



## CHAPTER 3

---

# New Attempts

The end of the first Jesuit mission in 1583 forced the brief absence of another European voice and set of eyes at the Mughal court. As the correspondence of Antoni de Montserrat and Rodolfo Acquaviva revealed, the Jesuit missionaries were keen observers of Timurid courtly politics and foreign policy, who carefully registered the rumours, manoeuvres and all sorts of news involving Akbar, his courtiers and the foreign emissaries who visited the court.

The end of the first Jesuit mission also represented a serious setback to the *Estado da Índia*, who lost a valuable source of information. Between 1583 and the early 1590s, the information received by the Portuguese viceroys at Goa about the Great Mughal was scarce and rather unreliable: an amalgam of rumours and second-hand information that reached Goa, Daman, Diu and Hormuz through merchants, travellers, diplomats and other itinerant individuals.<sup>1</sup> Portuguese officials often treated this information with care and sought to cross-check different news items (*noticias*) from Mughal territories to have a better perception.

The interregnum on Luso-Mughal exchanges prompted by the end of the first Jesuit mission had more causes than the apparent lack of interest from the Society of Jesus. After 1583, Akbar's immediate concerns lay

<sup>1</sup> Jorge Flores, *Nas margens do Hindustão*, p. 165.

in the political convulsion troubling Safavid Persia, the expansion of the Uzbek Empire and the turmoil in Afghanistan. The disappearance of Mirza Hakim allowed the Uzbek ruler of the Khanate of Bukhara, Abdullah Khan, to interfere in a key region for the khanate's expansionist ambitions following the conquests of Transoxiana in 1583 and Badakhshan in 1584, two events that approximated the borders of Akbar's and Abdullah's empires. The proximity between the rulers of Bukhara and Kabul, who exchanged embassies between 1579 and 1581, the years that preceded Mirza Hakim's rebellion against Akbar, generated apprehension in the Mughal court and contributed to a widespread perception of an imminent conflict between Mughals and Uzbeks over 'Kabulistan'. As Abu'l Fazl noted in the *Akbarnama*, after the announcement of Mirza Hakim's death, the Afghan soldiers 'were wickedly thinking that they would become wanderers in the desert of failure and would go to Turan'.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the activities of the Roshaniyya, a religious movement founded by Bayazid Ansari, a self-proclaimed *Mehdi* who attracted the Afghan tribes discontented with Mughal rule and Akbar's religious policy, reinforced the Mughal concerns over Afghanistan and eventual Uzbek support to the guerrilla-like activities of the Roshaniyya.<sup>3</sup>

Abdullah Khan's shadow also fell over Safavid Persia. In 1578, the Uzbek ruler launched a successful expedition into the Safavid territory of Khorasan. In the same year, the Ottomans attacked the Safavid territories in Georgia and the Caspian Sea. The devastating effects of the conflicts with the Uzbeks and the Ottomans further weakened the fourth Safavid shah, Mohammad Khodabanda, a ruler troubled by health issues that affected his eyesight and by the violent infighting and factionalism of his court. The fragility of the Safavids was a matter of concern for the Mughals. Persia offered the Mughals an appealing, sophisticated literary and political culture that had a profound influence on the construction of the Mughal state apparatus and the formation of its intellectual elites. Akbar's court attracted many Persian scholars, literati, clergymen, bureaucrats and military men who migrated to Hindustan to escape from the

<sup>2</sup> Turan is a term of Persian origin used to identify a geographical area encompassing modern-day Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and northern parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Munis D. Faruqi, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 48:4 (2005), pp. 498–500.

instability afflicting the Safavids and contributed to the Persianisation of the Mughal court and state.

Safavid Persia was not only a cultural reference for the Mughals, but also a key geopolitical power whose strategic position between the Middle East, Central Asia and Hindustan both served and threatened Mughal interests. The Safavids were an important barrier between the territories of the Great Mughal and the Ottoman sultan, as well as a real obstacle to Abdullah Khan's ambitions to expand Uzbek rule along Central Asia. At the same time, the Safavids were interested in consolidating their presence in Afghanistan following Humayun's concession of Kandahar to Shah Tahmasp in exchange for Safavid military support. In spite of the Safavid presence in Kandahar being seen as a serious threat to the Mughal control of Kabulistan, the eventual collapse of Safavid Persia would pave the way to a long and unpredictable regional crisis with the potential to cause a clash between Ottomans, Uzbeks and Mughals.

Despite the problems of reliability of the available information, the *Estado da Índia* was aware of the tensions between Mughals and Uzbeks, the instability in Afghanistan, and the transfer of the court to Lahore. The rivalry between Akbar and Abdullah Khan was of particular interest to the *Estado* and Philip II. The rise of Shah Abbas was seen in the Iberian Peninsula as an opportunity to restore the old plans of forming an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Safavids. Despite the affirmation of Spanish authority in the Mediterranean following the Battle of Lepanto, Philip II feared a resurgence of the Great Turk in the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, in 1581 an Ottoman fleet attacked the Portuguese fortress of Muscat in the Swahili Coast, and many in Goa feared that the Sublime Porte would soon turn its attention towards India.<sup>4</sup> The rivalry between Akbar and the Great Turk was well known to the Portuguese, and an eventual conflict between an Iberian-Safavid alliance against the Ottomans would inevitably involve the Mughals.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 157–160; Giancarlo Casale, “Global Politics in the 1580s: One Canal, Twenty Thousand Cannibals, and an Ottoman Plot to Rule the World”, *Journal of World History*, 18:3 (2007), pp. 267–296; Rui Manuel Loureiro, “Ottoman Portuguese Interactions as Reflected in Portuguese Chronicles of the Late 16th and Early 17th Centuries” in *International Turkish Sea Power History Symposium: The Indian Ocean and the Presence of the Ottoman Navy in the 16th and 17th Centuries* ed. Metin Ataç (Istanbul: Naval Training and Education Command, 2009), pp. III-3–14.

## I

In 1590, the same year when Akbar was contacted by Shah Abbas,<sup>5</sup> the Mughal court received the visit of Leon Grimon, a Greek Catholic subdeacon, who travelled from Goa as part of a group of Portuguese and Armenians who came to Lahore to sell ‘Chinese cloths and other goods of that country’. Apparently, Grimon’s original intention was to travel overland to Greece and find a caravan heading to a suitable destination in Lahore. However, according to Abu’l Fazl, the presence of a Catholic priest caught the attention of the emperor. Padre Famālion, as he was known by the Mughals, spoke Persian and Turkish, and Akbar commissioned him with the task of translating Greek books into Persian. Abu’l Fazl praised Grimon for his ‘abundance of sense and knowledge’ and credited his translation for bringing to the court ‘varieties of knowledge’.<sup>6</sup>

The presence of the Greek subdeacon was also used by Akbar to reinitiate direct contact with the *Estado da Índia* and the Jesuits. In June 1590, Grimon returned to Goa carrying letters and gifts for the viceroy and the Jesuits.<sup>7</sup> Besides the gifts, the emperor donated 5,000 *pardaos* to the Christian poor of Goa, a donation that aimed both to charm the Goan ecclesiastical authorities and enhance the prestige of the Great Mughal among the Christian poor of Goa, most of them converts from the indigenous populations.

According to the Jesuit annual letter from Goa of 1590, the Greek priest assured the provincial that the new mission would find a favourable environment. Akbar celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of Mary with a grand ceremony that included the public display of an image brought by the members of the first Jesuit mission. The emperor also asked the main courtiers and officials to kiss the image and rewarded those who paid their homage to the Virgin Mary. Another sign of Akbar’s divergence from Islam was the desacralisation of several mosques in Lahore that were now being used as stables for the Mughal cavalry. Minarets were also being destroyed with ‘disdain’, and an imperial edict banned the circumcision of all Muslims under the age of 15, ‘to allow them to freely choose the religion they think is best’.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Mansura Haider, “Relations of Abdullah Khan Uzbek with Akbar”, *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 23:3–4 (1982), p. 327.

<sup>6</sup> Abu’l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, p. 874.

<sup>7</sup> Doc. 84, “Annual Letter of the Province of India (1590)”, *DI*, vol. XV, eds. Joseph Wicki and John Gomes (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1981), p. 526.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

Grimon's account of what was happening in *Mogor* was nothing short of spectacular. Akbar seemed to be leading an unstoppable movement that would eradicate Islam from his empire. Indeed, the report given by the Greek subdeacon, and the way in which it is described in the annual letter of the Goan Jesuits, has an interesting echo of the early accounts of the rise of Protestantism that shocked Catholic Europe with its stories of iconoclasm and desacralisation of monasteries, abbeys and convents. Like the Protestant rulers of Germany and England, Akbar was apparently dismantling an entire religious apparatus and replacing it with a new religion. For the Jesuits and the Portuguese authorities, the news brought by Leon Grimon represented yet another opportunity to convert a new Constantine and reshape the religious and political landscape of South Asia.

As the annual letter mentions, Grimon's words and Akbar's request for a second mission caused 'much joy and consolation and sparked a fervour [such] that even the seculars want to join the mission'.<sup>9</sup> Among the secular Jesuits who wished to go to Lahore was Gil Eanes Pereira, who was visiting Goa when Grimon arrived. Pereira asked the provincial to join the mission, evoking the fact that, ten years early earlier, he was the first Jesuit to visit the Mughal court and one of the responsible for Akbar's interest in Catholicism, but this request proved unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup> The provincial decided to send three missionaries: Duarte Leitão, a Portuguese who served as Rector of the College of Malacca; Cristóbal de la Vega, a Castilian who was the superior of the House of Daman; and Estevão Ribeiro, a Portuguese coadjutor brother. Unlike the composition of the first mission, which included a Spaniard (although one with strong links to the Portuguese Crown), an Italian and a Persian convert, the second mission was formed only by Iberians and had a clear Portuguese majority.

The three missionaries arrived at Lahore in January 1591, but by the end of the year they abandoned their mission field. The first months were encouraging. The annual letter from Goa of 30 November 1591 reported that the missionaries had opened a school for 30 boys from the Mughal courtly elite, including one of the emperor's sons and a nephew. Akbar

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

treated the Jesuits with ‘love, respect and affability’ (*amor, respecto y affabilidad*), but the three missionaries had no opportunity to speak in private with the emperor and awaited ‘a good moment to speak with the king about religious matters, but he is always surrounded by his captains, and he only speaks with them, and it is not easy to find a convenient time’.<sup>11</sup>

A few months later, to the surprise of Pedro Martins, the provincial, both Leitão De la Vega requested their immediate return to Goa, stating that Akbar wanted to use the Jesuits to create ‘a new sect’ instead of converting to Christianity. Vega travelled to Goa to persuade the provincial to cancel the mission. Martins reported the problems with the Mughal mission to Claudio Acquaviva and stressed his determination to maintain the mission ‘with generosity and hope’. Evoking the account given by Leon Grimon, the provincial highlighted the apparent religious revolution occurring in the Mughal Empire, where Akbar had ordered the destruction of 40 mosques and revealed himself to be ‘affectionate to Christian things’.<sup>12</sup> For the provincial, there was a problem of managing expectations for the Mughal mission. While the missionaries expected an almost immediate conversion of the emperor, but Akbar’s decision to convert was ‘such a big thing that cannot be done with the speed the Fathers wanted’.<sup>13</sup> Duarte Leitão and Estevão Ribeiro received orders to remain at Lahore and await further instructions on how the missionaries should act.

After sending his report to Rome, Martins pressured De la Vega to return to *Mogor*, but his efforts to maintain the mission were suddenly ruined when Leitão and Ribeiro returned to Goa without warning. Martins blamed Vega and Leitão for the debacle of the second mission to the Mughal court. He divided the two Jesuits and punished them with appointments to the missions of Salsete. Duarte Leitão died in mysterious circumstances shortly after returning to Goa. Jerónimo Xavier, the future leader of the third mission, mentioned to one of his correspondents in Spain, the Andalusian Jesuit Francisco de Benavides, that there

<sup>11</sup> Doc. 102, “Annual Letter of the Province of India, Goa, 30 November 1591”, *DI*, vol. XV, p. 645.

<sup>12</sup> Doc. 108, “Pedro Martins to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa 7 December 1591”, *DI*, vol. XV, p. 740.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

were rumours that Leitão was poisoned by someone from ‘the church of the Christendom [parish] where he resided’.<sup>14</sup>

The sudden end of the mission was a potential embarrassment to the Society of Jesus. The fact that two missionaries decided to abandon a mission field without the approval of the provincial suggested the inability of the Jesuit hierarchy to impose its authority. Indeed, the Portuguese Jesuit Jorge Gomes noted to Claudio Acquaviva that the failure of the second mission to *Mogor* had ‘discredited a little’ the Society of Jesus in the eyes of the Goan population and especially the Crown. The announcement of the mission had generated an enthusiasm across different sectors of Goan society and was fully supported by the *Estado da Índia*. The sudden return of Vega, Leitão and Ribeiro, as Gomes noted, frustrated everyone in Goa and Lahore:

The three missionaries left Goa with much applause from the Viceroy, the noblemen and other lay people, as well as the prelates and clergymen, who had with pleasure offered to do this mission for the Viceroy. Everyone was in suspense, desiring greatly to receive the good news they expected, but then, after just few months, against all expectations, they returned without any order or permit, against the will of the Mughal himself, who only allowed them to leave after they had sworn on a missal that they would return.<sup>15</sup>

Gomes’ words highlighted the fact that the mission of *Mogor* was not only a religious affair but also an important diplomatic enterprise. The missionaries were expected not only to convert Akbar, but to ensure fluid, direct and stable communication between the emperor and the *Estado da Índia*. One of the most problematic aspects of De la Vega and Leitão’s behaviour was precisely that they neglected the diplomatic dimension of the mission, putting at risk the relations between Akbar and Goa. The hasty end of the second mission put into question the ability of the Jesuits to deal with complex mission fields where the geopolitical interests of the Iberian Crowns were at stake. In addition, the sudden end of the Mughal mission threatened the continuity of the *Estado*’s support

<sup>14</sup> Doc. 49, “Jeronimo Xavier to Francisco de Benavides, Goa, 12 November 1593”, *DI*, vol. XVI (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1984), p. 257.

<sup>15</sup> Doc. 129, “Fr. J. Gomes S. J., to Fr. Cl. Acouaviva S. J., Goa, November 16 1594”, *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 825.

for other Jesuit enterprises in relevant mission fields where Lisbon and Madrid had vested interests such as Ethiopia, China and Japan. Alessandro Valignano, who believed that the most promising mission fields of Japan and China should be the priorities of the Society of Jesus, bitterly noted to Claudio Acquaviva that the failure of the second mission corroborated his negative perception of the potential of the Mughal court: ‘in my judgment, the mission of *Mogor* should be avoided, because we already have experience of what the Mughal [Akbar] wanted’.<sup>16</sup>

The second mission also generated considerable expectation in Europe. On 14 August 1591, the Jesuit provincial of Sicily, Bartolomeo Ricci, reported with some enthusiasm the arrival at Messina of an Armenian named Antonio Giorgio, who spent a year in Mughal lands and carried letters from the Portuguese governor of Goa, Manoel de Sousa Coutinho, and had news of a new Jesuit mission to the Mughal court. Antonio Giorgio told Ricci that in December 1589 that Antoni de Montserrat and Francisco Henriques had been summoned again by Akbar, probably confounding the departure of the Catalan missionary to Ethiopia with the second mission to *Mogor*. The Great Mughal was apparently on the verge of converting his empire to Christianity. According to the Armenian, the emperor’s sons, Salim, the future emperor Jahangir and Daniyal, had been baptised, and many at the Mughal court had seen Akbar and the princes listening to Mass. The news of the imminent conversion of the Timurid ruler and the baptism of his heirs was spectacular. Even more spectacular was the news that Akbar had ordered the destruction of 60 mosques across his dominions. Antonio Giorgio also mentioned that four more Jesuit missionaries would be soon sent to Lahore, mentioning the names of Gomes Vaz, who was a serious candidate to be part of the mission, and one Luis Leitão, probably a confusion with Duarte Leitão.<sup>17</sup>

Antonio Giorgio, however, did not carry with him any letter from the Jesuits to confirm his account, but only a copy destined to Philip II of a letter from Akbar addressed to the Portuguese governor, Manoel de Sousa Coutinho.<sup>18</sup> The Armenian, however, seemed to be regarded as a reliable informer. Antonio Giorgio, or António Jorge as he was known

<sup>16</sup> Doc. 50, “Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Acquaviva, Macao, 15 November 1593”, *DI*, vol. XVI, pp. 270–271.

<sup>17</sup> Doc. 92, “Bartolomeo Ricci to Claudio Acquaviva, Messina, 14 August 1591”, *DI*, vol. XV, pp. 604–605.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



to the Portuguese and Spanish authorities, was employed by the *Estado da Índia* as a spy and courier.<sup>19</sup> His task was to carry the *Estado's* correspondence along the overland route between Goa and the Mediterranean, and to collect all sorts of information as he travelled through Mughal India, Persia and the Levant. The Armenian's account was, indeed, full of imprecisions and confusions with parallel events such as the second Jesuit mission to Ethiopia formed by Antoni de Montserrat and Pedro Paez, inconspicuous details that were common in the information provided by peripatetic individuals who, like Antonio Giorgio, made a living as gatherers of rumours and raw intelligence.

The news of the second mission undertaken by António Jorge also reached Madrid in February 1592. An anonymous report attributed to the provincial of Toledo, Gonzalo Dávila, mentioned the account given by the Armenian upon his arrival at Messina and Leon Grimon's visit to Goa—who apparently was accompanied by António Jorge/Antonio Giorgio himself—and the departure of four missionaries to Lahore. The Madrid report highlighted that Akbar's imminent conversion was 'causing the fear of all Mahometans and Gentiles, who are now frightened with the power of such a great king whose state includes forty-six kingdoms with great populations and riches, with many bellicose people'. To stress the importance of the conversion of the Great Mughal even more, and probably drawing from the writings of Antoni de Montserrat, the author of the Madrid report reminded that Akbar had at his disposal '300,000 horses and 12,000 elephants'. What was at stake thus was not only the conversion of a ruler, but the entire conversion of an extraordinary military power. As the anonymous report concluded, 'if [Akbar] becomes a Christian, as is expected, and allied with us, great progress could be achieved without fearing anyone'.<sup>20</sup> An Iberian-Mughal alliance instigated by a shared Catholic faith would inevitably change the political landscape of Europe and Asia dramatically, allowing the execution of some of the

<sup>19</sup> In 1602, Antonio Giorgio/António Jorge petitioned Philip III to give the post of clerk of the Customs House of Ormuz to his son-in-law as a reward for his services as a spy and imprisonment for seven years. See "Consulta do arménio de nação, António Jorge, 21 de Agosto de 1602", *Boletim da Filmoteca Ultramarina Portuguesa*, No 14, 1960, p. 47. For more on the career of Antonio Giorgio/António Jorge, see: Gennaro Varriale, "El Armenio de Goa: Espía o charlatán", *Archivo de la Frontera: Clásicos Mínimos*, [www.archivodelafrontera.com](http://www.archivodelafrontera.com) [Accessed on 18 November 2020].

<sup>20</sup> Doc. 121, "An Anonymous Relation on Akbar, Emperor of the Moghals, Madrid, February 1592", *DI*, vol. XV, p. 779.

most extravagant projects conceived in Lisbon and Madrid concerning the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, the conquest of China or the eradication of the Protestant powers and their ambitious colonial projects.

The frustrated expectations caused by the second mission led Cristóbal de la Vega to write a long letter to Claudio Acquaviva explaining the reasons that had led him and Duarte Leitão to put an end to said mission. De La Vega reminded the general that in 1590 he had asked to return to Europe ‘due to suffering many melancholic humours during four consecutive years exposed to the heat [of India]’. The tropical climate of South Asia inclined De la Vega to the ‘natural passions’ and only after being finally acclimatised to India he realised his ‘error’, pleading for Acquaviva’s ‘pardon and penitence’.<sup>21</sup>

De la Vega’s letter was a summary of another set of letters that the Spanish missionary had previously written to Acquaviva and that were lost on their way from Goa to Rome. The missive addressed to Acquaviva sought to provide a clear explanation for the decision of the members of the second mission to *Mogor* to abandon Akbar’s court. According to De la Vega, after a long deliberation, Duarte Leitão, the superior of the mission, opted to end the mission due to the many obstacles posed by Akbar’s behaviour and religious policies. The Mughal emperor was not on the verge of becoming a new Constantine, as many hoped in Goa and Rome, but planning to establish a new religion:

It was such the proudness of this barbarian that he acts as a prophet and a legislator, claiming that the law of Mohammed is over and that the world is now without a true law, and that it is necessary to have another prophet to institute a new one, and that he, among everyone else, is the more qualified to do this. And as such, he is publicly adored as a prophet with such insolent praises that many times I heard people calling him God in public.<sup>22</sup>

Akbar was being worshipped as a saint. He received gifts and alms ‘with pleasure’ from his subjects in exchange for blessings and miracles. A new calendar was also introduced, as well as a series of new practices—‘fasting and abstinences’—and wedding ceremonies. The innovations introduced

<sup>21</sup> Doc. 71, “Fr. Cristobal de la Vega to Claudio Acquaviva Chaúl, December 2 1593”, *DI*, vol. XVI, pp. 479–480.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 480–481.

by Akbar were said to be ‘scandalising the Moors, because he disfavours the Law of Mohammed to impose his own law’. One of the features of the cult developed by the emperor that was particularly shocking for the more orthodox Muslims was the adoration of the sun. Leitão and De la Vega rapidly became aware that the Sunni orthodox associated the arrival of the Jesuits, and the enthusiastic welcome that Akbar gave them, with the religious ‘novelties’.<sup>23</sup>

The scandal caused by the emperor’s religious innovations and his reluctance to speak with the Jesuits, in private, about Christianity instigated Duarte Leitão to consider the end of the mission. According to De la Vega, the three missionaries ‘clearly understood that he [Akbar] had called [them] to sanction the institution of his new religion with [their] presence and that of other priests from false sects who were already with him’.<sup>24</sup> Leitão, De la Vega and Ribeiro believed that they had been manipulated and their prolonged presence at the Mughal court would be used to validate the establishment of a new religious cult that went against Christian doctrine. The three Jesuits were aware that the mission was not only a religious enterprise and served ‘other goals in the interest of honour and the treasury’—a tacit recognition of the utility of the missionaries as intermediaries between the Iberian Crowns and the Mughal polity. However, confronted with the ‘general scandal’ provoked by Akbar’s religious policy and their eventual negative effects on the sociopolitical stability of the Mughal Empire and the reputation of the Society of Jesus, Leitão instructed De la Vega and Ribeiro to leave Lahore.

The three missionaries were privileged witnesses of the zenith of a long process of transformation of the ideological and social structures of Akbar’s reign that took shape after the *mahzar* of 1579, a crucial moment that allowed the emperor to affirm himself as a universal ruler and the main spiritual authority of the empire. Akbar’s universalistic pretensions were deeply tied with the religious and ethnic diversity of Mughal India, the development of the *mansabdar* system and the dynastical and international prestige of the Mughals vis-à-vis the other leading Islamic powers, the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia.

As John F. Richards noted, the *mansabdar* system allowed Akbar to achieve two goals. It ensured the military and administrative control of

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 481.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 482.

the territories under Mughal rule and simultaneously created a balance between the frequently hostile traditional Timurid Islamic elites of Central Asian origin, and the new elite groups formed by Shi'as from Persia, Rajputs, Indo-Muslims, Hindus or Jains.<sup>25</sup> The Mughal nobility became thus, to use Iqtidar Alam Khan's words, a 'composite ruling group'.<sup>26</sup> The diversity of the Mughal elite led Akbar, together with his chief ideologue, Abu'l Fazl, to develop an imperial ideology that sought to mix Timurid traditions with elements taken from the Persian and Hindustani political and religious cultures. The heterodoxy of the Akbari ideology sought to attract and incorporate subjects from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds through the principle of *sulh-i kul* or absolute peace between the different religious and ethnic groups of the empire. In the *Akbarnama*, Abu'l Fazl summarised this principle as an essential part of good government and kingship:

As in the rules of sovereignty and the religion of humanity, concord is preferable to opposition and peace better than war. In particular, as it has been our disposition since we attained discretion to this day not to pay attention to differences of religion and variety of manners and to regard the tribes of mankind as the servants of God, we have endeavoured to regulate mankind in general.<sup>27</sup>

Akbar's policy of *sulh-i kul* sought to attract and incorporate subjects from diverse backgrounds, while affirming the figure of the emperor as the ultimate political and religious authority.<sup>28</sup> The construction of the *mansabdar* system and the development of the *sulh-i kul* policy were thus followed by the development of an imperial ideology manifested by a series of symbolic acts that consecrated Akbar not only as the head of the Mughal polity but as a 'paramount spiritual authority'.<sup>29</sup> The symbiosis between the temporal and spiritual sovereignty of the emperor was reflected in the development of a specific ritual idiom that included

<sup>25</sup> John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, pp. 127–128.

<sup>26</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook—A Critical Appraisal" in *Akbar and his India* ed. Irfan Habib (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Abu'l Fazl *Akbarnama*, vol. III, pp. 1008–1014.

<sup>28</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook", p. 91.

<sup>29</sup> John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 129.

rituals inspired by the fire symbolism performed in Persia and Rajput, as well as the establishment of acts of symbolic subordination to the emperor influenced by the Sufi master (*pīr*) and disciple (*murīd*) relationship.<sup>30</sup> The latter were particularly favoured by Akbar, who, as John F. Richards has observed, regarded discipleship as a useful instrument to establish powerful emotional ties that could create ‘a sense of direct personal obligation to the emperor’ and thus form ‘an exceptionally loyal and reliable cadre of noblemen’.<sup>31</sup>

Cristóbal de la Vega was not completely wrong when he wrote that Akbar acted as a ‘prophet and a legislator’—a clear reference to the affirmation of the emperor’s temporal and spiritual authority. The Castilian missionary and his companions arrived at Lahore at the precise moment when the Akbari ideology and its ritual apparatus reached their maturity. The powers granted by the *mahzar* of 1579 encouraged Akbar to become a ‘bricoleur extraordinaire’, to borrow Azfar Moin’s words,<sup>32</sup> who used his supreme authority in religious matters to manipulate different religious beliefs and imaginaries to enhance his power across diverse religious and ethnic groups. At the same time, the 1590s were also the years when the main imperial chronicles such as the *Akbarnama* were produced and cemented the figure of the *padshah* as a universal ruler and integral feature of the Mughal political and ritual idioms. The members of the second mission were thus privileged (and bewildered) witnesses of the complex process of affirmation of a distinctive Mughal imperial power and political identity. Indeed, De la Vega’s mention of Akbar being ‘publicly adored’ reflects not only the success of the Akbari ideological project at the court but also beyond the gates of the imperial palaces. The expectations generated by Akbar’s apparent rejection of Islam and interest in Christianity shaped the Jesuit missionaries’ perception of Akbar’s efforts to sacralise the figure of the emperor not as an attempt to affirm his power and develop a distinctive political identity, but as a worrying sign of the creation of a new religion.

The three missionaries, having recently arrived at the Mughal court, and without sufficient knowledge of the sociopolitical structures of Mughal India, rapidly became discouraged about their role. The abrupt

<sup>30</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *From the Tagus to the Ganges*, pp. 126–127.

<sup>31</sup> John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, p. 146.

end of the second mission was thus a story of frustrated expectations. If De la Vega and his companions believed that their presence would incite Akbar's immediate conversion and guide the emperor in the Christianisation of his empire, Akbar expected the missionaries, as wise men from *Firangistan*, to contribute new elements to the development of his ideological project.

## II

The short-lived second Jesuit mission to *Mogor* coincided with the Mughal annexation of lower Sindh, an event that caused some apprehension in Goa and Iberia. The control of Sindh, a strategic coastal region on the trade routes of the Persian Gulf, allowed Akbar to develop a new maritime dimension to his empire. If the conquest of Gujarat cast a shadow over the Portuguese ports of Diu and Daman, the incorporation of Sindh raised new questions about Akbar's intention to expand his empire along the Persian Gulf and conquer the strategic Portuguese-held port of Hormuz.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, the Mughal campaigns in the Deccan positioned Akbar dangerously close to Goa and the *Província do Norte*.

These fears are patent in a letter to Viceroy Matias de Albuquerque dated 1 March 1594 and written on behalf of Philip II by Miguel de Moura, one of the members of the government junta responsible for the Viceroyalty of Portugal. The view from Madrid and Lisbon was that the Mughal campaigns in Sindh should be carefully monitored by the Portuguese officials in Goa. Philip II believed that the Mughal annexation of Sindh was 'very inconvenient for the Estado' since it confirmed that Akbar was 'growing in lands and powers (...) becoming the lord of the hinterland (*sertão*) of the coast of India'.<sup>34</sup> It was decided that the *Estado* should thus covertly undermine the Mughal expansionist movement and incite the Deccani rulers to work together against Akbar. Indeed, Philip

<sup>33</sup> Jorge Flores, *Nas Margens do Hindustão*, p. 184.

<sup>34</sup> Doc. 140, "Philip III to Viceroy Matias de Albuquerque, Lisbon, 1 March 1594" in *Arquivo Português Oriental*, fasc. 3, ed. Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1861), p. 429.

II supported the viceroy's 'concern in knowing the designs and intentions of the Mughals' and his diplomatic efforts to forge a Deccani alliance.<sup>35</sup>

After the return of the Jesuit missionaries from Lahore, Matias de Albuquerque lost three valuable potential informers on the Great Mughal at the precise moment when the *Estado* needed to gather all sorts of intelligence about Akbar and his closest aides. The end of the second Jesuit mission was also a setback for the Mughals. The long history of Portuguese involvement in Deccani geopolitics suggested that the *Estado da Índia* would be willing to interfere in Akbar's plans for the region. The presence of Jesuit missionaries at the Timurid court allowed the emperor to restore a channel of direct communication with the *Estado da Índia* that would allow the Mughal authorities to more accurately assess Portuguese intentions in the Deccan. Indeed, the second Jesuit mission to *Mogor* coincided with the preparation of a series of Mughal embassies to the Deccani sultanates between 1591 and 1593, which sought to pressure the Deccani rulers to accept Akbar's authority over the region.

In 1594, Akbar sent another embassy to Goa. Both Portuguese and Mughal sources do not mention this embassy in detail, but the annual letter of the Jesuit provincial of Goa, Francisco Cabral, mentions the visit of a Mughal ambassador who, like his counterparts from Persia and Pegu, asked the viceroy for permission to visit the Jesuit College and meet the rector, who 'accepted such good intentions, and showed them the things they do; and all gained a great knowledge of the divine cult and the Christian religion'.<sup>36</sup>

The visit of the Mughal ambassador was yet another overture from Akbar to the Jesuits and the *Estado*. Indeed, Pierre du Jarric and Luis de Guzmán mention that the ambassador received a letter from the emperor persuading the archbishop and the viceroy to send more missionaries to the Mughal court.<sup>37</sup> However, the fiasco of the second mission made the Jesuit provincial, Francisco Cabral, extremely reluctant to organise another mission. Cabral explained his position to the viceroy by reminding him 'that there was so little hope that this would bear fruit

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 429–430.

<sup>36</sup> Doc. 117, "Annual Letter of the Province of India, Goa, 7 November 1594", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 715.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre du Jarric, *Historie des Choses Plus Mémorables*, vol. 2 (Bourdeaux, 1610) p. 463; Luis de Guzmán, *Historia de las misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesus*, vol. I (Alcalá, 1601), p. 257.

because the fathers went two times there without any result',<sup>38</sup> as he mentioned to Claudio Acquaviva. Confronted with the lack of enthusiasm of the provincial, the viceroy threatened to send a mission from another religious order, since 'there were other clergymen who were wishing and requesting it'.<sup>39</sup> The pressure from the viceroy succeeded and Francisco Cabral called a congregation to discuss the organisation of a new mission to *Mogor*.

Matias de Albuquerque's energetic pressure and blackmail were deeply related to the need to establish regular communication and gather reliable intelligence from the Mughal court. But the viceroy's personal commitment to ensure that a new mission was sent to Lahore coincided with the worrying reports from Coge Abrão, a man described by Philip II as 'a very reputable, practical and trustworthy Jew' who, between 1593 and 1594, was sent to Bijapur and Ahmadnagar to 'spy [...] and learn the mood of those kings'. Based on his contacts with the Deccani sultans, Coge Abrão was expected to encourage them to join forces to resist the Mughal advances, in particular, the ruler of Ahmadnagar; Matias de Albuquerque wanted to know 'if he thinks that it is more honourable and profitable to be an absolute king or the vassal of a king'.<sup>40</sup> The reports sent by the *Estado's* were particularly worrying. Sultan Burhan II revealed to Coge Abrão that Akbar was pressuring him to attack the *Estado's* borders, and even showed the envoy a letter from the Mughal emperor.<sup>41</sup> The news from Ahmadnagar recommended caution, but, above all, exposed the need to closely monitor every movement from Akbar and ensure that the *Estado da Índia* was able to regularly obtain relevant intelligence from the *Mogor*.

Matias de Albuquerque's visit to the *Província do Norte* to examine the garrisons—as well as monitor the Mughal movements in the Deccan—forced the provincial to anticipate the launch of the mission.<sup>42</sup> Francisco

<sup>38</sup> Doc. 133, "Francisco Cabral to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa, 20 November 1594", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 848.

<sup>39</sup> Doc. 141, "Gomes Vaz to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa, 25 November 1594", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 890.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Jorge Flores, *Nas Margens do Hindustão*, p. 206.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206–207.

<sup>42</sup> Doc. 118, "Francisco Lameira to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa, 7 November 1594", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 758.



Cabral suggested Jerónimo Xavier, Manoel Pinheiro and Bento de Góis, three names that the provincial believed would restore the prestige of the Jesuits at the Mughal court. Jerónimo Xavier was the grand-nephew of St Francis Xavier and was seen by many in the Jesuit hierarchy in Rome and Goa as a promising prospect. Indeed, as Francisco Cabral mentioned to Claudio Acquaviva, the Navarrese missionary had already been appointed for the second mission, but due to the logistical problems he was unable to travel from Cochin to Goa. Before being appointed to *Mogor*, Manoel Pinheiro was proposed for the grade of Spiritual Coadjutor for being a ‘suitable, good worker, [who is] very zealous of the souls and has taken care of the Christendom with many fruits’.<sup>43</sup> Bento de Góis was presented in the catalogue of December 1594 as coadjutor ‘aged 32, with good health, and six years and nine months at the Society’.<sup>44</sup>

The composition of the third mission also sought to reduce the growing tensions between Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits in Goa after the formalisation of the Iberian Union with the acclamation of Philip II of Spain as king of Portugal by the *cortes* of Tomar in 1581. The rapid rise of Jerónimo Xavier was seen by many Portuguese Jesuits as a worrying sign of a ‘Castilianisation’ of the Goan province. Fears of subordination of the Portuguese ecclesiastical and administrative agents vis-à-vis the Castilian subjects of Philip I of Portugal (Philip II of Spain) were common in the metropolitan and colonial territories of the Portuguese Crown. Almost fifteen years after the union of Crowns, on 10 November 1595, Alessandro Valignano complained to Claudio Acquaviva about the damaging effects of the tensions and conflicts between Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits, confessing that:

the thing that has most upset me was the bad seeds of dissension among our people, and if they grow and create roots they will cause much damage and trouble to this Province. This dissension is growing among the Portuguese and the Castilians, and may God allow that in the passing

<sup>43</sup> Doc. 155, “Catalogue of Those Proposed for the Grade of Spiritual Coadjutor, Goa, December 1594”, *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 1020.

<sup>44</sup> Doc. 151, “First and Second Catalogues of the Province of India, Goa, 15 December 1594”, *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 951.

of time it will not affect the other foreign nations (...) And since between Portuguese and Castilians, due to their close borders and past wars, as well as the last events related to the succession, these two nations remaine opposed (*poco amigas*), and this little union is now reaching religious matters'.<sup>45</sup>

Although Cabral hoped that the ratio of two Portuguese missionaries to one Spanish one would be well received, the appointment of Xavier as the head of the second mission to *Mogor* caused suspicions among some Portuguese Jesuits. Nuno Rodrigues, for example, besides complaining about Jerónimo Xavier's 'choleric passion' (*paixão da colera*), mentioned that he 'reveals to be very passionate (*apaixonado*) for his nation, which is something that is not well seen here and troublesome to those who have to deal with him'.<sup>46</sup> In a letter to Claudio Acquaviva, Jorge Gomes reported that Xavier was 'too fond of Castile and of those of that nation, making the Portuguese angry and scandalised, [because] he shows little consideration for the Portuguese and their things, and since he shows this in such a notorious way and they confront him, I have the impression that the Portuguese loath him (*lhe têm este asco*)'. After listing a long list of complaints about Xavier's behaviour, including his choleric outbursts and desire to be 'revered and treated with an advantageous difference by the others', Gomes accused Xavier of being excessively occupied with confessing pious women. According to the Portuguese Jesuit, Xavier was 'very inclined to them, because almost all women of importance attend the church of the Professed House and he is their confessor, and in the days when there are confessions at the church he is the last of the confessors to leave [the church]'.<sup>47</sup> Another Portuguese Jesuit, André Fernandes, also complained to Claudio Acquaviva that Jerónimo Xavier was 'spending much time in the confession of women, which is an infamy for the superiors, because until today no one did such thing like him, and he should be more careful and spend his time in other things that

<sup>45</sup> Doc. 27, "Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa, 10 November 1595", *DI*, vol. XVII, ed. Joseph Wicki (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1988), pp. 130–132.

<sup>46</sup> Doc. 11, "Nuno Rodrigues to Miguel Rodrigues, Cochín, 29 December 1592", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Doc. 64, "Jorge Gomes to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa, 26 November 1593", *DI*, vol. XV p. 442.

are more appropriated for his post'.<sup>48</sup> However, Xavier was not the only Jesuit with an inclination for pious women. Valério de Parada, the rector of the Cochin College, complained to Acquaviva that in many Jesuit colleges and house there was 'a notorious lack of observance of vows and rules, a lack of respect for the superiors, in spirit and devotion, too many dealings with secular people, and worst of all, too much freedom in visiting women and pious women (*molheres e molheres devotas*)'.<sup>49</sup>

Xavier's appointment was one among many episodes of the problematic rivalry between Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits in Goa. In spite of the many critics of Francisco Cabral's decision, the fact that the Navarrese Jesuit was the grand-nephew of St Francis Xavier and possessed an interesting aristocratic background made him a suitable candidate to lead the third mission to *Mogor*.

### III

The three Jesuits arrived in Lahore on 5 May 1595, after a long journey of 230 leagues (1,150 kilometres) that, as Xavier noted in a letter to Claudio Acquaviva, was made only 'across lands that belong to him [Akbar]'.<sup>50</sup> Before reaching Lahore, Xavier and his companions had a brief sojourn in Khambhat, where they met Prince Murad. The rendezvous between Murad and the Jesuits, as Pinheiro revealed, was not planned by the Mughals. The *firman* issued by Akbar stated that the missionaries should travel via Sindh, a condition that suggested that the emperor was aware that the Jesuits could meet Murad's camp and report on it to the Portuguese authorities in Goa. Nonetheless, Akbar's son welcomed the *padres* 'with great joy and signs of benevolence'. The prince questioned the *padres* about 'many things and many places', especially the fauna, flora and weather of Portugal, as well as the life at the court of the Austrias. Pinheiro gave a brief description of Murad's camp and army, counting 'four or five thousand horses (...) four hundred elephants, seven hundred camels, forty or fifty dromedaries, four thousand oxen, fifteen pieces of

<sup>48</sup> Doc. 67 "André Fernandes to Claudio Acquaviva, Goa, 29 November 1593", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 460.

<sup>49</sup> Doc. 96, "Valério de Parada to Claudio Acquaviva, Cochin, December 1593", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 604.

<sup>50</sup> Doc. 19, "Jerónimo Xavier to Claudio Acquaviva, Lahore, 20 August 1595", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 69.

artillery, (...) four cannons, and some camelotes and camis'.<sup>51</sup> As Pinheiro duly noted, Murad was charged with the mission of 'subduing the entire Deccan'. The Jesuit, however, was not particularly impressed by the prince and believed that he lacked political judgement: 'he governs with men who lack experience, and because he is soft (*brando*) and generous (*liberal*) by nature, he is always under their influence'. However, Murad's words and behaviour suggested that he was more hedonist than a dedicated Muslim. According to Pinheiro, the prince 'had little devotion for the mosques, he never frequents them, his days are dedicated to hunting and riding, and this is his life'.<sup>52</sup>

After arriving in Lahore, Akbar welcomed the Jesuits 'with much honour and love'. During this first meeting, Akbar recommended that the three missionaries should do their utmost to rapidly learn Persian to facilitate communication between them and avoid a 'third party'. Xavier reveals that to compel the missionaries to begin their Persian studies, the emperor asked Abu'l Fazl to tell them 'that if we learn Persian, a big knot that has been made would be untied'.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the three *padres*, during their brief sojourn in Khambhat, began to have Persian lessons. In the first years of the third mission, Xavier, Pinheiro and Góis dedicated most of their time to studying Persian.

The first letters sent by the third mission to Goa and Rome reported a series of encouraging signs that suggested Akbar's inclination towards Christianity. The emperor was, in Xavier's words, 'totally departed from Muhammad' and, as reported by the members of the second mission, 'tended to be a gentile, worshipping God and the sun'.<sup>54</sup> Many regarded Akbar as a prophet, and the emperor himself suggested that he had miraculous powers, accepting, for example, the gifts of 'many women who pray to him to give health to their children or to help them to get pregnant'.<sup>55</sup> However, Akbar seemed to have incorporated Christian elements into his religious beliefs and practices. The Mughal emperor, as Jerónimo

<sup>51</sup> Doc. 46, "Annual Letter of Francisco Cabral, Goa, 29 November 1595", *DI*, vol. XVI, p. 372.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Doc. 19, "Jerónimo Xavier to Claudio Acquaviva, Lahore, 20 August 1595", *DI*, vol. XVI p. 69.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Xavier noted in a letter to Claudio Acquaviva, had ‘images of Christ Our Lord and Our Lady of very rich and good quality that were brought from Europe’.<sup>56</sup> Akbar even participated in a Christian celebration ‘on his knees, with his hands raised as if he were a Christian king’.<sup>57</sup> On Assumption Day, he lent the missionaries his collection of Christian images and ordered the Jesuit chapel to be decorated ‘with canopies and rich brocades and silks’, a gesture that Xavier associated with the emperor’s ‘love and devotion’ for the Virgin Mary.<sup>58</sup>

Akbar was not the only figure in the Timurid court who had an interest in Christianity. Prince Salim also showed ‘much love’ and helped the missionaries ‘by negotiating with the king [Akbar] on our behalf’. The future Jahangir promised to help the Jesuits to build a church in Lahore and played a crucial role in the emperor’s decision to issue a *firman* allowing the Jesuits to convert whoever wanted to become Christian.<sup>59</sup> One of the reasons for Salim’s support for the Jesuits was his interest in European art. The prince commissioned the painter who accompanied the missionaries to produce an image of the Virgin Mary, and he also instructed a Mughal sculptor to make ivory copies of an image of an infant Jesus and crucifix brought by the Jesuits.<sup>60</sup> The Mughal interest in European art was seen by Xavier as a potential avenue to persuade the Timurid elites to accept Catholic doctrine. After arriving in Lahore, many courtiers frequently requested the Jesuits to supply them with original artworks. The demand was such that Xavier asked Claudio Acquaviva ‘to send good and large images of Our Lady, of the birth of Christ, etc. to give to this King and Prince, who will receive them with much love and esteem, and to also send some little images to give to some Christians and Moors, who have asked us with much affection, and send also some other little pieces’.<sup>61</sup>

Manuel Pinheiro also wrote encouraging letters from Lahore mentioning several episodes of positive contacts between the missionaries and the local population. He compared his experience in Khambhat, for

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

example, with ‘walking in Évora’. The presence of Jesuit missionaries on the streets of the Gujarati city attracted a considerable number of curious passers-by who enthusiastically greeted the three missionaries. In the first annual letter of the third mission, Pinheiro mentioned that the ‘men, women and children who saw us, made signs of benevolence with their eyes and mouths, saying: “*Padres! Padres!* There are *padres!*”’.<sup>62</sup>

The news from the Great Mughal generated a wave of enthusiasm in Goa. Francisco Cabral lauded the third mission with the expectation that it would be an imminent success. The positive attitudes of Akbar and Selim towards the missionaries, and the veneration of the local populations for the images brought from Goa, led Cabral to imagine himself ‘walking along the streets of Cambay, singing the Christian doctrine and raising the flag of the Cross, without fearing any Moor or Gentile, but actually they would follow me, because of the love and respect they show towards us’.<sup>63</sup> The correspondence from the three missionaries at *Mogor* in 1596 continued to send ‘good news’. As Francisco Cabral reported to the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, the letters from Lahore were very encouraging. Akbar, Selim and many Mughal noblemen treated the three Jesuits with ‘much love and honour’. The activities of the missionaries were ‘abundantly supported by the temporal power’. Akbar had not only sponsored the construction of a church in Agra, but also issued a ‘general licence’ that allowed all his subjects to convert to Christianity.<sup>64</sup>

Francisco Cabral’s enthusiasm for the first steps of the third mission were based on a report written by Jerónimo Xavier that mentioned that Akbar asked the missionaries to meet him ‘at carpeted place where few enter, and those who enter are the emperor’s captains’.<sup>65</sup> The correspondence of the members of the third Jesuit mission often mentioned the familiarity that the emperor or other members of the Mughal ruling elite had with the missionaries. Again, the access to the most private or restricted spaces of the Mughal court granted to the Jesuit missionaries

<sup>62</sup> Doc. 46, “Annual Letter of Francisco Cabral, Goa, 29 November 1595”, *DI*, vol. XVII, p. 377.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 374–375.

<sup>64</sup> Doc. 83, “Francisco Cabral to Claudio Acquavia, Goa, 17 December 1596”, *DI*, vol. XVIII, ed. Joseph Wicki (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1988), p. 697.

<sup>65</sup> Doc. 72, “Jeronimo Xavier to Francisco Cabral Lahore, 8 September 1596”, *DI*, vol. XVIII, p. 550.

suggested that the *padres* enjoyed a prominent status, being regarded by Akbar and his courtiers as an integral part of the court. Besides, the ability to approach a ruler in person, especially in moments of leisure and in intimate or restricted spaces, was an indicator of prestige that suggested the possibility of becoming a protégé of the ruler or influencing his decisions.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, as Xavier noted, the missionaries even attended the private entertainments staged for the emperor and his inner circle, ‘standing on our feet as everyone, and barefoot as everyone’. Although this privileged access to Akbar’s inner circle was very encouraging, there were some disadvantages. The emperor’s entertainments included local artistic performances that clashed with the Jesuit moral code, such as the troubling ‘women who dance’, who often forced Xavier and the other missionaries ‘to turn our back to them’—a behaviour that surprised Akbar, who ‘find it very strange that we do not raise our eyes to a spectacle that caught the attention of the hearts and eyes of many’.<sup>67</sup>

This anecdotal episode, mentioned by Xavier to demonstrate the good moral conduct of the missionaries in a lavish and lascivious courtly environment, is both revealing of some of the initial difficulties that the missionaries had to contend with when it came to the Mughal courtly culture and *habitus*, and of the attempt of the Jesuits to act as the representatives or disseminators of a moral alternative at the Mughal court. In fact, Xavier tended to present the moral conduct of the missionaries as the main reason for their rapid rise. As Francisco Cabral was informed, Akbar often allowed the missionaries to meet him while he visited or entertained his daughters, displaying towards the Jesuits, in the words of Jerónimo Xavier, ‘a trust that I do not know to whom else he would show’.<sup>68</sup>

Outside the court, the missionaries reported some encouraging progresses. Xavier reported an estimated 38 conversions, not counting the baptism of ‘some Muslim women who married some Christians with whom they lived in sin and now live well’.<sup>69</sup> One of the converts was ‘a Muslim who reads and writes Persian very well and worked as scribe for

<sup>66</sup> Jeroen Duindam, “The Court as a Meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control” in *Prince, Pen, and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives* eds. Maaïke van Berkel and Jeroen Duindam (Leiden: Brill, 2018), p. 47.

<sup>67</sup> Doc. 72, “Jerónimo Xavier to Francisco Cabral Lahore, September 8, 1596”, *DI*, vol. XVIII, p. 558.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 550.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 576.

a Christian captain'.<sup>70</sup> The other conversions highlighted by Xavier were those of 'two sons and one daughter of an Englishman, who is believed to be a heretic, and a Muslim woman'.<sup>71</sup> This Englishman was probably William Leades, the jeweller who took part in Newberry's expedition and decided to remain in Lahore after being invited by Akbar to work at the court. Although the letter to Francisco Cabral does not dwell much on the Englishman and his family, Xavier mentions that Leades' 'carelessness' in religious matters almost led to one of his sons being buried without being baptised, and that the missionaries were 'at pains to baptise his sons', suggesting that the Englishman's Protestantism made him reluctant to establish a rapport with the Jesuits.<sup>72</sup>

The presence of the *padres* and their religious rituals continued to raise the curiosity of many courtiers and commoners. During the celebrations of the Nativity of Mary, the Jesuit chapel attracted a considerable crowd. Xavier enthusiastically reported that 'there were so many men and women that the chapel was full of people till sunset'. The majority of the crowd was formed of Hindus who, in the words of Xavier, had an 'affection' for Mary and Jesus 'prostrating themselves in front of their images; and they did not get enough of kissing the image of Child Jesus'.<sup>73</sup> Many visitors covered the image with garlands (*fulas*) according to the Hindu custom of adorning images of deities with flowers as a demonstration of respect. Scenes of the Nativity of Mary were becoming increasingly frequent. With a mix of enthusiasm and surprise, Xavier asked Cabral 'to imagine, Your Reverence, a multitude of Blacks (*negros*) gathering there by the time of the Angelus whenever there is a jubilee, and the sacristan can hardly close the church, because there are so many people worshipping the images that it is a thing of awe, and may God be praised for seeing and listening to such things'.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 577.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 584.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



## IV

Like Antoni Montserrat, Jerónimo Xavier focused most of his early analysis of the Mughal court on the figure of Akbar, providing detailed descriptions of the emperor's daily routine, his ideological and ritual experiments, and the ways in which Akbar dealt with the Mughal nobility. The meticulous reports written by the Navarrese missionary were intended to provide relevant information to both the Society of Jesus and the *Estado da Índia*. In the long report that Xavier wrote to Francisco Cabral in 1596, several pages are dedicated to Akbar and to how he constructed his political and symbolic authority.

According to Xavier, the emperor was an omnipresent figure who dictated the rhythms of the daily life of the court and the population of Lahore. Every morning, by sunrise, the emperor appeared in a window (*jharoka*) to show himself (*darshan*) and receive the greetings of his subjects. Xavier was particularly impressed with the crowds that gathered every day in front of the imperial palace to attend the *jharoka-i-darshan*. 'Sometimes', he wrote, 'I am perplexed when I see how this people get up so early (*madrugão*) and work for their King, making me seem to be cold in the matters of God'.<sup>75</sup> The devotion of Akbar's subjects for their emperor was such that many of his subjects took pains to see him 'no matter if it rains spears, or if it is intolerably cold'.<sup>76</sup> Xavier's description of the crowds attending the *jharoka-i-darshan* is that of an almost hysterical mob obsessed with seeing a glimpse of the emperor's face every morning. The cult of Akbar instigated the formation of the *darshaniyas*, or 'darsanins' (*sic*) as Xavier identified them, a dedicated group of followers who 'swore to neither eat nor drink until they seen the king's face every day'.<sup>77</sup>

Conceived as a ceremony that sought to affirm the emperor's centrality in Mughal daily life and establish a direct connection between Akbar and his subjects, the *jharoka-i-darshan* played a pivotal role in the promotion of a cult of personality that was fostered both by the emperor and his subjects. If the *darshaniyas* never failed to appear in front of the *jharoka* every morning, Akbar, as Xavier noted, 'was most punctual (*pontualissimo*) in appearing to them every day, even when he has many other things

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 545.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 546.

to do, so they could eat'.<sup>78</sup> Although Xavier used the word 'comedy'—a term that was often employed by early modern Iberians to refer to both theatrical performances and humorous spectacles—while describing the reactions of the crowd during the *jharoka-i-darshan*, the Jesuit missionary justified Akbar's commitment to the ceremony as an act of generosity from the emperor towards his more dedicated subjects, an idea that suggests that some of Xavier's early perceptions of the Timurid polity were largely influenced by the essential principles of the Akbari imperial ideology.

Despite his apparent acceptance of the ideological premises behind the emperor's symbolic power, Xavier noted that the *darshaniyas* were not a Timurid custom, but an 'invention' (*invençãõ*) introduced by 'some Moors who came from Persia' who caught Akbar's attention for their regular presence at the *jharoka-i-darshan*.<sup>79</sup> Impressed by their devotion, the emperor rewarded this group of Persians, and soon afterwards members of other communities imitated them. They in turn were also rewarded by Akbar for their extreme acts of devotion.<sup>80</sup> The *jharoka-i-darshan* became thus a 'comedy', to borrow Xavier's preferred term, a choreographed public performance, a sort of ritualised dialogue between the emperor and his subjects where the terms in which imperial authority could be affirmed and supported by different sectors of Mughal society were both negotiated and validated.

The popular cult surrounding the image of the emperor was also furthered by the frequent visits of women who offered Akbar presents in exchange for his blessings and intervention to help their pregnancies or the children's health every Sunday morning after the *jharoka-i-darshan*. Other women brought their now healthy children or newborn babies, as well as more offerings, to show their gratitude to the emperor. After attending to all the plead and demonstrations of gratitude, Akbar offered 'some pieces of cloth' to the women.<sup>81</sup>

Again, Xavier reconfirmed the reports from Cristóbal de la Vega that revealed that Akbar worshipped the sun and embraced elements from 'heathenism' (*gentilidade*). The emperor had 'totally renounced the

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 547.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 549.

things of Mohammed, and he even does not like the Arabic language'.<sup>82</sup> The emperor had developed an interest for the ancient Persian cult of the sun and adopted some of its features. Every day, Akbar recited 'one thousand and forty-five names in praise for the sun' during moments of prayer that lasted for more than half an hour'.<sup>83</sup> Xavier attributed the development of this new solar cult to the influence of Abu'l Fazl, the emperor's 'master and guide', who promoted the idea that Akbar, as the 'main servant of the house of God' should praise the sun for 'the many benefits that it offers to the world'.<sup>84</sup> The Jesuit missionary sensed that Akbar and Abu'l Fazl were attempting to incorporate the sun into the imperial symbolic repertoire. Indeed, Xavier promised Francisco Cabral that he would 'leave these particularities for next year's report, when I can give you more accurate information'.<sup>85</sup>

## V

The rise of the Jesuits at the Mughal court coincided with the improvement of their language skills. As Jerónimo Xavier reported in 1596, the 'main and only occupation' of the missionaries was to study Persian. After one year at Lahore, their linguistic skills improved considerably and, although recognising to 'still have problems because we lack mastery of the language', the missionaries believed that they had 'less need of an interpreter'.<sup>86</sup> It was also in 1596 that the Navarrese missionary presented a selection of passages from the New Testament translated into Persian.<sup>87</sup>

The positive reception of these translations, considered to be the first work of Catholic literature in Persian, encouraged Xavier to develop a proselytising strategy that sought to engage the Mughal intellectual elites through the elaboration of treatises written in Persian that explored the Neoplatonic culture shared by Islam and Christianity.<sup>88</sup> Jerónimo

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 542.

<sup>87</sup> Arnulf Camps, *Studies in Asian Mission History, 1956–1998* (Leiden, 2000), p. 34.

<sup>88</sup> Gauvin Alexander Bailey, "The Truth-Showing Mirror: Jesuit Catechism and the Arts in Mughal India" in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, vol.

Xavier thus developed an ‘accommodationist’ approach similar to the one implemented by Alessandro Valignano in Japan and Matteo Ricci in China.<sup>89</sup> The Mughal interest in Christian theology and Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy encouraged Xavier to explore local intellectual traditions deemed as suitable to Christian doctrine and produce a series of literary works that presented a select information on Europe and Christianity. Around 1597, Jerónimo Xavier prepared two treatises, the *A’imā-I haqq-numā* (*The Truth Revealing Mirror*) and the *Fuente de Vida* (*Fountain of Life*). Both works were originally written in Portuguese and then translated into Persian. The *Fuente de Vida* is a dialogue between a Jesuit, a philosopher, who personifies Akbar, and a Muslim scholar, representing the mullahs, on the differences separating Islam and Christianity.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, the production of these works allowed the Navarrese missionary to model himself as a Mughal courtly scholar in the manner of Abu’l Fazl or Abdus Sattar, two leading Mughal intellectuals whose works and activities contributed to the centralising and religious policies of the emperor. Indeed, Xavier often collaborated with these and other Mughal intellectuals. His *Mir’at al-Quds* (*Mirror of Holiness*) and the *A’ina-yi Haqq-numa* (*Fountain of Life*) counted among the important collaboration of Abdus Sattar.<sup>91</sup>

I, ed. John W. O’Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 384–385; Arnulf Camps, *Jerome Xavier and the Muslims of Mogul Empire: Controversial Works and Missionary Activity* (Shoneck-Beckenried: Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire, 1957), p. 97.

<sup>89</sup> Joan-Pau Rubiés, “Diálogo religioso, mediación cultural o cálculo maquiavélico? Una nueva mirada al método jesuita en Oriente, 1580–1640” in *Jesuitas en imperios de ultramar: Siglos XVI–XX* eds. Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, Javier Burrieza Sánchez and Doris Moreno (Madrid: Silex, 2012), p. 47.

<sup>90</sup> Arnulf Camps, *Studies in Asian Mission History*, p. 21.

<sup>91</sup> See *Mir’at al-quds (Mirror of Holiness): A Life of Christ for Emperor Akbar. A Commentary on Father Jerome Xavier’s Text and the Miniatures of Cleveland Museum of Art, Acc. No. 2005.145*, ed. Pedro Moura Carvalho, trans. and annot. Wheeler M. Thackston (Leiden and Boston, 2012); *Fuente de Vida. Tratado Apologético dirigido al Rey Mogol de la India en 1600* (San Sebastián: Universidad de Deusto, 2007). On Xavier’s Persian works, see Ángel Santos Hernández, “La obra literaria persa de un jesuita navarro: El P. Jerónimo Xavier”, *Estudios eclesiásticos* 29:113 (1955), pp. 233–250. Also see Arnulf Camps, *Studies in Asian Mission History*, pp. 33–45; Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mughal*, pp. 203–221; Henry Hosten, “Fr. Jerome Xavier’s Persian Lives of the Apostles”, *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 10:2 (1914), pp. 65–84.

If the Jesuit correspondence of first two years of the third mission highlights the positive reception from the Mughal elites and populace, in 1597 a worried Jerónimo Xavier reported that Akbar asked the missionaries to inform the Portuguese viceroy of the Mughal campaign in the Deccan and of the emperor's intention to initiate a round of talks with the *Estado da Índia* after the end of the campaign. The Deccan, as Xavier noted, was the territory that would allow Akbar 'to become the lord of all India, and on its border are located Chaul, Goa and all the fortresses of the Portuguese, and he is hoping to conquer it and then deal with the Portuguese as many of his entourage are encouraging him to do'.

Xavier believed that a conflict between the Mughals and the Portuguese was imminent. The conquest of Berar and the rumours of a Mughal triumph over Ahmadnagar led Akbar to ask the Jesuits to 'write to the Viceroy about a certain business' and warned them that if the reply from Goa was unfavourable 'he would obtain it with war for the sake of his honour'. Akbar's threat coincided with his decision to order the construction of several ships, a move that in the Jesuit's opinion was a clear sign that the Mughals wanted to prepare an armada to challenge the Portuguese monopoly of the Indian Ocean.<sup>92</sup>

As Xavier noted, while he was preparing an *armada* to challenge the Portuguese, Akbar 'sought to keep us here [at the court], giving us more honours'.<sup>93</sup> Xavier perceived these apparent gestures of favour and friendship as part of a dissimulative scheme to keep the Jesuit missionaries at the Mughal court in order to guarantee a channel of communication with the Portuguese authorities at Goa. The favourable concessions granted by the emperor to the Jesuits, such as the building of a church in Lahore, were nothing more than 'a way to keep us here imprisoned and happy' and ensure that the presence of the Jesuit missionaries, 'so the Christian merchants can keep coming and going and there is communication with the Viceroy and the Portuguese'.<sup>94</sup>

One of the honours granted by Akbar to the Jesuits was the permission obtained by Manuel Pinheiro on 7 September 1597 to open a residence and a church in Lahore. One year later, Akbar would issue a *firman*

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Doc. 102, "Jerónimo Xavier to Claudio Acquaviva, Srinagar, 18 August 1597", *DI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 832–833.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 832–833.

granting the Jesuits permission to build a church in Khambhat. The privileges granted by the emperor confirmed the imperial approval of the proselytising activities of the *padres* and also allowed them to set up the necessary logistical bases to serve a small Christian community formed by a few native catechumens, some Europeans and Armenians scattered in Agra, Lahore, and the Gujarati ports.<sup>95</sup>

Following the directives of the Goan Provincial Councils, which imposed the obedience of all Oriental Christians (i.e. Armenians, Georgians and Syrians) to the Papacy, the reports sent from Agra and Lahore often mentioned the efforts made by the missionaries to persuade Armenians to conform to Catholicism. One of the strategies adopted by the *padres* was to allow the Armenians to use their churches and Catholic cemeteries, which made many Armenians de facto members of the Jesuit congregations. This is patent in the attitudes of Mughal officials and missionaries such as Manuel Pinheiro in perceiving the Jesuits as valid representatives of the Armenian communities. Jesuit proselytising and charitable activities often relied on donations from Armenian merchants. Although a small community, the Armenians settled in Mughal India constituted a relatively wealthy Christian group connected to a wide mercantile network, which made them potential donors and facilitators in the exchange of information between the Jesuit missionaries and their counterparts in Goa and Europe.

The Mughals also sought to take advantage of the Armenian merchants and their networks. Besides Akbar's interest in co-opting prominent members of the different ethnic and religious communities of his empire, Mughal commercial ambitions also encouraged the incorporation into the imperial apparatus of some members of the Armenian mercantile diaspora operating in Gujarat and elsewhere in Northern India. Indeed, the presence of Armenian tradesmen in Agra, Lahore and Surat was not the result of a supposed invitation from Akbar, as Mesrovb Seth argued,<sup>96</sup> but a consequence of the expansion of the Armenian trading networks based in the Persian Gulf, a process that caught the attention

<sup>95</sup> Father Felix, O.C., "Jesuit Missions in Lahore", *Journal of the Panjab Historical Society*, 5 (1916), p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> Mesrovb Seth suggested that Akbar invited Armenian merchants to settle in Mughal territories and that an Armenian church was erected in Agra in 1562. However, there is no evidence for this claim. See: Mesrovb Seth, *History of the Armenians in India from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 1897), p. 54; Sebouh David Aslanian,

of some Portuguese officials and mercantile agents. Around 1512, Tomé Pires noted in his *Suma Oriental* (c. 1512–1515) the activities across Gujarat and some Southeast Asian ports of Armenians tradesmen based in Hormuz.<sup>97</sup> After the incorporation of this strategic port into the *Estado da Índia*, reports on Armenian mercantile activities in India and across the Indian Ocean became more frequent, demonstrating the gradual expansion of Armenian mercantile networks. Some of these networks became involved in the maritime commercial circuits of the *Estado da Índia*.<sup>98</sup> The Mughal annexation of Gujarat increased the involvement of Armenians in the Mughal economy. Indeed, the overland routes linking the Ottoman Empire, Safavid Persia, the Uzbek Khanate and the Mughal Empire also attracted many Armenian traders familiar with the shared commercial practices that were common, as well as the Persianate cultural and linguistic environment of the Islamic Eurasian empires.

Armenians thus offered the possibility to expand Mughal commercial links across Persia, Central Asia and the Mediterranean. This potential led to the collaboration of some prominent Armenian merchants with the Mughal polity. An illuminating example is the case of Iskandar, an Armenian merchant from Aleppo settled in Lahore whom Akbar integrated into the imperial elite. According to a 1621 report by Francesco Corsi, the emperor appreciated Iskandar's cosmopolitanism, especially his 'knowledge of various languages, in particular Portuguese, because he had been living some years as a merchant in the cities of India'.<sup>99</sup> The remark made

*From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 47.

<sup>97</sup> *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires. An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515. And the Book of Francisco Rodrigues. Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanacs, and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East Before 1515*, vol. I, ed. Armando Cortesão (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), p. 46; vol. II, pp. 265–266.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, João Teles e Cunha, "Armenian Merchants in Portuguese Trade Networks in the Western Indian Ocean in the Early Modern Age" in *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique au début de l'ère moderne* ed. Sushil Chaudhury and Kéram Kévonian (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2007), pp. 197–252.

<sup>99</sup> ARSI, Goa 33 I–II, "Da Origem da Fundação do Collegio incoato na Cidade de Agra feita por Mirza Zulcarné, e aceiteada pelo N. R. P. Geral Mutio Vitellesqi o ano 1621", f. 671v. English translation in Henry Hosten, "Mirza Zu-L-Qarnain, A Christian Grandee", *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. V (1916), p. 312.

by the Florentine missionary is quite revealing of the potential contributions expected by Akbar from Iskandar to the development of Mughal commercial and diplomatic strategies. Iskandar seemed to have served in different posts of the Mughal administration during Akbar's reign. He was not the only Armenian at the Mughal court. Akbar also appointed one Abdul Havvy to serve in the imperial harem. Iskandar would marry one of the daughters of Abdul Havvy, a matrimonial union apparently promoted by Akbar.<sup>100</sup> After the emperor's death in 1605, Iskandar continued to be a part of the imperial inner circle. Indeed, Jahangir promoted him to the rank of 500. Iskandar's son, Mirza Zulqarnain, also known in Jesuit sources as Dom Gonçalo Mirijá, also became a prominent courtier during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, serving as *faujdar* (district chief) of Sambhar.<sup>101</sup>

## VI

The privileges obtained in Lahore and Khambhat encouraged Manuel Pinheiro to invest in a 'popular mission' focusing on targets outside the Mughal court, in particular the lower strata of Mughal society. The division of the third mission into two fields, the court and the commoners, would be definitively confirmed when Akbar decided to move the court from Lahore to Agra, also in 1598. The decision to move the imperial seat was, once again, related to the Mughal expansion in the Deccan. The end of the Gujarati rebellion allowed the emperor to invest more time and resources in the Deccan campaigns. In the same way that the proximity of Lahore to Gujarat allowed Akbar to closely follow the suppression of Muzaffar Khan's uprising, Agra offered an ideal base to direct the Mughal war effort against the Deccani sultanates. For the Jesuits, the transfer came at a rather inconvenient time, at the precise moment when the works for a new church and residence in Lahore started. Moreover, the missionaries already supervised a small community of local converts, European Catholics and Armenian Christians who resided in Lahore. To avoid hampering the few but encouraging marks of progress made in the

<sup>100</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memories of Jahangir*, vol. II, ed. Henry Beveridge and trans. Alexander Roger (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1914), p. 194.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*



city, Manuel Pinheiro remained in Lahore, while Jerónimo Xavier and Bento de Góis followed Akbar to Agra.<sup>102</sup>

After arriving at Lahore in 1595, Pinheiro rapidly became fluent in Persian and Hindustani, developing a much-appreciated capacity to interact with different agents from the courtly milieu and the popular strata. Apart from his language proficiency, the Jesuit missionary seemed to have excellent interpersonal skills. The correspondence of Jerónimo Xavier and Bento de Góis often depicted Pinheiro as one of Akbar's favourites and highlighted his proximity to Prince Selim, as well as other relevant figures of the Mughal polity. Pinheiro's ability to manoeuvre within the different levels of Mughal society was duly recognised by his companions, who nicknamed him *O Mogor*, 'The Mughal'.<sup>103</sup> The nickname reflected not only Pinheiro's ability to interact with his targets, but his continuous investment in a 'popular mission'.

Without the presence of the emperor and his courtly milieu, Pinheiro sought new popular targets and invested in a strategy of proximity with the local authorities in order to guarantee the necessary political protection for his proselytising activities. Pinheiro's investment in a popular mission was not a mere consequence of the transfer of the court to Agra. The failure of the two previous missions to produce converts was seen by the Jesuit hierarchy as an indicator that Mughal India was far from being a promising mission field, especially when compared with the at the time more successful cases of Japan and China. Although the Jesuits recognised that Christianity generated an intellectual curiosity at the Mughal court, the reports sent from Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore and Agra complained of the difficulties that many Muslims had with understanding concepts such as the Holy Trinity.<sup>104</sup> The problem seemed not only to be caused by the complexities of Christian theology but also by a failure to define an efficient proselytising strategy. As a worried Jerónimo Xavier confessed while

<sup>102</sup> "Fr. N. Pimenta's Annual Letter on Mogor, Goa, 21 December 1599", *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 23 (1927), p. 61.

<sup>103</sup> BL, Add. MSS 9855, "Relação da Christandade que temos no Reino do Gram Mogol", f. 41r; Father Felix, O.C., "Jesuit Missions in Lahore", p. 84.

<sup>104</sup> Doc. 2, "Carta do Padre Jerónimo Xavier para o Padre Provincial da Companhia de Jesus na Índia, (Agra, 6/09/1604)" in *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa (DUP)*, vol. III, ed. António da Silva Rego (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1963), p. 22.

reporting the first stages of the Agra mission, ‘the Moors certainly see us as inept instruments for such hard hearts’.<sup>105</sup> This initial perception of failure would encourage Xavier to successfully promote Indo-Persian Christian literature to present Christian doctrine in an accessible and familiar way to Mughal courtiers and literati.

Confronted with difficulties in attracting the upper echelons of the Mughal polity, Pinheiro targeted other Muslim and Hindu social ranks. Christian art, charity and political networking were at the centre of a proselytising strategy that sought to make Christianity more attractive to the local populations and ensure the incorporation of the Catholic Church into Lahore’s civic life. Encouraged by the positive reaction of the Muslim and Hindu populace to the images displayed by the Jesuits and their religious ceremonies, Pinheiro invested in the organisation of ‘sumptuous’, ‘solemn’ and ‘beautiful’ religious ceremonies during important moments of the Catholic festive calendar such as Christmas and Easter.<sup>106</sup>

Drawing upon the lost letters of Manuel Pinheiro and the correspondence of Nicolau Pimenta, Du Jarric described the baptism of the 38 converts made in Lahore between 1598 and 1599 as a public ceremony of ‘great magnificence’.<sup>107</sup> Pinheiro prepared an elaborate ceremony that used various visual and auditive resources. The street crossed by the catechumens:

was decorated with green foliage and shaded with palm branches. The candidates left the house in which the Fathers lodged in an orderly procession, each one carrying a palm leaf in his hand, while those who were already Christians walked two and two on either side of the street, which was strewn with flowers. Musicians marched in front of them with drums, trumpets, clarions, flutes, and other musical instruments, on which they played till the procession reached the church.<sup>108</sup>

A large crowd of curious Hindus and Muslims stood in contrast to this ‘orderly procession’. Du Jarric mentions that due to the ‘great multitude’ gathered in front of the church, Pinheiro ‘knew not on which

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 23–24.

<sup>107</sup> Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits* ed. and trans. C. H. Payne (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1996), p. 92.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

side to turn, nor how to conduct the service, because of the noise and tumult'.<sup>109</sup> The parade of the 38 catechumens escorted by a troupe of musician along a flowered street was an absolute novelty in Lahore, an unexpected event that broke the city's daily routine. Such impressive processions and spectacular displays of Christian art formed part of a strategy of visual stimulation that allowed the missionaries to integrate the Catholic festive calendar into Lahore's urban and social life. But more importantly, these ceremonies also highlighted Pinheiro's central role within the Christian community, conferring to him a charismatic aura. The Jesuit missionary awaited the catechumens at the entrance of the Jesuit church. The Azorean missionary emerged as the focal point of the ceremony. Dressed in a surplice and cope, Pinheiro stood out from the other participants. The liturgical clothes contrasted with the usual long black gown worn by the Jesuit missionaries and allowed a non-Christian audience to both understand the importance of the ceremony and identify Pinheiro as the leader of the Lahore Christians. Indeed, after arriving at the church, the 38 catechumens were conducted by Pinheiro throughout every step of the baptism rites until the end of the ceremony.<sup>110</sup>

Pinheiro used images not only to attract large crowds of curious potential converts, but also to shape the imagination of the neophytes.<sup>111</sup> The spectacular processions, frequent display of sacred objects (relics, images) and the investment on confessions sought, as in other Jesuit mission fields, to frame the mental and physical engagement of the Lahore neophytes and Christians with the Catholic Church. By 1600, Pinheiro reported 106 conversions, a considerable number, which led the Jesuit visitor, Nicolau Pimenta, to send Francesco Corsi to aid the Portuguese missionary.<sup>112</sup>

Charity was another important element of Pinheiro's proselytising strategy. Every day the Jesuit residence in Lahore distributed alms to a 'hundred poor people' and Pinheiro often assisted in particular cases in which individuals required specific help. These charitable acts, which were a recurrent instrument of the missionary repertoire, allowed Pinheiro to establish permanent contact with the local population and identify

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ines Zupanov, "The Pulpit Trap: Possession and Personhood in Colonial Goa", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 65/66 (2014/2015), p. 309.

<sup>112</sup> Father Felix, O.C., "Jesuit missions in Lahore", p. 83.

potential converts. Ideally, they would be persuaded to convert through prolonged exposure to Christian doctrine and the edifying examples provided by Pinheiro or other members of the Christian community. However, the material benefits offered by Jesuit charity encouraged the appearance of ‘rice Christians’, a problem recognised by the Jesuit correspondence. In fact, the reports on the Lahore mission frequently mentioned a continuous effort in catechisation and confession to ensure adequate integration of converts into the Catholic ecumene. As in other mission fields, these instruments allowed Pinheiro to monitor and correct the behaviour of neophytes.

The investment in charitable acts reinforced the charismatic aura and public notoriety of Manuel Pinheiro. The relief and assistance offered by the missionary allowed him to establish clientelist relationships with those who relied on Jesuit aid. At the same time, Pinheiro’s philanthropic activities were compatible with Mughal practices based on the Islamic principle of *zakat*. Charitable endowments were also one of the preferred vehicles exploited by Mughal emperors and high officials to enhance their status and influence. These similarities facilitated the integration of the Jesuit mission into local civic traditions, allowing Pinheiro to become a relevant figure in Lahore’s sociopolitical landscape.

Pinheiro’s investment in a popular mission focused on the lower strata of Mughal society seemed to have faced the opposition of Jerónimo Xavier. In a letter to Claudio Acquaviva dated 9 September 1602, Pinheiro mentioned that Xavier disapproved of his strategy:

The father [Jerónimo Xavier] had many concerns, but he did not say a word, because he does not like the fact that I make Christians, especially among the Gentiles (...) and for this reason this mission has been discredited in India.<sup>113</sup>

These words suggest a tension between two apparently antagonistic visions of the *modus operandi* that were supposed to guide the Mughal mission. Indeed, Xavier favoured the traditional Jesuit top-down approach, conceiving the emperor and the court as the only real targets of the mission. A rapid and successful Christianisation of the Mughal Empire would only be possible if the *padres* were able to convert Akbar

<sup>113</sup> ARSI, Goa 46, “Manuel Pinheiro to Claudio Acquaviva, Lahore, 9 September 1612”, f. 44r.

and other relevant figures of the Mughal elite. As the head of the body politic, the emperor could establish Christianity as the official religion or encourage other relevant social or political actors to embrace Catholicism. If the emperor was reticent to convert, the conversion of relevant courtiers and officials had the potential to institute an influential Christian elite that could create the necessary political conditions for the ruler's conversion and subsequent Christianisation of Mughal India. As in other mission fields such as China, Japan and Ethiopia, the missionaries should concentrate their efforts on infiltrating non-Christian political structures and promote a conversion 'from within'.<sup>114</sup> For Xavier, Pinheiro's 'popular mission' in Lahore, in spite of its encouraging numbers of converts, threatened the success of the top-down strategy at the imperial court. As a new religion, the association of Catholicism with the lower strata of Mughal society, in particular low-caste Hindus, could reduce its attractiveness in the eyes of the Mughal elites. In 1607, Xavier complained that the majority of the Lahore converts were 'common and low people' (*gente comum e baixa*).<sup>115</sup>

Like Xavier, Pinheiro sought a conversion 'from within' but, as his comments to Claudio Acquaviva indicated, also feared that the lack of conversions could terminate the Mughal mission. With his activities in Lahore he sought to establish a native Christian community that could safeguard the continuity of the mission and, at the same time, establish the Catholic Church as an integral part of the Mughal social and political landscape. Indeed, the formation of native Christian communities, and the role of the *padres* as their spiritual leaders, allowed the missionaries to pose as domestic political actors and explore different ways to engage with the Mughal polity and its elites.

Indeed, Pinheiro's agency in Lahore was made possible by an implicit acknowledgement that the Jesuit missionaries were part of a subordinate minority—the Christian community—and an inferior polity—the Hispanic Monarchy. As non-state actors or non-official representatives of the Iberian Crowns, the *padres* had the flexibility to participate in forms of interactions that submitted them to symbols of Mughal political authority. Pinheiro's progressive 'Mughalisation' was thus part of a

<sup>114</sup> Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines Zupanov, *Catholic Orientalism*, p. 148.

<sup>115</sup> Doc. 7, "Carta do Padre Jerónimo Xavier para o Padre Provincial da Companhia de Jesus na Índia, Laor, 25 de Setembro 1604", *DUP*, vol. III, p. 97.

proselytisation strategy, also followed by the members of the first mission, that sought to reach all strata of Mughal society and form a local Christian community, but also to establish interpersonal relations with different Mughal agents who would allow the missionary to infiltrate local political structures and, if possible, convert their members.<sup>116</sup> These affinitive social relations served mutual interests. If Pinheiro became ‘Mughalised’ to guarantee political protection and some degree of influence in his host society, the Mughal authorities supported his ‘Mughalisation’ in an attempt to integrate the Europeans and Christians living in Lahore and Gujarat into the Mughal political order. Pinheiro’s ability to integrate Lahore’s civic life and pose as a domestic actor allowed him to gain political agency. His language skills and direct access to Portuguese and Mughal officials allowed him to be considered as a viable mediator between the Mughal polity and a diverse Christian community formed by European Catholics (Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, Flemish, French and Germans), Armenians, Orthodox Greeks, Georgians and Syriacs. The *Kotwal*, a post often translated in the Jesuit correspondence as ‘chief-justice’, appreciated Pinheiro’s mediator role. Indeed, the annual letter mentioned that the *Kotwal* ‘releases many people, being them Muslims, Hindu or Christians, after the petitions presented by the fathers, and he often allows them to apply justice’.<sup>117</sup> The formal and informal concession of political and social privileges to the Lahore mission transformed the missionary into a de facto Mughal agent who oversaw a heterogenous minority. Manuel Pinheiro is thus an interesting case study as a non-state actor who, thanks to his ability to facilitate diplomatic contacts and maintain regular communication between key political actors in Goa and the Mughal court was progressively, though not completely, absorbed by the Mughal formal structures.

Pinheiro’s status in Lahore was also enhanced by the role of the Jesuit church as a centre for the diffusion of European art. After its construction, the Jesuit church and residence gradually became an attraction.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Ines G. Županov, “Between Mogor and Salsete: Rodolfo Acquaviva’s error” in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization* eds. Nadine Amsler, Andreea Badea, Bernard Heyberger, and Christian Windler (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 53–57.

<sup>117</sup> Doc. 2, “Carta do Padre Jerónimo Xavier para o Padre Provincial da Companhia de Jesus na Índia (Agra, 6/09/1604)”, *DUP*, vol. III, p. 24.

<sup>118</sup> Father Felix, “Jesuit Missions in Lahore”, p. 91.

Many Hindus and Muslims from Lahore and other surrounding towns frequently visited the Jesuit buildings to contemplate the artistic and architectural novelties from Europe brought by the missionaries. The frequent visits of non-Christians made the church a privileged meeting area for Pinheiro and different local agents, especially the members of the Mughal elite.

Pinheiro's presence and the existence of Catholic buildings allowed noblemen and high-ranking officials to emulate Akbar's patronage of religious minorities and interest in European art and letters. To mimic the emperor was, besides a suggestion of superiority or sophistication, an unequivocal expression of loyalty and adherence to the religious policy and administrative reforms implemented by Akbar. Khawaja Shamsuddin Khawafi, one of Akbar's closest aides, who served as governor of Lahore between 1598 and 1600, attended the inauguration of the new Jesuit church and frequently attended the processions and solemn masses staged by Pinheiro.<sup>119</sup> Even a hostile governor such as Qulij Khan, a member of the Sunni orthodox faction and a supporter of a policy of open confrontation with the *Estado da Índia*, contributed to Jesuit charitable activities and frequently invited Pinheiro to theological debates in the manner of those organised by Akbar. Although Jerónimo Xavier described Qulij Khan as 'a great enemy of our Holy Law',<sup>120</sup> he also reported that the *subadar* was personally on friendly terms with Pinheiro. Qulij Khan's wife even visited the Jesuit church to make an offer to Our Lady and a vow for the improvement of her son.<sup>121</sup>

Manuel Pinheiro also reported with enthusiasm 'the great number of clean people (*gente limpa*) who goes to the Church to see it and listen to the law of Jesus Christ'.<sup>122</sup> The reference to clean people suggested the interest of the local elites and middle strata. Pinheiro counted among the frequent curious visitors 'Persians, Mughals, Turkmen, Uzbeks and many other nations'.<sup>123</sup> The Jesuit missionary described the visits of these

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>120</sup> Doc. 2, "Carta do Padre Jerónimo Xavier para o Padre Provincial da Companhia de Jesus na Índia (Agra, 6/09/1604)", *DUP*, vol. III, p. 23.

<sup>121</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mughal*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>122</sup> Doc. 2, "Carta do Padre Jerónimo Xavier para o Padre Provincial da Companhia de Jesus na Índia (Agra, 6/09/1604)", *DUP*, vol. III, p. 43.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

members of the Mughal elites as ‘royal retinue’ (*regio acompanhamento*) that crossed the city attracting a crowd. ‘It was a beautiful spectacle of people’, wrote Pinheiro, ‘the streets, windows, balconies, walls, etc. were full of people’.<sup>124</sup>

Pinheiro’s role as the political and spiritual leader of the Lahore Christians was instigated by a series of *firmans* issued in the early 1600s, which conceded a series of privileges that allowed the Portuguese Jesuit to expand his activities. In 1601, following a petition made by Manuel Pinheiro, Akbar signed a *firman* granting imperial protection to the Jesuit church and residence at Lahore. The document allowed Pinheiro to enjoy a privileged status vis-à-vis the authorities of Lahore. Another important privilege granted by the emperor to the Lahore church was the right of asylum, allowing fugitives from justice and renegades to seek refuge in the Jesuit church.<sup>125</sup> This act of imperial benevolence was followed by *firman* of 1602, which expanded the privileges granted in the previous year by guaranteeing the freedom of religion to all Christians living in the Mughal and ending the persecution of the Christian converts.<sup>126</sup>

Manuel Pinheiro emerges thus as a de facto superintendent or overseer of the local Christian community who, on behalf of the Mughal authorities, regulated their behaviour and ensured their obedience to the Mughal polity. It is possible that the imperial *firmans* and other privileges granted to the Jesuit missionary represented an attempt to implement something resembling the *millet* system developed by the Ottoman Empire. In Safavid Persia, more or less at the same time, Shah ‘Abbas was also making similar experiments involving the Carmelite and Augustinian friars.<sup>127</sup>

The Jesuit correspondence regarded the 1602 *firman* as an important victory that formalised and defined the range of action of the missionaries. Indeed, the previous privileges conceded by Akbar to the *padres* consisted of verbal instructions and lacked the formal authority granted by a *firman* signed and sealed by the emperor. Although Akbar agreed to issue an edict confirming all the privileges granted to the Jesuits, Pinheiro

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Father Felix, “Jesuit missions in Lahore”, p. 82.

<sup>126</sup> Jorge Flores and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, *Os Firangis na Chancelaria Mogol: Cópias portuguesas de documentos de Akbar, 1572–1604* (New Delhi: Embaixada de Portugal, 2003), p. 48.

<sup>127</sup> John M. Flannery, *The Missions of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602–1747)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 248–249.



complained that the emperor sought to delay the signing of the document. Initially, the emperor rejected the first draft of the *firman*, arguing that its contents would annoy the Sunni orthodox and had the potential to undermine Qulij Khan's allegiance. Given the political implications of the *firman*, Akbar opted to consult with several high-ranking courtiers and officials on four different versions of the document. Pinheiro believed that the emperor's intention to obtain a general consensus from different sections of the court was a subterfuge to postpone *sine die* the signing of the *firman*. In an attempt to accelerate Akbar's deliberation, Pinheiro sought the intervention of an unnamed courtier described as 'a young man (*mancebo*) very close to the king who calls him his adoptive son and who was a former pupil of mine'.<sup>128</sup> The *mancebo*'s good services bore results and after a few days Akbar signed the *firman*.<sup>129</sup>

Indeed, the dates of the imperial edicts coincided with a troubled period in which the Sunni orthodox factions dissatisfied with the Akbari dispensation regrouped around Salim and supported his rebellion between 1599 and 1604. Although loyal to Akbar, Qulij Khan's alignment with the Sunni orthodox suggests that the *subadar* took advantage of the problems of the Mughal polity to implement in Lahore a programme that reverted elements of the Akbari dispensation. As Pinheiro noted in his 1605 report, the clashes with Qulij Khan coincided with the outbreak of the conflict between Akbar and Selim. The instability within the Mughal polity seemed to have encouraged the *subadar* to gain a greater autonomy from the emperor.<sup>130</sup>

At the same time, the privileges granted by the *firman*s issued between 1598 and 1602 encouraged Pinheiro and Francesco Corsi to aggressively target the Hindu community. Pinheiro reports, for example, his continuous efforts to persuade the inhabitants of a Hindu neighbourhood to abandon the *sati* and the 'great abomination' and 'nefarious sin' of killing newborn girls. The Hindu community reacted by petitioning Qulij Khan to enact the immediate expropriation of the Jesuit properties in Lahore on the grounds that they were wrongly taken from their previous owner, a Hindu named Pauseri. The *subadar* initially sided with the Hindus and

<sup>128</sup> ARSI, Goa 46, "Manuel Pinheiro to Claudio Acquaviva, Lahore, 9 September 1612", f. 45r.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., ff. 45r, 46r.

<sup>130</sup> Doc. 3, "Carta do Padre Manuel Pinheiro para o Padre Manuel da Veiga, Provincial da Companhia de Jesus na Índia (Lahore, 12/08/1605)", *DUP*, vol. III, p. 40.

supported a series of anti-Christian measures that were intended to limit the activities of the mission and undermine the stipulations of the *firmans*.

The disputes between the Jesuits and the *subadar* would be solved by a *nishan* signed on behalf of Akbar by the rehabilitated Salim in 1604. The document instructed Qulij Khan to restore the Jesuit estate. In spite of the imperial orders, Pinheiro's report of 1605 mentioned that Qulij Khan and a Hindu faction planned the massacre of the entire Christian community of Lahore.<sup>131</sup> The killings, which was to take place on a Friday, 15 September, were abruptly cancelled after the defeats of the Mughal army led by Qulij Khan's son in the Deccan.<sup>132</sup>

The connection between the alleged conspiracy and the Mughal campaigns in the Deccan indicates that more than Qulij Khan's religious orthodoxy and personal agenda, the frequent acts of intimidation against the Christian community of Lahore could also be connected to the recurrent clashes between Portuguese and Mughal geopolitical interests. At the same time that Qulij Khan supported anti-Jesuit actions, in 1603 two ships and 50 Portuguese were arrested again in Khambhat. The captives were sent to Agra and released through the mediation of Jerónimo Xavier, who negotiated with Akbar, Salim and 'Aziz Koka.<sup>133</sup> Qulij Khan's efforts to inhibit the Lahore Christian community—which was closely associated with the *Estado* via the Jesuit mission—seemed thus to have been influenced by these Mughal attempts to curb Portuguese influence in the Indian Ocean.

## VII

In 1599, there were hopes that the Mughal ambitions in the Deccan and the *Estado* would fade away after the defeat of the Mughal army in Bir and the death of Prince Murad, the commander of the Deccan campaign. Murad's death was seen in Goa as an eventual turning point that could hamper Akbar's plans. Viceroy Francisco da Gama, in a letter to Philip III, stated that the disappearance of the Mughal prince was probably 'the

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>133</sup> Jorge Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours*, p. 86.

best thing to happen' for the *Estado's* immediate interests.<sup>134</sup> Gama's enthusiasm has led Sanjay Subrahmanyam to suggest that the viceroy was probably behind Murad's death. Indeed, as Jorge Flores has argued, the thesis of a Portuguese involvement in the death of the Mughal prince is plausible.<sup>135</sup>

Rather than causing instability in the Mughal court or forcing the abandonment of the expansionist ambitions in the Deccan, Murad's death led Akbar to personally supervise the Mughal offensive in the region. Between 1600 and 1601, the emperor led a successful campaign that would culminate with the conquest of Khandesh and most of the Sultanate of Ahmadnagar. After these series of victories that consolidated the Mughal presence in the region, on 29 March 1601 Akbar signed a *firman* addressed to Viceroy Aires de Saldanha and announcing that the Mughal emperor was sending an embassy to Goa led by one Cogetqui Soldan Hama (Khwâjgî Sultân Ahmad), accompanied by Padre Bento de Góis, to acquire 'rare pieces' from Europe, as well as recruit 'skilled craftsmen'.

The Mughal embassy seemed to have been both a gesture to demonstrate Akbar's apparent goodwill towards the *firangis*, by fomenting a cultural exchange between Goa and Agra, and an attempt to negotiate an arrangement with the Portuguese regarding the borders of the *Estado* and Mughal seafaring activities. Indeed, the *firman* the Akbar was concerned with the freedom of navigation in the 'seas of Hindustan' and was probably seeking an agreement with the Portuguese. The *firman* sent to Aires de Saldanha mentions that Khwâjgî Sultân Ahmad would inform the viceroy on 'other matters by word of mouth'. These matters were probably related to the Mughal campaigns in the Deccan and the Jesuit mission. Indeed, at the same time that Akbar sent an ambassador to Goa, there were three other Mughal embassies to Bijapur, Golconda and Bidar with the aim of securing their obedience after the conquest of the Deccan.<sup>136</sup>

Although Góis travelled with the status of ambassador, after arriving in Goa his Jesuit superiors instructed him to 'religiously withdraw' from

<sup>134</sup> BDP – Reservados, cod. 1976, f. 99; see also: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected Histories: Mughals and Franks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 71–103.

<sup>135</sup> Flores, *Nas Margens do Hindustão*, pp. 216–217.

<sup>136</sup> Flores and Saldanha, *The Firangis in the Mughal Chancellery*, p. 45.

the lavish public reception and ceremonies related to the embassy. As Nicolau Pimenta commented in the 1601 annual letter, the reception of the Mughal embassy was surrounded by ‘great pomp’ (*grande aparato*), which probably clashed with the desired image of austerity promoted by the Jesuits. Góis’ discreet retreat from the splendid ceremonies staged in honour of the Mughal ambassador also had the advantage of not exposing the role of the Jesuit missionaries as mediators between Akbar and the *Estado* too much, a position that started to raise questions about the proximity of the *padres* to the Mughal polity.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, Aires de Saldanha’s predecessor, Francisco da Gama, interpreted the new Mughal embassy as another manoeuvre by Akbar to distract and manipulate the *Estado*. The former viceroy saw the Mughal emperor as ‘a sagacious and skilful’ man who was capable of many ‘machinations and plots’, and accused Akbar of being a master of dissimulation who was on friendly terms with the *Estado* and the Portuguese Crown to hide ‘his thoughts and desires, which are focused on seeking all the ways to cause harm to this State’. To support his thesis, Gama mentioned the information obtained by the Jesuits who had reported that Akbar and Salim ‘often talk about this Island of Goa, and make questions about its particularities with great curiosity, being understood that they have an insatiable desire to take it’.<sup>138</sup>

As Jorge Flores noted, the words of Francisco da Gama reveal the existence of two distinct visions of Akbar. While the Jesuit missionaries presented the emperor’s interest in Portugal and Goa as the result of a genuine curiosity in distant places and peoples, described from time to time as an expression of a true affection for Portugal, Gama’s letters described the Timurid ruler as a rather Machiavellian and dissimulative character who pretended at friendship with the *Estado* to gain time, and manipulated the missionaries to obtain privileged information.<sup>139</sup> Although privileged and reliable informers of the Portuguese authorities, the positive perception of Akbar presented by the Jesuit missionaries seemed to have been heavily influenced by the emperor’s religious policy, which it was believed could result in his conversion to Christianity. In

<sup>137</sup> Henry Hosten, “Eulogy of Father Jerome Xavier, SJ, a Missionary in Mogor (1549–1617)”, *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 23 (1927), p. 88.

<sup>138</sup> BNP – Reservados, cod. 1976, f. 184–185.

<sup>139</sup> Flores, *Nas Margens do Hindustão*, p. 229.

other words, the *padres*' role as courtiers and the personal ties they established with Akbar and other key figures of the imperial apparatus led them to develop a more sympathetic image of the Mughal emperor.<sup>140</sup> Francisco da Gama and other Portuguese officials based their perceptions of Akbar on a wide range of informative sources provided by a myriad of agents—spies, merchants, renegades and diplomats—who had no significant personal ties to Timurid political actors and observed the evolution of the Mughal Empire through a political lens that did not contemplate the possibility of an imminent conversion of Akbar to Catholicism.

However, the Jesuits were far from being naïve observers of Mughal India. Missionaries such as Antoni Montserrat, Jerónimo Xavier and Manuel Pinheiro were often suspicious of Akbar's true intentions towards Goa and ready to become involved in court politics to protect or promote Portuguese interests. As early as 1595, Xavier commented that the missionaries were particularly cautious while dealing with Akbar:

We are very careful with this king because we do not understand him. On one hand he shows his devotion and desire to become a Christian, as I have mentioned before. But at the same time, he worships the sun.<sup>141</sup>

Xavier's worries reveal a clear perception that the relation between the Mughal emperor and the Jesuits involved an element of mutual dissimulation. Xavier's collaboration with Akbar's ideological projects or Pinheiro's 'Mughalisation' echoed the recommendations of calculated politeness and discretion recommended by Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* and Della Casa's *Il Galateo* regarding daily social interaction at an early modern court. The fortunes of the courtier, as Castiglione noted, relied on his capacity to be discreet and conceal his thoughts and interests, in order to surpass other courtiers and gain the favour, praise and recognition of the prince. To achieve these aims the *padres*, like the ideal type of the courtier, needed to possess or develop the adequate social and intellectual skills to operate in a courtly environment. For example, Lorenzo Forero, a Jesuit who operated in Bavaria, stressed the importance of sending clever and skillful missionaries who could 'secretly instil the mysteries of the Catholic faith'

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp. 228–229.

<sup>141</sup> Real Academia de Historia (RAH), 9-3669/141, "Suma de una carta del Padre Hieronimo Xavier, de Lahore a diz de Jullio de mil y quinientos y nouenta y cinco años", f. 488r.

to royal courts.<sup>142</sup> As the courtier, the missionary should be a clever but honest dissimulator, someone who had the prudence, discretion and realism to use the art of ‘civil conversation’ for a greater good.<sup>143</sup>

The careful approach adopted by Jerónimo Xavier and the other members of the third mission reveals thus the changing perception of the Society of Jesus regarding the nature and possible outcomes of the Mughal mission. The debacle of the two previous missions derived from the expectation of Akbar’s immediate conversion, a perception based on the limited information in Goa about the sociopolitical reality of the Mughal Empire. The experiences of 1580–1583 and 1591–1592 revealed that the emperor’s conversion was not certain and that his interest in Christianity derived from his diplomatic and ideological agenda. To secure the continuity and success of the mission, the *padres* needed thus to be useful to the emperor’s projects and establish partnerships with different agents of the Mughal polity. Xavier’s scholarly endeavours and Pinheiro’s ‘Mughalisation’ were thus part of a long-term strategy that sought to normalise the presence of Christian missionaries by making themselves useful to the Mughal polity and an integral part of the Mughal political and intellectual structures.

<sup>142</sup> Adriano Prospero, “The Missionary” in *Baroque Personae* ed. Rosario Villari (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), pp. 182, 193.

<sup>143</sup> Jon Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 29.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

