

Ines G. Županov, Angela Barreto Xavier. *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th-18th Centuries)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 416 pp. \$55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-945267-5.

Reviewed by Jorge Canizares

Published on H-Asia (February, 2017)

Commissioned by Sumit Guha (The University of Texas at Austin)

Like his contemporary Garcilaso Inca de la Vega, Manuel Godinho de Erédia claimed to be a mestizo, the son of a Portuguese conquistador and a princess of the sultanate of Makassar. This Melakan mestizo attended the St. Paul Jesuit seminar in Goa where he became a frater coadjutor in 1577. The Jesuit superior of the Estado de India Alessandro Valignano, the same who incorporated dozens of Japanese converts into the order, however, dismissed Godinho in 1584. Godinho excelled in natural history, mathematics, and cartography. Like his contemporary the Portuguese Fernandez de Quiroz (in Lima, Peru), Godinho became obsessed with finding Terra Incognita in the South Pacific, El Dorado, a land of riches south of Java but also a new frontier for conversions. Like Quiroz, Godinho sailed to Australia. A total of 210 of his maps of India and Southeast Asia are extant. Godinho penned *Tratado Ophirico* (circa 1616) describing the island of Indonesia as the original Ophir and Tarsis, sources of riches for both King Solomon and Philip III, charged with rebuilding the Temple and recovering Jerusalem. Viceroy Roy Lourenzo de Tavora (1609-12) commissioned Godinho to prepare an atlas of Portuguese fortresses in India (1610) and a cosmography of the province of Gujarat and of the Mughal Empire, which Godinho delivered in 1611 as *Dis-*

curso sobre a Provincia do Indostan. He also produced for the viceroy an illustrated *materia medica* for apothecaries: the herbal title *Suma de Árvores e plantas da India intra Ganges* (no date). Finally, he chronicled in 1615 the life and martyrdom of an obscure Luis Monteiro Coutinho who died tortured in captivity at the sultanate of Aceh in 1583. Godinho's writings and maps are scattered in archives in several continents. The manuscript of *Tratado Ophirico* remained untouched in the French National Library until recently. His botanical illustrated *Suma* wound up in the Norbertin Monastery in Tongerlo, Belgium. Godinho's *Discurso* is in the British Library. Unlike Quiroz and Garcilaso Inca, who are well known, the mestizo Malayan cosmographer remains forgotten. Some of his works have only been published recently.[1]

The anecdotal story of the fate of Godinho's writings is the main argument behind Angela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov's magisterial *Catholic Orientalism*, namely, the physical and symbolic obliteration of the many early modern archives of the Portuguese Estado da India (Government in India) and the Roman Propaganda Fide (Society for spreading the Catholic faith) from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. Barreto Xavier and Županov go over the dozens of

agents of the Portuguese monarchy and the Roman curia who left writings on India as they engaged in conquest, trade, governance, and conversion. The authors describe chronicles of conquest; cosmographies, atlases, natural histories, and agricultural treatises; censuses of lands, labor, and tribute; grammars, vocabularies, and translations into Tamil, Malayalam, Konkani, Hindi, Persian, and even Sanskrit of Christian texts and doctrines; treatises on idolatry and heathen religions; and institutional chronicles of Jesuits, Franciscans, and Carmelites. The authors of these manuscripts were all men, not only Portuguese but also Italian, French, and German. More important, some were mestizos as well as acculturated Goa Brahmans and Charodos. Barreto Xavier and Županov's approach is encyclopedic and, at times, overwhelming.

They seek to demonstrate that these archives disappeared from the historiographical imagination after having fully shaped the archives and ideas of nineteenth-century French and British Orientalism. In fact, they argue that Catholic archives disappeared *because* they informed the new ones. French, Dutch, and British Orientalists in Paris, London, Mumbai, Calicut, Cochin (Kochi), Meliapore, Pondichéry, Calcutta, and Delhi consumed, digested, and appropriated, without due acknowledgment, the documentation assembled by the Catholic Portuguese *Padroado* (State regulation of the church) and Rome-based society for the propagation of the Catholic faith.

This, of course, is doubly ironic because the first Catholic Orientalist archive did not fully acknowledge how much it drew on local knowledge. "Informants" were just shadows in the background, anonymous invisible technicians. French and British Orientalism did to their European Catholic peers what the latter did to the many local scribes, witnesses, and scholars who contributed to the writing of natural histories, grammars, vocabularies, chronicles, censuses, and translations. Dutch and British Orientalists not only con-

tinued to bury in condescension the bearers of local knowledge, but also lured with cash many of the very local intermediaries Catholic Orientalists had cultivated and trained in India, particularly in Madras (Meliapore) and Pondichéry.

Catholic Orientalists, to be sure, were not a homogenous bunch. The Padroado Jesuit mission that Roberto Nobili established in Madurai eventually became the source of documents and expertise on Tamil and Sanskrit languages and Brahmin Hinduism for the Propaganda Fide French Jesuits of Pondichéry. Italian Carmelites, in turn, would appropriate the Jesuit archive in Madras after the suppression of the order in France in 1764.

It was the Carmelite Paulinus a S. Bartholomeo who had centuries of accumulated Orientalist Tamil and Malayalam documentation of the Kerala mission now transferred into the archives of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. The French Orientalists, who had profited from the documentation gathered since the mid-seventeenth century by the French Jesuits of the Pondichéry missions, drew on the dozens of primary sources that Paulinus a S. Bartholomeo made available in print as director of the Propaganda Fide Press. Yet the French would label Paulinus a S. Bartholomeo (Paulin de Saint-Barthélemy for them) as credulously ignorant, unreliable, and untrustworthy. The East Indian Company Orientalist Alexander Hamilton, who along with Louis Mathieu Langlès reorganized the Oriental manuscripts section of the French National Library while Hamilton was a prisoner of war, for example, left out Saint-Barthélemy's collected Sanskrit texts entirely. Hamilton rejected Saint-Barthélemy's Sanskrit text in Grantha and Telugu scripts. The British Orientalists in Calcutta had learned their Sanskrit from Bengali pundits via Devanagari script. Arrogant assumptions caused the British to dismiss entire regional local archives.

Yet this book is not only about the symbolic obliteration of both local Indian and Catholic Mediterranean Orientalist archives through silencing, misreading, plagiarizing, and borrowing without citation. This book is also about their physical disappearance. As Barreto Xavier and Županov like to remind the reader, the tsunami that followed the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 literally destroyed the Portuguese early modern imperial archive. Francisco Rodrigues's *O Livro [Atlas]* (1511-15), Tome Pires's *Suma Oriental* (1515), Duarte Barbosa's *O livro do que vio e ouvio* (1516), João de Castro's *Roteiros* (1538-1540), Fernão Lopes da Castanheda's *Historia do descobrimento e conquista da India pelo portugueses* (1551), João de Barros's *Asia* (1552), Garcia da Orta's *Coloquios* (1562), and Fernão Vaz Dourado's *Atlas* (1571) drew on massive amounts of empirical information. The royal "padrão" systematically adjusted maps to the steady stream of new information codified in sailor and pilots' logs. Each new atlas packed immense quantities of first-hand evidence as digested by cosmographers at the Houses of Ceuta, Mina, and India, institutions that were both archives and centers of calculation. Hired in the 1520s to digest and process documentation assembled by the fledgling legal lay and ecclesiastical bureaucracy of the Estado de India, João de Barros used that information to write his *Asia* (1552). In it, Barros refers to his office at the House of India as bulging with books written on palm leaves, Asian and Indian texts, and books from all over the world. His office and the archives and centers of calculation it once housed disappeared swallowed by water and fire. It is as if the entire documentation assembled today at the Archive of the Indies in Seville were to vanish without a trace one day.

Barreto Xavier and Županov's book is a sustained meditation on the silencing of the past caused by the physical and symbolic obliteration of the Catholic archive. In a dialogue with Christopher Bayly's *Empire and Information* (1996), the authors also seek to discern the various systems

of social communication set up by the Portuguese Estado de India-Padroad and the Roman Propaganda Fide. Like their British peers, Catholic Orientalists drew on early modern local systems of information gathering, both oral and written. Barreto Xavier and Županov, however, are not interested in exploring the technical innovations in communication and governance that allowed imperial bureaucracies to both fail and succeed at preventing rebellion. Unlike the East India Company that was caught unawares in 1857 of simmering widespread discontent, the Portuguese Estado de India seemed never to have developed the hubris that led the British to privilege detached new science of governance through statistics and the telegraph at the expense of rumor and local networks of affection and information.

Barreto Xavier and Županov's second charge is to offer an analysis of the "orientalist" discourse gleaned from the many forgotten extant Catholic imperial archives. This charge explains the structure of the text.

Chapter 1 argues that the sixteenth century was largely characterized by a discourse controlled by lay, martial humanists who used the Portuguese expansion to draw parallels with late antiquity. Portugal was Rome. India was both the "Orient" of classical antiquity and the Rome of pagan civilization that had paved the way for Christianity. Yet Portugal was also cast as superior to both Rome and Greece, for the latter had stopped with Alexander at the Ganges. Portugal superseded antiquity and was about to create a church even larger than that of the first apostles. Like the early church, the Portuguese church had to be built from the top down, coopting local ruling elites and even the Mughal emperors. This classical humanism was steeped in the martial, providential anti-Muslim rhetoric of the crusades as well.

Chapter 2 seeks to emphasize the early modernity of local bureaucracies that not unlike those of the nineteenth-century British created

censuses of local lands and resources, particularly those around former Muslim and Hindu temples controlled by the 150 hinterland villages that fell under the sovereignty of Catholic Portuguese Goa. This emphasis on Portuguese modernity also surfaces in chapter 3, devoted to the many natural histories and *materia medica* created by the Estado de India and the Roman Propaganda Fide over the course of three centuries. This chapter centers on Garcia da Orta (*Cóloquios* [1563]), Cristovão da Costa (*Tratado de las drogas* [1578]), Godinho (*Suma de arvores* [no date]), Matteo di San Giuseppe (*Viridarium Orientale* [circa 1667]) and the anonymous Jesuit *Arte Palmarica* (no date). Barreto Xavier and Županov insist on the pragmatic use of these texts that sought to secure the survival of colonists and bureaucrats in unknown climates and the productivity of plantations to finance Jesuit missions.

Chapter 4 explores the emergence of a Jesuit discourse that separated religion from “civility.” This was the discourse that allowed Alessandro Valignano, Roberto Nobili, Matteo Ricci, and many others to justify accommodation to local rituals and practices in places in which the Portuguese did not exercise sovereign control, which was the majority of India with the exception of a few coastal enclaves in Goa, Cochin, Sri Lanka, and Meliapore. Barreto Xavier and Županov argue that this separation between the practices and rituals of civilizations from the theological content of “religion” drew a wedge in the medieval discourse of equivalence between natural and divine law. Medieval discourse assumed a perfect match between religion and society. The theology of Revelation and the natural law that begot the polity and civil jurisprudence reinforced one another. The Jesuit discourse that led to the Malabar Rites controversy, however, neatly separated the workings on the polity from any theological content of the dominant religion. One could praise the finely designed society of hierarchies and sound laws of Brahman religion and yet dismiss its religious doctrines as demonically inspired, misleading, or

even deliberate shams. This form of Catholic Orientalism would be largely responsible for the emergence of Deism back in northern Europe as Jesuits’ writings on India and China began to be widely read.

Chapter 5 deals with Franciscan Orientalism, which unlike Jesuit Orientalism fully managed to integrate creoles and mestizos. Franciscans created libraries and archives in both Portugal and India every bit as impressive as those the Jesuits once established. Barreto Xavier and Županov explore the early seventeenth-century Franciscan chronicles of Paulo de Trinidad (*Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* [circa 1638]), Francisco de Negrão (*Taprobana* and *Chronica da Provincia de São Tomé* [circa 1584]), and Jacinto de Deus (*Vergel de Plantas e Flores* [1690]). These texts are remarkably similar to those penned by contemporary creole Franciscans in Peru, including those of the brothers Diego and Buenaventura de Cordova y Salinas. Both sets emerged out of similar directives by Franciscan superiors in Rome to rewrite the global history of the order. Both Peru and Goa left a lasting imprint on the new global chronicle that the Irish-, Coimbra-, and Salamanca-educated Luke Wadding finally compiled. The Franciscan Goan texts were interested in chronicling the spread of Franciscan institutions of learning and piety and in mapping the riches and peoples of India. Their inquiries on Brahman practices and theology centered more on seeking anticipations of Christian monotheism. Franciscans did not seek to separate civility from religion to offer accommodationist strategies of conversation, largely because they did not operate outside secure Portuguese sovereign strongholds.

Chapter 6 studies the dozens if not hundreds of grammars, vocabularies, and translations that Jesuits and Franciscans produced to communicate with local populations in India. Barreto Xavier and Županov seek to present this vast linguist work as the foundation on which both French and British Sanskrit Orientalism stood. The idea that

Sanskrit shared with Latin, Greek, and the Romance language a common origin had long circulated among the missions of the Portuguese Padroado and the Roman Propaganda Fide.

Chapter 7 is by far the most original. It focuses on a group of eighteenth-century Goa Brahmans and Charodos who circumvented Jesuit and Franciscan restrictions to get ordained with the help of Rome. Jesuits and Franciscans did not encourage the natives to become priests, let alone to have positions of authority within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These native Goans not only ordained their own and became bishops but also created new religious orders to prepare Catholic missionaries from Brahman and Charodo backgrounds to go to the sultanate of Bijapur and even to the Mughal court in Agra. The chapter deals with Joao da Cunha's *Espada de David contra o Golias do Brahmanism* (circa 1710), Antonio João Frias's *Aureola dos Indios* (1702), Leonardo Paes's *Prontuario das Difinições Indicas* (1713), and Matheus de Castro's *Espelho de Brâmanes* (circa 1653). These priests, either Brahman or Charodo, fought with one another over the true origins of Christianity in India. Both groups sought to cast either Brahmans or Charodos as the true descendants of Noah and King Gaspar of Nativity fame. Both groups pushed the genealogies of Christianity in India back to their own castes, wholly re-framing Jesuit and Franciscan Orientalism.

Catholic Orientalism is a book of great learning and depth that deserves wide readership. Historians of the Spanish monarchy, both Europeanists and colonialists, will surely profit from it, for the parallels with the Philippines, Peru, Mexico, and Spain are striking and need elucidation. It is my hope that the very parochial historians of British Orientalism in India will also turn to Barreto Xavier and Županov for some much-needed perspective.

Note

[1]. Jorge Flores, "Between Madrid and Ophir, Erédia, a Deceitful Discoverer?" in *Dissimulation*

and *Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzog (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 184-201. Recently published works include Manuel Godinho de Erédia, *Suma de Arvores e Plantas da India Intra Ganges*, ed. John G. Everaert, J. E. Mendes Ferrao, and M. Candida Liberato (Lisbon: Comissao Nacional Para as Comemoracoes dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 2001); and Manuel Godinho de Erédia, *Tratado Ophirico*, ed. Juan Gil and Rui Manuel Loureiro (Macao and Lisbon: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau and Fundação Jorge Álvares, 2016).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at
<https://networks.h-net.org/h-asia>

Citation: Jorge Canizares. Review of Županov, Ines G.; Xavier, Angela Barreto. *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th-18th Centuries)*. H-Asia, H-Net Reviews. February, 2017.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=47703>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No
Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.