

VLADIMIR USPENSKY

(St. Petersburg State University, Russia)

Józef Kowalewski's Studies on the History of Catholicism in China

Abstract

Józef Kowalewski, a founding father of Mongolian studies in Russia, stayed in Beijing from November 1830 until July 1831. He stayed with the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and, being a Catholic himself, Kowalewski was very interested in the history and current state of Catholicism in China. In those years Catholicism in China faced severe persecution. All European missionaries were expelled from China with the exception of Bishop Gaetano Pirès Pereira, who was allowed to stay at the Russian Mission because of his old age. Kowalewski is said to have written a history of Catholicism in China which was destroyed by fire. However, unpublished diaries of Kowalewski, which survive in the Russian archives, contain much interesting information about Catholic cemeteries in Beijing, the life of Chinese converts, the Jesuit library and records of his talks with the last Catholic bishop.¹

Keywords: Józef Kowalewski, Gaetano Pirès Pereira, Catholicism, Jesuits, China, Beijing, Mongolian studies

Józef Kowalewski, a founding father of Mongolian studies in Russia, was sent by the Imperial Kazan University to Eastern Siberia in 1828 for the purpose of studying the Mongolian language. By a lucky coincidence of events, from November 1830 to July 1831 Kowalewski stayed in Beijing, the capital of China. He lived at the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission which had an initial task of providing spiritual guidance to the descendants of the

¹ I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Ramil' Mirgasimovich Valeev (Kazan University) for making for me available J. Kowalewski's *Diaries*, and to Dr. Diana Cousens for correcting my English and contributing valuable remarks.

Russian prisoners-of-war captured at the end of the seventeenth century who had settled in Beijing. However Sinicized, these people continued to profess Orthodox Christianity and the Chinese government allowed the establishment of a Russian Christian mission which sent priests on a rotation principle – once in ten years. Kowalewski accompanied the new mission to Beijing in the official capacity of its secretary.

In this connection Kowalewski's personal religious affiliation should be mentioned. He himself was a Catholic. However, his father and ancestors were Uniate priests (Pol. *ksiądz unicki*) in a region which now forms a part of the western area of Byelorussia.² Upon his return to the city of Kazan in 1833 he became the professor of Mongolian language and later the Rector of the Kazan University. While the Catholic cathedral was only built in 1858 a Catholic parish was established in Kazan in 1835, and Kowalewski was an active member of the local Catholic community whose house was used for religious services during the construction of the cathedral.³ Also it should be noted that Józef Kowalewski was a person of liberal views. According to his diaries, he attended services held at the Russian Orthodox church in Beijing and maintained contacts with British Protestant missionaries who stayed at that time in Eastern Siberia. As he himself wrote in his diary on 5 October 1831:

“Mr. Yuille⁴ in every way was persuading me to compose a history of the missionaries in China (for which I possess rare and important materials) and to demonstrate how much large scale damage to Christianity was caused by religious altercations.”⁵

In 1862 Kowalewski settled in Warsaw and in 1864 a major part of his materials were burnt in an accident during the Polish uprising. Among the lost materials is said to have been his *History of Catholicism in China*.⁶ However, a considerable number of materials relating to the history and contemporary state of Catholicism in China are found in Kowalewski's unpublished diaries. The current article draws on two manuscript diaries which are now kept in Kazan at the National Archives of Tatarstan Republic, Russia. One of these diaries contains copies of the letters he wrote about his studies which he sent to the administrator of the Kazan Department of Education M.N. Moussine-Pouchkine (М.Н. Мусин-Пушкин; 1795–1862). One of these letters is entirely devoted to Catholicism in China and can be regarded as a small article on this subject.⁷

² Jerzy Tulisow and Ramil' M. Valeev, *Osnovnye etapy zhizni O.M. Kovalevskogo: Vil'nyus, Kazan', Varshava*, in: *Mongoloved O.M. Kovalevskij: Biografiya i nasledie (1801–1878)*. Alma-Lit, Kazan' 2004, p. 97.

³ Ahmet M. Mazgarov (ed.), *Tatarstan: Illyustrirovannaya enciklopediya*, Institut tatarskoj enciklopedii AN RT, Kazan' 2013, p. 388.

⁴ Robert Yuille was a Scottish Protestant missionary who stayed in Eastern Siberia preaching Christianity to the Buryat Mongols in 1820–1846.

⁵ DZ₁, p. 226.

⁶ Tulisow and Valeev, *Osnovnye etapy zhizni O.M. Kovalevskogo*, p. 127.

⁷ DZ₂, pp. 354–378.

The years when Kowalewski visited Beijing were a very difficult time for the Catholics in China. All four Catholic temples in Beijing were successively closed: Xitang 西堂 in 1811, Dongtang 東堂 in 1812, Beitang 北堂 in 1820 and Nantang 南堂 in 1838. In 1814, by the Imperial order, Christianity was forbidden in China and all foreign missionaries were sent outside China. In 1821 the prohibition of Christianity was confirmed by the new Daoguang 道光 Emperor. Only Gaetano Pirès Pereira (1763–1838), the last Bishop of Beijing, was allowed to stay in China as a sign of respect for his old age.⁸ The bishop, as well as the property of the Catholic mission and their cemeteries, were entrusted to the Russian Orthodox Christian Mission. “The Peking mission, the former center of the Church’s strength, all but disappeared.”⁹

The following materials about Catholicism in China are found in Kowalewski’s diaries:

- Records of the Jesuit cemeteries in Beijing;
- Excerpts from different European books;¹⁰
- Excerpts from European manuscript sources;
- Records of personal talks with bishop Gaetano Pirès Pereira.

Descriptions of Jesuit Cemeteries

The available diaries contain a record of a personal visit by Kowalewski in April 1831 to the French Jesuit cemetery called in Chinese, Zhengfusi 正福寺, located in the western suburbs of Beijing.¹¹ In addition to the cemetery there was also a country residence of the Jesuits which contained the library and the archives. Kowalewski copied the inscriptions from the tombstones and also inspected closely the library which the French Catholic missionaries left behind. He copied inscriptions of the 11 tombstones on the eastern side, and 16 inscriptions on the western side of the cemetery. This is what he wrote in his diary:

“23 April. With Mr Krymsky¹² I went to the French cemetery outside the city and spent there the 24th and the 25th days. My work consisted in copying the tombstone inscriptions and examining the library which was left behind by the French Catholic missionaries.

⁸ Rolf Gerhard Tiedemann (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume two, 1800 to the Present*, Brill, Leiden 2010, pp. 214–222.

⁹ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, MacMillan, New York 1929, p. 181.

¹⁰ Excerpts from European printed books published in the seventeenth – early nineteenth centuries in different languages occupy many pages of Kowalewski’s diaries. There are also many Russian translations and summaries of writings in European languages. Since he wrote out the titles of these sourcebooks, they could be identified. These excerpts are not touched upon in the present article.

¹¹ Lewis Charles Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, Henri Vetch, Peking 1935, pp. 308–309; Jean-Marie Planchet, *Le cimetière et la paroisse de Tcheng-Fou-Sse 1732–1917*, Imprimerie des Lazaristes, Pekin 1918.

¹² K.G. Krymskiy (К.Г. Крымский; 1796–1861) was a member of the Russian Mission.

This cemetery [named] Zhengfusi exists since 1732 as can be concluded from the inscription under the stone cross near the northern wall: “PP. Galli Soc. Jesu posuere A.D. MDCCXXXII.”

On the Eastern side the following inscriptions are engraved on the gravestones:¹³

1. Joahimus Bouvet † 29 Junii 1730 [RJC No. 106]
2. Joan. Bapt. Regis † 25 Novembr. 1738 [RJC No. 672]
3. Dominic. Parennin † 29 Sept. 1741 [RJC No. 611]
4. Josephus de Mailla † 28 Junii 1748 [RJC No. 511]
5. Ludovicus des Robert † 21 April 1760 [RJC No. 248]
6. Petrus de Labaume † 20 Febr. 1770 [RJC No. 438]
7. Hubertus de Mericourt † 20 Aug. 1774 [RJC No. 547]
8. Martialis Petrus Cibot † 8 Aug. 1780 [RJC No. 176]
9. Joannes Collas † 22 Januar. 1781 [RJC No. 189]
10. Franciscus Bourgeois † 29 Julii 1792 [RJC No. 104]

On the same side in the third row is

Joannes Damascenus¹⁴ † 1781

On the Western side, in the first row:

1. Franciscus Gerbillon † 25 Mart. 1707 [RJC No. 360]
2. Franc. Xaver Dentrecolles † 2 Jull. 1741 [RJC No. 245]
3. Valentinus Chalier † 12 Apr. 1747 [RJC No. 166]
4. Petrus d’Incarville † 12 Jun. 1757 [RJC No. 413]
5. Antonius Gaubil † 24 Jull. 1759 [RJC No. 355]
6. Alexander de la Charme † 27 Jull. 1767 [RJC No. 440]
7. Michäel Benoit † 23 Octobr. 1774 [RJC No. 98]
8. Jacobus Franc. Adeodatus Dollierres † 24 Dec. 1780 [RJC No. 597]
9. Matheus Deventavon † 27 Maii 1787 [RJC No. 881]
10. Josephus Maria Amiot † 8 Octobr. 1793 [RJC No. 35]

In the second row there are two graves, in the third – one grave without inscription.

In the fourth [row]:

1. Stephanus Rousset † 2 Sept. 1758 [RJC No. 725]
2. Unknown, the gravestone is broken
3. Aegidius Thebault † 18 Jan. 1766 [RJC No. 841]
4. Broken
5. Ludovicus Basin † 15 Mart. 1774 [RJC No. 92]
6. Unknown

Beside these there are gravestones of Chinese Jesuits.¹⁵

¹³ For the sake of brevity only the names of the deceased and the dates of their demise are given, while the information about their age, number of years spent in China as well as standard Christian formulas are omitted.

¹⁴ Jean-Damascène Sallusti was Bishop of Beijing in 1778–1781.

¹⁵ DZ₁, pp. 29–33.



Fig. 1. Tombstone of Franciscus (Jean-François) Gerbillon which is now exhibited at the Wutasi Temple in Beijing. Photo by the author, 2013

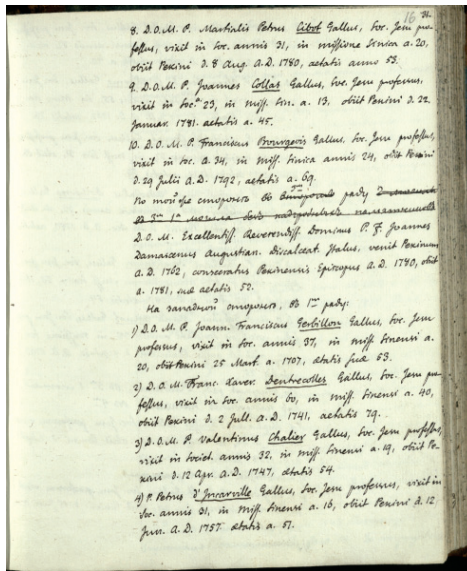


Fig. 2. Copy of the inscriptions on Jesuit tombstones made by J. Kowalewski. It contains information about Gerbillon's tomb [DZ₁, p. 31]

Under the date, 31 May, the diary of Kowalewski contains a list of seven tombstones of the Portuguese cemetery known by the Chinese name Zhala 栅栏 made by K.G. Krymskiy.

On the left side from the Cross:

1. Ferdinandus Verbiest † 29 Januar. 1688 [RJC No. 883]
2. Antonius Thomas † 28 Jul. 1709 [RJC No. 843]
3. Leopold. Liebstein † 26 Apr. 1711 [RJC No. 468]
4. Guilielmus Bonjour Fabri¹⁶ † 25 Dec. 1714
5. Kilianus Stumpf † 24 Jul. 1720 [RJC No. 818]
6. Franciscus Cardoso † 14 Aug. 1723 [RJC No. 141]
7. Franciscus Xaver. a Rosario † 11 Maii 1736 [RJC No. 722]¹⁷

Also Krymskiy copied long Latin inscriptions on two stelae facing the right and the left gates of the cemetery which are dated respectively 1739 and 1740.¹⁸ It is not clear from the available material if Kowalewski had visited this cemetery himself. This cemetery was a burial place of such famous Jesuits as Matteo Ricci, Adam Schall and Ferdinand Verbiest (only his tombstone is mentioned in this list).¹⁹

During the Boxer rebellion of 1900 when everything foreign was destroyed and Christians were killed, these cemeteries were razed to ground. The tombstones were broken, the bones of the deceased dug out and thrown away.²⁰ Though these cemeteries were later restored to some extent, they did not survive the turbulent events of the twentieth century. At the Buddhist temple Wutasi (五塔寺) in Beijing there is an open-air exhibition of the stelae with inscriptions gathered from different temples which no longer exist. There are also many Jesuit tombstones.

The available lists of inscriptions on the tombstones seem to be incomplete. Upon his return to Russia and at the request of M.V. Ladyzhensky (M.B. Ладыженский; 1802–1875), the attendant of the Mission, Kowalewski lent Ladyzhensky what he described as, “Copies of tombstone inscriptions which I collected at the French and the Portuguese cemeteries near Beijing.”²¹ Possibly these lists survive in Russian archives.

Jesuit manuscript materials

Kowalewski took some manuscript materials from the library of the French cemetery which registered the events relating to the contemporary state of the Chinese Catholic church. In his diary he put down their abridged Russian translations. He wrote:

¹⁶ Guillaume Fabri (1670–1714) was a member of Augustine Order.

¹⁷ DZ₁, pp. 110–111.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Arlington and Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, pp. 251–256; Jean-Marie Planchet, *Le cimetière et les œuvres catholiques de Chala, 1910–1927*, Imprimerie des Lazaristes, Pekin 1928.

²⁰ Arlington and Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, p. 252, 308.

²¹ DZ₁, p. 236.

“Among other things, in the local library I saw a list of Catholic Christians who were kept under the guidance of French missionaries from 1788 to 1825. Initially Jesuits were here and they were replaced by the missionaries *de* [= of the – V.U.] *Congregatio Missionis* dispatched [from Europe] with Raux as their first superior.²² Their territorial jurisdiction stretched 170 miles (*lieues*) from East to West, and 130 [miles] from South to West. In 1801 in the capital Beijing and its environments there were 920 Christians, and in Northern China besides the capital – 6645. In addition, French missionaries had their flock also in the southern provinces. It appears from a table that in 1801 there were 4328 Christians in the Huguang 湖廣 Province, in 1805 there were 6501 [of them]; in 1806 only in Hubei 湖北 Province there were 2490 persons. In 1806 in Henan 河南 there were 529 Christians, in 1807, 535. In 1808 in Jiangxi 江西 there were 1200 Christians. Very regrettably this list lacks completeness and preciseness which are observed in our countries. The same book indicates that from Jean de Fontenay (b. 1643 † 1710 in Europe)²³ to Joseph Panzi (1734 † 1809)²⁴ 87 French Jesuits stayed there. Out of these only 12 passed away in Europe or on their way back, all the others died in China or other Asian countries. There were 14 Jesuit priests of the Chinese. *Ex Congregatione Missionis* up to 1818 there were 10 Frenchmen and 24 Chinese missionaries. However, this list is incomplete. In proper time I shall make excerpts from the books which I discovered there.”²⁵

Under the date 10 May is the following excerpt:

“It is written in a manuscript journal of a French missionary under the date 16 February 1786 that a crowd of Christians gathered in search of the Bishop Alex[andre] de Gouvea who, according to rumours, was planning to promulgate the papal bulla prohibiting the Chinese from performing their worship. At that time the bishop was staying at the Portuguese cemetery together with Fathers Marien,²⁶ Deventavon, Crescentien.²⁷ On 18 February the joint congregation of European and Chinese missionaries ruled that the bulla should be promulgated with an exemption of its seventh clause. A crowd of Christians behind the gates were impatiently waiting for permission [to enter]; finally, some seven or eight persons dared to enter the hall. Among them were two officials with blue balls [on their

²² Nicolas Raux (1754–1801) arrived in China in 1785.

²³ RJC No.326.

²⁴ The precise date of Panzi’s death is found in no other written source.

²⁵ DZ₁, pp. 33–34.

²⁶ Also named Mariano (?–1790). He was an Italian Franciscan. See Joseph de Moidrey, *La hiérarchie catholique en Chine, en Corée et au Japon (1307–1914)*, Imprimerie de l’orphelinat de T’ou-sé-wé, Zi-ka-wei près Chang-hai 1914, pp. 50–51.

²⁷ Also named Crescent (ca. 1754–1791). He also was an Italian Franciscan. See *Ibidem*, pp. 51–52.

hats] and two who were yellow-belted.²⁸ The bishop ordered the reading of the bulla together with the sermon explaining the principal points. This meeting of the congregation lasted from 2 to 5 p.m. The bishop was advised to delay leaving the cemetery so that the mob had time to calm down. On 24 February the bishop sent to the French monastery a Chinese-language directive prohibiting the action of bowing down before the deceased, and an order to promulgate the prohibition in the church during Mass. The Christians silently listened to this directive which was immediately hung on the church gates. This is what happened at the French [compound]; however, in the Southern Temple the Christians strongly opposed the prohibition, and one of them loudly persuaded people not to believe this promulgation. A few days later the Christians from the Southern diocese were again looking for the bishop so as to complain about a missionary (P. Marien). [They said] that he himself was promoting superstitions such as, during the act of confession, ordering people to wear a horse saddle, etc. for the [redeeming] of sins. In December the bishop ordered [priests] to ask [people] during the confession whether they indisputably obey the Pope's commands and not to give the absolution of sins if otherwise. The priests of the Southern Temple – European ex-Jesuits and the Chinese – responded that they would rather not confess than follow such an order. The [lay] Christians also revolted and even offended a Chinese priest, who tried to do the bishop's will. The bishop even had to hide from the threats of the baptised Chinese who did not want to obey to the Pope's order concerning bowing down before the deceased."²⁹

Under the heading of 11 April, Kowalewski put down more information taken from that "journal."

"The same journal under the [heading of the] year 1799 contains information about return of the missionaries Poirot³⁰ and Panzi³¹ because of respect for their old age.³² This was the fourth year of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 Emperor. This event is described vaguely.

On 4 October 1800 (Jiaqing's reign, 5th year, 8th month, 20th day) there was issued an order which made it illegal to carry out conversions.

16 April 1804 – a report to the emperor concerning Pirès. On 30 September [1804] the Portuguese Pirès and Serra arrived in Beijing. On 28 December the news was received from Macao that Pirès was appointed Bishop of Nanking.

²⁸ Chin. *huangdaizi* 黃帶子 – the direct imperial descendants (*zongshi* 宗室) who were privileged to wear yellow sashes.

²⁹ DZ₁, pp. 52–53.

³⁰ RJC No. 654.

³¹ RJC No. 608.

³² It seems that Poirot and Panzi were initially ordered to leave China but later were allowed to stay in Beijing.

Joachim Salvetti arrived in Macao having been appointed Bishop of Beijing to replace de Gouvea.

Under the [heading of the] year 1804, beginning from the 10th day,³³ there are interesting notes concerning intercepted letters and a map of China which were sent to Europe by missionaries. A copy of this article should be included with the journal as an attachment.³⁴

12 February 1816. Joachim Salvetti – the vicar apostolic of Shenxi – arrived at the French cemetery outside Beijing. On 15 February he was ordained bishop, and on 19 February he returned from here to Shenxi Province.

The journal which is mentioned here, especially its last part, was written by Father Lamiot³⁵ and gives a picture of the persecution of Christians, with detailed descriptions of the events which happened at that time and also of the means undertaken by the missionaries in order to end the persecution. If there were prohibiting decrees they seem to have been caused by the illegal actions of the missionaries which incited the suspicions of the local government. The officials who were assigned to carry out the thorough investigation of the Christian faith and its followers had no real intention to exterminate Christianity in China. More, they were incited by their own insatiable greed and made every effort to bring Christians to the Xingbu 刑部³⁶ in order to extort money from them by applying severe tortures. A few remaining missionaries who were able to rely on the riches accumulated by their predecessors paid the ransoms [required to free the] missionaries from torture and the faithful from their unfortunate imprisonment. Meanwhile the disputes persisted and ambitions were out of control. Only a few learned men stayed behind, so that there was no skilled person who could occupy a place at the Board of Astronomy and undertake the duties of an astronomer. While some [clergy] put too much trust in the baptised Chinese and tried to give them equal rights with European preachers there were others who took the opposite position and tried to rule over them despotically and demanded from them unconditional obedience. Because of such disturbances Lamiot left Beijing. After him left Serra³⁷ who had been serving as an astronomer at the Board in his own capacity and as a substitute for his departed colleagues. Ribeira died of disappointment and sorrow which left only Bishop Pirès to exercise limitless patience amid the incredulous Chinese. Serra entrusted the French estates in Beijing to a Chinese named Xue³⁸ who is now hiding in the mountains to the north of Beijing. A flock without a shepherd will necessarily become a victim of

³³ The month was not specified by Kowalewski.

³⁴ Russ. original: *Статью сию поместить при журнале в копии*. This seems to be a note made by Kowalewski for himself.

³⁵ Louis Lamiot (1767–1831) arrived in China in 1794 and was expelled in 1819.

³⁶ Board of Punishments.

³⁷ Verissimo Monteiro da Serra (d. 1852) was Bishop of Beijing in 1818–1826.

³⁸ Matthaes Xue (Xue Madou 薛瑪竇; 1780–1860) was a Chinese Lazarist.

irreconcilable enemies. The building which has been standing for several centuries is doomed to destruction if not properly surveyed and repaired.”³⁹

This is followed by two pages of Kowalewski's reflections on the tragic fate of Catholicism in China which he witnessed, ending it with a Latin phrase: *omne imperium divisum, peribit*.⁴⁰

Under the date 8 [May] Kowalewski wrote:

“In the evening while looking at the manuscripts which were brought by me from the French cemetery, I found in one of them the following hymn:

Hymne, qui se chantoit anciennement dans la Salle des Ancêtres, lorsque l'Empereur faisait les cérémonies respectueuses dans tout l'appareil de sa dignité. Cet hymne a trois parties, composées chacune d'une strophe de 8 vers; chaque vers est de 4 syllabes.”⁴¹

Kowalewski copied in his diary the whole French translation of this poem.

In a semi-jocular letter to the former attendant of the mission, Ladyzhensky, Kowalewski wrote:

“Sir! During my stay in Beijing I had the possibility to look through the diaries of some Catholic missionaries who had stayed there, and I made some small excerpts about the events which are interesting to us. In one French diary – among other things – I found reminiscences about our last mission to China, a copy of which I dare to submit to you.”⁴²

In his answer⁴³ Ladyzhensky promised to include Kowalewski's materials into his description of their travel in the same way as the previous attendant of the mission, Timkovski (Е.Ф. Тимковский; 1790–1875),⁴⁴ had included in his book writings by Father Hiacynth (Bichurin).⁴⁵ However, Ladyzhensky did not accomplish his plan to write a story of this travel.

³⁹ DZ₁, pp. 54–55.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 57. ‘Every divided empire shall perish.’

⁴¹ Ibidem, pp. 49–51.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 257.

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 258.

⁴⁴ George Timkowski. *Travels of the Russian Mission Through Mongolia to China: And Residence in Peking in the Years, 1820–1821*. With Corrections and Notes by Julius von Klaproth. London, 1827. 2 Vols.

⁴⁵ Hyacinth (Иакинф, secular name N. Ya Bichurin, Н.Я. Бичурин; 1777–1853), a founding father of Russian Sinology, stayed in Beijing in 1808–1821.

Contacts with Bishop Gaetano Pirès

Kowalewski began his letter about Catholicism in China to Moussine-Pouchkine with the following words:

“Among my most memorable experiences in Beijing was my acquaintance with the Catholic Bishop Gaetano Pirès, the last European remaining in distrustful Beijing. This most respectful old man received me as if I were his compatriot who came from Portugal to visit him in his unfortunate circumstances, being on the brink of death. Multiple talks with him gave me the chance to penetrate into the history of Catholic missionaries which, while known in Europe to some extent, is not, however known to the extent or in a way as would be demanded by the current expectations of the science of history and the general desire to know in detail the destiny of the human race.”⁴⁶

The language of communication between Pirès and Kowalewski (as well as other members of the Mission) was French with some use of Latin. Of course, for Bishop Pirès meeting a Polish Catholic in Beijing in the days of tribulations was an unexpected delight.

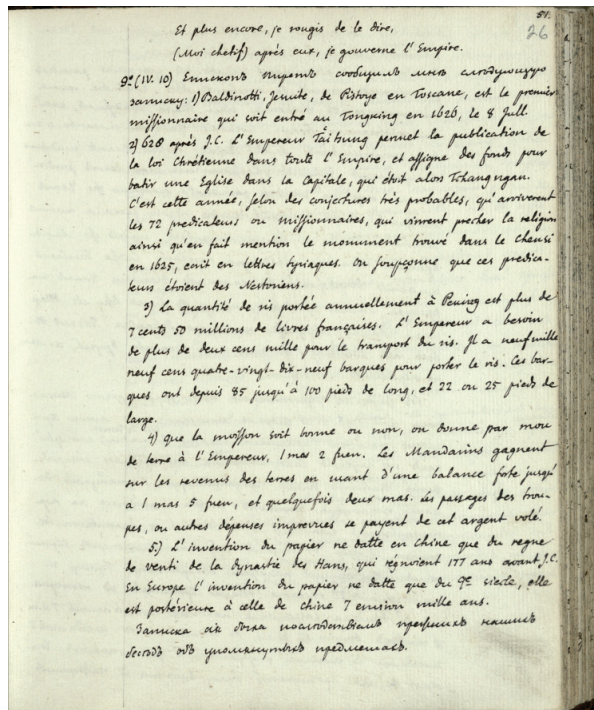


Fig. 3. Copy of a letter by Bishop Pirès [DZ₁, p. 51]

⁴⁶ DZ₂, pp. 354–355.

In a record of a talk with the bishop, Kowalewski wrote:

“I have learnt from the bishop that he arrived in Beijing in 1805 by Imperial order to occupy a position at the Board of Astronomy. He met there thirteen other European missionaries. Soon he received the Pope’s bulla to be appointed the Bishop of Nanking. Letters sent to Europe together with a map of a Chinese province in which were marked the places where different missionary orders were stationed, were intercepted. A severe persecution followed. The present-day Bishop of Shenxi⁴⁷ was earlier discovered in Canton and sentenced to a three-year imprisonment. After serving his term he was taken to Macao, and secretly made his way via Tongkin to Shenxi, and to the French cemetery of Beijing where he was ordained a bishop. Christianity now exists only being supported with huge sums of money which are paid to high officials so that they take no notice of the missionaries’ activities. Chinese catechists enjoy more respect of the people than missionaries and even Chinese priests.”⁴⁸

In his letter Kowalewski wrote that after the death of Portuguese missionary Ribeira in October, 1826 a memorial was submitted to the Emperor requesting the immediate deportation of Pirès and Serra. Serra left but Pirès earlier reported a grave illness and was allowed to stay in Beijing until recovery.

“Pirès prepared for himself a coffin, dug a grave and put a tombstone with his name inscribed, leaving a free space for the date of his death. He is forbidden to go out but secretly visits the cemeteries outside the city. He never appears in the main temple holding the divine services at his home church. There was a rumour that Chinese officials promised – if paid a big sum of money – to petition for an imperial order allowing European missionaries to stay in China as previously.”⁴⁹

A farewell meeting with Bishop Pirès was vividly described by Kowalewski:

“July 2. Together with the attendant, the archimandrites, the doctor and the head of the caravan, I attended a farewell lunch with the most respected bishop. A touching minute! The archpastor, the last of the European missionaries in Beijing, has lived many years maintaining true friendship with the head of the Russian Mission, sharing with him all pleasant and unpleasant things. The years which passed away made this friendship stronger. In the time of persecution the Russians became the protectors of the orphaned Catholics of China, they saved the missionaries’ temple and buildings from pillage and consoled the bishop and his flock. An

⁴⁷ Vicar Apostolic of Shenxi and Shanxi in West China Joachim (Gioacchino) Salvetti (1769–1843).

⁴⁸ *DZ*₁, p. 12.

⁴⁹ *DZ*₂, pp. 369–370.

enormous library was donated to our Mission and a major part of the [Catholic Mission's] assets in the form of land as well as shops, was sold to it at a low price or given up with conditions. These difficult circumstances brought together the Europeans with the Russians whom they earlier eschewed. Mr Wojciechowski,⁵⁰ who acquired the respect of the Chinese through his knowledge and experience, has always been a friend and a patron of the suffering Catholics. Without any personal preferences the bishop many times expressed his gratitude to members of our Mission, especially today, bidding farewell.

During the lunch he received two letters from Macao from the procurator *de Propag[anda] fide*: one for the Bishop of Shanxi, Joachim Salvetti, the other for himself, which informed him that two missionaries – one European, the other Chinese - who were now in Macao, want to find their way to Korea in order to preach God's Word, and asked the local bishop to help them to achieve this purpose.

The first toast was proposed by the bishop *pro Patria vestra*,⁵¹ and then for the well-being of the attendant, the archimandrite, the doctor... After taking leave of the respected archpastor we dropped in to the temple which is assigned to destruction by the suspicious Chinese! European millions are scattered throughout China for the benefit of the Faith. The preachers are exterminated in the persecution and Christians languish. The bishop is left alone doomed to die amid the enemies of the Faith!"⁵²

The number of baptised Chinese, according to Pirès, was about 60 million persons (men and women) with 40,000 in Beijing.⁵³

Kowalewski wrote:

"On Easter day I personally saw in the Southern Temple about 2,000 men. (From a certain time women do not visit the temple.) Besides this in Catholics' homes altars are made, and priests perform there liturgy. With extreme surprise I watched the reverence of the local flock, their Christian zeal and fervour."⁵⁴

The following notes about the way of life of Chinese Catholics are found in Kowalewski's diary.

"Here persecutions originate from petty causes. For example, in April 1826 a Christian barber in a brawl with a pagan of the same profession bit off his

⁵⁰ Wojciechowski (О.П. Войцеховский; 1793–1850) stayed in Beijing in 1820–1831 as a physician of the Mission.

⁵¹ 'For your homeland'.

⁵² DZ₁, pp. 121–122.

⁵³ DZ₂, p. 375. This number is an obvious exaggeration.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, pp. 375–376.

finger. To revenge the pagan kicked him in the head and reported to the police that his adversary was a Christian. The former and his disciples were seized and being interrogated did not renounce his faith and therefore was sentenced to eternal exile. However, being tortured his disciples became informers about Christians. This persecution ended with getting money from the bishop and rich Christians.”⁵⁵

Kowalewski remarked that the bishop often said in Latin that a foreigner who wished to live in China should have three things: *patientia, prūdentia et pecūnia*: patience, prudence and money.⁵⁶

Under the date, 1 May 1831, Kowalewski recorded an event which happened during his stay in Beijing and which was probably witnessed by him.

“About half a month ago a mischievous Chinese who called himself a Christian, while scolding all Christians and priests, walked many times around the Southern Temple which is the abode of the Catholic bishop. Crowds flocked in the street while all Christians already were expecting tribulation, which is, however, limited here to robbing of the bishop and rich Christians by means of slandering and insatiable avidness of the bureaucrats. This slanderer could not have been calmed by admonitions. A few days ago came to the street a respectful seventy years old man who called him his son and begged the crowding people to help him to punish this disrespectful son. This miscreant in vain tried to persuade the surrounding starers that he is not a son of this old man. However, the old man with the help of the mob severely punished him in the street and also threatened to bring him to criminal court. Such an accident can take place only in China. The fake father comforted Christians by relieving them of the slanderer’s attacks.”⁵⁷

About the Jesuit Library

Kowalewski did not only copy portions of European books and manuscripts left behind in Beijing by Catholic missionaries but took with him to Russia a certain number of them. In his diaries he enumerated the books which he presented to the Kazan University:

- *Informatio pro veritate contra iniquiorem famam sparsam per Sinas cum calumnia PP. Societ. Jesu, et detrimento Missionis comunicata Missionariis in imperio Sinensi anno 1717.*
- *Brevis relatio eorum, quae spectant ad declarationem Sinarum Imperatoris Kam-Hi circa Caeli, Confucii et Avorum cultum, datam anno 1700. Accedunt Primatum*

⁵⁵ DZ₂, pp. 370–371.

⁵⁶ Ramil’ M. Valeev and Irina V. Kulganek (eds.), *Rossiya – Mongoliya – Kitai: Dnevniky mongoloveda O.M. Kovalevskogo: 1830–1831 gg.*, Taglimat, Kazan’ 2006, p. 45.

⁵⁷ DZ₁, p. 42.

Doctissimorumque Virorum et antiquissimae Traditionis testimonia, opera PP. Soc. Jesu Pekini pro Evangelii propagatione laborantium.

“Both are printed in Beijing.”

- *Epochae celebrioris, Astronomis, Historicis, Chronologis, Chataiorum, Syro-Graecorum, Arabum, Persarum, Chorasmiorum usitatae: ex traditione Ulug Beigicum comment.* Joh. Gravici, Londini 1650. 4°
- *Chorasmiae et Mavaralnahrae h.e. regionum extra fluvium Oxum description, ex tabulis Abulfedae Ismaelis Principis Hamah.* Londini 1650. 4°
“The latter two books are bound in one.”
- *Viaggi di Moscovia degli anni 1633, 1634, 1635 e 1636. libri tre cavati dal Tedesco,* in Viterbo 1658. in 4° maiori.
- *Thomae a Kempis de imitatione Christi libri quatuor de latino in arabicum versi a P.F. Coelestino a S. Liduina Carmelita Discalceato.* Roma. 1763. 8°
- *Compendiosa narratione dello Stato della Missione Cinese, cominciãdo dall anno 1581 fino al 1669 offerta in Roma, dal P. Prospero Intorcetta.* Roma 1672. 8° min.
- *Abdallae Beidavaei historia Sinensis, persice e gemino manuscripto edita, latine quoque reddita ab Andrea Mullero.* Jenae 1689. 4°⁵⁸

Needless to say that these books originate from the library of the Catholic missionaries. Besides printed books, Kowalewski took with him some Jesuit manuscripts. As he wrote himself in 1832 while already staying in Eastern Siberia:

“Among the manuscripts which I brought from Beijing there is one in Latin which is divided into following chapters: on antiquity, on philosophy, on the beliefs existing in China et al. The author mentioned the fact that he took the evidence directly from Chinese books.”⁵⁹

Kowalewski mentioned that Bishop Pirès helped him to find necessary books in the Jesuit library. It is also hardly imaginable that he could have taken with him these materials without the bishop’s permission. The question arises concerning the status of the Jesuit library at that time. Kowalewski wrote several times that this library was “donated”⁶⁰ by the Catholic missionaries to the Russian Mission. Archimandrite Daniil⁶¹ who returned from China in the same party with Kowalewski also brought with him a collection of Catholic books in Chinese which he later sold to Kazan University. Vasili Vasilyev (В.П. Васильев; 1818–1900), a student of Kowalewski who later became an outstanding scholar in Tibetan, Buddhist and Chinese studies, stayed in Beijing in 1840–1850. This is how he described the origins of the Chinese book collection at Kazan University:

⁵⁸ DZ₁, pp. 249–250.

⁵⁹ DZ₂, pp. 139–143.

⁶⁰ Russ. “пожертвована”.

⁶¹ Archimandrite Daniil (Д.П. Сивиллов; 1798–1871) stayed in Beijing from 1820 to 1831. He was the first Professor of Chinese language at Kazan University.

“La même année⁶² fut établie à l’université de Kasan la chaire de chinois; l’archimandrite Daniel, professeur d’alors, céda à l’université tous ses livres [...]; et c’est de cette époque que date réellement la collection chinoise. La plus grande partie de la bibliothèque du p. Daniel se composait d’ouvrages classiques et de philosophe et surtout de livres traitant du Christianisme; c’étaient des ouvrages composés ou traduits tant par les membres ecclésiastiques de notre mission en Chine que par des prédicateurs catholiques. [...] Comme les temples chrétiens ont été fermés en Chine, et comme l’impression d’ouvrages sur le Christianisme y a été défendue, les habitants de la Corée qui ont embrassé notre religion, en achetant de nos jours des livres chrétiens, doivent les payer très-cher. Mais lors du séjour du p. Daniel à Péking les derniers missionnaires catholiques allaient précisément quitter pour jamais la Chine, et, en s’en allant, ils remirent tous les biens de l’église à notre mission et firent *cadeau* [emphasis added – V.U.] à ses membres d’une précieuse collection d’ouvrages tant européens que chinois, y compris les armoires; et c’est probablement de cette collection là que le p. Daniel avait formé la sienne.”⁶³

It is clear from this passage that the library of the Catholic missionaries (including cabinets) was regarded as a present and hence the property of the Russian Mission. In his testament Bishop Pirès mentioned only his private belongings and said no word about the library.⁶⁴ However, with the return of the Catholics to Beijing in 1860 this library was handed over to them.⁶⁵

The questions relating to the history of this library are now being studied by a Chinese scholar, Liu Ruomei 柳若梅, who found interesting materials in Russian archives. A catalogue of the Catholic library entitled, *A Catalogue of the Portuguese Mission’s Library*, (Russ. Каталог библиотеки португальской миссии), which includes 3348 book titles, was made by Goshkevich (И.А. Гошкевич; 1814–1875), a student of the Russian Mission in Beijing in 1840–1849.⁶⁶ Since that time these books were put under a more formal control. In 1850 the new head of the Russian mission certified the receipt of these books according to this catalogue from his predecessor. In the same year a small number

⁶² 1837.

⁶³ Wassiliew, *Notice sur les ouvrages en langues de l’Asie orientale, qui se trouvent dans la bibliothèque de l’université de Saint-Petersbourg*, “Mélanges asiatiques tirés du Bulletin historico-philologique de l’Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Petersbourg”, t. 11, 6^e livraison. 1856, p. 581.

⁶⁴ Liu Roumei, *Izyskaniya o kataloge knig biblioteki Severnogo sobora (Beitang) iz sobraniya arkhiva Ministerstva inostrannykh del RF*, “Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta (Vostokovedenie i afrikanistika)” 11/2 (2019), p. 147.

⁶⁵ Petr Ye. Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniya*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow 1977, pp. 149, 324 n. 30.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 141–146. At present this catalogue is kept in Moscow at the Archives of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (Архив внешней политики Российской империи) which is attached to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

of books were taken to Russia for the library of the Pulkovo Astronomical Observatory near Saint Petersburg.⁶⁷

It is obvious from the testimonies of Kowalewski and Vasilyev that a number of books and manuscripts in European and Chinese languages were brought to Russia during the lifetime of Bishop Pirès. In 1855 the Oriental Department, including its library, was moved from Kazan University to Saint Petersburg University. Although there still exists no complete catalogue of its Chinese collection, a number of books and dictionaries which belonged to Catholic missionaries have been recovered.⁶⁸

Conclusion

While there is no shortage of works on the history of Catholicism in China, the eyewitness evidence on this subject found in the diaries of Kowalewski – the only Catholic who visited Beijing in the most difficult times for local Christians – has so far been ignored. The main reason for this is that these manuscript diaries have never been published and nor were they supposed to be published, being draft materials which are often difficult to decipher. While the current article is based on two of Kowalewski's extant diaries, more information could very possibly be retrieved from the Russian archives. A further study of this subject would constitute a partial restoration of Kowalewski's unpublished study of Catholicism in China which was tragically lost in a fire.

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⁶⁷ Ibidem, pp. 146–147.

⁶⁸ Vladimir L. Uspensky (ed.), *Rukopisi i ksilografy na vostochnykh yazykakh v Nauchnoi biblioteke im. M. Gor'kogo SPbGU*, Filologicheskij fakul'tet SPbGU, Saint Petersburg 2014, p. 77.

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