

Karel Slavíček, SJ and His Correspondence from China with European Astronomers and Scholars

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Abstract

Karel Slavíček, SJ (1678–1735) was a Jesuit missionary to Chinese Empire, and in the same time the mathematician, astronomer and musician, coming from the Czech Crown lands. He was one of the eight Jesuits of the old Bohemian province who reached China. His letters from China are an ample source of his observation of life and customs in China, as well as of Chinese science. These letters in Czech translation, together with their originals (mostly in Latin), were published, for the first time, in 1995. This edition was later translated into Chinese and published in 2002 in Beijing. This article aims to acquaint the readers with the scientific contribution of Karel Slavíček, which we can find primarily in his letters to European scholars published so far.

Keywords: Jesuit missionaries, China, Karel Slavíček, correspondence

Izvlček

Karel Slavíček, SJ (1678–1735) je bil jezuitski misijonar na Kitajskem, matematik, astronom in glasbenik iz Češke kraljevine. Bil je eden izmed osmih jezuitov stare češke province, ki mu ju uspelo priti na Kitajsko. Pisma, ki jih je pošiljal iz Kitajske v Evropo, predstavljajo zajeten vir njegovih opazovanj kitajskih navad, običajev ter tudi kitajske znanosti. Ta pisma so bila v češkem prevodu skupaj z originalnim zapisom (večinoma v latinščini) prvič objavljena leta 1995. Leta 2002 so bila v kitajskem prevodu objavljena tudi v Pekingu. Pričujoči članek seznani bralca z znanstvenimi dosežki Karla Slavíčka, ki jih je moč zaznati v njegovih pismih evropskim učenjakom.

Ključne besede: jezuitski misijonarji, Kitajska, Karel Slavíček, korespondenca

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Slaviček in the Eyes of His Contemporaries

A Catholic priest, Jesuit missionary in China, Karel Slaviček, SJ (in Latin: *Carolus Slaviček*, *Slavizek*, *Slaviczek*, *Slawicek* etc.,¹ Chinese name: Yan Jiale² 嚴嘉樂) (b. 24 December 1678, Jimramov, Moravia/Czech Crown lands, d. 24 August 1735, Beijing, China) was one of eight Jesuits (SJ) of the old Bohemian province³ of this Order who reached China. Only Slaviček was of Czech nationality (or exactly speaking Moravian, *Carol[us] Slavicek Morav[us]*, as written on his tombstone in Beijing), others were Germans⁴ (Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995, 14). Slaviček's letters from China (1716 to 1735) are an ample source of his observation of the life and customs in China, and—as he was also a scholar—of Chinese science, as well.

But if you wanted to find some relevant information of missionary and scientific activities of this Moravian Jesuit and talented mathematician, astronomer, cartographer, and musician, you probably would not be successful. You can hardly find his name in any large encyclopedia (such as *Encyclopædia Britannica* or *Catholic Encyclopedia*) or in a general study on history of Christianity in China. Even in the *Handbook of Christianity in China*, Vol. 1, edited by Nicolas Standaert (Standaert 2001), there are only few references on Slaviček, but without any detail about his life and work. The only appreciations of his scholarly activities are in the works of his contemporaries.

Bavarian Jesuit P. Joseph Stöcklein, SJ (1676–1733), the editor of first 24 parts of a voluminous collection of letter and reports dating from 1642 to 1730, in

- 1 Also Celavitchec (*Obs.* 150, 7, 19); Slavisechett (*Borg. Lat.* 566, 337v, 345); Slavitchek; Slawiczek; Slawiezeck (*JS* 177, 472).
- 2 Jiale 嘉樂 is a phonetic transcription of *Carolus*, *Charles*. But Yan Jiale 嚴嘉樂 was also Chinese name of French bishop Charles Maigrot (1652–1730), an important person in the Chinese Rites controversy.
- 3 Jesuits in the Czech Crown lands originally belonged to the German province, after 1563 to the Austrian province, and finally in 1623 a separate Bohemian province was founded—the Jesuit colleges in Moravia and Silesia also belonged to this province. The old Bohemian province was one of the strongest among the Jesuit provinces, and many of its members were also active in overseas missions.
- 4 The other Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian Jesuits on the China mission were (in chronological order): Václav Pantaleon Kirwitzer (German: *Wenzel Pantaleon Kirwitzer*, Latin: *Wenceslaus Kirwitzer*, *Wenceslas Pantaleon Kirwitzer*, Chinese name: Qi Weicai 祁維材, 1588–1642; in China: 1620–1642), Leopold Ferdinand Liebstain (or Liebstain; Chinese name: Shi Kesheng 石克勝, 1667–1711; in China: 1707–1711), Franz Ludwig Stadlin (Latin: *Franciscus Leonitus*; Chinese name: Lin Jige 林濟各, 1658–1740; in China: 1707–1740), Franz Tillisch (Latin: *Franciscus Thilisch*; Chinese name: Yang Bingyi 楊秉義, 1670–1716; in China: 1710–1716), Florian Josef Bahr (Latin: *Florianus Babr*; Chinese name: Wei Jijin 魏繼晉, 1706–1771; in China: 1738–1771), Johann Walter (Latin: *Joannes Walter*; Chinese name: Lu Zhongxian 魯仲賢, 1708–1759; in China: 1741–1759), and Ignác Sichelbart (German: *Ignaz Sichelbarth*, or *Sickelbart*, *Sickelpart*; Chinese name: Ai Qimeng 艾啓蒙, 1708–1780; in China: 1745–1780).

part XIX of his *Neuer Welt-Bott* published in 1732 qualifies Slavíček's letters in these words:

P. Carolus Slavizek beschreibt uns kurz und gut in einem kleinen Begrieff, was sie beede weitläuffig erzehlen. Schad ist, daß sich diser letztere alles Brieff-wechsels, so viel möglich, entschlagt: noch mehr aber zu bedauern, daß seine Send-Schriften nicht in ihrer lateinischen Ursprach gedruckt werden; gestaltsam er in derselben meines Gedunckens alle andere Missionarios übertrifft... Keine Brief kommen in Europa geschwinder an als die seine. Muthmaßlich dernwegen, weil er dieselben den kürztzesten Weeg über Moscau nach Böhmen in sein Vatterland abfertiget. (Stöcklein 1732, Vorrede)⁵

Early Years

Karel Slavíček was born on Christmas day 1678, in the house “U Slunce” (*By the Sun*) on the main square in Jimramov (historically known as *Ingramycz, Gymramow, Ingrowitz, Ingerwitz*),⁶ a small town founded in the 13th century, straddling the historical border between Bohemia and Moravia (in the eastern part of today's Czech Republic). His father, Václav Vojtěch Slavíček, was a teacher and town councilor writer. Both he and his older brother Jiří were very musically talented. Karel also excelled in mathematics and astronomy. His great talent was reflected in language teaching, as well.

After finishing gymnasium (a high school) in Brno, Slavíček entered, on 9 October 1694, the Jesuit Order (Society of Jesus, Latin: *Societas Iesu*, S.J., SJ or SI). He studied philosophy for three years and afterwards theology at the University of Olomouc (Latin: *Alma caesarea regia ac episcopalis universitas Societatis Jesu Olomucensis*; modern Palacký University, Olomouc) for three years. After finishing his studies, he stayed at the University as a teacher of mathematics, Hebrew, and history. Later he went to Prague, where he has studied theology at the Jesuit-run Charles-Ferdinand University (Latin: *Universitas Carolo-Ferdinandea*; now Charles University) for four years. He was ordained as a priest in 1707. During his

5 “P. Carolus Slavizek recounts simply and clearly what others have told at length. Too bad is that he almost completely disclaims all further correspondence. But we regret even more that his letters could not be published in their Latin original. They surpass, in my opinion, the letters of all other missionaries... No other letters to Europe are delivered as fast as his, probably because he is sending them to his Czech homeland in the shortest route via Russia.” (Translation by author)

6 Therefore Slavíček is referred to as “Imramvirensis”, “Gimramoviensis” in Latin sources.

studies in Prague Slavíček took part in making a precise map of the capital city of the Kingdom, which helped him in his later scholarly activities in China.

After finishing studies in Prague he many time changed his place of work. He taught at Jičín (German: *Titschein, Gitschin, Jitschin*) in Moravia, subsequently lecturing mathematics at the University of Wrocław (German: *Leopoldina, Universität Breslau*, Latin: *Universitas Wratislaviensis*) in Silesia (now in southern Poland), finally returning to the University of Olomouc. He obtained his Doctorate of Philosophy, became a professor of mathematics and, in 1712, a fully-fledged member of the Jesuit Order. In 1714 he went to Brno, where his work involved assisting his former professor Jakub Kresa (1648–1715) with the preparation of his mathematical writings for print (Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 14).

Mission to China and Slavíček's First Letters

Like many young Jesuits of his time he desired active service on the mission. Therefore, in autumn 1714, he offered his service and already in October of that year he was chosen for a mission to China, together with a Bavarian Jesuit Ignaz (Ignatius) Kögler (Chinese name: Dai Jinxian 戴進賢, 1680–1746) and a Portuguese Jesuit Andreas (André) Pereira (Pereyra) (Chinese name: Xu Maode 徐懋德, 1690–1743). Slavíček was chosen for a mission in China because of his scholarly and musical skills, since the missionaries to China of that time had to have knowledge at least of one of these branches (Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 14).

In the summer of 1715, Slavíček left Moravian capital city of Brno for Prague. From there he wrote his letter of thanks to Mons. Michelangelo Tamburini, SJ (1648–1730), Superior General of the Society of Jesus (Letter I in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 20–21).⁷

He then continued to Bavaria, where he met Kögler, and leaving with him for Lisbon to join Pereira. All three of them departed from Lisbon on 14 March 1716, on the *Santa Ana*, and sailing along Africa they reached Macao without a stop after a five-and-half-month journey, on 31 August 1716. After reaching Macao they acquired local clothes and adopted local haircuts. Shortly after his arrival, Slavíček continued to Canton, and on 9 November he advanced to Beijing.

Already on 24 October 1716, right after his arrival in Canton (Guangzhou 廣州), Slavíček sent his first letter to a friend of his, P. Julius Zwicker (1667–1738), a tutor of novices in Brno at the time (and later, in 1725–1729, Provincial Superior of

7 Dated: Pragae 10. Julii Anno 1715. Signed: *Carolus Slavíček*.—*Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu* in Rome (sign. F.G.756).

the Bohemian Jesuit province). However, this letter reached Brno only in March 1718 (Letter II in Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995, 22–29).⁸

After a brief notice on his unusually quick arrival to China he wrote that he immediately began learning Chinese. He noticed, among other things, that Chinese pronunciation is quite easy for a Czech or Pole:

Pronunciationes vocum omnibus Nationibus multum negotii facessunt, boëmo, aut Polono fere nullum: ita testantur Grammatica cujusdam Franciscani Poloni, ita mea, priusquam eam legerem, confirmavit experientia, et Sinarum assensus, quorum pronunciationem mox capio, et exprimo tum literis, tum lingua meis... (Letter II in Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995, 22)

(Chinese) pronunciation causes many difficulties for members of all nations, but for a Czech or Pole almost none. This is testified by a grammar written by a Polish Franciscan, and before I had read it, it was confirmed by my own experience and confirmation from Chinese people, whose pronunciation I soon understood and expressed both in writing and in speech...

Classification of Slaviček's Correspondence

The activities of Karel Slaviček in China are known mainly from his correspondence. But Slaviček was also famous for his scientific research, for example of the liberation of Moon (Duteil 1994, 289). There are 21 letters from or to Slaviček preserved in the original autograph or in a copy. The letters are scattered in European archives in Prague, Brno, Rome, Paris, Munich, Glasgow, and St. Petersburg in Russia. Most of these letters were written in Latin, only one was in French. Only three of the known letters are not available in their Latin original, but their German translation from the Stöcklein's collection *Neuer Welt-Bott* is at disposal.

Slaviček's letters from China can be divided into two portions:

- 1) letters to his native country (to Brno and to Prague) (1715–1727)—edited by P. Josef Vraštil, SJ (Slaviček and Vraštil 1935);
- 2) his correspondence with the European scholars (Prémare, Souciet, T. S. Bayer, Delisle) (1723–1735)—edited by Josef Kolmaš (Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995).

⁸ Dated: Cantone 24. Octobris. Anno 1716. Signed: *Carolus Slaviček, Soc. JESU mp.*—*Státní oblastní archiv* [State Regional Archives] in Brno (Jesuitica 557, I/b).

Until now, there are only two editions of Slavíček's correspondence (in 1935 and 1995), both in their original and in Czech translations. The second edition was also published in the Chinese translation (with the help of Chinese Bohemists Cong Lin 叢林 and Li Mei 李梅), in 2002. In this Chinese edition only translations without originals were published (Slavíček and Kolmaš 2002).

Letters from Vraštil's Collection

In 1935 P. Josef Vraštil, SJ (1878–1944), the Moravian Jesuit and the Provincial Superior of the Bohemian province (in 1934–1936) published eight letters sent by Slavíček between 1715 and 1727 (Slavíček and Vraštil 1935). These letters are sources of useful information, mostly on the imperial court and on the situation among Jesuits in Beijing. Six of them were addressed to P. Julius Zwicker, SJ (1667–1738), Slavíček's long-time friend and the Provincial Superior in 1725–1729.

Already in his letter of 8 November 1716 sent from Canton he gives a detailed travel diary, beginning with his embarking in Lisbon and ending just before his departure to Beijing (Letter III in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 30–43).⁹

After New Year 1717 Slavíček arrived in Beijing, which remained his definite place of work, leaving it only for short periods for health reasons. On 3 February 1717, Slavíček was introduced to the Kangxi Emperor 康熙 (r. 1661–1722) in Beijing, who employed him as a court musician (Slavíček was a Spinet player). His travel from Canton to Beijing and his first experience in the Chinese capital city, namely his audience by the Emperor, is described in the letter from Beijing of 19 March 1717 (Letter IV in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 44–55).¹⁰

He wrote, among others:

Tum præcinit mihi ut, re, mi, fa, etc. meque repetere jussit, spinetta mea lusit, varia circa tonos tentavit, proposuitque; denique inter plurima amœnæ humanitatis indicia disertè professus fuit: “Se plurimum adventu meo gaudere, ac pridem desideravisse, ut bonus aliquis Musicus idem Mathematicus simul adveniret.” ex qua conjunctione in me ab ipso æstimata, & propalata... (Letter IV in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 46).

9 This letter has survived only in Stöcklein's *Neuer Welt-Bott* in German translation (1726, Vol. VII, No. 155). — Signed: Carolus Slaviczek.

10 Dated: Pekini. 19 Martij 1717. Signed: *Carolus Slavizeck. S.J.*—*Státní ústřední archiv* [State File Centre] in Prague (JS IIIo 419).

Then [the Emperor] sang do-re-mi-fa, etc. for me and ordered me to repeat it. He played my spinet and questioned about various things concerning tones. Finally, in displaying many indications of kindness, he explicitly said that “he was quite overjoyed by my arrival and that he had previously desired that some good musician as well as mathematician would come.” And because I know both I was appraised and admired by the Emperor...

In the postscript to this letter he added his own sketch of the ground plan of Beijing walls with exact measures (Letter IV in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 52–55).

Letter V sent from Beijing to an unknown Jesuit P. Thomas Matthaeus is known only from a Latin extract in the correspondence of French Benedictine historian and orientalist Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze (1661–1739) (Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 56–57).

Slavíček wrote his sixth letter on 14 October 1723 from Nanchang 南昌 in southern China to his friend Julius Zwicker.¹¹ He announced to him the death of Emperor Kangxi, during whose reign Christianity in China had considerably better results than under his predecessors. But under his successor Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1723–1735) there began a cruel persecution of Christians (Letter VI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 58–61).¹² Slavíček notes the persecution of Christianity in the Fujian province 福建, in particular: “...therefore both Dominican Fathers and Jesuits, as well as the Gospel itself, in the Fujian Province are persecuted and the Christian churches in pagan schools perverted” (Letter VI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 60). Yongzheng ordered all the Jesuits in China to be accommodated in Beijing; consequently also Slavíček had to return there.

The last two letters (Letter VII of 20 November 1725, in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 62–81¹³; Letter VIII of 28 November 1727, in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 82–99)¹⁴ of this edition are annuals (*litteræ annuæ*) of the Beijing mission and the entire Chinese Vice-Province for the years of 1725–1727.

11 Almost identical was the letter to P. František Retz (Latin: *Franciscus Retz*, 1673–1750), the Provincial Superior in 1719–1722 and 1724–1725. Slavíček wrote this letter on 8 October 1723 in Nanchang, just several days before the letter to Zwicker. (Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 226, n. 81)

12 This letter has survived only in the Stöcklein's *Neuer Welt-Bott* in German translation (1728, Vol. VIII, No. 203).—Signed: Carolus Slavicek.

13 Dated: Pekini Anno 1725 Novembris die 20. Signed: *Carolus Slavicek*.—*Státní ústřední archiv* (State File Centre) in Prague (JS IIIo 415).

14 This letter has survived only in Stöcklein's *Neuer Welt-Bott* in German translation (1732, Vol. XIX, No. 413).—Signed: Carl Slavizek.

The Second, Extended Edition by Josef Kolmaš

The first edition of Slavíček's correspondence to his colleagues in the Czech Crown lands (Bohemia and Moravia) was, sixty years later, notably extended with a new portion of his letters to prominent scholars, mostly astronomers, in Europe, first of all in Paris and St. Petersburg in Russia. In 1995, a book entitled Karel Slavíček, SJ: *Listy z Číny do vlasti a jiná korespondence s evropskými hvězdáři (1716–1735)* (*Letters from China to His Native Country and Other Correspondence with European Astronomers*) was published (Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995).

Editor of this book, Prof. PhDr. Josef Kolmaš, DrSc. (b. 1933), Czech Sinologist and Tibetologist, a long-time researcher at the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Czech Academy of Sciences, and in 1994 to 2002 its director reedited the Vraštil's edition of Slavíček's eight above mentioned letters and added a new portion of fifteen letters to or from European scholars. This edition is also valuable for foreign scholars, because it bears either the Latin or French original (or the German translation where the original is not available) on the left page and the Czech translation on the opposite page.

As we can learn from these letters and references in the works of his contemporaries, Slavíček's activity in China, similarly to the activity of many other Jesuits in the Manchu court, starting with Matteo Ricci (Chinese name: Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610), consisted not only of missionary services, but also in scientific research. His letters contain for example numerous important topographic measurements and astronomical observations that he made himself in China and sent to prominent European astronomers and other scholars.

They often referred to these measurements and observations in their respective works: Étienne Souciet (1671–1744) in his *Observations mathématiques, astronomiques, géographiques, chronologiques et physiques...* (Paris, 1729–1732), Theophilus (Gottlieb) Siegfried Bayer (Chinese name: Ba Ye 巴耶, 1694–1738) in *De horis Sinicis et cyclo horario commentationes...* (Petropoli (St. Petersburg), 1735), or Ferdinand Augustin Haller von Hallerstein (Slovene: Ferdinand Avguštin Haller von Hallerstein; Chinese name: Liu Songling 劉松齡, 1703–1774)¹⁵ in his *Observationes astronomicae, ab anno 1717 ad annum 1752, à PP. societatis Jesu Pekini Sinarum factæ...* (Vindobonæ 1768)

The great value of Slavíček's scientific inheritance is in his correspondence with astronomers in Paris and Saint Petersburg, and possibly other letters not found

15 Ferdinand Augustin Haller von Hallerstein was a Jesuit missionary in China and Chinese astronomer from Carniola (then Habsburg Monarchy, now in Slovenia), who spent 35 years at the Emperor Qianlong's 乾隆 (r. 1735–1796) court as the Head of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau and Board of Mathematics (Chinese: Qintianjian 欽天監).

until now but mentioned in some of his letters or in the correspondence of other authors. Some of them may also be addressed to Bohemia and Poland, but we do not know whether he was also in correspondence with astronomers at universities in Prague, Olomouc, or Wrocław (Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995, 103–4).

Five letters were sent, between 1730 and 1733, to Étienne Souciet (1671–1744), French Jesuit, mathematician and astronomer. Seven letters were exchanged, in 1732–1735, between Slaviček and two scholars in Saint Petersburg—Theophilus (Gottlieb) Siegfried Bayer and Joseph-Nicholas (Nicolas) Delisle (*De l'Isle, Del'Isle, De Lisle, Del'Islius, Delislius* etc.) (1688–1768). These letters contain a range of scientific topics, calculations, sketch maps, tables, outlines, and polemics, often large and extent, which are of great importance for the history of the European cognition of Chinese science.

In some letters we can find also references to Slaviček's well-known interest in Chinese music and also to his own work from this field, which is unfortunately otherwise unknown.

Letters to Paris

From the letters addressed to European astronomers, the earliest is Letter IX (in Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995, 118–31)¹⁶ of this edition addressed to an unmentioned recipient (he may be Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare, 1666–1736; see Slaviček and Kolmaš 1995, 104–5). This letter was written on 25 August 1723 in Nanchang, where Slaviček resided for health reasons in 1720–1723, as we know from his letters to PP. František Retz and Julius Zwicker, both from October 1723.

This letter contains a large philippic against Abbé Eusebius (Eusèbe) Renaudot (1646–1720), a French theologian and Orientalist, who published, in 1718 in Paris, his translation of accounts written by two Arabian travelers of the 9th century about India and China (*Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine...* Paris, 1718). In his own notes Renaudot denied, among other things, the correctness and antiquity of Chinese chronology and astronomy. Slaviček analyzes his theses in detail, argues against them and advocates convincingly the antiquity and even priority of Chinese chronology. He gives many examples of ancient Chinese astronomical observations and exact measurements, including a *Catalogus 36. Eclipsium Solis* (*List of 36 solar eclipses*) between 720 BCE and 495 BCE

16 Dated: Anno Christianæ Epochæ 1723. Cycli Lunaris 13. Augusti et 7.æ Lunæ 25.to (= on 25th August and [in the same time 25th day of] the seventh lunar month of the 1723 year of Christian era and [in the same time] of the 13th year of the lunar cycle). Signed: *Carolus Slaviček*.—*Recueil Manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale Française* in Paris (No. 17239).

as recorded in *Chunqiu* (春秋), together with his own corrections (Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 130–1).¹⁷

The last third of this Slavíček's letter advocates astronomical research and work of Jesuits in China, namely Matteo Ricci and Johann Adam Schall von Bell (Chinese name: Tang Ruowang 湯若望, 1591–1666), against injuriousness from the side of Abbé Renaudot. He writes, among others:

Ergo qui ad tantam perfectionem reducere Tabulas Astronomicas Sinarum potuerunt, præclaros sane Astronomos oportet fuisse, licet Jesuitas, licet Missionarios, aliquibus Europæ Academiis ignotos, utpote qui DEI et animarum amore præoccupati, Patrias suas, Cathedrasque splendidas ante in Europa reliquerunt... (Letter IX in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 126)

Therefore those who were able to bring Chinese astronomical tables to such perfection must have been reasonably illustrious astronomers, although Jesuits and missionaries not known in some European academies, in as much as they, led by their love of God and souls, left their native lands and splendid chairs in Europe...

Other recipient of Slavíček's letters in Europe was Étienne Souciet, the author of many works, among them voluminous *Observations mathématiques, astronomiques, géographiques, chronologiques et physiques...* (Paris, 1729–1732, 3 vols.), based mostly on the research and observations sent to him by Jesuits in China.

Slavíček's first letter to Souciet of 18 December 1730 (Letter X in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 134–47)¹⁸ contained detailed corrections to the above mentioned *List of 36 solar eclipses*. In his second letter to Souciet of 22 September 1731 (Letter XI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 148–55)¹⁹ Slavíček thanks him for a copy of Volume One of his *Observations*, and he refuses "an undeserved commendation" of him in the Preface. Slavíček sent his own corrections to the sketched map of Beijing published in *Observations*. He was not a beginner in topography as he writes in this letter:

Urbis Pekinensis plantam velle & facere facilius mihi erat, eo quod jam ante 27. annos simili modo Pragensia Triurbis ichnographiam cum omnibus plateis, vicis, ac foris &c. delineaveram, sed in modulo grandi (Letter XI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 150).

17 This he further corrected in his next letter addressed to Étienne Souciet (Letter X in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 134–47).

18 Dated: Pekini in Residencia S. Josephi die 18.^a Dec. 1730. Signed: *Carolus Slavíček*.—*Observatoire de Paris* in Paris (A.B.1.10).

19 Dated: Pekini 22. Sept. 1731. Signed: *Carolus Slavíček*.—*Observatoire de Paris* in Paris (A.B.1.10).

To draw a sketch map of Beijing was easier for me, as 27 years ago I already drew in a similar way a ground plan of Prague's Triple City with all the squares, streets, and markets etc., but in a greater measure.

In his response to Slavíček's first two letters Souciet promised to publish Slavíček's corrected sketched map of Beijing in some of the following volumes of his *Observations*, but because they were ended in 1732, Slavíček's sketch map of Beijing has not been published.

In his letter to Souciet of 2 October 1733 (Letter XIII in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 160–3),²⁰ Slavíček reverts once more to the *List of 36 solar eclipses*. This letter shows evidence of Slavíček's deep admiration of the exactness of ancient Chinese science:

Venio ad difficultatem, quam circa Tchun Tsieou Eclipses Reverentia Vestra hærere animo suo scripsit. Reverende ac Doctissime Pater, quinque illæ, falso inter 36. annotatæ, Eclipses, adeoque non observatæ, reliquarum fidem non pos-sunt obscurare. Nam has, cum visibiles in Sinis fuerint, incredibile est, a nemine observatas fuisse, præsertim, quæ Confucii ætate contigerunt, qui Librum illum, ex unanimi Sinarum sententia, et traditione, vel conscripsit, vel concinnavit... Si ergo Eclipses illæ, licet ex computu tantum descriptæ fingantur, sunt textus ipsius Libri, tanto ante Christum D. Nostrum tempore conscripti, constat Libro illi antiquitas, et chronologiæ Sinicæ fides, quantam cum certa Confucii ætas, tum Eclipses plurimæ demonstrant. (Letter XIII in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 160)

I come now to difficulties regarding eclipses in Chunqiu, which is a matter of great concern of Your Reverence, as you have written. Reverend and the most learned Father, those five eclipses, erroneously included among those 36, and therefore never observed [in China], cannot obscure the credibility of the rest. For it is incredible that they could have not been observed if they had been visible in China. Namely those which happened in times of Confucius, who, according to unanimous opinion of Chinese and to tradition, either wrote or arranged this book... If thence those eclipses described only by computing are false, they are still the text of the Book, written down so much before Christ Our Lord. The antiquity of that book and credibility of Chinese chronology still remain certain, which is demonstrated both by the accurately determined lifetime of Confucius and by numerous eclipses.

20 Dated: Pekini festa Angelorum Luce A. 1733. Signed: *Carolus Slavíček, m.p.*—*Observatoire de Paris* in Paris (A.B.1.10).

Letters to St. Petersburg

Most of Slavíček's preserved scientific correspondence is addressed to St. Petersburg in Russia. Since the first years of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences's (Russian: *Петербургская Академия наук*, founded in 1724) existence, the attention of its scholars was caught with problems of science in the Orient, namely in China. St. Petersburg academicians entered into active correspondence with European missionaries, namely Jesuits, in Beijing.

This correspondence started in 1731 and lasted almost half a century. In its beginning was Theophilus (Gottlieb) Siegfried Bayer, born in Königsberg (Russian: *Кёнигсберг*, modern Kaliningrad *Калининград*), then in East Prussia, who was interested in China since his studies in Berlin. Since 1726 he was Professor of Greek and Roman antiquities and Oriental languages (Chinese, Mongolian, Manchurian, Tibetan and Sanskrit) at the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. His letters to and from China sent between 1731 and 1736 are now a part of the Bayer Collection in the University of Glasgow's Special Collections.

Slavíček's first letter to Bayer of 12 September 1732 (Letter XV in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 168–75)²¹ was written jointly with Ignatius Kögler and Andreas Pereyra. It was a response to an unpreserved letter of Bayer's and on his book *Musæum Sinicum* (St Petersburg, 1730) sent to China. Among others, they explain the reasons for inserting the seven intercalated months in the course of 19 years and give information on Chinese characters, as well as about mythological *qilin* 麒麟 (Letter XV in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 169–170).

There was also a short mention about Chinese music: "Musica Sinarum suas utique regulas habet, licet delicatis Europæorum auribus non satisfaciennes" (Letter XV in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 170),²² which might have been written by Slavíček.

In his response to Slavíček of 15 November 1733 (Letter XVI in Slavíček, Kolmaš 1995, 176–179)²³ Bayer remarks:

Sed, audio, Reverende vir, tuis in scriniis de Musica Sinica multo præstantiora a te ipso elaborata contineri. Noli permittere, ut Europa tua eorum quidquam ignoret, quæ summo labore, ingenio subtili acrique investigasti (Letter XVI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 176–9).

21 Dated: Die 12 Septembris Anni 1732.^{di} Signed: *Carolus Slavicek*.—*Special Collections Department, Glasgow University Library* in Glasgow (MS Hunter 650, Bayer Papers A3).

22 "Chinese music certainly has its own rules, although not always satisfactory for Europeans' delicate ears."

23 Dated: Petropoli XV. Nov. 1733.—*Special Collections Department, Glasgow University Library* in Glasgow (MS Hunter 650, Bayer Papers B3).

However, as I hear, Reverend Sir, there are many outstanding things about Chinese music kept in your boxes, elaborated by yourself. Don't permit that your Europe should ignore anything of that you have had investigated with highest effort and substantial and sharp intellect.

Nevertheless, Slavíček in his following letter to Bayer of 23 July 1734 refused that he had completed anything about Chinese music because he had not enough time for that; he has collected only Chinese books about music (Letter XVI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 180–3).²⁴

Another recipient of Slavíček's letters in St. Petersburg was the French astronomer Joseph-Nicholas Delisle, since 1726 the director of the astronomical observatory at the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. His scientific correspondence with Beijing missionaries is preserved in copies in the University of Glasgow's Special Collections and in St. Petersburg. In his letter of 14 September 1732 (Letter XX in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 194–7),²⁵ which Delisle received as late as in November 1733, Slavíček again warns of the errors in the sketched map of Beijing published in Souciet's *Observations*.

Delisle, in his French written answer of November 1734 (Letter XXI in Slavíček and Kolmaš 1995, 198–201) was impressed with the regular direction according to cardinal points. He noticed that the great wall separating the Manchurian town from the Chinese town in Beijing was led almost parallel with the equator. Therefore he asked Slavíček to write to him whether this was the intention of the Chinese architects, how, when, and with what precision they accomplished it. Unfortunately this letter was never answered, because Slavíček was already heavily ill and in August of the next year he has died, in his fifty seven.

Conclusion

Karel Slavíček has died in Beijing in August 1735. His tombstone rises in the old Jesuit Zhalan cemetery (Zhalan²⁶ mudi 柵欄墓地), situated in the north-western part of Beijing on the grounds of the Beijing Administrative College (Beijing Xingzheng Xueyuan 北京行政學院, formerly the Party School, Zhong-gong Beijing Shiwei Dangxiao 中共北京市委黨校). This cemetery includes the

24 Dated: Pekini 23. Julii A. 1734.—*Special Collections Department, Glasgow University Library* in Glasgow (MS Hunter 650, Bayer Papers A6).

25 Dated: Pekini ex Collegio 14. Septembr. 1732. Signed: *Carolus Slavicek*.—*Special Collections Department, Glasgow University Library* in Glasgow (MS Hunter 650, Bayer Papers C10).

26 Other pronunciation is *Shālán*.

tombstones of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Adam Schall Von Bell (1591–1666), Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), and 60 other prominent clergy: 49 foreign missionaries and 14 Chinese priests altogether.²⁷

In the only known obituary in the *Bibliothèque Germanique* published in Amsterdam in 1737, we can read:

Des Lettres de Peking du 18. Décembre 1736. nous ont appris la mort du Père Charles Slavicek, Jésuite de Bohème, décédé le 24. Août 1735. dans sa cinquante septième année. Depuis dix huit ans il étoit d'une fort mauvaise santé, qu'il attribuoit au Climat; ce qui l'avoit engagé, il y a longtems, à demander son congé pour revenir en Europe. Son infirmité n'avoit rien oté à la sérénité ni à la vivacité de son esprit. Il étoit fort habile en divers genres de Sciences. Il doit se trouver entre autres, parmi ses Papiers, un Recueil de divers Manuscrits sur la Musique Chinoise, & des Observations sur le Balancement de la Lune. (Bibliothèque Germanique 1737, 198)

From a letter from Beijing of 18 December 1736 we have learned the death of Father Charles Slavicek, the Bohemian Jesuit, who died on 24 August 1735 at his fifty seventh years. For eighteen years he was in a very bad health, which he has attributed to local climate. This had committed him a long time ago for asking his return to Europe. His infirmity had nothing deprives the serenity or the liveliness of his mind. He excelled at various kinds of sciences. It must be, among others, in his papers, a Recueil de divers Manuscrits sur la Musique Chinoise [Collection of manuscripts on various Chinese Music] and Observations sur le Balancement de la Lune [Observations on the balancing of the Moon].

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27 In 1995, Jesuit Father Edward J. Malatesta, S.J. (1932–1998), together with Gao Zhiyu 高智瑜 and other researchers at the Beijing Administrative College, published a beautiful and notable book on the history of Zhalan Cemetery, with pictures of all the tombstones (Malatesta, Gao 1995).

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