CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN THE IBERIAN WORLDS (1500–1700)

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In the setting of religious confrontations that marked the European world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in support of the imperial undertaking that justified itself by its proselytising, the Iberian monarchies made adherence to the Roman Catholic faith a central element of their identities as realms composed of disparate territories. For which reasons it became one of their main political goals the establishment of confessional uniformity in their peninsular and European territories, while at the same time, the promotion of religious conversion among the peoples encountered in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Based on some interpretations in recent historiography on the character of modern Catholicism and its global spread, this chapter analyses the manner in which, within the Iberian peninsula, in the Atlantic world and in Asia, societies were characterised by their adherence to the Roman Catholic faith. Their members ended up identifying themselves as Catholics, despite the margins of “creativity” that are expressed in the ways of indoctrination, and their various expressions of a religiosity that did not always conform to the models defined by orthodoxy, and by their innumerable daily transgressions of norms. In this sense, this analysis shows the configuration of multiple cultural Catholic identities within the different Iberian worlds; or, if you prefer, of diverse expressions of a modern Catholicism, that, despite its undeniable intolerance and violence, was also characterised by a certain flexibility.

INTRODUCTION

With Europe embroiled in religious confrontations, and amid imperial conquests justified by their evangelising mission, Portugal and the Spanish monarchy played a fundamental, albeit not unique, role in spreading the Catholic faith across the world, and thereby contributed to the global dimension of early modern Catholicism (Banchoff and Casanova 2016; Marcocci et al. 2014; Catto, Mongini, and Mostaccio 2010; Ditchfield 2010). Indeed, the Iberian monarchies made the Catholic faith a central element of their identity as kingdoms and as composite political entities. They promulgated policies to uphold religious uniformity in their peninsular and European territories, simultaneously sponsoring religious conversion among people
in America, Asia, and Africa. The initiatives adopted, which involved many actors beyond the royal and ecclesiastical authorities, contributed to the construction of societies within and beyond the peninsula which came to identify themselves as Catholic. Over and over again, these societies found creative ways of introducing Catholicism; their expressions of religiosity and their customs did not always align strictly with the models defined by ecclesiastical authorities. With this in mind, this chapter seeks to analyse the way in which, within different Iberian worlds, multiple Catholic identities were forged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, contributing to different expressions of early modern Catholicism, which, despite its indisputable intolerance and violence, also showed a certain degree of flexibility and a certain capacity to adapt.
Even today, few studies addressing issues of religion and religious identity have encompassed both the Portuguese and Spanish worlds (Hsia 2005, 187–198; Maldavsky and Palomo 2018). There are abundant studies on the kingdoms as separate entities, which treat them almost as autonomous and unconnected spaces, despite their political integration between 1580 and 1640. As Charles R. Boxer pointed out in his day, many synergies existed (in terms of both confessional and missionary strategies) between the two monarchies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Boxer 1978).

The following pages, therefore, seek to articulate a connected, rather than comparative, vision of the way in which different expressions of early modern Catholicism were formed in territories where the Spanish and Portuguese were present. Rather than aligning our reading along imperial borders, we highlight the differences in the processes of religious conversion which existed in three different contexts: first, the territories and communities under the control of the Iberian Crowns; second, the territories located at the border of the two Empires; and, third, the territories in which missionaries’ undertakings lacked any sort of imperial (Iberian) political support and were conditioned by the wishes of the local powers. In turn, we deem it essential that our approach overcome and rethink the “cultural geography of Catholic expansion”, which has traditionally been considered from a Eurocentric, unidirectional viewpoint (from the centre to the periphery), paying little attention to the ways in which the non-European worlds shaped Catholicism (Ditchfield 2010). From this starting point, it also seems natural to explore the links between metropolitan and colonial contexts. As Allan Greer and Kenneth Mills have pointed out, far from considering them closed and isolated, as traditional historiography has done, we should focus on the connections which emerge between the religious dynamics developed in European contexts and those developed in American and some Asian regions. These dynamics could follow similar logic and, above all, were shaped by a vast and multidirectional circulation of experiences (Greer and Mills 2007). To that end, the geographical scope adopted in this study will not prevent an analysis which considers the continuities and connections which were naturally produced between the peninsula and the Atlantic and Asian territories where the Spanish and Portuguese were present.

THE DOMESTIC INDIES

The Counter-Reformation Church’s efforts to indoctrinate rustic peasants and the illiterate population, the result of a widely held image of them as irrational and ignorant people, are well known. This translated into the discovery in the second half of the sixteenth century of a kind of “domestic Indies”, that is, of a world inhabited by people whose simplicity and barbarity was equal to that of indigenous Americans. Like them, European peasants needed to be changed into more civil people through teaching of doctrine and good customs. The identification of the European peasant with the indigenous American is perhaps one of the clearest expressions of the links which were created between the missionary worlds of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans and that of Europe, which, in parallel, was perceived as superficially Christian (Prosperi 1982). Thanks to this consciousness of a “domestic Indies”, intense missionary activity directed at believers emerged in parts of the
Iberian peninsula and in other parts of Europe which remained faithful to Rome—activity which found its analogue in the missions directed at the gentile and pagan peoples of Asia, Africa, and America. Indeed, this domestic mission became one of the most unique disciplinary means deployed by the ecclesiastical authorities in the context of the confessional politics of the Iberian monarchs (Palomo 2003; Rico Callado 2006).

In sixteenth-century Europe, confessional affiliation acquired a clear political value. The requirement to adhere to the sovereign’s faith was extended to all subjects, in order to guarantee harmony and the preservation of the State; religious dissidence was seen as a potential threat. From the middle of the century onwards, different strategies were deployed aiming to control orthodoxy and spread doctrine and moral norms. In the Iberian peninsula, the ambition for religious uniformity began to materialise in the final decades of the fifteenth century, when both the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns attempted to expel Jews and Muslims from their respective territories. Alongside the expulsion, they promoted violent campaigns of conversion. The forced baptism of Jews in Portugal in 1497 was mirrored in the forced conversion of the Muslims in the kingdom of Granada in 1502 (Soyer 2007). The latter ended a decade of religious policies which, through strategies of persuasion (Hernando de Talavera) or force (Jiménez de Cisneros), consistently sought to transform the old Muslim kingdom, conquered in 1492, into a Christian land (Coleman 2003). Indeed, the religious integration of Jews and Muslims had political, social, and cultural consequences which ended up affecting the whole of Iberian society—from the establishment of the Inquisitions to the emergence of new identities, new socio-political categories (converso, morisco, cristiano viejo), new forms of otherness (but also of familiarity), and a new definition of Iberian Catholicism itself (García-Arenal 2014). But because the conversions were forced, the new converts were never accepted as true and sincere believers. As a result, tools of exclusion were created, best demonstrated through the laws of limpieza de sangre (purity of blood). Both experiences of conversion, in fact, became references for what would later happen in the Iberian “conquests” of Asia and America; the status held by Jewish and Muslim converts in peninsular societies found its parallel in imperial territories where the indigenous people, while brought into the colonial order through baptism, never shook off their status as subalterns.

Alongside the challenges raised by the presence of moriscos and cristãos novos were the threats emerging from the religious crisis in Europe. As religious frontiers became more clearly defined from the middle of the sixteenth century, so did accompanying confessional policies. Some people and groups linked to the recogimiento and the mystical spirituality which had emerged in the first half of the century as a response to reformist ambitions came to be seen as focal points of Lutheran heresy or suspected of heterodoxy. In the 1550s, the first inquisitorial cases were brought against professors at the University of Coimbra, such as João da Costa, Diogo de Teive, and Jorge Buchanam (Brandão 1948–1969). The same years in Spain saw the first prosecutions against reformed circles in Seville and Valladolid amid accusations of Lutheranism. The autos de fe which took place in 1559 marked the beginning of a hardline religious politics which found one of its most powerful instruments in the Inquisition. The arrest in the same year of the Archbishop of Toledo, Bartolomé de Carranza, was a clear expression of the Inquisition’s long shadow, and opened the
way for persecution, censorship, and suspicion which would be cast upon other religious people and their writings (such as Francisco de Borja, Luis de Granada, and Diego de Estella) as well as specific groups like the Jesuits, who eventually reshaped their forms of spirituality (Tellechea Idígøras 2003–2007; Pastore 2004; Civale 2008; López Muñoz 2011; Boeglin 2016). With the end of the Council of Trent in 1563, all the dioceses in Castile and Aragon adopted its decrees (albeit with some nuances), and the provincial synods and councils, held under the attentive gaze of the Spanish monarch, established the foundations for the episcopacy to enact controlling and disciplinary policies (Fernández Terricabras 2000).

In Portugal, the Inquisition, created in 1536, also played an essential role in the confessional policies implemented by the Portuguese political and ecclesiastical authorities. At the heart of this was Cardinal Henry, later King Henry I of Portugal. In his role as Inquisitor General, legate ad latere and even regent, he laid the foundations for Catholic confessionalisation in the Portuguese kingdom. He also established an inquisitorial power which, as in Castile and Aragon, came to cast its shadow over the relatively cooperative Portuguese episcopacy, which had efficient instruments of control in pastoral visits, and over the religious orders and specifically their confessors (Marcocci 2004; Palomo 2006; Paiva 2011).

Alongside coercive apparatus like the Inquisition, censorship and episcopal officials’ control over the religious and moral life of the faithful, peninsular Catholicism liberally employed more persuasive and/or pedagogic tools which, subtler, helped to disseminate and shape the Counter-Reformation imagination. These tools encompassed all sorts of apostolic and pastoral activities: preaching, administering sacraments, spiritual direction, teaching the rudimenta fidei, assisting the poor, and the aforementioned rural missions. But there was also a vast arsenal of religious images, dramatic performances, and liturgical festivals, as well as books, papers, and an endless stream of printed and manuscript devotional texts which flooded early modern communities with doctrinal principles, models for living, and guidelines to regulate the behaviour of the faithful in their relationships with God, with other members of the community, and with ecclesiastical and secular authorities.

Beyond their liturgical, doctrinal, and spiritual functions, these tools served to articulate a religious and political language which often sought to extol the figure of the monarch, the kingdom, the city, the patron saint, or a specific image. They thereby confirmed the established order, engendered conformity and reinforced corporate, local and royal identities. The religious element was also an effective means of legitimation and consensus-forming for royal authorities as well as other actors, playing a central role in the development of an emerging public sphere. The role of preachers in the Portuguese succession crisis in 1580 is well known, as is their role 60 years later as a legitimising tool during the Restauração. The Spanish monarchy was not indifferent to the debates about the Immaculate Conception which unfurled in 1615 and which, to a great extent, lasted throughout the rest of the century. In what became a kind of battle of (written) words, the controversy generated no end of sermons, images, treatises, notices, and leaflets full of prayers and verses, through which the defenders of the opinión pía persuaded different institutions, and above all the faithful (and certainly the Iberian monarchs) to adhere to their cause. Indeed, the monarchy took on the cause of the Immaculate Conception as its own, and
made it into an expression of its providentialism in the face of Roman authorities battling Spanish meddling in questions of orthodoxy (Prosperi 2006; Broggio 2009, 171–203).

Throughout, there was a clear objective to reinforce a peninsular Catholicism against Rome. To that end, saints, martyrs, images, and relics came to acquire particular importance beyond their strictly religious functions. In 1652, during the Portuguese Restauração, Jorge Cardoso commissioned the printing in Lisbon of the first volume of his Agiologio Lusitano, a monument of sacred scholarship, a compendium of Lives which sought recognition for Portuguese sanctity (Fernandes 1996). Whole territories, communities, institutions, orders, and social groups found, in the figures of saints and martyrs, a vehicle for their respective ambitions; promoting specific figures as saints could be an effective way of reinforcing social and political links and identities. Theresa of Jesus, Ignatius Loyola, and Francis Xavier had a determining role in the spirituality and identity of their respective congregations, but also outside them. It was no coincidence that the Iberian monarchs supported many of these processes of canonisation (when not directly promoting them), fully aware of how significant the recognition of holiness could be in political and even dynastic terms. The Spanish monarchy mobilised actors and resources in Rome during the first half of the seventeenth century to promote Ferdinand III of Castile and Queen Elizabeth of Portugal or of Aragon (1271–1336) as saints. The canonisation of the latter would serve as a reminder of the links uniting the Spanish monarchs with the two territories (Serrano Martín 2005; Vincent-Cassy 2002, 2011b; Álvarez-Ossorio 2006).

The end of the sixteenth century saw a growing interest in peninsular martyrology. Although emerging from different roots, the phenomenon was not unrelated to the discovery in 1578 of the paleo-Christian catacombs in Rome. The catacombs had become a symbol of a “Roman”, pontifical, Christianity, which was proposed as a genuine reflection of primitive Christianity. Within the Iberian peninsula, bishops, cathedral chapters, and town councils also encouraged the recovery of relics of saints and martyrs from the period of Hispania’s Christianisation and its first bishops, and from the era of Muslim rule. The veneration of figures like Saints Ildefonso and Leocadia in Toledo, Saints Justus and Pastor in Alcalá de Henares, and Saint Euphrasius in Jaén was promoted. In 1592, Archbishop Theotonius of Braganza ordered for a fragment of the arm of Saint Mantius († 100), martyr and first bishop of the diocese of Évora, to be brought to the Portuguese town. Often, these relics were used as a tool to assert the authority of the bishops who had been put at the centre of Church reform by the Council of Trent. But, at the same time, they emerged in opposition to the Roman world as an expression of a “Hispanic” (i.e., Iberian) holiness which, like the Roman one, was also a reflection of a primitive and martyrial Christianity (Vincent-Cassy 2011a).

In general, the worship of relics became an affirmation of the Catholic faith against the Protestants, and thereby gave rise to collections like those at the monasteries of El Escorial, São Roque in Lisbon and the Encarnación in Madrid. Missionary enterprises played a unique role in this, facilitating a global circulation of relics by connecting metropolitan and colonial spaces. Not only were relics sent from the Old World to the colonies; as ideals associated with martyrdom were revitalised, the remains of those who had been persecuted and perished for their faith on missions
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...in places like England acquired particular value (Pérez Tostado 2017). The relics of the Martyrs of Japan spread from Macao and Manila to Mexico, Rome and the Iberian peninsula, becoming sought-after and exalted objects in churches and private collections. The presence of a relic of the Japanese martyr Diogo Kisai in the mid-seventeenth century, in Viana do Alentejo in Portugal, reveals how important they were in Iberian contexts, helping to establish concrete connections between the two worlds which were thousands of miles away. The trials and tribulations of a martyred Christianity were projected across the world and, as a result, the remains of a particular native Japanese saint could now be venerated in the remote south of Portugal (Palomo 2016).

Although saints, images, and relics acquired new meanings in Tridentine Catholicism, the desire to promote their worship also reinforced forms of religiosity which historiography would typically class as traditional. The Tridentine model favoured more personal devotional practices, based in the sacraments, the liturgy, and the worship of more abstract and universal figures and invocations (such as Christ, the Virgin, or modern saints). But, at the same time, ancien régime Iberian societies continued to observe practices taken from more local and communal Catholicism. Many communities continued to express their devotion and identity through old images, vows, rogations, hermitages, and sanctuaries, and kept them as their main tools of intermediation with God and the saints (Christian 1981). These were, most likely, not incompatible models of religiosity. Indeed, fluidity and permeability between them was probably the norm, with early modern communities integrating moral and devotional patterns established by ecclesiastical authorities, and the latter in turn showing some flexibility by accepting, or even openly promoting, expressions of religiosity which were rooted in local communities (as long as they did not openly contradict orthodoxy). Cults of the Virgin Mary and Christ grew, but this did not prevent images like the Virgen de la Salceda (Guadalajara) or the Santo Cristo do Outeiro (northern Portugal) from taking on a votive nature. Therefore, instead of playing a simply reminiscent role, evoking the figures they represented, the objects led to the rise of vows and pilgrimages, attracting huge numbers of the faithful from surrounding regions. Attributed even greater powers as intermediaries thanks to their capacity for miracles, many other sanctuaries sprung up (or attracted new attention) throughout the Iberian peninsula during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, often gaining the patronage and protection—and control—of bishops and religious orders.

A new type of Catholicism thus emerged, which would neither fully become the religion established by the ecclesiastical powers, nor fully leave behind the pre-reform traditions. More personal expressions of devotion developed, made up of, for example, meditations, spiritual exercises, and examinations of conscience. Countless texts—confessionary manuals, prayer guides, sermons, hagiographies, and so on—circulated, offering standards of moral conduct and guidelines of spiritual life which, inspired by the monastic world, advocated for frequent recourse to the sacraments (particularly confession), and methodical prayer practices (especially meditation and contemplation). These texts were read in different ways, and subject to multiple forms of appropriation. In any case, many of them laid out different models of exemplary life and religiosity, tailored to different public and social groups. Just as princes, nobles, married couples, widows, clerics, nuns, merchants, and farmers...
played different roles within society, so the path to salvation—and sometimes the forms of piety they had to observe—was different for each of them (Caro Baroja 1978). This is not to say that models of piety traditionally confined to monastic life did not spread among the humbler people: for example, the Franciscans and Oratorians introduced meditative practices in rural Portuguese communities during the seventeenth century. People from across the spectrum of society could adopt ways of life based on religious perfection and more elevated methods of prayer. Ultimately, these ambitions led to the emergence of expressions of holiness which did not always sit well with the inquisitorial authorities’ interpretation of orthodoxy (Tavares 2005).

The reception of devotional practices, norms of conduct, and doctrines across the peninsula was far from homogeneous. The solutions which emerged were varied, and often negotiated. Transgressions from the norm were widespread, ranging from those related to the sixth commandment to those which forayed into the world of superstition or heterodox spirituality. In the Iberian peninsula, Catholic reform did not look the same from region to region (Nalle 1992; Poska 1998) or from group to group. In truth, discussing the success—or lack thereof—of confessional processes is a somewhat futile exercise, subject to endless casuistry and contradictory evidence. Lack of discipline and transgression were, undoubtedly, completely normal within the peninsular Catholic world, but conformity, observance of precepts, and adherence to orthodox religiosity were too. In figures like the Spanish carder Bartolomé Sánchez, the Portuguese farmer João Pinto, and the Portuguese-Brazilian settler Pedro de Rates Henequim we see how norms could be avoided or subverted (Nalle 2001; Ribeiro 2005; Gomes 1997). But, at the same time, we can see them as individuals not completely alien to the Church’s reformist objectives. They took on an active role in incorporating and internalising religious practices, guidelines for conduct and so on, opening up a wide field within which both orthodox forms of religiosity and idiosyncratic appropriations and interpretations of texts, doctrines, and observances could sit side by side. In the mid-eighteenth century, João Pinto compiled a unique eschatology which included the end of Hell through a needle through which the Virgin of Mercy would save each soul one by one. The farmer’s ideas, his exorcisms, and the powers attributed to him led to the congregation in the Portuguese hamlet of Mondim de Basto of a group of followers who eventually joined the community’s religious festivals (Ribeiro 2005). In contrast, Isabel Miranda, an illiterate weaver-woman, exemplified the “orthodox” path taken by many women and men who were considered to live a holy life (Fernandes 1999).

The paths taken by these figures demonstrate a reality crossed by multiple influences, from both above and below. They show that different forms of religiosity and conduct were defined by exercises of creativity and negotiation. In contrast to the perception of a uniform peninsular Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the religious landscape was in fact far more diverse, with communities and people—regardless of their overall more or less orthodox or heterodox attitudes—defining themselves in confessional terms, all recognising themselves as Catholic. This diversity would go on to be even stronger and more telling in the monarchies’ colonial territories, where, in the Atlantic, the mixing of indigenous communities, people of Iberian origin, Africans, mestizos, and mulatos naturally gave rise to unique forms of Catholicism.
THE EMERGENCE OF A CATHOLIC ATLANTIC

As is well known, the papal bulls which acted as the juridical foundation for the Iberian Crowns' imperial projects imposed a requirement to convert gentiles. However, evangelisation was initially carried out somewhat off the cuff—and indeed sometimes not at all—during the first commercial and colonising journeys in the Atlantic. The first explorations of the African coast in the fifteenth century were not accompanied by any concerted efforts of proselytism, never going beyond nominally baptising slaves. Only in the 1490s did a more concrete project emerge, when members of religious orders were sent to the kingdom of Kongo, although even this did not last long. The colonisation of the West Indies, which began at the same time, similarly lacked any systematic attempts to convert the natives. In the Atlantic, the process of evangelisation became clearer during the 1520s, when the conquest of Mexico allowed the Spanish to shape an empire with different characteristics. Less than a decade before the evangelising projects in Portuguese India, the mendicant orders, imbued with millenarian ideas and elements of Christian humanism, sought to establish a new Jerusalem—a new Christianity—in Mexico (Ricard 1933; Phelan 1956). Furthermore, beyond its role legitimising imperial power itself, conversion acquired an explicitly political significance. Through baptism, indigenous peoples were brought into the new colonial order. In the long term, the adoption of their conquerors’ faith contributed to the cultural transformation of the peoples and to their “westernisation” (Gruzinski 1988), and led to the establishment of long-lived forms of power. Ultimately, and mirroring the criteria used in metropolitan contexts, making the natives “good Christians” opened up the path to making them “good subjects” (Díaz Serrano 2012; Xavier 2008).

As noted, the pursuit of a “spiritual conquest” in the territories which the Spanish and Portuguese brought under the command of their respective crowns found a precedent in the evangelisation of Granada and in episodes of forced baptism of Jews and Muslims. In colonial contexts, although native peoples were converted to the Christian faith and included in the new political order through baptism (which was initially understood in Pauline terms as a transformative element per se), this did not prevent forms of exclusion that in many ways mirrored those used against moriscos and cristãos novos. The indigenous people were reduced to eternal minors, whose conversion—always doubted and suspected anyway—was considered ever incomplete. In turn, this accentuated the liminal position which, for the most part, they occupied within the colonial order (Estenssoro 2003; Xavier 2008).

In Mexico, the Franciscans immediately adopted strategies which combined violence and persuasion alongside mass baptisms. They sought to eradicate all ritual and supernatural elements from the indigenous imaginary and build in its place a new Christian one. Just as had happened in Granada and as would happen later in Goa and Peru, they destroyed temples and idols, prohibited celebrations, and worked to discredit—or even banned—traditional intermediaries. In their place, they built churches, introduced new rites and a liturgical calendar, crafted tools to indoctrinate the natives (written, visual and so on), and introduced new moral and social norms. But they also found room to adapt and, as we shall see, to establish continuities between the Catholic and indigenous worlds, searching for elements which could be used to inscribe the “new humanity” of the Americas into sacred history. But above
all, they gave new meanings to rituals, spaces, and figures, thereby enabling the persistence of expressions of the pre-Conquest religious world.

Beginning in the 1560s and 1570s, while significant changes were taking place in the political and ecclesiastical fields, the initial methods of conversion and the features which had tinged them with Christian humanism came into question. The College of Tlatelolco, founded to educate Mexican nobles, went into decline. It was a period in which “colonial orthodoxy” came to be defined (Estenssoro 2003). In this sense, the American world was not isolated from the changes which were going on at the same time in European and metropolitan contexts. The period saw the founding of the inquisitorial tribunals of Mexico and Lima (1569), and the first visits of the Portuguese Inquisition to Brazil (1591). It also saw the introduction of Tridentine reforms in colonial contexts and, alongside this, the reinforcement of episcopal authority (over that of the religious orders). In sixteenth and seventeenth century Portuguese America this process was rather specific, in large part due to its weak episcopal and parochial framework (Souza, 2014). In Spanish America events such as the Third Council of Lima (1582) and Third Council of Mexico (1585) were held, which became particularly prominent in missionary terms, aiming above all to standardise the doctrine to be taught and to define more clearly what would be considered idolatrous. In this sense, the image of the submissive native, which presented them as particularly disposed to embrace the Catholic faith, took on darker tones, painting them as a seemingly indomitable people. In one sense, the native passed from being a mere pagan to being a guilty idolater (Estenssoro 2003, 440). This reimagining of the native justified their isolation and differentiation from the rest of the faithful and sustained the idea of permanently unfinished conversion. For Bernardino de Sahagún, many of the Christian devotions which the indigenous people observed were no more than the continuation of pre-Hispanic ancient worship. More pointedly, the Jesuit José de Acosta distinguished two types of idolatries: those associated with natural elements (the sun, rivers, mountains, trees, and so on) and those which came from human invention (idols, mummies). Both types, though, were the work of the devil, and needed to be eradicated. The years from 1611 to 1660 saw successive campaigns to eradicate idolatries within the Andean world, the bishops and (Jesuit) priests acting together—for once—in an attempt to control indigenous religiosity and end all expressions which were considered idolatrous (Duviols 1971; Mills 1997). Similar, although far less intense, campaigns took place in New Spain and even in Portuguese America, where, in 1591–1592, the inquisitorial visitor Heitor Furtado de Mendonça had no qualms acting against Jaguaripe’s so-called Santidade (Vainfas 1995).

The introduction of Christianity and, with it, the colonisation of the native mind was not a homogeneous process. Not only was it subject to significant variation as times changed and as Catholicism changed; the contexts, the strategies undertaken by missionaries and the groups they targeted were also determining factors in the highly complex processes of cultural conversion. In this respect, historiography traditionally oscillated between two conceptions, one arguing that Christianity was passively and wholly adopted by the indigenous peoples, and the other focusing on different forms of resistance and the persistence of traditional expressions of belief. This false dichotomy must be superseded by more nuanced understandings of the phenomenon: on the one hand, considering the interactions between those who were involved in conversion processes, such as missionaries, indigenous people,
and so on (and with them the adaptations, mediations and negotiations which took place); and, on the other, bearing in mind the real complexity of the transformations which religious practices underwent in colonial contexts, particularly in the Iberian Atlantic world (Wilde 2017, 135).

In this respect, it has been noted that missionaries devised a variety of responses depending on the different political, social, and cultural realities they faced. They showed in these responses a vast capacity to adapt to and accommodate different native worlds, ultimately following an evangelising strategy that was not confined—as historiography has traditionally argued—to certain Asian missionary contexts (in spite of the quite different solutions adopted in those contexts). In Mainas and among the Mapuche, the Jesuits almost took on the mantle of the exorcist to counter the shamans’ power; they incorporated elements from indigenous rites into Catholic rites, such as adorning the paths of processions with votive living animals and fruits; they often tolerated polygamy; and they allowed the natives to continue burying their dead as their ancestors had done (Carvalho 2016; Boccara 1998).

The variety of methods adopted by the missionaries clearly demonstrates how practices were adapted to accommodate different indigenous realities. In many cases, apostolic activity, originally intended to be itinerant as it had been in the medieval era, had to become stable. Thereafter, missions were established around villages or settlements where different native groups could be often brought together. The mendicant orders attempted such methods in New Spain and later in the Andean region. The Jesuits, who debated the solution at some length, tried out and eventually implemented a system of aldeias in Portuguese America in the 1550s (Castelnau-L’Estoile 2000), which would later be adapted in other places. Essentially, aldeias, missions, the doctrinas de indios, and reducciones were all responses to a parochial model in which natives remained under the protection of priests and friars, although not necessarily isolated from colonial society or from contact with other indigenous and unconverted groups. They were spaces which transformed indigenous populations and changed the elements which defined their conceptions of the world and social order. But, more than being spaces of complete domination, they were above all places of adaptation and negotiation (and also of conflict), where, in a sort of process of ethnogenesis, indigenous identities were reconstructed in a Christian context and new “missionary cultures” were created (Wilde 2009).

The conquest’s effects on the indigenous populations and the ensuing demographic collapse, transformation of political and socioeconomic structures, and loss of their public expressions of worship and intermediaries all undoubtedly contributed to the transformation of the indigenous imagination and of their religious identity. This does not mean, however, that the native Americans were reduced to mere passive subjects within an inexorable colonisation of their understanding of time, of their forms of expression and memory, of the ways in which they understood reality and the supernatural. On the contrary, they had the ability to select, incorporate, and use concepts and objects which were imposed on them from the missionary world, thereby showing a significant level of agency in the reception and internalisation of the Catholic worldview.

Conversion to Christianity was often a result of strategies of political and social integration in the new societies. In New Spain, indigenous elites saw adherence to the conquerors’ faith as a tool to maintain their status, as was the case
for the majority of caciques who with their communities joined the reducciones in Paraguay. For many, conversion at first simply consisted of incorporating the Christian God into the indigenous pantheon. Many different interpretations of the Catholic faith emerged, different versions of a Catholicism made up of juxtaposition, syncretism, and ambiguity. Elements from indigenous rites and beliefs permeated the natives’ Christian practices, often revealing deep-rooted ways of understanding reality and connecting with the supernatural world (Gruzinski 1988). In turn, many indigenous expressions of religion, such as ancestor worship, forms of prophecy, and so on, were transformed into “colonial idolatries” and often integrating elements of Catholicism such as words, prayers, and intercessors. Even the most explicit rejections of colonial power and the conquerors’ faith (such as the Taki onqoy movement or the Santidade of Jaguaripe) incorporated aspects of the Iberian religious imagination. In reality, these were not hermetic worlds. Many continuities were established—to many of which missionaries themselves contributed. Along with the links which first arose from the placing of churches, monasteries, and sanctuaries in ancient sacred locations, certain figures from the Christian pantheon came to be identified with specific indigenous deities: Santiago Matamoros to Illapa, the Andean god of thunder; Jesus Christ to the myth of the Sun among the Mayan Tzotzil people; or Saint Bartholomew with Viracocha, for example. In Peru, many images became associated with ancient huacas, whose rituals at times were continued in Christian celebrations, such as that of the Virgin of the Assumption. In Mexico, the feasts in honour of the god Huitzilopochtli were mixed up with those for Corpus Christi. Sometimes, the difficulties arising from attempts to translate the names of figures, terms, and doctrinal principles into local languages which did not have such concepts gave rise to misunderstandings and unique interpretations of Catholicism. Furthermore, the indigenous people’s reception and comprehension of Catholicism was often conditioned by mental habits and visions of the world which gave unexpected meanings being attached to concepts, objects, rules, and sacraments. Among the natives of the region of Mainas, for example, some attributed magical powers to baptism, associating it with bodily health or with death (Carvalho 2016, 119–124).

In this way, different practices and beliefs were brought together which the natives did not see as necessarily incompatible or contradictory. In the Andes, many of those accused as idolaters considered themselves to be good Christians. The Catholic world of the sacred and the supernatural continued to penetrate the native imagination, “impregnating their senses with a Christian piety” (Bernand and Gruzinski 1999, II: 314). Baroque religiosity helped to establish points of contact upon which different expressions of indigenous Catholicism could be built. In this regard, images, saints, and miracles played a determining role from the middle of the sixteenth century and especially during the seventeenth century. The Catholic understanding of saints as intermediaries, and the role often allotted to them in the resolution of everyday problems, no doubt facilitated their integration into the natives’ frames of reference, who found in them something relatable, a type of relationship which was not too distinct from the relationships between people and divine forces in the pre-Hispanic world (Mills 2007). Under the (not always consensual) patronage of bishops and religious orders, stories of apparitions, images, and crucifixes proliferated. Their miracles and unique curative faculties validated the
power of Christian intermediaries, and thereby encouraged natives (and also other social groups) to venerate them. Our Lady of Guadalupe in Tepeyac, Our Lady of Remedies in in Mexico, the Totolapan Christ, the Sacromonte of Amepecoa, Our Lady of Copacabana, and the Virgin of Pucarani were some of the most significant examples of a phenomenon which, sometimes combining elements of indigenous worship (such as locations and deities) with forms of Baroque piety, led to the proliferation of local and regional devotions. The number of Marian and Christological sanctuaries grew rapidly. They contributed to the “Christianisation” of the lands and, as happened in European contexts, they became centres for veneration, personal prayer, pilgrimage, vows, processions, and other religious celebrations. Stories of miracles, printed prayers, and engravings also led to the greatly increased presence of the images associated with those sanctuaries and multiplied their effects (Taylor 2016).

This hybrid or mixed character of Christianity among the native American peoples was mirrored even more uniquely among subjects of African origin. In the Atlantic, the development of an African Catholicism had its origins in the evangelising mission in the kingdom of Kongo, which stemmed from the Portuguese presence there and the conversion of King João I (Nkuwu Nzinga) in 1491. The sovereign’s and the elites’ conversion to Christianity was not without political significance; but, more than anything, it shaped a form of Catholicism with unique traits, in which visual, religious, and political aspects from the indigenous culture combined with others from the Christian world. People adopted Christianity to different extents, and interpreted it in their own way. Just as in the American world, some simply incorporated the Christian God into their own pantheon or attributed particular meanings to sacramental practices. Baptism was often associated with the consumption of salt (which was given out when the sacrament was administered), considered to be an instrument of protection. Crosses and crucifixes barely retained their Christian meaning, instead becoming associated with local ideas about the movement between life and death; churches, often built in cemeteries, became places for ancestor worship (Fromont 2014).

In the New World, the integration of the Catholic world into populations of African origin took place in very different conditions (see Chapter 20). Alongside some forms of resistance, the evangelisation of a majority slave population was not without obstacles. Missionaries and priests continually complained about the lack of indoctrination; only in urban contexts was the incorporation of Catholicism more intense. The “black saints” played a fundamental role in the process of constructing religious identities within these communities, which were often made up of people with varied geographical origins, and therefore a range of beliefs, political traditions, and social structures (Rowe 2016). In turn, the brotherhoods of black and mulatto people, which increased in number from the end of the seventeenth century, could reinforce specific ethnic and cultural traits, especially when only admitting individuals from the same origin or “nation”. This was the case in the eighteenth century for the Brotherhood of Saint Elesbon in Rio de Janeiro, which brought together Mahi slaves (Soares 2011). However, the brotherhoods also gave rise to forms of “Africanisation”, bringing together individuals from different cultural origins and capable of assimilating and exchanging practices and rites, thus creating a sort of common corpus (Sweet 2003; Soares 2011).
In this sense, elements originating from the Christian world were not incorporated at the expense of the slaves’ beliefs and cosmologies. Catholic practices and doctrines were reinterpreted, while forms of belief which had clear African roots were conserved, reshaped, and brought together. Many turned to divinatory and curative practices—reshaped for colonial realities and slavery—from western Africa, the Mina Coast, and Central Africa. In Portuguese America, divination ceremonies evoking Central African *jaji* were adapted to the realities of slavery, just as were *calundús*, rituals of possession which were held in high esteem not only by subjects of African origin, but also by settlers of European origin (Sweet 2003). In fact, neither American practices nor those observed by African people and their descendants were always alien to colonial settlers.

Notwithstanding these aspects, the religiosity of the Spanish and Portuguese settlers replicated to a great extent that of their counterparts in Europe. Saints, images, and relics continued to be used as foundations upon which local and group identities were built, seeking often to build visions of the Iberian empires which differed from those perceived through metropolitan eyes. The aim was to “sanctify” an American space which was often represented as a subaltern world, ruled by the devil, in which souls, bodies, and temperaments became weakened and corrupted. Many texts exalted America’s geography and nature, with rhetorical intentions, but also showing vast knowledge of the natural world and erudition, attributing to the continent an Edenic quality and highlighting its health and its fertile, metal-bearing land. This “chosen” character of the region’s nature was then reflected in the continent’s inhabitants. Natives, especially *criollos*, could be only wise, hard-working, and virtuous (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006, 178–214; Rubial García 2010, 209–239). Furthermore, the “sanctification” of America was supported by the discovery of miraculously appearing images and relics; interpreted as yet another expression of divine election, they gave rise to an ever-growing number of devotions and sanctuaries, which, as noted above, came to be an effective place for dialogue between the indigenous and missionary worlds (or between the Afro-American and missionary worlds), as well as often reinforcing an urban *criollo* patriotism.

In this context, claims were likewise made for an “American” holiness. The *Lives* of men and women who had been born or lived their lives in America were disseminated—individuals who were known for their perfection and virtue, and for the miracles which they had worked in life and in death. Often, they became objects of veneration and local protectors—but very few had canonical recognition (Rubial García 1999). The most noteworthy case was that of the *criollo* woman Rosa de Lima, who was canonised in 1671 and who was worshipped far beyond the Andean world. In New Spain, many cities granted her a prominent position in their temples. Beside her, the Franciscan Felipe de Jesús, another *criollo*, had a different impact, devotionally and geographically. A New Spaniard and a missionary in Japan, he was one of the Twenty-six Martyrs of Nagasaki murdered in 1597. His beatification in 1627 gave rise to the rapid global diffusion of a cult which was made up of the group of friars who had died with him. But, at the same time, it led to the *criollo* community in New Spain claiming him for their own; he became an object of worship for the *criollos* and was chosen as patron of Mexico City, where great festivities were held in his name in 1629 (Rubial García 1999, 65–66).
ASIA

The degree of control determined the religious identities of the Iberian Crowns in Asia. In the Philippines (foremost in Luzon) and in the Portuguese Estado da Índia (centred on Goa and its hinterland), the Iberians succeeded in reproducing the religious institutions that shaped the profoundly Catholic religious identities at home. Here we find monasteries, confraternities, misericordias, and the Inquisition (more effective in Goa than in Manila); here, episcopal authority and the parochial structure coexisted with the strong evangelising impulse that sent missionaries into territories ruled by non-Christian rulers. In the Philippines, the Spaniards faced no serious challenge to their rule despite their small numbers. Even though Catholic evangelisation proceeded slowly in the islands, the capital Manila served as a centre that sent missionaries to China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. The Portuguese faced a more complex political landscape in their Indian holdings. Having established effective rule over a string of coastal fortifications and their hinterlands on the western coast of the Deccan Plateau, they had to deal with regional Hindu and Muslim rulers as well as the powerful Mughal Empire to the north. The following pages will describe the progress of Catholicism and the nature of religious identities respectively in the two major Iberian Asian colonies.

In 1521 Ferdinand Magellan, commissioned by the Spanish Crown, landed in Cebu in the Central Philippines after an epic voyage across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Befriending and baptising a local chieftain, Magellan erected a cross and persuaded the hastily baptised natives to destroy their statues of gods and sacred objects. Lending his military firepower to this one local headman in his conflicts with neighbouring villages, Magellan introduced violence simultaneously with evangelisation and paid for it with his life in one of the skirmishes. Four decades later, when the Spaniard Miguel Lopez de Legazpi (1502–1572) reached Luzon from Mexico, establishing in 1565 a permanent Spanish claim on these islands, the same combination of violence and evangelisation was imported from the New World.

Compared to the large-scale destruction of Mesoamerican culture and peoples, the Spanish conquest of the Philippines was much less violent due to the absence of large indigenous states and centralised religious cults. Nevertheless, coercion was present in Christianisation at least until the end of the seventeenth century. To a large extent, Christianisation was Hispanisation. These processes came with missionaries, soldiers, and administrators, and emanated from the centre of Spanish power in the Philippines, the walled city of Manila on Luzon. As the furthest outpost of the far-flung Spanish Empire, the Philippines, without mines of precious metals, failed to attract mass immigration from Iberia. The small Spanish presence was concentrated in Manila; its presence in the provinces and outlying islands represented only by missionaries and a few administrators. Christianisation was wholly in the hands of the religious orders, the diocesan structure being especially weak. Accompanying Legazpi’s first expedition were Augustinian friars, whose order was assigned the choicest territory as their mission. The Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits soon followed, each assigned their own missionary territories, with the Blackfriars also entrusted with the conversion of the large Chinese community in the Philippines (Phelan 1959; Boxer 1978).
When Spanish rule was established in the 1560s, Islam had been firmly implanted on the southern island of Mindanao by Malay traders sailing from Borneo. Mohammedan monotheism had even made inroads in the central Visayan Islands and would prove to be an insurmountable obstacle to the complete Christianisation of the Spanish Philippines. Other than these two external monotheistic faiths, the local religions of the Philippines were animist, despite the great ethnic and linguistic diversities of its peoples. Worshippers of nature and spirits, the Filipinos relied on shamans in communicating with the spiritual and ancestral worlds. Drawn from noble families and overwhelmingly female, the shamans were usually older women in the village communities who had learned the rituals and secrets from their female relatives, although a few men, dressed in women’s robes, also served in this role (Brewer 2004). Despite structural similarities in their beliefs and ritual objects, animist religion was highly local and tied to the village, which was the basic social unit. Unlike in Mexico, the Spaniards found no urban settlements. The basic social unit was the barangay, simultaneously a kinship and geographical unit comprising between 30 and 100 households. Drawn from the leading noble families, the headman was chosen both for his lineage and his charisma. Under the noble families in which we find the headman and the shaman was a class of common farmers, beneath whom were indentured servants, some in debt servitude, others captives in wars (Phelan 1959). A society with a balanced distribution of power between the sexes, religious life was firmly in the hands of women. Also, to the astonishment and disapproval of the Spaniards was a sexual regime that held no social values for virginity or monogamy, and readily allowed for divorce, which could be initiated by either sex.

For Catholic missionaries, Christianisation implied the eradication or at least the modification of Filipino social habits and religious beliefs, a task that faced three immense difficulties: distance, diversity, and dispersion. Since the first half-hearted attempt to train a native clergy was not attempted until 1677, when a royal decree promoted the ordination of indigenous clerics, the Christianisation of the Philippines fell on the shoulder of the regular clergy, the vast majority had to travel from Spain (due to early conflicts between Mexican Creoles and Iberians in Manila) across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans at the expense of the royal treasury. Despite the heroic effort of some clerics, there were simply too few of them. In 1655, for example, the Church could muster only 304 priests (254 regulars and 50 seculars mostly Filipino) for a Christian population of several thousand Spaniards and Chinese converts (called Ladinos in Spanish sources) and upwards of 500,000 Filipino converts, widely dispersed in the thousands of barangays on many islands. Moreover, the unchallenged authority of the missionary over his converts created a milieu that gave rise to scandals: in 1607, the superior of the Augustinian order in Manila was removed due to financial corruption; ten years later, his successor was murdered by disgruntled fellow religious. None of the four religious orders was clear of sexual scandals, especially in the provinces where missionaries enjoyed complete and full power over their flock. Dominating the mission, the religious orders fiercely resisted the imposition of ecclesiastical authority in the form of diocesan visitations, which might have acted as a check on abuses. There were simply not enough qualified secular priests, who were almost exclusively Filipino. As late as 1750, there were still only 142 Filipino priests in all of the islands. An effort in the 1760s to
replace the regulars in parishes with the Filipino clergy ended disastrously because the indigenous clergy was entangled in numerous local and family webs of interests (Phelan 1959).

To this is added the vast linguistic diversity of the Philippine islands. Aside from the main linguistic group of Tagalog speakers concentrated in the plains and coastal regions of central Luzon, Bikol was spoken in southern Luzon, and Cebuan in the Visayan Islands, not to mention many other smaller languages in the geographically diverse and dispersed country, or the Minnan dialects spoken by Chinese immigrants. The territorial division of Catholic missions was a result: few Spanish priests could be expected to master more than one Filipino language in their posting; and many clerics stationed in Hispanophone Manila never acquired a mastery at all of any indigenous language.

Geography itself opposed evangelisation. Separated by water, Islamic Mindanao not only resisted Christianisation but launched numerous raids on the Christianised villages of the Visayan Islands. The Spanish religion followed the contours of the land: it was concentrated disproportionately in Manila and radiated out to the fertile rice fields of the central Luzon plains and along the maritime coast. Further, in southern Luzon it established a strong presence in the Bohol province as well. But even on the main island, Christianity ran up against the forested mountains of central Luzon, where the original inhabitants, driven out from the plains a long time ago by the Malay settlers, fiercely resisted both Hispanisation and Christianisation. Even in geographically more accessible areas, the Spaniards failed by and large to duplicate the resettlement pattern of Mexico. Fiercely attached to their land (and rice-cultivation), most Filipinos resisted “reduction”, that is the concentration of far-flung settlements into consolidated large town-villages more amenable to Spanish political, military, and religious control. The mountain tribes resisted the reduction to Christianisation for the longest, and many only came down from their high forested dwellings into planned villages after punitive military expeditions in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Due to the paucity of personnel, churches and clergy were only found in these main villages, with their central squares serving as ritual space where outlying villagers came for market and religious festivals. Rarely travelling to more remote settlements, the Spanish clergy played by no means the most significant role in the Christianisation of the Philippines, their reputation occasionally sullied by financial and sexual scandals, and by inter-order quarrels.

But the Philippines eventually became a Catholic country in a long process that only ended in the nineteenth century. Unlike Mexico, however, Hispanisation did not always accompany Christianisation. Despite the ubiquity of Spanish baptismal names, only a tiny Filipino elite spoke Spanish, and primarily in Manila. Christianisation succeeded in the Philippines in some ways despite the Spaniards. We shall examine briefly the elements of coercion and volition that made this possible. Although far less violent than the conquest of Mexico, the Spaniards readily employed violence to crush opposition, such as the suppression of the 1585 Pampanga revolt. In subsequent centuries, only two large revolts challenged Spanish rule, in response to excessive exploitation, but neither the 1660 revolt in the provinces of Pampanga, Pangasinan, and Ilokos nor the 1745 revolt in the Tagalog provinces targeted Catholicism. The only anti-Christian uprising was a short-lived one in 1621.
in Cebu, when villagers followed a shaman in a revolt against Spanish-Christian rule in a vain attempt to recover their ancestral religion. Ever ready to employ violence, the Spaniards and their Christian Filipino auxiliaries were engaged in a long war of raids and enslavement against the Muslims of Mindanao.

For the majority of Filipinos, Spanish coercion came in the form of taxation and forced labour, especially harsh in the early seventeenth century, which were levied on all households, except for the village headmen (called *principales* in Spanish), their oldest sons, the fiscal officials of the village, and the sacristans of the parish church. The most Hispanised among the Filipino populations in the provinces, these local elites were real stakeholders in the maintenance of a Christian Spanish regime. The headmen received insignia and clothes to signify their rank, being addressed as Don; their families enjoyed fiscal privileges and benefited from the actual system of exploitation since they carried out the actual collection of taxes and organised the forced labour rotations, allowing them plenty of opportunity to exercise influence and increase their own income. Spanish rule increased considerably the power of the village male elites by giving their authority an institutional and religious foundation of support. No longer was the headman merely the *primus inter pares* in a barangay, but his authority was linked to a far more extensive network of power in the Spanish Empire and the Catholic Church (Rafael 1988). Conversely, as Caroline Brewer has demonstrated, the suppression of indigenous animist cults undermined the traditional religious and social authority of women, who constituted the overwhelming majority of shamans (Brewer 2004).

Despite the condemnation of Spanish missionaries, the majority of converted Filipinos probably did not experience a contradiction in Catholic and animist rituals: one being a public, the other a household religion. Catholic icons, sacred objects, and rituals were readily used for healing, just as the traditional ritual objects associated with animist cults. The low density of the clergy on the ground and the absence of the Inquisition (which functioned in the Philippines theoretically out of Mexico City) implied that religious conformity was left largely in the hands of the local Filipino elites. There is ample evidence that the Augustinians in the province of Bolinao tolerated the mixed use of traditional and Christian rituals until this missionary territory was ceded to the Dominicans in 1679. A more rigorist order, the Dominicans smelled idolatry; between 1679 and 1685 they carried out a series of investigations that discovered the widespread, albeit clandestine, practice of animist rituals, as well as a prevailing sexual regime that still deviated substantially from the rules imposed by Tridentine Catholicism. Significantly, of the 236 locals questioned by the friars on idolatry in these years, 217 were women. In their combat against traditional religion, the Spanish clergy deployed effectively devout young boys who had been entrusted to their care and education (Brewer 2004). This was the age cohort that had played an effective role in the early conversion of the Filipinos and would continue to play in the subsequent Christianisation of the convert population. Baptised, schooled, and shaped in a Hispanic Catholic culture alien to their own family traditions, boys and young men were enrolled in confraternities and distinguished by the Spanish clergy in their “civilising campaign” against indigenous traditional religion. The struggle between generations represented also a shift of power between genders, as young men gained in influence at the expense of mature women, with grandsons denouncing the animist rituals of their grandmothers. This
pattern of Christianisation, so effectively deployed in the Spanish America, achieved a similar long-term result in the Philippine Islands as well.

In the first decades after the conquest of Goa, Portuguese authorities used a divide-and-rule policy, favouring their Hindu subjects while expelling the Muslims. The “Old Conquest” consisted of the islands of Bardez, Tisvadi, and Salcete, which had a combined indigenous population of ca. 600,000. Until the 1540s, the inhabitants in the villages outside of the city kept their ritual practices and social hierarchy. The presence of Catholicism was represented by a thin veneer of casados, soldiers, and clergy, the last consisting of Franciscans. Inspired by a similar élan as their brethren in Mexico, the Minor Friars also came from those provinces in Spain that had undergone reform. Their vision of spontaneous conversion, based on Christian love and charity, however, won few converts. The numbers reported in widely enthusiastic letters—6,000 converts in 1514 and more than 10,000 in 1518—seem highly exaggerated (Xavier 2008).

Beginning in 1540, royal policy signalled a new direction. To consolidate territorial control and Portuguese rule, it was imperative not only to colonise, but to evangelise. The aim was to turn the indigenous populations of the villages into Christian subjects, loyal to crown and church, who would reinforce the military ranks of the Estado da Índia, which faced powerful regional rulers in Bijapur and the Maharati. To absorb Goa into the Portuguese realm, political and ecclesiastical institutions from the Metropole were duplicated: in addition to the viceroy, a municipal council and a Misericordia were established, two institutions that marked the identity of Portuguese cities. More importantly, Goa was elevated to an archdiocese, with spiritual jurisdictional extending as far as Ethiopia to the west and Japan and China to the east (Boxer 1978; Sá 1997; Xavier 2008). The foundation of colleges, churches, and schools provided a positive push for Christianisation, while the establishment of the Inquisition served as an institution of fear and coercion for the Christian converts. To the ranks of the Franciscans came other missionary personnel, chief of whom were the Jesuits, an order founded in 1540 and strongly supported by the Portuguese Crown. Francisco Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary, laboured in Goa before embarking for missions in Japan. In addition to the Friar Minors and the Jesuits, Augustinian and Dominican friars also came to Goa. While a Spanish presence was felt in the ranks of the mendicant orders, the fathers of the Company included many Italians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By 1635, more than a century after the establishment of Portuguese rule, there were 639 clergy of religious orders, who outnumbered the secular clergy: 220 belonged to the various Franciscan families, 149 were Jesuits, followed by 125 Augustinians, and 102 Dominicans (Xavier 2008). They outnumbered the Spanish clergy in the Philippines, who were ministering to a vastly more numerous flock.

The main thrust of Christianisation was transforming the rural hinterland of the three provinces of Bardez, Tisvadi, and Salcete into parishes. Beginning in the 1540s and continuing into the 1560s, the Portuguese authorities used force to stamp a Catholic identity on the hinterland and its inhabitants. These decades coincided with the span of the sessions of the Council of Trent, which defined the identity of the post-Reformation Catholic Church and strengthened its resolve to score spiritual victories over Protestants and non-Christians. Priests and soldiers were dispatched to the countryside; hundreds of Hindu temples were destroyed. The income from
these temples (and the land that belonged to them) were transferred to the Catholic Church and supported both the parochial structure and a flourishing convent life. Christianisation met with three responses: flight, resistance, and acquiescence. The village elites faced the heaviest pressure. If they refused to convert, they lost positions of leadership in the village councils as well as guardianships of the temples, which were, of course, rededicated as Christian churches. Resistance to conversion also implied exclusion from the lower echelons of the Portuguese colonial administration, which could bring considerable financial rewards and support for their elite status. The 30 years between 1540 and 1570 witnessed an upheaval in the rural society of Goa. Almost one-third of the population left Goa to migrate to neighbouring Bijapur in order to be able to worship their ancestral gods. For the rest of the population, it would be impossible to determine the number of genuine Christian converts as opposed to those who submitted for political, economic, and social advantages or those who practiced outwardly Christian rituals but remained devoted to their old gods in domestic setting. The pantheon of deities in Hindu beliefs, especially the presence of many goddesses, allowed for a certain degree of religious syncretism as the local population gradually accepted the new politico-religious regime. There were relatively few moments of violent resistance. The most notable was the 1583 revolt of the inhabitants of Cuncolim against Portuguese repression and the subsequent killing of five Jesuit missionaries, including Rodolfo Acquaviva, the nephew of the General of the Society of Jesus (Xavier 2008; Souza 2014).

Despite voices of optimism, many missionaries were doubtful of the long-term success of this Christianisation. The visitor of the Jesuit provinces in Asia, the Italian Alessandro Valignano, expressed his scepticism as to the worth of Indian converts. The term “rice Christians” was freely used by the Portuguese, reflecting the reality of a racial hierarchy, in which the Indians, even if converted, stood at the bottom of a society that had Portuguese from the metropole, those born in the colonies, and mestiços all ranked above them. This was reflected, for example, in the education of converts. Indians were excluded from the study of theology at the Jesuit college of São Paulo in Goa, for example, as many Jesuit superiors, including Valignano, considered them of inferior intellectual capability. Despite racial inequality—notable in the case of Mattheus de Castro, a cleric from the Brahmanic caste who was consecrated bishop in Rome in 1625 and nominated as vicar apostolic to Bijapur, and whose authority was contested by the Patriarch of Ethiopia, the Jesuit Afonso Mendes—the Portuguese succeeded in training a native Goan clergy, recruited mainly from the upper castes, who filled the ranks of the parish clergy (Boxer 1978). Many of the sermons and writings on Christianity extant in Konkani and Marathi are the results of this dedicated clergy. They constituted the ranks of the Order of Santa Cruz, founded in 1691, which was pivotal in sustaining the Catholic communities in Ceylon and Malacca after the Dutch conquests because they blended in more easily with the local inhabitants than European missionaries travelling in disguise. While the subaltern position of the Goan clergy improved during the seventeenth century, it was not until the reforms of Pombal that they were made equal to Europeans and Creoles (Boxer 1978).

Cultural prejudices notwithstanding, notable works of Christian ethnography and Christian works in Indian languages were created. Some were written by non-Portuguese missionaries, examples being the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens
(active 1579–1619), composer of the first Christian *purana* (sacred literature in the Hindu tradition) in Marathi (1616) on the birth of Christ, or the work of Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), which will be discussed below. Others were Portuguese, examples being the Jesuits Sebastiâo Gonçalves (1561–1640), the fierce critic of Nobili, author of *A History of Malabar*, the first work introducing Hindu religion to a European readership or Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso (ca. 1520–1596), who also composed a work on Hinduism in 1616. With the conquest of Ceylon after 1597, this endeavour extended to the Sinhalese language, when the Franciscan Antonio Peixoto (fl. 1620) composed a popular play on the martyrdom of John the Baptist. These works of grammar, ethnography, and Christian literature in South Indian languages remained, however, in manuscripts until the modern era (Boxer 1978). The failure to print and propagate these works obscured the important and pioneering role missionaries in Portuguese Asia played in creating the foundation of Asian studies, a role that the Dutch, French, and British counterparts would eagerly assume in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It is important not to see this process of Christianisation as only a coercive process. The social upheaval of conversion brought real benefits to large segments of indigenous society that were hitherto excluded from power. Portuguese law allowed female converts, including widows and orphans, the full right of property inheritance, which was not the case before. The social advancement for members of the shudra castes, deemed untouchable in Hindu society, speaks for itself. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the success of Christianisation was overwhelming, if we judge by the numbers: there were 100,000 converts in Goa with only 3,000 non-Christians (Xavier 2008). However, coercion did play its part, one of its chief instruments being the Inquisition.

Established in Goa in 1560, the tribunal there exercised jurisdiction over all of Portuguese Asia from the Cape of Good Hope in the West to Macao in the East. It was one of four Portuguese tribunals of the Holy Office, the others being Lisbon (with jurisdiction over Brazil and Africa), Coimbra, and Évora. Except for the sixteenth century, the annual averages of cases prosecuted in Goa surpassed that of the other three tribunals, as we can see in the table below. In the period 1606–1674, Goa led by 99 cases per year on the average, followed by Évora (97), Coimbra (71), and Lisbon (46). For 1675–1750, Goa led by 51 (compared to 17, 40, and 37 for the other three tribunals in order listed). In absolute numbers of cases, Goa again was at the top with 13,667 cases, surpassing the second place Évora tribunal with 11,050 cases (Bethencourt 2000).

The Goan Inquisition differed substantially from the other three tribunals in the Portuguese homeland: the largest category of offenses (44%) pertained to Hinduism, while cases against crypto-Islam and crypto-Judaism constituted 18% and 9% respectively; another 1.5% concerned Protestants. Altogether, religious cases constituted 72.5% of the workload of the Goan Inquisition. Offenses against Catholic doctrine, infringements of Christian morals, and obstructing the work of the Holy Office constituted 10, 8, and 7% respectively. The singular importance of Hinduism reflects of course the geographical fact of Goa, but it also renders the Inquisition in Goa different from the tribunals in Spanish America, where indigenous converts were generally exempted from their jurisdiction. The most intensive period of the Goan operation during the seventeenth century also coincided with
the definite triumph of Catholicism in the Estado da Índia. Intended as a measure of religious discipline, the Inquisition in Goa relapsed very few Hindu converts to the secular arm, unlike those condemned for crypto-Judaism, who constituted 9% of all condemned but 71% of all sentenced to death. Here, the religious identity of the Portuguese Estado da Índia followed the priorities of the metropole, where merchants, physicians, and professors with converso background became prioritised targets of the Holy Office (Amiel and Lima 1997).

Not all conversions followed this colonial model of Christianisation/Lusitanisation. Outside of the core territory of the Estado da Índia, missionaries adopted other ways of evangelisation. The greatest success of Christian conversion lay to the south of Goa, along the Tamil-speaking Malabar coast. Two groups—the Thomist Christians following Syriac rites and the fisher-folk of the Fishery Coast—furnished the largest numbers of converts to Roman Catholicism. The success of these missions depended on the ingenuity and willingness to adapt on the part of exceptional Jesuit missionaries, who operated outside the structure of colonial rule and ecclesiastical control. Instead of banning indigenous languages and repressing local rituals, these pioneer missionaries learned Indian languages and adapted to local cultural customs. The Italian Jesuit Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) laboured for six months among the Tamil-speakers in 1573, learning enough of the language to be able to hear confession. He was then summoned by Valignano to the China Mission, where he became the first missionary to successfully learn the written Chinese language to make an impact on the new mission there. Another such figure was the Portuguese Jesuit Henrique de Henriques (1520–1600), himself of New Christian (Jewish) background, who composed Christian catechism and literature.
in Tamil and compiled the first Tamil grammar. But the most famous example was the Italian Jesuit Roberto Nobili, who learned Sanskrit, put on Brahmanic robes, and conceded certain Brahmanic rites to converts in order to attract followers from the upper caste. Nobili’s example, while celebrated by many of his confreres, was harshly criticised by some Portuguese Jesuits, who remained firm in their vision of Christianisation within the colonial framework. The tension would continue to play out throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Zupanov 2004).

Given the two modes of Christianisation—the first within the colonial structure and aiming at Iberianisation (names, language, mentality) and the other with greater degrees of cultural adaptation to indigenous conditions—one should be careful about drawing hasty conclusions about the durability of religious identities. To a large extent, the combination of rewards and punishments that the Portuguese exerted in Goa worked. By the late seventeenth-century native Goan converts constituted the majority of the population of the Estado da India, who identified with the political, religious, and cultural goals of the Portuguese Empire.

Goa represented the epitome of military and spiritual conquest. Goa became the model in two other Portuguese enclaves in Southeast Asia: Ceylon and in Malacca. In Ceylon, the alliance between the Portuguese and the Sinhalese rulers tipped the balance more in favour of persuasion rather than coercion. In Malacca, where the Portuguese overthrew the sultan in 1511 and imposed Catholicism, a small community of mestiço and indigenous Christians developed. When these possessions were lost to the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the indigenous Lusophone and mixed-race Catholic communities successfully resisted attempts at Calvinist conversion, thanks in part to the somewhat desultory effort invested by the Dutch East India Company in missions and in part to the clandestine Catholic missionaries dispatched from the Estado da India who paid periodic visits to these communities.

Malacca, a major entrepôt seized by the Portuguese in 1511, remained under Lusitan rule until its takeover by the Dutch in 1641. Christianisation followed the Goan model: the destruction of mosques and the expulsion of non-Christians to the suburbs (Muslims in the case of Malacca, Hindus in the case of Goa), the concentration of Christians in secure zones, and the exclusive and public exercise of Catholicism, such as urban processions. Again, similar to Goa, after 1540, the Portuguese adopted a more aggressive policy of conversion. But the similarities ended here. Unlike Goa, where a mixed policy of enticement and expulsion resulted eventually in a majority convert population, the Christian enterprise was more precarious in Malacca. First, Malacca was a fortified port, without an extensive hinterland. Surrounded by the Malay-speaking, Islamic-animist world, Malacca itself had a much more mobile and diverse population of Europeans, mestiços, Malays, Sumatrans, Javanese, Chinese, and South Asians from different religious, regional, and linguistic roots. Christianity made little headway amongst the Malays, who had successfully synthesised Islam with their traditional animist beliefs and rituals. The Catholic population consisted of Europeans, mestiços, and a sprinkling of other ethnic groups, and remained a minority of the city’s population, unlike in Goa. When evangelisation succeeded, it was most likely on a pattern first established by Islamic conversion: the heroic Catholic missionaries who won converts by their ascetic and holy behaviour were successors to the Sufi mystics and saints who first converted the Malay world to Islam. This older pattern persisted even in the sacramental life of the...
convert community: Christian women seldom attended mass. This marginalisation of women in public ritual life in Catholic Malacca seemed to have followed upon earlier Islamic practices. Despite the constant complaints of European clerics about the lack of spiritual fervour, Catholicism survived the Dutch conquest and subsequent periods of Protestant rule by the Dutch and English. Sacred objects—relics and holy images—became important holdovers and remainders of communal identity, one strengthened by clandestine visits of European Jesuits and Goan priests in the course of the latter seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Alberts 2013).

This seeming paradox of military conquest and spiritual resistance observed in Malacca characterised also Ceylon, today Sri Lanka. Christianity came with the Portuguese in 1505, who were initially interested in commerce, not conquest. Having established their fortress at Colombo on the west coast, the Portuguese became embroiled during mid-century in the dynastic strife of the kingdom of Kotte, and later in conflicts with the kingdoms of Jaffna and Kandy. King Dharmapala of Kotte (reign 1551–1597) was the first ruler to allow evangelisation. Becoming a Christian himself and baptised as Dom João Dharmapala, he antagonised his subjects by the donation of Buddhist temples and their lands to the Catholic Church. The dynastic strife and civil wars that followed dethroned Dharmapala, who donated his kingdom to the Portuguese and lived out the rest of his life under their protection in Colombo. After his death in 1597, the Portuguese inherited Kotte and subsequently conquered Jaffna. Resistance to Portuguese rule, especially by the inland kingdom of Kandy, rendered Christianisation a slow and difficult process. The pattern was similar to that of Malacca: Catholic communities concentrated in littoral communities and Portuguese strongholds and consisted of Europeans, mestiços, and a small indigenous community. Despite the labour of a few missionaries who used Sinhalese, Portuguese became the dominant language of Christianisation for this minority population. The failure of indigenisation produced again a paradoxical effect, similar to Malacca: once Portuguese colonial rule was eradicated, again by Dutch victory, the minority mixed-race Catholic community clung onto their rituals and beliefs to reinforce communal boundaries against a new colonial master. Although the Dutch East India Company made some attempts at Protestant conversion, that effort proved equally ineffectual as in Malacca. When Ceylon passed onto British rule, the new colonial regime found a minority Christian population in which the majority remained steadfast to the Catholic faith.

In regions outside of Portuguese colonial control, Catholic evangelisation also scored considerable success in Japan (until the persecutions of the seventeenth century) and in China. The common factor for the success of the Catholic mission in these two East Asian countries was that Christianisation did not equate Lusitanisation. This was clearest in the case of sixteenth-century Warring States Japan, where the Jesuit missionaries completely depended on the goodwill of Japanese daimyo (lords) on the island of Kyushu, who welcomed the trade with Macao. Even in Macao, which the Portuguese developed into a mini-Goa, with a municipal council (Senado), a Misericordia, a Jesuit college, and several convents, their presence depended on the toleration of local Chinese magistrates, who maintained jurisdiction of the land right up to the city walls that were only built in the early seventeenth century (Sá 2008). Unlike in Goa, there is no question of forcing the local Chinese population to convert, although a small community of mestiço and Macauese Christians would
grow in time and became culturally and linguistically Portuguese. In the case of Japan, the fishing village of Nagasaki was conceded by the local Japanese Christian lord to the Jesuits. But it was to be more of a Jesuit town than a Portuguese fort. In both the Japanese and Chinese missions, Italians constituted a significant minority of the Jesuit personnel. And after a first period of Christianisation in the Iberian model in Japan, the direction of evangelisation was changed under the leadership of Valignano to separate Christianisation and Lusitanisation. This tendency expressed itself strongly in the composition of Christian literature in Japanese and Chinese, and by the support and first attempts to train an East Asian clergy, unlike the reluctance in India. In time, Italian Jesuits would dominate the leadership of the China Mission, which provoked some tensions with Portuguese pride. The real conflict, however, arose between the two Iberian modes of Christianisation. When mendicant friars from the Philippines were sent to Japan and China, they were often faced with hostility from the Jesuit missionaries. With a method of Christianisation well-rehearsed from their conquest of Mexico in the early sixteenth century, the Spanish missionaries identified Christianization strongly with Hispanisation, which clashed with the missionary strategies of cultural accommodation developed in the Portuguese dominated Jesuit missions in Japan and China (Tremml-Werner 2015; Ollé 2000). In time, those conflicts in part would provoke the first waves of persecution in Japan (fear of the global Spanish Empire) and to the Chinese Rites Controversy that led to the decline of that mission.

NOTE

1 Federico Palomo’s contribution represents one part of a broader research project entitled “Trópicos letrados: textos y prácticas eruditas del clero en los espacios del Imperio portugués de la Edad Moderna (1580–1750).” HAR2017-84627-P. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (Spain). Dr. Palomo’s contribution translated by Matthew Stokes.

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