

Gemelli Careri: My natural curiosity and desire of travelling about the world (tho' often disappointed)

Even in the 17th C you could become bored with your job and decide to toss it in and go see the world. Amidst a small host of travellers aiming for China in the latter part of the 17th C, the Italian Gemelli Careri stands out. Of those reaching, or at least approaching, the Peking court of the great Kangxi emperor, the Jesuit missionaries, such as Adam Schall von Bell and Ferdinand Verbiest were dominant. To such an extent that the Emperor got Verbiest to send to Louis XIV for more, particularly skilled in mathematics and astronomy. Louis obliged and five more arrived in 1688¹. Over the same period, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sent six trade missions to attempt to break the trading monopoly of the Portuguese based in Macao. Of these, the second included the Dutch traveller Johan Nieuhof, who published his mighty account in 1665. The Russians tried as well. They had been informally trading across the inland borders for centuries but an official Russian embassy was sent via Siberia, by Peter the Great in 1692, later described in accounts by the envoy Eberhard Isbrand Ides and secretary Adam Brand (neither of whom were Russian).²

And then amidst all this, there was Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1651-1725)³. He was born in Taurianova in Reggio Calabri, down at the foot of Italy. His education was at the Jesuit College in Naples where he studied to enter the law profession. He seemed to have an urge to wander early on, since from 1685 to 1687 he travelled through Spain, France and Germany, ending up in Hungary serving in the army of the Emperor Charles V laying siege to the Turks at Buda. He was wounded and the siege was unsuccessful.

Gemelli published an account of these European travels, firstly in 1693, before he departed for his world travels.

Gemelli Careri Giovanni Francesco. Viaggi per Europa del dottor d. Gio: Francesco Gemelli Careri. : contenente insieme la relazione di due campagne, fatte dall'autore in Ungheria, per mezzo di varie lettere a varie persone indirizzate. Nella Stamperia di Giacomo Raillard, Napoli, 1693.



[Travels around Europe by doctor d. Gio. Francesco Gemelli Careri. : containing together the relation of two campaigns, made by the author in Hungary, by means of various letters addressed to various persons.]

Further editions were published in Naples in 1700, 1704 and 1708, eventually in two parts, one on the Hungarian campaign and the other on his travels through Spain, France and Germany. They comprise letters, and were written in collaboration with Matteo Egizio⁴.

Gemelli Careri Giovanni Francesco. *Viaggi per Europa. Divisati in varie Lettere familiari, scritte al Signore Consigliere Amato Diano. Parte prima - Parte seconda. Contenente insieme la Relazione di due Campagne, fatte dall'Autore in Ungheria, per mezzo di varie lettere a varie Persone. Napoli, Published by presso Giuseppe Roselli, 1704-08.*

[Travel in Europe. Divided into various family letters, written to the Counsellor Amato Diano⁵. Part One - Part Two. Containing together the Report of two Campaigns, made by the Author in Hungary, by means of various Letters to various Persons.]

He practised his legal profession until in 1693, and, as he says in his book, frustrated with the winds of ill-fortune, he undertook his voyage around the world. What he was like at the age of 43, setting out presumably without his periwig, we can only guess. The portrait, from his book, is dated 1699, with Gemelli's age at 48.

I came across his travel account, first published in six volumes in Jürgen Osterhammel's *Unfabling the East*⁶ where he stood out as a private traveller, an exception to the normal mission-led, as we would say, voyaging of missionaries, traders and diplomats. He appears in several books on 17th C travels, particularly for his independent views of the East, unbiased by the needs of a diplomatic mission or the Church. And then he has been claimed as the first backpacker⁷, based on his mode of travel, from port to port, city to city, funding his travels as he goes. And perhaps also for that backpacker's imperative, where he becomes fed up with life and his job and decides to see the world.

There is an alert necessary however. The authenticity of his account was widely questioned from the time of its publication, then gradually became more accepted as more knowledge of the East spread through Europe, and his account was reassessed. Did he go on the voyage, and if so, did he do all the things he described, particularly his meetings with Emperors and other notables? He certainly copied from existing published accounts for his general narrative, mostly acknowledged, some not. Keep this in mind, or put it aside and enjoy the work for what it is³.

His account was first published in six volumes in Italian in 1699-1700, and subsequently translated into French and English.

Gemelli Careri, Giovanni Francesco. *Giro del Mondo del dottor D. Gio: Francesco Gemelli Careri Nella stamperia di Giuseppe Roselli, In Napoli, 1699. 6 vols. The plates were engraved by Andreas Magliar⁸.*

About seven Italian editions were published up to 1709, and a further augmented edition in 1717. The first French edition was in 1719 and a second in 1727, and it appears in Prevost in 1749. The first English translation was in volume 4 of Churchill's *A Collection of*



Frontispiece image, opposite the title page for the French translation, *Voyage du Tour Mond*, 1727.

Voyages and Travels in 1704 (a digitised copy is available⁹), and in the later editions of 1732 and 1747, and also in Astley's Collection in 1746. The excerpts used throughout this article are from the 1704 Churchill book¹⁰. The Churchill introduction in volume 4 is effusive: *'His learning, as being a Doctor of the Civil Law, and his excellent natural qualifications, have render'd his work so compleat, that indeed it seems to be one of the most excellent pieces of this nature now extant.....An Air of Truth appears throughout it, there being nothing but what is told with much Modesty, and what is probably and natural enough it self; ...'* And also notes that feature of independence that was somewhat unique with Gemelli ...*'His Remarks and Observations are extraordinary curious, because he was not only capable to make them, but had leisure, that being his only business, and Money to carry him through.'* The volume is titled: *A Voyage round the world, by Dr John Francis Gemelli Careri. In six parts, viz. I. of Turkey, II. of Persia, III., of India, IV. of China, VI. of the Philippine Islands, VI. of New Mexico. Written originally in Italian, translated into English.*

He opens his first chapter with an almost poetic cry about his ill-fortune. But then says we are often in the wrong to complain, because our sorry state and events which plague us can drive us to something more worthy. And what is more worthy than tossing your past life aside and taking off on a voyage around the world. It reads like the opening of a great epic poem like the *Lusiads*, a romantic before the era.

'Were it always in the power of cruel and unsteady fortune, with who we are daily to struggle, to reduce us to a miserable and wretched condition; and could not a wise man, by bearing up against its injuries and assaults, open himself a way to a more peaceable state of life; our condition would certainly be too rigid and unhappy; and the great work of that all-great Artificer, who drew us out of nothing, appear the less perfect and valuable. Yet it often happens, that we are much in the wrong when we complain of fortune; because when she seems most averse to us, she then often forwards us, to undertake some worthy enterprise, and help to raise us to a higher degree, obliging us, through necessity, to perform good and noble actions. This may be plainly evinced by the whole course of my life, which has been interwoven with such strange accidents, that the very remembrance of them terrifies me; yet to them do I owe the seeing of so many countries, the sailing of such vast seas, and if it may be allowed me to hope for any, the glory of these unpolished lines.'

He goes on to admit that while his desire to travel was a cause, *'.....it is certain that I had no other reason to undertake this other dangerous and painful voyage, but the unjust persecutions, and undeserved outrages I was forced to endure.'*

And so, on Saturday, June 13, 1693, having resisted the entreaties of his friends Amato Danio, D Joseph Chaves, F Alonso Rici and Dr Laurence Sandalari. He sails on a felucca south from Naples around the foot of Italy, calling into a port each day. Near Redecina he meets his brother Dr John Baptiste Gemelli, (*'A man of exemplary life, and most innocent behaviour....'*) who had brought horses. He makes his will, goes to confession and takes the sacrament, and to assuage the fears of his brother, says that *'...to lessen his grief, I told him I intended only for the Holy Land, and thence to return as soon as possible' tho' at the same time I had absolutely resolved not to settle till I had taken a view of China...'*. And so on the wings of a lie and a good wind, he sailed away.

There is almost something on every page that you would want to relate – even before he leaves Italy his ship with all his belongings takes sail from Messina bound for Malta, without him, and he knows neither the ships' or master's name. He takes a felucca and eventually they sight his vessel at Ali on the Sicily coast; he seems to have trouble

leaving Italy. Such is the narration that it is difficult to have to pass over Gemelli's travels through Turkey, Persia and India, as related in the first 3 books. This is how he travels: *'Monday the 20th. There put into Malta a French Tartan¹¹ sent by the Merchants of Marseilles to carry Advice to the French Vessels then lying at Alexandria, Cyprus, and Tripoli of Soria¹² for fear of the Dutch Privatiers, that they might safely venture out of those Ports on their several Voyages, three French Men of War then cruising in the Mediterranean which would secure them. Therefore to avoid wasting my time in Expectation of a better opportunity to Sail for Constantinople, whither I had resolv'd to go, I readily agreed to give twelve Crowns for my passage to Alexandria.'*

Gemelli Careri travels through Turkey, across to Persia and then on to India. He is clearly a man of charm and persuasion, regularly being invited into strangers' houses, provided with accommodation, and finding ways to attend courts, grand events, and in India, entry into the camp of the great Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb, then at Galgala, now Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. He meets some Christian gunners in the entourage, and*'went to the Gunner's Quarter to hear Mass, and found a convenient Chappel of Mud Walls, serv'd by two Canarine¹³ Priests, maintain'd by the Catholicks. After Mass Francis Borgia by extraction a Venetian but born at Dehli , invited me to his House.'* The next day he goes to see the King (Aurangzeb), but there was*'such a Multitude and Confusion that I could not have a good sight of him. The King's and Princes Tents took up three Miles in Compass, and were defended every way with Palisade, Ditches and five hundred Falconets¹⁴. There were three Gates into them one for the Aram or Women, and two for the King and his Court.'*

But in the end he made it: *'Monday 21st , by the means of a Christian of Agra, and an Eunuch his Friend, I had the Fortune to be admitted to a private Audience of the King. In the first Court of the King's Quarters, which had two Doors, in a large Tent I saw Kettle-Drums, Trumpets eight Spans long, and other Instruments, which use to sound at certain Hours of the Day and Night, I pass'd on into the second Court, and then into the Royal Tents, and King's Apartments, adorn'd with Silks and Cloth of Gold. Finding the King in one of thee Rooms, sitting after the Country manner, on Rich Carpets, and Pillars Embroider'd with Gold. Having made my Obeisance after the Mogul Fashion, I drew near, the same Christian being my Interpreter. He ask'd me of what Kingdom of Europe I was, how long I had been come thence, where I had been, and what I came to his Camp for, whether I would serve him, and whither I design'd to go? I answered accordingly, that I was a Neapolitan, and came thence two Years before; during which time I had seen Ægypt, the Grand Signior's Dominions, and the Persian Monarchy, that I was now come into his Camp, only out of curiosity to see the greatest Monarch in Asia, as his Majesty was, and the Grandeur of his Court and Army; that I should have reckoned it a great Honour to serve him, did not affairs of the greatest Importance call me home, after seeing the Empire of China. He then ask'd me concerning the War betwixt the Turk and European Princes in Hungary, and having answer'd to the best of my Knowledge, he dismis'd me....'*



Aurangzeb Alamgir I. (1658-1707).
c 1660.

On Tuesday the 2nd of August, 1695, having sailed from Goa, stopping at Malacca, following the coast of Cochin China and then across the South China sea, Gemelli Careri reached the islands off the coast of Macao. On the Feast of St Dominic, August 4, they are

close enough for people from Macao to sail from the mainland to visit them. He had arrived in China¹⁵. As he records at the end of Book III, among the visitors is '*...F. Philip Fiesia, Procurator of Japan, who came in a Lorja¹⁶, on large Bark to bring Refreshments to F. Ferreira, and the other nine Fathers. I had my share, and Eat excellent Figs, like ours in Europe, and good Ananas, my Stomach not failing me. Going into the Bark with those Fathers, to the City Macao, on the long wish'd for Land of China, I left my Mony in some Vessels full of salt Flesh, and Fish, to save paying the Duty of four in the Hundred to the Ship, and two to the City, since for the ViceRoy's sake, I had not paid for my own, nor my Servant's Passage.*'

Here, hosted in the monastery of St Augustin by the prior F. Joseph of the Conception, he says: '*Here it will be convenient, that whilst I rest me after my Voyage, which was no less than 3000 Miles; the Reader, who has hitherto born with my unpolish'd Discourse, take some little Respit, that he may in the next Volume be the more attentive to the Wonders of the renowned Empire of China.*'

Well, you can't travel around the world for five years and not take steps to avoid paying duty, and so conserve your funds. But before we go on to his account of China, there a couple of other things worth relating.

To get to China, Gemelli sails from Goa, the Portuguese enclave and centre of the Jesuit missionary organisation. Also aboard, and mentioned on his arrival in Macao, are '*F. Emanuel Ferreira, a Portuguese, Missioner to Tunchin, who wore a Reverend long Beard; F. Joseph Condoni, a Sicilian, going to his Mission of Cochinchina, which Fathers had been Summon'd to Rome, by his Holiness Pope Innocent the 11th, because they had refus'd to Obey the French Bishops and Vicars Apostolick in those Kingdoms, to the great Scandal of the Christians, who saw the Church Men Excommunicate one another, and eight other Jesuits of several Nations, who were going to China; besides ten others who went in the Vessel of the Merchants of Goa, call'd Pumburpa, which carry'd the Lion above-mention'd.*'

Yes, there was a lion aboard the other boat. As above-mentioned: '*Friday 29th. I went to see a Lion brought the Vice-Roy from Mozambique, who was about to send it as a Present to the Emperor of China.*'¹⁷ Gemelli later mentions the lion when he has reached Canton and letters are being sent by mandarins to the Emperor, including those concerning the lion as a gift, so it got that far. Once in Peking, he notes (p. 398) that the lion had not yet arrived, F. Grimaldi (the noted Jesuit missionary ensconced at court) was anxious, and that it had been sent from Macao on September 10 (the date now being the 21st). We hear no more of it in his account.

At the same time, leaving Goa: '*My Armenian Servant refusing to go to China, on Wednesday 11th, I Bought a Cafre, or Black Slave for eighteen Pieces of Eight, and there being a Necessity to get a License to Ship him off, because we were to touch at Malaca, where the Dutch Hereticks Command, I went on Thursday 12th, to the Inquisitors to have it Pass'd. They made a great Difficulty of granting it, and dispensing with the Prohibition they themselves had been Authors of; alledging that some Cafres, who had been Shipp'd at other times, being taken, had turn'd Mahometans.*'

And so into China. '*I am now at length come to enter upon the vast Empire of China, and could with my Stile and Language were suitable to the greatness of the Subject, that I might give the curious Reader such a Draught and Description as it deserves; but that being above my Capacity, he must be forced to take up, and be satisfy'd with my unpolish'd way of Delivery.*' He has no need for

apologies. His style is immediate and accomplished, but likely not well served by his early 18th C translator. He starts by providing an extensive description of Macao and its history, and in Chapter II discusses *'A fruitless Voyage made by the Portugueses, and Natives of Macao to Japan, to Resettle themselves in the Trade lost in the last Persecution of the Christians.'* These extensive passages throughout the book are largely taken from other sources, as was the contemporary travel-writing custom³. But he is clear that the observations that he records, often in journal style, are all his own.

Gemelli leaves Macao for Canton. He needs to get a pass from the 'Upu'¹⁸ and comes across the elaborate Ceremony of writing and despatching letters to the Emperor (which included mention of the lion, as above). He gets his pass, which he needs because he is carrying *'Goods of Bulk, and a Slave'*. After three days he sails into Canton and goes to stay at the Spanish mission. *'They receiv'd me very Courteously, not without some Jealousy, because my coming was an unusual thing.'* Gemelli was under suspicion, since he arrived at a time when there was considerable strife amongst the missionaries over allegiances; they were for some time without a Bishop and there was constant dispute over Papal authority and obedience. It is worth reading Gemelli's account since it emphasises the unusual nature of his traveller status, that of independence of any religious or governmental authority, something unique at the time, *'I coming thither during those Troubles, they all positively concluded, I was sent by his Holiness to enquire privately into those Affairs, some making me a Bare-foot Carmelite Friar, and some a secular Priest; and tho ' I did all I could to undeceive the Franciscan Fathers , telling them the Truth viz. that I was a Neapolitan and Travell'd only for my own private Curiosity; that his Holiness had not allow'd me a Farthing for my Voyage; and that the least I desir'd to enquire into, was the Business of their Missions; yet this could not remove the strong Imagination settled in them, and they answer'd, That since there was first a Passage open'd into China, no Italian Lay-Man, much less a Neapolitan had ever set his Foot there. At length, I bid them search my Goods, for I would freely give them the Keys to satisfy them I had no such Instructions: But all was in vain. At the same time the Jesuits, as well as the Franciscans consulted about my coming.'*

Gemelli gives a description of Canton, but he is only there for about a week before he determines to keep on with Peking in sight and mind. The suspicion of his 'spying' status persists, as he gets permission of the superior of the monastery to leave. *'Yet this my Resolution did not a little increase the jealousy of the Missioners, and confirm them in the Opinion that I was sent by the Pope to enquire privately into the divisions in China, seeing I was going on to the Court. I am of Opinion this jealousy facilitated my Journey, which otherwise is full of difficulties, because the Portuguese Fathers will have no European go to the Court without their consent.'*

He hires a *'guide, or conductor'* who was a Christian and *'ripe in years'*, provided by the Father Superior, then three days later *'he came to acquaint me, that he was known and had Relations at the Court, and therefore could not cook for me, and perform other mean Services, and therefore it would be requisite, I should take another, and he would be Steward, and provide conveniencies for Travelling. I submitted to this Imposition, and took a Christian Servant eighteen Years of Age, to dress Meat, and do other mean Offices,'* and so off he sails, leaving his slave at the monastery.

Gemelli travelled by boat, sailing or being pulled by ropes, up the Great canal from Canton, and was able to describe firsthand both landscape and villages and towns through the inland waterway. His route is a little like the reverse of that taken by Lord Macartney

100 years later on his return from Peking. At Nanyanfu¹⁹ the party has to take to chairs, to go overland across mountainous country to reach the Grand Canal. The journey continues up the Grand Canal. He reaches Nanchianfu (Nanchang) the major city of Kiansi (Jaingxi) and, as elsewhere, immediately finds the Jesuit church and mission, the missionaries at this stage having quite deeply infiltrated the eastern provinces. Here: *'Being weary of going by Water, I resolv'd to hire Mules to Peking, as the Fathers of the Society use to do, when they come to this place, for there is no coming hither any other way but by Water; but I could not find conveniency further than to Nanking, so that I was forced to take another Boat, which cost me dear, because of the extravagant Duty the Water-men pay at Fucheu, which is not according to the Goods, but the bigness of the Boat, tho' it be empty...'*

Gemelli continues his inland journey, a narration of customs houses and duties, touring cities in a chair, meeting Jesuit missionaries and churches, including Monsignor D'Argoli, the Venetian Bishop of Nanching. He provides a detailed description of the city and surrounds, travelling by chair and foot, visiting temples, great houses, the streets, and every object that a tourist might include. The bishop and his assistant Franciscan fathers try to persuade him not to go on to Peking,*'because the Portuguese Jesuits would have no European look Into the State of that Court, and if I went thither they would certainly do me some ill Office. I answer'd, I went not to pry into the Affairs of their Missions, but only out of Curiosity to see that great Court, and therefore I fear'd nothing, for I would go take up my Abode in the Convent of those Fathers.'* He must have become quite tired of Church politics by this stage.

Deciding that horseback would be quicker and more direct than continuing on the canal, which by connecting waterways would have got him very close to Peking, he leaves, *'the hiring of mules is cheap, and the expense at inns is very small..'* And then: *'Sunday 6th, after Coasting along under most uncooth Mountains twenty Miles together, I arriv'd at Peking, having spent two Months and eleven Days in the Journey from the Day I set out of Canton, and having Travell'd 2150 Lijs²⁰ by Land from Nanking to Peking, and 3250 by Water from Canton to Nanking, the Chinese counting from Canton to Peking 5400 to those Lijs, each of which is 260 Paces.'*

Immediately on arrival, Gemelli visits the Jesuit establishment where he meets the leading missionary of the time, F. Philippus Grimaldi, but is advised by Grimaldi and Fathers Ferreira and Thomas, also resident, that he can't stay there since the Emperor had not yet been informed of his visit. *'They admir'd, who had advis'd me to come to Peking, whither no European may come without being sent for by the Emperor. I answer'd, That the same Liberty I took to go to the Courts of the Grand Signior, the King of Perfia, and the Mogul, brought me to that of Peking, those Monarchs being no less powerful or jealous than the Emperor of China. F. Grimaldi*



The Kangxi Emperor (1654-1722)

There appears to be no known image of Grimaldi.

Father Philippus Maria Grimaldi (1639-1712) arrived in Macau in 1659, and along with other missionaries, was confined to Macau until the Kangxi Emperor relaxed their conditions in 1671, when he went to Peking as assistant to father Verbiest, the leading Jesuit and director of the Emperor's observatory. He took over from Verbiest when the latter died in 1688, gained the Emperor's confidence to the extent that he often accompanied him on his visits, and was sent on a diplomatic mission to Russia for him in 1687. He returned to Peking in 1694 and was at the height of his influence when Gemelli visited.

answer'd, The Politicks of that Kingdom differ'd from those of others, and after a long Debate, I took my Leave, telling them I did not desire to see Forts, or any thing else that might raise a Jealousy in the Chinese, they waited upon me out of Doors, causing their Servants to wait upon me to my Lodging, which was taken for me in the Chinese City.'

Gemelli describes Peking, the streets, the multitudes, and the Emperor's Palace: *'In the time of the Chinese Kings there were ten Thousand Eunuchs, but he that now Reigns has supply'd their Place with Tartars and Chineses of the Province of Leaotung, who out of a particular Favour are look'd upon as Tartars.'* The external and internal details of the palace are likely taken from other sources, and indeed at one stage, regarding the Imperial apartments, he says: *'...I could Describe them by what another hath deliver'd, (Relat. du. F Magaliens²¹; written in the page margin) but I refer the curious Reader to him, chap. 18. not to tire him with Transcribing the same Relation.'*

In Book III (*Containing the most Remarkable Things he saw in China*), he reverts to his own observations (although the first-hand authenticity of the account of the court and the visit to the Emperor have been disputed³). Grimald sends for him, and the latter is richly clad in a garment lined with sables and invites Gemelli to accompany him to the palace for an audience with the Emperor, where a new calendar for 1696, prepared by Grimaldi in Chinese, Tartar, Eastern and Western languages will be presented. They pass through four courts, each with great painted pillars, gilt, with steps of white marble and porcelain roofs. At the fourth court *'...F. Grimaldi carrying the Almanack handsomely put up in a Casket cover'd with Silk, attended by several Mandarin, and Persons of Quality, a Person sent by the Emperor to receive it, came to meet him, and having taken it with great Respect and Civility, carry'd it in to his Master.'* Grimaldi tells Gemelli that it would be best for him to be presented to the Emperor rather than the latter hear of his visit through others, including two pages working with Grimaldi, whom he suspected were spies. It is best to hear this in Gemelli's own words:

'In Fine after an Hours stay, a Servant came to bid us Advance; so we pass'd through four long Courts, hemm'd in with Apartments, and Lodgings of several Structures, surpassing the last Square Hall, Built upon the Gates of Communication. The Gates through which we pass'd, out of one Court into another, were of a wonderful Bigness, Wide, High, and well Proportion'd, made of White Marble, whereof Time had worn away the Smoothness and Beauty. One of these Courts was divided by a small Stream of Water, over which are litle Bridges of white Marble.....The Emperor's Throne was in the midst of a great Court. It ascended Square, the first Basis being of an extraordinary bigness, and all hemm'd in with Banisters of white and very fine Marble. Above the first Landing Place or Plain, which had such another row of Banisters about it, was a second in the same manner, but somewhat less in compass, and so it grew less to the 5th Ascent or Plain, where was an admirable open Room or Gallery cover'd with Gilt Tiles, and supported by strong Wooden Pillars Varnish'd. In this Place was the Emperor's Throne. Those five Orders of Banisters look'd mighty Beautiful to my Eye, especially at that time when the Sun Shining on them, they reflected its Rays all about. The Emperor was within that Beautiful Chamber or Gallery, sitting after the Tartar manner, on a Sofa, or Floor rais'd above the rest of the Room three Foot, and cover'd with a large Carpet, which reach'd over all the Pavement. He had by him Books, Ink, and Pencils after the Chinese manner, to write. His Garment was of Gold colour Silk, Embroider'd with Dragons, two whereof very large were on his Breast richly Wrought. On his Right and Left, were ranks of Eunuchs well clad, and with- out any Weapons, their Feet close together, and their Arms hanging. When we came to the Door, we ran hastily to the end of the Room that was opposite to the Emperor, and standing both together, continu'd on our Feet a Moment, holding our Arms right down by our sides. At last kneeling, and lifting up our Hands, join'd to our Heads, so that our Arms and Elbows were of an equal height, we bow'd three times down to the Ground, then rising, we set our selves in the fame Posture, as at first,

and perform'd the same Ceremony, a second, and a third time, till we were order'd to advance, and kneel down before the Emperor...'

The Emperor, due to be disappointed, and with Grimaldi translating, asked about the European Wars, then asked if he was a physician or could do surgery – no. Or whether he had studied or practised mathematics – no. There was sense in his answers, even though true, since he had been forewarned that if he professed to any of these skills, he would be kept in the Emperor's service:...' *and I had no Mind to stay there. At length he gave us our Conge²², and we retir'd without any Ceremony.'* The description would have fitted into the accounts of the British embassies of Macartney and Amherst 100 years later (though without the British kowtowing, and Amherst never got as far as the court in consequence); all indicative of a court trapped in ceremony and tradition. The Kangxi Emperor was 43 years old at this time, and in the 35th year of his reign. Gemelli notes his appearance, confirming that of others drawn to this remarkable man: '*His Stature is proportionable , his Countenance Comely, his Eyes Sparkling, and somewhat larger than generally his Countrymen have them; somewhat Hawkos'd, and a little round at the Point; he has some marks of the small Pox, yet they do not lessen the beauty of his Countenance.'*

However, as fine as it all is, there is the possibility, still discussed, that Gemelli took this description, or parts of it, from the accounts of others, such as that of the Jesuit missionary Joachim Bouvet, published in 1697³.

Gemelli goes out into the city in a chair, and finds it very cold, being November, and he describes the weather and seasons, court ceremonies and rituals, all from hearsay since as he says, he is unable to see such court activities himself. On a second day out, he chances on '*...something Curious, for there was publick Mourning, and Rejoycing along one and the same Street, a Wedding, and a Funeral happening to pass by at the fame time. The Funeral was thus. First went the Colours and Banners of Silk, and colour'd Paper, the Statues of the Dead, Horses, and Monsters carry'd by several People in good Order. Others beat a Brass Drum, and the Bonzes Brass Plates, Bells, and other Instruments, after whom was carry'd the Corps in a Coffin on a Bier cover'd with white Cloth..... The manner of the Wedding is almost like that of the Funeral as to the Instruments that Sound. Several Persons go before a-Foot and a-Horseback with Colours, and Banners, according to the Bridegroom's Quality. Then comes the Bride in a close Chair or Calash adorn'd with Fringes, or Laces and Silk Embroidery in great State, but she cannot be seen.'*

He then provides a description of the Great Wall, one of the few that had appeared in European literature at the time. '*Being so near to that so famous Wall, I had the Curiosity to see it, and therefore went upon Friday 11th, to the French Fathers to provide for my Journey. They told me it would be dangerous to go where the Passage was guarded, because the Guards would be jealous of a Foreigner; but that I might go to that part next the Mountains where there were no Soldiers.'* He goes out on horseback but has to cover the last 4 miles on foot. '*The Wall in some Places is fifteen Foot high, in others twenty; but in the Vallies it is much higher and thicker for six Horses may easily go a-Breast on it.'* He dwells on the utility of it, saying what many others then and now have thought: '*This was one of the greatest, and most extravagant Works that ever was undertaken. In Prudence the Chineses should have secur'd the most dangerous Passes: But what I thought most Ridiculous, was to see the Wall run up to the top of a vast high and steep Mountain, where the Birds would hardly Builds, much less the Tartar Horse Climb, to break into the Country. And if they conceited those People could make their way climbing the Clifts and Rocks, it was certainly a great Folly to believe their Fury could be stop'd by so low a Walls.'*

The emperor goes out to his summer palace where he spends half the year: *'It is call'd, Shian - Sciun- Tuen²³; Tuen, signifying a Garden, Sciun, always, and Shian, Spring, that is, The Garden where there is continual Spring. It consists of fine little Houses, separated from one another, like those of our Carthusians, with Gardens and Fountains after the Chinese manner.'* Gemelli witnessed the procession: *'First march'd about 2000 Soldiers and Servants, after whom follow'd about twenty Women in close Calashes. Next, came the King attended by the Princes of the Blood, and Mandarines. He was a-Horseback, plainly Clad in a Garment of Gold Colour, embroider'd with Dragons all over, but more particularly on the Breast, where were two very large ones. On his Manso, or Tartar Cap was a rich Jewel.'* He describes what a procession might look like when the Emperor generally goes out in public for religious or great public occasions. This is illustrated in the fold out plate, where Gemelli itemises, as numbered in the engraving, some 25 components, from *'1. First go 24 Men with great Drums in two Files, Twelve and Twelve.'* to *'25. Tartar Soldiers.'*

There is an extended chapter on religion in China, much longer and with greater detail than other chapters thus far, and clearly sourcing published material. This leads to Chapter V on *'The Persecution of the Catholick Religion in China, and its happy Restoration.'*



The Emperor of China's Retinue or Train when he appears in Publick. p.325 of the English translation of Gemelli Careri's account, published in Churchill's 'A Collection of Voyages and Travels'.

Here he covers much of the history of the Jesuit missions and their fluctuating Imperial favour, and brings it up to his contemporaries in Peking, where he is in company with the Jesuits that Louis XIV sent on the request of the late Father Verbiest and the Emperor, they particularly being skilled in astronomy and mathematics. *'In Peking the Jesuits have three Churches. One is within the first enclosure of the Palace, belonging to the French Fathers; where F. Fontane is Superior, assisted by the Fathers Gerbillon, Buet, Visdalou²⁴, and a German Father, whose*

Name is Kilian Stumps²⁵, all greatly learned in the Mathematick, and well read in other Sciences, being chosen by the Society by the King of France's Order, at the request of the King of Siam; whence (after his Death) it is almost nine Years since they pass'd through the City of Nimpo into China, and settled themselves at Peking, notwithstanding the vigorous opposition made against their fixing there, by the Portuguese Fathers of the same Society.' The other two churches were that in the east quarter of the Tartar city, led by F. Sifaro, with F. Anthony Thomas²⁶ of Namur and F. Suarez. The third, in the west side of the Tartar city was led by F. Grimaldi, along with F. Periera²⁷, F. Rodriguez and F. Offorio. The Emperor worked his Jesuits hard: 'The life of the Jesuits is very hard and troublesome, for every Day at Sunrising, the Fathers Grimaldi, Gerbillon and Fontane are to go to the Palace, either to teach the Emperor, or to receive his Orders, and if any one fails of going any Mornin, he is presently sent for, and there they stay till Afternoon. The other Fathers are employ'd in making Mathematical Instruments, mending Clocks, or running up and down...'. Gemelli's account is valuable in giving some view of the life of the missionaries and the court at this time, the view of the contemporary outsider.

There is a long chapter on: 'Of the Antiquity of the Empire of China; of the Value the Chineses put upon their Empire; of the Number of Cities, and other Places; and of the Families and Souls it contains', and another on 'Of the notable Government, of the Empire of China, the several degrees of Mandarin, and of six Supreme Courts, or Councils of the Learned, or Gown-Men, and six of the Souldiers, or Military Men.' Chapter VIII covers: 'Of several other Courts in Peking, of the fifteen Provinces, and Cities of the Empire of China.' Then on the language, arts and books, industry and navigation, and then we come to Book III, which has more from written sources more than observation, on 'Nobility, Empire, Civility, Politeness, and Ceremonies', on customs, bound feet, families, on wives, appearance, honesty, manners, trading, calling people by their surname first, weapons and coins, and funerals, with another fold-out plate of a funeral processions, again numbered with a key.



The manner of the Funerals in the province of Quantun in the Empire of China. P.381 in the English translation of Gemelli Careri's account, published in Churchill's 'A Collection of Voyages and Travels'.

He talks of *'the plenty of things'*, of fruit, waxes, food and tea, and then onto *'The Original of the Eastern Tartars, their Settlement in the Throne of Chin, and the Wars that ensu'd thereupon, in the Empire.'* He is clearly taken with the Kangxi Emperor, and who wasn't. *'Camhi, the present Emperor of China is of a pregnant, and piercing Wit, has an excellent Memory, and a Mind so unshaken, that no Misfortune can move him. All his Inclinations are Noble, and worthy a mighty King; for he is a great lover of Justice and Virtue. He applies himself equally to Learning, and gentle Man-like Exercises,.....'*, (this could easily be straight out of Bouvet) and with his wealth *'No Man of Sense will doubt, but that the Emperor of China is the richest Monarch in the World;'*. At the end of this chapter, he says (referring to the discussion on wealth) *'Hitherto I have transcrib'd what the Another Fathers Magalhaens and Couplet²⁸ relate'*, revealing two of his sources. He has leaned particularly heavily on Magalhaes, whose work was the most comprehensive of the 17th C.

It feels as though Gemelli has been in Peking longer than he has, and on Saturday November 19 he decides to leave and asks Grimaldi to get 3 mules for him, and on Monday 21 he takes his leave of them, Grimaldi giving him a pass *'...pressing in it, that I going to Fokien to fetch Books for the Emperor's Service, none should presume to molest me, on account of the Arms, and a Black²⁹ I carry'd, but should be aiding to me upon occasion. The Father told me, that tho' I had been no way disturb'd by the Governors of Cities, in coming to Court; yet they might put me to some inconveniency in my return, and therefore I had need of his Pass, which was well known, and honour'd by all the Ministers of the Empire. I have the said Pass by me still, in the Chinese Tongue, it having sav'd me from any molestation on the Road.'*

Here suddenly is a picture of Gemelli sitting at a desk back in Naples, writing his travel account, with the pass on Chinese paper and in Chinese characters on the desk before him.

He takes his leave; *'Being to depart the next day, I took my leave of the Fathers, thanking them for all their favours. F. Grimaldi gave me an Almanack he had, made for the year 1696, in the Chinese, and Tartar Languages; and F. Offorie a Portuguese, gave me four other Books in the Tartar Tongue, and Provision of Sweetmeats.'* And the lion had not yet arrived, to the consternation of Grimaldi and his bretheren. Grimaldi walks with him to the city gates, and off he goes on his three mules, heading back to far-off Nanchang. He records his travel back, day by day, what it costs, what he eats (wisely) *'There might be good Eating in the Inns, but the Chineses refusing to pay more than their usual Ordinary at Dinner, and for Supper and Bed, the Host gave them the worst Fowls and Swines Flesh, but I made them kill the Fowls before my Face, and paid more for them, because I cannot Eat them stale.'* There are odd comments: *'The Day's Journey was 100 Ly. Wednesday 14th din'd at Leanxyen, having first pass'd through Tienpu, a large but open Town, where the Tartar remain'd that lov'd to be beaten by Boys.'* He reaches Nanchianfu (Nanchang) on the 29th, having taken 34 days from Peking. He finally reaches Canton and shows again his love of numbers: *'The Muletiers reckned from Peking to Nancianfu, 3213 Ly; and the Watermen from Nancianfu to Canton 2179; in all 5392 Ly, of 260 Paces each, which reduced to Italian Miles, make a Thousand four Hundred and Two.'*

Gemelli had intended to make for Amoy (Xiamen) and then take ship for Manila, but had to change his plans and leave from Macao. He meets old friends and is very much the seasoned traveller *'..I found three Spaniards, who came to Can-ton to lay out 180000 Pieces of Eight, they had brought aboard their Ship. Getting acquainted with them I laugh'd at the Wonders they made at my Boldness, in coming to Canton without a Pass, and then going on to Peking; whereas the Xupu or Customer, took thirty Pieces of them for their Pass.'* He is able to take part in

Country; so that they were forced to go away half Naked to Matacumbe, a Territory of Christian Indians.' He records a Council of all the Sea-Officers in Havana where there was a dispute about new Galleons being so tall that they must be loaded with merchandise and not sail empty, as required by the King, for fear of capsizing. Fortunately the decision was to load the holds, and his Galleon would thus sail safely. And so he hitches a free ride back to Spain with a treasure fleet: 'D. Ferdinand Chacon having generously given me my Passage gratis aboard his Galeon, he sent on Sunday 9th for my Equipage. Monday 10th, several Grummets³², who had receiv'd their Pay, ran a-way. Tuesday 11th, I took Leave of my Friends, and provided Sweetmeats for my Voyage.'

Gemelli arrived in Cadiz after a stormy, trouble 84 days voyage, and where there was great concern that the treasure fleet might have been lost. *'...and all the Shore cover'd with a Multitude of People come down to see us, the Bells throughout all the City Ringing to Eccho the People's Joy.'* Even though he is near home, he continues to record his travels, through Seville, Madrid, Toulouse, Marseilles, Monaco, Genoa, Milan, Bologna, Florence, Rome, still taking time to visit Churches and explore the cities. On Wednesday December 3, 1699, *'Riding eight miles after Dinner through delicious Plains, we came to Averfa, (thought to be built out of the Ruins of Atella,) and four miles from thence I began to meet Friends, who were come out to honour me; and after mutual Embraces we took Coach, and proceeding four miles farther, entred the long wish'd for City of Naples: And thus I finish'd my Journy round the World, having spent in it 5 Years 5 Months and 20 Days....'*

But he can't quite stop himself, and provides a couple more pages on describing Naples and its history. Then: *'But perhaps I have proceeded too far upon this Subject, and I fear I may have tir'd the Reader with my unpolish'd Discourse. It is fit therefore, that since the Voyage round the World is now ended, he apply himself to more profitable Studies; and that I put a period to the Labour of Writing, which I look upon as not inferior to that of Travelling.'*

There Gemelli Careri leaves us, and perhaps a little tired, but grateful that he saw writing as not inferior to travelling.

While Gemelli's account, published only about 5 months after his return, was widely popular³, there were continuing questions about its veracity. Could he have seen all these things that he described, or did he write the work from the comfort of Naples, with access to the extensive library of his friend Matteo Egizio? He did spend several months staying with Egizio on his return, but the latter confirmed later that he only contributed small grammatical edits, supporting the authenticity of the work.³ Du Halde, in his seminal work on China, published in 1735³³, declared that Gemelli had never in fact met the Kangxi Emperor, a suspicion still alive today³. There was open acknowledgement that he copied information from previous accounts such as those of Magalhaes and others, in fact some 24 authors were cited by Gemelli³, but that was not unusual. It was however, only later in the following centuries that the true value of the account was acknowledged, the work being referenced right through to the 19th C as a reliable source, particularly for the first-hand observations on Aurangzeb and Mexico. In this latter case, von Humboldt resurrected Gemelli's reputation by confirming that his findings were genuine and accurate. The current view is best seen in the commentary by Rui Manuel Loureiro³, concluding that the great voyage did take place, Gemelli used a variety of sources to build the work around the journal

of his travels, some sources were acknowledged and others not, and in all provided a great account of a great journey.

Gemelli was something of a celebrity after his return, seeing some eight editions of his work in Italian, French and English translations, giving lectures, and presumably living on the proceeds of his books. A rather poor, sculptured bust was raised in Taurianova in 1884, but it was damaged in 2020, and doesn't seem to have been repaired³⁴. The travels are not over.



¹ <https://ianferg.nz/an-universal-genius-louis-xivs-jesuit-fathers-in-peking/>

² <https://ianferg.nz/overland-to-peking-accounts-of-journeys-across-russia-siberia-and-china/>

³ There is a biography of Careri published in 2000 in Italian, and which doesn't seem to have been translated into English. Angela Maccarrone Amuso, Gianfrancesco Gemelli-Careri: L'Ulisse del XVII secolo. Rome, Gangemi, 2000. A journal article giving a comprehensive life and commentary on the work and its consequences has been published: Rui Manuel Loureiro. The Chinese adventures of an Italian globe-trotter: Gemelli Careri and his Giro del Mondo (1699–1700).

https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/9789813233256_0001

⁴ Matteo Egizio (1674-1745) was a classical scholar and contemporary of Careri, also based in Naples.

⁵ A friend, Counsellor of the city Amato, in Calabria.

⁶ Osterhammel, J., *Unfabling the East. The Enlightenment's encounter with Asia*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1918.

⁷ <http://www.digid-rift.com/origin-budget-travel-gemelli-careri-original-backpacker/>

⁸ Very little seems to be known about Andreas Magliar. He was an Italian artist and engraver, born in the 1680s, and so still quite young when involved in this production.

⁹ <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=k0hpAAAAcAAJ&pg=GBS.PP4>

¹⁰ <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=k0hpAAAAcAAJ&pg=GBS.PP4>

¹¹ Also Tartane, a small ship used for shipping and coastal trade in the Mediterranean.

¹² Tripoli of Syria, now in Lebanon and its second largest city.

¹³ From the Canary Islands, and thus Spanish.

¹⁴ A small cannon used in the 16th and 17th centuries.

¹⁵ Gemelli's account of China has been closely studied by Rui Manuel Loureiro, see footnote #3.

¹⁶ Lorcha – a junk-rigged vessel typical of Macao, with Chinese batten sails and a hull in the Portuguese or European style.

¹⁷ This was not the first Lion to be sent as tribute. In 1678, the Jesuit missionary Lodovico Buglio was involved in presenting a lion to the Kangxi Emperor, writing a treatise '*On Lions*' to go with it. This was instigated by the Jesuits at Macao concerned over relations with the new regime, and hoping for some liberalization of maritime trade and movements. The lion only lived for 15 days, but the Emperor took his sons to see it and the court poets wrote on it appropriately <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.4/43802>. See p.85. and subsequent text. Also: <https://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/post/28826/imperial-pets-furry-friends-in-the-forbidden-city>. The lion is a significant feature in Chinese art and culture, and some 20 lions had been sent as tribute to the Ming emperors over time. No further information beyond Gemelli's account has been found on its fate.

¹⁸ Perhaps equivalent to the pigin English term for the administrator of customs, the Hoppo, so familiar in English travel accounts. This position was established in Canton in 1685. Perhaps something similar was in Macao, or else it refers to the Hu Bu, or Ministry of Revenue, although Gemelli's account refers to a person.

¹⁹ Probably now Nanxiong, also historically known as Namyung, amongst other names.

²⁰ Li: Chinese measurement of distance, roughly 600 m at that time.

²¹ Gabriel Magalhaes or Magaillans (Fr.) 1610-1677, was a Portuguese Jesuit missionary who arrived on Hangzhou in 1640. During the upheavals of the Manchu take over, he was captured and, along with the Italian Jesuit Ludovico Buglio, taken to Peking in 1648. They were well-received by the Shunzhi Emperor, imprisoned by the Kangxi Emperor in 1671, reprieved and died in Peking in 1677. He wrote one of the best accounts of

China for the time: *Nouvelle Relation de la Chine, contenant la description des particularitez les plus considerables de ce grand empire*, published in 1688 after his death, from his manuscript taken back to France by Philippe Couplet. The original was in Portuguese and then translated into French, it would have been accessible to Gemelli.

²² This is probably the French word 'congé' meaning permission to depart or dismissal (not a present of congee, or porridge).

²³ Yuanmingyuan, or the old Summer Palace, the same as used by the Qianlong Emperor a hundred years later, where Lord Macartney first met that Emperor, and barbarically destroyed and looted by British troops under orders from Lord Elgin in 1860.

²⁴ The six sent by Louis XIV were led by Fontaney, and included Gerbillon, Bouvet (here Buet), Visdalou and Louise le Comte, who is not mentioned, The fifth, Tachard, stopped off at Siam. See <https://ianferg.nz/an-universal-genius-louis-xivs-jesuit-fathers-in-peking/>

²⁵ Kilian Stumpf (1655-1720), born in Würzburg, arrived in Canton in 1695 and because of his mathematical skills moved to Peking at the behest of the Emperor, where, he took leading roles in the missions and in teaching and practising mathematics and astronomy. He is reputed to have built the first glasshouse in China, got involved heavily in the Rites controversy and died in Peking, being buried alongside Matteo Ricci. See: <https://www.yumpu.com/it/document/read/16721159/biography-of-kilian-stumpf-sj-china-missionary>

²⁶ F. Antoine Thomas (1644-1709) was born in Namur in the Spanish Netherlands and arrived in Macau in 1682. He was called to Peking and took over from Ferdinand Verbiest as director of the Observatory upon the latter's death in 1688. He eventually became Superior of the Jesuits in Peking.

²⁷ F. Thomas Pereira (1645-1708) was a Portuguese Jesuit who arrived in China in 1672 and spent most of his life there in Peking, being sent along with F. Gerbillon to take part in negotiating the Treaty of Nerchinsk with F. Gerbillon, and with Antoine Thomas, unofficial director of the Peking observatory for some time.

²⁸ Philippe Couplet (1623-1693) was a Flemish Missionary who arrived in China in 1656. He returned to Europe in 1681 as Procurator of Jesuit missionaries, with the request to Louis XIV for more missionaries, and published works and translations on China, which would have been available to Gemelli both before and after his travels. Couplet eventually returned to China, but in May 1693, on the voyage, died as his ship approached Goa, too frail at 70 years to survive the effects of sea chest falling on him.

²⁹ Is this a black powder firearm?

³⁰ Probably Gemelli is referring to Johan Nieuhof, who was a member of the Dutch embassy to Peking in 1656. Nieuhof published his account in 1665. Nieuhof would have been a major source for Gemelli.

³¹ Local chieftain, used by the Spanish to describe local leaders, literally meaning King or Prince.

³² Apprentices or ships' boys who did menial work, from the Spanish word 'grumete' meaning a novice seaman.

³³ Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise . 1735

³⁴ <https://www.approdocalabria.it/giornale/taurianova-commissario-surace-ripari-lei-la-statua-di-gemelli-careri/>