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ASPECTS OF THE MISSIONARIES' ROLE WITHIN THE POLICY OF INDIAN ASSIMILATION IN BRAZIL AND IN THE UNITED STATES, 16TH – MID-19TH CENTURIES

por

ANNE-MARIE LIBÉRIO *

This paper aims to establish links between Brazilian Indian and American Indian histories in a comparative perspective. Do we find in different cultures and historical contexts analogous structures? How did the Portuguese and the British crowns, and the Brazilian and the American governments conceive and codify their relations with native peoples?

From a national viewpoint, the history of a people can take on a unique aspect. In 1921, Carlos Malheiro Dias wrote: «the grandeur of Portugal in the 16th century is the first and noblest blazon of Brazilian history»¹. When they reached the New World, puritan settlers also bore the concept of exceptionalism. In 1640, Peter Bulkeley viewed the puritan world as: «a city upon an hill, in the open view of all the earth; the eyes of the world are upon us because we profess ourselves to be a people in covenant with God (...)»². This study stands back from these ethnocentric perspectives, as it endeavors to shed light on Brazilian and American histories transcending national borders.

Pedro Álvares Cabral was the first Portuguese to land in Brazil in 1500, in the reign of King Manuel I. Only in 1530 did King John III order the settlement of the new land. As for the British, pioneers arrived in the New World in 1607. By that time, almost one century of Indian-White relations elapsed

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¹ Carlos Malheiro DIAS, *História da colonização portuguesa no Brasil: edição monumental comemorativa do primeiro centenário da independência do Brasil* [History of Portuguese Colonization in Brazil: Commemorative Edition of the First Centenary of the Independence of Brazil], (Porto: Litografia Nacional, 1921), 3.

² Peter BULKELEY, «The Gospel-Covenant», in *The Puritans in America: a Narrative Anthology*, ed. Alan HEIMERT & Andrew DELBANCO (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 120.

between Portuguese and native peoples in Brazil. We will take into account chronological, cultural, and demographic differences. These factors help understand the Indian policies implemented in Portuguese and British Americas.

This analysis is devoted to the missionaries' role in the efforts to assimilate Indian peoples within Brazilian and American socio-economic contexts, from the 16th to the mid-19th centuries. Catholic and protestant clergymen were bound to the same end by colonial authorities. Their functions were indeed of the utmost importance in the Americas, as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Portuguese and British settlers asserted that their civilized way of life was incompatible with indigenous traditional values. Conveying Christianity to pagan peoples was the motto European crowns put forward to claim and settle new territories, not only in the New World, but also in Africa, India and Asia, as for the Portuguese³. Consequently, in the early times of territory exploration and settlement, the first Whites Indians met were often missionaries. With the passing of time, missionary work was challenged as well in the Portuguese colony as in the United States. We will thus examine the transitions that resulted in the decline of missionary enterprise, and the evolution of the policy of Indian assimilation, from Indian evangelization to Indian civilization in colonial Brazil, and to Indian removal in the United States.

I. Symbiosis between evangelization and colonization in Brazil: the Portuguese *Padroado*

The missionaries within the Portuguese crown's colonial project

In 1549, King John III sent a letter to the first governor of Brazil, Tomé de Sousa. The letter read thus: «the main reason that led me to colonize the so-called lands of Brazil was the conversion of the peoples of these lands to our Holy Catholic Faith⁴». From early colonial times, missionaries were thus integrated into the Crown's Indian policy. Spiritual conquest was closely linked with territorial occupation. New World inhabitants had to be evangelized and their lands cultivated for the colonists' benefit. Furthermore, the missionaries sent to Brazil were also in charge of maintaining the Portuguese within Catholic faith. Accordingly, Christianity was designed to homogenize the emerging Brazilian colonial society.

³ The most relevant Portuguese discoveries in the 15th century are: Ceuta (Morocco) – 1415, the islands of Madeira – 1420, and Azores – 1427, Cape Verde Islands – 1444, Senegal – 1445, Calicut (Malabar Coast, India) – 1498.

⁴ Quoted in Serafim LEITE, *As raças do Brasil perante a ordem teológica, moral e jurídica nos séculos XVI a XVIII* [Brazilian Races Faced with Theological, Moral and Legal Orders from the 16th to the 18th centuries] (Braga: Livraria Cruz, 1964), 5.

Among the missionaries who disembarked in Portuguese America in the 16th century, the Jesuits acquired a predominant place in the Indian affairs of the colony. Numerous scholars have been interested in the Jesuits' activities in Brazil. Nonetheless, the *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*⁵ published in ten volumes, written between 1910 and 1930 by a Jesuit, Serafim Leite, remains one of the most comprehensive sources on the Jesuits' enterprise in Brazil from the 16th to the 18th centuries. In *Artes e ofícios dos Jesuítas no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Brotéria, 1953)⁶, Serafim Leite describes the ecclesiastics' respective functions within the Company. In addition, Roberto Gambini, in *O Espelho do Índio: os jesuítas e a destruição da alma indígena* (Rio de Janeiro: Espaço e Tempo, 1988)⁷ produced an innovative text exploring the Jesuits' missions from a psychological stance, contrary to most sources, which are based on historical and economical perspectives. Also significant is *The Making of an Enterprise: the Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), by Alden Dauril, who offers a terminology of Portuguese Jesuits' missions in English.

The first Jesuits, headed by Father Manuel da Nóbrega (1517-1570) first settled in Salvador in 1549. Riolando Azzi states that: «from 1549 to 1580 only the Jesuits were allowed to exercise regular missionary activities in Brazil. (...) Between 1580 and 1640 the Franciscans, the Carmelites, the Benedictines, and French Capuchins came to Brazil⁸». Accordingly, the Company of Jesus possessed the monopoly of evangelization during the first wave of Portuguese settlement in America; although some Franciscans arrived in 1500 with Pedro Alvares Cabral's fleet, the order only settled in Olinda in 1585, and in Salvador in 1587. The Carmelites established themselves in Pernambuco in 1580, and in São Vicente and Rio de Janeiro in 1582. The Benedictines founded their first abbey in Bahia in 1584. The political change that occurred in the Iberian Peninsula from 1580 to 1640, when the Portuguese crown was annexed to the Spanish, under Kings Philip I-II and III, explains this opening of missionary activities to other religious orders in concert with the Jesuits, as it was the case in Spanish America.

Contrary to non-institutionalized relationships between protestant missionaries and the British Crown, the dealings between Portuguese authorities and the missionaries sent to Brazil were structured around a system called *Padroado* [patronage, sponsorship].

⁵ *The History of the Company of Jesus in Brazil*.

⁶ Jesuits' Arts and Offices in Brazil

⁷ *The Indian Mirror: the Jesuits and the Destruction of the Indigenous Soul*.

⁸ Riolando Azzi, *A Cristandade colonial: um projeto autoritário* [Colonial Christendom: an Authoritarian Project], vol. 1 of *História do pensamento católico no Brasil* [History of the Catholic Thought in Brazil] (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1987), 81.

The Patronage : missions under the Crown's authority

The system of patronage was established in the 15th century by a series of papal bulls, such as *Romanus Pontifex* issued by Nicolas V in January 8, 1455, and *Inter Coetera* written by Calixte II in March 13, 1456. The first document granted the king of Portugal the possession of newly conquered lands; the second provided the Order of Christ, which was under the king's leadership, with the right to institute clergy in the new colonies. In 1514, Leon X confirmed the former privileges granted by the Vatican to the king. Thanks to these bulls, Rome set the Portuguese crown free to organize ecclesiastic institutions and appoint churchmen in Africa, India and South America. Portugal thus became a delegation of the pontifical authority in its overseas territories.

As concerns missionary enterprise, the king benefited from an absolute autonomy to integrate missions within his colonial policy. The missionaries' departures to Brazil were systematically made from Portugal, following an interview with the monarch during which the churchmen pledged allegiance to the Crown.

The number of missionaries sent to America depended on colonial expansionist needs. The monasteries built in territorial borders often preceded the pioneers' settlements. Strategically placed, the missions were meant to protect Portuguese possessions from rebellious Indians and from competing foreign powers (primarily the Spanish, the French, the Dutch).

Economically, the king's sponsorship turned the missionaries entirely dependent on the home country. In return for the authority exerted on missionary work, the Crown committed itself to finance the missions. The salary paid to the missionaries was part of the funding the Crown disbursed for the establishment of clergy in Brazil. In theory, the priests had to settle their missions in lands that belonged to the public domain. Otherwise, when they managed to establish themselves in their own lands, generally thanks to colonists' donations, in the beginning, the missionaries had to pay a tax to the Crown. In spite of this dissuasive measure, by reducing financial dependence on the Crown, missionary activity gained efficiency, as it was exemplified by the Jesuits' missions, whose prosperity appeared to be the key of their success.

Conversions and villages: the missionaries' methods

Both Luso-Brazilian and Anglo-American authorities aimed at similar goals, among which was the replacement of the Natives' modes of sustenance by the Whites' agricultural economy. In Brazil, the evolution of Indian-White relations has to be studied in parallel with the growth of sugar plantations and the question of slavery.

According to Carlos Guilherme Mota, the cultivation of sugar cane was as significant for Brazil as tobacco for the British colonies. The author

suggests that: «(...) the volume of sugar trade gave Brazil its *raison d'être*. Thanks to sugar, Brazil became the first source of income of the Portuguese Empire⁹». Within this context, the Indian policy of the colony was divided between two measures. Either Indian peoples would be incorporated within the colony's economy and society, as slaves or as paid laborers in the colonists' plantations, or, they would be annihilated if they refused to submit themselves to the settlers' and the missionaries' authority¹⁰.

Contradictory legislation on Indian slavery and negligent implementation of laws occasionally resulted in «just wars», or colonists' raiding parties against native communities being launched at the same time as missionaries were endeavoring to pacify Indian nations, for instance. Furthermore, depending on their own needs of workforce, the missionaries did not unanimously advocate the defense of Indian freedom.

Although technical distinction about the means of evangelization existed from one religious order to another, missionary work started with the grouping together of the Natives in villages, called *aldeamentos*¹¹, directed by the churchmen. Once settled in a mission, the Indians were granted freedom by legislation. This policy was instituted in the second half of the 16th century (1556) by Manuel da Nóbrega. From a spiritual point of view, the missionaries' role in the villages consisted in teaching Christianity to the Indians, christening the children and the dying, converting adults, and maintaining Indians within Catholicism.

Outstandingly, the Jesuits under Father Nóbrega, insisted upon the need to combine religious assimilation with social integration of the Indians. Indeed, clergymen from the other obedience above cited were mainly devoted to christening native populations, without «civilizing» them. In *Diálogo sobre a conversão do gentio*, Nóbrega specifies the practical aspects of daily life that missionaries had to convey to the Indians: «1. Forbid them to eat human flesh and wage war against each other, without the governor's agreement, 2. Oblige them to have only one woman, 3. Dress them (...), 4. Remove their magicians, (...) 6. Oblige them to live [and stay] in the same place (...)»¹². Jesuits were also in charge of distributing Indian workers, men and women,

⁹ Carlos Guilherme MOTA, *Viagem incompleta, a experiência brasileira (1500-2000)* [Unfinished Journey, the Brazilian Experience (1500-2000)] (São Paulo: Editora SENAC, 199, 108).

¹⁰ Notwithstanding, epidemics and famine represented the main causes of Native peoples' decimation, as well in Portuguese and Spanish, as in British and French Americas.

¹¹ In Portuguese, the term «village» can be translated into «aldeia». Nonetheless, the Brazilian missions were called «aldeamentos». This word refers to the process of constituting a village by bringing into it people who were originally living somewhere else.

¹² Manuel da NÓBREGA, *Diálogo sobre a conversão do gentio, pelo P. Manuel da Nóbrega, com preliminares e anotações históricas e críticas de Serafim Leite* [Dialogue on the Conversion of the Pagans, by Father Manuel da Nóbrega, with Serafim Leite's Preliminaries, and Historical and Critical Notes], ed. Serafim LEITE (Lisboa: União Gráfica, 1954), 28.

who were living in the missions, into the colonists' households for a definite period, in theory¹³. Nonetheless, one third of the group remained permanently in the village, to ensure its subsistence¹⁴ and protection, and another part was assigned to public services in the colony¹⁵. When the missionaries intended to evangelize an Indian community, their efforts were first directed at the political leader of the group, then at the spiritual chief¹⁶, generally called «pagé» in Portuguese America.

Luiz Felipe Neves analyzed the early relations between Natives and Jesuits from 1549 to 1570. In *Christ's Soldiers' Struggle in the Land of Parrots: Colonialism and Cultural Repression*, he states that: «In reality, what has to be done is to unmask the «pagé»; decipher his devilish code and exhibit him as a fallacious liar to the Indians. Once unveiled, he shows his real face: the face of evil. (...) Lucifer is the «pagé». He is the devilish speaker we have to silence»¹⁷.

To gather Indian communities in villages, colonists and priests launched capture raids, called *descimentos*, in the inland parts of the colony. This practice, in which Indian allies served as guides, was preserved until the second half of the 18th century. Seldom Natives came voluntarily and settle in the missions. Supposedly, Indians had to consent to be baptized and to follow the missionaries to the *aldeamentos*, but those who refused were declared enemies of the Colony, and as such, could be enslaved.

Until the 1611 Law, missionary villages were systematically established near the colonists' villages. In the beginning, colonial authorities and missionaries assumed that the Whites' neighborhood would facilitate the process of assimilation. However, it was not long before the missionaries realized that the Portuguese would not correspond to the model of the Christian way of life they were trying to inculcate the Indians with. Furthermore, the proximity of the missionary villages attracted the colonists' greed for Indian workforce, as slaves, despite the Crown's anti-slavery legislation as concerned Indians.

¹³ Frequently, the colonists kept the Indians working for them longer than the time due. Faced with such abuses, missionaries were often helpless.

¹⁴ Once they were constituted, the missions had to become self-dependent. Lands were reserved around the village to be cultivated by the Indians themselves.

¹⁵ For instance, as rowers, scouts, labor force in the building of roads and public buildings.

¹⁶ Spiritual and political affairs might be embodied by a single leader in some Indian communities.

¹⁷ Luiz Felipe NEVES, *O Combate dos soldados de Cristo na terra dos papagaios: colonialismo e repressão cultural*, (Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária, 1978), 93.

Relationships between civil and religious authorities

Native peoples' submission was only made possible thanks to the mutual efforts of the missionaries and the governors. The first wave of Portuguese expansion in Brazil occurred between 1550 and 1600-1610. By the 1620s, coastal territories, where Indian groups of the Tupi-Guarani family lived, no longer belonged to these peoples, who were the first the Portuguese met in South America¹⁸. The appropriation of the Tupi-Guarani lands was carried out thanks to the collaboration between Mem de Sá, who was appointed second governor of Brazil in 1556, and Father Manuel da Nóbrega. Their joint action was carried on by their successors, until some of the Indian peoples of the region were grouped together in missionary villages, or took refuge in the interior. Others were decimated by famine, wars and epidemics. Riolando Azzi (Azzi, *A Cristandade colonial*, 1987, 70) asserts that:

«Whereas spiritual conquest was specifically incumbent upon the Jesuits, securing territorial protection was the soldiers' responsibility. These were the two aspects – spiritual and secular, of the expansion of Christianity. Besides, this union between the cross and the sword was also a consequence of the messianic conception, which is so typical to the Portuguese crown.»

In the 17th century, Father António Vieira was a fundamental figure of missionary history¹⁹. In one of his sermons, he declared that: «The purpose of these missions is to transform them [Indians] from barbarians into men; into Christian men; and into Christians constant in faith²⁰.» Like their contemporaries, the Jesuits thus conceived the American world as «barbarian» and pagan, through the European system of values. This aspect explains the Company's accounts, in which Indian ways of life are described in depreciatory terms. Despite these prejudices, the Jesuits thought the Natives were able to progress, but only if they were kept in missionary villages. According to the priests, it was impossible to convert and civilize the Indians in their natural environment. Grouping the Natives together in the villages was not in their viewpoint a method, which deprived First Peoples from freedom. Nonetheless, while offering the Indians the opportunity «to save their souls», the Jesuits were putting into practice the policy of forced assimilation backed by the Crown, although the Jesuits showed unrelenting efforts to protect Indian peoples from the colonists' abuses.

¹⁸ See Mário MAESTRI, *Os Senhores do litoral, conquista portuguesa e agonia Tupinambá no litoral brasileiro* [The Lords of the Littoral, Portuguese Conquest and Tupinamba Agony in the Brazilian Littoral] (Rio Grande do Sul: Editora da Universidade Federal de Rio Grande do Sul, 1994).

¹⁹ See Charles R. BOXER, *A Great Luso-Brazilian Figure, Padre António Vieira, S.J., 1608-1697* (London: Hispanic & Luso-Brazilian Councils, 1957); and Hernâni CIDADE, *PADRE ANTÓNIO VIEIRA* [Father António Vieira] (Lisboa: Arcádia, 1979).

²⁰ Quoted in NÓBREGA, *Diálogo sobre a conversão do Gentio*, 24.

The confrontations between the settlers and the churchmen were due to divergent interpretations of the use of missionary villages. Contrary to the missionaries, the settlers viewed the missions as workforce reserves. Faced with these conflicts, the Crown successively took side with the colonists and the missionaries. This incapacity to solve the Indian question was due to the fact that on the one hand, the economic development of the colony depended on the settlers, especially on influential land owners, and on the other the missionaries legitimized the Portuguese presence in Brazil, and their work turned possible a pacific assimilation of Indian peoples, which avoided the Crown to resort to war.

The missionaries and the settlers' expansion

After having first settled along the Atlantic coast, the Portuguese headed for northwestern lands, called *sertão*, from the second half of the 17th century onwards. To enter these regions, the pioneers used the river São Francisco, along which the Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Capuchins and the Oratorians established Indian villages.

From the Northwest, the Portuguese turned toward the Maranhão region. Nevertheless, the French arrived before them in this province²¹. In 1622, Daniel de la Touche, Seigneur de la Ravardière, landed in Brazil with some Capuchins. Among these missionaries led by Father Yves d'Evreux, was Father Claude d'Abbeville, who described their relationships with Tupinamba Indians. *The History of the Capuchin Fathers' Mission in the Island of Maragnan and Neighboring Lands*²² depicts an idyllic territory, peopled by hospitable inhabitants, who listened attentively to the missionaries' lessons of Christian faith. Apparently, the French developed the colony of Saint Louis with the Tupinambas' agreement. However, the Portuguese were progressively advancing on the French settlement. By the end of the fights between the French and the Portuguese, with whom the Tupinambas finally became allied, the French left Maranhão in 1615.

After the French Capuchins' departure, Portuguese Jesuits, Franciscans, Carmelites and Capuchins carried on the evangelization of Maranhão and Grão-Pará²³ Indians. One century later, in 1759, the Jesuit João Daniel, portrayed missionary activities in these regions:

²¹ See Maurice PIANZOLA, *Des Français à la conquête du Brésil (XVII^e siècle), les perroquets jaunes* [The French and the Conquest of Brazil (17th century), the Yellow Parrots] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991).

²² Claude d'ABBEVILLE, *Histoire de la mission des pères capucins en l'Isle de Maragnan et terres circonvoisines* (Paris: Impr. de F. Hulby, 1614)

²³ Because of their isolate location, the Crown set administratively apart the Maranhão and the surrounding lands of Grão-Pará from the colony of Brazil. Both became Brazilian provinces in 1815.

«With great ability, Portuguese and Spanish missionaries undertook to extract the Indians from the forests, where they lived as wild beasts, in order to civilize them in villages, where they instructed them [Indians] as well in the rules of the Evangel as in the rules of civilization²⁴.»

According to Eduardo Hoornaert²⁵, this period corresponds to the apogee of missionary enterprise in Brazil. The Jesuits had gained considerable influence on Indian policy, and on the Indians themselves. In some regions, the Company managed to arm the Natives, and turn them into soldiers. Sebastião Cavalcanti puts forward that «from 1686 onwards, the Jesuits obtained the spiritual, political and temporal direction of Maranhão and Grão-Pará Indians»²⁶. Cavalcanti also states that during the conquest of Maranhão, the conflicts between the settlers and the Jesuits on Indian freedom, reached their climax. Whereas in the past the Crown showed an accommodating attitude toward the missionaries, who condemned the colonists' mistreatments of the Indians, in the beginning of the 18th century Portugal no longer supported the Jesuits. Their power was perceived as an obstacle, which jeopardized the economic development of the colony.

II. Indian assimilation in the American colonies and in the early republic

The New World represented for the early British colonists a land of freedom and hope. These adventurers were attracted by the perspective of enrichment thanks to the appropriation of lands they considered «empty». In the same way as Jamestown, founded by John Smith in 1607, the first British colonies took the shape of trading posts, where the British established their first relations with Indian peoples. Contrary to the settlement of South America, under the supervision of the Portuguese and Spanish Crowns, the colonial expansion of British America was led by trading companies.

To the economic motivation must be added the religious cause. The New World became a land of exile for Lutheran and Calvinist dissenters, who denounced the opulence of the Church of England, and by this way became a threat to the Crown. In *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Reverend Cotton Mather depicted the first migrants' voyage: «Multitudes of pious, peaceable Protestants, were driven (...) to leave their country, and seek refuge for their lives and liberties, (...) in a wilderness, in the ends of the earth²⁷».

²⁴ Quoted in AZZI, *A Cristandade colonial*, 114.

²⁵ Eduardo HOORNAERT (ed.), *História da igreja no Brasil: primeira época* [Church History in Brazil: First Period] (Petropolis: Vozes, 1992), 76.

²⁶ Sebastião Barbosa Cavalcanti FILHO, *A questão jesuítica no Maranhão colonial, 1622-1759* [The Jesuit Question in Colonial Maranhão, 1622-1759] (São Luís: SIOGE, 1990), 37.

²⁷ Cotton MATHER, «A General Introduction», in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. American Studies at the University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/cotton2.html> (cited January 14, 2004).

In parallel with the organization of their villages, the British were interested in the conversion of the Indians. Like the Portuguese, the British advanced the evangelization of the Natives as the central motivation for their expansion in the continent. Even though some Protestant missionaries attained successful achievements, the scope of the British missionary activities was smaller than Catholic missions in South America. Henry Bowden suggests that:

«If we judge from their promotional rhetoric, the English seemed to be as committed to Christianizing the Indians as were the Spaniards and the French, who occupied other parts of the continent; however, the English colonists actually produced the smallest number of missionaries and allocated less financial support for their work and exhibited the greater indifference toward it than did the other Europeans²⁸.»

First missionary attempts in Virginia

The first charter of the Virginia Company, signed on April 10, 1606, by King James I illustrates the «promotional rhetoric» Henry Bowden refers to. The document stipulates that the colonists had to commit themselves to the propagation «of Christian Religion to such People, as yet they live in the Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God (...)»²⁹. James I confirmed this project in the second charter of the Virginia Company in 1609. Nevertheless, although the king encouraged Indian evangelization, he excluded non-Anglican missionaries.

In seventeenth-century Virginia, William Crashaw was among the most prominent preachers. In his opinion, the colonists' mission toward the Indians consisted in «giving the Savages what they most need. 1. Civilitie for their bodies. 2. Christianity for their souls³⁰». Despite first Virginian preachers' effervescence in the first decades of the 17th century, only George Thorpe dedicated himself to the evangelization of the Natives in 1620. This attempt however ended in failure; Indian rebels murdered George Thorpe during the massacre of 1622³¹. No other missionary attempt was launched in the region by that time.

²⁸ Henry BOWDEN, *American Indians and Christian Missions, Studies in Cultural Conflict* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 113.

²⁹ Quoted in Margaret SZASZ, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 46.

³⁰ Quoted in Francis P. PRUCHA, *The Great Father. The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 4.

³¹ See Alden T. VAUGHAN (ed.), «A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia. With a Relation of the Barbarous Massacre in the time of peace and League, treacherously executed by the Native Infidels upon the English, the 22 of March last», in *Virginia Treaties, 1607-1722*, vol. 5 of *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789* (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1983), 31-32.

Missionary fervor in New England

In the vein of the charters granted to the Virginia Company, proselytism appeared as a colonists' duty in the New Plymouth, the Massachusetts Bay Company and the Connecticut charters. However, the Puritans applied themselves more zealously to Indian conversion than Virginian Anglicans. These communities made no distinction between religious and political affairs, drawing their social codes from the Bible. Cotton Mather describes them as such: «I do not say, that the Churches of New England are the most *regular* that can be; yet I do say, and am sure, that they are very like unto those that were in the first ages of Christianity³²».

Once settled in America, the Puritans endeavored to preserve the freedom of worship they were deprived from in England. Consequently, they showed themselves intolerant toward American Indians, whose ways of life and religions differed from theirs. According to New England pioneers, only the conversion of indigenous peoples would allow cohabitation. In November 1644, the General Court of Massachusetts urged the counties to take measures to civilize the Indians. There was no response to the request of the General Court. The year after, the Court appointed two preachers, who would be in charge of Indian evangelization. Contrary to these slight efforts, two individual projects came into being, from the Mayhew family and John Eliot.

In 1641, Thomas Mayhew purchased from the Indians sixteen islands in southern New England, among which were Martha's Vineyard, Elizabeth and Nantucket islands. In Martha's Vineyard, Thomas Mayhew, Jr. started the conversion of the Massachusetts Indian tribe in 1642. Next year, Hiacoomes became the first Indian preacher. In 1670, the establishment of an Indian church stands for Thomas Mayhew's crowning achievement.

Likewise, from 1646 onwards John Eliot proved to be an attentive and successful spiritual guide for the Nonantum Indians. Whereas the sources do not allow us to establish a link between John Eliot's methods and those employed by Catholic missionaries in Portuguese America, they proceeded in a comparable way. Eliot thus chose to separate Indian converts from non-Christian Indians and from white settlers. Encouraged by the colonial authorities, the first village was established at Natick in 1651. The General Court of Massachusetts declared that: «if there shall be a competent number of the Indians brought to civility, upon their request to the General Court, they shall have grant to lands, as the English have³³». In 1674, there were

³² Cotton MATHER, «A General Introduction», in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. American Studies at the University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/cotton2.html> (cited January 14, 2004).

³³ Quoted in Richard W. COGLEY, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999), 141.

fourteen Christian Indians' villages in Martha's Vineyard, New Plymouth and Massachusetts, «with a reported population of 2,200 on the mainland and 1,800 to 2,600 on the island [Martha's Vineyard]³⁴».

In each village, a church and a school, funded by the colony, represented the principal institutions. The teachings were provided in English and in Algonquin. Like Brazilian Indian missions, the villages created by John Eliot had to be self-sufficient. For this reason, farming, carpentry and blacksmith techniques were taught to Indian men, while their wives learned the household occupations, which were traditionally assigned to women in Europe. Fifty years after the launching of his mission to Algonquin Indians, John Eliot and his companions, as Daniel Gookin and John Cotton, managed to train thirty-seven Indian preachers.

In England, the Crown finally showed itself concerned with missionary activity in America. In 1649, the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in New England³⁵ became the first chartered missionary society. This late attempt was soon challenged by King Philip's War.

The Indian rebellion of 1675 is due to the fact that while the settlers prospered, Indian peoples were growing weaker because of the diseases introduced by the Whites, and of their lands' reductions. As a result, Metacom, the chief of Wampanoag tribe, who was named «King Philip» by the British, planned an uprising. An Indian convert, called Sassamon, alerted New Plymouth governor to Metacom's projects. This treason cost Sassamon his life. The arrests and the executions of Metacom's followers, who had taken part in Sassamon's murder, triggered off the first assaults led by Metacom in June 1675. New Plymouth, Connecticut and Massachusetts were involved in the war. Metacom's execution in August 1676 ended the war, and the Indians' revolt.

As for New England settlers, the reconstruction of their villages took several years. The war also had devastating effects on the «Praying Indians» of the region. Being Christians and Whites' allies during the war, non-Christian Indians considered them as enemies. Paradoxically, after the end of the fights, any «Indian» aroused the Whites' aversion and suspicion. Public opinion made no distinction between civilized and hostile Natives. Where tensions were stronger, colonial authorities undertook to remove the Indian villages and the missionaries. After the war, the British had definitely discarded the «Indian threat» from New England.

Until the beginning of the 18th century, no missionary enterprise was launched. Only in 1717, did the colonial authorities of Connecticut pass

³⁴ Robert P. BEAVER, «Protestant Churches and Indians», in *History of Indian-White relations*, vol. 3 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Wilcomb Washburn (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 431.

³⁵ In 1665 this society was named «Company for the Propagation of Gospel in New England and Parts Adjacent in North America», under the direction of Robert Boyle. The mission is also known as the «New England Company».

«an Act for the more effectual well ordering of the Indians, and for the bringing of them to the knowledge of the gospel». Nonetheless, Moravian missionaries' work was irreversibly compromised between 1744 and 1763 by the colonists' assaults on Indian converts' villages. In Massachusetts, missionary activity was insignificant until 1734, when John Sergeant devoted himself to Mohican Indians. Sergeant established the villages in Stockbridge, apart from the colonists.

The exception of Pennsylvania

The colony founded by William Penn in 1681 can be looked on as an exception. In fact, no missionary society was created in the 17th century, the first being «The Friendly Association for Gaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures», during the Seven Years War (1756-1763)³⁶. Contrary to other settlers, the Quakers recognized Indian religious beliefs and their relations with Indian peoples were based on tolerance and pacifism. William Penn's first address to the Natives read: «the King of the Countrey where I live, hath given unto me a great Province therein; but I desire to enjoy it with your Love and Consent, that we may always live together as Neighbours and Friends (...)»³⁷. Within this context, missionary enterprise was not needed, for the purpose of Indian assimilation.

New York: missions as a means to preserve the frontiers of the colony

In New York, missionaries had clearly a political function. Churchmen were charged with opposing the French Jesuits of Canada. The Indian nations of the region were the Onondaga, the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Seneca and the Cayuga, also known as the Iroquois Confederation. In order to counter the influence of the French, the British granted the Iroquois the status of «subjects of the Crown» in 1687, and New York governors requested the sending of missionaries. The first mission was committed to the evangelization of the Mohawk Indians in 1703. After the Seven Years War, the Society for the Propagation of Gospel, created in 1709, joined the Mohawk missions. Presbyterian preachers of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge also devoted themselves to the conversion of the Iroquois Confederation in 1730.

On the eve of the American Revolution, the Mohawk remained allied to the British, while the Oneida pledged allegiance to the revolutionary, whose

³⁶ The Treaty of Paris ended the war in 1763, and brought the British the whole territory East of the Mississippi. The war had involved the French, the British and the Spanish.

³⁷ Alden T. VAUGHAN (ed.), «William Penn's First Letter to the Indians», in *Pennsylvania and Delaware Treaties, 1629-1737*, vol. 1 of *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789* (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1979), 55-56.

goal was to secure for themselves the alliance or the neutrality of the Indians within the war against the Crown.

Missionary activity after independence: consensus between the government and the religious societies

After the Revolution, the only Anglican mission, The Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts, founded by Thomas Bray in 1701, moved to Canada. According to Robert Berkhofer, «at the end of the American Revolution, only a dozen missionaries survived to carry the Gospel to the aborigines³⁸». Nevertheless, the authorities of the young republic encouraged the creation of missionary societies. The Society for the Propagation of Gospel among the Indians and Others in North America, and the Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen were founded in 1787. In New York, Presbyterian missionaries established the New York Missionary Society in 1796, and the Northern Missionary Society in 1797. The Connecticut Missionary Society was founded in 1798, and then the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1799.

Like the Indian missions founded in Portuguese America, American missions had to serve the expansionist goals of the government, and play a unifying part in the nation as the missionaries had to devote themselves not only to the Indian communities, but also to the white pioneers who settled in the West. As early as 1776, Congress declared:

That a friendly commerce between the people of the United Colonies and the Indians, and the propagation of the Gospel, and the cultivation of the civil arts among the latter, may produce many and inestimable advantages to both; and that the Commissioners for Indian Affairs be desired to consider proper places, in their respective Departments, for the residence of Ministers and schoolmasters, and report the same to Congress³⁹.

These measures were meant to legalize the dealings between the government and the missionaries. In 1787, a reservation of 10,000 acres was granted to the United Brethren society for the civilization of the Indians.

The first Secretary of War, Henry Knox⁴⁰, encouraged Indian assimilation as well. On the missionaries' role, he stated that:

«Missionaries, of excellent moral character, should be appointed to reside in their [Indians'] nation, who should be well supplied with all the imple-

³⁸ Robert BERKHOFER, JR., «Protestant Indian Missions», in *The Indian in American History*, ed. Francis P. PRUCHA (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 75.

³⁹ Quoted in Robert P. BEAVER, *Church, State and the American Government: Two and a Half Centuries of Partnership in Missions Between Protestant Churches and Government* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 57.

⁴⁰ According to the Constitution of 1787, the secretary of war was in charge of Indian Affairs until 1849, when the secretary of the interior started directing Indian policy.

ments of husbandry, and the necessary stock for a farm (...). They should, in no degree, be concerned by trade, or the purchase of lands (...). They should be their friends and fathers. Such a plan, although it might not fully effects the civilization of the Indians, would most probably be attended with the salutary effect of attaching them to the interest of the United States ⁴¹.»

In the early 19th century, the creation of mission boards reverberates the strategic role missionary activity still played in Indian policy. Missionary societies had to opt for a structure, which would turn easier their dealings with the federal government. In 1810 was formed the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which despite its appellation has mainly devoted itself to Indian evangelization, not to overseas peoples. Afterward, the main societies established their own board too. As a proof of its commitment to the policy of Indian assimilation, Congress passed the Indian Civilization Fund Act in March 1819 ⁴². Every year the boards of the missions would be allocated \$10,000.

In the Northeast, the Wyandot and the Seneca were «the most civilized» peoples, according to the missionaries' standards. Moreover, missions were particularly efficient among southeast Indians, known as the Five Civilized Tribes (Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole), to the extent that American preachers promoted the creation of Indian governments, in parallel with the authority of the federal government.

In 1820, Reverend Jedidiah Morse proposed to observe the state of American Indian tribes. His *Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs, Comprising a Tour Performed in the Summer of 1820, under a Commission from the President of the United States, for the Purpose of ascertaining, for the Use of the Government, the Actual State of the Indian Tribes in Our Country* (New Haven: Converse, 1822) stated that the Civilization Fund Act was bearing fruit. Besides, Reverend Morse encouraged the settlement of American «model families» within Christian Indian villages.

Until the 1830s, the Indian policy of the federal government aimed at the evangelization and civilization of American Indian communities. During colonial times, this duty was wholly assigned to the missionaries, who also directed the economic and social affairs of Indian villages. After independence, the missionaries' role was progressively limited to spiritual affairs.

Similarly in Portuguese and British Americas, the status of Christian Indians set them apart from their traditional communities, without integrating them within mainstream Luso-Brazilian and Anglo-American societies. In the beginning of the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville analyzed the consequences of two centuries of missionary activity: «The Europeans

⁴¹ Quoted in Anthony WALLACE, *Jefferson and the Indians, the Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1999), 168.

⁴² Francis P. PRUCHA (ed.), «Civilization Fund Act, March 3, 1819», in *Documents of the United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 33.

have not been able to change the character of the Indians; and though they have had power to destroy, they have never been able to subdue and civilize them⁴³».

III. Decline of missions in Brazil and in the United States

In *Politics and Religious Consciousness in America*, George Kelly suggests that: «The authoritative power of religion rose, crested, and waned (or became “secularized” and “privatized”). (...) If we can understand religious evolution, we can progress toward understanding political evolution⁴⁴».

Missions faced with the reforms of Indian assimilation in colonial Brazil

In the reign of Joseph I (1750-1777), Portugal and its American empire experienced deep transformations under the initiative of the Prime Minister, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal.

While Portugal and Spain were still governed by the despotic power of Inquisition, Pombal discovered in his travels to England, France and Holland peoples who defended human rights without fearing Rome's hegemony. In addition, Pombal was influenced by European philosophers, as René Descartes and John Locke. Back to Lisbon, the Marquis was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and War in 1750. After his successful contribution to the reconstruction of Lisbon after the earthquake of 1755, Pombal became Secretary of State for Domestic Affairs in 1756. His plans consisted in strengthening the Crown's authority, and reducing its economic dependency on Great Britain. To stimulate national economy, he reinforced trade with Brazil through the creation of the Grão-Pará Company. As for Indian policy, Pombal granted freedom and land rights to Brazilian Indians. His legislation is known as the «Indian Directory». Nonetheless, it came out that the only lasting results of these measures were the curbing of religious power in Indian affairs and the expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil.

Initially devoted to the Indian villages of Pará and Maranhão, the «Directory, which must be implemented in the Indian villages of Pará and Maranhão», was issued by Pombal's brother, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, who was the governor of the State of Grão-Pará since 1751. Eventually, Mendonça Furtado's Indian legislation was extended to the rest of the colony by order of Pombal from 1758 to 1798. The Directory aimed at

⁴³ Alexis de TOCQUEVILLE, 1835-1840, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols., ed. Bradley PHILLIPS (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945) 1:334.

⁴⁴ George KELLY, *Politics and Religious Consciousness in America* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), 2.

replacing the missionaries by directors, who would become «tutors» to the Indians for the administration of their villages. Indian civilization would be carried on, but the teachings had to be provided in Portuguese only. To integrate the Indians into the colonial society, interethnic marriages were also promoted, and racial outrages would be punished. The real intention of this policy was to transform Indian peoples into useful subjects of the Crown.

Yet, the Company of Jesus represented an obstacle to the implementation of the Directory. Indian villages controlled by the Jesuits were seen as enclaves, where the Crown's authority had little effect. The conflict that opposed the Jesuits to Portugal ended more than two centuries (1549-1759) of collaboration between the Church and the State in Indian policy. When in 1750, Portugal and Spain signed the Treaty of Madrid to redefine their frontiers in America, it had been agreed that Portugal would cede to Spain the colony of Sacramento. In exchange, Spain had to restitute the lands belonging to seven Guarani Indian villages, under Jesuits' control. This meant that the Indians and the missionaries had to abandon their villages. From 1753 to 1756, the Guaranis violently opposed their removal, and the Jesuits were accused of the Guaranis' rebellion. For the Guarani war and other charges attributed to the Jesuits, King Joseph I finally decided the expulsion of the priests of the Company from Maranhão in 1757 and 1758, and from the rest of the colony on September 3, 1759.

End of the consensus between the American government and the missionary societies

Under President Jefferson, it was thought that the assimilation of American Indian peoples would contribute to the homogeneity of the American population, and to the strengthening of the nation's unity. Thomas Jefferson thus carried on the policy implemented since colonial times. Furthermore, by the 1800s, the vanishing of the «Indian race» was seen as an unavoidable consequence of its contact with the Whites. To solve what was called the «Indian problem», an alternative to the policy of assimilation, which was not as efficient as it was expected to be, appeared. The new plan consisted in setting apart «permanently» hostile Indians from Americans. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the American territory doubled, and President Jefferson proposed the Indians who were settled in the East to exchange their lands for new lands in the West. This proposal foreshadowed the creation of an Indian territory. Jefferson stipulated that no parcel of land should be taken without the Indians' consent. This statement concerned the Natives, who voluntarily agreed to be displaced. They were promised that they would be allowed to carry on their traditional way of life in their new homelands. Nevertheless, non-sedentary peoples, who were living in the East, would be forced to remove. Indian removal was still an option to the policy of assimilation, in the beginning of the 19th century.

As for the missions, the policy of Indian removal corresponds to the origin of their decline. Robert Beaver states that: «the government set out to destroy with his left hand all that it had sought to achieve with the right. (...) The cause of civilization, so loudly acclaimed, was retarded by removal» (Beaver, *Church, State and the American Government*, 90). Removal indeed stands for the government's acceptance that the assimilation policy and missionary enterprise failed. Furthermore, federal authorities realized that the most part of the Whites rejected both civilized and non-civilized Indians. With the increase of American population and the westward advance of the frontier, the long-lasting and uncertain process of Indian assimilation became adverse to Americans' needs. Consequently, by the 1820s the policy of Indian removal was taking shape. Divergences then appeared within the American society. On the one hand, the advocates of Indian rights opposed removal; on the other, under the pretext that American Indians would never be civilized, their displacement to the West was promoted. These disagreements also emerged within missionary societies. Jedidiah Morse, Isaac McCoy, James Finley and Jeremiah Evarts embodied the conflicting parties. The societies, to which these missionaries belonged, remained neutral, except for the Baptists.

In the 1820s, the point was not to remove the whole Indian peoples of the East. Furthermore, some missionaries had already resorted to displacement by the end of the 18th century to avoid the encroachment of Oneida and Stockbridge lands in the Northeast. Inspired by these former experiences, Reverends McCoy and Morse acted as spokesmen for the government's policy of removal. According to Isaac McCoy, who was a Baptist, Indian converts had to show the example to non-civilized Indians, by displacing themselves voluntarily. Assimilation would be furthered in the West, without the Whites' intrusions. The Baptist congregation brought its support to McCoy. As for Jedidiah Morse, the government appointed him to explore western lands, where the removed peoples would be relocated.

Conversely, the American Board, under Jeremiah Evarts, and the Methodists, under James Finley put forward two major arguments against Indian removal. Firstly, they drew attention to the contradiction on which this measure was based: how would the Indians be more easily civilized in the wild and desert lands of the West? Moreover, they alerted the government to the fact that white pioneers were constantly moving westward, and might soon invade the displaced Indians' new lands.

Whereas the debates divided the nation, the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 limited the efforts of the missionaries, who stood against Indian removal. Furthermore, the controversy between the Cherokee Indians and the State of Georgia hastened the end of the conflict. Among the Five Civilized Tribes of the Southeast, the Cherokee distinguished themselves by their capacity to adopt a sedentary way of life. Nonetheless, Georgia claimed their lands in spite of former treaties, which granted the Indians their lands if they became civilized. When the Cherokee passed their own Constitution in 1827,

and when gold was discovered shortly after in their lands, Georgians' resentment and greed were triggered off. Cherokee displacement became a national issue, which went beyond the missionaries' influence. To solve this question, Congress voted on March 28, 1830 the Indian Removal Act. From then on, the missionaries, who opposed removal, became outlaws; as was the case of Reverends Worcester and Butler, who were accused of having settled in Cherokee lands without a license. In 1832, the Supreme Court decision delivered by John Marshall did not prevent the Cherokee removal, which took place from 1835 to 1839. Like the Choctaws, who had been displaced from 1831 to 1833, the Chickasaw were removed between 1837 and 1847. The Creek and Seminole wars ended in the Creeks' in 1836, and the Seminoles' in 1842.

Despite renewed interest in missionary activity in Brazil in the 1840s, and in the United States in the 1870s, missions never regained the influence they had acquired before the Marquis of Pombal's Indian Directory in Brazil, and the Indian Removal Act, in the United States.