

## **“I Am a Great Sinner”: Jesuit Missionary Dialogues in Southern India (Sixteenth Century)**

**Ines G. Županov\***

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### **Abstract**

In this article I look into a Jesuit dialogical and catechetical text—a confession manual—published in Tamil in 1580. Written as instructions for Tamil Catholics and for Jesuit confessors, these kinds of texts were nodal points in which Tamils and missionaries reprocessed their knowledge of each other and established rules for appropriate social interaction and Catholic sociability. My claim is that the *Confessionario* captured and condensed Tamil voices and arguments in a network of Jesuit normative vocabulary and offered a language of self-knowledge expressed in affective vocabulary. A confession manual should not be considered only a strategy for missionary manipulation but also an important tool for the social self-empowerment of the new convert.

Dans cet article, j'examine un texte jésuite tout à la fois dialogique et catéchétique – un manuel de confession – rédigé en tamoul en 1580. Recueils d'instructions à l'usage des catholiques tamouls et des confesseurs jésuites, ces textes constituèrent des points nodaux pour la transformation du savoir que les tamouls et les missionnaires avaient les uns des autres et pour l'établissement de règles garantissant des rapports sociaux et une sociabilité sans heurts. Je montre dans cet article comment le *Confessionario* captura et condensa des voix et des «arguments» tamouls dans les interstices d'une structure et d'un vocabulaire normatif jésuite, créant du même coup un langage du savoir sur soi à travers un vocabulaire affectif. Suivant cette perspective, le manuel de confession ne doit pas être réduit à une stratégie de manipulation missionnaire: il est aussi un instrument qui permit au nouveau converti d'affirmer leurs nouvelles identités comme une sorte de pouvoir social.

### **Keywords**

Parava, Confession manual, Jesuits, Mission, Tamil

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\*) Ines G. Županov, CEIAS, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CNRS/EHESS, Paris, zupanov@ehess.fr.

According to the Jesuit historian George Schurhammer, Francis Xavier—the Apostle of the Indies, as he is known, and the first Jesuit missionary in Asia—brought with him from Europe only two books.<sup>1</sup> One was the breviary and the other *The Institution of Religious Life with Examples from the New and the Ancient Testament*, by Marko Marulić (Italianized as “Marco Marulo”), published in Cologne in 1531.<sup>2</sup>

Although Xavier used Marulić’s book as a source of examples for preaching and instruction, it was no more—as he wrote in one of his famous letters to another Jesuit, Gaspar Barzaeus, who was about to be sent to Ormuz, on the Persian Gulf, in 1549—than a “dead book (*livro morto*)”;<sup>3</sup> he preferred the study of “living books (*vivos livros*).” In a word, Xavier advised Gaspar Barzaeus to study the people around him. It is from them, he wrote, that we can learn more in order to usefully “fructify the souls, your own and that of your neighbour.”<sup>4</sup>

“Living books” are essentially constituted in dialogue and in dialogic contexts. For the Jesuit missionaries, a dialogue was, first of all, a strategy for acquiring knowledge of geopolitics and geography, of customs and manners, of economy and bioresources, and of religious practices linked closely to the secret internal knowledge of the soul. The presence of these dialogical voices, fragmented as they were, is attested in Jesuit correspondence, where dialogues spring forth, as embedded theatre pieces, from the epistolary narratives.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a part of a larger project, in collaboration with Cristina Muru, on Christian literature in Tamil from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. We are currently working on the critical edition (with annotations, translation, and introduction) of Henrique Henrique’s Tamil *Confessionario* from the Bodleian Oriental Manuscript Reading Room. I thank Ananya Chakravarti, Angela Barreto Xavier, Corinne Lefèvre, Margherita Trento, and the anonymous readers for JESHO for their comments and suggestions. All translations from Tamil are mine. I extend my gratitude for clearing certain difficult passages to Professor S. Arokkianathan and Pundit R. Varada Desikan.

<sup>2</sup> According to Georg Schurhammer, this book, preserved in the Jesuit Casa Professa in Madrid, was burnt by “the Reds in the Spanish Civil War in 1932.” G. Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*, vol. 2, *India (1541-1545)*, trans. from the German by M.J. Costelloe (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1977): 225.

<sup>3</sup> F. Xavier, *Epistolae S. Francisci Xavierii aliaque eius scripta (1535-1552)*, ed. G. Schurhammer and J. Wicki (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1996): 2:98.

<sup>4</sup> Xavier, *Epistolae*: 2:98-9. The letter is mostly about how to confess and cleanse the Christians of sin, as Ormuz was a Portuguese commercial outpost in which Christians lived among a Muslim majority. Xavier’s mission, according to his own correspondence, was to help Portuguese souls that were perceived as being in danger in the non-Christian environment, as well as to convert non-Christians.

In this essay, I am interested in a particular type of Jesuit dialogical text, those that are written for the "living books"—that is, for the new converts—such as catechisms and confession manuals written in Tamil, during the second half of the sixteenth century, for the Parava community of pearl fishermen and traders who inhabited the long sandy beaches between Kanyakumari and Rameswaram. The Parava first converted to Christianity at their request in the 1530s, in return for the promise of the Portuguese to protect them from their local Muslim rivals.<sup>5</sup> After the initial conversion—which was no more than a communal event in which the whole caste converted, with no instruction in Christian doctrine and practice—it was the Jesuit missionaries who transformed Parava into self-conscious Catholics. The Parava were, in fact, the first converts to Christianity in Tamil Nadu and constituted the first Jesuit mission field in India.<sup>6</sup> Francis Xavier opened the mission for the Jesuits with miracles and highly dramatic gestures of sanctity, but the Jesuits who followed in his footsteps organized the Parava into a community of pious and devoted Christians who withstood efforts by the Dutch to convert them to Protestantism in the seventeenth century and remain staunch Catholics to this day.<sup>7</sup>

By looking closely into the *Confessionnaire*, a confession manual printed in 1580—in the Collegio da Madre de Deus in Kochi (Cochin), "on the 31 of the month of May (*vaikaci*)" (2b), in the Tamil language and the Tamil script—I will show how its dialogical narrative, a libretto for a real conversation between a Jesuit confessor and a Parava penitent, transcends

<sup>5</sup> G. Schurhammer, "Die Bekehrung der Paraver (1535-1536)," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 4 (1935): 201-33.

<sup>6</sup> I.G. Županov, "Prosélytisme et pluralisme religieux: Deux expériences missionnaires en Inde aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 87 (1994): 33-56.

<sup>7</sup> P.A. Roche, *Fishermen of the Coromandel: The Social Study of the Paravas of the Coromandel* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1984). On the Parava (or Bharatar) community, see S. Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). On political and economic history, see S. Subrahmanyam, "Noble Harvest from the Sea: Managing the Pearl Fishery of Mannar, 1500-1925," in *Institutions and Economic Change in South Asia*, ed. B. Stein and S. Subrahmanyam (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996): 134-72; J.M. Flores, *Os Portugueses e o Mar de Ceilão* (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1998); Ā.Civacuppiramaniyan, *Paratavarkalīṅ naṭṭar maruttuvam, navaviṅ araycci*, I, I, Oct. (Tuticorin: 1985); Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993). On the Portuguese-Dutch struggle for control of the Parava community, see M. Vink, "The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of the Fishery Coast: The Portuguese-Dutch Struggle over the Parava Community of Southeast India, c. 1640-1700," *Portuguese Studies Review* 9/1-2 (2001): 372-97.

the confines of its normative framework.<sup>8</sup> The *Confessionairo* and other pastoral texts in Tamil, such as catechisms and the lives of saints were both conscience-fashioning manuals teaching converts to think, feel, talk, and act in a Christian way, and important instruments in the building of this South Indian Christian community.<sup>9</sup> They proposed a new technology of the self that the conversion to Catholicism necessarily entailed, but they also reworked and reinforced the structure of authority within the community.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the dialogical texture of the *Confessionairo* captures and mediates Parava voices, which tell a fragmentary but parallel story of cultural conversion, one of individual empowerment and social subjection.

The *Confessionairo* may appear at first to be an instrument of the missionary-driven “spiritual colonialism,” complicit with practices of domination, because it teaches the penitent to adopt and adapt to European Christian habitus.<sup>11</sup> This was certainly the intention of the Catholic

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<sup>8</sup> I will henceforth quote the *Confessionairo* in my text by folio numbers, e.g., (1a), (2b). Henrique Henriques, *Confessionairo* (Cochin: Collegio da Madre de Deus, 1580). The only extant copy of this book is in Oxford, in the Reading Room of the Bodleian Library, Oriental Dept., MS Vet. Or. f. Tam. 1. It was bound in the same volume as *Kiricittiyāni vanakkam* (Cochin: Collegio da Madre de Deus, 1579). The *Confessionairo* was discovered by G.W. Shaw, who, a few years later, also discovered a second copy of Henrique Henriques's *Flos Sanctorum* in the Oriental Collection (Orientaliske Afdeling) of the Royal Library in Copenhagen. See G.W. Shaw “A ‘Lost’ Work of Henrique Henriques: The Tamil Confessionary of 1580,” *The Bodleian Library Record* 11 (1982): 26–34. Another copy of the *Flos Sanctorum* is in the Vatican Library in Rome, while the only copy of his *Tampirān vanakkam*, a small catechism printed in Coulam [Kollam] in 1578 in the Collegio do Salvador, is in the Harvard University Library. Other copies of the catechisms by Henriques were inventoried in Paris and Leiden but cannot now be located. The scarcity of these early Tamil printings reflects the long-standing lack of historiographical interest in these texts. Tamil words are transliterated in this article according to the system used by the Madras University Tamil Lexicon.

<sup>9</sup> The manual for successful self-fashioning was an important literary genre in early modern Europe; see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning, from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989). Christian self-fashioning was a genre stimulated by the Catholic Reformation and the Jesuits published a variety of texts in various languages on the topic. See for example, *Les jésuites parmi les hommes aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Clermont-Ferrand: Faculté des lettres et science humaine, 1987): 83–172.

<sup>10</sup> For the Foucauldian concept of the technology of self and confession, see M. Foucault, “About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth,” *Political Theory* 21/2 (1993): 198–227.

<sup>11</sup> “Habitus” is here taken, in the sense given to it by Pierre Bourdieu, as a system of unconscious and collective dispositions that structure both practices and representations; see P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge

Church, but the translation into the Tamil language and cultural idiom made the results of the passage less certain. By soliciting emotions, the very texture of the *Confessionairo* overflows with Tamil concepts of devotion, guilt, fear of sins (*pilai, tolcam*), sorrow, desire, and hope that may coincide only imperfectly with the semantic fields of Latin or Portuguese. The problem of studying emotion in history is, as Barbara H. Rosenwein has cautioned, that people live in emotional communities that construct their own systems of feelings.<sup>12</sup> The Jesuit missionaries, who were probably the first eager students of "emotional communities" in South India, noticed the complexities of emotional life of their subjects, as they spread their missions from Goa south, north, and inland. In a way, dealing with emotions was what they were trained to do—whether in the Neapolitan countryside or the Iberian court, or on the coast of the Parava fishermen—because twisting and turning emotions were an integral part of the spiritual pedagogy developed by the Society of Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Emotions were all the more important, as they were considered potentially treacherous vessels for diabolic forces that, in the Parava mission, literally surrounded the churches and the bodies of the Christians.<sup>14</sup>

The *Confessionairo* therefore methodically, chapter after chapter, enumerates faults and castigates transgressions, and provides "remedies" for cleansing the individual conscience of sins and of the relics of paganism still present in Parava practices and thoughts, but by repeatedly speaking

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University Press, 1977): 72. For the role of confession in the development of European individualism, see A. Gurevich, *The Origins of European Individualism*, trans. K. Judelson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> On the history of emotions in recent historiography, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 10/3 (2002): 821-45.

<sup>13</sup> Although not necessarily positive in themselves, emotion and imagination play an important role in the spiritual pilgrimage to salvation enacted in Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*; A. Saunders, *The Seventeenth-century French Emblem: Study in Diversity* (Geneva: Droz, 2000): 233.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the painting by André Reinoso describing a scene from Francis Xavier's life, in which the forces of the Badaga army attacked another Christian fishing community of South India, the Mukkuvar, and were stopped by Xavier's heroic intercession. The painting, done in 1619 and today in the sacristy of the church of São Roque in Lisbon, represents the army as the "darkness of paganism." See I.G. Županov, *Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India (16th-17th centuries)* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2005): 154. See also V. Serão, *A Lenda de São Francisco Xavier pelo Pintor André Reinoso*, (Lisbon: Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, 1993) and his "Quadros da vida de São Francisco Xavier," *Oceanos* 12 (1992): 56-69.

and re-memorizing sins in thoughts (*ninaivu*), desires (*iccai*), and words (*vacanam*) (5a), the *Confessionario* unwittingly enhanced their importance and scope. In a way, the sins to be expurgated re-emerge relentlessly, through willful recollection. The printed texts, in fact, may have breathed a new life into these concepts and affects and into other types of “idolatrous” and “superstitious” practices that the *Confessionario* tried to eradicate.

Insistence on frequent and general confession and on penitential discipline was, in fact, a very Jesuit approach to newly missionized territories.<sup>15</sup> Juan Carlos Estenssoro-Fuchs has adduced Jesuit efforts in Peru, culminating in the Third Council of Lima (1562-3), in contrast to earlier Dominican opinion that confession was indispensable exclusively in the case of mortal sin.<sup>16</sup> Even the practice of recording one’s sins on khipus (the knotted cords used for record-keeping in the Andes) was hailed as a correct practice, at least until the middle of the seventeenth century, when other concerns, having mostly to do with the Andean capacity to record clerical abuse, made the ecclesiastical hierarchy suspicious of this indigenous recording practice.<sup>17</sup> In another Spanish imperial territory, the Philippines, confession and confession manuals in Tagalog, as Vicente Raphael pointed out, became popular among the newly converted Christians, as well as a space of resistance to Spanish domination.<sup>18</sup>

From additional documents, mostly letters by the Jesuits, I will show how and why confession took root relatively easily among the Parava

<sup>15</sup> The importance of confession as a Jesuit tool for spiritual growth is well known. Already Ignatius of Loyola commissioned Juan Alfonso de Polanco to write a confession manual, *Breve directorium ad confessarii ac confitentis munus recte obeundum* (Rome, 1554), which was followed, for internal use by the second general of the order, by Diego Laínez’s *De modo audiendi confessiones*. See J.W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993): 141-3. See also R. Rusconi, *L’ordine dei peccati: La confessione tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002): 314-5.

<sup>16</sup> J.C. Estenssoro-Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad: La incorporación de los indios del Perú al catolicismo, 1532-1750*, trans. from the French by Gabriela Ramos (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, Pontificia/Universidad Católica del Perú, 2003): 206-8.

<sup>17</sup> Hence the accusation of the inadaptability of khipus for keeping an exact account of sins committed. See J. Charles, “Unreliable Confessions: Khipus in the Colonial Parish,” *The Americas* 64/1 (2007): 11-33.

<sup>18</sup> According to Rafael, “converting conversion and confusing confession, the Tagalogs ‘submitted’ while at the same time hollowing out the Spanish call for submission.” V.L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993): 135.

Catholics and became an important cultural expression.<sup>19</sup> With no imperial language interfering substantially in the Tamil of the Parava Christians, in contrast to the pressures put on Tagalog and on Amerindian languages, and with the Portuguese never having had full control of their territory, "learning to be a sinner" became an empowering act, providing Parava Christians with enhanced social and cultural capacities.

The *Confessionairo* also became an important element in the construction of Parava communal identity and caste structure. This caste of pearl fishermen and pearl merchants used Christianity successfully in their social and political ascent, even when they were no longer under Jesuit pastoral care.

### Jesuit Tamil Translations and Printings

The *Confessionairo* comes at the end of a series of dialogical Tamil texts produced by the Jesuits in the sixteenth century for the spiritual nourishment of the Parava. A different type of dialogical documents, written for the missionaries and eventually also for the local catechists, comprised the grammars and dictionaries of the major mission languages. These bilingual constructions were necessary prerequisites for developing a catechetical literature for the direct use of the Christians. In Indian missions, the Jesuits produced the vocabularies/dictionaries and the *artes* (grammars) of the major mission languages, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> The first references to these linguistic efforts for the Tamil language date to the middle of the sixteenth century from the Fishery Coast (Costa da Pescaria), where the first and largest Catholic community, the Christian Parava caste, was coming of age under Jesuit pastoral care.<sup>21</sup>

The Jesuits often claimed that the catechetical books they wrote and published in various vernacular languages were nothing but imitations or translations of authorized texts. The *Arte do Malavar* was, according to the author, Henrique Henriques (also spelt Anrique Anriques), based on two

<sup>19)</sup> Most of the correspondence from the Parava mission field in the sixteenth century is published in *Documenta Indica*, ed. J. Wicki, 18 vols. (Rome: Monumenta Hiistorica Societatis Iesus, 1948-88), cited henceforth as DI.

<sup>20)</sup> G. James, *Tamil Lexicography* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991): 53-91. For Konkani, see an old but classic work by J.H. Cunha Rivara, *Ensaio histórico da lingua Concani* (Nova-Goa: Imprensa nacional, 1857).

<sup>21)</sup> Županov, *Missionary Tropics*: 232-58.

grammars, one Latin and one Portuguese, by João de Barros.<sup>22</sup> Invoking the support of some authority was necessary, especially when dealing with linguistic material that was not only completely unknown but also closely connected with the world of “paganism.” Latin and Portuguese thus contained and tamed Tamil conjugations and declensions within the framework defined by European grammars.

The semantic content of a language was obviously more difficult to control. By claiming that they were perfectly competent to translate Christian catechisms and other doctrinal works into formerly “pagan” languages, the Jesuits not only gave authority to their “translations” but also admitted—and, in the long run, promoted—the idea of continuous convertibility between non-Christian and Christian vocabulary. This had an important consequence for the geographical spread and configuration of Catholicism in the early modern period. In fact, the degree of convertibility was not always taken for granted, not even by the Jesuits.<sup>23</sup>

For example, Marcos Jorge’s *Doctrina Christãa* (Lisbon, 1566), the so-called “Big Catechism,” written as questions and answers between the priest and the disciple, was translated into many different languages of the Portuguese colonial empire, including Japanese, Kikongo, Tupi, and Konkani.<sup>24</sup> Most of these translations were printed in the early seventeenth

<sup>22</sup> H. Henriques, *Arte Malauar*, Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Reservados, MS 3141: 6v. The manuscript is printed in *The First European Tamil Grammar. A Critical Edition*, ed. H.J. Vermeer, trans. A. Morath (Heidelberg: Julius Gros Verlag, 1982). João de Barros, *Gramática da língua Portuguesa: Cartinha, gramática, diálogo em louvor da nossa linguagem e diálogo da viciosa vergonha*, ed. M.L. Carvalhão Buescu (Lisbon: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 1971).

<sup>23</sup> The Jesuit controversy in Madurai in the early seventeenth century, which ended in the so-called Malabar rites quarrel a century later, continued to raise the question of accommodation. It was waged between those who saw endless convertibility of concepts and practices and those who felt that these were dangerous concessions to “paganism,” which risked contaminating Christianity. See I.G. Županov, “Le repli du religieux: Les missionnaires jésuites du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle entre la théologie chrétienne et une éthique païenne,” *Annales HSS* 6 (1996): 1201–23.

<sup>24</sup> In Japanese: *Nippon no Iesus no Companhia no Superior yori Christan ni soto no cotouari uo tagaino mondo no gotoqu xidai uo vacachi taamo Doctrina*, Amacusa, 1592. In Kikongo: *Doutrina christaa. Composta pelo P. Marcos Jorge... Acrescentada pelo Padre Ignacio Martinz... De novo traduzida na lingoa do Reyno de Congo, por ordem do P. Mattheus Cardoso theologo, da Companhia de Jesu*. Lisbon: por Geraldo da Vinha, 1624. In Konkani: *Doutrina christam em lingoa bramana canarim: Ordenada a maneira de diálogo, pera ensinar os mininos coposta pollo Padre Thomas Estevao*. Empresa no Collegio de Rachol da Copanhia de Jesus, 1622. In Tupi: Leonardo do Vale is credited with the first translation of Jorge Marcos’



century with additional introductions and adapted comments. Such is the case with João da Rocha's hefty introduction to *Doctrina Cristiana* (*Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng*).<sup>25</sup>

Jorge's *Doctrina* was also translated into Tamil as *Kiricittiyāni vaṇakkam* (*Christian Salutation*). It was the second catechism printed in India in Tamil script, after a small catechism or *Tampirān vaṇakkam* (*Salutation of the Lord*) that appeared in 1578 in Kollam, in the Collegio do Salvador.<sup>26</sup> These extraordinary pieces of early Tamil printing have no imprimatur or any other official permission. Nobody but the Jesuits—about twelve of whom knew Tamil—were able to verify the "theological" orthodoxy of these texts, when the Inquisition was working diligently in Goa to suppress "heresy" and when no books could be published without authorization from the Church. The author of both books, moreover, was Henrique Henriques, a Jesuit missionary of New Christian (*cristão novo*) origin, that is, from a family of converted Jews.<sup>27</sup> The New Christian status was

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catechism in 1574. His text is lost. See Cândida Barros, "Entre heterodoxos e ortodoxos: Notas sobre catecismos dialogados na Europa e nas colônias no século XVI," *Revista da história e estudos culturais* 5/4 (2008): 1-20, and M. Kittiya Lee, *Conversing in Colony: The Brasília and the Vulgar in Portuguese America, 1500-1759* (PhD diss., John Hopkins University, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Gianni Criveller, "Dar razón de las cosas de nuestra santa fe. Géneros literarios y misión jesuita en China al final del periodo Ming," in *Escrituras de la modernidad: Los jesuitas entre cultura retórica y cultura científica*, ed. P. Chichilla and A. Romano (Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2008): 227, and see Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Borgia Cinese*, 338 (1-8). Criveller makes a distinction between "direct" and "indirect" apostolate in the Chinese mission. For the Chinese literati, Ricci used discussions and disputations, as well as texts such as *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, based on Valignano's *Catechismus cristianae fidei* (1586). The same strategy was used by Roberto Nobili in Madurai in the early seventeenth century, but it is not applicable to Henriques's mission among the Parava. See Matteo Ricci, *Tianzhu Shiyi: The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, trans. D. Lancashire and P. Hu Guozhen (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985); *Catechismus christianae fidei, in quo veritas nostrae religionis ostenditur, et sectae japonenses cofutantur*, ed. Alexandro Valignano (Olyssipone, 1586, facsimile edition Tokyo, 1972).

<sup>26</sup> *Tampirān vaṇakkam*, in *Vaṇakkam*, ed. S. Rajamanickam (Tuticorin: Tamil ilakkiyakalākam, 1963): 1-12.

<sup>27</sup> DI: 2:134. According to Nicolao Lancilotto's letter from 1550 (from Kollam), Henriques was admitted to the Franciscan order, only to be thrown out when his New Christian origins were discovered. In the Jesuit hagiographies of the College in Coimbra, where Henriques started the novitiate, there is no mention of his family origins. A. Franco, *Imagem da virtude em o noviciado do Coimbra, Coimbra em Portugal* (Evora: na Oficina da Universidade, 1719) 1:523.

a problem in sixteenth-century Iberian kingdoms and empires.<sup>28</sup> The Inquisition arrived in Goa in 1560 specifically to tackle the accusations of Judaizing in the rich and prominent communities of New Christians in Goa and Cochim.

The New Christians devised various ways to trick or postpone the inquisitorial machine. I have argued elsewhere that a physician of Goa, Garcia da Orta, wrote a famous medico-botanical book on tropical remedies and thus saved his life.<sup>29</sup> Not his bones, however, because the Inquisition caught him posthumously and burnt his remains. Henrique Henriques, who was undoubtedly a fervent Christian, spent his whole life trying to prove his orthodoxy by claiming a special gift for languages.<sup>30</sup>

In a letter from Punnaikayal, written to Ignatius of Loyola (31 December 1556), Henriques complained that Gonçalo de Sylveira, the provincial of India, never responded to his letter, in which he offered his services in composing grammars of Asian languages. With a good interpreter and a scribe, he boasted, he would be able to decipher any grammar—Japanese, Chinese, or that of Prester John (Ethiopian). He also admitted that his Tamil grammar, the *Arte*, had not been completed, for lack of time, but he asserted that it was already usefully employed in his Tamil school for missionaries, in which the language could be learned well in six months.<sup>31</sup> A few years later, he reported to Diego Laínez, the general of the order, that his *Arte* was used to write down conjugations and declensions of Telugu (or Badaga).<sup>32</sup> He also mentioned, in passing, that they lacked priests who knew Tamil well enough to hear confessions. In order to be able to confess, a missionary needed intensive training, with the help of his *Arte*.<sup>33</sup>

A few years later, in 1567, Henriques repeated his readiness to serve as a grammarian of non-European languages. He was working on Konkani, the language of Goa.

<sup>28</sup> J.A.R. da Silva Tavim, *Judeus e Cristãos-Novos de Cochim. História e Memória (1500-1662)* (Braga: Edições APPACDM, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> I.G. Županov, “‘The Wheel of Torments’: Mobility and Redemption in Portuguese Colonial India (16th Century),” in *Cultural Mobility*, ed. S. Greenblatt et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 24–74.

<sup>30</sup> See Županov, *Missionary Tropics*: 232–58.

<sup>31</sup> DI: 3:593–601.

<sup>32</sup> DI: 5:688.

<sup>33</sup> DI: 9:600.

For a couple of days I worked on this. There are four months that I brought one or two Canarins [i.e., Konkani] who speak Portuguese and I learnt from them during my free time (*nos tempos vagos*).... Few words are similar in the two languages, but the sentence is very similar. Konkani is, however, more difficult [than Tamil]. I hope to send my *Arte* to Goa very soon, in order to have it examined and to see if I can do the same for other languages.<sup>34</sup>

Neither *Arte*, *Kiricittiyāni vanakkam* (*Christian Salutation*), nor any other book by Henriques came exclusively from his pen. He acknowledged in his letters that he was helped by the *topazes* and by one particular *língua*, Pero (Pedro) Luís Bramane who oversaw personally the printing of the books in Tamil.<sup>35</sup> Pero Luís was born to an impoverished Brahman family, converted at an early age, and served as interpreter to the Jesuits. He was extraordinary in becoming the only Indian Jesuit in the early modern period.<sup>36</sup> The close collaboration with native speakers of Tamil who were themselves bilingual is recorded in these early printed books. Henriques always claimed that he was either co-author or translator.<sup>37</sup>

### From Pious Dialogue to Pious Theater

*Kiricittiyāni vanakkam* (*Christian Salutation*) is, moreover, not only a dialogical text, co-written with a Tamil catechist or a Christian interpreter, but itself a dialogue—a dialogue between a teacher (*vātiyar*) and a disciple (*ciṣan*), just as in the original *Doctrina Christāa*, written by Marcos Jorge. Although there is no indication how this and other texts were read—except that men “practiced” (recited) it on Sunday and Friday after the Mass and women on Tuesday—we presume, from other descriptions, that they were

<sup>34</sup> DI: 7:442.

<sup>35</sup> Pero [Pedro] Luís Bramane wrote from Kollam in 1580 to Everard Mercurian, the general of the Society of Jesus, that he had spent the whole month of October in Kochi, for the love of printing in Malavar (Tamil) (*por amor de empresa malavar*). Marco Jorge's *Doctrina Christāa* was published on 14 November 1579 in Kochi. DI: 11:790. *Topaz* and *língua* mean “interpreter.”

<sup>36</sup> Županov, *Missionary Tropics*: 259-70.

<sup>37</sup> According to the second page of the small catechism *Doctrina Christam* (*Tampirān vanakkam*), printed on 20 October 1578 in the Collegio do Saluador in Coulam [Kollam or Quilon], the co-author of the sixteen-page booklet was a certain Padre Manoel de São Pedro, who appears neither in the Jesuit catalogues nor in any of their letters. He was a native speaker of Tamil and a priest.

performed theatrically.<sup>38</sup> If these were theatrical performances, they concentrated more on re-memorization and discernment than the usual passionate and lachrymose plays, which were apparently even more attractive to the Parava.

The religious plays were very popular during the Easter and Corpus Christi holy days. On Maundy Thursday, 30 March 1567, a boy dressed as “the statue (*figura*) of Our Lady . . . represented the mourning of Our Lady in [the Tamil] language, all the while crying himself. This touched greatly the feelings of the people.” Even a Portuguese captain shed tears without understanding a word of what the boy was saying.<sup>39</sup> It is clear that the boy was carried away by his own acting. He was not only impersonating Our Lady, he was also crying, touched by his own performance. Unfortunately, there is no trace of the actual verbal content of such passion plays from the sixteenth century, but the body language and the language of affects surely played a crucial part in this pious theatre. Anthropologists report that funeral dirges are still an important part of the Tamil cultural landscape in present-day Tamil Nadu.<sup>40</sup> It is during the mortuary rituals that the bereaved and those who accompany them can “throw out” their existential feeling of *kurai* (lack, deficiency). Making oneself cry in ritual situations was a way of unburdening sorrow and grief.<sup>41</sup>

The Jesuits knew well that this kind of public expression of passions attracted new converts and solidified social cohesion among the Catholics,

<sup>38</sup> Nuno Rodrigues describes the scene in his annual letter written in Kochi (30 December 1582), DI: 12:718. “We continue with the recitation practice (*praticas*) on the Coast, for pious men on Sunday afternoon and Fridays at night, for women on Tuesday after the Mass, with a catechism for girls and boys (the *Tampirāṅ vaṇakkam*), and now with more zeal with the catechism by Father Marcos Jorge with questions, which was translated into the local language (*lingua da terra*) and produces much fruit, and many know parts of it by heart.”

<sup>39</sup> DI: 7:421.

<sup>40</sup> I. Clark-Decès, *No One Cries for the Dead: Tamil Dirges, Rowdy Songs and Graveyard Petitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 8. Contrary to classical anthropological theories that assert that funerary rituals generate sociability, Clark-Decès’s interpretation is that, in Tamil culture, it reaffirms “that to be social is to be alone and lonely.” Anthropologists can, of course, afford to present cultural traits as relatively stable in time and to draw extensive conclusions from limited fieldwork, and they may be right—but, with the introduction of Christianity and its yearly enactment of the death and funeral of Christ, the Parava funerals surely acquired an additional social dimension. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive study of Parava Christian funeral rites and dirges.

<sup>41</sup> Clark-Decès, *No One Cries for the Dead*, 45–6.

but they were also aware that, to cleanse the neophytes' souls of sins, they needed to teach them to strike a balance between their overzealous affects by strict mental control, by reasoning, and by the new art of introspection enshrined in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Social affects such as anger and envy continued to be managed and appeased through the sacrament of penance and the rituals, but, following the Lateran Council of 1215 and the introduction of the private confession, sin and penitence turned inward.<sup>42</sup>

For example, during the Corpus Christi (1567) play in Tamil (*autho em malavar*) directed by P. Cunha and his *topaz*, they first argued against the falsities of the gentile laws and the Muslim sect and against gentile customs that some Christians still practiced. These Christians (i.e., the actors) were then taken to the judge by the demons, condemned, and sent to Hell, to the utter horror of the audience of both local Christians and Portuguese. "The Christians were so frightened that they said that they have to expiate similar sins because, having seen such things, their eyes were opened, and they asked for other representations of this sort."<sup>43</sup> Similar scenes from Heaven and Hell would appear in the *Confessionairo* (1580), with the descriptions of suffering and torture, as well as rejoicing with angels, saints, and relatives, accompanied by melodious instrumental music.

### Tamil Voices, Jesuit Knowledge

In addition to the public drama of sin, demons, and redemption, each individual had to discover and manage her or his own interior theatre of salvation. The *Confessionairo*, "translated" into Tamil by Henrique Henriques and printed in Collegio da Madre de Deus in Kochi (Cochin) in 1580, was an important weapon in the battle for salvation and redemption. The Jesuits promoted this kind of manual in Europe and all over the globe in their mission fields, in order to harness, focus, and discipline the psychic energy of the Christians towards pious contemplation in the soul and moral action in the world. The office of confessor, as one historian put

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<sup>42</sup> J. Bossy, "The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. 5, 25 (1975): 21-38. On the role of anger, see M. Flynn, "Taming Anger's Daughters: New Treatment of Emotional Problems in Renaissance Spain," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51/3 (1998): 864-86.

<sup>43</sup> DI: 7:426-7.

it, was a Jesuit specialty.<sup>44</sup> The sacrament of penance, with confession and confession manuals as its tools, was, from the thirteenth century onwards, responsible for structuring ethical selves, already subjected to increasing pressure to conform from church and society.<sup>45</sup> While it is widely accepted that the sacrament of penance was closely connected with social control in Europe, the way in which it combined social discipline with the missionary and colonial situation has only recently been taken up by mission historians for Mexico, China, Peru, etc.<sup>46</sup>

Henriques's *Confessionario* in Tamil was mentioned casually in the sixteenth-century Jesuit letters and then appeared again in the works of bibliographers, but not a single historian or Tamil scholar has read the text printed on 216 small pages.<sup>47</sup> The most important of the many reasons for this neglect is that the texts of the missionaries are often stigmatized as simply "technical" texts, translations of the European texts in a language that was hardly a literary standard. Bad Tamil writing and the translation of foreign (European) concepts made the early Tamil printings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries all but disappear from mainstream Indian historiography. Stuart Blackburn, in his history of Tamil printing, made a valiant effort to address briefly the history of early Jesuit printings, but again without delving into the text and by relying on meager secondary sources.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> H. Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State ca. 1540-1630* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 15.

<sup>45</sup> For the development of confession and the sacrament of penance, see A. Murray, "Confession before 1215," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. 6, 3 (1993): 51-81. Bossy, "The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation."

<sup>46</sup> W. de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 46. See N. Standaert and Ad Dudink, *Forgive Us Our Sins. Confession in Late Ming and Early Qing China* (Sankt Augustin/Nettetal: Steyler, 2006). S. Marco, "Indigenous Eroticism and Colonial Morality in Mexico: The Confession Manuals of New Spain," *Numen* 39/2 (1992): 157-74. I. Silverblatt, "Family Values in Seventeenth-Century Peru," in *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World*, ed. E. Hill Boone and T. Cummins, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998): 63-88. J.C. Estenssoro-Fuchs, "Les pouvoirs de la parole: La prédication au Pérou: De l'évangélisation à l'utopie," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 51/6 (1996): 1225-57.

<sup>47</sup> G. Schurhammer and G.W. Cottrell, "The First Printing in Indic Characters," *Orientalia* 21 (Lisbon: BIHSI, 1963): 317-27. X.S. Thani Nayagam, "The First Books Printed in Tamil," *Tamil Culture* 4 (1954): 288-308.

<sup>48</sup> S. Blackburn, *Print, Folklore and Nationalism in Colonial South India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003): 31-43.

There are at least three good reasons to study this text: First, it is a dialogue that captured and condensed the sixteenth-century "Christian Parava" voices and "arguments" in a normative Jesuit vocabulary and structure. They are the witnesses of Parava agency that the text works to silence. Second, this text is a translation into a sixteenth-century Tamil vernacular of a particular region and a particular caste or lineage cluster. This kind of language, considered unfit to be written—because of Tamil diglossia—is precious for the history of non-literary and spoken varieties of Tamil.<sup>49</sup> The Jesuits identified the problem of the high and low registers of Tamil, and Constanzio Giuseppe Beschi, a Jesuit of the early eighteenth century, wrote separate grammars of these two varieties.<sup>50</sup> Henriques's printed books are, therefore, an invaluable window into this "low" regional spoken variety and its history.

Third, the *Confessionario* was intended and imposed by the Jesuits as a legal code of behaviour and thus became a caste constitution. The *Confessionario* regulates both individual conscience and communal morality. The dialogical structure of the *Confessionario* betrays the labour of negotiation with Parava converts and with their cultural traditions. In a word, the church became the centre of Parava Christian ritual life in the sixteenth century and had the same function as a Hindu temple had earlier.<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> On Tamil diglossia and the distinction between the formal (high) and the informal (low) language see H.F. Schiffman, "Diglossia and Purity/Pollution in Tamil," *Contributions to Asian Studies* 11 (1978): 98-110, and *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, Francis, and Taylor, 1996): 197-203.

<sup>50</sup> C.-G. Beschi, *Grammatica latino-tamulica in qua de vulgari tamulicae linguae idiomate kotuntamil dicto* (Tranquebar: 1728); the second edition was published in Madras in 1813, the third in Pondicherry in 1843. C.-G. Beschi, *Grammatica Latino-Tamulica, ubi de elegantiori linguae tamulicae dialecto centamil dicta* (written in 1730), Bibliotheque National de Paris, MSS, Fond Tamoul, 192-3. It was translated into English and published by B.G. Babington in Madras in 1822. See J.-L. Chevillard, "Beschi, grammairien du tamoul, et l'origine de la notion de verbe appellatif," *Bulletin d'Ecole française d'Extrême Orient* 79/1 (1992): 77-88. See also J. Vinson, *Manuel de la langue tamoule (grammaire, textes, vocabulaire)* (1903, repr. New Delhi: AES, 1986).

<sup>51</sup> The emphasis on church and community in Parava Catholic sociability and sacramental practice should not be taken as a "medieval" relic compared to European situation in which, as John Bossy wrote, the Catholic Reformation tended to transform sin and confession into a private and individual affair. At a micro level of society, the *Confessionario* was intended to build the church community, which remained insular in the South Indian religious landscape, all the while targeting individual souls directly by providing them with a toolkit for introspection. Bossy, "The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation."

major procession in Tuticorin is, in fact, now, as it was then, that of a ritual *ter* (chariot), the “golden car” (*poṇ tēr*).

How exactly does the *Confessionairo* capture Parava voices or, rather, their intentions and acts? The *Confessionairo* is constructed on two dialogical levels. The first is a prefabricated “fictional” and, at the same time, “normative,” framework for the actual dialogue between the priest and the penitent, who is also a sinner. The *Confessionairo* is a manual because it teaches the penitent how to prepare him or herself for confession. The preparation is twofold—internal and external. One had to learn the art of introspection and then the right words to express oneself during the confession, as well as what is or is not to be said during confession. A specific body language is also included in the instructions (such as making the sign of the cross, the shedding of tears, and kneeling).

It is most important for the reading of this text that the natural dialogue—the “raw dialogue” (in Clifford Geertz’s terminology)—is incorporated into a fictional and normative framework in which we witness the compressed forms of negotiation between Parava cultural practices and those that the Jesuits wanted to suppress or modify. The *Confessionairo* is, therefore, a compendium of Parava sins: some of them are universal Christian sins, such as anger, adultery, miserliness, and disobedience, while others belong to Parava professional life and cultural habits, such as cheating during the pearl-fishing season and consulting local wizards and astrologers.

The *Confessionairo* also offers a language of self-knowledge through affective vocabulary, in order to give voice to the interior self. In the process the self acquired a new, composite, disciplined (in Foucault’s sense), and Christian voice. This vocabulary is taken mostly from the Tamil register, to which are added untranslatable Portuguese concepts, such as “attrition,” “contrition,” and “penitence.” These were transliterated phonetically into Tamil and bracketed with a diamond-shaped sign to mark their presence on the page. The verb “to confess” is also borrowed from Portuguese but conjugated as a Tamil verb (e.g., “I confess” is *kompeccarikkiren*).

The semantic field of these Tamil words can lead us straight into a Tamil cultural system that predated the Jesuits and remained part of that system, with some adjustments, to accommodate Christianity. Three words are used for a sinner (*tolcavāli*, *kurrāvali*, *pilaiyāli*), and at least six words are used for “sin” (*cāvāna tolcam* = mortal sin; *palatu* = fault; *epāllāppa* = sin, evil, misfortune; *kurram* = offence; *kuraiccal* = fault, lack; *pilai* = sin). There are also words designating punishment (*ākkilana* or *ākinai*; *talaiāna*



*pāvam* = capital punishment; *teṇṇikk* = to punish [Sanskrit, *daṇḍa*], redemption (*ūttirik* = to suffer, atone, redeem; *āṭaimānām* = remedy, penance, solution; *poru* = pardon), as well as various shades of emotions, from sorrow (*viṭaṇampattu* = feeling sad) to fear.<sup>52</sup>

In the fourth chapter, for example, the confessor teaches the "sinner" how to approach the priest:

Like that, we should also think that the one who confesses is an offender who has offended his king (*iraca*) and will expiate his sins before his (*avartirumunpe*) [Lord's or *tampirānś*] presence. With this in mind you should kneel on the floor on both knees with great humility...and, having said the proper prayer which is made for that, you must make the sign of the cross. As soon as you make the sign of the cross you must say the salutation "I am a great sinner." (10b)

While the confessor instructs one how to think, feel, and act and what to say, he asserts his authority to be simultaneously spiritual and temporal. He equates, if only through the simile, the Lord with the king. For the Parava, this is an important point. They came to ask the Portuguese to be admitted into the Christian fold as a lineage or a caste in need of a protection, in need of a king. Christianity helped them, in the long run, to build their own "little kingdom" with their own hereditary royal family, that of *jati talaivan*.<sup>53</sup> The simile appears to have been chosen neither arbitrarily nor as a simple rhetorical trope but already expresses Parava communal aspirations. In fact, the Jesuits were caught up in, and played along with, Parava elite's social engineering and caste building.<sup>54</sup> Though the scene seems, at first glance, to be constructed schematically as a spiritual hierarchical relationship between the confessor, who commands, and the penitent, who obeys, in which the dialogue is completely predictable, the small poetical additions, such as the simile of the king, may have reminded the Parava that what was at stake was a political hierarchy as well.

<sup>52</sup> The orthography of the quoted Tamil words follows the printed text and so differs from the contemporary standard Tamil.

<sup>53</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*: 347. The author uses *jati talaivan*, a British colonial transliteration of a Tamil word meaning literally "caste headman." In the *Confessionaire*, it is spelt *cāttitalaivamār* (the suffix *-mār* being honorific).

<sup>54</sup> On Parava (Bharatha) claims of *kshatriya* (royal) status made during the British census-taking in the late nineteenth century, see Roche, *Fishermen of the Coromandel*: 25.

The *Confessionario* is, in fact, a Jesuit libretto that assigns roles and pre-fabricates questions and answers but nevertheless captures the intentions and voices of the Parava, as well as occasional Jesuit ventriloquism.

The captured voices are easily detected on the second dialogical level, which requires reconstruction. That is, the voices are already condensed in the questions and commands of the confessor and they bear witness to a prolonged cultural interaction. These questions were created through continuous, backstage dialogue between the Jesuits and the Parava. In a way, the Parava spoke through their confessors, making this and other confession manuals in Asian languages much more than translations of Portuguese texts. Henriques singled out no particular confession manual as the original text he translated into Tamil, unlike his claim that Jorge Marco's *Doctrina Christãa* had been the basis for the *Kiricittiyāni vanakkam*. In general, confession manuals are grounded in the locality and the community, especially when these communities consisted of recent converts.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, there was a growing literature on casuistry and confession in Europe, primarily for the use of the confessors. Juan de Polanco's *Breve directorium ad confessarii ac confitentis munus recte obeundum* (1554) was popular among the Jesuits and was translated into Portuguese in 1556;<sup>56</sup> Henriques may have known and consulted this work. Other popular confession manuals that Henriques must have known are those of Martim de Azpilcueta ("El Navarro") and of Luís de Granada.<sup>57</sup> According to Robert

<sup>55</sup> Even a random search through various confession manuals will prove this point. By comparing the First Commandment interdictions, for example, we can feel the pulse of the locality from which the writer stemmed or for which he wrote. In the *Confessionario raccolto da i dottori catholici* (Rome, 1574) by the Dominican Girolamo Panormitano, one of the mortal sins is to be "cured by Jews, to wash with them or invite them": 16. In the famous confession manual by Martim Azpilcueta Navarro, on the other hand, the sin of *dilectatio morosa* (masturbation) is included among the mortal sins violating the First Commandment. Martino ab Azpilcueta Doctore Navarro, *Enchiridion sive manuale confessoriorum et poenitentium* (Antwerp: Ex officinal Christophori Plantini, 1575): 129. Non-European confession manuals of the period contain, as does the *Confessionario*, local "superstitious" and "pagan" practices, all of which were defined as mortal sins. On the other hand, Jews do not figure at all in our text, and masturbation is mentioned only once, briefly, as violating the Sixth Commandment.

<sup>56</sup> Juan de Polanco, *Breve directorium ad confessarii ac confitentis munus recte obeundum* (Rome: apud Antonium Bladum, 1554); trans. into Portuguese by Álvaro de Torres, *Directório de confessores e penitentes* (Lisbon: João Blavio, 1556), <http://purl.pt/14263/1/index.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Martim de Azpilcueta, *Manual de confessores e penitentes* (Coimbra: Ioam de Barreyra, 1560) and Luís de Granada, *Guia de peccadores* (Salamanca, 1568).

Aleksander Maryks, between 1554, when Polanco's book inaugurated Jesuit penitential literature, and 1650, when it came under Jansenist attack, the Jesuits published fifty-eight books on sacramental confession in 763 editions.<sup>58</sup>

Having introduced in Europe the new sacramental practice of frequent communion and confession—preferably every eight days, as opposed to once a year—the Jesuits acquired unprecedented knowledge about local communities and their customs, rites, dreams, and worries. In 1580, therefore, when Henriques wrote the *Confessionario*, he had already been hearing confessions for thirty-three years and had a detailed knowledge of the Parava social and cultural world. On the basis of this knowledge, he and his Parava informants reclassified thoughts, feelings, and practices under the Christian rubrics of sin and virtue, damnation and salvation. For a Jesuit missionary, the *Confessionario* was a way to dominate and control the Parava; for the Parava it was, most importantly, a technique to control and dominate themselves and their community.

Dominating the Parava, was, above all, an effort to eradicate "paganism." It is especially in the questions asked about the First Commandment (to love the Lord more than any other thing) that the rich world of "paganism" or everyday magical and thaumaturgical practices of the Parava is evoked and speaks through the hostile Jesuit enumeration of sins and transgressions.

Moreover, the confessor commands the "sinner" to "remember well" and recite repeatedly these superstitious and idolatrous acts committed in words, thoughts, and desires. The list of sins is long (10a-18a): e.g., celebrating demons and goddesses (*pakavatikaḷ*), selling palm leaf books, "which contain the religion (*mārkam*) of those who have not embraced the Christian religion," believing in and using magic (*vittai*) and black magic (*cāttiram*), consulting astrologers (*kanyar*) and wizards (*vittaikkārar*), using love potions (*maruntu*), finding thefts by magic, believing in bird omens and gecko omens and the *paṭci tolcam* (disease caused in children by the birds flying over them), using magical plates (*iyantiram*), observing auspicious time (*mugilttam*), and using various roots (*veṭṭaru*, roots; *kurraru*, roots[?]), keeping iron objects and bracelets to ward off demons, doing magical prayers against the sharks.

<sup>58</sup>) R.A. Maryks, *Saint Cicero and the Jesuits: The Influence of the Liberal Arts on the Adoption of Moral Probabilism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008): 32-42.

It is obvious from the *Confessionairo* that the confessor compelled the sinners to reflect on these “sins” each time they went to confession. It is possible that, instead of purging sin from thoughts, desires, and actions, the Jesuits actually made them more present through verbalization.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, these sins had to be confessed in order for the sinner to be pardoned, so there was no need to refrain from repeating them, when necessary. From the Jesuit correspondence, we know that the Parava tried to confess frequently and that some women, in particular, wanted to confess every day and followed the priests along the coast as they made their visits.<sup>60</sup> When the Jesuits visited the villages, the crowd of Christians waited for them for confession and vied with each other for a place in the confessional. In Virapandyapattanam, wrote Henriques, when they saw him approaching,

women ran to the church, each trying to be the first, and sat down: one said she had not confessed for three months, asking me to hear her, and others for many days; another that she was there as soon as they opened the church;<sup>61</sup> and one poor old woman who did not find a place in the confessional fell on her knees in front of me with hands in prayer. And because there was little time, she started to pester me more than others, saying: *Pâtirârê, enakku metta manathu [u]ndu, metta, metta, metta*, Oh Father! I am very willing! Very! Very! Very!<sup>62</sup>

Women, therefore, expressed their devotion freely and noisily, in gestures and in words. Diogo do Soveral reported that, during the confession, women, just like men, beseeched (*fazerem alguns coloquios com*) Jesus

<sup>59</sup> On verbalization in confession see Foucault, “About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self”: 220.

<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to assess, from the documents available, whether the Parava confessed more frequently than once or twice a year, during Holy Week and Christmas. The most devoted members, women included, and those belonging to confraternities were eager to receive the sacrament of penance at least once a month, but there was, as Eugenio Menegon discovered in the Chinese mission, a lack of “foreign” priests; see E. Menegon, “Deliver Us from Evil: Confession and Salvation in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Chinese Catholicism,” in *Forgive Us Our Sins: Confession in Late Ming and Early Qing China*, ed. N. Standaert and A. Dudink (Sankt Augustin/Nettetal: Steyler, 2006): 48-50.

<sup>61</sup> DI: 8:175. A Jesuit missionary, Diogo do Soveral mentioned that people who come from afar sleep on the porch of the church in order to be first in line for confession. They also asked to be able to sleep in the church, but this concession was not granted, because it was prohibited by the first Goan Council (1567). Sleeping on temple porches was common in India.

<sup>62</sup> DI: 7:562. Henriques’s letter is dated 1568.

Christ or the Virgin Mary to intercede for them "in the language of their country with much grace," sparking public devotion and emotion.<sup>63</sup>

Confession also empowered women in another way. The sacrament of penance, given after confession, when all sins are pardoned and expiated, was translated into the Parava cultural idiom as an act of purification. Frequent confession was a way to maintain this pure state, which is intimately linked, at least for women, to their status in family and society. One man, for example, demanded that the father hear his confession immediately, because his wife had stopped cooking for him until he did.<sup>64</sup> Some women, like a certain Isabell in Tutucorin, managed to impose themselves as the supervisors of other women, with an authority that even a priest was unable to challenge. No one could approach the confessional without her knowledge. Henriques reported that he was about to start confessing an "honorable" woman, when Isabell stopped them and ordered the woman to leave under the pretext that she was not yet well prepared.<sup>65</sup>

A confession was also helpful to calm women who were creating marital strife. Fernão da Cunha, a Jesuit who was later dismissed from the Society of Jesus, reported that he "heard the confession of a woman who, during the six years after marriage, did not want to live with her husband. She was punished for this several times without result. But after confession, she remained calm and lives with her husband."<sup>66</sup> Confession also cured another woman, "weak in her sex (*fraca no sexo*)," who saw the devil in a dream telling her to break the promise she had made to give donations for the Mass, in honour of the Virgin Mary.<sup>67</sup>

With the growing number of confessions of men, women, and children, the Jesuit confessors who knew Tamil were clearly overwhelmed, and some, the Jesuits asserted in their reports, died of illness and exhaustion. In the Annual Letter from India in January 1580, the Jesuit Gaspar Álvares (who was born in Cranganore and was later dismissed) mentioned that in a stretch of forty to fifty leagues along the coast between the Cabo do Comorim and the island of Mannar there were twenty-five churches and forty to fifty thousand Christian souls, while there were only fifteen to sixteen Jesuits, of whom ten to twelve were priests, in addition to "brothers"

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<sup>63</sup> DI: 8:176-7.

<sup>64</sup> DI: 8:176.

<sup>65</sup> DI: 7:554.

<sup>66</sup> DI: 7:425.

<sup>67</sup> DI: 7:561.

who were learning Tamil.<sup>68</sup> The publication of the *Confessionairo* must have channelled this initial confessional zeal into a more structured, even bureaucratized, approach in dealing with sin and introspection. The public expression of devotion was also harnessed by the establishment of a confraternity, fashioned in imitation of those of Our Lady of the Rosary, for which Henriques wrote constitutions and petitioned Rome as early as 1578.<sup>69</sup>

### Disciplining the Body, Constituting Community

The *Confessionairo*'s most important use, from the missionary's point of view, was in disciplining the bodies and the souls of the Catholic Parava, both as individuals and as members of a Catholic community. If, as Adriano Prosperi wrote about the use of Catholic confession in sixteenth-century Italy, controlling consciousness is controlling territory, controlling Parava meant controlling much of the Fishery Coast.<sup>70</sup> The Catholic Church and the papacy had their own imperial project in early modern Europe, and confession and catechism were instruments for achieving the ultimate goal, which was global Catholicism. For the Portuguese crown missions were, in addition, part of the empire-building strategy. Royal patronage (*padroado*) of the missions was responsible for funding Catholic missions in Asia, so the ecclesiastical and missionary establishments were often considered pioneer outposts of the Estado da Índia.

In addition to controlling individual conscience through the language of affects, the *Confessionairo* was geared to order social relations within the community, especially in economic and legal transactions. Theologians in Europe at the same time discussed the "cases of conscience," especially in deciding what to do with the "merchant mentality" clearly visible in the colonies, which had already been indicted by spiritual figures such as Meister Eckhart as ruinous to the soul. The *Confessionairo* was attentive to all economic and legal transactions in the community, and it functioned as a code of behaviour, a law code, or a caste constitution. The Parava were a hierarchically structured community—from lowly pearl divers to rich pearl

<sup>68</sup>) DI: 11:805

<sup>69</sup>) DI: 11:72-123 and DI: 14: 531-6.

<sup>70</sup>) A. Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996).

merchants—and the *Confessionairo* further accentuated these internal social divisions.

For example, the questions to be asked a sinner under the rubric of the Seventh Commandment ("Thou shalt not steal"—in Tamil, literally "remain without stealing") reveal a society interested in economic gain at any cost. Stealing, especially from the church; plundering or failing to return items found on the beach after shipwreck; enslaving people; failing to pay wages to divers and slaves; cheating in gambling; selling weapons to non-Christians—these were questions asked and sins to be confessed by men.<sup>71</sup> For women, there is only one question regarding the Seventh Commandment: "have you, a married woman, taken from or given to anyone without the agreement of your husband?" (41b). This is followed immediately by a clarification: "It is not a sin if you have taken or given the wealth only when there is a clear sign that your husband will agree to this giving or taking." Why did the Jesuit have to explain this particular point? Were women prone to follow commandments strictly, being unable to interpret the rule in a larger context? Something else was more probably in the back of Henriques's mind. The next two sentences perhaps shed more light. "Have you, a married man, ever given to anyone or anything according to your ability and without the consent of your wife?" Again, this is followed by an explanation: "It is not a sin if, at the time of your death, you think that you want to give out of your portion, even if you give to excess."

As a rule, the Christian laws in Goa and elsewhere granted inheritance rights to daughters and widows, which went against local practice.<sup>72</sup> The parallelism of these two injunctions perhaps refers to this fact, but it is more likely that the Jesuits were trying to drive home another point: they were extending the possible range for generosity and pious charity to those outside the Parava family or clan. If a dying Parava wanted to give part of his property to a Christian charitable institution, he was allowed, even encouraged, to do so. Finally, the Jesuits maintained themselves primarily

<sup>71</sup> *Confessionairo*, "Have you stolen items from the church?" (40a), "have you paid off the loan?" (40b), "have you refused to give wages to the porters (*kūlikkuvelaiceytavārkaḷukku*) or slaves (*paṇivītaiceykirapokaḷukku*)?" (40b), etc. In fact, as John Bossy asserts in his article, the sin of stealing from the church was more important to the priests than the sins of fornication or masturbation. Bossy, "The Social History of Confession in the Age of Reformation": 36.

<sup>72</sup> F. da Silva Gracias, *Kaleidoscope of Women in Goa* (New Delhi: Concept, 1994): 89-117. J. Duncan M. Derrett, "The History of the Juridical Framework of the Joint Hindu Family," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 6 (1962): 2-47.

from Parava gifts and profited amply from substantial testamentary bequests. Even the printing of the books in Tamil was paid for by the largesse of the Parava. In the preface to the 1597 *Kiricittiyāṇi vanakkam* (the translation of Marcos Jorge's *Doctrina Christāa*), Henriques addressed the Parava:

You desired that you and your descendants should achieve salvation in heaven, and you have desired many kinds of printed books and contributed large sums of money toward a printing press. We, therefore, give this book to you as a gift. Your financial support for this press has earned you public respect and praise.<sup>73</sup>

The reciprocity between the Jesuits and the Parava appears to have been based on the exchange of gifts—salvation for a printing press and vice versa—but it was, in fact, a financial transaction. Economically speaking, the patrons were the rich Parava elites, and the Jesuits were their clients.

The *Confessionairo* both describes and prescribes an ideal Christian Parava social structure and body politic, in which each member must fulfill his or her duty to the others. It singles out important occupations in the community: village overseers (*paṭṭaṅkaṭṭi*), caste headmen (*cāttitalaivamār*), judges (*ṅāyakkārar*), lawyers (*kaṇakkālikaḷ*), pearl-fishing skippers (*calāpatturuvōṭṭikaḷ*), and pearl divers (*kuliyāṭkaḷ*) (59b-66b). Because these were important social and economic roles in the community, they were considered prone to certain kinds of sins.<sup>74</sup> For example, a village overseer, who was the person in charge of discipline and order in the village, had the most sins or possible abuses of power to answer for and avoid: such as imposing taxes on the people in order to obtain favours from the (Portuguese) captain in charge of the Fishery Coast; levying taxes from some people but not levying taxes from their own relatives; imposing added taxes on enemies (59b-62b). The collection of taxes was obviously a contentious issue, but the *Confessionairo* proscribed other traditional forms of violence and conflict solving: “Because you dislike someone, did you beat him or make someone beat him in the matter of fish collection or in any other matter?” (61b). It also proscribed abuse of office and nepotism:

<sup>73</sup> Henriques, *Kiricittiyāṇi vanakkam* (no pagination).

<sup>74</sup> In Álvaro de Torres's *Directório de confesores e penitentes*, the social and professional groups singled out to respond for their particular sins were bishops, judges, procurators, scribes, married men (*casados*), secular priests, regular priests (*religiosos*), university professors (*doutores e mestres*), students, merchants and officials, physicians, and servants (*moços*).



"When the people of your village create problems for Christians or people who have not accepted the Christian religion (*kiricittiyānimārkaṃpukūtā-tavaṇ*) belonging to the next village (*ayalūrāru*), have you failed to accuse the offenders justly and failed to punish them?" (62a).

The fact that these practices were transformed into "sins" to be confessed did not mean that they were discontinued. Because every sin could be washed away with the sacrament of penance and priestly mediation, the *Confessionairo* primarily taught how to cleanse one's conscience of sins and, of course, how to avoid sinning again. The remedy for sin was truth about the self and verbalized from the self. This was a new technique that the Jesuits taught in *Confessionairo*; this is usually taken in Europe as an important phase in the construction of the modern subject. For the Christian Parava, for all new Christian communities all over the globe, and for the Italian peasants who were subjected to the same process of discipline, confession also offered new possibilities of self-knowledge.

The *Confessionairo* taught the penitent to articulate personal, internal suffering. It provided the language of grief, sorrow, and fear, before offering the hope of redemption and paradise. As in other penitential manuals, it is the fear of punishment that the Jesuits relied on, while they built on the Ignatian emphasis on love<sup>75</sup>—in particular, the fear of the Lord (Tampirān), who is portrayed "as a judge and as a witness who will demand an accounting for all the sins we have committed, without missing anything. . . . There is fear that we will be weeping forever, suffering in Hell, having lost the heavenly seat" (84a). Love, on the other hand, is Tampirān's creation, and the Christians "who love and serve the Lord will receive unlimited happiness, which will be no less than the happiness of the saints" (90b).

The separation between fear and love, between Hell and Heaven, marks the dividing space between the self and the community. In this intermediate space is the body, which in Christianity plays a special, if ambiguous, role. The wounded and suffering body of Christ, and by extension of his followers, becomes the locus of power and knowledge. By teaching how to fear the Lord, the *Confessionairo* is not only digging into the soul of the penitent but teaching him or her that there is a soul and that one can learn to control it using one's mind, affects, and body. For example, the penitent is advised "not to be idle at any time, to give charity, to fast, to pray a lot,

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<sup>75</sup> B.V. Brady, *Christian Love: How Christians through the Ages Have Understood Love* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

to beat the flesh and do other penance (*peniteñci*), and make your flesh suffer well. We must make our body suffer a lot because it is the medium for sexual pleasures” (81a). Sexuality took the central position on the confession list of sins from the Lateran council (1215) onwards, but we can only speculate on the effect it produced on Parava selfhood. Foucault’s thesis—that before the Council of Trent, the Sixth Commandment was understood in judicial terms, as referring to a transgression against another person, while in the late sixteenth century the confession box (invented or at least perfected by Carlo Borromeo, and introduced a century later in the missions) became the site of pleasure of speaking about sex—is difficult to test in this case, because Jesuit letters are usually mute on that issue.<sup>76</sup> The fact that women became addicted to confession may have something to do with confessional eroticism, but it was probably more closely connected with the possibility of voicing their feelings and complaints.<sup>77</sup>

Love, on the other hand, denotes an ideal community—loving the Lord, one’s parents, and one’s neighbours. Unlike the solitary Hell where the sinner roasts in a hot “kiln (*cullai*)” (89a), those who would reach Heaven would be “rejoicing forever with all kinds of instruments, very happily, with music and melodies” (92b) and “with the friendliness they share among themselves” (93b).

If instruments in heaven were to produce music and social harmony, reading the right sorts of books, such as the *Confessionairo*, the life of saints, and the catechism, according to Henriques, held important remedies for the soul. Although Stuart Blackburn assumes that these early books were read aloud to the audience, Henriques suggests that a different practice was encouraged. The penitents were encouraged to read alone and with pious concentration: “When you read this kind of book (*pottakam*), don’t read them carelessly; you must read them deeply (*amantu*) without inattention (*parākkaniya*) and with the thought that your soul will benefit from it.” These were, he said, devotional books, and they save souls. “If you read them, it will help you have good thoughts (*karuttu*) and good desires (*iccaikal*)” and will bring enlightenment (*vellicam*) and knowledge (*arivu*) (75a).

<sup>76</sup> M. Foucault, *Les anormaux* (Paris: Seuil/Galimard, 1999); Bossy, “The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation.”

<sup>77</sup> I.G. Županov, “Conversion, Illness and Possession: Catholic Missionary Healing in Early Modern South Asia,” in *Divins remèdes: Médecine et religion en Inde*, ed. I.G. Županov and C. Guenzi (Paris: EHESS, 2008): 263-300.

The Parava were reading other books that Henriques judged idolatrous and harmful to the soul. One of the sins to confess was, for example, selling "books (*pottakam*) and palm-leaf books (*eṭukaḷ*), which are about the religion of those who did not enter Christian religion (*māṛkattile*)" (14b). The concept of the book is obviously wide enough to encompass manuscripts and printed texts. The distinction seems to be between palm-leaf manuscripts and paper manuscripts. Certain "books and palm-leaf books . . . [were] forbidden by the priests as not suitable to be read" (17a), because of their pagan content or because they were full of "indecencies . . . and indecent love words [written] to create love passion" (36a). There was another use of the book, for divination "by inserting the thread in the sacred books" (17b). Reading practices were also combined with writing: the *Confessionairo* suggests that the sins be written down "in a secret manner, so that no other person can read it" (5a).

In numerous letters that follow in the 1580s, Jesuits report on the success of the text and of their mission. They portray the Parava as a pious and devoted community, but it is also clear from their reports that, given the small number of priests and the weak Portuguese presence, the Parava were left to manage their community themselves. The confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary that Henriques worked hard to establish after 1578 was important in the self-discipline and self-management of Parava communal piety.<sup>78</sup> What the Jesuit provided was a template of an organized Christian and Iberian communal structure, with what they perceived as necessary internal hierarchies and the establishment of Christian noble elites, while the rest was for the Parava to fill in with their own cultural imagination.

And they did: By the end of the eighteenth century, with or without Jesuits, the Parava emerged as one of "South India's most organized specialist caste groups."<sup>79</sup> The family of the *cāttitalaivamār* transformed itself into

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<sup>78</sup> Eugenio Menegon stresses the importance of confraternities in the case of Chinese convert communities in Fujian but insists that they also bolstered the role of the foreign missionary (first Jesuit, then Dominican, in the eighteenth century). The case of the Parava mission seems different, because the Parava elites, divided though they may have been, always had the upper hand, especially in the eighteenth century, vis-à-vis their foreign pastors. Menegon, "Deliver Us from Evil: Confession and Salvation in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Chinese Catholicism": 79.

<sup>79</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*: 322.

the “princely lineage” and the caste and the territory was organized on the basis of a “little kingdom” model.<sup>80</sup>

The Virgin Mary became a Parava tutelary deity, and the festivals in her honour, especially the annual procession of Our Lady of Snows in the Golden Car became something of an enthronement festival for the elite lineage, accompanied by the distribution of honours, so well described by anthropologists who work on South Indian temples.<sup>81</sup> It resembles, in that respect, the Navaratri festival practiced by other princely lineages in South India. The Parava have, nevertheless, remained staunch Catholics.

The *Confessionairo*, a “dead book” that languished for three centuries in the Bodleian Library, has the power to conjure up lost worlds and is one of the invisible actors in the story of the building of a successful Catholic caste in South India. In spite of its technical language and schematic structure, its specific Christian genre, and the fact that it is a translation from another cultural system, its dialogical form, which captures the fragments of Parava historical agency, makes this long neglected early printed work from India an important historical document. The nearly faded ink on the pages of the *Confessionairo* was deciphered, read, and memorized word by word by the sixteenth-century Tamil Christians, and, in the process, it helped them shape their own conscience and community.

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<sup>80</sup> On the notion of “little king” in the Tamil historical context, see N.B. Dirks, “The Past of a Pālayakārar: The Ethnohistory of a South Indian Little King,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 41/4 (1982): 659.

<sup>81</sup> Ch.J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 80.

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