



**Early Modern
Litterae Indipetae
for the East Indies**

Elisa Frei

BRILL

Early Modern *Litterae Indipetae* for the East Indies

Jesuit Studies

MODERNITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF JESUIT HISTORY

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By

Elisa Frei



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ἐμαυτῇ
ἐμῷ δαίμονι
καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ



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1 Ludovico Gonzaga from Ferrara, January 14, 1699 (Rome, ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fol. 161).

Introduction

During the early modern period, thousands of Jesuits across Europe frequently paused their work in churches and classrooms and drafted individual petitions directly to the superior general of the Society of Jesus. In Rome, the general received these requests for missionary appointments in the “Indies.” The young men who wrote these private letters expressed their most personal desires, hopes and dreams in their handwritten petitions, which are known today as *litterae indipetae* because their authors were *Indias petentes* (applying for the missions in the Eastern and Western territories).

The purpose of this book is to recapture the experiences of these individuals since lost to history by studying the *indipetae* written by Jesuits living in the Italian assistancy (the Jesuit territorial division which roughly coincides with current Italy). Italian Jesuits were the most prolific producers of *indipetae* for the entire history of the Society of Jesus. This monograph takes into consideration the two generalates of Thyrso González de Santalla (in office 1687–1705) and Michelangelo Tamburini (in office 1706–30). During these years, the fields available to Jesuits were changing, and a further feature is geographical, as the book concentrates especially on the Jesuits applying for East Asia—China and Japan mainly. The historical situations in these Far Eastern locations were very different at the time than where the Jesuit petitioners lived and worked.

Starting in 1639, it was impossible for any foreigner to enter Japan. The policy of *sakoku* (the closure of the country) kept the archipelago in nearly complete isolation until 1853.¹ Yet for the previous century, European Jesuits had been drawn to the Japanese empire, where they hoped to successfully evangelize the local population. As soon as Francis Xavier (1506–52) arrived in Kagoshima in 1549, the whole Society of Jesus started nourishing a consistent optimism for the possible conversion of Japan. Jesuits operated in the age of “warring states” (the Sengoku period, 1467–1615) and, in the absence of military support by the Portuguese, had to rely on the local lords who, from time to time, favored them. This collaboration took place mostly for practical reasons: Jesuits traveled aboard European (mainly Portuguese) ships and could act as *super partes* intermediaries with European merchants, who traded all sorts of items (for

1 On this topic, see for instance Adriana Boscaro, *Ventura e sventura dei gesuiti in Giappone (1549–1639)* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2008); Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542–1742* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994); Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome-Paris: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu/Letouzey & Ané, 1973).

instance firearms, of the utmost importance in such a belligerent period). The internal clashes among the Japanese lords led to the rise of the three unifiers of the empire: Oda Nobunaga (1534–82), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). As a result, the fate of Christianity in Japan constantly changed, subject of external circumstances as much as of the Jesuits' own strategies and evangelizing attempts, until the entrance of other religious orders and the progressive civil disorders led the Tokugawa dynasty to issue several edicts imposing isolation, the persecution of local converts, and, eventually, the gradual exile of all the foreigners from the empire.

Meanwhile, as for China at the end of the seventeenth century, the circumstances were theoretically more prosperous for the Society of Jesus. Despite the first arduous steps in previous decades, Christianity then enjoyed the support of several distinguished mandarins, officials and emperors, due largely to the refined strategies of Jesuits as Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). The Ming dynasty was ousted in 1644 by the Qing; during the first Qing decades, and in particular under Kangxi's (1654–1722) rule, Jesuits were allowed to proselytize or at least live and study with a certain freedom.² For the Society of Jesus, the most urgent problem at the turn of the eighteenth century became the so-called Rites controversy: not the religious "tolerance" (confirmed in 1692 by Kangxi), but the dispute between missionary orders (and sometimes within the Society of Jesus itself). As it had happened in Japan before, in fact, the coexistence of different religious orders who disagreed on many issues ended up annoying the local rulers and the emperor. Differently from Japan, however, the Jesuits were forced to interrupt their missionary activities not by the Chinese emperors but by the papal brief *Cum Deus optimum* (1704). Though the Jesuits sought to defer as much as possible the brief's implementation in China, there was no way for Rome to accept the

2 Other religious orders had been authorized by pope Urban VIII and his decree *Ex debito pastoralis officii*. On the *accommodatio* policies of the Society of Jesus, especially in China and India, see: Vincenzo Lavenia and Sabina Pavone, eds., *Missioni, saperi e adattamento tra Europa e imperi non cristiani: Atti del seminario* (Macerata, 14 maggio 2013) (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015); Guido Mongini, "Ad Christi similitudinem": Ignazio di Loyola e i primi gesuiti tra eresia e ortodossia: *Studi sulle origini della Compagnia di Gesù* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2011), esp. 131 off. On Valignano's experience, see Paolo Aranha, "Gerarchie razziali e adattamento culturale: La 'Ipotesi Valignano,'" in *Alessandro Valignano S.I., uomo del Rinascimento: Ponte tra Oriente ed Occidente*, ed. Adolfo Tamburello, Antoni M. Üçerler, and Marisa Di Russo (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2008), 76–98. On exterior adaptation and clothing, see Matteo Sanfilippo, "L'abito fa il missionario?: Scelte di abbigliamento, strategie di adattamento e interventi romani nelle missioni *ad haereticos* e *ad gentes* tra XVI e XX secolo," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée* 109, no. 2 (1997): 601–20.

Jesuit tolerance of the ancient rites in honor of Confucius and the ancestors that converts kept practicing. After the attempt of intrusion in domestic matters made by European authorities, the Kangxi emperor decided to allow in his empire only those missionaries following Ricci's method, putting all the Jesuits in a delicate position. The definitive (for the early modern age) condemnation of the "Chinese rites" was issued by pope Benedict XIV (r.1740–58) in 1742, just a few decades before the suppression of the Society of Jesus (1773).

The timespan studied in this book was, thus, a very tormented period for the Jesuits—especially for those who felt a vocation for the East Indies. Still, this unrest and uncertainty did not prevent a significant number of Europeans from dreaming about those remote and fascinating destinations. There was always the hope to reach, if not Japan, China—perhaps through the Philippines, recognized as the best temporary location, while waiting for the doors of those glorious empires to open again. Moreover, the circumstance that East Asia was largely unreachable for Jesuit missionaries after 1742 did not represent an insurmountable obstacle, but was seen more as a challenge by the most determined, motivated, and obstinate ones.

This volume offers a general introduction to *litterae indipetae*, even if its *foci* are specific in space and time (the Italian assistancy and East Asia, and seventeenth–eighteenth centuries). The book concentrates on the qualitative and quantitative relevance of *litterae indipetae*, an extraordinary collection of ego-documents whose uniqueness is even more accentuated in the case of "unknown" and "unimportant" Jesuits—which are the majority among petitioners for the Indies. The words of these people survived only because the Society of Jesus gave them the opportunity to speak for themselves, afterwards meticulously preserving their more or less polished, but always very colorful letters. People, their thoughts, and desires are the main focus of this book because, as Marc Bloch wrote, "the good historian is like the giant of the fairy tale. He knows that wherever he catches the scent of human flesh, there his quarry lies."³

3 Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft: Reflections on the Nature and Uses of History and the Techniques and Methods of Those Who Write It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 26. This book is based not only on the 1500 *indipetae* studied for this author's PhD, but also on the many more thousands she worked on as a project assistant of the *Digital Indipetae Database*, developed by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, Boston College. This yearlong experience on the same source allows to widen the scope and impact of this book's conclusions, and to deal with different periods, generals and historical circumstances, encompassing the continuities and discontinuities of *indipetae* letters from the sixteenth until the nineteenth century.

The structure of the book is the following. It starts with a brief introduction on the “literary genre” of *litterae indipetae*. More than twenty-two thousand petitions for the Indies survive until today, written from the 1580s until recent times. Despite the centuries separating their authors, *indipetae* share many characteristics—starting from their main aim: an assignment in the overseas missions. The variety of this *corpus* remains, however, astonishing. Thanks to multiple, personal, and often very creative strategies, Jesuits tried to achieve their goal in many different ways. They knew their destiny could depend on this very document, which they addressed directly to the highest authority of their order. The chances to obtain what they longed for could be increased by their rhetorical abilities and how they used them to convince the superior general.

The most frequently mentioned elements were health, age, studies, and personal skills; they could also include practical abilities (especially in the cases of domestic helpers, who were less educated). Every word pursued the same goal thus, according to the circumstance, being too old or too young could be depicted as an advantage and not as an objective impediment. While being healthy did not guarantee success to one petitioner, suffering from constant illnesses could become an advantage for another. In the case of personal characteristics, Jesuits tended to “belittle” themselves, not only to manifest humility but also because the majority of petitioners thought that the best way to be chosen was to be considered by the general as the most useless and interchangeable of men at his disposal.

Chapter 2 focuses on the “push and pull factors” leading a Jesuit to compose an application for the Indies. One or more circumstances could provide a positive *stimulus*: the most important was, of course, faith and desire to serve as an instrument of God. Certain publications (such as the promotional material produced by the Society of Jesus) could instill a missionary vocation in the hearts of those who were already Jesuits. Even before their entry to the religious order, laypersons often developed an interest in the Ignatian global endeavor because of what they read. Another aim of working in the “vineyard of the Lord” was to cry, sweat and suffer—possibly to die as a martyr as well—in hostile circumstances. Finally, several Jesuits undertook the missionary path after receiving mysterious signs and having prophetic dreams.

On the other hand, negative factors influenced an application for the Indies. Jesuits had problems and quarreled with their natural families. Parents, often not keen at first to lose their sons to the Society of Jesus, opposed their possible assignments and dangerous journeys to the other side of the world. The same happened within spiritual families. Local superiors tried in every way to

prevent the candidacies of some Jesuits (especially in the Sicilian province, as *indipetae* seem to indicate). Finally, the daily life with confreres and the teaching duties were a hard experience for some Jesuits, who petitioned for the Indies to radically change their condition.

The network involving petitioners for the Indies was as wide as the global network of the Society of Jesus itself. Chapter 3 situates the main *personae* of this book (the petitioners) in relation with other agents. The most important of these figures within the order, outside of the superior general, were the procurators of the Indies. Procurators were elected by their provincial congregations and periodically traveled to Europe to defend the interests of their provinces. One of their primary tasks was to recruit new missionaries. After a general introduction on this position within the Society of Jesus, this chapter concentrates on the procurators from the Chinese vice-province—especially Filippo Grimaldi (1638–1712) and Kaspar Kastner (1665–1709)—whose sojourns through Europe influenced many Jesuits in their applications; some of them were lucky enough to leave with them.

In the end, however, it was the superior general who had the last word on a missionary appointment. Given the numerical and geographical size of the Society of Jesus, the general still maintained surprisingly personal and often very intimate relationships with petitioners. Generals González and Tamburini replied to the men, explained their decisions, and encouraged the ones they could not appoint yet. These correspondences lasted often for years if not decades, presenting historians the opportunities to write a Jesuit story “from below” and from multiple points of view—not only the petitioner, but also the Roman curia, the local superiors, and the relatives.

The final chapter focuses on the Asian missions—both real and imagined—with a few case-studies related to this destination. It analyzes all the *indipetae* written during González’ and Tamburini’s generalates from quantitative and qualitative points of view, presenting answers to such questions as how many petitions for Asia were written during that period, when and why? The chapter also explores two “unsuccessful” but very motivated petitioners (Carlo Sarti, 1706–?, and Giovanni Berlendis, 1664–1745), and the reasons for their disappointments. On the other side, the final section studies two “successful” missionaries, Agostino Cappelli (1679–1715) and Ludovico Gonzaga (1673–1718). Both were appointed to the Chinese missions and left Lisbon on the same ship in 1706. Once arrived in Asia, however, they behaved in completely different ways and ended their lives as “enemies.” This is well documented in the letters they both exchanged with the general after the *Indias petens*-phase, and which represent a fascinating corollary to it.

Litterae Indipetae

1.1 Purpose, Structure, and Instructions

In the last decades, *litterae indipetae* have become the focus of attention for an increasing number of historians. Borrowing a term from the theologian Daniel Chamier (1565–1621), Emanuele Colombo defined *gesuitomania* as the recent explosion of studies on the Society of Jesus.¹ This “mania” inspired the study of the Jesuit order and its activities from many different perspectives: cultural studies, family histories, early modern understandings of emotions and masculinity, as well as art history, rhetoric, and psychology.² One of the strengths of Jesuit sources is the sheer number of documents in general, and of *indipetae* letters in particular: more than twenty thousand of them are preserved in the Roman archive of the Society of Jesus, written by over six thousand religious from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.³

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- 1 Emanuele Colombo borrowed from a French pamphlet (Daniel Chamier, *La Iesuitomanie, ou Les actes de la dispute de Lecture*. Montauban: Par les heritiers de Denys Haultin, 1618) the title for his bibliography on Jesuit missionary studies: “Gesuitomania. Studi recenti sulle missioni gesuitiche (1540–1773),” in *Evangelizzazione e globalizzazione: Le missioni gesuitiche nell’età moderna tra storia e storiografia*, ed. Michela Catto, Guido Mongini, and Silvia Mostaccio (Rome: Dante Alighieri, 2010), 31–59. Decades before, Edmond Lamalle (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [ARSI]) briefly wrote about *indipetae* in “L’archivio di un grande ordine religioso: L’Archivio Generale della Compagnia di Gesù,” *Archiva Ecclesiae* 34–35, no. 1 (1981–82): 89–120. For tables with the precise distribution of *indipetae* in the Jesuit Archive in Rome (ARSI), see Aliocha Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias: Las cartas ‘indipetae’ de los jesuitas europeos, siglos XVI–XVII, ensayo historiográfico,” *Relaciones* 33, no. 132 (2012): 147–81.
 - 2 Concerning *litterae indipetae* and for an updated bibliography, see the recently published volume by Girolamo Imbruglia, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Guido Mongini, eds., *Cinque secoli di litterae indipetae: Il desiderio delle missioni nella Compagnia di Gesù* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2022). For the Old Society, see also Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie: Storie, sogni e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001); Adriano Prosperi, “I missionari,” in *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, by Adriano Prosperi (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 549–684; and Alessandro Guerra, “Per un’archeologia della strategia missionaria dei Gesuiti: Le *indipetae* e il sacrificio nella ‘vigna del Signore,’” *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 13 (2000): 109–92. As for the Old and New Society and for further bibliographical data, see also Emanuele Colombo and Marina Massimi, *In viaggio: Gesuiti italiani candidati alle missioni tra Antica e Nuova Compagnia* (Milan: Il Sole 24 Ore, 2014).
 - 3 The *indipetae* letters from the Italian assistancy are mostly preserved in ARSI, *Fondo Gesuitico* [FG] 732–751, and dated from 1589 to 1770; other Italian *indipetae* are in *Ital.* 173 (1580–1765)

Writing an *ad hoc* petition to Rome was the standard practice since the 1580s. As Aliocha Maldavsky remarks, the superior general was “an important part of the cycle of selecting missionaries,” being in contact with all the parts involved in it.⁴ Camilla Russell notices how “Europe at the turn of the seventeenth century was awash with accounts from the Jesuit missions in the Indies, while young Jesuits in colleges and novitiates eagerly sought a place on the missions, especially in the East.”⁵ During the years covered in this book, i.e. the two generalates of Thyrso González de Santalla (1687–1705) and Michelangelo Tamburini (1706–30), Italian Jesuits were generally asking for what their companions had been requesting from the foundation of their order in about 1,500 *indipetae*.⁶ Some of them followed a pre-established format (as periodically suggested by the generals), but others were lengthy, written quite freely, and included secrets for the generals’ eyes alone.

Availability, detachment, and obedience have always characterized the Society of Jesus, so that mobility and missions were—and are—cornerstones of the order.⁷ Ignatius’s original ideas about missions had been influenced by the medieval chivalric values he treasured, but apostolic work had characterized the Church since its earliest decades. The Council of Trent (1545–63)

and in *Ven.* 99 (1638–1754). As for the *indipetae* from other assistancies, see the table in Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias.” There are two catalogs of *indipetae* in ARSI: *Indipetae* (732–759) and *Indipetae extra FG*.

- 4 “una pieza esencial del circuito de elección, incluso cuando no se conservan cartas *indipetae*, pues mantenía una correspondencia asidua con los provinciales acerca de la organización de las expediciones,” Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias,” 154. About the selecting process, see by the same author: “Administrer les vocations missionnaires: Les *Indipetae* et l’organisation des expéditions de missionnaires aux Indes Occidentales au début du XVII^e siècle,” in *Missions religieuses Modernes: “Notre lieu est le monde,”* ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 45–70.
- 5 See Camilla Russell’s research on this point: “Imagining the ‘Indies’: Italian Jesuit Petitions for the Overseas Missions at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century,” in *L’Europa Divisa e i Nuovi Mondi: Per Adriano Prosperi*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore, vol. 2 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 179–89; about Jesuits and the Chinese Empire as a preferred destination, “Vocation to the East: Italian Candidates for the Jesuit China Mission at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, ed. Machtelt Israëls and Louis Waldman, vol. 2 (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2013), 313–27.
- 6 Moreover, some of the letters were lost. On this period, see Anna Rita Capoccia, “Le destin des *Indipetae* au-delà du XVI^e siècle,” in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions Religieuses Modernes*, 89–110 and “Per una lettura delle *indipetae* italiane del Settecento: Indifferenza e desiderio di martirio,” *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* 1 (2000): 7–43.
- 7 See Adriano Prosperi, *La vocazione: Storie di gesuiti tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2016), and the section “I missionari” in *Tribunali della coscienza*, 549–684.

reshaped and institutionalized every aspect of religious life; missions became more formalized and related to religious orders than to charismatic individuals acting quite autonomously.⁸ The Council promoted a certain continuity and uniformity of action, but many Jesuit petitioners for the Indies kept imagining a missionary land in which they were the main actors, chasing a “crown of tribulations” in the most distant and neglected vineyards of the Lord. They wanted to leave as soon as possible, being aware that every minute of delay condemned thousands of souls whose only sin was not having heard of the word of the Lord.

As *indipetae* indicate, Jesuits were ready to leave their residences with a short notice, carrying only the clothes they were wearing, and even without giving a formal notice to the spiritual and natural families they left behind. They were not afraid of suffering or dying: what they feared was the “bureaucracy” of the Jesuit curia, responsible for selecting among hundreds of volunteers for the missions. Even before Rome’s approval, however, Jesuits needed the approval of their local superiors: the latter did not want to send (all of) their best and brightest subjects to the overseas missions. European schools constantly needed good teachers, and this was a high priority because they were an effective means not only to recruit new Jesuits, but also to reach every social class.⁹ Usually, every Jesuit (except temporal coadjutors, that is domestic helpers) was supposed to work in schools, at least for a few years: they taught classes, revised homework, often managing large groups of students with different levels of education. Petitioners understood that teaching, though not as thrilling as the mysterious Indies, was a primary task of the Society, and they wrote their *indipetae* letters mindful of that context.

1.1.1 *How to Write Good litterae indipetae: Instructions from Above*

All the petitions were written by people belonging to the same “emotional community.” The medievalist Barbara Rosenwein uses this term to define all groups of people sharing the same “systems of feeling: what these communities

8 Among the many titles on the Council of Trent, see the classic reference by John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Some Jesuits, like Peter Canisius, had influential roles at the council: Ignatius designated Diego Laínez and Alfonso Salmerón to be theologians there; Pierre Favre was also appointed but died on his way to Trent. However, “in an age in which political, intellectual, and religious leaders consistently and vociferously demanded ‘reform of the church,’ the Jesuits spoke of it seldom,” as O’Malley explains in *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. 321. On Jesuit ideas about the missions, see also Pizzorusso, “Le choix indifferent.”

9 “Strumento fondamentale della politica di conquista delle classi dominanti.” See Adriano Prosperi, “Il figlio, il padre, il gesuita: Un testo di Antonio Possevino,” *Rinascimento* (2014): 112–55, here 114.

(and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others' emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore."¹⁰ Men of different social and geographic origins shared a similar vocabulary, from the first three centuries of the Society of Jesus until its suppression (1773)—and also later (post 1815).

Almost all the petitioners for the Indies expressed inflamed feelings: fervor, desire, hearts on fire, burning and consuming emotions. Many of them admitted being obsessed by the object of their desires: overseas missions. *Litterae indipetae* are such a unique type of document that they can be described as a literary genre *per se*, with specific tropes of the *ars dictaminis*.¹¹ These letters often exhibit a predetermined format: in the opening, the author recognizes his unworthiness and humbly seeks the general's attention. In the *narratio* (the main part), he summarizes the circumstances that led him to write the documents, the sum of which was in the *petitio* (the petition), containing the request to be sent to the missions (with more or less indifference as for timing and destination). The document ends with a formal and conventional conclusion, and final greetings (*conclusio* and *salutatio*). Many *indipetae* through centuries employ this framework; many others begin *in medias res* with an inflamed *petitio*.

What did the petitioners know of the superior general and his selection policy? Some of them were aware that his secretaries were very busy, sorting out the dozens of petitions that arrived in Rome each day. Nevertheless, as the Jesuit Giuseppe Maria Amendola was assured, receiving *indipetae* was for the general more "consolation than tedium."¹² It was rare for petitioners to summarize what they thought were the steps for an appointment for the Indies: this happened with the Roman Francesco Corsetti (1704), who was convinced that, "in order to more easily succeed in my plan" (leaving for the missions), he had to address to the general a complete "memorial."¹³ Although studying in the

10 Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821–45, here 842.

11 On the educational system of Renaissance Italy, see Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989) and Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

12 "consolazione che tedio," ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 61 (Termini, January 5, 1719). Chapter 3 will show how the generals' answers validated this belief—even if sometimes the generals had to invite petitioners not to be too insistent and write that frequently.

13 "acciò più facilmente riesca un tal mio disegno [...] memoriale," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 174 (Rome, August 15, 1704).

Roman College (not physically far from the general), Corsetti felt the need to remind him of his missionary vocation also in writing. In 1720 Giovanni Battista Aggiutorio begged the general “to inscribe me in the Catalog where you take note of the names of everyone who wants to reach the place where my desires aspire to.”¹⁴ Giovanni Domenico Pozzobonelli oscillated in 1727 between two opposing attitudes: on the one hand, he did not want to receive the “license” for the missions only “for importunity.”¹⁵ On the other hand, he would also have regretted “not to obtain it because Your Paternity forgot the desire God kindly granted me;” thus he took up the quill and wrote.

Over time, generals invited Jesuits to apply and contextually also gave some instructions on how to do it. Such communications contained the names of the missions more in need, and which elements the applications should possess to help the Roman secretariat in making its choice. Even if the archival preservation of *indipetae* does not necessarily match their production, it is clear that these letters influenced the number of petitions of certain years. Shortly before the period taken into consideration in this book, Giovanni Paolo Oliva (in office 1664–81) wrote to the French superiors to encourage missionaries for the Antilles to step forward: immediately afterwards, more and more *indipetae* requesting this destination reached Rome.¹⁶ A few decades later and in Italy, the petitioner Maurizio Zaffino remembered how around 1691 general González issued a circular inviting missionaries to the Chinese missions; the Milanese Jesuit had never applied before because he believed that destination impossible to reach.¹⁷ Similarly, Paolo Faraone wrote from Palermo his fifth petition in 1700, on the occasion of the “fervent letter addressed last year by Your Paternity to this Province in a special way, to urge its members to the apostolic missions of America.”¹⁸

14 “a scrivermi nel Catalogo dove registransi tutti coloro che, giusta gl’Ordini di Vostra Paternità, devono incaminarsi colà dove aspirano i miei desiderii,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 82 (Naples, February 24, 1720).

15 “per importunità [...] non ottenerla, perché Vostra Paternità si sia dimenticato il desiderio ch’Iddio s’è degnato benignamente concedermi,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 327 (Milan, January 22, 1727) and FG 751, fol. 339 (Milan, December 17, 1727).

16 Pizzorusso, “Le choix indifférent,” 886.

17 “la lettera circolare di Vostra Paternità, con la quale esorta ciascheduno ch’habbia tali desiderii ad esporglieli,” ARSI, FG 749, fol. 369 (Milan, August 22, 1691). It was not possible to find the original notice by the general.

18 “fervorosa lettera indirizzata da Vostra Paternità l’anno trascorso, in modo speciale a questa Provincia, per animare i suoi sudditi alle apostoliche missioni di America [...] missioni delle galee e carceri [...] appreso più lingue,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 86 (Palermo, July 20, 1700). Faraone was never destined to the missions, and died fifteen years later

As Claudio Ferlan noticed, 1722 was a “crucial moment for the definition of a real *indipeta* genre.”¹⁹ At the beginning of that year, Michelangelo Tamburini addressed to all provincials the circular *De mittendis ad Indias novis operariis* (*About Sending New Workers to the Indies*). The communication was to be publicly read in the Jesuit residences to promote the vocations for the Indies, and invited the aspiring missionaries to list in their letters age, health condition, time spent in the Society and performed tasks. After Tamburini’s letter, there was an “explosion” of *indipetae* in the Italian assistency: there were thirty-seven in 1721, and they almost tripled a year later.²⁰

The influence of Tamburini’s document was not only quantitative, but qualitative too: from then on, *indipetae* were strictly modeled on his instructions. In the first months after his exhortation, almost *all* the letters were diligently written according to the framework provided by the general; moreover, many *indipetae* listed *just* the required data. This concision and “objectivity” greatly reduces their interest from a cultural-historical point of view: there was no more space for creativity, childhood memories, miracles, and dreams. Most letters were brief, stereotypical, showing none of the passion which transpired from the *indipetae* of the previous months. In these circumstances, the letters of long-term petitioners are even more relevant exceptions: how did react those Jesuits already used to write to the general, after the new directives? Finally, in 1722 and 1723, new and *una tantum* petitioners were more frequent than repeated letters: as suddenly as they appear, these first-timers’ names disappear from the senders’ lists very soon.

Many (but not all) of the *indipetae* written after Tamburini’s epistle mentioned his exhortation. As soon as the end of January 1722, Stanislao de Marco wrote from Naples “in conformity with the order of Your Paternity.”²¹ The letter did not get him with what he wanted, and the Jesuit died in his city fifteen years later. In March of the same year, Giovanni Saverio Bongiardina listed his

in his native Sicily (Joseph Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi Societatis Jesu: 1641–1740*. Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1985, 101).

19 The document is preserved in ARSI, *Ep. NN.* 9, fol. 3, and it marked “un momento decisivo per la definizione di un vero e proprio genere *indipeta*,” Claudio Ferlan, “Candidato alle Indie: Eusebio Francesco Chini e le ‘litterae indipetae’ nella Compagnia di Gesù,” in *Eusebio Francesco Chini e il suo tempo: Una riflessione storica*, ed. Claudio Ferlan (Trento: Fondazione Bruno Kessler, 2012), 31–58, here 32. See also Capoccia, “Le destin des *Indipetae*,” 101–2.

20 See Appendix.

21 “in conformità dell’ordine di Vostra Paternità, manifestatoci per mezzo d’una lettera al Padre Provinciale circa la vocazione alle missioni dell’Indie,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 150 (Naples, January 29, 1722). For de Marco’s death, see Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 25.

personal data, “obeying to what your Paternity demands in his letter.”²² In the same spring Nicolò de Martino noticed how, after “Your Paternity’s exhortation letter was read in our Refectory,” the many Jesuits already interested in the missions “felt an even more burning fire as for their Holy wish.”²³ De Martino “experienced this same effect” in himself, therefore wrote his one and only petition. Antonino Sinatra, who likewise had never applied before, testified how, after the general’s letter was “read a little while ago in our common refectory,” it had “rekindled in me the desire I had since (I was) a Novice, to apply for the Indies.”²⁴ After listening to these words, wherever he went Sinatra felt an “inner voice that tells me: It is impossible for you to beg the general, without being satisfied with your demands.” Although Giuseppe Cacace felt “not [...] worthy for now of that grace,” he implored the general to “inscribe me in that very fortunate book which registers the names of those who seek the Indies,” hoping that “sooner or later I will go there.”²⁵ About the same time, Mauro Berarducci felt a great vocation after “the last communication of Your Paternity, which exhorted and invited us Jesuits to give an answer to the many requests of evangelical workers which constantly arrive here.”²⁶ The forty-four-year old man, a Jesuit for twenty-eight years, had already presented his requests in 1699 and 1705. In this case, Tamburini’s letter refreshed an old and almost dormant vocation but did not guarantee any fulfillment to it: Berarducci died in Naples a decade later. From the same city, Giovanni Chiavacci wrote a typical letter for the year 1722, beginning *in medias res* announcing in the first line the “most

22 “obedire a quanto Vostra Paternità impone nella sua,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 200 (Marsala, March 16, 1722). Bongiardina never left his province and died there twenty years later (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 146).

23 “si lesse nel nostro Refettorio la sua Lettera Parenetica [...] molti che havevano desiderio di cercar le Missioni delle Indie si sentirono viepiù accesi nel loro Santo desiderio: anche io sperimentai in me il medesimo effetto,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 164 (Naples, February 13, 1722).

24 “poco fa si lesse nel nostro commun refettorio, fe’ riaccendere in me quel desiderio [che] fin da Novizio ebbi di chiedere l’Indie [...] ovunque mi porti, mi sento non so qual voce interiore ch’or mi dice: L’è impossibile che ti facci sol una volta a supplicare il Padre Generale, senza esserne soddisfatte le tue dimande,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 196 (Palermo, March 5, 1722). Sinatra’s name is not to be found in Jesuit catalogues.

25 “non [...] meritevole per ora di tal favore [...] registrare il mio nome in quel fortunatissimo Libro in cui soglion registrarsi i Nomi di coloro che cercano l’Indie, affinché io resti con qualche speranza di andare o più presto o più tardi, come sarà maggior gloria di Dio,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 255 (Bari, March 6, 1723). The destiny of this Jesuit is unknown, but he did not die in the East Indies.

26 “precisamente stimolato dall’ultima circolare di Vostra Paternità, ch’essortava e invitava i Sudditi ad accorrere alle tante richieste che continovamente vengono di Operarii evangelici,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 264 (Benevento, August 21, 1723). Berarducci died in Naples in 1737 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 111).

ardent desire” born in him even before becoming a Jesuit, “to end my life among the Infidels.”²⁷ This idea was “so revived by your sweet and fatherly exhortations,” that he could not but write his own plea. He was ready to “learn and do everything,” and to “overcome any obstacle that someone [...] could raise to prevent the fulfillment of my resolution.” Chiavacci probably thought that his local superiors might not agree with his departure. He concluded his letter listing the data requested by Tamburini: “my age is about twenty-seven years, with seven years of Religious life; my Nation is Tuscany and my Fatherland Pistoia; I am not robust, but have perfect health.”

Tamburini’s exhortation about *litterae indipetae* were integrated and reaffirmed later by Franz Retz (1673–1750, in office 1730–50), who in 1734 addressed to all provincial superiors an instruction on the basic information needed from petitioners for the Indies.²⁸ First of all, Rome needed to know the candidates’ name, homeland, age, grade in the Society, studies and tasks: the investigation was “rather detailed, and was intended to allow the general and his helpers in the decision.”²⁹ Provincials needed to inquire if the aspirants had enough strength and health, if they had prudence and talents for missionary life, if they were moved by the right intentions, if they were good-natured and finally whether they would have easily accommodate to the new customs of the missions, being able to endure difficulties and dangers. The ideal candidate had to be devout, humble, tame, charitable, disposed to love mortifications and poverty, obedient, indifferent about the destination and the assignment.³⁰ He had to have sufficient zeal for the countless hardships and inconveniences he would have met.

These were the few explicit and written rules for a successful application to the Jesuit missions, but what other criteria guided the general and his secretaries

27 “il desiderio ardentissimo [...] di andare una volta a terminar la vita tra gli Infedeli [...] con le dolci Paterne esortazioni talmente ravvivato [...] apprendere et esercitarmi in qualsivoglia altra cosa [...] superare qualunque ostacolo che da qualcuno [...] fosse addotto per impedire l’adempimento della mia risoluzione [...] la mia età è d’anni ventisette meno alcuni giorni, e anni sette di Religione; di Nazione Toscano e di Patria Pistoiese; di complessione non robusta, ma di perfetta salute,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 154 (Naples, February 7, 1722).

28 “Capita informationis de iis, qui petunt Missiones transmarinas,” ARSI, *Ep. NN.* 9, fol. 151. This was the kind of information Jesuit Provincials had to send about the candidates living in their territories. See *Synopsis historiae Societatis Iesu* (Lovanii: Typis ad Sancti Alphonsi, 1950, column 306).

29 “l’indagine era piuttosto dettagliata e aveva lo scopo di consentire allo stesso generale, e a chi lo affiancava nella decisione sulla eventuale destinazione missionaria, di essere adeguatamente informato su qualità fisiche e morali, nonché doti intellettuali, disponibilità e motivazioni di ogni candidato alle Indie,” Ferlan, “Candidato alle Indie,” 32.

30 ARSI, *Ep. NN.* 9, fol. 151.

when deciding whom to send among hundreds of available candidates? As for the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries, Alessandro Guerra remembers how the *Constitutions* underlined the importance of selecting “people who can be fully trusted. For places where more physical work is needed, [choose] the healthiest and most robust people. For places with spiritual dangers, the most experienced in virtue and trustworthy people.”³¹ The general intervened at all stages of the operation: for instance, in the Spanish assistancy at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Aliocha Maldavsky concludes that the concrete organization of the journey was negotiated by the single provinces and the secular power (the crown and its administration), but the choice of personnel was ultimately up to him.³² He was assisted in the task of recruiting mainly by the procurators: Charlotte de Castelnau L’Estoile studied a few personnel lists that Rome and Lisbon used to exchange when departures were approaching.³³ These documents contain the same personal data that were available in the *indipetae*: place of birth, years spent within the order, experience in studying and teaching, health.

On the other side, what were the criteria guiding the petitioners in their application? The majority of them, first of all, asked in a generic way for “the Indies.”³⁴ Very frequent references to Francis Xavier (1506–52) suggest that Asia might be implied, but sometimes petitioners mentioned him and at the same time asked for the West Indies: the link between the Apostle of the East and the “real” East was not so exclusive. The “Indies” were what petitioners aspired to, and the Society of Jesus was their way to reach them: this desire often started even before their entrance into the Society. Cesare Filippo D’Oria, for instance, had felt a “vocation to the Indian missions” since he was a lay person, and this

31 “si devono inviare persone scelte e delle quali maggiormente ci si possa fidare. Per le attività in cui vi è più da lavorare fisicamente, le persone più sane e robuste. Per le cose che presentano maggiori pericoli spirituali, persone più provate nella virtù e più sicure,” *Costituzioni della Compagnia di Gesù*, par. 624, quoted in Guerra, “Per un’archeologia della strategia missionaria,” 150.

32 Maldavsky, “Administrer les vocations,” 59.

33 Departures took place from Lisbon, usually in March or April for climatic reasons. Apparently, in Portugal it was more common to speak with local superiors or procurator, than to write to the general concerning the missionary appointment: this is the reason why there are not many *indipetae* from the Portuguese assistancy, as explained in Charlotte de Castelnau L’Estoile, “Élection et vocation: Le choix de la mission dans la province jésuite du Portugal à la fin du XVI^e siècle,” in *Missions Religieuses Modernes: “Notre lieu est le monde,”* ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 21–43; see also Lamalle, “L’archivio di un grande ordine,” 102–3. Many Portuguese families destined their sons to the Society of Jesus, thus missionary lives were a natural outcome.

34 As chapter 4 shows.

“was one of the main reasons that led me to choose the Society of Jesus” in the 1710s. After twelve years in the order, this desire still persisted and was “very alive” in him.³⁵ The Milanese Maurizio Zaffino confessed in 1692 that “it was so ardent” in him the “desire for the missions in the Indies” that “always, even as a child, not even knowing what the Indies were,” he had coveted them. After entering the order, he felt in his soul “the increasing desire to employ every part of me in the missions among the Infidels.”³⁶ Similarly, the twenty-two-year-old Antonio Calcaterra openly admitted that it was precisely to go overseas that he had turned to the Society of Jesus. This vocation was born one year before he became a Jesuit, and “this was always the only reason why I put the Society before any other religious order: because I hoped to find in it, after some time, what I crave so ardently.”³⁷

Petitioners for the Indies are the best testimonials of the fact that the Society of Jesus has always been associated with the global Catholic endeavor. Its name was inextricably associated with the far and unexplored territories: to reach them, the Jesuit order offered a “preferential route,” when compared to other religious orders. Girolamo Lombardi confirms this connection in his letter dated 1725: he wanted to “offer to the barbarians the life God gave to me” and felt a desire for the Indies “with great eagerness, since my childhood [...] one of the first desires I ever had, as soon as I reached the age of reason.” Lombardi was making plans to reach the Indies by himself: “even as a secular person, I would have tried to put this desire into practice.” He heard, however “certain things about Jesuits, and they convinced me it would be easier to pursue them in this religious order than elsewhere.” After pondering his options, he decided “to put on this robe, in which I find myself very happy.”³⁸ Even clearer was Domenico Sorrentino in 1716: “for no reason but seeing its commitment in sending subjects to the Indies, did I grow fond of the Holy Society

35 “vocazione alle Missioni dell’Indie [...] fu uno de’ principali motivi che mi spinsero a chiedere la Compagnia [...] vivissimo,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 314 (Genoa, January 14, 1716).

36 “sì ardente il desiderio delle missioni dell’Indie [...] sempre più crescere questa brama d’impiegarmi tutto nelle missioni degl’Infedeli,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 480^v (Milan, August 6, 1692).

37 “il Signore si compiace chiamarmi nell’Indie [...] questo fu sempre l’unico motivo per cui anteposi la compagnia ad ogn’altra religione, sperando in questa trovarne col tempo quello che sì ardentemente bramavo,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 211 (Nice, May 11, 1722).

38 “con somma avidità fin dalla mia fanciullezza [...] uno de’ primi desiderii che concepissi dopo che hebbi uso di ragione [...] dare tra barbari la vita per quel Dio che me la diede [...] per certo ancor secolare avrei messo in esecuzione un tal desiderio [...] per fama alcune cose de’ Gesuiti, che mi fecero credere più facile una tale esecuzione in questa Religione che altrove [...] di vestirmi di questo habito, di che mi ritruovo sommamente contento,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 299 (Piacenza, September 20, 1725).

of Jesus.”³⁹ He also added that, “before knowing such a precious zeal in the Ignatian Religion, I did not feel any inclination for the Society of Jesus.” What convinced him to “commit all my heart” in it, was “because I hoped to be one of those lucky ones”—that is, those sent to the overseas territories. A few months after this letter, Sorrentino was granted the missionary license.⁴⁰

What exactly were “the Indies” for an early modern Jesuit? Roscioni believes that, more than a real place, they could be described as a “mental landscape.”⁴¹ The destinations that petitioners had in mind included the Far East and the Americas first of all, but also the Near East or Africa.⁴² What was important for them was to cut off every bond with Europe, as soon as possible and forever, with no contact with their old life anymore. After the early modern geographic expansions, the imagination of many Europeans traveled even further, and with new “rivals:” not only the familiar Jews and Muslims, but new peoples, imaginary and real, of whose existence nobody was aware before. The Catholic and therefore “universal” message had to be delivered to every one of them. Many Jesuits could not find any rest thinking about the thousands of men, women, and children dying without any knowledge of the “true faith,” and thus destined to eternal damnation: they could not but apply to save these souls. Superiors tried, but with little success, to oppose to the “real Indies” the “Indies here” or “our Indies”—that is to say, Europe. The adventurous journeys into an unknown and “desert” (without any Christians) territory guaranteed an existential turn which could hardly be compared to an “ordinary” life on the Old Continent.

Maldavsky highlights the “imprecision of the allusions to missionary places” as expressed by petitioners for the Indies.⁴³ This was caused in the first place by the “indifference” requested of Jesuits in their religious life, and consequently reverberated also in their missionary choice. *Litterae indipetae* seem

39 “non per altro mi sono affettionato alla Santa Compagnia, che per vederla impegnata di inviare soggetti all’Indie [...] prima di conoscere questo zelo sì pretioso nella Religione del Santo Padre, il mio genio non era punto inclinato alla Compagnia, ma tutto il mio cuore s’impegnò a volerla con la sola speranza di poter essere uno di quei fortunati,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 357 (Naples, July 9, 1716).

40 ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 258 (Naples, July 20, 1723).

41 “paesaggio mentale,” Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie*, 102; Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies,’” refines Roscioni’s ideas.

42 For some Jesuits, also the areas suffering with plagues could become a valid alternative to overseas missions. However, they were as dangerous and potentially deadly, sometimes even more: Jesuit schools were always in need of personnel, and the superiors did not want to lose precious resources.

43 “necesaria indiferencia por el destino geográfico [...] carácter impreciso de la evocación de los lugares de misión por los redactores,” Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias,” 166–67.

to imply either a certain geographic-cultural ignorance, or in any case a consistent vagueness in expectations. They can hardly be used to assess the extent and the quality of the circulation of information from the missionary countries to Europe in general, and to Jesuit colleges in particular. Jesuit schools, in fact, also taught geography of the newly discovered areas, as several sentences from *litterae indipetae* confirm. Maldavsky concludes that there was “quite an unawareness between the real situation of a mission, and what petitioners aspired to.”⁴⁴ Jesuits living in the main European cultural centers had access to books (in Latin, but also in vernacular languages) describing the new geographical discoveries; and all Jesuits shared a basic education, but almost all of them expressed rather vague ideas of their missionary future.⁴⁵ *Indipetae* were not meant to inform the general about the lives and conditions in missionary countries, but to petition successfully to be sent there. The thousands of Italian candidates writing from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century do not include any general detailed expectations or information on the historical or geopolitical context of the required country. More than ignorance, Ignatian “indifference” played a fundamental role in this trend.

There are a few exceptions: for instance Attilio Antonio Luci had heard in 1695 “such good news from China, where there is now freedom to preach the Gospel and build Churches and Colleges.”⁴⁶ He referred to the edict by the Kangxi emperor dated 1692 but, despite these optimistic updates, Luci died in Naples three years later.⁴⁷ *Indipetae* showed more frequently their writers’ vagueness of expectations on the required destination: Niccolò Longo, for example, asked in 1721 for Madurai as a destination which guaranteed the greatest suffering. He was however ready to go anywhere else: “either among the Heretics or the Schismatics or the Gentiles, in the East or in the West: *ecce ego, mitte me*.”⁴⁸ Similarly, Emanuel Querini was “very ready to go to both Indies, or

44 “una gran inconsciencia de la realidad de la misión a la que aspiraban [...] un índice de la circulación y de la apropiación de la información acerca de las zonas de misión y de la experiencia misionera” (Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias,” 155).

45 Maldavsky lists among these documents the accounts written about the Indies by Jesuits themselves, but also Columbus, Vespucci, Pigafetta, Ramusio, Las Casas, Botero and others. See Aliocha Maldavsky, “Société urbaine et désir de mission: Les ressorts de la mobilité missionnaire jésuite à Milan au début du XVII^e siècle,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 3, no. 56–3 (2009): 7–32.

46 “Havendo li giorni passati inteso sì belle nuove venute dalla Cina che vi sia libertà di predicar l’Evangelio, et fabricar Chiese e Collegii,” ARSI, FG 749, fol. 633 (Naples, February 15, 1695).

47 Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 190.

48 “sia tra gli Eretici, sia tra gli Scismatici, sia tra i Gentili nell’Oriente o nell’Occidente: ecce ego, mitte me,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 130 (Genoa, November 16, 1721). Longo left for East Asia in

to the countries of the Heretics or to Tartary, and to the Turks [...] to spill my sweat and blood.”⁴⁹ Francesco Corsetti wanted in 1715 to be sent “immediately, barefoot, without any baggage to Germany, then in Moscow, then to Batavia [Java], then to China, or to any other part of the Indies, both Eastern and Western, that you desire, and you will immediately hear that I am executing your orders.”⁵⁰ Salvatore Saverio Marino, in one of his sixteen *indipetae* dated 1716–17, explained how he wanted to leave his “homeland and native kingdom, to devote to the cultivation of souls among either barbarians and gentiles, or heretics, or Mohammedans.”⁵¹ Even if the Sicilian focused on the Philippines, he remained open to any destination: if the general intended to send him to Japan, he invited him to “notify me of your will with the slightest sign, and I will go there swimming, if a ship is not available.”⁵² If his superiors wanted him to “instruct children in the less valued/basic schools, I will do it.” Even if he would have been destined to work as a temporal coadjutor: “I will deem it the greatest good fortune of my life, because I would be doing God’s will.” Marino’s desire was partially fulfilled: he actually left for the East Indies, but died at sea in 1734.

Indipetae, therefore, can surprise for the absence—and not the presence—of any information on missionary lives, but what really matters in these sources are the motivations to be sent there as listed and vividly described by their authors, together with the reason to be chosen as “the perfect missionary.”

1722 (Josef Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541–1758,” *Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte* 7 (1967): 252–450, here 321), but it is not clear when he died, and if as a Jesuit.

- 49 “prontissimo ad andar nell’una e nell’altra India, o ne’ paesi degl’Eretici o nella Tartaria, e ne’ Turchi [...] a spargere i sudori ed anche il sangue,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 285 (n.p., August 7, 1712). Querini’s name does not appear in the Jesuit *defuncti* catalog.
- 50 “subito a pie’ scalzi senz’alcun viatico per la Germania, indi in Moscovia, indi in Batavia, indi alla Cina; o per qualsivoglia altra parte dell’Indie, o orientali o occidentali, che desidero, e subito mi udirà porre in esecuzione i suoi comandi,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 308 (Florence, May 9, 1715).
- 51 “patria e regno natio, per attendere alla coltura delle anime o in mezzo a’ barbari e gentili, o heretici, o Maomettani,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 358 (Palermo, July 20, 1716). Marino died in 1734 at sea (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 235).
- 52 “mi notifici la sua volontà con minimo segno che io, in mancanza di barche, a nuoto mi porterò in quelle isole [...] addottrinare fanciulli nelle più infime scuole di grammatica, lo farò [...] ne’ ministeri de’ fratelli coadiutori, io stimerò somma somma mia fortuna il servire la Compagnia in questo stato, facendo la volontà di Dio,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 422 (Palermo, January 8, 1717).

1.2 A “Typical” Petitioner?: Health and Age

Health conditions could—but did not always—play a crucial role among the decisive factors to be taken into consideration for a missionary appointment. On the one hand, it was not enough *per se* because an aspiring missionary could be the healthiest person of his college, but also have negative characteristics like mediocre intellectual virtues, lack of prudence, or a shaky vocation.⁵³ On the other hand, if petitioners were admittedly not particularly robust, they could try to put a favorable spin on it. They could claim that their superiors and families were exaggerating their health problems, or that a miracle had recently cured them, or that the only way they could have really recovered their well-being was putting it to test in the missions. If they had undeniably bad health, they still tried to depict it in a favorable way: Giovanni Andrea Gheri, for instance, was sad because he did not deserve the Indies for his “great demerits” and his “insufficient health, of which perhaps Your Paternity received not entirely favorable accounts.” He assured the general, however, that the situation was under control and not as serious as it seemed: “if in the past I suffered because of blood problems, I am doing well now.”⁵⁴

Poor physical conditions—real, or as such presented by their “rivals”—could be a last-minute obstacle to an already planned departure. For example, in 1721 Francesco Cappella had already “embarked on the long-awaited journey to the Indies:” suddenly, his superiors ordered him to “desist.”⁵⁵ The Neapolitan provincial then told him that the “reason for this change of mind was the clear weakness of my health,” which troubled Cappella’s direct superiors. The petitioner was sorry, and refused to corroborate such a complaint: “it has been many years since I even visited an infirmary, and moreover I successfully endured

53 “era uno fra i più severi criteri di selezione fra i candidati, anche se non assoluto: la sola salute non bastava di per sé quando era accompagnata da altri gravi difetti,” Guerra, “Per un’archeologia,” 153.

54 “grandissimi demeriti [...] la poca sanità, di cui forse potrebbe Vostra Paternità avere non del tutto favorevoli relazioni [...] se per il passato l’abbondanza del sangue mi diede qualche fastidio, hora mi lascia riposare,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 355 (Genoa, March 3, 1691).

55 “quanto mi abbia rammaricato il nuovo arresto in punto, che già mi era imbarcato per il sospirato viaggio alle indie [...] motivo di tal cambiamento [...] l’esposta fiacchezza di mia salute [...] molti anni né pur son comparso per il minimo che all’Infermeria, ed ho potuto reggere alla fatica di viaggi ancor disastrosi [...] pretesti, affacciati dall’umano affetto di chi altre volte pur s’ingerì, acciò i Superiori mutassero sentimento circa la mia persona [...] tal uno presso i due Padri Provinciali, passato e presente, giunse fino ad insinuare che io, già pentito, mal volentieri partissi [...] che di nuovo mi v’accordi la Grazia tanto bramata,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 139 (Naples, December 30, 1721). It is not known whether the Sicilian was sent to the Indies nor even if he died as a Jesuit.

the fatigues of the most disastrous journeys." What his relatives and superiors depicted as sickness, were nothing else than "pretexts, born out of the human affection of those who in other occasions as well intruded, trying to change the superiors' mind about me." His family apparently had intervened before, begging the local superiors to give general false and misleading information about his health. Further aggravating this situation, "someone insinuated to two provincials, this and the former one, that I already regretted my petitions and would have left against my will." The aspiring missionary denied these as false accusations, and with his poignant letter warmly appealed to the general: "please, once again, give me that longed-for grace." It is likely however that his family's operation was successful and Cappella never left for the Indies.

As for age, there are no statistics about how old Jesuit petitioners for the Indies were: such a study would require a long time and a meticulous analysis not only of *indipetae* (because petitioners quite rarely specified their age), but also of the registers containing the basic biographical data of Jesuits (*Catalogi Triennales*) and multiple repertoires (bibliographies, catalogs of dead Jesuits etc), which is not the aim of this book. It is possible however to shed some light on the topic through a dozen examples on the age at which men from the Italian peninsula entered the Society of Jesus, applied for the missions, saw their request accepted, left for the Indies and finally arrived there—or not. These examples are taken from some of the Jesuits who, between the timespan considered in this book, distinguished themselves for their persistence and passion in requesting the missions, especially in the Far East.⁵⁶

Giovanni Berlendis, born in 1664 in Bari, entered the Society of Jesus in Naples when he was twenty years old. From there, he wrote his first petition for the Indies a decade later, aged thirty, immediately showing a vehement obsession with Japan. Berlendis renewed his interest in that destination (alternatively proposing England or China) twice. He never left Italy and the order of St Ignatius, and died at the age of eighty-one. Agostino Cappelli, born in 1679 in Ascoli, joined the Society of Jesus aged sixteen. He wrote his first request from Viterbo four years later, asking to be sent to the Indies and reiterating this desire until, when he was twenty-five, he was sent to East Asia. In 1706 he reached Malabar, where he died ten years later. Giovanni Battista Federici was born in 1693 in Sicily. He sent his first petition from Palermo at the age of

56 All the following biographical information is based on the *Schedario unificato* available in ARSI, looking *sub nomine*, on the *Catalogi Triennales*, on the repertoires of Jesuits sent to the East Indies and on the catalogs of the *Defuncti*. The aim of this section is just to show how age varied during the various stages of a Jesuit's life: when he entered the order, when he wrote the first petition, when he professed the fourth vow, when he left for the Indies, when he died or exited the order.

twenty-two. He later renewed his appeals for the East Indies several times until finally, in 1721, he was accepted for that destination. Sent the following year to India, he died there after three years of missionary work and health problems. Filippo Maria Furnari, born in Sicily in 1680, wrote a dozen *indipetae* starting when he was twenty-one years old. After fifteen years of insistence, his hopes finally came true. In 1718 he was sent to the province of the Philippines, where he died around 1746. Ludovico Gonzaga, born in Mantua in 1673, joined the Society of Jesus in Bologna when he was seventeen. He was twenty-six years old at the time of his first letter, in which he showed a clear interest for the East Indies, and in particular for the Chinese mission. At the age of thirty-three he was sent there. He professed the four votes in Beijing in 1708, and died in Macau a decade later. Nicolò Migliaccio was born in Palermo in 1670. A Jesuit since sixteen, he started sending his petitions to Rome when he was thirty-two. His Sicilian superiors described his health condition as poor and prevented his departure, and he desisted from sending letters at the age of thirty-four. After professing the four vows in Messina, he died in Rome before turning fifty. Francesco Antonio Riccardi, born in 1670, became a Jesuit aged twenty-four. He wrote his first petition from Turin when he was thirty-two years old, mentioning a similar (but lost) request made eight years before. A year later, he received the “license” to leave and, after some delays, headed for Malabar in 1708. After becoming fully professed in the province of Goa, he died there aged sixty-five. Francesco Maria Riccio was born in Palermo in 1693. He entered the Society aged sixteen, and wrote his first petition for the Indies seven years later. He renewed his pleas several times in the following two years but, for unknown reasons, he left the order when he was about thirty. Carlo Sarti, born in Cremona in 1706, became a Jesuit when he was nineteen. Three years later, he wrote his fervid first petition, soon after followed by another one in which he made the destination he wanted explicit: it was China. He applied one last time at the age of twenty-three. One year later, as a student who had not been ordained a priest yet, Sarti left the order. Giovanni Battista Vignoli, born around Rome in 1682, entered the Society of Jesus when he was twenty-five. He sent his first petition at the age of thirty-two, underlining how he had chosen the religious order precisely because it would give him more chances to realize his missionary dream. He repeated his pleas first for Madurai, then for Tibet, and finally for any mission but died in his own province almost eighty years old.

These examples clearly show how petitioners for the East Indies (and, more in general, petitioners for any overseas mission) usually entered the Society before their twenties. Their missionary zeal was the consequence and often also the premise of this life choice. Some started applying for the Indies as soon as they became Jesuits (during their early twenties), others waited until

the end of their *curriculum studiorum* (at the end of the said decade). Most were accepted as missionaries around their thirties. With overly young petitioners, the superiors could reasonably suspect that their missionary desire was an adolescent's whims. Thus, when young Jesuits applied, they tried to emphasize how their vocation had already been tested for a long time, and how their superiors and spiritual fathers had positively evaluated it. Francesco Saverio Farugi wrote in 1727 about his ardent vocation to the mission, already foreseeing that his young age could be considered not mature enough. Being nineteen years old, it was precisely on his youth that he relied: according to his words, a young man had greater "ease to accommodate himself to so many sufferings and disasters, such as learning languages, getting to know the way of the missions."⁵⁷ Salvatore Saverio Marino wrote to the general in 1717, presenting himself as an ideal candidate for the East Indies and assuring the general that "I am not that young, as it seems from my face, because I am twenty-two already."⁵⁸

As for the ideal age to surrender and stop sending petitions, Jesuits acted differently: some of them insisted for a few years, others for decades. As a matter of fact, it was not implausible for a general to appoint as missionaries men over thirty, who had asked for the Indies for more than half of their lives. Older petitioners, moreover, had qualities their younger competitors did not have—and which they accurately underlined in their letters. Elder aspiring missionaries usually had completed their studies and had some experience in teaching and preaching. On the one hand, they could already master foreign languages, but on the other they admitted it was more difficult for them to learn them anew. They were less likely to survive long journeys but, since they mostly were ordained priests, they would have had experience in giving the last rites to the crew and their brothers.

In 1700, fifty-three-year-old Giovanni Lainez longed for the mission. He did not want to travel to the "distant" Indies, but was satisfied with being sent to Tunis, "spending the rest of my days closely assisting those very needy souls."⁵⁹ He died in Palermo, Sicily, a dozen years later. Another Jesuit not worrying about old age was Giuseppe Scapecchi, asking in 1717 for "the most laborious

57 "facilità d'accomodarsi a tanti patimenti e disastri, come imparar le lingue, impraticarsi del modo delle missioni," ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 338 (Rome, December 5, 1727).

58 "Né a ciò può ostare quello, mi disse Vostra Paternità d'esser io molto giovane, mentre non non [sic] son tanto giovane, quanto alla faccia dimostro, havendo ventidue anni già mesi son compiti," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 521 (Frascati, October 27, 1717).

59 "spendere il resto della [...] vita in aiuto più immediato di quell'anime più bisognose," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 83 (Palermo, February 23, 1700). Lainez died in Palermo in 1712 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 106).

and most horrid Indies.”⁶⁰ Even if this was his first request, he had been nurturing this desire for years, but never applied simply because until then he had not received any “special impulse” to do so. Afraid that the general might consider him too old for such a task, he asked him “not to regard my age of fifty-six years, because I enjoy good health, thanks to the holy Grace [...] I do not have any headaches or stomachache, I am used to every kind of food, and have also been able to resist a stormy Sea.” He argued with the general about the advantages of accepting the petition of an aged Jesuit like him: “I have completed my studies already; although unworthy, I am a professed father and have also taught Philosophy; besides, I have taught Humanities for many years, Rhetoric for eleven years [...]; I also worked in local Missions, without any inconvenience.” The general’s secretary however did not seem convinced of this reasoning, because he wrote on the back of the letter a neutral “asks for the Indies albeit aged 56.” Scapecchi never left and died in Rome in his seventies.

Italian applications at the turn of the eighteenth century show how, in general, the strategy of repeated applications was often rewarded by success. The general’s secretaries seemed to appreciate Jesuits who fiercely resisted familiar opposition or the superiors’ intrusions, never abandoning hope despite the current political and diplomatic situation. The general’s collaborators selected the missionaries not only based on *indipetae*, but also according to the information received by local superiors and the preferences expressed by the procurators. One petition could be enough in some cases, while other Jesuits applied dozens of times: many elements were involved in order for an application among hundreds to become “successful.”

As for the average longevity in early modern age, Jesuits had a significantly higher life expectancy (up to thirty percent more) than the European aristocrats with whom, for cultural and economic conditions, it is possible to compare them. According to Dauril Alden’s monumental study focused on the timespan 1525–1700, the Jesuits working in the province of Portugal lived a little less (to the age of about fifty-four years) than their confreres in the East and

60 “le più laboriose e più orride che si trovino [...] impulso speciale [...] non riguardare l’età mia di 56. anni: perché io per la divina Grazia [...] mi sento con buona sanità, senza dolor di testa né di stomaco, accomodato a ogni sorte di cibo, che ha retto anche al Mar burascoso [...] si può metter a risparmio dell’età gli studi già fatti; essendo io, benché indegnamente, un Professo e avendo letto anche Filosofia; oltre a molt’anni di lettere umane e ora mai undici anni di Rettorica in Firenze; avendo fatto anche alle volte delle Missioni senza incomodo [...] dimanda le Indie benché in età di 56 anni,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 441 (Florence, February 16, 1717). Scapecchi died in Rome in 1734 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 43).

West Indies (to about fifty-nine).⁶¹ Jesuits had a longer life first of all thanks to the vow of chastity, which prevented them from contracting the venereal diseases responsible for the deaths of many people, in Europe as well as in the Americas or the Indies. Likewise, lay people frequently died because of duels and violent fights, which were forbidden to Jesuits. A missionary life, made of oceanic crossings, raids of pirates, and storms was not as deadly as one could think. Moreover, many Jesuits lived in these harsh conditions just for a short time: most of their activities took place in the urban residences of the new country, less dangerous and forged on the familiar European models. Out of necessity and economic reasons, Jesuits often were skilled masters of medicines: they cured not only their confreres, but also nobles and natives turning to them to heal or improve their health condition. Finally, the balanced diet and the general moderation on which the *Constitutions* insisted, kept Jesuits away from the excesses that caused the premature deaths of many lay people of the time. Nonetheless, not few Jesuits perished at sea, while others died due to diseases contracted during navigation or exhaustion in the first period of stay in the missionary country.⁶² In some cases, the decision of the general not to send a petitioner was clearly motivated by his bad health. Many of the candidates reported as sick by their superiors died just a few years later in their province of origin, but other fervent and sickly petitioners who were not accepted as missionaries reached remarkable ages in their own province. On the other side of the world, the situation did not change, so, in conclusion, different conditions of life in missionary territory did not necessarily affect the average lifespan of a Jesuit during the early modern age.

1.2.1 *Linguistic and Scientific Skills*

Petitioners could not keep their narration distant from reality in the case of health conditions and age, but they did enjoy more freedom when writing about their personal talents and skills. On the one hand, they could proclaim themselves incompetent, just a weight for their province, someone to let go as soon as possible. On the other hand—and less frequently—they admitted and underlined specific abilities: speaking different languages or having a special gift for them, being able to play musical instruments, or possessing advanced knowledge in science and mathematics. Being polyglot could be a key-feature

61 Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond 1540–1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), esp. 278.

62 Not so many Jesuits died in the route for China: many were simply redirected to other Asian destinations. See Frederik Vermote, “Travellers Lost and Redirected: Jesuit Networks and the Limits of European Exploration in Asia,” *Itinerario* 41, no. 3 (2017): 484–506.

and give a fundamental value to a candidacy, as the case of Giuseppe Bobadilla shows. He wrote in 1704 that he was told to inform the general about his missionary desire, adding that the procurator Medel said to him that “he would have gladly appointed me to his Mission in the Philippines, because my Father and Mother are native Spaniards, and I know the Castilian language, which educated people mostly use there.”⁶³

Jesuits had practiced *accommodatio* in China since the 1580s, that is adapting to the local customs of the population they encountered. This far-sighted strategy employed not only exterior aspects like adapting to local clothes and food, but also theoretical education. In the case of the Chinese empire, Jesuit actively collaborated with indigenous scientists, astronomers and mathematicians: with the Chinese calendar’s reformation, the introduction of new technological tools (the telescope, new measurement systems, more precise geographical maps), and the decennial direction of the Imperial Observatory and the Tribunal of Mathematics. Aspiring missionaries were aware of the connection of China with Mathematics, a subject which the Society of Jesus always proudly promoted (and sometimes exaggerated), and they sought to exploit it in their petitions—with different outcomes.⁶⁴

From Sicily, Antonino Porzio expressed his desire to serve in China as a missionary in at least a dozen letters, dated 1705–18. Born in 1682 in Messina, Porzio dreamed of putting his advanced scientific mathematical knowledge to good use at the Qing court. In his first letter, he emphasized his diligence in high scientific studies: “Oh, how happy would I be, if I would be lucky enough to work until death in those areas in East Asia [...]. This was one of the reasons

63 “tra l’altre cose che, per essere io Figlio di Padre e Madre spagnuoli nativi e possedendo la lingua castigliana, mi avrebbe volentieri assegnato alla sua Missione delle Filippine, ove la gente colta si serve assai di questa lingua,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 173 (Genoa, July 16, 1704). See on this regard also the following petitioner: “Questo mio desiderio [delle Indie] mi si accresce per esser sano, per saper la lingua spagnola et per havere qualche abilità a qualche lingua straniera, per haver appreso in breve tempo la spagnola senza molto aiuto né metodo,” ARSI, *FG* 733, fol. 11/1 (Naples, June 23, 1590), quoted in Guerra, “Per un’archeologia della strategia missionaria,” 151.

64 Before missionary developments in China, as long as Jesuits could operate in Japan they had some success with Japanese lords interested in science but most of all technological innovations like firearms. On this topic see Adriana Boscaro, *Ventura e sventura dei gesuiti in Giappone (1549–1639)* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2008). Nonetheless, the Chinese were generally more eager than the Japanese to learn from Europeans and Jesuits, and this interest led to the systematic translations, adaptations, and publications of many European classics, an activity which involved not only Europeans but also Chinese scholars’ work. See Nicolas Standaert, “Christianity Shaped by the Chinese,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 558–76.

for me to apply myself particularly to Mathematics, because I heard of them being in some way necessary there.”⁶⁵ The Jesuits’ leadership was not indifferent to this detail, because on the *verso* of the epistle it was noted that Porzio “studies Mathematics because he heard they are of some use there.”⁶⁶ Less than one month later, Porzio received a letter from Rome, explaining that the general was “very comforted by your petition, and by the Mathematical studies you are skillfully devoted to.”⁶⁷ Porzio was invited to “persist with these holy desires, and with this scholarly work—which I suppose is carried on together with the practice of the holy virtues and the attention for the other sciences of the Society.”

After a decade of silence because of health problems, Porzio contacted the general again in 1715. In his view, God had healed him so that he could become a missionary in China: even during those years of suffering, Porzio thought of nothing else.⁶⁸ In one of this second phase’s letters, Porzio commented on a recent visit to Sicily of the procurator of the Chinese province, explaining how he wholeheartedly hoped to join him in his return to Asia.⁶⁹ Porzio’s frequent letters all yielded replies from Rome: the general often just invited petitioners to wait, giving them a vague hope but without any promises, but Porzio was repeatedly assured that he would soon leave for China. The general confirmed that he was “very favorable” to Porzio’s “Indian desire,” and that the aspiring missionary’s hopes were “now closer to certainties.”⁷⁰

During the following year, Porzio wrote three other petitions to Rome, afraid that his previous correspondence had been lost. He was panicking because some of his companions were receiving the “license” for the Indies while he was not, but the general reassured him again and depicted as “closer

65 “udito essere [le Matematiche] colà in qualche maniera necessarie,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 206 (Palermo, May 26, 1705).

66 “studia le matematiche perché sente esser ivi giovevole,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 206^v.

67 “Mi consolano grandemente le vostre fervorose dimande della Missione dell’Indie, e gli studii delle Matematiche co’ quali ad arte vi disponete. Proseguite pure animosamente nel corso di questi santi desiderii, e di questi dotti esercizi, che suppongo accompagnati dalla pratica di tutte le virtù religiose, e dalla attenzione alle altre scienze proprie della *Compagnia*,” ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 306 (Palermo, June 22, 1705). On the generals’ replies, see chapter 3.

68 ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 307 (Messina, February 19, 1715).

69 ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 309 (Messina, July 26, 1715).

70 “La speranza che *Vostra Reverenza* concepì dalla mia risposta assai favorevole al suo desiderio dell’Indie, può sperare che sia vicina a maturarsi,” ARSI *Sic.* 46, fol. 175 (Messina, August 26, 1715). Similar answer a few months later: ARSI, *Sic.* 46, fol. 188 (Messina, October 18, 1715).

the opportunity to make you happy with the fulfillment of your yearning.”⁷¹ Nothing happened however, and Porzio was desperate: his last two petitions, dated 1717, were entirely written with blood. This way, he showed his commitment for the vow he made to go to the Indies—but also his despair: he feared he was missing his last chance to leave for China. Porzio was teaching Philosophy and Mathematics at the prestigious College of Messina, and his superiors reported his talents “ad Mathematicam”—a rare note, certainly attesting his skills in the subject. He really was an ideal candidate to send to the imperial court in China.⁷² Yet, at the age of forty, Porzio received from Rome a reply he surely never wanted to read: “Consider yourself fully satisfied with the repeated petitions you sent me. Your age now does not allow me to grant you what you want. Simply, consecrate yourself to serve God and the Society in our Provinces, with your spirit free from any remorse.”⁷³ Porzio had no choice but to accept this unwanted decision.

Like Porzio, other Jesuits committed to Mathematics in order to reach the East Indies: Domenico Caraccioli was one of them. In 1705 he wrote he was studying “Physics and advanced Mathematics with pleasure, especially because it helps in the conversion of the East Indies.”⁷⁴ To ensure his departure, Federico di Massarano declared in 1691 he would take his own money for his travels but also “things that, according to Father Grimaldi’s news, I understood to be much more useful to Missionaries in China than money.”⁷⁵ The Milanese Filippo Grimaldi (1638–1712) was the procurator of the Chinese province, and the precious items were scientific books. Like di Massarano, Giovanni Francesco Musarra had studied “a little bit of Mathematics” and promised that, if the general sent him where those skills were needed—clearly having China in mind—he would set sail with something very important. Once again, books of mathematics: “as many as a Missionary is allowed to bring without any

71 “mi consola il veder non lontana l’opportunità di renderla contenta col compimento di questa sua brama,” ARSI, *Sic.* 47, fol. 9^r (Messina, February 3, 1716).

72 See the *Catalogi Triennales*: ARSI, *Sic.* 104, fol. 61 and *Sic.* 105, fol. 61.

73 “Con le replicate istanze che Vostra Reverenza mi fa di essere destinato alle Missioni dell’Indie ella hà sodisfatto a pieno alla fedeltà dovuta alle divine chiamate. Ma giacché la sua età ora non mi permette di esaudirla, Vostra Reverenza attenda à servire Dio e la Compagnia con l’animo libero da ogni rimorso in coteste Provinciale,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 44 (Messina, April 20, 1722).

74 “studio della Fisica, avanzato in quello della Matematica, preso con gusto spezialmente perché giova alla conversione dell’Indie Orientali,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 211 (Palermo, June 12, 1705).

75 “cose che, conforme alla notizia havuta dal Padre Grimaldi, ho inteso essere nella Cina molto più utili a Missionarii di quel che sia il denaro,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 348 (n.p. [January 31, 1691]). On Grimaldi, see also chapter 3.

burden for the ship, since it seems incredible that it is almost impossible to find this kind of books there.”⁷⁶

Another ability mentioned by petitioners for the Indies could be musical skills. In 1717, Francesco Maria Luciani started his letter underlining his demerits and uselessness: the Roman province would have hardly noticed his absence, even benefitting from it. On the other hand, however, Luciani could not conceal that he had received from God “the gift of playing the Violin” and wanted to use it fruitfully. His talent as a violinist, combined with “some music practice,” would have helped him more “easily to acquire the benevolence of those Barbarians, and thus greatly promoting the expansion of the Holy Faith.”⁷⁷ Luciani was not afraid to say that “such a gift would go lost in this Province:” his musical talents would have been much more appreciated in China than in central Italy where he operated. His rare “gift” was actually noted on the back of the letter, but it was not enough to guarantee him the desired departure for the Qing empire. A few years later, the Jesuit died in his province. Were his skills too good to let him go?

1.2.2 *Virtue and Rhetoric*

As a matter of fact, the Society of Jesus could not send *all* of his best men in the Indies. Depriving Europe of educated and efficient Jesuits and diverting them to uncertain futures was an investment, and as such a risk. It seems that some petitioners for the Indies were aware of it: this was, according to Alessandro Guerra, one of the reasons why, from the beginning of the seventeenth century on, candidates for the missions started to underline their demerits, more than their worthiness.⁷⁸ The analysis of Italian *indipetae* written a century later does not bring to the same unequivocal conclusions: some Jesuits exalted their qualities, others their lack of them, others did both.

A testimonial of the second strategy is Domenico Maria Ferrara, who sold himself in 1722 as “the most vile and useless of your pupils [...]; for sure, a miserable and mean scum.” Nonetheless he could still be redeemed, with God’s help:

76 “quel poco di Matematica [...] per quanto a un Missionario sia permesso recarne senza aggravio della Nave, poiché mi pare incredibile che colà eziandio appresso i Nostri sia per trovarne che quasi niente,” ARSI, FG 749, fol. 636 (Mazara, March 5, 1695).

77 “l’ornamento del suono del Violino [...] qualche pratica di Musica [...] facilmente acquistare la benevolenza di quei Barbari, e così promuovere molto la dilatazione della Santa Fede [...] un tale ornamento per me in questa Provincia sarebbe perduto,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 502 (Città di Castello, July 25, 1717). On the *verso* of the letter, the secretary wrote: “Sa di violino supra mediocritatem.” Luciani died in Recanati in 1722 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 189).

78 “poveri d’ogni virtù [...] evidenziare un qualche aspetto positivo [...] si è nella Compagnia,” Guerra, “Per un’archeologia,” 163–64.

“omnia possum in eo, qui me confortat.”⁷⁹ Once again from Sicily, Francesco Saverio Cellesi depicted himself in 1713 as “miserable and lacking any virtue.”⁸⁰ He underlined his many faults: “I have offended my Lord so much and so severely, that I do not know how to repay the holy justice but by bringing those souls to the eternal deliverance [...] and giving my life for God’s sake, amidst a thousand hardships and dangers.” When he joined the Society, he brought “so many bad habits from my secular life, and my vocation is so tepid,” that the missions were essentially the only way to save his soul. Giovanni Battista Bussone felt in 1716 much “apprehension” because so many souls were left abandoned in the Indies, and the fault was all on him: “I was not able to acquire the talents necessary for such a vocation.”⁸¹ Bussone succeeded in convincing the general and was sent to Peru, where he died in 1729. Another Jesuit insisting on being a burden for his province was Nicolò Contucci. The general did not have to be worried about depriving the Roman Province of “a subject anyway unable to serve it” like he was, and if any “little damage” would have come from his departure for the Indies, Contucci listed the name of a confrere who could substitute him, and with “even greater advantages.”⁸² Similarly acted Filippo Lucentini, who in 1716 assured the general that no one would have minded his departure. In his only known petition for the Indies, he contextually tried to refuse his appointment as a rector of the college of Terni. He did not want this office for just one reason: the “hope, already given to me, to receive the grace to be sent to the Indies.”⁸³ Lucentini felt even more urgency because “my age cannot bear longer suffering nor delays.” He had however to surrender and accept his new office, and died in Rome ten years later. In 1717, thirty-four-year-old Francesco Maria Luciani underlined the many reasons to send him to China.

79 “il più vile ed inutile dei suoi allievi [...]; al certo una carogna miserabile e meschina [...] omnia possum in eo, qui me confortat,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 172 (Palermo, February 29, 1722). Ferrara died in Modica, Sicily, in 1725 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 116).

80 “miserabile e privo d’ogni virtù [...] havendo tanto e sì gravemente offeso il mio Signore Gesù Christo non so come soddisfare in qualche parte alla sua divina giustizia se non con ridurre alla salute eterna quelle anime ricomprate con il suo preziosissimo sangue, e dar la mia vita per amor suo tra mille stenti e pericoli [...] con tanti abiti cattivi portati dal secolo e con tanta tiepidezza,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 288 (Rome, December 3, 1713).

81 “apprensione [...] perché non mi sono industriato di fornirmi di que’ talenti, che per altro son necessari a chi ha una tal vocazione,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 337 (Turin, May 20, 1716). Bussone died in Peru in 1729 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 191).

82 “piccolo danno della Provincia con altrettanti vantaggi maggiori,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 291 (n.p., August 14, [1713]).

83 “speranza già datami intorno alla grazia di andare all’Indie, di ordine alla quale andata la mia età non patisce più dilazione,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 320 (Terni, March 11, 1716). Lucentini died in Rome in 1726 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 189).

Among them, his “scarce ability to serve the Society of Jesus in my Province, where you can find better teachers for any subject.”⁸⁴ Luciani was not able to convince the general either, and died in the Roman province five years later.

Some Jesuits were very detailed in highlighting their unworthiness and their being totally replaceable. Bernardo Zuzzeri humbly described himself as a mediocre teacher, interchangeable with anybody—and therefore ready to leave for the missions. He wrote from Rome in 1719, ready to move as soon as possible to Dalmatia. He was sure that his superiors were “boycotting” his application because they wanted to employ him as a professor of Theology at the Roman College. Zuzzeri was instead more concerned with the “extreme need of the many souls almost entirely abandoned in Dalmatia.”⁸⁵ He was sure the general had been informed on this issue “by many bishops via letters.” Dalmatia needed Jesuits. Zuzzeri suggested the names of a few confreres suitable for his position in Rome, and was very detailed in explaining virtues and vices of the teachers he recommended to the general, almost describing them like a Human Resources employee. One Jesuit, for instance, was better “for his age, and for the classes he already taught [...] for his doctrine:” he was “much more apt than me for the aforementioned office.” Another candidate was “well known by everybody here as a very considerate and skilled person.” Rome was filled up with excellent professors, and after a proper analysis the general would have seen it “very reasonable” to send Zuzzeri to Dalmatia. If his superiors had depicted the Roman College situation with more pessimistic words, the general should have been aware that “the need for missionaries that Ragusa and the Dalmatian colleges suffer has to be taken into much deeper consideration.”

Applying for the overseas missions required many skills, a far-sighted strategy, and good rhetoric. Pierre-Antoine Fabre described the writing of *indipetae* as “a major ritual of the Society of Jesus, a self-presentation to the general, a humble self-portrait for his attention.”⁸⁶ The future of a Jesuit could depend

84 “la mia poca abilità a servir la Compagnia nella Provincia, dove da per tutto posso trovarvi ottimi Maestri miei in ogni impiego,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 502 (Città di Castello, July 25, 1717). Luciani died in 1722 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 189).

85 “estremo bisogno di tante anime poco meno che abbandonate in tutta la Dalmazia, notificatole dalle lettere di tanti vescovi [...] per l’età e per gli insegnamenti già fatti [...] per la sua dottrina [...] molto più abile di me al sopradetto impiego [...] sogetto, come ogni uno sa, riguardevolissimo ed abilissimo [...] ragionevolissimo [...] il bisogno di missionari che ha Ragusa e dei collegi dalmati è da tenere più in considerazione,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 72 (Rome, July 11, 1719).

86 “un rituel majeur de la Compagnie de Jésus [...] une présentation de soi au Général, un autoportrait en humilité pour le Général,” Pierre-Antoine Fabre, “Un désir antérieur: Les premiers jésuites des Philippines et leur *indipetae* (1580–1605),” in *Missions religieuses*

on this document: drafting it was a great concern—and sometimes also a pain for the candidates. They were not afraid to admit all the problems they faced while transposing their vocation on a piece of paper: Ignazio Maria Coniglio, for instance, confessed in 1722 that he had repeatedly “picked up the quill, to ask this grace from your Paternity.”⁸⁷ Every time he finished the letters, however, he was “not able to mail them, because of the Devil’s work or I do not know why.” In his case, the demonic intervention could ironically act as a *deus ex machina*: a solution to justify the lack of other petitions from him prior to Tamburini’s exhortatory epistle dated that same year. On his own admission, Francesco Santi had always looked with little interest at the overseas missions, even looking down upon his confreres for having them in mind. Suddenly, one day, God changed his mind not only with respect to the Indies, but also with respect to those who asked for them. In 1724 he wrote to the general that “God surprised me with this unexpected mutation: earlier, I always persecuted those who sought it [the mission], but soon after I became one of those who wanted it.”⁸⁸ This new perspective made Santi uncomfortable, also because he needed to understand who had put this desire in his soul. Was it a gift “from God to test me, or from the Devil to prevent me from reaching it and distressing my whole life?” In addition to his interior doubts, the Santi family were also intruding: “they showed me they want to remove me [from the Society], because they want to have me back at home, for their earthly interests and other minor issues.” Santi was clear with them: if they would have proposed “similar ideas” again, he would have “asked to be sent as far as possible, not to see them anymore.” Santi wrote just this petition, essentially aimed at moving him away from his relatives, and after Tamburini’s circular.

Many petitioners for the Indies were anxious and unsatisfied, because they considered the written instrument not able to accurately reflect what

Modernes: “Notre lieu est le monde,” ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 71–88, here 84.

87 “ripigliato la Penna per chiederme la grazia da Vostra Paternità ma, terminate le lettere, o per opera del Demonio o che so io, non gliele ho inviate,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 149 (Palermo, January 22, 1722). Coniglio wrote just this petition, and his name does not appear in the Jesuit *defuncti* catalogs.

88 “Dio mi eccitò allora con quella mutazione inaspettata facendomi diventare, di un persecutore di quelli che la cercavano, uno di quelli che la desideravano [...] nell’animo non so se da Dio per provarmi, o dal Demonio per impedirmi e disturbar il tutto [...] han mostrato con alcuni segni la loro pretenzione di rimuovermi e di desiderarmi alla loro casa, per alcuni interessi loro temporali e questi di poco conto [...] simili sentimenti [...] fatto istanza di portarmi per sempre il più lontano che mi fosse permesso, per non più vederli,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 272 (Monreale, April 4, 1724). Santi’s name does not appear in the catalogs of the dead Jesuits, and this could mean he left the order.

happened in their souls.⁸⁹ They could not conceal a certain—more or less rhetorical—apprehension for the inappropriateness of this *medium*, when it came to express what they really felt.⁹⁰ For instance, Giovanni d'Aquino could not introduce himself to the general in the way he wanted. He cried out: “Oh, if I were allowed to send to Your Reverence, instead of this sheet, my heart! Perhaps, you would see there is enough desire to move your tender charity, to have compassion for my unworthiness, and please me!”⁹¹ Even if D'Aquino's poetic solution was not practicable, he had at least the cultural means to put it into paper. What about the Jesuit who did not study and could not use more sophisticated rhetoric tools to convince the general?

1.2.3 *The Strategies of Temporal Coadjutors*

Among the petitioners for the Indies, in fact, temporal coadjutors often stand out, and for multiple reasons. First of all, their lack of education and capacity for spontaneity led them to write even more original and heartfelt petitions than their more educated confreres, this way allowing a better understanding of the many facets of a vocation to the Indies. Secondly, many of them had very specific practical skills, and used this resource to apply for the missions. Once again, *litterae indipetae* bring to light the thoughts and desires of people belonging to social classes otherwise mostly silent. Also known as domestic helpers, temporal coadjutors were lay brothers who carried out the most diverse tasks for the Society, working as “tailors, cooks, shoemakers, barbers, masons, carpenters, apothecaries, painters, and bakers.”⁹² They relied on their talents to be chosen as missionaries, because they were aware that, beyond the spiritual tasks, also very practical ones were indispensable in the Indies.

In general, the Jesuit curia did not send many European temporal coadjutors to the Indies. It was not too difficult for Jesuits to find in any missionary country indigenous help to carry out the tasks related to the maintenance of a Jesuit residence—like cooking, cleaning, and doing some errands. Moreover, temporal coadjutors might not behave in an exemplary way, sometimes even

89 Amélie Vantard, “Les vocations missionnaires chez les Jésuites français aux XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles,” *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest* 116, no. 3 (2009): 9–22, here 15.

90 Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies,’” 183–84.

91 “O, se mi fosse permesso di mandare, in cambio di questo foglio, a Vostra Reverenza il mio core, forse vedrebbe in quello desiderii tali che moverebono la tenera sua carità ad haver dalla mia indegnità compassione e compiacerli,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 188 (Naples, December 1, 1704).

92 “sarti, cuochi, calzolari, barbieri, muratori, marangoni, speziali, pittori, fornai,” Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie*, 125. On temporal coadjutors, see also O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 60–61, and Flavio Rurale, “La Compagnia di Gesù tra Cinque e Seicento: Contestazioni e indisciplina,” *Archivio per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia* 135 (2005): 29–38.

jeopardizing the good name of the order. In the overseas missions, the distance from European superiors and their instructions could be risky in the case of proud and independent helpers: some of them dressed and behaved like ordained priests, working as preachers or confessors without having the required skills. They could deal too closely with women, deny obedience to the superiors, have their own close group in competition with their ordained confreres, and in general neglect the practical activities of daily life that were their real task.⁹³ This could happen both in the West and East Indies: the more distant from Rome and its direct control, the more some of them felt free to act. This could also happen because some of them, once arrived in the missionary territories, could feel bitterness: did they cross the ocean just to do the same “humble” work as in Europe? As Giancarlo Roscioni noted, “the gap between the dreamt India and the real one was almost unbridgeable” especially for temporal coadjutors.⁹⁴ They left inspired by the accounts written by their confreres’ adventures, but their daily life was as prosaic as before.

The dreams, hopes, and talents of temporal coadjutors appear in *litterae indipetae*. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the temporal coadjutor Domenico Maria Riccardi applied for the Indies thrice, ready to work “as a tailor and then in the kitchen, the infirmary and the sacristy.”⁹⁵ Despite his efforts, he died about fifteen years later in the Roman province. Francesco Maria Scalise petitioned for Chile in 1705, specifying that he was “a trained surgeon,” had “some practice of nursing and pharmacy,” and was “very ready to be employed in any worthless task.”⁹⁶ Ignazio Maria Vincenzi sent in 1716 one of his four petitions, after learning “from an authoritative person, that someone with some knowledge about medicines is needed in the Indies.”⁹⁷ The general

93 Some of the Milanese coadjutors sent in the seventeenth century to the Americas confessed the indigenous people, taught Christian doctrines, and debated with “heretics”—all of it without any authorization from Rome (Rurale, “La Compagnia di Gesù,” 36–37). They also: “risolvevano i casi di coscienza, insegnavano la dottrina cristiana, disputavano pericolosamente con eretici [...] scambiati per sacerdoti [...] un’uguaglianza affettata con sacerdoti e scolastici nel vitto, nei vestiti e nell’attività di ricreazione [...] negavano apertamente l’obbedienza ai superiori, fomentavano polemiche nei collegi, si radunavano da soli quasi congiurando” (37).

94 “divario tra l’India sognata e l’India reale [...] quasi incolmabile,” Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie*, 129.

95 “la sartoria e poi la cucina, infermeria e sagrestia,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 139 (Orvieto, July 3, 1703). Riccardi died in 1718 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 234).

96 “di professione chirurgo [...] pratttica d’Infermeria ed aromatario [...] prontissimo ad impiegarmi in qualunque minimo officio,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 224 (Palermo, October 13, 1705). His destiny remains unknown.

97 “viene scritto a persona autorevole esservi bisogno per le Indie d’un soggetto che sappia di speziaria [...] buone speranze [...] impiegato a servire l’amalati con sommo mio gusto

had previously given him “good hopes” of leaving, and Vincenzi recollected how for the past five years he had been “employed, and with great pleasure, to serve the sick in this College’s Infirmary.” He then practiced some pharmacy, and devoted himself to the “service and care of the sick,” at the same time trying “with every attention to learn the best I could about how to manipulate medicaments.” He also committed to “some study in this field, as much as I am allowed.” He was “just” a temporal coadjutor but presented himself at his best, as a competent person, who would bring useful and hardly available knowledge in the Indies—a destination he probably never reached.

Beside pharmacy, coadjutors had the most diverse talents: at the end of the seventeenth century, the thirty-six-year old Attilio Antonio Luci applied for Japan, a desire he had “from the first years I had the privilege of living in this Holy Society.”⁹⁸ His brother Isidoro was leaving for China and Attilio Antonio wanted to follow his footsteps, but he was discouraged to do so by his superior, who considered him “unsuitable” for this destiny and for a very clear reason: “because I do not have any particular skill.” The general was looking, among the applicants for the Indies, for “people who have some knowledge of farms,” but no one could be better than Luci, who had worked for eleven years in some farms in the Kingdom of Naples.⁹⁹ Not receiving any positive answer, two years later Luci reapplied, changing the destination and aiming at the Chinese empire.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately his prayers remained unheard, and the Jesuit died in Naples three years later.

Giovanni Battista Verzi was a domestic helper, who lived in the Kingdom of Naples. He wrote in 1699 in a naive but very vivid style his only petition, whose aim was to inform the general of the “will and desire I held since the beginning of my Vocation [...] I would go to the Indies with great satisfaction.”¹⁰¹ This “good

nel Infermaria di questo Collegio [...] pratica di Speziaria [...] servizio e cura dell’amalati [...] con hogni attenzione [...] apprendere al meglio che potei il modo di manipolare li medicamenti [...] qualche studio, per quanto mi è stato permesso,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 413 (Palermo, December 18, 1716).

98 “dalli primi anni ch’hebbi grazia d’essere ammesso nella Santa Compagnia [...] atto, per non havere nessuna arte [...] lettera circolare, dove offeriscie l’andare all’Indie anco [...] quelli che sanno di Massarie [...] esercitato undici anni nelle Massarie di Puglia e Giuliano del Colleggio Romano,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 526^v (Naples, January 16, 1693).

99 It was not possible to trace the general’s letter mentioned by Luci.

100 “inteso sì belle nuove venute dalla Cina, che vi sia libertà di predicar l’Evangelio,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 633 (Naples, February 15, 1695). Luci died in 1698 in Naples (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 190).

101 “mia volontà e desiderio, tenuto da me dal prencipio della mia Vocatione in cotesta Santa Compagnia in sino ora presente [...] con grande mia sutisfatione andarei alle indie [...] cotesta mia buona intentione [...] per risposta avarei a[v]uto che restasse a quelle Indie,

intention” of his grew year by year, and he had not applied before just because he was afraid of “being answered that I should stay in these Indies where I find myself already” (the Neapolitan province). One day, however, Verzi decided to act, without any previous consultation with his superiors—which was a quite rare circumstance. He was very secretive with the general: “I will tell this to someone, only if I will be appointed by Your Paternity.” He did not explain the reasons for this discretion, but his words show his fear that his superiors would have tried to dissuade him, or would not have approved his decision.

The most interesting part of Verzi’s letter is on its *verso*. After writing his application, he evidently thought it was a good idea to add a small autobiography, in case the general wanted to “know the circumstances of my will and desire, and to have some information about me.”¹⁰² In the majority of cases, Jesuits did not include any references to their secular lives. This is true especially in the case of temporal coadjutors, who were poorly educated and less able to explain themselves than their more educated confreres. Domestic helpers often used their brothers’ help to have their letter written, and simply signed it. On the contrary, Verzi described himself very well and with more details than “standard” petitioners. He was “Venetian, born precisely in Venice,” and when he turned twenty he moved to Naples: “not to become a Jesuit, but to take care of my worldly business.” His profession was “writing-desk carpenter, in other words cabinet-maker.” Looking for a place to work, he learned by chance that the Jesuits were looking for someone to work in the “Chapel of Saint Francis Xavier, in the college’s infirmary where the miracle of Xavier with Father Marcello Mastrilli took place.”

Marcello Mastrilli (1603–37) was a Jesuit, a carpenter, and an aspiring missionary—precisely like Verzi.¹⁰³ Mastrilli had become a model for many petitioners for the Indies after a serious accident happened to him while he was working on the decorations of a Jesuit church in Naples in the 1630s. While convalescing, Mastrilli saw Xavier at his bed, who gave him his health back to fruitfully employ it in the Japanese missions. Verzi’s vocation was born while

dove mi ritrovo [...] con nisuno [h]o parlato di questa mi vocatione, con Nisuno parlarò se prima non sono asegnato da Vostra Paternità,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 63 (Castellammare, February 20, 1699).

102 “saper le circostantie do[v]ute per aver qualche Conditione de Me [...] di nascita Venetiano, nato propio in Venetia [...] ma non per farne Gesuita, ma per tender alli Negoti del Mondo; il Mio Mistiero erra di scritoriario overo ebenista [...] che lavorase alla Capella di Santo Francesco Saverio in Coleggio alla infermaria, dove sucesse il Miracolo di detto Santo col Padre Marcello Mastrilli” (ARSI, FG 750, fol. 63).

103 On Mastrilli, see Ines G. Županov, “Passage to India: Jesuit Spiritual Economy between Martyrdom and Profit in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 1–39.

being in the same environment in which Mastrilli had worked, both having the “good luck of serving our fathers.”¹⁰⁴ Shortly thereafter, twenty-one-year-old Verzi entered the Society of Jesus and started first working “in the infirmary, and then as a helper for many activities.” Although he carried out his tasks “with the greatest satisfaction,” health problems forced him to move from Naples (whose air was “too thin”) to Castellammare (in the same Jesuit province), where he died a dozen years later. Verzi concluded his *indipetae* by inviting the general to gather further information about him from two confreres who knew him before he entered the Society. Although in his life he may have not achieved anything “exceptional,” with his letter Verzi left a unique and intimate testimony of his life and desire to leave for the missions.

In addition to these “real” temporal coadjutors, there were several Jesuits who did not perform that office, but offered themselves as such in order to be chosen. Was this humility a rhetorical strategy, or were they really willing to work as helpers just to be sent to the missions? Domenico Stanislao Alberti certainly possessed culture and intellectual competence, because in his petition dated 1703 he apologized with the general for not having completed the second part of his historical treatise *Istoria della Sicilia*. Nonetheless, he proclaimed himself ready for “any employment [...] for the rest of my life, in any college but not in Sicily” where he wrote from.¹⁰⁵ His desire to leave his native island was not satisfied, and the Jesuit died there in 1730. Similarly, Francesco Pepes applied at the end of his Philosophy course “to go to the missions as a Brother Coadjutor, to serve the Poor in every vile and neglected task.”¹⁰⁶ The same availability was given by Niccolò Maria Bell’Assai, who begged the general to be sent “if not as a worker, for I am not worthy of it, at least as an apprentice of our Fathers in my beloved Indies.”¹⁰⁷ Their destinies, as in the case of many other Jesuits, remain unknown.

104 “buona fortuna di Poderli Servire [...] alla Spitiaria, poi per Suplimento in vari altri Ofizi [...] con grande mia Satisfatione [...] quella aria che erra troppo sutille,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 63. Verzi died in 1716 in the Neapolitan province (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 262).

105 “qualunque impiego [...] per tutto il rimanente della mia vita in qualunque Collegio, purché non sia della Sicilia,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 146 (Palermo, November 13, 1703). There are no other *indipetae* under this name, and Alberti died in Palermo in 1731 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 15).

106 “sul fine della Filosofia [...] per andare a quelle missioni per Fratello Coadiutore, per servire i Poveri in ogni più vile e negletto ufficio,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 197 (Naples, January 20, 1705).

107 “se non operario, perché di tanto non son degno, almeno garzone de’ nostri nelle da me bramattissime Indie,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 220 (Palermo, August 10, 1705).

Conclusions

Many young men joined the Society of Jesus because of its global scope and the missionary identity, to travel overseas and become “workers” in the most distant of “vineyards of the Lord.” The genre of *litterae indipetae* has certain characteristics that can be found in *every* letter: the most evident being the goal to *Indias petere*. There are more than 22,000 *indipetae*, written by thousands of men during four hundred years: and yet, it is almost impossible to find two identical letters. Their authors filled them with their most intimate desires and self-representations, especially in the case of repeated applications during a long time span.

As for the data and characteristics to include in a missionary petition, this chapter demonstrated that in the eyes of petitioners *everything* could support their cause. Health, for instance: a strong complexion was the right complement of a virtuous soul, but also sickly Jesuits could underline their weak health when applying, because illnesses and fevers could be sent by the Lord to show his will and intention. The same happened with age: being too young could leave the general with doubts about the solidity of a vocation, thus petitioners highlighted how they only *seemed* young, and how their desire had already been tested by themselves and their superiors. Being too “old” was theoretically a disadvantage as well, but Jesuits tried to put it under a positive light, focusing on the maturity, sturdiness, and resistance coming out of it. As for personal skills, sending too many and too talented Jesuits overseas meant “wasting” many years of (and economic resources spent for) education. The Society of Jesus could not send *all* of its best members to overseas appointments, first of all because European schools, residences, and institutions could not be deprived of too many resources, but also because the need for missionaries could absolutely not meet the demands of petitioners for the Indies. This is one of the reasons why, apparently, petitioners for the Indies usually did not insist on their unique characteristics, on the contrary silencing them in the name of a sort of “invisibility.” Rhetoric was, in the end, the real “weapon” that petitioners for the Indies had at their disposal to try to negotiate their departure. Many elements were involved in their cause, however, as the following chapter will show.

Desires: Push and Pull Factors

Introduction

Most petitioners for the Indies were prompted by an ardent desire to devote their lives to apostolic work. When did they first feel this impulse? Why were they so motivated to write their impassioned letters to the general? The work in the Lord's vineyard was essential to the Society of Jesus thus, in theory, all of its members were expected to feel such a missionary zeal. Yet, this zeal appeared more evidently in some Jesuits than others, and could also be intertwined with other practical and concrete reasons that motivated the desire to serve as missionaries.

The subject of this chapter is the pull factors (positive attraction) and push factors (negative repulsion) that factored into Jesuits' desires to apply for the foreign missions. Elements from the first category did attract or "pull" the petitioner towards a missionary life: readings from books on the Jesuit enterprises overseas, prophetic dreams about a glorious apostolic future, missionary work as the best option to fully commit to Christ—to suffer and shed tears, or even blood for him. Negative factors could instead "push" a Jesuit to detach himself from a life he saw as not pious or serene enough. Spiritual and practical obstacles, families hindering the fulfillment of their religious goals, confreres and superiors could play a role in this psychological discomfort.

It is not clear to what extent the superiors general (as well as the local superiors) took those push and pull factors into consideration. Did the Jesuit authority examine the reasons that the Jesuits gave for wishing to go to the Indies? The Roman copy-letters reveal how, in many cases, after becoming aware of the doubts of the petitioners' families the generals started a proper investigation. Did this happen after reading the *indipetae*, or after receiving the letters of protest of their writers' families (as it happened in Ignazio Maria Romeo's case examined in this chapter)? Such complicated issues, involving all the *strata* of the Jesuit order, require further study, which would also confirm which *indipetae*-style seemed to be more successful: emphasizing or shadowing this kind of potential problems?

As for "push" factors, books—read both privately or in common spaces—could be the source of many vocations to the Indies, according to the hints available in *litterae indipetae*. However, Jesuits did not use these chances to extensively write about it: treatises and accounts were mentioned only if necessary

to their authors' narration. Since most of the candidates never mentioned which books influenced them, it is hard to acknowledge the literary sources of their vocation. Visiting what remains today of the early modern Jesuit libraries could help to shed some light on these particular issues, but there are many methodological problems.¹ First of all, the presence of books in the catalogs is not a confirmation *per se* that they were read, by whom, and at which stage of a Jesuit's religious life. Many petitioners, in fact, wrote that they had chosen the Society of Jesus precisely because it was the order giving more chances of a missionary life: this very common sentence means that many Jesuits had first learned about overseas missions *before* entering the Jesuit order. Unfortunately, most petitioners did not mention what they read, and Jesuit libraries endured various misfortunes, often not surviving the suppression of the order.

2.1 Pull Factors: Reading

2.1.1 Reading

Most Jesuits spent a great part of their lives engaging in the activities of writing and reading. Documentary production played a fundamental role in the Society of Jesus: Jesuits were both passionate and in need of writing, also to justify their own history. They were also avid readers, as their well-structured epistolary system and the diffusion of the annual letters (*litterae annuae*) show. The fruition of these sources was not only internal or individual: this kind of material could also be read aloud in the refectories during common meals, and lay people were very keen on accessing it as well. Only rarely did petitioners explicitly mention in their letters the literary sources that inspired them. What follows here, then, are the most important works on Jesuit missions in Asia that were widely available to them at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The Jesuit missionary *par excellence*, commonly known as “the Apostle of the Indies,” is Francis Xavier (1506–52). He is the person named with more fervor and frequency in *litterae indipetae* of both the Old and the New Society.

1 The author of this book undertook a research on the library of the Jesuit novitiate of Mainz, Germany, to identify which books available to young Jesuits concerned the Asian environment in general, and the Catholic missions in Asia in particular. A short fellowship offered by the Research Infrastructure on Religious Studies (ReIReS, <https://reires.eu>), during March 2020 and June 2021 allowed to visit several libraries and archives in Mainz, mainly the Martinus Bibliothek and the Wissenschaftliche Stadtbibliothek. The author wishes to thank Alexandra Nusser (the ReIReS local mediator in Mainz) and Christoph Nebgen, both kindly helping her during those weeks. The main bibliographical data and pictures of the books on East Asian missions are available open access on the database developed by Kathleen Comerford of Georgia Southern, the European Jesuit Libraries Provenance Project (<https://www.jesuit-libraries.com>).

For aspiring missionaries “devotion and mimesis went hand in hand,” and every aspiring missionary wanted to follow his footsteps,² invoking him not only when aiming at the East Indies, but also at the Americas. Xavier died in 1552 on Shangchuan Island, waiting for a boat to bring him to the Ming empire. During his missionary life, he wrote many letters and accounts on the recently explored territories of Asia, most of all Japan.³ He was particularly fond of the Japanese who were, according to him, “the best [...] people ever discovered, and among the infidels it seems to me that you cannot find anyone better.”⁴ Until his very death, Xavier optimistically believed that, after the conversion of China, the Japanese empire would follow and Christianity would have finally conquered the entire Asian continent.

Another Jesuit fundamental to the Asian missionary policies was Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606).⁵ His attitude was more objective and less naïve than Xavier’s. Appointed visitor of the Indies, he complained against the exaggerations present in some of the first *Litterae annuae*. Even if written by Jesuit missionaries and then revised and edited by the Society itself, some of their claims were not beneficial to the Jesuit cause. Embellishing the missionaries’ accounts sent to Rome and often not verifying their contents could, as Valignano complained, cause very dangerous misunderstandings: for Jesuits, other religious orders, and their lay readers as well. These Asian accounts spread in Europe unrealistic and misleading stories, which could become the reason why “some Jesuits cool down after arriving here, when they see the situation personally.”⁶ Valignano sensed that “the Indies” attracted many European Jesuits because of overly-enthusiastic news spread about them by his confreres. Once these missionaries reached the East Indies, the harshness of the local environment

2 Ulrike Strasser, “Copies with Souls: The Late Seventeenth-Century Marianas Martyrs, Francis Xavier, and the Question of Clerical Reproduction,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 2 (2015): 558–85, here 568.

3 Xavier wrote five letters from Kagoshima (in 1549, soon after his arrival) and four from Kochi (in 1552, after leaving Japan and soon before his death). Xavier’s correspondence is published by Georg Schurhammer, ed., *Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii altaeque eius scripta*, 2 vols. (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1944).

4 Letter written from Kagoshima, 5 November 1549.

5 On Valignano, see Vittorio Volpi, *Il visitatore. Alessandro Valignano, un grande maestro italiano in Asia* (Milan: Spirali, 2011); *Alessandro Valignano S.I., uomo del Rinascimento: Ponte tra Oriente ed Occidente*, ed. Adolfo Tamburello, Antoni M. Üçerler, and Di Russo, Marisa (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2008), 76–98; Jack B. Hoey, “Alessandro Valignano and the Restructuring of the Jesuit Mission in Japan, 1579–1582,” *Eleutheria* 1, no. 1 (2010): 23–42.

6 “si raffreddano quando si veggono in queste parti,” *DI XIII*, 94–95, also quoted in Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie. Storie, sogni e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001, 98).

depressed and frightened them. Valignano also suspected that, in those first decades, many “Italian provincials [...] instead of fostering the Great Mission” were only interested in “freeing the Italian professed houses and colleges of the most incapable and restless elements: what a providential opportunity, in their eyes, those places!”⁷ In order to encourage applications for these missions in need of manpower, during the 1580s Valignano planned a European tour of Japanese converts.⁸ The Society could show to these few Japanese the European splendors, as described to them by the Jesuit missionaries. At the same time, Europeans could finally meet this new, extraordinary civilization the Jesuits were enthusiastically writing about for decades.

As for the Chinese mission, its pioneer was Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). Together with Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607), Ricci founded the Chinese missions and was the first Jesuit to apply the *accommodatio* method theorized by Valignano. During the last years of his life, Ricci wrote a treatise on his experience in the Ming empire (*Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina*).⁹ It became well known in Europe in 1615, through the Latin version (*De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas Suscepta ab Societate Iesu*) by Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628).¹⁰ Ricci’s and Trigault’s work was not (at least openly)

7 Roscioni states that: “i provinciali d’Italia [...] Invece che a favorire la Gran Missione, avrebbero infatti badato a liberare le case professe e i collegi italiani degli incapaci e degli irrequieti: quale providenziale opportunità, ai loro occhi, quelle designazioni!” (*Il desiderio delle Indie*, 100–1).

8 Valignano realized and published a sort of diary of this Japanese mission, edited today as *Dialogo sulla missione degli ambasciatori giapponesi alla curia romana e sulle cose osservate in Europa e durante tutto il viaggio*, ed. Marisa Di Russo and Pia Assunta Airoidi, trans. Duarte de Sande (Florence: Olschki, 2016). On the Japanese tour see also: Derek Massarella, “Envoys and Illusions: The Japanese Embassy to Europe, 1582–90, ‘De Missione Legatorvm Iaponensium,’ and the Portuguese Viceregal Embassy to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, 1591,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no. 3 (2005): 329–50; Judith C. Brown, “Courtiers and Christians: The First Japanese Emissaries to Europe,” *Renaissance Quarterly* XLVII, no. 4 (1994): 872–906; Adriana Boscaro, “La visita a Venezia della Prima Ambasceria Giapponese in Europa,” *Il Giappone* 5 (1965): 19–32.

9 Ricci’s original treatise was published only in the 20th century: by Pietro Tacchi Venturi in *Commentari della Cina. Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci S.I.* (Macerata: Giorgietti, 1911–1913), by Pasquale D’Elia in *Fonti Ricciane. Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l’Europa e la Cina (1579–1615)* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1942–1949), and by Maddalena Del Gatto, *Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2000).

10 Trigault left for China in 1607 and was sent back to Europe in 1612. On his rearrangement of Ricci’s work see Luca Fezzi, “Osservazioni sul *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Iesu* di Nicolas Trigault,” *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 35, no. 3 (1999): 541–66; Liam Matthew Brockey and Anne-Marie Logan, “Nicolas Trigault, SJ: A Portrait by Peter Paul Rubens,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 38, no. 1 (2003): 157–68;

acknowledged in the 1,400 *indipetae* written between 1687 and 1730: not one single Jesuit mentioned them. It was Xavier who Jesuits asking for China constantly had in mind as an inspiration, even though he was never there. What most counted for these writers was the longed-for and “imagined” missions with its missionaries to emulate, rather than the real ones.

Differently from the case of Valignano and Xavier, the influence of Daniello Bartoli (1608–85) can be deduced from the content of many letters, and is specifically stated in a few of them. Before becoming one of the most important historians of his century, the Ferrarese Jesuit had been a petitioner for the Indies. In 1633, he expressed to General Mutio Vitelleschi (1563–1645) his desire to “spend all my struggles, and a thousand lives if I had them, for the propagation of the holy faith, in the places where I can find more dangers and more chances to suffer and die in hard work, or to be killed by it.”¹¹ He listed his favorite destinations as “Japan, England, China, or the Mughal empire.” The preference of this typical early modern candidate was confirmed and institutionalized in his *magnum opus* which became the reference point for describing the Society’s work to both a religious and lay public: the *Istorie della Compagnia di Giesù*. Having applied several times but never obtaining the desired license, Bartoli had to transfer his passion for the missions into the “official” history of the Society of Jesus he was appointed to write.¹² The challenge of describing the first hundred years of the Society of Jesus in such crucial times can be seen as “both global in scope and universal in aspiration.”¹³ As a historian living in Rome, Bartoli had the great advantage of benefitting from the immense amount of sources present in the Jesuit archives: reports, missionary accounts, letters, Roman replies, and much more.¹⁴

and Nick Lewis, “Revisiting *De Christiana Expeditione* as an Artefact of Globalisation,” *Itinerario* 45, no. 1 (2021): 1–23.

- 11 “il desiderio che sempre in me è cresciuto da che dieci anni sono mi venne, non è di mutar paese, ma di spender ogni mia fatica, e mille vite se tante n’havessi, per la propagatione della Santa fede, e dove pericoli maggiori, e maggior occasione vi è di patire, e morir ne’ stenti, o esser ammazzato [...] sia il Giappone, l’Inghilterra, la Cina, il Mogor,” ARSI, *FG* 739, fol. 239 (Parma, May 16, 1633).
- 12 Bartoli wrote in his twenties at least five *indipetae* (1627–35), all preserved in ARSI, *FG* 738, fols. 7, 189, 179, 239, and 363. On his frustrated missionary vocation, see also Daniello Bartoli, *La Cina. Libro I*, ed. Bice Garavelli (Milan: Bompiani, 1975) and Daniello Bartoli, *Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù. Dell’Italia*, ed. Marino Biondi (Florence: Olschki, 1995).
- 13 Simon Ditchfield, “The Limits of Erudition: Daniello Bartoli SJ (1680–1685) and the Mission of Writing History,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 225 (2019): 218–39, here 220.
- 14 On his *modus operandi*, see also Prosperi introduction to the recent critical edition of Daniello Bartoli, *Dell’Istoria della Compagnia di Giesù. L’Asia*, ed. Umberto Grassi and Elisa Frei, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 2019).

Bartoli's *Istorie* were printed over several decades: *Asia* from 1650 on (eight books, with the addition of *The Mission to the Great Moghul of Father Rodolfo Acquaviva* in 1653), *Japan* in 1660 (five books), *China* in 1663 (four books), *England* in 1667 (six books) and *Italy* in 1673 (four books). When Bartoli describes the Asian missions, "his longing for adventure realizes the most compelling pages, thanks to a subject matter of extraordinary splendor."¹⁵ The *Istorie* constantly highlight the Jesuit impulse towards the new geographical realities. Bartoli's fascinating descriptions of the journeys overseas indissolubly linked discoveries and explorations with the newborn order—as desired by its providential vision. Bartoli knew that a Jesuit had to act, in his own world and time. The journey had always been a distinguishing feature of the Society of Jesus. It was the concretization of the mobility and detachment required to all of its members, ready to move anywhere in the world, but in the same way willing to also go back to Rome, always at the general's orders and in the name of indifference. Bartoli's books were read not only by Jesuits, but became well known even amongst lay people, who held a constant interest in these exotic and edifying topics in the early modern age. Bartoli succeeded in his goal, and his importance for aspiring missionaries is testified in *indipetae* as well. For instance Giovanni Francesco Grungo applied for the Indies in 1717 after reading *Asia*. He was especially interested in the sections vividly describing "the struggle, imprisonment, and martyrdom" of João Baptista Machado (1580–1617) in Japan. After being inspired by Bartoli's words, Grungo "felt such an ardent desire for the Indies," that he decided to immediately write his petition.¹⁶

Beyond published accounts, other *media* could play a role in the birth of a missionary vocation. Petitioners for the Indies were "far from operating in an informational vacuum [...] and in making their case for selection, they draw on a wide variety of non-textual sources to frame their vocation."¹⁷ Among these sources, the Jesuit oral network had the utmost importance. Word of mouth was influential within Jesuit colleges: it often involved confreres, and developed among them the ambiguous feeling of what was called "holy envy."

15 "aspirante missionario e la sua nostalgia di avventura depositano le pagine più avvincenti, appagate letterariamente da una materia di straordinaria suggestione," as Biondi points out in Bartoli, *Italia*, 38.

16 "le fatiche, prigionia, e martirio [...] mi si accese nel cuore talmente il desiderio delle Indie," *FG* 750, fol. 486 (Palermo, April 5, 1717). According to the *Defuncti* catalog, he died in 1730 in the province of Goa, so his dream was fulfilled.

17 Camilla Russell, "Imagining the 'Indies': Italian Jesuit Petitions for the Overseas Missions at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century," in *L'Europa Divisa e i Nuovi Mondi. Per Adriano Prospero*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore, vol. 2 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 179–89, here 182.

Similarly, external personalities, such as the missions' procurators, periodically visited the residences, addressing the novices, inviting them to apply for the Indies and recounting their fascinating stories.¹⁸

Secondly, the Society of Jesus widely and efficiently used paintings and sculptures.¹⁹ The visual depiction of missionaries dying as martyrs in the most exotic and distant lands had an unparalleled charm for many young men. The persuasive power of these images was great, and they furnished the colleges with paintings of often brutal scenes perfectly suited to the early modern Baroque taste. The constant allusion to martyrs, moreover, established a comparison between the apostles and the first Jesuit victims of persecutions all over the world—frequently in Asia. The twenty-six martyrs of Japan, for instance, have served as a very popular subject since the end of the sixteenth century.²⁰ Representations of their execution were described in words and images, this way impacting on many Jesuits. According to Aliocha Maldavsky, paintings played a fundamental role in many missionary desires and cannot be underestimated: every student used to admire pictures of martyrs in the dangerous Indies, both Eastern and Western. An early modern petitioner confirms it: he decided to apply only after seeing “two portraits, one of Our Blessed Father Ignatius and the other of Blessed Francis Xavier, whose sight penetrated my heart and set alight a desire to suffer and die for Christ.”²¹ Jesuits were constantly updated on the missionary situation: they knew about their confreres' adventures in the most distant countries, the clothes they wore to accommodate to the local surroundings, the undercover work they were often forced to do. They also knew how, despite every effort, in some places martyrdom was the only possible outcome—and they were attracted by it.²²

18 As discussed in chapter 3 of this book.

19 On this topic see John W. O'Malley, *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

20 On the subject, see Hitomi Omata Rappo's research: “La Quête des Reliques dans la Mission du Japon (xvi^e–xviii^e Siècle),” *Archives de Science Sociales des Religions* 177 (2017): 257–82; “Les aventures du mot ‘martyre’ entre l’Asie et l’Europe ou les aléas de la traduction,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome—Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* 129, no. 1 (2017): 1–16; see also her monograph *Des Indes lointaines aux scènes des collèges. Les reflets des martyrs de la mission japonaise en Europe (xvi^e–xviii^e siècle)* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2020). The author thanks her for kindly sharing all this material.

21 ARSI, FG 733, fol. 301 (n.p., May 29, 1605), letter by Giuseppe di Maio quoted in Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies,’” 188. There is no geographical indication, but it is significant that di Maio did not mention books, but pictures as the source of his vocation.

22 On missionary clothing see Sabina Pavone, “Spie, mandarini, bramini: I gesuiti e i loro travestimenti,” *Il Capitale culturale. Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage* 7 (2013): 227–47 and Eugenio Menegon, “The Habit That Hides the Monk. Missionary Fashion

2.1.2 “To Do and to Suffer”

Martyrdom certainly holds a unique place within the spirituality of Catholic religious orders, including the Society of Jesus. The authors of many *litterae indipetae* showed a great enthusiasm for martyrdom: for them, the Indies were the perfect place to obtain their own “baptism of blood.”²³ It was however not practical for the Society of Jesus to spend so much money and resources on the education and housing of young men, only to send them to the Indies to die shortly upon arrival—especially if it was because the young Jesuits were actively seeking martyrdom. At the same time, however, Jesuit superiors were disinclined to dampen such holy desires. Indeed, they tried to present to the candidates “our Indies,” those less visibly magnificent but equally satisfying destinations of a missionary vocation, that is Europe.²⁴ The majority of the petitioners did not seem convinced by these alternative opportunities, and the Jesuit superiors and generals always avoided excessively inhibiting the enthusiasm shown by the candidates, allowing them to dream of the Indies even if they would never be sent there.²⁵

Martyrdom was an exceptional grace: Jesus himself has been a martyr, and Ignatius named his religious order after him. Martyrdom was the highest form of *imitatio Christi* and, therefore, the most desirable one, which is why many Jesuits wanted to be sent to a distant place they were not familiar with, full of asperities and risks. Jesuits did not know precisely what was happening on the other side of the world, but, because of the information shared within the Society’s network of communication, they were at least aware that working in the Indies was indeed dangerous at times, certainly more than in the typical European environment, which largely explains their zeal to set sail for Asia or

Strategies in Late Imperial Chinese Society and Court Culture,” in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia. Patterns of Localization*, ed. Nadine Amsler et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 30–49.

23 This section is partially based on two essays by the author: “Signed in Blood. Negotiating with the Superiors General about the Overseas Mission (18th Century),” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 51, no. 4 (2019): 1–34 and “The Ardent Desire to Spread All My Sweat and Blood. Italian *Litterae Indipetae* between 1690 and 1730,” in *Narratives of Suffering, Persecution and Disappointment in the Early Modern Period. Giving Birth to New Martyrs*, ed. Leonardo Cohen (Lisbon: Universidade Católica Portuguesa—Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, 2020), 101–26. Alessandro Guerra noticed how most Jesuits were fascinated by the “real” Indies, seeing them as their true vocation and the only place where they could find martyrdom (“Per un’archeologia della strategia missionaria dei Gesuiti: Le *indipetae* e il sacrificio nella ‘vigna del Signore,’” *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 13 (2000): 109–92, here 133).

24 For “our” Indies, see chapter 28 of Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 549–99.

25 Guerra, “Per un’archeologia,” 134.

the Americas. They knew what they would risk as a missionary and yet specifically asked for these dangerous locations in their pleas to the general. For sure, it was more probable to die as martyrs in the “real Indies” (at least, in certain times and places) than in “our Indies.” With the latter expression, petitioners defined the European missionary assignments. Most Jesuits saw their own countries just as a temporary fulfillment of their missionary zeal: they wanted a potential apostolic activity on “our” Indies to be only a premise to the most glorious “real” ones.

Litterae indipetae often wrote about spilling blood, but sometimes they did it literally: a few authors chose to write their petitions by using their blood as ink.²⁶ The desire to suffer was so acute that it could cause interior torments and tears.²⁷ Tears could also be of consolation, as Giovanni Berlendis’ petition shows. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Sicilian Jesuit specifically asked three times for the Japanese destination, for he felt the Lord called him “to tell you clearly, in the Indies, and not everywhere in them, but specifically where it is possible to watch more closely my Japan.”²⁸ This Jesuit was one of the most inflamed petitioners, never changing his mind about his one and only destination. He had wanted to be there since his childhood. He wrote as an adult that “Japan [...] it is incredible, just naming it, how filled with joy I become. Japan, my love, my noble vow, my sigh.” What he loved and looked for in Japan were “its graves, its gallows, its waters, its tortures, its martyrdoms.” He was aware that also in other places a missionary could meet similar risks and tortures, but he wished for them only in Japan. Just thinking about his

26 Beside *indipetae* from the Italian assistancy, there is at least one Spanish example (ARSI, *FG* 759, fol. 234), and a few German ones (preserved in ARSI, *Germ. Sup.* 18, fol. 4 and mentioned by Luke Clossey, *The Early-Modern Jesuit Missions as a Global Movement. UC World History Workshop* (2005), available online at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/oh45m0jw>). The author wishes to thank the archivist Mauro Brunello, who updated her on the issue. The Roman “Polizia Scientifica” conducted preliminary examinations on the Italian *indipetae* believed to be written in blood but, without damaging the document, it is impossible to ascertain the ink’s composition.

27 On the significance of religious tears, a trope of Christianity since its first decades, see Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley, *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) and Jessie Gutzell, “The Gift of Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination of Western Medieval Christianity,” *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 2 (2015): 239–54.

28 “A dirla dunque apertamente, Padre Nostro il Signore mi chiama all’Indie, e non già, se ho a dir, come devo, il vero, in qualunque parte di esse, ma solo in quelle, che guarda più da vicino il caro mio Giappone [...] Giappone, quale, a nominarlo solo, non è credibile, di quanta gioia mi colma. Giappone, il mio amore, il mio nobil voto, il mio sospiro [...] Amo in esso le fosse, le forche, le acque, i stratii, i martirii,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fols. 595–96 (Naples, February 27, 1694).

martyrdom there, Berlendis felt full of excitement and happiness. To be more persuasive, Berlendis wrote of a curious game he played as a young boy, before entering the Society of Jesus. With a friend, he assumed the role of a Jesuit questioned and accused by the Japanese tyrant he wanted to convert. He found this performance incredibly thrilling, weeping and sighing every time during it, especially when the tyrant condemned him to death. On his knees with his head up, the young Berlendis had accepted the simulated beheading as if it was true “and with so much delight, oh my God! With so many tears, I could not easily conceal them from my friend!”²⁹ Jesuit tears were, therefore, not only of desperation and disappointment, but could be the exterior expression of an interior joy to be found in a missionary and exotic future.

Many petitioners for the Indies expressed a more generic desire to suffer, struggle, and experience an uncomfortable life in the name of evangelical poverty. For instance, Giuseppe Maugeri renewed in 1719 his application for the missions and further promised to do the same every year, until he would have been fifty years old. He admitted that he could be a missionary anywhere, even in his native land, but every time he thought about Francis Xavier and the Far East missionaries, he felt “moved in such a way, that blood boils in my veins, and my heart of stone softens, and bursts into ardent longing for struggling and suffering there.”³⁰ Tomaso de Domenicis asked, in his only known request dated 1714, to be sent to the East Indies because they were the reason he became a Jesuit. He was leading a too weak and soft life, not in compliance with his religious status, and complained: “my lower self gets used to my many daily comforts; doing my duties I have so few chances to suffer, in repayment for my faults and in the help of other people’s souls.”³¹ From central Italy, Girolamo Matthia longed for overseas missions with relentless vigor in 1718. He narrated to the general how some people were trying to scare him, showing him how “harshness, efforts, struggle, and persecution, which inevitably are related to missions everywhere, and especially in the Indies” would have become his “daily pasture.”³² With this strategy, however, his desire not only

29 “o Dio! con quanta vehemenza di lacrime, che pur mi bisognava comprimere, per occultar all’amico!” *ibidem*.

30 “in tal guisa commuovere, che mi bolle nelle vene il sangue, e il mio Cuore tutto che di pietra? Si intenerisce, e sfoga in ardenti brame di faticare, e patire in quelle parti,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 76 (Palermo, December 4, 1719).

31 “vedo, che la parte inferiore s’accomoda volentieri alla vita che al presente faccio, in cui ho moltissime comodità corporali, nell’ufficio assegnatomi, e poche occasioni di patir, molto in isconto delle mie colpe, et in aiuto dell’anime altrui,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 294 (Rome, July 19, 1714).

32 “le durezza, le fatiche, i stenti, gli odi, le persecuzioni, le quali infallibilmente portano seco le Missioni d’ogni luogo, ed in particolare quelle dell’Indie, non mi si raffredda, non mi

“does not cool down, but I feel it more and more.” His purpose was to “resemble crucified Jesus in its pain but, more than that, answer to the Lord’s calling to repay for my offenses.” Nicolò Clavesana volunteered for missionary fieldwork three times in 1717–18. He especially wanted to go “where it is possible to gather more abundantly hard work and struggle, because it is specifically there that the Lord is waiting for me.”³³ The Jesuit died in his native province ten years thereafter.

Finally, a Jesuit who perfectly expressed what moved him and his fellows was Giorgio Maria Solari in 1719. Carrying an ill-concealed exhaustion for his life as a teacher, he asked to be sent as a missionary to Corsica instead. He feared the general’s probable opposition and also knew he did not deserve such a reward, first of all because he was leading a too “idle life.”³⁴ A few lines later however, Solari complained of the contrary: his tasks at school were too exhausting for him. Even if he was a very strong man, his life seemed to him “with the exception of some sleep and little comforts [...] too hard to keep me healthy in the future.” Nonetheless, Solari begged the general to focus on his deficiencies to find a reason to send him away: “the Indies are for me a way to amend myself.” He concluded, “there is plenty to do in Italy, but what I esteem in the Indies is not to do, but to suffer; and I will not find it in Italy, or not with the same abundance.” He may well have accomplished this, even if not in the Eastern provinces since he worked as a missionary in Europe for the remainder of his life.

2.1.3 *Miracles and Signs*

Petitioners for the Indies lived in a world where supernatural events were commonplace.³⁵ Many petitioners applied for the overseas missions because

s’indebolisce punto; anzi, allora lo provo di maggior lena [...] pascolo quotidiano,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 37 (Recanati, April 8, 1718).

33 “paesi dove si raccolgono in maggior abbondanza e stenti e fatiche, perché là aponto parmi che il Signore mi aspetti,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 520 (Genua, October 23, 1717). His death date is reported by Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 270.

34 “la mia vita rilassata [...] sottraendo qualche poco di tempo al sonno, e qualche cosa ad altre commodità [...] non mi pare una vita, a cui possa reggere lungamente una sanità profligata [...] io prendo l’Indie, come un mezzo per emendarmi [...] non mancherà che fare in Italia, e questo lo concedo. Ma non stimo nell’Indie tanto il fare quanto il patire; e questo, o non lo troverò in Italia, o non lo troverò in tanta copia,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 74 (Como, November 27, 1719). Solari worked as a missionary in 1727 in Locarno, Switzerland (Ernst Staehelin, *Der Jesuitenorden und die Schweiz: Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. Basel: Verlag Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1923, 46); his name is however not on Fejér’s list.

35 As a general introduction to this topic, see the classic reference by Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971); Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park,

a miracle or a mysterious sign urged them to do so. If a Jesuit felt predestined by God to leave as a missionary, nothing should stop him not only from asking but also from obtaining this assignment. An unexpected healing after a long and serious illness, an apparition, or a voice from the afterlife regularly appear in the *litterae indipetae* to explain the influence of these supernatural experiences.

Indeed, miracles forged the lives of many Jesuits even *before* entering the order. Many *indipetae* describe vocations as the consequence of supernatural intervention into the lives of the writers, moments in which God manifested himself and convinced them to be the chosen ones for the apostolic path. These phenomena required deep consideration not only by the petitioner but also by the general, in whom the first fully confided. Interpreting such claims was a delicate process, especially when miracles and similar signs were propulsive not only for the application to the mission but also for entering the Jesuit order. The general had to ascertain that a vocation born this way was not a misunderstanding, a mistake or, even worse, a diabolical temptation.

A vocation to the Society of Jesus often resulted from life changing “conversions.” Many candidates for the Indies explained to the general in detail how such an irresistible religious impulse was born in them. The Sicilian Giuseppe Maugeri, author of ten petitions at the beginning of the eighteenth century, included his own “Conversion [...] among the changes made by the right hand of God and Mary.”³⁶ His story was very rare among *indipetae* because Maugeri wrote as he finished his law studies. At the age of twenty-one, he stepped back from this career and chose the Society of Jesus, vowing to apply for the Indies.

The most frequent ways in which the Holy Spirit manifested its will and powers in the *litterae indipetae* were through unbelievable and unexpected healings, able to free the petitioners from mortal illnesses and convincing them of their higher purpose in a bigger picture. In 1720, Giovanni Battista Aggiutorio applied for both East and West Indies after being healed from an infirmity “almost incurable, and so serious that it could have prevented me also from entering the order.”³⁷ In 1690, the Sicilian Giovanni Filippo Ricci

Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750 (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Lorraine Daston, “Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe,” *Critical Enquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 93–124; Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (Washington: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Steven Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (London: Hambledon, 2000).

36 “conversione [...] tra le mutazioni operate dalla destra dell’Altissimo, mercé la protettione dell’Immacolata,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 301 (Palermo, November 13, 1714). It is not sure whether Maugeri was sent and died as a Jesuit.

37 “quasi incurabile e d’impedimento ad entrare nella Compagnia,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 82 (Naples, February 24, 1720).

reminded the general that he applied for the missionary assignment after recovering from a “serious infirmity.” Besides God, Xavier was one of the most mentioned figures in this kind of healing. For Ricci, the “glorious Apostle of the Indies” himself took action, curing him on the condition he would have petitioned for the Indies.³⁸ The Neapolitan Giuseppe Crognale applied for the missions in 1704 after a recovery as mysterious as it was effective. The previous summer he fell “seriously into a deadly illness” but, as soon as he had renewed the vows to leave for the Indies as a missionary, “miraculously, thanks to God and Xavier” he recovered.³⁹ Five years later, however, the Jesuit died in his own province and never reached the longed-for Indies. Another Neapolitan Jesuit lived a similar experience but at a younger age. Scipione Maria Fazzari was nine years old when a “malignant fever” left him “almost dead” and ready “to give my spirit back to the Creator.”⁴⁰ Fortunately, he was put into contact with a providential relic of Xavier, who realized a “clear miracle.” As soon as Fazzari made a vow to enter the Society of Jesus and ask for an Indian assignment, he miraculously recovered. His desire, however, was never fulfilled and the Jesuit died in his province in 1728.

Ines Županov has recognized the frequent appearances of “prophetic visions and narratives of [...] future martyrdom” in the Jesuit autobiographical accounts—among which we can count *litterae indipetae*. She interprets them as “strategic institutional tools by which young novices expressed their ‘vocation’ for the missionary profession, and each made a personal vow to go wherever he was sent by the superiors.”⁴¹ The main character of most of these visions was Xavier, not only as a healer but more generically as a model, motivator, and pioneer. The Milanese Pantaleo Balbi, for example, applied for the Indies like many of his confreres, on December 3rd, the feast of Xavier. Precisely on that day, God clarified his will, showing “in a new and increased way” that he wanted Balbi “at His service, to convert the Infidels in the Indies.”⁴² After this

38 “glorioso Apostolo dell’Indie,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 301 (Trapani, January 6, 1690).

39 “caduto [...] in una grave indisposizione di malattia mortale [...] miracolosamente per gratia di Dio e del Santo [Xavier],” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 182 (Naples, October 25, 1704). Crognale died in the Neapolitan province in 1709 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 316).

40 “febbre maligna [...] ridotto in punto di morte [...] dar lo spirito al Creatore [...] con evidente miracolo,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 199 (Naples, January 31, 1705). Fazzari died in his province in 1728 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 106).

41 Ines G. Županov, “Passage to India: Jesuit Spiritual Economy between Martyrdom and Profit in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 1–39, here 3. About prophetic dreams, see Lionel Laborie and Ariel Hessayon, *Early Modern Prophecies in Transnational, National and Regional Contexts* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

42 “con nuovi e maggiori lumi [...] al suo servitio nella Conversione degli Infedeli nell’India,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 343 (Milan, December 27, 1690). Balbi died in Genua in 1730 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 75).

petition, Balbi never wrote to the general again and died in his province after forty years from this letter.

The Neapolitan Domenico Capasso, after having professed for many years a “special Devotion” to Xavier, suddenly felt a “strong inspiration to the Missions in the East, to imitate him.”⁴³ This happened also because it was the right time to apply for him: some missionaries destined to Asia were coming to Naples, giving him the chance to more easily join them. This is why Capasso replicated his request twice again that year, always asking for the same location. His “Desire of the Eastern Missions, unworthily given to me from Heaven” could take advantage also of an unexpected “opening of Japan” he heard was happening—but actually was not.⁴⁴ Capasso’s name reappears among the *Indias petentes* five years later, with a thanksgiving letter for the license to the Indies: instead of the unreachable Japan, he was sent to South America. This “successful” petitioner died in Brazil about twenty years later.⁴⁵

Domenico Sorrentino narrated in one of his seven *indipetae* the miraculous episode that changed his life goals. First of all, he had chosen the Society of Jesus “not for any other reasons [...] than seeing it committed to send subjects to the Indies to live there, among sweat and hardships, to convert the Barbarians to the Holy Faith.”⁴⁶ To share his newborn vocation and receive some advice, he contacted two Jesuit brothers. This is when God clearly manifested himself: one of them “as soon as he saw me, without even knowing me, told me these words: Do not forget to do great things in the Indies.” The other one, likewise, replied to him prophetically: “Prepare yourself to go there, have a great yearning to suffer for Christ.” This same (unnamed) Jesuit objected, when one of Sorrentino’s confreres tried to dissuade him that that missionary vocation would have never disappeared in him for a very simple reason: “because it is God’s will.” Sorrentino likely did not leave for any mission.

Xavier could work as a role model through the intermediation of another Jesuit personality. Several petitioners for the Indies mentioned Marcello Mastrilli (1603–37), but he could also be a more implicit inspiration. As much as Mastrilli, in Županov’s words, created “his own life of future martyrdom, and

43 “speciale Devozione [...] fortemente ispirato alle Missioni dell’Oriente a sua imitazione,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 461 (Naples, March 13, 1717).

44 “Desiderio comunicatomi indegnamente dal Cielo delle Missioni Orientali [...] presta apertura del Giappone,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 519 (Naples, October 2, 1717).

45 Capasso died in 1736 in São Paulo (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 211).

46 “non per altro [...] che per vederla impegnata di inviare soggetti all’Indie ad impiegare ivi, tra sudori e stenti, la vita per convertire Barbari alla Santa Fede [...] al primo vedermi, senza avermi mai conosciuto prima mi prevenne con queste parole: Non ti dimenticare di far cose grandi nell’Indie [...] Apparecchiatevi ad andarci con un desiderio grande ardente di patir per Christo [...] non passerà a questi, perché è volontà di Dio che vada,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 357 (Naples, July 9, 1716).

went to great lengths to fulfill his ‘prophecy,’⁴⁷ other Jesuits could follow his *exemplum* and use a similar strategy to apply for the overseas mission. During the 1630s, Mastrilli had been hit by his hammer while he was building decorations for the local religious festivals in Naples. While convalescing he had a vision of Xavier, emerging from a picture he had in his room and talking to him. In the 1710s, another Italian Jesuit had a very similar vision, which he recounted to the general in two quite different letters written at a distance of only five days, and very close to Xavier’s feast. In two petitions dated 1717, Ignazio Maria Napoli recalled a vision he had had during his youth, after catching a very serious illness. The first letter’s version was that, after the doctors gave him up for dead, at midnight he was woken up by a noise, seeing at the end of his bed “a Jesuit, with a robe and a cap on his head, who called me by name.”⁴⁸ At first, Napoli believed the Jesuit was one of the fathers assisting him, and then the man in the vision started talking to him: “I am Francis Xavier. I have healed you. You are going to enter the Society of Jesus: become a saint.” The next morning the doctors came to his room prepared to find him dead but instead, received the utmost surprise seeing how Napoli was healthy again.

Written a few days after the first letter, the second one gives a slightly different version of the story—with Napoli changing and adding secondary details, and focusing on the most truculent aspects of his experience. He stressed out how God had sent him “a very serious malignant fever, with bowel inflammation, coagulation of blood and the risk of an apoplexy” to bring him to the point of death.⁴⁹ All the doctors agreed on it: Napoli’s health would never restore, so he had been given the last sacraments. During the night, he saw Xavier at the end of his bed, telling him almost the same words. As he woke up, he rushed to the nearest church with great urgency—causing a big surprise in those who saw him, for his strange behavior—to thank his patron, whose feast fell precisely that day. It cannot be confirmed whether Napoli was aware of Mastrilli’s experience (and success) in pursuing a missionary assignment and consciously wanted to emulate him, or he was simply describing something

47 Županov, “Passage to India,” 3. Županov analyzes two accounts on Mastrilli’s life, *Relaçam de hum prodigioso milagre que o Glorioso S. Francisco Xauier Apostolo do Oriente obrou na Cidade de Napoles no anno de 1634*, College of Rachol, Goa, 1636, published in facsimile in Lisbon in 1989, and Leonardo Cin(n)ami’s S. J., *Vita, e Morte del Padre Marcello Francesco Mastrilli della Compagnia Di Giesù*, Viterbo 1695.

48 “un Gesuita col mantello e berretta in capo, che mi chiamò di nome [...] Io sono Francesco Xaverio: ti ho guarito, entrarai nella Compagnia e fatti Santo,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 539 (Frascati, December 7, 1717).

49 “gravissima infermità di febbre maligna, infiammatione di viscere, coagulatione di sangue e pericolo prossimo di goccia,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 547 (Frascati, December 11, 1717).

that happened to him during those hard times. His application, though, likely convinced the general, who sent Napoli to Southern California, where he died in 1744. Yet, to send a Jesuit so far from his home, Tamburini would have needed additional reasons before this fervent *indipetae*.

2.2 Push Factors: Reasons to Leave

2.2.1 Family Tensions

Many Jesuits dreamed of the missions because they wanted to avoid—rather than reach—some destinations. These “push factors” could concern a difficult family situation: mothers missing their sons, fathers in need of heirs to manage their households, or also sisters who never got married and were a constant burden for their brothers. These are just some of the problems mentioned in *litterae indipetae* by Jesuits worried of how their native environments caused them troubles.

The Society of Jesus succeeded, from the first decades of its foundation, in attracting many young men who transitioned from one father to another.⁵⁰ The *Constitutions* never questioned whether a Jesuit should completely detach from his biological family, as the Gospels long before stated that only those abandoning father and mother to follow Christ could be defined as real disciples.⁵¹ Predictably, not every family saw this precept favorably. Parents had business to take care of, in collaboration with their sons. Families could also have political aspirations for their male descendants and, more in general, they wanted grandchildren to continue the household.

But joining the Society of Jesus also had equally significant consequences from a practical point of view. The *Constitutions* stated that, once admitted to the Society, every novice could decide whether to leave his material possessions to his native family. Common practice in the order, however, usually lets the Society decide what to do with it. Only when novices made the final vows, they had to formally renounce everything. After that moment, everything he would have received from his family would have gone to the Society and not

50 Strasser, “First Form,” 66; Aliocha Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias: Las cartas ‘indipetae’ de los jesuitas europeos, siglos XVI–XVII; Ensayo historiográfico,” *Relaciones* XXXIII, no. 132 (2012): 147–81, here 168.

51 Paragraphs 60, 61 e 62 of Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of Official Latin Texts*, ed. by George E. Ganss (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). As for the “holy hatred” against a Jesuit’s natural family see Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie*, 149–61. The topic has its origins in the *Gospels*: Lc 14, 26 and 9, 57–62, Mt 19, 29, and Mc 10, 29–31.

directly to him.⁵² The *Constitutions* did not authorize candidates who were the only source of income of their families. If an aspiring Jesuit was the only person able to sustain his relatives, he could not avoid doing so. Moreover, if his family was in bad economic conditions, he would have been constantly distracted by worldly worries.⁵³

The *indipetae* studied for this book establish a link between the status of the family of an aspiring missionary and the strength of potential protests against his departure. Once again *indipetae* confirm that the Society of Jesus did not leave unheard complaints coming from important households, that could offer to the order not only their heirs, but also substantial donations. Antagonizing wealthy and prestigious families was not a wise way of proceeding for any institution. Many *indipetae* reveal that one of the best moments to apply was immediately after the death of one or both parents: no opposition could arise from them anymore. Another good time was when brothers and sisters of the petitioner joined a religious order or got married, and the aspiring missionary was thus freed from any responsibility toward them. Giovanni Andrea Gheresi, for instance, renewed his “most fervent pleas for the longed-for Chinese

52 As the section 38 of the *Constitutions* stated, “If at some time a difficulty or doubt should arise in his [the aspiring Jesuit] mind, either about any debts, or as to whether he is obliged to help his parents or relatives in some spiritual or corporal necessity, or in another temporal need of whatsoever kind by visiting them or helping in some other manner, is he willing to relinquish his personal judgment and opinion and leave the matter to the conscience or judgment of the Society or of his superior to decide upon what he thinks to be just? And is the candidate willing to abide by that decision?” The section 54 confirms: “If for some good reasons a candidate does not abandon those goods immediately, he will promise to give them all up, as was stated, with promptitude after one year from his entrance has elapsed at whatsoever time during the remainder of the period of probation the superior will give him the order. When this period has passed, the professed before their profession, and the coadjutors before their three public vows, must relinquish them in fact and distribute them to the poor, as was stated. This is done to follow more perfectly the evangelical counsel, which does not say ‘give to your relatives’ but rather ‘to the poor’; and also to give to all a better example of divesting oneself of disordered love of relatives, to avoid the disadvantage of a disordered distribution which proceeds from the aforementioned love, and, by closing the door on recourse to parents and relatives and profitless remembrance of them, to help them persevere in their vocation with greater firmness and stability.”

53 Par. 37 of the *Constitutions*. See Niccolò Guasti’s research on the Society of Jesus and its relationship with the Italian environment: “Tra élites cittadine e baroni: Le strategie politico-economiche dei gesuiti nel Regno di Napoli (secoli XVI–XVII),” in *Élites e reti di potere: Strategie d’integrazione nell’Europa di età moderna*, ed. Marcella Aglietti, Alejandra Franganillo Álvarez, and José Antonio López Anguita (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2016), 31–45 and Niccolò Guasti, ed., *I patrimoni dei Gesuiti nell’Italia moderna: Una prospettiva comparativa* (Bari: EdiPuglia, 2013).

missions” in 1690, after “the death of my Father [...] in the past few days, when he was returning from Milan, where he left my mother in a convent.”⁵⁴ There was no one given to protest against his departure for the Indies and, even better, his parents had also given him some money—which he planned to use to finance his dream.

Regardless of the status and patrimony of his family, the vocation of a pious boy opposed by his relatives (especially the father) was a very frequent reality within religious orders in general, and in the Society of Jesus in particular.⁵⁵ Paternal affection (sometimes more than the maternal one) can be seen not only as “a visceral bond, but the result of a sum of investments and hopes.”⁵⁶ Fathers based their expectations on sons on the wellbeing of the household rather than on his individual happiness. Once a boy entered the new Jesuit family, he had to give up his own will and completely rely on his superiors’ authority. His father *secundum carnem* could no longer advise him or guide his choices.⁵⁷ Prosperi showed how some Jesuits relied on the Society of Jesus to help them defy their parents, by studying the delicate triangle constituted by natural fathers, spiritual fathers, and the “sons” of both.⁵⁸ The original families

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- 54 “le mie più che mai fervorose suppliche per le tanto sospirate Missioni della Cina [...] la morte di mio Padre [...] nei giorni passati, in occasione del suo ritorno da Milano dove lasciò mia madre religiosa,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 338 (Genoa, November 19, 1690). Ghersi’s name cannot be found in the *defuncti* or missionaries’ catalogues; it is certain however that he kept asking for the Chinese mission at least until 1701.
- 55 On the relation between original and spiritual families see Miriam Turrini’s essays, especially: “Il fine di aiutar giovani non è perché si facciano religiosi: Istruzioni per una guida spirituale gesuita della prima Compagnia,” in *Università e formazione dei ceti dirigenti. Per Gian Paolo Brizzi, pellegrino dei saperi*, ed. Giancarlo Angelozzi, Maria Teresa Guerrini, and Giuseppe Olmi (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2015), 187–98; “Poco oltre la soglia: Racconti autobiografici di aspiranti gesuiti a metà Seicento,” *Studi Storici. Rivista trimestrale dell’Istituto Gramsci* 3 (2014): 585–614; “I racconti della vocazione nel ‘Menologio’ del gesuita Giuseppe Antonio Patrignani (1730),” in *La fede degli italiani: Per Adriano Prospero*, ed. Guido Dall’Olio, Adelisa Malena, and Pierroberto Scaramella, vol. 1 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 253–64; “La vita scelta: Appunti per una storia della vocazione in età moderna,” in *Dai cantieri della storia: Liber amicorum per Paolo Prodi* (Bologna: Clueb, 2007), 145–59.
- 56 Adriano Prospero, “Il figlio, il padre, il gesuita: Un testo di Antonio Possevino,” *Rinascimento*, 2014, 112–55, here 112.
- 57 Evonne Levy, “Jesuit Identity Identifiable Jesuits?: Jesuit Dress in Theory and in Image,” in *Le Monde Est Une Peinture: Jesuitische Identität und die Rolle der Bilder*, ed. Elisabeth Oy-Marra and Volker Remmert (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), 127–52, here 146.
- 58 See Prospero, “Il figlio, il padre, il gesuita,” 112–55 and *La vocazione. Storie di gesuiti tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2016). Prospero studies a case of sixteenth century France, in which a very young boy entered the Society of Jesus and disappeared to his father. A well-known figure of the time, the latter published a treatise to convince him

clearly saw the new relation as an attempt of circumventing and misleading its young boy. What makes the difference in interpreting these dynamics is, as always, the point of view of the storyteller—and the chance to write *litterae indipetae* gave every Jesuit a unique way to craft his own narrative.

While some families openly supported the religious vocation of their sons, the majority of petitioners implied they joined the order to get rid of a suffocating, impious, or dishonest family. The best example of this is the shame and despise the Jesuit “protomartyr” Antonio Criminali (1520–49) always showed for his original family, “criminal” by name and in reality. Many Jesuits described their natural parents and siblings as a pernicious distraction from religious life—even if such depictions were likely more rhetorical than accurate statements. The *Constitutions* encouraged Jesuits to detach from their families, and *indipetae* often include a line or two on this point. To be more convincing, some candidates were not afraid to claim that they wanted the most distant missions *specifically* to move away from their families. The physical detachment would have helped them conduct a better life, gaining this way merits not only for themselves, but for their relatives as well.

Antonino Sinatra was twenty-two years old in 1722, when he worried with the general about the damage his natural family could still do on his religious vocation. He wanted to leave as soon as possible for an overseas mission, and his petition was aimed at a “total detachment from my relatives, which will greatly benefit me.”⁵⁹ He was the firstborn, and the domestic disputes about the household management were distracting him from the religious life he wanted to lead. Even before his application for the overseas missions, his parents accepted only reluctantly his decision to join the Society. The Sinatra family tolerated Antonino’s desire only because they knew that Jesuit schools were for free. They always hoped that, once he had finished his studies, he would have left the school and the order at the same time. Therefore, Sinatra begged the general to “take away from me every occasion that could harm, or stop my vocation.” Not only did he not like his family, but he felt for them “such a great disgust that I can no longer bear hearing their names.” God instilled this holy hatred in him, and the only way for him to get rid of this feeling was to “let him die, or to call me elsewhere, but far away from my relatives.” The Roman curia did not take lightly his concern, and the secretary noted on the *verso* of

to come back and at the same time accusing the Society of Jesus’s ambiguous cooptation practices.

59 “total distaccamento de’ miei Parenti, quale potrà molto giovarmi [...] toglier ogni minima occasione che possa nuocere, non che arrestare, la mia vocazione [...] un abborrimento sì grande verso loro, che non posso più sentirli nominare,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 196 (Palermo, March 5, 1722).

the letter that Sinatra begged for the missions “also to get away from the dangers originated from his relatives’ personal interests.”⁶⁰ The fact that his name disappears from the Jesuit catalogs might mean that his relatives reached their goal in the end, and brought him “in the world” again.

Many Jesuits from Sicily sent similar pleas to the general. Alessandro Stanislao Scornavacca, for instance, described in 1719 his terrible torment. Leaving for the Indies would be the only way for him to be freed “from the affections and all the intrigues of my relatives, so pernicious to my own perfection and religiosity.”⁶¹ If this was not possible, he implored the general at least “to remove me from my relatives, from this province to another one”—meaning: leaving Sicily for the peninsula. Another Sicilian saw the Indies as a way to get away from his family: Antonio Maria Garlano. His last letter to Rome, dated 1726, depicted the assignment to an overseas mission as the only solution to the “serious assaults” he was a victim of. His father was constantly bothering him, insisting that he wanted him to become a layman again, and for a very egotistical reason: just “to help him in his advanced age of 64.” Since he was their firstborn, his parents expected “every consolation” from him.⁶² Pietro Giuseppe Zisa could hardly contain the joy of being destined to the Philippines in 1717, after eleven years of waiting and hoping. Nevertheless—or *because* of this—he had a certain concern about his parents’ reaction to the news. He thus implored the general, “if by any chance my relatives will try to complain,” to merely “console them, without letting the Lord’s glory suffer for it.”⁶³ No earthly family was in the position of questioning God’s will.

Yet another Sicilian wishing to rid himself of an intruding family was Ignazio Maria Pistorelli, as he declared to the general in 1728. He harshly suffered because of the “uneasiness and the extraordinary torments [...] my relatives give me about my Religious Vocation.”⁶⁴ The situation even worsened after his

60 On the letter’s *verso*: “anche per allontanarsi dalle insidie che per motivo di interesse i parenti fanno alla sua Vocazione,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 196^v.

61 “dall’affetto e dall’intrighi de’ parenti, tanto perniciosi alla propria perfezione e religiosità[...] per rimuovermi da parenti, da questa in cotesta o in altra Provincia,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 67 (Mineo, May 31, 1719). It is not sure whether he died as a Jesuit.

62 “delli gravi assalti [...] al secolo, per agiutarlo nella cadente età di 64 anni [...] ogni consolazione ed avanzo della Famiglia,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 325 (Siracusa, November 19, 1726). After Garlano’s application, his name disappears from the Jesuit documents.

63 “se per sorte i miei Parenti facessero qualche istanza [...] consolarli, senza che patisca la gloria del Signore,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 446 (Palermo, February 26, 1717). This letter seems to confirm Zisa’s departure for the Indies, but his name is not on the catalogs of the dead Jesuit or of the missionaries.

64 “inquietudine e molestia non ordinaria [...] da’ Parenti intorno alla Vocazione Religiosa [...] scosse [...] a tutto studio s’ingegnano di farmi perdere con mille stratagemmi questo

father died, because he was the firstborn. From that moment on, Pistorelli constantly received “shocks” from his relatives, “who put all their efforts in letting me lose my beloved gift [the missionary vocation], with a thousand strategies.” Although he was “always firm, in every contrast,” he implored the general to give him peace. The Jesuit closed the letter dreaming with enormous “ardor” to finally be able to pursue such an “adventurous fate, if I will ever get to reach it!” Once again, the Roman curia took this kind of request seriously: after a few months he was destined to the overseas mission.⁶⁵ Quite curiously, however, after six months Pistorelli had second thoughts about his departure. The general probably granted him such a quick license to remove from danger a young man who could end up misled by his relatives and leave the Society. Maybe Pistorelli never was in possession of this vocation, or he was finally overwhelmed by his family’s maneuvers, accepting to do as they wanted.

The twenty-two-year-old Vincenzo Maria Guerrieri was another Jesuit who longed from Sicily for the Indies for “the greatest safety I would have, away from my relatives and not annoyed by them.”⁶⁶ His family was, in his words, trying to fight the “most sentimental part I have in this life, which is the Holy Vocation to the Society of Jesus.” He thought that “moving the furthest I can away from my relatives, would be very beneficial to me,” but he also admitted that he applied for the Indies for the first time “touched by holy envy, because my companions received such a grace.” Also this time, on the *verso* of the letter, the Roman secretaries noted that this petitioner asked the missions not only “with great fervor”, but with “the desire to free himself from being bothered by his relatives, as it is happening.”⁶⁷ These examples make clear how the Society of Jesus did not underestimate the fact that a Jesuit’s vocation was put at risk because of his native family, and tried if possible to put a remedy to it.⁶⁸

dono sì caro [...] sempre saldo ad ogni contrasto [...] ardore [...] sorte a me sì avventurosa, se arriverò a conseguirla!” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 368 (Palermo, December 22, 1728).

65 ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 389 (Palermo, June 25, 1729).

66 “la maggior sicurezza, che avrei lontano da’ miei Parenti di non esser da loro molestato, come è accaduto, nella parte più sensitiva, che ho in questa vita, che è la Santa Vocazione alla Santa Compagnia [...] giovevolissimo l’allontanarmi da essi, quanto più posso,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 396 (Caltagirone, October 1, 1716).

67 “con gran fervore chiede la Mission dell’Indie, adducendo specialmente per motivo il liberarsi così dall’esser molestato da’ Parenti, come gli è avvenuto,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 396^v.

68 Sections 60 to 62 of the *Constitutions* insist that “Since communications from friends or relatives, whether oral or written, generally tend to disturb rather than help those who attend to the spiritual life, especially in the beginning, the candidates should be asked whether they will be content not to converse with such persons and not to receive or write letters, unless on some occasions the superior judges otherwise” (60); “Everyone who enters the Society [...] must make up his mind to leave his father, mother, brothers,

2.2.2 *Distancing Oneself from Superiors and Other Jesuits*

Not only the natural, but also the spiritual family of an aspiring missionary could affect his application for the Indies. Many petitioners reported to the general how superiors tried to prevent their “sons” from departing. Religious brothers were one against the other in this “competition,” feeling for each other envy or a generic discomfort in the daily interactions. The distant Indies could look like the only solution to get away from this. Religious orders could give to men and women what Ulrike Strasser defined “an attentive and sustained response to the deepest concerns of the[ir] soul that was difficult to come by in other social and institutional arenas.”⁶⁹ During the constant wars, famines and crises of early modern age, becoming a Jesuit was one of the ways to live in a tight system of relationships and tending to a common Good (*ad maiorem Dei gloriam*). All the Jesuits were united under the aegis of an affectionate father, who good-naturedly took care of them, and lived in a community made of brothers with whom they shared beliefs and goals. Not all the relationships could be idyllic, and in *litterae indipetae* many petitioners took the chance to pour out their emotions and explain the discomfort they were daily experiencing because of brothers or superiors. Sometimes, the general was the only recipient of these confessions; other times, the petitioners had talked about their issues previously, with teachers, confessors, or spiritual fathers. Beyond quarrels and misunderstanding, the everyday life of a Jesuit could also be simply characterized by daily boredom and fatigue—another reason to ask for the adventurous and exotic missions in the Indies.

How did a “typical” Jesuit live his daily life, and why did he apply to have it radically changed? Was there a connection between the situation in a certain province and the petitions for the Indies coming from there? Such a correlation seems confirmed by early modern *indipetae* written from the Southern-Italian areas, that is the provinces of Sicily and Naples. Many petitioners very solicitously emphasized to the general how well they found themselves in their own college or province but may intend quite the contrary. For instance, the Neapolitan Giovanni Chiavacci nourished a “very ardent desire” of the Indies. He also specified that this was not motivated by “any aversion that I have to this province, or to someone in it, nor because I feel exhausted by our tiring

sisters, and whatever he had in the world [...] Consequently, he should take care to put aside all merely natural affection for his relatives and convert it into spiritual, by loving them only with that love which rightly ordered charity requires” (61); “it is a holy counsel to adopt the practice of saying not that they have, but that they did have, parents or brothers and sisters” (62).

69 Strasser, “First Form,” 48.

tasks.”⁷⁰ The allusion to his daily struggle and the fact that he applied just once in 1722, could corroborate the hypothesis of a feeble vocation. More openly, Antonino Arezzo updated in 1705 the general on his daily work in Mazarino, a Sicilian town, though he also exclaimed: “oh, how much I would love to change it with the cultivation of the Barbarians!”⁷¹ He was however aware that this aim was not admissible and added how he recognized in this his “little talent and many demerits.” The same year, the Jesuit died, never leaving his island.

Giovanni Tommaso Mosca sent to Rome no less than seventeen *indipetae* from 1716 to 1726, all from Naples. He wanted to leave as soon as possible, but was also aware that the completion of his studies would have improved his application. He thus promised to behave “like an Apostle, and to make that profit in the sciences, which must go together with an Apostolic Spirit.”⁷² These words corresponded to what the generals typically answered to first-time applications.⁷³ One of Mosca’s obstacles was his strength, so he prayed to God to give him “the most perfect health of the soul” combined with “the health of the body, which I greatly need.” He complained about the Neapolitan climate, which was “not very beneficial for me, as far as I can see” and put him “in the condition of not being able to study or apply to any mental exercise.” Mosca’s *historia indipetarum* went on for a decade. During that time, he wrote a petition twice a year to Rome until finally, in 1726, he was granted the mission of Paraguay. His health, however, intervened once again and prevented him from leaving. In his last letter, the Jesuit thanked the general for the license but declined it because he was in such conditions that his survival would not have been guaranteed after the oversea crossing.⁷⁴ It is hard to say whether his prediction was true or rather if Mosca, once having the real chance to leave

70 “desiderio ardentissimo [...] qualche avversione ch’havessi a questa Provincia, o a qualche soggetto di essa, né meno per esser troppo aggravato d’uffici faticosi,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 154 (Naples, February 7, 1722).

71 “oh, quanto volentieri la cambierei colla coltura de’ Barbari! [...] il mio poco talento e i miei demeriti,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 200 (Mazzarino, March 30, 1705). About his death, Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 51.

72 “vivere da Apostolo, e di far quel profitto nelle scienze, che deve esser unito collo Spirito apostolico [...] la salute perfettissima dell’anima, ancora quella del corpo, di cui ne ho estremo bisogno [...] per quanto si è potuto scorgere a me non poco contrario [...] in istato di non potere studiare né applicarmi a veruno esercizio mentale,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 349 (Naples, June 27, 1716).

73 As shown by many *Epistolae Generalium* (see chapter 3 of this book).

74 ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 313 (Naples, May 29, 1726).

forever, had been frightened and invented the most plausible excuse to avoid what he had demanded for ten years.⁷⁵

Jesuit superiors could oppose an application for the Indies for multiple reasons.⁷⁶ On the one hand, they could think that some of their pupils were too young, not ready, not mature, not fit for missionary life. On the other hand, they did not want to deprive their province of an educated, talented, or important element. Leaving for the missions meant for a Jesuit not coming back anymore, and not giving any support to his natural and religious family anymore. *Indipetae* show how local superiors could oppose or support the missionary vocations of their members. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the most passionate and iterative *indipetae* were sent from Sicily, also in the largest number. As the graphics show more than one third of the 1,500 letters written during González de Santalla and Tamburini's generalates came from Sicily alone, while a quarter stemmed from the Neapolitan and Milanese provinces, and just a small quantity from the Roman province.⁷⁷ Archival accidents cannot be underestimated, but these statistics show an undisputed continuity: Sicily dominated the *indipetae*-scene for almost every year.

The overabundance of missionary vocations from Sicily can explain why Sicilian superiors were not always enthusiastically supporting them. As noted by petitioners, Sicilian superiors frequently discouraged "their" Jesuits from applying for the missions, and employed different reasons for doing so. Sometimes they did not trust the petitioner's skills, and some others they were afraid the Sicilian province suffered a shortage of workers and could not lose another Jesuit. Some petitioners complained because superiors opposed them for such "egoistic" reasons like affection. Just like real fathers, spiritual ones had seen them grow and did not want them to leave. Like with real families, certain Jesuits were needed to help manage their household. Also, every paternal relationship implied a level of control, regardless of the kind of father involved.

75 There is no trace of the Jesuit in the Storni repertoire of the Jesuits sent to Paraguay nor in Fejér's catalog.

76 Guerra, "Per un'archeologia," 152. Petitioners from Sardinia were similarly worried about the obstacles their superiors would have supposedly created for them: Raimondo Turtas, "Gesuiti sardi in terra di missione tra Sei e Settecento," *Bollettino di studi sardi* 2 (2009): 49–82. Also candidates from the Portuguese assistancy were ready to by-pass their superiors, in case they were against their application: Charlotte de Castelnau L'Estoile, "Élection et vocation: Le choix de la mission dans la province jésuite du Portugal à la fin du XVI^e siècle," in *Missions Religieuses Modernes: "Notre lieu est le monde,"* ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 21–43, esp. 41–42.

77 As specified in the introduction, this book does not consider all the *indipetae* from the *Provincia Veneta*. Moreover, not every petition contains a geographical and chronological location, thus it is impossible to ascertain the origin of several of them.

It was common for superiors (not just in Sicily) to complain about the scarcity of laborers. The work to do in the Lord's vineyard was more and more, and Jesuits never seemed enough. *Indipetae* provide a fascinating view of these complaints: for instance, Sicilian petitioners often assured the general that their province had plenty of men. Such claims did not come from impartial witnesses, and some of them even argued that, on the contrary, there were *too many* Jesuits in Sicily. Sending some of them to the missions was the best way to get rid of all these needy mouths, in order to more efficiently administer the province. Francesco Saverio Cellesi, for instance, shrewdly begged the general to destine him to the missions because "you would help this way not only our Province, so populous as it is, freeing it from such a useless person like I am, but you would also add fervor to all of us who have this vocation, but grieve over seeing its fulfillment before it is too late."⁷⁸ Giovanni Filippo Ricci repeatedly asked to be sent to California, in 1705 explaining to the general that "I am fine, I work in the missions of this province, where there is however no shortage of workers."⁷⁹

Sicilian *litterae indipetae* frequently contained allusions to conflicts and tensions between aspiring missionaries and their superiors. Petitioners were worried about their superiors' involvement in such a crucial phase of their life. After receiving in 1729 just "a reason to hope" from Rome, and even having his provincial superior's approval, Ignazio Maria de Franciscis could not stay quiet.⁸⁰ He wrote to the general with a preventive argument against possible grievances that some of his lower-grade superiors may make against his candidacy. Franciscis' invective significantly contained an open accusation against the obtuseness of the Sicilian superiors (not at a provincial level in this case). These local figures did not realize how much more useful "their" Jesuits could be elsewhere, and forced them to stay. Even the master of novices in Palermo ("a holy man") complained with Franciscis about this negligence, and the latter reported to the general his words: "there is such an excellent youth here in Sicily, as for number and skills, but the solicitous Fathers of this province either

78 "conferirebbe non poco non solo alla nostra Provincia sì numerosa sgravandola d'un peso inutile, qual son'io, ma ancora al fervore di quei, che havendo simile vocazione disperano di poterne haver se non tardi l'esecutione," ARSI, FG 750, fol. 31 (Rome, November 2, 1715).

79 "Io sto bene, e fò le Missioni in questa Provincia, in cui non mancherebbono operarij," ARSI, FG 750, fol. 228 (Sicily, December 26, 1705).

80 "motivo di sperare [...] quel sant'uomo [...] in Sicilia v'è ottima Gioventù, ed in numero ed in abilità che i Padri solleciti di questa Provincia o non sanno o non pensano l'enorme necessità di quelle Parti, e che un Giovane chiamato là da Dio e qui trattenuto per tali motivi o perderebbe o impiegherebbe qui inutilmente la vita," ARSI, FG 751, fol. 394 (Palermo, July 23, 1729).

do not know or do not think about the enormous necessity of those [missionary] countries, and that a Young man, called there by God and instead held here for their reasons, would lose or uselessly employ his life here.”

Not *all* the local superiors, of course, acted this way. Some encouraged their pupils and supported their applications. However, from the *litterae indipetae* the most common attitude was the first one, as well demonstrated by the case of Vespasiano Salazar. Born in Caltanissetta in 1683, Salazar’s mood oscillated between prudence and paranoia. In 1716, he successfully petitioned for the missions, obtaining an appointment for Paraguay first, soon after changing in Quito. After these communications, the Sicilian was “very pleased with what God seems to want me to do”—even if he had always felt “moved by the spirit of the Lord to desire the Holy Missions of Madurai or a similar one in the East, which are the most disadvantaged and fertile with sufferings.”⁸¹ Salazar’s most urgent need was not the place, but the time of his departure. He made a final recommendation to the general: “please, kindly inculcate in our provincial the immediate execution of your order.” He was evidently concerned about opposition coming from him, but they did not prevent him from setting sail from Italy.

Luigi Maria Caloria had similar suspicions in 1716. The twenty-one-year-old native of Messina received in February the order to prepare for the trip to the West Indies, passing through Genoa. His departure, though, was postponed until May without any further communications from Rome. Caloria quivered with impatience and wrote again to the general, asking if he could leave with the aforementioned Salazar, who had been told to move to Genoa, while he himself had not received any orders. For this reason Caloria had started fearing a domestic enemy, and he implored the father general to not listen to the “oppositions that they continually make us here, in Sicily.”⁸² The particle “us” confirms, once again, that many Sicilian candidates were firmly convinced of a common opposition from their superiors. This does not mean Sicilians wanted to leave as missionaries *because* of their superiors’ resistance, but it confirms that they discussed the problem with each other and together sought a way

81 “sempre sentito muovere dallo spirito del Signore a desiderare le Sante Missioni del Maduré o altra somigliante delle Indie Orientali, come più disagiate e fertili di patimenti [...] inculcare premurosamente a questo Padre Provinciale la subita esecuzione del suo ordine,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 328 (Messina, April 11, 1716). As for his missionary destiny and death, see Hugo Storni, *Catalogo de los jesuitas de la Provincia del Paraguay (Cuenca del Plata) 1585–1768* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1980), *sub nomine*.

82 “l’opposizioni che continuamente ci fanno qui in Sicilia,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 353 (Palermo, July 4, 1716). About Caloria’s death, see Storni, *Catalogo, sub nomine* and Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 201.

to fight it, such as allying with one another and leaving together for the same destination. One year later and from the same place, Giovanni Battista Federici confirmed that Caloria and Salazar had been assigned to the Indies. He felt envy and impotence for not being able to depart: “someone goes here, and someone goes there [...] I am the only one so unworthy: until now and, perhaps (God knows) forever.”⁸³ Federici was jealous of two men who soon after died: both Salazar and Caloria actually left Italy, but died at sea in 1717. Federici’s fate was luckier, because he reached the East Indies, even if he survived there just for a few months.⁸⁴

Another Sicilian who cared for secrecy was Salvatore Saverio Marino, who in 1716 asked to be granted as soon as possible “the detachment from my country and native kingdom.”⁸⁵ At the end of this first passionate request he warned the general to “prevent any impediment from this province before it is too late.” Consistent with the tendency of Sicilian petitioners towards privacy, Marino complained: “this is what we fear most, those of us who have this holy vocation.” To avoid any risk, he invited the general to give the order to the provincial but asked that he should “not talk to anyone about the license and when Your Paternity wants to console us, if not two days before we have to leave this Kingdom.” Such episodes were representative of a common fear among Sicilian Jesuits, which did not occur as frequently in letters from the rest of the Italian assistancy. In the cases of several and unrelated petitioners, this need for secrecy and the fear of being hindered by superiors could have resulted from personal inclinations or paranoia of the candidates. Sicilians complained more than others, perhaps for personal reasons, but those complaints were real inasmuch they depicted real conditions.

The shared fears of the intervention of local superiors did not mean, however, that Jesuit confreres were free of conflict between themselves. Living together in a community was not always easy. For instance, in the seventeenth century Spain, the Jesuit Hernando Gómez Dávila stabbed and almost killed a confrere, ending his days sectioned in a cell.⁸⁶ Similarly, António de Andrade

83 “e chi una e chi l'altra parte; solo io me ne ho reso indegno finora e forse, dio sa, se son per sempre,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 488 (Palermo, May 27, 1717).

84 On Federici, see chapter 3.2.1 of this book.

85 “lo staccamento della propria patria e regno natio [...] impedire ogni impedimento di questa Provincia prima che si facci [...] ciò temiamo molto, quelli [di noi] che habiamo questa santa vocatione [...] non comunicare con niuno la licenza e quando Vostra Paternità mi vorrà consolato, se non due giorni prima che debba partire da questo Regno,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 358 (Palermo, July 20, 1716).

86 See Raphaël Carrasco, “Le crime de frère Hernando: Un drame au collège de Grenade en 1616,” in *Les jésuites en Espagne et en Amérique*, eds. Anne Molinie-Bertrand, Alexandra Merle, and Guillaume-Alonso Araceli (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2007), 433–48.

was poisoned to death in Goa by a group of Jesuits.⁸⁷ *Indipetae* contain many allusions to personal discomforts and their narrations' objectivity fluctuates. Their pathos and strength make it hard to doubt their veracity, even if some embellishments were a common rhetoric tool to add value to their applications. The best and definitive solution to many problems, actually, was to leave for the Indies.

In 1729, Onofrio Maria Riccio asked the general not for the mission (although his letter is preserved among *indipetae*) but to leave the Society of Jesus. He said one of the reasons for this decision was "the great evil and barbarity of the Father Rector,"⁸⁸ whose cruel treatment was only for the pure taste of seeing him suffer. Riccio bursted out directly with the general: "during the whole winter, not once have I obtained warm dressings to put on my wounds, with the greatest risk for my life!" He wanted to leave the order and, also within it, he did not have kind words for it. Others wrote to the general with similar problems of abuse and revenge taken by confreres. The Sicilian/Spanish Francisco de Fonseca was convinced that a Duke and some "nasty and malicious people," with the help of his confrere Giuseppe Paternò, were discrediting another Jesuit, Agatino Maria Tedeschi.⁸⁹ De Fonseca was sure that Paternò had written to the general something against Tedeschi and himself. These evil gossipers were just interested in "doing as they always do: eating happily and with impunity at the College's expenses." On the contrary, Tedeschi was "the best and most harmless religious man," who did only good at the College of Catania. Only "envy or malice could say bad things about him."

Another fascinating case of "enmity" between Jesuits vividly described in *indipetae* took place in the Roman province. From there, Ignazio Maria Napoli wrote two letters which probably guaranteed him passage to the West Indies.⁹⁰

87 See Michael Sweet, "Murder in the Refectory: The Death of António de Andrade, s.j.," *The Catholic Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (2016): 26–45.

88 "la grandezza del male e più per la barbarie del Padre Rettore [...] in tutto quest'inverno, né pure una volta ho ottenuto pannilini caldi o simile alle parti offese, con tanto maggior discapito di mia vita," ARSI, FG 751, fol. 369 (Trapani, February 1, 1729).

89 "genii maligni e torbidi [...] come facevano inanzi, mangiar alegre e impunemente la Roba del Collegio [...] huomo innocuo e bonissimo Religioso [...] solamente la invidia o malitia può dir male della sua persona," ARSI, FG 751, fol. 233 (Palermo, October 29, 1722). Fonseca is a rather common name so, according to the *defuncti* catalog, he could be born in 1668 and died in 1738 in Rome, or born in 1705 and died in 1739 in Coimbra (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 137).

90 Napoli's name cannot be found in the *Catalogi triennales* of the Roman province, where he was, nor the Sicilian ones, where he came from. Two Ignazio (de) Napoli pronounced the last vows in 1738 in Atri (ARSI, *Ital.* 28, fols. 302–03), and in 1742 in Spain (ARSI, *Hisp.* 29, fols. 303–4) (*Ultimi voti dei gesuiti*, available in ARSI).

In 1717, the twenty-seven-year-old Napoli began his first letter by complaining about how complicated it was to obtain the overseas missions. He was quite annoyed because he only recently understood that it was not enough to simply show inclination to the Indies, but rather it was necessary to put it into words and submit it to the general. The latter apparently expressed doubts about Napoli wanting to leave as missionaries just “to escape Frascati” (a town near Rome), where he and other Jesuits were sent from Sicily.⁹¹ Napoli assured the general in his second letter to be “one of those, who are very willing to stay here.” Yet this was not the case. Napoli complained that two other petitions, written by him from Sicily some time before, never received any answer. He did not accuse the general of avoiding him but suspected that the fault was with his local superiors who never forwarded his letters to Rome, “perhaps afraid of losing Jesuits.” He also supposed his natural family could have had something to do with not receiving a reply to his letters. Both types of fathers, he guessed, did that “for human reason, as it often happens.”⁹²

In his first preserved letters, Napoli informed the general of the “supernatural” events which led him to the Society to become a missionary. When in Sicily he worked as a teacher in Polizzi but, for health reasons, then moved to Palermo, where he stayed some time preparing for the philosophy exams. As soon as he sensed “the imminent dangers” of being sent away, Napoli developed a strategy that should have helped him to stay where he wanted: he pretended to be ill.⁹³ He even later confessed to the general that the disease was invented. He had locked himself in his bedroom for five days but, despite this precaution, he was sent to the Roman area. In the following surviving letter (written a few days later, always from Frascati), he also mentioned his “exile” but with rather different tones from before. He was in Polizzi working as a teacher when the provincial, worried about his health, sent him to Palermo, where he fell ill and

91 “per fugir Frascati [...] uno di quelli, che vi sta volentierissimo,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 539, 539^v, 539^{vv} (Frascati, December 7, 1717). Napoli was most likely sent to Rome with other Sicilian Jesuits because of what has been described by several petitioners as the “Sicilian exile.” From 1714 to 1720, many Jesuits were moved (even “forcefully,” like in Napoli’s case) from Sicily to the Italian peninsula (usually to Frascati, near Rome). Historical factors involved in this Jesuit praxis could have been the consequence of different kingdoms in Sicily, and of a heated religious controversy. On the latter, see Fernando Mainenti, “La Legazia Apostolica in Sicilia: Uno scisma religioso nella Catania del ‘700,” *Agorà* x (2002): 20–25, here 20; Salvatore Vacca, *La legazia apostolica: Chiesa, potere e società in Sicilia in età medievale e moderna* (Caltanissetta–Rome: Sciascia, 2000).

92 “per timore forse di non perdere i sogetti [...] per altro umano motivo che non di rado suol accadere,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 539, 539^v, 539^{vv} (Frascati, December 7, 1717).

93 “i pericoli imminenti dell’esilio,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 547, 547^v, 547^{vv} (Frascati, December 11, 1717).

stayed “in bed, infirm.”⁹⁴ Napoli did not describe it here as a performance not to be sent away, as he candidly admitted before. He simply complained that for this reason he should not have been included in this number of the exiled Jesuits, “as happened to another sick one.”

A few days later, Napoli sent a letter to the general with Christmas wishes and complaints for not having received any reply yet. He changed once again some details, and the fact that he liked living in Frascati and did not ask for the Indies to escape became a recognition of the “intolerable crosses that I suffer here, caused by this good Community.”⁹⁵ He had “no longer patience” for this situation and wrote with “warm tears and sighs.” The story Napoli narrates is unfortunately not easy to understand, because of its ambiguities and hints. It is certain, however, that the Sicilian brothers were accusing him of being “a spy of the general, [...] a traitor of our homeland, an enemy of God and of the Sicilian province.”⁹⁶ He was constantly “ridiculed, mistreated, criticized, mocked” by all his teachers, while his confreres totally ignored him: “they all escape me like a plague every time I go out; they are mute with me, during recreations they never look at me; and God knows the insults they address to me.”

The harsh life Napoli so vividly depicts seems impossible to bear, especially because the pestering did not occur only in the common areas. Napoli did not feel safe even in the room he shared with a teacher-confrere, Tarantino jr. Napoli had warned a superior and his roommate’s elder brother (Tarantino sr) of a behavior he condemned: Tarantino jr was never busy, as he should have, “studying or praying or reading spiritual books,” but spent all of his time “as a madman, just noticing in a diary what he ate and drank, and the things happened to him during the day.”⁹⁷ As soon as Tarantino jr became aware of this tip-off, he got angry and addressed Napoli as “crazy, drunk and a hundred other insults.” Moreover, he started torturing him in many ways, like opening the

94 “a letto infermo [...] come non fu un altro ammalato,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 547, 547^v, 547^{vv} (Frascati, December 11, 1717).

95 “insoffribili [le] croci che da questa buona Comunità patisco, e non ho più pazienza [...] calde lacrime e sospiri,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 562, 562^v, 562^{vv} (Frascati, December 25, 1717).

96 “spia di Vostra Paternità [...] traditor della Patria, nimico di dio e della Provincia della Sicilia [...] burlato, maltrattato, criticato, schernito [...] non [...] guardato da niuno: tutti mi fuggono come appestato qualche volta che esco a caminare; stanno meco mutoli, nelle ricreazioni né meno son guardato; e tante volte Dio sa i vituperi mi dicono,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 562, 562^{r-v}. As noted *supra*, during those years there was a “consistent colony of Sicilian exiles [about 1500 people] in Rome” (Vacca, *La legazia*, 181–82).

97 “né studia, né ora, né legge cose spirituali [...] solamente come un disperato se la passa in notare in un diario cosa si abbi mangiato e bevuto, e le cose accadute nella giornata [...] pazzo, ubriaco e cento ingiurie [...] altro che non posso alla penna confidare,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 562, 562^{r-v}.

window of their shared room in the middle of the night, to scare and frighten him. As if this was not enough, his angry confrere did also “other things, that I cannot confide to the quill:” was this just one of Napoli’s exaggerations, or was he really bothered more seriously? Furthermore, not only Tarantino jr had targeted him, but also Tarantino sr had made him “ridiculous to the whole community” after an ambiguous economic operation planned by Napoli.⁹⁸ Tarantino sr wrote him a letter full of resentment “with a thousand bad words, calling me simpleton and incompetent.” Napoli had been exposed in every corner of the college because Tarantino sr stole his letters and read them in public everywhere.

Community life was unbearable for Napoli. He did not even go to recreation, because: “why should I do it, to drink poison? Everyone makes fun of me.”⁹⁹ No one spoke to him during the day, and during the night he was even afraid to sleep in his room because of Tarantino jr’s “inappropriate discourtesies,” seeing no escapes. Before writing to the general about it, Napoli had cried for help with the Rector. The man however simply dismissed his problems with “sweet admonitions,” completely useless to solve them, and making Napoli even more “laughed at and offended” by anyone. He could no longer endure this life and theatrically begged the general to put him out of his misery as soon as possible: “they will find me dead soon, otherwise.” The whole Jesuit community was against him, and he felt like he had become “the target of all their delusions.” Napoli implored the general to receive a different roommate, suggesting someone characterized by a saturnine temperament like him (according to the Hippocratic-Galenic medicine).¹⁰⁰ Another very efficient solution would have been to send him with the missionaries leaving in the next months for the Indies. He knew that an expedition was in preparation, and in the meantime he could have been moved to another province, ready to leave permanently in spring.

98 “ridicolo presso tutta la comunità [...] con mille termini, chiamandomi semplicione e senza giudizio,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 562, 562^{r-v}.

99 “che ci vo a fare? bevo veleno? Tutti mi burlano [...] importune malacreeanze [...] dolci ammonitioni [...] burlato ed offeso [...] mi troveranno morto di subito, se non si rimedia [...] il bersaglio dei loro deliri,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 562, 562^{r-v}.

100 Melancholy (“black bile”) was commonly seen as associated with creativity, with the downside of depression and despair. On the connection between Saturn and melancholy, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1964); on temperaments Cristiano Casalini, “Discerning Skills: Psychological Insight at the Core of Jesuit Identity,” in *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks (Boston: Brill, 2016), 189–211.

Nonetheless, Napoli's request was not satisfied: two months later, he sent his fourth petition, once again mentioning the following month's expedition, which he seemed certain to join.¹⁰¹ The ship was directed to Mexico and Napoli was extremely happy knowing that there would not have been Sicilians in it. Unfortunately, his family name is very common among his contemporaries, so it is hard to be sure about his destiny. If the identification is correct, Napoli finally obtained what he wanted. He had shown himself as a well-informed person on the departures of the months to come; his personal situation was also (if what he wrote corresponded to the truth) of great discomfort, and the general probably tried to put a remedy to it by sending him to the distant Indies. He arrived in Southern California in 1721 and after some time wrote an account of his missionary experience, with the same "confused, repetitive, and prolix" style he showed during his years as a petitioner.¹⁰² In the Americas, Napoli operated as a missionary and showed some ability to gain the local population's trust.¹⁰³ He also persisted in having bad relations with his confreres: he was removed from the mission of Santiago because he did not get along with some Jesuits, who accused him of mistreating them.¹⁰⁴ Napoli died in Southern California around 1744.¹⁰⁵

While several Jesuits felt resentment towards their companions, they more commonly feared an emotion called "holy envy." Many petitioners used this term when seeing their companions leaving for the Indies. The feeling was not necessarily negative, because it gave to many of them a renewed impulse to apply for the mission. The sight of departing missionaries also inspired others to apply for the Society. In 1729, Antonio Maria Maggi was a lay law student in Milan. Twenty-one years old, after seeing many Jesuits leaving for the missions it was growing in him "not the yearning to go there, because I have always had it, but a great hope of being able to obtain these two long-awaited graces: [...] to be admitted into the Society and [...] to go to the mission, which has always been the purpose of my desires."¹⁰⁶ This petitioner, not even a Jesuit yet,

101 ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 14 (Frascati, February 6, 1718).

102 An Italian Ignazio Maria Napoli is mentioned in Lower California by Peter Masten Dunne, *Black Robes in Lower California* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952, 197). If he is this same man, then he is also the author of *Relacion del Padre Ignacio María Nápoli acerca de la California, hecha el año de 1721*, ed. Robert Ramos (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1958).

103 An edifying episode can be found in Francesco Saverio Clavigero, *Storia della California: Opera postuma* (Venice: M. Fenzo, 1789).

104 Dunne, *Black Robes*, 205.

105 Napoli arrived in Lower California in 1721 and died there in 1744 (Appendix in Dunne, *Black Robes*, 453).

106 "non dico la brama, che ho sempre avuta, ma una grande speranza di poter ora ottenere queste due sospiratissime gratie: [...] essere ammesso nella Compagnia e [...] passare

was prepared to become one and no matter with which grade. Maggi's name, though, does not appear in the Jesuit documents so it is probable that, for him, applying to enter the order was more a way to travel to the Indies than an end in itself. Another "envious" man was the Sicilian Vincenzo Maria Guerreri, who applied for the Indies in 1716, before his ordination. At the "happy news" that the general had accepted for the Indies not only ordained priests but also students, Guerreri felt a "saintly touch of envy for such a grace received by my own Companions."¹⁰⁷ He was a student as well, but never one of the chosen ones, because he died in Palermo a few decades later.

Litterio Celona applied in 1717 for the Mexican mission, reminding the general to be fair. Already, some of his confreres had been satisfied with missionary assignments while he was not. He wrote that he did not "have less obligation to suffer for Christ; on the contrary, my obligation is much greater than the one of my classmates [...], who was already chosen by Your Paternity for an endeavor I so much desire."¹⁰⁸ He concluded his letter "hoping in paternal justice"—which favored him, because the following year Celona was assigned to the Eastern missions. In 1705 Francesco Corsetti fervently asked the Chinese or Japanese destination, and could not help but notice how many of his confreres had already been sent there, "even if they are not much older than me."¹⁰⁹ Finally, Cesare Filippo d'Oria, after twelve years as a Jesuit, wrote in 1716 to the general in the midst of the great pain caused him by hearing that "many selections of Missionaries are in progress," but no one had contacted him to confirm that he was "in the lucky number of those destined to that enviable enterprise"—where he probably never was.¹¹⁰

all'Indie, che è sempre stato lo scopo de' miei desideri," ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 391 (Milan, July 13, 1729). Fejér's catalog does not account for Maggi's death.

107 "le liete novelle [...] tocco da santa invidia d'un tanto bene ne' miei stessi Compagni," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 396 (Caltagirone, October 1, 1716).

108 "non ho minore obbligo di patire per Cristo, anzi di lunga maggiore di quello che ha un altro compagno [...] già eletto da Vostra Paternità alla tanto da me desiderata impresa. Spero dunque nella paterna giustizia," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 503 (Frascati, July 29, 1717). Celona's name does not appear in Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome–Paris: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu–Letouzey & Ané, 1973) nor in Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, but his departure for the East Indies is confirmed in Wicki, *Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer*, 319.

109 "di età non molto superiore alla mia," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 221 (n.p., August 10, 1705). It is not known when and where Corsetti passed away.

110 "da varie parti si sono fatte scelte di Missionari [...] nel fortunato numero de' destinati in quella invidiabile impresa," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 360 (Genoa, July 11, 1716). D'Oria wrote six petitions between 1716 and 1717; after these two years, his name disappeared from the Jesuit repertoires and it is not known what happened to him.

Conclusions

This chapter's division in Push and Pull factors tried to clarify how an application for the Indies could originate from different reasons, all of them part of the religious life in the Society of Jesus but also of the "normal" life of an early modern man. *Indipetae* are a great archival source, but they need a deep analysis. Only the reading of thousands of *indipetae*, with specific "lens" aware of the Society of Jesus' spirituality, allows one to appreciate the leitmotifs in their rhetoric, but also in their concrete content. Almost everyone mentioned the desire to work in the Lord's vineyard, preach the Gospel, and promote the greater glory of God, but what other stimuli did petitioners for the Indies experience?

As for the pull factors, something could attract Jesuits to the missionary appointment or, at least, to the application to it. Some of them were fascinated by the narrations on the mysterious and dangerous territories in the East and West Indies. After joining the order, Jesuits used to read books about these subjects. In some cases, they did that also before, and entered the Society specifically because of its global missionary horizon. These works often mentioned Francis Xavier, who became the official advocate of petitioners. The most famous and prolific Jesuit author was Daniello Bartoli. Both are present in *indipetae*. Jesuits could also experience the reality of the missions thanks to pictures or theater pieces. Especially the subject of the Japanese martyrs filled the imagination of the Jesuits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Other reasons to apply were: healings from deadly illnesses, visions of famous Jesuits or of demons, and prophetic messages delivered through superiors, saints, confreres, or family members. These supernatural episodes were not mentioned that frequently, but if they happened they constituted a call to a missionary life of the utmost importance. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Jesuit missions were everywhere in the world: but what better place than the Indies to guarantee a life full of hardship, misery, suffering, tears, and possibly blood? Martyrdom always remained a strongly attractive element to petitioners—even if putting it into practice had become more and more rare compared to the first decades of the order.

Jesuits could also feel "pushed" to the missions. Entering a religious order represented a fracture, but passing from the natural family to the spiritual one meant for the young man to continue following rules and have most of his life planned and decided by superiors instead of parents. The role played by the petitioners' families, both natural and spiritual, is very significant in *indipetae*. When parents were dealing with difficult businesses, and when siblings were not married yet, a Jesuit could feel constantly involved in his previous and

mundane life. A departure to the Indies was the most efficient and definitive way to get away from his family, with all the risks of being dragged in something he should not be interested in anymore. Most of the petitioners describe their families as active obstacles to their Christian zeal. The fears about their parents' opposition were often justified. The most important family of a Jesuit was however not his natural one, but the Society itself. In the order, relationships were both vertical (upper-subordinate) and horizontal (between confreres), and they could assume the most different nuances. Some *litterae indipetae* describe close friendships among brothers, and reverence and affection toward the superiors. This new family could however give the same problems of the natural one, thus many Jesuits applied for the Indies also to escape the supervision, love, and ultimately oppression they felt coming from their superiors. The latter, on the other hand, did not allow some of them to leave because of an excess of affection toward them.

Each of the circumstances analyzed in this chapter could add to *litterae indipetae* a collateral reason to ask for the missionary appointment, and with even greater motivation: a totally new life, for the benefit of the petitioners, their spiritual and natural families, and the new converted souls.

The Petitioners' Network

3.1 Strategies to Be Chosen: Not Only *Indipetae*, but Also Hearings in Rome

Jesuits petitioning for missionary assignments abroad all had to navigate a vast network—one that extended throughout and even beyond the Society of Jesus—forcing them to manage a series of relationships and to employ different strategies in order to fulfill their desires. Many aspiring missionaries, in fact, readily adopted multiple strategies to promote their candidacies and to make their individual appeal emerge at least as equally strong as those of their “rivals.”

This chapter focuses on some of the ways available to Jesuits to render their request more visible and convincing for the general. First of all, some petitioners did not consider the written medium sufficiently effective to communicate their desire: they thought they would have been able to show him their motivation only in a face to face meeting. Secondly, many aspiring missionaries put their hopes—and, sometimes, their petitions—in the hands of the procurators of the Indies. Thirdly, the relationship with the general was a very close and intimate one: Jesuits had to try to act on their own initiative, sometimes directly reaching him without official permission to apply for the Indies, concealing their desire from the family or not telling their direct superiors about it. Since the general often gave feedback on applications for the Indies, turning directly to him and following his advice could increase their chances of being selected. Finally, the case-study of a Sicilian Jesuit will show how all of these factors were closely intertwined in an overseas missionary assignment—sometimes for decades and until death.

Based on archival evidence and local practices, writing a petition for the Indies was not the only way to undertake a missionary career. Charlotte de Castelnaud L'Estoile highlights the very low number of Portuguese *litterae indipetae*.¹ This was a consequence of the fact that Portuguese candidates, rather than forwarding a written request to the general, preferred to speak

1 Charlotte de Castelnaud L'Estoile, “Élection et vocation: Le choix de la mission dans la province jésuite du Portugal à la fin du XVI^e siècle,” in *Missions Religieuses Modernes: “Notre lieu est le monde,”* ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 21–43.

directly with their local superiors. The latter then forwarded lists of names to Rome, providing the general with information on the candidates they found suitable for the overseas mission. Something similar happened in the Gallo-Belgian province at the turn of the seventeenth centuries. According to Annick Delfosse many *indipetae* never reached their destination.² It was normal for superiors to read their pupils' letters before forwarding them to Rome, and Belgian superiors often decided not to proceed with the second step of the application.

Many petitioners proposed a personal visit with the general, to present their cause face-to-face. A plea in person seemed to some of them the only option, because of the obstacles they saw before them. This approach was common during the generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (in office 1581–1615) when, as Camilla Russell has noted, ninety-two Italian Jesuits were sent to the East Indies as missionaries even though only twenty-three *indipetae* are preserved in ARSI.³ Such a meager number, however, can also be a result of the complex vicissitudes of the Jesuit archives, as synthesized by Lamalle.⁴

In any case, *indipetae* were not “the only means of securing a missionary appointment” and, for the Italian Jesuits, living close to Rome could provide an additional opportunity—which their “rivals” scattered across the peninsula and beyond did not have.⁵ The proximity to the father general and his secretariat could seem decisive, if only for the chance of a more effective self-presentation, but proximity did not always mean “having access” to him, as a disappointed Salvatore Saverio Marino learned. In just two years (1617–18), Marino wrote eleven requests from Frascati, near Rome, and in one of them

2 Annick Delfosse wrote about it in “La correspondance jésuite: Communication, union et mémoire: Les enjeux de la *Formula scribendi*,” *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 104, no. 1 (2009): 71–114 and in the unpublished essay “*Ecce ego mitte me*: Les *indipetae* gallo-belges ou le désir des Indes,” available online at https://www.academia.edu/3660730/_Ecce_ego_mitte_me_.Les_Indipetae_gallo-belges_ou_le_désir_des_Indes.

3 See Camilla Russell in “Imagining the ‘Indies’: Italian Jesuit Petitions for the Overseas Missions at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century,” in *L'Europa Divisa e i Nuovi Mondi: Per Adriano Prosperi*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marocco, and Stefania Pastore, vol. 2 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 179–89 and “Becoming ‘Indians’: The Jesuit Missionary Path from Italy to Asia,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 43, no. 1 (2020): 9–50.

4 Edmund Lamalle, “L'archivio di un grande ordine religioso: L'Archivio Generale della Compagnia di Gesù,” *Archiva Ecclesiae* 34–35, no. 1 (1981–82): 89–120, *passim*.

5 Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies,’” 183.

he complained about “missing” the general, disappointingly noting: “when I arrived, I was not allowed to see you because you were not available.”⁶

Another factor could complicate, postpone, or even jeopardize a successful outcome for an *indipeta*: a succession at the top of the Society of Jesus. A new general could not be aware of the petitions approved by his predecessor in face-to-face meetings. Let us look at the case of the Savoyard Filippo Felice Carrocio, who, after a dozen annual requests, saw his application accepted by general Giovanni Paolo Oliva (1600–81). After Oliva’s death, his successor González de Santalla (1624–1705) reassured Carrocio of his destiny, inviting him to write as soon as a procurator of China had begun recruiting missionaries. Carrocio left for East Asia, arriving in Canton in 1688 and working under the name of Lo Fei-li in several Chinese missions until his death.⁷

Even if a petitioner was given the chance to directly interact with the general, this could be insufficient on its own to secure the office. Bartolomeo Cuccanti, for instance, saw general Tamburini in Rome “on several occasions,” and talked to him, constantly reminding him “of my old desire for the Missions to the Indies” and using these opportunities also to “beg for comfort.”⁸ Nonetheless, in 1713 Cuccanti thought it safer to put his request in writing at least once, first of all, because since their discussions he had “more maturely [...] considered” his vocation. Moreover, Cuccanti noted how he had recently felt “a deeper desire in my heart,” one that compelled him to entirely give himself “to God and to the deliverance of those souls, so much loved by my Apostle Saint Francis Xavier, who sent me this call to the Indies.”

Writing a petition was usually recognized in the Italian assistory as an essential moment on the path to a missionary assignment. Saverio D’Amato’s case demonstrates this well. The Sicilian had recently moved to the Roman province where he met with Tamburini, to whom he expressed “only [...] orally my desires, thinking that this was enough.”⁹ He bitterly regretted not having also a document testifying his vocation and, since someone recently told him

6 “non mi fu permesso colla mia venuta in Castello, per haverla ritrovata impedita,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 521 (Frascati, October 27, 1717).

7 ARSI, FG 749, fol. 283 (Milan, October 13, 1685). Author of fifteen *indipetae*, Carrocio died in the nearby of China (“apud Sinas”) in 1646 (Joseph Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi Societatis Jesu. 1641–1740*. Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1985, 224).

8 “in varie occasioni che ho avuto di parlar a Vostra Paternità, [...] l’antico mio desiderio delle Missioni all’Indie et insieme supplicarla a consolar me [...] più maturamente [...] considerato questa mia vocazione [...] sempre più acceso nel cuore un vivo desiderio di darmi tutto a Dio et alla salute di quelle anime tanto amate dal mio Apostolo San Francesco Xaverio, da cui riconosco la mia chiamata all’Indie,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 289 (Rome, December 3, 1713).

9 “solamente [...] a voce a Vostra Paternità i miei desiderii, pensandomi che ciò bastasse,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 239 (Rome, December 22, 1722).

of the probative value of a written application, he was afraid that his naivety could have undermined any chance for his departure to the Indies.

3.1.1 *Procurators of the East Indies*

In 1722, Angelo Agostino Polleri revealed to the general the strategy he was employing “to more easily obtain the license” to serve as a missionary. As his spiritual father had recommended, he had to simultaneously write to the general and to the procurator (of Goa in his case).¹⁰ When a face-to-face meeting with the superior general in Rome was not possible, petitioners needed further allies: and they could find them—with no small amount of inspiration—in the procurators for the Indies.

The Society of Jesus was divided into assistancies which were themselves divided into provinces. There were different kinds of procurators in its organizational structure, among which were those elected to go to Europe. This kind of procurator is not explicitly mentioned in the *Constitutiones*, where only a few references about procurators of another sort (such as the procurator general, provincial procurator, and procurators of the colleges) can be found. The provincial procurators were responsible for the Society’s temporal affairs: they “oversaw the management of the material possessions of the province through a sophisticated accounting and reviewing process,” and, apart from these administrative tasks, “represented the Society’s corporate interests to the outside world.”¹¹ These procurators were often temporal coadjutors and, once appointed, did not move from their residential community. This chapter focuses not on them, but on the procurators elected by their provincial congregation, the ones traveling to Europe to defend the interests of their province, who usually were fully professed (admitted to the profession of the four vows).

Procurators periodically left their missions from every part of the world to go back to Europe. One of the goals of their travels was to attract interest and

10 “per più facilmente ottenerne la licenza,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 181 (Genoa, February 21, 1722).

11 This section is partially based on my essay “To Go to China or Japan, Not to Stay in These Colleges: Jesuit Procurators of China and Petitioners for the Indies (1640s and 1690s),” *Orientalis Aura: Macau Perspectives in Religious Studies* 3 (2018): 81–102. On procurators, see Gabriel Martínez-Serna, “Procurators and the Making of the Jesuits’ Atlantic Network,” in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 181–209, here 183. On Jesuit finances see Frederik Vermote in “Financing Jesuit Missions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 128–49 and “Finances of the Missions,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 367–400. About the global character of the Jesuit enterprise, see Luke Clossey, *Savation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

funding for their mission from some of the continent's most eminent people, both lay and religious. During the centuries considered in this book, fascination for Chinese culture was widespread in Europe: kings, princes, popes, women and scholars (especially philosophers and scientists), had a particular curiosity about it.¹² Procurators from East Asia often took part in book projects to describe this culture to eager European audiences: Jesuits like Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628), Álvaro Semedo (1585–1658), Martino Martini (1614–61), Philippe Couplet (1623–93) and others wrote, collected, curated and published material which became very popular in Europe.¹³ In terms of what they brought back to their missions, Jesuit procurators transported goods of all kinds. One of the most requested items, especially among the Chinese court, were European books.¹⁴ They transferred money, religious objects—such as crucifixes, wine for the Eucharist, engravings, and devotional pictures—not to mention the shipment of herbs, medicines, and handicrafts (clocks, hourglasses, and musical instruments).

Moreover, from Europe to their missions, procurators sought to move people, typically visiting Jesuit colleges and schools to find new recruits. They directly approached Jesuits involved in their religious formation and fascinated them with stories about their missions, making promises and establishing special relationships with them. After leaving the schools, the procurators tried to use this information about potential candidates for their missions to influence the general's selection of the petitioners writing to him. To understand why Jesuits petitioned for overseas assignments, the influence of the procurator's

12 Among others, the Spanish duchess of Aveiro, Christina queen of Sweden and Maria Theresia Fugger von Welleburg were interested in overseas missions and in close contact with Jesuit missionaries. On the subject see, respectively: Ernest J. Burrus, *Kino escribe a la Duquesa: Correspondencia del p. Eusebio Francisco Kino con la Duquesa de Aveiro y otros documentos* (Madrid: Ediciones Jose Porrúa Turanzas, 1964); Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle: The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Noble Patronage and Jesuit Missions: Maria Theresia Von Fugger-Wellenburg (1690–1762) and Jesuit Missionaries in China and Vietnam* (Augsburg: Wißner, 2015).

13 On the endeavor of translating Confucius for a European readership, see David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), esp. the chapter “*Confucius Sinarum philosophus* as a culmination of Ricci's accommodation.”

14 On the importance of scientific books for Jesuit missionaries in China, see the research of Noël Golvers: “Foreign Jesuit *Indipetae*: Mathematical Teaching and Mathematical Books at the Colégio Das Artes in Coimbra in the 2nd Half of the 17th Century,” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 14 (2007): 21–42 and “Scientific Books and Individual *Curricula* among Jesuit *Indipetae* in Portugal and China (17th–18th Cent.),” *Euphrosyne* 45 (2017): 205–27.

propaganda about his missions is one of the factors to be considered. Aliocha Maldivsky and Annick Delfosse have studied the galvanizing effect that the tours of procurators of the vice-province of China had in the areas of current Belgium and Northwestern Italy.¹⁵

Litterae indipetae, however, show not only the effect that procurators had on an Indian vocation, but also their importance for greasing the mechanisms of an overseas appointment. The superior general had, of course, no personal knowledge of most petitioners. He could have met several Jesuits during his daily life, especially those living in the Roman area, but usually he had to rely on other people's accounts. The local superiors had the first intermediary role, but they often showed themselves more willing to keep their best members with them, instead of giving them permission to depart.¹⁶ The procurators, on the contrary, had it in their interests to involve many new Jesuits in their enterprises, returning to their missionary countries with all the qualified people they could. The experiences of procurators of the vice-province of China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remain illustrative of these desires and how procurators sought to fulfill them. Trigault, one of the first procurators from China, sailed back to Europe after a few years in the Ming empire. He edited and published Matteo Ricci's (1552–1610) treatise in 1615, contributing to its immediate success throughout Europe. Ricci never became a procurator nor went back to his assistancy, but its message reached European Jesuits nonetheless, through Trigault's mediation. Once in Europe, during the 1610s, Trigault traveled as a procurator throughout the Jesuits' colleges and residences and, as Annick Delfosse demonstrated, led petitions for the Indies in the *Gallo-Belgica* province to peak because of it.¹⁷ The admiration for an exceptional person and the spirit of emulation he inspired upon his return

15 See the studies by Aliocha Madalvsky, "Administrer les vocations missionnaires: Les *Indipetae* et l'organisation des expéditions de missionnaires aux Indes Occidentales au début du XVII^e siècle," in *Missions religieuses Modernes: "Notre lieu est le monde,"* ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 45–70; "Entre mito, equívoco y saber: Los jesuitas italianos y las misiones extraeuropeas en el siglo XVII," in *Missions d'évangélisation et circulation des savoirs, XVI^e–XVIII siècle*, ed. Charlotte de Castelnau L'Estoile (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2011), 41–58; and "Società urbana e mobilità missionaria: I milanesi e la missione lontana all'inizio del Seicento," *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 1 (2009): 159–84. Similarly and for the *Gallo-Belgica* province, Delfosse noticed how the passage of Nicolas Trigault, originating from that area, increased the production of *indipetae* ("*Ecce ego mitte me*").

16 See Chapter 2 of this book.

17 See Delfosse, "*Ecce ego mitte me*" and Edmund Lamalle, "La propagande du P. Nicolas Trigault en faveur des missions de Chine (1616)," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* IX (1940): 49–120.

were enhanced by the fact that he had entered the Society of Jesus in that same province. During his visit, Trigault made a stop in Belgium, where his manners, clothes, and stories of the missions left many of those he met open-mouthed and amazed. This reaction was true not only for the many curious and Jesuit supporters but also for the students and the Jesuits of a certain age, who were already aware of the first reports of the Chinese mission thanks to the Society's publications of missionary accounts from there.

Procurators consistently appear in *indipetae* letters of the early modern period, especially in the months following their visit to a certain Jesuit residency. The procurators had the power to ignite a desire for the Indies, most of all in students who had some knowledge of the missionaries' accounts in the Indies but had never seen them in person. Some petitioners even attributed to procurators the merit of having convinced them to join the Society of Jesus and having instilled in them the desire to serve abroad. For instance, Domenico Mario recalled in 1722 that, one year before entering the order, two procurators headed to Rome passed through Nice, his fatherland. Young Mario had listened to the stories of those "great conversions that were made by ours, and our immense labors for God's glory" in the missions.¹⁸ The procurators' tales had filled him with such a "desire to go and serve those Fathers" that a year later he asked to join the Society.

The procurators' tours of Jesuit schools and houses throughout Europe provided also the ideal opportunities for the petitioners for the Indies to *renew* requests already made. A visit by a procurator—Jesuits knew—precisely marked a moment when new recruits would be needed for imminent voyages, and the chances to leave were higher than ever. In these cases, the aspirants who had always focused on just one destination, describing it as the only one they desired, came to understand that it was better for them to change their strategy and to be suddenly persuaded to serve at another place (the one mentioned in the procurator's appeal), even if on the other side of their previous choice. The most insistent candidates even took advantage of the procurators' tours to show the superior general how aware they were of the latest missionary expeditions, of the type of missionaries required, and of the operations' logistical details. At times, writing a petition for the Indies was certainly a spontaneous initiative. Yet, many candidacies were born during or soon after the visits by the procurators (with many explicitly mentioning them). This circumstance confirms once again how external factors intervened in the *Indias*

18 "grandi conversioni che per mezzo dei nostri si facevano, e le nostre fatiche immense per gloria di Dio [...] desiderio di andare a servire quei Padri," ARSI, FG 751, fol. 227 (Genoa, August 29, 1722).

petendi process, factors that could encourage the drafting of a letter or constrain it.¹⁹

The Milanese Filippo Grimaldi (1638–1712) was the procurator of the Chinese province during the first years covered by this book: from 1686 to 1694.²⁰ It was quite common for Jesuits coming from what is now Italy to serve in leadership roles during the last years of the Ming dynasty and under the first Qing emperors. After Matteo Ricci this happened in the case of the Tyrolean Martino Martini (in office 1650–59), the Sicilian Prospero Intorcetta (in office 1666–74), and Grimaldi. Grimaldi was born in Cuneo in 1638, and entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty.²¹ He left Lisbon for Macau in 1666, a particularly hard time for the Chinese mission: the Qing government had previously forbidden Christianity, a policy that remained until 1671. In that year, Grimaldi traveled to Beijing, where he collaborated with his confrere Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–88) in constructing scientific instruments. Because of these activities, Grimaldi gained the Kangxi (1654–1722) emperor's favor and was appointed his ambassador for diplomatic missions to Moscow and Rome. Grimaldi arrived in 1689 in Rome, where important meetings and intellectual exchanges with the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) took place. Leibniz was an ardent sinophile, intrigued by all the extraordinary firsthand news that only the missionaries like Grimaldi could give him, both in person and via letters. Grimaldi also had the chance to visit the major continental courts (such as Paris, Munich, Krakow, and Vienna) and to meet with the most important personalities of the time, gathering support and funding for the China mission. After this extended European sojourn, Grimaldi returned to Beijing in 1694. Verbiest, though, had died six years earlier, and the emperor appointed Grimaldi to replace him as the president of his Mathematical Tribunal. Within the Society of Jesus, Grimaldi also rose quickly, becoming vice provincial in 1695 and serving as the

19 Delfosse, “*Ecce ego mitte me*,” *passim*.

20 Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome–Paris: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu–Letouzey & Ané, 1973), 314–15 and 401–4.

21 See Grimaldi's biographical profile in Ugo Baldini, “Engineering in the Missions and Missions as Engineering: Claudio Filippo Grimaldi until His Return to Beijing (1694),” in *Tomás Pereira, s.J. (1646–1708). Life, Work and World*, ed. Luís Filipe Barreto (Lisbon: CCCM, 2010), 75–184. In this article Baldini shows how hard it is to determine whether Grimaldi was a skilled mathematician and researcher, because of lack of contemporary sources confirming it—or the contrary. It is likely that Grimaldi was sent to China also thanks to his intellectual gifts and scientific studies; in conclusion “he was probably not very proficient in mathematics initially; he knew enough for routine work in Astronomy but was probably limited in the ‘pure’ and theoretical areas” (82, 84 and 87). See also Federico Masini, “Filippo Grimaldi,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani online*, last modified 2002, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filippo-grimaldi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filippo-grimaldi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

rector of the College of Beijing from 1700 to 1701 and, finally, from 1703 to 1706, as the Visitor of the Japanese province and Chinese vice-province. Suspended by Charles Maillard de Tournon (1668–1710), who was trying to impose the last dictates of Rome in China, forbidding the Confucian rites for neo-Christians, Grimaldi died in Beijing in November 1712.

During Grimaldi's presence in Europe between 1686 and 1690, there was a significant increase in interest among Jesuits for missionary assignments. Precisely in those years, *litterae indipetae* in the whole Italian assistancy rose dramatically, from forty-five in 1687 to seventy-one a year later to seventy-five the year after, and to ninety-five in 1691.²² His visit undoubtedly contributed to a general peak in the missionary requests and, even more, established a precedent for others in his position. Grimaldi's European assignment was very complex and involved multiple tasks: on one side, the Kangxi emperor wanted him to "start a dialogue between the Chinese and the Russian Empires."²³ On the other hand, Verbiest entrusted him to support the Jesuit method in China, to obtain more autonomy for the Chinese vice-province, and to find new missionaries to bring back, especially "young Jesuits spurred by missionary zeal who also had scientific, technical or artistic skills." The process of the missionary selection could work out smoothly or not, and Grimaldi's case testifies how disappointment could have afflicted not only the procurators, but also the local Jesuits who wanted to set sail but were unable to. Grimaldi planned to bring back with him about forty new recruits, as he said to Leibniz; even if there is no unanimous source, in the end he could only add a few men to the Eastern mission.²⁴

Grimaldi's presence sparked the interests of many Jesuits, as in the case of Giovanni Andrea Ghersi, who showed himself well informed about the practical details of the coming expedition. Upon meeting Grimaldi, he renewed to the general his "more than ever fervent supplications for the long-awaited Missions of China."²⁵ To convince him, he explained that his father had recently died and his mother had decided to retire to a convent: it was for

22 See Appendix. The preservation of *litterae indipetae* is not homogeneous and it depends on the assistancy where they were written. In the Italian case, it is quite regular from the end of the sixteenth century until 1729, when they suddenly disappear, only to reemerge after the restoration of the order.

23 Baldini, "Engineering in the Missions," 123 and 141.

24 Baldini, "Engineering in the Missions," 143–44.

25 "più che mai fervorose suppliche per le tante sospirate Missioni della Cina [...] santo desiderio di staccarmi affatto dal mondo [...] quel pocho che mio Padre lascia in beneficio del viaggio e della missione [...] alcuni giovani [...] a fine di dar principio con l'autorità Regia all'educatione della Gioventù Cinese [...] nel medesimo tempo apprendere la lingua," ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 338 (Genoa, November 19, 1690).

him the ideal moment to fulfill his “holy desire to get away from the world.” In addition, Gheresi’s inheritance (“that little bit that my Father leaves”) could now be used “for the benefit of travel and mission.” Gheresi knew that Grimaldi was looking for “some young Jesuits [...] to start, under the imperial authority, a project of Chinese youth education,” and therefore applied for this assignment, proposing to teach to the Chinese and “at the same time, learning their language.” In another letter, he also showed awareness that the general had “benevolently granted to Grimaldi a young man,” who, however, had caused him “many difficulties.”²⁶ He was probably referring to Pluro’s case, discussed below. This development was an opportunity for Gheresi, but even if he was aware of the latest news and did not lack initiative, he was not lucky enough to be called as Pluro’s substitute and never left Italy.

In 1690, the Italian Pantaleo Balbi updated the general on his availability to join Grimaldi in his journey back to China. Balbi’s spiritual father approved this idea, saying he only needed the general’s permission, thus Balbi propitiously wrote on the feast of the petitioners’ patron, Francis Xavier. Yet, he would be disappointed: despite the offer from Grimaldi, the general rejected his petition for unknown reasons and Balbi never left Italy, dying in Genoa forty years later.²⁷

Federico di Massarano wrote four *indipetae*, all of them dating during the years of Grimaldi’s European visit. In one of his later appeals to the general, Massarano pointed out that Grimaldi had promised to “willingly take me on his return to China, if I can get the general’s approval in time.”²⁸ He pledged his will to “contribute as much as I can to the good of those [Chinese] missions, which I know are in need of temporal help.” Similarly to Gheresi’s case seen above, Massarano also offered financial assistance, as, over the years, he had saved some money received “as an annual pension from my parents.” Moreover, he proposed to bring with him “things that, according to the news received from Father Grimaldi, are much more useful to Missionaries in China than money.” These “useful” items mentioned in the letter were likely books, as can be deduced from other similar letters. The general, though, evidently did

26 “havea havuta la bontà di concedergli un giovine per la Santa Missione della Cina [...] molte difficoltà,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 355 (Genoa, March 3, 1691).

27 Balbi died in Genoa in 1730 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 75).

28 “haverebbe volentieri condotto seco in questo suo ritorno dalla Cina, se havesse havuto tempo di procurarmene il beneplacito da Vostra Paternità [...] contribuire quanto posso al bene di quelle missioni [cinesi], che so essere bisognose d’aiuto temporale [...] una pensione annua da miei [...] cose che, conforme alla notizia havuta dal Padre Grimaldi, ho inteso essere nella Cina molto più utili a Missionarii di quel che sia il denaro,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 348 ([Milan, January 31, 1691]).

not grant Massarano's request, as the young Jesuit wrote again a month later. Grimaldi's return to Asia had been delayed, allowing Massarano the "opportunity to hope for the glory of going with him on his departure."²⁹ What happened to him remains unknown: most likely, he was able to leave for Asia as he never wrote another petition to the general.³⁰

Even when procurators and generals perfectly coordinated to choose and approve a missionary, it might be the latter who would cause some difficulty—for instance, by his indecision. Procurators, moreover, could be disappointed because either they failed to persuade enough petitioners to join them, or they found those they convinced to be unqualified in the end: Grimaldi experienced both frustrations, as Carlo Giuseppe Pluro's case shows. This Milanese Jesuit was informed about Grimaldi's movements and, when the latter was about to leave Italy, he asked the general to finally receive "the grace, already granted me, to collaborate in the Chinese missions."³¹ Pluro's writing reflects his lack of education, making it quite hard to understand what he wanted to recount: apparently, in Genoa he met Grimaldi, who invited him to join the coming expedition. Pluro confirmed his availability but did not make a final commitment before Grimaldi left town. The procurator had at first shown interest in Pluro, likely for his practical skills as a cook and stone cutter, but he soon had to acknowledge that he lacked sufficient conviction. Grimaldi refused to bring him to China, and Pluro remained "behind, guilty of being late [...] deprived of this grace." Pluro admitted that Grimaldi seemed to him "a little disgusted that I lost the courage to follow him by sea, especially because he already spent money for me, thinking that I am allowing myself to lose such an exceptional opportunity." As a result, Pluro wrote to the general about his fears of always living "with constant scruple," if he did not plead again. He proposed that he join the aforementioned Massarano: it is clear that the local "Indian" network worked very well, rapidly spreading information about life-changing events like imminent departures. Pluro wanted to

29 "occasione di poter sperare la gloria d'acompagnarmi seco nella sua partenza," ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 353 (Milan, February 28, 1691).

30 Dehergne believed "Masseranus" to be a candidate to the Chinese missions in 1690, however uncertain about his final destiny (Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 169). Massarano does not appear among the deceased nor the Jesuits who left with the *Carreira da Índia* ships.

31 "per tornare ad ottenere la gratia, già concessami, di potere andare a cooperare nelle Messione de Lacina [...] sono restato indietro né senza qualche scrupolo d'havere tardato, dal che venghi privato di questa gratia [...] un poco disgustato che mi perdessi d'animo di seguirarlo per mare, massime havendoli fatto far spese per terra, et in oltre pensando che mi lascio togliere una occasione di tanto merito [...] con continuo scrupolo [...] non [h]anno più speranza di cong[i]ungere li altri in Portugallo," ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 465^v (Milan, March 5, 1692).

serve Massarano in his already programmed journey “because for now there is no hope of joining the others in Portugal.” Pluro, whose many spelling errors indicate he was a temporal coadjutor (a domestic helper, and not an ordained priest), worked in the Milanese area.³² His final destiny remains unknown, and it is not unlikely that he left the Society of Jesus around 1700.³³

Finally, a missionary selection could on the contrary be successful from the point of view of both the procurator and the petitioner. Thirty-year old Giovanni Paolo Gozano requested from Milan an assignment abroad. In 1689, he shared with General Thyrso González de Santalla (1624–1705) all the “consolation” he felt after Grimaldi had informed him that he had been elected to serve the procurator “in the Mission of China.”³⁴ Departing Europe the next year (1690), Gozano reached the Chinese Empire four years later. He held several important positions, such as the Visitor of China and Japan and the Rector of the Jesuit College of Beijing. In 1724, he was exiled by the Emperor Yongzheng (r.1722–35) to Guangzhou and was later appointed vice-provincial of Japan, a position he held until he died in Macau in 1732.³⁵ With Gozano, Grimaldi had chosen, on his own initiative, a capable person from Europe who successfully operated in such a different environment.

The influence of the procurators of the vice-province of China on the Italian Jesuits at the turn of the eighteenth century, however, was not constant. For instance, the next procurator Miguel do Amaral (1657–1730) toured Europe just four years after Grimaldi, between 1694 and 1699. His name was almost never mentioned in the Italian *indipetae* of the period, even if another peak in the documentation could be a direct effect of his promotion.³⁶

The German Kaspar Kastner (1665–1709) was another procurator of the vice-province of China who visited the Italian assistancy; a few Italian *indipetae* mention his time in Europe (1702–07). Born in Munich, he embarked for Asia at the age of thirty-one and traveled extensively within the Chinese Empire until his appointment as procurator. Kastner held a number of other positions in China, such as serving as the emperor’s cartographer, president of the Mathematics council, and tutor of the prince. He died in Beijing, aged forty-four. In 1704, the Italian Ludovico Gonzaga asked the general’s “blessing for China” even though he admitted that, according to “what I really feel,”

32 Baldini, “Engineering in the Missions,” 145 n268.

33 His name does not appear on the Milanese *Catalogi triennales* from the year 1700 on (ARSI, *Med.* 61).

34 “Consolazione [...] eletto a servirlo nella Missione della Cina,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fol. 277 (Milan, September 7, 1689).

35 Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 116–17.

36 See Appendix.

he was destined to Japan as his first and greatest desire, “as soon as God will open it for the entrance of the Holy Gospel”—wishful thinking.³⁷ Gonzaga explained that he did not want to lose such a “favorable opportunity to join Father Castner and many Companions” who were sailing to the East. In fact, he did that in 1706, and arrived in Goa at the end of the same year.³⁸ Gonzaga soon left for Macau and then Beijing: from there, he gave in 1710 direct testimony of Kastner’s death, which happened a year earlier.³⁹ In 1716 Gonzaga had to leave Beijing for health reasons; he moved finally to Macau, where he died the year after.⁴⁰

This procurator’s return to Europe was also referenced by another Jesuit from the Roman province, Agostino Cappelli, who wrote to the general “daring to beg the Goodness of Your Reverence to send me as Kastner’s companion in this journey.”⁴¹ Also Cappelli was destined to China. In general, however, the timespan corresponding to Kastner’s European tour was not characterized by an increased production of Italian *litterae indipetae*: they always ranged between twenty and forty each year.⁴² Either Kastner was not able to have a great effect on the Italian vocations, or this “indifference” was related to the problems that the China mission was experiencing at the time, which made not only the mission but the request to undertake it difficult even for the most stubborn dreamer. The main issue at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the so-called Rites controversy. Most of the Jesuits followed Ricci’s method (which pleased the Ming and Qing emperors) allowing the converts to perform the ceremonies in honor of Confucius and the ancestors, but there was no common policy among the different religious orders—not even within the Society of Jesus—on how deep the adaptation to local practices should and could be. Moreover, the “religious” issue was strictly intertwined with the political and nationalist interests of the missionaries operating in the Empire.⁴³

37 “La sua benedizione per la Cina [...] secondo a quel che sento veramente [...] come mio primo e gran desiderio, quando Iddio ne aprisse l’ingresso al Santo Evangelio [...] opportunità sì favorevole del Padre Castner e di tanti Compagni,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 193 (Rome, December 9, 1704).

38 Josef Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541–1758,” *Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte* 7 (1967): 252–450, here 315.

39 ARSI, *Japonica-Sinica* 173, fols. 308–09 (Beijing, November 22, 1710).

40 Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 114.

41 “Ardito di supplicare la Bontà di Vostra Reverenza a volermi destinare suo compagno nel viaggio,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 194 (Rome, December 21, 1704). On Cappelli, see also chapter 4 of this book.

42 See Appendix.

43 On the Rites controversy see, for instance, David E. Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Sankt Augustin–San Francisco: Steyler, 1994) and Nicolas

Beyond these cases related to the Chinese missions, it was quite common for Jesuits to request destinations previously unpopular, after their procurator's passage.⁴⁴ Such petitioners took advantage of the concrete opportunities offered by similar events, and they paid great attention to rumors about visits by procurators. Petitioners employed different strategies to secure an assignment: for instance, Stefano Serio first asked in 1698 for the generic "Indian Missions."⁴⁵ A few months later, however, the Sicilian indicated a more precise destination, the Philippines, explaining that he did so "after hearing that their procurator is in Rome now, looking for preachers and brothers for those places."⁴⁶ Serio was unsuccessful but undaunted: two years later, he asked to be sent to Chile because he knew that Domingo Marino, head of that province, was in need of new recruits.⁴⁷ Serio's preferences were based on available locations or those needing men—and he was not the only Jesuit reasoning this way. This approach shows a certain adaptability on one side and a readiness on the other, though unfortunately it did not result in leading Serio to any mission at all.

Finally, during the procurators' promotional visits in Europe, many Jesuits wrote a single application. Often, these one-off requests were short and not very detailed; never followed by a second letter, these appeals were probably based on a short-lived enthusiasm, or on an unofficial obligation to apply and show a pious vocation—that was almost mandatory among Jesuits. These *una tantum* petitions often moved numerically and geographically on the same trajectory as the procurators.⁴⁸ Paolo Perremuto's only petition (1705) requested the Chilean destination because its procurator visited him in Palermo. Perremuto never left Sicily, where he died many years later.⁴⁹

This section has shown the strong influence procurators could have on Jesuits' vocation for the Indies, in inspiring their missionary desire on one side and in determining the selections of the people involved on the other. Procurators

Standaert, "Christianity Shaped by the Chinese," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), vol. VI, 558–76.

44 Aliocha Maldavsky, "Pedir las Indias. Las cartas 'indipetae' de los jesuitas europeos, siglos XVI–XVII, ensayo historiográfico," *Relaciones* 33, no. 132 (2012): 147–81, here 160.

45 "Missioni Indiane," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 160 (Palermo, February 22, 1704).

46 "haver udito trovarsi in Roma il Padre procuratore dell'Isole Filippine, il quale desía non meno predicatori che fratelli per quelle missioni," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 172 (Palermo, July 15, 1704).

47 ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 232 (Palermo, March 22, 1706). Chile was born as vice-province of Paraguay in 1624, but from 1684 on became a province itself (*Synopsis*, column 665).

48 See Appendix.

49 ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 217 (Palermo, July 19, 1705). Perremuto died in Sicily in 1734 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 110).

could interact with the candidates, verify their vocation, test their abilities, have epistolary relations with them, and make them half promises. In this pre-selection phase, probably, the procurators confronted local superiors and made preliminary agreements with them on which candidate should be considered or ignored. While a procurators' recommendation seems to have been quite frequent, the general's approval was nonetheless essential—otherwise a departure would have been impossible. From the requests of men selected by procurators, many were endorsed by the general who, with rare exceptions, had no reason to oppose a candidate he did not know personally and with whom often had never even come into epistolary contact before. Also emerging from the *indipetae* are those last-minute changes: defections, uncertain Jesuits, second thoughts of persons considered suitable who were not, ships that could not take off at the expected time, etc. Likely to be prepared for such inconveniences, the procurators were probably inclined to make promises and assurances to *more* Jesuits than they would have brought with them, meaning there would always be some Jesuits ready in the case of last moment's problems. On this point, practically *every* petitioner declared a readiness to leave as soon as possible.⁵⁰ The petitioner Francesco Corsetti, for instance, implored the general: "give me the order to leave immediately, barefoot, without any supplies for Germany, then in Muscovy, then in Batavia, then to China, or for any other part of the Eastern or Western Indies [Your Paternity] wants me to be, and you will see me execute Your orders."⁵¹ Some of them saw in an already planned departure's setback (storms or other accidents that caused some delay) the perfect chance, sent by God to give them more time and to help them join the other lucky companions already chosen.

As for the destinations, even in the general vagueness and indifference expressed by many candidates, there was a clear influence of the missions available at the time. The result was frequent and sudden changes among those who had asked for a place for years, as if it was the only one that really mattered. At the visit of a procurator looking for Jesuits to take with him to the other side of the world, these petitioners suddenly relocated their vocation and declared themselves ready to leave with him for a place never mentioned before, and with even greater enthusiasm. In fact, most of the aspiring missionaries preferred to have a safe and above all immediate destination, rather

50 With the exceptions of the several petitioners who asked the general for some time to wish farewell to their families, or to conclude personal business before leaving.

51 "mi comandi di partirmi subito a pie' scalzi senz'alcun viatico per la Germania, indi in Moscovia, indi in Batavia, indi alla Cina; o per qualsivoglia altra parte dell'Indie, o orientali, o occidentali, che desideri, e subito mi udirà porre in esecuzione i suoi comandi," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 308 (Florence, March 9, 1715).

than an exhausting wait with an uncertain epilogue. In a case such as the vice-province of China, whose procurators were charismatic figures, good writers, well dressed, and often particularly brilliant individuals, candidates could easily be attracted by them. What Chinese procurators told about their missionary country, life at the Imperial court, the astronomic or diplomatic work (even if this was not what most of the Jesuits in China ever did)—everything could not but be exciting and extremely alluring for young Jesuits who had gotten used to studying, teaching, and preaching in small and “prosaic” towns.

3.2 The Generals and Their Replies

While the procurators did not play a fundamental role in the lives of *every* petitioner, many of them saw their fate strongly influenced and completely changed by these important figures who came from far away, and would return to those distant regions with their new recruits. The precise steps of the selection process for missionaries are not entirely clear, as they allowed both for the influence of a procurator and for different strategies on the part of the applicant. In short, the possible paths to an appointment varied considerably. Nevertheless, the general (and possibly his secretaries, who updated and informed him) had the last word on it.⁵² Each missionary assignment was also influenced by political factors, the candidates’ families, as well as the local superiors’ opinions. At the beginning of the 2000s Gian Carlo Roscioni concluded that it was almost impossible to apprehend the precise reason for an appointment, or why preference was shown towards one Jesuit instead of another. Roscioni argued that “further documents that tell us about this are almost non-existent; similarly, it appears that the ‘books’ or registers have disappeared, in which were noted the names (and notes, or judgments?) of the candidates for the Indies.”⁵³ More recent archival studies by Mauro Brunello however show that *ad hoc* registers were kept at least during the nineteenth century, and still survive in the Roman archives. These notebooks report some data concerning the Jesuits who asked for the Indies (names and destination if specified), and several codes and signs yet to be deciphered. They could allow

52 This section is partially based on my essays “*In nomine Patris: The Struggle between an Indipeta, His Father, and the Superior Generals of the Society of Jesus (1701–1724 ca.)*,” *Chronica mundi* 13, no. 1 (2018): 107–23 and “The Many Faces of Ignazio Maria Romeo, SJ (1676–1724?) Petitioner for the Indies: A Jesuit Seen through His *Litterae Indipetae* and the *Epistulae Generalium*,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 85, no. 170 (2016): 365–404.

53 Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie: Storie, sogni e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), 169.

a better understanding of the criteria that guided the Roman Curia's missionary policy.⁵⁴

Several *litterae indipetae* can provide some hints about this issue, including references to the replies of the generals in Rome. In such instances, the authors recalled how their previous requests were answered: they mention when they received the letter, and then how long they had waited before applying again, highlighting how they were following the given directions. Many others, on the contrary, complained that they never received any reply. Some, suspecting that the local superiors were not forwarding their requests to Rome, tried to reach the superior via a new petition or in person, with the aim of speaking to him directly.⁵⁵ The process of Jesuits applying and of the leadership selecting could follow a certain way of proceeding. A plausible synthesis of this *modus operandi* emerges from the correspondence, such as those concerning Francesco Corsetti. This Jesuit sent requests during two decades: 1704–05 and 1716–18. In one of his final letters, Corsetti described the three key phases of his vocation to the Indies: the first one was when he was in Frascati, and the superior general assured him that “certainly I will not fail to console you at the appropriate time.”⁵⁶ The second one was with Corsetti in Castel Gandolfo when, once more, the general repeated his affirmative response: “yes, but after Theology.” The last stage was in 1715, when the general finally assured Corsetti that “the hopes that I reaffirmed so many times to you, now are approaching their desired conclusion.” Corsetti's chronological survey indicates the delicate balance between the parties involved. The Jesuit received replies encouraging him not to lose hope, even if ten long years had passed from his first requests, while at the same time enjoining obedience on the applicant to wait for the right moment for a possible appointment. With this subtle strategy intended to motivate Jesuit applicants to persist in their missionary vocation while at the same time exhorting them to obedience, it may be that the Society of Jesus deftly managed to keep many of its members within its ranks.

Letters such as those by Francesco Corsetti, with its hints of the superior general's replies, prompt further investigation into the Roman “strategy” of a

54 The registers are preserved in ARSI, *Secretariatatus Missionum Societatis Iesu, Miscellanea* 23, *Catalogus sociorum missiones postulantium ab anno*; see Mauro Brunello, “Nuova Compagnia di Gesù e vocazione missionaria: Le *indipetae* dell'Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) e l'archivio fotografico Acquaderni,” *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* 45, no. 88 (2016): 21–44.

55 As chapter 2 of this book shows.

56 “a tempo opportuno non lascerò certo di consolarvi [...] sì, ma doppo la Teologia [...] le speranze, tante volte rafferimatele, vanno horamai accostandosi al bramato lor termine,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 459 (Macerata, March 12, 1717).

missionary appointment. To this end, the letter-books of the replies sent by the superior general to members of the Society, and others—arranged and preserved according to each Province—provide important evidence of this strategy, namely the records of the generals' replies to the petitions.⁵⁷ Archival research demonstrates how the generals under consideration in this book, González de Santalla and Tamburini (in office 1687–1705 and 1706–1730) usually replied to received correspondence within a few weeks. Their answers tended to include a statement of gratitude to the petitioner and an expression of hope that he might resemble the role model *par excellence* Francis Xavier (1506–52), not only in his desire to go to the Indies but, more importantly, in virtue as well.⁵⁸

If the applicant was still a student, the Roman curia underscored the importance of achieving a good education within the Society of Jesus. In most cases these replies avoided providing explicit or specific promises, but rather simply expressed the wish that, in future, at the right time, a departure to the Indies might be possible.⁵⁹ If petitioners distinguished themselves for becoming particularly insistent and impatient, the general invited them to wait and persist in their vocation.⁶⁰ If a Jesuit expressed his conviction, as sometimes occurred, that only through an appointment to the Indies could he find the true fulfillment of his vocation and life in the Society—and that this would not be possible in his own province—he was reminded of the importance to

57 Only recently scholars started to pay attention to the *Epistulae generalium* in relation with *indipetae*: see chapter 6 of Monika Miazek-Męczynska, *Indipetae Poloniae: kolatanie do drzwi misji chińskiej*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2015; and my essays “Muzio Vitelleschi Replies to *Litterae Indipetae*: Two Case Studies from the Austrian Province in the Seventeenth Century,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 140, no. 179 (2021): 63–87; “Signed in Blood: Negotiating with the Superior General about the Overseas Mission (18th Century),” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 51, no. 4 (2019): 1–34, and “‘You Only Torment and Upset Yourself’: Replies to a Restless Writer at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century,” in *Engaging Sources: The Tradition and Future of Collecting History in the Society of Jesus (Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Boston College, June 11–13, 2019)*, ed. Seth Meehan, Cristiano Casalini, and Emanuele Colombo (Boston: Institute for Jesuit Sources, 2021), 1–14. See also Sabina Pavone, “I dimessi dalla Compagnia negli anni del generalato di Francesco Borgia: Una nuova questione storiografica,” in *Francisco de Borja y su tiempo: Política, religión y cultura en la Edad Moderna* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011), 465–79, which confirms a frequent connection between *Epistulae generalium*, natural families' intrusions, and Jesuits leaving the order.

58 Especially after Xavier's canonization (1622), his feast day on December 3 was a preferred time for many to write their request.

59 See for instance ARSI, *Sic.* 39, fol. 88^r (Palermo, July 2, 1703).

60 As in ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 3 (Messina, January s.d., 1704).

think about his present tasks and be ready to work anywhere.⁶¹ A number of Jesuits evidently were not satisfied with their daily lives and repeatedly complained about it: in reply, the general reprimanded them for their uneasiness. In one letter, Santalla's secretary wrote: "I wish for Your Reverence the utmost peace to your soul, and satisfaction: but be sure that this cannot depend on the change of place and role that you are seeking," continuing to advise that, he should "rather be happy with all of the responsibilities that keep you occupied where you are."⁶² Therefore, the Roman answers to the petitions for the Indies reveal much about the petitions, their authors, and the larger contexts involved, especially when combining this information with the *litterae indipetae* of the same period.

3.2.1 *Ignazio Maria Romeo (1676–1724?)*

Ignazio Maria Romeo was born in Palermo in 1676, and entered the Society of Jesus when he was sixteen. As he specified in desperation on one occasion, in his lifetime he sent more than thirty *litterae indipetae* without ever managing to leave for the Indies.⁶³ This was despite the fact that Ignazio was one of the fortunate few applicants actually selected to leave, only to have his appointment rescinded, as this chapter will show. Thanks to the generals' answers to the members of the Sicilian province, it is possible to recover the content of the disappeared letters as well. More significantly, the letter-books reveal the existence of other documents related to Romeo's case, providing evidence that a further important protagonist in this "vocational story" was played by Ignazio's father, Ignazio Romeo, marquis delli Magnisi.⁶⁴ Fathers (in most cases, but also

61 As advised in ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 13^r (Mazara, January 28, 1704).

62 "ogni maggior quiete d'animo, e sodisfazione: ma sia pur certo, che questa non può dipendere dalla mutazione ch'ella designava di luogo, e d'ufficio [...] Piuttosto parmi che abbia giusta occasione di più contentarsi nei ministerii, ne' quali viene costò occupato," ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 144^v (Palermo, November 3, 1704).

63 Romeo explicitly mentioned the number in ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 464 (Palermo, March 15, 1717). His extant letters date 1702–20 and are preserved in *FG* 750 and 751.

64 Ignazio's father wrote to the superior general many more times than the letters now preserved, exchanging mainly vague sentiments of gratitude and congratulations (Frei, "Many Faces," 375–126). For the potentially complicated relationship between Jesuits and their spiritual and natural fathers see Adriano Prosperi, "Il figlio, il padre, il gesuita: Un testo di Antonio Possevino," *Rinascimento*, 2014, 112–55 and *La vocazione. Storie di gesuiti tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2016), esp. 170–87. See also Miriam Turrini, "La vita scelta?: Appunti per una storia della vocazione in età moderna," in *Dai cantieri della storia: Liber amicorum per Paolo Prodi* (Bologna: Clueb, 2007), 145–59. For a general overview of fathers and sons in the early modern period, see the now-classic (but also criticized and somewhat dated) Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (Paris: Seuil, 1960).

mothers and brothers/sisters) could become involved in supporting a petitioner's application or, more frequently, taking a position against it. There were many cases where families apparently tried to stand in the way of a departure to the Indies, and several letters in the *Epistulae generalium* were addressed to them, with the Roman curia trying to understand if there were specific reasons why the candidate should not depart (above all, on account of health issues, possibly unknown to the superiors).

Going back to Ignazio, his first extant request was sent in January 1702, although he recalls in this letter that in fact it was his second petition already (the general's registers confirm that a petition was sent in 1701).⁶⁵ At this time, the Sicilian Jesuit was in his mid-twenties and enjoyed good health. He was teaching Grammar and Humanities at the College of Palermo, and had begun missionary and preaching activities within his province.⁶⁶ In his fifth letter to the general (1702), Ignazio remarked on his physical well-being, which he described as "perfect:" in his view, it was a divine gift granted to him "for the good of the Indians" (for whose salvation he wished to work), and that before his cure "all the physicians were talking about my death as imminent, and thought a recovery to be impossible."⁶⁷ Before receiving his hoped-for official permission to depart for the Indies, as with many of his companions, Ignazio doubted seriously that he would ever be sent. He wrote to the general at the end of 1703 that he especially did not trust his provincial: "he will try to obstruct my departure."⁶⁸ Ignazio even hypothesized that "he will raise the scarcity of [manpower in] the Sicilian province, to which he will add the disapproval of my relatives, which in truth are neither well founded nor of real concern." Indeed, Ignazio eventually was stopped from leaving for the Indies on account of these very reasons, as we shall see.

Yet, in 1704, his prospects looked very bright for, in one way or another, Ignazio managed to convince superior general González with his requests, and he received the "license" for the Indies aged twenty-eight years. His ecstatic response to this news still can be read in one of his letters, signing his message

65 This was actually his second *indipeta*, and the general's registers confirm that another petition was sent in 1701: ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 104 (Palermo, January s.d., 1702).

66 ARSI, *Sic.* 95, fol. 100 (*Catalogus Triennalis*, 1705).

67 "salute [...] perfettissima m'è stata concessa solo a bene dell'Indiani [...] si parlava di morte da tutti i Medici, e davano il mio riavimento per impossibile," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 117 (Palermo, October 17, 1702).

68 "Padre provinciale mi sarà di qualche impedimento [...] allegherà egli le scarsezze della Provincia, e l'accompagnerà co' dissapori de' miei Parenti, ma in verità non fondati né di sode conseguenze," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 151 (Palermo, December 21, 1703). Here and throughout, "parenti" has been translated as "relatives;" however, it could also have the more restrictive meaning of "parents."

of copious thanks to the general with a new name, “the Happiest Indian,” written “with my whole heart in this quill.”⁶⁹ In his excitement, he wished to leave as soon as possible—also because he was aware that he was at risk of being prevented from doing it, and he invited the general to be cautious. In the *Post Scriptum* to this enthusiastic letter, Ignazio begged the general to call him “as soon as possible to the ship, otherwise these good Fathers will cause some substantial impediment.” It is not possible to establish with certainty the reasons why the Jesuits in Palermo apparently were trying to persuade Ignazio’s father, the marquis, that leaving for the Indies was too dangerous for his son. They may have been worried for Ignazio’s health (although it seemed to have improved at this time). They may have been fond of their companion and wished him to stay and work in their province (Ignazio was not the only Jesuit from Sicily, during these decades, to complain about what was seen as their superiors’ excessive attachment to keeping their young charges at home). They also may simply have been telling the marquis what he wanted (and asked) to hear. In this case, the only source is Ignazio’s impressions. Rather optimistically, however, he claimed in his letters to General González that his father ended up approving of the decision, even if he was becoming concerned on account of “some falsehoods spread by those good Jesuits against the Indies; I see him become alarmed, and I am unable to give him the required answers.” Ignazio nevertheless remained confident that his father would be convinced by his arguments, even if he warned the general not to waste precious time before sending him.

Some days after this letter (the last to carry an optimistic tone), Ignazio wrote again to Rome, this time stricken with panic. He described himself as “terribly needy and afflicted” and “imploring,” explained how, regarding his “Indian departure,” he had learned that it had been canceled because of his mother’s protests.⁷⁰ He was desperate and turned to the superior general as if he were a judge in a court of law: “I appeal to the gracious and fatherly tribunal of Your Reverence [...] to your authority and holy Zeal, which burns in your chest.” The level of misery in which Ignazio found himself already can be discerned from the status of his mother and her connections—the marchioness

69 “Felicissimo Indiano [...] con il cuore tutto sulla penna [...] priego [...] a chiamarmi presto in Nave, altrimenti questi buoni Padri saran caggione di qualche sodo impedimento [...] dicerie somministrate da quei buoni Padri contro all’Indie, vedo turbarsi quello, e me impedito del dar le dovute risposte,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 157 (Palermo, January 24, 1704).

70 “bisognevolissimo ed afflittissimo [...] supplichevole [...] intorno alla mia partenza Indiana [...] Nel tribunale della cortese, e paterna carità di Vostra Reverenza m’appello [...] alla sua autorità ed al santo Zelo, che l’arde in petto,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 162 (Palermo, March 6, 1704).

was godmother to the viceroy of Sicily, Francesco Del Giudice (1647–1725; in office from 1701), as Ignazio mentioned twice in his letters, and that the latter possibly intervened to stop him from departing.⁷¹

Ignazio was indignant. He had been ordered by the provincial to prepare to leave for Cádiz or Genoa, and for this reason he began to bid farewell to his Jesuit brothers and family. But upon doing so, the provincial told him that he could not leave anymore because his mother, the marchioness, needed him. Ignazio expressed his disbelief that the Society of Jesus was unable to do something that appeared to him not only possible but also “simple”—to resist his mother’s “tearful assaults,” as he himself already had done.⁷² The Jesuit was inconsolable, not only because his departure thus had been delayed, but also because he feared it would never take place: “the path to my longed-for Indies is almost entirely precluded to me, if the matter must depend on the ‘yes’ of my Mother.” This situation seemed to him like a “labyrinth,” but he remained hopeful that the general would release him from this *impasse*.

Ignazio correctly supposed that his father was involved in the matter as well. He then carefully set about listing the reasons why he should not remain in Sicily. First, his father probably feared that Ignazio never would leave Europe, simply remaining stuck in Spain. The separation from his family would have been an unnecessary offering, given that it did not include the evangelization of the Indies. If this was the case, he did not care: “I am glad of it, for when it is not possible to sacrifice something else to God, I will sacrifice to him my departure from my relatives and my province.” Curiously, however, this was the only concern that the marquis did not mention at all in his letter to the superior general.

Second, Ignazio assumed—very correctly this time—that his father wanted him to be (at least, partially) responsible for the Magnisi household. One of the marquis’s reasons for wishing to keep his eldest son in Sicily was that his second son would not be able to manage everything in his absence. Like every Jesuit, Ignazio had left his family already when he joined the order, but it was

71 In 1704, Ignazio complained about the marchioness’ intrusion in his cause (ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 162, Palermo, March 6, 1704) and, more than ten years later, he wrote that his departure had been previously canceled after the intervention of his parents and the viceroy (ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 464, Marsala, March 15, 1717). About the latter, at the time Francesco Del Giudice, see [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-del-giudice_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-del-giudice_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

72 “superar facilmente gl’assalti lagrimosi di mia Madre [...] mi vedo preclusa quasi dell’in tutto la strada all’Indie bramate se il negozio debba dipendere dal sì di mia Madre [...] labirinto [...] di ciò son contento, e quando altro a Dio non possa sacrificare, gli sacrificerò l’allontanamento de’ parenti e della propria Provincia,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 162 (Palermo, March 6, 1704).

felt that he would have been available nevertheless to assist his family from Sicily or nearby. Even the geographically closer Tunisia was, for instance, a destination that his parents would have accepted more peacefully, but Ignazio had quite openly refused it before.⁷³ In the Western or Eastern Indies, instead, his family knew that it was unlikely that he would ever return and that, from the moment of his departure, he would no longer be able to assist his young siblings and sick mother, while his father feared that he or his second son could die suddenly and leave the Magnisi family in difficulty. As a Jesuit priest, Ignazio would not have been able to inherit the title of marquis delli Magnisi. By being based in Sicily, however, with his father too old and his brothers too young, the eldest son at least could maintain some role of oversight within his family. Given the elevated status of the family, such decisions about who would head the family, and who was permitted to leave it, carried consequences that went beyond it, and likely impacted on the socio-political fabric in which the Jesuits were operating in Sicily, making difficult for poor Ignazio to overcome his family's determination. The young Jesuit did not conceal his anger or, even more, his refusal to comply, indicating that the expectation of help from him on the part of his father was only a "chimera," and that he would have helped his house "solely with my prayers."⁷⁴ He concluded his letter, nevertheless, on an optimistic note, observing that his mother's emotionally-charged protest was almost over, and that she seemed "now [...] quite pacified." However, like many of his fellow-petitioners, Ignazio was too prone to see the bright side, and he ignored other more concrete signs.

After some time, the beleaguered Ignazio returned to the subject in yet another letter to the general, underlining all the months (five!) that had passed since their last correspondence. He was unable to "find the Indies in Sicily; I am waiting to be consoled by the Real Indies."⁷⁵ Since their last communication, Ignazio remained "silent, directing all possible energies towards calming my relatives (who oppose my Indian move)." This is what the general had enjoined

73 Ignazio wrote one year before that the provincial superior wanted to send him as a missionary to Tunisi, but he refused this destination because Sicily and North Africa were not distant enough, and his parents would have called him back every time they wanted to (ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 135, Sciacca, April 26, 1703).

74 "chimera, aiuterò sol la sua casa colle sole orazioni [...] hor [...] quasi placate," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 135.

75 "ritruovar l'Indie in Sicilia, aspetto d'esser consolato coll'Indie Reali [...] sto in silenzio, e pongo tutte le possibili industrie per acquetare i miei Parenti (contrarii alla mia mossa Indiana) [...] più che mai ostinati [...] Gesuiti Santi, Dotti, e Prudenti [...] sicuri del non contravenire al divino volere impedendo la mia partenza [...] pronto a partenza furtiva, e ad ogn'altro, fosse necessario per assecondare alle divine chiamate," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 170 (Palermo, July 12, 1704).

him to do, but, he wrote, they seemed “more stubborn than ever.” As to why they refused to change their minds, Ignazio explained that this was because the spiritual care of his parents was in the hands of the same Jesuits who were stopping him from leaving. These priests, described as “holy, learned and cautious,” were constantly reassuring his parents they were “not contravening the divine will by wishing to prevent my departure.” Ignazio felt trapped as the result of a conspiratorial alliance between his parents, possibly the viceroy, and his Sicilian superiors. But he remained firm in his determination to leave, and he even seemed to calculate that he could count on the general’s support, when he confided that he was “ready for a stealthy departure, and for anything else necessary to support my divine callings.”

Ignazio, however, continued to be obliged to wait, although, remarkably, he remained hopeful about his future in the Indies. He wrote regular letters to Rome, on some occasions waiting for more time than usual, to demonstrate his “obedient” respect for the general’s will. For his part, the latter replied with the same regularity, always repeating how Ignazio’s departure was in the hands of God. Ignazio’s penultimate petition was written in 1717. In many respects this was a different era from the one in which he first wrote of his missionary vocation: thirteen years had passed since he received his unrealised “license;” by now, his correspondent was General Tamburini (in office 1706–30), and Ignazio himself was forty-one years old. He recalled in his letter: “I have not written for two-and-a-half years, and I will not repeat here my well-known requests for the Missions of the Indies, because I remained hopeful, in accord with your paternal letters, that if an opening were to occur [in the missions], you would have satisfied me.”⁷⁶ The next sections will show that the general was not as forthcoming in encouraging Ignazio’s hope as would appear here, even though Ignazio gives the impression in his letters that Tamburini repeatedly fueled his expectations of an imminent departure.

By 1717, then, and despite the objectively reduced likelihood of ever realizing his aim, Ignazio was no less motivated than before, except that this time he included an admission of envy—a “holy envy” of course. He saw many of his province leaving for the Indies and after a novena to Xavier, he felt “inspired” to

76 “Sono due anni e mezzo, che non scrivo a Vostra Paternità, e non le replico le mie ben consapute istanze delle Missioni dell’Indie, perché stavo coerentemente alle paterne sue lettere sulla speranza, che nell’apertura se l’incontrarebbero, m’avesse esaudito [...] santa invidia [...] or veggo esauditi [...] molti di questa Provincia, e fatta la Novena a San Francesco Saverio [...] mi sento ispirato a ricordare a Vostra Paternità le mie brame con tutta la caldezza possibile, le accompagno colla dovuta indifferenza [...] non sono sì avanzato nell’età, che è sol di quarant’un anno, che non possa cimentarmi a viaggi lunghi, ed a qualunque fatica,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 464 (Palermo, March 15, 1717).

remind the general of his “yearnings, with all possible warmth and accompanying them with the required indifference.” All things considered, he optimistically added: “I am not so advanced in years, for I am only 41, not so old that I am unable to endure long journeys and every possible hardship.” He reminded his correspondent of how long his desire had persisted: “from the time of my entry to the Society of Jesus.” He also indicated where the new general could find the written evidence of his vocation, in the Roman Archives: “if you conduct a search from the year 1702, it is possible to find there more than thirty of my letters, in part addressed to Your Paternity, in part to your predecessor [...], who appointed me [to the New World missions] in 1704, and as I was preparing to leave, everything was thrown into confusion by my domestic enemies.”⁷⁷ About the latter, he specified how “they are all dead now, and cannot stop me anymore.”

Ignazio's last letter to the general (1720) makes no mention of the Indian missions, but only of the Sicilian ones, whose situation was a great concern to him. They seemed to him to have become “too disgraced and despised by ‘ours’ [Sicilian Jesuits].”⁷⁸ After failing in his aim and even after his relatives' death, Ignazio seems to have found a different but equally satisfactory meaning to his Jesuit vocation in the local missions. Yet, a number of other documentary testimonies hint at a different outcome. For example, unusually, Ignazio's name is not included on the list of the deceased Jesuits and, in browsing the copies of the letters sent by the generals to the Sicilians, it would seem possible to rewrite Ignazio's story and find unexpected developments along the way. At the same time, answers can be found in these sources to some unresolved questions about the appointment process to the Indies, and the role in this process played by the intensely personal and long-standing correspondence exchanged between a number of Jesuits (and on occasion their families, as in this case) and the general of the Society of Jesus.

The Sicilian letter-books reveal a different face of Ignazio. Even before his first petitions, his name was mentioned for the first time in a reply to his father, from general González in 1698. The latter was keen to reassure the marquis that Ignazio, who as we know had some health problems, was well taken care

77 “fin dall'ingresso nella Compagnia [...] se farà ricercare fin dal 1702, trovarà in cotesto Archivio più di trenta mie lettere parte indirizzate a Vostra Paternità, e parte all'Antecessore [...] il quale nel 1704 mi ci disegnò, ed intrapresi la partenza, e dai miei nimici domestici [...] (li quali tutti son morti, e non possono più impedire) mi fu frastornata,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 464.

78 “troppo dicaduto, e vilipeso da nostri in questa Provincia,” ARSI, FG 751, fol. 80 (Agrigento, January 19, 1720). Even if this letter is preserved among the *indipetae*, it cannot be considered a petition for the Indies.

of in the Society. He declared: “Never shall the Society of Jesus nor I fail to keep a watchful eye of Charity upon Your Most Illustrious Lord’s firstborn, and our brother Romeo.”⁷⁹ He reassured the marquis that he, as father, had charge over the medical care of his son, according to his wish. In the same register, there are at least two further letters to Ignazio’s father (in 1699 and 1700), containing thanks and congratulations.⁸⁰ The relationship between the Magnisi family and the Jesuit leadership in Rome (and probably Sicily) was quite close. In the same letter-book, the general answered a lost letter written by Ignazio, advising him to keep his hope alive and to get better as soon as possible, in order to ensure his speedy departure for the Indies: “If your spiritual fervor were to correspond to your physical health, I would not be reluctant to satisfy your request [...] But for now it is advisable for you to recover completely from your illness, and to contain your apostolic desire within this college.”⁸¹

Ignazio indeed mentions this illness (in his first surviving petition from 1702), from which he claims to be healed. How can we confirm whether his health condition was improving? One of the most important sources to access this kind of information on “unknown” Jesuits are the *Triennial Catalogs* (compiled approximately every three years), which registered the main data about every single Jesuit in the world.⁸² The *First Catalog* reported name and origins,

79 “Non mai né la Compagnia, né io lasceremo di riguardare con occhio di attentissima Carità il primogenito di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima e nostro fratello Romeo,” ARSI, *Sic.* 38, fol. 18^v (Palermo, July 28, 1698).

80 ARSI, *Sic.* 38, fol. 81^r (Palermo, August 10, 1699) and fol. 122^r (Palermo, March s.d., 1700).

81 “Se al fervore dello spirito corrispondesse in voi il vigore del corpo, non sarei alieno dall’esaudire le vostre istanze [...] Ma per ora conviene, che attendiate a risanare dalle vostre indisposizioni, e a contenere dentro i termini di cotesto Collegio i vostri apostolici desiderii,” ARSI, *Sic.* 38, fol. 224^r (Palermo, August 29, 1701).

82 The *Catalogus Primus (sive publicus)* provided information on every Jesuit’s “Nomen et cognomen, Patria, Aetas, Vires, Tempus Societatis, Tempus Studiorum, Ministeria quae exercuit, Gradus in Litteris and Gradus in Societate.” The *Catalogus Secundus (sive secretus)*, because it was based not on the name but on an identification number) recorded “Ingenium, Prudentia, Experientia Rerum, Profectus in Litteris, Naturalis complexio, Ad quo ministeria Societatis habet talentum” of each member. There was also a *Catalogus Tertius (sive rerum)*, which registered practical information concerning every Jesuit house. About this source, see Lamalle, “L’archivio di un grande ordine;” Robert Danieluk, “Michał Boym, Andrzej Rudomina and Jan Smogulecki: Three Seventeenth Century Missionaries in China: A Selection of Documents from the Roman Jesuit Archives,” *Monumenta Serica* 59, no. 1 (2011): 417–43; Cristiano Casalini, “Discerning Skills: Psychological Insight at the Core of Jesuit Identity,” in *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 189–211; Valentina Bobková-Valentová, “Come elaborare la biografia di un gesuita?: Rassegna delle fonti di registro dell’ordine, loro conservazione, accessibilità e valore documentario nella prospettiva di una sistematica elaborazione di un database

time in the Society, accomplished studies and grades, and performed tasks. The *Second Catalog*—complimentary but “secret”—contained deeper considerations about every Jesuit and his personal attitudes, virtues, defects, and intelligence. It also tried a “psychological” profiling of his person and talents, in order to spend every human resource in the best way for the Society. As for Ignazio, in 1693 the Jesuit catalogs described him as healthy; three years later, he was reported as ill, but then again fit by 1700.⁸³ It seems that Ignazio’s strength was the object of different interpretations: in 1701, for instance, the general still referred to this as a reason to leave him in Sicily. In his native island he certainly would have not had “all the hardships of the Missions in the Indies,” but his merits would have “undoubtedly compensated for them.”⁸⁴

This, however, was not a definitive outcome, because in the subsequent epistolary exchanges, Ignazio managed to convince the general that he would be a perfect missionary for the “real” Indies. At the beginning of 1704, Ignazio received a letter “with the longed-for notification to set forth.”⁸⁵ The provincial was appointed to take care of the “details of the arrangement [...] concerning the circumstances pertaining to departure and navigation.” The general wished him the best: “I hope that the Lord with brotherly spirit will keep alight always the holy fire of zeal for his divine glory, and for the health of souls; and that he keeps you long in bodily strength for this heavenly undertaking.” This was the typical tone of this kind of letter, which finally confirmed to a Jesuit the “license” to leave for the Indies as a missionary.

After some days of joy, Ignazio was sorely disappointed. The *Epistulae generalium* clarify the reasons: it was an immediate reaction to Ignazio’s family, who protested vociferously against his appointment in a letter signed by the marquis himself. He recounted to the general how his son visited him at home “with the objective of receiving ‘license’ to leave for the Indies, where he says

biografico,” *Bollettino dell’Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma* 9 (2014): 111–45; José Manuel Díaz Blanco, “Un sistema de información en la Europa del siglo XVII: Los catálogos trienales de la Compañía de Jesús,” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 23 (2014): 341–69; Marina Massimi, “Engenho e temperamentos nos catálogos e no pensamento da Companhia de Jesus nos séculos XVII e XVIII,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicopatología Fundamental* 11, no. 4 (2008): 675–87.

83 ARSI, *Sic.* 86, fol. 127; *Sic.* 89, fol. 111.

84 “non haverete certamente i travagli delle Missioni dell’Indie, ma potrete senza dubbio compensarne i meriti,” ARSI, *Sic.* 38, fol. 224^r (Palermo, August 29, 1701).

85 “coll’avviso desiderato di mettersi in viaggio [...] particolari determinazioni [...] intorno alle circostanze della partenza, e della navigazione [...] Prego il Signore con fraterno spirito, che le mantenga sempre acceso nel cuore il santo fuoco del zelo della sua divina gloria, e della salute delle anime; e che le conservi anche lungamente le forze corporali per quest’impiego celeste,” ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 9^r (Palermo, January 22, 1704).

that God is calling him.”⁸⁶ The marquis was actually not convinced it was God who called Ignazio, but it seemed to him more like a juvenile whim. This sentence also suggests that, in the case of appointments to the Indies, “license” could sometimes, in a way, be sought also from the family of the candidate. This news came to him completely out of the blue: Ignazio never mentioned this strange idea, “even if his mother did have some knowledge of his vocation.” The marquis proceeds to place the responsibility for the ensuing drama squarely on his wife, who he described as not being psychologically prepared for a farewell. Facing the prospect of “such a sudden departure, becoming overwhelmed by the violence of an intolerable grief, she cried to such an extent as to seem almost in danger of dying.”

The marquis immediately turned to the provincial for help, adding that “I would not have left my place at his feet, if he had not granted me so much time as he was able to do previously.”⁸⁷ In writing to the general now, he wished to set out “sincere and truthful information about the state of my House (family affairs),” and the reasons why Ignazio should not leave. First of all, his son’s health was not as good as Ignazio claimed: no miracle managed to cure him completely, and from the time of his entry to the Society of Jesus, he had been ill often. Second, the Magnisi couple had borne twenty children, but “God [...] called to Himself half of them, granting them in advance the possession of that glory for which we were created;” Ignazio now was the firstborn among them. All the others were young or very young: “three of them are spinsters not yet ‘placed’ [in marriage or convents]; of the other five, the eldest is not yet fourteen, and the last two are not yet weaned.” As for the marquis, he was advanced in years (for the period), at forty-eight, and depicted himself too old to have enough strength to take care of all of them. Further, he had no one to rely on: “I have neither father nor mother, nor brothers or sisters.” The same happened for his wife, whom he described as not even able to look after herself. The marchioness was forty-four years old, “ailing, devastated by twenty

86 “a fin di prender licenza per andarsene all’Indie, ove egli dice che Dio lo chiama [...] ancorché avesse avuto sua madre qualche notizia della sua vocazione [...] si affrettata l’esecuzione della partenza, che sopraffatta da violenza di cordoglio intollerabile, l’ha pianto in pericolo quasi evidente di morire,” ARSI, *Sic.* 188, fol. 133 (Palermo, 4 March 1704).

87 “non mi sarei mosso da suoi piedi, se prima non mi avesse concesso tanto di tempo quanto si potesse [...] una sincera e veridica informazione dello stato presente della mia Casa [...] Dio [...] la metà l’ha chiamato a sé, anticipandole il possesso di quella gloria, per cui fummo creati [...] tre son Zitelle non ancora collocate, dell’altri cinque il più grande non ha 14 anni, e l’ultimi due sono ancora lattanti [...] non ho Padre né madre, né fratelli né sorelle [...] di poca salute, e disfatta da 20 parti, oltre l’aborti framezzati, quando uno, e quando due da un parto all’altro, patisce d’un flato ippocondriaco, che la rende talvolta quasi fuor di se stessa,” ARSI, *Sic.* 188, fol. 133.

deliveries, in addition to the many miscarriages that she suffered (often one or two) between one childbirth and another; she suffers a condition founded in hypochondria, that causes her on occasion almost to go out of her mind.”

According to the marquis, Ignazio was the last hope for his family: “the only child, from whom we may gain some benefit from having had him, if for nothing else, at least to assist in closing our eyes [after death].”⁸⁸ If he were to leave them for the Indies, the physicians who took care of the marchioness were afraid that “either she would go completely mad, or that she would die of an apoplectic fit.” If this were to take place, as the doctors considered likely, the marquis reminded the superior general that he would have no son, no wife, and his remaining children to take care of. He pointed out to the general, finally, the biblical duty to assist one’s parents: “divine and human laws prescribe every assistance from sons and daughters.” He placed all these reflections, requests, and details about his family’s circumstances, within a tone of formal humility and submission: “like a child to his father.” In these epistolary exchanges, the general not only was the spiritual father of Ignazio, but of Ignazio’s natural father too, who was begging/demanding him not to let his son go. This submission was, in fact, a rhetorical strategy as well, and the marquis knew he had some potential sway over the superior general, on account of his elevated social position and the apparent material support he had given to the Society. From this correspondence sent from Sicily, he thus sought to enlist these advantages to attempt to persuade the general of the Society of Jesus in Rome to do as he wished.

The contrasting letters sent to Rome about this case—from the Sicilian marquis closely connected to the Society of Jesus, and from his son with a burning vocation to depart for the Indies—reveal the difficult position created for the general to produce replies to both of them. In the first place, in late-March 1704 general González sent reassurances to the marquis about his concerns for his son: “the obligation to you, and your Lady Consort, shall not be overlooked, in resolving the departure of Father Romeo, your son.”⁸⁹ Indeed he had warned the provincial about the importance of the peace of the Magnisi family, which was held “very close to my heart.” Then, a few days later, González wrote to Ignazio with a brief note of praise about the “holy

88 “l’unico figlio, di cui potremmo far capitale d’averlo, se non per altro, almeno assistente al capezzale per serrarci l’occhi [...] o che sia per uscire affatto di cervello, o che sia per restar morta di colpo apopletico [...] le leggi Divine et humane prescrivono da figli ogni soccorso [...] come figlio a Padre,” ARSI, *Sic.* 188, fol. 133.

89 “non si mancherà dei dovuti riguardi verso la persona, e della sua Signora Consorte, nel risolvere la partenza del Padre Romeo loro figlio [...] sommamente a cuore,” ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 47^r (Palermo, March 31, 1704).

estrangement from your Relatives, that Your Reverence expresses.”⁹⁰ At the same time, he suggested he re-discuss his vocation with them, unmoved about the importance of securing their approval along with his: “before leaving these shores, it is advisable to calm your Lord Father and Lady Mother, somehow.” From the surviving documentation on the matter, however, it was unlikely that the marquis and the marchioness would change their mind: on the contrary, the head of the family made himself very clear in his letter to the general about his decision not to let Ignazio go, and apparently the Society in this case was committed to following the wishes of this well-connected family. The Roman curia probably was well aware that the Jesuit had little chance of leaving while his parents were alive. However, Ignazio was not discouraged definitively (also because this situation may well have changed at any moment), and instead recommended that he continue with his petitions, and with trying to convince his parents about his vocation.

Throughout the rest of that same year (1704), the general received further requests from Ignazio, without, however, renewing his “licence” for departure to the Indies. He tried to console him instead and, while perhaps not believing in what he was promising (or at least keeping in mind that the situation could change if his parents were to pass away), he wrote: “I do not doubt that, little by little, with the help of time, Your Reverence will be able to efficaciously, as well as gently, conquer your relatives’ souls,” in such a way that they would not suffer excessively on account of the separation.⁹¹ General González would have been praying to the Lord for this, but only “if this is God’s will [...] without offense to people [...] on every account they deserve the most particular respect, from you and from me.” The Sicilian *Epistulae generalium* contain many replies to letters sent from Ignazio over the following years that are no longer preserved. Ignazio knew that his father and probably his superiors continued to divert the course of his destiny away from the overseas missions. Like every other Jesuit, however, Ignazio could directly turn to the general via letters *solis*, i.e. destined for his eyes only (with no intermediation of superiors). He may have received constant replies because of his elevated social status, but very probably it was because of it that he never departed. The sway of his family in Sicilian life and

90 “santa alienazione da’ Parenti che Vostra Reverenza esprime [...] ma prima di partir di costà conviene che in qualche modo acquieti i suoi Signori Padre e Madre,” ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 50 (Palermo, April s.d., 1704).

91 “Non diffido, che a poco a poco, e coll’aiuto del tempo Vostra Paternità non possa efficacemente insieme e soavemente espugnar l’animo de’ suoi congiunti [...] se questa è Sua volontà [...] senza offesa di persone [...] per ogni motivo meritano da lei, e da me un particolarissimo rispetto,” ARSI, *Sic.* 40, fol. 109r (Palermo, August 11, 1704).

their close ties to the Jesuits, apparently were such that his parents' wishes overrode the general's decision to send him overseas.

Ignazio nevertheless remained hopeful that he might yet leave for good. It was during this time that there were many changes in Ignazio's environment: general González died in 1705, Tamburini took his place in 1706, and both of Ignazio's parents passed away.⁹² Tamburini's first reply to thirty-five-years old Ignazio reveals an increasing exasperation, apparently reprimanding him for failing to understand that it was no longer possible for him to be sent overseas. In response to several years of Ignazio's stubbornness in failing to apprehend this point, he delivered (what should have been) a definitive reply to his petitions: "Your Reverence must be satisfied with the merit that the Lord will grant you for your good and holy desires: since at this stage your age is quite advanced; the difficulty that you would encounter in learning a new language (not only foreign, but difficult in itself); the time you would spend on the long journey; and the many things that you would leave undone here [in Sicily], where you are working so well for the glory of the Lord—render the fulfillment of your desires, not only difficult, but also impossible. Therefore, content yourself in this way, to exercise your zeal for the benefit of Souls, and besides that believe that the Lord wants nothing further from you."⁹³

While Ignazio may have experienced some shock in reading these quite strong and unambiguous words from the general, he did not seem particularly discouraged. He stayed in touch with Tamburini, although his focus did appear to include matters not exclusively oriented to his vocation to the Indies: he wrote about the Sicilian missions, asked to have companions join him, judging and promoting some of them, and finally tried to solve internal disorders.⁹⁴ Even in these "obedient" letters, however, glimpses emerge that Ignazio did not surrender his desire for the Indies: in 1713, the general had to remind him to be content with his current circumstances. His age and labors already expended

92 See a reference to memorial masses for Ignazio's father: ARSI, *Sic.* 43, fols. 36–37 (Palermo, March 4, 1709). Ignazio's mother died after 1707 (year in which she protested her son's departure) and before 1717, when Ignazio mentioned that his relatives were deceased: ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 464 (Marsala, March 15, 1717).

93 "bisogna [...] che Vostra Reverenza si contenti di quel merito che il Signore le darà per i suoi buoni e santi desiderii, poiché la sua età oramai alquanto avanzata, la difficoltà che per essa provarebbe di imparare un linguaggio non solo straniero, ma per se stesso difficile, il tempo che spenderebbe nella lunga navigazione, et il molto che lascerebbe di fare costi dove opera si bene in gloria del Signore non solo difficultano, ma impossibilitano l'adempimento delle sue brame. Ella perciò si contenti di esercitare così il suo zelo a beneficio delle Anime, e creda pure che il Signore non vuol altro da lei," ARSI, *Sic.* 44, fol. 139^r (Palermo, September 14, 1711).

94 ARSI, *Sic.* 44, fol. 149^r (Palermo, October 20, 1711) and fol. 74^r (Palermo, August 8, 1712).

for the Society, the general told him, no longer permitted him to face the trials of the journey. His desire for the Indies was proportional to the spiritual benefits he would receive, just the same as if he had actually gone there: “Enlist your Apostolic fervour for the missions in these our Parts, while your desire for the more distant missions of the Indies will itself attract a reward, because your age and the hardships that you have endured are not equal to such a long and arduous voyage.”⁹⁵

From Ignazio’s only partially extant letters, he did not give up and in 1717, after a break of two-and-a-half years in writing, he reminded the general that there was nothing to stop his departure by then: his “domestic enemies” who had brought about such “confusion” in his affairs had now died. Nevertheless, at some point, Ignazio seems to have accepted his fate to remain in the “Indie di qua.” in 1717 Tamburini acknowledged his work and wrote very warmly to him about his victory over this very persistent cause for suffering pain in his vocation. It gave Tamburini “no small consolation” to learn that “after diligent reflection Your Reverence acknowledges the ministry of the missions to be commendable.”⁹⁶ The general promised that for Ignazio “in no other place, as much as in this very Kingdom, may be found those Indies to which you aspire. Attend to sanctify these people with untiring zeal and, in time, you will receive from the eternal Remunerator that same crown, which others will win through their hardships among the Barbarians of Asia and America.”

Further replies to Ignazio exist from 1718, when the general indicated his appreciation in learning about the “reports [...] concerning the establishment of these missions, and of the various incidents relating to them,” the details about which Ignazio had informed him.⁹⁷ Tamburini wished for Ignazio to “enjoy the peace of these months of rest, without being troubled by anyone who may happen to be unhappy with your stay in this College.” In the same

95 “Impieghi Vostra Reverenza il suo fervore Apostolico nelle missioni di queste nostre Parti, et abbia il merito del desiderio che ha delle missioni più lontane delle Indie, poiché la sua età e le fatiche che ha fatto, non le proporzionano un viaggio sì lungo, e sì arduo,” ARSI, *Sic.* 45, fol. 220^r (Palermo, August 8, 1713).

96 “non ordinaria consolazione l'avviso che Vostra Reverenza mi porge di essersi dopo diligente desaminazione riconosciuto per commendabile il ministero delle missioni [...] non altrove che in cotesto Regno le costituisco quelle Indie alle quali aspira. Attenda a santificare cotesti popoli con zelo indefesso e riceverà a suo tempo dall'eterno Rimuneratore quella stessa corona, che altri vi conquisteranno faticando tra' Barbari dell'Asia e dell'America,” ARSI, *Sic.* 47, fol. 352^v (Palermo, December 13, 1717).

97 “relazione [...] della fondazione di coteste missioni e delle varie vicende alle quali è stata sottoposta [...] si goda in pace questi mesi di riposo senza prendersi alcun travaglio di chi per avventura si adombrasse del suo soggiorno in cotesto Collegio,” ARSI, *Sic.* 48, fol. 61^r (Palermo, May 18, 1718).

year, the general thanked him for other “news [...] about the various responsibilities of our houses and colleges in relation to the missions,”⁹⁸ for his commitment to promote them,⁹⁹ and assuring him that “at the opportune time, all of these matters would be settled as necessary.”¹⁰⁰ A few years later, Ignazio had further roles and responsibilities, along with his missionary work, including tasks at the tribunal of the Holy Office. His letters from the general reflect these positions: he was praised for his zeal and warmly thanked for his donations.¹⁰¹ Tamburini also congratulated Ignazio for his “great efforts, travels, and diligence in working to maintain the good name of the Society,” for the sake of the Sicilian missions.¹⁰²

At the end of 1720, Ignazio apparently wrote a letter filled with “many difficult points,” and had to wait until February 1721 before he received the general’s detailed reply, who appears to have been acting once more as a mediating figure, this time with the provincial.¹⁰³ General Tamburini assured him that he would raise all of these topics with the provincial, but directed Ignazio to be satisfied with what could be done realistically, without demanding too much: “use every diligence to do the best you can; if it is not possible to do everything, then do what is necessary.” In the meantime, Ignazio had written to Rome again, and within days was sent assurance once more that his advice about the missions had been communicated to the provincial, who was trying to put them into practice.¹⁰⁴ After some months, Ignazio was praised because he helped in another delicate matter he “concluded with such satisfaction [...] with such honour for the Society,” thanks to his “good heart and competence.”¹⁰⁵ In the same letter, Ignazio once more was assured of the importance of the Sicilian mission: “I will take to my heart the care of these Missions, and the Missionary

98 “notizie [...] intorno a vari obblighi delle nostre case e collegi in favore delle missioni,” ARSI, *Sic.* 48, fol. 93^r (Palermo, August 1, 1718).

99 ARSI, *Sic.* 48, fol. 123^r (Palermo, October 24, 1718).

100 “per ordinare a tempo congruo, che si dia loro quel provvedimento che sarà necessario,” *Sic.* 48, fol. 132^r (Palermo, November 14, 1718).

101 ARSI, *Sic.* 49, fol. 10^r (n.p., March 25, 1720) and fol. 68^r (Palermo, November 4, 1720).

102 “grandi fatiche, viaggi e diligenze impiegate per mantenere il buon nome della Compagnia nella causa del Padre Urso,” ARSI, *Sic.* 49, fol. 22^r (n.p., May 13, 1720).

103 “punti molto difficili [...] si usi ogni diligenza per fare quel che si può, se non può farsi tutto quel che si deve,” ARSI, *Sic.* 49, fol. 87^r (Palermo, February 3, 1721).

104 ARSI, *Sic.* 49, fol. 93^r (Palermo, February 17, 1721).

105 “per l’esito felice che ha procurato all’affare [...] terminato con tanta soddisfazione dell’afflitto Padre, e con tanto decoro della Compagnia mercé del buon cuore, e della destrezza con cui Vostra Reverenza ha maneggiato [...] Mi prenderò a cuore la causa di coteste Missioni, e de’ Padri Missionarii [...] un ministero sì proprio della Compagnia,” ARSI, *Sic.* 49, fol. 124^r (Palermo, June 9, 1721).

Fathers [...] a ministry that indeed belongs to the Society.” Nevertheless, Ignazio was in a phase of almost bombarding the superior general with letters, since he soon had to write to him again about the same topic.¹⁰⁶ At the beginning of the following year, Ignazio still seemed to be completely immersed in promoting the Sicilian missions.¹⁰⁷ The pace and intensity of his work and communication was frenetic in this period: by now he was in his late-forties, relatively senior, and certainly a long-standing member of the Society.

Ignazio, however, seemed increasingly dissatisfied and frustrated in the Society, and in 1722 the superior general had to advise and comfort him about his crisis. He wrote that it was not easy to work together with other Jesuits for the kinds of tasks he had been asked to attend to, but Ignazio should be realistic and reasonable: “I too feel the affliction that has been brought about by the difficulties that Your Reverence faces in implementing the Rules that have been established concerning the Missions.”¹⁰⁸ Tamburini had to insist on how “obedience” was requested even “if these rules are not well justified,” because “action must not triumph over reason.” Tamburini advised him that he could not control everything and be everywhere: it was hard for just one person to carry out all his tasks. The general seems to be showing the first signs of disappointment about Ignazio’s excessive commitment to everything he cared for: the Indian missions before, and the Sicilian ones after. Ignazio proposed a solution to his problems, requesting two companions to help him: “one [...] in the city, and another to whom the affairs of the Countryside might be entrusted.”¹⁰⁹ Tamburini saw an incompatibility between all of these tasks and did not agree. He closed his letter communicating to Ignazio that he would be substituted: theoretically not to punish him, but on the contrary to keep every “occasion of bitterness” away from him. The general in any case had already charged the provincial to find “someone who was competent, and less busy” than Ignazio.

A month later, the *Epistulae generalium* contain a quite unexpected letter from Tamburini to Ignazio concerning the possible exit of Ignazio from the Society of Jesus. For the general, the news came as “absolutely unexpected,”¹¹⁰

106 ARSI, *Sic.* 49, fol. 135^r (Palermo, July 14, 1721) and fol. 146^r (Palermo, August 18, 1721).

107 ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 95^r (Palermo, August 3, 1722) and fol. 104^r (Palermo, August 3, 1722).

108 “Ridonda anche in me l'afflitione che le hanno recata le difficoltà che Vostra Reverenza incontra nell'esecuzione del Regolamento stabilito intorno alle Missioni [...] osservanza degli ordini dati [...] non deve l'impegno prevalere alla ragione,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 113^r (Palermo, August 31, 1722).

109 “per aver Compagno di cui servirsi in Città, et un altro a cui raccomandare gl'affari di Campagna [...] ogni occasione di amarezza [...] qualche soggetto capace, e meno occupato,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 120^r (Palermo, September 14, 1722).

110 “affatto improvvisa l'istanza [...] La stima ch'ella ha sempre dimostrata della sua Vocazione, il zelo con cui l'ha propagata [...] la sodisfazione con cui ha sempre corrisposto

and he was even more shocked to learn that Ignazio claimed that he conceived and matured this decision for at least twenty years. Tamburini wrote, dumbfounded, “how much you always appreciated your Vocation, the zeal you used to propagate it [...] the satisfaction you had in meeting its duties, never made me dread such inconstancy after so many years of religious life.” Indeed, Tamburini felt sure that a mere “temporary excitement” had prompted Ignazio to write his letter. In the meantime, he hoped for him that he would have “come to your senses and returned to a greater loyalty to that Lord, to whom so many times in the past you swore your allegiance.” This plan could be approved “neither by God nor the World, neither by you nor your prominent relatives, whose honor you take so much to heart.” The general was ready to leave behind this “volubility” before it was too late, since he wanted to believe that Ignazio’s mind had changed in the meantime. This mistake would have been “forever canceled” from his memory, where only Ignazio’s “virtues and merits within the Society of Jesus” would have remained alive.

Tamburini understood that the probable reason for this crisis of vocation was Ignazio’s frustration, and the fact that he did not feel appreciated for all he had done for the Sicilian missions, which were not even his first choice. The general explained his previous decisions as just ordinary administration: “as for your tasks up to this point, the idea of entrusting them to another person who is less occupied than you should not seem strange to you, given that the fact and taking of offices is nothing new to the Society, according to what is considered to be the most suited to the Service and glory of God.”¹¹¹ He concluded by enjoining Ignazio to serve God as best he can, and in peace, in the knowledge that there are many ways yet to serve him, and in the certainty that God will appreciate his “humble and steady resignation to his divine will.”

During the following months, several letters from Rome were sent in an effort to persuade the Sicilian Jesuit to wait and think about his decision. The

agl'obblighi di essa, non m'hanno mai lasciata temere in Vostra Reverenza dopo tant'anni di vita religiosa una tale incostanza [...] l'impeto della passione [...] havrà ripigliati sentimenti di maggiore fermezza, e di maggior fedeltà a quel Signore a cui tante volte ha giurato [...] non poter essere approvata né da Dio né dal Mondo, né poter essere a lei né al suo cospicuo parentado di quel decoro che tanto le sta a cuore [...] volubilità [...] perpetuamente cancellata dalla mia memoria, in cui resteranno vive soltanto le virtù di Vostra Reverenza et i suoi meriti con la Compagnia,” *ARSI, Sic.* 50, fol. 136 (Palermo, October 26, 1722).

111 “Per ciò che riguarda l'impiego da lei fin' hora esercitato, non le deve parere strano che si pensi di addossarle a persona di lei meno occupata, non essendo nuovo nella Compagnia il dare et il togliere gl'uffici secondo che si vede maggiormente convenire al Servizio et alla gloria di Dio [...] umile e costante rassegnazione alla sua divina volontà,” *ARSI, Sic.* 50, fol. 136.

general was hoping that Ignazio by then would have “recognized the enemy’s deceit; under the false pretenses of a larger good, [the Devil] wants to lead you to lose your faith in God, whom instead you may serve in all fullness in the very ministries of the Society.”¹¹² The general reminded Ignazio that staying within the order could help him gain “that level of perfection” that God required of him.¹¹³ The reasons to leave the Society for another order that Ignazio mentioned (in a not preserved letter) were not sufficient, because “as I wrote to you many times before, inside the Society of Jesus and by the grace of God, you will be able to put into practice your zeal.”¹¹⁴ Ignazio should be acquiescent “towards every tribulation that you may meet, even when Your Reverence has no occasion to exercise any other virtue than that of obedience,” for submission of one’s own will to the Divine one was a true and valuable sacrifice to God. Evidence of these repeated attempts to keep Ignazio inside the Society of Jesus exist only in the general’s registers of letters to the Sicilian province. Without these testimonies, he would have seemed a “normal” Jesuit, who overcame his missionary vocation without particular problems—although clearly, he had a particular penchant for sending a steady stream of requests to Rome.

Several months later, Tamburini still was not surrendering, even if he understood how serious the situation was, and sent to Ignazio all his “esteem and affection.”¹¹⁵ He suffered for his decision and felt “anguish” seeing him “engaged in a decision that would bring little honor to yourself, and to the Society of Jesus.” Ignazio’s virtues, merits and intentions certainly could be more useful within his own order, in which he could find a “very big field that opens out before you, perhaps more than in any other.” He made an offer: if Ignazio was

112 “l’averà conosciuto l’inganno del nemico, il quale sotto apparenze di maggior bene vorrebbe indurla a mancar di fede a Dio, a cui ella potrà servire con tutta l’ampiezza ne’ ministeri proprii della Compagnia,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 149 (Palermo, November 16, 1722).

113 “quel grado di perfettione che Dio esige da lei,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 158 (Palermo, December 21, 1722).

114 “come più volte le ho scritto, nella Compagnia e per grazia del Signore non le potrà mai mancar campo di esercitar il suo zelo [...] a qualunque contrarietà ella potrà incontrare: anzi quando anche Vostra Reverenza non avesse luogo di esercitar altra virtù, che quella dell’ubbidienza,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 175 (Palermo, January 25, 1723).

115 “la stima, e l’affetto [...] il rammarico di vederla impegnata in una risoluzione, che ridonderebbe in poco decoro suo, e della Compagnia [...] vastissimo campo, che le si apre nella Compagnia, forse più che in altre Religioni [...] Non mancherà poi a’ superiori l’attenzione di assegnarle qualche impiego, che riesca di sua piena sodisfazione, al che io contribuirò di buon grado le mie più efficaci premure [...] non si metta a rischio di perdere in un momento tutto il Capitale di stima, e credito, che in tanti anni di vita religiosa tra noi ha acquistato presso gli Uomini, e forse anche il gran cumulo di meriti guadagnati finora presso Dio [...] non di rado l’Angelo delle tenebre si trasfigura in Angelo di Luce,” ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 192 (Palermo, March 8, 1723).

not pleased with his Jesuit path, the general could find a way to give him more suitable roles of his choosing: "Your superiors will not fail to pay particular attention to assigning you a role that would meet your satisfaction completely, towards which matter I will contribute willingly with the utmost care." Finally, Ignazio was not to "risk losing in one moment all the Capital of esteem and credit that, in the course of many years of religious life among us, you have acquired in the presence of Men, and perhaps also the great accumulation of merits earned from God up to this point." He should have been aware of the fact that the "Angel of Darkness often transfigures himself into the Angel of Light."

After some months, however, Ignazio's decision seemed irrevocable and the general thought it was time to capitulate. He wrote him a short and terse answer in which, since Ignazio's "fantasies" continued to "keep" him "busy" in his determination to leave the Society, he asked the name of a religious order willing to accept him.¹¹⁶ After two months, Ignazio was given "official license" to leave the Society of Jesus in a letter in which the general appointed the provincial with "all the necessary authority," which he indicated to Ignazio, would allow him the "hoped-for passage to another Religion [religious order]," advising him to deal directly with him about it.¹¹⁷ Tamburini closed the letter with a warning: "I pray that the Lord bless you in this resolution of yours, in such a way that there will be no cause to regret it, while for my part, I will always have the consolation of having used all necessary means to keep you in the Society."

This may well have been the end of the story, but Ignazio's name returned in the letter-books of subsequent months too, and it seems that at the end of 1723 he still had not left the Society. Instead, he wrote again to the general requesting to go to Rome to personally talk with him; he was answered with a rather detached and laconic prohibition to do "such a long and uncomfortable journey in these dangerous times."¹¹⁸ He assured Ignazio that they could more easily communicate via letters, and promised him all his "attention and assurance." Less than two months later, Tamburini replied to Ignazio again,

116 "le fantasie di Vostra Reverenza seguitano a tenerla impegnata nella risoluzione di mutar Religione," ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 217 (Palermo, May 24, 1723).

117 "tutte le necessarie facultà per accordare a Vostra Reverenza il sospirato passaggio ad altra Religione; onde di questo punto ella ne tratti con esso lui [...] prego il Signore a benedire cotesta sua risoluzione in modo, che non se ne abbia a pentire, mentre a me rimarrà sempre la consolazione di aver usati tutti i mezzi per ritenerla nella Compagnia," ARSI, *Sic.* 50, fol. 228 (Palermo, July 28, 1723).

118 "Non posso permettere che Vostra Reverenza in tempi sì pericolosi si cimenti ad un viaggio sì lungo, et incomodo [...] le offerisco perciò tutto l'udito, e la confidenza," ARSI, *Sic.* 51, fol. 22 (Palermo, December 20, 1723).

apparently not enthusiastic about the resumption of this epistolary contact.¹¹⁹ He reminded him how, if he had shown “that religious submission” he so much wanted for his own good, he would not have been complaining about not receiving quicker answers. The general for his part was sure that all of these complaints and apparent indecision were the consequence of Ignazio’s wrong choices and, probably quite annoyed, begged him not to trouble himself “with vain suspicions.” Instead, since God’s mercy was always with him, Ignazio had to “reflect seriously on your situation, in order to avoid finding yourself without remedy to the regret of having fallen.” Unfortunately, this is the last archival record for this story. From then on, Ignazio disappears from the letter-books, and indeed, from all other relevant archival documents, and so it remains a mystery whether he remained a Jesuit or left the Society.¹²⁰

Ignazio’s story is fascinating, but not unique in the *Indias petentes* community. Other case-studies may confirm the importance of the *Epistulae generalium*, because not a few Jesuits dealt with the same problems. In the same Sicilian context and time span there were at least two other Jesuits whose departure the parents tried to obstruct. The first one is Giovanni Battista Federici, born in Palermo in 1693 and son of a marquis, as was Ignazio Maria Romeo.¹²¹ He became a Jesuit in 1709 and applied for the Indies thirteen times (1716–21), also sponsored by his spiritual father Girolamo Maria Pisano. The latter recommended Federici to the general as a very deserving subject—his parents may have raised some issues, but “not too difficult to overcome.”¹²² The Federici marquises had in fact already told Pisano that they would have done “as much as possible” to prevent their son’s departure; at the same time, they declared themselves ready to do God’s will. Giovanni Battista was the firstborn,

119 “religiosa sommissione [...] vani sospetti [...] riflettere seriamente al suo stato, per non aver poi senza rimedio a pentirsi di esser caduto,” ARSI, *Sic.* 51, fol. 40 (Palermo, February 13, 1724).

120 The Jesuit *Catalogs* list his name for the last time in 1723: he is identified as living in the College of Palermo, and in good health. The *Catalogi Triennales* of 1727 includes no mention of Ignazio Maria Romeo anymore. Quite oddly, in the *Catalogus Primus* of the year 1717, his name appeared in the initial “index alphabeticus” together with a cross written with a pencil (was it a modern, archival hand?), though he surely survived beyond this date because of his correspondence, analyzed above. Nevertheless, his name is absent from the list of the “Defuncti” of the years after 1724, which would suggest ordinarily that he died outside the Society; however, if this were the case, his name would have appeared a few pages later, with the names of those sent from the Society, including Jesuits who had been given permission to leave, the “Dimissi.”

121 ARSI, *Sic.* 98, fol. 56 for the *Primus* and *Sic.* 99, fol. 56 for the *Secundus*.

122 “qualche difficoltà i signori suoi genitori [...] non [...] molto difficile superarla [...] il possibile per impedirlo,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 378 (Palermo, August 6, 1716). Pisano died in Palermo in 1723 (Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 139).

but they had other six male sons, aged between nineteen and twenty-five: unlike the Magnisi family (where Ignazio was the oldest and only adult member), the Federicis could more easily “survive” his departure. Pisano also added in his letter to the general that the Federici couple would have used their son’s health as a deterrent. Quite unusually—and probably also thanks to Pisano’s powerful recommendation—Federici was almost immediately awarded with the missionary assignment he longed for. After several years of delays, Federici left in 1722 from Lisbon for Mysore (India), where he died a few months later due to an illness that he had caught shortly after his arrival.¹²³ His parents may not have been wrong about his feeble health.

The other Jesuit with family issues was Filippo Maria Furnari, born in Messina. After entering the Society of Jesus in Palermo at the age of sixteen,¹²⁴ he sent his first *indipeta* to Rome when he was twenty-one, and it took him sixteen years to receive permission to leave. At least he was assigned to the country he had mentioned in his requests, the Philippines—influenced by the European tour of their procurator.¹²⁵ Three months later, however, there arose the threat of Furnari’s mother’s opposition to this expedition. In mid-March, the Jesuit was still in Sicily, ready to leave.¹²⁶ At the end of the month, the *Epistulae generalium* included a note later covered with vertical lines—to highlight or erase it?¹²⁷ It said that Furnari’s family protested against his departure: his “relatives” had made known that they had welcomed with “grave grief” the news that their son would leave. It is hard to determine the recipient of this complaint: the general in person or a local superior? The main motivation they alleged were “his many illnesses, that make him unfit for such an effort.” His fragility could be true, but describing an aspiring missionary as an almost dying man could also seem a winning strategy to discourage the general. In this case, however, the latter must not have been particularly convinced of the sincerity of the family and ordered for someone to “check if his [Furnari’s] health is sufficient for the missionary way of living;” if not, he designed another Sicilian Jesuit to replace him. Perhaps this mother did not

123 On Federici’s pious *example*, see Giuseppe Antonio Patrignani, *Menologio di pie memorie d’alcuni Religiosi della Compagnia di Gesù raccolte dal padre Giuseppe Antonio Patrignani della medesima Compagnia, e distribuite per quei giorni dell’anno, ne’ quali morirono. Dall’Anno 1538 sino all’Anno 1728* (Venice: Niccolò Pezzana, 1730), 124–25.

124 ARSI, *Sic.* 92, fol. 110 for the *Primus* and *Sic.* 93, fol. 110 for the *Secundus*. The surname has many documentary variations (Fornari, Forneri, Fornarius), but in the *Schedario unificato* available at ARSI the Jesuit is listed as “Furnari.”

125 ARSI, *Sic.* 47, fol. 157 (Mazara, February 1, 1717).

126 ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 468 (Palermo, March 19, 1717).

127 “grave cordoglio [...] molte malattie che lo rendono inabile a sì gran fatica [...] esami se la sanità è veramente da non poter reggere,” ARSI, *Sic.* 47, fol. 196^v (n.p., March 29, 1717).

have a role and power comparable to the Magnisi marchioness, who was godmother of the viceroy of Sicily, or perhaps Furnari convinced her to withdraw her complaints. In any case, Furnari in 1718 left for the Philippines. During his life in Asia, the Jesuit taught grammar, humanities, and philosophy, until he was appointed provincial of the Mariana Islands in 1625. He then moved to Rota Island, where he spent the rest of his quite long and healthy life and died at the age of sixty-six years.¹²⁸

The importance of the *Epistulae generalium* emerges clearly from the examples of this trio of Sicilian Jesuits at the turn of the eighteenth century. Not only can they corroborate or contradict the content of *litterae indipetae*, but they can also open up further research paths because of the variety of topics covered in the superior general's correspondence. As for the *historia indipetarum*, thanks to the letter-books it is possible to trace the content of documents which never reached Rome for different reasons: because they were dispersed or "intercepted" by local superiors or parents, or simply because they were lost. As a counterpart to the *indipetae*, other kinds of documents intended for the exclusive attention of the generals (which mostly are not available in ARSI, but whose contents can be reconstructed from the Roman answers) help to build an overall picture that is comprehensive and less biased or idealized.

Every year, the Roman Jesuit curia received hundreds of documents from all over the world. Among them, *indipetae*: and it was probably impossible, from a logistic point of view, to answer all of them. It is likely that the general's secretariat favored applications sent more times by the same person. This section focused on a limited number of insistent and very motivated Sicilian Jesuits: it is not certain whether they received a personal reply because in a certain sense they "deserved it," or because the general and his team invested substantial time and resources with *every* petitioner, even with those who applied just once. Moreover, the Roman answers were usually balanced and relatively standardized but also significantly personalized. In general, it seems that (except for a few cases) they contained no peremptory or definitive statements. Too much negativity could have discouraged a petitioner's enthusiasm, possibly causing his exit from the order. The tendency was rather to invite to perseverance, submission, and patience while giving more or less vague hopes to everyone. When the general explicitly "promised" a missionary assignment, this usually happened. On the contrary, there was no reason for the general to promise something that would have never taken place. When the Roman answers contained no hope at all, research shows that it was because the

128 Basic information about his destiny in the Philippines can be found at ARSI, in the *Schedario unificato, sub nomine*.

petitioners expressed conflicting feelings, insisted almost maniacally but for no apparent reason on one destination, did not show enough “indifference,” and conducted a life full of suspicious behavior and disagreements with their confreres and superiors. The generals were not favorable also in the case of Jesuits who did not seem not able to make a great contribution to the missions, or who were of too advanced an age. This limit, however, seems a very subjective and variable element, because it was not rare for Jesuits over thirty to be sent to the most distant destinations. Elderly missionaries could actually be more reliable and mature than their teenage confreres.

As these case-studies demonstrate, finally, the *Epistulae generalium* put to test the “credibility” of *indipetae*. There were many—more or less voluntary—misunderstandings when it came to “interpret” the general’s answers, often because of their vagueness. In the eyes of a hopeful petitioner, the Roman attempt to take time or dissuade someone from an ill-timed desire could easily become the announcement of an imminent departure. Like many other documents preserved in ARSI, the letter-books help to connect the dots between periphery and center of the missionary appointment, this way also reconstructing the relationship between the general and his subordinates. This hierarchical pyramid descended from the provincials down to the local superiors, intersected with parents, brothers, and uncles, and progressively reached the last brick: the humble petitioners. These trails are tortuous—sometimes impossible—to follow, because this correspondence has significant *lacunae*. Every interaction with the general was copied in the Roman letter-books, but many registers disappeared. In the *Epistulae generalium* it is possible to find proof of any interferences of the Jesuits’ families, who tried to hijack, delay, or cancel this definitive separation. The data emerging from the letter-books are often unique, sometimes the only way to trace back the “domestic enemies” of many petitioners. Thanks to this source, as precious as it is fragmentary and difficult to read, the *modus operandi* of the general and his office becomes more comprehensible and shows itself in all its global complexity.

Case Studies: China and Japan

4.1 The Desire for the Far East

One of the focuses of this book is the Far Eastern destination. How many Jesuit petitioners clearly stated a preference for Asia? What were the reasons for this choice? How successful could be those candidates applying for unreachable missionary lands? The following pages firstly deal with data and statistics about the Asian destination, and then tell the stories of four petitioners, two of them gaining the “license” and the other two not having the same fortunate outcome.

The *Fondo Gesuitico* preserves 1,565 *litterae indipetae* written from Italy during the years 1687 to 1730 (the generalates of González de Santalla and Tamburini).¹ As for their geographical distribution, they were sent by members of the Jesuit provinces of: Sicily (thirty-eight percent), Naples (twenty-seven percent), Milan (twenty-five percent), and Rome (eleven percent). There is no doubt that the most frequently requested destination were, simply, the “Indies.” The indifference and submission required to all Jesuits took shape also in silencing any personal will, and entrusting the general with such a fundamental and life changing decision. However, about ten percent of all letters—nearly 150 in all—dared to show a peculiar interest for the Far Eastern destinations, and in detail for the following missions:²

Philippines: 27%

China: 25%

“East Indies,” “some corner of the East,” Asia, and others: 24%

Japan: 13%

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- 1 They are preserved in the *Fondo Gesuitico* 749, 750, and 751. This book only partially considers the petitions preserved outside *Fondo Gesuitico*, for instance the ones sent from the *Provincia Veneta* (there were only thirty-five *indipetae* written during Santalla’s and Tamburini’s generalates preserved there, thus the statistical data still stand). Concerning Italian *indipetae* written in those years (specifically, between 1676 and 1770), see also Anna Rita Capoccia, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Bernard Vincent, eds., “Le destin des *Indipetae* au-delà du XVI^e siècle,” in *Missions Religieuses Modernes: “Notre lieu est le monde”* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 89–110.
 - 2 See also the graphics in the Appendix. This statistic is based on petitions, not on petitioners: the same Jesuit could ask for the same destination in different letters, or change his mind during time.

Malabar: 3%
 Tibet: 3%
 Madurai: 3%
 Goa: 1%
 Vietnam: 1%

From these statistics, the Filipino choice emerges preponderantly (forty-one *indipetae*), but this need not necessarily be linked to a particular affection for this territory. The Philippines had the great advantage of being part of the Spanish empire (the same from where Sicilians and Neapolitans were writing, for most years) and an ideal stopping point before a move to China or Japan. The Filipino destination became extremely popular especially if petitioners knew that their procurators were back in Europe, looking for new recruits. This happened, in particular, in the years 1704, 1717, and 1728–29, when the attention of the *indipetentes* focused on the Philippines. They were aware that, if they could join the expeditions under preparation, they would have sailed without waiting and suffering for more years.³ After some time there, the possibility to turn to the surrounding countries was always left open.

For some Jesuits, however, an assignment to the Philippines could be seen as a punishment compared to China and Japan. Writing from Sicily in 1642, Mario Finochiaro was desperate after being destined there, and felt it was “important to clarify to Your Paternity how I want my longed-for Japanese or Chinese mission,” because his “vocation has always been for Japan or China, not for any other place.”⁴ “Dying of melancholy,” he felt he went “crazy, thinking how the Lord mortifies me, appointing me to the Philippines, for which I never had any vocation.” He highlighted how he “explicitly asked for Japan or China,” writing to the procurator of China and not to the Philippines’ one. For Finochiaro and others missioned to the Philippines, their assignment was a tantalizing and yet unfulfilling one, so close to where they really wished to labor.

The preference for China and generic “East Indies” is numerically not far below (thirty-eight and thirty-six *indipetae*). Moreover, with the latter definition

3 In detail, the Filipino preference varied as follows: six requests in 1704, two in 1705, four in 1706, one in 1707, six in 1717, and then none until 1725 (one petition). In 1727, 1728, and 1729 there were respectively one, ten, and eight petitions aimed at that destination.

4 “M’importa grandemente per ottenere la mia bramata Missione del Giappone, ô Cina il chiarire di nuovo più distintamente Vostra Paternità come la mia Vocazione all’Indie sia sempre stata per il Giappone, ô Cina, e non per l’altre parti [...] si crepa di Melanconia [...] Esco matto in pensare che il Signore m’habbia mortificato in farmi offerire le filippine, per le quali m’hò dichiarato non havere vocazione [...] hò dimandato explicitè il Giappone, ô Cina,” ARSI, FG 743, fol. 334 (Caltanissetta, February 7, 1642).

petitioners often intended the first one. China, even in the complicated years of the Rites controversy, was a destination quite frequent in *indipetae* letters. Meanwhile, the Jesuit historiography and promotion of the Japanese missions had a remarkable and lasting effect as twenty letters requested this empire, confirming it remained a desirable destination even after several decades of its closure to all foreigners (1641). The other Eastern countries explicitly mentioned in *indipetae* were: Malabar, Tibet, Madurai, the current Vietnam, and Goa. Malabar, Madurai, and Goa are part of the Indian province, thus India was the most coveted missionary horizon after the aforementioned Philippines, China, and Japan. As for the West Indies, the most popular locations of *indipetae* that explicitly mentioned them were, in order of importance: Mexico, Chile, Paraguay, generic West Indies (also named “Americas” and “New World”), Maranhão, California, Quito, “New Kingdom,” and Brazil. Finally, less distant missionary territories that sporadically appeared in *indipetae* were: Tunis, Lebanon, Palestine, Dalmatia, Corsica, England, Zante, Greece, and all those areas afflicted with plagues.

There still is no all-encompassing statistical snapshot taking into consideration the geographical origin of the petitioners and the preference they expressed.⁵ In general, and according to the chances their kingdoms or empires offered, French Jesuits were inclined to ask for New France or French Antilles. Spanish Jesuits knew it was easier for them to be sent to the Spanish Americas, or the Philippines in Asia. Italian and German Jesuits did not have any overseas empires directly supporting their yearnings (even if Southern Italy was, at the time, under Spanish dominion). The “luckiest” in this respect were the Portuguese Jesuits, able to reach almost every corner of the known world.

A Far Eastern preference can be found in 144 of the about 1500 petitions analyzed for this book. This desire was often camouflaged with rather neutral expressions, such as the longing for “some corner of the East” expressed by Giuseppe Paternò in 1692.⁶ Similarly, Tomaso de Domenicis always longed for the “Eastern missions,” and he had entered the Society of Jesus to reach them: the more he lived as a Jesuit, the more he felt “pushed to them.”⁷ Without the ready access available to the French, Spanish, and Portuguese Jesuits but with the same yearning for a missionary assignment, these Italian Jesuits had a more

5 Such a statistic will be possible as the uploads on the *Digital Indipetae Database* progress.

6 “qualche angolo dell’Oriente,” ARSI, FG 749, fol. 445^v (Palermo, January 6, 1692). Paternò wrote nine *indipetae* between 1685 and 1693, but died in his native Sicily in 1726 (Joseph Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi Societatis Jesu: 1641–1740*. Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1985, 85).

7 “missioni orientali, per andar alle quali io entrai nella Religione, et in essa vivendo sempre più mi sono sentito eccitato ad esse,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 294 (Rome, July 19, 1714).

difficult path to fulfill their desires and had to employ tactics more discreetly. The following section will focus on *indipetae* aimed at East Asia, and on the motivations involved in this choice. The purpose of the case studies is to reach a larger conclusion about the motivations: did they vary or are they common? In both cases, what do they indicate?

The Italian Giulio Gori (1686–1764), for example, articulated one of the rare explanations for the reasons to join the Chinese missions. Member of a rich and important family in Siena, Gori had studied philosophy as a lay man and then became a Jesuit at the age of eighteen.⁸ His apostolic zeal was never fulfilled, and he worked as a professor of philosophy and canon law in Italy. In his courses he also taught forbidden scientific and philosophical theories, and some of his work was condemned by both the Church and the Society of Jesus. Nevertheless, he remained in the order for the remainder of his life. Gori pleaded passionately to be sent to the Chinese Empire in three detailed letters, all written in the days close to Xavier's (1506–52) anniversary (the second and third days of December). He applied when he was eighteen and then again at twenty-three. Gori's first letter started by supposing that the general might be skeptical about his intentions and preemptively explained that it was really “the World”—that is, worldly desires for fame and adventure rather than a real divine calling—that prompted him to request the mission to China.⁹ Consequently, he explained that “the World has the habit to deceive with only three things: riches, honor, and pleasures,” but none of them could be found in the Chinese Empire.¹⁰

No missionary could imagine obtaining money or a good reputation in China. On the contrary, a Jesuit should expect discomfort from the very beginning of the missionary experience, Gori continued, starting with “a very humiliating navigation, always with a terrible crew, that continuously vituperate,

8 See Anna Rita Capoccia, “Gori, Giulio,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 58 (2002), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giulio-gori_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giulio-gori_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) and “Modernità e ortodossia: Strategie di conciliazione e dissidenza nell'insegnamento della filosofia nei collegi gesuitici del primo Settecento,” *Les Dossiers du Grhl* 2 (2009): 1–37. On Gori, see also Elisa Frei, “Signed in Blood: Negotiating with the Superior General about the Overseas Mission (18th Century),” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 51, no. 4 (2019): 1–34, here 17–18.

9 “Il mondo suole ingannare, et adescare con tre sole cose, Ricchezze, Onori e Piaceri,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 89.

10 This is an allusion to the Meditation on the Two Standards (*Spiritual Exercises* 136–48). Riches, honor, and pleasures, as the petitioner Giulio Gori noted, were weapons that Lucifer used to mislead Jesuits who did not have a true vocation. See Adriano Prosperi, “The Two Standards: The Origins and Development of a Celebrated Ignatian Meditation,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 2 (2015): 361–86.

mistreat, and insult you, and you cannot nonetheless do anything but serve them, and be anyone's slave."¹¹ Even after he landed at his destination, a Jesuit would pass many days and months in learning the language and practicing *accommodatio*—that is, adapting himself to food, clothing, cultural expectations, and ceremonies, as well as spending “much time in the residence, sweeping and cooking so as not to be idle: tasks which no worldly man would consider honorable.” As for “honors,” Gori argued that he had to be sent to the Indies because leaving him in the Italian assintancy would be dangerous to his spiritual integrity. He described himself as “inclined to [intellectual] speculation:” staying in Europe was “tempting for my honor.” As for the third seduction of riches, China meant to him “getting rid of the many legitimate and honest recreations that we can enjoy here in the Society of Jesus, losing some luxury and comfort” to which human beings are naturally attracted. Gori asserted as an “indisputable fact that people do not like inconvenience, the sufferings of navigation, or even worse, every change of climate, and food, and costumes.” In short, Gori was arguing shrewdly that sending him to China was the only way that the superior general could save his soul.

China was rooted in the hearts of many Jesuits like Gori, but the Qing empire could be requested (like in the case of the Philippines) also as a temporary destination, in order to pass to another even more attractive—and impossible—one: Japan. For instance, in 1704 Francesco Corsetti implored the general to send him to China, “to then immediately move on, to Japan, as soon as the Holy Grace will let the Holy Faith enter it again.”¹² The Sicilian Antonio Trigonas proclaimed in 1717 an indifference about the location of his missionary assignment but at the same time wrote to his general, “I must sincerely show to Your Paternity where I always felt a sort of inclination to go: the islands of Japan, if we are allowed to access them again.”¹³

11 The original quotation of the paragraph sounds as follows: “navigatione assai humiliante, sempre con ciurmaglia, che continuamente caricano di ingiurie, strapazzi e villanie, e bisogna per questo istesso servirli, e far lo schiavo a tutti [...] molto tempo in casa, e per non starvi otioso, scopare, fare il quoco, et altre cose simili, che l'uomo mondano non reputa per onore [...] grandissima inclinazione alla speculatione [...] più tosto allettativo d'onore [...] privarsi delle molte ricreazioni lecite, ed honeste, che qui si godono in Domino nella Compagnia, perdere qualche agio, e commodità [...] non gusta gran cosa né degli incomodi, patimenti sommi della navigazione, né di quelli molto maggiori, che portan seco un clima diverso, diversi cibi, et il doversi assuefare a diversi costumi,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fols. 89, 89^a, 89^b, 89^{bv}, 89^c, 89^d, 89^e, 89^{ev} (Rome, December 2, 1704).

12 “per poi subito passarvene al Giappone, quando Sua Divina Maestà si degerà di farvi penetrare la Santa Fede,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 174 (Rome, August 15, 1704).

13 “sinceramente manifestarle di aver avuto un non so che d'inclinazione a portar la fede nelle Isole del Giappone, se pur ivi è permesso l'entrarvi,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 452 (Palermo, March 5, 1717).

The Japanese mission was unreachable for a Jesuit in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With the issuing of edicts about the exclusion and expulsion of all foreigners (from 1623 to 1650), the empire refused any further evangelization. Nevertheless, almost a century later Jesuits still kept asking to be sent there: in particular, during the years studied in this book, in several Southern Italian colleges some optimistic rumors may have spread about an imminent reopening of Japan to foreigners—and also missionaries. At the turn of the eighteenth century, when the only possible outcome of an expedition to Japan would have been “martyrdom” (as seen by the Catholic Church, or execution for breaking the law as seen by the Japanese), Jesuits seemed to insist on this decision with that main aim in mind.

Such was the context for the risky (and, in the end, suicidal) adventure of Giovanni Battista Sidotti (1668–1715), a Sicilian who reached Japan to die there as a martyr.¹⁴ He was not a Jesuit but a secular priest, even if very famous among Jesuit petitioners for the East Indies. Sidotti took advantage of an expedition leaving from Italy to the East in 1702, which had onboard the papal legate Charles Maillard de Tournon (1668–1710). Once arrived in Asia, Sidotti embarked by himself from Manila to southern Japan. As soon as Sidotti disembarked at Yakushima (1708), in fact, he was captured and taken to Edo (current Tōkyō), where he was interrogated by the scholar Arai Hakuseki (1657–1715). In the years of Sidotti’s adventure, several *indipetae* mentioned his name, or more vaguely alluded to his enterprise.

Hakuseki, an open-minded Neo-Confucian, tried to discuss with Sidotti and to gain from him as much information as possible about Europe. He met him at the “Kirishitan yashiki” of Koishikawa (where Christians were locked up) on three occasions, in 1709–10. After a few years of detention, Sidotti died in 1715. Before, however, Hakuseki took note of their discussions—even if

14 There is no complete bibliography on Sidotti: see <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-sidotti/> His name is mentioned in Maillard de Tournon’s biography of the same online source: Giacomo Di Fiore, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maillard-de-tournon-carlo-tommaso_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maillard-de-tournon-carlo-tommaso_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). Sidotti left Rome in July 1702 with a group of papal emissaries which included Maillard de Tournon and other religious people. They were meant to announce the decree against the Chinese rites in the Empire, while bringing precious gifts to Kangxi. For the conversations between Sidotti and Hakuseki, see Aldo Tollini, “L’ultimo missionario in Giappone: Giovanni Battista Sidotti,” in *Italia-Giappone. 450 anni*, by Adolfo Tamburello, vol. 1 (Rome–Naples: Ca’ Foscari, 2003), 66–73. See also the short mentions of Sidotti in John A. Tucker, “Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725),” in *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. James Heisig and Thomas P. Maraldos (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 387–92; Adriana Boscaro, *Ventura e sventura dei gesuiti in Giappone (1549–1639)* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2008), 17; Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542–1742* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 109–10.

linguistic difficulties did not help their mutual comprehension. Before landing in his beloved archipelago, Sidotti had tried to study some Japanese, and he had a Latin-Portuguese dictionary with him. On the other side, Hakuseki was assisted by two Dutch interpreters.¹⁵ Sidotti did not achieve the desired results, nor regain Japans' former sympathies to Christianity. As Aldo Tollini noticed, Sidotti had nonetheless the merit to "close an era of contacts and exchanges between two deeply different cultures [...] symbolically representing the conclusion of over a century of contacts, but also of clashes and misunderstandings."¹⁶ His adventure was known to some of the Italian petitioners of that time: in these cases, the role of Sidotti was just symbolic but concretely very important, because he was able to rekindle in them a desire for Japan.¹⁷

In 1689, while Sidotti was still planning his journey, the Sicilian Antonino Finocchio described himself to the general as "being invited by God to sail to Japan."¹⁸ Since Finocchio was aware that that "vineyard" was "impenetrable," he planned to stop in Macau before, and from there to stay "ready for that journey, as soon as the Supreme Monarch will break the closed doors of that vast Empire with the blood of the Lamb." After consulting with a superior, Finocchio acknowledged how this desire was proper and deserved to be shared with the general ultimately. The Southern Italian environment seemed a fertile ground for the dream of a reopening of the Japanese empire. Seven years after Finocchio's letter, the twenty-four-year-old Tomaso Macchia implored the general to send him there. According to the information he had received, Japan

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- 15 On the challenging cultural and linguistic exchanges of the early modern age, see Peter Burke, "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7–38. On misunderstandings between Europeans and Japanese, both linguistic and cultural, see the three essays by Urs App: "St. Francis Xavier's Discovery of Japanese Buddhism: A Chapter in the European Discovery of Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist. New Series* 30, no. 1 (1997): 53–78; 30, no. 2 (1997): 214–44; 31, no. 1 (1998): 40–71.
- 16 "chiudere un'epoca di contatti e di scambi, tra due culture profondamente diverse [...] egli anche simbolicamente rappresenta la conclusione di oltre un secolo di contatti, ma anche di scontri e incomprensioni" (Tollini, "L'ultimo missionario in Giappone," 72).
- 17 It is not clear where petitioners received this information from. Since the common Sicilian origins both from Sidotti and the petitioners mentioning it, it is likewise it was an oral news. Sidotti was not a Jesuit, and his enterprise was not claimed nor planned by the Society of Jesus: his was mainly a solitary adventure.
- 18 "a navigar al Giappone [...] quella vigna [...] impenetrabile [...] pronto al viaggio, per quando si compiacesse il Supremo Monarca rompere col sangue dell'Agnello le chiuse porte diamantine di quel vastissimo Imperio," ARSI, FG 750, fol. 41 (Messina, January 23, 1698). Finocchio was never sent to the East Indies, nor his name appear among the *defuncti* of the Society of Jesus.

had recently “opened its door, already long closed, to the true Faith, and the Emperor of that kingdom asked our missionaries for the conversion of those people.”¹⁹ Macchia would have loved to share “the unfortunate fate of those happy destined to go converting the Japanese peoples.” Macchia wrote in 1705, three years after Sidotti left Sicily, and therefore this news could be related to him. However, another event could have influenced his petitions: Kangxi’s tolerance edict, issued in 1692. Although Macchia explicitly named Japan, he may have confused it with China, also because Japan had always been formally ruled by an emperor, but this figure had no political importance at the time, and the Jesuits never communicated with him. In the same year and from the same city (Salerno), Casimiro Muscento proclaimed himself ready to sail for Japan “if it is true the news we received here, about its opening.”²⁰ It is likely that Muscento and the previous Jesuit knew each other and had the same source—even if it is not easy to determine which it was. Muscento had no greater fortune than his confrere, and died in Naples in 1725.

Sidotti’s name does not disappear from the *indipetae* letters after his death, in 1715. A year later, the Sicilian Martino d’Andrea exulted because of “the news we received here, that Our Lord Sidotti entered Japan with two of our Frenchmen, and they have obtained the license to spread the gospel to those peoples.”²¹ One of the “Frenchmen” could be the already mentioned pontifical legate Tournon, but a Jesuit would have hardly named him one of “ours.” Tournon was, on the contrary, an irreducible opponent of the Society of Jesus in the Rites controversy. Sidotti however is explicitly mentioned and called “Our Lord:” in this case, it is improbable that d’Andrea confused Japan with China. It could just be that, in the absence of certain information from Sidotti (who had been incarcerated in Japan from 1709 to 1715), some optimistic news spread in the Jesuit residences.

In the same years as d’Andrea’s letter, Salvatore Saverio Marino compulsively wrote to the general (sixteen *indipetae* in just two years) about his vocation for the East. In one of his letters, the Sicilian asked to be sent to the Philippines,

19 “aperta la porta, già da tanto tempo chiusa, alla vera Fede, e l’Imperatore di quel regno ha chiesto nostri missionari per la Conversione di quelle genti [...] l’avventurata sorte d’essere annoverato nel numero felicissimo di quelli che dovranno passare alla Conversione di quei popoli Giapponesi,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 223 (Salerno, October 9, 1705).

20 “quando sia vera la nuova qui giunta esservi apertura,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 225 (Salerno, October 14, 1705). His name is alternatively reported as Muscento, Muscattulo or Muscettulo, and his death is registered in Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 350.

21 “capitata qui notitia d’esser già entrato nel Giappone Nostro Signor Sidoti con due nostri francesi, e che habbiano ivi ottenuta licenza di spargere il seme evangelico a quelle genti,” ARSI, FG 750, fol. 399 (Modica, October 20, 1716).

whose procurator was in Italy looking for new recruits. Marino's most intimate hope, however, was Japan: if the general had wanted to send him there, he proclaimed himself ready to go "at every slightest sign [...] even by swimming."²² Notwithstanding the impracticality of the Japanese missions, the Roman secretary took note of this preference on the *verso* of the letter. Perhaps in those years in Rome, and not only in the more isolated colleges, Sidotti's venture was seen as a possible step to the restoration of the Christian faith in Japan. A last mention of this alleged Japanese opening can be found a dozen years later, in Giuseppe Saverio Alagna's *indipetae*. A Sicilian as well, he felt destined "especially for Philippines and China in view for Japan, to whom I have affection as well."²³ He asked himself: "who knows, if it is near the time to fulfill the revelation of the holy mercy, as I heard, on those islands?"

According to the chronological and topographical concentration of these pious illusions, rumors supporting the hypothesis of a reopening of Japan may have spread in Southern Italy at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Although it is not easy to understand where these ideas originated, they are significant for two reasons. First of all, they testify to the enduring fascination with Japan a century after its total closure to foreigners. Secondly, these "echoing voices" also help demonstrate the petitioners' network, because they well show how the Jesuits of a close geographical area benefitted from the same (whether oral or written) sources.

4.2 "Unsuccessful" Candidates

4.2.1 *Carlo Sarti* (1706–?)

The following pages analyze, through their *litterae indipetae*, motivations, tactics, and destiny of four petitioners for the East Indies: on one side two "unsuccessful" Jesuits, and on the other two "successful" ones. The "success" of this definition was for these Jesuits to reach their goal and to be sent to China or Japan. Despite the tendencies to generally and vaguely express a desired location to fulfill their missionary vocation, some candidates showed in fact a remarkable insistence on the East Indies, and approached this preference in different ways—achieving different results. What "strategy" seemed to pay off, and why?

22 "minimo segno [...] a nuoto," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 422 (Palermo, January 8, 1717).

23 "specialmente per le Filippine e Cina, in veduta al Giappone ove mi sento pure affezionato [...] chi sa se è vicino il tempo da compirsi le misericordie divine rivelate, come ho udito, a sensi suoi, su quelle Isole?" ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 371 (Palermo, February 10, 1729).

Carlo Sarti was a temporal coadjutor based in northern Italy. In 1728, the twenty-two-year-old novice wrote from Cremona the first of his three *indip-etae*. Their number is not exceptional, but the tenor was particularly fiery—as the Roman secretaries noted on their *verso*, with words like “requests the Indies very fervently.”²⁴ Sarti’s first plea began *in medias res*, with the novice confessing that he had been nourishing his “enflamed [...] desires” for the Indies for three years. He did not lose time in describing this longing, because he was “certainly not able to do it, with words expressive enough to explain what I really feel in my heart.”²⁵ His vocation was born when the departure of other Jesuits for the Indies left him with “such a fire inside” that he started being “so taken and carried away, that this fire never cooled down.” His superior confirmed the veracity of this desire, assuring him with the following words: “I know, and can touch with my hand, that *Digitus Dei est hic*.” Sarti’s calling received a further impulse when some other German Jesuits, leaving for Paraguay, arrived in Cremona: “Oh, how much did my fervors increase!” When the provincial asked him if he would have left with them, Sarti burst into tears with joy, throwing himself “at his feet, begging such grace from him.” The provincial could not fulfill his desire at the time, and advised him to have patience. The mission was for Sarti “one of the most powerful stimuli, which pushed me to become a true son of the Society of Jesus.”

A few months later, in 1729, Sarti wrote his second petition, revealing new personal details. First of all, his family wanted him to be a missionary, and not generically in the Indies but specifically in China. His parents wanted him to follow the footsteps of his homonymous uncle, who they claimed arrived with Tournon at the gates of the Celestial Empire without being able to enter it.²⁶ In addition to this encouragement (not so common among the petitioners’ families),²⁷ Sarti’s vocation for the Society of Jesus grew by reading his uncle’s letters preserved at home, written during the journey from Europe to China:

24 “chiede con molto fervore le Indie” (ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 367^v). Sarti’s name appears in the Milanese catalogues of a decade, 1726–37 (ARSI, *Med.* 64 and 65). For basic biographical information, see also *Schedario unificato Lamalle, sub nomine*.

25 “infocate [...] brame [...] certo di non poterlo fare con formole sì espressive, che corrispondano al cuore [...] un cotal fuoco [...] così preso e infervorato, che mai [...] mi son ponto lasciato intiepidire [...] conosco e tocco con mano che *Digitus Dei est hic* [...] oh, quanto vie più mi si accesero i miei fervori! [...] a’ piedi chiedendogli una tal grazia [...] uno de’ stimoli più possenti, che mi spingono a portarmi da vero figlio della Compagnia,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 367 (Cremona, December 13, 1728).

26 It was not possible to find any data about his uncle Carlo Sarti in the main Jesuit repertoires of sources.

27 See chapter 2.2.1. of this book.

“they inflamed me a lot.”²⁸ Because of this fervor for the mission, Sarti often cried “out of pure consolation, for God granting me such a grace [...] Oh, how often have I cried before the altar of my dear saint Francis Xavier, with how many sighs have I asked him for such grace!” Sarti also remembered the general of the vow to go to the Indies made during his novitiate, in the day of the “Holy Japanese Martyrs,” after being caught by “unusual fervor” and without even asking permission.

Sarti’s third letter arrived in Rome a few months later, after Tamburini had replied to his earlier petition. The Jesuit thanked the general for the “pleasure, with which you liked my fervent vocation to the Indies.”²⁹ Yet, no action was undertaken after this communication, neither from one side nor from the other. After his last petition, Sarti lived a few years as a Jesuit in the Milanese province, and finally left the Society aged thirty-six.³⁰ Sarti’s *indipetae* were fervent and passionate like few others. He became a Jesuit, it seems, primarily to reach China and fulfill his uncle’s destiny—as his family encouraged him to do in many ways, first of all giving him the same name. Was the Sarti family more interested in the Eastern missions than Carlo himself? The young man may have been at first fascinated by the idea of emulating and completing his uncle’s adventure. Sarti’s main sources apparently were his uncle’s accounts, which described exotic Asian scenarios in a compelling way. However, it is also possible that his passion was fueled by other kinds of readings, like travelogs, collections of letters and news sheets. Unfortunately, as most with his confreres, he did not share more information on his family library, nor the one in the Jesuit residence he was living in.³¹ Over time, Sarti may have understood that being a Jesuit was not what he wanted, especially if he had to stay in Italy. The fact that he was a temporal coadjutor may have influenced the general’s secretariat not to send him to China, and it may be that his disappointment about the missions led him to leave the order after a few years.³²

28 “m’infiammavano non poco [...] ho pianto di pura consolazione in vedere che Iddio mi faceva grazia sì grande [...] Oh, quante volte ho pianto inanzi l’altare del mio gran Santo San Francesco Saverio, con quanti sospiri gli ho chiesta tal grazia [...] Santi Martiri Giapponesi [...] insolito fervore,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 379 (Milan, May 3, 1729). He referred to the Nagasaki martyrs (twenty-six Christians, of whom three Japanese Jesuits) of 5 February 1597.

29 “distinzione, con cui ha gradito i miei fervori circa la mia vocazione dell’Indie,” ARSI, *FG* 751, fol. 396 (Milan, August 24, 1729).

30 ARSI, *Med.* 66, fol. 241.

31 See Chapter 2 of this book.

32 ARSI, *Med.* 65, fol. 38^v.

4.2.2 *Giovanni Berlendis (1664–1745)*

Born in 1664 in Bari, in the Kingdom of Naples, Giovanni Berlendis entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty. After ten years in the order, he wrote three suggestive *indipetae*. He had studied Philosophy for three years as a lay person, thereafter attending and teaching classes in Jesuit schools. His nature was described by his superiors as “melancholic,” and he showed a remarkable talent for preaching.³³

At the time of his first petition for the Indies Berlendis was thirty, and had felt the desire to become a missionary for half of his life. He had always desisted from writing, however, for “being for every part immature, both in the spirit and in the letters,” and also for a “suspicion” he had. Was “such a desire given freely by God,” or had it arisen in his soul “otherwise?”³⁴ Berlendis was, in fact, not interested in the Indies in general but only in “my dear Japan.” In particular, he wanted to become a martyr there: “When will I be torn apart and die in my Japan, when, my God, when will you console me!” Since he was a child, everything in his daily life had been an occasion for him to think about Japan. He explained: “if I ever stopped to enjoy the stars in the clear sky, if I ever heard any instrument playing, if I ever saw a picture of our martyrs,” then he felt immediately “enchanted with all my thoughts and affection towards Japan.” Berlendis’ description was very vivid and intensely involved all the senses, including sight and hearing: imagining himself immersed in the new realities was certainly related to the Ignatian practice of the *compositio loci*.³⁵ What is sensed through touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste can be important not

33 ARSI, *Neap.* 88, fol. 100 for the *Catalogus Primus* and fol. 85 for the *Secundus*. For basic biographical information on Berlendis, see *Schedario unificato Lamalle, sub nomine*.

34 “L'essere per ogni parte immaturo, or sia nello spirito or nelle lettere [...] il sospettar [...] se fossemi un tal desiderio [...] donato liberalmente da Dio o sorto comunque altrimenti [...] il caro mio Giappone [...] Quando sarà che squarciato io muoio nel mio Giappone, quando sarà Dio mio, quando! [...] quando consolaveris me! [...] Se mai io mi fermava a goder delle stelle in Ciel Sereno, se mai mi avveniva udir istrumenti da suono [...] imagine de tanti martiri ch'ha la Compagnia [...] rapito col pensiero e con l'affetto al mio Giappone [...] pativan per Dio in paesi ignoti e barbari! [...] per non esser costretto a [...] piangere a vista d'altri,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fols. 595–96 (Naples, February 27, 1694).

35 On the *compositio loci*, see Nicolas Standaert, “The Composition of Place: Creating Space for an Encounter,” *The Way* 46, no. 1 (2007): 7–20. Berlendis’ letter is a precious source for the history of the senses, an interdisciplinary area of cultural studies whose main goal is to find documentation mentioning sensory experiences. On the recent ‘sensory turn’ in cultural studies, see Herman Roodenburg, ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance* (New York–London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993). On discernment, see Marina Massimi and

only *as* what is read or taught, but even more. Moreover, written sources—in the case of Jesuit petitioners, books, sermons, and lectures—could have a fundamental role in fostering a vocation for the Indies, but most of these media's fruition happened through the senses, because books were read aloud, sermons were publicly played, and lectures were listened to as well.

For his part, Berlendis felt ashamed for his lazy and soft lifestyle in Italy, especially knowing that, on the other side of the world, many Jesuits “suffered for God in such unknown and barbarous countries!” In those reflections, he was caught by such a strong feeling that he had to flee, “not to cry [...] in front of everybody.” Even in his later years, he used his imagination to think about “the various kinds of tortures that I could have endured.”³⁶ During common choral moments, he imagined himself “vividly, already dying on a scaffold, but singing those songs.” Even before going to sleep, when he was “already in bed or also after, in the middle of the night,” he woke up and remembered “with great pleasure these images.” Every time he could not stop indulging in them, he stayed awake and lost “all the remaining sleep.” He knew that “the gates of Japan” had been closed for so many years, and humility prevented him from believing that he would be the one succeeding in overcoming them. His intention, in fact, was not “to force those doors, closed with such jealousy. It is not wanted by God, nor reason, nor prudence.” Berlendis planned just to approach Japan and then stay there, waiting. It was unthinkable that God wanted that country to remain closed forever to his message: “will the Devil be more astute than God wise? Japan will open, sooner or later it will open, and it will open to a man, not to an Angel.” This humble instrument of God would be, in the end, him.

A few months later, Berlendis wrote another petition. In the meantime, the general had replied to him in a vague way, leaving him struggling between ambivalent emotions: “consolation on the one hand,” and “so much [...] sadness on the other.”³⁷ His name had been added to the list of candidates to the

Mauro Brunello, “*Indipetae e conoscenza di sé: Discernimento ignaziano e psicologia moderna nel xx secolo*,” *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* 45, no. 88 (2016): 119–52.

36 “varii generi di tormenti, quasi che tutti mi si applicassero [...] l’immaginarli vivamente esser io costretto già a morire su d’un patibolo, però cantar quelle preci [...] già in letto, o svegliatomi tra notte [...] a delitarsi in tali immaginazioni [...] il rimanente del ristoro [...] le porte del Giappone [...] far forza a quelle porte, chiuse con tanta gelosia. No ’l vuole Iddio; non la raggione, non la prudenza [...] sarà il dimonio più astuto in guardarlo, che Iddio savio in deludere le sue astutie? Si aprirà, si aprirà una volta, e si aprirà ad un huomo, non già ad un Angelo,” ARSI, *FG* 749, fols. 595–96 (Naples, February 27, 1694).

37 “consolazione per una parte [...], tanto dall’altra [...] tristezza [...] Che posso far io? s’egli [Dio] mi vuol senz’altro per il Giappone, posso resistergli, posso chiedere altro? Sono importuno, è vero, ma mi perdoni: ci ha chi mi forza ad esserlo [...] Mi piace dunque incontrar ostacoli; mi piace patir, per superargli [...] Creschino le difficoltà [...] Sospirerò

missions, but there was no fixed date for his departure yet. Berlendis was not surprised at learning the obstacles to the mission as listed by the general's reply. He answered him: "what can I do? if he [God] certainly wants me for Japan, can I resist him? Can I ask anything else? I am annoying, this is true, but forgive me: there is someone forcing me to be like this." Berlendis even offered to confer face to face with the general in order to convince him. In the meantime, he explained his preferences and expectations: "I like to meet obstacles; I like to suffer to overcome them [...] let the difficulties grow [...] I will sigh before Your Paternity, and I will cry and multiply my penances so much that you will send me [...] the license to become an Apostle of Japan."

Berlendis' last petition, dated at the beginning of the following year (1695), shows—if possible—an even greater urgency and anxiety to leave. In particular, the Jesuit was concerned about his age: he was over thirty years old and did not want to waste the best and most active years of his life in Italy. Berlendis indicated that he understood that insisting on Japan could get him nowhere. He therefore changed his strategy, claiming to be ready to go to other countries as well: England as the second choice, and Far East in general as the third. As for the first option, England was considered "Europe's Japan," also according to Bartoli's definition.³⁸ Concerning the second, Berlendis practically thought that, "being closed the doors of Japan," he could have, "as long as God opens it, fatigued in China and the nearby, somewhere in those Indies."³⁹ The letter ended with a certain despair, and the renewed wish to meet the general in person: "I would like [...] to be with you, because I would throw myself at your feet and cry and sigh abundantly." Despite Berlendis' fervor and determination to leave for a classic martyrdom mission (he did not even contemplate the option of "our Indies," in continental Europe), he never left for "his" Japan. Even if his *indipetae* did not seem very balanced, his characters and skills were appreciated by his superiors, who underlined his inclination to spirituality and his refusal to avoid hard work. He studied theology in the college of Cosenza,

avanti a lui tanto, e tanto piangerò e moltiplicherò le penitenze, finché per mezzo di Vostra Paternità si compiaccia di spedirmi [...] le patenti di Apostolo al mio Giappone," ARSI, FG 749, fol. 597 (Naples, March 22, 1694).

38 For England as "Europe's Japan" see Giuseppe Boero, ed., *Lettere edite ed inedite del padre Daniello Bartoli, D. C. D. G. e di uomini illustri scritte al medesimo*, letter 28, June 9, 1665 (Bologna: Alessandro Mareggiani, 1865), 32–33, quoted in Simon Ditchfield, "The 'Making' of Roman Catholicism as a 'World Religion,'" in *Multiple Reformations?: The Many Faces and Legacies of the Reformation*, ed. Jan Stievernann and Randall C. Zachmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 189–204, here 202.

39 "chiusa la porta del Giappone [...] finché Iddio l'aprisse, affaticarmi nella Cina o là intorno, in una parte di quelle Indie? [...] Vorrei [...] essergli presente, perché gittandomegli a' piedi, tanto vorrei piangere e sospirare," ARSI, FG 749, fol. 628 (Naples, January 18, 1695).

and then put into practice his talent for “sermons and all the ministries of the Society of Jesus,” dying in Naples at an advanced age.⁴⁰

4.3 “Successful” Candidates

4.3.1 *Agostino Cappelli (1679–1715)*

During the generalates of González de Santalla and Tamburini (in office 1687–1705 and 1706–1730), about thirty Italian Jesuits left for the Chinese Empire. Among them, several never arrived because they died during the journey or, more frequently, were reassigned to other Asian missions.⁴¹ Almost every one of these missionaries wrote one or more *litterae indipetae* before leaving for the East.⁴² This section focuses on the lives and petitions of two Italians the general sent to China together, only to have very different destinies and personal attitudes.

40 “ad concionandum, et ad omnia ministeria Societatis,” ARSI, *Neap.* 88, fol. 122 for the *Catalogus Primus* and fol. 59 for the *Secundus*. Berlendis died in 1745 (ARSI, *Neap.* 163, fol. 59).

41 Frederik Vermote, “Travellers Lost and Redirected: Jesuit Networks and the Limits of European Exploration in Asia,” *Itinerario* 41, no. 3 (2017): 484–506.

42 The Italian Jesuits of the period all went to China during Kangxi’s rulership (1662–1723); under his successor Yongcheng (1723–36), only members of the Portuguese and French assistancies were allowed to. In detail, during the timespan of this book (1687–1730), the following Italian Jesuits successfully reached China: in 1687, Filippo Felice Carrocci (sixteen *indipetae*); in 1690, Giuseppe Bressanelli (two), Giovanni Battista Pallavicini (one) and Carlo Giuseppe Pluro (one); in 1691, Isidoro Lucci (no petitions of his are preserved); in 1692, Pietro Belmonte (no petitions) and Francesco Capacci (three *indipetae*); in 1693, Alessandro Ceaglio (no *indipetae*); in 1694, Luca Adorno (eight), Carlo Amiani (two), Giuseppe Baudino (three), Antonio Faglia (two), Cristoforo Fiori (no *indipetae*) and Gianpaolo Gozani (three); in 1695, Antonio Provana (two); in 1697, Giandomenico Paramino (five); in 1698, Agostino Barelli (four) and Giovanni Laureati (two); in 1699, Giuseppe Candone (three); in 1701, Girolamo Franchi (two); in 1706, Agostino Cappelli (five; see *infra*); in 1707, Ludovico Gonzaga (four see *infra*); in 1709, Annibale Marchetti (no *indipetae*); in 1715, Giuseppe Castiglione (no *indipetae*), Giovanni Giuseppe Costa (no *indipetae*) and Niccolò Giampriamo (one); in 1718, Antonio Trigona (three); in 1719, Filippo Simonelli (one); in 1720, Antonio Morabito (three); in 1721, Francesco Folleri (no *indipetae*), Ferdinando Moggi (one) and Gianbattista Sanna (three). These names are listed in Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome-Paris: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu–Letouzey & Ané, 1973), 403, divided per year and native assistancy. To check whether they applied in written form, see the typewritten document *Indipetae (732–759)*, available in ARSI, with all the petitions preserved in *Fondo Gesuitico*. However, letters could have been written, sent and received but not preserved.

The first Jesuit is Agostino Cappelli. Born in Ascoli (in the Papal state and in the Jesuit Roman Province), he joined the Society in 1695, at the age of sixteen. Cappelli's first plea, rather sober and concise, is dated March 1699. Since the previous November, God had "inspired" him to "devote myself to the Missions of India"—which could mean actual India, but also the generic Indies.⁴³ These repeated callings motivated Cappelli to be "ready for any mission" the general considered appropriate for him. He was not concerned with "all the travails of the journey and the seasons, even if they will be deadly to me." If he died, he would have "the joy of corresponding to God's voice." In any case, he insisted on being sent "as soon as possible:" more important than the destination was an immediate departure. At that moment, Cappelli was in the College of Viterbo (close to Rome), studying rhetoric and philosophy and teaching grammar. Every judgment about him was positive, and he was described as suitable to teach humanities.⁴⁴

A twenty-five-years-old Cappelli wrote the next letter, this time from Rome. Five years had passed from his previous application. His missionary "desire" had not only remained the same but had rather "increased so much that I would have repeated the same plea several times already, if my spiritual Fathers had not advised me otherwise."⁴⁵ Regarding the destination, he just hoped it would be the "most arduous and most fatiguing Mission." A few months later, Cappelli felt compelled to write again because "God's Infinite Goodness does not cease to call me to the missions every day, more and more [...] with constant inspirations."⁴⁶ He was "always ready to obey Your Paternity's every sign, and run everywhere, especially where God seemingly wants me"—not specifying any particular place.

In the same year Cappelli wrote a fourth letter, to "testify to Your Paternity the ardent desire [...] to spread [...] all the sweat, blood and Life for the one who died on the Cross for me."⁴⁷ For the first time he mentioned a geographic

43 "ispirato di dedicarsi alle Missioni dell'India [...] pronto a qualunque missione [...] tutti i travagli del Viaggio e delle stagioni, quantunque mi dovessero riuscire mortali [...] goderò d'havere corrisposto alla sua Voce divina [...] quanto prima sia possibile," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 68 (Viterbo, March 3, 1699).

44 ARSI, *Rom.* 67, fol. 87 for the *Primus* and also for the *Secundus*.

45 "desiderio [...] talmente accresciuto che haverrei fatta di nuovo più volte l'istessa supplica, se non mi havessero consigliato altrimenti i miei Padri spirituali [...] Missione più ardua e più fatigosa," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 169 (Rome, April 16, 1704).

46 "per sua Infinita Bontà non cessa ogni di più [...] con frequenti ispirazioni [...] sempre pronto ad'ogni suo cenno a correre da per tutto, ma specialmente ove pare mi voglia Iddio messo," ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 179 (Rome, August 30, 1704).

47 "testificargli l'ardente brama [...] di spargere [...] tutti i sudori, il sangue e la Vita per chi è morto in Croce per me [...] compagno nel viaggio [...] o mi mandi alle Missioni della Cina

preference: this was caused by the arrival in Rome of the procurator Kaspar Kastner (1665–1709), who was passing through Rome and about to leave for China.⁴⁸ This circumstance led Cappelli to clearly ask the general to be Kastner’s “companion in this journey.” Cappelli would have been glad to be sent to “to the Missions of China, which Kastner returned to,” but he claimed that he remained indifferent to go “to other Indies” as well, as long as they were “the most laborious and in need of workers.”

A few months later, with Kastner’s expedition not yet sailed, Cappelli could not resist a palpable eagerness to reiterate his pleas. Every day that passed seemed to him “so long,” because of his “great desire to receive the happy news that I was destined too for the lucky journey to the Indies.”⁴⁹ Some of his companions were receiving this communication, and Cappelli feared being excluded. His Roman superiors apparently did not want him to leave. Cappelli complained that “the provincial has no inclination to send me, although I have so often petitioned to him as well.” Frustrated, he was even “ashamed that this province arises so many difficulties for a person so mean and inane like me.” He could not understand it, because “many other provinces are happy to lose so many Jesuits, and so much more qualified than me.” He was referring to Ludovico Gonzaga from the *Provincia Veneta*, who would soon become his travel companion and almost an “enemy” once in Asia. Cappelli wanted the “longed-for consolation to be destined to Tonkin [Vietnam], as a companion of Father Castner from Lisbon to the Indies, and of Father Gonzaga from Rome to Portugal.” He also concluded theatrically that his letter was entirely written in blood.⁵⁰ It is not possible to know whether this element was the key to unlock the *impasse* in which Cappelli seemed to be, but it is certain that after

ove Egli torna, o pure ad altre dell’Indie [...] le più fatigose e le più bisognose d’Operarii,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 194 (Rome, December 21, 1704).

48 On Kastner, see chapter 3.

49 “più lungo per il gran desiderio che ho di ricevere la felice nuova d’essere anch’Io destinato al fortunato viaggio per L’Indie [...] il Padre Provinciale non ha inclinazione a mandarmi, benché più volte glien’habbia fatte efficacissime istanze [...] mi vergogno che questa Provincia faccia tante difficoltà per un soggetto Vilissimo e da nulla, mentre Molte altre Provincie si contentano di perderne tanti, e tanti incomparabilmente più qualificati [...] Consolazione desideratissima di destinarmi per il Tunchino, Compagno del Padre Castner da Lisbona all’Indie, e del Padre Gonzaga da Roma in Portogallo,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 201 (Rome, April 6, 1705).

50 As for the desire to spread blood and the use of real blood to obtain this aim, see chapter 2.1.3. of this book and the essay by the author “The Ardent Desire to Spread All My Sweat and Blood: Italian *Litterae Indipetae* between 1690 and 1730,” in *Narratives of Suffering, Persecution and Disappointment in the Early Modern Period: Giving Birth to New Martyrs*, ed. Leonardo Cohen (Lisbon: Universidade Católica Portuguesa–Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, 2020), 101–26.

this letter he embarked for the East Indies. He arrived in China, and a few years later moved to Malabar.⁵¹

Through his correspondence, it is possible to trace Cappelli after his arrival in Asia as well as his views of the dramatic events that unfolded there. Almost thirty years old, Cappelli wrote for the first time about the situation in Macau. These times were particularly hard for the Society of Jesus because of the Chinese rites controversy. Propaganda Fide was undermining the Jesuits' autonomy, and other religious orders had deprived them of the Catholic monopoly in the Qing empire.⁵² In these very delicate circumstances, Cappelli wrote in 1708 to his confrere Ludovico Gonzaga, lamenting the situation in which the Jesuits were operating, no longer understanding whom to obey and asking for precise orders. He hoped for a prompt resolution of a situation full of "disorders that always go further, on a precipice without any hope of remedy."⁵³ Cappelli had learned that Tournon had been appointed Cardinal of Santa Sabina: he saw this as "a tacit approval by the pope of his Eminence's work."⁵⁴ Cappelli therefore thought that Tournon was legitimate in ordering the Jesuits how to proceed on the Rites controversy, thus his order's members had better come to terms with him as soon as possible. The Jesuits in China did not have "any other escape, than to reconcile with him before it is too late, while waiting for further answers from Rome." Cappelli may personally have continued to hope that, in some way, the Jesuit endeavor in China would have obtained another official approval (and not definitive condemnation) from the pope. In such hard times, however, it was better not to antagonize a key figure like Tournon. In the course of time, however, Cappelli did not take too long to distance himself from the Society's policies of *accommodatio*, and rather

51 Although theoretically sent to Japan (Josef Wicki, "Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541–1758," *Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte* 7 (1967): 252–450, here 315), Cappelli was redirected to southern China before and Malabar after because, as Dehergne states, "Tournon did not want him to enter China" ("puisque le Patriarche [de Tournon] ne veut pas qu'il entre en Chine," Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 43). Even if not explaining the reasons why, in his letters Cappelli confirms that it was at Tournon's invitation that he left for Malabar, after several years spent in China and Macau.

52 ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 172, fol. 378 (Macau, November 22, 1708). For a brief account on the Chinese Rites controversy, see the Introduction of this book.

53 "disordini che sempre vanno in maggiore precipizio, senza alcuna speranza di rimedio [...] tacita approvazione, che il Papa fa dell'operato di sua Eminenza [...] altro scampo, che conciliarci la sua benevolenza per tempo, ancora che vengono risposte da Roma," ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 172, fol. 378 (Macau, November 22, 1708).

54 Tournon was appointed patriarch of Antiochia in 1701, before leaving for the East. In 1707 he also became Cardinal of Santa Sabina.

entertained a close relationship with the ambiguous (from the point of view of the Portuguese Jesuits) Tournon—being criticized by other Jesuits.

Cappelli wrote then from Macau, having therefore first-hand news on Tournon's "house arrest." A group of Jesuits had convinced the local (Portuguese) political authorities to watch Tournon with not too severe "guards."⁵⁵ Cappelli expressed satisfaction about it: "although we have not achieved everything, the guards are now not as many as before, nor too strict." They needed to patrol Tournon's residence "because people in this city are all afraid of the Chinese." In the long term, according to Cappelli, the best solution would have been to guarantee complete personal freedom for Tournon—it was impossible otherwise to convince him of any "peaceful agreement." Cappelli had already sent to his confrere Gonzaga a letter with "the last decree of which his Eminence [Tournon] is the bearer, wishing that Your Reverence will not get confused." The situation was delicate but Cappelli claimed to act only for the "great desire I have [...] of the Society of Jesus's wellbeing, and the common good—which must always be preferred to the particular." If he had not done his best "in such grave danger [...] in such extreme misery," he would not have even been worthy of the title of "son of the Society of Jesus." Cappelli was aware that his "apology" of Tournon could be seen as a "betrayal." He insisted he was concerned only with the Society of Jesus' interests, not even thinking about his personal situation.

Cappelli's attempts to soften conflicts could be due to his character, but also to the fact that he was more forward-looking than other Jesuits. Probably also because of his proximity to Tournon, he understood that new winds were blowing from Europe, and that it was not possible to take refuge in the past Jesuit glories. Cappelli's Asian letters are colorful gazettes from the Far East. He recounted for his general in Rome interesting and curious facts about the Jesuit fortunes and misfortunes on the other side of the world. These documents are a precious inside source for understanding divisions, strategies, and open problems in such a delicate historical period. One month later and always from Macau, Cappelli was again describing Tournon's imprisonment. He added further details about the efforts he made, together with a few confreres, to congratulate him as soon as they received the news of his appointment as cardinal of Santa Sabina. Cappelli had also tried to convince the Captain of Macau to

55 "guardie [...] benché non l'abbiam ottenuto in tutto, adesso però le guardie non sono come prima, né tanto rigorose [...] per il timor che hanno de' Cinesi questi della Città [...] accordo di pace [...] l'ultimo decreto di sua Eminenza, per il desiderio che anche Vostra Reverenza non s'imbrogliasse [...] gran desiderio che ho [...] del bene della Compagnia e del bene publico, che sempre si deve preferire al particolare [...] in sì estrema miseria [...] degno figlio della Compagnia," ARSI, *Jap-Sin*. 172, fol. 378 (Macau, November 22, 1708).

publicly apologize with Tournon for the treatment he inflicted on him. After two hours of meeting Cappelli convinced the Captain to write to Tournon inviting him to forget the past. This would have happened only at the condition that Tournon “would have answered with at least two lines, in which he said he never had the intention to question the *Ius patronatus* of the King of Portugal.”⁵⁶ The guards would then have been permanently removed from Tournon’s residence.

Excited about this result, Cappelli and two confreres went to Tournon, who did not even accept to meet them. Tired and disconsolate, Cappelli and his brothers tried another pacification strategy. They went to beg all the religious superiors of the city, asking them to go all together to the Captain of Macau, to ask him to remove the guards from Tournon’s mansion. Cappelli himself gave a speech defending Tournon’s “ecclesiastical freedom.” He always admittedly took the cardinal’s side, also in front of the Captain of Macau, who promised to do what they asked if all the aforementioned superiors had agreed on the issue. The religious power sided with Tournon as Cappelli wished. However, as soon as the Captain of Macau decided to dismiss the guards from the cardinal’s house, “the whole city protested against it, saying that it was enough that the guards were respectful and available to his Eminence’s needs.” Tournon was not happy with this result. To have “respectful” guards was not enough for him: he did not “want to see such soldiers at his house” at all. Notwithstanding Cappelli’s efforts, all the parties involved were embittered. Tournon refused to meet anybody, even his supporters. The tension remained, with the city council on one side and Tournon on the other, apparently irreconcilable. Cappelli saw this outcome as a “great disgrace, especially for the Society of Jesus, because we would have benefitted from an appeasement more than anybody else.”

In the following letter (1709), Cappelli reappears in a very distant location: São Tomé de Meliapor, in India. He enjoyed the company of the abbot Ignazio Giampè, one of the authors of the papal bull issued in 1715 which condemned the Jesuit policy of *accommodatio*.⁵⁷ Cappelli described Giampè and himself

56 “due righe, nelle quali significasse che mai hebbe intentione di pregiudicare all’Ius patronato del Re di Portogallo [...] libertà Ecclesiastica [...] tutta la Città in corpo protestò contro tale ordine, dicendo che bastava che le guardie fossero ossequiose e a disposizione di sua Eminenza [...] ossequiose [...] non voleva vedere alla sua Casa tali soldati [...] grande disgrazia, specialmente della Compagnia, a cui certamente tornava conto che si riconciliassero,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 172, fol. 389 (Macau, December 23, 1708).

57 Ignazio Giampè was one of the writers of the bull *Ex illa die* (March 19, 1715), together with Giovan Francesco Nicolai, Charles Maigrot, Giovan Giacomo Fatinielli, Giovanni Donato Mezzafalce and Nicolas Charnot. See Michela Catto, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-francesco-nicolai_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-francesco-nicolai_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

as “being exiled for the Confucian rites.”⁵⁸ Spending time together and having “familiar conversations” with Giampè, Cappelli realized that the abbot had “some documents against the Society of Jesus, written after what happened in China with the Cardinal of Tournon.” A Jesuit intermediary, Claude de Visdelou (1656–1737), had received those letters by his confreres and was meant to forward them directly to the superior general in Rome.⁵⁹ Instead, Visdelou had given them to Giampè, who intended to show them to the anti-Jesuit faction in Rome, where they would have been “able to negatively prejudice us [Jesuits].” Visdelou was a Jesuit, but also a detractor of the Chinese rites, taking position against his order’s policies. After some time spent in the Qing empire rejecting the Jesuit way of seeing the Chinese rites, Visdelou did the same with the Malabar rites after moving to India in 1709. Nonetheless, he always refused to leave the Society of Jesus.

Cappelli was in India after having left Macau “with the Cardinal [Tournon] fully pleased with it,” but he was not sure he could “say the same of the Father Provincial.”⁶⁰ The latter had given Cappelli a written authorization, but he did not know a detail that Cappelli confessed in this letter. It had been Tournon himself who had invited Cappelli to move from Macau to Madurai. Cappelli admitted that he had intentionally left the provincial unaware of this, because he feared “that he would have become suspicious of it, and would not have given me the license to leave.” Moreover, Cappelli supposed that some bad comments about him had reached the general in Rome. While in Macau, Cappelli had been criticized because he had “negotiated with the Lord Cardinal’s and the people of Propaganda Fide.” He reassured the general: “it was not much

58 “esiliato per li riti di Confusio [...] discorrere familiare con Lui [...] alcune Massime contro la Compagnia, per le cose succedute nella Cina contro il Signore Cardinale di Tournon [...] temo che ci potrà pregiudicare in Roma al bene della Compagnia,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 173, fol. 89 (São Tomé de Meliapor, August 13, 1709).

59 Claude de Visdelou, considered one of the first “sinologists,” lived in the Chinese empire for decades (1685–1709). Even if he never left the Society of Jesus, he openly criticized it as well explained in Sabina Pavone, “Dentro e fuori la Compagnia di Gesù: Claude Visdelou tra riti cinesi e riti malabarici,” in *Los jesuitas: Religión, política y educación (siglos XVI–XVIII)*, ed. José Martínez Millán, Hernan Pizarro Llorente, and Esther Jiménez Pablo (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2012), 943–60, here 945 and 951. Visdelou also accepted the appointment as bishop of Claudiopolis *in partibus infidelium*, which was an office not compatible with the status of a Jesuit, thanks to a dispensation obtained from Tournon.

60 “con ottima sodisfazione del Signore Cardinale [Tournon]; non so se anche del Padre Provinciale [...] che ne prendesse alcun sospetto, e mi difficultasse la sua licenza [...] trattato molto con quei del Signore Cardinale e di Propaganda; ma si assicuri che non fu molto [...] con intenzione del maggiore bene della Compagnia,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 173, fol. 89 (São Tomé, August 13, 1709).

as they tell,” and in any case it always was “for the greater good of our order.” Cappelli seemed not to have a very clear conscience, given his tight relationships with the Society’s “enemies.” He was probably afraid of being accused of betrayal.

From Madurai, Cappelli wrote three other letters. In the first one, he described himself as very happy with his missionary life.⁶¹ He was thirty-two years old, and expressed the wish to die there. The local situation was heartbreaking to him: a previously rich mission was suffering from so many problems, the first one being poverty. The missionaries and their assistants had barely food for themselves, and the hardships were the same in the whole *Madurensis* province. That mission was in fact in constant need and, even if quite vast, had less than a dozen Jesuits administering its branches. Two years later, Cappelli contacted the general to know if he could access the money he left to the Society of Jesus as he entered it. Since this fund had not been touched yet, he probably wanted to employ it for the survival of this poverty-stricken mission.⁶² His last and long extant letter is dated the year before his death. Cappelli informed the general about the local religious customs, like the one of giving a squared particle instead of a round one, asking if it was admissible.⁶³ A few months later, in the summer of 1715, Cappelli died in the town of Kalugumalai, where a funerary monument was erected in his honor and became an object of pilgrimage. The missionary who took his place at the Marava station was another Italian, Giuseppe Beschi (1680–1747).⁶⁴

4.3.2 *Ludovico Gonzaga (1673–1718)*

Ludovico Gonzaga was one of Agostino Cappelli’s companions in the journey to the East. After their paths split, they stayed in contact, but often criticized each other. Born in Mantua in 1673, Gonzaga joined the Society of Jesus when he was seventeen years old. Before leaving as a missionary for the Chinese empire, Gonzaga wrote at least four *indipetae*. From the Asian missions, he sent about fifteen long and often very intimate letters to the general. He died at forty-five years of age in Macau—as he wrote, the worries related to the

61 ARSI, *Goa* 20, fol. 76 (Madurai, January 16, 1711).

62 ARSI, *Goa* 20, fol. 93 (Madurai, January 31, 1713).

63 ARSI, *Goa* 20, fols. 104–5 (Madurai, September 10, 1714).

64 Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi*, 211; Leon Besse, *Father Beschi of the Society of Jesus: His Times & His Writings* (Trichinopoly: St. Joseph’s Industrial School Press, 1918), 21 and 69. One of the most recent pilgrimages to his grave took place in 1988, according to the website of the Jesuit Madurai Province (<https://gulabigirlshighschool.com/index.php/who-we-are/highlights-of-madurai-province>).

distressful situation of the Chinese rites undermined his mental and physical health.⁶⁵

After becoming a Jesuit, Gonzaga studied in the college of the order in Bologna. His teachers had only good words for him.⁶⁶ Gonzaga waited a dozen years before writing his first petition at the age of twenty-six, from Ferrara. He never doubted about the destination he wanted: the “missions of the East Indies, and in particular the Chinese one.”⁶⁷ He was sure of his calling for this important missionary appointment: first of all, it was for this that he had miraculously recovered from a deathly disease. Secondly, some episodes in his life showed him how God wanted him there, like this one he narrated to the general. Before having made known his desire to anyone, one day after lunch Gonzaga was summoned by a classmate. Gonzaga was wondering about the reasons for this meeting because the two were not even close: “I had for him just that general affection that a Jesuit has for his confreres, but we did not share any particular confidence.” Abruptly, his classmate asked him if he wanted to leave for China. Having ascertained it, he urged him to nourish this not yet confessed desire “with such an effective reasoning, that I was finally persuaded by someone who did not know a thing about what I was bearing in my soul.” Gonzaga was “inflamed after hearing all this, thinking it was God’s way to show me what he wanted from me.”

Surer about his vocation, Gonzaga requested a meeting with a superior Jesuit who barely knew him. For this reason, Gonzaga feared that the latter would have accused him of “recklessness, or even of little wisdom.”⁶⁸ Not only did this not happen, but the superior assured him that “even without thinking about it, he found himself thinking: I must exhort [...] Gonzaga to go to China.” These words stayed in his mind all day long. The next morning, after seeing Gonzaga, the superior understood the reasons for this thought and both

65 His name is very common and research on him is thus quite complicated, as Dehergne already noticed in *Répertoire*, 114. Gonzaga does not mention any relation with the saint, and there are no clear indications about it.

66 ARSI, *Ven.* 49, fol. 11 for the *Primus* and the *Secundus*.

67 “missioni delle Indie Orientali, ed in particolare la Cinese [...] quell’affetto generale che si ha con gli altri della Compagnia, ma non già confidenza veruna in particolare [...] con tutta l’efficacia delle ragioni prende a persuadermi, che così debbo fare, senza però saper egli niente di quel, che fomentavo nell’animo [...] m’infiamai a queste voci, pensandole da Dio inviatemi acciò capissi ciò che da me voleva,” ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fols. 161–62 (Ferrara, January 14, 1699).

68 “imprudente, o anche di poco senno [...] senza pensare a ciò, era caduto a sé in pensiero di esortare [...] Gonzaga ad andare alla Cina [...] i più segreti arcani del mio interno [...] Mantenete la Vocazione, acciò Dio non dica: Vocavi et renuisti, ego quoque in interitu tuo ridebo,” ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fols. 161–62 (Ferrara, January 14, 1699).

were amazed about this sign. Another superior (the school rector) approved Gonzaga's intentions and urged him to speak to the provincial. To him, Gonzaga revealed "the most arcane secrets of my soul." The provincial urged Gonzaga with the following words: "keep alive your Vocation, so that God will not say: I have called you and you refused me, thus I will laugh for your calamities."⁶⁹ After these consultations, Gonzaga's intentions were strengthened, and he felt ready to resist every obstacle.

Gonzaga was a resourceful petitioner because, also before turning to the general, he took every chance he could to ease his departure. For instance, when the procurator of China spent some time at his college, Gonzaga ran "into his room [...] offering myself to him."⁷⁰ Moreover, after a year he contacted the procurator again via letter. He also wrote to the provincial, who replied kindly but quite discouraged any complaints on Gonzaga's part where he was not selected because "things are in such a deplorable state, that neither Italians nor Portuguese can be accepted [...] because of the unfortunate state of those [Chinese] missions." Complications and obstacles, however, not only did not frighten Gonzaga, but made the Chinese empire more and more desirable to him. Gonzaga also contacted the father assistant of Portugal (Emmanuel Correa in those years), with two other letters. He was told to wait for better times.

Furthermore, Gonzaga tried to tailor his studies to the mission he was asking for. Committing to mathematics seemed a good way to be sent to China, as Gonzaga explained to the general: "I learned the first 12 books of Euclid, though not everything of the tenth—which I am focusing now on [...] I have sufficient knowledge of Arithmetic [...] I know the principles of Algebra [...] trigonometry and the sphere." In a short time, he could have acquired a very good knowledge of these subjects. His application to a scientific *curriculum* was clear, and he proudly shared it with the general. He also volunteered to start studying Chinese before leaving for Asia, as soon as arrived in Lisbon.

Gonzaga was a concrete man, also concerned about the material repercussions of his vocation and, as many petitioners, wished to prevent unexpected obstacles. He wanted to contribute financially to his departure and offered the money he inherited from his dead father. He was afraid that his remaining

69 *Proverbs* 1, 24–26.

70 "in camera [...] ad offerirmegli [...] facendo istanze premurose [...] le cose sono in uno stato così deplorabile, in cui né Italiani né Portoghesi si ponno accettare [...] stato infelice di quella missione [...] ho pigliata la congnozione de 12 primi libri d'Euclide, benché non di tutto il decimo, quale studio attualmente [...] soficiente notizia dell'Aritmetica [...] li principii dell'Algebra [...] applicato alla trigonometria ed alla sfera," ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fols. 161–62 (Ferrara, January 14, 1699).

family members might object to his desires, but at the same time he did not seem too worried about their intervention. Other complications could have come from “Ours:” Gonzaga was afraid that his superiors had for him too much “affection,” “esteem” and “goodness”—completely unmotivated according to him.⁷¹ He therefore advised the general to organize everything “most secretly,” spreading the news only after having put Gonzaga on a ship. At the end of the letter, finally, he asked the general to address his reply to a trusted Jesuit and not to him directly (supposing that his superiors would have read it before, or not forwarded it to him).

A few months later, Gonzaga wrote another petition because he doubted his previous ones had been received, seeing no answer from the Portuguese assistant or from the general. He verbosely recounted to the general the story of his vocation, the miraculous signs he kept receiving, the diseases he was healed from—described in even more morbid and tragic terms. He also recalled a communication sent by the general to all Jesuits, “which minutely accounted us on the most happy situation in China, and gave us hopes that that vast empire was ready to subject to us, together with its emperor [...] and invited us to reap the already ripe crops of the fertile harvest.”⁷² Gonzaga had not really left any strategy untried, applying to all the Jesuit offices, from the lowest to the highest in a hierarchical ladder. No one was kept uninformed of his vocation.

At the end of the same year, Gonzaga wrote a new petition for “the Mission of China” but also declaring himself available to be sent “wherever you like in the Indies.” He announced that, from then on, he would contact the general “at least once a year” to reiterate his plea.⁷³ He wrote on the day of Marcello Mastrilli’s death, October 17th. Mastrilli landed in Japan with the goal of finding Cristóvão Ferreira (1580–1650), a Portuguese Jesuit whose traces were lost in 1633. Ferreira apparently apostatized, even if it is not clear whether he embraced Catholicism again before his death. The Neapolitan Mastrilli was, together with the Virgin and Luigi Gonzaga, Gonzaga’s patron for the

71 “Nostrì [...] affetto [...] stima [...] bontà [...] con un sommo segreto,” ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fols. 161–62 (Ferrara, January 14, 1699).

72 “minutamente ci narraua il felicissimo stato della Cina e ci recava speranze che, assieme col suo Imperatore, quell’ampio impero fosse per soggettarsi [...] ed invitava in fine compagni a mietere le messi già mature della ferace ricolta,” ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fols. 164–65 (Ferrara, March 7, 1699).

73 “la Missione della Cina, o per dove altro più le piaccia nell’Indie [...] almeno una volta per ciascun anno [...] in qualche luogo di Spagna o Portogallo, lungi almeno dall’Italia per indi correre speditamente alle Missioni destinatemi [...] troppo benevoli [...] memoria [...] abilità [...] per apprendere con magior agio le lingue,” ARSI, *Ven.* 99, fol. 167 (Ferrara, October 17, 1699).

missions.⁷⁴ He asked for the general's permission regarding his theological studies. First, he wanted to begin them early, in order to be prepared to leave for the Indies, and to pursue them not at his college: "somewhere in Spain or Portugal, but far from Italy, so that I could rush as soon as I would be appointed to any mission." His urge to get away from Italy was even more strong and explicit than in the previous letters. It was linked to the problem of the "too benevolent" superiors and relatives, but it also depended on the advantages of studying foreign languages the sooner he could, while he still had the "memory and skills necessary to learn them more easily." Gonzaga was one of the very few petitioners concerned with this aspect of *accommodatio*. Almost no one seemed to consider linguistic adaptation something to worry about, at least not in the *litterae indipetae*. Few Jesuits mentioned their willingness to learn a language as soon as possible, during their stay in the Portuguese residences or while navigating to the East. The general's secretaries seemed interested in Gonzaga's worry, and took note of it.⁷⁵

In 1704, Gonzaga submitted his last and very long application. Although he knew that the general was already minutely informed, he wanted to summarize everything again, to help him make the right decision. Once again he added new pieces to his account, for instance the fact that in his feverish crisis he was delirious but always thinking of the Indies, imagining himself already there. For the first time he also mentioned the "fervor" born in him after "reading the letters from those countries."⁷⁶ He always remembered the general's letter to all the Jesuits celebrating all "the favor and good inclination of the Emperor of China to the faith of Christ and the spread of the Holy Law." In this letter, the general invited his flock to "move to that great harvest, whose ripeness God is

74 As for the *indipetae*'s role model Marcello Mastrilli (1603–37), see chapter 2.2 of this book, Ines G. Županov, "Passage to India: Jesuit Spiritual Economy between Martyrdom and Profit in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Early Modern History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 1–39 and Liam Brockey, *The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). See also Hubert Cieslik, "The Case of Christovão Ferreira," *Monumenta Nipponica* 29, no. 1 (1974): 1–54. The second person mentioned in the letter is the homonymous Luigi Gonzaga (1568–91), one of the most important Jesuit figures. He was beatified in 1605 but canonized only in 1726, after Gonzaga's letter.

75 ARSI, Ven. 99, fol. 167^v. On linguistic skills and their use in *indipetae*, see the first chapter of this book.

76 "fervore [...] lettura di lettere che venivano da que' paesi [...] favore e buona inclinazione dell'Imperator della Cina alla fede di Cristo e alla pubblicazion della Santa Lege [...] a quella gran messe, che Iddio già ci mostrava matura [...] quanto mi sentissi tutto infiammare [...] in gran bollore di spirito [...] intendere un poco chiara la sua volontà [...] In tutta la messa, [...] forse la maggior divozione che sentissi mai, la quale penetrandomi tutto mi pervadeva che quello era il piacer di Dio," ARSI, FG 750, fol. 193 (Rome, December 9, 1704).

showing us.” Gonzaga was “not able to express how much I felt everything in me going in flames after reading that account [...] I was like in a great boil of spirit.” He may have thought that, for once, showing himself more passionate than usual could have helped his candidacy, convincing the general of the authenticity of his vocation. Gonzaga also confirmed how his superiors always saw him working well in the East. He had internal affirmations of his desire as well. While celebrating mass as an assistant, he had asked Xavier to help him “understand God’s will.” So it happened, because “throughout the entire Mass, [...] I felt perhaps the greatest devotion I ever had, which pervaded me and assured me of what God wanted from me.”

Gonzaga recalled again the passage in Bologna of the procurator of China, Miguel do Amaral (1657–1730), but adding something new. As soon as Amaral left, Gonzaga fell into “a dangerous and long infirmity.”⁷⁷ The doctors visited him but were not able to find any disease, until God finally “enlightened” them: it was smallpox. The second sign of supernatural support came when the doctor changed their minds about the therapy. At the beginning, they were treating Gonzaga with “blood extractions,” but then realized (and publicly admitted) that, if they had continued with the leeches, they would have killed him. The third sign was the fact that, despite Gonzaga’s rather advanced age to contract smallpox (twenty-three years), he not once doubted that he would recover, for the unquestionable reason that God wanted him in the Indies.

Gonzaga then methodically analyzed all the potential “obstacles” that could have prevented his selection, arising “from myself, from others, from Italy where I am, and from China where I desire to be.”⁷⁸ As for himself, Gonzaga would face any difficulty. As for the “others,” he thought that any “noise” coming from his relatives could be easily silenced. Meanwhile, the classic opposition within the Society to petitioners (“I would be more helpful here”) made no sense to Gonzaga and, even if it was true, “among so many of us who joined our order, why should India [the Indies] not have at least one of us?” God had a very specific plan for everyone: even if someone tried to hinder it, it did not change. Regarding the requested destination (China), Gonzaga knew that someone could object that he was “not well informed,” that there were “some defects

77 “in una pericolosa e lunga infermità [...] Iddio l’illuminò [...] cavar sangue,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 193 (Rome, December 9, 1704).

78 “difficoltà [...] da me, da altri, dall’Italia in cui sono, e dalla Cina in cui bramo di essere [...] strepito [...] potrei qui essere più giovevole [...] tra tanti di noi, che sono intrati nella Compagnia, L’India non deve averne né pur uno? [...] non sono ben informato [...] sono pur ivi i suoi difetti [...] là vivrei con meno fatica e con più commodo [...] Giappone, come mio primo e gran desiderio, quando Iddio ne aprisse l’ingresso,” ARSI, *FG* 750, fol. 193 (Rome, December 9, 1704).

there [in the Far East] too,” and that he would “live there with less struggle and more comforts.” Were these sentences a *Leitmotiv* for the aspiring missionaries in the East—and the reason for some of them to prefer this destination? Gonzaga asked to be sent to China, but from there he wanted to reach “Japan, my first and foremost desire, as soon as God opens its door again.”

After that letter, Gonzaga succeeded in his aim. The reasons could have been many, and among them: his own numerous pleas to different offices (the local superior, the rector, the provincial, the assistant, the procurator, and finally the general), the network supporting him, his mathematical skills, his family’s inclination to “let him go,” and the right historical conjunction. He left Rome and stayed for a while in Lisbon, waiting for the Portuguese ships to depart. From there, he congratulated Michelangelo Tamburini for his appointment as the new general of the Society of Jesus, at the beginning of 1706.⁷⁹ Gonzaga gave him an account on the pious death of a confrere he was close to, Ferdinando Calini (1675–1706), who passed away on a ship destined to Brazil.⁸⁰ Gonzaga also informed the new general that the procurator of China Kastner had received the authorization to sail directly to Macau, and was hoping for an imminent departure. The most favorable period to travel from a climatic point of view were March and April. Missing these months, it was usually necessary to wait until the following year. The Jesuit ships would have been patrolled by four Dutch vessels. François Noël, the other procurator of China, had also arrived in Lisbon and had been welcomed with joy by all the ten Jesuits waiting for the right moment to leave.⁸¹

Gonzaga sailed as planned, together with his Roman confrere Agostino Cappelli. After landing in Goa at the end of the same year (1706), Gonzaga updated the general. Then, he continued with his journey to the “longed-for destination of China.”⁸² If on one side *litterae indipetae* expressed all the

79 ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 169, fols. 79–80 (Lisbon, March 21, 1706).

80 Ferdinando Calini was an Italian Jesuit who died during the journey to the Indies, where Wicki listed him in 1705 (*Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer*, 315).

81 Gonzaga left for China in 1706, together with Kastner and François Noël (Wicki, *Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer*, 315). The latter, born in 1651, had already been in East Asia in the decades before. In 1708, Noël was sent by the Kangxi emperor to Europe as his emissary; once in Rome, the Jesuit never received permission to go back to China as he wanted (as his *indipetae* letters show), and died in Douai in 1729 (Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 185–86).

82 “bramato termine della Cina [...] amore [...] parzialità [...] trovato in tutti questi Padri [...] il glorioso corpo [...] molto fresco [...] circostanze assai malagevoli [...] gran rischio di perdere la Missione, e d’essere tutti cacciati fuori della Cina [...] l’ingresso nel Giappone, mio unico desiderio [...] per spargere di nuovo su quell’infelice paese non meno e più copiosa misericordia di prima,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 170, fol. 173 (Goa, May 14, 1707). The date of his departure is confirmed in Wicki, *Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer*, 315. As for Xavier’s

writers' anxiety of being chosen for the Indies and getting there, always worrying about unexpected and last-minute obstacles, in their first letters from the missions the ex-petitioners often described with joy and enthusiasm all the news of the unknown country and their daily activities. Gonzaga, for example, enjoyed excellent health, and his stay was even more pleasant because of the "love" and "partiality" he "found in all the Fathers who are here." He was happy also because of the chance to admire Xavier's "glorious body" exposed in Goa, which had struck him for the excellent state of preservation of face, hands and feet ("very fresh"). Although Gonzaga was confident of a forthcoming departure, he did not hide from the general the "very unpleasant circumstances here," and the fact that the Society of Jesus ran "the great risk of losing the Mission, with all of us being expelled from China." If that was the case, Gonzaga was not the type to be discouraged: he could have pursued martyrdom. He was planning, together with an unnamed confrere, "to try to enter Japan, my only desire [...] to spread again in that unhappy country no less, but even more copious mercy than it had before." Gonzaga closed the letter asking for the text of the last General Congregation and some data on the celebration of masses in China.

In May, Gonzaga left as planned for Macau. At the end of the same year (1707) he was sent to Beijing, where he arrived in 1708 and pronounced his final vows as a Jesuit.⁸³ In July of the next year, he asked the general for precise instructions on the policy of the Society of Jesus in China.⁸⁴ At the end of 1710, Gonzaga gave direct testimony of Kastner's death, which occurred a year before. He was apparently annoyed when criticizing his confrere Cappelli, whose point of view was the focus of the previous section of this chapter. Gonzaga thought that Cappelli was simply "benefitting from the actual circumstances, so unfavorable to us in these lands."⁸⁵ Cappelli had decided without many

body and his magnificent burying as a pilgrimage destination, see the chapter "The Sacred Body: Francis Xavier, the Apostle, the Pilgrim, the Relic" in Ines G. Županov, *Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India (16th–17th Centuries)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 35–86.

83 See the typewritten document *Ultimi voti dei gesuiti*, available in ARSI. In 1709, Gonzaga sent several letters to the general in Rome: ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 173: fols. 16–19 (Beijing, February 16, 1709); fols. 154–61 (Beijing, October 24, 1709 and other dates); fols. 162–63 (Beijing, November 1, 1709).

84 ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 173, fol. 61 (Tum Tam, July 31, 1709).

85 "attratto dalle circostanze de' tempi, sì poco favorevoli a queste parti [...] di passare alle Missioni del Maduré, dove ritruovasi ora contentissimo della sua sorte [...] turbazioni di questa Mission infelice [...] pericolo [...] di perdersi, senza rimedio fuor d'un miracolo [...] tempeste, affogato da tante persecuzioni e angustie [...] confidando a Dio," ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 173, fols. 308–09 (Beijing, November 22, 1710).

scruples “to go to the Madurai Missions, where he finds himself very happy with his fate.” Gonzaga felt betrayed by the turnaround of a brother who was so close to him. They had left Italy together, and had spent many months living in the same place, in Lisbon before and on the ship after. Gonzaga thought that Cappelli had chosen to abandon a thorny situation like the one in China, only to live more relaxed and in a quieter environment like it was, in his view, India.

Reading Cappelli’s letters, Gonzaga’s suspicions seem partially founded: Cappelli may have acted like Gonzaga explained—and Gonzaga probably did not even know that Cappelli moved to Madurai at Tournon’s explicit invitation. Tournon was (almost) unanimously seen by the Jesuits as an enemy of the Society, a threat to the (until then) successful *accommodatio* policy in China. Gonzaga imagined Cappelli living happily and peacefully in India, while his confreres were sadly facing all the “troubles of this unhappy Mission,” in a constant situation of “danger [...] of getting lost, without any remedy but a miracle.” Gonzaga described his heart being in the middle of “storms, drowned by so many persecutions and distresses,” that his only consolation was “to sigh, trusting God.”

Concerning the Rites controversy, that went on “among so many debates and disputes,”⁸⁶ Gonzaga was sure that the situation could be judged only by the Jesuits, because the other religious orders had neither the skills nor the honesty necessary to do it. He complained: “those who accuse us so much and oppose our policies, are not the most learned nor virtuous people, they are not the most experienced in China, they do not know the Chinese Letters and customs—something we do, instead, and have done for more than a century.” What caused the Chinese “admiration” for Christianity were exactly the Jesuit choices facing accusation in those months.

On one side, Cappelli juggled among opposite fires, trying not to have anybody as an enemy: neither the powerful Tournon, nor the Captain of Macau, nor the general or the other religious orders in Rome. On the other side, Gonzaga firmly believed in the righteousness of the Jesuit practices until then, and was proudly sure that no one could understand as much as his brothers

86 “fra tanti dibattimenti e dispute [...] quelli che ci accusano tanto e sono tanto contrarii a riti nostri, né sono i più dotti o in maggior credito di virtù, né sono i più esperti o pratici nelle Lettere e costumanze della Cina di quel che l’ sieno quelli che seguivano da più d’un secolo le nostre prassi [...] ammirazione [...] molte calunnie [...] incredibili, né le avrei credute io stesso o m’avrei potuto persuadere di tal cosa se non mi trovassi qui presente dove il veggio co gli occhi e l’ tocco colle mani mie [...] alcuni di tanto poco coscienza e che facciano tanto sforzo d’infamarci senza riguardo alcuno al [...] danno che arrecano a questa sì degna missione, purché soddisfacciano alla persona e impegni loro,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin*. 173, fols. 308–09 (Beijing, November 22, 1710).

in China what was the best to do, to keep the emperor's favor—especially with the intervention of people like Tournon and Maigrot, who did not know the local culture at all. Jesuits were for Gonzaga the only competent judges of these issues, and he was sorry because he knew that “many slanders [...] and incredible things” were said against them. These critics were so harsh that “I would not have believed them myself, nor could I have been persuaded of such things, if I would not have bumped into them myself here, now, where I see them with my eyes and touch them with my hands.” He was genuinely upset and did not understand how it was possible that “some people, with so little conscience, would make so much effort to defame us, without any regard to the harm they do to such a worthy mission, being interested only in satisfying themselves and their interest.” Gonzaga was sure of the dishonesty, falseness and destructive spirit of the detractors of the Society of Jesus. This way however they were damaging not only the order of St. Ignatius, but the whole of Chinese Christianity.

Gonzaga was sure he was on the right side, but what could he do? He could but wait and try not to lend any ear to this gossip, especially because its propagators were people who “do not love reason nor fairness.”⁸⁷ According to him, it was not just ignorance of Chinese civilization, but a wider envy and resentment towards the Society of Jesus. These people's final goal was to steal the Jesuits' place at court. Gonzaga tried to keep calm looking at the “objects [...] in themselves directly and with almost speculative judgment, trying to see things for what they really are.” Beyond his personal beliefs, anyway, Gonzaga would have followed any order received from the general. He was “a son of obedience,” always considering “infallible” every word coming from the general's mouth. Like Cappelli, Gonzaga foresaw hard times for the Society of Jesus in China, but “if the decrees against the usual policies will arrive and be issued here, I will not but lower my head in humble subjection, not to risk any censure or excommunication, nor my spirit's restlessness.” In other words, if the Jesuits in China had received the original document of the papal decree (and not its abbreviation by Tournon, whom they could continue pretending not to trust), Gonzaga's conscience would have forced him to obey, even

87 “sì poco amano la ragione e l'equità [...] oggetti rimirati in se stessi direttamente, e con giudizio quasi speculativo per quel che veramente son le cose [...] figlio d'ubbidienza [...] infallibile [...] decreti contrarii alla prassi usata, e siano qui publicati, io non avrò ch'ad abbassare il capo per umile sogezzione, risoluto di non volermi espor a rischio di censure o scomunioni, né di tener inquieto il mio spirito [...] se tali decreti siano qui publicati, questa Missione è infallibilmente perduta [...] impegnatissimo a conservare i riti del suo Impero [...] in queste perturbazioni e perplessità dell'animo loro,” ARS1, *Jap-Sin*. 173, fols. 308–09 (Beijing, November 22, 1710).

knowing it was not the right choice. However, he also added prophetically: “if these decrees are issued here, this Mission is infallibly lost.” Gonzaga saw that on one side the Chinese ruler was “very busy preserving his empire’s rites,” but on the other side the Jesuit missionaries could not live longer with all “these perturbations and perplexities of our soul.”

Two years later, Gonzaga wrote to Tamburini about the development of the Jesuit mission in the imperial capital, asking for liturgic clarifications.⁸⁸ The next year, he updated again the general on the rites controversy and the dangerous position assumed by Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730) and Jean François Foucquet (1665–1741). Both Jesuits had explained their figurist theories to the emperor: according to their opinion, Chinese literature and history showed a closeness with Christianity and in some way precluded it. Gonzaga saw these theories as not beneficial to the Society’s public image. In his letter, he also mentioned the presence at court of two Italians, Teodorico Pedrini (1671–1746), music teacher of some of Kangxi’s sons, and Matteo Ripa (1682–1746), the founder of the Collegio dei Cinesi in Naples.⁸⁹ A year later (1714), Gonzaga seemed optimistic about the establishment of Christianity not only in the Chinese Tartaria, but also in Korea and Japan, because people seemed to cry out for missionaries from all those places.⁹⁰

In 1716, Gonzaga had to leave Beijing for health reasons. He moved to the south, to Nanjing, from where he wrote two other letters to Tamburini. In October, he still complained about Bouvet’s interpretation of Chinese history. Bouvet defended his ideas and saw them as a good way to convert the emperor, while for Gonzaga they promised “big damage for the whole Christian religion.”⁹¹ He had tried to convince his fellow Jesuit not to divulge his theories, but Bouvet “turned a deaf ear, insisting more and more with his phantasies.” Gonzaga begged the general to put an end to Bouvet’s delusions, since he would not listen to any superior in China. Similarly, Gonzaga was afraid of Foucquet’s arguments. His re-writing of Chinese chronologies, astronomy, and history were a “big detriment” not only to the Jesuit situation in the empire, but more generally “to European doctrines.” He also complained about the arguments between the French Jesuits and their local superior, François-Xavier

88 ARSI *Jap-Sin.* 174, fol. 253 (Beijing, October 10, 1712).

89 ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 175, fols. 73–74 (Beijing, November 14, 1713).

90 ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 176, fol. 90 (Beijing, October 16, 1714).

91 “magnum [...] damnum infert Religioni Christianae [...] ille tamen obdurescit auribus, et semper magis insistet ad suas phantasias producendas [...] magnum detrimentum attulit doctrinae Europeorum,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 177, fols. 112–13 (Nanjing, October 8, 1716).

Dentrecolles (1664–1741), a subject he dealt with in his following letter as well.⁹² Gonzaga concluded beseeching Tamburini's blessing for the Chinese mission, which he saw put at risk more because of the internal conflicts between Jesuits, than for the Rites controversy itself.

In 1716, Gonzaga shared with the general a certified copy of a letter he previously sent to Dentrecolles.⁹³ Gonzaga had been very polite in addressing the French superior. First of all, he apologized himself for the delay of his correspondence caused by health problems. He added that all the “confusions and quarrels between us” (meaning the Jesuits from different factions: the Portuguese *versus* the French Jesuits) were causing him “maximum pain.”⁹⁴ There was a real “schism among us,” and nothing could be “worse for the ruin of the Chinese mission,” if the news he had received were true. All those “quarrels before the emperor” and the “scandals arisen among the neophytes” was really bad publicity not only for the Society of Jesus, but for Christianity in general. Gonzaga's hopes of a reconciliation of the Jesuit front in China were disillusioned. The change of air and the transfer to Macau did not have the expected effect: he died there in 1718, aged forty-four.

Conclusions

This chapter briefly accounted for the preference of *litterae indipetae* for Asian destinations. It then followed the stories of a few Italian Jesuits longing for the East and their concrete outcomes, as seen through their *indipetae* and other documents. These four Jesuits employed different strategies to apply for the Asian missions, sometimes also changing them underway. Petitioners highlighted some aspects instead of others, broadened the list of destinations to which they were available instead of insisting on just one (especially if impossible, like in the case of Japan), committed to the study of the disciplines considered more useful in China (like mathematics), and wrote more or less inflamed pleas.

92 François-Xavier Dentrecolles (also spelled as D'Entrecolles or d'Antrecole) was born in France in 1664, and left for East Asia in 1698. Between 1707 and 1719 he was superior of the French mission in China. In 1719 he arrived in Beijing, where he died in 1741 (Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 74).

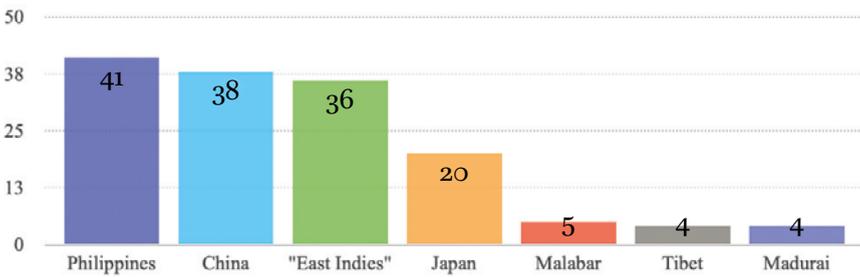
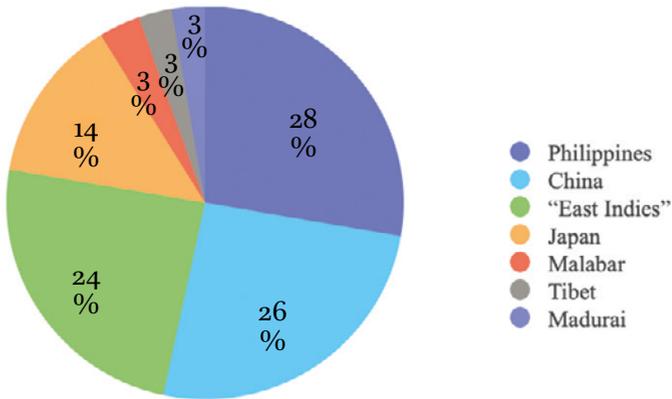
93 “turbas et contentiones inter nos [...] maximo dolori [...] schisma inter nos [...] nihil pejus ad ruinam Missionis [...] litigia [...] coram Imperatore [...] scandala inter Neophytos exorta,” ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 177, fol. 218 (Beijing, July 2, 1716).

94 Dehergne, *Répertoire*, 114; see also: ARSI, *Jap-Sin.* 177, fols. 224 (28^a) and 472 (8).

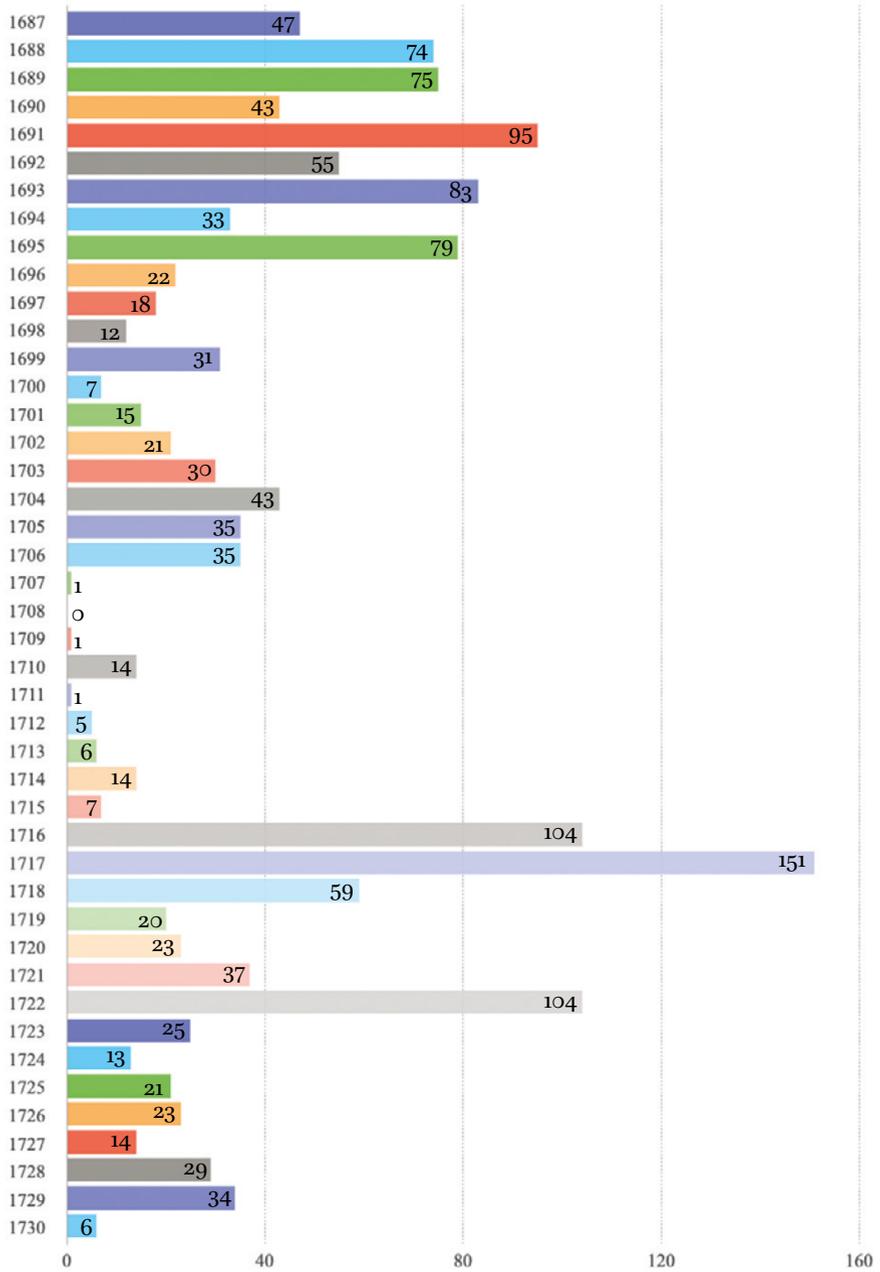
On the one hand, Sarti and Berlendis' attitude towards Japan could have been what prevented them from leaving. The Roman curia may have seen as too morbid and obsessive their desire for the tortures and the martyrdom they wanted to reach in Japan. The generals' answers had two specular results: while Sarti left the order, Berlendis peacefully lived for another fifty years in it. On the other hand, Cappelli and Gonzaga could have looked to the Roman secretaries as more educated, talented, and balanced than other companions. What stood out in these latter cases was that both contacted not only (and not always for first) the general in Rome, but the procurator of China Kaspar Kastner. Luckily for them, in those years Kastner was in Italy recruiting Jesuits for his missions, and that certainly made the difference. Cappelli and Gonzaga had the chance to personally interact and talk to him, who may have put a good word with the general. Beside the reasons why some were chosen and others not, this chapter showed one of the many ways *indipetae* can be used: not to write History, but to recount histories.

Appendix 1: Asian Preference in the *indipetae* from the Italian Assistancy (1687–1730)

Required destination	Number of <i>indipetae</i> requesting it
Philippines	41
China	38
“East Indies”	36
Japan	20
Malabar	5
Tibet	4
Madurai	4

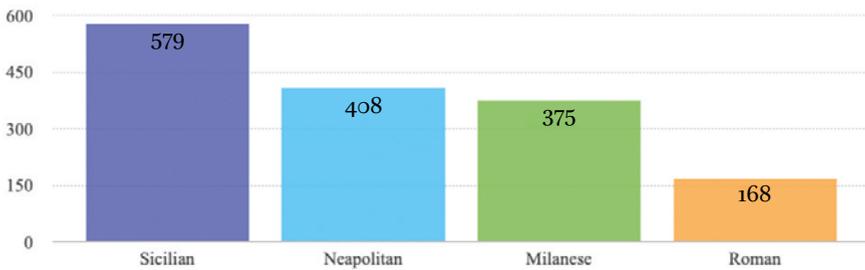
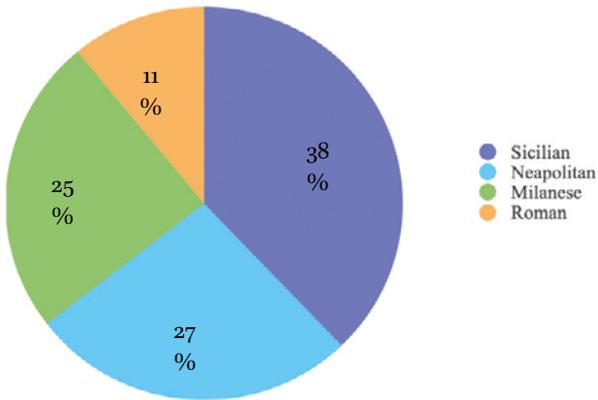


Appendix 2: *Indipetae* Sent from the Italian Assistancy (1687–1730)



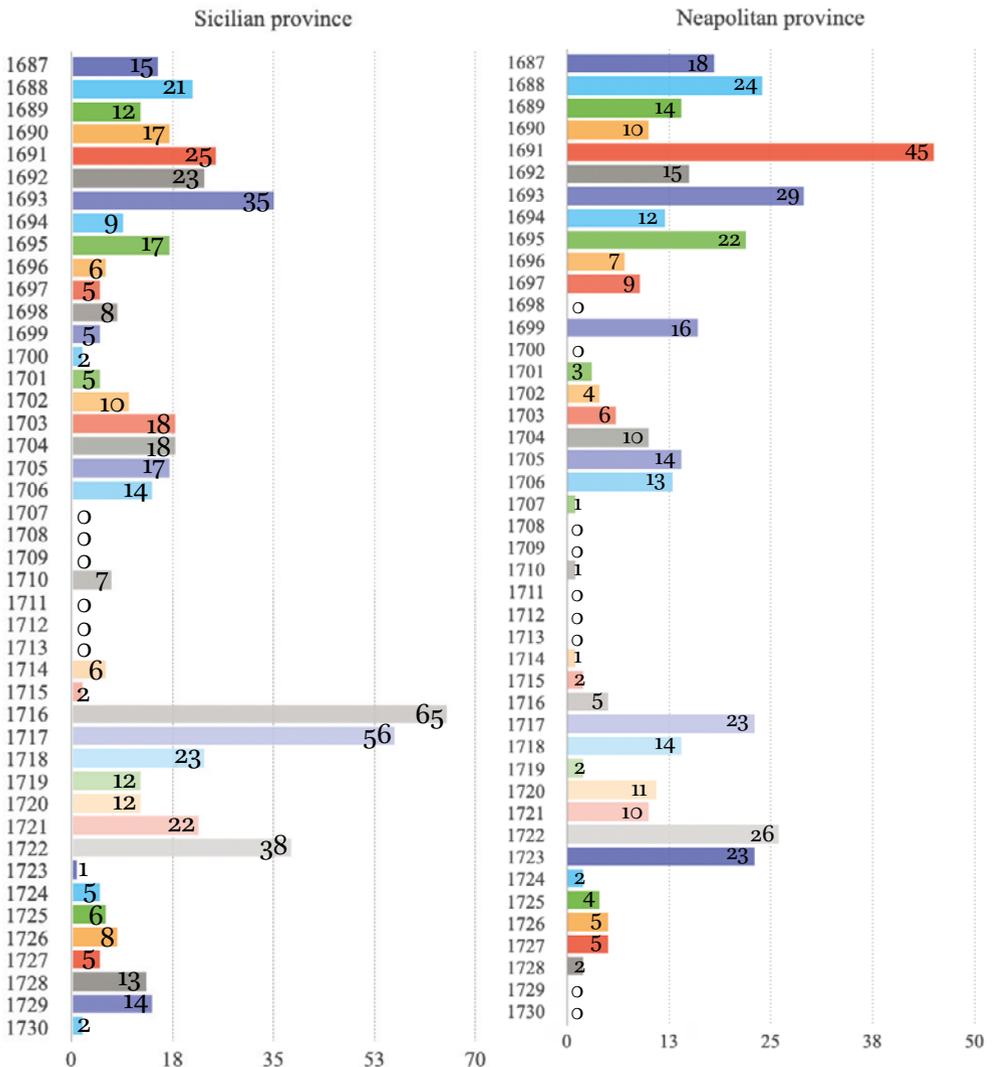
Appendix 3: Origin of the *indipetae* Written from the Italian Assistancy (1687–1730)

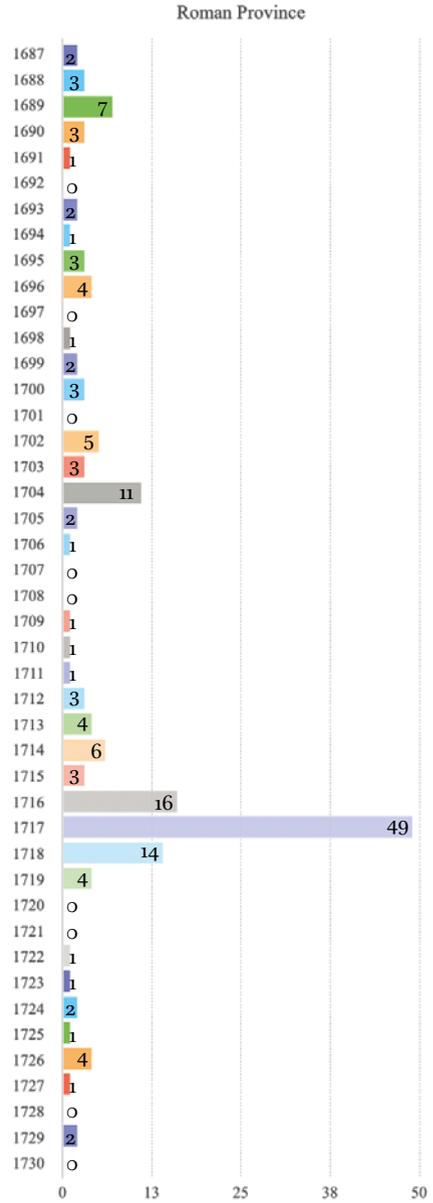
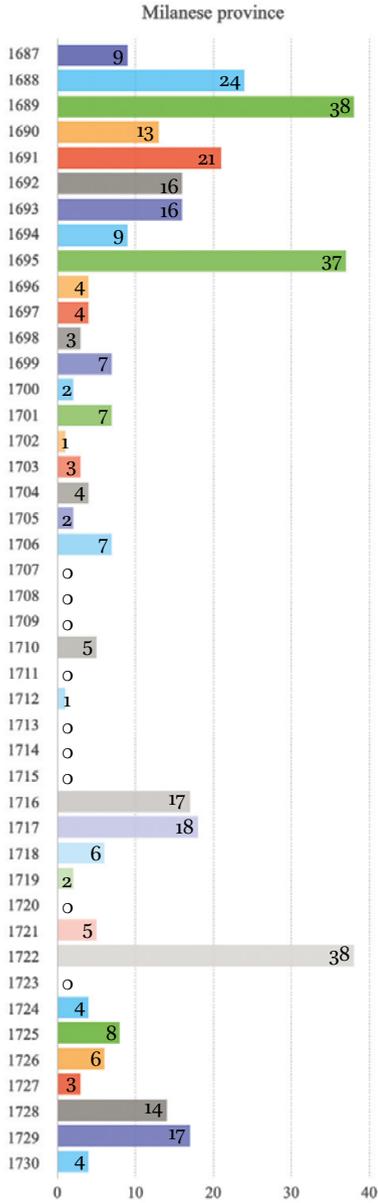
Jesuit province	Number of <i>indipetae</i>
Sicilian	579
Neapolitan	408
Milanese	375
Roman	168



Appendix 4: *Indipetae* from the Italian Assistency according to the Jesuit Province (1687–1730)

Province	Number of letters
Sicilian	579
Neapolitan	408
Milanese	375
Roman	168





Conclusions

This book is based on the analysis of over 1500 *litterae indipetae* written from the Italian assistancy, now preserved in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI). The “Italians” of the Society of Jesus resided in the provinces of Milan, Rome, Naples and Sicily and, like every Jesuit elsewhere, obeyed the Roman superior general—but they lived under different political authorities. This research concentrates mainly on the forty years of the generalates of González de Santalla (in office 1687–1705) and Tamburini (in office 1706–1730). During this period, the situations in both Japan and China were increasingly very challenging for the Society of Jesus. The circulation of information from the overseas territories to Europe and back was wider and more constant than decades before, at the beginning of the Jesuit endeavor, but those years were particularly delicate for the Ignatian order.

Meanwhile, within the Catholic Church beginning in 1622, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (also known as Propaganda Fide) started supervising all the Catholic missionary activity around the globe. Not only the souls of European Christians passed to reformed religions had to be regained, but all the peoples who were encountering in the global scenario from the fifteenth century on had to be converted *ex novo*. The Congregation also sought to reduce the Iberian power in religious decisions, as the Spanish and Portuguese crowns grew even stronger between 1580 and 1640 because of the dynastic union. The members of Propaganda Fide aimed at guaranteeing the uniformity of the missionary policies all over the world—a very hard, if not impossible, goal because of all the different “nationalities” involved in this spiritual, but also very material activities related to missions.

Another institution founded in the seventeenth century was the Société des missions étrangères (MEP), approved in Paris by the king in 1663 and by the pope a year later. The French Catholic crown had this way provided Propaganda Fide with political and economic support to counterbalance the overwhelming power of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in Asia. The MEP was an organization of secular priests and lay people, whose goal was the spread of the evangelical message in the missionary territories, promoting the formation of indigenous clergy, and the knowledge of local languages and cultures by the missionaries. The Parisian seminary became a fundamental center for recruiting and educating new missionaries before sending them overseas.

Propaganda Fide and the MEP were tightly connected with the French crown. Starting from the 1680s, King Louis XIV (r.1643–1715) began to favor his subjects when it came to approving missionary assignments. Also answering

to the appeal for new missionaries made by the Jesuits who worked at the Chinese imperial court, Louis XIV sent a first group of French “Royal mathematicians” to the East. After these missionaries arrived in Beijing (1688), they created a sort of *enclave* of Jesuits depending primarily on the King of France, and not on the Roman general of the Society of Jesus. These “French” Jesuits had their own superiors and lived in separate residences, showing a relevant autonomy and independence from their “Portuguese” brothers. The latter were sent by the Portuguese crown, but came from different Jesuit assistancies and therefore belonged to different “nationalities.”

The missionary scenario in China was quite crowded, and the Rites controversy between Catholic orders only added further friction. It was in this context that Italian petitioners applied to be sent to the Qing empire, unconcerned about the logistical obstacles—or even more motivated by them. There were different kinds of *indipetae* letters, as chapter 1 showed: some of them seemed rather detached and did not contain many personal details. This happened especially after the superior generals exhorted Jesuits to apply by following certain rules—in the case of this book, after Tamburini’s letter dated 1722 which listed all the elements an application should contain: age, health condition, studies, and motivations. From then on and for a few months, most of the *indipetae* just stated the basic data the general invited to report, and were “one-off.” All the Jesuits were aware of the Roman invitation, and many felt an inner obligation to write a petition. External obligations existed as well, as their superiors expected them to do so.

The most fascinating and revealing (from a historical-emotional perspective) *indipetae* are the ones written by the most persistent Jesuits. These men repeatedly disclosed to the general the most intimate secrets of their heart. They continued applying for the Indies with the clear aim to stand out among their many competitors before, during and after the general’s appeal of 1722, even more galvanized by it. It is quite easy to spot these letters among the hundreds of documents produced in just forty years. Not the names or the length, but the content stands out after reading thousands of *indipetae* in preparation of this book.

While all of the *indipetae* letters were, as their name states, *ad Indias petentes*, their authors’ motivations, however, could be different. Many petitioners became fascinated by the Jesuit missionary enterprise even *before* entering the order: for instance, by reading books on the subject during their childhood. Many chose—as they explicitly admitted later—this particular religious order precisely because it gave a bigger opportunity in this regard. Some petitioners, more generally, desired to redeem the sinner’s life they conducted as lay persons, before joining the Society of Jesus. Crying, sweating, bleeding—and

even better, dying as martyrs—would save their souls and contextually spare from hell all the people they might convert. Men also wrote *indipetae* after experiencing prophetic dreams, unexpected healings or miraculous accidents, all preternatural events manifesting the Lord's will. These phenomena were the reasons for such an insistence by the petitioners: God wanted them there, and not answering to his call was a tragic mistake.

Every one of the thousands of applications to the superior general started from the bottom, with the humble petitioner, an “anonymous” Jesuit among many. Chapter 2 investigated on the next filter: local superiors, who could support or oppose his vocation. Before applying for the Indies, usually, Jesuits waited for their superiors' authorization. Some superiors attached their own letters to their pupils' *indipetae*, this way heartily recommending them to the general. On the other hand, Jesuits were more frequently afraid of their superiors' intervention *against* them. Superiors could, first of all, simply not forward the plea to Rome, which many petitioners were positive was happening in their case. Some Jesuits, to avoid further boycotts, wrote to the general directly, bypassing any authority in between and begging him to address the reply not to them personally in the community but rather secretly and only to a person they knew was “on their side.” Some petitioners explicitly stated that they were “forced” to act in the darkness because their provincials (especially in the case of Sicily) allowed too few Jesuits to leave. Further, because local superiors maintained with the general a regular correspondence, some families directed their complaints to them about their sons' missionary vocation before appealing to the ultimate authority of the Society of Jesus.

Chapter 3 focused on another element of the missionary selection, the procurators. Their role could be decisive, because one of their tasks during their periodic tours from their missionary lands to Europe was to recruit new missionaries. Their passage never went unnoticed. After meeting them, many Jesuits applied for the first time while many others renewed already submitted requests. Procurators had the rare advantage of moving through multiple places for months, being able to meet *vis-à-vis* many Jesuits. Every time they found someone who seemed particularly well suited for their mission, they invited him to write the official request to the general and offered to intercede for them.

It was the general who had the last word on the missionary appointment. The second part of chapter 3 put *litterae indipetae* in dialogue with *Epistulae Generalium*. These Roman registers summarized the generals' answers to any letter they received. Analyzing these two sources together, the “monologue” of petitioners for the Indies finally becomes a “dialogue” with the highest Jesuit authority—often, a very vivid one. This “conversation” could also include a

third subject: the family of the petitioner. This chapter focused on the *Epistulae Generalium* sent from Rome to members of the Sicilian Province, revealing how the intervention of the petitioners' parents was not unusual, and the Roman authorities did not leave their protests ignored.

The long-term correspondence available in the *Epistulae Generalium*, also shows how sometimes the missionary vocation was, paradoxically, what led a Jesuit to leave his order, if that vocation went / was not unfulfilled. Some petitioners for the Indies, indeed could not accept the fact that their calls remained unheard. Once again, the generals' replies document the petitioners' bitterness and discontent. Some Jesuits felt the need to entertain with the general a close relation for all their life, sharing with him their daily sorrows and confiding in his understanding—especially when no one around seemed to appreciate them. They usually contacted the general for the first time as soon as they entered the order, with a petition for the Indies. The general had always given them attention: even when they wrote full of doubts and wanting to exit the Society, as the case-study of Ignazio Mario Romeo showed.

In addition to providing valuable and unique information to answer many scholarly questions, the *Epistulae Generalium* also confirm that, among many daily tasks, the Roman curia considered replying to many (if not to most of) *indipetae* a matter of the utmost importance. The letters were signed by the general, but were most probably conceived and written down by his secretaries. For example, at least in the Sicilian Province at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the majority of petitioners for the Indies expected an answer from Rome—and an answer from someone aware of his own characteristics and history.

Undoubtedly, most of the Roman replies were standardized and generic, especially when answering to first-time *indipetae*. The generals gave suggestions valid for any occasion, while exhorting the candidates to be patient, show submission to their superiors, and not offend parents and relatives. After a few years of unsuccessful petitioning, the general could invite them to transfer their missionary desire for the “real” Indies to “our” Indies—that is staying in their native countries, preaching and teaching to their compatriots. Many Roman replies testify an updated knowledge on the addressee, whether it was one person or several designated *ad hoc* to evaluate and record the stories of the petitioners. In this regard, this book focused on a dozen Sicilian petitioners for the Indies, checking their statements with what the generals' answers report. Ardent and motivated, all received a tailored response and in a short or very short time. The extraordinary accuracy in handling these *indipetae* suggests that even the general (and not only the author of this book) may have been struck by their tenor. Was such care in managing the *Indias petens*

correspondence exceptional or ordinary? Were *all* the *indipetae* answered with the same frequency and precision? It was not possible to verify it for this publication, but further research (with the help of the *DID* and the selection of another period and time) can confirm the percentage of *indipetae* answered by the Roman curia, the average reply-time, and finally their content.

Among the thousands of early modern *indipetae*, this research identified those aimed at the Far Eastern destination, which often were the most passionate and iterated ones. The final chapter shows how, statistically, it is however difficult to find an explicit and generic preference for the East Indies. What dominated the majority of letters was, on the contrary, an omnipresent proclamation of indifference—as was expected from every member of the Ignatian order.

From a statistical point of view, only a tenth of the 1595 *indipetae* letters written by Italian Jesuits during the generalates of Santalla and Tamburini explicitly requested an assignment in the East Indies. The most frequently mentioned destinations were the Philippines (twenty-seven percent), China (twenty-five percent), and generic “corners of Asia” (twenty-four percent). The allure of China and of the East in general was persistent and well impressed in the minds of the petitioners, also thanks to the best-selling publications of the Society of Jesus. The candidates saw the Philippines more as a temporary destination, until the times were ready to move forward to the Chinese or Japanese Empire. Many petitioners also asked for the Philippines because, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, expeditions were frequently destined there. Finally, the Philippines were under Spanish dominion as were, for many years, the Jesuit provinces of Sicily and Naples. The Jesuits there had thus more chances to be welcomed in Spanish ships than their confreres in the Northern Italian peninsula.

The Japanese destination was explicitly listed in about twenty *indipetae* (thirteen percent). The number is not high, but this empire had not been accessible for several decades at the time. Japan always had a special place in the Jesuits' publications and collective memory, and was still able to influence the candidates' preferences. The areas of Malabar, Madurai (India), and Tibet were named by about five Jesuits each (three percent each), and almost always because they have been informed of expeditions of missionaries ready for that direction. Finally, a few Jesuits expressed the desire to leave for Goa and Vietnam (one percent each).

To reach their aim, many petitioners were willing to modify their preference at the last minute. If there were more chances to leave for the West Indies, those proclaiming themselves interested only in the East before easily changed their mind. Some petitioners desiring Asia, however, declined the general's

invitation to redirect their expectations to the Americas and remained resolute in their goal to be sent only to China and/or Japan. This happened in the four case-studies analyzed in this final chapter. On the one hand, Sarti and Berlendis always wanted to go to Japan but never reached this empire, nor left for any missionary country. On the other, Cappelli and Gonzaga applied for the East and were sent there together, on the same ship. Even if they ended up becoming “enemies” in the Rites controversy, they both kept with the general a long and rich correspondence, updating him long after the *Indias petens*-phase, as did many other petitioners, until the end of their lives.

This chapter also showed how the concrete information provided by the petitioners for the Indies about the object of their desire was very scarce. This does not mean they were all naive and unprepared. At least some authors had read (by themselves) or heard (during common meals or in class) the accounts produced by the Society of Jesus on the new and exotic missionary territories. Some of them had become familiar with these scenarios of suffering and adventures even *before* entering the order, as children. Some of them had missionary uncles or brothers, who had described the Indies via letters to them. *Indipetae*, however, remain in most cases vague on geography: they simply did not represent the appropriate place to fantasize about missionary life.

Similarly, the situation in the Qing empire was not a subject to be treated in *indipetae*. In the forty years considered in this book, just a bunch of Jesuits tried to imagine what life in China would have been. This silence was also related to the difficulties plaguing the Society of Jesus at the time. The Rites controversy was heavily affecting the outcomes of an order that had been until then so successful in familiarizing and adapting to such a different civilization. Especially “minimal” members of the Society like petitioners for the Indies were not supposed to approach such a sensitive matter.

Petitioners were vague not only in defining their destination but also in planning how to proceed to reach their goal, once their request was accepted. Most Jesuits declared themselves ready to leave the day after receiving the “license,” without greeting any relative or superior or bringing anything useful (clothes, money, books) with them. Only a small percentage of petitioners tried to manage the time before a possible departure, asking the general to continue their studies either in Rome or Lisbon or on board during the long oceanic journey. Aspiring missionaries seldom took into consideration problems like the learning of a new language, or the adaptation to new climates and food. Most of them were not touched by these worries: they simply wanted to leave as soon as possible. In this regard, *indipetae* stand out not for the information they carry, but for the absence of it.

This book demonstrated how the precious source of *indipetae* can be fruitfully used, in many academic fields and with different perspectives. As a source, *indipetae* are remarkable for the interdisciplinary approach they allow, and also because of their *longue-durée*. After the restoration of the Society of Jesus (1814), *indipetae* immediately started to be addressed to the generals again. This book showed how, when put into dialogue with other sources, *indipetae* reveal their unique potential. This book made a large use of the generals' copy-letters, which highlight the internal and external mechanisms of communication of the Society of Jesus. The spiritual family of a petitioner (his local superiors) provided comments in favor or against him, a procurator significantly influenced his cause, and the general had the last word on it. Copy-letters however also testify that many missionary vocations did not come to a successful end because of the natural families' protests. The superior general received requests and complaints not only from a petitioner, but also from his superiors and his relatives. Some Jesuits, frustrated for the very reason for which they had joined the Society, decided to leave the order. The last words exchanged with the generals can be found once again in the *Epistulae Generalium*, which bring this way an important contribution to the studies on the thorny theme of resignation from religious orders.

Finally, one of the most important projects promoting *indipetae* is the already mentioned *Digital Indipetae Database*, developed by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College. Once it will be completed, scholars from any field will have a long-lasting and monumental repository to turn to. Missions were a substantial task of the Ignatian order, and many Jesuits expressed at least once a written vocation for the Indies. The *DID* is an open access database, available to users from any part of the world, but it is also a work in progress to which hundreds of people are contributing. This public history project allows to reach out to people who would have otherwise never come in contact with Jesuit sources—nor archival sources in general. Students of high schools are transcribing letters written by boys of their age, noticing the different use of linguistic conventions, words, language, rhetorical tools, and revising each other's work in an integrated and collaborative way. University students are immersing themselves in an unusually large series of ego-documents, digitized by ARSI and available for home-working, giving a solid contribution to a project which will last even if they decide (or are forced) to divert from an academic path. None of this work gets lost, and while they write a dissertation on subjects related to their transcriptions, they familiarize at the same time with archival work. In the third place and more predictably, scholars who had already worked on the topic are contributing

with their transcriptions to a database which, once completed, will allow all kinds of research.

It is not easy to find Digital Humanities projects able to harmonize a thick analysis of documents (from an archival, historic, and linguistic point of view), an open access outcome, and collaborative learning between its contributors. The involvement of different people from all over the world, at different stages of their life and career, is one of the most “Jesuitic” aspect of the database, and of *indipetae* in general, because it is consistent with the Society of Jesus’ motto: *Nuestra casa es el mundo*.

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