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**Lust, Marriage and Free Will;
Jesuit Critique of Paganism in South India (17th century)¹**

Jesuit missionary reports from India around the turn of the 17th century endeavoured increasingly to transport European imagination into the culturally "thick" but, as they came to believe, aesthetically appalling and morally deficient world of the "natives" in the name of "scientific" interests, "true" information and "ethnographic" comparison. In addition to the private Jesuit correspondence, official exchanges and *Annual Letters* (the first written from Goa in 1552), the inspired Jesuit travelers and writers offered texts concerning either particular problems and topics encountered in their missionary field (usually entitled *Relação, Tratado, Summário, Livro da [...], Commentarius*, etc;), or general hagiographic histories of the Jesuit missions in Asia.²

These "additional" Jesuit texts represent a self-conscious effort to order, classify, describe and remember significant Jesuit actions in the missionary field, and their cultural experience of a non-European, non-Christian reality. While Jesuit hagiographies continued to nourish a wide range of historiographical projects, both pro- and anti-Jesuit, during the 17th century and all through the Enlightenment, their field notes or treatises containing information about "native" cultural practices, cosmologies and world views inspired many of their learned contemporaries, from theologians and moralists to polymaths and scientists. Although the critique of non-Christian beliefs, presumed to have been initiated by one or the other demonic agency, was the main goal of these texts, the desire for knowledge, or perhaps simply for telling "curious" and "edifying" stories, often surpassed the limits of the missionary framework and facilitated the "discovery" and representation of the "native" social and cultural patterns which were then amply

¹This article was first presented at the Conference held in Paris from 7 to 9 Jan. 1998 - *The Doors of Asia; Multiple Heritage of Vasco da Gama* - organized by S. Subrahmanyam, G. Tarabout, and I. G. Županov. I thank the participants for their comments.

²John Correia-Afonso, *Jesuit Letters and Indian History*, Bombay, 1955. See also Ines G. Županov, *Disputed Mission, Jesuits Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in 17th Century India*, OUP, Delhi, 1999.

used and often reordered by the European-based compilers and writers.³ The fact that Jesuit missionaries often produced written materials without specifically acknowledging individual authorship made way for the notorious traffic and falsification of their "ethnographic" texts well into the 19th century.⁴

The devil of contention appeared, however, more than ever in the realm of what was perceived and conceptualized by the missionaries as social rather than religious phenomena. Jesuit interest in and penetration of the "pagan" or "infidel" social field was not accidental but was enshrined at the very core of the Jesuit being and acting in the world.⁵ More often than not social and psychological engineering, for example, through education, preceded "correct" religious or theological grafting. As in the course of the 17th and the 18th centuries in Europe, the fissure between the social and the religious continued to grow, the former encompassing the political and the public, the latter anchoring the spiritual and the private, as Jesuit methods (educational and confessional) initially conceived to deal with both approached their apogee and declined. During the transitional phase in which religious concerns and frames of reference were gradually eclipsed by the social, especially by the end of the 16th and the early decades of the 17th century, the Jesuit missionaries in Asia became increasingly interested in the problem of "indigenous" ethics, based on what they saw as specific psychological and physiological dispositions such as enhanced sensuality and oversexed bodily functions.⁶ The origins of indigenous moral laws, resembling or dissembling "natural" laws, and their application within the indigenous social structure, were debated time and again, both within India and without.⁷

By looking into two treatises, one written by a Portuguese Jesuit, Diogo Gonçalves and the other by an Italian, Giacomo Fenicio, who both worked as missionaries at nearly the same time and who both traveled extensively through the same Malabar region in southwest India, my aim is to juxtapose and comment on two related historical/historiographical issues. Inspired by de

³ Among the growing literature on Jesuit scientific missions and achievements, see Luce Giard, (ed.) *Les jésuites à la Renaissance; Système éducatif et production du savoir*, Paris, 1995 and John O'Malley, Gauvin A. Bailey, Steven J. Harris, T. Frank Kennedy (eds.), *The Jesuits. Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540-1773*, Toronto, 1999.

⁴ Sylvia Murr, *L'Inde philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire, l'indologie du Père Coeurdoux; stratégies, apologétique et scientificité*, 2 vols., Paris, 1987.

⁵ On the first seven founding fathers of the Society of Jesus and their conception of "mobile" apostolate, see John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Harvard, 1993.

⁶ On the displacement of the frames of reference from religion to ethics see Michel de Certeau's still unsurpassed statement in the chapter 'The Formality of Practices, From Religious Systems to the Ethics of Enlightenment (the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)', *The Writing of History* (Paris, 1975), New York, pp. 1988-205.

⁷ For controversies raging over Latin American "Indians" see Anthony Pagden, *The fall of natural man; The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, Cambridge, 1982.

Certeau's laconic (and by now famous) lead, "because it is in fact the text's reworking of space that simultaneously produces the space of the text", the first issue concerns the narrative fabric of the texts, the analysis of which should help us discern and understand the capacity of these texts to construct ethnographic evidence.⁸ The second should take us beyond the field of rhetoric through the thick and thin of Jesuit social engineering in the post-Tridentine period.

In a word, since the devil is also in *écriture*, my intention is to reveal the nexus between writing and action which produced a set of cultural patterns, and suspended in it what we have come to call "Hinduism". More specifically, I will be looking at how the Jesuit missionaries, called upon to implement the canons of the council of Trent which re-emphasized the sacramental nature of *matrimonium*, came to conceptualize the marriage and kinship institutions they encountered in the Malabar region as "illegal" and false. At the same time, in other missionary locations in India, such as the Fishery Coast in the Gulf of Manār, Christian communities of converts were also under pressure to emend their marriage customs and rites in order to comply with the directions from Rome, in spite of special dispensations accorded to them by the popes prior to the Council of Trent.

A close family and caste solidarity among "gentiles" and Christians alike appeared to the Jesuits as signs of the lack of free will (*liberum arbitrium*), itself a mixed concept containing theological shades of a "misanthropic" sense elaborated by St. Augustine and Luther through Erasmian human volition as dependent on, but separate from, the divine until an ever more profane meaning of individual consciousness.⁹ In spite of a typically Jesuit cultivation of infinite interiority and conscious choice ("election"), refusal of or indifference to the Christian message and to conversion was immediately branded as proof of a fatal deficiency in both free will and its ultimate support, divine grace. For at least a century and a half, the Jesuits would propose various "origin" stories in order to explain that deficiency among the non-Christians. What those stories have in common, even when referring to different societies and cultures of Asia, is the fact that complex cultural and psychological formations were reduced in missionary texts to simplified and readily identifiable functions, as if they were a part of the same, in Jesuit words, mindless and diabolic machine (*máquina*) of paganism, which indefinitely barred these societies from practicing and developing the "true morality" and "ethics".¹⁰ The same questions embedded

⁸Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies; discourse on the Other*, (transl.) Minneapolis, 1986, p. 68.

⁹"Le libre arbitre" (integral translation into French of the *Diatribè sive Collatio de libero arbitrio*), *Erasmus*, eds. Calude Blum André Godin, Jean-Claude Margolin and Daniel Ménager, Paris, 1992, p. 763.

¹⁰ Devoid of morality, non-Christians were likened to a variety of inferior creatures from childlike imbeciles to brutish beasts. It is important to note that this newly "freed" human subjectivity was in fact increasingly seen as entrapped and enchained within a new golden cage of societal norms, rules and

within this mechanistic matrix, though under different guises, were taken up after Jesuit missionaries by British colonial (and various post-colonial) ethnographers. The denial of the existence of individual and social agency in Hinduism and its social and political ramifications, recently denounced by both social scientists and historians, has a long, mixed and multiple ancestry.¹¹ Some of its genealogical and geological strands and layers are clearly visible in early Catholic missionary texts.

Two Jesuit writers on the Malabar coast in the early 17th century

When Jacobus Fenicius, a twenty six year old Capuan, appeared in the Jesuit catalogue of the *Provinciae Indiae Orientalis* in 1584, he was described as learned in philosophy and theology, of good judgement and intellectual disposition (*ingenium*), and as holding the rank of confessor. In addition, according to Alessandro Valignano's confidential information, Fenicio was also "beginning to acquire experience in his office of converting infidels"¹². The same year in a letter written in Cochin and destined for the Provincial of the Jesuit province in Naples, Ludovico Maselli, Jacomo Fenicio expressed his "great compassion" (*gran compassione*) for the gentiles who were living in the "misery and darkness" of superstition and "continuously perform ceremonies, feasts and dances" for their idols.¹³ Some twenty years later, his missionary experience on the Malabar coast in Cochin, Purakkād [Porca in Port.], Calicut, Tanur and many other smaller missions, enabled him to write a compendium of information concerning, as he called it, "*the first Book of the Sect of the Oriental Indians, principally the Malabars*". Failure or

customs. See for example, John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, No. 5, Dec. 1997, pp. 1309-1342. For a seminal work on the difficulties and solutions concerning the conceptualization of the status of American Indian in the 16th century see Anthony Pagden, *The fall of natural man; The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, Cambridge, (1982) 1990.

¹¹ The rehabilitation of the subaltern (gendered, tribal, local, indigenous, etc.) agency silenced by colonial historiography was at the heart of the project professed by the *Subaltern Studies* group of scholars and writers. For the recent critical discussion on epistemic results and inherent problems in this most prominent fin de siècle historiographical school in India, see Sumit Sarkar's recent articles, "Post-modernism and the writing of history", *Studies in History*, July-Dec., 1999, Vol. XV, No.2, pp. 293-322 and the chapter, "The Decline of the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*", in his *Writing Social History*, OUP, Delhi, 1998, pp. 82-108.

¹² Joseph Wicki, S.J., *Documenta Indica* [henceforth DI], Rome, 1975, vol. XIII, p. 638. (Fenicio was born in 1558, entered the Society of Jesus in 1580 and went to India in 1583. He died in Cochin in 1632.) Separate from the official provincial catalogue providing information on Jesuit personnel, another confidential catalogue was attached by the Provincial, Alessandro Valignano. These "secret" evaluations were a common and accepted practice among the Jesuits.

¹³Of all the versions of his name - Giacomo, Jacopo, Jacome, Jácome; Fenicio, Fenizio, Phinicio, quite arbitrarily I have decided to use henceforth Jacomo Fenicio. DI, XIII, p. 739.

refusal to clearly assert authorship of this text - of which the integral manuscript is available in the Manuscript Room of the British Library in London [Sloane 1820] - perhaps indicates that he considered it primarily as a missionary tool for collective use, and as a way of introducing Jesuit missionary novices to local non-Christian cosmogony, theology and tradition and, ultimately, as a means of facilitating the composition of sermons specifically directed at refuting what were perceived as false, non-Christian doctrines. The fact that his text or major parts of it, without acknowledgement of Fenicio's authorship, acquired fame during the 17th and 18th centuries in works of such compilers as Philippus Baldaeus and Manuel de Faria y Sousa was unrelated to his intentions.¹⁴

Similarly, Diogo Gonçalves, a Portuguese Jesuit working at the same time in the same region, completed around 1615 his *História do Malabar*, which he left unsigned.¹⁵ Compared to Fenicio, Gonçalves is less interested in theological speculation, but shares his passion for the quest of "origins", the origins of political hierarchy and social structure in particular. Unlike Fenicio who records "pagan" phenomena and cultural patterns in order to prepare a Jesuit doctrinal offensive, Gonçalves writes both as a missionary and an official Portuguese spy. He not only provided strategic information on, for example, the exact location of temples and the quantity of precious materials kept on the precincts, but also regarding the feasibility of an attack by Portuguese soldiers, to which he actively exhorted his compatriots. The temple of *Chimindirão* [Suchīndram] dedicated to Śiva and located between Kōttār and Kanniyākumāri is, according to Gonçalves, built "in the flatland, a league away from the beach from where the Portuguese, if they so desire, can attack since it is the best place on the Cape (Comorin) to disembark"¹⁶. Another temple (*pagode*), between Kollam and Kayankulam in Trevilar (*Trivilar*), on a peninsular strip of land belonging to the king of Travancore, preserved, according to the Jesuit, "some treasures, so close to the beach that we could reach them from the sea with our cannon

¹⁴For the history of the authorship attribution and the abridged published version of the text, see Jarl Charpentier, (ed. and intro.), *The Livro da Seita dos Indios Orientais (Brit. Mus. Ms. Sloane 1820) of Father Jacobo Fenicio, S.J.*, Uppsala, 1933 [henceforth Fenicio]. Manuel de Faria e Sousa, *Asia Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1666-75 (EC.66.9, Archive Collection, SOAS, London). A. J. de Jong (ed.) *Afgoderye der Oost-Indische heydenen door Philippus Baldaeus...* The Hague, 1917. The fact that Fenicio wrote in Portuguese instead in his native Italian can be taken, perhaps, as an indication that his text was for the internal use of the missionaries in the Malabar regions, all of whom spoke Portuguese.

¹⁵A fairly legible and leather-bound manuscript is preserved in *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, Goa 58. Published document is available in J. Wicki, *P. Diogo Gonçalves S.I., História do Malavar*, Rome, 1953 [Henceforth, Gonçalves]. Diogo Goncalves was born in Vila Real in Portugal in 1561, joined the Society of Jesus in 1583, and arrived in Goa in 1591. He died in Kollam (Quilon) in 1640.

¹⁶Gonçalves, p. 83.

balls (*pelouros*)".¹⁷ In addition, a big stone mosque not far from the temple could also be pounded from the sea. After these fantasies of pillaging and destruction, justified by religious righteousness, Gonçalves immediately continued with advantages of territorial conquest and possession. "There should be more than two hundred palm trees besides many cultivated tracts (*vargens*); they give more than 20 thousand *pardaos*. Our armadas could enter through the reed bar (*barra da Bica*), pulling the galleys". The list of targets with all necessary geographical details and logistics unfolds through the succeeding pages, leading the prospective conquistador along the coast from Kollam to Cochin.¹⁸ The kings and queens who happened to rule those coveted islands and peninsulas dotted with temples and mosques were in their turn portrayed as a bunch of bellicose little tyrants with dubious ancestors and legitimacy.

Sex, Lust, and "Sociability" in the Tropics

A few centuries before the appearance of ethnography, both Fenicio and Gonçalves underscored the importance of gathering evidence concerning the indigenous life-cycle ceremonies. Not only because the reproduction of the non-Christian society, both biological and cultural, depended on them but also because the post-Tridentine papacy emphasized the sacramental nature of such ceremonies in Catholicism itself. The sacramental nature of marriage, as against Protestant opposition to such interpretation of the Scriptures, was reasserted throughout Catholic Europe during the second part of the 16th and early 17th centuries, and found its ramifications in the overseas missions in such questions as: Are there "true marriages" among the non-Christians? If there are, among which social groups? How does one define "true" or "false" marriage? What are the forces or actors within the non-Christian societies determining the nature of human relations such as kinship, which are closely related to the questions of marriage? And finally, how does one distinguish marriage ceremonies of the new Christian converts from the "pagan" ceremonies of the non-Christians?

Both Fenicio and Gonçalves offered descriptions and explanations by using cultural and literary material accessible to them through their knowledge of Malayalam (and Tamil in Fenicio's case). Neither of them, however, had access to Sanskrit texts, except indirectly through Brahman informants. In spite of the richness of "facts" - keeping in mind a proviso that *factum non est verum* - which the two Jesuits collected, their conceptual post-Tridentine Catholic grid channeled this "theater of paganism", as it later came to be known, into a display of various forms

¹⁷ Gonçalves, p. 85.

¹⁸ Gonçalves, pp. 85-88.

of "abusive", "irrational" behavior going against the marriage norms introduced in Europe in the second half of the 16th century.¹⁹

For the two Jesuit writers, the sense of carnal lust, libido and concupiscence wafted, so to speak, through the Malabar air, captivating the minds and the souls of the "natives" (both Christian and non-Christian) and imprinted upon them the metaphors and allegories of sexual desire.²⁰ Fenicio's rendering of the "Brahmanical" conception of the creation of the universe, "so much devoid of reason" (*tão fora de razão*), rapidly turns into an inventory of sexual symbols and erotic scenes connected with the introduction into the text of the principal "Indian" deities; *Bramâ*, [Brahma], *Visnu* [Viṣṇu] and *Ixora* [Īśvara]. After an elaborate and confused story of the cosmic egg, the birth of the three gods is attributed to the appearance of a "triangular form called *tricoma sacra* in which grew another round thing called *Guiuelinga* [Śivalingam], signifying genital parts, the *Guiuelinga* of men and the triangle of women".²¹ For a theologian such as Fenicio, creation and procreation could, on no account, be equated. Even less was he prepared to accept further information that the same "Śivalingam is the highest divinity *Egasourunam* [Ekasvarūpam]".²²

After such dramatic staging of the creative power and action of the male sexual organ, Fenicio skillfully unseated all menace emanating from the object in question by turning it quickly into stone.

"I was surprised", he wrote, "when I entered one day into a *teuere*, as they call the temple dedicated to gods; I saw in the chapel on the side where we place the altar on the floor the Śivalingam which was a round marble stone; as thick as a man's leg and in everything as equal and as long, more or less [the size of] an ell (*covado*) of a hand and placed on the right side on the ground and [vertically]standing (*em pe*)."²³

Embodied in stone and enshrined in a fixed place, the Śivalingam was less threatening to the Jesuits, in so far as it could be clearly identified as an "idol" and its "cosmic force" could be refuted by conventional arguments against idolatry, employed, practiced, tested and refined by

¹⁹Although the Council of Trent did provide a model against which to measure and judge all other forms, the situation was more complicated since even in Europe the assimilation of the new ecclesiastical canons was not fully accomplished before 1700. See John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*, Oxford, 1985, p. 25.

²⁰ The case is also often made about the effects of tropical concupiscence on Europeans by European travelers, Portuguese officials and religious specialists.

²¹Fenicio, p. 4. *tirikōṇam* (Tam.) triangular figure, female pelvic triangle; *cakkaram* (Tam.)=cakra (Skt.)

²² *Egasourunam*, or as it appears later as *Egasourubão*, is supposed to mean "the one and only true god". Fenicio, p. 41. *Curūpam* (Tam. of Skt. origin) = nature, an image, that which is well-formed. *Ēkam* (Tam. of Skt. origin) = one, unity, J. P. Fabricius, *Tamil and English Dictionary*, Tranquebar (1779), 1972, p.420 and p. 148.

²³Fenicio, p. 4. *Tevere* is probably an error collapsing two terms, *tēvāram* (= divine praises, songs) and *tēvālayam* (=a temple, sacred shrine). *Covado* is an old measure equivalent to 0,66m.

missionaries all over the globe: by the Jesuit José de Acosta in Peru, the Franciscan Diego de Landa in Yucatan, by Matteo Ricci in China, and many others.²⁴ Nevertheless, the definition of the Śivalingam as an idol is not without problems because "the Brahmans deny that [it] denotes divine genitals: they say in addition that since gods have neither bodies nor limbs (*membros*), they [Brahmans] do not adore any limbs in that round-shaped and formless figure."²⁵ Confronted with indigenous opinion, a sort of *emic* information, Fenicio nevertheless privileged his own ocular testimony and his linguistic competence which had taught him that *linga*, among other things, did also mean male genitals (*partes genitais do varão*). His refusal to overlay this "pagan" object with symbolical meaning - such a procedure being in order throughout Christian history - and his insistence on its profane substances are justified in the text by the fact that the "forms" and "figures" of the Śivalingam are to be seen everywhere, in particular around the necks of the members of a certain "pagan caste" (*huma casta de gentios*), easily identified as Lingayats, and of the *Iogues* [Yogis] who chose to wear a figure in which one can see "both sexes joined in the most debased manner".

By piecing together bits of Indian cosmogony and cosmological theories of which he had only partial and second-hand knowledge, and which in themselves were not a unified system, but fragments of different textual traditions, Fenicio in addition chose to represent only those ideas which substantiated his own theological and practical missionary elucidation. Thus he stated that he was unable to exaggerate in words the "brutishness" (*brutalidades*) of these "brutish people" (*gente tão bruta*). In the 17th century, the signification of the term brutality was closely connected with its common Latin meaning of the quality pertaining to irrational animals. For this Italian Jesuit, both the animal and vegetal worlds functioned as a mirrors of Indian "paganism". "Śivalingam, as we said, is a round thing and has three layers (*tres cascás*) like an Indian fig (*figueira da India*); of which they say that they got peeled away from the stem and converted (*conuerterão*) into three gods Brama, Visnu and Guiuen [Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva] ".²⁶ The fig leaf in the story of Adam and Eve covered and uncovered "the shame", or the "the truth" if we believe Michel Foucault, while the stripping of the Indian fig fruit, i.e. banana, created Indian gods. These and similar analogies are not innocent in Fenicio's text. They are part and parcel of the

²⁴On José de Acosta, see the important work by Sabine MacCormack, *The Religion in the Andes, Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru*, New Jersey, p. 264-270. The case of Diego de Landa is discussed in detail by Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570*, Cambridge, 1987. Matteo Ricci and his mission has recently attracted a huge amount of scholarly attention. Still the most challenging reading on the question and an excellent introduction is Jonathan Spence's, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, New York, 1983.

²⁵Fenicio, p. 5.

²⁶Fenicio, p. 5; See Sebastião Rodolfo Delgado, *Glossário Luco-Asiático*, Coimbra, 1919, pp. 395-398.

missionary strategies of deriding and ridiculing in the predication Indian conceptions of the sacred. The same procedure was later used by Protestant missionaries for their famous "street-corner" invectives. Many of these "shameful" stories or "fancies", according to British missionaries, cannot be readily attested in either the written textual tradition in Sanskrit or in vernacular languages. They were probably a combination of written texts, existing oral stories and epics, and of the imaginations of the Jesuits and their informants. Jesuit suspicions were not merely confirmed by their informants but their wildest expectations were also at times surpassed.²⁷

Moreover, Fenicio and other Jesuits in the Indian missionary field conceptualized local religious practices as pulleys and axles of a "diabolical machine (*máquina tão diabólica*)" which processed and reprocessed similar libidinous material.²⁸ The episodes of divine debauchery and fornication are strung together in overlapping stories. Thus, Ixora (Īśvara, i.e. Śiva) grew a long lingam, "*que he o membro uiril*", according to Fenicio, because of his desire for woman, and ploughed the world, thereby creating mountains and seas. The same desire then grew into the form of a woman (*a forma de molher*) on his back. The "pagan" Adam and Eve inaugurate a conversation - incidentally attesting George Steiner's dictum that sex is a profoundly semantic act - in a predictably lewd idiom, starting with Īśvara's question "*om*, which means do you desire (*quereis*), and the woman responded *am*, which means I desire (*quero*)".²⁹ The same syllables are also mentioned by Gonçalves - who confirms that the lingam is "man's nature and the nature of their [non-Christians'] gods". While the syllables are in his view merely words of a prayer and not an erotic dialogue, the meaning, he maintains, is too indecent to be put in words.³⁰ But where Gonçalves stops, Fenicio continues with relish. Thus, when Chatti [Śakti], Īśvara's wife, was finally removed from his back and separated from her husband's body, the divine couple desired to copulate, but was unable to do so because Īśvara's lingam was too long and had to be cut into eighteen pieces. And just when that problem was solved, the two of them discovered that Śakti had no vagina (*vazo*), whereupon Īśvara opened one with his finger. The blood that sprinkled forth created the sun, the moon, the stars and all sorts of red flowers used in special ceremonies, etc.

²⁷In the controversy between two Jesuits, Roberto Nobili and Gonçalo Fernandes, their Brahman informants often played one Jesuit clique against the other by switching sides and providing counter-information, often contradicting their former statements. See Županov, *Disputed Mission*.

²⁸Gonçalo Fernandes calls it "*máquina do Bramanismo*". *Tratado do P.e Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso sobre o Hinduísmo*, (Maduré 1616), ed. Joseph Wicki, Lisbon, 1973

²⁹ Fenicio, p. 8, George Steiner, *After Babel, Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford (1975), 1992, p. 40.

Although contemporary Indianists consider blood to be one of the conventional symbols of sanctity in South Indian society, for the Jesuits the connection between blood, fertility and sanctity was quite threatening, precisely because the equation was "correct" from their point of view.³¹ Except that fertility, ideally, led to abundance in the celestial, not in the terrestrial world. Missionaries never failed to mention in their letters that their mission was about the "harvest of souls" before the last judgement. As strange and appalling as these Indian creation stories might appear, they were not in Fenicio's mind, inexplicable. On the one hand, they were typical "chimeras and metaphors [...] of which Ovid had written about" and on the other, they were human "inventions" caused by the "blindness of reason".³² In between the wonders and marvels presented, Fenicio's text throngs with cautionary pointers such as, "note, please, how they contradict themselves", citations of the indigenous texts and poetical verses mocking their own gods, or personally communicated opinions, mostly from "honest" Brahmans, disclaiming "such abominations" (*naquellas sugidades*).³³ The principal indigenous cosmological and theological error was, it is repeated again, their belief that "rational and irrational animals were made during copulation (*copula*) between Ísvara and his wife, filling the earth and the netherworlds (*padalas*) with people and demons (*raxxades*)".³⁴

By developing minute descriptions and qualifications of power-filled Indian divine figures, Fenicio carefully painted a background against which he would ultimately propose (or impose) his psychological definition of a Hindu person as a sexually high-strung being, without a proper sense of ethical or theological direction, revelled in extremes.³⁵ His assessment, based on what is called today Hindu mythology, resonates at times with the conclusions proposed by Sanskritists such as Wendy Doniger. Her contention is that the Hindu mentality does not function through compromises, but rather tends to exaggerate polarities, "including potentially dangerous

³⁰Gonçalves, p. 37.

³¹David Dean Schulman, *Tamil Temple Myths; Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in South Indian Śaiva Tradition*, Princeton, 1980, p. 107.

³²Fenicio, p. 1.

³³Fenicio, p. 21 and pp. 9-10, p. 157

³⁴Fenicio, p. 10; Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, New York, 1989, p. 117

³⁵ *Stricto sensu*, according to the Jesuit description of, and prescription for, human subjectivity, personhood would not be an appropriate word at all for "Hindu" and "pagan" human beings because the field of "personal" action and choice was too restricted. For an interesting view of the history and historiography of Individualism in Renaissance see, John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity , Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, No. 5, Dec. 1997. pp. 1309-1342. An interesting collection of articles dealing with Indian subjectivity was published in *Cahiers Confrontation*, No. 13, Spring 1985, 216 pp. (Paris). Unfortunately, editorial misrepresentation of issues and authors made the project irrelevant.

excesses".³⁶ Doniger refers here to the fact that eroticism and asceticism are inseparable, especially in the case of Śiva, since the dialectic between these two complementary states is one of the moving forces of the Hindu universe.³⁷ While Fenicio's text inflates erotic scenes involving all gods and their offspring, he is curiously silent on the ascetic aspect embedded in the Hindu sense of the sacred. Even when certain practices resemble the European type of penitential, austere and mortifying behavior, Fenicio chose to underscore differences, while preserving analogies solely to undervalue and desecrate them.

Thus, *Munis* or *rixis* [ṛṣis] venerated by the people are portrayed "by black pagans" as being of white complexion "with long beards, dressed in a kind of a stole which descends from the neck to the chest, crossed over (*emcruzada*) in the manner in which it is carried by our priests when they serve mass", and as living in seclusion away from human commerce.³⁸ However, these holy figures, resembling European religious specialists and venerated and feared by local kings, were, according to Fenicio, married (*casados*). Although he comments no further, the mentioning of this fact, in light of the Protestant refusal of priestly celibacy, speaks for itself.³⁹ Gonçalves, on the other hand, very casually, tongue-in-cheek, states that they say that "a *muni*, which means a saint and a hermit" had six thousand sons.⁴⁰ Similarly, the description of the daily ritual use of ashes which pious Indians (*indios deuotos*) smear on the head, on shoulders and on the chest, while *jogues* anoint their whole body with them, turns into a scatological parody in Fenicio's text. Instead of reminding him of Catholic Lenten austerities, these ashes appear as nothing but the remains of the cow's excrement (*bosta de uacca*).

A long Christian tradition of sanctity, woven together by endless individual battles against the movements of the lower parts of the body, since as St. Augustine puts it, "lust

³⁶Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*, Oxford, 1973 (My citation from the French edition, Gallimard, Paris, 1993) p. 110.

³⁷In his effort at "configuring" the field of Indian inner world by means of psychoanalysis, in his early study, *The Inner World; A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, (2nd. ed., 1981) Delhi, 1989, Sudhir Kakar discerns in Hindu mythology, "sexuality [as] rampant flood of polymorphous pleasure and connection, disdaining the distinctions between the heterosexual , genital imperatives of conventional sex and sweeping away incestual taboos (p. 23)." This statement is in perfect accordance with the ideas expounded by Jesuit missionaries (Fenicio and Gonçalves) on the topic. The context and the aims of these theories (Jesuit and Kakar's) on Hindu sexuality are, of course, quite different.

³⁸ Fenicio, p. 22.

³⁹Fenicio's *Munis* or *rixis* designate without distinction a combination of major "priestly" roles in classical Hinduism, such as Vedic seers, sacrificers (Skt.*yajamāna*), Brahman priestly officiants and renouncers. See J.C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition; Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*, Chicago, 1985.

⁴⁰Gonçalves, p. 42.

ambushes the saints", operates as a subterranean frame in all Jesuit ethnographic enterprises.⁴¹ But the desire *of* writing runs easily into desire *in* writing. Titillating and almost auto-erotic passages are abundant in Fenicio's text. Especially when he braids together tokens of European sanctity and Indian obscenity. Hence, men taken for "great saints" by the people on the "Canara [coast] from Cannanor to Mangalor, and to Barsalor [Basrur]" when they come out of their temples carry a little bell, just like St. Francis Xavier, except that they are all naked. Women of all walks of life, princesses, queens and ladies included, touch and kiss their "dishonest parts" (*partes deshonestas*). They consider themselves happy when they succeed in pulling out body hair from those "parts" and sport it on their ears or on their heads as relics.⁴²

Gonçalves, in the *História do Malavar*, is even harsher towards Indian "paganism". His sources and interests were, however, somewhat different. Less overwhelmed with mythology and oral or written literary evidence, he collected and recorded customs, rites and rules of sociability as they were prescribed or currently in use. While Fenicio mentioned the state (or status) of a *saṃnyāsi* (*sanegadi*) only once, and in the context of the story of Viṣṇu's lion avatara (Nṛsiṅha), Gonçalves identifies the *saṃnyāsi* (*çaniadi*) as belonging to a particular social category not unlike religious and priests in Europe.⁴³ As such, he claimed, they even fared better in their society than their European counterparts - ate better food, led a more luxurious life and even had property in spite of the outward signs of poverty and deprivation. It is obvious that Gonçalves was not able to resist airing some common and quite apposite complaints by the understaffed and underpaid grass-roots religious workers in the Christian missions. Where he did find a positive analogy between *saṃnyāsi* and European religious specialists was in chastity, although he maintained, that a *saṃnyāsi* refrained from "using women" (*usar de molhers*), not for spiritual reasons, but in order to enjoy all the other social honors and economic advantages. Obviously, here was another hint by Gonçalves as to the deprivation of the Christian religious specialists who were neither respected, nor properly remunerated, nor enjoyed women (or men, as the next phrase quite explicitly points out). *Saṃnyāsi* do not practice "the nefarious sin" (*peccado nefando*), sodomy, which is considered as in "abomination among the Malabars", but which "confuses" and surprises Europeans who behave in "these parts" worse than animals. ⁴⁴

The problem of controlling sexual desire seems to have been, not only according to the Jesuits, a major problem for the Europeans in India. The apostolate of Francis Xavier was in part

⁴¹ On early Christian ideas concerning sexual continence, virginity and renunciation, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York, 1988

⁴²Fenicio, p. 171.

⁴³ Fenicio, p.134.

devoted to that particular mission - of bringing back to the righteous path those European members whose souls and bodies were imperiled by the Oriental environment.⁴⁵ Alessandro Valignano, writing from Shimo in Japan during his first visitation of the Company's Oriental province in 1580, blamed for the loss of European virtue in the East, the heat, the "dishonest clothes", the food full of cloves and pepper and an abundance of readily available women.⁴⁶ Female eroticism (lasciviousness, obscenity, lust) became a "zone of encounter" with, at the best, an ambiguous outcome and legacy.⁴⁷ With a surplus of supply in Asian women and those of "mixed" blood (*mestiças*) in their roles of legitimate spouses, servants, concubines or slaves, a theory of moral decay (leading to the general *decadência*) of the Portuguese nation in the tropics found its originary moment of transgression. Uncontrolled sexual appetites of both men and women were seen as socially and psychologically destabilizing for Portuguese colonial communities. In spite of the harsh penal and judicial institutions set up in the major Portuguese enclaves, excessive violence, murder and unruly behavior were not easily contained.⁴⁸

In spite of an effort at injecting some "pure" Portuguese blood through the practice of *órfãs del-Rey*, the precious liquid became thinner with each generation.⁴⁹ Jesuit missionaries and in particular foreign travelers, promoted and disseminated these ideas in print in early 17th-century Europe.⁵⁰ Thus, for missionaries such as Fenicio and Gonçalves and others residing in Goa, non-European and non-Christian woman was equated with paganism and, when residing in the house of a Portuguese male, she was an element of corruption, an alien body (and mind)

⁴⁴Gonçalves, pp. 63-66.

⁴⁵On Xavier's mission among the Portuguese in Asia, see Ines G. Županov, "The Prophetic and the Miraculous in Portuguese Asia: A Hagiographical View of Colonial Culture", Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ed., *Sinners and Saints; The Successors of Vasco da Gama*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 135-161.

⁴⁶DI, XIII, p. 271-2.

⁴⁷ See, James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Mass, 1997 and Serge Gruzinski, *La pensée métisse*, Paris, 1998, for discussion concerning similar conceptions such as "zones of contact" (Clifford) and "espaces de métissage" (Gruzinski).

⁴⁸ For violence against women, between spouses and concubines, and, ultimately, vengeance against violent husbands by means of stupefying drugs (*datura*) and poisons, see among many other narratives Francesco Carletti, *Voyage autour du monde, 1594-1606* (translation from the Italian manuscript), Paris, 1999, pp. 248-257. Concerning the drug – *datura* - that became the epitome of tropical licentiousness, see Garcia da Orta, *Colóquios dos simples e drogas da Índia*, (Goa, 1563, facsimile edition of 1891), Lisbon, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 295-301.

⁴⁹ Timothy J. Coates, *Degredados e Órfãs: colonização dirigida pela coroa no império português. 1550-1755*, Lisbon 1998.

⁵⁰ François Pyrard de Laval, *Voyage de Pyrard de Laval aux Indes orientales (1601-1611)*, Paris, 1998, 2 vols.; Jean Moquet, *Voyage en Éthiopie, Mozambique, Goa, & autres lieux d'Afrique & des Indes orientales (1607-1610)*, Paris, 1996, Pietro della Valle, *The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India* (from the old English translation of 1664, Hakluyt, London 1892), reprint, New Delhi, 1991, 2 vols.; John Huyghen Van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies* (from the old English translation of 1598, Hakluyt, London, 1885), reprint, New Delhi, 1988, 2 vols.

snatcher, leading a Christian household into dangerous religious syncretism. No wonder these and similar reports fed the imagination of philosophers such as Montesquieu, whose theory of the earth's climatic zones and their effect on the human psyche and society stigmatized the Orient as a hothouse of barbarism. Polygamy, slavery, and the personal indolence attributed to the Orientals were thus all explained and justified as consequences of *la loi naturelle* which prevails in hot climates.⁵¹ "The soul is like a spider in its web", claims Montesquieu in the *Essay on Causes Affecting Minds and Characters* (1736-1743), and the arrangement and condition of these fibers define the person, psychologically and socially.

The Jesuit missionaries must have felt some of those particular fibers vibrating with heat. Francis Xavier stressed the crucial importance of chastity in the mission field, while from personal and private Jesuit correspondence we at times get a glimpse of the immensity of the problem and of the various ways employed for solving it. Hence, in 1561, Henrique Henriques, a missionary on the Fishery Coast, asked for permission to try out local medicine (*mezinha*) used by *jogues* who in spite of the mortification of the flesh feel "no appetite coming from sensuality".⁵² The then General of the Society of Jesus, Laínez, responded a year later from Trent – where the closing and decisive sessions of Council were in preparation -, without offering any decision and leaving for the time being the task of consulting physicians to the Jesuit Provincial in India.⁵³ The post-Tridentine religious environment and the election of Francisco de Borja to the office of the General brought to a halt further doubts. He stiffly ordered the Provincial in Goa, António de Quadros, to leave "the medicine for chastity" to the "*bonjes*", obviously confounding the name used for the Japanese Buddhist priests with the *jogues* from Henriques's letter.⁵⁴ The distrust of indigenous medical practices and the refutation of cosmological and theological conceptions by missionaries and reformers persisted throughout the colonial period in India. Fenicio and Gonçalves, for example, denounced all "indigenous" information as stories (*fabulas e patranhas*) produced by false and diabolical imagination, in a word, downright simulacra and illusions.⁵⁵ These were also, partly, Jesuit illusions in the double signification of *inlusiones* in St. Augustine's Latin - that of visual errors and of wet dreams.

Uses and Abuses of the Malabar Marriage Customs

⁵¹Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, (1748) Book XV. (English translation by D. W. Carrithers, Berkeley, 1977, p. 47).

⁵²Henriques, H., to Lainez, I., Mannar, 19 Dec. 1561, DI, V, p. 382.

⁵³Laínez, I. to Henriques, H., Trent, 12 Dec., 1562, DI, V, p. 661.

⁵⁴Borja, F. to Quadros, A. de, Rome, 29 Nov., 1565, DI, VI, p. 526.

After the Council of Trent, the sacramental nature of marriage was strengthened and the Jesuits in particular were sent out to implement the reforms and counter-reforms decided upon by the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁶ The Tridentine matrimonial code was clearly directed against too closely knit kinship bonds and solidarity. It was a war cry against community privileges and for parochial conformity. The hand of the church extended far into the bedchamber of individual married couples in order to disconnect them from the extended *familia* and link them with the larger society. The emphasis on exogamy was no innovation of the post-Tridentine Catholic Church. It was held throughout Christian history that, as St. Augustine defined it, one of the goals of exogamous marriage was to increase the relationship of love among peoples, i.e. social bonds.⁵⁷ From the theologian's point of view - marriage, an alliance important for preserving peace for the good of the commonwealth - remained for too long embedded within various incoherent communal practices - Roman, Germanic, Irish, etc.⁵⁸ It was not, in fact, until Luther branded the *matrimonium* as a purely secular affair, that the Roman Church showed increased interest in meddling in local customs formerly held to be unimportant. After 1563, the Council of Trent brushed aside, in the words of John Bossy, "the vast corpus of customary rites and arrangements as having no sacramental force [and], it transformed marriage from a social process which the Church guaranteed to an ecclesiastical process which it administered".⁵⁹ Briefly, marriage contract was reaffirmed as the source of grace.⁶⁰ Probably around the time that Fenicio and Gonçaves completed their treatises in which they both - Gonçaves in particular - revealed unusual matrimonial practices in Malabar, the Roman Ritual of 1612 propelled the rite from the church door to the altar, with nothing but disregard for local and varied European matrimonial customs and traditions.

Predictably, non-European, non-Christian marriage customs fared even worse. In the first half of the 16th century, in spite of the perceived differences, travelers and missionaries never doubted the existence of indigenous "marriages", even when certain practices were considered as strange or even appalling, such as the swapping of wives among merchants and gentlemen, and the polyandry among the Nayars in Calicut, reported by Ludovico di Varthema, an Italian

⁵⁵Gonçaves, p. 56.

⁵⁶ For the most recent overview of the period see Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770*, Cambridge, 1998.

⁵⁷St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XV, Ch. 12, Doubleday, New York, 1953, p. 350.

⁵⁸Jack Goody, *The development of the family and marriage in Europe*, Cambridge, 1983.

⁵⁹Bossy, *Christianity*, p.25.

⁶⁰André Duval, *Des sacrements au Concile de Trente; rites et symboles*, Paris, 1985, pp. 281-325.

merchant from Bologna, whose oriental expedition from 1503 to 1508 was presented to European readers in his best selling *Itinerario*, first published in 1510.⁶¹ Even before him, in 1444, the Venetian, Nicolo de' Conti recorded these social particularities, while the first detailed account of the extremely complex society of 16th-century Kerala can be found in Duarte Barbosa's *Livro*, completed around 1518.⁶²

At the end of the 16th and in the early 17th century, according to Fenicio and Gonçaves, the Malabar *casamentos* were of two types: "true marriages" and those which were not true, but which were forms of concubinage or prostitution. A true marriage, *casamento verdadeiro*, according to their post-Tridentine template, was a monogamous, patrilocal, patrilineal, patriarchal, nuclear family alliance based on exogamy, pre-marital virginity and marital fidelity. In addition, technically, only Catholic priests were able to perform the ceremony and thus endow it with sacramental blessing. If one were to follow to the letter the Tridentine prescriptions, no pagan marriage partook of the divine grace, but the Jesuits continued to use the name *matrimonium* or *casamento*, either in a descriptive sense or to designate those customs which did not "contradict reason and natural light".⁶³ Both Fenicio and Gonçaves agreed that only men from certain social groups practice "true marriages", while others either have no "ascertained" wives or change them as they desire. Brahmans and, according to Gonçaves, Chatis [Chettis], or the merchants, have only one permanent wife (*uma soo molher e perpetuo*) in a "true marriage". Next mentioned in this category were *castas* of people called Chanas [Shanars] who, according to Gonçaves, do not divorce and their wives do not remarry after the husband's death. It is striking that the Jesuit clearly separated, in this short paragraph on "true marriages", the Chanas, the low status toddy tappers and palm tree climbers, from the Brahmans and Chetins [Chettis], as if observing the indigenous hierarchy and pollution rules which segmented the Malabar social texture into islands of castes and lineages.

The majority of the non-Christian population was thus perceived by the Jesuits as living in adulterous, that is sinful, relationships. From Siri Cristna (Śri Kṛṣṇa), who married 16,000 women in one day, to protagonists in the stories of celestial, demonic and terrestrial sexual encounters, the same point is made *ad nauseam* by Fenicio concerning Indian gods and goddess. Actually, "mythic", "historical" and "ethnographic" material is projected simultaneously on his

⁶¹*Itinerario de Ludovico di Varthema Bolognese ... nel anno MDX*. I have consulted *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508* (translated from the Italian edition of 1510 (the Hakluyt Society, London, 1863) reprint, New Delhi, 1997

⁶²*The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, (translated from Portuguese by M. L. Dames, Hakluyt Society, 192) Kraus reprint, Millwood, N.Y., 1967, vol. II, pp. 43-45.

⁶³Gonçaves, p. 95.

textual screen, with the result of effacing clear distinctions between them. Compared to Fenicio's psychological analysis of Indian mentality, Gonçalves appears as a matter-of-fact, no nonsense "ethnographer". He relied on ordered lists, taxonomies and classifications, both those provided by his informants and his own. Thus he identifies the normative *varṇa* divisions as "castes": "among Malavares [Malabars] there are three castes, I say, four principal: bramenes, chatira [kṣatriya], vayxia [vaiśya], chudra [śūdra]".⁶⁴ All those who did not belong to these social categories were, according to Gonçalves, divided according to their professions (*officios*) and were mostly "mechanics (*mecanicos*)" and workers and soldiers. His obsession with precision, accuracy and exactitude is visible on the formal level of his narrative organization. His text is broken into small chapters swarming with marginal annotations on each page, as if all difference or particularity must be noticed immediately *prima vista*. The same procedure is employed in his chapters on travel through the region. In a series of quick strokes, Gonçalves provided the most efficient road-guide for an idle (or busy Portuguese) itinerant merchant: names of the places and tips for avoiding local custom posts (*juncão*) which seem to have been dotted along the route. At one point, in order to travel 25 leagues (*legoas*), one had to stop at 19 custom posts.⁶⁵

Some of the chapters contained, however, longer and more detailed information, especially those regarding the four *varṇas* and their various customs and rites. Falling under the category of social elite, these lineages were of special interest to the Jesuit missionaries. Although they did target social elites in Europe, the trickle down theory of conversion was neither a Jesuit invention, nor the only drive behind their ministry.⁶⁶ However, clearly identifying and "persuading" the local "notables", "aristocracy" and "intelligentsia", became a prominent part of the strategy in those overseas missions in which Portuguese military support played no such role as in Japan, China or in certain Indian missions.⁶⁷ Although in the Malabar region the Jesuits never consciously or willingly mobilized their *accommodationist* pastoral and conversion method, their interest in local social elites was in no way diluted. Often, however, the missionary highlight on the indigenous "aristocracy" was but a way of delegitimizing local political and leadership structures. In the paragraph entitled "Marriages of the Malabar kings who are not

⁶⁴ Gonçalves, p. 8 (repeated on p. 15).

⁶⁵ Gonçalves, p. 87. *Juncão* (chumkam, Malayālam) = a custom house in Malabar. Delgado, *Glossário Luco-Asiático*, p. 497.

⁶⁶ John O'Malley is of the opinion that the Jesuit penchant for attracting elites was widely exaggerated. John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Harvard, 1993, p. 71.

⁶⁷ Alessandro Valignano, Matteo Ricci and Roberto Nobili defended their ministries among the local elites under the heading of "accommodation" to indigenous cultures. See, Alessandro Valignano, *Sumario de las cosas de Japon* (1583), Tokyo, 1954.; Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism; Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*, Durham, 1997, Županov, *Disputed Mission*.

Brahmans", Gonçalves endeavored to prove just that - the illegitimate status of the Malabar kings.⁶⁸

Even if some of Gonçalves's deductions and assertions laminate and distort social reality, a few insights into the workings of certain "Malabar" marriage arrangements are quite accurate. For example, what demographers and anthropologists later termed hypergamy, Gonçalves clearly described in the marriage system practiced by kings and other castes, particularly the Nayers. On the other hand, he never identified the royal lineages as Nayar subgroups – who therefore remained, in his view, the lowest caste, or *sūdra*, in the prescriptive fourfold *varṇa* scheme in which kings are identified as *kṣatriya*. In addition, according to Gonçalves, some kings were Brahmans: "Since the Malabar kings are not all mutually related - some being of the Brahman caste, as we said, other of *chatriâ* or *caimâr*, who are those of Muterte, Lerte, Cochim and Cranganor, others are those called *chamanter* [*sāmanthar*] who are those who proceed from the 8 servants of the Cherumam Perumal [Chēramān Perumāl], among whom four are relatives - but the custom is not to marry each other."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, when deeper cultural predicaments were not evident to him, partly due to his dependence on local informants, he was able to grasp the epiphenomena and the visible causal chains in social interaction. Honorable women, according to Gonçalves, have to marry upward, that is, find men who enjoy status higher than the woman and her lineage. Men, on the other hand, can entertain lower caste women. While low caste men pollute through sexual intercourse higher caste women, low caste women gain in status through association with higher caste men. Historians and anthropologists of Kerala have amply confirmed this early Jesuit assessment.⁷⁰

Discreetly, however, we are led to think that these customs, perceived as abusive, come from the fact that kings do not practice "perfect marriages": "The kings do not marry with the women of their caste because they are all relatives, nor do they marry other [women] because they are not of an equal rank with them, and live only in concubinage (*amancebados*)".⁷¹ For this reason, the inheritance passes from the king to his nephews, his sister's sons, while his own sons have only the status of a *tambi*, a younger brother, and "have no more honor than their father wants to accord them during his lifetime". The fact that sons do not inherit is a much greater abuse in Gonçalves's view than the king's extramarital sexual liaisons. For this combative Portuguese, illegitimacy in kinship is very close to illegitimacy in kingship. Hence, his self-

⁶⁸Gonçalves, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁹ Gonçalves, p. 11. See Kathleen Gaugh, "Nayar: Central Kerala", in David M. Schneider and Kathleen Gaugh, eds., *Matrilineal Kinship*, Berkeley, 1961, pp. 306-312.

⁷⁰Gaugh, "Nayar: Central Kerala", p. 319-323.

⁷¹Gonçalves, P. 11

righteous invitation to the Portuguese colonial authorities to conquer these small Malabar kingdoms. The justification of the conquest was, as Gonçalves demonstrated in his treatise, the existence of aberrant *costumes politicos* [political customs].

The distinction between the religious and the political, in its early modern meaning of social, political and civil combined, is one of the landmarks in the early 17th-century ethnographic treatises written by the Jesuits.⁷² Malabar and other "pagan" marriage customs were generally assigned to the political sphere. Among political customs a further distinction is often made between those which can be "accommodated" in Christianity, that is, those which the new converts were allowed to practice and those which should be, as Gonçalves puts it, extirpated (*desterrar*) because "they cannot be tolerated without sin".⁷³ The raging contemporary debate between supporters of accommodation and those against it reverberates in these statements. Gonçalves takes a conciliatory position since he thinks that "sometimes it is convenient to dissimulate, principally in those things that are not clearly against natural reason".⁷⁴

In the first part of the third Book of *História*, Gonçalves attacked the errors and abuses concerning marriages defying both natural reason and opposing the divine law which prescribed that the *essence* of marriage was an everlasting husband-wife union with the unique *goal* of creating children and of being free of [sexual] incontinence.⁷⁵ The polygamy of the Muslims with their "impious legislator and false prophet Mafamede" and the polyandry of Nayars is the first abuse, since nothing *superfluous* could be considered either natural or good. Even the mating of birds is performed between one female and one male. All "political nations" (*naçoens politicas*) and even "gentiles" (*gentios*) practice monogamy, claimed Gonçalves, unless this divine law had been spoiled in the course of time. The customs of Brahmans and Chettis (lineages of patrilineal descent) in this respect prove that the "light of the evangelical doctrine" was, in some distant past, cast over India. The presence of St. Thomas Christians in the neighborhood, although not evoked at this point, was implied. Indian mythology, however, enabled Gonçalves to locate the early Hindu-Christian encounters around the time of the birth of Christ. Thus he interpreted the story of the battle between Hiranyakaśipu and Nṛsiṅha (Viṣṇu's avatāra) as a fight between Lucifer and the son of God. In his story the wooden pole from which Nṛsiṅha appeared

⁷²Ines G. Županov, "Le repli du religieux; Les missionnaires jésuites du 17e siècle entre la théologie chrétienne et une éthique païenne", *Annales*, 6, 1996, pp. 1211-1223.

⁷³Gonçalves, p. 95

⁷⁴Gonçalves, p. 95.

⁷⁵Gonçalves, p. 96.

turns into a cross.⁷⁶ Gonçalves, in a truly baroque spirit, relished what can be termed Christian "ethnographic" allegories which, to paraphrase James Clifford, have the propensity to generate parallel stories and repeat and displace prior ones.⁷⁷

The second abuse against the substance of marriage, according to the normalizing pastoral apparatus of missionaries, was the fact that there were no durable and fixed marriages among Nayars. Since the marriage vow was seen as identical to the religious vow, it ought not to be broken because, claimed Gonçalves, "it is very difficult to be forced to persevere with only one woman until death [...], I do not deny that, and even the Gospel confesses it [Mat.,19,10], but it is in this difficulty that lies the virtue and the good".⁷⁸ Again, sexual desires are indicted as being at the root of the fundamental emotional instability of the human condition which leads to general social anarchy, as the Malabar unnatural and abusive social customs, according to Gonçalves, amply proved.

Pollution, Free Will and Indian Christian Marriage

There were various other "disorders" in Malabar marriage customs. Some of them, according to Gonçalves, were also practiced by Malabar Christians: such as marrying brothers- or sisters-in-law after the death of a wife or a husband. In addition, a secondary list of relatively minor "errors", but "ordinary among the Malabars", such as dowry to the bridegroom, the age of consent as low as nine years, and marriages within degrees of kinship prohibited by the Catholic Church, brings home some immediate missionary problems.⁷⁹ The decrees (*Decretos*) of the notorious Synod of Diamper [Udayampērūr] of 1599, by which the Archbishop of Goa, Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes, tried to, once and for all, latinize the rites and customs of the insubordinate "native Christians" of St. Thomas, repeat mostly the tenets of the Council of Trent; but they also evoke through various interdictions the same matrimonial abuses and "superstitious rites" mentioned by Gonçalves twenty years later.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Gonçalves, p. 88-90.

⁷⁷James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory", George Marcus and James Clifford (ed.), *Writing Culture, The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, 1986, p. 100.

⁷⁸Gonçalves, p. 97

⁷⁹Gonçalves, p. 99

⁸⁰*Archivo Portuguez Oriental*, Fasciculo 4 (*que contem os Concílios de Goa e o Sínodo de Diamper*), Nova Goa, 1862 [reprint 1992], pp. 439-454. See also Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Dom Frei Aleixo de Menezes (1559-1617) et l'échec des tentatives d'indigénisation du christianisme en Inde", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no. 103, 1998, pp. 21-42

Similarly, although Indian Christians in Goa were subjected from the 1550s onwards to a rapid Portugalization, all ecclesiastical Provincial Councils (1567, 1575, 1585, 1592 and 1606) continued to condemn superstitious practices seeping into Catholic ritual. In the light of the Council of Trent, some of the "abuses" - such as excesses of community solidarity, marriage within the prohibited four degrees of consanguinity and affinity, the disregard for mutual consent - might not appear to be exclusively related to the encounter with the local, non-Christian matrimonial practices in Kerala and southern India. However, on one crucial point the Indian social context was perceived as "particular" and dangerously different. Catholic religious specialists, Jesuits in particular, agreed that in India, the excess of pollution rules governing the "natives" turned them into "blind" people and unthinking "animals". Fenicio ridiculed the pollution rules in the creation stories collated in his treatise. According to Fenicio's rendering, when the founder of Malabar, Parexé Rama [Parāśūrāma], made the waters recede and recuperated the land for its inhabitants, he ordered them to perform certain ceremonies, *carma* [karma Skt. works, rites]. Hence, the other name of Malabar is *carma pumi* [karmabhūmi]- the land of *karma*. The basic principles of these ceremonies were touchings (*toccamentos*) and baths (*lavatórios*) which "no other nations practice", nor do Malabars when away from their land of karmabhūmi.⁸¹ Gonçalves reiterates and confirms the existence of strict regional purity and pollution rules in the first sentence of the *História*, while adding a touch of "original sin" to the story. Thus at the command of his father, Parāśūrāma killed his mother [Reṇukā], who had committed the sin of desiring in her mind another man, a giant (*gigante*) whom she saw playing with his own wife. In order to wash away the sin of matricide (*alimpar deste peccado*), Parāśūrāma left his country, where he was not allowed to perform appropriate ceremonies. Ever since, the inhabitants of Malabar land have been induced to repeat the same expiatory and propitiatory rites.

The consequence of the original pollution of the Malabar founding father, according to both Fenicio and Gonçalves, is the obsession with cleanliness, which in turn divides the fabric of society into hierarchically and clearly separated units. Although, both missionaries were outraged at certain "injustices" and extremes, the existence of social inequalities was absolutely natural to them.

"That they have different castes, would be a bearable thing, if they were kept [organized] as they are among us, as lineages and families; because in the true republic all cannot be equal, [...] but that the major importance is given to blood and to caste, means forcing everyone to

⁸¹Fenicio, p. 165.

follow the same condition and office as his father, without opening the way for all to distinguish themselves according to their natural inclinations"⁸².

Gonçalves's statement is truly baroque and Jesuitical in the sense that it defends simultaneously two opposing propositions, one conservative, the other almost revolutionary. José Antonio Maravall identified this phenomenon as the morality of accommodation, the traces of which can also be found in Cartesian provisional morality.⁸³ Gonçalves was as far from the ideas and conceptions we could tentatively call cultural relativism, as some of his contemporaries and Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci or Roberto Nobili were close. In fact, his critique of the ethics of kinship is perfectly in line with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent, although, if only for a brief moment, he had pushed much further the celebration of individual freedom of choice in a combination of Renaissance self-fashioning and baroque individual exuberance.

Individual freedom of choice in the early 17th century is, of course, not identical to the free will elaborated by the Augustinian tradition. Gracián's aphorism - "There is no perfection where there is no choice"- does not denote a mere individual, interior state, but an active, exterior exercise of freedom.⁸⁴ Similarly, Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* emphasized and prescribed the "discernment of will" in spiritual and practical matters, as a sort of perpetual bifurcation.⁸⁵ In the same vein, Gonçalves pronounced his judgement that the Malabar "pagans" and Muslims have no "*livre alvedrio*" [*liberum arbitrium*], but ascribe all worldly occupations to fatality, destiny (*fado*) and occult forces. He criticized in this respect the belief in "*taley elutu*" [Tam. *talai eluttu*], the writing on the head", by which the Gods predetermine the course of individual life at the time of birth, and in various other omens and portents.⁸⁶ If one were to re-write Gonçalves's conclusion in contemporary anthropological jargon, the concept of agency is the first that would come to mind as a replacement (translation) for *liberum arbitrium*. Hence, the Malabars' inability to construct a subject position in order to act freely in an infinite world of "baroque" mentality is woven like a *fil rouge* through the subtext of the Jesuit ethnographies in the early modern period.

Both missionary texts that we have examined here overstate the lack of "meaning" in indigenous institutions, equating "pagan" cultures to senseless machines, without interior center or a frame for human feeling, intention or action. Marriage customs and kinship structure were

⁸²Gonçalves, p. 102-103.

⁸³José Antonio Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, (transl.), Minneapolis, 1986, p. 157

⁸⁴Baltasar Gracian, *El discreto*, in OC, Madrid, 1960, *discurso* 10, p.103.

⁸⁵G. Fessard, *La dialectique des Exercices Spirituels de Saint Ignace de Loyola*, Paris, 1956, p. 191.

⁸⁶Gonçalves, p. 72-73.

therefore conceptualized as an outgrowth of a disordered "imagination", governed by carnal desires. Fenicio clearly states that all "pagan" festivals "affirm the laws professed by carnal people; without any spirit in them".⁸⁷ For Gonçalves, "not only is it false, the sect of these pagans, in what they teach about God, as we saw; but it is false in what they teach about the ultimate goal (*ultimo fim*) since they locate it in carnal pleasure with many women".⁸⁸ The quest for meaning in the indigenous institutions is an anthropological gesture *par excellence*, while the denial of a possibility of a "true" indigenous hermeneutics was a common missionary perspective. All missionary enterprise remains firmly grounded in a denial of indigenous ontology and epistemology.⁸⁹

The "webs of meaning", therefore, in which the Jesuits were suspended, especially concerning areas such as sexuality with which they were supposed to deal as individuals and as missionaries, prepared the ground for a certain anthropological configuration of knowledge of the other, always tainted with debilitating prudishness. Yet, these two texts from the early 17th century are interesting not only because they stand in a chain of genealogies leading to contemporary disciplines which study Hinduism from anthropological, social and cultural perspectives, but also because these texts, especially *História do Malavar*, do not assign Brahmans the preeminent role in society. In the long run, European episteme privileged the figure of a Brahman, characterized/caricaturized as both a prude and a pervert, and overestimated his societal importance. The figure of a Brahman, in his role of a "philosopher", reclaimed some of the "agency" qualities denied to "pagan minds", but compelled, on the other hand, the eroticized topography of Indian culture to the margins of the Jesuit missionary horizon of interest.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Fenicio, p. 67.

⁸⁸Gonçalves, p. 115.

⁸⁹ Liberton and Dalit theology is an effort at breaking away, but not complete success, from this entrenched principle. See Catherine Clémentin-Ojha, "Indianisation et enracinement: les enjeux de 'l'inculturation' de l'Église en Inde", *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, tome 80.1, Paris, 1993, pp.107-133; Felix Wilfred, "Inculturation as a hermeneutical question. Reflections in the Asian Context", *Vidyajyoti*, Sept. 1988, p.p. 422-436.

⁹⁰ In fact, a Jesuit, Roberto Nobili working at the same time across the Western Ghats in Tamil country, had already both enshrined the Brahmanical model as the highest in the society and had accommodated his own missionary behavior to fit into its cultural field.