

Nuova Rivista Storica

Anno XCIII, Maggio-Agosto 2009, Fascicolo II

Abstracts

MICHELA CATTO, Una crociata contro la Cina. Il dialogo tra Antonio Sánchez e José de Acosta intorno a una guerra giusta al Celeste Impero

In 1587 Alonso Sánchez (1545-1593) and José de Acosta (1540-1600) debated the possibility of waging war against China, and specifically whether from a theological prospective, it would be justifiable conquering China to Christianize it. Both Jesuits supported their positions by invoking Francisco de Vitoria's theories of just war, but they came to opposite conclusions. More importantly, discussing the application of just war to the case of China, challenged the received opinions of Chinese culture and government, bringing forth the vexing question of whether it was legitimate or even possible to transform China into a second Europe. The two Jesuits championed different approaches to conquering: Sánchez supported conquering by means of the sword, as in America; Acosta, by means of the art of the persuasion to adopt Christianity, this is, the approach used by the Apostles and the primitive Church. Their debate is important also because it reflects the spectrum of views and positions within the Society of Jesus at the end of the sixteenth century. These differences were much alive also in Far East missions and concerned directly the opinions about the results already achieved in China. This research presented by this article further illustrates both the variety of Jesuit approaches to the *accomodatio* subject, and the different political positions with respect to the relationship between temporal or spiritual powers. Sánchez sides with the intents of the Spanish monarchy favouring a centralised organization of the mission; Acosta supports instead a freer and more flexible position.