

## INDIAN INQUISITION AND NATIONAL PRIDE

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### Abstract:

In the context of Portuguese maritime expansion, history shows that there was a well delimited intention to evangelize the territories that fell under Portuguese flag. In this effort, it is usually well accepted that Royal Patronage had used Inquisition in these territories to control the incipient Catholicism in them, especially till the end of 17th century. Some of the most famous events took place in Goa, India, where the Inquisition growth is said to impose a new mode of culture rooted in Portuguese standards. There, as a reaction to the Portuguese standardization effort of Christianity, Nobili and Fernandes, two Jesuit Missionaries, We present in this research an alternative explanation for this phenomena, stating that the growth and strength of Inquisition in India had more to do with National pride by both involved (Portuguese and Indians) and much less with religious or theological issues.

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**Key Words:** Patronage, Mission, Jesuits, Goa, Nobili

### Introduction

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Tamil Nadu Madurai Jesuit Mission was started by Fernandes and Nobili<sup>470</sup>, both jesuit missionaries, there have been discussions about the pertinence of the method of Nobili, to which Fernandes openly opposed himself and started a series of accusations to the Inquisition Court established in Goa, all valid from a certain point of view and false from other. There was no falsehood on their dissension. We, of course, cannot judge none of them nowadays, making use of all the results of further research and reflexion that we made since then.

What we can have and give are different perspectives about that dissension, as in fact we are still trying to solve it<sup>471</sup>. Nevertheless, one forgotten issue that seems to have played a major role then, and maybe is still playing its role now, is the cultural identity. Of course we are not saying that this identity was never brought to the table where we are still making our appreciation over the facts that happened then. But we can affirm that the point of view from which the evaluation of this squabble, which we may explain in time during this small article, is taken from cultural perspectives, and it is indeed hard to try comprehending them (Fernandes and Nobili) without putting in our appreciation our own cultural start point. By doing so, we act negligently with their own cultures, and because of this, cannot anymore do any valid evaluation about their points of view.

In this paper, I wish to remember some of the cultural points of view of the directly involved in such squabble (Fernandes and Nobili). I hope, by trying to raise this points, that further evaluations on this hard subject will be less vitiated by our own culture and will approach to the kernel of the question, which should be theological pertinence of the Nobili's missionary practices and proposals. At the bottom, lays with no doubt the problem of National Pride as a key factor to the formulation of the accusations themselves.

I also hope that, by doing so, further examinations over the missionary practices of nowadays will be improved, and we may be able to use or discard Nobili's related practices in a more precise

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<sup>470</sup> Roberto Nobili, a Roman (or Tuscan) Jesuit Missionary, arrived at Madurai through Goa in 1606, to work in that region with Gonçalo Fernandes, who was already there. NOBILI, Roberto de. *Preaching Wisdom to the Wise*. Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Lois: 2000. p3. Madurai is a city, then capital of a kingdom, located in southern region of the nowadays Indian State of Tamil Nadu.

<sup>471</sup> Specially during the 1970's and 1980's, a series of works about Nobili had been written, and there is an dedicated Institute in India dealing mostly with 'Nobilian' research, located at Loyola College in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. It is called "De Nobili Research Center".

way. This would mean separating well in our propositions for the reality of world today what is Theology, Soteriology, Culture, Adaptation, Inculturation, Transculturation and many other subjects, that on the missionaries approaches of today are, sometimes, confused. Maybe this is the time to stop trying to validate (or invalidate), let's say, Soteriological aspects from a Sociological point of view. Soteriology may be evaluated, naturally, from a Soteriological point of view. And Sociology may play a parallel role in this evaluation, as a auxiliary discipline, but not as the key to try understanding a question that is, on its bottom, Soteriological, at least in the opinion of both involved, Nobili and Fernandes.

### 1) Settling the ambience

The origin of the Madurai Mission is an direct output of Portuguese history in India. And the Portuguese history in India is, by its way, an output of Portuguese history as a whole. We may mark that the history of Portugal as independent State, from the XII century on, is also a history of: i- expansion of territory and ii- establishment of Catholicism within this original and expanded territory.

In fact, the first Portuguese King, Dom Afonso Henriques, was acclaimed as such after playing a major role as a military leader in the context of the reconquer war, that was the war in which the Muslims were expelled from the Iberia, the peninsula where Portugal and Spain are located<sup>472</sup>. After the expelling of the Moors, as the Muslims populations occupying Iberia were known, Portugal and Spain started to expand their territories in search for new trading routes with the Eastern countries, where silk, spices and other products came from<sup>473</sup>.

In such search, they conquered, during the next two centuries (from the XIV to the XVI) nautical knowledge with no precedents in Europe, and attained the position of the richest countries in that continent.

As a collateral effect, they also (re-)discovered America, and occupied territories from the regions that now may be known as Florida (in the United States) to the Patagonia, in extreme South of Argentina and Chile. They were trying to reach India from a route towards West, as the knowledge that Earth was round spread to some nautical experts, particularly Cristopher Columbus, who was the first European in many centuries to do such a journey with the support of a State, Spain<sup>474</sup>.

The Portuguese went, majorly, to the East, step by step surrounding the African continent and finally reaching the Indian shores in the late XV century, in the ship of Vasco da Gama<sup>475</sup>. Just after him, obeying per it seems direct and quite precise orders and directions, Pedro Álvares Cabral, another portuguese navigator, leaded one fleet from Portugal to Northeast Brazil, taking possession of that country in the name of Portuguese Crown, and then moved directly towards India. In doing such a longer trip, Cabral took, nevertheless, about half the time Gama took just to surround Africa and arrive in India<sup>476</sup>. That points us that, almost surely, they were not the just ones in service of the Iberic countries, but that had may be others, now forgotten, who worked under those powerful countries to improve navigation all over the globe in a very short period of time.

As we pointed out, the historical identity of Portugal, to which activities we may attain more closely from now on (since the Spanish did not play a relevant role in the squabble this essay roots in), is directly linked and rooted in Catholicism identity, under the molds of European Roman Catholic Church.

Royal Patronage may be understood in this direction. It is, no doubt, an agreement between Church Powers and "Secular" Powers in Portugal (specifically, the Crown). Under such arrangement,

<sup>472</sup> RAMOS, Rui; SOUSA, Bernardo Vasconcelos *et* MONTEIRO, Nuno Gonçalo. *História de Portugal*. Lisboa:A Esfera dos Livros, 2009. p473.

<sup>473</sup> This expansion started in 1415, when after the consolidation of the kingdom, founded in the middle 14<sup>th</sup> century, moved by commercial interests and also still in the spirit of the "Reconquer War", the Portuguese arrived in Ceuta, North Africa. Cf RAMOS, Rui; SOUSA, Bernardo Vasconcelos *et* MONTEIRO, Nuno Gonçalo. *História de Portugal*. Lisboa:A Esfera dos Livros, 2009. p873.

<sup>474</sup> These is evidence of the arrival of Viking ethny navigators in North America in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Cf WAHLGREN, Erik. *Los Vikingos y América*, Barcelona: 1990

<sup>475</sup> Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut, India, in 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1498. cf MUNDADAN, Mathias. *History of Christianity in India. Volume I*. Bangalore, Theological Publications: 1984. p 244.

<sup>476</sup> Cabral reached India in 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1500. cf MUNDADAN, M (...) p 256.

the Portuguese kings and further rulers would be recognized and validated by the papacy, and in exchange all the territory under the “Faith Defender”, who is the King (or Queen) will have, as the official religion, Roman Catholicism.

Church gains, because it is now quite sure that the expansion of Protestantism inside these territories is stopped or even prevented. And the Portuguese Crown also gains, because it is recognized by the papacy, what warrants prestige among the other monarchies. And also the Crown, under this arrangement, can “filter”, or better saying, “discern” about the Pope instructions to the Clerk, adapting them to the reality of the Kingdom.

This is a important political gain to the Portuguese monarchy, as it now may detain under its control all the clerk inside its territory, as the Pope also opens hand to give direct orders to them, but to assume and validate the Monarch as its intermediary. The Monarch now can erect Dioceses, name bishops, expel or admit inside its territory Orders or other kinds of Consecrated Life Institutes (if we may use a more modern nomenclature for them). Seems that each player in this game about religious and political power in Portugal is happy<sup>477</sup>.

And also, it fits perfectly in the Portuguese cultural identity, which, as we pointed some paragraphs above, is rooted in religious identity.

But if such “peaceful happiness” regarding, let's name it, Church inside Portugal is apparently of easy maintenance, in a very short time the Patronage will face a obvious menace to itself. The Portuguese territory expands. When it happens, sprouts a new need, the need of missionaries to the new discovered lands.

A series of further arrangements takes place, and the agreements sprout also with the new need. These agreements are between the Royal Patronage agents and the Orders who are International, spread all over Europe. In the case of Portugal, the Jesuits assume a major role in the Portuguese expansionist policy<sup>478</sup>.

Nevertheless, from the beginning this seems to be, let's use a comparison, a impossible marriage, or maybe a mere arrangement one. The nubents are, by one side, Portugal, where Catholicism and local Culture are so deeply interlayed that the distinctions between one and other are hard to make. To be Portuguese means, very clearly and as a official policy and fruit of an effort, to be catholic.

In the other side, there are the Jesuits, who were supposed to adapt their evangelization in accordance to the cultural environment they might found in their destinations<sup>479</sup>. How could they do that when the destination, despite being thousands of miles away, was under Portuguese cultural siege?

In the Portuguese mind, to be Catholic meant to be Portuguese. Very soon, in the space of less than one century, this will result in the squabble between a Portuguese priest (Fernandes) and a Roman one (Nobili), each of them trying to prove opposite thesis about pertinence to Culture and Religion.

By now, let's attain a bit more on the history of the expansionist Portuguese Empire. The first Portuguese who returned from India to Portugal, those ones in the Gama's fleet, stated when arriving in Europe that they had found a Christian Temple in Calicut<sup>480</sup>. All was, nevertheless, a confusion with apparently a Kali Temple, that was later on almost destroyed by Cabral's fleet, who started the first Worldwide War, between the Portuguese Empire and the local powers in India.

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<sup>477</sup> LACH, Donald, *Asia in the Making of Europe, vol. 1* Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1965. pp.230–245

<sup>478</sup> Boxer, Charles R. *O Império Marítimo Português, 1415-1825*. 2.ª Edição. Lisboa, Edições 70: 1992. P 98.

<sup>479</sup> The essential book to understand this direction is Claudio Acquaviva's *Industriae ad curandos animae morbos*, available at <http://books.google.com/books?id=KAE8AAAACAAJ&dq=claudio%20acquaviva%20industriae%20ad%20curandos%20animae%20morbos&pg=PP14#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Acquaviva is took by some as the “second founder” or “ideological founder” of the Jesuits, once he gave the Society, in 1600 (year of publishing of the book I quote here) directions about the way adaptation should be done in the mission areas.

<sup>480</sup> SUBRAHMANYAM, Sanjay. *The career and legend of Vasco da Gama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1997. p171-172.

What is curious in the account Gama gave to the Court in Portugal may be not the confusion he made, but the fact that somehow they needed one Venetian to interpret it and notice that this was a pagan temple. That means that some in the Court believed in the possibility of such a “Christian Kingdom” existence in the far-eastern India.

When we take a look on the accounts of the starting of the Portuguese Maritime expansion, we find direct instructions, gave by King João II of Portugal to Bartolomeu Dias, a navigator, to “Find the Kingdom of the Christians that lays in the East.”<sup>481</sup> So, the Portuguese were searching for this Kingdom, which, of course, at least in the time they arrived in India, was not there.

The first role the missionaries played in these first fleets was not as evangelizers, but as chaplains of the fleets themselves. They were going to a Christian territory, so there was no need to evangelize them.

And, after the conquer of Goa, which took place in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the first fathers who landed there with the next fleets were there to take care of the Portuguese souls, and nothing more.

When they found that there was no Christian Kingdom, but sparse populations of Syrian Christians in the Southwest Coast (specially the nowadays' Kerala State), the need of Evangelize finally raised. And then the Jesuits missionaries arrive in scene, on this precise time; and also precisely, inside the Portuguese ships<sup>482</sup>.

The Portuguese interests in India, of course, were not only the conquer of Goa. Very soon, sprout also the interest of domination over the East Coast, from where the access to Macau, another colony in China, would be easier. So, from Goa, the Portuguese went to try to dominate the nowadays region of Mylapore, or Chennai.

And were quite successful in their trials, naming the region after “Madre de Deus” which later on corrupted in “Madras”. Conquering the entire Southern Region, comprehended under the line we may trace from Goa to Madras, was the next natural step. By conquering this land, the amount of goods that could be carried to the ships located in both ports would increase exponentially. Of course, there were smaller ports, like the ones in Diu, Daman, Mumbai, Kochi. But Goa and Madras soon developed in the most important ones.

There are, as we all know, many ways of Conquest and Domination. One is military, and the Portuguese could not, naturally, do that. How to dare defying the well-established kingdoms of South India, in an unknown terrain and in numerical disadvantage? This would be military suicide.

In spite of that, the option was to build a series of alliances with these kingdoms, so that the access to the goods that moved the Portuguese from the Europe to every single spot of world should be improved. These alliances putted the Iberians in India in touch with large populations of non-evangelized peoples. And, in the conjunction of the interests of evangelization and the need of tightening the recently formed links, Missions took place. Madurai Mission can be inserted in this context, where a authentic Gospel zeal from the part of many missionaries met the commercial interests of the Portuguese Empire<sup>483</sup>.

Nevertheless, this meeting was not a easy to cope bondage. Every missionary should be aware that spreading the good news towards the interior of the Indian continent, where the Portuguese cannons and gunpowder power were absent also meant taking risks.

Not only the obvious physical risk involved in the adventure, but also the cultural risk: the cultures that were present in the areas to which the missionaries went had never, sometimes, heard anything about Jesus Christ, and so they developed the local cultures after and in a very different religious matrix. To understand these cultures was now a must-to-do activity in order to approaching them appropriately.

Madurai kingdom, which capital city was nowadays Madurai, in Tamil Nadu, fitted this description quite finely: it was one large centre of Tamil culture, and housed during those times a powerful politics centre, that was able to construct the Perumal Palace, still visible today in Madurai's

<sup>481</sup> MUNDADAN, (...) p237.

<sup>482</sup> MUNDADAN, (...) p260.

<sup>483</sup> MAROTTIKAPARAMBIL, Francis. Latin Christianity in India. IN AFONSO, A.V. *Indian Christianity*. An issue of CHATTOPADHYAYA, D.P. *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*. PHISP, New Delhi: 2009. pp 60-61

downtown, and also run the Meenakshi temple, still there, and (as the tale tells) since some two thousand years ago.

Both Fernandes and Nobili will try and will do such an understanding, but the method of approach they will build after their experience will be radically different. Why?

## 2) Squabble per itself

When Nobili arrived at Madurai for the mission, Fernandes was already working on that area for some time. Precisely, he was there for 4 years, and the converts he had made were counted only among the lower castes. These lower castes can be understood as those ones to whom the right of the “second birth” ritual was not indulged<sup>484</sup>. From that, in the Indian religions located in Madurai at that time (what we may call Hinduism sects or something like that), these peoples could not attain salvation, understood as liberation from the Samsara or Moksha, regardless the efforts made.

From the point of view of the populations in India during this period, the Portuguese, and virtually any non-Indian nationality were viewed also as this lower-caste people, and their religion would seem to fit only for the lower caste people.

This is a suitable explanation for the phenomenon of conversion being restricted only to lower-caste people. From the perspective of the upper-castes (and let’s not forget Madurai was a centre for both Brahmins and Kshatriya people, once it was one prominent centre of religious and political power in South India) the Portuguese may and must have had considered as lower caste people because the kind of life this new actors in Madurai had was the lower caste type. They ate beef, dressed in black (specially the priests), didn’t wear any distinctive mark (as special haircut or line or anything else) that could distinguish them from the lower castes. Also, even the priests were directly involved with the non-religious affair of commerce. How could any of them, including the fathers, be called a Master in Religious issues, or “Brahmin”?

Fernandes, encountering these difficulties, noticed that this approach to them from the Indian population was deeply rooted in the culture. He made serious and deep investigations among the local populations, and was able to identify and enumerate many of the then current rituals and customs, and also gods and goddesses<sup>485</sup>.

And, as a fruit of this effort, he made the option to invite the ones he was trying to convert to open hand from the caste they were in and embrace Christianity and (this is a key factor) the *Portuguese* way of Christianity. So, this may be the reason why he would ask to the ones he was baptizing on the very moment of the Baptism rite itself: “Do you want to join the religion of the westerns?”<sup>486</sup>

Let’s not forget, and this is the second key factor to understand Fernandes’ question to the converts, that he was a Portuguese father. He was a participant of the Portuguese national identity, which as we pointed out some pages ago, was about Roman Catholic identity. Also, he was a late vocation, and fought as a soldier under the Portuguese flag before becoming a priest.<sup>487</sup>

From his perspective, as a Portuguese person, there was not in his life any aspects that could delimitate him as a Portuguese which could not also do the same to him as a Catholic. Maybe, by asking this question to the converts, he was just being honest to his identity. To him, if being

<sup>484</sup> There is a ritual, namely Upanayana, where the young boy, at the ages of 8, 10 or 12, depending on the caste he belongs to, receives the access to the knowledge of Brahman. The lower castes and non-caste Hindus cannot perform this ritual, what in the Vedic perspective and an interpretative line (or school) may impede them to know the Union with God in its various acceptations, impeding, in this way, the moksha, the Salvation of the individual Atman, or Being. cf. LEVETTE, Sarah. *Coming of age: Journey of Life*. Chicago: Rosen Publishing Group, 2009. pp45-47.

<sup>485</sup> His main work was “*Tratado do Padre Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso sobre o Hinduísmo*”, an extent description of brahminical practices and with a whole section dedicated to Sanskrit quotes. Cf. NOBILI, *opus citi*, p 29. (in fact, an introduction by one of the translators, Clooney or Amaladoss.)

<sup>486</sup> Nobili states that Fernandes understands the word “parangui” as equivalent to “portuguese”. Joe Arun, in one of his articles is of the opinion that “parangui” means “lower caste person”. Nevertheless, it derives from frangui, a word used by the North Indians to describe the “Franks”, or the “Westerns”. After all, for sure it was used to nominate the Portuguese during this period, as Fernandes pretends to use it. Cf. NOBILI, *opus citi*, p 233. & ARUN, Joe. *Interculturation of Religion*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007. p4.

<sup>487</sup> ARUN, *opus citi*. p74.

Portuguese meant being Catholic, then being Catholic might meant being Portuguese, and open hand of all cultural and social aspects from India to embrace the western ones.

But he could not deny that his method was inefficient, at least to convert high caste population. Nobili arrived there, at this Mission, and after observing the whole method for one year and trying to identify where the problems of it could be, he opposed to his fellow Fernandes' one of his own<sup>488</sup>.

In Nobili's method, the identification between culture and religion does not exist, at least not so deeply as in Fernandes'. In spite of that, Nobili defends and roots his method in the History of Church in Europe, demonstrating that, from the beginning, Christianity is too plastic to not be able to fit other cultures than its original one<sup>489</sup>.

After this premise, he tried to make distinctions among all the customs he could look upon to put them inside three major categories: a) customs directly linked to Indian religions, that could not be adopted because were deeply rooted in these religions; b) customs somehow linked to religions, that could be adopted after some adaptation; c) customs not related to religions, that because of this could be kept, once there wasn't any harm to the new converts<sup>490</sup>.

This is what the Nobili's method is about. It has nothing to do with caste. It has nothing to do with nationality. It has nothing to do with theology. It has to do with distinction on the realms of each custom.

One interesting thing about this controversy, or dissension, between Nobili and Fernandes, is that it was not about the method itself, but about the direct output of it: the customs that could or could not fit inside the neo-born Christianity at Madurai.

Fernandes wrote a letter that can be taken as he start point of this squabble where he criticized Nobili because he dressed in this and that way, and permitted this and that custom among his neophytes, and spoke on this or that style<sup>491</sup>. He never went to the root of this customs, which were the possible distinctions Nobili proposed.

Why? Simply because on a very ethnocentric perspective; Christianity meant to him the same Portuguese did. So how could any of this distinctions be possible? The only possibility of conversion was not to convert in-the-culture, but to convert the culture. Fernandes simply aimed to convert the whole Indian culture and shape it after the Portuguese one.

Usually, the Province Superior would be asked to solve this kind of doubt. But indeed, Nobili or his partisan Vicco were succeeding each other at the charge of Madurai Province's Superior, and the judgement over this issue could not be done by any of them. This is one crucial factor in the history of the squabble which perfectly explains why the decision was took to the higher spheres of power. In fact, the bishop of the Diocese where Madurai was located in was asked, and as he gave his permission, Fernandes took the issue to the higher court, which was the Superior in Goa Diocese<sup>492</sup>.

In Goa, since the 1590's, was located the most hard Inquisition Tribunal all over the whole of Portuguese Empire, and of course Nobili, knowing that and previewing one judgement not in his favor used all the influence he had in Europe to try solving it in benefit of the method, which he believed was the most clever one.

Being related to former Popes and to some influential people in Roman Cure, it was easy to gain the case in his favor, with a Apostolic Constitution<sup>493</sup>. This should be the end of all the trouble the interpretations on Indian Culture generated to the Jesuit and to the Church in India. We may say,

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<sup>488</sup> Bachmann, Peter R. *Roberto Nobili: 1577-1656*. Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1972. p 37

<sup>489</sup> NOBILI, *opus citi*, pp212-213

<sup>490</sup> Id, *Ibid.* pp217-224

<sup>491</sup> This letter is transcribed in DAHMEN, Pierre. *Robert de Nobili, les Apôtre des Brahmes*. Paris: SPES, 1931. pp 195-199

<sup>492</sup> The quoted Letter, was, in case, sent to the Superior in Goa.

<sup>493</sup> Nobili was the grand-nephew of Roberto Nobili, a Roman Cardinal. Was also related to Cardinal Sforza, and close to Cardinal Bellarmine. BACHMAN quotes he was also the grand-nephew of a Pope, but does not identify what Pope he is speaking about. Nobili, at that time, addressed a letter containing the text which is translated in the "Preaching wisdom to the wise" I am quoting here, named "Responsio", to Acquaviva and to Bellarmine, and also spoke on the issue, through a letter, with Sforza. The result of all the squabble was the Apostolic Constitution *Romanae Saedis Antistes*, by Gregory XV in January 31, 1623.

in fact, that it was the end of this dissension between Fernandes and Nobili, but was not a final solution to the problem of Culture interpretation.

Some fifty years after these events the same question was re-asked, and a totally different output came. Also, in other parts of Portuguese Empire similar squabbles went on, and at the bottom of all these dissensions, we find always the problem of National Identity<sup>494</sup>.

In all this cases, it sprouts from the ethnocentric perspective which wants to shape all newborn christianities in the Empire after the Portuguese one, which is seen as one superior force with the divine right of colonize, siege and conquer other countries and cultures, shaping them after the Crown's will. Weirdly enough, this seems to be, at least, the exact case of the India Conquer Effort, as we can learn after the text we introduce below.

### 3) One elucidative text: Nobili catechism as translated by Balthasar da Costa.

One of the most important sources when dealing with Nobili is his Catechism, composed in Tamil to help with the instruction of the catechumens and neophytes at Madurai and adjacencies. It is a very extant text, with more than 1200 pages in its Tamil form. In fact, its importance goes beyond the missionary field, once it is considered to be one of the first Tamil texts in prose. Nobili is considered by some as the father of modern written Tamil prose<sup>495</sup>, and this is one of the texts he wrote in such form and language.

The catechism, by itself, is also important because it shows to the reader that Nobili was very familiar with the Indian tantra style, and with Vedanta philosophy style as well. The structure of the text follows both references and is a kind of blend of this styles<sup>496</sup>.

Unfortunately, the Tamil complete version seems to be lost, and what is available in India are the two brochures which compose the first volume in the original language, stored at Goa State Library, and translations. It seems that this two volumes were sometimes, in the course of time, reedited and printed, in Tamil.

But one secondary source to understand not Nobili Catechism but the ambience it took place is Balthasar da Costa translation, to Portuguese, of the said text.

I found it in the Archives of Madurai Province, located in Kodaikkanal, Tamil Nadu. The Nobili's text is preceded by an extant introduction about him (then recently deceased) and the translator, addressed to the king of Portugal. In it, we find that Balthasar da Costa was a direct disciple of Nobili, and they both shared the mission by some time. Also, we find a drawing, made by Costa, of Nobili in Sannyasa dresses, made after a personal order by Nobili himself. This shows that they may have been working together for some time, in also a friendship relation, that would naturally sprout from the need of co-living.

After that, we could suppose that Costa would dedicate great part of this introduction to speak about Nobili and the mission, to such a important reader who may never heard anything about the missionary. We may point out here that this translation was made by Costa exclusively for the king, and was not printed, but hand written.

In spite of that, he occupies himself in a weird justification of Portuguese Imperialism after the Bible. He states that the King must financially support the missionaries with the same good will he supports the army, because the Portuguese Empire was a neo-Israel, the establishment of God's rule all over the world and to all nations, under the Portuguese flag and by natural and divine right.

This divine right Costa speaks about was allegedly given after a vision the first Portuguese king is said to have had, in which he received the cross as the symbol of the kingdom, for that under and after this cross the King should rule.

<sup>494</sup> In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was a disagreement between the Capuchins working at Pondicherry and the Jesuit in the Carnatic Missions regarding exactly the same practices. Pope Clement XI sent there the Patriarch of Tournon who, despite never going there, prohibited even practices that never happened in the region. Afterwards, a series of decrees came from Rome, even prescribing an oath to all missionaries to not use any of the banned practices. This resulted in a series of controversies in the Carnatic Region and also in Pondicherry, that until nowadays are not completely solved. Cf ARUN, *opus citi*, pp 90-102.

<sup>495</sup> Cf DATTA, Amaresh. *Encyclopedia of Indian Literature: devraj to jyoti*, Volume 2. New Delhi: Sahita Academy, 2005. p 1669

<sup>496</sup> Cf NOBILI, *opus citi*. p 34-42

He goes ahead, and compares the Portuguese army with Joshua and the Portuguese missionaries (or the missionaries under Portuguese patronage, if we prefer including all the nationalities in the missionary effort here) with Moses.

Then he recalls the period about the fight between the Israelites and Amalec as a symbol of the Portuguese fight against the Dutch, stating also that the Portuguese would not win this battle if the king didn't pay more attention to the conversion of souls.

To support the missionary work was equivalent, in Costa's text, to the supporting of Moses arms by his servants. And only when Moses had his arms straight to the air, Joshua won. Whenever his arms laid down, Joshua started to lose<sup>497</sup>.

Then Costa concludes and says to his king, almost giving a recipe: we are this God's army and people. God gave you the right to rule all over the world and to work in the defeat of Protestant Dutch Heresy, a Luciferian enterprise. To win this battle, is simple: support the fathers, and you will win<sup>498</sup>.

Of course, Costa linked in his text Dutch with Protestantism. Sounded as good and real as the link between Portuguese and Catholicism. To defeat the Protestants is to defeat the Dutch. And so, God would compensate the king by allowing him to rule all over the world. Why not?

What is quintessential here is to notice that Costa was not free from Portuguese pride, or was trying to play with it. And he links directly national to religious pride, like if it was just one. So, we may infer from it that, like all over the Portuguese History in other places and regarding other issues, the justification of Roman Catholic Mission to India, by the Portuguese, was simply one aspect of secular power will. They were, definitively and explicitly, linked. Simply because, if they weren't, this text would not make any sense, specially when we consider it is composed and addressed directly to the king.

Balthasar da Costa justifies not Nobili's method here, but Portuguese empire. It is not an introduction about the quoted catechism, but a text implicitly alleging that also Madurai mission was part of the Portuguese effort of Colonization of India.

It was just a way to state before the king that they were all playing the same game. But it wasn't, unfortunately, enough to prevent, after the death of King Sebastian, the expelling of the Jesuits from the Kingdom of Portugal. Specifically, the accusation was that they did not submit themselves to the Patronage.

And this Patronage, as we noticed here, was the controller of the organisms which accused Nobili's method of being unorthodox. Simply because, it seems, that it was not about defeating Amalec. It was also about circuncidate the enemies, putting them under the Portuguese Standards of "Catholic Faith". Which, afterwards, was too Portuguese to be Catholic.

#### 4) Conclusion

It's undeniable that all the crisis about Nobili method was, at its bottom, linked to cultural identity, Portuguese expansion and Religious identity in Portugal.

The other issues which had been pointed out in the course of time (theology, missiology, sociology, caste system etc) are late interpretations about all the issue, and didn't play, at those times, a relevant role on it. It was, simply, about one question that until now we could not answer in India, in Brazil, in East Timor, Mozambique, and everywhere else: is to be Christian equivalent to be European? If not, why this effort of "europezation" of the "mission areas", since then? Should we try to make of our churches more national, from the point of view of culture?

The lack of courage from us to answer this question properly is also fruit of our ethnocentric views. The squabble between Christian Faith and Culture will never end, once there is not "Christian Culture". Jesus was Hebrew. There is Hebrew culture. And Jesus, the incarnated Christ, historically inside it. Shouldn't we look inside of our cultures in chase of the missing Christ in them? Should we reduce Christ to Jesus?

<sup>497</sup> Obviously, COSTA is refering here to the biblical period in Exodus 17, 8-16.

<sup>498</sup> NOBILI, Roberto. *Catecismo em que se explicão todas as verdades catholicas necessarias pera a salvação com excelentíssima ordem*. JEMPARC Archive object 47. Shelve "Nobiliana", Type writed copy. Translated by Balthasar da Costa. The original title of this Catechism may have been Gnanopadesam.



If we assume that we must find Christ inside the cultures we are living in, the squabble, as it was anything but nationalism, ruins. It was, in fact, fruit of National Pride. And, being so, at least during the period when the events took place, it was theologically unreal.

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