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FERNÃO DE QUEIRÓS: HISTORY AND THEOLOGY¹

por

ALAN STRATHERN *

When Fernão de Queirós' *Conquista temporal e espiritual de Ceylão* first came to light in Sri Lanka at the beginning of the twentieth century it caused something of an academic sensation.² Scholars of the period of Portuguese involvement in the island's history (1505-1658) had previously been dependent on the general chronicles of the east by writers such as João de Barros and Diogo do Couto, along with a few contemporary letters and the elliptical Sinhalese texts. Now they were suddenly presented with a massive continuous account of the 'Portuguese era' spanning six books and written by a clergyman with unparalleled access to church and state archives in Goa as well as the oral testimonies and surviving narratives written by men who had served in Sri Lanka before the expulsion of the Portuguese. Brimming with new information, it clearly contained material from sources that were hitherto unknown and whose identity, even today, the historian can only

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¹ This is a modernized version of his name, which has been variously spelt 'Queiroz', 'Queiros' and 'Queyroz'. This essay revises material from two previous articles Alan STRATHERN, 'Re-reading Queirós: Some Neglected Aspects of the *Conquista*', *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, 26 (2000), and 'Representing Eastern Religion: Queyroz and Gonzaga on the first Catholic-Buddhist disputation in Sri Lanka, 1543', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, 43 (1998). Parts of this work were read by or profited from the advice of Peter Carey, Nicholas Davidson, Tom Earle, Richard Gombrich, Alexis Sanderson, Bryan Ward-Perkins, K. N. O Dharmadasa, Jonathan Walters, Samanthi Dissanayake. The author is grateful to them all (while assuming full responsibility for any errors of fact or judgement):

² *Conquista temporal e espiritual de Ceylão*, ed. P. E. PIERIS, Colombo, 1916. This derives from the Rio de Janeiro Manuscript. Here I shall generally refer to the English translation, Fernão de QUEYROZ, *The Temporal and Spiritual conquest of Ceylon*, trans., S. G. Perera, 3 Volumes, Colombo, 1930, reprinted, New Delhi, AES, 1992, which is widely used by scholars – except when particularly close attention to the original language is required. There is some ambiguity over the title, as the other manuscript copy in the Biblioteca da Ajuda (51-VIII-40) has the title *Historia de Ceilão*, preferred by Tikiri Abeyasinghe. Here it will be abbreviated to *Conquista* in the text, and Perera's translation will be cited as 'Q'.

guess at. Not surprisingly, it quickly moved to the centre of academic controversy, with first one and then two scholars refusing to allow rivals to tap its riches, and strategic delays in publication and charges of plagiarism thickening the plot.³

Now the work is widely available in Sri Lankan bookshops and regularly referred to as the single most important source for the Portuguese period. Tikiri Abeyasinghe, for example, described the *Conquista* as, 'the history *par excellence* of the Portuguese in the Island. It has justly been hailed as second only to the *Mahavamsa* as a source for the history of Ceylon. For the loving care and great pains which he has gone through his sources and the wealth of information he has made available to us, Queirós does not yield place even to the author of the *Mahavamsa*.'⁴ (The *Mahavamsa* is the principal Pali chronicle). However a strikingly different perspective had been aired as far back as 1929 when Georg Schurhammer published his collection of letters pertaining to the period 1539-1551. These provided a much more reliable and comprehensive picture of the convoluted events of these years—and simultaneously showed up parts of Queirós' narrative to be confused, inadequate and downright wrong. In the little-read German introduction to this publication Schurhammer gave his judgement of the *Conquista*: 'An uncritical compilation of otherwise accessible sources, eyewitness reports, later authors, native palm leaf chronicles, and native tales, legends, everything that tells of the time from letters etc, into a whole in which it is impossible to tell truth from fiction.'⁵

In one sense this diversity of opinion is only superficially paradoxical. While Schurhammer was most concerned with the middle decades of the sixteenth century when his beloved subject Francis Xavier roamed the east, the *Conquista* proved to be more useful and reliable for the later periods—the era of Portuguese rule in the seventeenth century—with which Abeyasinghe and others were most concerned. However one can see how both perspectives have shaped the modern historiography of the Portuguese period. The generally high reputation of the *Conquista* throughout the twentieth century

³ In brief, Ladislaus Zaleski, the Apostolic Delegate of the East Indies residing at Kandy, refused to let the renowned Sinhalese scholar P. E. Pieris use his copy of the manuscript. Pieris then obtained a copy of it from Rio de Janeiro and began to make use of it in his work, most famously *The Portuguese Era* (2 vols., Colombo, Colombo Apothecaries Co., 1913-4). However he refused constant demands by the Royal Asiatic Society to publish the *Conquista* or make it available for inspection. Eventually he bowed to pressure and brought out his rather bad edition of the Portuguese text in 1916. His great rival Fr. S. G. Perera was then commissioned by the Government to make a translation of the work.

⁴ Tikiri ABEYASINGHE *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594-1612*, Colombo, Lake House, 1966, p. 7. However Abeyasinghe (p. vii) also says that Queirós' 'views of history are not ours nor are his interests our interests.'. See also the praise meted out in S. G. PERERA'S *The 'Conquista' of Queirós, the only history of the Portuguese in Ceylon*, Colombo, Ceylon Historical Association, Jan. 1925, Leaflet no. 1.

⁵ G. SCHURHAMMER and E. A. VORETZSCH, (eds.), *Ceylon zur Zeit des Königs Bhuvaneka Bahu und Franz Xavers, 1539–1552*, Leipzig, Verlag der Asia Minor, 1928, 2 vols, I, p. 49.

has meant that many of its preoccupations and biases, its characterisations of the main agents and empathetic descriptions of their motivations, have all entered the bloodstream of Sri Lankan historiography. One need only consider the great impact of P. E. Pieris' *The Portuguese Era* (1913-4), a work which follows the *Conquista* so closely that it sometimes read as little more than a free translation of it. Pieris' work is still the only major work to cover the whole period and is still referred to as a principal authority by more popular writings in Sri Lanka.

In recent times, the most contentious questions in Sri Lankan historiography, and the most theoretically exciting, have revolved around identity – ethnic, religious, and cultural.⁶ And it is precisely with regard to such intangible and elusive qualities that the value judgements and interpretations of our primary sources are liable to exert an irresistible influence. This is particularly the case for Queirós, on whose vast text our account becomes increasingly dependent as the sixteenth century wears on. Indeed, Queirós' retrospective does more than any other source to provide explicit evidence for nationalist or traditionalist understandings of Sri Lankan history.⁷ Yet we shall see that some of his interpretations point the way to profound insights into the underlying principles of Sinhalese behaviour in this epoch. These issues will be considered in the latter section of this long essay, and that is where those who are more concerned with Sri Lankan history *per se* should turn.

However, historians have apparently shared Schurhammer's scepticism concerning large stretches of narrative, particularly in Book Two, which they have simply ignored. Many of these passages, often concerning Catholicism and Buddhism and their interaction, will be submitted to investigation in the course of this project – but with a quite different end in view. If we make our principal object the minds that create our historical texts, then unreliable data about an earlier period can be seen as offering reliable insight into the concerns of later decades and centuries. Above all, it is the worldview of Fernão de Queirós himself that is brought to the surface.

Queirós' reasons for undertaking such a great project towards the end of his life (he died the year after he finished work at the age of 71) are clearly established. When Queirós had first arrived in India in 1635 at the age of eighteen he had an inspirational encounter with a Jesuit lay-brother by the name of Pedro de Basto.⁸ Basto was famous for his mystical visions and

⁶ This is a major concern of Alan STRATHERN, *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2006.

⁷ For the sense of 'traditionalism' as used here, see Alan STRATHERN, 'Theoretical Approaches to Sri Lankan History and the Early Portuguese Period', *Modern Asian Studies* 38 (2004).

⁸ Much later Queirós referred to, 'the way he welcomed me, the advice that he gave me, the news which he very frankly communicated to me, even though I was still very young and in the first years of the Company.' *Historia da Vida do Veneravel Irmão Pedro de Basto, Coadjutor Temporal da Companhia de Jesus, e da variedade de successos que Deos lhe manifestou, ordenada pelo Padre Fernão de Queyroz da Companhia de Jesus*, (Lisbon, 1689) [hereafter *Vida*], 'Aos que Lerem'.

his extraordinary gifts of clairvoyance and prophecy. Indeed such was the fame he acquired in Portuguese India and in the old kingdom itself that upon his death in 1645 there was a widespread feeling that a testimony of his holy life should be written. After years of procrastination the Jesuit authorities finally commissioned Fernão de Queirós, who was now enjoying high office in the Indian Church hierarchy.⁹ While researching the *Historia da Vida do Veneravel Irmão Pedro de Basto* (History of the Life of the Venerable Brother Pedro de Basto) Queirós was deeply impressed by Basto's prophecies about the ruin of the Portuguese State of India and in particular by his conviction that the island of Sri Lanka, one of the brightest jewels of the fading empire, would be conquered by the Dutch.¹⁰ Basto claimed that the Dutch would be acting as God's scourge: the Portuguese had failed in their providential task of inaugurating a truly Christian world empire and they would accordingly pay the price. Some thirteen years after Basto's death the Dutch did indeed manage to wrest the island from Portuguese control. In order to provide a background for these prophecies and to assess their truth Queirós amassed considerable evidence relating to the history of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka. So much in fact, that he decided to make it the foundation for a separate project, the *Conquista*.

One should not underestimate how seriously and how literally Queirós believed in the providential role of the Portuguese empire. A distinctly Portuguese strain of messianism had developed during the union with the Castilian Crown (1580-1640) around the figure of the dead king Sebastião, who was believed to be waiting for the day when he would return to lead the nation to a glorious future. These hopes inter-mingled with prophetic traditions that foretold the coming of the fifth world-monarchy as described in the Book of Daniel, a universal empire that would oversee the conversion of the whole world to Christianity and the Day of Judgement. When Portuguese independence was restored under João IV (1640-56) some acclaimed him as the redeemer-king. Most fervent of all was the Jesuit António Vieira. He had served as a missionary in Brazil and was so overwhelmed by the task that he believed only the direct intervention of God, working through the kingdom of Portugal, could effect world-wide conversion. Thereafter many influential Portuguese Jesuits looked to the Old Testament for prophecies of Portugal's destiny, among them, Fr. João de Vasconcelos, the chronicler of the Jesuits

⁹ See the crucial study, G. SCHURHAMMER, 'Unpublished Manuscripts of Fr. Fernão de Queiroz s.j.', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 5 (1929), p. 213. The documents relating to Basto's life were placed in Queirós' hands in 1663. An anonymous text surviving as an incomplete MS in British Museum, Egerton 1646 (folios 26-246), was published in *Documenta Ultramarina Portuguesa*, I, no. 749, (1960), with the title *Conquista da India per Humas e Outras Armas Reaes e Evangelicas*. Georg SCHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*, trans. M. J. Costelloe, 4 vols. (Rome, 1973-82), ii, pp. 623-4, identifies this as Queirós' lost work, *Conquista Temporal e Espiritual do Oriente*. However, I can see no reason for this, and it seems merely to be an annalistic account of Portuguese imperial history.

¹⁰ Q, pp. 1003-1004.

in Brazil.¹¹ As for Queirós, in the dedication to the King of Portugal in his *Vida* he suggests that the very fact that the lay-brother had been blessed with such visions was proof of God's providential scheme.¹²

These mystical concerns had thoroughly practical implications. The catastrophic loss of Sri Lanka, which might seem irrevocable to the modern reader, was for Queirós merely a divine test. If the Portuguese conducted themselves in a godly manner, the island was theirs for the taking. The *Conquista* is a protracted argument to convince the Viceroy and Captain-General of India, to whom it is dedicated, of this fact, to convince him that coming to the aid of the Catholics left stranded there and placing them under his jurisdiction once more was both advantageous and pre-ordained. Sri Lanka was one of the very few places in Asia which the Portuguese had mounted a full-scale conquest and then occupied and ruled. Elsewhere they had tended to establish fortified trading centres, content to 'rule the seas'. This latter form of imperialism Queirós thought of as lowly piracy; the loss of Sri Lanka was so painful and its recovery so urgent because it represented a higher form of imperialism – higher because spiritual conquest depended on actual temporal conquest. Sri Lanka would be the heart of a new spiritualised and renascent Portuguese empire. It is not difficult to see why Queirós, peering through the twilight of the *Estado da Índia* and watching bits of it fall away into heretical hands, dreamed of a glorious new dawn of empire. This was why the proclamations of Pedro de Basto gathered such pathos decades after his death.

It would be wrong, however, to see the mystical and prophetic themes of the *Conquista* as simply the result of Goan hindsight or the generic sensibility of the Portuguese diaspora: they also reflect the mentality of the Catholic community of the island itself. That is to say, the *Conquista* can profitably be read as a great reservoir of casado sentiments and memories, as well as a repository for the traditions that had coalesced within the missionary orders.¹³ That community had certainly suffered periods of trauma; it was particularly beleaguered in the second half of the sixteenth century when, after weathering the campaigns of Vidiye Bandara and Mayadunne, it found itself pinned back to the environs of Colombo by Rajasinha I of Sitavaka. Sinhalese resistance acquired a strong anti-Christian bite, and there were mass apostasies in the re-conquered areas. Then, following the ousting of the Portuguese in 1658, the Catholic community faced persecution

¹¹ C. R. BOXER, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*, London, Carcanet, 1991, p. 373.

¹² *Vida*, Dedication, p. iii: 'so manifest is the patronage of God for the Kingdom of Portugal, as one can see in the multiple revelations of the Venerable Pedro de Basto... and in the favour which the most felicitous King Dom João IV, the father of Your Highness, always found from Heaven in his frequent visions.'

¹³ Beyond the chroniclers of Asia in general, Q, pp. xvii, 448, 451, 564, refers explicitly to texts by Afonso Dias da Lomba, Antonio Barbosa Pinheyro, Bento da Silva, Francisco do Oriente and Francisco Negrão. But he clearly used many other texts too, as well as oral testimony (Q, p. 545), and masses of martyrological material from missionary texts (pp. 374 ff.)

from the Dutch, who directed more forceful efforts against unreformed Christianity than they did against native religions. The Catholics regularly pleaded with Goa for help and their plight was an important factor behind Queirós' insistence on the necessity for a Portuguese re-conquest.¹⁴ Their stories of the past reflect this need to make sense of isolation and persecution: their suffering was part of a higher narrative in which Sri Lanka's divine destiny was assured. Via miracles and holy signs, God had indicated to them that the lowliness or sufferings of their present state are but a prelude to a glorious future. That may be distinctively Christian, but the notion of 'divine' destiny, arguably, is not. For in Sri Lanka it had long been held that the island had a unique role in the destiny of the Theravada tradition: the Buddha himself had visited the island to consecrate it as the place where the *dhamma* (teaching or law) would be preserved in its true form. This then presented a further motivation to develop a Christian Providentialism, to compete with or colonise this long-standing Buddhist myth.

But first we shall consider further questions concerning the intellectual and cultural milieu in which Queirós wrote. The Portuguese had been established in India for well over one 150 years. Generations of indigenous Indians had grown up Christian within the jurisdiction of the *Estado*. Yet beyond this Catholic enclave was a vast sub-continent of alternative traditions of religious practice and thought, the ancient and multifarious heritage that came to be called Hinduism. What effect did this long co-habitation have on European attitudes to non-Christian religion? There have been many academic studies of the 'accommodationist' movement within the Society of Jesus that attempted to penetrate the philosophies of India, China and Japan. But what impact did this have on the attitudes of mainstream Portuguese Churchmen? And what kind of knowledge was amassed of the religion of places such as Sri Lanka where such enlightened methods were rarely employed?

Although Fernão de Queirós had never been to Sri Lanka he had a bookish erudition regarding Sri Lankan culture and the version of Theravada Buddhism practised there that was probably unrivalled in his time. Yet Queirós' thought has not received the attention it deserves. The only work to comment on the background, biases and preoccupations of the author of the *Conquista* in a systematic manner is an essay by Abeyasinghe that he wrote many years after his eulogistic appraisal quoted above. This later essay is rather more nuanced and sceptical, as its title indicates: 'History as Polemics and Propaganda: An Examination of Fernão de Queirós' *History*

¹⁴ The year in which the *Conquista* was completed Queirós' pleas for succour for the Sri Lankan Christians were answered in a deeply ironic manner. For the revivification of Sri Lankan Catholicism was not begun by Portuguese missionaries working under the auspices of the *Estado*, but by indigenous Indian missionaries given protection by the King of Kandy: the Oratorian mission led by Joseph Vaz.

of Ceylon'.¹⁵ In the course of our enquiry we shall have cause to expand on Abeyasinghe's observations and also complicate and qualify them. First of all, let us enter the *Conquista*, via one puzzling episode:

The disputation of 1543

One of the most intriguing passages in the *Conquista* is the account of the disputation that took place between Fr. João de Vila de Conde and a Buddhist representative in the Kotte court a few weeks after the arrival of the first Catholic mission to Sri Lanka.¹⁶ There exists another – and entirely different – account of this crucial encounter in Gonzaga's history of the Franciscan order, and there are in fact good reasons for assuming that Gonzaga's report bears some resemblance to what actually happened.¹⁷ Queirós' account, by contrast, consisting of two long and rather academic speeches, seems comprehensively fictitious. Perversely, this is rather fortuitous. Why did Queirós ignore his source at this point and insert such lengthy speeches? What determined their content? What we have here is a Portuguese clergyman thinking himself into shoes of a Sinhalese *bhikkhu* (Buddhist monk), an empathetic task that forces an explicit disclosure of his understanding of Sinhalese religion. It will also become apparent that this is a pivotal moment with regard to the structuring obsessions of the *Conquista*. Solving the problems of its construction will serve as an introduction to these central themes and draw us closer to the mind of the author.

The only historian to have commented directly on their authenticity is Schurhammer. In his German essay of 1928 he has a terse footnote which simply says, 'freely invented' ('frei erfunden'), and refers us to the more sober report by Gonzaga.¹⁸ This is not surprising given that one can point to many other examples of invented speeches cropping up in Queirós' narrative. Many of them are similarly peculiar, caught between three different aims: to achieve empathy with the actual situation of the character in question; to drive home arguments relating to his polemical aims; to flourish his literary style and classical erudition.

But speeches can be more or less invented. Was Queirós working from a particular source? Let us look a little more closely at the words of the

¹⁵ Tikiri ABEYASINGHE, 'History as Polemics and Propaganda: An Examination of Fernão de Queirós' *"History of Ceylon"*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka Branch*, n.s., XXV, 1980/1.

¹⁶ Q, pp. 238-242.

¹⁷ FRANCESCO GONZAGA, *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis Franciscanae eiusque progressibus*, Vol I, 1587, but the relevant Volume, II is entitled, *De Principii*, Venice, 1603, p. 1406. See A. STRATHERN, 'Representing Eastern...', cit.

¹⁸ G. SCHURHAMMER and E. A. VORETZSCH, *Ceylon...* cit, p. 43, footnote 2. Although ABEYASINGHE, 'History as Polemics...' cit., p. 55, includes them in a list of speeches which he considers dubious.

Buddhist representative. He starts off, impossibly enough, by referring to the Spartans, Athenians, Egyptians, Abyssinians and the Chinese, who all barred entry to foreigners because of the social evils that resulted from their new cults. He points to the corrupting influence of other sects on Sinhalese Buddhism. There follows the middle section, a highly detailed description of cosmological belief. The description of Buddhist soteriology is confined to one unsatisfactory sentence right at the end. The Buddha came to Ceylon, 'declaring that the salvation of man consisted in chastity and fasting, the essential points of our religion, which are observed with great strictness, as also the transmigration of souls.'¹⁹

The content of the long middle passage is somewhat unexpected. For analytical purposes we can divide it into two sections, (a) and (b):

- (a) Our Books show that there is a cause, superior, and ruler of the rest. On this depend the Angels and souls, and he is the mover of the others, a spirit incorporate, infinite and omnipotent; and for this reason he is generally called *Xarves Zibaru*. His attendants, though Holy, are neither eternal nor equal to him in power, the first being most pure, the second less so, and the last the jailors of hell. There is none to equal the first; with the second group live men; and with the perverse those who have erred. As this misery is not the greatest, there are others for rebellious sinners, such as the bodies of impure animals. As a consequence we know that there is glory for the good and suffering for the wicked; and that therefore we are born with a destiny either for Heaven, which we call *Xervago*, or for Hell, called by us *Naranca*, in the company of Diagal and Saytan, the names of the principal Demons. Nor are we unaware that there is another place where light faults are expiated during a limited time. We acknowledge that man proceeds either from Divine elements or from that same matter of which the world is composed. We have moreover ten precepts, of which we observe four with great rigour, namely not to kill, steal, drink wine, or take another's wife: and if owing to our frailty we violate them, we make satisfaction to God by pilgrimages, alms, fastings and sacrifices, whereby we placate the
- (b) wrath of the Supreme Regents, which being superior before whom the others bow down, are five, and though in our Book *Tivarum* they are given various names, I will give the usual ones, so that this statement may not be confusing. The first called Xadaxivao dwells in the first heaven; the second Ludra by name in the region of fire: the third known as Maessura in the air: the fourth called Bisnu in the water: the fifth and last on earth under the name of Brahema: with this distinction that Bisnu and Rudra are the chief ones by whom the world is preserved, the first creating and the second augmenting what Brahema consumes. And their effects, though in appearance different from one another, we hold to be uniform, and therefore we give them one single name, viz: Maha Murte, which means the Supreme Three, born of the first cause, to whom are subordinated the seven heavens, each distant from each other by 600 leagues. In the first are the fixed stars and the planets; in the second the Gods; in the third the penitents; in the

¹⁹ Q, p. 240.

fourth the Angels; in the fifth the chaste; in the sixth the Regents; in the seventh the Virgins.²⁰

PART B is rich in content, replete with proper nouns and numbers. Yet none of it should belong in a speech by a Buddhist monk because the doctrines it records seem to be Hindu. Our venerable *bhikkhu* begins by complaining about how corrupting foreign influences are obscuring the true Buddhist wisdom – and then proceeds to expound Brahmanic teachings....

This made apparent by the reference to the *Tivarum* (or *Tevaram*), which is part of the Tamil Saiva canon, the *Tirumurai*.²¹ And these are Saivite teachings – garbled, certainly, but idiosyncratic enough to make the identification clear. His account of the Gods pervading the five elements is not too wide of the mark; in fact the *Tirumurai* gives it as:

	Element	Function
Sadasiva	ether	salvation
Isvara (or Mahesvara)	air	holding in bondage
Rudra	fire	withdrawal ('destruction')
Visnu	water	preservation
Brahma	earth	emission ('creation')

As comparison with the above table shows, Queirós' account of the functions of the Gods is more simplified and he has entirely mixed up just which deity is supposed to do what. The name *Maha Murte* [*Mahamurti*] would in fact mean something like Supreme Form, but it might be a corruption of *Mahamurtitrayam*, or 'the triad of the supreme forms', who were indeed Brahma, Visnu and Rudra.²²

We know then that for PART B Queirós was working closely from a text derived from the teachings of a particular canon. But turning to PART A we

²⁰ Q, p. 239. Perera's translation is open to question in a number of places in this passage. For the Portuguese see PIERIS (ed.), *Conquista temporal...* cit., pp. 188-9. Perera translates, 'Seus assistentes, sendo Santos, nem são eternos...' as, 'His attendants, *though Holy*, are neither eternal....' It could equally be, 'His attendants, *being Saints*, are neither eternal...!' The text appears to be faulty where we have 'Com o *que* apalacamos a ira dos Supremos Regentes; *que* como Superior, a *quem* os mais se humilham, são cinco'. (One would expect 'Superiores', so that it agrees with 'cinco'). Perera gives it as, '...whereby we placate the wrath of the Supreme Regents, who, including the Superiors before whom others bow down'. Regarding the functions of the gods, Perera renders, 'o *que* consome Brahema', as, 'what Brahma consummates', whereas it should be, 'what Brahma consumes'. (My thanks to Professor Tom Earle for help with these translations).

²¹ I owe the identification of this passage with the *Tirumurai*, the Tamil Saiva canon, to Professor A. Sanderson, whose personal correspondence is also the source for the information on Saivism reproduced here. The *Tevarum* itself does not contain the doctrine presented here, being instead a collection of devotional hymns.

²² Again this is the suggestion of Sanderson (p.c. 1/3/99). He points out that the *aya-* of *traya-* is frequently pronounced as if it was *-e*.

find it at once much more familiar and more vague. In this part there is only one feature that clearly evokes Buddhism: the 'ten precepts' could well refer to the ten basic rules for ordained monks, and while there are five major precepts rather than four, Queirós misses out only one of them: the injunction against lying.²³ As for the other doctrines, it is not a straightforward matter to assign them to either 'Hinduism' or 'Buddhism,' for sixteenth-century Sinhalese Buddhism had certainly incorporated a cosmology of heavens and hells. However the reference to '...a cause, superior and ruler of the rest. On this depend the angels and the souls...' is alien to Buddhism of any stripe.²⁴

But one can make PART A correspond to some general aspects of Hinduism only in a very loose sense. To lay out the bare bones of it: we are told of the 'first cause' who created the universe; and of a chain of being which leads from an omnipotent God down to mankind; we learn how human beings are judged at their death and then punished in the heavens and hells of the afterlife; and we learn of the ten moral precepts and the recompenses that must be made if they are not observed. Hinduism has been stretched into a recognisably Christian form. Indeed many of the most fundamental principles of Hinduism, the soteriological core of reincarnation and liberation, have been ignored. The workings of karma are hinted at in the reference to sinners going into 'the bodies of impure animals', but they are conceived of in terms of Christian-style divine judgement and hellish punishment. And we are solemnly informed that one of the principal demons of Hell is called *Saytan*.

But why would Queirós insert so much Hinduism into this speech? Was it simply rank ignorance and uninterest? One might be inclined to agree, following the lead of Abeyasinghe's blunt verdict that Queirós had, 'little understanding of Oriental learning, eastern religion, or Asian culture...'²⁵ But this would be mistaken; indeed several times in Book One Queirós warns *us* against failing to distinguish between Buddhism and Hinduism. It becomes a point of academic pride: 'It is absolutely necessary not to confuse this Sect [of the Ganezes] with that of the Veddãos or of the Brahmenes, a mistake into which some have fallen, because both are received in Ceylon and in all India beyond the Ganges, in Tartary and in Japan.'²⁶ Queirós also thought

²³ Although Sanderson suggests (p.c. 1/3/99) this could equally be a reference to a version of the ten Brahmanical rules of morality, albeit a list influenced by one of the Brahmanical 'major sins' (*Mahapatakas*), that of drinking liquor.

²⁴ '...hũa causa superior, e regente das mayns. Desta dependem os Anjos, e as almas...' (PIERIS (ed.), *Conquista temporal...* cit., p. 188). Sanderson proposes (p.c. 6/3/99) that the 'angels' mentioned might be a reference to the Rudras, who are often mentioned as a class between God and the (bound) souls in Saivite literature.

²⁵ ABEYASINGHE, 'History as Polemics...' cit., p. 53. It is also true that he knew very little about Asian languages, but it is hardly surprising that he knew no Sinhala, given that he had never been to the Island. Nevertheless this does make his pompous proclamations (Q, p. 116) about the inelegance of Asian tongues rather hard to swallow.

²⁶ Q, p. 118; see also p. 120.

of himself as an expert on the complexities of heathen idolatry. He believed, like many other Jesuits of the time, that understanding the language and beliefs of a people was crucial in order to effect their conversion.²⁷ In the *Conquista* he refers us to other projects of his on the subject of Eastern religion, a theological and philosophical treatise in Latin, and his *Perfeito Missionario*—both of them intended to enable missionaries to refute their ideological foes.²⁸

He knows that the Sinhalese are the only Buddhists in South Asia and he could provide a comprehensive list of Buddhist countries further east.²⁹ He is aware, moreover, that Buddhism changed as it spread. He gives a very long account of Chinese Buddhism, taken from his colleague in China, Fr. Thomas Pereyra, in order to contrast it with its Sinhalese counterpart.³⁰ Queirós is quite well informed about the institutional structures of Buddhism and the education and career of the Buddhist monk and so on. He also realises that Sinhalese religion is a mixture of Buddhist philosophy and Hindu influences—even if he has a very simple grasp of the relationship between the two: ‘Though this sect is the most renowned in Ceylon, especially among the noble folk, they admitted also that of the Veddos, especially their seven lesser Gods.’³¹ He knows that the priests of temples to gods such as Kataragma and Visnu are entirely different to *bhikkhus*. Only occasionally does he seem to betray some confusion, or, at least, to treat Buddhism and Hinduism as part of the same general Indian religiosity.³²

However where Abeyasinghe’s criticism does have bite is in regard to the *understanding* of Buddhism, for Queirós spends very little time describing what Buddhists believe as opposed to what they do. Indeed, regarding Buddhist doctrine, he is never able to give much more information than the belief in the transmigration of the soul, and the ten precepts, notably those strictures against meat and alcohol. However, Queirós was not happy with this; he complains, at one point: ‘and if those who had read the documents of Ceylon had been more curious and had not been weary of giving us more detailed information, we could have shown more clearly from what they relate of his life [the Buddha’s] the additions made by Chinese

²⁷ See SCHURHAMMER, ‘Unpublished Manuscripts...’ cit., p. 223, footnote 1. Schurhammer lists all the known writings of Queirós, including a polemic on the mission-field of Abyssinia (Queirós was elected Patriarch of Ethiopia in 1671).

²⁸ Q, pp. 79, 80, 141, and throughout Book One. In Queirós’ Necrologue, written shortly after his death in 1688, the author refers to the ‘*Perfeito Missionario* em que confutava os erros de todas as seitas, obra de muito trabalho, muita erudição e muito proveitoza’. (SCHURHAMMER, ‘Unpublished Manuscripts...’ cit., p. 227).

²⁹ Q, pp. 87, 140.

³⁰ Q, pp. 122–140. This section does not appear in the Ajuda MS *Historia de Ceylão*. Why?

³¹ Q, p. 120.

³² Q, pp. 115, 139, where he seems to place Brahmin Yogis and Sinhalese *Bhikkhus* in the same tradition. Queirós often refers to Buddhist monks as Yogis. See, for example, Q, p. 256.

malice.’³³ Now, in the first instance this relates to the *life* of the Buddha. In fact he does give us the life of the Buddha, as ‘recorded in the Chingala scriptures’ and it is not such a bad summary, and he clearly also had some access to the popular *jataka* stories.³⁴ Just as Christ’s message is witnessed in the story of his life and death, so Queirós assumed that the heart of Buddhist doctrine lay in the life-story of the Buddha.

Queirós was hungry for material on Sinhalese Buddhism yet for all the considerable resources at hand, there was little for his appetite to work on. A typical Portuguese description of Sinhalese religion can be seen in the account of the expedition to Uva in the 1630s, written by an anonymous author who was otherwise highly educated and of long service in Sri Lanka: it is, ‘so barbarous that only exceedingly brutish men, as the Chingalas, could take the heavens, the sun and the stars and this world, as the heaven of their happiness.’³⁵ Sinhalese religion is thereby confused with the (admittedly strong, and still strong) traditions of astrological folk-belief. As we shall touch on later on, this scornful tone, this refusal to engage in intellectual empathy, was partly a product of the continual wars and rebellions of the later period and the profound politicization of cultural difference that they elicited. We must stretch Abeyasinghe’s criticism to include the whole tradition of Portuguese reflections on Sri Lanka to which Queirós was heir.

However this lack of material could potentially weaken his presentation of the pivotal moment of the disputation, for which his readers would be expecting an account of the opposing creed that relayed a recognisable theology. Our explanation for his methods in filling the gap must start from the avowed purpose of the *Conquista*, that is, to establish an argument for a truly spiritual conquest of Ceylon by showing that it is both necessary and practicable for the Portuguese to wrest the island back from the Dutch and win Sinhalese souls for Catholicism. It is firstly an exhortation to righteous action and only secondarily an academic enquiry. In a narrative concerned to glorify missionary endeavour, an occasion such as the 1543 disputation would offer a dramatic opportunity for a showdown between the true faith and the enemy, between God and the Devil. The exact character of that enemy, whatever academic interest it may have in ethnological discourse, would matter less here than its oppositional role; the powerfully generic concept of paganism becomes useful once more.

The central role of the theme of religious disputation and conflict in the *Conquista* will become apparent later on. Here we need only refer again to the two theological works that Queirós wrote intending to arm missionaries

³³ Q, p. 141. Queirós has given us this Chinese ‘life of the Buddha’ in his narrative partly for comparative reasons and partly because he could not access a Sinhalese one – contrary to Saparamadu’s inference in the introduction to PIERIS, *Ceylon...* cit., p. viii, that Queirós had confused Chinese and Sinhalese Buddhism.

³⁴ *Jatakas* are Sinhalese folk-tales about the life of the Buddha: Q, pp. 115-120, 266.

³⁵ S. G. PERERA (ed.), *The Expedition to Uva made in 1618*, Colombo, 1930, p. 35.

with winning arguments in set-debates. He refers to one such in a letter from 1671: 'a polemical work on which I have worked and with a most stringent method I refute the ancient and modern errors [of heathenism].'³⁶ His ultimate target was almost certainly Hinduism. Interestingly, these projects spill over considerably into the *Conquista*. Book One is ostensibly an overview of the customs and beliefs of Sri Lanka, but Queirós regularly slips into discussing India and spends much more time discussing the 'Heathendom of this Hindustan' than he does discussing Buddhism. For the 1543 disputation then Queirós' mind seems to have been drawn back to the rhetorical material he employed in his other works. His target thereby became 'eastern religion' rather than any one manifestation of it.

To return to the narrative of the disputation, we are told that Fr. João waited patiently for his opponent to finish and then stood up to make his reply. His speech is a learned account of the theory that all pagans had received a dim appreciation of revelation, but had perverted or ignored it. João refers to,

...the faint lights which you shed amidst darkness on divine things, of which your ancestors obtained some knowledge, either from the Hebrews who formerly lived here, of from those who followed them. This opinion is confirmed by what St. Paul said: "that the gentiles knowing God did not give him thanks, but fell into abominations and sins." There is sufficient proof for us to say that throughout the Orient there was some knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity, as may be seen from the Symbols and figures of various pagodes, though disguised under strange names and expounded with many errors in the vedos of this heathendom.

Notice that João is now talking about, 'the vedos [*vedas*] of this heathendom.' Queirós seems to be assuming that his protagonist is now facing Indian Hindus, perhaps even Hindus with some connection to the traditions of the St. Thomas Christians, for João says, quite mysteriously, 'Read one of the books you have, which you have maliciously hidden, composed by Valver, a native of Melipur and a contemporary of St. Thomas. There you will find the unity of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son....'³⁷ It does appear as if Queirós has lost sight of the specific context of the event he is supposed to be dealing with.

Fr. João's (or rather his fictional alter ego's) argument here is intriguing, for it assumes that there are nuggets of truth amidst all the dross of pagan superstition. He says, 'For this reason our Doctors permit the reading of Pagan books in order to expurgate them from error, and because of the inconsistencies between falsehood and truth, it is easier to confirm the latter,

³⁶ Fernão de Queirós to Fr. General J.P. Oliva s.j., Goa, Jan 1671, in C. BECCARRI (ed.) *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales Inediti A Saeculo XVI ad XIX*, Vol XIII, Rome, 1913, Doc. 144, p. 446.

³⁷ Q, p. 241. There is no sign that João is discussing Buddhism.

as I undertake to do with your books.’³⁸ This is no doubt a fair description of what Queirós tried to accomplish in his works of eastern theology. In Book One of the *Conquista* Queirós also devotes much attention to the problem of how heathen religions came to contain doctrines which resemble those of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. This preoccupation is the key to Queirós’s whole presentation of the debate.

Contextualising Queirós’ beliefs

We will come back to the disputation, but having introduced the chief ideas we should reflect a little on their background. To provide a proper intellectual history for the ideas and passions which give life to Queirós’ writings would require a substantial and systematic investigation into his education, his reading and his network of colleagues along biographical and inter-textual lines. However, in lieu of such an ambitious undertaking, we can throw light on the peculiar motifs of the *Conquista* by connecting them to more general intellectual trends in European thought during the expansion into the East. Queirós was not an innovative thinker. Indeed, by seventeenth century terms, he was rather orthodox.

Christianity is well-known for its exclusivist claim to truth. Yet in the early modern period there were intellectual tendencies that complicated this principle. The equation of Christianity with civility was crucial here as Europeans came to discover that the features of civilisation did not confine themselves neatly to Christian lands and epochs. How did one assess the authority of the classical thinkers who had been the benchmark of wisdom for so long, yet who were also, confusingly, pagans? One response was to see them as *praeparatio evangelica*, a preparation for Christ. Just as Europeans were becoming more aware of their own pagan heritage, there were also missionaries encountering the ancient civilisations of the East. And this was one aspect of a larger problem, which grew more acute as the European awareness of faraway peoples expanded: how could God have denied the chance of salvation to so many? There were thus strong motives for granting some connection to salvific knowledge even in non-Christian societies, which in turn promoted drawing connections between Christianity and the other religions. This could be done in two ways. Firstly the notion of an historical diffusion of ideas maintained a powerful grip over any attempts to explain cultural analogies.³⁹ Secondly one could reflect on the role of innate human

³⁸ Q, p. 241.

³⁹ For example, it seems generally agreed upon that the eastern doctrine of reincarnation was an offspring of Pythagoras’ teachings on the transmigration of the soul. For a good introduction to the intellectual context of diffusionist ideas see S. MACCORMACK, ‘Limits of Understanding: Perceptions of Greco-Roman and Amerindian Paganism in Early Modern Europe’ in K. O. KUPPERMAN (ed.), *America in European Consciousness 1493- 1750*, London, Chapel Hill, 1995.

qualities. Queirós employed both these explanations, which of, course, often inter-twined.

The first explanation could appeal to a pre-revelation knowledge of God. The literal interpretation of Genesis demanded that mankind had sprung from one source, Adam, who had come face to face with his creator. His offspring might therefore preserve a dim memory of that first contact.⁴⁰ It was simple enough to imagine that the history of religious diversification was essentially a history of amnesiac corruption. This idea could take a radical form. Guillaume Postel's (1510-81) enthusiasm for evidence of true religion in those regions of the globe untouched by the gospel meant that he could explicitly equate Buddha with Christ.⁴¹ It also enabled Bartholomé de Las Casas to argue that Amerindian religion held enough remnants of truth to act as a *praeparatio evangelica*. By the seventeenth century it was commonly held that Amerindian religions represented the corruption of an original monotheism.

In India, an instinctive tendency to make analogies between Christian and heathen forms, without necessarily thinking through either the theological or historical implications, is apparent from the very beginning in the works of Duarte Barbosa, Tomé Pires and Fernão Nunes.⁴² These analogies achieved a theoretical weight when they came to be conceived of within the antiquarian culture of the early seventeenth century, which sought to account for historical and philological parallels between Ancient Greek, Egyptian and Biblical material.⁴³ The crucial step was taken by Lorenzo Pignoria whose 1615 supplement to a much earlier guide to classical deities speculated on the homologies between Greek and Roman Gods and counterparts discovered in the New World and Asia.⁴⁴ But, at the same time, the Italian traveller, Pietro della Valle was coming to similar conclusions in his proto-ethnological wanderings in India. Indeed he wondered whether the 'monstrous figures' of Indian mythology were a superficial cover for secrets of natural or moral philosophy.⁴⁵

By the mid-seventeenth century accounts of Hinduism were being subjected to the Neoplatonic interpretations of the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher at the *Collegio Romano*, who developed increasingly elaborate and mystical genealogical trees connecting all forms of religion past and present. However

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96

⁴¹ See D. F. LACH, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Book 2, vol II, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1965, pp. 267f. For some reason these theories found particular sympathy in France. Thevet's *La Cosmographie Universelle*, of 1575, links ritual bathing in the Ganges with Baptism, just as Queirós would do one hundred years later (*ibid.* p. 14).

⁴² Joan-Pau RUBIÉS, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 221, 248, 291.

⁴³ See *ibid.* pp. 371-372.

⁴⁴ MACCORMACK, 'Limits of Understanding...' cit.

⁴⁵ E. GREY (ed.), *The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India*, London, Hakluyt Soc, 1892, 2 vols., I, pp. 73-74

Kircher's hermetic constructions did not involve any serious grappling with eastern philosophies on their own terms. In this sense his concerns were quite different to those of Roberto de Nobili, whose pioneering work amongst the Tamil Brahmins a few decades before he rather ignored. Nobili was the most famous proponent of 'accommodationism', a form of rapprochement with non-Christian civilisation by which the local forms of life were adopted by the missionary pursuing a serious project of intellectual translation. It began with Alessandro Valignano the Jesuit Visitor to the east, working amongst the Japanese, whose example and eloquent polemics inspired Nobili and Matteo Ricci to found similarly culturally-sensitive missions in India and China.

Nobili became the first to major figure to take seriously the notion that Hinduism contained shards of holy revelation.⁴⁶ As the seventeenth century wore on other missionaries attempted to reach the philosophical or revelatory foundations that lay behind the colourful and alarming exterior of Hinduism. It was particularly Dutch Protestants such as Abraham Roger who used learned pagan informers to probe deeper into the Brahmanical scriptures. Roger, or at least his editor in 1652, was impressed enough by what he saw to argue that the light of truth had penetrated this far and something of it must have remained.

The simplest way to explain the seemingly incontrovertible traces of revealed truth was to imagine some sort of historical contact with Hebrew scripture. Queirós seems particularly keen to make higher reason dependent on revelation – 'If some Greek Pagans reason rightly, it is because of the knowledge they had of sacred scripture' – a thoroughly orthodox move, made by St. Augustine himself to explain Plato's 'monotheism.'⁴⁷ An illustration of this is also forced into Fr. João's speech in the disputation, although characteristically the emphasis is on how the ancient pagans had corrupted the revelation of holy scripture.⁴⁸ The argument is then extended to the east. In the ethnographic sweep of Book One, Queirós had devoted two Chapters, (20 and 21) to detailing the correspondences between Oriental beliefs and customs, particularly from the Vedic traditions, and their Hebrew counterparts. So we learn of the Hindu belief in a first cause, 'unborn and incorruptible, without beginning and without end...But when they come to the application of this doctrine they say a hundred-thousand absurdities....'⁴⁹ The heathens also have knowledge of the Holy Trinity, with three persons and only one God, but, alas, they do not 'understand this lofty mystery, but rather

⁴⁶ Ines G. ŽUPANOV, *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India*, New Delhi, OUP India, 1999, p. 3

⁴⁷ Q, p. 166. But Asian science is scuppered by the absence of the light of Faith.

⁴⁸ Q, p. 241. He even has Fr. João embark on a little sub-Kircherian digression, linking Egyptian, Roman and Indian motifs.

⁴⁹ Q, p.150.

profane it with a thousand abominations.’⁵⁰ Platonic abstractions have become mired in Asiatic dirt. A few pages of comparisons later, we learn how knowledge of the cleansing sacrament of Baptism had degraded over time into the Indian belief in the spiritual purity of rivers. Queirós concludes that ‘the foregoing comparison and observations clearly prove that the pagans of this Asia, and especially the Bramanes who are their Teachers and the Authors of all the fables they believe, *had received much intelligence concerning the teachings of the written Law which they had perverted...*’ [emphasis added]⁵¹ Once again this lengthy digression was also imported from – or at least destined for – his works of refutation.⁵²

Another option was to imagine that Christianity itself had been preached to all peoples at some stage in history. As a French biographer of Xavier averred around the time that Queirós was delving into the history of Sri Lanka, ‘it may be inferred that in former times the Indians heard of Christianity and that their religion is an imperfect imitation or corruption of ours.’⁵³ The fact that the Portuguese did actually find a living community of St. Thomas Christian in India gave considerable force to this idea. As we have seen Queirós makes Fr. João rather indignant at Asia’s blitheness with regard to this apostolic fore-runner. At any rate, in his lengthy digression Queirós is just as happy to draw analogies between Christianity and Hinduism. To take just one example, the practice of *puja* and other kinds of offerings could be nothing but a distorted imitation of spiritual indulgences granted by the Popes of the ‘True Church.’⁵⁴ In this way the strangeness of other cultures was ultimately effaced. Behind every Hindu error one can find a Judaeo-Christian truth.

From Queirós’ prose, it would seem that these were assumptions that his audience would find uncontroversial. Rather, controversy centred on the details: just how far one could press the analogies and in what circumstances. So Queirós says that while ‘Hindustan’ in general has Hebraic origins, it is not true that the Buddha was a Hebrew or that he preached the Ten Commandments’.⁵⁵ Here he was contradicting his principal (albeit unacknowledged) source for Sinhalese religion source, a text written by the captain Constantino de Sá de Miranda in the 1630s.⁵⁶ The effect is to make

⁵⁰ Q, p.151.

⁵¹ Q, p. 158.

⁵² Q, p.158: ‘Many other resemblances we could point out, but these are enough to confirm our statement, and there shall not be wanting a place in another work to continue the subject at greater length.’ It is possible that this habitual replication of his academic material is connected to the traumatic fire in New St. Paul’s College in Goa that destroyed all his manuscripts (perhaps twenty years work) in 1664, with Queirós trying to incorporate stretches of his lost works in his current endeavours.

⁵³ In 1682: M. COLLIS, *The Land of the Great Image*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1943), p. 41.

⁵⁴ Q, p. 156.

⁵⁵ Q, p. 142.

⁵⁶ MS 13, Biblioteca Universitária, Universidad de Zaragoza, published in Jorge Manuel FLORES (ed.), *Os Olhos do Rei: Desenhos e Descrições Portuguesas da Ilha de Ceilão (1624, 1638)*

Buddhism a more isolated and detached evolution of error. Yet Queirós still wants to insist that Buddha's ten precepts bear a resemblance to the ten commandments because both are 'natural precepts given by God as author of reason'. Hence we arrive at the second kind of explanation for cross-cultural analogies.⁵⁷

For Queirós' thinking was underpinned by a Thomist belief in the universality of the monotheistic and ethical urge. This derived from man's faculties of reason to apprehend the book of nature as scripted by God, and also from deep instinct. He is quite explicit about this: 'one must know that in all this East there is no people who deny that there is a God; but admitting that there is one, no one knows what he is, which confirms [the opinion] that the knowledge of the existence of God is an innate Notion and a truth which God impressed on our souls when we were first created....'⁵⁸ This is surely the main reason why the Hindu material in the ostensibly Buddhist speech in 1543 seems so essentially Christian.

This venerable idea reaches back to Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, 2.12-16: recognition of God is inscribed on the hearts of all men. Moreover it found a natural habitat in the Jesuitical education system, which incorporated the humanist tradition of finding worth in non-Christian traditions with an Ignatian emphasis on the compatibility of grace and nature.⁵⁹ Indeed, given the famously comprehensive schooling provided by the Jesuits, Abeyasinghe's assertion that Queirós was the product of an utterly reactionary and scholastic education seems rather peculiar.⁶⁰ Between 1635 and 1641. Queirós took a degree in Humanities and Philosophy at St. Paul's college Goa, a subject that he subsequently taught.⁶¹ Many of the writers of the 'humanist' canon would have been covered by such a course and his surviving writings show him to be certainly well-read, with a facility for classical reference.⁶²

However, this means that Queirós would have been acquainted with Classical authors who entertained sceptical ideas about the existence of the

(Lisbon, CNCDP, 2001). This text provided the basis for the *Descrição histórica, geographica, e topographica da Ilha de Ceilão* (Biblioteca da Ajuda, Call-mark 51-VIII-40, Number 27). The relevant passage is in folio 273. The *Descrição* was in turn the basis for Book One of the *Conquista*. However, the latter part of the *Descrição* seems to argue for the urgency of the Portuguese conquest of the Island, which would belong to Book Six.

⁵⁷ Q, p. 142. For the following see pp. 120, 141f.

⁵⁸ Q, p. 80.

⁵⁹ See John W. O'MALLEY, *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century: Preaching, Rhetoric, Spirituality, and Reform*, London, Ashgate, 1993, in particular, Chapter X, 'Renaissance Humanism and the Religious Culture of the First Jesuits'.

⁶⁰ ABEYASINGHE, 'History as Polemics...' cit., p. 49.

⁶¹ SCHURHAMMER, 'Unpublished Manuscripts...' cit., p. 211.

⁶² Besides the *Conquista* and the *Vida*, there also survives, his *Informação succinta sobre a redução do Imperio Abexino pera Sua Alteza ver a seus Ministros* (MS. 1196, Appendix II, School of Oriental and African Studies).

Soul or of one God.⁶³ In the seventeenth century such metaphysical speculations seemed to find an empirical counterpart in the increasingly sophisticated accounts of Buddhism in particular. Pietro Della Valle, for example, reported on the atheistic quality of Japanese Buddhism.⁶⁴ More importantly, there were Jesuit thinkers who recognised the existence of atheism; indeed Roberto de Nobili had made it a corner stone of his defence of accommodationism. In order to prove that the customs and rites of the Brahmins were entirely secular he placed their origins in an ancient atheistic civilization, the main principles of which survived to this day in the form of Buddhism.⁶⁵ But it was the Kircherian notion of an intrinsically monotheistic universal history of that Queirós sought to align himself with.

With these principles in mind one would also want to complicate Abeyasinghe's contention that Queirós' approach to Eastern religion was comprehensively and consistently negative.⁶⁶ Yet the casual reader would not doubt concur immediately with Abeyasinghe: Queirós does show a visceral disgust at all forms of 'idolatry' and it is not difficult to picture him serving in the Inquisition of Goa, an office that he discharged for 16 years.⁶⁷ How can one square his theoretical concessions and indigenist leanings with the ugly tenor his writing?

In many ways, Queirós stands as an example of how accommodationist principles had entered into the mainstream of Jesuit ideology. He had a strong belief, for example, that Christianity in India should have deep indigenous roots: this is what lies behind his argument that the Portuguese should have taken to heart and developed the cult of St. Thomas much more than they did.⁶⁸ The exhaustive length of the *Conquista* itself stands as a testament to how seriously Queirós believed that one should learn as much as possible about indigenous society before one could hope to effect a just spiritual and temporal authority over it. Hence he bemoans the fact that Portuguese officers did not take pains to find out the laws and customs of the country.⁶⁹ Moreover, at times, he suggests that spiritual conquest—naturally the more important—could have been better served through installing Christian native kings.⁷⁰

But accommodationism was always a potentially disruptive force, hovering on the precipice of heresy and eventually plunging into it with the rites controversies of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Portuguese and Spanish clerics tended to be more suspicious of it than their Italian

⁶³ Cicero was one much-studied writer who reflected on the idea of a Godless universe.

⁶⁴ RUBIÉS, *Travel and Ethnology...* cit., p. 373.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

⁶⁶ See ABEYASINGHE, 'History as Polemics...' cit., pp. 50-53.

⁶⁷ See SCHURHAMMER, 'Unpublished Manuscripts...' cit., p. 4. In 1673, Queirós, 'was for sixteen years Deputy at the Inquisition of Goa.'

⁶⁸ Q, p. 385.

⁶⁹ Q, pp. 1008-1009.

⁷⁰ Q, p. 479.

colleagues. In late seventeenth-century Goa it must have been the subject of intense and ongoing controversy. It seems, then, that Queirós felt under pressure to maintain the dividing line between Christianity and other religions in the face of the various similarities and analogies that pressed upon it. Moreover, at this mature stage in Portuguese Goan history, the Church included Indian converts who would have retained an awkward pride in their Brahmanic heritage. This is why Queirós devotes two chapters of the *Conquista* to attacking a treatise by an anonymous author, clearly a Christian Brahmin, who sought to retrieve some of the nobility and even spiritual wisdom of his forefather's traditions. For how to disassociate this regard for Brahmanic culture from respect for Brahmanic Gods? Hence, 'the only true Nobility is the one that is derived from [the worship of the] True God and that there is only false and imaginary nobility where false Gods are concerned.'⁷¹ Of these chapters Abeyasinghe refers to them as being, 'classic examples of scholastic disquisitions.'⁷² They may strike the modern reader as over-long and tediously pedantic, being point-by-point rebuttals backed up by endless Biblical and classical authorities. But this also indicates that their target represented a threat of some force to Queirós' world. In effect, Queirós was denying that Nobili's attempt to fence off an entirely secular and therefore respectable realm of indigenous culture could ever be countenanced.

In terms of his basic conception of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions, neither Queirós nor Nobili conceived of conversion as the defeat of a radically-different system of ideas. However, whereas Nobili emphasised the *sacralization* of Hinduism, that is, bringing its latent truths to proper fruition (i.e. Catholicism), Queirós seems to promote a *scourging* of Hinduism not simply for its irrelevancies and obfuscations but because of the inherently repulsive nature of its mythology. Queirós has been caught by the surface exotic and finds it difficult to see further; yet he also uses aesthetic language – the demonic ugliness of heathen Gods – as a means of emphasising difference. In the defensively aggressive tone of such passages, the layers of ridicule and scorn, one no doubt catches glimpses of his lost refutational works. Where there is a closeness in historical sense it was all the more important to emphasise a distance in a theological sense. Indeed the latter pervades the rhetoric used to describe the former: Queirós references to the historical evolution of religion are imbued with an imagery of blame and distaste, so that revelation is not just degraded or lost or forgotten but, 'corrupted', 'hidden', and 'maliciously perverted'.⁷³ By these means heathens have also accommodated the devil. Fr. João is made to say, 'for if the indecencies and superfluities which the Devil introduced into

⁷¹ Q, p. 163.

⁷² Chapters 22 and 23. See ABEYASINGHE, 'History as Polemics...' cit., p. 49, footnote 71.

⁷³ The words of 'Fr. João' regarding the Egyptians: Q, p. 241.

your Books... be removed, it will be easy to discover faith in the true God.'⁷⁴ For Queirós then, conversion was a form of corrective surgery, an excision of diabolical growths.

Note that it should be 'easy' to come to Christ in this way. Theoretically, heathens have a deep propensity to turn towards Christianity, with their natural inclination towards Christian logic and morality, their contact with Hebraic revelation and then the arrival of the gospel itself via the apostle St. Thomas. Fuelling Nobili with a sense of optimism, for Queirós many decades later this propensity was exasperatingly slow in manifesting itself: there was by now a sizeable native Christian community within Goa itself but there still remained this vast hinterland outside of Portuguese control which simply refused to convert, despite well over century of mission.⁷⁵ Moreover, Queirós now had to contend with the very analogies developed by Jesuit thinkers being thrown back in his face by recalcitrant heathen:

The fact is the Devil has forestalled everything. When we preach to the heathens of hither India, they reply that they also have a Trinity, and that their Vixnu incarnated himself times out of number; if we preach to those of further India and of Ceylon (for this Sect has disappeared from many parts of India wherein it began), they reply that their Buddum or their Fo or their Xaka also took the shape of a man, though he was an eternal being.⁷⁶

In this way, the European movement to seek a bridgehead with eastern theologies combined wickedly with the glorious inclusivism of Hindu-Buddhist thought. The figure of Fr. João de Villa de Conde, going forth in the innocent first days of mission, appears in the *Conquista* to be loaded down with the weariness and anger of future generations. This is why his speech in the account of the 1543 disputation has the tone of a parent chastising a particularly stubborn and obstinate child.

The implications for his ethnology: what Buddhism is

What implications did these presuppositions have for Queirós' sketches of Sinhalese Buddhism in the geographical and ethnological survey of Sri Lanka contained in Book One of the *Conquista*? Gernet's classic work on Matteo Ricci's early seventeenth century mission in China set out to reveal the fundamental differences of mentality between the Jesuits and the Chinese literati. Gernet was then able to show how these differences mediated and

⁷⁴ Q, p. 241. One of the reasons why it was natural to see false religion as a corruption of true religion is that the devil, obviously the author of heathen notions, worked not by creation *per se*, but by the corruption of what has already been made.

⁷⁵ Queirós often complains about the stubbornness of the Brahmin caste in particular in their refusal to convert. See, for example, Q. p. 170

⁷⁶ Q, p. 141.

ultimately obscured their attempts at dialogue. Sometimes it seems as if Queirós' attempts to penetrate eastern philosophies foundered on a similarly massive mental reef, his belief in the universality of monotheism. However we have seen that Queirós must have been aware that this issue was contested and debated within the Jesuit order. Indeed the very notion of faith rests upon the possibility of the absence of belief in God. And there had been, of course, a long tradition of Christian theology demonstrating the existence of God from first principles. In so far as the language of *mentalité* leads us to envisage entirely unconscious and determinative structures it will not do. On the other hand, one does sense that Queirós had difficulty in imagining a picture of the universe devoid of an ultimate divine presence and ruled by karma, in which punishment or reward for earthly behaviour is the result of a mechanistic process rather than the intercession of a judgmental consciousness. For South Asian traditions, *it is in the order of things* that immoral behaviour will lead to an unfavourable reincarnation, in the same way that lighting a fire will cause heat. In Western monotheism reality can only be organised and given meaning through subjection to a divine will.

Yet there is a troublesome passage in the *Conquista* that seems, at first, to throw doubt on our account of his mind. In this passage Queirós refers to a quite different interpretation of Buddhist teaching:

'Querem hūs, *que* ensinace a adoração de hum s... Deos, penitência, e misericórdia; sobre o *que* contão dele impossueys exemplos; mas he falso, *que* lhes desse os dez preceytos dos mandamentos; acreaentando dous: que não bebessem uinho, nem matassem couza uiuente, ***que negara a immortalidade da alma, e todos os sucessos, e acontecimentos humanos atribuiara ao fado, e aos Planetas; donde negão a primeyra causa, attribuindo, tudo M uentura; principio conaturalissimo da ingratição.*** Outros querem *que* lhes ensinasse a ley de Moyses; mas he por *que* confundem esta seyta com a dos Veddãos...' ⁷⁷

Now, the phrases in bold do approximate to Buddhist doctrine. It is not quite right to say that the Buddha denied the immortality of the soul, for in fact Theravada doctrine denies that the soul, or any kind of permanent self, could exist in the first place. However the former could clearly arise as a degraded version of the latter. While the denial of a first cause and its replacement by fate or chance does at least gesture towards the notion that the universe is not overseen by an ultimate consciousness, but works according to innate laws. Has Queirós accepted that Buddha's teachings were truly independent of the dictates of natural reason or the influences of revealed tradition?

However the precise meaning of the text here is unclear. Perera's English translation implies that the italicised phrases continue the list of doctrines

⁷⁷ PIERIS (ed.), *Conquista temporal...* cit., p. 93.

falsely assigned to the Buddha.⁷⁸ In fact, the original Portuguese is ambiguous on this point, and nor does it indicate whether the ‘some’ here are Sinhalese or Portuguese commentators.⁷⁹ However, consideration of both the rough draft of this passage, and Miranda’s text on which it is based, indicates that the opinion is being attributed to the Sinhalese themselves – but not to Buddha.

In Miranda: ‘A este homem reconhecem os chingallás por deus, não avendo na sua oppenião outro, e negando com brutalidade increiual, a primeira cauza, dizendo que estas segundas nação pur sea uentura’.⁸⁰

Which becomes, in the rough draft, ‘mas os Chingalaz a perverterVo de sorte, que sô a Boddum reconhehem por Deos, negando a primeira causa, e dizendo que estas segundas nascerão por sua ventura’⁸¹.

If we look beyond the judgmental language, Miranda’s terse comment represents the most insightful comment we have by a Portuguese on Sinhalese Buddhism. Indeed, it is quite remarkable in its rough appreciation of radical difference. As such, it presented Queirós with uncomfortable empirical evidence that there were people who did not conform to his vision of a universal substratum of religious belief. But he could not bring himself to attribute such ideas to a major religious figure as the Buddha. Hence he dismisses them as freakish corruptions on the part of some Sinhalese. Nowhere else in the *Conquista* does he refer to these disturbing ideas; elsewhere Sinhalese Buddhism conforms to his presuppositions.

There is a further reason why Queirós would have difficulty attributing such beliefs to even the majority of Sinhalese. In the final draft, this passage is immediately followed by one doctrine that Queirós does positively assign to Buddhism, and that is the transmigration of the soul. It is one of the very, very few Buddhist doctrines that Queirós is able to point to in the whole of

⁷⁸ Q, p. 120: ‘Some say he taught the worship of only one God, penance and mercy, about which they relate of him impossible instances; but it is false that he gave them the ten precepts of the commandments adding two, not to drink wine nor kill any living thing, that he denied the immortality of the soul and attributed all the successes and human events to fate and the planets; whereby they deny the first cause, attributing everything to chance, a principle most in keeping with ingratitude.’

⁷⁹ Tom Earle (p.c 17/8/99), comments on ‘the sudden shift of tense, from “desse”, imperfect subjunctive, to ‘negara’, which in modern Portuguese is pluperfect indicative. If Queiroz was a modern writer the shift would indicate that he wanted to establish a contrast between statements regarded as false and statements regarded as true, which are typically conveyed by the indicative. However, Queiroz wrote in the seventeenth century, at a time when the –ra tense had not yet fully acquired its modern meaning. In the period prior to his it habitually had a subjunctive or conditional sense, which has only gradually given way to the pluperfect indicative. Exactly where Queiroz stands in the history of the development of the tense is not clear; though its use in this passage certainly suggests that some kind of contrast is intended with “desse”. Nor do the two surviving manuscripts of the *Conquista* (Ajuda MS folio 34, Rio de Janeiro MS folio 35 r, pencil 48r) clarify matters. Indeed they employ strange punctuation, indicating perhaps that the scribes themselves did not fully understand what they were writing.

⁸⁰ FLORES (ed.), *Os Olhos...* cit., p. 181, and see p. 153 too.

⁸¹ *Descrição historica ...cit.*, folio 273.

the *Conquista*. And it is easy to see how this fact, so firmly established, could seem to rule out any suggestion of the mortality or non-existence of the soul. Indeed it is still one of those features of Buddhist thought which newcomers find so hard to grasp: how could the Buddha have taught both the reincarnation of the self and its illusory nature? The problem was compounded by the now routine equation of eastern conceptions of reincarnation with the notion of 'transmigration of souls' that was associated with Pythagoras or envisaged as a more primordial feature of ancient heathenism. Indeed it seems that some Brahmin informants had already begun to incorporate the figure of Pythagoras as an imagined source for their traditions.⁸² But in translating Buddhist ideas into this ready-made category, Queirós denied himself access to the subtleties of doctrine that would resolve this contradiction. Nor could he properly incorporate an account of Buddhism that approximated to its teachings.

The story of the martyr in boiling oil

An excellent case study is provided by Queirós' treatment of a very old Sinhala story, about King Kalani Tissa and the Kelaniya temple. Jonathan Walters has given us a detailed study of all the versions of this story as it has been retold over the centuries. In the *Mahavamsa* we are told that the King Kalani Tissa discovers evidence that his queen is committing adultery and he throws into the sea an imposter-monk and an actual arhant (enlightened one) on suspicion of aiding the adultery. The gods are angered with such impiety and raise the seas to destroy Kelaniya.⁸³ In the Dambadeniya period the story is elaborated so that it is an innocent Elder who is suspected of the adultery. He is not thrown into the sea but placed in a cauldron of boiling oil, but at that moment he becomes an arhant and so remains unharmed. He then perceives that he is paying for the sin in a previous life of casting a fly into boiling milk, he expounds a century of verses on the *dhamma* and he disappears into Nirvana.⁸⁴ The seventeenth century retellings differ princi-

⁸² RUBIÉS, *Travel and Ethnology...* cit., p. 372.

⁸³ Jonathan S. WALTERS, *The History of Kelaniya*, Colombo, 1996, p. 24.

⁸⁴ This is the version as given in the circa thirteenth-century *Rasavihini*. See WALTERS, *Kelaniya...* cit., pp. 46-7. In the fourteenth century a collection of 98 verses was identified as being the 'century of verses' which the arhant recited and thus given the name, *Tela-kataha-gata* (Oil cauldron verses). Walters argues convincingly that these 98 verses, dating stylistically to the tenth century, were not composed with the story of Kalani Tissa in mind. Nevertheless by the Kotte period this association was being made. G. P. MALALASEKERA, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (1928, reprinted Kandy, 1994), p. 163, comments thus: 'The verses embody in them the fundamental tenets of Buddhism and are an earnest exhortation to men to lead the good life.' However this association did not become an intrinsic or permanent feature of the story because the *Rajavaliya* merely tells us that he spoke, 'to the people declaring that this state of existence is a stain on Buddhahood.' What does remain common to all versions of the story – except Queirós' – is the centrality of the ethic of *Rajadharma*, the law which binds kings. My thanks to K. N. O Dharmadasa and Jonathan Walters for their comments on the *Tela-kataha-gatha* and other aspects of this story.

pally through a greater exaggeration of the oceanic destruction caused by the Gods, so that the *Rajavaliya* tell us that, 'altogether eleven-twelfths of Lanka got submerged by the sea'.⁸⁵

Queirós' version seems closest to that of the *Rajavaliya* as it reports that the greater part of the island was destroyed.⁸⁶ However it contains a most striking alteration, for the Buddhist arhant is turned into a proto-Christian martyr. He says in the boiling oil, 'Since Lord, you show your power in my weakness by defending my innocence; even though I may be [innocent] of the crime they attribute to me, not long ago I committed another no less grave: grant that by this fire I may atone for it, the body suffering to save the soul.'⁸⁷ Thus the traditional Sinhalese story of how kings are punished if they fail to meet Buddhist norms is transformed into the motif of the Christian faithful suffering under temporal tyranny.

We cannot be sure that Queirós is responsible for twisting the story in this way, although the interposing of an incongruous speech into the narrative is a characteristic of his.⁸⁸

However, this should be seen as an issue of translation as much as deliberate distortion. We can assume that Queirós (or his source) was presented with a version of the story similar to that in the *Rajavaliya*. There the arhant comments that on his predicament as repayment for a sin he had committed in a former state of being.⁸⁹ How would a Portuguese of the sixteenth or seventeenth century translate that? And if Queirós is responsible for this version, how would he perceive its true meaning, being already predisposed, on intellectual principle, to see Judaeo-Christian structures underneath the messy complexities of Eastern religion? It is in fact not clear whether Queirós is making his monk refer to Original Sin, or just the sins which every mortal is guilty of in the course of life; no matter: the real sleight-of-hand which Queirós accomplishes is to make karmic retribution into Catholic atonement. Yet in a sense, this equivalence is not entirely bogus. There is

⁸⁵ A. V. SURAWEERA (trans., ed.), *Rajavaliya*, Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, 2000, p. 26. WALTERS, *Kelaniya...* cit., p. 69, suggests that this could be a Sinhala response to the Portuguese appropriations of the temple: a warning of the punishments accorded to those who defile its sanctity.

⁸⁶ Q, pp. 29-31. Walters tells us that he has preserved elements from a sixteenth-century version of the myth which are not preserved anywhere else.

⁸⁷ My translation differs slightly from that given by Perera (Q, p.30). PIERIS (ed.), *Conquista temporal...* cit., p.23, has 'Poys Senhor, mostrays vosso poder, em minha fraqueza, defendendo minha inocencia; ainda que o esteja na culpa, que me dão; outra cometi há pouco tempo, nada menos grave; permeti que neste fogo a satisfaça; padecendo o corpo por salvar a alma.'

⁸⁸ About the alteration Walters says, 'in Portuguese eyes Kelaniya had become Portuguese,' but he does not indicate whether this Christianisation represents a new version of the myth in circulation among the Catholic community, or whether it is a deliberate re-working by Queirós. The latter hypothesis is advanced in the main text, but the former is equally plausible. The Portuguese destroyed the temple of Kelaniya and two Churches were built among the ruins. Perhaps the Christian re-working of the myth lent a kind of legitimacy to this recreation: by making its Christian destiny prefigured in the person of the unlucky arhant.

⁸⁹ SURAWEERA (trans., ed.), *Rajavaliya*, p. 25.

perhaps one key difference between the two concepts: atonement takes place before the eyes of God, whereas the working of karma is a natural law of the universe to which deities are irrelevant. Over and again this is revealed as the one major obstacle to Queirós' understanding of Buddhism and Hinduism; he seems unwilling to conceive of a system of thought in which all pattern and meaning in the universe does not ultimately derive from this watchful intelligence, from God. For Queirós it makes no sense for the arhant to merely perceive his sin, instead he must lament it and make that lament known to God and beg for forgiveness. If this represents a colonial appropriation of the story of Kalani Tissa, it is less through symbolic conquest than symbolic slippage.

A neat encapsulation of Queirós' interpretative bias can be found in his translation of the most basic lay-chant in Sinhalese Buddhism, '*Buddham saranam gacchami*'. He renders it as 'Buddum be Mindful of me' rather than the correct sense of, 'I take refuge in the Buddha'.⁹⁰

The implications for his narrative: how Buddhists behave (and Christians remember)

It should be clear by now that Queirós' methods of writing history require special attention. If we return momentarily to the 1543 disputation, it needs to be remembered that Queirós had indirect access to Gonzaga's fairly reliable account of it. (Gonzaga's account is reproduced, sometimes word for word, in Paulo da Trindade's *The Spiritual Conquest of the East*. Queirós explicitly acknowledges his use of Trindade at least twice). Therefore Queirós deliberately ignored his source and replaced it with fictional speeches that rehearsed his own theological theories. We have cause now to doubt Queirós whenever his narrative touches upon religious matters.

In fact Queirós' theological preoccupations influence his narrative via two principal themes: (1) An obsession with religious conflict and disputation, where inter-religious dialogue is conceived of in martial terms, rather in contrast to Nobili's use of debate as a form of translation and mutual adjustment. (2) There is an equal insistence on the anticipation or mimicry of Christianity in heathen religions. We saw as much in his re-telling of the Kelaniya story, which illustrated the principle that sparks of divine grace can crop up in the very heart of idolatry to give fore-warnings of its future: 'And though even among these heathens God often works such wonders in justification of the truth....'⁹¹ Queirós had a particular motivation for reminding us of the reality of this kind of divine intervention. During his researches into the life of the visionary Jesuit lay-brother Pedro de Basto he had come across records of the divinations of Sinhalese holy men that seemed to offer

⁹⁰ Q, p. 120.

⁹¹ Q, p. 31.

an eerie echo of Basto's warnings regarding the victory of the Dutch – 'for we know from good Theology that that grace is not denied to a Heathen as is seen in the Sibyls.'⁹²

These two themes have a single discursive logic. One would imagine that the trope of religious conflict would emphasise contrariety, but here it works to draw out fundamental similarities, through the need to make Sinhalese Buddhism into a suitable opponent. It is a pleasing irony: in fashioning the eastern religions into opponents of the True Faith he made them into its mirror image.

However, we should not assume that Q was simply 'inventing' material in order to develop these themes. His usual method was to take an episode from his source and then adapt it according to his preoccupations. In that case it is always difficult to know how far he has altered his material.⁹³ Given the shadowiness of Queirós' sources and his tendency to incorporate long sections from other works without acknowledgement, we ought to be cautious in making direct conclusions about which passages bear the distinctive impress of Queirós' mind. For the episodes discussed below one can often imagine an alternative origin, what one might call a Sri Lankan providentialist or martyrological tradition, promulgated in the stories about the past circulating among the Sri Lankan Christian community. With the abandonment of Kotte in 1565, Portuguese power and the Catholicism it promoted contracted to the city of Columbo and its immediate environs for the best part of thirty years. But where it retrenched, it thrived in adversity. Little attention has been paid to the sheer quantity of miraculous, martyrological, providential, and prophetic material that this community produced.⁹⁴ Animating all of this material is the image of a Christian destiny for the island that would ultimately outshine any of the diabolical creeds ranged against it.

In other words, Queirós shared with his sources a firm belief in Sri Lanka's providential destiny. Therefore we cannot distinguish by hermeneutic viewpoint alone where his voice begins and those of generations of Portuguese settlers and native Christians end. Take for example, the very first episode that Queirós narrates, the 'discovery' of Sri Lanka by the Portuguese. Other sources confirm that D. Lourenço de Almeida's little fleet was driven to Sri Lanka by adverse winds in 1505 or 1506 although it is ambiguous whether this was accidental or fortuitous. Queirós extends the moment of the storm. He tells us that on board there was a Franciscan, Fr. Vicente, who seeks to ask God what should be done.⁹⁵ He puts two pieces of paper under

⁹² Q, pp. 747, 1004.

⁹³ I have not undertaken a systematic search of all Queirós' extant sources to see if the Kelaniya story has been lifted wholesale from one of them.

⁹⁴ See, for example, the huge number of stories about the Holy Virgin that Queirós incorporates into his text. She was ever at hand to put in a miraculous appearance, pausing a storm to allow a ship to reach port, or giving forth a blinding flash of light to scatter the enemy: Q, pp. 613-4, 647-0, 667-85.

⁹⁵ Q, pp. 176-7.

the altar stone, one representing sailing on to the Maldives, the other representing the return to Cochin. The following morning both papers are gone and there had been no way for the wind to carry them away. So Fr. Vincente concludes, 'that Heaven is leading us in another direction for the greater service of God.' The message, that the Portuguese were blown by the winds of God onto the shores of Sri Lanka, clearly reflects the interests of both Queirós and the Sinhalese Catholic community. One would imagine that Queirós would be loath to fabricate too much about such a key event as the 'discovery' of the island; although his intended readership was the Portuguese authorities in Goa and Lisbon, he would have been aware that there were texts and oral histories in circulation that might contradict him. The speeches of this Fr. Vincente are almost certainly Queirós' handiwork, as is the gloss with which Queirós completes the episode: 'God wishing thereby to show them that He did not lead them to India to be pirates, but to be conquerors.'⁹⁶

Saint Francis Xavier and Sri Lanka

In Queirós' narrative of the 1540s Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit apostle to the East, is the subject of a number of stories describing his activities in or connected to Sri Lanka. While Xavier did make brief visits to the Island on more than one occasion, most of the episodes that Queirós narrates seem to be entirely unhistorical. As a result historians have largely ignored them. Xavier had an immense impact among Christian communities across Asia, and the development of a Xavierian hagiography was so swift after his death that it was a serious job for his biographers to separate fact from fiction in the case for his canonisation. Although Xavier's historical links with the island can seem marginal to the historian today, at the time they resounded with great emotional significance due to his connection with the conversion of the inhabitants of Manar in 1544 who were subsequently slaughtered by the King of Jaffna. This event shocked the Christians of Colombo, and the Portuguese authorities in India and in Portugal, not to mention Xavier himself, and gave rise to a widely circulated martyrological tradition. It is not surprising that Sinhalese Christians would want to see Xavier at the root of their faith, marking out Sri Lanka with the grace of his bodily presence in the same way that Buddha had done. By the late 1550s, perhaps five or six years after his death, Xavier was already being represented by a banner in the first holy procession in Sri Lanka, as Queirós tells us, 'even before he was beatified, because he had planted the Faith in that Island.'⁹⁷ For Queirós the fact

⁹⁶ If we remember that Queirós thought of sea-borne imperialism as lowly piracy, with only bodily conquest enabling a truly spiritual dimension to empire.

⁹⁷ Q, p. 341. Miracles surrounding the cult of Xavier in Colombo are referred to in letters from 1645 and 1654. V. PERNIOLA, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The Portuguese Period, Volume III: 1620-1658* (Dehiwala, Tisara Prakasakayo, 1991), pp. 271, 337.

that Xavier was a Jesuit would have been important, a means of inserting his own order into the otherwise Franciscan history of the early mission in the island. One could even say that for Queirós, Xavier was still with him, in a sense, entombed in the Cathedral of Goa and manifesting saintly powers so strong that Queirós feared for the integrity of his body under the hands that constantly pressed upon it.⁹⁸

One of the many tiny oddities of Queirós' narrative is the role of Trincomalee, which is magnified into the major centre of cult for the whole island, a place renowned all across for Asia for its Hindu and Buddhist sacredness.⁹⁹ It was indeed 'the Rome of the gentiles of the Orient'.¹⁰⁰ We hear of Bhuvanekabahu making an improbable pilgrimage across to the other side of the island, and we are even told that he is buried there, the 'honoured sepulchre of the kings of Cota and others of Ceylon.'¹⁰¹ It is the Buddhist hierarchy who Xavier comes to challenge, entering into, 'this pagan Rome', and effecting a meeting with the 'Turunanse' (*terunnanse*, a title of respect given to a senior monk). What transpires is not so much a debate as a process of submission to saintly prowess. Xavier preaches the Gospel to the monk who, 'half won over', asks for another meeting the following day:

In the morning they both assembled in a retired spot, and the gentile declared to him the principles and means of his religion; but as he was uncertain of the end, he begged him to enlighten him entirely. The Saint dispelled these mists with such brevity and clearness, that as he [the monk] was predestined, he at once perceived the truth of all that was said and the falsity of what he had hitherto professed.¹⁰²

Here we have the ideal inter-religious encounter: there are no intellectual objections, merely a statement of error and its replacement by the truth. The truth was instantly recognised as such because the monk was predestined; his conversion was providentially assured. We are told that many other Buddhist monks converted following his example, but they had to do so secretly, fearful of persecution. Xavier instructs them and returns to India.

A little later on in Queirós' narrative of that year we hear of another *bhikkhu* who comes to God, although this time almost by a process of independent deduction. We are told that the fame of Francis Xavier's mission

⁹⁸ As Queirós states in a letter, of 1681: SCHURHAMMER, 'Unpublished Manuscripts...' cit., p. 224.

⁹⁹ See Q, pp. 66-9. Incidentally, Queirós records that a Sinhala inscription was found at the temple, which apparently foretold the coming of the Portuguese (or 'francos' equivalent to Anglo-Indian *farangi* or Sinhala *parangi*) and their conquest of the Island. Clearly, another example of Sri Lanka's providential destiny foretold in its pagan past.

¹⁰⁰ Q, p. 236. This statement suggests one reason for Trincomalee's representation as an international holy centre and desired sepulchre; it has clearly become, via Queirós' oppositional logic, the pagan equivalent of Rome.

¹⁰¹ Q, pp. 294, 736.

¹⁰² Q, p. 237.

reached Denavaka in Sitavaka and leads to a debate among Buddhist monks, about, 'whether one can be saved without being a Pythagorean or believing in the transmigration of souls.'¹⁰³ One monk argued for a fixed abode of punishment or reward in the afterlife (i.e. Heaven and Hell) and, judged to be a heretic, he was sent to Trincomalee. There he encounters a secret Christian community, being ministered by a cleric called Francisco Antunes, who had been ordained by Francis Xavier.... He receives baptism and is then sent off to Arakan (in modern day Burma) to stand trial before the 'Maturanse' (*Maha-terunnanse*). The report of the debate is peculiar enough to make one wonder whether it preserves some kind of memory of a Buddhist intellectual response to the aggressive new faith in the first years. However, again this reference to Christianity in Trincomalee on the East coast in the 1540s is quite implausible, as is the reference to a Fr. Antunes working there.¹⁰⁴ We shall discuss the role of Arakan below, but this too is unhistorical. Queirós account of what was said in Arakan is however very interesting. The monk confesses his conversion and says:

If an earthly King punishes with banishment and rewards with [honourable] Places those who have deserved well or ill, how is it possible that the King of heaven punishes with perpetual peregrination one who has earned his love by merit? Does it not seem to you an ill-founded error to try to conceal truth under folly? Have you perchance an ancient Book which teaches you this? I know for sure that you have maliciously buried what they teach you to the contrary. Buddum, whom you venerate so much and whose doctrine you follow, it is certain, never taught such a thing....'

Even the choice of words comes close to Fr. João's speech at the disputation. We have Queirós talking again here, this time through a Sinhalese *bhikkhu* in Burma. All the old *bête noirs* are present, but perhaps most interesting is what happens to the Buddha, who becomes, 'the King of Heaven', a monotheistic overseer who punishes and rewards the behaviour of mortals.¹⁰⁵ Queirós does not understand that 'perpetual peregrination' (reincarnation) happens regardless of the Buddha, and that this has nothing to do with salvation, which concerns the individual's *escape* from reincarnation. Notice also the notion that the Sinhalese are even deviating from Buddhism. The speeches, then, are pure Queirós, but the form of the story would fit neatly into our hypothetical providentialist tradition. For the monk

¹⁰³ Queirós refers to the monks as 'Yogis' at this point. Denavaka ('Dinavaca' in Queirós) was a medieval district held by the kings of Sitavaka. See H. B. M. ILANGASINHA, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka* (Delhi, Sri Satguru Publications, 1992), p.45.

¹⁰⁴ The first reference we have to Christians in Trincomalee is the conversion of a prince of that area in 1551, SCHURHAMMER and VORETZSCH, (eds.), *Ceylon zur Zeit...*cit., p. 578. However it seems as if they were not provided with any priest or institutional support, and after that we have to wait until at least 1602 for an indication that there might be missionary work there, as it was given over to the Jesuits at this time: PERNIOLA, *The Catholic Church...* cit., p. 266.

¹⁰⁵ See Q, p.257.

ended up being stoned to death for his views, receiving 'the Crown of Martyrdom' in 1543. As such he is just like the Kelaniya martyr who died in oil, he is a spark of grace in the heart of idolatry. Moreover this emphasis on Trincomalee as a place of great idolatry yet marked out for holiness suggests that either our stories come from the later Christians of the Trincomalee region, or that there was a felt need to need to defuse and undermine it as a centre of cult.

Another disputation and trial by fire?

According to Queirós another set-piece debate took place at Kotte a few years after the first one, between Fr. João and a Brahmin. This Brahmin had converted to Buddhism and been sent to Kotte by the 'Maturanse of Arracão' in order to oppose the Catholic mission. Fr. João gives a speech at the Palace, the Brahmin is called for to refute him. But Fr. João challenges him to a trial by fire. Both men pass through the flames, and, sure enough, Fr. João emerges unharmed while his opponent is burnt to death. Bhuvanekabahu is overwhelmed by this miracle and kisses the feet of the apostolic Father João.

Again, one should not rule out the possibility that there a few elements of truth behind this story. Queirós gives the impression that it occurred in 1545 or 6 at a time when Bhuvanekabahu was hostile to the mission. Fr. João was indeed at Kotte at this time, and was having to contend with a distinctly anti-Christian atmosphere. In early 1546 we know that he was having a number of conversations with the king.¹⁰⁶ There are few curious and intriguing details, such as that the Brahmin had previously been a devotee of 'Peramissora' (*Paramesvara*, a title of Siva) and we know that there was a temple to this God in Sitavaka. Many of the other details, however, are highly implausible, especially the climax: if such a dramatic ordeal had taken place and been won it would have made some kind of mark in the surviving correspondence from the time. Surely Fr. João himself would have mentioned such a high point in the generally dismal story of his mission. Equally Bhuvanekabahu never came close to being 'won over' in this way—which makes the narrative rather awkward at this point, because although the chapter ends on this high note, the next chapter has to come back to reality as it were: 'The King gave some hopes of being converted, but in the end political reasons got the better of him and he continued in the worship of his pagodes.'

It is possible that Queirós invented the episode in order to present a vivid demonstration of the divine favour behind the mission and to erase the rather bathetic note on which the first disputation had ended.¹⁰⁷ However

¹⁰⁶ SCHURHAMMER and VORETZSCH, (eds.), *Ceylon zur Zeit...*cit., p. 368.

¹⁰⁷ In the first disputation Fr. João asks for a trial by fire, but his opponent refuses. In this Queirós is following his source Trindade/Gonzaga, He still gives it a twist however, making the monk refuse out of fear, rather than from an injunction by the king.

the most likely scenario is that this represents another version of the story of the 1543 disputation, circulated orally across a generation or more, and therefore acquiring details more amenable to the sensibility of the Sinhalese Catholic community. Queirós, not realising that it dealt with the same event as described by Trindade, set it down as a separate affair—a form of error that he has certainly made in other parts of the *Conquista*.¹⁰⁸ This would explain the odd fact that Fr. João's words here are much closer to the spirit of what Trindade/Gonzaga report for 1543 than Queirós own account of that event.¹⁰⁹ If this is the case, then it seems as if Fr. João's challenge of a holy ordeal by fire or water, which probably did happen, was transformed into a story wherein the ordeal was accepted and gloriously won. Both Fr. João and the opposition set against him are thus magnified, and God is seen to have revealed himself once more in the heat of religious battle.

The 'Buddhist Pope' of Arakan and the notorious renegade Vimaladharmasuriya

It may have been noticed that a definite sense of a Buddhist organisation and a counter-offensive is emerging from Queirós' narrative. The mysterious figure of the *Maha-terunnanse* of Arrakan crops up in many of these tales, orchestrating a coherent opposition to the Franciscan mission: it is he who is supposed to have sent forth the Brahmin to oppose Fr. João in the 'second debate' of the 1540s.¹¹⁰ In fact Queirós tells us that the Sinhalese *bhikkhus* were all subordinate to this man, who controlled the temple land in Sri Lanka and gave it to his 'Administrators' to use.¹¹¹ We know, of course, that the Sri Lankan *sangha* was never subject to an international hierarchy such as Queirós describes. A closer look at how this fictional institution came into being will illustrate how the *Conquista* can be read as a merging of *casado* myth and Jesuit preoccupation. Queirós' source here (which he fails to acknowledge!) is the survey by Constantino de Sá de Miranda written in the 1630s, that Jorge Flores has recently brought to our attention. Indeed, Queirós is following his usual technique of following his source, word-for-word at times, while periodically expanding the text with his own interpolations.¹¹²

Sá de Miranda's brief comments on the *Maha-terunnanse* probably derive from a Portuguese or Christian oral tradition concerning the cultiva-

¹⁰⁸ See for example, Queirós' (Q, pp. 244-5) confused narration of the death of Prince Jugo, where he gives a version from one source and then presents Fr. Negrão's report of it as if it were a separate happening.

¹⁰⁹ For example, in reminding Bhuvanekabahu that he had requested missionaries, that he had promised to convert, that D. João III desired it greatly and that it was in his interests to do so. All of which fits in with Gonzaga.

¹¹⁰ Q, p. 258. See also p. 237 where Sinhalese *bhikkhus* are described as being the 'Administrators of the Maturanse of Arração.' *Terunnanse* is an honorific form of *thero*.

¹¹¹ Q, p. 237.

¹¹² Compare FLORES (ed.), *Os Olhos...* cit., p. 183, with Q, pp. 114-5.

tion of relations between Vimaladharmasuriya I (1591-1604) of Kandy and the Kings of Arakan.¹¹³ These culminated in the re-establishment of higher ordination to the *sangha* in the *upasamapada* ceremony. The burst of new life that he gave to institutional Buddhism after its serious reverses in the last fifty years must have represented as significant a spiritual threat to the Christian community in Ceylon, as his military resistance was a political threat. In the understandings of the *casados*, their enemies were acting just as they did: just as they looked to Goa, to Lisbon, to Rome, so the heathen would look to Arakan. It is in Sá de Miranda that the *Maha-terunnanse* is compared with the Pope.

But from this reference Queirós develops a whole layer of narrative logic, imagining or speculating on the influence of this shadowy hierarch in a variety of different situations. Here, then, we do have examples of Queirós inventing facts, mixing in what seemed plausible and instructive along with what was recounted in his sources. And here we see how his polemic of refutation could work towards promoting sameness. To be a suitable opponent Buddhism had to be recognisable as a religion, and that meant it had to operate in the same way that Christianity did. Just as the Pope in Rome sends forth his legions of missionaries to the east to combat idolatry, so the 'Maturanse of Arracão' dictates the movements of the enemy from his South-East Asian base. The location of this base is significant, for Queirós was already predisposed to see South-East Asia as the most intractable heartland of Buddhism, which was in turn the most intractable of the Asiatic religions.¹¹⁴ In the Theravada regions, Catholic missionaries had often simply failed to detach the people from their traditional beliefs: 'And as the Religious of this Sect [of the Buddha] have a great reputation outside China, it has been a very difficult matter to convert any of his sectaries, which has been the experience especially in the kingdoms of Arracan, Pegu, Siam, Laos and others of lesser name.'¹¹⁵

He describes this false Pope as dispensing jubilees to stiffen the spiritual resolve of his subjects, promising great 'indulgences' to whoever would take part in Vidiye Bandara's campaign against the Portuguese.¹¹⁶ He also puts unorthodox thinkers on trial for heresy, as we saw with the 'martyrdom' of

¹¹³ See ILANGASINHA, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka...*, pp. 67, 168; C. E. GODAKUMBURA, 'Relations between Burma and Ceylon', in *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 44/2, 1966, p. 154, Catherine RAYMOND, 'Études des relations religieuses entre le Sri Lanka et l'Arakan du XII^e au XVIII^e siècle', in *Journal Asiatique* 283/2, 1995, p. 481

¹¹⁴ Q, p. 141.

¹¹⁵ Q, p. 141. See also p. 115 where he describes Buddhists as a 'fore-doomed people' because of their resistance to Christianity. There may be a personal element to Queirós' bitterness about the intractability of Buddhists. In 1677-80, around the time Queirós was working on his *Vida* of Pedro de Basto and the *Conquista*, he held the position of Provincial of the Province of Goa. As such he dispatched missionaries to Nepal ('Tartary'). See the *Necrologue* of Queirós, published in SCHURHAMMER, 'Unpublished Manuscripts...' cit., pp. 225-7.

¹¹⁶ Q, pp. 325-6.

the Denavaka disputant, just like his Roman counterpart.¹¹⁷ And it was not just the Catholic Church which stood as his model for pagan institutions. The Jesuit order had long been known for its unparalleled organisational efficacy, its centralized hierarchical structure and administrative acumen. For Queirós these similarities were not to be marvelled at since it was customary for Satan to make Evil a simulacrum of Good. After telling us about the jubilees he says in parentheses, 'for even here the Devil aped Christianity.'

As for Vimaladharmasuriya, the *casados*' feelings about him have made their way into Queirós' text in many other ways. He is not so potent a figure in modern historiography, but his contemporaries in Columbo apparently regarded him with horror. This was not simply because of the military resistance he offered, but because he did so as an apostate, spurning his baptismal name of João D'Austria as he mounted the throne. The Christian need to see him punished is behind the little aperitif of hell he is depicted as suffering in the days before his death.¹¹⁸ He fails to remember his baptismal rebirth even as he dies. At his cremation ('for even in this he wished to show himself a pagan') a wonderful thing happened: the fire failed to consume his heart. For the pagans 'that fire had not the strength to consume such an invincible and valiant heart', a miracle about which 'they made many songs and verses, distributing it [the heart] among themselves as a marvel'.¹¹⁹ Queirós, or his sources, naturally preferred an interpretation more amenable to the Catholic mind: that God wished to preserve that dark heart for the flames of hell. Clearly Queirós has preserved here a genuine Sinhalese oral tradition symbolizing Vimaladharmasuriya's feats of resistance, but his counter-point illustrates how the ground of the miraculous and the sacred was fought over at this time.

Insight and Hindsight: The Motivations of Kings and the Question of Religious Legitimacy

Much of the above might seem rather tangential to the historian of sixteenth-century Sri Lanka: it tells us about the *Conquista*, about Queirós himself and the intellectual struggles of his time, and about the feelings of later Sinhalese Catholic communities, but will it change how we write the narrative history of the period? In one way it might. As we mentioned in the introduction, the judgments, and interpretations of our obsessive Jesuit have led a privileged after-life in the writing of Sri Lankan history. Queirós takes it as axiomatic that religious and national or ethnic resistance are intrinsically bound together; he assumes, in fact, that the same relationship

¹¹⁷ Q, p. 256

¹¹⁸ Q, p. 604, works up this suffering from 'some partly worn out pages which are the last of Bento da Silva'.

¹¹⁹ Q, p. 605.

between religion and state maintained in Sri Lanka as it does in Portugal. He is always inclined, therefore, to see the temporal and spiritual battle-lines coincide.¹²⁰

This has surely influenced Queirós' representation of Mayadunne of Sitavaka (1521-81), a great adversary of Bhuvanekabahu and the Portuguese. In Queirós' narrative Mayadunne is presented as the champion of Buddhism, implacably opposed to Christianity and its propagators on grounds of principle. Mayadunne is described as 'being anxious to extinguish in Ceylon the name of Christ...' and with Sankili, King of Jaffna (1519-61) he plans war, 'on the plea of defending the Law of Buddum...'¹²¹ He is the spiritual-national adversary that the narrative demanded and as such he is also the instrument of the devil.¹²² Incidentally, Queirós' dualism has again effaced his understanding of the variations within 'heathenism', for it is momentarily forgotten that Sankili (*Xaga Raja*) was a Hindu.

Undoubtedly there was a groundswell of popular anti-Christianity, particularly after the conversion of Dharmapala (1551-97). *Bhikkhus* rose up in revolt and smuggled the tooth-relic into Sitavaka. Queirós chooses to show us what went on in the Sinhalese camp, again inventing a speech to put in the mouth of a Buddhist monk, one *Buduvance*, revered as a second Buddha. It is a rousing speech of patriotism and righteousness, hailing Mayadunne for fighting, 'because he fears that in the course of time this Kingdom will go to strangers, and that the religion of Buddum will be altogether displaced by that of Christ.'¹²³ While this speech is obviously fictional, it could conceivably bear some resemblance to the tone of Sitavakan propaganda. However, Queirós' peculiar brand of pseudo-relativism is strongly in evidence. The Sinhalese are given spiritual principles and heroic causes that are as strongly realised as those of the Portuguese, but fundamentally undifferentiated from them. Queirós' representation of Mayadunne was found to be very congenial by Pieris, whose own brand of history was influenced by the incipient Sinhalese nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹²⁴ The heroic story of resistance has also been useful in modern times.¹²⁵ But we should think twice before assuming that Mayadunne was someone primarily motivated by religious principle.¹²⁶ When he wanted to

¹²⁰ Thus, with regard to the interesting case of the Portuguese renegade Paul Chainho who establishes himself at the court of Mayadunne, Queirós (Q, p. 281, and see too Q, p. 562) assumes that he had also abandoned his faith because, as Plutarch says, 'That he who turns against his fatherland does likewise against heaven.'

¹²¹ Q, p. 262. See also p. 335.

¹²² Q, p. 287. Here Queirós goes on to list the set-backs which have befallen the enterprise of mission in other regions due to the opportunism of Hell.

¹²³ Q, p. 336.

¹²⁴ PIERIS, *Ceylon...*cit.

¹²⁵ See P. RAMBUKWELLA, *The Period of Eight Kings*, Dehiwala, 1996.

¹²⁶ On occasion, Queirós himself implies some scepticism about this. See Q, p. 335, where Mayadunne is motivated by 'appearance of zeal for their law' (emphasis added). In this instance, however, the spiritual-national crusade is transferred onto the Buddhist monks.

form an alliance with the Portuguese in 1547, he was not above coming to some sort of an agreement with Antonio Moniz Barreto 'regarding the spread of the Christian religion and the service of the king of Portugal.'¹²⁷

His enemy, Bhuvanekabahu VII of Kotte (1521-51), might also be a candidate for the role of monstrous pagan king or oriental despot, given that he always refused to submit to baptism and sometimes indulged in low-level persecution of Christians. Occasionally he is presented as reverting to type in this way, as with the deeply mistaken reference to his undertaking a 'pilgrimage' to the temple of Trincomalee in order to sacrifice 300 captives to a wrathful Buddha.¹²⁸ And yet Queirós does not, on the whole, cast him in this role, because of the simple fact that Bhuvanekabahu was a long and generally faithful ally of the Portuguese. As such, as both an ally and a resolute pagan, Bhuvanekabahu awkwardly cuts across Queirós' battle-lines. Queirós strategy for dealing with this was to endow (or condemn) Bhuvanekabahu with one over-riding characteristic: *weakness*. This explains his inconsistency. It also explains an otherwise opaque fact, that twice Queirós lets us know that Bhuvanekabahu is intellectually convinced by Christianity, he recognises its truth, and is converted in all but name. Yet he never accepts baptism. In this way the personal goodness of Bhuvanekabahu, necessary for an ally of Portugal, is affirmed. He is a pseudo-Christian. What requires condemnation is his public timidity.

This is what lies behind the most peculiar invented speech in the *Conquista*, supposed to have been given by Bhuvanekabahu to that man Francis Xavier in the mid 1540s. Bhuvanekabahu, elsewhere condemned for his hardening stance towards converts is made to give a little discourse on the follies of Buddhism.¹²⁹ It begins:

I understand, father, that your religion is the only true one, and that all the others have so much error as is clear to anyone who knows himself and knows them. I know full well that by continuing in the path which I follow, I can only end in Hell.... I see that the religion of Buddum contains errors as intolerable as they are incompatible with reason. [Much mockery of Buddhism follows]. But though I know the truth of the Law of Christ, on account of the place which I hold, I am unable to receive Baptism at once, for the least suspicion that they should have of me in this regard would be enough to ruin the whole of my realm...

¹²⁷ See the letter of Fr., João de Villa de Conde, in SCHURHAMMER and VORETZSCH, (eds.), *Ceylon zur Zeit...cit.*, p. 492.

¹²⁸ Q, p. 271. The fact that Queirós could repeat (or even invent) this story shows that he was either sometimes not in control of the material he was incorporating from his sources, or that he had a very slender grasp of Buddhism indeed, representing the Buddha as a being who could be wrathful, and placated by sacrifice. Both notions are entirely alien to Buddhism. Again Trincomalee figures as a major centre of royal cult.

¹²⁹ Q, pp. 266-7. Bhuvanekabahu and Francis Xavier probably did meet, in 1544, but this meeting is entirely unhistorical. In actuality Bhuvanekabahu was becoming steadily more anti-Christian at this time.

The end of the 'second debate' is almost a variation on the same theme: Bhuvanekabāhu is won over by argument and spiritual power but then, 'in the end political reasons got the better of him and he continued in the worship of Pagodes.'¹³⁰ Notice that Bhuvanekabahu is given a passive role, while it is the people who are the active force. The other potential function of Bhuvanekabahu's speech here is to undermine the idea that there could be intellectual grounds for objecting to Christianity. Instead, native princes refuse baptism out of rank political calculation.

But what lies behind such political calculations? Why are 'the people' presented as being so opposed to the conversion of their ruler? How could they be so insensible to their own innate capacities for monotheistic adoration? By the late seventeenth century, it had become a matter of great frustration to Portuguese Churchmen that 150 years of evangelism in Asia had failed to result in the great top-down conversion movements that had been anticipated. This leaked into Queirós' writings in all sorts of ways. The most magnificent example he gives is that of the last emperor of China (Shunzhi 1644-61) who, 'though perfectly convinced of the falsity of his sect and of the truth of the law of Christ', even at the extremity of his imminent death was dissuaded from baptism by 'political and human considerations'.¹³¹ Queirós is also concerned to defend the Portuguese record of conversions in Asia against unflattering comparisons with the Spanish successes in the New World. His gives three cogent excuses: 'first because we did not conquer so many lands as the Spaniards did there', and 'thirdly because the Idolators and their Princes are fanatical and most obstinate in their blindness, and those who follow the law of Buddum... seem to be doomed men...'¹³² Buddhists may be particularly obstreperous, with their infuriating respect for their own monastics, but indeed the whole idolatory of the east is strangely resistant.¹³³ At one point Queirós explicitly addresses the reasons why the princes of Ceylon failed to convert, and he suggests that it is because the island played host to *both* 'the two common sects with which the Devil keeps the eastern heathendom in thrall', i.e. the Vedic cult of the Brahmins, and the teachings of the Buddha. The land is held in heathendom by a diabolical pincer movement. Both traditions generate an awkward pride in their antiquity. And thus in these lands princes are liable to face popular displeasure if they convert: the obstacles of 'political consideration' or 'self-interest', which Queirós regularly bemoans.¹³⁴

However, it is important to recognize that for all his lawyerly touchiness, Queirós' analysis rests on a keen insight: that Asian rulers failed to convert

¹³⁰ Q, p. 261.

¹³¹ Q, p. 463. Shunzhi had developed very close relations with the German Jesuit Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591-1666, in Q: João Adamo).

¹³² Q, p. 660

¹³³ Q, pp. 115, 141, 700.

¹³⁴ Q, pp. 699-700, 702, compares King of Kandy with Ethiopian kings.

partly as one aspect of the general resilience of Indic traditions, but also because these traditions encouraged a particular relationship between the ruler and his people. This phenomenon of 'transcendentalist intransigence' is not to be found in other regions of the world, such as the Americas, Sub-Saharan Africa or the Pacific, where world religions had yet to leave their mark.¹³⁵ Naturally, Queirós' interpretation stops well short of where it needs to: what he refers to as merely political or human considerations were in fact profoundly ethical and spiritual too. Nevertheless, in one sense Queirós was right to indicate that the 'heathen' Sinhalese would find it difficult to stomach a Christian king.¹³⁶ There were indeed important strands within Sinhalese royal ideology that made the ruler's legitimacy contingent on the fulfilment of his role as a patron of Buddhism. The fate of Bhuvanekabahu's successor Dharmapala who did convert might suggest that these ideological prescriptions could translate into communal action: the Buddhist priesthood deserted him, and great numbers of his subjects defected to Sitavaka.

Thus there were politico-cultural structures in place that made the king's religious adherence an intensely public affair and would necessarily complicate the question of conversion. Yet in the *Conquista* this insight hardens into governing stereotype that intrudes into his narrative in a crude and fictitious manner. In one of Queirós' most outrageous forgeries, an alleged reproduction of the document of vassalage to the Portuguese King by the King of Kotte in 1518, Queirós makes the king accord himself the title, 'preserver of the Law of Buddha'.¹³⁷ Somaratne has argued that this epithet was never adopted by any Sinhalese king and is rather a reflection of the designation of the Portuguese king as 'defender of the faith'.¹³⁸ Moreover, the only evidence that Bhuvanekabahu was personally amenable to baptism and publicly afraid of it comes from Queirós, and it should be treated with great suspicion. As C. R. de Silva has already pointed out, Bhuvanekabahu's own letters give a quite different picture of his state of mind. They are consistently frank about his refusal to convert and the importance he attached to the traditions of his forefathers.¹³⁹ Instead of being portrayed as an obsequious and unprincipled puppet-ruler, he should be recognised as one of the few Sinhalese rulers of his time who consistently refused to compromise his religious identity.

The *Conquista* is, however, far from monological; it is much too ramshackle and sprawling an edifice for that. His missionary defensiveness

¹³⁵ See STRATHERN, *Kingship and Conversion*...cit.

¹³⁶ Q, pp. 522-3 tells us that Dharmapala bore 'with great patience the commotions of his lieges due in great measure to his change of religion,' and see, p. 708 too.

¹³⁷ Q, pp. 195-6.

¹³⁸ G. P. V. SOMARATNE, *A Political History of the Kingdom of Kotte, circa 1410-1521*, Colombo, 1975, p. 224.

¹³⁹ In K. M. DE SILVA (ed.), *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka*, Volume II, Peradeniya, 1995, p. 74, and see Bhuvanekabahu's letters in SCHURHAMMER and VORETZSCH, (eds.), *Ceylon zur Zeit*...cit., pp. 197, 521.

is cross-cut by another agenda, which is to emphasize that Sri Lanka could have been—indeed could still become—a truly Christian land if only the progress of the faith had not been tainted by the baser qualities of Portuguese imperialism. Hence he has to give contingency its due and acknowledge sources of monarchical legitimacy beyond the customary religious commitments. He argues that in the tumult of the 1590s, the Sinhalese could have been induced to follow an indigenous Christian prince, but not a Portuguese power nakedly intent on avaricious conquest.¹⁴⁰ As a result when the plan leaked out that the Portuguese were going to set up one of their number on the Kandyan throne ‘that great change succeeded in alienating the minds of a nation that ill-endured its own government [and was] unyielding to a foreign one... uniting the whole Island against the Portuguese nation without hesitating to accept a subject for King, provided he was an Apuami or Chingala gentleman.’¹⁴¹ Queirós acknowledges that Sinhalese royal legitimacy is also nourished by blood-line, and by a feeling that the incumbent should be one of their own.¹⁴² Apart from the instinctual repugnance of foreign rule that one might expect of a Portuguese who grew up under the ‘Union of Crowns’, the Jesuit here is undoubtedly influenced by later events. Moreover, the text, littered as it is with erudite references, is also informed by classical models of history that require the empathetic ennobling of the enemy. And as we watch Queirós flexing his muscles of humanist rhetoric through the Tacitean oratory of Sinhala leaders, we are reminded how of how completely empathy can obscure cultural difference.¹⁴³

But again, it would be wrong to see his interpretations as a mere product of textual logic or a reflex Eurocentrism; it was grounded in bitter experience. For, by the time he was writing, the Sinhalese were known as the instigators of the fiercest and most long-lived resistance to the Portuguese anywhere. It is hardly surprising then that the Sinhalese are portrayed as a brave nation intolerant of foreign dominion and with a deep-seated hatred of the Portuguese.¹⁴⁴ We merely need to watch out for the extension of this seventeenth-century perspective to earlier eras, particularly when it provides a ready-made and sometimes anachronistic motivational logic for the mid-sixteenth-century actors.¹⁴⁵

However, as we progress further into the sixteenth and particularly seventeenth century, it is becomes clearer that this sense of isomorphism between the spiritual and the temporal was something that Queirós imbibed from his Portuguese sources in the island. And the feelings of those sources,

¹⁴⁰ Q, p. 478-9.

¹⁴¹ Q, p. 478.

¹⁴² Q, p. 473.

¹⁴³ E.g.s: Q, pp. 334, 762-4.

¹⁴⁴ Q, pp. 306, 508, 540. The latter refers to ‘the spirit of these people against a foreign dominion, for war can reduce, but tyranny can never subjugate a brave nation’.

¹⁴⁵ Q, pp. 296, 306.

¹⁴⁶ FLORES (ed.), *Os Olhos...* cit., pp. 53, 153.

in turn, reflect the very facts of life there. Why does a soldier such as Sá de Miranda, for example, feel the need to excoriate Sinhalese religious and historical traditions so fiercely, or engage in an unseemly tussle over whether Adam's Peak bears Buddha's footprint or that of St. Joseph?¹⁴⁶ Because, as we shall see, by the time he was writing in the 1630s, political struggle had become unmistakably associated with religio-cultural conflict. We only need to turn to the non-simulated voice of 'the enemy', as embodied in the roughly contemporary portions of the *Rājāvaliya*, to find an equivalent assumption that being anti-Portuguese and anti-Christian were two sides of the same coin.¹⁴⁷ The general subversiveness and chaos of the Portuguese presence is emphasised in these pages—Buddhism is neglected, heretical beliefs flourish, the caste system collapses, inter-marriage is rife—in a way that echoes descriptions of long-past South Indian invasions. Bhuvanek-abāhu is therefore castigated too, for joining hands with the *Pratikal* (Portuguese) causing harm to the *Sāsana* [the Buddhist 'Church'].¹⁴⁸ The spiritual battles had not only raged inside the fevered imagination of Queirós; they had been fought over the land of Sri Lanka and the minds of its people for more than a century.

Conclusion

When Fr. Simon Perera, Queirós' translator and one of the great historians of the 'Portuguese period', tells us that 'The manner and method of Queyroz was that of every honest historian in all ages' then we must now be inclined to disagree.¹⁴⁹ Queirós was rather more and rather less than an historian in a 'universal' or modern sense. For there were too many agendas beyond that of historicist fidelity shaping his narrative. If they are not borne in mind one runs the risk of being both overly credulous of his historical judgements and overly dismissive of the evidence his writings provide for the preoccupations of late seventeenth-century Goa. While the Catholic Empire was receding, the heretical Dutch were on the advance and heathen Asia remained largely resolute, the catastrophes of the present shuddered into representations of the past and future. Equally, too little patience for the obviously strange or mistaken passages in the *Conquista* has prevented access to the traumatic emotional life of the Portuguese and native Christian community over the preceding century, for it was this that gave shape and colour to many of the sources on which he in turn drew.

In the hands of Fernão de Queirós, the theme of religious disputation is developed in a rather unattractive spirit of aggression. Yet in a broader perspective these debates and dialogues, this urge to understand in order to

¹⁴⁷ SURAWEEERA (trans., ed.), *Rajavaliya*...cit., p. 74-7

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 77.

¹⁴⁹ PERERA, *The 'Conquista'*... cit., p. 14.

overcome, did lead to the development of real breakthroughs in European comprehension of eastern thought. However in Sri Lanka, which was one of the few places where the hinterland was placed under the direct rule of the *Estado da Índia*, conversion to Christianity became largely a political act. As a result, the rigmarole of debate and confutation was so much more superfluous. Ultimately Sri Lanka was not a land won over to Christ by spiritual or intellectual conflict at all but by the contingencies of secular power. This must be one reason why the Portuguese learnt so little about the religion of the indigenous inhabitants of the island – but so much about the way in which political conflict could be matched by deep cultural antagonism.