



INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JESUIT STUDIES
BOSTON COLLEGE

JESUIT SOURCES

International Symposia on Jesuit Studies

ISSN: 2766-0664

Entangled in the Global Networks of Macau:
Jesuit Procurators in the Seventeenth Century

Author: Leonor Pratas, NOVA University of Lisbon FCT-CCCM/
NOVA FCSH-CHAM

Source: *Circa Missiones: Jesuit Understandings of Mission through the Centuries*
(Proceedings of the Symposium held at Lisbon, Portugal, June 12–14, 2023)

Edited by: Alessandro Corsi, Claudio Ferlan, and Francisco Malta Romeiras

ISBN: 978-1-947617-35-3

Published by: Institute of Jesuit Sources

Originally Published: January 21, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.51238/ISJS.2023.13>

Provided in Open Access by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College.

The Institute of Jesuit Sources, specializes in preserving, maintaining, and expanding for scholars around the world important texts and studies in Jesuit history, spirituality, and pedagogy.

© Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2025

Visit our website at <https://jesuitsources.bc.edu>

Entangled in the Global Networks of Macau: Jesuit Procurators in the Seventeenth Century

LEONOR PRATAS¹

Procurators in Jesuit Historiography

The Jesuit missions would have been unable to survive on a global scale without the work of the procurators, who were responsible for all the order's material, monetary, and logistical operations. Yet little of the research in the ever-expanding field of Jesuit studies has been devoted to this office. The first contributions, on the missions of Brazil and Maranhão, came from the pioneering work of Serafim Leite, S.J. (1890–1969), with subsequent authors also focusing on those missions. As a result, we know more about the role of the procurators within the Spanish assistancy than in the East Asian missions, established in Macau and Nagasaki, which have received only scant attention.

Although very few sources have been published, and there are still no monographs on the eastern missions,² João Paulo Oliveira e Costa's doctoral thesis, which uses the episcopacy of Luís de Cerqueira (1552–1614) to explore the networks where the procurators operated, made a major addition to research on the procurators in Japan.³ Francisco Figueira Faria, Daniele Frison, and Mihoko Oka subsequently published three further essays on the topic that also prioritized the Japanese territory, discussing the role of three Jesuits as procurators of the Japanese province: the well-known inter-

1. This article is the outcome of the paper “Entangled in the Global Networks of Macau: Jesuit Procurators and Their Business in the Seventeenth Century” presented in Brotéria (Lisbon) at the international symposium on Jesuit studies “*Circa missiones: Jesuit Understandings of Mission through the Centuries*” (June 2023). I would like to thank the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies for the opportunity as well as all the professors and colleagues I have met for their interest, support, and suggestions.

Leonor Pratas is a PhD student in modern history at NOVA University of Lisbon, School of Social Sciences and Humanities (FCSH-UNL). She has a bachelor's degree in history (2021) and completed her master's at the same institution with a dissertation entitled “The Jesuit Procure/Procuratura of Macau: A Global Agency during the Ming–Qing Transition (1620–1680)” (2024) on which this work is based. She is currently a PhD fellow at the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, in collaboration with Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre, IP (FCT-CCCM) (reference PRT/BD/154858/2023/DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54499/PRT/BD/154858/2023>), as well as a non-doctoral integrated researcher at CHAM—Centre for the Humanities at FCSH-UNL. Email: leonor.meca2000@gmail.com.

2. On Jesuit activity in the Americas and their procurators, see, for example, Nicholas Cushner, *Jesuit Ranches and the Agrarian Development of Colonial Argentina, 1650–1767* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1983); Fabián R. Vega, “‘Que se han de embarcar para la provincia del Paraguay’: Procuradores jesuitas y circulación de libros en el Río de la Plata, mediados del siglo XVIII,” *Anuario colombiano de historia social y de la cultura* 48, no. 2 (March 2021): 49–80; Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “El peso de la salvación: Misioneros y procuradores jesuitas de las Islas Marianas y la Nueva España (1660–1672),” *Historia mexicana* 71, no. 3 (2022): 1103–48; Alexandre Coello de la Rosa and Fabian Fechner, eds., *Political Agents and Cultural Mediators: Jesuit Procurators in a Globalizing World (16th–18th Centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2025). On Trigault's European journey, see Edmond Lamalle, “La propagande du P. Nicolas Trigault en faveur des missions de Chine (1616),” *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 9 (1940): 49–120.

3. João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, “O Cristianismo no Japão e o Episcopado de D. Luís Cerqueira” (PhD diss., NOVA University of Lisbon, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, 1998).

preter João Rodrigues Tçuzu (1561–1633), the physician Luis de Almeida (c.1525–83), and missionary Carlo Spinola (1565–1622). Frison’s doctoral thesis of 2013 explored Spinola’s actions in further detail.⁴ However, our knowledge of the procurators of the Chinese vice-province is still seriously deficient.

Dauril Alden conducted the first analysis of the typologies, history, and functions of the office of the procurator. Through the prism of world history, Alden also examined the role of economics and money in the order’s operations, as well as the missionaries’ involvement in trade and slavery and their roles as businessowners and investors.⁵

The gaps in our knowledge of the procurators are part of a larger historiographical problem, namely the unexplored economic-financial dimension of the Society of Jesus, notwithstanding recent work by Noël Golvers, Fred Vermote, Luke Clossey, José Gabriel Martínez-Serna, Inès G. Županov, and Hélène Vu Thanh.⁶ Within the scope of these important contributions, mention should also be made of the project “Res sinicae: Digital Base of Documentary Sources in Latin and Portuguese about China (16th–18th Centuries); Surveying, Editing, and Studies” (PTDC/LLT-OUT /31941/2017), coordinated by Professors Arnaldo do Espírito Santo and Cristina Costa Gomes.⁷ As part of this project, Maria João Pereira Coutinho has studied the roles of Fathers Francisco de Cordes (1689–1768), José Rosado (1714–97), and Marcelo Leitão (1679–1755) as general procurators of the East Asian missions in Lisbon; she has also transcribed a number of important documentary sources. Isabel Murta Pina’s analyses of Fathers Álvaro Semedo (1585–1658) and António Francisco Cardim (1596–1659), sent to Rome as procurators of the vice-province of China, as well as the article “Negócios da China e do Japão: Os procuradores das missões jesuítas da Ásia Oriental” (Business of China

4. On João Rodrigues Tçuzu, see Mihoko Oka, “A Memorandum by Tçuzu Rodrigues: The Office of Procurador and Trade by the Jesuits in Japan,” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 13 (2006): 81–102, as well as the work of Michael Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter: An Early Jesuit in Japan and China* (New York: Weatherhill, 1974); Daniele Frison, “El oficio de procurador al qual aunque tengo particular repugnancia,” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 20 (2010): 61–68; Frison, “The Nagasaki–Macao Trade between 1612 and 1618: Carlo Spinola, S.J., Procurator of Japan” (PhD diss., NOVA University of Lisbon, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2013); Francisco Figueira de Faria, “The Functions of Procurator in the Society of Jesus: Luís de Almeida, Procurator?,” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 15 (December 2007): 29–46.

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

6. Noël Golvers, *François de Rougemont, S.J., Missionary in Ch’ang-Shu (Chiang-Nan): Study of the Account Book (1674–1676) and the Elogium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999); Golvers, *Portuguese Books and Their Readers in the Jesuit Mission of China (17th–18th Centuries)* (Lisbon: Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre, CCCM, I.P., 2011); Fred Vermote, “Finances of the Missions,” in *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 367–400; Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); José Gabriel Martínez-Serna, “Procurators and the Making of the Jesuits’ Atlantic Network,” in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 181–209; Hélène Vu Thanh and Ines G. Županov, eds., *Trade and Finance in Global Missions (16th–18th Centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

7. “Res sinicae: Base digital de fontes documentais em latim e em português sobre a China (séculos XVI–XVII); Levantamento, edição, tradução e estudos,” <https://www.ressinicae.letras.ulisboa.pt/?lang=en> (accessed October 3, 2025).

and Japan: The procurators of the Jesuit East Asian missions), are examples of her extensive work on the subject.⁸

Two other articles published in *Daxiyangguo: Portuguese Journal of Asian Studies* are related to this research. The first, by Diogo Reis Pereira, addresses António Freire's activities at the College of Santo Antão when procurator of the province of Japan and vice-province of China. The second, my own publication, is on Brother Manuel de Figueiredo.⁹

The two latter articles, together with the present paper, are part of the broader research created, developed, and supervised by Professors Isabel Pina and Maria João Pereira Coutinho since 2021 (in the context of the above-mentioned “Res sinicae” project). Our detailed analysis of these Jesuits, which has sought to identify their functions, has confirmed the importance and complexity of the office, which clearly warrants further study. We have also compiled prosopography lists that have helped shed light on the background, identity, and characteristics of the procurators.¹⁰

8. Maria João Pereira Coutinho, “‘So many things I wanted from Guangzhou’: The Orders of Two Jesuit Procurators; Francisco de Cordes (1689–1768) and José Rosado (1714–1797),” *Orientis aura* 3 (2019): 103–22; Coutinho (paleographic transcription): “Marcelo Leitão (1679–1755): Active and Passive Correspondence”; Cristina Costa Gomes (paleographic revision), Arnaldo do Espírito Santo (Latin translation), in “Res sinicae: Base digital de fontes documentais em latim e em português sobre a China (séculos XVI–XVIII); Levantamento, edição, tradução e estudos” (PTDC/LLT-OUT /31941/2017), ed. Arnaldo do Espírito Santo and Cristina Costa Gomes (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Clássicos, 2021), <https://www.ressinicae.letras.ulisboa.pt/6-1-2-correspondencia-activa?lang=en> (accessed October 3, 2025); Maria João Pereira Coutinho, “Marcelo Leitão (1679–1755),” in *Res sinicae: Enciclopédia de autores*, ed. Arnaldo do Espírito Santo, Cristina Costa Gomes, and Isabel Murta Pina (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Clássicos, 2021), <https://www.ressinicae.letras.ulisboa.pt/marcelo-leitao-1680-1755?lang=en> (accessed October 3, 2025); Maria João Pereira Coutinho, “José Rosado (1714–1797),” in Espírito Santo, Gomes, and Pina, *Res sinicae: Enciclopédia de autores*, <https://www.ressinicae.letras.ulisboa.pt/jose-rosado-1714-1797?lang=en> (accessed October 3, 2025); Coutinho, “Francisco de Cordes (1689–1768),” in Espírito Santo, Gomes, and Pina, *Res sinicae: Enciclopédia de autores*, <https://www.ressinicae.letras.ulisboa.pt/francisco-de-cordes-1689-1768> (accessed October 3, 2025); Coutinho, “O papel dos procuradores-gerais da Companhia de Jesus no contexto das transferências artísticas do séc. XVIII: Dois casos de estudo,” in *Universitas, las artes ante el tiempo* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2021), 1273–83; Coutinho (paleographic transcription), “Francisco de Cordes (1689–1768): Active and Passive Correspondence and Other Documents.” Cristina Costa Gomes (paleographic revision) and Arnaldo do Espírito Santo (Latin translation) in Espírito Santo and Gomes, “Res sinicae: Base digital de fontes documentais em latim,” <https://www.ressinicae.letras.ulisboa.pt/6-3-1-correspondencia-passiva?lang=en> (accessed October 6, 2025); Coutinho, “‘Homem de prendas e talentos’: Marcelo Leitão (1679–1755), procurador-geral da vice-província da China,” in *Res sinicae: Pessoas, papéis e intercâmbios culturais entre a Europa e a China (1600–1800)*, ed. Arnaldo do Espírito Santo, Cristina Costa Gomes, and Enrique Rodrigues-Moura (Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2022), 181–207; Isabel Murta Pina, “Dois procuradores em confronto: Álvaro Semedo e António Francisco Cardim,” in Espírito Santo, Gomes, and Rodrigues-Moura, *Res sinicae: Pessoas, papéis e intercâmbios culturais*, 97–112; Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão: Os procuradores das missões jesuítas da Ásia Oriental,” in *Con crucifijos y mercaderías por distantes tierras: La Compañía de Jesús y sus actividades económicas en los Imperios Ibéricos* (Madrid: Editorial Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2024), 31–57.

9. Diogo Reis Pereira, “Entre Portugal e a China: Procuradores Jesuítas e seus negócios; O caso de António Freire (séc. XVII),” *Daxiyangguo: Portuguese Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (November 2022): 135–56; Leonor Pratas, “Entre negócios e religião: O Irmão Jesuíta Manuel de Figueiredo (1589–1663),” *Daxiyangguo: Portuguese Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (November 2022): 113–33.

10. They can be seen in Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 31–57; Diogo Pereira, “Procuradores Jesuítas em Macau: Redes de contacto e transferências materiais na primeira metade do século XVII” (master’s diss., NOVA University of Lisbon, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2024); and in my master’s dissertation, already mentioned.

The following pages analyze, through the lens of global microhistory, the background and career of seven Jesuits—five brothers and two fathers—who worked as procurators of the vice-province of China and province of Japan in Macau in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹

The Procurators: Typologies and Functions

As a pyramidal religious order, the Jesuits had three different types of procurators who were responsible for the various material dimensions of the order. As more focus has been given to the procurators elected to Rome in recent years, our team's attention centered on the study of two typologies: the missions procurators and the provincial procurators.

The Portuguese crown created the office of missions procurator in the 1570s due to the heavy workload of the missions of India, Japan, and Brazil. According to Alden, this office was one of the most challenging responsibilities within the Society of Jesus. The missions procurators were responsible for forwarding all letters between the provinces and Rome and maintaining close contact with the court procurator. They helped candidates who had been selected to go to the overseas missions, providing the necessary accommodation and education, ensuring the procedures were followed, and the goods were carefully loaded onto the ships. They had to send gifts to benefactors of the Society of Jesus and to the superior general. When the delegated procurators arrived in Rome, the missions procurators expected them to sell the products they had brought with them at the best possible price. This was also the case for the commodities the provinces sent to Europe. Finally, they had to collect the different revenues owed to the provinces, including overseas revenues.¹²

Paperwork, writing, and correspondence played an intrinsic part in the Society of Jesus's operations, and the missions procurators had to be in regular contact with other procurators, including the provincial procurators (one of their main correspondents).

The individuals analyzed in this research come under the typology of the provincial procurator. Provincial procurators acted as intermediaries between the college procurators and the missions procurators and received the accounts from the colleges and the missions that would define the financial situation of their province or vice-province. Their responsibilities also included assisting their superior, the provincial, by drafting reports to Rome about the state of the province or vice-province. They had to invest the funds entrusted to them by the colleges of the province and prepare correspondence

11. On microhistory, see Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Ginzburg, "Microhistory and World History," in *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 6, *The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE, Part I: Foundations*, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 446–73. On global history, see Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). On global microhistory, see Tonio Andrade, "A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (December 2010): 573–91, and Eugenio Menegon, "Telescope and Microscope: A Micro-Historical Approach to Global China in the Eighteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 54, no. 4 (December 2019): 1–30.

12. Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 298–99, 303–4.

and yearly lists of goods and forward them from Europe to the colleges in their province, or vice-versa.¹³

The college procurators oversaw the management of the different Jesuit houses and supervised the work of other Jesuits, including cooks, cleaning personnel, porters, infirmarians, and buyers. They had to purchase everything necessary for the smooth running of the residence and keep records of all their financial and legal operations.¹⁴

Searching for Patterns: Procurators and Their Backgrounds

Our team set out to explore the background of this group of procurators. We wanted to know more about their activities, skills, and training prior to and during their time as procurators with a view to identifying any similarities, affinities, and patterns that unite or differentiate them.

The first, Brother Manuel de Figueiredo (1589–1663), was a Jesuit from the north of Portugal who worked as an infirmarian during his novitiate in the College of Évora, which he entered in 1611. In the following year, he was appointed soto-minister, which meant he oversaw the college’s pantry and kitchen; he was chosen to be the new apothecary a few months later. Figueiredo had a “great desire to serve Our Lord in [...] India” and wanted to “move away” from his people, so he ultimately asked the Father Provincial for permission to “serve and accompany” the new bishop of Japan, Diogo Correia Valente (1567–1633), on the journey to India. He set sail from Lisbon to Macau aboard the carrack (*nau*) *Santo Amaro* in April 1618.¹⁵

Enduring a dangerous, six-month journey on rough seas, Figueiredo reported having “a lot of work [...] with the sick patients,” which meant he continued to work as an infirmarian and apothecary even after leaving Évora. They sailed first to Goa, where he spent some time at the college, before finally arriving in Macau in July 1620, where he started serving the bishop of Japan as a Jesuit linked to the province of Japan as well as giving assistance in the infirmary.¹⁶

Brother Belchior Ribeiro (1589–1671) followed a similar path to that of Figueiredo. Also born in 1589, he was from the north of Portugal and belonged to the province of Japan. He was already in Macau as a temporal coadjutor from at least 1615 and had been an infirmarian there since January 1616. His placement at the infirmary appears to have been due to a sudden lack of qualified Jesuits. Although direct evidence is

13. Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 306, 309–10.

14. Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 308–9.

15. Pratas, “Entre negócios e religião,” 118–22; “Lembrança do Irmão Manuel de Figueiredo” [Remembrance from Brother Manoel de Figueiredo], Macau, February, 21, 1661, Biblioteca da Ajuda, Collection *Jesuítas na Ásia* 49-V-5, fol. 301v (BAJA hereafter); subsequently cited as “Remembrance [...]”; Letter from Brother Manoel de Figueiredo to Father Paulo de Carvalho from the College of Evora, Macau, November 20, 1620, BAJA: 49-V-5, fols. 297v–298, 299. In 1617, Father Diogo Correia Valente (1567–1633) was appointed bishop of Japan. His predecessor, Luís Cerqueira, had died three years earlier, during a very complicated period for Japan. On Cerqueira, see Costa, “O Cristianismo no Japão.” “Anua sinensis [...],” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 121, fol. 97v. Josef Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541–1758,” in *Aufsätze zur portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Hans Flasche (Münster: Aschendorff, 1967), 252–450.

16. Letter from Brother Manoel de Figueiredo to Father Paulo de Carvalho from the College of Evora, BAJA: 49-V-5, fol. 300v; Costa, “O Cristianismo no Japão,” 693.

missing, it is highly likely that the organizational and medical skills Ribeiro acquired during his formation in Portugal influenced his immediate selection for the infirmary.¹⁷

Figueiredo's superiors probably took his prior experience as an infirmarian into account when he arrived in Macau, as this would explain why he was asked to assist Ribeiro, albeit sporadically. The relationship established over these years may be why Figueiredo appointed Ribeiro to the position of procurator two decades later.

Brother António de Torres (1592–1680), also from the province of Japan, had an interesting connection to both Ribeiro and Figueiredo. Born in Torres Vedras in central Portugal, this coadjutor was already in Macau in December 1623 and was quickly selected to be the soto-minister of the college. The sources do not explain the reasons for this decision: it is only known that he had “a very good disposition and strength,” which is the minimum requirement for any brother. The appointment could have been due to the lack of qualified Jesuits or, alternatively, because he had already had some experience and was therefore the most suitable candidate.¹⁸

Torres shares similarities with another brother from the province of Japan: Manuel dos Reis (1634–1669). Reis arrived in Macau between 1658 and 1659 during the Ming–Qing transition. He was a soto-minister and buyer, which meant he was also responsible for purchasing and managing all the food for the college.¹⁹

In addition to Figueiredo and Reis, Torres also crossed paths with Ribeiro. Both were in the Vietnam mission between 1628 and 1630, where they worked as “village guardians,” as they were the only brothers in a group of fathers. This might explain why we find them in the Procure—the procurator's office—of the vice-province of China and the province of Japan two decades later, first as assistants, then as procurators.²⁰

These temporal functions were indispensable for the smooth functioning of the colleges of the Society of Jesus. Moreover, their work as managers of the infirmary and apothecary and as soto-ministers and buyers enabled these future procurators to develop their organizational and management skills, thus improving their performance.

Even the brothers had to keep detailed records of activities related to their temporal office. This work would have made excellent preparation for all the reports and accounts they would have to deliver as procurators to their superiors, sending them

17. Josef Franz Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae I* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1975), 497, 511, 514, 615, 638, 692; “Rol dos padres, e irmãos do Collegio de Macau feito em Janeiro de. 615.” [List of fathers and brothers from the College of Macau compiled in January 1615], Macau, 1615, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 102.

18. Joseph Dehergne, S.J., *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1973), 272, 1111. “Primeiro catalogo das Informações comuas dos padres E Irmãos da prouincia de Japão [...] feito em Dezembro de 1623” [First catalog of fathers and brothers from the province of Japan [...] compiled in December 1623], ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 133v; “Rol dos padres e Irmãos da prouincia de Japão que se contem neste catalogo do ano de 1623. em Dezembro” [List of fathers and brothers from the province of Japan [...] from December 1623], ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 129; “Primus catalogus [...] 1675,” Macau, 1675, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 206v; “Catalogus [...] 1679,” Macau, 1679, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 210; Vermote, “Finances of the Missions,” 380.

19. “Primus catalogus [...] 1666,” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 134, fol. 186v.

20. “Primus catalogus [...] 1659,” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fols. 171v, 172; Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae*, 1081.

to Rome and the other provinces in the following decades. Indeed, in 1624 Tçuzu declared that the procurator was not only an important “buyer and soto-minister” but also a “merchant [...], for he seeks food and sustenance for the whole province.”²¹

Brother Luís de Figueiredo/Fei Cangyu (c.1622–1705) can be distinguished from his companions in two respects: he was Chinese Korean, and he belonged to the vice-province of China rather than Japan. His knowledge of Mandarin and Cantonese as well as his contacts with the Chinese authorities may thus have been considered crucial for the financial survival of the East Asian missions, illustrating the importance of excellent interpersonal and communication skills when selecting a procurator.²²

It is unclear why Fathers Giovanni Francesco De Ferrariis (1609–71) and Gonçalo da Fonseca (1618–62) were appointed procurators. We know that De Ferrariis had no difficulty in learning Mandarin and that he was professor in the College of Macau. Fonseca was the only Jesuit in the group who had previously been procurator before going to Macau between 1645 and 1646 as a missionary of the province of Japan. He managed both Procures of the East Asian missions in Goa for a short time.²³

De Ferrariis and Fonseca probably had some skills that were important for the office. On the other hand, they may have been chosen for the Procure due to the lack of more suitable candidates, and they were therefore chosen because they were the most competent priests for the role.²⁴

Terms in Office and Working as Assistants

According to Alden, the provincial procurators usually remained in office for brief periods since their activities coincided with their superiors’ mandates. However, this was not the case for Brothers Manuel de Figueiredo and Luís de Figueiredo, who stayed in the Procure for over twenty years.²⁵

Visitor André Palmeiro (1569–1635) appointed Manuel de Figueiredo as procurator in 1628; he remained in office until 1646. In a letter written a year before his departure, Father Álvaro Semedo expressed concern about the future of the Procure. In his view, once Figueiredo left, “everything would dissolve like salt in water.”²⁶

21. Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 618; Elsa Penalva and Miguel Rodrigues Lourenço, *Fontes para a história de Macau no século XVII* (Lisbon: Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre, CCCM, I.P, 2009), 360; On Tçuzu’s work as procurator, see Pereira, “Procuradores jesuítas em Macau,” and Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*.

22. On *mestiço* and Chinese Jesuits, see Isabel Murta Pina, *Jesuítas chineses e mestiços da missão da China (1589–1689)* (Lisbon: Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre, CCCM, I.P, 2011).

23. “Anno de 1658. Cazo que aconteceu a este Collegio Informação para o Padre Visitador do cazo que aconteceu neste Collegio aos 17 de Agosto de 1658” [Year of 1658 (...) Information to the Father Visitor about the incident that happened in this college on August 17, 1658], BAJA, 49-V-3, fols. 197v–198; Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites*, 96; Hubert Jacobs, *The Jesuit Makasar Documents (1615–1682)* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1988), 17–18.

24. For a more detailed prosopographical analysis of the Jesuit procurators in Macau, including additional biographical data, see Pratas, “Jesuit Procure/Procuratura of Macau.”

25. Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 307–8; Vermote, “Finances of the Missions,” 377–80; Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 47–48.

26. Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 48–49; on Palmeiro, see Liam Matthew Brockey, *The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

It is unclear why Figueiredo left the Procure; however, he was appointed to the office again in 1647, probably because of his exceptional skills. Eleven years after Semedo's letter, Figueiredo expressed similar concerns about the financial state of the vice-province of China, stating that he was leaving the office definitively, and that if no one had the experience and organization to manage the vice-province's money, it would soon end up "like the seas that soon swell and empty." He seems to have left the office in 1656.²⁷

Semedo's and Figueiredo's concerns may have been due to a lack of Jesuit candidates with the necessary qualifications or experience, which would account for Figueiredo occupying the position for two decades.

It is also crucial to remember that entry into the Procure may not necessarily have come at the same time as the appointment to procurator. The Jesuits had such a heavy workload, especially in the turbulent and fragile context of seventeenth-century East Asia, that support from assistants was indispensable. According to Tçuzu, the "procurator was in continuous movement with his companion." Catalogs of the province of Japan also refer to brothers who were "helpers" or "secretaries."²⁸

Luís de Figueiredo started work as an assistant to Brother Manuel dos Reis in the early 1660s. In a receipt written in 1661, Reis declared that Figueiredo acted on several occasions as his "companion for the small expenses of the Procure" and when collecting silver. He subsequently became procurator in 1681, an office he held until 1702, when he was almost ninety years old. In the case of Brother Luís de Figueiredo, it should be noted that he was appointed *mestizo* coadjutor as a last resort due to the lack of more suitable fathers.²⁹

In 1638, Father Manuel Dias Sr. (1559–1639) confirmed that Torres was working as a companion to Brother Manuel de Figueiredo in the Procure. Although the sources are unclear, it seems that he was replaced by Ribeiro in 1646.³⁰

27. Letter from Brother Manuel de Figueiredo to Superior General Goswin Nickel, Macau, December 8, 1656, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fols. 340–342, fol. 341; "Contas que da o Jrmão Manoel de Figueiredo procurador de prouincia da China ao Padre Visitador Manoel de Azevedo [...]" [Revenue from Brother Manuel de Figueiredo to Visitor Manuel de Azevedo], Macau, 1647–48, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fols. 338–339; Subsequently cited as "Revenue from Brother Manuel de Figueiredo [...]."

28. Penalva and Lourenço, *Fontes para a história de Macau*, 361; Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae*, 553, 638, 847.

29. "Receita do cabedal da vice prouincia da China que dêo[?] o jrmão Manoel dos Reys procurador da mesma vice prouincia [...]" [Receipt of the vice-province of China given by Brother Manoel dos Reys procurator of the same vice-province (...)], Macau, 1667, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fols. 144–147v. Subsequently cited as "Receipt [...] Given by Brother Manoel dos Reys [...]"; "Despeza do cabedal da Prouincia de Japão que dá o Jrmão Manoel dos Reys [...]" [Expense from province of Japan given by Brother Manoel dos Reys (...)], Macau, 1668–69, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fols. 153–55v; Pina, *Jesuítas chineses*, 355–56; Pina, "Negócios da China e do Japão," 48–50. It seems that in 1702 Figueiredo also had an assistant: Father Luís França (Father José Monteiro to the superior general, September 17–October 5, 1698, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 166, fols. 290–292v).

30. Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae*, 1067; "Prata que vice prouincia da China tomou em Macao da Prouincia de Jappam no anno de 1646" [Silver that the vice-province of China took in Macau from the province of Japan in 1646], Macau, 1646, BAJA: 49-V-11, fols. 518–518v. Subsequently cited as "Silver that the Vice-Province of China Took in Macau [...]."

Father Gonçalo da Fonseca became the procurator of the East Asian missions in the late 1650s. Once again, his companion was Brother António de Torres.³¹

Who Succeeds Whom?

Reconstructing the timeline related to succession for this group of procurators is more challenging. We have tried to understand the succession process and the knowledge procurators passed on to their successors; however, the sources are unclear and often contradictory.

Although Manuel de Figueiredo was procurator of the vice-province of China and the province of Japan for the last time in around 1656, as noted above, it seems that he passed the office to Brother Belchior Ribeiro at some point between 1650 and 1652. Ribeiro was procurator of the vice-province of China until 1656/57. Nevertheless, the sources give us two contradictory accounts. First, a letter written by Figueiredo about the finances of the vice-province of China shows that he was still procurator in 1656. Second, Brother António de Torres was procurator in 1654, not Manuel de Figueiredo or Belchior Ribeiro. The situation becomes even more complicated as Figueiredo explained in November 1656 that he had appointed another successor to the office: Father De Ferrariis. De Ferrariis was in the Procure from 1656 to 1659, but we have information that suggests that the management was in the hands of Father Gonçalo da Fonseca over this period (from 1657 to 1660).³²

The departure of the most competent and experienced Jesuits from the Procure, Manuel de Figueiredo, Manuel dos Reis, and Luís de Figueiredo, led to the almost immediate entry of Brothers Belchior Ribeiro and António de Torres. It seems, therefore, that the office of procurator was frequently passed to Jesuits who already had experience and knowledge in this role. As explained previously, this means that the assistants not only needed considerable skills but also know-how about market values, currency exchange rates, and financial record-keeping, without which they would have been unable to give the procurator appropriate assistance or to become procurators themselves.³³

31. Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites*, 80; “Lista de todos os sojeitos que tem a vice provincia da China: Janeiro de 1660” [List of all Jesuits of the vice province of China: January 1660], ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 134, fol. 344; “Primus catalogus [...] 1648,” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 147.

32. “Primus catalogus [...] 1666,” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 134, fol. 186; “Contas que dá o Jrmão Manoel de Figueiredo ao Padre Visitador, e aos padres da China dentro; [...]” [Revenue from Brother Manuel de Figueiredo (...)], 1650–52, BAJA: 49-IV-61, fols. 630–631v. “Primus catalogus [...] 1650,” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 25, fol. 152v; Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites*, 272; Letter from Brother Manuel de Figueiredo to Superior General Goswin Nickel, Macau, December 8, 1656, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fols. 340–342; “Entrega que faz o Padre Gonçalo da Fonseca procurador da vice prouincia da China ao Padre Diogo Fabro procurador eleito a Roma” [Revenue and expenses of Father Gonçalo da Fonseca procurator of vice-province of China to Father Diogo Fabro, elected procurator to Rome], December 18, 1661, ARSI FG 722 II 6, fols. 6–6v.

33. Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 303. For a detailed reconstruction of chronology of appointments and succession of procurators, see Pratas, “Jesuit Procure/Procuratura of Macau.”

Conflicts between the Procure and the College of Macau: Ethical Issues and Tensions

After Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) expelled the Jesuits from Japan in 1614, the College of Macau became so crowded that many of the missionaries from the province of Japan and vice-province of China had to sleep in the corridors.³⁴ Much of the college was taken over by the Procure, which occupied four rooms. It was here that the procurator worked and lived; it was also where money, commodities, and correspondence were kept, and where many merchants with whom the Jesuits had business were found. The noise disturbed studies and, more importantly, the Procure was not well received by the rest of the community. In light of these criticisms, Father Sebastião Vieira (1574–1634) ordered the Procure to be moved to a complex adjacent to the college. But this did not put an end to the problems.³⁵

These were religious men who had been forced to become businessmen, buyers, and merchants, yet many fathers and even brothers were reluctant to dedicate their time to the material rather than spiritual dimension of the missions. Those who took on the task in Macau and Nagasaki were subjected to constant criticisms from their peers, especially due to their involvement in the trade of silver and silk, which ended in 1639.³⁶

This gave rise to sources constantly transmitting the idea of “frustration” with the office of procurator, be it in the province of Japan or the vice-province of China. For example, Spinola, procurator of the province of Japan, admitted to the superior general in December 1618 that he had found the work repugnant since he took office in 1611. Forty years later, Father José Agnes noted with displeasure that he had been obliged to accept the office of procurator of the province of Japan. He found the work difficult, perhaps due to insufficient knowledge or, more importantly, because he refused to deal with temporal matters, which raised ethical issues. The letter also reflects the constant tension between the province of Japan and vice-province of China. Agnes wrote about an episode when Father Visitor Simão da Cunha (1589–1660) accused him of angrily throwing the keys of the Procure down onto a chair, making a terrible noise.³⁷

The revenues sent in the seventeenth century by the Catholic Church and Iberian crown were neither sufficient nor regular enough for missions like those in East Asia, far from the imperial center, to survive. Moreover, since Saint Paul College was overpopulated, conflicts started to develop between missionaries.

34. Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 323–25.

35. For a more detailed description of the Procure of Macau, see Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter*, 323–25. On the Procure of Lisbon, see Pereira, “Procuradores jesuítas.” For the eighteenth century, see Maria João Pereira Coutinho, “Do Colégio Almirantino à Procuratura das Missões (1705–1759): Dois exemplos de arquitectura barroca ao serviço das missões ultramarinas (S.I.),” in *Identidades y redes culturales: Congreso Internacional de Barroco Iberoamericano* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2021), 935–43.

36. Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 35–45; Hélène Vu Thanh, “Poverty, Finances, and Evangelization: The Case of the Jesuit Mission in Japan (16th–17th Centuries),” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 2, no. 5 (2022): 29–45; Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 309–12.

37. Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 44; Frison, “Nagasaki–Macau Trade,” 237; Father José Agnes to assistant father, Macau, December 22, 1659, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 19, fol. 60. On the constant tension and rivalry between the province of Japan and the vice-province of China, especially concerning the procurators Álvaro Semedo and António Francisco Cardim, see Pina “Dois procuradores jesuítas em confronto,” 97–112.

Given the missions' financial insecurity, money was usually the main cause of disagreements and intrigue. In the abovementioned letter, for example, Agnes reported that Cunha, who belonged to the Chinese mission, had gone to the Procure one evening after dinner to find out whether Agnes had been lying about the accounts of the province of Japan. Such episodes led him to conclude that there was "no need for a procurator of Japan," when the visitor "showed himself so resolute and passionate about China," openly diverting the Procure's resources to favor the vice-province despite his duty to serve both missions impartially.³⁸

Agne's "frustration" with the office of procurator may, however, not have been related simply to ethical issues. When he arrived at the Procure, the room was in such a state of chaos that he had to put the papers he needed in order. Whether due to the negligence of past procurators or simply lack of time, this illustrated how the procurator was inundated with work, meaning that organization and discipline were essential to the office.³⁹

Procurators as Controversial but Powerful Figures

In the same letter, Agnes also criticized Brother Manuel de Figueiredo, the procurator of the vice-province of China. Agnes complained that he had been born "for demands and embarrassments," stating that "no procurator of Japan can have peace and rest" because he was "always the object of complaints from past procurators."⁴⁰

Brother Manuel de Figueiredo was not the only one criticized by other Jesuits. Brother Luís de Figueiredo was also subject to complaints due to his Asian origins. In a letter written in 1689, Father Prospero Intorcetta (1625–96) protested that he had been consistently underpaid. In another letter, written from the Forbidden City, Father Tomás Pereira (1646–1708) claimed that the accounts sent by Luís de Figueiredo as procurator of the vice-province of China were incorrect.⁴¹

Although controversial, the work granted its holder great power due to its financial and material nature. As Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) mentioned in 1591, one of the procurator's tasks was to keep "the safe and well-guarded keys" (also referred to in the letter written by Agnes).⁴²

Of the seven procurators, Brother Manuel de Figueiredo stands out as the one most closely linked to the exercise of power. The sources portray him as a constant and influential presence within the College of Macau and its networks, often acting behind the scenes on administrative and financial matters. His influence stemmed primarily from his long-standing relationship with his superiors, which might explain why he stayed in the Procure for more than a decade.

38. Father José Agnes to assistant father, Macau, December 22, 1659, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 19, fol. 60.

39. Father José Agnes to assistant father, Macau, December 22, 1659, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 19, fol. 60.

40. Father José Agnes to assistant father, Macau, December 22, 1659, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 19, fol. 60.

41. Pina, "Negócios da China e do Japão," 50; Pereira, "Tomás Pereira," 190, 237–38.

42. Alessandro Valignano, "Regimento do procurador que está em Japão" [Rules of the procurator of Japan], 1591.

He served, for example, the bishop of Japan Diogo Valente from his arrival in Macau in 1620 until 1625. Eight years later, he was appointed procurator of the vice-province of China by Visitor Palmeiro, who considered him a man of “good industry” and “great application.” In his capacity as infirmarian and apothecary, Figueiredo even took care of Palmeiro on his deathbed in 1635. In 1639, a few years after Palmeiro’s death, the brother participated in the deposition of Father Manuel Dias Sr. (c.1560–1639), along with other missionaries. It is also clear from the criticisms in Agnes’s letter that Figueiredo became an advisor and confidant of Visitor Simão da Cunha.⁴³

Managers of the Province of Japan and Vice-Province of China

Although controversial, the procurators were essential for the survival of the missions of East Asia, especially during the brutal conflicts of the second half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, some were even associated with the province of Japan during their time as procurators of the vice-province of China.

As there was a severe shortage of missionaries in the Chinese mission during this period, all those available were probably sent to the interior of the country, which would have meant there were more Jesuits from the province of Japan in the College of Macau. This, in turn, would have increased the likelihood of a Jesuit from the province of Japan, such as Manuel de Figueiredo, being entrusted with the management of the vice-province’s finances.

In a letter from 1642, Father António Francisco Cardim declared that Brother Manuel de Figueiredo was “the best procurator in all the province of Japan.” Figueiredo also spoke of the connection to Japan in some of his letters when addressing its financial state, including its debts, revenues from the Carcavelos vineyard, lands in India, and the houses built in Macau. In 1668, he confirmed that he had been procurator of the two provinces for all (or part) of his career.⁴⁴

The situation of Brother Manuel dos Reis was very similar. He entered the Procure of the province of Japan in 1661. Two years later, he also took control of the finances of the vice-province of China. He stayed for twelve years—not five, as some of our sources suggest—which again indicates there were no suitable candidates for the office in Macau.⁴⁵

43. Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão”; Brockey, *Visitor*, 419–20; on the deposition of Father Manuel Dias Sr., see Isabel Murta Pina, “Manuel Dias Sénior, S.J./Li Manuo,” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 15 (2007): 79–94, as well as Pina, “Dois procuradores,” 97–112; Father José Agnes to assistant father, Macau, December 22, 1659, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 19, fol. 60. For a more detailed analysis of these aspects of the procurator’s office, see Pratas, “Jesuit Procure/Procuratura of Macau.”

44. Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 48–50. The Carcavelos vineyard was one the of province of Japan’s most important sources of income (together with the lands in India and the donations from prominent benefactors) (Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 349–50); Letter from Brother Manuel de Figueiredo to Father Goswin Nickel, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fol. 341; Letter sent to Father Prospero Intorcetta, Macau, August 8, 1668, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fols. 179–181.

45. “Mostrase com clareza uerdade e euidencia a contia de cabedal [...] que se achou nesta Procuratura da Prouincia de Jappão depois do falecimento do Irmão Manoel dos Reis [...] [Money (...) found in the Procure/Procuratura of province of Japan after the death of Brother Manuel dos Reis (...)], Macau, December 1669[?], ARSI, *Jap. Sin.*, 23, fol. 158. Subsequently cited as “Money [...] Found in the Procure/Procuratura of Province of Japan after the Death of Brother Manuel dos Reis [...]”

The Procure of Macau as a Global Institution

In this seventeenth-century “world on the move,” to quote A. J. R. Russell-Wood, the Procure acted as a global institution through the management of maritime and terrestrial networks.⁴⁶

Circulation of Correspondence and Material Culture between Asia and Europe

Brother Manuel de Figueiredo’s network is one of the best examples since it illustrates the constant contact the Procure of Macau had with others in both Goa and Lisbon.

With reference to the year of 1636, Figueiredo wrote a letter to Father Nicolau da Costa (c.1569–1640), procurator in Goa of the East Asian missions, telling him to purchase some commodities and sending six thousand *xerafins* for that purpose. Costa decided to buy “apothecary pearls” first and then invest in some diamonds. Figueiredo’s concern as procurator was to guarantee that the money received by Costa in Goa was sufficient to cover the costs of the missionaries that had traveled to Europe in that period and who would eventually need to return to China.⁴⁷

Father Álvaro Semedo was one of those missionaries. He left Macau for Rome in 1636 as procurator of the vice-province of China and went to Lisbon in 1640, where he added “two cups of musk” and some more money to the products received from Costa. In the College of Santo Antão, Father António Freire (1581–1650) received from Semedo all these commodities as the procurator of the East Asian missions.⁴⁸

A few decades later, when Brother Manuel dos Reis was the procurator of Japan and the vice-province of China, he had to prepare the necessary provisions for the departure of Father Intorcetta, elected procurator to Rome in October 1666. In a letter written in 1668, he referred to the acquisition of pepper and tin from India, as well as amber and incense.⁴⁹

During the same period, Reis also bought five boxes of tea for “the provision of this college.” He then reported having cups, “trays, combs[?], and wagons.” However, these

46. A. J. R. [Anthony John Russell] Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire: A World on the Move* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Alden, *Making of an Enterprise*, 628–29. For a fuller discussion of the Procure of Macau as a global hub, see Pratas, “Jesuit Procure/Procuratura of Macau.”

47. Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão,” 46; Pratas, “Entre negócios,” 125.

48. Pratas, “Entre negócios,” 125–26. On Father Álvaro Semedo, see Isabel Murta Pina, “The European Circulation of Álvaro Semedo’s Work,” in *China–Macau and Globalizations: Past and Present*, ed. Luís Filipe Barreto and Wu Zhiliang (Lisbon: CCCM-Macau Foundation, 2017), 90–103; Pina, “Representations of China in Álvaro Semedo’s Work,” in *History of Mathematical Sciences: Portugal and East Asia V. Visual and Textual Representations in Exchange between Europe and East Asia, 16th–18th Centuries*, ed. Luís Saraiva and Catherine Jami (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2018), 31–53; Pina, “The European Tour of a Jesuit Procurator: Álvaro Semedo on Behalf of the China Mission (1637–1645),” in *Honoring the Option for China: History of the Encounters between the Catholic Church and China, from the 17th Century until Today*, ed. Pieter Ackerman (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute of the University of Leuven, 2023), 39–58. On the work of Father António Freire as procurator of the East Asian missions in Lisbon, see Pereira “Procuradores jesuítas” as well as Pina, “Negócios da China e do Japão.”

49. “Entrega que faz o Irmão Manoel dos Reys procurador da vice prouincia da China ao Padre Prospero Intorcetta Procurador eleito a Roma pella mesma vice prouincia” [Delivery made by Brother Manoel dos Reys procurator of the vice province of China to Father Prospero Intorcetta Procurator elected to Rome by the same vice province], September 1668, ARSI FG 722 II 6, folios not numbered; Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites*, 129.

commodities were not for the Jesuits settled in Macau, who had left for the Procure in Goa.⁵⁰

A piece of satin, two skirts, and “silver buttons” were purchased by a Chinese agent in Canton. The materials would be used to sew the “dresses” of Fathers José Magalhães (1636–83) and Diogo de Sotomaior (1635–83). Reis also mentions the food that had arrived at the college from Canton for Christmas Eve. Reis tells us that he registered lychees, apples, walnuts, and pears.⁵¹

Wine from the Carcavelos vineyard in Portugal, as well as silver (which had to be sent to the fathers traveling to the imperial court), stand out in the different receipts written by this group of procurators. Correspondence, writing material such as paper, quills, and ink, along with religious and devotional items, appear in other sources, showing that the procurator also acted as an important bureaucratic agent.

Contacts with the Secular Community: Chinese Merchants and Ship Captains

Given the inconsistency of regal revenue during periods of financial insecurity, the procurators had to find alternative ways of financing their provinces as businessmen, merchants, and material managers.

Macau was a “land of informal partnerships,” and it is the networks of Brothers Manuel de Figueiredo and Manuel dos Reis that again best represent the contact made with the secular community and merchants. Both established important contacts (and contracts) with people from Macau and Canton, including ship captains, Portuguese, and Chinese merchants, as well as residents from the port.⁵²

After four years in Europe, Semedo returned to China in 1645. He was welcomed by Brother Belchior Ribeiro, who gave him a “red cloth,” two liters of wine, “two *beatilhas*,” and “two *enrolados*.” The red cloth and *enrolados* may have been silk textiles sold by Chinese merchants, with whom the procurators had to make business, directly or through intermediaries, thus illustrating the Procure of Macau’s connections with local groups. *Beatilhas* were linen or fine cotton cloths that were usually used to sew white caps.⁵³

The records of the income and expenses of Manuel dos Reis also make recurrent references to the names of some Macau residents and ship captains. The sources under analysis refer to the period between 1661 and 1667, when the trade to and from Macau was already centered in Southeast Asia. Domingos de Almeida, for example, was the owner of the ship *Rosário* when he handed a certain amount of silver to the procurator of the vice-province of China. According to the entry, the money delivered by Almeida to Reis was connected to the expenses for the repair of the ship’s hull; the

50. “Receita do cabedal da vice prouincia da China que dê-o[?] o jrmão Manoel dos Reys [...]” [Receipt of the vice-province of China given by Brother Manuel dos Reis (...)], Macau, December 1661–June 1667, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fol. 144. Subsequently cited as “Receipt of the Vice-Province of China Given by Brother Manuel dos Reis [...].”

51. “Receipt of the Vice-Province of China Given by Brother Manuel dos Reis [...].”

52. Luís Filipe Barreto, *Macau: Poder e saber* (Lisbon: Presença, 2006), 213.

53. “Silver that the Vice Province of China Took into Macao [...],” BAJA, 49-V-11, fol. 518; Virtual Museum of Lusophony, <https://www.museuvirtualdalusofonia.com/glossario/beatilha/> (accessed October 6, 2025).

incident dated back to the time of the previous Father Procurator, but the repairs had still not been made or paid for. Many other sums of money were forwarded to support other contacts such as Simão de Sousa de Távora, another ship captain and frequent contact of Manuel dos Reis; Manuel Leal da Fonseca, a magistrate who was on his way to Siam in 1665; and Vicente Fernandes(?), probably a resident in Macau and owner of a “small” ship.⁵⁴

Procurators as Private Agents

The networks formed by these procurators allow us to address a final topic related to their work as private agents of families and merchants.⁵⁵ The most emblematic example is Brother Manuel dos Reis, who, in 1667, became the manager of the fortune of one of the richest merchants in Macau, Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo (1624–67). A letter from 1669 clearly shows that he not only had to manage a great deal of business with the secular community (together with all his Procure work) but that he was also responsible for managing the money left by Vieira de Figueiredo to the College of Macau when he died. In addition, following the death in 1649 of Mateus da Silva, a Jesuit and benefactor of the Society of Jesus, Manuel de Figueiredo, was in charge of sending money to his family from Macau to Portugal.⁵⁶

Conclusion

The global agency of procurators demonstrates the centrality of their role in the circulation of commodities, money, and correspondence.

By managing a large group of networks as well as many types of currency exchanges, the procurators worked at three different levels: a local level, reflected by the contacts with Chinese and Portuguese merchants, ship captains, and the secular and religious community in Macau and Canton; a regional level, as visible in the Procure of Macau’s strong links with Goa and with other parts of Southeast Asia; and, finally, a global level, as illustrated by all the other networks built between Macau, Lisbon, and Madrid, and other places in the world, including Angola and Brazil.

This research, conducted by a networking team, seeks to bring new insights and contribute to our knowledge of the procurators, who have thus far been invisible figures in academia. In an in-depth project covering a long period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), our team argues that missionaries—and procurators—should be studied as religious and economic agents whose work had a profound impact on the construction of a global world.

54. “Receipt of the Vice-Province of China Given by Brother Manuel dos Reis [...]” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fol. 144.

55. This idea was first proposed by Maria João Pereira Coutinho. See Coutinho, ““So many things I wanted from Guangzhou,”” 103–22; Coutinho, “Do Colégio Almirantino,” 935–43; Coutinho, “Homem de prendas e talentos,” 181–207.

56. On Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, see Charles R. Boxer, *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant-Adventurer in South East Asia, 1624–1667* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); “Money [...] Found in the Procure/ Procuratura of Province of Japan after the Death of Brother Manuel dos Reis [...]” ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 23, fol. 158; “Remembrance [...]” BAJA: 49-V-5, fol. 302.