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Résumé de l'article

Les missions des Jésuites en Asie comptent parmi les réalisations les plus audacieuses entreprises par les Européens au début de la période moderne. Cet article s'interroge sur un aspect encore relativement peu compris de l'entreprise : son processus de nomination. Il rassemble des documents d'archives disparates afin de recréer les étapes à suivre pour devenir un missionnaire jésuite, notamment les *Litterae indipetae* (pétitions pour les « Indes »), les rapports provinciaux portant sur les candidats à ces missions, ainsi que les réponses rédigées par le supérieur général des jésuites. En se concentrant sur les candidats originaires des provinces italiennes de la Compagnie de Jésus, cet article décrit non seulement la manière dont les missionnaires jésuites étaient nommés, mais aussi les priorités, les motivations et les attitudes qui guidaient ce processus d'évaluation et de sélection. La présente étude démontre notamment que la sélection des missionnaires s'effectuait à travers une “manière de procéder” spécifique, qui avait fait l'objet d'une négociation entre toutes les parties, et qui était perçue en termes aussi bien spirituels qu'organisationnels. Cela se constate à travers la vocation elle-même puisque, indépendamment du fait qu'il partît effectivement ou non pour les « Indes », le candidat soumis à cette procédure prenait le nom d'indiano.

Becoming “Indians”: The Jesuit Missionary Path from Italy to Asia

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The Jesuit missions in Asia were among the most audacious undertakings by Europeans in the early modern period. This article focuses on a still relatively little understood aspect of the enterprise: its appointment process. It draws together disparate archival documents to recreate the steps to becoming a Jesuit missionary, specifically the Litterae indipetae (petitions for the “Indies”), provincial reports about missionary candidates, and replies to applicants from the Jesuit superior general. Focusing on candidates from the Italian provinces of the Society of Jesus, the article outlines not just how Jesuit missionaries were appointed but also the priorities, motivations, and attitudes that informed their assessment and selection. Missionaries were made, the study shows, through a specific “way of proceeding” that was negotiated between all parties and seen in both organizational and spiritual terms, beginning with the vocation itself, which, whether the applicant departed or not, earned him the name indiano.

Les missions des Jésuites en Asie comptent parmi les réalisations les plus audacieuses entreprises par les Européens au début de la période moderne. Cet article s’interroge sur un aspect encore relativement peu compris de l’entreprise : son processus de nomination. Il rassemble des documents d’archives disparates afin de recréer les étapes à suivre pour devenir un missionnaire jésuite, notamment les Litterae indipetae (pétitions pour les « Indes »), les rapports provinciaux portant sur les candidats à ces missions, ainsi que les réponses rédigées par le supérieur général des jésuites. En se concentrant sur les candidats originaires des provinces italiennes de la Compagnie de Jésus, cet article décrit non seulement la manière dont les missionnaires jésuites étaient nommés, mais aussi les priorités, les motivations et les attitudes qui guidaient ce processus d’évaluation et de sélection. La présente étude démontre notamment que la sélection des missionnaires s’effectuait à travers une “manière de procéder” spécifique, qui avait fait l’objet d’une négociation entre toutes les parties, et qui était perçue en termes aussi bien spirituels qu’organisationnels. Cela se constate à travers la vocation elle-même puisque, indépendamment du fait qu’il partît effectivement ou non pour les « Indes », le candidat soumis à cette procédure prenait le nom d’indiano.

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Introduction: sending Italians to the Portuguese “Indies”

This study enlists a range of archival records to investigate how Jesuit missionaries were selected for the Asian “Indies” in the early modern period.¹ Situated within current scholarship on Jesuit history, especially the overseas missions,² it enlists sources generated about Jesuits from the Italian provinces, the best documented—although little studied as a cohort³—as well as the largest group

1. The study employs the term “Indies” in the way that it was used by its protagonists: the term had many meanings depending on context, from geographical (to the east or west of Europe, or both) to metaphorical and spiritual, including in the last two senses the lands of Europe identified for reconversion or renewal in the tenets of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. It was a term containing attitudes of hope, ambition, and opportunity. It is complex on a number of levels, not least for the attitude of cultural, religious, and regional superiority that Europeans on the whole assumed in using it to describe regions beyond, or peoples within, its borders—i.e., those considered rough and only partially Christian. The term is enlisted in this analysis precisely to reflect and retain the multiple meanings with which it was invested at the time. Because of the study’s focus, Asia is intended when the term is used in a geographical sense. (In cases where the Indies of the west is intended, this is noted.) All translations into English are by the author unless otherwise stated.

2. For up-to-date, historiographical treatments of many topics discussed in this article, see Jesuit Historiography Online: referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/jesuit-historiography-online. With few studies in English about the mission appointment system, one aim of this article is to provide a historiographical overview of the relevant research.

3. Studies of Italian candidates for the Indies include: 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; and (for the eighteenth century) Anna Rita Capoccia, “Le destin des Indipetae au-delà du XVIIe siècle,” in *Missions Religieuses Modernes: Notre Lieu est le Monde*, ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 89–110, which explores the relationship between candidates’ desire for the Indies (petitions) and the implementation of such a desire (actual selection of candidates) through matching the Italian authors of the *Litterae indipetae* with a variety of relevant sources, including Triennial Catalogues and *Epistolae Communes*. Preliminary research on Italian candidates for the Indies, of which this study represents the culmination, is in two earlier studies by the author (with some material reproduced in this article): 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 Prosperi*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore, vol. 2 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 179–89; and Camilla Russell, “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, 2 vols. (Florence: Villa I Tatti / the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2013), 2:313–27.

assigned to Asia after the Portuguese.⁴ The article is structured around four key phases of the appointment process and the documents that shed light on them: vocation, traceable in the *Litterae indipetae* (autobiographical vocation statements written by missionary hopefuls to the Society’s head, the superior general); acknowledgement, seen through the replies sent from the superior general to applicants and their provincial superiors; assessment, through reports by provincial leaders about prospective missionary candidates; and selection, analyzed here through a case study of Italian Jesuits chosen for the China mission.⁵

These phases, it will be shown, point to four key features of the appointment process in the Italian provinces.⁶ First, the process allowed for consultation between the main parties, including applicants, superiors, and even families, reflecting a distinctly Jesuit “way of proceeding,” that is, a system of negotiated

4. Data cited in this study for Jesuit numbers sailing east are from three main sources (listed here in chronological order of publication): Josef Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541–1758,” *Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte* 7 (1967): 252–450; Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1973); Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540–1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For the sixteenth century, see Maria Iris Gramazio, “Gesuiti italiani missionari in Oriente nel XVI secolo,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 66.132 (1997): 275–300.

5. All sources used in this study are held at Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (hereafter ARSI). For overviews of the archive’s holdings, see Edmond Lamalle, “L’Archivio Generale della Compagnia di Gesù,” *Archiva Ecclesiae*, 24/25 (1) (1981–82): 89–120; Flavio Rurale, “...lo sguardo o la mano del generale: problemi e prospettive di ricerca nell’Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu,” in *Gli archivi per la storia degli ordini religiosi. Vol. 1: Fonti e problemi (secoli XVI–XIX)* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2007), 93–110; Robert Danieluk, “Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu: un luogo privilegiato per lo studio dell’attività evangelizzatrice dei gesuiti,” *Archiva Ecclesiae* 53–55 (2010–12): 221–54; Robert Danieluk, “Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI),” in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits*, ed. Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 44–45.

6. The study thus seeks to address what Liam Matthew Brockey describes as the “enigma” of the appointment process, which he partially resolves in his excellent analysis on Jesuit formation, focusing especially on Portuguese Jesuits bound for China: *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); for this point, see p. 226. This study expands on these findings by focusing on the candidates from Italy and including discussion of the spiritual dimensions of the appointment process—and consequently reaches some different conclusions. Important later studies include several essays in Fabre and Vincent, eds., and Aliocha Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias. Las cartas *indipetae* de los jesuitas europeos, siglos xvi–xviii, ensayo historiográfico,” *Relaciones* 132 (2012): 147–81. For the overseas Catholic missions more broadly, and how they were organized, see Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, ed., *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), especially part 5, “The Structures.”

obedience that weighed up the most suitable path for both the individual and the Society's needs. Second, the process on occasion entailed the personal attention of the superior general. Third, it sought to identify talented individuals of the highest standard. Fourth, through these Italian appointments to the predominantly Portuguese missions, it safeguarded Jesuit cosmopolitanism. The analysis further shows that vocations were seen as so transformational in the life of some Jesuit petitioners that they attracted the title *indiani* without ever leaving Europe (let alone abandoning their "European-ness").⁷ These practical and conceptual processes by which missionaries were made bear consequences for our understanding not just of missionary appointments but also of the European encounter in this period with the "Indies."⁸

The Jesuit missions in Asia—the first outside Europe—were administered by the Portuguese assistancy.⁹ This meant that, in line with the operational norms

7. This article introduces the term "indiano" to identify Jesuit candidates for the missions of the Indies. For "negotiated obedience" see Antonella Romano, *Rome et la science moderne: entre Renaissance et Lumières' études réunies par Antonella Romano* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2008). Thomas V. Cohen was the first to demonstrate the historical value of the vast documentation generated in the Society about vocations: "Why the Jesuits Joined, 1540–1600," *Historical Papers/ Communications Historiologiques* 9.1 (1974): 237–58. There is a growing interest in the subject and in the Jesuit sources pertaining to it: for example, Lucy Underwood, "Youth, Religious Identity and Autobiography at the English Colleges in Rome and Valladolid, 1592–1685," *Historical Journal* 55:2 (June 2012): 349–74; Mirriam Turrini, "La vocazione esaminata. Narrazioni autobiografiche di novizi gesuiti a metà Seicento," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 28 (2015): 289–366; and (for the non-European missions) Aliocha Maldavsky, *Vocaciones inciertas: misión y misioneros en la provincia jesuita del Perú en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: CSIC, 2012). For mainly retrospective autobiographical and biographical accounts about vocations to the Society, see Adriano Prosperi, *La vocazione: storie di gesuiti tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2016).

8. The article thus builds on studies from recent decades that have provided useful signposts for tracing the "global turn" in early modern European history—and the missionary enterprises' (especially the Jesuits') central place in it—including Simon Ditchfield, "Of Missions and Models: The Jesuit Enterprise (1540–1773) Reassessed in Recent Literature (Review)," *The Catholic Historical Review* 93.2 (2007): 325–43; Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalisation in the Early Jesuit Missions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Emanuele Colombo, "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, Biblioteca della "Nuova Rivista Storica" 42 (Rome: Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 2010), 31–59; Hsia, ed., *A Companion*.

9. Assistancies were the administrative groups into which the worldwide Jesuits were organized along roughly geopolitical lines in the Old Society (referring to the period between its foundation and worldwide papal suppression, 1540–1773). By 1558, the many Jesuit provinces were already grouped under the following assistancies: Portugal, Spain, Germany, and Italy. By contrast with Asia, the Jesuits

of the Society, the majority of Jesuits sent to the region (around 65 percent) came from Portugal.¹⁰ This arrangement reflected the fact that, for Europeans, from the time of the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, all of Asia (except for the Spanish Philippines) came within the Portuguese sphere.¹¹ With the Portuguese crown’s oversight of religious life in its *Estado da Índia*, established by papal delegation and known as the *Padroado*, in 1540 the crown in turn entrusted the Asian missions to the Society of Jesus under the leadership of the Basque former nobleman, Francis Xavier (1506–52), the same year as the Society’s foundation with Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) as the first superior general.¹² The Portuguese crown’s control of European affairs in the region was such that all Jesuits, both Portuguese and from elsewhere, depended on the king to travel and remain there.

By 1559, there were already 126 Jesuits serving in the east; just over forty years later, in 1601, the Jesuits in Asia counted 276 members out of roughly 8,500 members worldwide. In 1603, the Portuguese Provincial Congregation

started travelling to the Spanish Americas and the Philippines from the mid-1560s; other religious orders and the secular clergy held more sway in these territories than did the Jesuits. The first Jesuits arrived in Lima in 1568; Florida in 1566 (although they left in 1572); Peru in 1568; Mexico in 1572; and Canada in 1611 (although they were soon expelled). They arrived in the Philippines in 1581; Jesuits had first arrived in Portuguese Brazil in 1549.

10. For classic studies, see Georg Schurhammer, *Gesammelte Studien, II–IV. Herausgegeben zum 80. Geburtstag des Verfassers*, ed. László Szilas (Rome and Lisbon: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu and Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1963–65); Josef Wicki, ed., *Missionskirche im Orient: Ausgewählte Beiträge über Portugiesisch-Asien* (Immensee: Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft, 1976); Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*.

11. For the Portuguese *Estado*, see Adolfo Tamburello, “La presenza portoghese in Asia e le missioni. La questione del patronato nei secoli XVI–XVII,” in *L’Europa e l’evangelizzazione delle Indie Orientali*, ed. Luciano Vaccaro (Milan: Centro Ambrosiano, 2005), 23–50.

12. For the missionizing imperative underpinning the overseas operations of the European empires, see Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 551–99; Paolo Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo. Le missioni della Compagnia di Gesù tra Europa e America (secoli XVI–XVII)* (Rome: Carocci, 2004), 227–61 (including tensions in the Society between the initial missionizing zeal and the sedentary tendencies of Jesuit operations in later decades); Elisabetta Corsi, “Putao yuan gongren huo xuezhe? Jindai chuqi laihua Yidali huishi de fuyin chuanbo he jiaohua jiaoliu; Operai della vigna o savants? I missionari della Compagnia di Gesù tra evangelizzazione e mediazione culturale,” in *L’incontro fra l’Italia e la Cina: il contributo italiano alla sinologia. Quinto simposio internazionale di sinologia dell’Università Fu Jen*, ed. Antonella Tulli and Zbigniew Wesolowski (Taipei: Fu Jen University, 2009), 83–124.

Resolutions signalled a desire to change the nature of the Portuguese contribution to the enterprise by stating that it would not send fully-formed Jesuits or those demonstrating particular talents who could perform greater service at home than overseas.¹³ Rome's attention to securing quality candidates, observable in this study of Jesuits from the Italian provinces, points to its leaders' different position on the issue.

Yet, the Roman leadership also had reason to share the Portuguese view that the weight of responsibility for manning the missions should not fall to Portugal alone. Apart from the growing number of Jesuit missions in the region, without hopes of replenishment from local vocations (excluded from the late-sixteenth century with a few exceptions), sending Jesuits from European provinces outside Portugal was in line with the Society's organization around supra-regional principles.¹⁴ Also, during the generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)¹⁵—which suffered a series of separatist crises and leadership challenges mainly from Spain—the overseas missions became a central plank in the general's claim to authority over the whole Society and all of its members.¹⁶ The mixed provenance of the overseas missionaries was

13. Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 231. The Portuguese were not the only ones with this attitude: In 1561, Jerónimo Nadal (1507–80) had suggested that less-bright Germans would do well for the overseas missions (Alden, 267).

14. John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 59.

15. For Acquaviva (1543–1615), see Paolo Broggio, Francesca Cantù, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Antonella Romano, eds., *I gesuiti ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva: strategie politiche, religiose e culturali tra Cinque e Seicento* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2007); Silvia Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014); Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Flavio Rurale, eds., *The Acquaviva Project: Claudio Acquaviva's Generalate (1581–1615) and the Emergence of Modern Catholicism* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources Boston College, 2017).

16. The Society's system of governance was distinct from the monastic and mendicant orders, including in the area of missionary appointments. The so-called monarchical system in the Society replaced the capitular one, where appointments were made by election in a chapter of the religious community. In Mexico, for example, the fact that the Mendicant orders were organized into separate provinces from Europe (like the Jesuits), with semi-autonomous governmental structures (unlike the Jesuits), meant that recruitment practices were more devolved to the provincial level than they were in the Society; by the same token, they worked very closely with the crown in determining missionary strategies (especially in deciding locations and priorities for where to send personnel): see Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523–1572*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of

an important expression of this claim.¹⁷ In a letter addressed to the Society’s provincials in 1583, Acquaviva requested all provinces, and not just the overseas missions, to “have a mix of the members of the various provinces and languages, so that in this way, every part of this body [the whole Society] will come to be tied and united through this mix and fortified and embellished together with this uniform variety.”¹⁸ The assessments provided about Italian candidates, studied here, reflect this policy.

California Press / Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), esp. 61–82. For the Jesuits, instead, the monarchical system meant that, at least in principle, the hierarchy had precedent over the community, with the general, in cooperation with the General Congregation that elected him and met periodically, responsible for governance and the most important decisions. In practice, this was tempered by a delegation of responsibility to the various levels of government, including provinces, but also to each individual (as part of a system of spiritual discernment), and in turn reinforced through the Society’s insistence on obedience of its members towards their superiors. One of the primary manifestations of these institutional dynamics is the immense system of correspondence, including the documents under consideration in this study, which made possible consultation across and between members as well as the issuing of directives. The relative paucity of equivalent documents in the other religious orders (and consequently sketchier information about the appointment process for the missions) reflects these different governmental systems. See O’Malley, 354. For the non-Jesuit overseas enterprises, see Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest*; Pedro Borges Morán, *El envío de misioneros a América durante la época española* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1977); and several essays in Hsia, ed., *A Companion*.

17. Already there was mention of the overseas missions in the Society’s first General Congregation (references to these meetings and their published decrees, further explained in this note, below, are abbreviated to *GC*): *GC* 1, D. 130 (“Missions to the Indies are to be assisted,” that is, the over-stretched Portuguese) and in the congregation that elected Muzio Vitelleschi, *GC* 7, D. 21 (“On missionaries scattered throughout various provinces”), the latter in fact directed at the English mission, which was criticized for isolationist tendencies in communal life and governance (answering only to English leaders and not to the formal non-English leaders) in the mixed-race environments of their European hosted bases. See John W. Padberg, Martin D. O’Keefe, and John L. McCarthy, *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations: A Brief History and a Translation of the Decrees* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994). The General Congregations were set up as the highest governing body of the Society; they elected the superior general. The congregation’s decrees were related to organizational questions within the Society, the introduction of reforms, the airing of problems, and the updating of interpretations of the Society’s founding documents and adjustments in the applications of their directives. Relevant pages for these points: 100, 256–57, and (with editorial explanation) 15–16.

18. ARSI, *Ital.* 168, 41^v: 30 April 1583, quoted in Alessandro Guerra, “La Compagnia di Acquaviva: riflessioni su memoria e identità gesuitica,” in “Anatomia di un corpo religioso: L’identità dei Gesuiti in età moderna,” ed. Franco Motta, special issue, *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 19.2 (2002): “far mistura de’ soggetti di varie province e lingue, perché così ogni parte di questo corpo venga stretta et unita con questa mistione e fortificata et abbellita insieme con questa uniforme varietà” (391).

In the early years of the Asia mission until 1581, the highest percentage of non-Portuguese to travel east (28.3 percent) was Spanish. However, ongoing tensions between the two nations (exacerbated by the union of the crowns in 1580, unwillingly on the Portuguese side), meant that by 1591, Spaniards had ceased travelling to the region, with very few exceptions.¹⁹ They were almost completely supplanted by Jesuits from the Italian provinces: between 1581 and 1640, 26.8 percent of all departures for the east were made up of Italians (out of a total of 36.2 percent non-Portuguese). This period corresponds to the biggest concentration of documents generated about Italian candidates, which provide the basis of this study.

After 1640, the number of Italians and other non-Portuguese gradually dropped off; during the years 1641–1706, 24 percent were from outside of Portugal, and only 15.2 percent were Italian. The predominance of Portuguese Jesuits in Asia thus increased as the seventeenth century proceeded, especially from the restoration governments on, while further political changes in Europe meant that French Jesuits took over the China mission towards the end of the seventeenth century. The crown and Jesuit leadership in Portugal periodically sought to curb the appointment of non-Portuguese missionaries; between 1611 and 1615, no Italians sailed east (except one, Cristoforo Bruno) and all missionaries in these years were Portuguese. Italians departed again in 1615, together with a handful of other Europeans appearing more regularly from this time, especially Flemish.²⁰

For Italian Jesuits, then, the decades either side of the turn of the seventeenth century represented a relatively brief but intense “golden age” in the Asian missions, providing the focus of this analysis.²¹ The upswing in Italian appointments in Asia is attributable to a number of factors. Replacements were

19. Even prior to the 1580 union, relations between the Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits plummeted in 1575 when news of a planned Spanish-led invasion of China from the Philippines prompted missions procurator Alessandro Vallareggio to advise Superior General Mercurian that Spanish Jesuits were harmful to missionary work in the region. See Alden, 267–68.

20. Alden, 268–70.

21. As Alden indicates, almost one thousand Jesuits sailed east between 1541 and 1640, of whom around 216 were Italians; only twenty-eight sailed in 1541–80, and 188 out of a total of 700 Jesuits between 1581 and 1640. This high percentage of Italians in the second date span (almost 30 percent) compares to 0.9 percent of Germans, and only 4.1 percent of others, such as French, Fleming, English, Irish, Swiss, and a few Asians; Italians thus made up 90 percent of non-Portuguese travelling east in 1581–1640, while the Portuguese made up 65 percent of the total (Alden, 268).

needed after Spanish Jesuits ceased being sent east, and Jesuits from Italy were sufficiently numerous to supply this need, without being tainted or strained by the religious conflicts that their less numerous confreres faced in northern and eastern Europe; at the same time, with much of Italy under Spanish rule, the Spanish crown could be satisfied that its subjects continued to be represented in the eastern missions.

Already from 1573, at the outset of Everard Mercurian’s generalate (1573–80),²² key leadership positions were placed in the hands of Italians, first through the appointment of Alessandro Valignano (1539–16) as visitor to the East Indies,²³ and second through Alessandro Vallareggio’s (1529–80) designation as procurator of the enterprise based in Lisbon, responsible for practical and organizational aspects, such as managing correspondence, personnel, shipping, and financial affairs. These appointments tightened a direct line of administration and leadership between Vallareggio, Valignano, and the office of the superior general in Rome, in some respects at the expense of the Portuguese²⁴—both their fellow-Jesuits and the state apparatus—even though these remained dominant protagonists, the first as members of the assistancy within which the region’s administration fell, and the second as patrons of the entire enterprise.

From the outset of taking up his role, Valignano expressed his objectives in a series of letters. First, he argued that governance and personnel in the

22. For Mercurian (1514–80), see Thomas M. McCoog, ed., *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture 1573–1580* (Rome–St. Louis: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu–Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004).

23. For Valignano, see Josef Franz Schütte, *Valignano’s Mission Principles for Japan*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980), vol. 1; Pedro Lage Reis Correia, “Alessandro Valignano’s Attitude towards Jesuit and Franciscan Concepts of Evangelization in Japan (1587–1597),” *Bulletin of Japanese / Portuguese Studies* 2 (2001): 79–108; M. Antoni J. Üçerler, “Alessandro Valignano: Man, Missionary, Writer,” *Renaissance Studies* 17.3 (2003): 337–66; Adolfo Tamburello, M. Antoni J. Üçerler, and Marisa di Russo, eds., *Alessandro Valignano, S.I., Uomo del Rinascimento: Ponte tra Oriente e Occidente* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2008). For the office of visitor, see Alden, 247–54, and for a discussion of the role, with a particular focus on Visitor André Palmeiro (1569–1635), see Liam Matthew Brockey, *The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

24. This was a view expressed by Valignano in Lisbon in his letter to Superior General Mercurian in Rome, 8 February 1574, in *Monumenta Missionum Societatis Iesu*, Vol. XXI, *Missiones Orientales: Documenta Indica IX (1573–75)*, ed. Josef Wicki (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu – Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1966), 151–59.

Indies should be directed more emphatically by the superior general,²⁵ and that the missions should be placed more firmly under the authority of the Society's leadership in Rome.²⁶ He also sought candidates whose qualities in time would make them suited to governance roles, and he wrote "that there is to be commingling of nations, and not in a small number."²⁷ He was critical of the Portuguese style, too, and wrote from Lisbon to Superior General Mercurian in a ciphered letter (whose meanings were later added above the ciphers, and provided here in square brackets): "here, there reigns only the 90 [spirit] of 94 [servitude] and 227 [fear], and the poor 69 [Fathers] and 71 [Brothers] come to 306 [suffer] almost a miserable b.o.d. [slavery]."²⁸ He reported in another letter that his Portuguese confreres had tried to "catechize and indoctrinate me in their way of thinking in order that I should govern India in the same spirit that they do here [in Portugal]."²⁹ He explained further that in Portugal the Roman way "of g.l.f. [governing], with f.g.g. [love] is against the b.m.o. [spirit] of Father Ignatius."³⁰

Along with his criticisms of the missionary methods among the Portuguese, Valignano was concerned about the quality of the future missionaries being selected. He identified possible solutions:

Our Italians are few in number, but they are good and I remain greatly consoled. [...] Out of the whole cohort, these are the most welcome: if Your Paternity wishes really to help India, send some good Italian candidates,

25. Valignano in Lisbon to Mercurian in Rome, 12 January 1574, in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 89.

26. For a discussion of Valignano's aim (with support from Rome) to separate the Jesuit enterprise from the Portuguese imperial project, see Tamburello, "La presenza portoghese in Asia," 31.

27. Valignano to Mercurian, 8 February 1574, in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 155–56. See also, Schütte, 1:89: "che vi sia commistione di nationi et non in picciol numero."

28. Valignano in Lisbon to Mercurian in Rome, 12 January 1574, in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 78–96: "Regnat hic nonnisi 90 [spirito] di 94 [servitù] et di 227 [timore] et li poveri 69 [Padri] et 71 [Fratelli] vengono a 306 [patire] quasi una misera b.o.d. [servitù]."

29. Valignano in Lisbon to Mercurian in Rome, 28 January 1574, in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 110, quoted also in Üçerler, "Alessandro Valignano," 342, whose translation is used here: "pensarono di catechizar me et addoctrinarmi al lor modo acciò che governasse l'India con questo spirito che aqui tengono."

30. Valignano in Lisbon to Mercurian in Rome, 12 January 1574, in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 86: "il g.l.f. [governare] con f.g.g. [amore] è contro il b.m.o. [spirito] del P. Ignatio."

but be sure that they are good, such that they can be like cornerstones
between these two nations [Portugal and Spain].³¹

It is to these Italians, and the documents dedicated to them as candidates for the Portuguese Indies, that we turn in the remainder of this study.

Step one to making missionaries: establishing a vocation to the “Indies”

In 1638, Pietro Conti wrote a letter from the Collegio Romano to the superior general. It was a petition to be considered for a missionary appointment overseas. He wrote that he wanted to go in particular to Japan, “to suffer greatly, and also spill my blood if necessary, for love of God, and to imitate his Son.” He described his desire for the overseas missions as “being not a small part of my vocation to the Society.”³²

Unique to the Society for their scope and number, over fourteen thousand petitions were solicited, collected, and preserved together from the Old Society (that is, before its suppression in 1773): they are known as the *Litterae indipetae* and were written by Jesuits to the superior general in search of an appointment to the Indies.³³ The petitions were sent to Rome from all over the

31. Valignano to Mercurian, 8 February 1574, in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 155: “Li nostri italiani sono pochi, ma sono buoni et io resto di loro molto consolato [...] Questi sono fra tutti più accetti et, se V.P. desidera da dovero d'aiutar l'India, mandi alcuni buoni soggetti italiani, ma che sieno buoni et tali che sieno come pietre angulari tra queste due nationi.” For a possible link between the humanism of the Italian Renaissance and the missionary style among Jesuits from Italy (in contrast with those from Iberia), see Charles Burnett, “Humanism and the Jesuit Mission to China: The Case of Duarte de Sande (1547–1599),” *Euphrosyne: Revista de filologia Classica* n.s., 24 (1996): 425–71; for the link between the Jesuit missionary method of “accommodation” and the (predominantly) Italian practitioners of it in Asia, see Antony Mecherry, *A Testing Ground for Jesuit Accommodation in Early Modern India: Francisco Ros SJ in Malabar (16th and 17th Centuries)* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2019), chapter 1.

32. Pietro Conti at the Collegio Romano to Muzio Vitelleschi in Rome, 25 May 1638, ARSI, *Fondo Gesuitico* (hereafter *F.G.*) 741, 116^r (the full passage reads thus): “di patire assai, et spargere anco il sangue, se sarà di bisogno, per amore di Dio, e per immitare il suo figliuolo [...] essendo ciò stata parte non piccola della Vocatione alla Compagnia.”

33. They are located at ARSI, *F.G.* 732–59, on which see Lamalle, 102–03. The name given to the petitions is a Latin contraction of “Petitions for the Indies.” On the provenance of the name, see E. J. Burrus, “A Monument to Jesuit Heroism,” *Woodstock Letters* 84.4 (1955): 335–47, 336. For equivalent petitions in the Franciscan order, see Aliocha Maldavsky’s discussion of Morán: “Administrer les vocations

Society, and the practice continued also after the Jesuit restoration of 1814.³⁴ The systematic solicitation and preservation of these petitions got underway during the generalate of Claudio Acquaviva.³⁵ For the Italian assistancy,³⁶ the earliest petitions collected together are dated from 1590 and are by far the most numerous extant collection from the Old Society: nineteen large folders contain letters from the Italian provinces.³⁷ During Acquaviva's generalate alone, over six hundred petitions were written, or more precisely, preserved—many more are lost or dispersed elsewhere—compared with very few petitions that survive among the *Litterae indipetae* files from Portugal and France,³⁸ with two folders each from Flanders–Belgium and Spain.³⁹ The first petitions from Italy coincide precisely with the cessation of sending Spanish recruits to the Portuguese Indies, and may have been part of the opening up of a more coordinated recruitment avenue, among all assistancies but especially the Italian one, which, as we have noted, left by far the largest documentary trail.

missionnaires. Les *Indipetae* et l'organisation des expéditions de missionnaires aux Indes Occidentales au début du XVIIe siècle,” in Fabre and Vincent, eds., 45–70, 47–48.

34. They survived as a specific genre until the 1960s (the current pope, Francis I, wrote a petition, for example), and today Jesuits still write letters directly to the superior general seeking consideration for some appointments, such as those to distant missions. For a study of petitions from the New Society, see Emanuele Colombo and Marina Massimi, *In viaggio. Gesuiti candidati alle missioni tra Antica e Nuova Compagnia* (Milan: Il Sole 24 ore, 2014).

35. Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie. Storie, sogni e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), 101; Broggio, Cantù, Fabre, and Romano, eds., 12.

36. The Italian assistancy had oversight of five provinces: Rome, Naples, Sicily, Venice, and Milan.

37. The Italian petitions are located at ARSI, *F.G.* 732–51. In *F.G.* 733, several clusters of folios are numbered sequentially, without *recto* or *verso*.

38. Departure lists refer in some cases to the existence of petitions for Portuguese candidates, but these have not been found. Possible explanations for the small number of Portuguese petitions are discussed by Charlotte De Castelnau L'Estoile, “Élection et vocation: le choix de la mission dans la province jésuite du Portugal à la fin du XVIe siècle,” in Fabre and Vincent, eds., 21–43, 24. Only one folder for Portugal (but containing petitions from France as well) is preserved among the *Indipetae* for the Old Society, with a limited date range, 1627–1717. More petitions are located in other ARSI *fondi* relating to the Portuguese assistancy (several are quoted in Brockey, *Journey to the East*, chapter 6). Lamalle observes that the approval of the superior general was not required in all cases where regions were treated as extensions of certain European provinces, such as Canada for the Province of France, the Near East for Sicily, the west coast of Africa for Portugal, and the Philippines for Mexico. He identified this approach to appointments as one of the reasons for the small number of *Indipetae* from France and Portugal (Lamalle, 102).

39. ARSI, *F.G.* 752–53 and 758–59 respectively.

These documents are both formulaic and highly personal; they combine uniform elements (in cases where Jesuits wrote what was expected of them) with data that were unique to the individual applicant, as well as containing many apparently off-script deviations.⁴⁰ As a rare example of the collective yearning among young Europeans for foreign lands in the early modern age, the *Litterae indipetae* have generated substantial scholarly interest in recent years, mainly outside the Anglophone world, perhaps due to a tendency there to study Jesuit documents for the history of the missions themselves, rather than of their organization, although this is changing.⁴¹ These studies have explored the petitions for their organizational and rhetorical insights into the enterprise;⁴² as artifacts of a European desire for travel and conversion in the Far East,⁴³ and as a tool for recruitment to the Society of impressionable, adventurous young men.⁴⁴

The documents’ myriad and overlapping features present interpretive challenges, to be sure, but they also provide access to how this aspect of the

40. See Natalie Zemon Davis’s classic observations about the often inventive and highly imaginative nature of the early modern legal document (applicable also to religious-administrative sources under consideration here): *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

41. For an overview of the relevant scholarship up to 2012, see Maldavsky, “Pedir las Indias.” For scholarship on the *Litterae indipetae* post-2012, historiographical summaries can be found in most of the relevant studies cited here.

42. See Fabre and Vincent, eds. (especially the chapters by Capoccia, de Castelnaud L’Estoire, Fabre, and Maldavsky) for the missions in Brazil, Peru, and the Philippines, concentrating especially on Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian candidates (in the eighteenth century). For their combination of styles and uses—rhetorical and literary, organizational and bureaucratic—see Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Autobiografia e vocazione in una lettera indipeta inedita del gesuita. Pierre-Joseph-Marie Chaumonot, missionario in Canada (1637),” in Donattini, Marcocci, and Pastore, eds., 2:191–202; and Capoccia and Maldavsky (both in Fabre and Vincent, eds.). For their administrative features, see Colombo, “Gesuitomania,” 40; Christoph Nebgen, “Missionaries: Who Were They?” in Hsia, ed., *A Companion*, 401–23 (which includes discussion of the German petitions for the Spanish Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with reflections on the cultural stimuli for their production).

43. Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*, 586–99; Roscioni; Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies,’” 2:179–89. For their psycho-historical value, see Marina Massimi and André Barreto Prudente, *Um incendio desejo das índias* (São Paulo: Loyola, 2002).

44. Roscioni. The letters’ theme of escape is highlighted by Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo*, 59; indeed, some applicants expressly stated that they wanted to go overseas on account of difficult relatives: see, for example, Nicolò Mastrilli in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 23 June 1590, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 11/1’.

missionary enterprise worked and what it meant for those involved. Most applicants from the Italian provinces wrote their petitions as young men at some point in their training (which lasted around a decade for Jesuits who proceeded to priesthood, and less for temporal coadjutors, who were the equivalent of lay brothers); some wrote as novices, and many wrote as scholastics (those following the course of studies prior to ordination). A large number applied more than once, several multiple times over many years and even decades after full incorporation into the Society. Applications were submitted from all grades in the Society, reflecting the variety of roles required in the missions, as at home.⁴⁵ In procedural terms, the petitions aided the superior general and his assistants in Rome to select candidates whom they did not know. They provided the documentary proof to protesting families and local superiors that these men (some still undergoing training and therefore in a phase when departure from the Society was possible) had entered freely into their vocation to depart for the overseas missions. This was a lifelong undertaking that for most of the petitioners was far from their province of origin, and from which few returned.⁴⁶

The petitions held a deeper resonance that pointed to a role beyond their administrative purpose, whose meaning apparently was shared at least in written form by the petitioners, their superiors, and indeed (as we shall see) the superior general. They were written in the mould of a vocational statement and, in some senses, this was the most important vocation of them all—after one's calling to enter the Society—since the Indies represented the farthest and most perilous geographical and spiritual journey for the saving of souls, which was understood as the primary task of every Jesuit. For many, the Indies demarcated less a geographical specificity than lands where the Catholic religion was absent or in peril. When a region was specified, the most common desire was to go to Asia; some letters mentioned the Americas or territories closer to home,

45. Membership in the Society was established according to different "grades": coadjutors were distinguished as either temporal or spiritual, the former being the equivalent of lay brothers in other religious orders and the latter serving as Jesuit priests with a more rudimentary level of training and responsibility than "professed" Jesuits. This grade of membership entailed profession into the Society either with three vows (priests trained in the full program of studies and "trials") or four vows (with a special vow of obedience to the pope in matters of mission and eligibility for the most senior positions in the Society).

46. For this last point, see Maldavsky and De Castelnau L'Estoile, both in Fabre and Vincent, eds., 70 and 31 respectively.

such as the lands under Ottoman rule, or the Protestant areas of Europe.⁴⁷ Petitions were crafted in the vein of the *Spiritual Exercises*⁴⁸ and the *General Examen*, both as texts and practice; these were undertaken on entry into the Society and constituted meditative and practical tools aimed at building a closer relationship with God and discerning one’s vocation and suitability to becoming a Jesuit. Like these foundational texts, with both spiritual and practical objectives,⁴⁹ the petitions articulated an ongoing process for members of the Society to discern their individual “way of proceeding,” punctuated by manifestations of conscience to one’s superiors, with the aim of establishing for each Jesuit the best way to serve in the world “for the greater glory of God.” The *Litterae indipetae* and other documents relating to missionary appointments need to be seen in this light, for they belonged to a distinctly Jesuit process that explains their dialogic nature and the transformative intention behind them. Through the *Exercises* and *Examen*, a young man was exploring the possibility of becoming a Jesuit; in his petition, he was manifesting a desire to transform himself yet further—into an “Indian.”

How did the petitioners set about trying to convince the superior general of the depth of their vocation and their suitability for the undertaking? Many cast their letters as impassioned replies to their confreres’ call for help,⁵⁰ or simply declared their vocation—as in the case of Alonso di Cordova in 1590—as a “*grande desiderio, grande grande*,” or, for another twenty-year-old petitioner, as a yearning to be chosen “*molto molto*.”⁵¹ This desire was accompanied by the strong spiritual theme present in most of the petitions: the successful candidate, Francesco Corsi (1568–1635), who left for Goa in 1599, made his case by drawing on the three-fold Jesuit values of discernment, indifference, and obedience: “the Lord gave me this desire” to go to the Indies

47. Ana Carolina Hosne, *The Jesuit Missions to China and Peru, 1570–1610: Expectations and Appraisals of Expansionism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 3; Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies,’” 179.

48. See Fabre, “Un désir antérieur. Les premiers jésuites des Philippines et leurs *Indipetae* (1580–1605),” and Cappoccia, both in Fabre and Vincent, eds., 71–88 and 89–110 respectively.

49. See Cohen, “Why the Jesuits Joined.”

50. For example, Giacomo Antonio Colacino in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 5 September 1597, ARSI, F.G. 733, 64: “the cries of our companions that ask for help *in captura piscium* continuously intone in my ears” (“i gridi de i compagni che dimandano aiuto *in captura piscium*, intonano continuamente nelle mie orecchie”).

51. Alonso Di Cordova in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 22 June 1590, ARSI, F.G. 733, 11; Nando di Bari in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 30 June 1590, ARSI, F.G. 733, 13.

(he requested Japan), “calling me *interiamente*,” stressing that he was ready to “obey everything that Your Paternity judges to be to [God’s] greater glory.”⁵²

Many petitioners employed the “indifference” that was expected in the face of all Jesuit decisions. The talented Francesco Pavone (who went on to a distinguished career in the Naples province) expressed a sentiment characteristic of these letters: “I know myself to be unworthy of this grace.” Yet the letters also reveal that candidates were aware of the special nature of the overseas enterprise, as they attempted to identify attributes and skills that they expected to be particularly important for the undertaking. Again, Pavone: “at twenty years old [...] I still have time at this age to learn the language [he wanted to go to China] and afterwards to do something useful in the service of God.”⁵³ The twenty-two-year-old Nicolò Mastrilli of Naples described himself as “healthy,” as knowing the “Spanish language,” and more generally as having “some ability with foreign languages,” proudly reporting that he had learnt Spanish very quickly with almost no assistance.⁵⁴ The artist, Alonso di Cordova, mentioned in his petition that, on Michele Ruggieri’s (1543–1607) recent visit to his college in Naples, the founding missionary to China talked about “the great need for painters and engravers in China.” Cordova went on to report that Ruggieri admired his work and commended him as an ideal candidate for the China mission. He wrote to the superior general: “for the love of Jesus Christ, do not forget [...] or] disparage [...] my application.”⁵⁵

Some candidates wrote of their frustration at being overlooked by their own superiors: Mastrilli described in his petition that, after having first written seven years previously, and having applied to his provincial by letter and in

52. Francesco Corsi in the Collegio Romano to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 2 February 1590, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 68r: “il Signore mi ha dato desiderio”; “chiamandomi egli *interiamente*”; “obedire a tutto quello che Vostra Paternità giudicherà esser maggior gloria sua.” All standard scribal abbreviations have been silently expanded.

53. Francesco Pavone in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 24 June 1590, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 12r: “a me mi conosco indegno di questa gratia”; “la mia età, che è di venti [...]illeg.] havendo io in questa età tempo d’imparar la lingua, e dopo operar alcuna cosa in servitio di Dio.”

54. Nicolò Mastrilli in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 23 June 1590, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 11/1r: “sano”; “[di] saper la lingua spagnola”; “haver qualche abilità a’ qualche lingua straniera.”

55. Alonso di Cordova in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 22 June 1590, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 11r: “la molta necessità che c’è nella China di pittori e intagliatori”; “per amor di Giesù Christo non se ne dimentichi [...] o] disprezzi [...] questa mia domanda.”

person, he decided to write in exasperation to the visitor to the Indies, in addition to his present petition to the general: “I am suspicious towards my other superiors because as far as I can see and understand they love me with the kind of love that possibly could hold me back.”⁵⁶

In the period of Acquaviva’s generalate, one of the most intense periods for Italian appointments to the missions—from the date of the first collated petitions in 1590 until the year of the general’s death in 1615, when hundreds of requests were made—ninety-two Italians travelled east;⁵⁷ of these successful candidates, only twenty-three petitions survive. While the attraction of the overseas enterprise always outweighed the number of places available, these figures show that petitions were not the only basis for selection, since many Italians were sent overseas, possibly without ever having written to Rome about their vocation.⁵⁸ At the same time, these young men likely received encouragement to write their petitions for motivational purposes, using the distant glow of a possible appointment to fan the flames of a vocation for life in the Society. What their superiors knew was that the majority of applicants were destined to be left behind and attend to much less glamorous missions at home as teachers, preachers, or administrators.⁵⁹ Most would have to make do with earning the name of *indiano* through the heroism ascribed to them by superiors simply as a result of offering to go.

The *Litterae indipetae* were not merely exercises in stoking collective missionary fervour, however; they were taken seriously enough to collate, preserve, and (as we shall see) send replies.⁶⁰ Operationally and chronologically, they appeared as the first step in a recruitment practice that was centred on

56. Niccoló Mastrilli in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 1590, ARSI, F.G. 733, 11/1^r: “de gli altri superiori sto suspetto perché come veggo e conosco mi amano di un certo amore che forse potrebbe ciò impedirmi.”

57. Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541–1758,” 252–450, esp. 279–87.

58. Capoccia, 89–110.

59. “Our Indies” were the focus of Jesuit missions as well, with many common characteristics with the overseas missions, studied in detail by Jennifer D. Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils: The Jesuits’ Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (Rome and Aldershot: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu / Ashgate, 2004).

60. See, for example, ARSI, *Ital.* 173, 2^r, and ARSI, F.G. 733, 64^r (reports mentioning that a reply was sent); see also ARSI, F.G. 733, 11^r (petition of Alonso di Cordova, 22 June 1590), mentioning replies to candidates’ petitions sent from Rome.

Rome and aimed to ensure a steady flow of candidates. The petitioning system entailed unmediated epistolary contact between the general and candidate as part of the plan to attract genuine candidates, even bypassing provinces on occasions when local superiors were thought to be trying to stop a candidate from pursuing his vocation. The extent to which the office of the superior general was involved in the procedure can be observed in his correspondence concerning appointments, to which we turn now in the next part of our analysis.

Step two to making missionaries: the involvement of the superior general

It is perhaps surprising to discover that a superior general with oversight of thousands of Jesuits around the world wrote individual letters of reply to petitioners for the Indies. This is precisely what happened for several candidates from the Italian provinces.⁶¹ Traces of these replies are preserved at ARSI within the general body of correspondence from the superior general's office, the *Epistulae Generalium*, in the form of copy letters: they are abbreviated, at times difficult to decipher, and interspersed among the vast quantity of successive generals' correspondence organized according to province.⁶² They are therefore quite elusive and almost certainly not comprehensive (the petitions reveal that more replies were sent than were preserved or recorded in the copy books).

Probably on account of their relative obscurity, they have been identified only recently—revealing among other features the sometimes-decisive role of families in preventing sons' departures—and they remain barely known in the growing literature on the *Litterae indipetae*.⁶³ They confirm that the petitions were not disconnected from the reality of missionary appointments, but were

61. For an overview of these letters, and a case study, see Elisa Frei, "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* 85.169 (2016): 365–404.

62. Here, examples are drawn from the general's correspondence with the Naples and Venice provinces (ARSI, *Neap.* and *Ven.*). Notes in the margins—sometimes indicating when letters concern a petition to the Indies—help the researcher, as do basic archival finding guides provided for some of the ARSI volumes, the latter tending to list names only. Cross-referencing between these names and similar alphabetical indices of the Italian *Litterae indipetae* aid research as well.

63. See Capoccia, "Le destin des Indipetae au-delà du XVI^e siècle." A study of Polish petitioners for China includes the superior general's replies in its analysis, dedicating a discrete chapter to them; helpfully, the Polish-language study has been reviewed in English: Robert Danieluk, Review of Miazek-Męczyńska, *Indipetae Polonae, kołatanie do drzwi misji chińskie* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe

used in Rome for record-keeping purposes and to create a pool of prospective candidates who could be identified and sent overseas when needed. As we shall see, the replies also reveal the rhetorical and spiritual function of the documentation generated for the appointment process to the Indies, to which the superior general contributed unreservedly and liberally through his own correspondence. Through his replies, we can observe the workings of a Jesuit correspondence system that encompassed a collectively-articulated set of values about the spiritual meanings of the missions and of appointments to them. Of course, these letters also pertained to the system for generating correspondence for governance, administrative, and edificatory purposes, with features in terms of style and content already codified and promulgated throughout the Society through the *Formula scribendi*.⁶⁴

In 1603, Superior General Acquaviva wrote a letter to Giulio Orsino, in which he referred to “the offer, which you renew with so much affection, to go to Japan;” however, in the same letter, Acquaviva mentioned the health-related reasons why “such a long journey” was not advisable.⁶⁵ This reply was sent to Orsino three years after he had sent his first petition for the Indies, followed by several subsequent ones spanning eight years. According to Orsino in his first letter—written on 23 May 1600 from the Collegio Romano—his vocation to undertake the “holy journey” overseas was a lifelong one: “since the first years of my life”; his desire was “to go among infidel peoples especially to Japan, or else to China.”⁶⁶ He wrote again later the same year about being inspired in his vocation after hearing “how in Turkey many suffer the experience of most

Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza University Press, 2015), in *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 85.170 (2016): 573–77.

64. “Formula scribendi,” in Wicki, ed., *Monumenta Missionum*, 717–22; Markus Friedrich, “Ignatius’s Governing and Administering the Society of Jesus,” in *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writing, Spirituality, Influence*, ed. Robert A. Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 123–41; Paul Nelles, “Cosas y cartas: Scribal Production and Material Pathways in Jesuit Global Communication (1547–1573),” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 2.3 (2015): 421–50.

65. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Giulio Orsino in Naples, [no day or month] 1603, ARSI, *Neap.* 7, 173: “[l’]offerta che rinova con tanto affetto di andar’ al Giappone”; “sì lungo viaggio.” For Orsino’s requests for the Indies, see Roscioni, part 1.1 (“Giulio Orsini”): the analysis does not mention the replies from the superior general.

66. Giulio Orsino from the Collegio Romano to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 23 May 1600, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 93: “sin dalli primi anni della vita mia”; “di andare tra gente infedeli specialmente al Giappone, o vero alla China.”

cruel torments, for the faith of Christ.”⁶⁷ In this letter he mentioned an illness that had made him fear that he would die in his bed without being able to die for Christ; however, he reported cheerfully that he had been granted the grace of good health once more, with the consequent renewal of his offer to serve overseas. Almost two years later, Orsino wrote again, complaining about still not having received a reply from the superior general, but referring to “my negotiations for going to Japan,”⁶⁸ on the understanding apparently that he was to be sent there.⁶⁹

Orsino received four replies from General Acquaviva between 1603 and 1605.⁷⁰ The dominant theme in these letters was the impediment of Orsino’s fragile health that prevented him from being sent. The letters were informal and encouraging; one even included congratulations on the news of Orsino’s improving condition; all expressed gratitude for his continued “desires for divine service.”⁷¹ In the final letter, dated February 1605, Acquaviva referred to Orsino’s persistent desire to assist the *indiani*; he informed Orsino that, just as he had “replied other times,” the Jesuit’s “weak health and strength render the matter a little difficult.”⁷² Indeed, Orsino did not receive what he so ardently wished for; he was not without talent, clearly, for in 1611 he was appointed instead to head the first Jesuit College in Florence.⁷³

Pietro Cornaro was another candidate who received replies to his petitions from the superior general. On 31 March 1611, Cornaro wrote from Parma that he had waited for some time to send his petition about his vocation to the Indies

67. ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 102^r–103^v (3 December 1600): “come in Turchia molti per la fede di Christo patir solevano crudelissimi tormenti.”

68. ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 133^r (27 November 1602): “per conto del mio negotio dell’andare al Giappone.”

69. Indeed, Orsino’s name did appear on a list of candidates for the Indies dated 23 May 1603 (six months after his final petition), located with the *Litterae indipetae*, and sent to Rome from the Province of Naples (ARS, *F.G.* 733, fol. 259^r–260^v); the document includes the proviso that the list had been compiled some time ago, noting that some whose names appeared on it “have already left” (“già sono andati”).

70. They are all located at ARSI, *Neap.* 7.

71. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Giulio Orsino in Naples, 9 October 1604, ARSI, *Neap.* 7, 314^r: “desiderij del divino servizio.”

72. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Giulio Orsino in Naples, 19 February 1605, ARSI, *Neap.* 7, 363^v: “risposto altre volte”; “la sua poca sanità, e forse fanno la cosa un poco difficile.”

73. Roscioni, chapter 1.

because he wanted to check if it came from God or was a temptation from the Devil. At long last he discovered the veracity of his vocation and became inspired to act on it, following the example of Francis Xavier. One interesting impediment that he identified as possibly excluding him from consideration was the fact that he was Italian: “I was born in Candia (the island of Crete, under Venetian rule at the time), even if my family descends from Venice.”⁷⁴ He seemed to have been aware of the halt to Italians being sent to Asia in those years, although he continued his petition, dauntless: “I find myself in very good health; I am twenty-four years old and I study natural philosophy. In spirit and virtue, however, the most important, I find myself very poor; however, I feel not a little desire to acquire them.”⁷⁵ Cornaro wrote a few months later on the feast of St. John the Baptist, advising that he had not received a reply (diplomatically adding the presumed reason: “doubting that it had reached the hands of your Paternity”), and reiterating his hope that he may be favoured in this *negotio*. He was aware of “the impediment in place for the Italians,” although he felt that this obstacle could be overcome, “knowing that everything depends on you”; second, he was painfully aware of his shortcomings in light of these missions, “for which people of the highest virtue and doctrine are received.”⁷⁶ The best course of action, he wrote, would be to travel to Rome to talk to the general in person, an offer he repeated in another letter sent one month later.

The offer to travel to Rome for a private audience with the superior general elicited a written reply, finally. Acquaviva reassured Cornaro that his offer would “be kept in mind,” adding, however, that “for now this cannot take place, there being—as I believe you know—some impediments for those parts.” The following sentence is crossed out: “the door is locked to Italians”; it continues, “but I hope that it will open favourably soon and in time to remember you. In the meantime, persevere [illeg.] and perfect yourselves

74. Pietro Cornaro in Parma to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 31 March 1611, ARSI, F.G. 734, 360^r: “Io sono nato in Candia, se bene i miei parenti discendono da Venetia.”

75. Pietro Cornaro in Parma to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 31 March 1611, ARSI, F.G. 734, 360^r: “mi ritrovo [...] di complessione molto robusto; d’anni 24, e studio physica. Di spirito e virtù però, che è più che importa, mi trovo molto povero, mi sento però havere non poco di desiderio d’acquistarne.”

76. Pietro Cornaro in Parma to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 24 June 1611, ARSI, F.G. 734, 368^r: “Dubitando io, che non sia capitata alle mani della Paternità sua”; “l’impedimento che vi è per l’Italiani”; “sapendo che da lei dipende il tutto”; “al quale si ricevano persone di grandissima virtù e dottrina.”

nonetheless in every virtue.”⁷⁷ Over a year later, in December 1612, the general wrote again, referring once more to the ban on Italian candidates, and again crossed out and replaced with a more neutral comment about the impossibility of sending Cornaro at present (these blander versions probably were the result of Acquaviva’s *viva voce* corrections to the secretaries’ pre-prepared drafts).⁷⁸ The general’s final letter to Cornaro was sent in March 1614. It must have been a very disappointing letter to receive, for Acquaviva relayed how sorry he was to hear that his many relatives were in grave need, which necessitated his transfer. Poor Pietro Cornaro’s hopes were dashed for good.⁷⁹

Francesco Buzomo from Naples was more fortunate. He left for the Indies in 1609, before the 1611 ban on Italians. He had a long wait for this departure: he joined the Society in 1592 at seventeen years of age and wrote the first of four extant petitions in 1595. In that year’s petition, he wrote of how he felt compelled to respond, first because of the “great need in [God’s] ancient Church,” then after hearing “the letters from Mogorr [Moghul lands],” followed by his experience of “much emotion in hearing the latest letters from Japan.” Buzomo’s petition was couched in terms of obedience, following the “advice of superiors, undertaking prayers, fasts, and other mortifications”; he wrote how “Fr Ricci, prefect of spiritual matters to whom I confided all of the [illeg. movements?] of my soul, also told me that the matter had progressed along a good path.”⁸⁰ He received an acknowledgement of his vocation from the superior general in 1599. The copy letters from this year record a salutation to him and several others (via the provincial to whom the letter was addressed);

77. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Pietro Cornaro in Parma, 6 August 1611, ARSI, *Ven.* 6a, 211^r (the full transcription of this section is as follows): “[...] di tiene [*sic.*] memoria di questa vostra offerta, quale per adesso non può haver luogo, essendosi come credo sappiate alcuni impedimenti [illeg.] [crossed out “serrata la porta agl’italiani”] per quelle parti, ma spero si aprirà col favor [illeg.] in breve et all’hora ci ricorderemo di voi. Intanto conservatevi nel [illeg.] et a’ perfetionarvi tuttavia in ogni virtù.”

78. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Pietro Cornaro in Parma, 15 December 1612, ARSI, *Ven.* 6a, 262^r.

79. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Pietro Cornaro in Parma, 22 March 1614, ARSI, *Ven.* 6a, 305^r: “sento dispiacere, che li vostri parenti stiano in tanta necessità, che bisogni precisamente trasferirvi a’ consolarli.”

80. Francesco Buzomo in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 6 July 1595, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 46^r: “essendo molto bisogno nella sua antiqua Chiesa”; “in parte dalle lettere del Mogorr, senei appresso tanta motione nel’udir l’ultime lettere del Giappone”; “conforme al consiglio de superiori facendo con orationi, dirigerli, et altre mortificationi [...] P. Ricci prefetto di cose spirituali al quale haveo scoperti tutti i [illeg.] del animo, anco mi disse che la cosa era andata per buona strada.”

in the margins, the letter is identified as *Indiani – saluti*, and it requests “Your Reverence to greet them most dearly [...] telling them how we embrace them [...] and we will keep in mind their desire that they do not fail to pray to God that he may inspire us.”⁸¹

However, Buzomo was not destined to depart for a further ten years, at around thirty-four years of age. His final dated petition was written in 1606;⁸² in a further undated petition, he reminded the general how he had requested and been given license for departure to the Western Indies, as that procurator had already discussed in person with the general.⁸³ The arrangements appear to have changed somewhere along the line, however, for Buzomo departed for the eastern, not western, Indies. He professed the four vows in 1618 at Macao, and from 1623 served as superior of the mission at Cochinchina for four years; he died in 1639.

The replies sent from the general’s office to the petitioners demonstrate some of the features of the process of application and selection for the missions. The process was rigorous, and the general was personally involved. We can observe this in a 1599 letter to the college rector at Chieti. Acquaviva wrote: “We had written to Your Reverence that as soon as possible, you were to send Father Puerio to Rome, for the Philippines [“India” was crossed out].” The situation apparently had since changed, and the superior general explained to the rector that Puerio had sent a letter explaining a number of “difficulties” that included “poor health” and “some decrease in his fervour.” He “placed himself under the obedience” of the superior general’s authority, and the result was that “he did not depart.” Acquaviva concluded the matter by advising the rector to send his greetings to Puerio, “and tell him not to move and that we will put another in his place, since we do not wish to send anyone to such an important enterprise unless he feels complete affection and desire towards it.”⁸⁴

81. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to the provincial in Naples, [no day or month] 1599 ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 62^r: “Vostra Reverendissima li saluti carissimamente [...] dicendoli come noi gli abbracciamo [...] et havremo a mente il loro desiderio che non manchino di pregare Iddio che ci ispiri.”

82. Francesco Buzomo in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 4 August 1606, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 407^r.

83. Francesco Buzomo in Naples to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, no date, ARSI, *F.G.* 732, 175^r.

84. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to the college rector in Chieti, 3 April 1599, ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 41v. Girolamo Puerio’s petition is at ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 42^r (29 May 1595): “Havevamo scritto a Vostra Reverenza che ci mandassi il P. Puerio quanto prima a Roma per le [“India” crossed out] filippine;” “qualche difficoltà [...] poca sanità [...] et qualche diminution dello suo fervore [...] rimettendosi all’obediencia non si è

While candidates received replies from the general to encourage perseverance in their vocations, the letters also served a procedural purpose to have as large a pool of committed candidates as possible from which to choose the best suited when the time came to send them. To this end, rectors and superiors were advised to do their part: in the copybook margins of one of the general's letters to the Neapolitan rector, the following note was added: "keep alive the vocation of the Indians."⁸⁵ In the letter itself, the general cast the vocations almost as gifts of dedication offered to the Society: "it gives us great joy regarding those that have the inspiration to go to the Indies, and we are consoled, and may Your Reverence preserve them in this good spirit."⁸⁶

This mix of spiritual and organizational motivations imbued the general's correspondence. On the one hand, he sought to limit the disappointment of the many candidates inevitably destined not to depart. The college rector at Naples received the following advice from Acquaviva about one candidate who had written yet again about his request for the Indies: "exhort him to nourish this holy desire and accompany it with the virtues that are necessary for it, such that we will keep him in mind."⁸⁷ Here, the Indies came to represent the embodiment of a vocation within the Society itself; the call to depart was kept alive as a strategy for petitioners to find the motivation to persist in the (often stationary) life of a Jesuit. On the other hand, pragmatism was the order of the day: Acquaviva wrote in one letter: "about Father Cicero [in Naples], I have already written to the Father Provincial [...] that it is difficult to satisfy everyone."⁸⁸

While the superior general had ultimate oversight of these appointments, his choice of candidate was not always guaranteed. Acquaviva wrote to one

partito [...] le dica che non si muova perché noi metteremo un altro in suo luogo [...] non volendo mandare ad impresa sì grande de niuno che positivamente non vi senta affetto e desiderio."

85. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to the college rector in Naples, 3 April 1599, ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 43: "conservi la vocazione dell'Indiani."

86. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to the college rector in Naples, 3 April 1599, ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 43: "ci da ragguaglio di quei che hanno inspiratione d'andare all'Indie et siamo consolati et Vostra Reverendissima li conservi in questo buono spirito."

87. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to the college rector in Naples, 3 April 1599, ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 42: "esortandolo a nutrir questo santo desiderio et accompagnarlo con le virtù a quello necesse che noi l'havremo a mente."

88. ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 53: "Circa il P. Cicero già ho scritto al P. Provinciale [...] che sia difficile contentare tutti."

petitioner in 1599: “The desire of Your Reverence to go to the Indies is dear to me: that you have proposed it, I will not fail to recommend to the Superior.”⁸⁹ Another reply to a petition from 1599, sent to Giovanni Battista d’Orsi, outlines the reason why the petition would not be satisfied: “For now, the Father Provincial needs you in the Province.”⁹⁰ No doubt there were cases where candidates were held back by both provincials and fathers general in agreement that their talents were best put to use in Italy and not in the Indies.

The path to an appointment of candidates from the Italian provinces comes into view in this correspondence as a negotiated process: between candidates, provincial superiors, even families of the candidates, and the office of the superior general in Rome.⁹¹ Alongside the Society’s hierarchical structure with its repeated claims to obedience, the process was highly interactive, consultative, and included all parties, each with a certain amount of agency, from the candidates themselves, to the most senior, the superior general, and in many cases in direct consultation with each other. At the same time, and as the example just quoted shows, among the most important mediating figures were the provincial leaders and administrators who knew the candidates best, and to whose part in making missionaries for the Indies we now turn.

Step three to making a missionary: the role of the provinces

In the same years as the petitions became permanent features of the recruitment system for the Indies, a second administrative document was introduced in the Italian assistancy: provincial reports addressed to the superior general in Rome with the purpose of appraising potential candidates specifically for the overseas enterprise.⁹² The largest concentration of extant reports of this

89. ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 66: “Il desiderio di Vostra Reverendissima, l’andar’ all’Indie, ho caro che mel’habbiate proposto, io non mancherò di raccomandarlo al Superiore.”

90. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to Giovanni Battista d’Orsi, ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 68: “Intanto il Padre Provinciale ha bisogno di voi in Provincia.”

91. For the interventions of families in the appointment process, see Frei’s case study in “The Many Faces of Ignazio Maria Romeo.”

92. ARSI, *F.G.* 732, 733; *Ital.* 173. De Castelnau L’Estoile (at pp. 26–28), analyzes correspondence from roughly the same period, between 1592 and 1596, from Portuguese provincials addressed to the superior general, together with departure lists, concerning individual candidates for the Brazil mission. The attributes that the superiors identify in these documents (the departure lists are particularly detailed) are

nature is from a brief period of just over a decade (1589–1601, although a small number from later periods also survive).⁹³ Their introduction coincides with the period when Spaniards stopped travelling to the Portuguese Indies on account of the delicate geo-political situation and the consequent tensions between Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits; it coincided too with the sending of the largest ever Italian cohort in 1602, and presumably was part of the need to guarantee the continued supply of missionaries. The reports seem to have been intended as a more realistic accompaniment to the petitions and their rhetorical flourishes, among which they are preserved, and in the interests of securing not only higher numbers from a mix of regions but also the most suitable candidates. This was part of the role of provincials according to the Constitutions, to have concern for the whole Society and not just care for the affairs of the province.⁹⁴

In a letter to the college rector regarding candidates from Naples, General Acquaviva wrote:

Your Reverence will have seen the desire of many for the Indies and I would like that some consideration be given to this matter and that you propose several of those who, in this holy inspiration, you will judge to be most fervent and suitable, such that, in needing to call some to this effect, we can do so with more awareness and certainty.⁹⁵

This was consistent with the Society's organization: there was one superior in the Society of Jesus: the superior general, who, for administrative reasons,

similar to those commented on in the Italian reports (background, intellectual capabilities, judgment, prudence); the departure lists also contain information about motivations for joining the missions, and the intensity of the vocation.

93. There are later extant reports about candidates for the Indies, but they are very few. See ARSI, *FG*. 721, which contains one report dated from 1678 and another from the eighteenth century.

94. *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, ed. and trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), part 8.

95. Claudio Acquaviva in Rome to the college rector (Girolamo Barisone) in Naples, 27 February 1599, ARSI, *Neap.* 6, 24^r: "Vostra Reverendissima havrà visto il desiderio [di] molti delle Indie, vorrei che facesse sopra ciò un poco di considerazione et ce ne proponesse parecchi di quelli che in questa santa inspiratione giudicherà più ferventi et più atti acciò bisognando chiamarne alcuni a questo effetto se possiamo farlo con più cognitione et sicurezza."

nominated provincial superiors and rectors to serve him in his leadership of the Jesuits.

Twenty-five separate reports of the kind requested by Acquaviva survive in three folders concerning roughly 130 individual candidates, with the majority interspersed (and lacking specific identification) among the earliest Italian *Litterae indipetae*.⁹⁶ These documents took a number of forms: some were produced roughly annually, with a list of candidates from one particular college or province; others were produced as separate letters of recommendation about single candidates.⁹⁷ Most were written in a fairly brief descriptive format, usually consisting of one or two paragraphs about a number of individual applicants.⁹⁸ The majority were signed by the provincial, although some have no obvious author; it would appear, too, that those who knew the candidates well, such as college rectors, teachers, and novice masters, were called on to provide much of the detailed information to the provincials, often verbally.⁹⁹ In these reports,

96. In the first of the three folders (ARSI, *F.G.* 732), most of the documents are undated, so it is not possible to ascertain their precise date range. The candidates' names, however, indicate that most of the reports fall within the period under consideration in this study, such as the undated report of successful candidate Alfonso Vagnone (1568–1640), who departed for China in 1603. There is also a small, separate folder (ARSI, *Ital.* 173) with specific reports (and no petitions) about candidates for the missions, sent from Rome, Veneto, and Milan. Later notations on the file indicate that the folder contains reports dated from 1580; however, the earliest list of missionary candidates is dated from 1588, while the first actual reports—as opposed to just lists of candidates' names—are dated 1589. Consequently, this study takes its starting point with the first reports of 1589. The reports in ARSI, *Ital.* 173 are much less detailed than those in the other two folders.

97. Some reports consist of a single page, while others run for several, close-written pages about numerous candidates. See, for example, the 1592 Neapolitan reports on twenty-seven candidates, one of the longest: ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 27^r–37^v.

98. Another method of reporting on missionary candidates consisted of brief notes by the applicants' teachers, rectors, or the provincial, hastily written on a candidate's petition for the Indies, before being sent to Rome. These annotations began to disappear in the early seventeenth century, apart from the occasional word, such as *cavato* (extracted), or *metterla al libro* (to be put in the book [of the list of potential missionaries]): see ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 200^v and 202^v respectively. Such books with candidates' names appear to have been lost, except for a few extant traces: for example, ARSI, *Ital.* 173, 2^{r-v} ("Quelli che domandano l'Indie ò altrove della Provincia Romana, 1588–1594"), where candidates' names were provided as discrete lists with no other information save for the date of their petition.

99. This was the case for the 1591 report from Naples, written by the provincial but using recommendations from the college rector: ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 23^r. Also, in his 1593 report from Milan, provincial Bernardo Rossignolo took advice from the college rector that the candidate Giovanni Medaglia was unsuitable

we are privy to which candidates were deemed suited to an appointment, the basis for disqualification, and what attributes were considered to warrant selection. Scarcely known by scholars,¹⁰⁰ these brief but incisive documents tell us something more about the appointment of Italians to the Indies.

In many respects, they were consistent with regular Jesuit recruitment practices; when special needs arose for members to be sent elsewhere from their provinces, lists were drawn up about the most suitable candidates.¹⁰¹ In terms of content, the reports resemble the Society's regular personnel catalogues, and probably were based partly on the information they contained.¹⁰² They provide assessments on a variety of characteristics, from age, stage of study, health, religious fervour, character, esteem of peers and teachers, and spiritual fortitude. For example, Francesco Pavone was "among the best in the [...] class, and reflects every virtue of the Neapolitan College."¹⁰³ Barnaba d'Erma from Sicily on the other hand was deemed to possess "as little learning as he did

on account of his advanced age and his stubborn and undisciplined character, whereas the same rector advised that Francesco Tezzoni, who had applied for Japan twice already, was enthusiastic, to be sure, but not yet sufficiently mature: ARSI, *Ital.* 173, 5^v.

100. The Italian reports are discussed briefly in Guerra, "Per un'archeologia della strategia missionaria dei Gesuiti," 161–63.

101. See ARSI, *Rom.* 78b, c. 1569^r, 106^r: "Lista di quelli che potranno andare in Germania fatti dottori in Theologia;" also, *Rom.* 78b, 124^r, which contains a 1565 letter from the Loreto college listing "quei c'hanno la lingua francese." (The Jesuits entered France formally in 1562; these documents may relate to the plan to send some members there.) For the vocation, recruitment, and selection process in the Society as a whole, see O'Malley, 51–90.

102. See Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 230. The principal sources of information about the Society's members were the triennial catalogues. They contained basic information about the current role of each member in the Society and were sent to Rome from every province, with brief assessments of the individual progress and status of members (including age, state of health, time in the Society, and stage and ability in studies). The confidential *secundus* section (not always included, and not about every member) resembled most closely the reports about mission candidates, with personal appraisals (intelligence, judgment, prudence, experience, temperament) reserved for the use of provincials and superiors general. The *tertius* section provided financial information about the relevant residence. See Adrien Demoustier, "Les catalogues du personnel de la province de Lyon en 1587, 1606 et 1636," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 42 and 43 (1973 and 1974); Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo*, 132n31. See also, Wiktor Gramatowski, "Glossario/Glossary" (trans. Camilla Russell), unpublished resource at Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, 1992/2014, 6.

103. Report from Naples, 20 March 1591, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 23^r: "sendo de primi della [...] classe, et è specchio del Collegio di Napoli in ogni virtù."

fervour, so that he does not seem to be suitable.”¹⁰⁴ Coadjutors (or lay brothers) were singled out for their technical skills, with one tailor from Palermo described as “very good at his art of cutting.”¹⁰⁵

On closer inspection, the reports reveal a number of differences compared with similar individual assessments produced in the Society. For example, on the whole they are more detailed than the standard triennial catalogues.¹⁰⁶ They are closer in style to the second catalogues, which were confidential, qualitative assessments of members and were used for senior or significant personnel decisions; their resemblance to these catalogues reflects the importance placed on the reports. One trait that was given particular attention, predictably, was health:¹⁰⁷ for example, the priest Benedetto Moleti was adjudged to be

very good [for the mission], because he is zealous, and graced with preaching talent, while his dealings with others bears much fruit [...] but, given that, when he was young, he suffered *il mal caduco* [epilepsy], and despite having been well, now (as I have noted elsewhere), it is feared that the initial stages of paralysis have set in.¹⁰⁸

104. Report from Sicily, [day not known] April 1592, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 25/1^r: “ha poche lettere, come anco poco fervore; perciò non mi pare buono.”

105. The report was produced in Naples, December 1595, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 50^r: “sa bene dell’arte sue di tagliare.” For the role of coadjutor in the Society, see O’Malley, 60. Numbers departing from Lisbon (on average, twelve annually) were divided more or less evenly between coadjutors, priests, and scholastics (some became spiritual coadjutors; others became professed of four vows after arrival in the east); see Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 237.

106. De Castelnau L’Estoile made a similar point in relation to the departure lists that she located for Portuguese candidates for the Indies (De Castelnau L’Estoile, 28).

107. Even minor physical ailments were serious impediments to overseas missions on account of the perils of the sea crossing alone. Xavier specified the importance of physical strength, especially for the coadjutors, who were required to undertake manual tasks. He wrote that these should “not be of poor health, since the labors in India require physical strength.” Francis Xavier to Master Simão Rodrigues in Portugal from Cochin, India, 20 January 1548, quoted in English translation in *Jesuit Writings from the Early Modern Period, 1540–1640*, ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelly (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 73.

108. Report from Sicily, April 1592, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 025/1^v (and fol. 4 [copy]): “Il P. Benedetto Moleti seria stato buono perché tien zelo, gratia di predicare et trattare fruttouoso con i prossimi [...] ma come in gioventù hebbe il mal caduco, ancorchè poi sia stato bene, hora (com’ho detto altrove) se gli temono principii di paralisia.”

Similarly, the talented Francesco Pavone was destined to remain in Italy, perhaps on account of his health, even though his assessor played down his condition: “he has suffered on occasion with faint pains in the chest, but it was nothing remarkable.”¹⁰⁹

The unusual and demanding nature of the enterprise was acknowledged in the assessors’ attention to the maturity and experience of candidates. In this, they seemed to heed Francis Xavier’s early advice to select only those who were “experienced in the Society,” and Valignano’s later request that candidates be “persons of great trustworthiness.”¹¹⁰ In these reports, skill was not enough; knowledge of the world was considered essential as well. The assessor of tailor-novice Pietro Martini wrote that, despite being twenty-seven years old, and having been in the Society for four or five years, he “does not seem mature for such a mission and it seems to me better if he were to try again at another time. This brother is in the novitiate and since his entrance he has never lived anywhere else, except perhaps for a few days.”¹¹¹ The type of candidate sought in these documents contrasts somewhat with the Portuguese policy of 1603, mentioned at the beginning of this study, which entailed placing restrictions on sending formed Jesuits who showed outstanding talents for service at home.¹¹² This is to be expected, given the higher number of missionaries that the Portuguese assistancy had to find from its provinces for Asia. The smaller number of Italians sought for the enterprise, instead, appear to have been identified from among the experienced and talented.

Much attention was given to the financial and family circumstances of candidates. For example, the thirty-three-year-old tailor, Pietro Antonio del Guasto, was described as appearing not to be “burdened by any poor relations, so that he seems suited to such a mission.”¹¹³ There were many candidates, however, who were described in terms similar to the following report on

109. Report from Naples, 20 March 1591, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 23r: “Ha patito qualche volta con poco di dolore di petto, ma non è stata cosa di momento.”

110. Quoted in O’Malley, 355 and Schütte, 1:178–79, respectively.

111. Report about Pietro Martini, 1 January 1591, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 17r: “non par tanto maturo per tal missione et mi pareria si provasse la sua riuscita per qualche altro tempo. Questo fratello sta nel novitiato né mai ha habitato in altro loco de nostri doppo l’entrata sua se forse non fusse per alcuni pochi giorni.”

112. Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 209, 231–32.

113. Report from Naples, 22 March 1591, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 19r: “non par che habbi impedimento di parenti poveri; sì che ci pare atto per tal missione.”

scholastic Giovanni Alfonso Sacco: “he has a mother and sister in some need; despite them having been extremely rich, they have now fallen into poverty.”¹¹⁴ Many such candidates with poor or needy relatives were deemed unsuitable, presumably because they might be required to remain in Europe to assist their family, or even abandon the Society to help support dependent relatives.¹¹⁵

Relatives were not the only ones reluctant to see these candidates depart for distant lands, for, like the *Litterae indipetae*, the reports reveal that provincials on occasion predictably were loathe to release their most talented candidates.¹¹⁶ In his report, del Guasto was identified as suitable for the missions, “although at the inconvenience of this province.”¹¹⁷ In 1600, the provincial of Sicily, Giovanni Battista Carminata (1536–1619), wrote a glowing report about four scholastics in Palermo, adding: “I only stress to Your Paternity the inconvenience to the province, since, in time, all of these candidates could serve the province well.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, one of his students, Antonio Zumbo, left for Goa in 1602.

More broadly, the reports tell us something about the profile of an ideal missionary; about the kinds of candidates that were considered suitable, and how the enterprise itself was envisaged. On this score, commonly occurring adjectives such as “virtuous,” “humble,” and “devout,” and appraisals such as being “talented at dealing with others,” or preaching with “much fruit,” suggest two things: first, assessors highlighted (if sometimes reluctantly) their best and most talented candidates; second, these candidates were chosen not so much for their force of character as for their endearing natures and their effectiveness

114. Report from Naples, April 1592, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 32: “Ha madre e sorelle in qualche necessità, perché sebene prima li suoi stavano molto ricchi, hora sono cascati in povertà.”

115. De Castelnau L’Estoile found that one Portuguese candidate was stopped from leaving for the missions because of pressure from his family; another candidate’s noble status proved an obstacle to his selection (De Castelnau L’Estoile, 34–35). Frei’s research into Sicilian candidates has produced similar findings.

116. For the Jesuit leadership in Italy, sending these talented young men came at a “cost,” reflected not just in the occasional reluctance of provincials to send them, but also in the importance placed on the health of candidates: the risks to life and limb were so high that talented but unfit men were preferred for service at home. For the dangers of the enterprise, see Frederik Vermote, “Travellers Lost and Redirected: Jesuit Networks and the Limits of European Exploration in Asia,” *Itinerario* 41:3 (2017): 484–506.

117. Report from Naples, 22 March 1591, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 19: “si bene con incomodo di questa Provincia.”

118. Report from Palermo, 1600, ARSI, *FG*. 733, 105: “solo rapresento a Vostra Paterintà l’incomodo della provincia, perché tutti questi sono soggetti di poterla servire bene col tempo.”

among their peers and among those to whom they evangelized.¹¹⁹ These were typical traits that were highly prized in the Society and were no different from those valued for European work. Perhaps it is this fact that is remarkable in itself: the traits identified in candidates considered suitable for the Indies were a far cry from the “spirit of servitude and fear” that Valignano saw his own confreres labour under in Portugal, and which he reported their superiors wished to apply in the Indies. By contrast, the Italians apparently were appraised in terms of their ability to work with others, not to dominate them. If anything, candidates appear to have been expected to be even better than they needed to be for Europe, at least in comparison with the equivalent stage of membership in the Society, as well as in their personal and intellectual attributes.

While it is possible that similar documents were produced and simply did not survive after these reports abruptly cease in 1601, another explanation for their discontinuation may be resistance on the part of provincials overburdened by administration and loathe to highlight their best candidates for an uncertain future away from the fields of their own provinces, along the lines of the resolutions from the Portuguese Provincial Congregation of 1603.¹²⁰ This was a period when the colleges were proliferating at a great rate and Jesuits were required back home to staff them. Further afield, the efforts on the part of the Spanish crown from 1601 to ban all foreign missionaries from travelling east may have put a stop to these reports, although Italians did continue to be sent for the rest of that decade, a total of sixty-five between 1600 and 1610, the largest number over a ten-year period in pre-Suppression history.¹²¹ While, as noted above, Italians ceased being sent temporarily in the following decade,

119. Correira notes a contrast between the Franciscan view of the missionary’s role and that of the Society, the former informed by a messianic vision of the world that was seen to need purification from its corruptions, and which saw conversion as a state of transcendence above worldly affairs. The Jesuit approach to conversion, instead, was founded on the injunction to seek salvation for oneself and one’s neighbour in the world, not only beyond it (Correira, 90–95).

120. It is likely that these short-lived reports were replaced by the triennial personnel catalogues as the documentary basis for choosing missionary candidates (in addition to the *Litterae indipetae*, which continued to be sent). The triennial reports already were used in conjunction with these reports on missionary candidates; the 1592 assessment from Milan, which included the successful applicant, Alfonso Vagnone, referred the superior general to the relevant triennial report for further information about the potential recruits. See ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 24/2. The Venetian provincial did the same in his 1592 report: ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 25^r.

121. Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer,” 282–86.

Jesuits from Italy continued to travel before, during, and after these reports stopped being generated.

Like the petitions discussed earlier, these reports reveal that they were not the only means used for selection. From the more than one hundred Italian candidates listed between 1589 and 1601, only thirteen of those named in the assessments actually departed for Asia (another twelve successful candidates wrote petitions in the same period) out of a total of sixty Italians who travelled east at the same time.¹²² In this face-to-face society, chief among the methods of selecting personnel no doubt remained by way of personal acquaintance: the 1600 report from Palermo points to this practice when it states that no information would be provided about one Vincente Galletti, on account of him shortly arriving in Rome to continue his studies, on which occasion the superior general would have the opportunity of knowing him in person.¹²³

Also, we know that in the early decades of the overseas enterprise, provincial procurators based in Asia (such as Alberto Laerzio, procurator for Goa) made the dangerous journey back to Rome via Lisbon: their duties included securing new recruits from Europe, who often were appointed on the procurators' recommendation.¹²⁴ These procurators were mentioned on occasion by petitioners and their superiors, and they would have been more important for the Italian candidates than the mission's procurator based in Lisbon, who instead would have had closer contact with Portuguese candidates (by contrast, Italians arriving in Lisbon had already been given their licence to depart by the general). Other missionaries returning to Europe were important figures too, such as Michele Ruggieri, who arrived back in Italy from China in 1590 and is mentioned a great deal in the petitions, especially from Naples.

Some candidates thus were chosen to depart, apparently without a petition or report ever having been written. The extant reports from the Italian provinces nevertheless offer textual access to the process of appraising missionaries at precisely the time when the appointments from the Italian provinces were

122. Twenty-three successful candidates appear among the petitions and reports for the Italian provinces for 1589–1601, the years when both types of documents were systematically generated then conserved together. Of these, Mario Squadrini and Alfonso Vagnone (both of whom left Italy in 1603) appear among both the petitions and reports.

123. Report from Palermo, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 106.

124. Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 55, 232.

receiving particular attention for the Indies enterprise. They tell us something about what that process involved, and about the type of missionary that these assessors envisaged for the enterprise. In the final section of this study, we shall explore this missionary profile further in relation to a sample group of Italians appointed to the China mission.

Step four to making missionaries: the selection

For the twelve-year period where both reports and petitions are extant concerning Italian candidates for the Indies (1589–1601), the China mission received nine Jesuits sent from the Italian provinces. It is possible to retrace the vocation and assessment process of five of the nine missionaries through a relatively substantial documentary trail: between them, there is a total of eight extant petitions and seven reports. (Over 50 percent of successful Italian candidates to China either have a report or vocation statement—one has both—compared with 20–25 percent of all Italians sent to Asia in the same period.) The five missionaries are Giulio Aleni (1582–1649), Francesco Sambiasi (1582–1649), Alfonso Vagnone (1568–1640), Nicolò Longobardo (1565–1655), and Sabatino De Ursis (1575–1620).¹²⁵ These Jesuits were the second generation of missionaries to China. Prior to this, four Italians had travelled, beginning with mission founders Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610).¹²⁶

None of the five Italians considered here returned to Europe; they embedded themselves deeply into Chinese culture and language, including as prolific writers:¹²⁷ Sabatino De Ursis initially was destined for Japan, and

125. The petitions and reports are dispersed throughout: ARSI, *FG*. 732, 733, 734.

126. For Italian missionaries sent to China, see Dehergne, 399. For the early Jesuit China mission, see Brockey, *Journey to the East*; R. Po-Chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci, 1552–1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Hsia, ed., *A Companion*.

127. For biographical notes, see Dehergne, 6–7 (Aleni, entered the Society, Novellara, 1600; final vows, Hangzhou, 1624), 75 (De Ursis, entered the Society, Naples, 1597; final vows, Macao, 1618), 153–54 (Longobardo, entered the Society, Messina, 1582; final vows, Hangzhou, 1617), 238 (Sambiasi, entered the Society, Naples, 1602; final vows, Shanghai, 1625), 278 (Vagnone, entered the Society, Novara, 1584; final vows, Nanjing, 1606). See also *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, ed. Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín María Domínguez, 4 vols. (Rome and Madrid: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu / Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001), 1:72–73 (Aleni), 2:1063–64 (De Ursis), 3:2411 (Longobardo), 4:3481 (Sambiasi), 4:3867–68 (Vagnone), and *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (1960–)

instead was called to assist Matteo Ricci in China, working as an astronomer, translator, and writer on hydraulics in Chinese, introducing European pharmaceutical knowledge to China and working on the early stages of the reform of the Chinese calendar. Alfonso Vagnone wrote a highly successful Chinese catechism; he became involved in the controversy over the Chinese terms for God, was a divisive figure among fellow-Jesuits and Chinese alike, and went into temporary exile from his missionary base in Nanjing in 1616–17. Francesco Sambiasi produced a world map in Chinese, as well as other religious writings; he worked on the reform of the Chinese calendar, was an ambassador to Macau, and was made a “master of the people,” then a Mandarin. Giulio Aleni became vice-provincial for southern China (based in Fujian), wrote extensively in Chinese, and produced an important Chinese world map. Nicolò Longobardo had a long and widely travelled career across China and in 1610 became Matteo Ricci’s successor as leader of the China mission. They were the kind of Italian Jesuits that Valignano asked for (cited above): “few in number,” but high-quality appointees.¹²⁸

The petitions and reports relating to these figures allow us to investigate the ways in which the successful candidates envisaged themselves, and how their own superiors viewed them, as prospective missionaries; they provide concrete means to test the criteria employed for their assessment and selection, and how these documents might have functioned in the appointment process. They also provide fresh insights into the first steps taken towards Asia by these leading protagonists of one of the Society’s most famous mission destinations.

(Rome: Treccani, 1991): Bertuccioli, “Sabatino de Ursis,” 39:498–500, and Corsi, “Niccolò Longobardo,” 65:716–20. Note that Giulio Aleni’s name sometimes appears as Giulio Alenis, and Sabatino de Ursis is sometimes referred to as Sabatino de Orsi. For the role of Jesuit missionaries in the cultural life of China and vice versa, see Nicolas Standaert, “Jesuit Corporate Culture as Shaped by the Chinese,” in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. J. W. O’Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999 and 2006), 1:352–63; Nicolas Standaert, “The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-Century China,” *Renaissance Studies* 17.3 (2003): 367–91; E. Corsi, “Putao yuan gongren huo xuezhe?” The pioneering study in this field is by Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965–93), with substantial sections about the Jesuits in vols. 1 and 3.

128. Altogether, Italians constituted less than a third of the total missionaries in China (with a high proportion in leadership roles); most were Portuguese, then (later) French.

Of the petitions that survive—those for Aleni, Sambiasi, and Vagnone—all write of their vocation as being in response to the need for more help overseas.¹²⁹ Vagnone mentions the shortage of labourers in the Indies; Aleni, who expresses a preference for being sent to Peru, identifies his desire to sacrifice his life if necessary in “assisting those poor souls,”¹³⁰ while Sambiasi casts his vocation in spiritual terms (anticipating persecution), writing that “in the greatest travails, and hardships, I will suffer for the love of that cross.”¹³¹ There is no sign that these men saw themselves as protagonists in an Imperial enterprise so much as (if patronizingly) servants to “those poor souls [...] that are in the many various parts of India deprived of all spiritual help.”¹³²

In emphasizing their suitability to a missionary appointment, the petitioners enlist a variety of strategies: Vagnone understood the importance of languages, stating that his abilities in Greek and Hebrew made him suited to acquiring new tongues.¹³³ Sambiasi went to the other extreme of humility, naming himself “a poor little one.”¹³⁴ The spiritual values that were expressed in these petitions, and the fact that they were expected to reflect the Ignatian method of discernment, are demonstrated further in Aleni’s petition, when he wrote that the enormity of his “sins, vices, and imperfections” made him aware of his unworthiness; his only hope was the trust he placed in God who could provide him with “that grace and talent” necessary for the task.¹³⁵

Four years after his first letter and still waiting to be called, Aleni shifted the focus from his unworthiness to his health: “Neither should you doubt my health and strength, since by the grace of God [...] I have not had any serious

129. For a brief analysis and full transcriptions of the petitions, see Russell, “Vocation to the East,” 2:313–27.

130. Giulio Aleni in Parma to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 16 May 1603, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 249^r: “la vita istessa per aiuto di quelle povere anime.”

131. Francesco Sambiasi in Lisbon to Claudio Acquaviva, 27 February 1609, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 259^r: “nelli maggiori travagli, et fatiche che per amor d’essa croce patirò.”

132. Aleni to Acquaviva, 16 May 1603, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 249^r: “per aiuto di quelle povere anime [...] che sono in tante varie parti dell’India prive d’ogni aiuto spirituale.”

133. Alfonso Vagnone in Milan to Claudio Acquaviva, 9 July 1602, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 382/1^r. (A copy of this petition in a later hand can be found at *F.G.* 733, 143–1, 2, 3.)

134. Sambiasi to Acquaviva, 27 February 1609, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 259^r: “un povarello.”

135. Aleni to Acquaviva, 16 May 1603, ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 249^r: “enormità de miei gravi peccati, vitii, et imperfettioni”; “quella gratia e talento.”

illnesses or indispositions.”¹³⁶ The oldest candidate, Vagnone, reminded the superior general that the more his departure was deferred, the fewer years would be left to him to manage the fatigues and difficulties of the missions.¹³⁷

The system of soliciting letters of petition prompted these candidates to call on all of their rhetorical abilities in describing their vocations.¹³⁸ One of the petitioners with the most original style, Sambiasi, wrote that his very health depended on his departure for the Indies, implying that being held back would make him ill.¹³⁹ Vagnone also was insistent that his request be met, reminding Acquaviva that he had secured a promise from him personally that he would be sent to the Indies.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, Aleni sought to make good the assurances made to him by the Paraguayan province’s procurator, Diego de Torres, who, on the occasion of his visit to Parma, “promised to remember me [for the missions] at the appropriate time, which seems to me to have arrived now.”¹⁴¹ It is unclear why he went to China instead of the Americas. Sambiasi, on the other hand, described how he kept his vocation a secret for two years: the only exceptions to this secrecy were “my Father Rector, and God,” to whom he confided his vocation.¹⁴²

In addition to the petitions revealing how successful candidates viewed their own missionary vocation and their suitability to the enterprise, the extant reports can tell us something about why they were chosen. These are of Nicolò Longobardo (with two reports),¹⁴³ Sabbatino De Ursis (two reports),¹⁴⁴

136. Aleni in the Collegio Romano to Claudio Acquaviva in Rome, 2 February 1607, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 51^v: “Né deve dubitare della sanità, et forse, poiché per gratia del Signore mi son sempre sentito bene nella religione, e fuori, né ho hauto malatie, né indispositioni di momento.”

137. Vagnone to Acquaviva, 20 August 1602, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 383A. (A copy of this petition in a later hand can be found at 733, 147–1, 2.)

138. For the form and practice of supplication and persuasion in baroque Rome, see Irene Fosi, “Rituali della parola: Supplicare, raccomandare e raccomandarsi a Roma nel seicento,” in *Forme della comunicazione politica in Europa nei secoli XV–XVIII: Suppliche, gravamina, lettere*, ed. Cecilia Nubola and Andreas Würzler (Berlin and Bologna: Duncker & Humblot–Mulino, 2004), 329–49.

139. Sambiasi in Naples to Acquaviva, 6 June 1608, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 142^r.

140. Vagnone to Acquaviva, 9 July 1602, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 382/1^r.

141. Aleni in the Collegio Romano to Acquaviva, 3 February 1607, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 53^r: “mi ha promesso di arricordarsi di me à suo tempo; qual mi pare che sia hora.”

142. Sambiasi to Acquaviva, Naples, 20 March 1608, ARSI, *F.G.* 734, 109^r: “il mio Padre Rettore, et Dio.”

143. ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 1 (Longobardo, 1589) and 25/1^v (Longobardo, 1592).

144. ARSI, *F.G.* 733, 116^r and 129^r (De Ursis, 1601).

and Alfonso Vagnone (three reports).¹⁴⁵ In line with the themes of the reports already discussed, the men's assessors commented on such things as their charges' progress in their studies and teaching experience. For example, the provincial of Sicily, Bartolomeo Ricci, reported in his 1589 list of missionary candidates that Longobardo was in his first year of theological studies, at which he must have been outstanding since Ricci commented that the length of the program could be reduced in his case to allow for his departure.¹⁴⁶

Apart from providing these basic details, the reports tell us something about Longobardo's personal attributes: he was identified as "virtuous, zealous and prudent," and three years later, "he seems excellent for his health, fervor and zeal."¹⁴⁷ The earliest of Vagnone's three reports, in 1592, commented on his scholarly abilities: "already he is an able and judicious philosopher; he has a virtuous and zealous spirit." In the reports, health was invariably tied up with these attributes, and Vagnone was no exception: "he has a good complexion [he is healthy], but is subject to catarrh, which has in the past given him great discomfort, as it continues to do now."¹⁴⁸ Unlike many others in a similar position, his physical weakness did not prevent Vagnone's eventual departure four years later in 1603.

As with the other reports, family background, especially financial circumstances, was an important factor in choosing these candidates. Nicolò Longobardo was described thus: "For having been born into a noble family, he nevertheless must support with very few means his mother, as well as a sister who is destined for the nunnery." The sentence that follows, however, evidently persuaded the recruiters in Rome that he could go: "It is true that he has two other brothers at home, one of whom has sufficient means to support

145. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 24/2 (Vagnone, 1592); *FG*. 732, 12^v (Vagnone, 1594) and 389^r (Vagnone, no date); The last report is undated but can be calculated to 1596 because Vagnone's age is given as twenty-nine years old.

146. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 25/1^v (Longobardo, 1589).

147. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 1; 25/1^v (Longobardo, 1592): "virtuoso, zeloso et prudente"; "par bonissimo per la sanità, fervore et zelo."

148. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 24/2 (Vagnone, 1592): "Alfonso Vagnone già philosopho di buon ingegno et giuditio, virtuoso et zelante dell'anime; di buona complessione, ma soggetto a cattarro che gli ha dato tal' hora gran fastidio, come fa ora."

his relations.”¹⁴⁹ Vagnone’s situation was more precarious, described in the following terms: “He has a mother and sister who are not comfortably off on account of a disgrace that befell the family; despite this, they can manage without him, and it is well to know that they will not need his help in future.”¹⁵⁰

Sabatino de Ursis has the most unusual reports, in that they were written as individual missives solely about him. In the first, the Neapolitan provincial, Fabio de Fabii, pleaded with the superior general to appoint de Ursis for the sake of his spiritual health (as we have seen, Sambiasi employed similar rhetoric in his petition): “for the love of God, and of Our most holy Lady, do not fail to help, and to console him in this, since he is unable to do anything in his current state, on account of his desire to go.” De Fabii’s postscript is curious, especially given de Ursis’s later scholarly distinctions in China: at the age of twenty-six and having just completed his novitiate, his intellectual capabilities were judged to be “sound,” and he was considered to be in “poor health,” although he was praised for his “spirit and maturity.”¹⁵¹

Four months later, he apparently had been chosen: on 17 May 1601, the day before his departure from Rome, a second letter was sent, this time to the superior general himself, by an unknown author. We learn that he was to travel in the large company of Jesuits under the leadership of procurator Laerzio: evidently de Ursis’s advocate was worried that he would be sent to Goa or the Malabar coast with Laerzio, and not to his requested destination of Japan, for he wrote that “he reminds Your Paternity that his desire was always to go to Japan.”¹⁵²

149. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 25/1^v (Longobardo, 1592): “Per esser nato nobile tien la madre, et una sorella per monacarse con molto poca sostanza. È vero che in casa sono due altri suoi fratelli, l’uno dei quali col suo valore mantiene tutti.”

150. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 24/2 (Vagnone, 1592): “Ha madre e sorelle le quali se ben non stanno molto comode per disgratie occorse alla casa, tuttavia fanno senza di lui et si può sperare che per l’avenire non havranno bisogno di lui.”

151. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 116^r (De Ursis, 1601): “per amor de Dio, et della Madonna santissima non manchi aiutarlo, et consolarlo in questo; poiche non può fare niente restando in questo modo, per il desiderio dell’andata”; “[postscript:] “mediocre”; “ha poca sanità”; “spirito et maturità.”

152. ARSI, *FG*. 733, 129^r: “ricorda à Vostra Paternità che il suo desiderio fù sempre di andare nel Giappone.” For his part, Fr Laerzio, who returned to work on the Malabar coast—he was provincial of Malabar (1605–11)—complained bitterly that fewer than a dozen of the thirty-five candidates he had brought to India (among whom was de Ursis) actually went with him to work at Cochin (Alden, 236).

None of the reports recommended against these candidates' appointments, suggesting that they carried weight in the selection process. Poor candidates were not sought, nor were they sent. The documents reveal a level of heterogeneity too. For example, failure to possess the preferred traits of excellent health and outstanding intellectual capacities did not appear to stand in the way of some candidates being chosen: De Ursis was unexceptional on both fronts, and yet he was chosen from among many apparently more suitable applicants. The administrative documents that were generated around the recruitment process, then, were less prescriptive than they were indicative of a broad framework that in practice allowed for variation. They confirm that the selection criteria for an overseas post in many senses were congruent with the recruitment practices of the Society of Jesus: spiritual factors such as interior discernment and obedience, as well as common-sense considerations such as age, studies, health, moral rectitude, and overall suitability to the vocation, were all important. Yet, the fact that these candidates were expected never to see Europe again, and to live and die in a place that was so different from what they knew, raised the stakes dramatically, and the documents under consideration here indicate that they were expected to be better than average.¹⁵³ This was reflected in the assessment process too, where superiors weighed up such factors as family circumstances, the state of the candidates' personal affairs, abilities, and overall fortitude for such an undertaking. These documents, it would seem, point to the aim to hold missionaries to the highest possible standard. For all concerned, these candidates from the Italian provinces were valued stars in the firmament of Jesuit membership.

Conclusion

At the General Congregation of 1730 (the meeting of the supreme governing body of the Society), which elected Franz Retz (1673–1750) as the new superior general, a decree was issued about the missions:

153. Martyrdom was considered a strong possibility: the first execution in the east had taken place in 1549, with the death of the Indian Fishery Coast's superior, Antonio Criminale; in 1599, published accounts of Japan's first Christian martyrs (executed in 1597) had arrived in Europe. For the system of production for these popular accounts, see Markus Friedrich, "Circulating and Compiling the *Litterae Annuae*: Towards a History of the Jesuit System of Communication," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 77.153 (2008): 3–40.

[...] provincials should carefully inquire about those who aspire to missions of this sort, should have inquiries made about them from prudent persons who know the candidates well, and should submit to Our Father [the superior general] both their own and the latter's judgment, so that *he may decide* what will seem **to him** better in the Lord [author's emphasis].¹⁵⁴

This study has sought to outline how the process was undertaken in the century or so prior to this eighteenth-century decree, when Jesuit leadership continued to underline the high priority given to the making of missionaries in the Society of Jesus. It has aimed to provide an overview of the methods, attitudes, and protagonists pertaining to this process, focusing on the second-largest cohort to be sent to the Asian missions in the pre-Suppression period: those from the Italian provinces.

The combined result of the analysis produces a number of findings that can be summarized under four discernible characteristics of the Jesuit leadership's aims for its operations in Asia: negotiation and consultation; close involvement from the superior general's office; a priority for securing suitable and quality personnel; and, through the appointment of Italians, pan-regional representation from Europe among missionaries in Asia.

If this was the aim, of course the reality was different. The missions were extremely varied and complex, with many competing interests and sites of influence. The superior general had oversight of operations, as he did over the whole Society, but he did not always get his way with appointments, although this study shows that in Italy there was a concerted effort to do so. In the Italian provinces as elsewhere, he had to navigate a path between family members and provincial leaders, not to mention negotiate yearly numbers and national weightings with confreres in the Portuguese assistancy. He also dealt with the Iberian crowns—the political, financial, and operational patrons of the enterprise, and mainly absent from the documentary record here: the limited numbers from Italy and the detailed, often fraught, exchanges that took place over each appointment hint at their role.

The vision set out by Visitor Alessandro Valignano, in which the Italian missionaries in Asia were to be a “cornerstone” of the enterprise, can be seen to

154. GC 16, D. 10, in Padberg, O'Keefe, and McCarthy, 379.

have been met through an appointment system summed up in three key words: quantity, quality, and method. Italians were sufficiently numerous to supply missionaries for Asia, while the documents show that poor candidates were disqualified. These records reveal that a missionary appointment was held in the highest regard by all concerned; in turn, those from the Italian provinces who demonstrated talent in dealing with others were prized as potential candidates. Consequently, the “infidels” of Asia, and the region itself, were invested with a value in these texts not readily seen in other European accounts from this period.

The objective was indeed ambitious: the conversion of the “Indies.” And as the inner journey of the *Spiritual Exercises* provided the path to becoming a member of the Society of Jesus, a Jesuit’s vocation to the Indies, manifested in his petition—written in many cases several times over a number of years—earned him a further transformation, and the name *indiano*, even if he never departed. The conceptual fluidity between places and peoples reflected in the use of such a term, the features and contexts for which have been outlined in this study, points to promising directions for further research into how contemporaries experienced and thought about the early modern world.