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Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy

**Travelling Books, Community Networks,
Intercultural Arguments**

Nicolas Standaert

**Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.I.
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The Chinese rites controversy in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is often considered a purely European affair: the Catholic Church questioned whether Chinese rites such as ancestor worship could be practised by Chinese converts. But to what extent did Chinese scholars take part in the debates concerning these rites?

An exceptional series of Chinese and European sources preserved in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (ARSI), dating from the year 1701 to 1704, provide new evidence for the Chinese voices in this controversy. These sources include a collection of some 60 Chinese letters (with about 430 different signatories) that were sent to Rome to make their voices heard. These letters provide a unique insight not only into the argumentation but also into the sociological composition of the local Christian communities and their networks at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

This book investigates how knowledge about Chinese rites was produced, distributed, and exchanged at that time. It fully exploits the richness of these documents with regard to three themes: travelling books, community networks and intercultural arguments. The book includes a reproduction of all the Chinese primary sources.

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