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Currents and Counter-Currents: Jesuit geopolitics in Asia (16th century)¹

The most potent moment in the Jesuit "discovery" of Asia was the realisation that it could function as a practical utopia, a dreamland of possibilities and projects. Alternative worlds were to be shaped out of visions, a new beginning for a perfect Christian universe that went so desperately wrong in Europe. It was with unprecedented enthusiasm, or as the Jesuits termed it themselves, with "fervours" that the missionaries embarked on geographical, political, linguistic and cultural journeys without return. Or, that is how it seemed - as no return - and what happened to the most of the Jesuits. The passage to India was often a one way ticket to the worlds of Asia where an individual Jesuit continued to travel extensively.

Moreover, one could and usually did travel extensively in one's own tiny mission. Henrique Henriques who arrived to his mission in India in 1547 and died there in 1600, travelled incessantly between one end of the Fishery Coast (*Costa da Pescaria*) on the extreme south-east of the Indian peninsula to the other, but never returned to Europe and never in his life went to Rome. And yet, his life was an incredibly rich linguistic journey into various Indian vernacular languages and into the deep of the Tamil cultural world. In particular, his understanding of the functioning of the indigenous Tamil "spirituality" in order to redirect it into Catholic fold, although historically and culturally limited, was good enough and his efforts "produced fruit" as he often repeated in his letters.²

Another, and in many ways exceptional Jesuit missionary, Pedro Luís Bramane never even went to Europe. He was born of gentile parents in Kollam (Quilon) on the South-west coast of India, became a Christian convert at fifteen and remained the first

¹ This article is a commentary on Pierre-Antoine Fabre's "Essai de géopolitique des courants spirituels: Alonso Sánchez entre Madrid, le Mexique, les Iles Philippines, les côtes de la Chine et Rome (1579 – 1593)", presented at the *Table Rond*, "Stratégies politiques et religieuses dans le monde moderne : la Compagnie de Jésus sous le généralat de Claudio Acquaviva (1581-1615)" held in Rome from 28-29 octobre 2002. I thank the organizers of the meeting - Antonella Romano, Francesca Cantù, Paolo Broggio and Pierre-Antoine Fabre - for their invitation.

² Zupanov, Ines, "Prosélytisme et pluralisme religieux: Deux expériences missionnaires en Inde aux XVI^{ème} et XVII^{ème} siècles", *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, 87, 1994, pp. 35-56

and the only "Indian" Jesuit Father until the suppression of the Society.³ Cherished for his linguistic skills, that is, a perfect knowledge of Malayalam and Tamil, in addition to Portuguese and Latin, he accompanied various Jesuits on their visitation trips to the South Indian missions. As any other missionary, he travelled extensively from one Christian settlement to another when posted among the Christians of St. Thomas. But his most impressive passage was from gentility to Christianity and the nature and the extent of the spiritual energy invested in this journey is yet to be properly documented and understood by historians.⁴

Henrique Henriques and Pedro Luís Bramane appear as small "fries" in comparison with Alonso Sanchez, a Spanish Jesuit, who mingled in his time with the king of Spain, Philippe II, and the General of the Society of Jesus, Claudio Aquaviva, and travelled from Spain to Mexico, to Philippines and back to Rome before dying in Alcalá. As Pierre-Antoine Fabre pointed out in his article, it is quite possible (even if all the pieces in the picture are missing and need to be confirmed by hard evidence) to claim that Alonso Sanchez impressed Claudio Aquaviva and contributed some of his own ideas about the importance of the "spiritual renovation", in terms of a stronger and centralised direction, for the members of the Society of Jesus scattered all over the globe. The fact that Alonso Sanchez stayed in Rome, in close contact with the General during the three years (1587-1590) preceding Aquaviva's letter on the role of the prayer in the Society of Jesus is certainly of importance, since face-to-face interaction was still the most efficient technology of persuasion.

However, given the mere volume of correspondence from all over the world directed to Aquaviva and his studious responses to most of them, it is also safe to claim that the General of the Society of Jesus had many other competent and credible informants besides Alonso Sanchez. Therefore, Aquaviva might have taken some clues from Sanchez's rich overseas experiences (Mexican, Filipan and Chinese), but his ultimate decisions were shaped in a more complex way by a variety of local and global interests and limitations imposed in often unpredictable and *ad hoc* way on the working of the Society of Jesus.

³ Pedro Luís Bramane to Diogo Laínez (the General of the Society of Jesus), Goa

⁴ Wicki, J. S.I, "Pedro Luís, Brahmane und erster indischer Jesuit (ca. 1532-1596)", *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, no. 6, Immensee, 1950.

Pierre-Antoine Fabre's impulse to disentangle Jesuit historiography in order to get at the truth of the historical moment in which Alonso Sanchez and Claudio Aquaviva interacted and influenced each other, and by doing that the whole future of the Society of Jesus is a worthy project. Nevertheless, when Pierre-Antoine Fabre detects "Copernican reversal" in Henri Bernard-Maitre's suggestion that "un représentant de la périphérie de l'Ordre - et tout spécialement des Iles Philippines, les plus lointaines - pèserait sur les décisions du gouvernement central", and in a strong rejection of this thesis by André Coemans who defended a more Rome-centered causality of events, historians studying the Jesuit missions outside of Europe (such as myself) may feel that this is only a small part of the historical puzzle.

Pierre-Antoine Fabre is probably right that the stakes in Henri Bernard-Maitre and Coemans debate in the 1930s revolved around a certain definition of the Jesuit history and historiography. While Henri Bernard-Maitre tried to "de-center" the Jesuit historiography, aware as he was of the importance of the Jesuit Chinese history for the shape and destiny of the Society of Jesus as a whole, Coemans firmly defended a "conservative", Eurocentric view, based on the fact that the institutional head of the Jesuit body had always been and is stationed in Rome and in the person of a General. Stated as clearly as that, Henri Bernard-Maitre's move may appear revolutionary to the historians versed in the European Jesuit history. However, among the scholars working on missionary history, Henri Bernard-Maitre's view from the "periphery" of the Society of Jesus, as it used to be called, was nothing new. It was rather business as usual. Especially, in the later part of the twentieth century, the study of the Jesuit missions stimulated by the successful publication of the gigantic projects of collation of the Jesuit primary sources such as, for example, *Documenta Indica* by Joseph Wicki, *Monumenta Brasiliae* by Serafim Leite, and many others, wittingly or unwittingly helped the whole scholarship to move away from the downright Eurocentric bias.⁵

The Jesuit historians, more often than not, continued to shape the field of the burgeoning missionary studies from a particular Jesuit-centred perspective and Catholic bias. The two giants of the Jesuit history and historiography of India, Georg Schurhammer and Joseph Wicki, in spite of their profound knowledge of the Jesuit

⁵ Wicki, Joseph, (ed.), *Documenta Indica* [henceforth DI], MHSI, vols. 18, Rome, 1948-1968.

European history, can hardly be branded as simply Eurocentric. The amount of work they have done to make known Jesuit materials and documents concerning India - the labour of love and "mission" of their own - is impressive and dwarfs all efforts of the contemporary historians.⁶ In fact, it can be argued that Georg Schurhammer and Joseph Wicki are the founding fathers of the Jesuit Indian studies as a field of expertise in its own right for generations of historians to come. The importance of learning Indian vernaculars and Sanskrit as well as a great deal of Indian non-Christian history and ethnography was one of the lessons that comes clearly from their own practice of history.

It can and did also happen that a narrow expertise in one field gets in the way of understanding the larger picture. A particular kind of parochial (India-centered) and limited Jesuit scholarship came from India, written by both European and Indian Jesuits roughly around the time of Bernard-Maitre - Coemans dispute. The impression we get from, let us take one example, Domenico Ferroli's, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, a somewhat jumbled narrative history of the "old" Society of Jesus in India is that all local disputes and issues were solved or left unsolved locally.⁷ Goa does figure as a "centre" for certain issues, especially when the Inquisition showed interest in the case, but often, other smaller Jesuit centres took upon themselves to judge the cases. Another type, but useful work of social geography of one of the South Indian missions, *La Mission du Maduré; Historique des ses Pangous* by Léon Besse, is equally written flatly as a history that evolves exclusively in and for the Indian territory.⁸

Sure enough, European missionaries were catapulted into the field from Rome, Lisbon or some other Jesuit college in Europe, but it is not always clear how far their previous experiences structured their missionary tasks in India. In the same vein, it is difficult to assess how the authorities in Rome managed and implemented their strategies for the Indian mission territories. Of course, the Generals of the Society of Jesus kept on issuing orders and directives, but the implementation was always, per force left in the hands of the local structure. Even the most dramatic orders - such as those issued after the

⁶Georg Schurhammer's and Joseph Wicki's bibliography runs up into hundreds of articles and books. The most accessible, learned and indispensable is Schurhammer's biography of St. Francis Xavier. Schurhammer, G., S.J., *Francis Xaveir, His Life, His Times, India, (1541-45)*, [transl. from the German edition of 1963, by Costelloe, J. S.J.], 4 vols, Rome, 1977.

⁷ Ferroli, D., S.J., *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Bangalore, 2 vols, 1939-1951.

⁸ Besse, Leo, S.J., *La Mission du Madure; Historique de ses Pangous*, Trichinopoly, 2 vols., 1914.

Council of Trent or, even more so, those of the eighteenth-century that resolved the Malabar rites quarrel and disbanded the Society of Jesus altogether - were put to use quite differently in different locations. In Goa the Jesuits were packed to jail and sent in chains back to Portugal (and Rome), while in Pondicherry they were simply integrated into another French missionary order, La Société des Missions-Étrangères.⁹

If we look further back in time and examine the first histories of the Society of Jesus in India and Asia, especially those written around the time when Aquaviva was in office, we can see that the Jesuits did not simply emplot their history as emanating from Europe. The most stunning characteristic of the synthetic and apologetic histories such as those of Sebastião Gonçalves, Alessandro Valignano, Fernão Guerreiro, João de Lucena, and many others, is an effect of spatial simultaneity.¹⁰ While events take place in Europe, such as the birth of Francisco Xavier, other events take place in India such as the first voyage of Vasco da Gama and the discovery of the maritime route to the Orient. True enough, some dates may be "fixed" to fit the providential narrative, as Sebastião Gonçalves made Xavier be born in 1497 instead of 1506, but it is the European event that ended up fabricated to fit the Indian.

Put most simply, the seventeenth-century Jesuit historians took Indian and Asian mission territory very seriously, not as an extension of the European will over the Orient, but as an extension of the God's grace over gentile regions of darkness. Although this is a reasonably persuasive theological argument, it remains to be disentangled and brought under a sharper focus from the historian's point of view. First of all, by studying in detail the web of Jesuit missionary itineraries and the effects they produced in India and Asia, we can establish the ebb and flow of decision-making process. It is quite interesting to see that the European "centres", such as Rome and Lisbon did not function as the principal decision-making bodies in terms of geopolitical strategies for India and Asia.

⁹ Launay, Adrien, *Histoire générale de la Société des Missions-Étrangères*, Paris, Téqui, 3 vols., 1894.

¹⁰ Gonçalves, S., S.I., *Primeira Parte da História dos Religiosos da companhia de Jesus e do que fizeram com a divina graça na conversão dos infieis a nossa sancta fée catholica nos reynos e provincias da India Oriental [1614]* (original in Biblioteca Nacional Lisbon, Fundo Geral 915,428 ff and 17 ff), (other unpublished original manuscripts in 1) Paço de Ajuda (Lisbon), codex 49-4-51, 252 ff. and 3ff.; 2) ARSI, Goa 37, 297 ff.), Wicki, J., S.I., ed., Coimbra, 3 vols., 1957, Guerreiro, F., S.J., *Relação anual das coisas que fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas Missões [...] nos anos de 1600 á 1609*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., Coimbra 1930 -1942, Lucena, J. de, S.I., *História de vida do padre Francisco de Xavier*, [Lisbon, 1600], facsimile edition, vols. 2, Lisbon, 1952, Valignano, A., *Historia del Principio y Progreso de la Compañía de Jesús en las Indias Orientales, 1542-1564*, ed. Wicki, J., S.J., Rome 1944.

To take the example of the itinerary of Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary in India, although his *vita* is exceptional precisely because it can be taken as a trend-setter, it is clear that his ten-year travels back and forth between India and the East Asia were conditioned and decided upon exclusively on the basis of his own judgements of necessity and importance.¹¹ The only authoritative order coming from Ignatius of Loyola by which he recalled the apostolically overzealous and spiritually over-enthusiastic Jesuit missionary back to Rome reached the address too late. But the story of disregarding orders from Rome and Lisbon continued. Xavier rarely took seriously orders from Europe when alive. After his death, his body was equally "disobedient". His dead body that turned instantaneously into the most coveted Asian relic was demanded from Europe and from Goa. In a series of Jesuit manipulations and by "theft", the Body (as he is today called in Konkani language) arrived to Goa, to a dismay and anger of the inhabitants of Melaka where he was first taken after the burial on the Chinese island of Sancian. The only part of his body that has been sent to Rome, as a consolation price or a synecdoche of the whole, was his right arm to be enshrined in a reliquary and placed on the altar dedicated to the saint in the church of Gesù in Rome. This concession was a part of the canonisation campaign that was reaching its apogee in the early decades of the seventeenth-century. The dismembered arm was sent accompanied (or *vice versa*) by Sebastião Gonçalves's manuscript of the history Society of Jesus in Asia (1615).¹²

The question of the "repatriation" of things, relics, letters, even ideas, such as those of Alonso Sanchez who, according to Henri Bernard-Maitre et Pierre-Antoine Fabre, returned to Rome with experiences which taught him about the dangers of the loss of the spiritual and contemplative nerve before the enormity of apostolic practices, is crucial for the understanding of the functioning and the eighteenth-century historical failure of the Jesuit "mobile" apostolate. It is a question that begs many other questions, as Pierre-Antoine Fabre correctly, if somewhat laconically, announced in the beginning and at the very end of his article: what is the world at the end of the sixteenth-century to an organisation based (and founded) on the principle of universality and to what extent

¹¹ Francis Xavier's correspondence provides ample proofs for this claim. See, Schurhammer, G., S.J., and Wicki, J., S.J., (eds.), *Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii alliaque eius scripta*, eds., 2 vols., Rome, 1944-45,

¹² Zupanov, Ines G., "The Prophetic and the Miraculous in Portuguese Asia; A Hagiographical View of Colonial Culture", dans *Saints and Sinners*, éd. S. Subrahmanyam, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

the blueprint for spiritual renewal proposed by Aquaviva in his letter on prayer was a way of re-enforcing unity that seemed to have been in danger of "*effusio ad exteriora*".¹³

Without coming up with any simple or straightforward answer, I propose at this point to go back to the "sources" in order to tease out at least some tangential points - although selected arbitrarily - that can hopefully help us reconstitute at least some parts of the story.

The first, somewhat obvious, answer to the question of what is the "world" and what is "universal" in the Jesuit letters from the Indian missions in the sixteenth century is rhetoric. The rules of how to write good missionary letters have, in fact, been codified quite early in Rome.¹⁴ However, even this codification was preceded by a solid missionary experience of letter writing combined with the classical and humanist epistolographic training. Jesuit missionary correspondence gives a sense of unity and universality to the whole Jesuit enterprise in the world. From a mission in Brazil among the Tupis to the one on the Fishery Coast of India, in spite of immensely different cultural contexts, we can find the Jesuits using the same language, the same metaphors and the same Biblical quotations, and expressing the same spiritual desires (of martyrdom, for example).

And yet, there is also a sense of break from Europe and the ways of dealing with this break created new conditions for self-invention, self-fashioning or madness.¹⁵ Even if, through the universal rhetoric, India was stereotyped into a territory of the heroic battle between the light of reason carrying the Christian message and the forces of darkness, blindly followed by the gentiles, through the pragmatic description, Indian missions were presented as autonomous sites generating their own history. Nowhere can one detect this simultaneous contradiction at work than in those letters that concerned some sort of internal quarrel. The quarrel between Giovanni de Loffreda and his superiors in Goa, between Roberto Nobili and Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso, between António Gomes and Francis Xavier, etc. Some of the inherent tensions between the "global" and the "local"

¹³ Certeau, Michel de, "La réforme de l'intérieur au temps d'Aquaviva", *Les Jésuites, Spiritualité et activité; Jalons d'une histoire*, Bibliothèque de Spiritualité 9, Paris and Centrum Ignatianum, Rome, 1974, p. 63.

¹⁴ On Jesuit "writing modes" from India see my *Disputed Mission; Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-century India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

were built into the Society of Jesus at its inception - its transnational membership. Thus the early seventeenth-century historiography of the Society of Jesus did all in its power to tone down and iron out all dissonant voices, disputes, quarrels and downright wars between, for example, various "nationalities" within the order.

A solid Catholic teleology and the divine providence as the agency of the Jesuit history were at the back of every Jesuit mind, but the day to day experience in the mission presented a new type of rhetorical challenges. The Jesuits were constantly facing all kinds of conflictual situations, mostly of their own making. They were in constant conflict, varying in degree and intensity, with their converts, with those whom they wanted to convert and between themselves. As all students of the Jesuit prodigious epistolary correspondence well know, messages with queries or complaints were sent to Rome on just about everything and by all concerned, from the Provincial to the lowest Jesuit brother. The problem was that the decisions heading east were slow, sporadic and in constant jeopardy of being lost at the sea. In addition, contributing to the muddle was the common fact that the parties to a dispute changed their minds or developed other strategies in between their initial letter to and the response from Rome. Thus somebody who asked to be transferred from one mission to another for reasons of health, disagreement with another missionary or inability to learn a vernacular language, had to petition again not to be sent elsewhere if in the meantime he decided to stay on.

Obviously, the more distant the mission or the missionaries were from the "calculation centres" in Rome or in Goa, the more independent were their decisions in the field. As much as time and distance played tricks on the proper functioning of the Jesuit networks since they appeared uncontrollable from any centre, they also opened an important space of freedom for the individual initiative and experimentation. In fact, the distance fragmented and, to a degree, multiplied the time of decision-making for all Jesuit actors, in Rome and in, say, Beijing. The game of plurichronicity, that is of having to deal with letters and orders that in fact responded to chronologically distant situations was well played by some of the actors. Especially, when the judgements from Rome did not live up to the petitioner's expectations, the ways and manners of redefining what

¹⁵ Quite a few a few Jesuits went "mad" in various sense of the world. Many left the Society of Jesus or were dismissed. The history of this aspect of the Jesuit apostolic over-extension is yet to be written.

exactly the "point" of complaint or defence was was endlessly open to discussion and engendered other disputes.

What Aquaviva faced in the last decades of the sixteenth-century was precisely the situation of insufficient conflict management strategies due to the increase in membership numbers and in distance (geographical, social, psychological, symbolic etc.), both of which were a direct cause of the fragmentation of the time needed for smooth communication between the actors. In a word, the network of relations that Aquaviva had to nurture, cultivate and maintain in growth and health required an improved technology of surveillance and negotiation that took account the factor of distance.

During his long tenure in the office of the General of the Society of Jesus (1581-1615) and since he weathered almost from the beginning the most serious institutional challenges from the Inquisition, from the popes, Sixtus V and Clement VII, from the King of Spain himself and from his own ranks, Aquaviva developed a refined sense of political survival - for himself and for the Society of Jesus. One of the questions to which there was no easy answer was how to control the Jesuit body that grew to some 13 000 members by the 1615? Michel de Certeau in his still unsurpassed and path-breaking article on "The Reform of the Interior at the Time of Aquaviva" (1974) underscored the importance of the centralised and closely watched "spiritual administration" of the members. Each member, thus, required an interior spiritual "pacemaker" with which to calibrate his own interior oscillation between the world of contemplation and the world of apostolic labours. The letter on prayer (1590) was, according to de Certeau, an effort at giving an official interpretation of the foundation and the origins (of the Society of Jesus) and thus fixing and reifying them for the purpose of providing for all an orthodox and unitary language of interior.¹⁶

Pierre-Antoine Fabre spells out this thesis clearly in his article by concluding that there is an essential relation between spirituality and conformity. It is obvious, in Pierre-Antoine Fabre's words, that "la complexité du dossier Alonso Sánchez tient [...] à une tension constitutive entre cette conformation spirituelle et l'exigence de réforme spirituelle qui se manifeste dans le désir du départ vers les missions lointaines – désir de retraite autant que désir de départ, désir de s'arracher autant que désir de se mettre en

¹⁶ Certeau, " La réforme de l'intérieur au temps d'Aquaviva", p. 56.

marche, recul et avancée, retour et aventure". Moreover, the same constitutive tension is present in many Jesuit apostolic and spiritual itineraries. To what extent, and when one or the other element takes precedence over the other, is often conditioned by local social and cultural ecology. For example in India, in the last two decades of the sixteenth century, there is an increasing number of the Jesuits who, at one point or the other, demanded to be allowed to join mendicant orders under pretext of desiring to consecrate more time for the salvation of their own souls. If we look closely into these demands we can see that it is not always the question of spirituality that makes Jesuits want to escape from apostolic duties. The spiritual hotheads such as Alonso Sanchez are relatively rare. It is, rather, "smaller" complaints that are the heart of the matter and closely connected with the problem of dis/obedience to superiors and the inability to pursue one's own personal goals and desires.

For example, in 1588, a Jesuit Brother Juan Martín complained to Aquaviva, with a tinge of impatience clearly discernable, that he had never been given a chance to study although he was initially admitted, in 1569, as a scholastic. He came to India with Valignano in 1575, but was somehow "forgotten (*se esqueceo de mim*)" by his superiors and spent his time as a nurse (*emfermero*).¹⁷ Whether or not Aquaviva responded to this letter is not known, but a year later Martín's superior in Goa, Nicolao Spinola, referred his case again to the General.¹⁸

At least Juan Martín made no public scandal about his condition. Some, however did, and were very vocal about it and a source of embarrassment to the Society of Jesus in India. Giovanni Battista de Loffreda's brief stay in India was just that. Loffreda was also one of the forty-one Jesuits who came to India with Valignano in 1575.¹⁹ He appeared to have been an important member of the expedition because of his medical training and talents.²⁰ The Visitor's first evaluation of Loffreda was that he "looks like a very good religious".²¹ However, already in 1575, he was described a "useless subject" because of

¹⁷ DI XV, pp.160-161.

¹⁸ DI XV, p. 218.

¹⁹ *Catalogo dos Padres e Irmãos da Companhia de Jesu que forão mandados hà India Oriental, Anno 1574*, ARSI, Goa 24, f.73v.

²⁰ Alessandro Valignano, *quae desiderantur in facultatibus haec sunt*, Genoa, before Oct. 25, 1573, ARSI Goa 24 I, f. 77v; Alessandro Valignano to Antonio Possevino, Lisbon, Feb, 6, 1574, DI IX and *Ripartitione delle navi*, Lisbon, before March 8, 1574, ARSI, Goa 24 I, f. 75.

²¹ Alessandro Valignano to the General, Lisbon, March 8, 1574, DI IX, p. 214.

his acute hearing impairment which was, we gather from various Jesuit letters written from Goa, a cause of his willful behavior. Briefly, he did not "hear" properly his superiors' orders. When, in the same year, another psychologically deranged, or, we may say, excessively spiritual Jesuit novice, António Velês, sailed back to Portugal to cure his fervors, Giovanni Battista de Loffreda remained and we find him enrolled as a theology student at St. Paul's College in Goa. The next and incurable bout of crisis erupted when two years later he had finished his studies and demanded to be ordained as a priest. This was, of course, something of a joke since he was not able to perform Mass and hear confession because of his physical condition. In addition, according to the ecclesiastical laws, as an ordained priest he would not be allowed to practice medicine. As he was considered one of the best physicians in Goa, no doubt his superiors hesitated. To keep him happy and to keep him at work as a physician, Valignano applied for a special dispensation for the Jesuit doctors to continue their practice overseas from the pope Gregory XIII. And, lo and behold, and to Loffreda's dismay, the dispensation arrived promptly.²²

It was only at that point that the scandal broke out in public since Loffreda refused to work as physician and demanded to be sent to do a real missionary work among the infidel kings and "to convert the king [Akbar]" and "to preach to the gentiles".²³ When the superiors in Goa snubbed his wishes, he ran away and found shelter with, among others, the Archbishop of Goa, a Dominican, Dom Frei Henrique de Távora e Brito (1578-1581).²⁴ He did repent and come back only to rebel again and at one point even declared that "the superiors wanted to kill him and that this Society of ours is not the Society of Jesus but of tyranny, and similar things in this manner."²⁵ He was finally dismissed and went back to Rome in 1582 with a firm will to complain about his Indian superiors directly to the General. Unfortunately, his traces disappeared in Rome, and unless some diligent student of Jesuit history manages to excavate the rest of the story, we might never know the end.

²² Alessandro Valignano to the General, Goa, Sept. 16, 1577, DI X, p. 899. Gregory XIII, *Unigeniti Dei Filii*, 10 Feb. 1576. Delplace, L., *Synopsis actorum S. Sedis in causa Societatis Iesu, 1540-1605*, Florence, 1887, 79 n. 70.

²³ Lofreda wrote letters to Akbar but they were intercepted and set to the General by Ruy Vicente in 1579.

²⁴ Third (and 4th) Archbishop of Goa, a Dominican, Dom frei Henrique de Távora e Brito (1578-1581). Poisoned in Chaul. See Sebastião Gonçalves, *Primeira parte da História dos Religiosos da Companhia de Jesus [...]*, Coimbra, 1962, vol. II, p.437, and Farinha, António Lourenço, *A Expansão da Fé no Oriente*, Ministério das Colónias, 1943, vol. 2, p.192.

Even more interesting is the case of Francisco Dionysio, also known as "*Padre moreno*", or "*mulatto*", since he was a progeny of a Spanish father and an African mother. He was a rector of the Kochi college and a missionary among the St. Thomas Christians when he suddenly, in 1578, decided to join the Franciscans (*passar à Cartuxa*) because "in that order (*religião*) I can serve God and can escape occasions (of sin) by which I turn to evil in my weakness".²⁶ However, it is not spirituality that is in question but rather the whole functioning of the Society of Jesus in India. "I do not fear (*cuido*) that the Institute of the Society is not useful for the salvation, I rather take it for the highest and the ultimate perfection, and full of light and of the divine help of Our Lord, but the times, places and persons and other circumstances cause much danger through false brothers (*in falsis fratribus*)".²⁷ Dionysio in Malabar, therefore, clearly pointed out - and Aquaviva in Rome would certainly agree with him - that the gap between the normative documents written by the founder, Ignatius of Loyola and the way in which these rules and regulations were put into practice was getting wider and wider in the thick of the Jesuit distant overseas missions.

In fact Aquaviva was himself responsible for the proliferation of the written revisions and instructions to the superiors directing them how to guide their subordinates in order to live according to the proper Jesuit code of behavior in spiritual and apostolic matters.²⁸ The cases of the Jesuits who were unhappy about their vocation certainly found their way to Aquaviva's working desk. Therefore, when the General asked Lorenzo Maggio to research into the matter in 1585, it was only one of the first steps towards the major inquiry "*de detrimentis Societatis*", opened in 1606. The letter on the prayer of 1590 is one of the first remedies "for the soul" that he offered to his "brothers in Christ", scattered throughout the face of the earth.²⁹

Alonso Sanchez might have been close enough to whisper words of advice into Aquaviva's ear on spiritual matters and on prayer, but I doubt that he was unique in performing that task. It was rather the massive correspondence, with thousands of voices

²⁵ Laerzio to Aquaviva, Goa, Nov. 3, 1581, ARSI, *Goa* 47, ff.156r-157v.

²⁶ DI XI, p. 211.

²⁷ DI XI, p. 212.

²⁸ Iparraguirre, Ignacio, "Élaboration de la spiritualité des jésuites, 1556-1606, *Les Jésuites, Spiritualité et activité; Jalons d'une histoire*, Bibliothèque de Spiritualité 9, Paris and Centrum Ignatianum, Rome, 1974.

clamoring in "spiritual" distress, often, in fact, originating in personal, national and class disputes with other members, that pushed Aquaviva into the turmoil of re-writing and re-adjusting the Jesuit spiritual sources to the new anxious and uncertain times, fifty years after the death of the founder. When we examine, for example, the documents produced by the Jesuits in India from 1581 to 1615, we can find hundreds of letters addressed to Aquaviva. Although he did not always respond to each and every letter, he did take into account particular cases when he pinned down his circular letters. But, all in all, it was the Jesuit missionaries from the missions that endlessly demanded more instructions and clearer directives from the General. Especially during the time of Aquaviva's tenure in office the flow of "effervescence", in Carmen Salazar-Soler's lapidary expression, flew from "peripheries" to Rome, rather than *vice versa*. In fact, Aquaviva's responses (not all of them are preserved) to the urgent missionary questions from spiritual craving to whether or not to use the sale of Chinese silk in Japan to sustain the missions, were often ambiguous and provided ample space for local manipulation. The debate of what one particular Aquaviva's answer truly meant could go on forever in local missionary squabbles. The sphinx-like effect of his answers was on a certain level a strategy of buying more time or procrastination before a final decision, but it was also the consequence of the temporal and spatial distance (polychronicity and multispatiality) that deformed to varying degrees all meaningful communication. When it didn't it was close to a miracle.

In that sense, the "Copernican reversal" detected by Pierre-Antoine Fabre may also be seen as just a smaller event of the 1930s happening within a smaller world of the French Jesuits and within the "conservative" milieu of the positivist Jesuit historiography, adhering to particular political currents. Of course, the iceberg of the Jesuit history below this dispute, was much bigger and much more mobile than meets the eye. The discussion is, therefore, not closed. It just has to be moved to a less European ground. Maybe not yet to "provincialize Europe", but to put it in its rightful place and downsize its universal and centralizing claims.³⁰

²⁹ One of the important books written by Aquaviva on "spiritual medicine" is *Industriae pro superioribus ejusdem societati ad curandos animae morbos*, Anvers, 1635.

³⁰ Chakraborty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe; Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.

