Space and Conversion in Global Perspective examines experiences of conversion as they intersect with physical location, mobility, and interiority. The volume’s innovative approach is global and encompasses multiple religious traditions. Conversion emerges as a powerful force in early modern globalization.

In thirteen essays, the book ranges from the urban settings of Granada and Cuzco to mission stations in Latin America and South India; from villages in Ottoman Palestine and Middle-Volga Russia to Italian hospitals and city squares; and from Atlantic slave ships to the inner life of a Muslim turned Jesuit. Drawing on extensive archival and iconographic materials, this collection invites scholars to rethink conversion in light of the spatial turn.

Contributors are Paolo Aranha, Emanuele Colombo, Irene Fosi, Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, Agnieszka Jagodzińska, Aliocha Maldavsky, Giuseppe Marcocci, Susana Bastos Mateus, Adriano Prosperi, Gabriela Ramos, Rocco Saccomaghi, Felicita Tramontana, Guillermo Wilde, and Oxana Zemtsova.

This series of publications brings together new material on well-considered themes within the wide area of Early Modern Studies. Contributions may come from any of the disciplines within the humanities: history, art history, literary history, book history, church history, social history, history of the humanities, of the theatre, of cultural life and institutions. Each volume addresses a single theme and articles are selected for the freshness of their approach and for the extent to which they elucidate aspects of the theme of the volume. The themes are carefully selected on the basis of a number of criteria, the most important of which are that they should address issues about which there is a lively debate within the international community of scholars and that they should be of interest to a variety of disciplines.
Space and Conversion in Global Perspective

Edited by

Giuseppe Marcocci, Wietse de Boer, Aliocha Maldavsky and Ilaria Pavan
Contents

Acknowledgements vii
List of Illustrations viii
Notes on the Editors xii
Notes on the Contributors xiv

Introduction: Space, Conversion, and Global History 1
Giuseppe Marcocci, Wietse de Boer, Aliocha Maldavsky, and Ilaria Pavan

PART 1
City and Country

1 Granada as a New Jerusalem: The Conversion of a City 15
Mercedes García-Arenal

2 Conversion on the Scaffold: Italian Practices in European Context 44
Adriano Prosperi

3 The Incas of Cuzco and the Transformation of Sacred Space under Spanish Colonial Rule 61
Gabriela Ramos

4 The Spread of Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century Palestinian Villages 81
Felicità Tramontana

5 Christian Missionaries and Jewish Spaces: British Missions in the Kingdom of Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century 103
Agnieszka Jagodzińska
PART 2
Segregation and Permeability

6 The Citadel of the Lost Souls: Spaces of Orthodoxy and Penance in Sixteenth-Century Lisbon  129
Susana Bastos Mateus

7 The Hospital as a Space of Conversion: Roman Examples from the Seventeenth Century  154
Irene Fosi

8 The Political Dimension of Space-Time Categories in the Jesuit Missions of Paraguay (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)  175
Guillermo Wilde

9 The Social and Physical Spaces of the Malabar Rites Controversy  214
Paolo Aranha

PART 3
Distance and Mobility

10 Saltwater Conversion: Trans-Oceanic Sailing and Religious Transformation in the Iberian World  235
Giuseppe Marcocci

11 Giving for the Mission: The Encomenderos and Christian Space in the Late Sixteenth-Century Andes  260
Aliocha Maldavsky

12 Telling the Untellable: The Geography of Conversion of a Muslim Jesuit  285
Emanuele Colombo and Rocco Sacconaghi

13 Confessional Rivals: Conversions and Apostasies in the Middle-Volga Region of the Russian Empire (Nineteenth Century)  308
Oxana Zemtsova

Index Nominum  327
Acknowledgements

The essays collected in this volume are based on papers given at the international symposium *Space and Conversion*, which was held in Pisa at the Scuola Normale Superiore on 13–14 December 2011. We wish to acknowledge the generous financial support offered by the Faculty of Arts of the Scuola Normale, which has allowed us to gather scholars from all over the world in Pisa. This book has also benefited from the contribution of those who participated in the symposium without authoring an article. We are deeply grateful to Véronique Castagnet, Simon Ditchfield, Jörg Deventer, Todd Endelman, Verónica Gutiérrez, Carol E. Harrison, Girolamo Imbruglia, Samuela Marconcini, Elena Mazzini, Ricarda Matheus, Stefania Pastore, Giorgos Plakotos, and Ellie Schainker. A special thanks goes to David Sorkin (City University of New York), who was a member of the scientific committee, but was unable to attend the conference due to family circumstances. Wietse de Boer joined the team of editors on behalf of the Editorial Board of *Intersections*. We thank Karl Enenkel and the Board for their keen interest in the project and their willingness to publish it in this series.
List of Illustrations

Figures 1.1–1.2 (accompanying the article of Mercedes García-Arenal)

1.2 Anton van den Wyngaerde, *View of Granada* (1567), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Ms. Min. 41, fol. 55r. Image © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna 29

Figures 3.1–3.6 (accompanying the article of Gabriela Ramos)

3.1 Temple dedicated to the Sun, Coricancha. Photo © Gabriela Ramos 64
3.2 Map showing the location of Cuzco parishes (ca. 1600). Map © Évelyne Mesclier 67
3.3 Colcampata, Cuzco. Photo © Gabriela Ramos 75
3.4 San Cristóbal, Cuzco. Photo © Gabriela Ramos 75
3.5 San Francisco, Cuzco. Photo © Gabriela Ramos 76
3.6 San Pedro, Cuzco (formerly Nuestra Señora de los Remedios or Parish of the Hospital de Naturales). Photo © Gabriela Ramos 77

Figures 5.1–5.7 (accompanying the article of Agnieszka Jagodzińska)

5.2 Chapel of the Institute for Jewish converts at Warsaw. Photograph in *Jewish Intelligence* 2 (1846), Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, Dep. CMJ e. 44, before p. 33. Image © The University of Oxford 109
5.4 'A secret inquirer'—a Jew reading a Christian tract watched by two missionaries. Photograph in *Jewish Records* (October 1878),
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

5.5 Scene at the Polish railway station. Photograph in *Jewish Records* (October 1877), Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, Dep. CMJ e. 24, 37. Image © The University of Oxford

5.6 A missionary tract in Hebrew. *Ir ha-miklat [The City of Refuge]* (1826), Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, Dep. CMJ e. 61, title page. Image © The University of Oxford

5.7 Polish Jews as imagined in the missionary press. Image in *Children's Jewish Advocate* (January 1876), Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, Dep. CMJ f. 34, before title page. Image © The University of Oxford

Figures 6.1–6.4 (accompanying the article of Susana Bastos Mateus)

6.1 Limits of the penitential area connected to the College for the Doctrine of the Faith. Reworked version of an engraved map of Lisbon by Georg Braun, in *Civitates Orbium Terrarum*, vol. V (1598). Image © Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon

6.2 Current view of the ancient penitential neighbourhood, Lisbon. Photo © Susana Bastos Mateus

6.3 Current view of the Rua das Escolas Gerais and the entry to the neighbourhood of Santa Marinha, Lisbon. Photo © Susana Bastos Mateus

6.4 Current view of the Rua do Salvador in Lisbon, which ended at the Church of Salvador. Photo © Susana Bastos Mateus

Figures 7.1–7.9 (accompanying the article of Irene Fosi)

7.1 Giovanni Battista Falda, *Church and Hospital of San Giacomo in Augusta (San Giacomo degli Incurabili)*, Rome (1665)

7.2 Camillo Acquisti, *The Hospital of Santa Maria della Consolazione, Rome* (1814)

7.3 Giovanni Battista Falda, *The Hospital of Santo Spirito in Sassia (Hospital of the Holy Ghost)*, Rome (1665)

7.4 *The English Hospice, Rome* (ca. 1580). Woodcut. Image © Archivio del Venerabile Collegio Inglese, Rome

7.5 *Plan of the Venerable English College, Rome* (ca. 1575). Image © Archivio del Venerabile Collegio Inglese, Rome
7.6 Giuseppe Vasi, *Church and Hospice of ss. Trinità dei Pellegrini*, Rome (1756) 163

7.7 *St. Camillus de' Lellis helping the sick during the plague*, Church of Santa Maria Maddalena, Rome. Photo © Ordine dei Ministri degli Infermi, Rome 166

7.8 Giuseppe Vasi, *The Hospital of San Salvatore (San Giovanni in Laterano)*, Rome (1756) 167

7.9 *The Hospice of the Convertendi*, Rome. Photograph, ca. 1930 © Museo di Roma, Archivio Fotografico, Rome 172

Figures 8.1–8.12 (accompanying the article of Guillermo Wilde)


8.2 Tupinamba Indians of the Brazilian Coast. Source: Staden Hans, *Warhaftige Historia und beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der Wilden Nacketen, Grimmigen Menschfresser-Leuthen in der Newerwelt America gelegen* (1557) 184

8.3 Plan of mission town of Candelaria. Source: Peramás José Manuel, *La república de Platón y los guaraníes* [1793] (Buenos Aires: 1946) 187


8.6 Map produced in connection with the litigation of 1773. Image © National Archive, Buenos Aires, AGN IX.40.2.5 202
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

8.7–8.8 Images from the Guarani imprint of Juan Eusebio Nieremberg y Otín’s *De la Diferencia entre lo Temporal y lo Eterno* (1705) 205


8.12 Angel musician holding maraca in the mission town of Santísima Trinidad. Photo © Bozidar Darko Sustersic 210

Figure 9.1 (accompanying the article of Paolo Aranha)


Figures 10.1–10.4 (accompanying the article of Giuseppe Marcocci)

10.1 Sandro Botticelli (attributed), *Madonna del Mare* (second half of the fifteenth century). Image © Galleria dell’Accademia, Florence 237


10.3 Alardo de Popma, *La nave de la Iglesia.* Source: Melchor Preto, *Psalmodia Eucharistica* (1622) 241

10.4 Unknown author, *St. Francis Xavier’s Departure from Lisbon to India* (ca. 1730). © Museu Nacional da Arte Antiga, Lisbon 249

Figures 12.1–12.2 (accompanying the article of Emanuele Colombo and Rocco Sacconaghi)

12.1 Engraving representing Baldassarre Loyola (n.d.). Image © Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome, Collezione Lamalle 291


Figure 13.1 (accompanying the article of Oxana Zemtsova)

13.1 Map of the Volga Region 309
Notes on the Editors

Wietse de Boer is Professor of History at Miami University (Ohio). His main research interests are in the religious and cultural history of early modern Italy. He is the author of The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan (2001). Recent publications include the volume (co-edited with Christine Göttler), Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe (Intersections 26, 2012), and contributions to Intersections volumes 9 (Spirits Unseen, 2009) and 17 (Meditatio—Refashioning the Self, 2010). He is currently completing a monograph on religion and sensory experience in early modern Italy.

Aliocha Maldavsky is Maître de conférences in Early Modern and Colonial Latin-American History at the University of Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Her research has focused on Jesuit missionaries in the Andean region and European mission vocations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She has published Vocaciones inciertas. Misión y misioneros en la provincia jesuita del Perú en los siglos XVI y XVII (2012). Junior member of the Institut Universitaire de France, she is now working on lay commitment in religious and evangelizing institutions in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Andes.

Giuseppe Marcocci is Assistant Professor in Early Modern History at the University of Tuscia, Viterbo. His main area of research is the early-modern Iberian world, with special attention to the Portuguese empire. His publications include a number of essays and articles, and four books: I custodi dell’ortodossia: Inquisizione e Chiesa nel Portogallo del Cinquecento (2004), L’invenzione di un impero: Politica e cultura nel mondo portoghese, 1450–1600 (2011), A consciência de um império: Portugal e o seu mundo, sécs. XV–XVII (2012), and (with José Pedro Paiva) História da Inquisição portuguesa, 1536–1821 (2013). His current project is about writing world history in Renaissance Europe.

Ilaria Pavan is Assistant Professor in Modern History at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa. Her main field of research is the history of Italian Jewry and Italian antisemitism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her
publications include *Persecution, Indifference and Amnesia: The Restoration of Jewish Rights in Postwar Italy* (2006) and (with Matteo Al Kalak) *Un'altra fede: Le case dei catecumeni in area estense 1583–1938* (2013). She is currently working on the social history of Jewish conversions in Italy from the late eighteenth century to the Holocaust.
Notes on the Contributors

**Paolo Aranha**
a Marie Curie—Gerda Henkel Fellow at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München; earlier he was a Marie Curie Intra-European Fellow at the Warburg Institute, London. He is about to defend his doctoral dissertation on the history of the Malabar Rites controversy at the European University Institute, Florence. His main area of research is the early modern history of Christianity in India, especially the Catholic missions to South India, the Goa Inquisition, Indo-Portuguese religious and social history, as well as early-modern Catholic representations of Hinduism. His publications include the book *Il cristianesimo latino in India* (2006) and several articles.

**Emanuele Colombo**
is Assistant Professor at DePaul University, Chicago. His research is focused on religious history in the early modern period, particularly on theology and politics, Jesuit missions, and Christian-Muslim encounters. He is the author of two books on Jesuit history: *Un gesuita inquieto: Carlo Antonio Casnedi (1643–1725) e il suo tempo* (2006) and *Convertire i musulmani: L'esperienza di un gesuita spagnolo del Seicento* (2007); he is co-editor (with Bernard Heyberger, Mercedes García-Arenal and Paola Vismara) of the volume, *L'Islam visto da occidente: Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte all'Islam* (2009). His Italian translation of Robert Bireley, *The Refashion of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, was published in 2010. He is member of the Accademia Ambrosiana, Milan.

**Irene Fosi**
is Professor of Early Modern History at the University “G. D'Annunzio”, Chieti-Pescara. As Alexander von Humbolt-Stiftung fellow she spent many years in German universities (Marburg, Tübingen, Freiburg). Her main research topics are justice in early modern Italy, especially in the Papal State, religious conversion in the age of confessionalisation, and the cultural and diplomatic relations between Rome, the papal court and the Holy Roman Empire. She is author of numerous articles and books, including *La società violenta* (1985), *All’ombra dei Barberini: Fedeltà e servizio nella Roma barocca* (1997), *La giustizia del papa: Sudditi e tribunali nello Stato Pontificio* (2007), Engl. trans. *Papal Justice: Subjects and Court in the Papal state, 1500–1750* (2011), and *Convertire lo straniero: Stranieri e Inquisizione a Roma in età moderna* (2011).
Mercedes García-Arenal is Research Professor at the Centro de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, CSIC, Madrid. Her main area of research concerns minorities in early modern Iberia and Jews in the lands of Islam. She is the Principal Investigator of the ERC Advanced Grant CORPI, 'Conversion, Overlapping Religiousities, Polemics, Interaction: Early Modern Iberia and Beyond'. Her most recent books are, with Fernando R. Mediano, The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, The Forged Lead Books of Granada and the Beginnings of Orientalism (2013), and with Gerard Wiegers (eds.), A Mediterranean Diaspora: The Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain (2014).


Susana Bastos Mateus is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Évora. Her dissertation deals with the consequences of the general conversion of the Portuguese Jews in 1497 and the social dimensions of the New Christians before and after the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition. She is a researcher at the Centro Interdisciplinar de História, Culturas, Sociedades, University of Évora (CIDEHUS/UE) and associated with the Chair of Sephardic Studies “Alberto Benveniste” at the University of Lisbon. She is co-author (with Paulo Mendes Pinto) of Lisboa, 19 de Abril de 1506: O Massacre dos Judeus (Lisbon: 2007).

Adriano Prosperi is Emeritus Professor of Early Modern History at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa. He is a specialist of early modern Italian religious history, including the Roman Inquisition. He has published Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari (1996), Leresia del Libro Grande: Storia di
NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS


Gabriela Ramos
is University Lecturer in Latin American History at the University of Cambridge and Fellow and College Lecturer at Newnham College, Cambridge. She is the author of Death and Conversion in the Andes: Lima and Cuzco, 1532–1670 (2010), and editor of Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes (2014).

Rocco Sacconaghi
is Adjunct Professor at the Catholic University of Milan. He studied in Italy, Germany, and the US. In 2011, he received a research fellowship from the Lonergan Center at Boston College and in 2012–13 he taught in the Philosophy Department at Boston College. His main research interests are German and French contemporary philosophy, the epistemology of the human sciences, and the philosophical implications of the Christian theological tradition. He is working on a book project on the relationship between philosophy and the empirical sciences in Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Felicità Tramontana
is Assistant Professor at the University of Palermo. Her main research interest is in the social history of the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period, with special attention to religious conversions in Palestinian villages and population patterns in the area. She is the author of several articles in international journals and of the volume Passages of Faith: Conversion in Palestinian Villages, 17th Century (2014). In the framework of the Collaborative Research Centre “Differenz + Integration” (Universities of Leipzig and Halle-Wittenberg), she has worked on Mamluk chronicles.

Guillermo Wilde
is senior researcher at the National Scientific Council of Argentina (CONICET) and Associate Professor at the National University of San Martin, Buenos Aires. His main areas of research include the indigenous history of the Americas, colonial art and music, and mission history from a comparative perspective. He is the author of Religion y Poder en las misiones guaraníes (2009), awarded the Latin American Association Studies (LASA) Premio
Iberoamericano Award (2010). He has written several articles on the Jesuit Missions in South America, and has recently published the edition *Saberes de la conversión. Jesuitas, Indígenas e Imperios Coloniales en las fronteras de la Cristiandad* (2011). He has been a postdoctoral fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the John Carter Brown Library, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro, and the Fulbright Commission, among other academic institutions.

**Oxana Zemtsova**

is a Ph.D. Candidate at the European University Institute, Florence. She received a Kandidat nauk degree in History from the University of Yoshkar-Ola. Her main areas of interest include the social history of the Russian empire in the late nineteenth—early twentieth centuries and the history of education.
CHAPTER 9

The Social and Physical Spaces of the Malabar Rites Controversy

Paolo Aranha

Introduction

During the last decades, categories such as 'Hinduism' and 'caste' have been strongly criticized as by-products of the British colonial enterprise in India. It is argued that these classification instruments served to discipline and control the Indian subjects by manipulating and reifying fluid religious and social dynamics.\footnote{Pennington B.K., Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and Colonial Construction of Religion (New York: 2005).} Although necessary, such a critique finds a specific limit in its almost exclusive focus on the British colonial period, ignoring the role played by Catholic missionaries, particularly during the early modern age.

A fundamental moment in the production of Catholic orientalist representations of India was the Malabar Rites controversy, a wide and violent clash over the missionary method followed by the Jesuits in the missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic during the first half of the eighteenth century. The scholarly literature on the Malabar Rites controversy is extremely limited, primarily due to the great abundance and geographic dispersion of the archival and manuscripts sources essential for its reconstruction. Moreover, old and new hagiographical strategies have made it even more difficult to understand the effective meaning of the controversy. The latter has usually been understood as a conflict over an alleged 'inculturation' of Tridentine Catholicism within South India: the *accomodatio* ('adaptation') proposed by the Italian Jesuit Roberto Nobili (1577–1656) in the Madurai mission at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and enforced by his successors until the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the following century, was thus seen merely as an attempt to adapt Christianity to a non-European culture.\footnote{This can still be seen in recent scholarly works, such as Collins P.M., "The Praxis of Inculturation from Mission: Roberto de Nobili's Example and Legacy", *Ecclesiology* 3 (2007) 323–344; Pavone S., "Tra Roma e il Malabar: Il dibattito intorno all'amministrazione dei sacramenti ai paria (secc. XVII–XVIII)", *Cristianesimo nella storia* 31 (2010) 647–680; eadem.} As I will argue, the
anachronistic projection of categories proper to contemporary Catholicism has led observers to underestimate the relevance of power relations in the construction of a religious community staffed by European missionaries (mostly Portuguese and Italians) but not subject to a European political power. As a result of this neglect, scholars have ignored that the Malabar Rites were primarily Christianized Hindu samskāras (i.e., ‘sacramental’ rituals) functional to the reproduction and distinction of caste hierarchies, rather than mere cultural traits that should be accepted in order to make Christianity more palatable to non-European peoples. Far from being an enlightened experiment of early modern missionaries, the Malabar Rites were primarily an expression of the prevailing agency of the leading native converts. On the other hand, the Jesuit tolerance of caste structures was combined with a clear rejection of Hindu religious practices, so that it is to be ruled out that the missionaries ever had a ‘syncretic’ intentionality.

This chapter uses a visual source in order to explore the connection between physical, social and religious spaces in the early-modern ‘adaptationist’ Jesuit missions of South India. The document we consider here is a multi-view orthographic projection of a typical church in the Madurai mission, presented by the Jesuit Procurator Broglia Antonio Brandolini to the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office in 1725. The purpose of the image was to show how the ‘noble’ castes and the untouchable paraiyār (i.e., ‘pariahs’ or ‘untouchables’, as they were called during the British Raj) could participate in the same Mass while avoiding all physical contacts. The image integrates—and acts as an interpretative key to understand—the abundant textual sources on the discussions about the segregation of the paraiyār held during the eighteenth-century Malabar Rites controversy. In my interpretation, a careful analysis of the image can ascertain a clear directionality from left to right in the allocation of spaces within the church complex to the missionary, the higher castes and the paraiyār, as well as to the women of both caste groups. Particularly relevant was also the proportion of space granted to each community. Notwithstanding their numerical strength, the paraiyār were segregated in a mere one-third of the entire church complex. They were not allowed either to get in touch with the ‘noble’ Christians, or to have direct contact with the missionary, whose residence was placed in the high-caste sector. In addition to the left-right
direction, a contextual reading of the image also makes it possible to discover a geographic orientation in which, contrary to usual Christian assumptions, the vector of sacral and social power proceeds from the West to the East. In conclusion, the analysis of this specific visual source shows how the sacramental discrimination of the paraiyār was located at the crossroads between a specific European hierarchical culture and the dynamics of social conflict that characterized early modern South India. It is also an example of the potentialities that space-based analyses can have in the interpretation of the early modern history of conversions and missions.

The Malabar Rites Controversy and the Critique of Orientalism

The critique of Orientalism, undertaken particularly in the wake of the influential and controversial contribution by Edward Said, has greatly affected the studies on Indian colonial history. Categories such as ‘Hinduism’ and ‘caste’, crucial in the epistemological regime of the British Raj, have been denounced by scholars as essentialist reifications functional to the colonial control of Indian subjects. The rise of fundamentalist political forces such as the Bharatiya Janata Party or the Shiv Sena, as well as the ever more effective and pervasive exercise of violence by militant organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, have made particularly urgent the study of the modern systematization of the category of ‘Hinduism’, undertaken first within a colonial context and then assumed by nationalist movements, inspired also by the Italian fascist model, so as to create an hegemonic, homogeneous identity.

Some scholars have claimed that ‘the notion of “Hinduism” is itself a Western-inspired abstraction, which until the nineteenth century bore little or no resemblance to the diversity of Indian religious belief and practice.’ Such a critical stance, however, should not be pushed to the extreme conclusion that Hinduism was ‘invented’ by the Britons. A religious awareness that was specifically Hindu and not merely ‘sectarian’ (such as in the case of

7 Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*
more limited Śaivite or Vaiṣṇava identities) had already taken shape during
the Indian Middle Ages as a consequence of the contact with Islam. Today's
system of caste hierarchies, far from being considered any more as a sort of
natural and perennial characteristic of Indian society, has been analysed by
recent studies as a modern artefact, whose purpose was to simplify and ratio-
nalize an infinitely more complex and articulated web of social relations, to
the apparent advantage of the colonial regime. If it is true that even castes, as
much as Hinduism, were not a mere and straightforward British construction,
it is nonetheless clear that it was colonialism that consolidated and elevated
them to primary factors of the political, economic and social life of India, for
instance as essential criteria for party belonging and allegiance.

Such a critique of Orientalism has indeed the merit of having demonstrated
that certain fundamental characters of modern India achieved their current
configuration during the colonial age; and it contradicts the stereotype, ne-
ither innocent nor candid, of a land beyond history, constantly equal to itself.
However, the role played by early-modern Catholic Orientalism in the con-
struction of a European understanding of India is still insufficiently known.
A fundamental moment in this process was represented by the Malabar Rites
controversy. The controversy is often defined as ‘famous’, although the schol-
ary literature that has dealt with it is extremely limited. Its hagiographic and

9 For caste and colonialism see Dirks N., Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of
Modern India (Princeton: 2001); for the caste system’s repercussions on Indian democracy
see Shah G. (ed.), Caste and Democratic Politics in India (New Delhi: 2002).
10 Murr S., L’Inde philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire, 2 vols. (Paris: 1987); Zupanov L.G.,
Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century
India (New Delhi: 1999); eadem, Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India, 16th–
17th Centuries (Ann Arbor: 2005); Sweetman W., Mapping Hinduism: ‘Hinduism’ and the
Study of Indian Religions (Halle: 2003). Further research is provided by recent disserta-
tions: Gelders R., Asetics and Crafty Priests: Orientalism and the European Representations
of India, Ph.D. dissertation (Universiteit Gent: 2009); Trento M., Semantiche della conver-
sione: Traduzioni e traslazioni di linguaggi nell’opera del missionario gesuita Roberto Nobili,
M.A. thesis (Università degli Studi di Torino: 2010); Ventura R. Nunes Jesus, Conversão e
conversabilidade: Discursos da missão e do genitio na documentação do Padroado Português
do Oriente (séculos XVI e XVII), Ph.D. dissertation (Universidade de Lisboa: 2011);
Chakravarty A., The Empire of Apostles: Jesuits in Brazil and India, 16th–17th c., Ph.D. dis-
sertation (The University of Chicago: 2012). But see now Xavier Á. Barreto – Zupanov L.G.,
11 It is defined as ‘famous’, for instance, in Smith S.F., The Suppression of the Society of Jesus,
2nd ed. (Leominster: 2004) 301; Melo G. Mercês, The Recruitment and Formation of the
Native Clergy in India (16th–19th Century): An Historico-Canonical Study (Lisbon: 1955)
anachronistic character does not allow one to make sense of the relevance of power relations within the missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic: a major effect of *accomodatio* in South India was indeed the official recognition of caste hierarchies within the newly established Catholic community. As we mentioned above, the Malabar Rites were primarily Christianized Hindu *samskāras* and the Jesuit defence of them definitely did not anticipate the contemporary theological notion of inculturation. If the missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic were torn apart by a furious, decades-long controversy, it was definitely because the very material constitution of the local societies was contested. While cultural differences indeed played a major role, the three missions were ravaged by such a fierce conflict because the adoption of native social hierarchies had been the main condition that the missionaries had negotiated with the local elites in order to ‘open the door’ to Christianity, just to use an image that was typical of Nobili’s rhetoric:

As I reached this city, where the devil had locked the door to the Gospel, in such a way that nothing could be achieved, although a residence had been established there fifteen years ago and the Fathers residing there had rare virtue and sanctity, eventually Our Lord began to open this door.12

Such a new understanding of the Malabar Rites controversy is part of a more general trend that can be seen in recent and ongoing studies on the early modern history of Christianity in India, which pay greater attention to different forms of local agency.13 Therefore, only an aprioristic faith in an alleged overwhelming and irresistible European agency or in a super-human Jesuitical shrewdness could lead us to see the endeavours of the Society of Jesus in

49: Dirks, *Castes of Mind* 25; Forrester D.B., "Hierarchy, Equality and Religion", in idem, *Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Farnham, Surrey: 2010) 43. Incidentally it should be noticed that the very expression ‘Malabar Rites’ was not employed during the seventeenth century and was never used in the controversy directly concerning Roberto Nobili. For a critical overview see Aranha P., "Malabar Rites: Towards a History of the Early Modern Controversies on *Accomodatio* in the Jesuit Missions of South India", in Fabre P.-A. – Županov, I.G. (eds.), *The Rites Controversy in the Early Modern World* (Leiden – Boston: forthcoming).

12 Letter from Madurai to the Jesuit Fabio de Fabius dated 8 October 1609, in Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Rome, Goa 51, fol. 13v (‘Arrivato che fui a esta cita nella quale il Demonio haveva serrata la porta de maniera al S.to Evangelio che ha gia da 15 anni che ca standing residentia non si potette far niente essendo li P.ri che qua residivano di singolar virtu he santitade. Comincio adesso N. S. a aprir questa porta’).

Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic as inspired by some sort of 'syncretic missionary approach'. Such an interpretation would conclude that, if the three South Indian missions displayed phenomena of Hindu-Catholic religious synthesis, this could happen only because the Jesuits had deliberately and consciously planned to mix Christianity and the Indian 'heathenism'. In fact, it is essential to differentiate Jesuit intentionality, informing a specific missionary approach, from concrete outcomes of religious interactions, as Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart have suggested precisely in relation to the modern concept of inculturation. If Catholic hierarchies stress today that the inculturation they are promoting has nothing to do with 'syncretism', such a differentiation would have been even more sharp in the age of the Counter-Reformation.

Inculturation and *accomodatio* are indeed different, particularly in the South Indian context, inasmuch as the former has a post-colonial drive and the latter is primarily related to a typically early-modern concern for maintaining and enforcing social hierarchies as castes in so-called 'holistic societies'. However, it is clear that both inculturation and *accomodatio* do express an effort to localize Christianity in non-European contexts. Both missionary


15 Shaw R. – Stewart C., "Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism", in Shaw R. – Stewart C. (eds.), *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (London – New York: 1994) 1–26, at 11: 'As anthropologists we would probably label many instances of inculturation 'syncretism' in so far as they involve the combination of diverse traditions in the area of religion. Representatives of the Catholic Church would immediately dispute this usage, however, and reserve 'syncretism' for a narrower (and altogether negative) subset of such syntheses where they perceive that the Truth of the Christian message is distorted or lost'.

16 Louis Dumont has argued that the modern ideal of equality emerged in the West in the eighteenth century, in the context of an individualist society. However, the French anthropologist claimed that far more widespread, both geographically and chronologically, were the holistic societies in which the individual was considered inferior to the social totality. See Dumont L, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, trans. M. Sainsbury, L. Dumont, B. Gulati, 2nd rev. ed. (Chicago: 1980).

17 The localization we can detect in both *accomodatio* and inculturation is of a different nature and more radical in comparison with the 'local religion' considered by Christian W.A., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: 1981). Another type of localization can be found in Menegon E., *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: 2009). Differently from local transformations of Christianity in Fujian, following 'practices and beliefs of diverse local religious expressions, frequently heterodox and heteroprax in state and elite opinions' (ibidem, 3), the localization expressed in India was concerned both with Brahmanical
strategies may lead to compromise solutions, but neither of them is based on a relativist and conciliatory approach theorized and consciously enacted by the missionaries. The complex dynamic of the Jesuit adaptationist strategy is explained in an exemplary way by David Mosse, as he considers specifically the Tamil region both at the time of the Malabar Rites controversy and after the re-establishment of the Society of Jesus:

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jesuits' tolerance of Indian cultural traditions, including those of caste, contrasts sharply with their strong rejection of what was understood as Hindu religion. Fundamental to salvation was the rejection of Hindu religious practices, and the diaries of Jesuit parish priests indicate severe sanctions imposed upon those who 'attend pagan worship and secure the things offered to the devil'. Ironically, it was precisely this intolerance of Hindu 'religion' which actually encouraged the incorporation of Hindu ritual forms (and no doubt with them Hindu conceptions) into Catholic contexts.

As counterintuitive as it may appear, both today and at the time of the Malabar Rites controversy, the Jesuit tolerance of caste structures was combined with a clear 'rejection of Hindu religious practices': the strategy of *accomodatio*, implying 'the incorporation of Hindu ritual forms (and no doubt with them Hindu conceptions)', was deployed by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus precisely to fight Hinduism.\(^{18}\)

While the adversaries of the Jesuit missionaries tried to portray them, at least in the most venomous polemical writings, as supporters of paganism, it is impossible to find a single hint suggesting that the Jesuits had ever conceived their apostolate as an effort to mix Christianity and other local religions. On the contrary, their task was precisely the 'spiritual conquest of the East', imposing Christianity over the native belief system.\(^{19}\) In order to pursue that goal it

---


19 The notion of a 'spiritual conquest of the East' was used as title of a famous history of the Franciscan missions in Portuguese Asia, composed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but printed only half a century ago, namely Trindade Paulo da, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente em que se dá relação de algumas cousas mais notáveis que fizeram os Frades Menores da Santa Provínica de S. Tomé da India Oriental em a pregação da fé*
could result expedient to adapt Christianity to social structures and customs very different from the European ones. In India this could imply accepting caste distinctions and even tolerating the segregation of the most humble social groups by means of practices of 'untouchability', as the case-study I am going to present will show.  

Liturgy and Untouchability: Social and Physical Spaces of the Malabar Rites Controversy

The image reproduced below [Fig. 9.1] is taken from an apologetic work published anonymously in 1729 by Fr. Broglia Antonio Brandolini (1677-1747), Procurator of the Jesuit missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic to the Roman Curia in the controversy on the Malabar Rites. As the author specified, he had submitted this architectural representation—a multi-view orthographic projection showing a church of the 'nobles' and 'Parreas', as well as houses of the missionaries—to Pope Benedict XIII and to the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office in 1725, in an attempt to obtain a repeal or at least a moderation of the decree Inter graviores, published in 1704 by Carlo Tomaso Maillard de Tournon, Patriarch of Antioch and Papal Legate to China and East Indies, while sojourning in the South Indian harbour of Pondichéry. The various customs and practices described in the decree are those Malabar Rites that led to a fierce controversy, which was to last for forty years. 

References:


21 "Disegno della Chiesa de’ Nobili, e Parreas, entro lo stesso recinto di muro esteriore, e della casa del Missionario", in Brandolini Broglia Antonio, Risposta alle accuse date al praticato siv'ora da’ Religiosi della Compagnia di Gesù, nelle Missioni del Madurey, Mayssur, e Carnate, in due libri diversi dal reverendissimo Padre Fra Luigi Maria Lucino del Venerabil’ Ordine de’ Predicatori, Maestro di Sacra Teologia, e Commissario Generale del Santo Uffizio in Roma. Opera d’un Professore della medesima Sacra Teologia, 3 vols. (Cologne, [s.n.]: 1739), vol. II, pt. 2, between 600 and 601. A printed copy of the same map can be found in Archivio della Congregazione per l’Evangelizzazione dei Popoli de Propaganda Fide, Rome, Scritture riferite ai congressi, Indie Orientali e Cina, Miscellanea 14, fols. 316r-334v, at 325r.

22 The text of the decree, issued on 23 June 1704 and published on the following 8 July, can be found in De Martinis R. (ed.), Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide Pars Prima complectens.
FIGURE 9.1 Disegno della Chiesa de’ Nobili, e Parreias, entro lo stesso recinto di muro esteriore, e della casa del Missionario.

Source: Brandolini Broglia Antonio, Risposta alle accuse date al praticato sin’ora da’ Religiosi della Compagnia di Giesù, nelle Missioni del Madurey, Mayssur, e Carnate (1729).
These ‘Parreas’ were actually the paraīyār, a specific jāti (caste as a professional group) of South India. By metonymy their name was often used to indicate all the numerous castes that were subject to untouchability.\(^{23}\) As for the ‘nobles’, the castes specifically concerned were—in terms of varṇa (caste as a ritual group)—mere südras, placed at the bottom of the ideal fourfold social scheme devised in the puruṣasūkta hymn of the Rgveda (10. 90) and including above them the brāhmanas, the kṣatriyas (warriors) and the vaiśyas (merchants, farmers, cattle-herders and artisans). However,

there are two facts about the Sudras [sic]. First, some powerful communities were counted in the caste hierarchies as Sudras, but they enjoyed the highest social prestige. The Reddys [Reddis] of Andhra, the Vellalas [Vellālas] of Tamil Nadu, and the Nayars [Nāyars] of Malabar never accepted the four-fold division though the Brahmins described them as Sudras. Also, they enjoyed as communities social power similar to that claimed by the Kshatriyas [sic]. Secondly, ‘the Sudras seem to have produced an unusually large number of royal families even in more recent times.’\(^{24}\)

In the Tamil context, namely in the cultural region within which the Madurai mission was placed, the roles belonging theoretically to the kṣatriyas and the vaiśyas were fulfilled by a number of different castes, all together labelled by the missionaries as ‘nobles’. Even more strikingly, between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries the Tamil country was ruled by the Nāyakas, kings of Śūdra origin whose legitimacy and ritual purity was affirmed by court poets with elegant subversions of the varṇa model.\(^{25}\)

The visual document provided by Brandolini did not concern a particular point of the decree Inter graviores, as the latter did not contain any specific provision concerning the way churches should be built in the three Jesuit missions. However, Brandolini presented the illustration to the Holy Office in order to explain better the condition of the ‘Parreas’, about whom Tournon

---


had decreed that their alleged 'untouchability' should not prevent priests from entering their miserable huts to provide them the viaticum and the last rites.

Brandolini included this multi-view projection in his book without any particular explanation—as if the image could 'speak' for itself—at the end of a section concerning the administration of the viaticum to the 'Parreas'. Its inclusion in the book, as well as its previous presentation in manuscript form to the Roman authorities in 1725, can only be interpreted as evidence of the alleged good will of the Jesuits towards the converted 'Parreas'. If the missionaries of the Society claimed that they could not enter the huts of this despised caste, lest they would be considered impure and would not be allowed to have contacts with the faithful of noble birth, through this image Brandolini wanted to demonstrate how the Jesuits did not actually discriminate against the Christian 'Parreas' in their access to the sacraments, inasmuch as direct physical contact was not required.

As we try to understand the spatial dimension of conversion processes, it is necessary to consider in detail the message that Brandolini conveys through this projection. First of all, let us examine the title: "Plan of the Church of the Nobles, and the Parreas, within the same external wall, and of the house of the Missionary". The crucial element is the point that the church of the 'nobles' and that of the 'Parreas' were included within a same external wall. The title was phrased ambiguously, inasmuch as the expression 'Church of the Nobles and the Parreas' could be interpreted in Italian as hinting either at one single church shared by both communities or at two different churches. It was the reference to a 'common external wall' that suggested the latter interpretation. As an island dispersed into an ocean of 'heathenism', or as a fortress in a 'pagan wilderness', the space enclosed by this wall was an outpost of the true faith in partibus infidelium.

Brandolini made it clear that the Jesuits did not promote a social schism within the communities of the Indian neophytes. From the elevated vantage point we can see that the wall was not merely a symbolic fence but a barrier higher than a man's height. Brandolini implied with such a wall that osmotic movements between the Christian and the non-Christian spaces were not allowed: the only access to the realm of the faithful was through two gates specifically designed for this purpose. The distinction between these two openings was social: a side entrance, on the shorter side of the quasi-rectangular space described by the wall, was reserved for the 'Parreas', whereas the gate leading to the church of the 'nobles' was placed on one of the two longer sides. An internal wall divided the global space of the Christian 'fortress' into two impermeable parts, allocated respectively to the 'nobles' and the 'Parreas'. However, these two parts were not two halves: the space of the 'nobles' was
more than two thirds of the total area, considering also that a curve deprived
the section of the 'Parreas' of the space that would otherwise allow them to
claim at least a third of the total Catholic space. If there was a single Christian
community facing the 'pagan othenness', within the external wall we find two
distinct churches. That of the 'Parreas' was not even an entire building; one
third of it (marked in the map with the number 15) belonged to the space of the
'noble' Christians. This way the church of the 'Parreas' properly defined was, as
noted, circa one third the size of the church of the 'nobles'.

A trait common to both the 'noble' and 'Parrea' spaces was the presence of
kitchens (numbers 20 and 21), suggesting the recurrence of communal meals
held according to the principle of caste commensality, but also hinting at the
fact—analysed, for instance, by a classic and widely debated author such as
Louis Dumont with respect to the North Indian context—that while the trans­
fer of raw food from an inferior caste to a superior one is always possible (for
example as a gift to a brāhmaṇa after he has performed a ritual service), that of
cooked food is far more difficult, although not totally impossible.26

The disparity between the 'noble' and 'Parrea' spaces can be detected by
observing that the church of the 'untouchables' was not actually an indepen­
dent place of worship, but rather a 'theatre' where an audience gathered to
gaze at a religious performance taking place on a separate stage, namely in
the church of the 'nobles'. As is clear particularly in the middle picture of the
illustration, titled 'section' ('spaccato'), the 'Parreas' were able to see the priest
celebrating the eucharist in front of the altar, placed only in the church of the
'nobles', but the opening of the church of the 'Parreas' was not large enough
to allow them to see the altar per se. It is possible that the priest would allow
also the 'Parreas' to enjoy the auspicious vision of the divine presence in the
eucharist during the rite of the Ecce Agnus Dei, just before the distribution of
the communion towards the end of the Mass. It should be noted that such a
vision of the divine under the name of darśana is essential also to Hindu piety.27
However, the extension of such a display also to the 'Parrea' converts can only
be guessed, as the image offered by Brandolini does not clarify the point. On
the contrary, the association of the missionary with the 'nobles' is obvious:

26 Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus 142. It should be noted, however, that in our case we are deal­
ing with relations between 'untouchable' castes and higher castes, which are a specific
case in comparison with the general issue of inter-caste relations.

27 I explored this connection in the unpublished paper "A Catholic Darśana: Eucharistic
Adorations and Processions in Early-Modern Portuguese India", presented on 30 June 2011
at the conference of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies held
at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais in Lisbon.
his house, as well as his kitchen, are represented on the side of the church of
the ‘nobles’, which is at the farthest end from the ‘Parrea’ section. There was a
single confessional for the faithful of all castes; however, the priest accessed
it from the side of the ‘nobles’.28 If we consider that the ‘Parreas’ are located
on the left side of Brandolini’s plan, the ‘nobles’ in the central part, and the
house of the missionary on the farthest right side of the picture, we can easily
identify a hierarchical direction moving from right to left. The prominence of
the right over the left side in Christianity and many other religious and cultural
traditions is a fact both empirically ascertained and theoretically engaging.29
In the context of early modern South India such a spatial divide assumed a
new meaning in the conflict between the valangai and idangai groups, namely
‘right hand’ against ‘left hand’ castes:

In a general sense, the right-hand division included groups traditionally
involved in agriculture or the production of agricultural or rural commodi-
ties, though it also had associations with military service. Communities
belonging to the left-hand division were primarily non-agricultural, and
included merchant and artisan groups.30

In this case the right-left dichotomy did not have a clear hierarchical sense, as
‘the Valangai [sic] or Right Hand faction included the more respectable castes
together with the Parayer [sic]’.31 It seems therefore that the right-left direc-
tion visible in Brandolini projection corresponded more to a Christian symbol-
ism (not surprising, considering also his intended audience) than to the South
Indian conflict between valangai and idangai divisions.

In Brandolini’s multi-view orthographic projection we find a further con-
firmation of this hierarchical orientation in the fact that, within the church
of the ‘nobles’, women are on the left side and men on the right. A crucial
piece of information, however, is not provided. Nowhere, neither in explicit
nor implicit form (for instance by means of a particular position of the sun
and of the shadows projected by the buildings), can we ascertain the position

28 In the image the confessional (number 10) is defined as ‘room for hearing confessions’
(‘Stanza per udir le confessioni’). Separate places were allocated to the ‘nobles’ and the
‘Parreas’ to make their confessions. Such an arrangement leads to the conclusion that
the missionary heard the confession through windows and grilles, facing respectively the
‘noble’ and ‘Parreas’ sections of the compound.
29 McManus C., Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms,
30 Sinopoli C.M., The Political Economy of Craft Production: Crafting Empire in South India,
of the cardinal directions. It could be imagined that the altar was facing east, following an ancient Christian tradition. In any case, the Jesuit Francisco Laynez had already observed in his *Defensio Indicarum Missionum*, a fundamental book in the Malabar Rites controversy published in 1707, that the settlements of the *paraiyār* (known in Tamil as *cheris*, although the Jesuit does not mention this expression) used to be placed on the eastern side of the South Indian villages. The axis northeast–southwest should also be considered here in order to assess what Laynez wrote on the spatial orientation of the Tamil settlements. He gave two reasons for this specific orientation. First of all, the 'nobles'—affected by a true *nobilitatis furor*—did not want that their settlements might be contaminated even by the shadows of the *paraiyār*. By being placed on the west side, the 'nobles' would indeed be tainted by impure shadows in the morning, but would then be purified in the evening by the sunset beams. Secondly, Laynez observed that in South India winds often blew from the west; if the *paraiyār* had lived in the western parts of the villages, then their impurity—understood in very graphic terms as an unbearable stench—would be carried up to the quartiers inhabited by the 'noble' castes.

On the basis of this evidence, admitted by the very Jesuits who supported *accomodatio* and favoured the separation of the *paraiyār* from the 'noble' castes, it could be argued that the church of the *paraiyār* in Brandolini's projection was actually oriented towards the east. This would imply that the altar would face south and the entrance to the space of the 'nobles' would be from the north. Very significantly, the position of the missionary's house would then be on the extreme western side of the Christian complex. It would indeed be a fascinating temptation (but definitely further research is required) to see Brandolini's illustration, read within the inter-textual context of the Malabar Rites controversy, as a demonstration of a new spatial and theological axiom, such as ex *Occidente salus* ('salvation from the West'). Is it too much to argue that the image condensed in itself both the spatial fixation of caste hierarchies and the direction of Christianization as a conversion process moving from the West to the East?

Conclusion

The assimilation of Christianity to the local social structures allowed a steady growth of the missions in South India, placed beyond the control of any Catholic power and subject to Hindu or Muslim rulers. However, it also caused the emergence of a spatial tension that is at the very heart of the Malabar Rites controversy. Theoretically, the neophytes belonged all to one and the same community: they attended the same Mass and all had equal access to the divine energy provided by the sacraments. In practice, the uniform space of faith had to cope with a fragmented social space. The low-caste paraiyár Christians were segregated in their cheris, at a safe distance from the centre of each South Indian village. In order to avoid social defilement the high caste Christians refused to attend the Mass under the same roof. The Jesuits missionaries, vocally represented in Rome particularly by their Procurator Brandolini, devised convoluted architectural solutions meant to allow the ‘plebeians’ to be separated from the ‘noble’ Christians during the Mass, even while making it possible for them to attend the sacred functions and receive Holy Communion. The liturgical segregation of the paraiyár could remind the Roman authorities of the walls and grilles separating cloistered nuns from the laity in conventual churches; however, while those nuns held a high religious status, the segregation of the paraiyár was due to their social stigma. Particularly difficult was the problem of providing the viaticum to the moribund ‘untouchables’. The missionaries were not allowed to enter the huts of the low caste neophytes, lest they should be considered contaminated by the upper-caste faithful, who would not recognize them anymore as their own priests. On the other hand, the option of carrying moribund persons to the nearest church could easily cause death without the last rites.

The controversy about the missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic highlighted less a contradiction between the European and Indian ways of life than a more general early-modern tension between a certain Christian egalitarian space and one of social separation. As the Jesuits argued, the unity of the Church did not imply the abolition of social distinctions. Brandolini claimed

---

35 It is noteworthy that the image is placed just towards the end of the book section that Brandolini devotes to the administration of the viaticum to the ‘Parreas’. The author states that the image is placed there ‘for greater clarity of the whole controversy’ (‘per maggiore chiarezza di tutta la controversia’), even though—as we observed before—this image hints at a problem—the spatial discrimination of the ‘Parreas’ in the church compound—that is not actually developed in the whole book. See Brandolini, Risposta alle accuse, vol. 11, 601 (§ 263).
even that a 'ordered charity' (‘ordinata carità’) could not go against the principle of prominence of the public over the private good. The distinction of an 'ordered' from a 'disordered' charity emerged within a context of involuntary irony, as it is highlighted in one of the various manuscript memoranda that Brandolini submitted to the Roman Inquisition. Brandolini claimed that the problem of providing the last sacraments to the moribund 'Parreas' in their huts was similar to the situation of a moribund (male) infant whose parents would not accept his baptism. On the basis of classical theological authors who had objected against forced baptisms, Brandolini concluded that even the provision of sacraments to the 'Parreas' in their huts should be ruled out, inasmuch as the public good should be preferred to the private one. As the forced baptism of an infant could cause perturbation to his parents, so the violation of the untouchability of the 'Parreas'—argued Brandolini—could cause commotion among the community of the 'noble' Christians and subject it to a difficult trial. The conclusion of the analogy went so far that the Jesuit claimed that the forced baptism of an infant was as sinful as the provision of sacraments to the 'Parreas' in their miserable dwellings.

An enthusiastic love of paradox probably led Brandolini to justify the discrimination of the 'Parreas' even in the conferment of the last sacraments, on the basis of the obligation that the 'plebeians' had of honouring the 'nobles', even if the latter were wicked or non-Christian people: it was not the specific virtue of a single individual that should be honoured, but a superior quality that could be seen reflected in a person, even if only in a figurative or symbolic way. Brandolini implicitly suggested to the prelates of the Holy Office in charge of evaluating the Malabar Rites that the hierarchical principles debated in the South Indian missions were finally not so different from the ones invoked in Europe to justify the power of the aristocracy over the other social groups.


37 This is how Brandolini refers to the theological doctrine in favour of the forced baptism of a moribund infant: ‘So Castropalao in the above-mentioned point [= De Ordine Charitatis n. 5, Coninck disp. 25, dub. 7 n. 88, and the common opinion of theologians expressly teach’ (‘Cosi insegnano espressamente Castropalao al luogo sopracitato n. 88 col comun de Teologi’), *Aggiunta 2.*, fol. 25v.

38 Brandolini Broglia Antonio, "Informatione di Fato sopra varij dubbij toccanti le Clausole de' Parreas, e delle Ceneri, ed altri segni", in Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Rome, St. St., QQ 1–4, fols. 152r–156v and 163–219v, esp. 6r–v.
irrespective of the intrinsic merits or vices that each single European nobleman could have.

The rigorous spatial separation displayed by Brandolini's multi-view projection could then appear as a consistent understanding of a necessary and universal hierarchical organization of any given society. In this perspective it seems difficult to imagine that the acceptance by certain Catholic missionaries of Indian structures of hierarchical subjugation may be understood primarily as an effort to dialogue with a non-European culture or that the endorsement of caste segregation may have anticipated the ideas of inculturation elaborated during the twentieth century. Even more puzzling would be an interpretation according to which 'the choice made by the Jesuits of keeping the neophytes' community within the dynamics of Indian society, avoiding therefore the risk of triggering among the converts a sense of estrangement towards their common culture, made it possible to keep open important communication channels for the future'.

The analysis of a specific visual source has shown us, on the contrary, that the sacramental discrimination of the paraiyār was located at the crossroads between a specific European hierarchical culture and the dynamic of social conflict that characterized early modern South India. The clumsy and paradoxical arguments of Brandolini, which should not be considered representative of a unanimous position among the missionaries of the Society of Jesus in South India, provided easy ammunition to anti-Jesuit critics. At the very end of the Malabar Rites controversy, the sacramental discrimination of the paraiyār was described by Abbé Jean-Baptiste Gaultier (1685–1755), a Jansenist theologian, as a fundamental religious flaw: 'il n'y a ni Dieu ni Religion ou il n'y a point de charité'.

As students of history we should probably refrain from easy projections of the past into the present. However, if the expression of a moral protest is not in conflict with scholarly rigour, then it would be very difficult not to see in the paraiyār, segregated in less than one third of the social space, an emblem of the radical inequalities that characterize our own world.

---

39 Pavone, "Tra Roma e il Malabar" 679 ('[…] la scelta dei gesuiti di mantenere la comunità di neofiti all'interno delle dinamiche della società indiana, evitando così di suscitare nei convertiti un senso di estranetità rispetto a una cultura comune, consensi di tenere aperti importanti canali di comunicazione per il futuro').

40 Les jesuites convaincus d'obstination a permettre l'idolâtrie dans la Chine: Lettres de l'abbé J-B. Gaultier (1744) 100. This anonymous libel was already attributed to Gaultier by Moréri L., Le Grand Dictionnaire Historique, ou le Mélangè curieux de l'Histoire Sacrée et Profane… Nouvelle édition dans laquelle on a refondu les Suppléments de M. l'abbé Goujet, le tout revu, corrigé et augmenté par M. Drouet, 10 vols. (Paris, Chez les Libraires Associés: 1759), vol. V, 103.
Selective Bibliography


