

## JESUIT MISSIONARIES IN AN ISLAMIC COURT

イスラムの宮殿で活躍していたイエズス会士

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1578年、ムガル帝国の大帝ジャラルッディーン・ムハンマド・アクバルは、自身や宮廷のムスリムやヒンドゥ教徒がキリスト教を学ぶために、首都ファテプル・スィークリー（デリーから北に176キロの所に位置した）の宮殿に、南インドのゴアから3人のカトリック司祭を招いた。当時のイエズス会の管区長ルイ・ビンセンテは、第一回目の使節団として、ルドルフ・アクゥアヴィヴァ、フランシス・エンリーケ、アントニー・モンセラテら3人のイエズス会士をムガルの宮殿に送った。アクバルと会士たちとの対話は3年にわたり、皇帝は彼らを歓待したが、自らキリスト教徒になることはなかった。宮殿に滞在中、会士たちはゴアやヨーロッパに向けてイタリア語、ポルトガル語、スペイン語、ラテン語などで手紙を書いた。

1579年、アクバルは37歳、強大な力を持ったムガル帝国の大帝であった。彼は背丈は並であったが体は頑丈で、長い腕を持ち、額は広く、眼は生気がみなぎっていた。また彼は外交官であり、政治家、軍人、行政官でもあった。そして非常に信仰心に厚く、一時たりとも神を忘れることがなかった。

アクバルの誕生日の数ヶ月前であった1542年5月、フランシスコ・ザビエルがゴアに到達した。そしてザビエルの後も、多くのイエズス会士がゴアを訪れた。これらのイエズス会士たちは、ゴアの聖パウロ・カレッジの学生や教師であったため、パウリスタと呼ばれた。また彼らはヨーロッパ各国のさまざまな階層の出身であった。長く黒いローブを見にまとい、高い帽子をかぶっていた。

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フランシス・エンリーケは1538年にペルシアに生まれ、もともとはムスリムであった。アントニー・モンセラテはエンリーケの数年前にスペインで生まれ、1556年にイエズス会に入会した。ルドルフ・アクアヴィヴァは、1550年イタリア生まれであった。彼はアトリ公国の9代目の公爵の息子であったが、イエズス会のローマン・カレッジで哲学と神学を修めた後に東洋に派遣され、ゴアの聖パウロ・カレッジでは哲学の教授になった。

これら3人の司祭たちが書いた多くの手紙からは、アクバルとイエズス会員たちの間に良い関係が築かれていたことがうかがえる。

アクバルの死後、その息子ジェハンギールがムガル王朝第4代の皇帝となった。彼もキリスト教徒に対して寛容であり、多くのイエズス会士が若き皇帝の教育係をつとめた。教会はラホールの街にあったが、そこではキリスト教の儀式も許され、ジェハンギールにはペルシア語に翻訳した福音書も渡された。彼もキリスト教に関心はあったようであるが、信者となることに興味をもっていたかどうかは定かではない。

しかし、アクアヴィヴァと2人の司祭ら、イエズス会はじめての使節団は、失敗であったとは言えないであろう。彼らの存在は、イスラーム教とキリスト教の間に良好な関係を築くことの助となったことには違いない。1591年にはエドワード・レイタオ、クリストファ・デ・ヴェガ、ステューヴン・リベイロ、第二回の使節団がアクバルの招聘によりラホールに到着し、その後も使節団の派遣が続いた。

**Any inquiry into the history of the Society of Jesus will reveal that the mission of the Jesuits in India formed the nerve center of their numerous ventures into the Far East. It was to India that Ignatius of Loyola sent his foremost associate Francis Xavier, and to him and his collaborators, some of whom were in course of time to attain international renown, Ignatius gifted both his inspiration and his directives. These in subsequent years formed the keystone of what we may call the Jesuit vocation and method. India has also been the birthplace of numerous missionary theories, and the testing ground of missionary policies.**

Francis Xavier was the first Jesuit to set foot on Indian soil on May 6, 1542, and on that day he is reported to have entered the city of Goa as a member of the entourage of the new Portuguese governor, Martin Affonso de Sousa, with whom he had sailed from Lisbon. They were given a rousing reception, and later we have reason to believe that the loveliness of the nature that pervaded the Mandovi riverside and the splendid and eye-catching edifices that lay scattered in the surrounding vicinity, deeply moved him. He went on to accept authority over the college of St. Paul, that was started in 1541 by a group of Portuguese. This was the first European-style educational institution in India, which later became the cornerstone of what we call the Indian Assistancy of the Society of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Xavier was an obsessive and relentless missionary, constantly on the move. He traveled practically non-stop along the coastal areas of India visiting various villages, and later went on to Mylapore, a city that forms part of the present-day larger city of Chennai in the South Indian state of Tamilnadu. He sailed to Malacca and Japan in 1549 where he spent two and a half years, and finally in April 1552 he set sail for China via Malacca from Goa. He was never to return from this trip, for he died at Sancian a small island facing China, on December 2 of the same year. Wherever he went Francis Xavier enthusiastically plunged into various benevolent and pastoral works, ceaselessly striving to communicate the essentials of Christianity to the surrounding village folk. At the time of his death there were 64 Jesuits in India, and many of them were associated with the college of St. Paul in Goa. Francis Xavier worked in India for ten years, namely from 1542 to 1552, and this is sometimes referred to as the Xaverian decade.

Islam was born in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD among lowly Arab tribes dwelling in the deserts of Mecca and Medina. Yet the religion grew with amazing rapidity, for within a hundred years it extended to diverse areas of Europe and Asia, and eventually reached as far as India. Like all religions Islam too had its share of ups and downs, but

the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries could undeniably be declared a golden age for Islam, for it was around that time that major areas of the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, fell under the control of Islamic rulers. These rulers held sway over three colossal empires, namely the Ottoman, the Safavid, and the Mughal.

The world of Islam has been described as Christendom's neighbor, contender, and by some scholars even as its deadliest enemy, and it comprised the three immense empires of Turkey, Persia, and India. It was a world that was as disunited and over-run by internal discord as Europe. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century Islam the 'faith' had been identified with Islam the 'nation,' but subsequent to that period national contentions began to steadily out-weigh religious brotherhood. Turkey was Sunnite, Persia was Shiite, and in India, Akbar the Great, who was the third ruler of the Mughal dynasty, attempted a synthesis of all religions including Christianity. At the same time, all the three empires abounded in separate sects and heresies, the control and manipulations of fortune-tellers, pseudo saints, and dervishes was widespread, and every ruler had among his retainers several astrologers as well. Viewed from a historical perspective, the situation was perhaps not too different from that of contemporary Europe. The chief contrast however was political. The Muslim ruler was an autocrat in a sense that could not be applied to the western rulers. There existed no constitution that limited his powers, and there rarely existed any machinery whereby his subjects' voices could be heard.

These three prodigious Islamic powers had four common traits apart from religion. First, all the three were centered on famous capitals. Even today the grandeur of Istanbul the capital of the Ottomans, Isfahan the capital of the Safavids, and Delhi, Agra, and Fatehpur Sikri, the three capitals of the Mughal emperors, electrify all visitors and evoke the approbation of all, drawing thousands of tourists who flock every year to goggle at their many spectacular monuments. Each city had its great Mosque that was oriented towards the holy city of

Mecca. The same language was used in all the three empires, that is, Arabic for religion and law, and Persian and Turkish for the court and the palace. All three empires had grown enormously large, so large that controlling them was often a demanding and wearisome task, for rebellions and uprisings were endemic. In all the three empires statesmen were aware of the presence and power of Europe, for merchants, travelers, adventurers, pilgrims, and missionaries moved about from Istanbul to Isfahan and from Isfahan to Delhi, Agra, and Fatehpur Sikri, marveling at the wonders that lay around them and communicating the mysteries of Europe to their inquiring hosts.

The Ottoman Empire that was centered in Turkey was established by Osman I, and in the 16th and 17th centuries it ranked among the world's most dominant political entities. The numerous nations of Europe felt jeopardized by the steady advance of the Ottoman forces through the Balkans. At its height, it comprised an area of about 19.9 million square kilometers, though much of this was under the indirect control of the central administration. The Ottoman Empire spanned more than 600 years and ultimately came to an end only in 1922, when the Turkish Republic and various successor states in southeastern Europe and the Middle-East arose in its place. At its height, the empire embraced most of southeastern Europe up to the gates of Vienna, including modern Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia, Romania, Greece, and Ukraine; Iraq, Syria, Israel, and Egypt; North Africa as far west as Algeria; and most of the Arabian Peninsula. The most well known name among the Ottoman rulers was Suleiman I (who ruled during the period 1520-66), and who was often referred to as the 'Magnificent' in Europe and as the 'Lawgiver' (Kanuni) among his people. His affluence and power are said to have been unparalleled in Ottoman history.

The Safavids (1502-1736) were the dynasty that ruled what constitutes present-day Iran, and unlike the Ottomans they followed the Shiite form of Islam. This Shiite form of Islam was the state religion, and it proved to be a key factor in the materialization of a

cohesive nationwide consciousness among the various ethnic and linguistic elements, that comprised its vast domain. The Safavid dynasty was founded by Ismail I. However, in 1588 Abbas I or Shah Abbas (1588-1629) ascended the throne as the undisputed ruler. He was referred to as Abbas the Great, for it was he who was primarily responsible for transforming the nation of Persia into a truly illustrious power. Trade with Western nations and industrial development within Persia briskly expanded, communications progressed, and the capital city Isfahan was transformed into the hub of Safavid architectural triumph. The magnificence of Safavid structural design is observable even today in mosques such as the Masjid-i Shah and the Masjid-i Sheykh Lotfollah, besides other great monuments like the Ali Qapu, the Chehel Sotun, and the Meydan-i Shah. A distinctive point about the Safavids lay in the fact that despite their Shiite zeal Christian people were tolerated, and several missions and churches were also reported to have been built.

Coming over now to India, we see that here existed one of the mightiest empires the world has ever known, namely the Mughal Empire founded by Zahiruddin Mohammed Babar in 1526. Although it began small, yet in course of time it developed into a domain that was incredibly large. The word 'Mughal' came from the Arabic word Mongol. The Mughal dynasty was notable for about two centuries of effective rule over much of India, for the aptitude of its rulers who for seven generations maintained a record of unusual talent, and for its administrative organization. The monarchs who were Muslims, sought to integrate Hindus and Muslims into a united Indian state. The Mughal Empire was one of the largest centralized states known in pre-modern world history. By the late 1600s the emperor held supreme political authority over a population that numbered between 100 and 150 million, and lands that covered almost the whole of the subcontinent of South Asia. The empire far outstripped in dimensions and resources its two contending Islamic empires, namely Safavid

Persia and Ottoman Turkey, for its rulers possessed direct and undeviating control over an area of roughly 3.2 million square kilometers. Indeed, one might say that the Mughal emperor's lands and subjects were analogous only to those ruled by his Chinese contemporary, namely the Ming emperor in early modern China.

The "Great Mughal's" worldly goods and grandeur were said to have been proverbial. His coffers housed the plundered fortunes of dozens of conquered dynasties, and his symbols of office and throne displayed some of the most fabulous gems ever mounted. Spectators were overawed by the mood of opulence and sophistication that pervaded every aspect of the realm. The ceremonies, etiquette, music, poetry, dance, calligraphy, and exquisitely executed paintings and objects of the imperial court, all blended together to fashion a distinctively aristocratic and elevated culture. Zahiruddin Muhammad Babar was the founder of the empire, and he was followed by his son Nasinuddin Muhammad Humayun, but the empire really reached its zenith in the reign of the third emperor Akbar, and this is the person with whom we are now concerned.

Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar (1556-1605) also known as Akbar the Great was the bona fide designer of the Mughal Empire. He was born in 1542, just a few months after Francis Xavier had landed in Goa. Under his successors, namely his son Muhammad Salim Jehangir (1605-1627), his grandson Ghiyasuddin Khurram Shah Jehan (1628-1658), and his great-grandson Mohiuddin Muhammad Aurangzeb (1659-1707), the empire rose to immense heights and dazzled travelers from Europe, so much so that when the English Ambassador Sir Thomas Roe wrote to his sovereign King James I, he made mention in his letter of the "mighty emperor of India, commonly called the Great Mogul." Mughal society was predominantly non-Muslim. Akbar therefore had not merely to sustain his position as a Muslim ruler, but also to be moderate enough to elicit effective support from his non-Muslim population. For that purpose he had first of all to deal first

with the Muslim theologians, who in the face of vigorous Brahmanic<sup>4</sup> resistance were rather concerned over the safeguarding of their community's individuality, and accordingly resisted firmly any efforts that could further a broader perception of political involvement that would include non-Muslims.

Akbar started his efforts to court the majority community by abolishing both the 'jizya' (the tax that non-Muslims were forced to pay), and the practice of forcibly converting prisoners of war to Islam. He also in various ways keenly encouraged Hindus and accepted them as his principal confidants and policy makers. To legitimize his many nonsectarian policies, he issued in 1579 a public pronouncement wherein he declared his right to be the ultimate arbitrator in Islamic religious matters, well above his many religious scholars and jurists. He had by then also undertaken a number of unyielding measures to amend the administration of religious grants, which were now available to learned and pious men of all religions, and not just the followers of Islam.

This statute was proclaimed in the wake of protracted discussions that Akbar had with Muslim scholars and theologians in his celebrated religious assembly hall, namely the Ibadat-Khanah at Fatehpur Sikri. He soon became dissatisfied with what he considered the shallowness of some of the learned men who surrounded him, and threw open the gatherings to religious experts of widely different persuasions, including Hindus, Jains, Christians, and Zoroastrians. After a comparative study of several religions Akbar arrived at the conclusion that there was truth in all of them, but that none of them possessed the unqualified truth. He therefore disestablished Islam as the religion of the state and espoused a system of accepting all people, irrespective of doctrine or sect. He rescinded what he felt were inequitable laws against non-Muslims and amended the personal laws of both his Muslim and Hindu citizens, so as to provide as many general laws as possible. Muslim judicial courts were allowed as before, but now the

decisions handed down by the village panchayats<sup>iii</sup> were also recognized. The emperor also created a new religion commonly referred to as Din-illahi (Divine Faith), modeled on the Islamic mystical Sufi brotherhood. This new order had its own ceremonial initiation and rules of conduct, in order to ensure a wholehearted dedication to the emperor. Aside from this, members of this community of the Divine Faith were allowed to hold on to their own individual religious beliefs and practices. It was devised with the principal goal of forging the dissimilar groups who were employed in the service of the state, into one cohesive political organization.

In 1578, Akbar requested the Jesuits from the city of Goa that lay far south in the western coast of India, to come to his capital of Fatehpur Sikri (some 176 kilometers south of Delhi) in order to explain the doctrines of Christianity to himself and the other Muslims and Hindus at his court. This invitation at once excited great hopes among both the religious and diplomatic communities of Goa. The possibility of converting the Mughal emperor to Christianity and thereby enabling Portugal to attain the position of a most favored nation, aroused a mood of great animation among all the priests and politicians of the city. Yet there were some who advised the people concerned to take a more cautious approach, and not just seize the chance. The provincial superior of the Jesuits whose name was Rui Vincente, sent three priests, namely Rudolph Acquaviva (who was later declared a Blessed of the Roman Catholic Church), Francisco Henriques, and Antonio Monserrate, on his first mission to the court of the Mughal emperors (1580~1583). The dialogues that were conducted between the Jesuits and the emperor progressed intermittently for about three years, and although Akbar showed a great responsiveness towards them, yet in the end he did not embrace Christianity. To the Jesuits he turned out to be “first an encouragement, then an enigma, and then a bitter disappointment.”

In 1579, Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, “the unique pearl of the vice

regency of God,”<sup>iv</sup> as his companion and biographer Abu'l Fazl called him, was 37 years old and at the very pinnacle of his powers. The image we have of him from contemporaneous paintings and descriptions is of a person of somewhat average height, well built, long-armed and somewhat bow-legged, and walking with a slight hobble. A wide forehead and a good crop of hair adorned his head that was bent a little to the right, and his eyes, which revealed evidence of his Mongol heritage, flickered with life. He was swarthy rather than fair in facial appearance with a small wart on the left side of his nose, and he was clean-shaven except for a closely trimmed little moustache.

Unusually bright though technically uneducated and questioning by nature, Akbar was a masterly tactician and statesman, warrior and supervisor. “A monarch should be ever intent on conquest,”<sup>v</sup> he declared, and in the pursuit of his ambitions he was at times even devious and brutal. There is good reason to hold however that he was at the same time a genuinely religious man, for in his autobiography his son the future emperor Jehangir, describes his father's nature in the following beautiful words,

“The good qualities of my revered father are beyond the limit of approval and the bounds of praise. If books were composed with regard to his commendable dispositions, without suspicion of extravagance, and he be not looked at as a father would by his son, even then but a little out of much could be said.

Notwithstanding his kingship and his treasures and his buried wealth, which were beyond the scope of counting and imagination, his fighting elephants and Arab horses, he never by a hair's breadth placed his foot beyond the base of humility before the throne of God, but considered himself the lowest of created beings, and never for one moment forgot God.”<sup>vi</sup>

In the course of a protracted time in power, his approach in matters of religion developed from that of a reasonably orthodox Sunni Muslim through Shia and Sufi influences, and followed a decade of questioning rationalism and skepticism, which led to an eclecticism that was embodied in the *Din-i-lahi*. Yet he remained very much a man of this world, predisposed to enticement and sin, though with such mundane tendencies there always remained blended a passionate craving for Spiritual Truth.

“The purpose of all our activity, the head and front of all we do,” declared Akbar, “is a desire to meet with divine approbation and to discover that which is true.”<sup>vii</sup> Yet his religious observances and course of action were not entirely devoid of political concern and diplomatic pragmatism, and while he certainly did spend a lot of time and risk a great deal in his contacts with religious leaders of diverse faiths, it is also true that he had an overweening ambition and greed.

It is in this context of his character that we must consider among other things, his interactions with the Portuguese. Ignorant of their actual power, he was far-sighted in not wishing to have an open war with them, least of all at sea where his own limitations were obvious. It was for this reason that he resolved to inform himself better about the Portuguese and acquire their camaraderie and support, which later could be slowly directed towards the advancement of his own plans, both political and otherwise.

Akbar first met the Portuguese in 1573 during the blockade of the city of Surat, when he received a group of representatives from Goa led by Antonio Cabral. Later in 1576, two Jesuits, namely Antonio Vaz and Pedro Dias arrived in the coast of Bengal that lay in the East, and there they sternly censured some Portuguese merchants who attempted to swindle the Mughal treasury by not paying certain taxes that were legitimately due. When news of this was conveyed to the emperor, he was tremendously impressed. He was curious to know what type of men these were, and what this religion was that they

followed, a religion that insisted so much on truthfulness and integrity. The next year he received at his court a Portuguese named Pedro Tavares, who was the commandant of the city of Satgaon in Bengal. This gentleman made an excellent impression upon him, and from him Akbar acquired a notion of the Christian faith. On the commendation of Tavares Akbar then promptly sent for Fr. Gil Eanes Pereira who was the Vicar General of Bengal, who arrived at Fatehpur Sikri in 1578. Fr. Pereira was an upright man who had even tried the religious life in Portugal, but he had no choice but to leave as a novice on account of his ill health. Unable to satisfy Akbar's curiosity he thereupon suggested that the emperor invite Jesuits to his court, since they were men of high intellectual caliber who were capable of answering his many probing questions.

The emperor acted swiftly. In the same year of 1578 he prepared to send a delegation to Goa, and in September 1579 the members of the delegation arrived in Goa with letters to the Viceroy, the Archbishop, and the Superior of the Jesuits. Here the emperor asked for two scholarly priests, who should bring with them the Christian scriptures, and whose security and return he would personally assure. The Mughal Ambassador was received with great acclamation, but the Viceroy, D. Luis de Ataide, was a very judicious and far-sighted man. He was disinclined to comply so readily with the emperor's demand, because he was worried that once they reached the Mughal capital the Jesuits might be kept as hostages. Hence after some deliberation he referred the matter to the Archbishop. The Archbishop thereupon consulted the other Bishops in Goa, and finally on November 10, 1579, it was formally decided that a mission should be dispatched to the Mughal court. At the college of St. Paul almost all the Jesuits when they heard the news were exceedingly eager to go, but the Provincial Superior Fr. Rui Vincente, after a great deal of prayer and consultation decided to choose three men, that is Rudolpho Acquaviva, Francisco Henriques, and Antonio Monserrate, with Acquaviva acting as the leader of the

group. The Jesuits in those days were referred to as Paulistas, from the name of the institution where they studied and worked, namely the college of St. Paul located in the city of Goa. They came from various nations and dissimilar social levels, and in the city they were conspicuous owing to their black robes, shaven faces, short hair, and high hats.

Francisco Henriques was born in Persia, around 1538. He was a convert from Islam, and was educated at Ormuz. He joined the Society of Jesus at Bassein (close to the present city of Mumbai) in 1556, and later proceeded to Goa. Since he joined not as a priest but as a brother he was for the most part occupied with administrative tasks, but later he too was ordained a priest, probably around 1579. Although Henriques had originally been a Muslim, yet the fact that he had spent so many years with the Christians had caused his knowledge of the Persian language to weaken, and he was obviously not too much of a scholar either. Hence, in the beginning it was he who conversed with the emperor on behalf of his companions with the help of Dominic Pires who was the emperor's authorized translator, but later when Acquaviva acquired some skill in Persian, Henriques who was not able to handle the complexities of the situation, silently returned to Goa in 1581.

Antonio Monserrate was born in Vich in Spain, a few years after Henriques. He also joined the Society of Jesus in 1556. He spent his early life in Lisbon, where he distinguished himself among the plague-stricken people during the epidemic of 1569. He landed in Goa in 1574, and for a time he was the secretary to the Provincial Superior.

The most illustrious of the three however was Rudolpho Acquaviva. He was the youngest of the group and the leader, and unlike the other two he came from a highly aristocratic background. He was born in 1550 in Italy to the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Atri and his wife. Though of delicate health he joined the Society of Jesus in 1568 in Rome, and here he was noted for his sterling piety. He studied philosophy and theology in Rome and was ordained a priest in Lisbon, and eventually set sail for

India in 1578. On the ship he had a few Jesuit companions who were also on their way to the Far East to work as missionaries. The most famous of these was Matteo Ricci, who was later to become a legend in China. The group reached Goa in 1578, and on landing Acquaviva was appointed to teach Philosophy at the college of St. Paul.

It was exactly a year later in 1579 that the emperor Akbar's embassy arrived in Goa, and on November 17 of that year the Jesuits set out for the Mughal capital in the company of the Mughal Ambassador and his retinue. The Jesuit Provincial also decided to go along with them part of the way. They set out by sea and then proceeded by land, and thanks to Monserrate we have a long and detailed description of the journey. His two companions went on ahead and reached the Mughal capital of Fatehpur Sikri on February 28, 1580, and they were tremendously impressed by the splendor of the city. Historical records reveal that many travelers to India have showered praise on Fatehpur Sikri. A merchant from England named Ralph Fitch has declared, "Agra and Fatehpur are two very great cities, either of them much greater than London and very populous." Another individual named Vincent Smith said, "Nothing like Fatehpur was ever created before, or can be created again. It is a romance in stone..." The missionaries were at the Mughal capital from 1580 to 1583, and religious discussions were held at the building located in Fatehpur Sikri called Ibadat Khana (the house of worship). Such discussions when they originally began in 1575 included only the various schools of Islam, but step by step they were extended to include representatives of other religions as well, such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, and now with the arrival of the Jesuits they included also Christianity. Throughout their stay in the emperor's court the Jesuits wrote reports back to Goa and Europe, in Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Latin, and since these letters give us an insight into life at the Mughal court, they now constitute a valuable source of research.

Correia-Afonso has shown that the reports sent by the Jesuits could

be divided into four main classes.

1. Those addressed to the Superiors of the Jesuit order.
2. Those meant for the members of the Society in general.
3. Those meant for the general public.
4. Private communications to personal friends, both within and without the Society.

He goes on to state that in order to understand the value of a Jesuit letter, it is important to keep in mind the person to whom it is written. Side by side with the Jesuit letters there appeared another set of documents called ‘allied documents,” and these are studies and treatises on particular issues, such as for example the life and customs of a particular tribe, the history of a major mission station, and so on. Since such documents were obviously the work of professionals, they are indeed of superlative value. I shall now briefly touch upon some interesting sentences from the letters of the three Jesuits. Most of the translations below are quoted from the book by Correia-Afonso, though I have taken the liberty of abridging and changing the wording in a few.

Henriques wrote the following in a letter to Fr. Lawrence Peres in Portuguese, on April 6, 1580.

1. Our journey (from Surat) lasted 43 days, and were it not for the indisposition of Fr. Monserrate we would have reached earlier. Everybody was gaping at us, since it was something they had never witnessed before. On a Sunday evening we were received by the king with great love and joy. As soon as he learned that we had arrived, he instructed the brother of the Ambassador that we should not speak to anyone until he himself had seen and spoken to us. The king came to know through letters from his Ambassador that although the Viceroy did not want to send us, we had insisted on coming, in order to meet a mighty king who wished to be informed of our law. He told his people that he did not know how to reward us for such determination and devotion. We held some discussions

with the Mullahs<sup>viii</sup> in his presence, but it was he who replied to our most searching questions.<sup>ix</sup>

In another letter of Henriques to Lawrence Peres, the following sentences are to be found.

2. Fr. Provincial had given us a Bible in seven volumes to be handed over to the king. On the day we made the presentation, he took each volume, kissed it, and placed it on his head with great reverence, in the presence of all his grandees, captains, and the people in the great hall. Everyone was amazed. He then asked, which one was the Gospel. When it was pointed out to him, he paid it greater reverence than all the others.<sup>x</sup>

In yet another letter of Henriques to Lawrence Peres, we find the following sentence.

3. We were very happy when the peons brought us letters from Daman. We conveyed to the king the news from Japan and Dachein (Achin in Sumatra where many Sultans and nobles were killed in 1579). He was very happy and we continued talking to him alone a good part of the night, replying to some of his questions.<sup>xi</sup>

The following sentences are from a letter of Acquaviva, Monserrate, and Henriques to Rui Vincente, the Provincial, on July 13, 1580.

1. The king wanted us to explain to him the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, and how Jesus Christ was the Son of God, since he had great difficulty in understanding these two things.

An interesting episode occurred when Akbar invited Acquaviva to witness a Sati.<sup>xii</sup> The emperor himself sponsored it, and remarked that fidelity like this came from God. Acquaviva declares that he thereupon reproached the emperor over this issue with certain well-chosen words, and he goes on to say that the emperor heard him completely. However owing to the love he had for the Jesuits, he took it very well. Acquaviva

also states that later he again reprimanded the emperor on various occasions, so much so that the people standing around were astonished. The emperor himself was astonished, but being a high-minded individual he did not mind. He realized that Acquaviva's sole motivation was a dedication to truth and justice, and so he esteemed him greatly for this deed. The Jesuits also objected to certain gladiatorial contests unto death that were organized for the emperor and his court, and made certain alternative and less harmful suggestions such as using blunt swords, breastplates, helmets, and so on, in order that the contestants may not get hurt. The emperor readily accepted these suggestions.<sup>xiii</sup> On one occasion Akbar is said to have visited the chapel in the place where the Jesuits resided, and here he took off his turban and prostrated on the ground before the pictures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. On another occasion he brought his three sons to the chapel and told them to show reverence to the pictures of Christ and his mother Mary.<sup>xiv</sup>

In one of the letters of Acquaviva to the Jesuit Provincial Superior Rui Vincente written on July 24, 1582, he states that he requested permission of the emperor to depart for Europe, but that Akbar was not disposed to letting him go. Acquaviva then tried to plead with him, but Akbar was unyielding. Finally the emperor replied, "If you are really bent on going, I shall not prevent you by force, but by no means can you count on my blessings. In a word, if you decide to go, this sin will be on your head." After writing this, Acquaviva said to the Provincial, "Since I know from your letter that you wish that I should not leave the place against the king's pleasure, and that I cannot go without him being grievously offended, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing else for me to do but to report back to you."<sup>xv</sup>

What finally became of the Jesuits? By February 1583 the last member of the First Jesuit Mission, that is, Acquaviva, was ready to quit the capital of Fatehpur Sikri, the other two having already departed earlier. Akbar wished to heap numerous gifts upon him but he

refused them all, accepting only what was barely necessary for him to return to his city of Goa. The only favor he asked of the emperor was that a Russian slave of the queen mother be allowed to accompany him, along with his wife and two children. The queen mother was apparently not too pleased at the idea of losing her slaves, but the emperor's love for his Christian friend was so great that refusing anything he asked was totally unthinkable. Acquaviva got back to Goa in rather poor health. Soon after his arrival he got news about the martyrdom of Edmund Campion at Tyburn in England, and deeply lamented over the fact that he himself was unworthy to achieve such a crown. By an extraordinary twist of fate however, not long after his return he was killed by a mob agitating against the missionaries at Cuncolim in Salcette on July 25, 1583, and thereby managed to acquire the crown of martyrdom that he so greatly desired. Monserrate declares that when the emperor heard about the death of his friend he was deeply grieved and said, "Alas, father. Did I not tell you not to go away? But you would not listen to me."

We have very little news about Henriques. He arrived in Goa from Fatehpur in November 1581, and after years of work he died at the college of St. Paul in 1597.

Antonio Monserrate accompanied the Ambassadors of the Mughal emperor to Spain and Portugal, and in 1582 he reached Goa. The embassy was eventually abandoned, but Monserrate had time to prepare an abstract of his future *Commentary*, in the form of the *Relacam*, a very instructive account of the great Mughal emperor and his court. In 1589 he left for Abyssinia but was captured by the Arabs at Dhafar, and during his captivity at Sanaa he completed in 1581 his famous *Mongolicae Legationes Commentarius*, or *Commentary*. He was then handed over to the Turks but was ransomed in 1596, whereupon he returned to Salcette in Goa and died four years later.

Following the death of Akbar the Great his son Muhammad Salim Jehangir acceded to the throne as the fourth emperor of the Mughal

dynasty. Apart from the fact that he provisionally discharged the Jesuits on account of a pledge he had earlier made that on his accession he would reinstate at court the Islamic religion that had been thrust aside by his father, Jehangir was generally lenient towards the Christians. His estrangement with the Jesuits, several of whom had been his mentors in his youth lasted only a year, namely from his coronation in 1605 until 1606, for he subsequently restored them to favor. Their church located in the city of Lahore was under no interdict, Christian processions were permitted in the streets, and a Persian translation of the Holy Gospels was handed over to Jehangir, who brought along two priests as members of his retinue when he returned from the city of Kabul to his capital of Agra. Though Jehangir was interested in Christianity, we are not sure whether he was truly interested in becoming a Christian.

Viewed from a broad perspective, this first Jesuit Mission of Acquaviva and his associates cannot by any means be considered a total failure, for their presence did help in bringing about a better understanding between Islam and Christianity. In 1591 a second mission consisting of Edward Leitaó, Christopher de Vega and Stephen Riberio arrived at Lahore on Akbar's invitation, but unhappily it lasted less than a year. The Jesuits soon felt that they were engaged in a futile task, and feared that Akbar was manipulating them for his own ends.

Once again after a gap of thirteen years, Akbar's earnest efforts to obtain a replacement for Acquaviva were rewarded. In May 1595, Jerome Xavier (who was a grand-nephew of Francis Xavier) arrived in Lahore on a third mission, accompanied by Manuel Pinheiro and Bento de Goez.<sup>xvi</sup> This time the emperor gave them permission to open a school. However, he avoided the subject of religion on the pretext that the Jesuits needed to learn Persian before embarking on any religious discussion. It is noteworthy however that a deep friendship developed between the Dutch Jesuit Henry Busi and Dara Shikoh, the son of

emperor Shah Jehan. As Troll declares, “the Jesuits at the Mughal Court did end up writing an extremely important chapter in the history of religious dialogue in India.”<sup>xvii</sup>

## NOTES

- i Within the enclosure of the old college of St. Paul in the city of Goa there is a chapel dedicated to Francis Xavier, that was reportedly built by the Saint himself. According to Moreno De Souza SJ, the chapel was built in 1545, and the college was entrusted to the Jesuits only in 1548.
- ii When the Hindu caste system was founded by the invading Aryans, the Brahmins who were the highest group in the system were chiefly concerned with religious and intellectual matters. The other major castes were the Kshatriyas who were the warriors and politicians, the Vaishyas who were the merchants and farmers, and the Sudras who were the slaves and servants.
- iii The word Panchayat refers to a council of elected members who take decisions on key issues having relevance to the social, cultural, and economic life of a village. It is a body of elected representatives.
- iv J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, p. 3
- v ‘Happy Sayings’ in Abu’l Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, translated by H. Blochmann and H. S. Jarret (Calcutta 1873-94), III, 399
- vi Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, translated by A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, Delhi, 1978, p. 37
- vii J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, p. 4
- viii An Islamic theologian
- ix J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, pp. 19-21
- x J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, p. 29
- xi J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, pp. 38-39
- xii A custom in ancient India where a woman burns herself in the funeral pyre of her husband, as a sign of her fidelity.
- xiii J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, p. 69
- xiv S. M. Burke, *Akbar the Greatest Mogul*, p. 115
- xv J. Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court*, pp. 108-110
- xvi Jerome Xavier came to India in 1581, and from 1595 onwards he worked at the Mughal court for 20 years. He died in Goa on June 26, 1617, in a fire that burnt and asphyxiated him at the new college of St. Paul, or St. Roch as it was popularly known.
- xvii W. C. Troll, *Christian-Muslim Relations in India, a Critical Survey, Islamo-Christiana* 5, Rome, 1979, p. 123

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