Conflicting Visions of the Jesuit Missions to the Ottoman Empire, 1609–1628

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Abstract

Beginning in 1609, as a result of the Capitulations concluded between France and the Ottoman Empire, the French Jesuits launched their missionary work in Istanbul. Protected by the French ambassador, the French Jesuits defined themselves as both French subjects and Catholic missionaries, thus experiencing in a new and complicated geopolitical context the tensions that were at the core of their order’s identity in France, as elsewhere in Europe. The intricate story of the French Jesuit mission to the Ottoman Empire is here considered through two snapshots. One focuses on the foundational period of the mission in Istanbul, roughly from 1609 to 1615. A second one deals with the temporary suspension of the Jesuits’ mission in Istanbul in 1628. These two episodes illustrate multilayered and lasting tensions between the French and the Venetians, between the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Church and Western missionaries, and between missionaries belonging to different Catholic orders, between the Roman church’s centralism and state-funded religious initiatives. Based on missionary and diplomatic correspondence, the article is an attempt to reconstitute the way in which multiple allegiances provided expedient tools for individual Jesuit missionaries to navigate conflicts and to assert their own understanding of their missionary vocation.

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Henri Fouqueray, *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus en France des origines à la suppression (1528–1672)*, vol. 3 (Paris: Picard/Bureau des Études, 1922), 196–215.

Diplomatic correspondence reveals the semantic elasticity of the word “protection” as it was understood by representatives of the Catholic powers at the Ottoman Porte against the larger backdrop of the abandonment of the idea of crusade, or a united Christian front against the “infidel,” in favor of a *Realpolitik* in which national rivalries posed an obstacle to the unitary representation of Catholicity. For the complex meaning of the concept of protection from the Ottoman, Roman, and French perspectives, see Elisabetta Borromeo, “Le clergé latin et son autorité dans l’Empire Ottoman: Protégé des puissances catholiques? (XVe-XVIIIe siècles),” in *L’autorité religieuse et ses limites en terres d’islam: Approches historiques et anthropologiques*, eds. Nathalie Clayer, Alexandre Papas, and Benoît Fliche (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 87–108; Aurélien Girard, “Entre croisade et politique culturelle au Levant: Rome et l’union des chrétiens syriens (première moitié du XVIIe siècle),” in *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Rome: Viella, 2013), 419–437; Aurélien Girard, “Impossible independence or necessary dependency? Missionaries in the Near East, the ‘protection’ of the Catholic States and the Roman arbitrator,” in *Papacy, Religious Orders and International Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Massimo Carlo Giannini (Rome: Viella, 2013), 67–94; Bernard Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994), 241–71; Géraud Poumarède, *Pour en finir avec la croisade: mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les Turcs aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Presses...
In this article, the intricate story of the French Jesuit mission to the Ottoman Empire is considered through two snapshots. One focuses on the foundational period of the mission in Istanbul, roughly from 1609 to 1615. A second one deals with events of the year 1628, a time of significant crisis, when the temporary expulsion of the Jesuits from their mission in Istanbul both crystallized a Jesuit and French discourse legitimating the mission in the Ottoman Empire and at the same time confirmed the fixed coordinates of a pan-European anti-Jesuit discourse. These two episodes of foundation and crisis illustrate more vividly the multilayered and lasting tensions between the French and the Venetians, between the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Western missionaries, between missionaries belonging to different Catholic orders, and between the Roman church’s centralism and state-funded religious initiatives. While the two case studies chosen document French Jesuit missionaries’ arduous quest for an identity appropriate to a tangled political and religious context, they also show that the conflicts did not originate exclusively outside the order. They reveal, too, that the multiple layers of power and sources of tension left a considerable space for individual action and internal dissent. Based on a careful reading of Jesuit correspondence, reports to the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, and French and Venetian diplomatic correspondence, Jesuit internal conflicts are situated in this article against the backdrop of French-Venetian-Roman negotiations and rivalries. This article thus goes some way towards building a bridge between religious and diplomatic history.

The Beginnings of the French Jesuit Mission

Institutionally, the French mission established in 1609 in Istanbul continued the work that had begun with a mission directed by Giulio Mancinelli (1537–1618) and carried out following an order by Pope Gregory XIII.³

³ Charles A. Frazee, Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453–1923 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 73–4. On Giulio Mancinelli see Pietro Pirri, “Lo stato della Chiesa ortodossa di Costantinopoli e le sue tendenze verso Roma in una memoria del P. Giulio Mancinelli S. I.,” in Miscellanea Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, vol. 1, eds. Celso Costantini, Pietro Pirri, Giovanni Dindinger (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947), 79–103; Pierre-Antoine Fabre, “La misión como visión del mundo: Las autobiografías imaginarias de Giulio Mancinelli (1537–1618),” in Escrituras de la modernidad: los jesuitas universitaires de France, 2004); “Les limites du patronage français sur les Lieux Saints: auteur de l’installation d’un consul à Jérusalem dans les années 1620,” Revue d’Histoire de l’Église de France 92 (2006), 73–116.
The instructions took up all the precautions that had been addressed to the missionaries in 1583. Mancinelli seems to have been in epistolary contact (directly or indirectly) with the French mission superior François de Canillac (1574–1629), as evidenced by a letter he sent to Superior General Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615) on September 3, 1611. He was thus able to recognize at a distance, from the description, the bodies that were found intact in the crypt of the San Benedetto monastery—built by the Genoese in 1420, granted to the Jesuits upon their arrival in Istanbul, and later referred to by the French as Saint-Benoît—as being assuredly those of his former companions who had been killed by the plague. These bodies, symbolic carriers of continuity, found themselves at the origin of two foundation histories, and constituted a source of polemic. Pacifique de Provins (1588–1648), founder of the Capuchin missions to the Levant, chose to interpret the oral testimony of the Jesuits differently. He made of it the main reason the Capuchins were obliged to return to Istanbul, since for him the bodies belonged to the Capuchins who, in 1587, at the request of the French ambassador Jacques Savary de Lancersme, at San Benedetto had replaced the Jesuits killed by the plague.

These contrasting interpretations prefigured the conflicts of jurisdiction that would break out between the different orders. The Jesuits and Capuchins would confront one another some years later in competition for appointment to the chaplaincy of Izmir in western Anatolia, once the general rapid expansion of the Capuchin missions was launched under the influence of Father Joseph du Tremblay, and in a particular context where the French consul was not very sympathetic to the Jesuits.
To Canillac, the mission represented the culmination of the Jesuit vocation, which he conceived from the beginning as a vocation to apostolic labor.\(^9\) The first *indipetæ* that he addressed to Acquaviva mentions a *memorial* in which he had pleaded for his admission to the Society against his mother's wishes and already expressed his aspiration to become a missionary. Coming from a noble family of Auvergne, he had been admitted into the Roman province only after his mother's death. His Roman training and his noble origin were to facilitate the success of his later missionary activity: as a superior of the mission in Constantinople, Canillac showed himself to be at ease just as much in conversation with the general of the order and with the Roman cardinals as in his relations with the three French ambassadors he knew during his time in Istanbul.\(^10\)

In a letter dated June 5, 1595, Canillac reiterated his old desire, confirmed and amplified by a long spiritual practice, to “work to help the peoples who are subjugated by the Turk,” with the hope of joining a potential mission to Transylvania.\(^11\) A second letter, which he signed by the name “Francois Ignace,” sent three years later on August 6, 1598, shows the persistence of his aspiration, heightened but also disciplined, since the required “indifference”—a spiritual and institutional tool in the Jesuit order—broadened his horizons to include “the Indies” as a potential field for his labors.\(^12\) The letter balances the strong and persistent will of which it was the instrument with Canillac’s interiorization of the imperative of obedience, a recurring theme in the *indipetæ*.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) On Canillac, see Guy Turbet-Delof, “Un jésuite à Constantinople (1609–1612): le père François de Canillac,” *Dix-septième siècle* 157 (1987): 427–430.

\(^10\) For instance, the Baron Salignac wrote to his wife to announce the arrival of the Jesuit fathers in Constantinople, rejoicing particularly that he had close to him “le R. P. Frere du marquis de Canillac, leur recteur.” 19 September 1609, ARSI, Gal. 101, 183.

\(^11\) ARSI, FG 733, 45.

\(^12\) Ibid., 74.

\(^13\) Dominique Deslandres, “Des ouvriers formidables à l’enfer: Épistémè et missions jésuites au XVIIe siècle,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée* 111/1 (1999): 251–76; Pierre-Antoine Fabre, Bernard Vincent, eds., *Missions religieuses modernes: notre lieu est le monde* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007); Aliocha Maldavsky, “Société urbaine et désir de mission: les ressorts de la mobilité missionnaire jésuite à Milan au début du XVIIe siècle,” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 3 (2009): 7–32; Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Le choix indifférent: mentalités et attentes des jésuites aspirants missionnaires dans l’Amérique française au XVIIe siècle,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée* 109/2 (1997): 881–94; Camilla Russell, “Framing the East: Asia in the Formation of Jesuit Missionary Vocations in Early-Modern Italy,” in *L’Europa divisa e i nuovi mondi: storia e geografia: Per Adriano Prosperi*, vol. 2, eds. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 108–127;
Years later, as mission superior in Istanbul, Canillac displayed the same alternation between audacity, based on practical knowledge, and humble indifference in negotiating problematic decisions such as quitting the mission and undertaking a questionable pilgrimage to the Holy Land. If his correspondence reveals a constant engagement with the success of the mission where he wished to end his days, a difference appears between Canillac’s enthusiasm at the start of the mission and the concerns that preoccupied him in 1612 and 1613. At this time, a return to Rome seemed to him the only means of conveying more information than could be transmitted through ordinary letters and of persuading the general to adopt more effective measures for underwriting the mission’s finances and personnel.

The beginnings of the mission to Istanbul were marked by conflicts with the Ottoman authorities, provoked by the Venetian ambassador Simone Contarini and the apostolic visitor, the archbishop of Tinos. First settled in 1609 in the church of San Sebastiano, and in an uncomfortable house, it was only a year later that the Jesuits would regain San Benedetto, where Mancinelli’s mission had been set—itself seen at first as a temporary solution, since the monastery was too difficult to access by the Latin community of Pera, and was considered too much at risk in the frequent epidemics of the plague, which claimed many victims in its surroundings. At the same time, Saint-Benoît had the advantage of allowing more attendance at the Jesuit school by “Greek” students who resided in the neighborhood.

The constant support of the Baron de Salignac guaranteed the stability of the mission, but it was not only external obstacles that it had to confront. The absence of missionaries able to teach and preach in Greek reduced its impact—a problem mentioned frequently in Canillac’s correspondence. Opposed to the possibility of having Pietro Metoscita (1569–1625) sent to

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Amélie Vantard, “Les vocations pour les missions ad gentes (France, 1650–1750)” (PhD diss., Université du Maine, 2010).

14 Monumenta Proximi-Orientis, vol. 3: Palestine-Liban-Syrie-Mésopotamie (1583–1623), ed. Sami Kuri (Rome: IHSI, 1994), 245–276.

15 For an overview of the conflicts opposing the Jesuits to the Venetian ambassadors, see Thomas Michel, “I contrastati rapporti di Venezia con i gesuiti nel Medio oriente nei primi decenni del ’600,” in I gesuiti e Venezia: momenti e problemi di storia veneziana della Compagnia di Gesù: atti del convegno di studi, Venezia, 2–5 ottobre 1990, ed. Mario Zanardi (Venice: Giunta regionale del Veneto, 1994), 361–383.

16 On the evolving geography of the Ottoman capital city, see Edhem Eldem, “Istanbul: From Imperial to Peripheralized Capital,” in The Ottoman City between East and West. Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul, eds. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 135–206.
the mission, since in his opinion he was not a sufficiently good preacher, he hoped instead for the arrival of a famous priest from the residence of Chios, Michele Neurida. Between January and May 1612, Ignacio Erranti, “borrowed” from the residence of Chios, was able through his linguistic abilities to attract the Greek-speaking part of the Istanbul Latin community, particularly the female one, a feat that had been difficult for the French missionaries. But the plague once again reduced participation at the school and at the religious services, and the experience of the Constantinople mission would leave Ignazio Erranti, who had been used to the beautiful ceremonies on his island, with bitter memories. Noting Erranti’s disappointment, Canillac used the occasion to recall the defining trait of the ideal candidate to the Istanbul mission: “Truly we need people here who do not depend on any consolation, external or even spiritual, and who are able to measure the fruits of their work not by the multitudes of people but by the importance of the place and expectations for the future.” In his summary letter to the general, Ignazio Erranti complained, in effect, that this mission offered little to do. What equally caused his bitterness was the constant internal dissent that he noticed among his French peers.

At the beginning of the mission, in 1609, Canillac already reported internal disagreements between his companions, Charles Gobin (soon to die of the plague in Istanbul in 1611) and Guillaume Lévesque (sent to Naples in 1612 on account of his deteriorating health). In fragile health, Canillac looked among his peers for a successor to the office of superior, and realized, with concern, that no one among them would be up to the task. Charles Gobin and Guillaume Lévesque reported, for their part, the rigid and authoritarian attitude of the superior, who allowed himself to be overcome by anger whenever he was contradicted. In 1612, when Ignazio Erranti temporarily joined the mission, Charles Gobin had been dead for almost a year; Guillaume Lévesque for his part was paralyzed and, according to the opinion of the Jesuit from Chios, the treatment he was given in order to recover sufficiently for the return voyage lacked compassion, and resembled too much a preparation for death. The tense

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17 Canillac to Claudio Acquaviva, 1 October 1611, ARSI, Gal. 101, 291. Neurida was uncle to the theologian prefect of the Vatican Library, Leone Allaci (1586–1669). On Pietro Mestocita, one of the founders of the Maronite College, see Monumenta Proximi Orientis 3:353. On the importance of the residence of Chios, founded in 1592 under the jurisdiction of the province of Sicily, as a base of apostolic action in the Aegean archipelago, see a summary in DHCJ 2:1809.

18 Canillac to Acquaviva, 11 February 1612, ARSI, Gal. 101, 316*.

19 Ignazio Erranti to Acquaviva, 24 March 1612, in ibid., 324*.

20 Canillac to Acquaviva, 2 October 1609, in ibid., 197.
atmosphere endured, and the missionaries reproached the superior not only for his excessive presumption of authority, but also for nourishing extremely high ambitions for the mission. Taking as a model the professed house in Rome, Canillac took on considerable expenses for the decoration of the church and for the installation of the residence. The projects of expansion of the apostolate in the Levant preoccupied him from the very beginning of the mission. Already in October of 1609, Canillac brought up the possibility of accompanying the ambassador, should the latter make a voyage to Jerusalem. 21 On June 26, 1610, he let the general know of the possibility of opening a mission at Naxos, in the Aegean archipelago, a project that had to be postponed as a result of the insufficient subsidies received by the mission. 22 On 12 January, 1613, strengthened by the arrival of two new French missionaries, Jean-Baptiste Jobert and Louis Granger, as well as of a new missionary from Chios, Domenico Maurizio, he envisioned with more confidence an installation at Naxos (which would actually take place only in 1627). 23

In Canillac’s vision, the best way to respond to the difficulties encountered in the Istanbul mission (the constant danger of plague, the difficulties caused by the Ottoman authorities, largely fueled by the Venetian ambassador, the delicate diplomacy with the Orthodox Church hierarchy) was not to concentrate the efforts on the capital of the empire, but rather to ensure a radiating out of the mission as far as possible, whereby the solidity of the project would become a logical consequence of its geographical expanse. The conjunction of the residences of Constantinople and of Chios in a vice-province was intended by Canillac, in order to ensure a complementarity of knowledge and of personnel that was missing at the Constantinople mission, a better expansion into the Aegean archipelago, and greater ease of communication between the Roman center and the territory of the mission (as regular courier service from Venice involved delays and the fear of indiscretions). Canillac’s training in Rome informed both the strategies that he intended to use for attracting the interest of the Roman cardinals in the progress of the mission (gifts of money and books, translation and printing projects, correspondence with Eastern prelates), and his expansive vision of the missionary world, which went far beyond the territory in which he conducted his everyday work. His network of Roman

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 225.
23 For a chronology of the Jesuit missions in the Mediterranean, see Georg Hofmann, “Apostolato dei gesuiti nell’Oriente greco, 1583–1773,” Orientalia Christiana Periodica 1 (1935): 139–63; George Levenq, La première mission de la Compagnie de Jésus en Syrie 1625–1774 (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1925).
and Italian friendships and acquaintances permitted him to enlarge the recruitment pool for the mission that he was called to administer and develop, but also to place his efforts, both actual and potential, within the global scheme of the evangelizing effort.24

In the plan for a voyage to the Holy Land we see the coming together of a personal desire for a pilgrimage with the zeal of the founder of a mission, who was able to take advantage of France’s ambitions to displace Venice in the protection of the holy sites, as well as to take advantage of the royal support that he was granted.25 At the same time, and particularly in the initial stage of negotiating the conditions of his departure from the Istanbul residence with General Acquaviva, one can read the superior’s acknowledgment of his own weakness, as he conceded he was unable to continue to work in the existing conditions. He suspected himself (or, perhaps, noticed the impressions that others had of him) of a desire to flee, but he turned this into a weapon of persuasion in the pursuit of his own goal. As far as Canillac’s own argumentation went, had the suspicion proven founded, he would have been judged a poor superior, which would have granted him more easily the approval to leave—an objective that seems to have entirely conquered his mind.26 From an ultimate grace accorded by the general to a dedicated worker upon his departure, the pilgrimage became a triumphant return after the success of his voyage to France from September 1613 to July 1614), which brought royal patronage to his

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24 The mission had to have a French superior, as well as a majority of French members, but since knowledge of Italian and Greek were required, Canillac expressed his predilection for French recruits who had passed through the Collegio Romano. Canillac to Acquaviva, 2 June, 1612, ARSI, Gal. 101, f. 346. For the broad horizon in which Canillac situated his activity, see for instance his letter to Acquaviva, 28 July, 1612, ARSI, Gal. 101, f. 353.

25 The mission to Jerusalem was envisaged as a continuation of the project of Ignatius. ARSI, Gal. 95 II, 273–274v, published in Monumenta Proximi Orientis 3:311–313, and in a shorter form in Documents inédits pour servir à l’histoire du christianisme en Orient, ed. Antoine Rabbath (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 348–350. The failure of the voyage, provoked by the hostile reception that the Guardians of the Holy Land gave to Canillac and his companion Jérôme Queyrot, did not signal the end of the project. Canillac continued to motivate the French dévots, particularly Cardinal La Rochefoucauld, in planning the opening of a French consulate at Jerusalem. The project of a Jesuit mission was part of an attempt to push back against the Venetian influence which was at work in the protection of the Franciscans. See Poumarède, “Les limites.”

26 Canillac to Acquaviva, 22 September 1612, ARSI, Gal. 101, 368v. In Canillac’s rhetoric there is a vivid example of the intricate relationship between obedience and personal initiative that defines the Jesuit identity. See for example the cases assembled in the volume edited by Fernanda Alferi and Claudio Ferlan, Avventure dell’obbedienza nella Compagnia di Gesù: Teorie e prassi fra XVI e XIX secolo (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012).
enterprise, together with promises of alms. On November 4, 1613, from Paris, while presenting the fruits of his requests to the general, he took up again the rhetoric of the indipeta, reaffirming his ever constant desire for his mission, and at the end of the year he proposed a direct route from Marseille to Tripoli (Syria), in order to investigate the possibilities of a mission to Cairo or to Antioch, while bearing in mind that it is “most necessary in order to preserve the residence of Constantinople to have other places with mutual correspondence.”

The direct route was not accepted by the general, and the passage through Istanbul turned out to be inevitable. In Istanbul, his return from France was met with joy and relief by everybody, and most of all by his relatively new companion Jean-Baptiste Jobert, who arrived in December 1612 and who had replaced him during his absence. Nevertheless, Canillac’s new departure towards Jerusalem incited new criticisms, of which we are able to find some echo in a very emotive letter written by Domenico Maurizio. The magisterial projects of Canillac were a pure phantasm when considered alongside the daily difficulties of the Constantinople mission, whose most urgent need, in Maurizio’s view, was to acquire a house that was safe from attacks of the plague. In 1615, the epidemic once again hit the city very hard: “one does not hear anything else but wailing and tears in the streets.” Domenico Maurizio made therefore a harsh judgment on the superior’s way of handling matters:

We are waiting for Father Franc[esc]o Canillac, who will probably be back in two months, after having seen, as we think, Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo and the Great Cairo; he seems to me a person who wants to do many things at once, and run through many countries, but it would be better if he stopped here and cared for what is good and useful for this mission, of which he is the superior in name, but where he resides very briefly, and the expenses and dangers that he incurs are considerable without any tangible fruits other than those based on empty hopes.

Nonetheless, Canillac’s tentative plans would have an enduring impact in Rome. New Jesuit foundations would follow in the next decade—Izmir in western Anatolia (1623), Aleppo in Syria (1625), and the Aegean islands Naxos (1627) and Andros (1630)—and his plan of action seems to have been sufficiently appreciated in Rome to be included among the documents collected by

———. Canillac to Acquaviva, 4 November 1613, Paris, ARSI, Gal. 101, 411; 31 December 1613, in ibid., 416.

———. Domenico Maurizio to Acquaviva, 5 August 1615, ARSI, Gal. 101, 492r–v.
the Congregation De Propaganda Fide and annotated by the congregation’s secretary. Structurally organized in a set of thirteen entries submitted for discussion to the cardinals of Propaganda, the means of “helping” (recurrent word in the vocabulary of both missionaries and diplomats to the Ottoman Porte) the Eastern churches and of converting the “schismatics” represent a development of the missionary strategies employed by the Jesuits at the beginning of the Istanbul mission: the education of the youth and the maintenance of bonds of friendship with the Orthodox patriarchs and bishops. Canillac was one of the optimistic visionaries of the first half of the seventeenth century, like the secretary of the Propaganda Fide Francesco Ingoli (1578–1649), for whom regaining the reconciliation of the Western and Eastern churches seemed perfectly realizable. Missionary strategies were therefore less concerned with individual conversions than with the establishment of a top-down approach targeting the hierarchs of the Eastern churches and the publication of treaties on doctrine and spirituality revised in Rome and translated into local languages including Greek, Arabic, and Armenian. The priorities of action according to Canillac were to attract the sympathy of the Eastern patriarchs and bishops, to financially assist those who showed pro-Catholic sympathies, and to invest in the missions and the circulation of printed works, particularly those directed towards the doctrinaire foyers of the Oriental church (in Canillac’s project, Mount Athos and Mount Lebanon). At the moment when he was writing the version of the plan received by the Propaganda Fide, the Jesuits had missions at Istanbul, Chios, and Izmir, and were attempting to establish one at Aleppo. The other places on which Canillac set his sights were Cairo, Sayda, Naxos, Cyprus, Thessaloniki, Adrianopolis, Filipolis, and Morea. Two other issues on which he insisted were the training of

29 APF, SOCG 286, 68–70v, 405. He had presented one such plan already on 15 June, 1612, which he asked the general to make sure was seen by Cardinal Bellarmine or even by Paul V. See ARSI, Gal. 101, 347.

30 On the role played by the Jesuit school in the Istanbul Latin community, see Eric Dursteler, “Education and Identity in Constantinople’s Latin Rite Community, c.1600,” *Renaissance Studies* 18 (2004): 287–303.

31 Heyberger, *Les chrétiens*, 268; Girard, *Entre croisade et politique culturelle*, 9–10. For Propaganda’s policy of translation and printing, see for instance Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Tra cultura e missione: la Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide’ e le scuole di lingua araba nel XVII secolo,” in *Rome et la science moderne entre Renaissance et Lumières*, ed. Antonella Romano (Rome: École française de Rome, 2008), 121–152. As Canillac summarized in the letter of 10 January 1612, the Orthodox patriarch Neophytus II wished to send his nephew to Rome and to live in “peace and union” with the Latin church, but he was forced to hide his wish for fear of repression. ARSI, Gal. 101, 305–306.
missionaries, and in particular of young Eastern Christians who spoke Greek or Arabic in other institutions besides the Roman colleges (in his view the Greek College was in particular need of reform), and the maintenance of good relations between the different Catholic orders represented in the Levant. This latter point must have been particularly sensitive for him, after the experience he went through with the Franciscans in the Holy Land. Not without a hint of irony, he stressed that the sending of people of reformed morals—people who followed an exemplary religious discipline—was preferable to the representation of reformed orders, as the multiplication of “religioni nove” in the Levant was rather harmful.

The lessons of the conflicts and polemics that surrounded the French Jesuit foundation extend like a leitmotif throughout Canillac’s correspondence. To forestall accusations of an attempt upon the order of the state which, transplanted from the Western anti-Jesuit discourse, could find fertile ground in the Ottoman Empire, he attempted to dissociate the religious from the political. In Canillac’s view, the most efficient way of effecting this dissociation was to emphasize the Jesuits’ identity as men of letters and to offer a central place in the Jesuit apostolate to translations of doctrinal and spiritual writings and to textual criticism, presented as an intellectual practice void of any subversive content. In announcing the comparative study of St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory the Great which the members of the mission in Istanbul intended to undertake, for which they would need to see the Vatican manuscripts, he added that this sort of activity was not only useful, but also necessary in order to show that “these are the practices of the Society, and not getting mixed up in the affairs of state or of war, as these days a certain person dreamt of one or many Jesuits who went, he said, to Persia as spies from Spain, who were thrown into the sea: a lovely invention to make us look odious.”

Elsewhere, he claimed that the political impact of religious education provided a service to the established authority in such a manner that, in working against heresy, the Jesuit missionaries formed better subjects for the Ottoman empire: “Will the Turks themselves not see nonetheless that our people are not factious, and dangerous for their state and government, but rather tranquil and peaceful, wanting only to help these Christians, who will be better subjects no less than they will be better Christians?”

The equation of religious identity with national allegiance was problematic for the Jesuits themselves, given the warnings of General Acquaviva and General Muzio Vitelleschi (1615–1645) against a “national spirit” that

32 Canillac to Acquaviva, 19 October 1612, ARSI, Gal. 101, 369.
33 Canillac to Acquaviva, 15 December 1611, ARSI, Gal. 101, 303–304.
imperiled the order’s homogeneity. In order to preserve the French ambassador’s support at the Ottoman Porte, the Jesuit missionaries had to present themselves first of all as French subjects. Yet, as the foundational episode has shown, the sought-after French character was thwarted by a very concrete obstacle: the competencies of the personnel, especially with respect to their knowledge of Greek, Italian, and in later stages of the mission Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Syriac, and Coptic. The French missionaries thus, in terms of both personnel and know-how, had to rely on what was available locally, as seen earlier in the case of the residence at Chios and the support it offered the Istanbul mission. The question of the nationality of missionaries arises frequently in the sources at moments of conflict, both over the jurisdictions of different orders and between the missionaries and Ottoman officials. Looking forward to the time of the suppression of the Society, additional proof of the increasingly French character of the mission is seen in the missionaries’ remaining in their posts after 1762, with their belongings protected by the ambassadors and the consular officials after both 1762 (the year of the expulsion of the Jesuits from France) and 1773 (the general suppression) and until 1783, when the missions were taken over by the Lazarists.

1628: The Temporary Suppression of the Mission

A brief analysis of the temporary suppression of the mission in 1628 will help show how the question of how one could be both a Jesuit and a Frenchman necessarily implied a parallel question: how could one be, at the same time, an ambassador as well as a mission’s de facto administrator? Both of these questions are significant in the case study of the embassy of Philippe de Harlay, the Count of Césy, to Constantinople first from 1620 to 1631 and again, more informally, from 1634 to 1639.

From 1622 onward, Rome deployed a new instrument for directing missionary activity and for pushing back against the influence and competition of

34 Robert Bireley, The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War. Kings, Courts, and Confessors (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29–30.

35 In 1627, when imprisoned in Cyprus, Domenico Maurizio (another Jesuit who was sent from Chios to Istanbul) wrote to Gaspar Maniglier, from the Aleppo mission, to request the intervention of the French consul before the grand vizir, explaining: “I was born in Chios, but I am more French than Chiotan because I have spent a good part of my life among the French” (ARSi, Gal. 95, 132r-v).
states: the Propaganda Fide. In the eastern Mediterranean, the congregation and the French ambassador to the Porte offered mutual assistance in order to control a territory on which Venice, though weakening in the face of Ottoman advances, still exercised a power that was not to be neglected. The French ambassador Philippe de Harlay, Count of Césy, became one of the most regular and respected informers of the newly created congregation. Taking advantage of the consular network in order to collect information, he was able in this way to cover a territory that went well beyond the capital of the empire and the observation of the power struggles within the Orthodox patriarchate, incited by the representatives of the Western powers. But the role that he intended to play within the congregation was not only that of a provider of information. He implicated himself in the nomination of bishops and the establishment of a suffragan to the Latin patriarch, all of whom he hoped would be faithful to French interests, and he intervened in the nomination of missionaries in order to ensure that they not be Venetian subjects, and in order to facilitate the development of missions that were directly dependent upon the French provinces of religious orders. He also attempted to impose himself as an intermediary in the relations between the Catholic community of Pera, the religious orders, and the congregation. He went so far as to hope to exercise an effective disciplinary power over the territory of the mission. Given the scandals to which the dissipated morals of certain missionaries gave rise, he asked the congregation to confer, by means of a brief, “power and authority to the ambassadors of France as the principal protectors of the churches and of the Christians of the Levant, to act in these cases, according to circumstances, either in favor of imprisonment or of the expulsion of the guilty parties,” with the obligation for the ambassadors to appeal to the judgment of theologians and specialists in canon law, “such as the patriarchal vicar and the Jesuit fathers.” Extremely active in the Roman action against Patriarch Kyrill Loukaris (1572–1638), judged not only to be “schismatic” and anti-Roman, but

36 Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Reti informative e strategie politiche tra la Francia, Roma e le missioni cattoliche nell’impero ottomano agli inizi del XVII secolo,” in I Turchi, il Mediterraneo e l’Europa, ed. Giovanna Motta (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1998), 212–31; Giovanni Pizzorusso, “La congregazione pontificia de Propaganda Fide nel XVII secolo: missioni, geopolitica, colonialismo,” in Papato e politica internazionale, 149–72.

37 On Philippe de Harlay, Count of Césy, see Fouqueray, “La mission de France à Constantinople durant l’Ambassade de M. de Césy (1619–1640),” Études 113 (1907): 70–101, 385–405. On Césy’s correspondence with the Propaganda Fide, see Pizzorusso, “Reti informative.”

38 APF, SOCG 111; SOCG 286.

39 APF, SOCG 286, 400.
also pro-Calvinist and aligned to the Protestant powers, he wished to preserve exclusivity of negotiation, and reacted against the sending to Istanbul of a former student of the Greek College in Rome, Canachio Rossi, as a dialog partner with the anti-Loukaris faction of the Orthodox Church.\(^{40}\) Moreover, he was irritated by the growing weight of the negotiations of the residents of the Holy Roman Emperor, Sebastian Lustrier (in Istanbul between 1624 and 1629) and, later on, Johann Rudolph Schmid von Schwarzenhorn (1629–1643), who in the 1630s became the principal interlocutor of the congregation in this delicate matter.\(^{41}\)

Césy claimed to be moved equally by his obedience to the pope and by his duty to the orders of the king; the cardinals assured him, in exchange, of their admiration for the prudence and zeal with which he served the cause of the Catholic religion in the Levant.\(^{42}\) But the relations were not without thorns. While Césy held that the battle for Roman influence on the Patriarchal See of Constantinople essentially rested upon significant financial support, the congregation hesitated to take this path in a “very spiritual affair.”\(^{43}\)

The Jesuits were expelled from Istanbul in 1628, due to the role they played in a conflict surrounding the figure of Kyrill Loukaris which opposed the English, Dutch, and Venetian ambassadors to the French and Polish ambassadors and the so-called resident of the emperor. The dossier on the expulsion is particularly rich and illuminating for many aspects of the Eastern Mediterranean missions, a principal one being the relationship between missionaries’ civic and political identities on the one hand, and their identities as members of religious orders on the other—this tension being crucial for the question of Jesuit identity.\(^{44}\) When Césy defended the Jesuits, imprisoned in

\(^{40}\) Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), Manuscrits français, 16158, 145. On Kyrill Loukaris, see Ovidiu Victor Olar, “Paroles de pierre: Kyrillos Loukaris et les débats religieux du XVIIe siècle,” Archæus: Études d’Histoire des Religions / Studies in the History of Religion 14 (2010): 165–196.

\(^{41}\) APF, SOCG 151.

\(^{42}\) Numerous elogious letters to Césy are found in BNF, Manuscrits français, 16158, for example one of 24 April 1627 by Cardinal Octavio Bandini, thanking him for the decree obtained from the Porte in favor of the Jesuits from Aleppo: “Veramente da Vostra Signoria Illustrissima non si può desiderar cosa, che non s’habbia, e perciò la stima che qui si fa della sua persona è tanto grande, che non si può con parole bastanti esplicare” (175).

\(^{43}\) Cardinal Antonio Barberini to Césy, 20 April 1624, in ibid., 47.

\(^{44}\) On the intrigues surrounding the Orthodox patriarchate and the role played by the representatives of the Western powers in Istanbul, see Gunnar Hering, Ökumenisches Patriarchat und europäische Politik, 1620–1638 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1968); see also Dénes Harai, “Une chaire aux enchères: Ambassadeurs catholiques et protestants à la conquête
January 1628, before the Kaymakam (substitute of the Grand Vizir), he did so in view of the affront to the king of France that would have resulted from their expulsion from Istanbul. The accounts of his audiences to the Kaymakam, the Kapudan-Pasha (Grand Admiral) the Sheikh ul-Islâm or Grand Mufti (expert in Islamic law) of Istanbul, which he gave in his dispatches to Louis XIII and to Secretary of State Raymond Phélypeaux d'Herbault, are based on a constant equation of “the honor of the king” [l’honneur du roi] and “the good of religion” [le bien de la religion], as well as of the “Jesuits” and the “subjects of the king.”

An interesting evolution occurred from 1609 onward: the Baron Salignac hesitated to “put out front” the name of the king of France before the Ottoman authorities; his defense of the Jesuits rested on their status as members of the body of the “nation,” while at the same time he presented them as churchmen whom he had chosen for the spiritual care of his own household. In the rhetoric of the ambassador Césy, the affront against the French Jesuits was directly, and without any ambiguity, an affront against “His Most Christian Majesty.” Moreover, in the interrogations to which they were submitted, the arrested Jesuits declared that they had been sent by the king of France, in order to serve his ambassador along with the French merchants, having decided, with the ambassador’s approval, not to make any mention of their Roman allegiances.

But in positing the equivalence between “Jesuits” and “subjects of the king,” Césy was constrained to remain within the framework of the pan-European, anti-Jesuit discourse that the ambassador had no trouble recognizing behind the accusations made by the kaymakam: “greatly seditious seducers of peoples” [gros séditieux seducteurs de peuples], was one of his descriptions of them to the French ambassador. Thanks to the aid of the Grand Mufti (whom Césy
presented as his personal friend) and of the Kapudan-Pasha, the Jesuits were reestablished on July 14, 1628.⁴⁹ The negotiations concerning the reestablishment of the Jesuits added an additional nuance: was the fault attributable to all of the Jesuits, to the French Jesuits, or to individuals of a particularly rough character?⁵⁰ Another event came to pass within the chaos of the polemic: the Kaymakam’s refusal to allow the Austrian resident to the Porte to bring his own Jesuits to Istanbul. This the Venetian ambassador (bailo) Sebastiano Venier (in Istanbul between 1626 and 1630), interpreted as a sign of laudable political prudence on the part of the Ottoman power.⁵¹ The question of the Jesuit missions at Istanbul and in the Aegean archipelago came, from the Venetian perspective, in a direct continuity with the polemics surrounding the Interdict crisis (1606–1607): in the conflict opposing Venice to Paul V, the Jesuits sided with the papacy, which led to their expulsion from Venetian territories between 1606 and 1657.⁵² Overtly anti-Jesuit, Sebastiano Venier denied having contributed financially to the expulsion of the missionaries, while not rejoicing any the less in their ill fortune. In his view, they deserved to be punished for meddling in dangerous theological controversies. Always respectful of the political line held by the senate of the republic, he was a defender of the status quo, and was circumspect in the face of Roman proselytizing and the dangerous projects of bringing the Eastern churches under the pope’s obedience. In defending the holding of the holy sites and the preservation of the Latin churches, Venice protected the Catholic religion. That said, Venier’s dispatches reveal that he had a different understanding of what the protection meant, and how it had to be put into place while not endangering public interest. It is the public interest (where the Venetian and the Ottoman public interest seem to coincide) that he put forth in order to justify his support for the patriarch Loukaris and for Nikodemos Metaxas’s printing press, imported from England and banned following Césy’s intervention in response to Roman

⁴⁹ Italian translation of the firman, ARSI, Gal. 102, 140–140v.
⁵⁰ The Jesuits who were imprisoned, Denys Guillier, Jean Régnier, and Amable Fressange, were sent back to Italy and France. Isaac d’Aultry and François Martin, who had taken shelter in the French ambassador’s house during the persecution, were able to go back to their residence.
⁵¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Senato, Dispacci, Costantinopoli, filza 108, 4 August 1629, 507–511.
⁵² On the interdict crisis, see William J. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty. Renaissance values in the Age of the Counter Reformation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).
(and Jesuit) fears that it would help spread Protestant propaganda among the Greek Orthodox. And it was in his capacity of protector of the Latin Christians in the empire that, while not supporting Jesuits’ initiatives, he wanted to present himself as the one who succeeded in saving their lives. The way he articulated his view of what it meant to be a protector of religion was based on a total eradication of the frontiers between orthodoxy and heresy, inapplicable in a religious and political context like that of the Ottoman Empire.

Reason of state—a concept used polemically by his opponents and detractors—comes forward from the Venetian bailo’s dispatches as a sufficiently important matter, apart from any universal Catholic import. In this sense his attitude seems to have been perfectly compatible with critical, anti-Tridentine, but not Gallican Catholicism, as laid out conceptually in the controversies surrounding the Interdict crisis. In addition to his anti-Jesuit inclinations and the necessity of defending the Venetian senate’s anti-French Eastern Mediterranean politics, Venier drew the ideological line not between national allegiance and Catholic loyalty, but between public duty and private interest. Thus, he disqualified Cézy’s actions not as an overzealous defense of French supremacy, but as a way of promoting his own, private interests in the Roman court.

A conclusion that he might have considered confirmed by the reports received by the Senate from the Venetian envoys to Rome and France. Both ambassadors affirmed not having received any requests or complaints concerning the Jesuits’ expulsion, in support of the formal complaint that the French ambassador to Venice, the Count d’Avaux, had already presented to the senate on July 8, 1628. The Jesuits’ expulsion paled in comparison with more dramatic and important events like the siege of La Rochelle (1627–1628) and the war of the Mantuan succession (1628–1631), but the Venetian ambassador to France, Giorgio Zorzi, concluded that Cézy, already discredited by his conflict with the Marseille Chamber of Commerce (who had refused to reimburse
the expenses of the embassy), was afraid to let anyone but his friends know what was happening in Istanbul. Antoine de Lomenie, Seigneur de La Villeaux-Clercs (1560–1638), secretary of state in charge of the foreign affairs, a disciple and an old friend of the Jesuits for whom he never missed a chance to do a favor, appeared to Zorzi as the one who could have initiated the request to the senate.58

The Venetian ambassador was mistaken, because the king had been informed. It was perhaps the negotiation of a Franco-Venetian alliance for the Italian war, as well as the ordinary cautions about invoking the king’s name without ensuring the success of the cause, which explain the lukewarm reaction on the part of France. But it is also true that, on the Roman side, Césy’s letters to the Propaganda Fide were very scarce and very vague on this subject, preferring to refer the cardinals to the supplementary information that the French ambassador at Rome, Philippe de Béthune (1565–1649), was able to provide to them in person. Fear that the non-encoded letters that he addressed to the congregation might be read by the Venetians, as well as a certain hesitation as to the degree of knowledge that the congregation should have of his suspicions concerning the Venetian bailo, may explain his reserve.59

Institutional Vision and Individual Agency

A final point should be underlined concerning the different relays of power which underlied the vision of the missions: namely, that in this back-and-forth at many levels of authority, a considerable margin for individual maneuver existed. The French Jesuit Denys Guillier (1578–1646), superior of the Istanbul mission and designated in all the relevant documents as partly responsible for the 1628 crisis, and by his own account an enemy of Kyrill Loukaris and the master of an opponent of this latter named Kyrill Kontaris, is an interesting example. In 1628, Guillier, chased out of Istanbul, settled in the college of the Society at Messina with the hope of returning one day to his mission, when the moment would prove ripe—a mission that remained close to him thanks to an ongoing epistolary exchange with his former companions. In 1639, he wrote to the former ambassador Césy, who was now on his way back to France, in order to thank him once again for his generous protection and for the encouraging letters sent to the imprisoned missionaries back in 1628, from which he picked up a line that sounded retrospectively like a prophecy: “As soon as two [astrological] signs which now oppose you will have changed positions, as it is

58 ASV, Senato, Dispacci, Francia, filza 69, 20 August, 1628, 392.
59 BNF, Manuscrits français, Cinq cents de Colbert 457, 130.
very likely to happen, trust me, you will come back." Insinuating that Loukaris's death and Césy's return to France might mark the time for his own return to his mission, Denys Guillier was secretly hoping to obtain Césy's support. He invited him to write back not at his residence, the College of Messina, but to address the letter to a French banker in Messina. In 1640, at the age of sixty-two, by way of a moving letter addressed to Urban VIII, he requested a papal intervention to break through the resistance that the assistant of France had put up against his return to the mission. Guillier was motivated in this request by his old disciple's repeated calls, and he was convinced that his return to Istanbul would serve Greek Christianity. His letter is a superlative example of the indipeta, going beyond both the standards of the genre as well as the boundaries of hierarchy. Bypassing the chain of authority in his order, he appealed to the "common father" of his disciple, the opponent of Loukaris, and of himself—namely, the pope, who would alone be able to give an answer to both his vocation and the salvation of Greece, genuinely and confidently united in a common cause from the towering point of a lifelong missionary aspiration. The different tiers of identity—French subject, envoy of the pope, member of the Jesuit order—proved to be expedient tools of bringing about individual agency. There were just as many possible sources of conflict as levels of power, but at the same time there were also just as many possibilities for individuals who needed to reconcile multiple allegiances to make recourse to, or to short-circuit, the hierarchy.

Here, the key elements that triggered the manifold and gradual constitution of an identity for the Istanbul Jesuit mission have been observed through two important moments of its history: the foundation of the mission under François de Canillac, and the temporary expulsion of 1628 especially as experienced by Denys Guillier and the French ambassador Philippe de Harlay, the Count of Césy. These episodes show that the national identity of French Jesuits entered into their missionary work in complex ways, responding to the equally complex local circumstances of the mission. In the Ottoman Empire, Jesuits had to navigate between a number of potentially threatening forces, including anti-Jesuit sentiments that complicated their work throughout Europe, pressures exerted by the local authorities, and finally Venetian designs on trade and political influence in the eastern Mediterranean. The two case studies go some way toward showing how the missionaries, notwithstanding these many complexities, were able to assert their own sense of action and identity.

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60 Guillier to Césy, 13 June, 1639, BNF Manuscrits français, 16160, 170.
61 Messina, 1640, APF, SOCG 288, 474–479, published in Griechische Patriarchen und römische Päpste, II-3, Patriarch Kyrillos von Berrœa, ed. Georg Hofmann (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1930), 49–53.
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