

Two important Chinese manuscripts restored

 Recent support offered by Dr. Edwin Mok of Hong Kong has enabled the prompt restoration work carried out on two important Chinese manuscripts: two separate editions of the Chinese-Latin dictionary originally compiled by Basilio Brollo (1648-1704), a Franciscan missionary, during his long stay in China, and especially in Nanchino.

The two paper manuscripts restored are *Vat.estr.or.3* and *Vat.estr.or.8*. The first manuscript, *Vat.estr.or.3*, «ex dono Abbatis Mezzafalce 1732» (f. VIIr) makes reference to Giovanni Donato Mezzafalce (1661-1720) from Bitonto (Bari), beneficiary of the Chapter of St. Peter, who had been in China after Card. Carlo Tommaso Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710).

The second manuscript, *Vat.estr.or.8*, containing the same dictionary, was copied by the Franciscan missionary Carlo Orzi da Castorano (1673-1755), vicar of the diocese of Beijing. It belonged to his collection of Chinese books and manuscripts.

The two documents were heavily damaged due to entomological attacks, which had occurred at unknown moments in the life of the artefacts, and which prevented consultation. The paper folios were fragmented and sometimes glued together; the sewing thread had been broken in several places, and the capitals were damaged. The complete restoration of the volumes required the dismantling of the original seam. According to the tradition of the Vatican Library, during operations that take place in order to render the documents fully available for consultation, caution is used to safeguard all the original parts, in order to preserve the elements that offer different kinds of information on the history of the artefact. What was not possible to keep with the body of the paper folios was conserved separately.

All the papers have been restored with total or local glazes in Japanese veil, or by mending the lacunae and other fragile parts locally by means of Japanese paper and rice starch glue.



Vat.estr.or.8 - Before the conservation treatments



During the treatments



After the treatments

Even the covers were restored before reconstructing the whole artefact, by gluing the nerves and the backing to new quadrants.

We are grateful to Mr. Mok, who in the past had already contributed to the recovery of important documents from China, for his commitment to preserve these important testimonies of Oriental culture, now usable once more.



Vat.estr.or.3

