

Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

Volume 11. South and East Asia, Africa and
the Americas (1600-1700)

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BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2017

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Jesuit reports on India in the 17th century

Daniello Bartoli, Fernão Guerreiro, Luys de Guzmán,
Pierre du Jarric, Louis de Dieu

BIOGRAPHY

Between 1580 and 1605, the Society of Jesus first established its presence in the Mughal Empire through a series of three missionary journeys led by Rodolfo Acquaviva and Jerome Xavier. The Jesuits came in response to a request to the Portuguese authorities in Goa from the Emperor Akbar, who wanted priests to come to explain the Christian scriptures. The nascent Catholic order had arrived in Goa almost 40 years earlier in 1542, just one year after its inception under the leadership of Ignatius of Loyola. Thus, records of its activities in Mughal India relate a formative part of the order's history. Seventeenth-century authors contributed to a significant increase in texts pertaining to the region, its inhabitants and customs, and to the history of Jesuit exploits there.

Jesuit reports on India in the 17th century are available from the works of five authors: Luys de Guzmán (1544-1605), Fernão Guerreiro (1550-1617), Pierre du Jarric (1566-1617), Louis de Dieu (1590-1642) and Daniello Bartoli (1608-85). The biographies of these authors are as follows.

Luys de Guzmán, born in 1544 in Osorno (Palencia), Spain, was the first of the Jesuit historians to compile and publish excerpts from annual reports and letters sent by Jesuit missionaries, including those from India. Guzmán was the Rector of Belmonte and Alcalá, and twice the Provincial of Toledo. This made him the leader of the Spanish missionaries who increasingly accompanied their Portuguese counterparts to India and beyond. He died in Madrid on 10 January 1605.

Fernão Guerreiro was born in Almodovar, Portugal, in 1550. He was a priest and teacher, and was later appointed Superior of the House of Profes in Lisbon. He provides a careful synopsis of the letters of the Jesuit missionaries in India from 1600 to 1609. Largely free of annotation, the abstracts of these letters, presented as a series of five volumes, provide first-hand accounts of the period. He died in Lisbon in 1617.

Pierre du Jarric was born in Toulouse in 1566, entered the Society of Jesus in 1582, and taught philosophy and moral theology in Bordeaux. Physically unable to join the missionaries, he dedicated himself to

promoting the vision through his writings. He died in Saintes, France, on 2 March 1617.

Louis de Dieu, born 7 April 1590 in Vlissingen (Flushing), was a Dutch Protestant minister and Orientalist. Originally from Brussels, his family fled to the Netherlands during the Spanish invasion of 1585. De Dieu studied theology with Thomas Erpenius and Jacob Golius in Leiden, and had a command of numerous Oriental languages: Hebrew, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic and Persian. His scholarship was mainly concerned with translations of the Bible, the most famous being *Critica sacra*. He also produced a comparative grammar of a number of Semitic languages (*Grammatica linguarum orientalium. Hebraeorum, Chaldaeorum et Syrorum inter se collatarum*, Leiden, 1628). In 1635, de Dieu gained access to two Persian texts on the lives of Christ and St Peter by the Jesuit missionary Jerome Xavier (1549-1617). In 1639, de Dieu published these, along with his Latin translation and annotations, as *Historia Christi* and *Historia S. Petri*. He died in Leiden three years later, on 23 December 1642.

Daniello Bartoli was born in Ferrara, Italy, on 12 February 1608, and joined the Society of Jesus in 1623. A convincing orator, he was a preacher in several principal cities and was eventually appointed as a teacher of rhetoric. Bartoli's writings on India are part of his larger history of the Society's missionary activities, which was published in six volumes: 'The life and institute of St Ignatius' (1650); 'The history of the Company of Jesus', Asia Part 1 (1653); 'History of Japan', Asia Part 2 (1660); 'History of China', Asia Part 3 (1661); 'History of England', Europe Part 1 (1667); 'History of Italy', Europe Part 2 (1673). He composed all of these in Italian prose, which made the collection accessible to a large popular audience. His writings were impressive in both detail and scope and, like other Jesuit historians, he intended not only faithfully to record past events, but also to promote the Order and to stimulate further missionary endeavours. He died in Rome on 13 January 1685.

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WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Jesuit reports on India in the 17th century

DATE 17th century

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE French; Italian; Latin; Portuguese; Spanish

DESCRIPTION

The works discussed here are the primary sources for understanding the experience of 17th-century Jesuit missionaries in Mughal India. These include historical accounts, compiled activity reports, original correspondence, and religious writings. The works of five representatives are considered below: Luys de Guzmán, Fernão Guerreiro, Pierre du Jarric, Daniello Bartoli, and Louis de Dieu.

Luys de Guzmán's *Historia de las misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañia de Jesus para predicar el Sancto Evangelio en la India Oriental y en los Reynos de la China y Japon* ('History of the missions undertaken by the religious of the Society of Jesus to preach the Holy Gospel in the East Indies and Kingdoms of China and Japan') recounts events from the period between 1565 and 1600. Work on the text had begun by 1593, and it was printed as two volumes in 1601. As can be attested by the affixed warrant, the order enjoyed the full support of the king of Spain, and the publication was celebrated by both church and state. Whereas vol. 2 pertains only to Japan, vol. 1 includes a biography of Francis Xavier (1506-52), co-founder of the Order with Ignatius of Loyola (1491-56), and detailed descriptions of India, sometimes juxtaposed to those of Japan, Ethiopia, Brazil and other regions of Jesuit ministry. These are compiled from correspondence and contain abstracts, narrated summaries and substantive portions of letters. *Historia* provides first-hand accounts of the attitudes and reflections of these early Christian missionaries as they seek to become acclimatised to the culture, to understand the intellectual climate, and ultimately to convince Akbar and his advisors of the benefits of the faith they proclaim.

Fernão Guerreiro's *Relaçam* provides a series of five biennial reports that recount the activities of Jesuit missionaries (*Relaçam annual das coisas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas missões na India e Japão, China, Cataio, Tidore, Ternate, Ambóino, Malaca, Pegu, Bengala, Bisnagá, Maduré, costa da Pescaria, Manar, Ceilão, Travancor, Malabar, Sodomala, Goa, Salcete, Lahor, Diu, Etiopia a alta ou Preste João, Monomotapa, Angola, Guiné, Serra Leoa, Cabo Verde e Brasil; nos anos 1600-1609 e do processo da conversão a Cristandade da quelas partes: tiradas das cartas gêraes que de là vierão*, vols 1-5. 'Annual report of the things done by the fathers of the Society of Jesus in India and Japan . . . in their missions in the years 1600-9, and the process of conversion to Christianity of those parts: taken from the general letters that came from there'). Guerreiro follows Guzmán's text closely, and this accounts for their similarity in style, and the tendency of later authors to cite these works in tandem. Guzmán had sent a copy of his work to Guerreiro, who apparently carried forward this manner of reporting to the year 1609. Like Guzmán, Guerreiro operated primarily as a compiler rather than an interpreter, and this allows for largely unencumbered access to the original accounts. However, only approximately 100 pages within the overall work pertain to India. These are spread across the five volumes. 'Of what was done by the fathers of the Society in the regions of India in the year 1601' is the largest section. It is 51 pages in length and contains 20 brief chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 (1603), entitled 'Of the Mogor (Mughal) mission and the journey of ours with him to the kingdoms of the Deccan, and the embassy he sent to Goa', and 'Of the residence in Lahore, and what occurred there, and the great respect that the infidels have for the Father who is there', provide primary accounts of Jesuit impressions during and shortly after the last of the three missionary journeys to Mughal lands.

The reports provide accounts that underscore the virtues and heroic sufferings of priests such as Francis Xavier, Manuel Pinheiro, Jerome Xavier and Bento de Góis. Although the purpose of the journey is the 'winning of souls', the episodes often include descriptions of the empire and its rulers, drawing attention to the implicit political implications of these missionary encounters. In the main, the plan was to bring about the Christianisation of the empire through the conversion of the sovereign. The mission was strategically intended to bring about a religious and political shift towards alignment with Christian Portugal. Akbar's letter to the viceroy in Goa, for example, which is fully transcribed in *Relaçam*, indicates a sincere interest that stirs up hope for the ultimate

success of the mission through the conversion of the emperor. This hope is further hinted at by candid discussions with members of Akbar's inner circle, including Abū l-Faẓl (1551-1602) whose views are often described as post-Islamic.

Relaçam is best known, however, for its description Akbar's heir, Jahāngīr, who ascended the throne in 1605. Though the Jesuits were disappointed by the father, the ambition endured among them that the son might convert to Christianity. This did not occur, although Jahāngīr continued the policies that allowed for conversion and the establishment of churches. The most extraordinary example of this was the permission granted for Father Xavier to baptise publicly three of Jahāngīr's nephews, Tahmuras, Bāyasanghar and Hoshang, the sons of his dead brother. This was a period of seemingly unrestricted proclamation of Christianity in public, and the establishment of small congregations, which would only barely survive subsequent reigns.

Guerreiro reproduces the substance of three letters written by Jerome Xavier to the Jesuit Provincial of Goa, which detail the activities of the missionaries and describe the situation. As recounted in part 4, chs 1-4, and part 5, chs 5-9, the general populace in Lahore – and this would be repeated in Agra and elsewhere – became fascinated with European religious art. Xavier records that, when a painting entitled *Madonna del Popolo* was first displayed in the church, nearly 10,000 visitors came each day to marvel at it. The display of the painting, as he explains, followed a prepared order of service that included very direct preaching prior to unveiling the *Virgin and her son*. Visitors were brought into the church and, before being shown the painting, were informed of the salvific work of 'Jesus and the Mother of Consolation' and the 'impostures and misdeeds of Mahomet'. Whereas the religious attitudes of the Mughal aristocracy at this time were apparently eclectic, the Jesuit approach reflects a combative confidence of imminent success.

Pierre du Jarric's *Histoire des choses plus memorables advenues tant ez Indes Orientales, que autre país de la descouverte des Portugais, en l'establissement et progresz de la foy Chrestienne et Catholique; et principalement de ce que les Religieux de la Compagnie de Iésus y ont faict et enduré pour la mesme fin* ('History of the most memorable occurrences in the East Indies and other lands discovered by the Portuguese in the establishment and progress of the Christian and Catholic faith, and principally what the religious of the Society of Jesus have accomplished and endured') was published in three volumes (1608, 1610 and 1614) and

recounts events through the year 1609. It includes almost 300 pages of material pertaining to the Mughal missions. The work relies heavily on Guzmán's *Historia* for information up to the year 1599, and on Guerreiro's *Relaçam* from 1599 to 1609, but it goes beyond these by adding accounts from Albert Laertius, the Jesuit Provincial of India. The quality of the work illustrates the interrelation and network of communication between the Jesuit provinces. It draws from a massive amount of source material: approximately 2,500 quarto pages from documents in four different languages. The meticulous attention to detail testifies to the care and accuracy of these historians in reproducing accounts both in summary and through direct quotation. Despite the scope of its sources and the erudition of the author, *Histoire* is regarded as more readable than the rather dry reports of his predecessors. This contributed to du Jarric's success in promoting the Jesuit work among the French people and their monarch, as this text also carried a dedication from the king of France.

Du Jarric devotes a considerable portion of his work to recounting stories of conversion, baptisms and church festivals. Akbar's heir, Prince Salīm, who is later crowned as Jahāngīr, is again of principal interest. Important personages such as Abū l-Faḏl and Azīz Koka are regularly mentioned, but Jahāngīr takes centre stage because the central aim is to see a Christian on the Mughal throne. However, an important shift in strategy can also be noted within these fuller descriptions of the progress made by the Jesuits and the difficulties they faced. Now greater attention is given to the people at large, and to the fledgling congregations composed predominantly of poor persons from lower castes. The writings honour the memory of the vanguard, and are intended to stimulate future generations of supporters and missionaries. *Histoire* brings to a close the first phase of the Jesuit campaign in north India, at once consolidating the work of earlier historians and expanding the scale of their accounts.

The last, and perhaps most popularly influential of these histories is Daniello Bartoli's *Missione al gran Mogor del Padre Rodolfo Aquaviva della Compagnia de Gesù* ('Mission to the Great Mughal of Father Rudolph Aquaviva of the Society of Jesus'). This comprises 24 sections and was published as part of his larger *Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù dell'Italia* ('History of the Society of Jesus') and printed in six folio volumes in Rome between 1650 and 1673. The text contains approximately 110 pages concerning the Jesuit work among the Mughals. Bartoli's description follows that of the existing Jesuit histories, but goes beyond these by

adding approximately 40 additional sources. (Though Goldie and Suau find this useful, Maclagan regards these as less authoritative and more open to conjecture than the earlier documents available to Guzmán and Guerreiro.) *Missione* recounts the events of the first Jesuit mission to the Mughal Empire according to the descriptions of the Jesuit missionary Rodolfo Acquaviva. The narrative elucidates the interactions between the priest and the Mughal sovereign. Akbar's unsolicited invitation to the Portuguese in Goa, along with his peculiar personal proclivities, give rise to the assumption that he is dissatisfied with his current circumstances and open to a Christian future. Bartoli, however, the experienced rhetorician, knows the end of the story, and so skilfully contrasts Akbar's character as unstable and capricious with that of Rodolfo and his company, who are the very picture of holiness and virtue. Despite the Jesuits' successful contestations with opposing Muslim clerics, Akbar does not convert but rather institutes a new and universal faith in his domain called *dīn-i ilāhī*.

The final representative author, Louis de Dieu, is not a Jesuit, but rather a Protestant. Although he is adamantly opposed to aspects of Catholic scriptural interpretation, this Dutch Calvinist provides a great service to European readers by rendering the writings of Jerome Xavier into Latin for the first time. De Dieu produced annotated translations of two Persian texts composed in India by the Jesuit missionary, which were presented to Akbar in 1602: *Mir'āt al-quds aw dāstān-i Masīḥ* ('Mirror of holiness and history of the Messiah'). These were originally composed in Spanish, but only Persian translations of them remain. De Dieu published these in Leiden as *Historia Christi Persice conscripta, simulque multis modis contaminate* and *Historia S. Petri Persice conscripta, simulque multis modis contaminate* in ('History of Christ written in Persian, though in many ways contaminated', and 'History of St Peter written in Persian, though in many ways contaminated'). The Persian texts are presented with Latin translations, the first in 206 folios, the other in 160 folios. As indicated by the title and clearly stated in the annotations, the purpose is not only to render these texts into a European language, but also to demonstrate what de Dieu described as the Catholic misrepresentations of the Christian message because of Xavier's use of apocryphal traditions. Despite de Dieu's acrimonious commentary, his translation introduces a key source for the study of Jesuit missiology. The text is a window into the thought and work of one of the order's early luminaries. Xavier's approach and socio-linguistic usage demonstrate a nuanced

understanding of the Muslim context and a serious attempt to contextualise Catholic Christian belief for a Persianate Muslim audience.

SIGNIFICANCE

The works of these Jesuit authors were influential in shaping European ideas of Islam in general and of Mughal India in particular. However, they inform the reader as much or more about the Jesuits themselves as about the peoples they encountered. Bartoli's *Missione*, for example, draws attention to particular characters at the initial phase of the Jesuit mission to the Mughals. Focus is placed upon the key players, Akbar and Rodolfo, as the determinants of the course of history. The outcome depends on Akbar: if he converts to Christianity, then the mission is a success because it is assumed that the empire will follow his lead. The encounter of two nations, or civilisations, is encapsulated in these two representatives. Thus, Christianity – like Rodolfo – is virtuous, chaste and firmly established, while Islam – like Akbar – is worldly, wanton and unstable. It is also striking that, despite the immense cultural and linguistic barriers and the absence of intelligible scriptures, there is still a sense that Akbar is just on the verge of converting to Christianity. Accounts such as this, which became broadly disseminated in vernacular Italian, helped to promulgate a glorified image of the Society of Jesus and the seemingly unstoppable expansive energy of Christian civilisation. Writers such as Bartoli and du Jarric built upon the reports and letters compiled by Guzmán and Guerreiro, which contained valuable historical and ethnographic data, to produce what at times reads like a curious blend of hagiography and travelogue. This popularises the heroic faith of the main characters, but often at the expense of the cultures and religions being described. It is significant to observe the manner in which the texts present the success of the missions as beneficial for both church and state. Following Guzmán's inclusion of a preface written by the king of Spain, both subsequent histories, in French and Italian, were given royal support. This underscores the inseparable political implications of these missionary ventures.

The Jesuits succeeded in bringing a Bible to Akbar's court, as originally requested. But the massive Royal Polyglot Bible, which contained versions in Hebrew, Chaldean, Latin and Greek, proved inaccessible to the Persian readers. Nevertheless, as recorded by the Mughal historian Badā'ūnī, if the Jesuits could not provide a legible Bible, then the great Mughal would create his own. And, as recounted by Antonio Monserrate, who accompanied Rodolfo Acquaviva on the first journey in 1580, the

translation was underway less than four weeks after the arrival of the Jesuits. Although there is no extant version, Capuchin records lament the loss of 'Akbar's Bible' in the fire of 1857 in Lucknow. This is a metaphor for the engagement between these Christians and Muslims in 17th-century India. Great efforts were made, but with few lasting results. In subsequent generations, the practice of Christianity was forbidden and churches were closed, though the interactions crystallised in the Jesuit reports continue to capture the imagination. For some Christians, this is a tale of the great fish that got away. For some Muslims, it is an account of megalomaniacal rulers of a society in dire need of religious reform. A more nuanced read, however, whether of Xavier or his Mughal contemporaries, offers a window into Akbar's *'ibādat-khāna* (house of worship), where leading religious thinkers were engaged in extended theological discussions. Although one can only surmise about the issues raised by a Mughal translation of the Bible, Xavier's compositions reveal a groundbreaking attempt to communicate the Christian message by a seasoned Jesuit representative who had lived amongst Indian Muslims for nearly 20 years. Regardless of these strides taken towards presenting the Bible in Mughal India, interest in these was overshadowed by the completion in 1600 of another text, *Ā'īnā-i ḥaqq-numā* ('The truth-showing mirror'), a polemical philosophical treatise that subsequently became the central, though divisive, presentation of Christianity to Persian speaking regions.

In conclusion, 17th-century Jesuit writings provide accounts of European Christian perceptions of their encounters with Indian Muslims at the apex of Mughal rule. They sometimes confirm and sometimes challenge other historical accounts from this context. The primary benefit is that they allow readers today access to these events through first-hand accounts.

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