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# An Ethiopian Mille-feuille: Unearthing the history of the Jesuit mission to Ethiopia (21th-16th)

Hervé Pennec

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Hervé Pennec

**An Ethiopian *Mille-feuille*:  
Unearthing the history of the Jesuit  
mission to Ethiopia (21st - 16th centuries)**

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Centro de Estudos  
Internacionais





An Ethiopian *Mille-feuille*:  
Unearthing the history of the Jesuit mission  
to Ethiopia (21<sup>st</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries)



Portrait of Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira  
*Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, 2, p. 389.

**Title**

An Ethiopian *Mille-feuille*: Unearthing the history of the Jesuit mission to Ethiopia (21<sup>st</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries)

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I dedicate this book to Marie-Louise Gicquel.

## PREFACE

A preliminary word is in order about the publication of this book in the E-Book'IS collection. When we received Hervé Pennec's proposal to publish his text, we welcomed it enthusiastically since it was not only an excellent opportunity to expand the scope of disciplines in the collection by embracing a critical and innovative problematisation of East African historiography, but also because it is the product of a personal research journey that was carried out over many years as part of a longstanding collaboration between IMAF<sup>1</sup> (previously CEMAF) members and a team from CEI-Iscte. This enduring cooperation has led to regular joint fieldwork in Ethiopia, the co-organisation of a stream of research seminars, workshops, exhibitions, and conferences, and to the publication of various academic books and scientific articles.

This is the first book in the E-Book'IS collection explicitly aimed at discussing the historiographical conundrums which are rich in studies of the Horn of Africa. Previous books have dealt critically with historical material about the region, but the decision to publish *The Ethiopian Millefeuilles* clearly marks an intention to open our collection to historical research (and researchers) as an integral part of international

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<sup>1</sup> Institut des Mondes Africains, a CNRS research unit.

studies. As is clearly demonstrated in the final chapters of the book, contemporary research in regional studies is heir to and frequently an unwilling prisoner of earlier endeavours, and thus the inquiry into the conditionality of knowledge produced on a particular topic or region is an indispensable requirement for any sound scientific analysis.

This book is the outcome of prolonged time travel. It was in the mid-nineties that the author began working on the dense volumes of documentation produced by the members of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, from 1550 to 1630. This work has enabled him to dissect both European and Ethiopian materials and complement archival research with regular fieldwork inquiries in the areas where that mission established itself for almost a century. Years of immersion in these materials and collaboration with both students of the history of religious missions and researchers specialising in the region of Ethiopia, be they anthropologists, historians or archaeologists, paved the way for another type of quest: the questioning of the conditions and ways in which knowledge was produced by the missionaries themselves and by the historiographers and hagiographers who set about publishing that body of knowledge from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

A *millefeuilles* indeed. Hervé Pennec offers us the chance to taste the savoury labyrinth of texts, images, and references that, layer upon layer, century upon century, the West has produced, largely for its own consumption, on the Northern Ethiopian plateau. We, the editors of E-Book'IS are sure the reader will enjoy this gourmet experience to the full.

Manuel João Ramos

## SUMMARY

The context of the research journey that has led to the present book is a body of work of mainly 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century textual documents concerning a mission of the Society of Jesus that began in Ethiopia in 1555 and ended in 1633, when their last members were expelled from the country. Throughout its duration and afterwards, up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the mission was the subject of an extended set of scriptural, archival and literary documents, produced by the Jesuits themselves and others. Sources include contemporary Iberian royal and governmental authorities in India, writings in Ge'ez (Ethiopia's classical liturgical language) and works of local scholars, royal chronicles and hagiographical sources, etc. Most of these documents are well known today and regularly feed a rich field of research on that period of Ethiopian history. However, despite the fact that the presence of the mission in Ethiopia has been carefully studied, there has still been little research on the mission's own production of written material, based on those sources and their history. And this too requires critical attention.

Indeed, it was between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that this vast wealth of documental production underwent scholarly treatment in European academic and ecclesiastic circles. Great effort went into collating, compiling an inventory and editing the many hitherto unpublished

documents of both European and Ethiopian origin. Understanding the context of this effort and the methods of appropriation in comparison to previous attempts to do so, which are distant both in time and space, is the subject of the present book. Although it is still concerned with the same general field as my previous book, *Des Jésuites au Royaume du prêtre Jean (Éthiopie). Stratégies, rencontres et tentatives d'implantation (1495-1633)*, my goal on this occasion is considerably different. While the first book focussed specifically on the history of the mission itself, the present work is centred on the process of creating an authoritative body of “scholarly” documental work at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; i.e. I examine how it was “fabricated” by identifying the main agents, the collating and cataloguing methods used, the stakes involved and the motives for their selection.

This has meant redirecting my research towards retracing the steps these scholars took to build a corpus of “primary sources” and towards questioning the specific historical context in which images and forms of knowledge were produced in a number of European countries in various publications dedicated to Ethiopia, to the history of Portuguese-Ethiopian relations and to the Jesuit mission in the country of the source of the Blue Nile. Above all, the present effort aims to debunk the *a priori* judgement of scientific neutrality of building up documental corpuses disregarding the ideological context of late 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

My intention here is thus an attempt to historicise these materials, in order to question what they meant for their contemporary public and how they related to the social worlds that gave them meaning. The starting question for my research was how and in what way was the erudite production of the *fin de siècle* able to shape and condition knowledge about a specific African region in the modern period. The approach I adopted was to consider knowledge as the object and the challenge of operations, processes and negotiations; i.e., by approaching knowledge not so much as information content but rather as an object in the making, taking into account its social dimensions. The priority was thus to study the social production itself, as if I were arranging the movements of the different protagonists on a stage, looking at the details, the objects and the actors’ comments on what they were doing. Hence the attention given to the dialogue between the different types of sources (be they direct or indirect, material, figurative or written).

My inquiry lies at the crossroads of several historiographies. On the one hand, the history of Christian missions: missions of the modern era, but not exclusively so, because the research topic leads to questions about the historiography of the Jesuits over a period of time that spans four centuries and deals specifically with the links connecting the so-called “old” and “new” Society of Jesus. On the other hand, the

history of missionary production of knowledge: this history has undergone a profound renewal, which has been formalized by taking into account a variety of actors and fields of activity, in particular the question of the historicity of the documentary sources of the knowledge. Finally, the third historiography is that of the exercise of Ethiopian power and of its concrete manifestations (the setting up of royal residences), in the territory that kings aimed to control: the missionaries took part in this endeavour, but to what extent? History, archaeology and anthropology must be called upon to search for alternatives to European-centred and sometimes excessively nationalistic, discourses.

The first two chapters on the two scholars of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira and Camillo Beccari), who I purposely group together, draw on a similar approach to the reconstruction of their itinerary.

My early familiarity with the work of these two scholars derives from the fact that their publications had served as raw material for my previous research on the Jesuit mission to Ethiopia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, since they offered relevant critical editions of the manuscripts. They were therefore extremely useful in restoring this history of the Jesuit mission and its establishment in Ethiopia. This double door access to Ethiopian and European documentation allowed me to make a cross-fertilization of approaches in the analysis of the mission and a clear comparison of the documentation, as well as enabling me to better compare the points of view of the actors.

Admittedly, my acquaintance and familiarity with these writings did not lead me to question the constitution and production of this documentation in my previous work. It is now important to look back at the way and the context in which it was brought together and organised. By trying to follow step by step what they succeeded in doing (and thus broadly embracing their production), and especially while writing, I paid close attention to the finer details of their texts (introductions, footnotes, conclusions etc.), in order to piece together fragments of their lives and especially those pieces related to their research, and to follow the links between these two scholars and the networks they were involved in.

Approaching them in this way allowed for a more extensive displacement and consideration to put the issues and the intentions of their work into perspective. In the absence of personal archive material, it was their writings that served as the basis for my research. They underline the extent to which their production, which focuses on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, must be linked to the colonial questions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For Esteves Pereira, it was a matter of highlighting the grandeur of the great Portuguese past and that of the Jesuits (who were mostly Portuguese), not as a matter

of Portuguese colonial presence but in the name of Christian civilisation. In addition to translating and editing Ethiopian documentation (in Ge'ez), this close up investigation into the thinking of Esteves Pereira provides an opportunity to highlight the fact that his references, and those used to feed critical commentaries, consist mainly of the collection of missionary sources. (It was he who discovered one of the versions of Manuel de Almeida's manuscript before the one Beccari published in his collection).

Chapter 2 deals with Beccari's itinerary and the other major challenge. The collection that Beccari compiled and published at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has become the essential reference for those studying either the Jesuit period in Ethiopia or the history of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom in modern times. His colossal inventory carried out in European libraries and archives is an exhaustive documental collection of unpublished European sources on Ethiopia from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He thus created a specific field of Jesuit and missionary knowledge about Ethiopia.

It is thus crucial to delve deep into both the intellectual journey and the literary production of Beccari. The perspectives highlighted by this double viewpoint clearly show that Beccari's function as a "holiness specialist"<sup>1</sup>, in parallel with that of editor of European sources on Ethiopia, were linked, and expose the very contemporary challenges the Society of Jesus faced from other orders of the Catholic world.

Complementarily, I was interested in establishing the professionalism with which historical information had been produced, which meant that the meaning of the word "data" had to be re-examined. Beccari had not collected any pre-existing data; he produced it through a series of choices. And it was these choices that I was interested in. What was the logic that had prevailed, in which system could they be included? This reinstatement of the sources made it possible to read them differently. Beccari was fully committed to a battle that put the Jesuits in competition with other Catholic religious orders. Here, I have merely opened up a potential pathway to approach the issue and this avenue should be pursued and explored in the future, since the history of relations between the papacy and Catholic religious orders at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century needs to be worked on further and to be articulated with earlier periods (as is the case with Ethiopia). The project is in its early stages, but it has made it possible to highlight and lay the first foundations for writing a history of the "old" Society by linking it with the "new" one. The colonial dimension of Beccari's enterprise, which has so far received very little attention, has made it possible to read his collection as

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<sup>1</sup> The expression is Pierre-Antoine Fabre's.

one might interpret a monument. It was the series of overhauls that constituted the final structure that I am most interested in.

The third chapter aims to shed light not on the itinerary of a character (even if that happens), but rather on that of a particular text, the *História da Etiópia* by Father Pedro Páez. It is three different moments of interest in this text that I have sought to analyse: its initial writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its rediscovery at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its critical revisiting in the present century.

While the text does not really change, the specific challenges during these three moments (writing, editing and re-publishing) are consequential as they reveal the diverse types of knowledge in circulation at each of these junctures. I have thus opted to pay special attention to the practical dimension of the issues and debates surrounding each of these moments.

For the 17<sup>th</sup> century period, in which the text was written, I focus on the confrontation between the two kinds of knowledge (geographical, in particular) that Páez refuted regarding the work of the Dominican Luís de Urreta. By refuting de Urreta, Páez set up a dialogue and it is in the context of this polemical interaction that his document must be read in order to understand the information he provided on 17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia and earlier periods.

The second part is Beccari's early 20<sup>th</sup> century examination of the time and context of the production of Páez's *História* in its entirety. Beccari's work, on the one hand, rehabilitated the originality of the manuscript, which had been used frequently by later authors (Manuel de Almeida, Baltasar Teles, Job Ludolf, etc.), who in a some way had crushed, recopied and distorted it, and on the other, it engaged in the debate about the discovery of the source of the Nile, which James Bruce had initiated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and was very much kept alive throughout the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By editing the entire Páez manuscript, Beccari sought to rehabilitate Páez's central role as the first Western discoverer of the Blue Nile, a rehabilitation that was manifestly intended to reflect on the whole Society of Jesus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The third phase is that of its critical republication at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the complementary scrutiny of archival sources, which raise further questions about the two manuscripts of Páez's *História da Etiópia*, and about the renewed interest in the materiality of the documents, their successive travels, the processes of correction and the direct implications they may have had in the context and fate of the Jesuit mission. By focusing on these different questions, it was possible to take a fresh look at the social relationships between the members of the Jesuit community in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (conflicts of interest between missionaries). Another



dimension I experienced was that of the various nationalistic challenges, especially European ones, linked to successive editions in different languages, and thus the need to delve into specific claims regarding this knowledge in the making.

Finally, the last part (chapter 4) is a proposal for a further dialogue between disciplines (history, anthropology and archaeology). It is also the result of a methodological position in which I aim to go beyond an archaeology based on presuppositions based on European-centred thinking, to show that a careful reading of the written missionary and Ethiopian sources about the buildings erected at the time the Jesuits were in Ethiopia and the materials used (lime mortar), are in fact the manifestation of a shared know-how in co-construction. Anthropology, with its oral surveys, and the results of archaeological excavations (mainly conducted on sites of the so-called “Jesuit period” of Ethiopian history), may provide the means for a re-reading of issues around the use of lime mortar in royal constructions. The use of these different documental materials also allows us to rethink the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia and Pedro Páez’s participation in it. The overall intention is to re-evaluate the genealogy of the 17<sup>th</sup> century mission within the framework of a multi-layered and kaleidoscopic history that was woven together between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries by redeploing each of the processes and moments, though we are fully aware that we will not necessarily be able to find definitive answers to all the questions asked. This chapter hence illustrates the fragmented character of the reconstruction, hoping nonetheless to identify some of the crucial moments in this period of history by taking into account the non-linear dimension of the forms of knowledge that shaped it.

## INTRODUCTION

In February 1541, the Ethiopian king Gälawdéwos (1540-1559), identified in Europe as the fabled Medieval Indian king of kings “Prester John”, received military reinforcements from the Portuguese King João III (1521-1557), as requested by his predecessor, King Lebne Dengel, who had died in September 1540. At the head of this column of about 400 soldiers was Christovão da Gama, the youngest son of the famous navigator Vasco da Gama (Esteves Pereira, 1983: IX-XV<sup>1</sup>). This event was the high point of relations between Portugal and the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, whose political origins dated back half a century. On a theological, fantastical level, they were centuries old.

The legend of Prester John dates back to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, arising from an apocryphal letter supposedly addressed to the Emperor of Byzantium, Manuel I Comnenus (1143-1180) and to the Emperor of the Holy German Empire, Frederick I Barbarossa (1152-1190). From that time on until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *Letter of Prester*

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<sup>1</sup> This was the fourth son of D. Vasco da Gama, born in 1516 or shortly afterwards, probably in Évora, where his parents lived from 1507 to 1519. He was educated in the army like his brothers. In 1524, when Vasco da Gama was governor of India with the title of viceroy, D. Christovão da Gama was not with him. It was only in 1532 that he left Lisbon with his brother D. Estevão da Gama. After wintering in Mozambique, both arrived in Goa at the end of 1533. D. Christovão served as captain of the Malacca fortress for three years. He went to Ethiopia in 1541.

*John* was copied and recopied, translated into various languages and underwent a series of alterations, cuts and additions, of which many are still extant. It conveyed a message of both great political and theological significance that had long haunted Europe, a message directed at the very root of the questions of power, its conception and extent in Medieval Europe. This so-called Prester John presented himself in the *Letter* as a Christian sovereign holding sway in a marvellous yet distant land located somewhere between the Far East and the Tower of Babel, in India or in the vicinity - which was then sometimes located near the earthly Paradise - whose immense power had a double dimension: he was a king of kings and a modest priest – a presbyter. Allying temporal power and spiritual authority was a fantasy that Western kings, and German emperors in particular, had always dreamt of. The concept of a sovereign that could reign over both bodies and souls, of which Prester John was the incarnation, gave the legend an aura like no other. This notion was further amplified by the content of the letter itself, where it is detailed how Prester John, as an authentic Christian ruler, was eager to fight the enemies of the Cross and to go as far as the Holy Sepulchre to glorify the name of Christ. He claimed to be the ruler of an immense and powerful kingdom exercising its dominium over no less than seventy-two kings<sup>2</sup>, and master of a palace adorned entirely with gold and precious stones. His title as a simple priest testified to his very Christian humility, as did the values of probity, generosity and humanity that he made his own. In the *Letter*, he embodied in lasting fashion the figure of the ideal emperor, the timeless priest-king and lord of lords who ruled over an egalitarian Christian society. He portrayed himself as the ideal and sought-after ally of the crusaders in the conquest of Jerusalem. His legend was to be a source of inspiration for European imperial projects for years to come (Ramos, 1997: 53-63; 1998: 9-11; De la Brocquère, 2010: 27-28; Salvadore, 2017; Krebs, 2021).

The geographic location of Prester John's kingdom, loosely related to the Three Indies in the *Letter*, remained uncertain for a long time. Its location has given rise to speculation about various possible locations from Asia to Africa, and to progressively modified maps. On the 13<sup>th</sup> century maps, Africa appeared in very modest proportions and its eastern tip, the Horn of Africa, known to be inhabited by Christians, was usually detached from the rest of the continent – the Nile river acting as its Western frontier. The presence of Ethiopian Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem at the time became a source of information about this region. Contacts multiplied in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and Ethiopia gradually emerged as a potential ally in Christian plans to reconquer the Holy Land. Its king, in the representations of the European powers, was a powerful Christian sovereign, and in time came to embody the mythical figure of Prester John.

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<sup>2</sup> Depending on the version, this figure varies, with the exception of a few units.

Once the legend took root in Ethiopia, it would take centuries before it started to diminish.

It was in this context that the Portuguese kings came to promote privileged relations with the sovereign of this African land from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards and sent two missions to the kingdom. At the beginning of 1488, Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope and landed on the south-eastern coast of Africa, five hundred kilometres beyond the Cape before returning to Lisbon in December 1488 (Conde de Ficalho, reed. 1988: 15-16). Although this journey did not lead him to meet Prester John, passing the Cape of Good Hope was a fundamental discovery for the future of Portuguese explorations. It showed that there was a passage from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and Africa could be circumnavigated, which opened up the possibility of a new route for India's spice trade. This route was indeed opened about ten years later, in 1498, by Vasco da Gama and was to successfully compete with the Mediterranean, until then a monopoly of Arabs and Italian merchants.

The second mission followed the path of the eastern Mediterranean. Afonso de Paiva and Pero da Covilhã left together but would then split up en route, the former attempting to establish a liaison with the kingdom of Prester John, and the latter trying to reach India. A meeting was arranged in Cairo to discuss the next stage of their trip. When Pero da Covilhã arrived there he was told of the untimely death of his travelling companion, and so decided to seek the kingdom of Prester John himself. Travelling south, he was received in King Eskender's court (1478-1494) and handed the Ethiopian king the letters sent by the Portuguese King João II (1455-1495) (Conde de Ficalho, reed. 1988: 13-14; Hirsch & Potin, 2009: 96). Because he was held in the Ethiopian court for years without royal authorisation to leave, the news of his discovery of Prester John went unknown in Portugal<sup>3</sup>.

These journeys from which the discoverers did not return home did not dent the determination of the Portuguese crown. João II's successor, Manuel I (1495-1521), renewed his predecessor's attempts to make contact and in 1508 a party sailing from Goa in India reached the Ethiopian court after landing near Cape Gardafui (the eastern tip of the African continent). When they found the Ethiopian king, the emissaries sought to forge an alliance between the two kingdoms (Conde de Ficalho, reed. 1988: 15-16)<sup>4</sup>. This alliance was supposed to strengthen the Portuguese imperial project: it confirmed the geographical position of the kingdom of Prester John (on the plateau of the Ethiopian Highlands) and allowed for the reinforcement of Christian troops

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<sup>3</sup> In any case, this is the account he gave in 1520 to the Portuguese chaplain Francisco Álvares, a member of the embassy led by Rodrigo de Lima.

<sup>4</sup> As for the precise chronology of Dias' journey, see in particular the one put together by the Conde de Ficalho.

against Mamluk Egypt on the Red Sea (Thomaz, 1990: 55-61; Hirsch & Potin, 2009: 105).

Christian Ethiopia (Amhara, Gojjam, Dembya and Begaméder), an area of highlands (2500m above sea level) fragmented by rivers, was the heart of the so-called "Solomonian" dynasty which had been exercising power in the territory since the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to a genealogical subterfuge, elaborated by the local Christian Orthodox scholars who created its legendary origins, this royal dynasty claimed to descend from the prestigious kings of Aksum, who converted to Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, its kings were "Solomonian", i.e., were the direct descendants of the kingdom's founder, Menelik I, the mythical son of King Solomon and an "Ethiopised" Queen of Sheba (Hirsch, 1997: 155-165). The kings who controlled the regions forming Christian Ethiopia thus established themselves as defenders of the faith and of an Orthodox Church attached to the patriarchate of Alexandria (Piovanelli, 1995: 190)<sup>5</sup>. This dependence on the Coptic patriarchate was reflected in the appointment of a metropolitan, or bishop, who, coming from Egypt, was responsible, as head of the secular clergy, for consecrating Ethiopian priests and deacons. Not knowing the local languages, he would stay mostly in the Ethiopian Royal Court and was thus closely controlled by the political authorities. But being the link with Alexandria, he was also the conveyer of Coptic doctrinal reforms and a vector for the cohesion between Ethiopian Christianity and the rest of the monophysite Christian world. Monophysite Churches were quite distinct from the more hegemonic Orthodox and Latin ones. The Council of Chalcedon (451), organized at the initiative of Pope Leo I (440-461), was at the origin of this divide, which saw two opposing options around the Christological question. The theological dispute concerned the concepts of the dual nature of Christ, human and divine, and the relationship between them. The Monophysite position defended by Eutyches, the monk of Constantinople, was that the human nature of Christ had merged into its divine nature, and thus privileged the divine over the human. On the other hand, the Chalcedonian (and Roman) option affirmed the separation of the two natures of Christ, as completely human and completely divine at the same time (Diaphysis). It was the Emperor Justinian (527-565) who, through his repressive policy against the supporters of Monophysism, caused the creation of "dissident" churches that spread in the Christian East (the Eastern Churches). Among them was born the Coptic Church

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<sup>5</sup> According to Piovanelli this dependence on the Coptic patriarchate of Alexandria was justified by the thirty-sixth article of the Nicaean Canons of the Arab Senodos, corresponding to the forty-second of the Ethiopian version (cf. Da Leonessa, 1942: 34-36, 50 and 78; Getatchew Haile, 1981: 115, n. 57).

of Egypt and its offshoot, the Ethiopian Church (Bandrés & Zanetti, 2003: 728-732; Marrou, 1985: 119-125; Heyberger, 1994: 13-18).

After a thousand years of formal separation, the auspices under which Luso-Ethiopian relations were formalised showed the strain of religious boundaries. In 1508, King Na'od had just died<sup>6</sup> when the Portuguese emissaries reached Ethiopia with a proposal for a military alliance. Queen regent Elléni<sup>7</sup> had placed the young Lebne Dengel, who was eleven or twelve years old, on the throne with the support of the Egyptian metropolitan, *Abuna*<sup>8</sup> Marqos. Upon receiving the Portuguese, she dispatched a merchant of "Armenian" origin named Abraham (known as Mateus in Portuguese documents) to the Portuguese sovereign: he arrived in Lisbon in 1514 (Aubin, 1996b: 133-182; Pennec, 2003: 28-32). In her reply to the Portuguese proposal, she offered her military assistance to fight Islam in the Red Sea and to seal the alliance between the two crowns through marriage (Cortese & Thomas, 1938: 123-124). In her message to the Portuguese king, she explained this rapprochement as the coming together of two kingdoms belonging to Christendom.

The visit of the Ethiopian emissary to Lisbon seems to have gone publicly unnoticed and remained very confidential. Still, his presence aroused the interest of Catholic theologians in Lisbon, who questioned him about the doctrine and practices of the Ethiopian Church. The difference in rites revealed by these exchanges marked the beginning of growing suspicions of religious deviances among the Ethiopians. Such assumptions were to be reinforced in the following decades and to have a lasting impact on Luso-Ethiopian relations.

In response to the regent's initiative, in 1515 Manuel I sent an ambassador, who failed to reach Ethiopia. It was not until 1520 that a new emissary, Rodrigo De Lima, succeeded in getting there. De Lima returned to Lisbon in 1527 bringing with him a new Ethiopian ambassador, Säga Zä'äb. This religious dignitary nominated by King Lebne Dengel was subjected to systematic interrogations by theologians in Lisbon. The observance by Ethiopian Christians of a set of practices such as the Sabbath, the marriage of priests, the annual renewal of baptism, circumcision and Levitical food prohibitions seemed to be proof of Jewish influence and confirmation that the subjects of Prester John were deviant Christians in need of reconversion and submission to the

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<sup>6</sup> King Na'od (1494-1508) died on July 31, 1508.

<sup>7</sup> Two homonymous queens frequented the Ethiopian court in contemporary times: Queen Elleni, *Qan Ba'altehat*, of King Zär'ä Ya'eqob (1434-1468), Princess of Hadya who he married before 1445 (Perruchon (ed.), 1893: 59) and Queen Elleni, *Qan Ba'altehat* of King Bä'edä Maryam (1468-1478), to whom the History of Lebne Dengel alludes by specifying that she lived during the reigns of three kings, who can be identified by Manfred Kropp as Bä'edä Maryam, Eskender and Na'od (Kropp, 1988: 3 n. 9).

<sup>8</sup> The title *abuna* [= our Father] was placed before the metropolitan's name as a sign of respect, cf. Piovanelli, 1995: 221.

Papacy (Aubin, 1996a: 201; Pennec, 2003: 32-39). The apparently positive disposition of the Ethiopian ruler Lebne Dengel towards the Papacy and the prospect of reconversion, led Rome and Portugal to commit further to strengthening ties with the Ethiopian Church.

Francisco Álvares, the priest who accompanied Rodrigo De Lima and wrote the detailed account of his time in Ethiopia, had been instructed by the Ethiopian king to visit Pope Clement VII (1523-1534). He carried a gold cross and a took request for submission from the Ethiopian Church in Rome. The account of this visit to Rome, which took place in 1532, and the Latin translation of the letters sent to the Pope by Lebne Dengel, were published in an anonymous booklet in 1533 in Bologna, under the title *Legatio David Æthiopiae Regis ad Sanctissimum D. N. Clementem Papam VII* (Aubin, 1996a: 190; Pennec, 2003: 40). The circumstances of the writing of these letters, however, raise doubts as to the exact terms of the Ethiopian King's request for allegiance to the Papacy: the final draft of the translation of the letters, explicitly stipulating that Prester John submit willingly to the Church of Rome, is attributed to Álvares himself, who seemed conscious of the need to address European expectations concerning the reality of Ethiopian predisposition (Aubin, 1996a: 183-210).

The larger context of these events was dominated by the vast expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1515, Ethiopia had been under threat from Muslim armies, and in 1529, the conflict took a more radical turn. Ahmed ibn Ibrahim (nicknamed Grañ, the "left-handed", by Ethiopian Christians), took control of the old aristocratic power of the Walasma dynasty (named after its founder, the *qat* Umar Walasma, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) and exercised his authority over the Ifat (southeast of the highlands) and the coastal area as far as the port of Zeyla. He engaged his troops, consisting in part of Somali and Afar nomads, in a genuine conquest of the Christian kingdom. But the Luso-Ethiopian alliance was crucial in offsetting the initial Muslim advantage. On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1543, Grañ's army was routed and its leader shot dead<sup>9</sup>.

By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, as Ethiopia was recovering from this long series of military clashes, the Oromo Bareentuma and Boorana (semi-nomadic groups that had until then lived in the lowlands to the Southeast), eyed the territories abandoned by the Christians during the Grañ wars and began to settle on the southern periphery of the Christian kingdom, and then threatened its vital central regions (the Gojjam and Choa regions). From the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they were to remain the main adversaries of Christian royal power (Hassen, 1990; Ficquet,

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<sup>9</sup> For a study taking into account a historiography of Islam in the Horn of Africa, see Chekroun's doctoral thesis, 2013: 269 ff.

2000: 137). The Ethiopian king Särsä Dengel (1563-1597) was the first to implement a defensive strategy against Oromo expansion by reorganizing his troops and stationing them at key posts on the Blue Nile's banks (the Abbay). This policy was later renewed by Susenyos (1607-1632) even more skilfully because of the knowledge he had gained from the Oromo, among whom he lived for a few years (Ficquet, 2000: 137). Slowly, in the wake of these serious crises that decimated the Ethiopian elite and ravaged the countryside, the Christian populations united around the Church and the king, and the kingdom began a new drive for expansion by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 1 – Map of Oromo migrations in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries





Source : Drawn by H. Pennec and M. J. Ramos. Base map: R. Oliver, Geography section, City of London Polytechnic (Pankhurst, 1982).

The Portuguese had indeed come into contact with a Christian ruler they identified as Prester John, but the way Christianity was practiced in Ethiopia differed significantly from Catholicism. With a view to realigning them with Rome, King João III of Portugal (1521-1558) opted to appoint a patriarch for the kingdom of Prester John in 1546, to be chosen from among the members of the Society of Jesus. The King addressed the Supreme Pontiff Paul III (1534-1549) via his Ambassador to the Holy See, Balthasar de Faria, to submit his proposal<sup>10</sup>. The Jesuit priest selected to become patriarch to Ethiopia was Pierre Favre.

As for what is appropriate for the service of God and the good of the Christianity of the said kingdom, I am sending it the said patriarch, trusting in Master Fabre [Pierre Favre] of the congregation and the Society of Jesus [...], for he is a person in whom flow all the qualities that are required for this, and such letters and virtues that in [this case] can greatly serve our Lord and be of great benefit to the doctrine, rebuilding and correcting this Christendom [...]. I ask His Holiness, please, to elect him [Favre] and make him patriarch of the said kingdom...<sup>11</sup>.

However, the untimely death of Favre in 1546 prevented the execution of this appointment. The project was postponed and then renewed in 1553, still at the initiative of João III, who wrote to his representative in Rome, concerned that the Ethiopian mission had still not been established. He therefore asked Ignatius of Loyola to choose a new patriarch from among the Jesuits, this time provided that he was Portuguese (Da Silva Mendes Leal, (ed.), 1884: 282-283). João Nunes Barreto was chosen and who was to be assisted by two coadjutor bishops, Melchior Carneiro and André de Oviedo<sup>12</sup>. From then on, it would be up to the Society of Jesus to decide on the best missionary methodology to be used in Ethiopia, and to write recommendations for Patriarch Barreto, a matter to which Ignatius of Loyola devoted

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<sup>10</sup> Letter from John III to Paul III, 08. 1546 (Da Silva Mendes Leal, (ed.), 1884: 58).

<sup>11</sup> Letter of John III to Balthasar de Faria, 27. 08. 1546, (Da Silva Mendes Leal, J. (ed.), 1884: 71).

<sup>12</sup> André de Oviedo had held the position of Rector of the Lisbon College before Barreto was sent to India (Beccari, 1903: 233). Chosen to hold the ecclesiastical office of coadjutor bishop of the patriarch, Carneiro was elected (at the same time as Father André de Oviedo) at the end of 1554 or the beginning of 1555 by the consistory of Pope Julius III (1550-March 1555). The two men arrived in Lisbon at the beginning of 1555, to await the apostolic letters for their consecration, just like the patriarch. At the end of March, as the letters had still not arrived (Pope Julius had just died), the Portuguese king detained the patriarch and Bishop André de Oviedo. On the other hand, Father Melchior Carneiro embarked on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1555 without having been consecrated bishop.

himself personally<sup>13</sup>. These programmatic instructions would condition the different phases of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, and its eventual demise.

The mission began in 1557, when Bishop André de Oviedo, accompanied by five other missionaries, landed in Ethiopia<sup>14</sup>. Making contact with the court proved to be difficult, and the discussions with the Ethiopian clergy were harsh. After a while, the Jesuit missionaries began to be harassed and persecuted during the reign of Minas (1559-1563) and then, less intensely, under his successor Särsä Dengel. Until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits were allowed to remain in Ethiopia but were physically removed from the court. They were to stay in May Gwagwa (Fremona) in the northern province of Tigray (Girma Beshah & Merid Wolde Aregay, 1964: 61-68). This marginalisation was accentuated by the “closing” of Massawa. As the port was occupied by the Turks, no European could pass through this route to Ethiopia and no missionary relief could arrive via this route.

The last of the Jesuit missionaries died in 1597. In the meantime, steps had been taken to send an Indian secular priest to prepare for the next mission, which began in 1603 with the arrival of Pedro Páez, soon to be joined by four other priests (António Fernandes, Francisco António de Angelis, Luís de Azevedo and Lourenço Romano). The five missionaries tried again to make contact with a string of kings that succeeded one another at high speed. Indeed, one of King Särsä Dengel’s sons, Ya'eqob, ruled for the first time from 1597 to 1603, was overthrown, exiled and replaced by Zä-Dengel for one year, and ruled again from 1604 to 1607, after having eliminated his rival. However, King Ya'eqob also had to deal with Prince Susenyos, who, after a long exile with the Oromo, returned to the forefront of the political scene and also staked his claim to the throne. After a merciless war, Susenyos crushed his rival in 1607. The Jesuit fathers established contact with each of these rulers, always making them offers of European military support in exchange for submission to the Papacy. These persistent efforts were finally rewarded with King Susenyos’ adherence to the Roman faith at the end of 1621.

By this time, the missionaries began arriving in large numbers. Patriarch Afonso Mendes, who landed in Ethiopia in 1625, received the oath of submission of King Susenyos to Rome and applied a religious reform strictly based on the model of the Roman Church. This was a very bold action that was met in 1633 with total rejection by Susenyos’ successor, his son Fasiledes (1632-1667). All the Jesuit missionaries were expelled or hunted down and put to death. Not only were the facts surrounding the

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<sup>13</sup> “Instructions to the Patriarch of Ethiopia, João Nunes Barreto (1554-1555)”, Beccari, 1903: 251. For the detailed study of these Instructions, see Pennec, 2003: 58-63.

<sup>14</sup> I deliberately leave aside the reasons why Patriarch Barreto was not sent to Ethiopia. For more details, see Pennec, 2003: 87-92.

Jesuit mission in Ethiopia and its tragic demise known in Europe from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century on, but so too was the history of the Portuguese military contribution to support Christian Ethiopia against the Muslims, mixed in with the ancient vision of a link to the legendary kingdom of Prester John.

One of the major works that gave concrete expression to the links between Ethiopia and Portugal was Francisco Álvares' book *Verdadeira informação das terras do Preste João das Índias*, printed in Lisbon in October 1540<sup>15</sup>. As chaplain of the Embassy of Rodrigo de Lima, on his return to Portugal he wrote an account of his eleven years of travel (1515-1526), six of which had taken place in Ethiopia from 1520 to 1526 (Aubin, 1996a: 185). The text was put together in part from his notes, written in the past tense, which detailed his observations and encounters (Aubin, 1996a: 195-196; Hirsch & Potin, 2009: 110-111) and, as the author himself put it: "What happened to me on the way, what happened to me on the sea and on land, the kingdoms, lordships and provinces, cities, towns and places through which we passed, the nations and peoples, their clothes, their ways and customs, both of Christian and Moor, Jew and pagan".<sup>16</sup> The publication of his text revealed for the first time in Europe that there was a Christian kingdom to the south of Egypt. Ethiopia had been identified since the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with Prester John's Lands. In addition to locating the geographical confines of this kingdom more precisely, Álvares' account devoted a large section to the question of the religious differences between Ethiopian Christianity and that of the Roman Catholic Church (Aubin, 1996a: 189).

Other texts published during the 16<sup>th</sup> century narrate the intervention of the military (about four hundred soldiers and one hundred and thirty slaves), sent by the Portuguese crown from Goa to support the Ethiopian king Gelawdewos in his defense against the Muslim army led by Ahmed Grañ. Led by D. Christovão da Gama, they intervened in Ethiopia from 1541 to 1544. The first account by Miguel de Castanhoso in 1564, the *História das cousas que o mui esforçado capitão Dom Christovão da Gama fez nos reinos do Preste João com quatrocentos Portugueses que consigo levou*, reported the events of the military campaign. Castanhoso, who was part of the column sent to Ethiopia, published his book nearly twenty years after the events, dedicating it to D. Francisco of Portugal, nephew of D. Christovão da Gama. It deals with the young captain's military achievements, heroicising him and depicting his death as that of a martyr. The book was conceived as an apology for a fallen member of a great and glorious Portuguese family, the Da Gama family.

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<sup>15</sup> For the different states of the text, see Álvares, 1961: 8; Beckingham, 1987: 174-175; Hirsch, 1990: 368-375. See also Kammerer, 1947: 9; and Aubin, 1996a: 183-210; Kleiner, 2003: 213-215.

<sup>16</sup> Translation by Aubin, 1996a: 194.

A second text that evoked this military expedition was by one João Bermudes. It was published in 1565 under the title *Breve relação da embaixada que o Patriarcha D. João Bermudez trouxe do imperador da Ethiopia, vulgarmente chamado Preste João*, and the author claimed to have been nominated patriarch by Prester John<sup>17</sup>. His account offers an interesting counterpoint to Castanhoso's fresco. The battles, victories and defeats are similarly narrated in Bermudes' book, but the hero was not Christovão da Gama but himself: he had been the great military strategist, the diplomat who made up for the blunders of the warlord, the one who granted the Portuguese divine victory. As for the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, there has been no shortage of books published since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The very announcement of Prester John's conversion to Catholicism in 1622 "made the headlines", as evidenced by the translation of the *Rome Gazette* into French published in Paris<sup>18</sup>:

The conversion of Prester John, Emperor of Ethiopians and Abyssinians, and all the subjects of his Kingdom, to the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith.

Together the submissions and presents given to Pope Gregory XV by the Ambassadors.

With the creation of a new Patriarch, sent by His Holiness, and the number of priests who have been assigned there for the conversion of the said countries.

The Empire of Prester John, Monarch of the Ethiopians, and Abyssinians, is a wide and spacious empire. It has borders with Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the east, to the South are the mountains of the Moon, and to the West it is bordered by the Niger and the Nile rivers. As for the inhabitants of this country, some of them follow the law of the disciples of Mohammed, while others have some marks of the Catholic religion, different however from ours. In addition to the two religions, several other sects reign there, mainly that of the Jews, which has since long taken root there.

King David of Ethiopia, aware of the reputation of the Portuguese, and of what they did remarkably well in India, sought their friendship, and sent gifts to King Dom Emanuel, who was in power in the year 1545. On account of this alliance the said Dom Emanuel made various efforts to hand them over to the true bosom of the Roman Church, about which they still had some superficial knowledge. This was done with such great success that in the year 1548 the said David King of the Abyssinians or Ethiopians sent his ambassador François Alvarez to Pope Clement VII who received him in Bologna, at the time when Charles V was crowned Emperor, to accept his wishes, and to send him some learned people to teach him. Pope

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<sup>17</sup> I have had the opportunity to address this question in other works, Pennecc, 2003: 42-46; Bermudes, 2010: introduction.

<sup>18</sup> BNF, O3c. 62, "In Paris, At Joseph Guerreau's, street Saint Jacques à la petite Hotte, in front of Saint Yves 1622. With permission".

Clement was on the verge of death and could not carry out this generous undertaking, so this was left to Pope Paul IV who nominated thirteen priests from the Society of Jesus, one of whom, Father Iean Nugnez Barratte, was made Patriarch, in order to bring all those people back to the path of truth. But they found King David dead, and his son was very reluctant to embrace the Christian religion, which delayed and then brought to an end this holy and generous enterprise, which with time was about to lead to happy success, had the King not died: for he was already beginning to feel the flavour of the teachings, and understand the precepts of the faith. But his brother Adamas, having succeeded to the Crown, showed himself in all his actions to be contrary to, and an enemy of, the Papacy.

Since then, through the presence both of those who travel in this country, which is very rich, and of those who go expressly to bring these wandering peoples back to the true sheepfold of Iesus Christ, Prester John who reigns today over the Abyssinians and Ethiopians has felt the inner desire to embrace the true Faith, and to give life in the eastern part of his lands the ancient majesty of the Roman Church, which he sees is the only one true Church, the one in which one can sail with serenity, and so we see that God often extends grace to some but not to others with the same abundance.

This Prince's resolution, based on the hope he rightly had, was approved by the greats of his Kingdom, although several of them are doing everything in their power to turn him away from such a holy undertaking. These are mainly Turks, Jews and other volunteers who live according to their dictates, to their own and inner imagination, though they toil in vain. For as God has been operating in such an important matter for the salvation of so many poor souls who have now been buried in the dark shade of deplorable ignorance, there is no doubt that we will soon see some admirable and advantageous effects.

This King, therefore, with the assistance of Heaven, is laying down the finishing touches on what some of his successors have so generously undertaken, and has sent his Ambassadors to Rome in the past few months with a train and equipage of a magnificence that has not been seen for a long time to offer his service and obedience at the feet of his Holiness, and asking that, if it so pleases him, to delegate some Legates and religious men to instruct all his subjects about the true Religion, and adding to his submission various letters and presents.

His Holiness received them with great demonstrations of benevolence, testifying that with the grace of God he would cooperate in their conversion as far as he could. The People of Rome also greatly rejoiced at this, seeing that the Catholic Church has extended its boundaries overnight to the very lands where irreligion and idolatry had planted the banners of their error.

The Pope, in order to support so adventurous a resolution to the whole Catholic Church, elected eight Fathers from the Society of Jesus, the most pious (p. 12) and learned he could find, to send them with the said Ambassadors to Prester John and

convert this whole country to the true Religion. One of these he constituted Patriarch of Ethiopia, and gave him all authority, second only to the power of the holy Apostolic See.

These Ambassadors have returned with the Fathers and Religious men to their country, hence we can hope they will shortly bear fruit and show admirable results, and with this fortunate success the Turk, whose empire borders Ethiopia, will now be contained, for as Christian it will attack them harshly in the future.

From the *Gazettes of Rome*.

In addition to this excellent news for the Catholic world, the French-translated *Gazette* revealed a recent development that had just arrived in Rome and Paris: the submission of the Ethiopian king to the Pope. Interestingly, this document also testifies to the fact there was access to precise knowledge about 16<sup>th</sup> century protagonists and situations both in Ethiopia and in Europe<sup>19</sup>, although in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the names of the Jesuit priests and that of the converted king are omitted.

The most detailed and complete account of the whole mission is the one published by Father Baltasar Teles, the Portuguese Provincial of the Society of Jesus, in 1660. His *História Geral de Etiópia a Alta...*<sup>20</sup>, as the author mentions in the subtitle, is an abridged account (736 pages) of the *História* produced by Manuel de Almeida, a field missionary who wrote his text while in Ethiopia<sup>21</sup>. Teles relied heavily on Almeida's manuscript, since he never set foot in Ethiopia himself. His *História Geral de Etiópia a Alta...* retraced the chronology of the Ethiopian mission in broad lines, describing in flowery baroque style the different events and the actions of the various actors in great detail. The information he provides differs little from what we know today about the history of the mission.

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<sup>19</sup> However, the geographical information comes from an older piece of literature and does not correspond at all to that given in the annual letters of the Jesuits of Ethiopia, although they are partially published in Europe by Guerreiro, as we will see in Chapter 3.

<sup>20</sup> Teles, *História Geral de Etiópia a Alta ou Preste Ioam e do que nella obraram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus. Composta na mesma Etiópia pelo Padre Manoel d'Almeyda, natural de Vizeu, Provincial e Visitador, que foy na India. Abreviada com nova releycam e methodo pelo Padre Balthasar Telles, natural de Lisboa, Provincial da Provincia Lusitana, ambos da mesma Companhia*, 1660. Biographical Notice about Teles by Leite, 2001: 3718.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 3.

Figure 2 – Frontispiece of the *História Geral de Etiópia a Alta*, by Father Baltasar Teles, 1660.



Before this well documented digest, there had been others, such as the one published by Fernão Guerreiro, who since 1603<sup>22</sup>, had specialized in publishing the

<sup>22</sup> *Relaçam annual das cousas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus na India, & Japão nos annos de 600 & 601 & do processo da conversão, & Christandade daquellas partes: tirada das cartas Gêraes que de lá vierão*

annual reports of Jesuit missions under the jurisdiction of Portuguese patronage. In eight years, from 1603 to 1611, he published a volume every two years, in which he published collected letters from the missions (from Brazil to Japan, India to Africa), in an abridged and revised form. News of the Ethiopian mission appeared in most of the volumes, namely in those published in 1605, 1607, 1609 and 1611<sup>23</sup>. He collated information on missionary work (its implementation, activities, etc.), but also included news about the political and religious situation in Ethiopia over a two-year period, information on local fauna, flora and hydrography, customs of different communities, descriptions of kingdoms, provinces, regions,... Translated into Spanish, French, German and Dutch (translations to which we shall return later), in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, his books gave the Ethiopian mission wide visibility in Europe.

These accounts of Ethiopia and its Christianity were published throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the time when links were forged and strengthened between Portugal and the Ethiopian Christian kingdom, and continued until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. European interest in these historical episodes lasted until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While it is difficult to measure the extent to which these stories spread (that would be the subject of another research project), some milestones make it possible to imagine its impact.

Twenty years after the publication of Teles' book, Job Ludolf, a German scholar, wrote his *Historia Aethiopica* (1681), in which he joined his mastery of the Ethiopian classical language (thanks to the assistance of Abba Gorgorios, an Ethiopian Catholic priest who migrated to Europe following the expulsion of Jesuits from Ethiopia), and his extensive knowledge of Ethiopian literature with a critical perspective of the materials that had been produced and published in Europe about Ethiopia. Teles' *História Geral de Etiópia a Alta...* was actually one of Ludolf's major references when addressing religious and theological issues. Although he clearly refused to take sides on the reported controversies between Ethiopian Christians and Jesuit missionaries, the fact remains that Teles was his main written source.

James Bruce, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish traveller who travelled from Egypt to Sudan and then to Ethiopia, brought with him a quantity of Ethiopian manuscripts on his return journey and published a widely read book, the *Travels to discover the source of the Nile, in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773* (Bruce, 1790; Pankhurst, 2003: 631-633), in which he claimed to have been the first European to discover the fabled

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pelo Padre Fernão Guerreiro da Companhia de Jesus. Vai dividida em dous livros, hum das cousas da India & outro do Japam, 1603, 259 p.

<sup>23</sup> The titles of Guerreiro's various works are given in Chapter 3.



sources of the Blue Nile (Abbay)<sup>24</sup>. He offered the educated public a detailed and precise account of Ethiopia's history and the period of its relationship with Europe, in particular. A French translation was published just one year after its English first edition (Bruce, (trans.) Castera, 1791), and the book would be frequently republished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This set of publications, which aren't in any measure a comprehensive list, underlines the interest that existed in Europe from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards and in different countries and languages, for books about Ethiopia. Prester John, Portugal and the Ethiopian kings, the Jesuit mission, the land of the Blue Nile springs fired the European imagination and fed various library shelves on Portuguese-Ethiopian relations and missionary history. This very European tale, about Europeans in the country of Prester John, was made visible and produced in its wake a set of images and knowledge.

My previous research (Pennec, 2003) led me to take into account the missionaries in the field with the intention of distancing myself from a European-centred history by connecting two topics: the history of missionary policies on the one hand and, on the other, the relationship between power and religion in the Ethiopian Christian kingdom. It was therefore crucial to analyse exactly what the concrete undertakings of the Jesuits were in Ethiopia, the relationship between missionaries and the people they aimed to convert, their role in Ethiopian society and their actions, and the concrete strategies related to the overhanging question of how best to implant Catholicism in a situation where political power, to which the missionaries submitted, had to be steered according to their intentions? The combined analysis of Ethiopian geographical space (i.e., the establishment and formation of a Catholic territory in Ethiopia), Ethiopian political space (one of mutual instrumentalisation by the Jesuits and the kings), and the global space of the Society of Jesus, that "one and indivisible body", the defence of which depended on the physical link of the written word to react and respond to a specifically European controversy while being in, and writing from, Ethiopia. The combined study of this double historiography made it possible to place both Jesuits and Ethiopians in a historical perspective.

To achieve a balance between the sources, given that the volume of documents on the European side was quite overwhelming in relation to Ethiopian written materials on the matter, it was necessary to mobilize other types of sources such as, for example, archaeological and architectural field surveys, ethnographic inquiries and the such. However, the problem of how the modes of knowledge on the side of "European" historiography were assembled remained a question in its own right insofar as it

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<sup>24</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

required a critical study of a system of knowledge whose production spanned several centuries and was directed at a period of several centuries.

Is knowledge actually cumulative? What is the place of forms of linearity in its production? Knowledge is not only a text, not only an intellectual activity, but also a production that is born out of multiple debates. While it is often imagined as linear and/or cumulative, the case under consideration called for a different approach. What had not been tried before but seemed essential was the need to concentrate on the forms of debate and on the challenges the production of this knowledge faced, so as to shed light on its multi-layered and non-linear nature. A complementary, and equally crucial question was: what is lost by looking at knowledge in terms of its finiteness? To answer this it was necessary to carry out surveys of the forms of facts that this system of knowledge production had been able to generate. Examining the texts themselves creates the possibility of questioning the knowledge contained therein and therefore the knowledge that is transmitted, and it also allows us to ask ourselves what the authors-actors were “doing” rather than what they were “saying”, i.e., to question the notion of transmitted “facts” by focusing above all on the actions they were carrying out (Torre, 2007: 101-107). This re-reading of sources means restoring the conditions and contexts of their production and analysing their language in the light of their staging (Grangaud, 2008: 563-573; Cerutti and Grangaud, 2013: 91-102).

The documentation I studied in order to carry out this survey is both rich and extensive, be they European, missionary or Ethiopian sources. Re-examining these documentary sources to piece together a complex and multifaceted story meant grasping its genesis and its transformations, understanding the social and literary contexts of production, analysing connections usually discarded by national(ist) historiographies. I opted for a localised micro-analytical method to better follow the steps through which this literary production circulated in time and space and contributed to the history of what has been called the “first globalization” (Subramanyam, 1997, 2005; 2007, 2012, 2016, 2018; Gruzinski, 2004, 2012; Boucheron, 2009; Bertrand, 2011; Brook, 2012). The underlying challenge has been to foster a rethink of global History by offering a case study where the multiplicity of histories and voices, both the expressed and the silenced, calls for a kaleidoscopic perspective, where multiple re-readings of ancient European and Ethiopian sources could be cross-analysed and contextualised (Chartier, 2001: 119-123; Gruzinsky, 2001: 85-117; Douki & Minard, 2007: 7-21; Zuniga, 2007: 54-68; Calafat, 2013: 57-70; Bertrand & Calafat, 2018: 1-18). My aim was to situate the facts related to the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit mission in Ethiopia within a history of the production of knowledge, the missionaries

themselves being prolific and influencing producers. Analysing these facts and the ensuing literature also offered me the opportunity to look at them as ordinary historical objects instead of predicates of hagiographic exaltation (Giard, 1995; O'Malley, Bailey, Harris, Kennedy, 1999, 2006; Fabre & Vincent, 2007; de Castelnaud-L'Estoile, Copete, Maldavsky, Županov, 2011; Agnolin, Wissembach, de Mello e Souza, Zeron, 2011; Palomo, 2014; Barreto Xavier, Županov, 2015; Romano, 2015, 2016). This is the focus of the present book.

First (chapters 1 and 2), it will be a question of looking as closely as possible at the itineraries of two late nineteenth century scholars to shed light on their intellectual postures. Esteves Pereira (1854-1924) and Beccari (1849-1928) were contemporaries who met and exchanged information. All the while, both published manuscripts relating to the history of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia, more precisely on the period when Portuguese and Ethiopian Christianities came into contact through the foothold the Jesuit missionaries established for nearly eighty years in the Ethiopian highlands and later when other Catholic missionaries tried their luck there after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1633-1634. Esteves Pereira was a Portuguese engineering colonel who carried out a parallel orientalist activity, publishing a number of texts in classical Ethiopian (Ge'ez) and translating them mainly into Portuguese; Beccari was an Italian Jesuit whose main career took place in the Italian peninsula as a "procurator for the cause of the saints" for the Society of Jesus and who published an immense amount of hitherto unpublished manuscripts relating to the history of Catholic missions in Ethiopia.

While both authors' biographical entries appear in various encyclopaedias (Zanfredini, 2001: 381; *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 1965: 432; Raineri, 2003: 513; Lopes, 1940-1941: 121-133; Boavida, 2005b: 389), these entries only provide the reader with factual biographical information without putting their scientific production into perspective or analysing the context in which their work was carried out. But to understand their motives, views and actions it is necessary to work differently: by looking back at their personal itineraries it is possible to shed light on the reality around their work in such a way that we can look at them not as data harvesters but rather as witnesses, so that we can re-interrogate the sources.

Their works, published with all the impeccable scientific seriousness of the nineteenth century, have been and still are essential reference works to be reckoned with. It will not be a question here of revisiting the quality of these works but rather of asking what we lose if we are only interested in them in terms of the knowledge they produce and taking their finiteness as a reference. This is why it is important to detail the surveys conducted on the itineraries of these scientists in order to

reconstruct as much as possible the circumstances of how this knowledge was produced.

Chapter 3 will be devoted to the practical dimension of this “operation” of knowledge production to highlight three moments concerning Pedro Páez’s opus, the *História da Etiópia*. First of all, the moment of its writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the debates that surrounded it and to which he had to respond, to show that the knowledge, and in particular the geographical knowledge, produced by Páez was truly contextual. The moment of its complete publication at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Beccari provides the opportunity to highlight other types of realities similar to those that affected the critical reedition of the *História da Etiópia* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Jacob, 2014: 25; 2007, 2011; Skinner, 2012: 55-67; Romano, 2015: 353-363).

The last part (chapter 4) will consider how the approach to the critical edition of Pedro Páez’s *História da Etiópia* paved the way to a different working of the history of the mission. Thanks to this work, it is now unthinkable to engage solely in philology when editing Jesuit sources. While republishing Páez’s text the editors confronted the challenge of answering questions related to the conduct of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, its success and failure, thus opening up the opportunity for further re-examination of the sources employing other disciplinary fields, namely anthropology and archaeology (Ramos, 2018; Fernández, Torres, de, Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, Cañete, 2017). Manuel de Almeida’s reworking of Páez’s text was reviewed in this new edition. He had begun his writing and editing work while still in Ethiopia but having been expelled from the country by King Fasiledes, from 1633 he was forced to finish his endeavour in India. By taking into account the process of production of the text, the analysis will show that the author is engaged in a dialogue with a changing succession of social events and uses it to respond to them. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to the dynamics of production of factual data by seeking first to reconstruct and describe the processes that generated them. This will, as Angelo Torre notes, lead “to reconsidering the very dimension of historical ‘fact’: the attestations, certifications, affirmations to which the historical documentation leads us are the result of constructions, true architectures to which multiple actors have contributed, driven by objectives whose disentanglement and definition are the historian’s responsibility. Similar dynamics of production of factual data place on the same level both the interpretation - or rather its reconstitution - by the historian and the process that generated it” (Torre, 2007: 105).

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a crucial period in the effort to understand the challenges of Luso-Ethiopian relations in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. From 1880 to 1920, the production of translations and editions of Ethiopian manuscripts in various

European languages was highly significant. Many Ethiopian manuscripts written in Ge'ez (the classical Ethiopian language), brought back by hundreds of Europeans who lived in the Ethiopian Highlands during the 18th and 19th centuries made their way to various European private collections and public libraries and were thence listed, classified and catalogued (Dillmann, 1848; d'Abbadie, 1859; Zotenberg, 1877; Wright, 1877; Goldschmidt, 1897<sup>25</sup>). "Ethiopian" funds thus emerged in a number of European countries and became in themselves objects of study to which a handful of scholars dedicated long years of their lives. They particularly cherished the translation of manuscripts which they would classify into different genres, of which especially two deserved much of their attention: "historical" texts such as royal chronicles and royal genealogies (Hirsch, 2000: 376)<sup>26</sup> and religious texts (the lives of saints, synaxaria, liturgical texts, the Ge'ez versions of the books of the Bible, etc.). The work undertaken by these scholars followed the principles of the methodical school, wrongly called "positivist school" by Guy Bourd , which was very active in France and in Germany (Bourd  & Martin, 1997: 181). The approach consisted of publishing editions of texts by collating the various available manuscripts with a historical and critical introduction and translating them into European languages (French, Italian, German, Portuguese, etc.), while offering the reader a solid critical apparatus of notes of great erudition to further ensure the indisputable value of the document. The interest and curiosity of these scholars extended far beyond Ethiopia itself, as shown for instance in the issues of the *Journal Asiatique*, whose goal, since the foundation of the French Soci t  Asiatique in 1822, was to "encourage knowledge of Eastern languages and peoples, from North Africa to the Far East". The Society's board of directors included not only a pleiad of scholars and academics but also the Minister of the Navy and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the Duke of Orl ans figuring as honorary president. From its inception and for many years, it would become the true authority on Orientalism, where cabinet philologists would convene with those in the field for the publication of grammars and dictionaries, the translation of manuscripts, memoirs, critical reviews and the announcement of important "Orientalist" news (Bendana & Messaoudi, 2012: 526-527).

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<sup>25</sup> For a complete inventory of libraries and Ethiopian manuscripts, see <http://www.menestrel.fr/spip.php?rubrique694&lang=fr>, Bosc-Tiess , Derat and Wion.

<sup>26</sup> As pointed out, Hirsch's distinction between historical chronicle and religious texts is far from obvious, because of "this game, usual in Ethiopian chronicles, between the detailed account of a king's years of reign and the permanent convocation of models most often taken from religious literature".

In France, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jules Perruchon<sup>27</sup>, René Basset<sup>28</sup> and William Conzelman<sup>29</sup> published erudite notes and edited Ethiopian royal chronicles in learned journals, the *Journal Asiatique* and the *Revue Sémitique*, from manuscripts kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, among others. They would publish both the Ge'ez texts (with their variants) and their French translations. In Italy, Ignacio Guidi<sup>30</sup>, Francesco Béguinot<sup>31</sup>, and Carlo Conti Rossini<sup>32</sup> also published other Ge'ez manuscripts using the same principle<sup>33</sup>. In Germany, August Dillmann (Kleiner, 2005: 160-161) and Carl Bezold (1901) edited the *Kebrä Nagast (The Glory of Kings)*, with the Ethiopian text and a translation (Marrassini, 2007: 364-368). Finally, in Portugal, Francisco Esteves Pereira undertook a similar task, publishing Ethiopian texts with a Portuguese translation (his works will be discussed later, in chapter one). This transnational impetus contributed, on the one hand, to a relatively wide dissemination of sources on the history of Ethiopia (on the Christian kingdom of the Highlands, in particular) and, on the other, to the establishment and enrichment of a “corpus” with which all later scholars have always have to deal (Bausi, 2010: 142-144). Thus was created a specific field of knowledge about the Ethiopian Christian kingdom and, to a lesser extent, Muslim Ethiopia (Chekroun, 2013)<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Jules François Célestin Perruchon (1853-1907) was a French philologist and specialist in Ge'ez. He studied the language under the direction of Joseph Halévy at the École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne, for his various works (Wion, 2010: 134-135).

<sup>28</sup> René Basset (1855-1924), “professor of Arabic and Berber, director of the Faculty of Letters, then dean of the Faculty of Letters of Algiers. After a first year of joint lectures in philology, Greek antiquities and history at the EPHE, he decided to devote himself especially to oriental languages by studying Arabic (but also Hebrew, Syriac, Ethiopian and ancient Egyptian) [...]. With a degree in literature, he was admitted to the Asian Society, which published his first work on a Berber text in its Journal (“Poème de çabi en dialecte chelha”, May-June 1879). Recommended by Michel Bréal, he was in charge of the complementary Arabic language course at the École supérieure des lettres, which had just been founded in Algiers, in 1880. However, he did not abandon his Ethiopian studies (*Études sur l'histoire de l'Éthiopie*, 1881-1882), on which his main thesis was based (*Étude sur l'histoire comparée du Yémen et de l'Éthiopie, depuis Jésus Christ jusqu'à Mohammed, d'après les sources grecques et orientales*, a work which remained unfinished (Messaudi, 2015: <http://books.openedition.org/enseditions/3730>).

<sup>29</sup> William El. Conzelman, a student of Joseph Halevy, translated and wrote the introduction for his EPHE diploma, *la Chronique de Galawdéwos*, 1895.

<sup>30</sup> Ignazio Guidi (1844-1935), an Italian scholar who was professor of Semitic languages at the University of Rome from 1876 to 1919. From 1885 he held the chair of *Storia e lingua d'Abissinia* at the same university (Ricci, 2005: 908-909).

<sup>31</sup> Francesco Béguinot (1879-1953), an Italian orientalist who studied Semitic languages under the direction of Ignazio Guidi and acquired a solid competence in Ge'ez and Arabic. He made an important contribution to Ethiopian studies with an annotated translation of the “short chronicles” (1901) already published by Basset in 1881 (Lusini, 2003: 521-522).

<sup>32</sup> Carlo Conti Rossini (1872-1949), an Italian Ethiopian who followed a career in the Italian colonial administration in Eritrea and as a “field” linguist who published many Ethiopian manuscripts (Ricci, 2003: 791-792).

<sup>33</sup> See final bibliography at the respective entries by author name.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the work of Basset published in 1897, *Histoire de la conquête de l'Abyssinie (XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle) par Chihab el-Din Ahmed Ben Abd el-Qâder surnommé l'Arab Faqih*, 2 vols, Paris.

In response to this vast undertaking of critical editions of Ethiopian manuscripts, Camillo Beccari, a Jesuit priest in Italy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, took up the task of listing, classifying and editing a large set of unpublished European documents on the history of Ethiopia from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that had been kept in the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus and elsewhere and published them in a collection he entitled *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales Inediti* (now *RÆSOL*). In one regard at least, Beccari's posture was different from those Orientalist scholars who had set about unearthing as many Ethiopian documents as possible and offering them to an audience of learned readers. The Jesuit, by publishing the *RÆSOL*, wanted to present a counter perspective. As he wrote:

These publications (the Ethiopian manuscripts), which we hope will follow one another, will shed great light on the civil and religious history of Abyssinia. However, with regard to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the influence of the Portuguese was felt in Abyssinia and when, because of them, the Catholic mission of the Jesuits took hold there, the historical records of the Abyssinian sources that have already been published, or are in the process of being published, need to be complemented and largely rectified by confronting them with the Western sources (Beccari, 1903: IV).

His aim was to provide a counter perspective by publishing hitherto unpublished European documents from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These would present historians with testimonies that would give them the opportunity to “put Ethiopia's history on the right track”<sup>35</sup>. The Jesuit presented them with the “basic material” and it would be up to others to use it properly. But as we will see in Chapter 2, Beccari proposed more than just publishing manuscript documents. By tidying them up and selecting them, he definitely intended to direct the readers' path. This is a discursive strategy that needs examination.

The aforementioned late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century pan-European community of scholars was considerably mobilised and published a fairly heterogeneous set of documents at a steady pace. These various scholars were in regular contact with each other, helped one another in their research<sup>36</sup>, copied and exchanged manuscripts<sup>37</sup>,

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<sup>35</sup> Beccari, 1903: III.

<sup>36</sup> “I feel obliged to publicly express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Esteves Pereira, who in recent times in Lisbon was of great advice and assistance to me in my research” (Beccari, 1903: VI); Jules Perruchon did the same to Esteves Pereira, to whom he communicated his copy, his translation which was corrected by his “kind correspondent”. In the same place, Perruchon reported that he had called on the skills of Basset. They were both thanked by the author (Perruchon, 1894: 320-321).

<sup>37</sup> As such, Esteves Pereira's private collection at the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (dossier Esteves Pereira, Classe de letras, Académico correspondente), holds various recopied manuscript notebooks. A copy of Dr. Enno

thanked and praised each other and offered one another their new publications, frequently with a dedication<sup>38</sup>. While it is difficult to know much about the detail of their debates, philological discussions and controversies over interpretations, it seems that at least in the case of Esteves Pereira and Beccari, the two figures of this learned world who will be discussed in the next two chapters (1 and 2), there is no evidence of dissension or debate of ideas. The scarcity of their private funds will probably prevent us from going further and answering these kinds of questions more precisely. In the first chapter we will trace the journeys of both scholars, in order to restore the internal dynamics of the production of their respective works and to grasp what they were “up to” at the time of writing. This approach will offer us the chance to read their “productions” not only in terms of their material content but also and above all by relating it to the processes that generated them (Torre, 2007: 101-107; Torre, 2019: 1-14).

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Littmann “Lucta e martirio de s. Gregorio, Patriarcha da Armenia.” Ms fol. 117 da bibliotheca imperial de Berlim. Another by René Basset (from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1888) “Vida de Takla Haymanot” Ms da Bibli. Nac. From Paris, n° 56 Ethiopian fund (cat. De Zot[enberg] n° 136).

<sup>38</sup> Once again, the private library of Esteves Pereira at the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa preserves the work of Beccari and contains a dedication by the author “All'illustre etiopista Colonnello Fr.co Esteves Pereira omaggio dell'autore. Beccari”, (Beccari, 1912: I).



## CHAPTER 1

### FRANCISCO MARIA ESTEVES PEREIRA (1854-1924): THE “LONELY” ETHIOPIANIST

The few existing biographical notes on Francisco Esteves Pereira (Lopes, 1940-1941: 121-133; Boavida, 2005b: 389), highlight three elements that made up his life story. He was a career soldier, a self-taught orientalist scholar specialising in the Ethiopian classical language (Ge'ez), and he was a member of a number of learned societies, not only in Portugal<sup>1</sup> but also in Europe, and in France, in particular<sup>2</sup>, thanks to the translations he did from Ge'ez into Portuguese. These biographical notes, while factually useful are unfortunately silent in regard to the possible links between his military career and his career as an orientalist, except in noting that thanks to the latter he was able to take long periods of leave from the army. What is more enigmatic about Esteves Pereira is that we know virtually nothing about how and under what circumstances he achieved his self-taught specialisation in Ge'ez.

It will not be a question here of addressing the quality of his work or his choice of manuscripts. Others, such as Manfred Kropp, for instance, studied this from a textual and philological point of view almost a hundred years after Esteves Pereira started publishing Ethiopian chronicles (Kropp, 1983-1984: 49-69; 1988; 1994). Rather, it will be a matter of taking a new interest in his life story by providing contextual insights so as to rewrite his biographical and intellectual journey.

The extant documentation at the Arquivo Histórico Militar in Lisbon and in the archives of the various learned institutions to which he belonged make it possible to follow the succession of Esteves Pereira's interactions with some of his contemporaries and thus appreciate the consistency of his intellectual journey.

## 1. Esteves Pereira: Colonel of Military Engineering and Editor of Ethiopian Texts

### 1.1 The archival fonds: a personal file at the Arquivo Histórico Militar

The file on Esteves Pereira that can currently be found at the Arquivo Histórico Militar<sup>3</sup> allows us to reconstruct his career as a soldier, on the one hand, and to learn

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<sup>1</sup> Admission to the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa in 1886 (Minutes of the sessions of the Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa, Session on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1886. Extract from the proposals for the admission of members", "ordinary", Mr. Francisco M. Esteves Pereira, proposed by Mr. G de Vasconcellos Abreu, Mrs. Maria Luiza Duarte, and Mr. J.P. Diogo Patrone Junior", Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1892, p. 108; Admission to the Lisbon Academy of Sciences in 1908, dossier: Esteves Pereira, Class of letters, correspondent Academician, elected on 14-05-1908. He died in 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Admission to *Journal Asiatique* during the session of 13<sup>th</sup> January 1888 (1888: 281).

<sup>3</sup> Arquivo Histórico Militar, Cd, 1542, Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira.

about his parallel career as an Orientalist philologist on the other. This file provides information on his entire military career, from joining to his death<sup>4</sup>. According to the file, Esteves Pereira was born on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1854, in Miranda do Douro (District of Bragança), in northern Portugal, to Ms. Ambelina Maria de Jesus Rebelo and Paulo José Esteves Pereira. The military archives, in addition to his date and place of birth and filiation, provide us with information on his career from the moment he joined the army as a volunteer on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1875, in the 3rd Caçadores Battalion. He then continued his military training in engineering at the Escola Politécnica from 1875 to 1882. He was appointed First Class Captain in 1903 and sub-inspector of the Lisbon fortifications in 1910. He pursued his military career until 27<sup>th</sup> June 1914 as Inspector General of Fortifications and Military Works. Having reached the age limit for military duty, he became a reservist on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1916. This general picture of his military journey clearly shows that all events of his career and changes in rank took place in Lisbon. He had no experience in the Portuguese colonies. It was therefore essentially in Lisbon that he exercised his military profession as well as his career as an orientalist, as we will see.

## 1.2 More than just a military career: personal and academic life

His military file, in addition to notes from his superiors, his evaluations and follow-up throughout his career, also contains two newspaper clippings pasted on a loose sheet inserted post-mortem. Each has a different photographic portrait for each article on Esteves Pereira, both dressed in military uniform. None of these documents bears a signature. The first is from an unidentified newspaper and dated the day after his death, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1924. The second is an advert for an exhibition of literary work taken from the newspaper *O Seculo*<sup>5</sup> and is dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 1932, the ninth anniversary of his death. The first clipping contains the following information:

Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira. Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, an engineering colonel, full member and treasurer of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, died yesterday [9<sup>th</sup> December 1924] at the age of 70. He was a very learned and dedicated officer. He carried out various activities: he was the second in command of the Tancos military school, president of the Santa Clara military courts, head of engineering distribution, member of various commissions assisting soldiers with tuberculosis,

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<sup>4</sup> Detailing all the documents in the file does little to help the reconstruction of his career.

<sup>5</sup> The mention of the newspaper was added by hand on the note. For a detailed description of this daily newspaper, see <http://digitalq.dgarq.gov.pt/details?id=1009215>.

director of many military works in the country, etc. He was passionate about literature and history, leaving above all a venerable name in Oriental studies, gaining more fame abroad in this field than in his own country. He devoted himself mainly to the study of the language and literature of Abyssinia, on which he published many valuable texts, some printed in the National Press, others abroad. One of the most remarkable of them, *The Chronicle of Susenyos*, earned him his European reputation. Listing all his works would take too long. He collaborated with the *Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium* and the *Patrologia orientalis* alongside the best names in Orientalism. In recent years he devoted himself along with Mr. Delgado to the study of Sanskrit and he also bequeathed us valuable work in this field. He thus honoured the Portuguese name in the major centres of Europe. He received the cross of Aviz and Santiago, the military medal and the Order of the Lion of Ethiopia, from the hands of Emperor Menelik II, who rewarded him for his work in that country. He bequeathed his specialist books to the Academia das Ciências [Lisbon]. He leaves a widow, Mrs. D. Madalena Martins de Carvalho Esteves Pereira<sup>6</sup>.

This obituary, written immediately after his death, offered a biographical summary of the life of Esteves Pereira and showed the many facets of his professional and personal life. The last sentence of the newspaper article mentioning that he “left a widow, Mrs. D. Madalena Martins de Carvalho Esteves Pereira” deserves a brief look, especially since the subsequent scholarly notes did not capture this personal episode of the life of Esteves Pereira. Here are the elements that could be found:

The consultation of his military file offers the opportunity to reconstruct the main stages of this matrimonial union which took place in the twilight of his life. His entire file up to June 1924 bears the mention: “single”. But this same box includes a letter from Esteves Pereira addressed to the Minister of War, dated June 2, 1924, which states: “Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, single, engineering colonel, reservist, residing in this city [Lisbon], at n° 4 Rua de Damasco, 3rd floor, wishing to marry D. Magdalena Martins de Carvalho, single, 52 years old, born in Regerogios, daughter of Nuno Maria de Carvalho, and D. Maria Ignacia Martins Ramalho, residing in this city [Lisbon], at 4 Rua de Damasco, 3rd floor, has requested the necessary authorization”. Another leaflet, this time from the president of the “Junta de freguezia de São Tiago do 1° Bairro da cidade de Lisboa”, attesting to the civil register of Magdalena Martins

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<sup>6</sup> Arquivo Histórico Militar, Cd, 1542, “Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira”, unidentified newspaper article without author. I nevertheless advance the hypothesis, considering that the information contained in the note is quite precise, that the author of the text could be David Lopes, his colleague at the Lisbon Academia das Ciências.

de Carvalho, 52 years old, single, domestic by profession and residing at 4 Rua de Damasco, 3rd floor, for more than a year<sup>7</sup>.

The answer from the Ministry of War, on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1924, was positive<sup>8</sup>. Thus, about six months before his death, Esteves Pereira married D. Magdalena Martins de Carvalho, his servant who had been residing with him for at least one year. Having no descendants, Esteves Pereira thus made D. Magdalena Martins de Carvalho Esteves Pereira his heir, leaving her protected. When in 1940, David Lopes (1867-1942) published his article “Um orientalista português. Esteves Pereira”, he quoted a letter from the Conde de Sabugosa addressed to Esteves Pereira (dated 28<sup>th</sup> May 1918), which, according to him, was in his widow’s possession (Lopes, 1940-1941: 124). The private correspondence of Esteves Pereira was therefore, on that date, in the hands of Senhora D. Madalena Esteves Pereira, probably still at 4, Rua de. Damasco, in Lisbon. Lopes in the same article indicated that he had received assistance in preparing a bibliography of the author (presented in the annex to his text) from Esteves Pereira’s nephew, Major Esteves Pereira (Lopes, 1940-1941: 127).

What this obituary also mentions is the legacy of his library and his “specialities” (by that we must understand the subjects of study covered during his academic career), left before his death to the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, part of which can still be consulted in the library of this institution of which he was an active member. In addition to the bequeathed works collected under the “Esteves Pereira” fonds, the Academy of Sciences has a file on the person as a member of this institution<sup>9</sup>. It is this file which also provides the opportunity to make the link with David Lopes and to reconstruct Esteves Pereira’s career path within the Academy of Sciences, the main moments of which are as follows: he was made a corresponding second-class member on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1908; then an effective second-class member on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918; and finally a member of the second-class board of directors on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918<sup>10</sup>. His entry into the Lisbon Academy of Sciences was the culmination of a long career (unlike what happened in other learned societies) and it was precisely because of his work that he was able to become an “effective member – policyholder” as is stated in the report drawn up by David Lopes on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1918, in these terms: “In general, this is what Mr Esteves Pereira’s literary work has been: thirty years of work in this branch of knowledge in which he has made a powerful contribution to the progress of

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<sup>7</sup> Arquivo Histórico Militar, Cd, 1542, Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, N 21, Res. 512, Two sheets, sky blue writing paper.

<sup>8</sup> Arquivo Histórico Militar, Cd, 1542, Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, Doc 237 ou 337, N.º 3153.

<sup>9</sup> Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, dossier: Esteves Pereira, Classe de letras, Académico correspondente, eleito em 14-05-1908. Falecido em 1924.

<sup>10</sup> Dossier: Esteves Pereira, Classe de letras, Académico correspondente, eleito em 14-05-1908. Falecido em 1924.

Oriental studies in Portugal thus honouring the Portuguese name in the most cultivated centres of Europe. For this reason, the Academy must reward such an obstinate and intelligent effort and appoint him as an effective member to fill the vacancy left by the death of Jaime Moniz. And so, I gladly nominate him for the History section”<sup>11</sup>.

The other element that makes it possible to follow the last witnesses who had access to this private correspondence of Esteves Pereira is in this same file: a letter dated June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1965, from Lisbon, from his nephew, Brigadier José do Amaral Esteves Pereira (the same nephew who had helped Lopes compile the author’s bibliography), addressed to the President of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, Amorim Ferreira, summarized here:

He decided to offer the Academy what he calls *algumas reliquias* [some relics] of his illustrious uncle, probably after emptying the apartment occupied by the widow of Esteves Pereira, such as his photographic portrait (missing from the file), a “gold star” from Ethiopia and the diploma offered by the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II on the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Hedar* in 1890 in the year of grace (missing from the file), a photograph of his office located at 4, Rua de Damasco (Lisbon) and two Ge’ez manuscripts kindly copied by two Orientalist colleagues, Dr Enno Littmann<sup>12</sup> and René Basset<sup>13</sup>. The President of the Academy acknowledged receipt on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1965.

This short detour through his personal and intimate life leads to some conclusions and reflections. While working as a soldier, Esteves Pereira also worked as a self-taught philologist, as all the biographic notes underline. First of all, David Lopes, who described him as a man “with homely habits” with spare time to proceed with his translation work (Lopes, 1940-1941: 122) and Isabel Boavida speaks of his translation work as “private leisure” (Boavida, 2005: 389). Lopes mentions that “he studied Hebrew, Arabic, Ethiopian and Sanskrit - this last one in the final years of his life along with Mr. Delgado, professor of this language at the Faculty of Arts in Lisbon, we believe” (Lopes, 1940-1941: 122). Unlike Sanskrit, where Lopes states the name of his teacher, for the other languages no linguist of the time is reported. For Hebrew and Arabic he was able to follow the courses that were taught at the Faculty of Arts in Lisbon, but this was not the case for Ge’ez and Amharic, which were not included.

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<sup>11</sup> Dossier: Esteves Pereira, Classe de letras, Académico correspondente, eleito em 14-05-1908. Falecido em 1924; 8-page paper document (recto), here p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> ACL, Esteves Pereira dossier, copy (handwritten notebook in Ge’ez ) of “Lucta e martirio de s. Gregorio, Patriarcha da Armenia. Ms fol. 117 da bibliotheca imperial de Berlim”. Copy by Dr. Enno Littmann.

<sup>13</sup> ACL, Esteves Pereira dossier, copy (handwritten notebook in Ge’ez ) of “Vida de Takla Haymanot (Ms da Bibli. Nac. De Paris, n° 56 fonds éthiopiens (cat. De Zot[en]berg] n° 136)”. Copy by Basset, Lisbon 1st September 1888.

However, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was no shortage of tools and reference works on classical and modern Ethiopia. They were the work, among others, of the great Ethiopian specialist August Dillmann (1823-1894) who, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first published a Ge'ez grammar (1857), then a Ge'ez-Latin dictionary (1865) and finally a Ge'ez chrestomathy (1866) (Kleiner, 2005: 160-161)<sup>14</sup>; and for Amharic, Antoine d'Abbadie (1881). For the first three languages that belong to a common linguistic universe, it is obvious that knowledge of Hebrew and Arabic contributed to his learning of Ge'ez because they are languages based on verbal roots from which nouns are derived.

According to the afore-mentioned biographical notes, Esteves Pereira's first translation was that of the *Chronicle of King Minas*, King of Ethiopia (1559-1563), published in 1887. His mastery of Ge'ez, which he taught himself, requires some additional insights, such as a more attentive investigation of the individuals Esteves Pereira was in contact with, which makes it possible to highlight the links he was able to maintain with this world of "European" scholars and thus to better understand how he became a "specialist" in ancient and modern Ethiopian.

The second point will concern the choice of texts and manuscripts that he translated or republished, choices that underline specific interests. They cover the period in which Portugal and then the Society of Jesus were in contact with the Ethiopian Christian kingdom, from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

While the Portuguese translation of the chronicle of the Ethiopian king Minas (1559-1563) and its edition in 1887 appear to be his first opus as a translator, there is another piece - not strictly speaking a translation - which makes it possible to situate his apprenticeship of classical Ethiopian at an earlier date. In an article published in French (translated from the Portuguese by Basset (Esteves Pereira, 1886: 16 pages) in 1886, entitled "Note on the *Magseph Assetat* of Father Fernandes", Esteves Pereira wrote an overview of a book written in Ge'ez and published in 1642 in Goa by a Jesuit father. Looking at this short text, which has often gone unnoticed in biographical notes on the author, allows us to highlight several elements on and around the life journey of Esteves Pereira.

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<sup>14</sup> *Grammatik der äthiopischen Sprache*, 1857; *Lexicon linguae aethiopiae cum indice latino*, 1865; *Chrestomathia Aethiopica*, 1866.

## 2. His beginnings as a Ge’ez specialist

### 2.1 A “trial run” as a Ge’ez translator with the *Magseph Assetat*

If we look at the *Magseph Assetat* notice, what was Esteves Pereira’s intention in publishing a 16-page text on a book of more than 230 folios? It seems important to underline, first of all, the scholarly dimension of the operation. To publish the notice of a work in Ge’ez written by a Jesuit father (António Fernandes) and published in Goa in 1642 was to inform the scholarly community of its existence. The use of the French language and collaboration with Basset was probably not insignificant as it gave visibility to this first work, making it “recognized” by his peers. Immediately after its publication, the article was among the publications received by the *Journal Asiatique*, in the Feb-March 1887 issue (p. 291), a learned society to which Basset belonged and in which he published his work *Études sur l’histoire de l’Éthiopie*, in several issues of the *Journal* in 1881<sup>15</sup>. At a meeting of the Society of the *Journal Asiatique* on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1888, Esteves Pereira (“Lieutenant of Engineering in Lisbon”, on that date), was received as a member of the Society and introduced by Basset and Barbier de Meynard<sup>16</sup>.

But how did Esteves Pereira present his work and what was its content? After a brief biography of the Jesuit missionary António Fernandes, who had been in Ethiopia since 1604, he explained the context for the writing of the *Magseph Assetat* as well as the material description of the volume. Then came the presentation of the frontispiece, the prologue and chapter 1 with the Ge’ez text. This was followed by the French translation of the previous excerpts. Finally, the text included the Latin titles of the 63 chapters taken from the table of contents of the book as they stand. All in all, it was a brief presentation that could nevertheless provide an insight into the nature of the text, which was a theological response by the Jesuits in Ethiopia (in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century), to their Ethiopian Christian opponents. In publishing the notes, Esteves Pereira achieved a double objective. On the one hand, he brought back from the past a text that at the time of its publication (in 1642) did not seem to have been widely distributed, and on the other hand, by offering the Orientalist community a noteworthy piece of work he became one of their own.

Lastly, there is the question concerning the documentation on which Esteves Pereira relied for the writing of the first two parts of his notes (the biography of Fernandes and the context of the *Magseph Assetat* writing). If we look closely at its

<sup>15</sup> Basset (ed.) 3, 1881: 315-434; 4, 1881: 93-183, 5, 1881: 285-380; in one volume in 1882.

<sup>16</sup> *Journal Asiatique*, 11, 1888, p. 281.



critical apparatus, it consists of published documentation dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First of all, regarding the Society of Jesus, he used both the news published in Europe about their missions (the “Annual Relations”), and, as was the case in the Ethiopian mission, a “History” written in Europe (Lisbon) based on manuscripts written by the missionaries in the field<sup>17</sup>. The second source of reference on which he relied were biographical dictionaries written in the 18<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Barbosa Machado, 1741: 269; Silva, 1858: 137). Finally, the third group of sources consists of “recent” works, such as Wright’s catalogue of manuscripts and René Basset’s *Études* published in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wright, 1877; Basset, 1882).

As the original book was written entirely in Ge’ez (except for the frontispiece and the index of the chapters - right column - in Latin), Esteves Pereira would have been unable to understand anything without having some knowledge of the language. However, the notes, which introduced the Ge’ez text followed by the French translation at the “beginning of the book” (Esteves Pereira, 1886: 9-12), as well as the “division of the book” where the Latin index of the 63 chapters was included (Esteves Pereira, 1886: 12-16), presented the book’s main line of argumentation. It is therefore clear that he had begun learning the classical Ethiopian language some years before the publication of these notes. However, as there is no evidence to indicate whether he received any specific training in ancient Ethiopian, he presumably had to learn it on his own. On the other hand, it is important to note that Basset’s French translation of his text attests to a fruitful collaboration between the two men.

## 2.2 The *Magseph Assetat*: genesis and chronology of a theological treatise

Esteves Pereira did not have access to the large body of missionary documentation that was published by Beccari in the collection *Rerum Aethiopicarum Occidentales Scriptores inediti* more than twenty years after the writing of his notes. From these materials we can reconstruct the various stages of the text published in 1642 under the title *Magseph Assetat*, in Ge’ez (A Catholic treaty to “refute Ethiopian theological errors” figure n° 1 Title page of the *Magseph Assetat*; figure n° 2 Index Ge’ez - Latin)

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<sup>17</sup> Fernão Guerreiro, who from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century published the Annual Relations (1604-1605) of the Jesuit missions in the East under Portuguese patronage; Balthasar Teles, the provincial of Portugal who published, in 1660, a compendium of the manuscript of the missionary Manuel de Almeida, entitled *História geral de Etiópia e alta; Historia Societatis Iesu de Sacchini, 1615*, (an irrelevant reference because it recalls the beginnings of the mission around the appointment of the patriarch in 1544, which could be sent to Ethiopia); the Italian edition of the Annual Letters from 1620 to 1624; and, finally, António Franco, *Imagem de virtude em o noviciado de Evora*, 1714, t. 3, chap. 49-52.

and correct some historical inaccuracies made by Pereira in the first part of his text. Father António Fernandes, a Jesuit missionary who landed in Ethiopia in 1604<sup>18</sup>, was one of those who dedicated himself from the very beginning to identifying the differences between the doctrines of Ethiopian Christianity and those of Roman Catholicism. The first evidence of his ongoing work can be found in the annual letter of the province of Goa of 1610<sup>19</sup> containing a letter from Fernandes addressed to the visitor from India, in which he deplored the failure to produce a book in Goa refuting the Ethiopians’ “errors”. He sent an accompanying catalogue of “errors” but considered it preferable that a book be written in Ethiopia, implying that he was the person to write it<sup>20</sup>.

Ten years later, in 1621, according to Diogo de Mattos (who arrived in 1620<sup>21</sup>) in Ethiopia’s annual letter for the year 1620-21, Fernandes was still engaged in writing a text aimed at refuting Ethiopian theological “errors”, which was under revision in order to respond to the theological controversies that occurred in Ethiopia after 1610<sup>22</sup>. Finally, the last element that makes it possible to trace the link between an undertaking begun as soon as Fernandes arrived and the book published in Goa in 1642 under the title *Magseph Assetat* [*Mäqsäftä Häsetat* / “The Whip of Lies”] is proposed by another Jesuit from Ethiopia, Manuel d’Almeida, who in his *História de Etiópia* (a manuscript completed in Goa in 1646), reconstructed the genesis of the book as follows:

He [Father Fernandes] did not write much, because as soon as he arrived in Ethiopia he inquired about the errors of the Abyssinians and soon began to write a book in which he refuted them, and which was later added to, proving Catholic truths and explaining the errors contrary to the authorities from the Abyssinians’ books, mainly from their *Haymanot Abau* [*Haymanotä Abäw*<sup>23</sup>]. This book, after the father came from

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<sup>18</sup> He was one of Father Pedro Páez’s companions when he arrived one year later in 1604 (Beccari, (ed.), 1906: 269). In 1619, he held the position of superior of the Ethiopian mission, a position previously held by Father Páez (Beccari, (ed.), 1911: 484). Unlike Esteves Pereira, Fernandes “obtained, through a bull from Pope Gregory XIII, the jurisdiction and powers of a patriarch” (p. 6), the missionary documentation published by Beccari does not allow him to be assigned such a function. See Boavida, 2005: 529-530.

<sup>19</sup> ARSI, *Goa 33 I*, doc. 31, fol. 333-334.

<sup>20</sup> An extract from this annual letter was published by Beccari 1911: 201-203.

<sup>21</sup> Diogo de Mattos arrived in Ethiopia in 1620 with Antonio Bruno to join the missionaries who had arrived in 1603 (Beccari, (ed.), 1911: 473).

<sup>22</sup> Beccari, (ed.), 1911: 484 (letter of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1621 from Diogo de Mattos to the General).

<sup>23</sup> *Haymanotä Abäw* (*The Faith of the Fathers*) “is the title of the Ge’ez version of an Arabic compilation of the writings of the first fathers of the Church and the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch”. One of its main purposes is to defend the non-Chalcedonian Christological doctrine regarding the Trinity, the Incarnation and the nature of Jesus Christ. In the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the controversies between Jesuit fathers and Ethiopian scholars, Father Fernandes declared that he had corrected certain passages of *Haymanotä Abäw*, namely those relating to “blasphemies” against Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (Beccari, (ed.), 1911: 510);

Ethiopia, and with the help of some Abyssinians who came from there too, was translated into their language [Ge'ez] with Abyssinian characters (which His Holiness Pope Urban VIII sent from Rome to the Patriarch Dom Afonso Mendez). It was printed at the College of Saint Paul [in Goa] so that the volumes (as some had already been sent) could be sent to Ethiopia. It is called *Magseph Assetat* [*Mäqsäftä Häsetat*], which means: "Flagellum mendaciorum" [The whip of lies], in contrast to another that the *ras* Athanateus composed in Ethiopia, which is called *Masgab Haimanot*<sup>24</sup> (Almeida, 1908: 475-476).

This book, printed at St. Paul's College in Goa in 1642 (Silva, 1993: 136-137)<sup>25</sup>, as Almeida pointed out, had begun to be written in Ethiopia and was translated into the Ethiopian classical language, Ge'ez, thanks to the collaboration of Ethiopians who became Catholics and afterwards accompanied the fathers when they were expelled from the territory in 1633. Sending a few copies to Ethiopia would have allowed the few remaining missionaries who had mastered enough Ge'ez to continue the theological debate with the Ethiopian scholars. The publication of the *Magseph Assetat* [*Mäqsäftä Häsetat*], almost ten years after their expulsion from Ethiopia, reinforces the idea that the hope of returning had not been ruled out<sup>26</sup>.

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see the letters from Antonio Fernandez to the General Officer of the Society of Jesus, Ethiopia, 30 April 1623; (Beccari, (ed.), 1912: 55), and to the General Officer of the Society of Jesus, Denqez, Ethiopia, 15 May 1624; see *Haymanotä Abäw* by Wion & Fritsch, 2005: 1073-75.

<sup>24</sup> According to Enrico Cerulli, the *Mäzgäbä Haymanot* (*Treasure of the Faith*) was written between 1555 and 1559; it is a booklet composed of two very distinct sections: the first is an abstract of the four councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon), according to the tradition of the monophysite Church of Alexandria and Ethiopia, probably translated from the Arabic; the second part is specifically Ethiopian and a direct refutation of Jesuit objections to monophysitism; see Cerulli, 1960: III-VIII, 1-65 (Ge'ez text) and 67-101 (Italian translation), and Getatchew Haile, 2007: 892-893.

<sup>25</sup> The author lists the publications of the typography workshop of the College of St. Paul of Goa, which includes the *Magseph Assetat*.

<sup>26</sup> See chapter 2.

Figure 3 – Title page of Magseph Assetat, 1642.

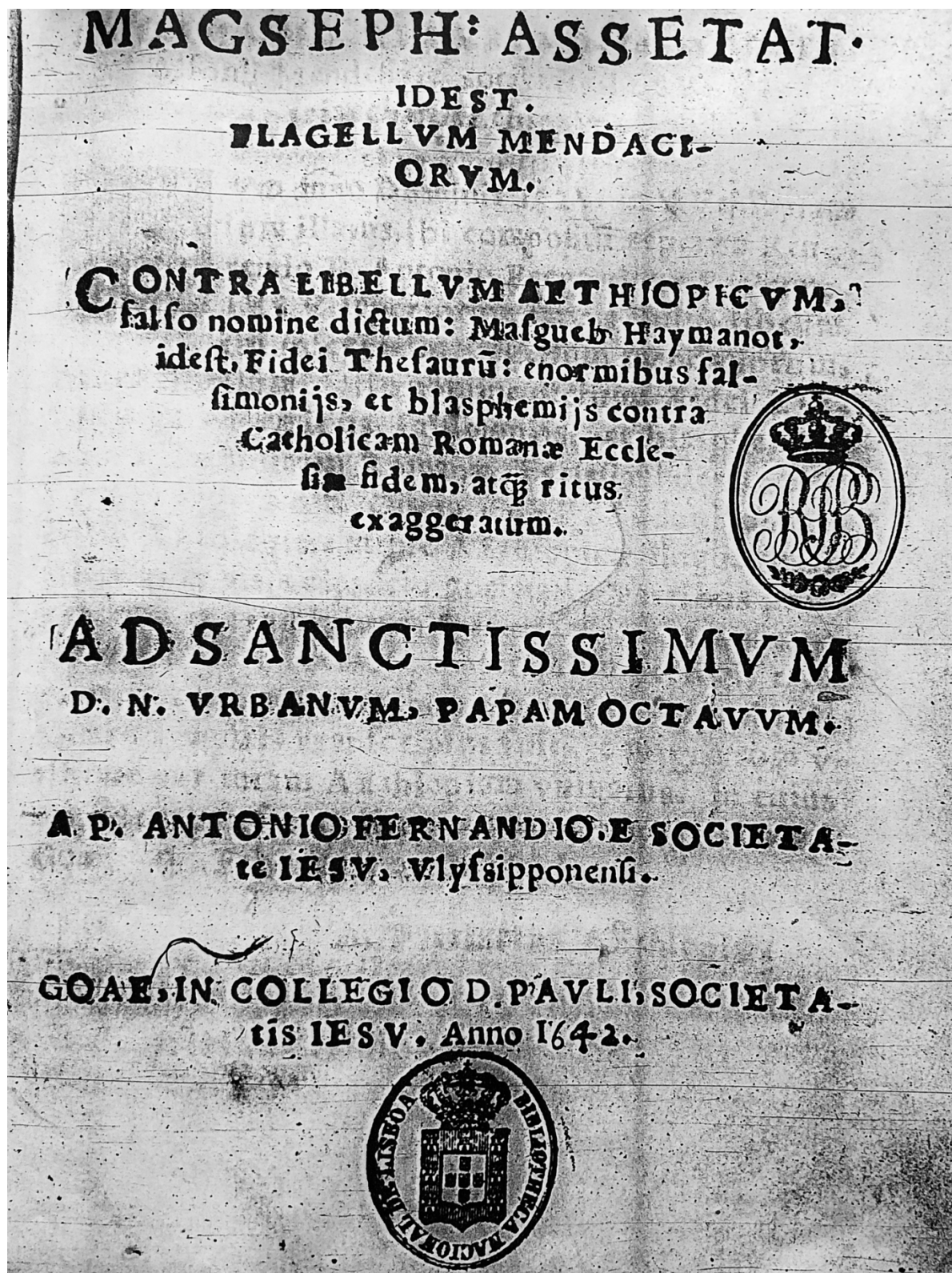
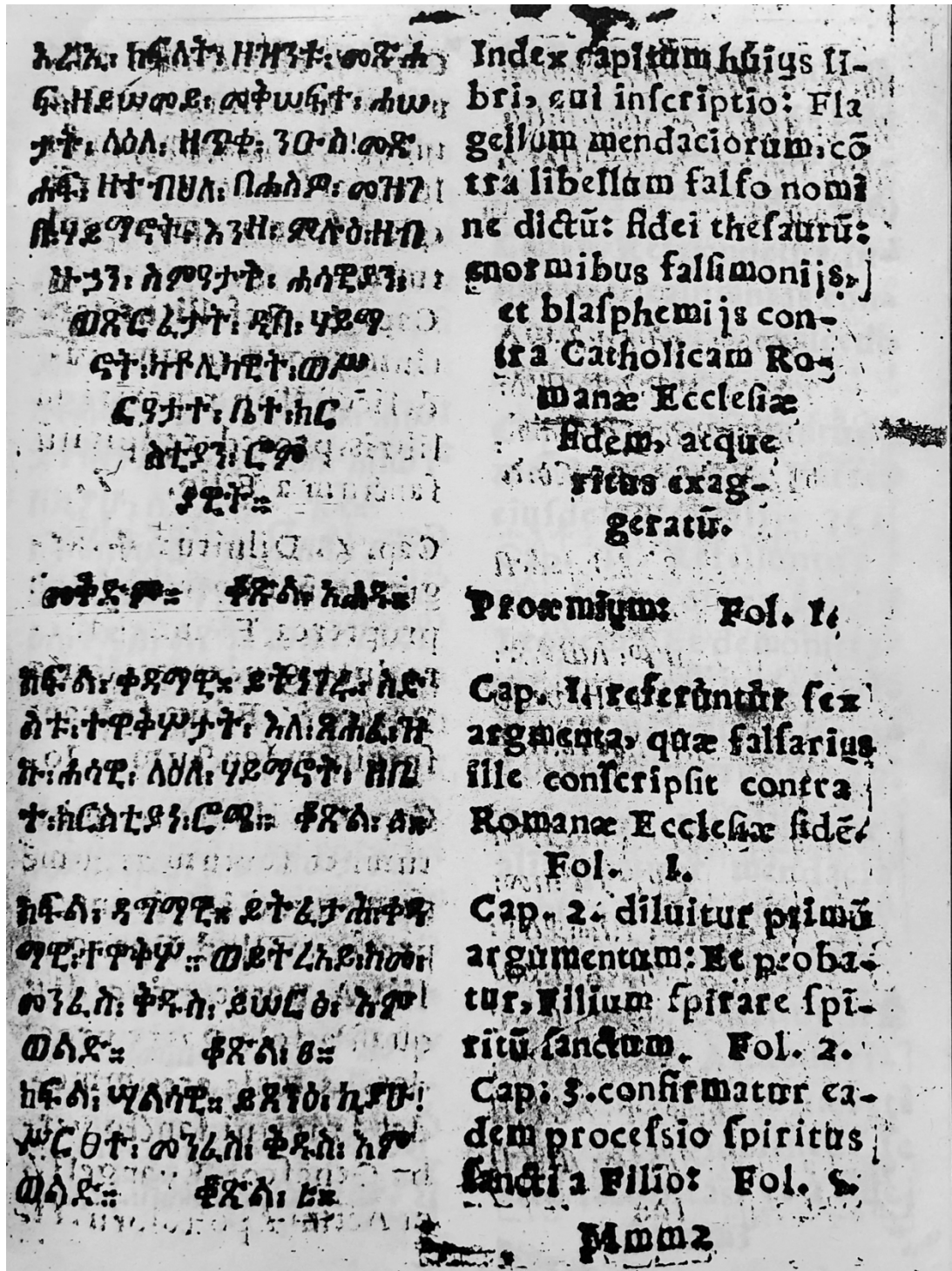


Figure 4 – Page of the Ge'ez index - Latin of the Magseph Assetat, 1642.



Surviving copies of the *Magseph Assetat* [Mäqsäftä Häsetat] existed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, some probably in Lisbon. Francisco da Silva reported a copy of it in the National Library of Lisbon, in his *Bibliographic Dictionary* (Silva, 1858: 137), and the personal library of Esteves Pereira bequeathed to the Lisbon Academy of Sciences

shows that he himself had also a copy<sup>27</sup>. Apart from this note published in 1886, the orientalist’s subsequent works do not mention the continuation of any work on this text, which had allowed him to take his first steps as a “Ge’ezist” in Portugal. The following year, he collaborated with Basset in the study of another Ethiopian manuscript: the *História de Minas* (1559-1563), the king who succeeded Gelawdewos (1540-1559).

### 2.3 The *História de Minas*: a second collaboration with Basset

In 1887, Esteves Pereira published the *História de Minas* (*Zena Minas*) in the Bulletin of the Lisbon Geographical Society (of which he had become a member the previous year) (Esteves Pereira, 1887: 743-827; 1888, 89 pages). His aim was to translate the third introductory chapter to King Sarsa Dengel’s chronicle (1563-1597)<sup>28</sup> from the manuscript of the Ethiopian collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, Ms. 143<sup>29</sup>. He based his work on a photographic copy made by one of his military colleagues, Mr. Alfredo Augusto Freire de Andrade, an engineering lieutenant and mining engineer, who at the time was studying at the École des Mines de Paris<sup>30</sup>. He called on the services of Mr. Reinhardt Hoerning<sup>31</sup> to have the text collated with that of the manuscript of the British Museum (Orient. 821) (Esteves Pereira, 1888: 7). In the text, he explicitly acknowledges and thanks Basset for his help: “We owe it to Mr. Basset, professor at the *École supérieure de lettres de Alger* and member of the *Société Asiatique de Paris*, to revise the text and the translation; we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to him” (Esteves Pereira, 1888: 7). The two men knew each other in person, since they had met in Lisbon, as evidenced by the report provided by Basset to the *Journal Asiatique* for the year 1888.

Basset, who had to go to Dakar on a research trip (he had just launched a vast project on Berber languages<sup>32</sup>), informed the members of the *Journal* of the itinerary

<sup>27</sup> ACL, Fundo F. Esteves Pereira, classification number 131820.

<sup>28</sup> The first chapter is devoted to Lebna Dengel’s (1508-1540), the second to Gelawdewos (1540-1559).

<sup>29</sup> Zotenberg, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, Ms. 143 (and not Ms. 147 as written twice by Esteves Pereira in his text p. 6).

<sup>30</sup> Esteves Pereira thanks Freire de Andrade in note 7, p. 6. See: <https://delagoabayworld.wordpress.com/2012/03/10/alfredo-augusto-freire-de-andrade/>

<sup>31</sup> Another scholar who at the time published the British Museum Karaite Mss., London, Williams and Norgate, 1889 (Descriptions and collation of the six Karaite manuscripts of parts of the Hebrew Bible in Arabic characters), reprinted by General Books, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> *Journal Asiatique*, “Rapport annuel”, July/August, 1890: 126: “He [Basset] was sent on a mission to Senegal by the *Académie des inscriptions*, studied the language of the Zenagas, who gave their name to the country and who represent for us the most accessible group in the southern Berber”.

that he had decided to follow: "I embarked in Algiers at the end of December [1887], and I preferred to cross the north of Spain to wait in Lisbon, rather than Bordeaux, for the boat that would take me to Dakar. This stay in Portugal allowed me to examine the oriental manuscripts of three of the main libraries in Lisbon. Thanks to the instructions of Lieutenant Esteves Pereira, a member of the Asian Society, I found a number of books and especially charters and documents concerning the history of Portugal's relations with North and West Africa" (*Journal Asiatique*, 1888: 550).

The coincidence of dates and Basset's presence in Lisbon suggests a shared collaboration, with Esteves Pereira having his translations from Ge'ez into Portuguese read and corrected by his French colleague. A separate reprint of the *Chronicle of Minas*, which Esteves Pereira translated, was sent to the *Journal Asiatique*, as stated in the section "Received Books" of the April-May-June 1889 issue (*Journal Asiatique*, 1889: 500). Although the reasons for Esteves Pereira to devote himself to learn and master Ge'ez and to master it in order to produce quality translations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century still remain a mystery, at least we can establish that Esteves Pereira's acceptance into the orientalist community was not without guarantors, and Basset was clearly one of them.

In a recent book, Alain Messaoudi retraced Basset's scholarly and institutional career, emphasizing his scientific scope and the breadth of his erudition. Forming the school of Algiers around him, "Basset sought to integrate orientalist studies into a general movement of scientific development in which he believed. He surrounded himself with a team of ambitious young scholars, convinced, like him, of the progress that Arab (and Berber) studies can make if they closely follow the results of research conducted in Europe or on other continents. Under his direction, the *École des lettres* entered into a dialogue with the work produced in the major scientific centres" (Messaoudi, 2015: 442-454). While the author mentions the important role played by Basset in the institutional influence of the Algiers *École des lettres* and the establishment of a dialogue with other European scientific centres, especially in the area of Arab and Berber studies, he fails to mention that Basset's work encompassed an additional scientific field, that of Ethiopian studies. Of all the French scholars, it was he who was invited to write the "report on Berber, Ethiopian and Arab studies for the years 1887-1891" during the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Orientalists (1891). The aim of the report was to review French scholarly activities for the years 1887-91 and to include them in a genealogy of knowledge for each of these three fields. The report on Ethiopian studies was also his responsibility, and he drew up a list of what was being carried out in Europe at that time. When he came to talk about Portugal, he stressed the essential role of Esteves Pereira: "We owe it to Mr. Esteves Pereira, who restored, or

rather created, Ethiopian studies in Portugal, to publish a translation of Minas’ chronicle supplemented by a very careful commentary [...]. As we can see, Portugal and France occupy a prominent place in the implementation of the plan that I mentioned when I started [...]. In Lisbon, Mr. Esteves Pereira is preparing the publication of the annals of Galâoudéouos and Sousënyos; finally, the story of the conquest of Abyssinia, written by the secretary of Ahmed Grañ, the Muslim leader, is also due to be published in the same city” (Basset, 1892: 8). The plan in question was to “present a framework in which the various historical pieces could be adjusted, the whole of which forms the sometimes interrupted series of Ethiopian annals from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present day” (Basset, 1892: 5). Basset was reporting on the current state of research and the work to come, the “different historical pieces” that could fill the canvas. Gelawdewos’ Chronicle was actually published by William Conzelman in 1895 in Paris<sup>33</sup>, not by Esteves Pereira, but it is quite possible that the project to publish the Chronicle of Gelawdewos was on the Portuguese scholar’s agenda, because manuscript 143 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France that he used for the edition of the *História de Minas* also contains that of Gelawdewos<sup>34</sup>. There is every reason to believe that his military colleague, Alfredo Augusto Freire de Andrade, did not limit himself to ordering the photographs of the folios in Minas’ chronicle alone, but that he requested the whole of manuscript 143. On the other hand, at that time Esteves Pereira was immersed in the onerous task of preparing the edition of the Ge’ez text of Susenyos’ chronicle, which he published in 1892, intended for the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the International Congress of Orientalists (Esteves Pereira, 1892), a matter to which we will return later.

Basset’s collaboration with Esteves Pereira reinforces the idea put forward by Messaoudi of this dominant desire to “rebuild traditional orientalism on a new scientific basis”. He gave the team of the *École des lettres* the means to disseminate its work in specialised journals, such as the *Revue historique*, the *Revue de l’histoire des religions*, the *Journal asiatique*, etc. He managed to turn the peripheral position of Algiers to his advantage by managing to get the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the International Congress of Orientalists held there in 1905 (and in which Esteves Pereira delivers a paper; Esteves Pereira, 1907: 199-218). The following year, thanks to the success of the

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<sup>33</sup> At the end of his introduction, the author stated: “I would like to express my sincere thanks to my master, Mr. Joseph Halévy, who kindly indicated to me the subject of my work and provided his precious assistance. I would also like to thank Mr. Jules Perruchon, who kindly reviewed my French translation and gave me his good advice” Conzelman, 1895: XI.

<sup>34</sup> Zotenberg, 1877, Ms. 143; Gelawdewos’ chronicle occupies fol. 95v to fol. 117r; and Minas’ chronicle from fol. 117r to folio 125.



Algiers Congress, Basset was chosen to take over the French editorial staff of the *Encyclopédie de l'islam* (Messaoudi, 2015: 451-454).

Esteves Pereira's first philological steps in Ge'ez and Amharic highlight the niche in which he wished to settle. He was the scholar in Portugal who could complete the "historical" framework of which Basset spoke in his report and give this world of scholars the tools for building knowledge on Ethiopia. How, through the reconstruction of his scholarly career, was it possible to highlight the different moments of the orientalist's work?

It seems important to return to the list of Esteves Pereira's publications that Lopes prepared (72 titles) while saying that it was a non-exhaustive bibliography (Lopes, 1940-1941: 127). This list is useful and valuable because it provides a long-term perspective on the plurality of its publications. Lopes recorded the works of Esteves Pereira in Ethiopian with the following timeframe: "His work in orientalism lasted from 1888 [...]" to 1919 (date of his last translation, the Ethiopian version of *Third Book of Ezrâ* translated into French, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, t. XIII). "After 1919 he did not publish anything else in this [Ethiopian] field" (Lopes, 1940-1941: 122-123). Still, as previously noted, we must stress that his interest in Ge'ez predates 1888, since his first text appeared in 1886 (the "note on the *Magseph Assetat*").

Lopes' proposal to only take into account the linguistic criterion does not give a dynamic view of Esteves Pereira's career. However, it appears that his journey is structured around three main moments. The first is from 1886 to 1900, during which time he took a particular interest in documents relating to the Portuguese presence in Ethiopia and that of the Jesuits during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The second was 1900 to 1917, when the hagiographical texts occupied the bulk of his work. Finally, from 1918 to 1922 he seemed to develop a new linguistic passion, Sanskrit, to which he devoted his later years of research. It is the first period of Esteves Pereira's research, prior to 1900, that will be of interest for the present analysis, his translations and editions of the lives of saints, homilies, biblical books etc. being of limited interest for my argument.

### 3. The early days of an orientalist’s career: Portugal and the Jesuits in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (1886-1900)

The early years of Esteves Pereira’s scholarly work were a period of intense research of documentation in archives, of translations, of editions and also reissues of texts about Ethiopia, in various European languages. They focused on a relatively circumscribed historical period, that of the Portuguese crown binding itself to the Ethiopian Christian kingdom in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and on the subsequent arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in that country (in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century), until their expulsion after 1633.

Esteves Pereira’s “first” work has already been mentioned, the “note on the *Magseph Assetat*” was a first attempt to be recognised by European ethiopianists. The following years, from 1887 to 1900 (the year of publication not corresponding to the upstream research work), were a period of feverish activity, linked to the context of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Portuguese African and Eastern discoveries, that represented an invaluable financial opportunity for publishing academic worlds, and from which Esteves Pereira benefitted greatly.

#### 3.1 The *História de Minas*

Concerning Esteves Pereira’s *História de Minas*, on which Basset collaborated, as has already been mentioned, the editorial and translating decisions were interesting and to a point even unprecedented. He published the Ge’ez text and translated the third chapter of the introduction to the history of King Sarsa Dengel (1563-1597) into Portuguese and published the abridged Portuguese version of the history of Minas, which included Almeida’s manuscript (written between 1626 and 1646), an endeavour that went practically unnoticed.

Two points should be highlighted here: firstly, Esteves Pereira’s interest in classical Ethiopian is clearly linked to his choice of texts that might have a historical link with Portugal and the Jesuits. Secondly, it is worth relating this publication to a note Basset included in his introduction to the *Études sur l’histoire d’Éthiopie*, published in 1881, where he stated, “It is to one of the missionaries, Manoel d’Almeyda, that we owe the first complete history of Ethiopia, according to indigenous records. This book, now lost and never printed, is only known to us via the abstract that Fr. Tellez made of it” (Basset, 1881: 316). In 1886, when Esteves Pereira published his “note on the *Magseph*

*Assetat*”, he simply pointed out and repeated: “Fr. Manuel d’Almeida and after him Fr. Balthasar Telles...” (Esteves Pereira, 1886: 6, note 2). This would seem to indicate that it was between 1886 and 1887 that he made the “discovery” of Almeida’s manuscript housed in the British Museum. His introduction to the *História de Minas* mentioned it as follows: “This work [*História da Etiópia a alta*], which has not yet been published, and which had been deemed lost, exists in manuscript form in the British Museum” (Esteves Pereira, 1888: 7). Two references were cited next, the *Catalogo dos manuscritos portugueses existentes no Museu Britannico*, by de la Figanière, 1853 (266) and the “Notice on Father Pedro Páez, followed by extracts from Almeida’s manuscript entitled *História da Etiópia a alta*” by Desborough Cooley, 1872 (532-553).

These two references (moderately old and accessible) confirm that it was during Esteves Pereira’s work on the *História de Minas* that he discovered the existence of Almeida’s manuscript, and they also confirm the notion that his previous work was “a trial run”. This first complete edition and translation of an Ethiopian text led him to further broaden his field of research, preparing him for later works that demanded greater erudition and experience.

It was with little conviction and some lucidity that, after publishing the Ge’ez text and the Portuguese translation of the *História de Minas*, he set out to edit the summary of this chronicle by Almeida in his *História da Etiópia a alta*, (Book IV in Chapter 10) with the following note: “Life and death of Emperor Adamas Caged [Minas], as well as the account of his book, or Ethiopic chronicle”. “Comparing this text with the one we published, we cannot but note that the translation of the *História de Minas* [Almeida], has removed everything that was foreign to history itself, a process frequently used by Portuguese writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when they used excerpts of works by eastern writers. Although this is a summary, Father Almeida’s review is of some value, because it shows to some extent that the original history does not suffer from the essential alterations in the reported facts. For this purpose, we publish it below” (Esteves Pereira, 1888: 7)<sup>35</sup>. After this update of Almeida’s manuscript, excerpts from the *História da Etiópia a alta* were published in the following years, such as the “Victorias de Amda Sion rei de Ethiopia” (abridged translation by Almeida with a French version by Jules Perruchon), published by Esteves Pereira in 1891 (Esteves Pereira, 1891: 40 pages). Just after this, in 1893, Perruchon published *Les Chroniques de Zar’a Ya’eqob et de Ba’eda Maryam, rois d’Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478*. In the appendix, he included the extract from Almeida’s manuscript about King Zara

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<sup>35</sup> What Esteves Pereira did not know at the time of this edition was that Almeida had relied on and taken over the Portuguese translation of Pedro Páez proposed in his *História de Etiópia*, and for good reason, since the manuscript Goa 42 of the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus was only published in 1905-06 by Beccari, even though it was “discovered” by the Italian scholar some years earlier (see chapter 2).

Yaeqob (1434-1468) in its Portuguese version and with a French translation, and he thanks Esteves Pereira for checking and correcting the Portuguese text (Perruchon, 1893: 199-205).

Almeida’s manuscript grew in strength and began to “supplant” Teles’ text in scholarly quotations. However, the history of the manuscript which Esteves Pereira claims to have used still needs further elucidation. In addition to following and charting the work of the Portuguese scholar, it is worth trying to identify the Almeida manuscript used by Esteves Pereira in the years to come, and analysing his notes.

### 3.2 *Chronica de Susenyos, rei de Etiópia (1607-1632)*

This is Esteves Pereira’s major work, one that required long-term dedication and was carried out in two stages. In 1892, he published the only extant manuscript of the chronicle of the Ethiopian king Susenyos (1607-1632), based on the first 75 folios of the Oxford 30 manuscript (Dillmann, 1848: 80-81). Being an outstanding philologist in Ge’ez and Amharic, Esteves Pereira noted that from chapter 79 onwards “amharisms” become more numerous (Esteves Pereira, 1892: XXV). He presented the result of his research in the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the International Congress of Orientalists, which was seen as an essential part of the knowledge building plan that Basset had announced<sup>36</sup>.

The “discovery” made a few years earlier of the handwritten text of the *História da Etiópia a alta* by Almeida was again highlighted, explicitly citing the classification number (Mss. Add. 9861) of the British Museum (Esteves Pereira, 1892: XXXI)<sup>37</sup>. In a particularly interesting comment, Esteves Pereira pointed out the fact that the *Chronica de Susenyos* and the *História da Etiópia e alta* were contemporary works, but he also mentions differences in perspective: “What Father Manuel de Almeida mainly had in mind was to describe the work of the mission, although the key civil and political events of the nation are also related in some detail. For this reason, for the period covered from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, this work is undoubtedly a valuable historical document, and what further increases its value is that his sources prior to end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are almost exclusively taken from Ethiopian chronicles, of which some translated extracts and abbreviations have been retained. The *Chronica de Susenyos*, written in the same period as the *História da Etiópia e alta*, is also mentioned in the latter in a few instances. At times the two narratives are verbally identical even though Father Almeida doesn’t quote the *Chronica de Susenyos*,

<sup>36</sup> 46 introductory pages and 335 pages of Ethiopian text. A first report appeared in the *Journal Asiatique*, March-April 1893: 352-56 by Drouin.

<sup>37</sup> Note 1, “manuscript offered by William Marsden in 1835”.

but this clearly shows that he was aware of it.” (Esteves Pereira, 1892: XXXI). Esteves Pereira’s commentary is somewhat vague as he seems only to imply a certain similarity between the texts. Had he access to Almeida’s complete manuscript (Ms. Add. 9861 of the British Museum), he would certainly have been aware of the missionary’s own words: “This book VI is divided in two parts: in the first I will show what Ethiopia was, what the fathers of our Company encountered, so that the many thorns of error and the heresies they ‘cleared’ can be seen. In the second, I will present the history of Emperor Seltan Çagued [Susenyos], as the chronicler, the notable martyr Azage Tino, wrote before the year 1619 [...]. And I place this chronicle here because it serves as an outline to our own words. For the writer, as is the custom of his land, wrote only about wars and never dealt with the questions arising from issues of faith, nor how they were countered by some and approved and received by others, which is the main intention of our history, being more ecclesiastical than political, in conformity with our profession” (Almeida, 1907: 115)<sup>38</sup>.

Almeida was clearly aware of the existence of the royal chronicle and of its author, and he announced that he would report on it in what he called the second part of his book VI. Esteves Pereira’s lack of clarity seems to suggest that he didn’t have access to the entire manuscript, but only to some passages. It is also worth highlighting his assessment of the Ethiopian chronicle in the “historical, geographical and military” fields (part VI of his critical introduction). To him, overall, “the *Chronica of Susenyos* is a historical monument of great value, not only for its extension and development, but also for its veracity (...) With the exception of the praises to King Susenyos, and of some exaggerations intended to exalt the effort and prudence of the same king, the story may generally be considered truthful. And the Portuguese documents of the same period confirm this (Esteves Pereira, 1892: XXXII-XXXIII). This judgment as to the truthfulness of indigenous sources is not surprising for the time and is even an intrinsic part of Orientalist conceptions of history as being validated by European writers was the way to raise the credibility of local sources. In the eighth section of his introduction, he provided the reader with a bibliography concerning “the main writings of the Fathers of the Society on the Catholic mission in Ethiopia, from 1600 onwards” (Esteves Pereira, 1892: XXXIX-XLVI)<sup>39</sup> where, along with many other published or unpublished texts, he refers to the manuscript (BM, Ms. Add. 9861) of Almeida’s *História da Etiópia a alta*.

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<sup>38</sup> I rely on the British Museum manuscript (Ms. Add. 9861) used by Beccari for the complete edition of Almeida (here fol. 214v) and which Esteves Pereira frequently referred to.

<sup>39</sup> Drouin, in 1893, who wrote a report on Esteves Pereira’s work, underlined the particularity of this introduction to the *Chronica de Susenyos*, March-April 1893: 355.

### 3.3 The appearance of more precise references in Esteves Pereira’s writings

Before dealing with the Portuguese translation of the *Chronica de Susenyos* (published in 1900), it should be noted that, from 1897 onwards, Esteves Pereira gives more precise references to Almeida’s text (inserting folio numbers) in his writings. On the occasion of the *Quarto Centenario do descobrimento da India*, he reprinted the *História das cousas que o mui esforçado capitão Dom Christovão da Gama fez nos reinos do Preste João... Miguel de Castanhoso’s Dos Feitos* by D. Christovam da Gama to Ethiopia (Esteves Pereira, 1898)<sup>40</sup>. This account glorifies the young Captain Christovão da Gama, who had landed in 1541 with four hundred soldiers to assist the Ethiopian ruler Gelawdewos (1540-1559) in his war against Muslim adversaries led by the Emir Ahmed Grañ. Esteves Pereira published a revised and updated version of the 17<sup>th</sup> century book, adding a long introduction which he completed on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1897.

Two aspects of this introduction deserve mention. On the one hand, the historical value he attributed to the text, as it was a “contemporary, detailed and most authentic narrative of the facts relating to D. Christovão da Gama [...] and the primary source from which all other narratives derive. It is an extremely interesting episode in the history of the Portuguese Eastern conquests, and a valuable contribution to the history of the Kingdom of Ethiopia at one of the most distressing and critical junctures of its existence” (Esteves Pereira, 1898: XLVI). And on the other hand, this is the first time that Esteves Pereira provides a precise reference to Almeida’s text: “Manuel de Almeida, *História da Etiópia a alta*, tomo II, fol. 63v and 64” (Esteves Pereira, 1898: XXXIII). In earlier texts, he would only vaguely refer to the manuscript kept by the British Museum (Ms Add. 9861). Beccari, who edited the entire manuscript Ms Add. 9861 in 1907-1908, never reported the existence of more than one volume, where pagination would have resumed at the beginning of each. In fact, Ms Add. 9861 contains 620 folios in a single volume. Esteves Pereira’s reference to fol. 63v and 64 of a “second volume” corresponds to folios 385v and 386 of Ms Add. 9861 (Beccari, 1907: 501). We will have the opportunity to see which manuscript Esteves Pereira relied on to give the reader references that became more and more precise. In the introduction of *Vida de Tekle Haymanot pelo P. Manoel de Almeida da Companhia de Jesus*, Esteves Pereira provides a first clue to give us an answer, albeit a confusing one.

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<sup>40</sup> Castanhoso, M., de, *História das cousas que o mui esforçado capitão Dom Christovão da Gama 1564*; reprinted in the *Colecção de opúsculos relativos à história das navegações, viagens e conquistas dos Portugueses*, 1, n<sup>o</sup>2, 1855; published again under the title *Dos Feitos de D. Christovam da Gama em Etiópia*, Esteves Pereira (ed.), 1898.

In mentioning in his text the *História da Etiópia e alta* by Almeida, he added an interesting note: “Of [Almeida’s] work, there is one still unpublished manuscript in the British Museum, the ms. Add. 16255. From it a copy currently deposited at the National Library of Lisbon was made” (Esteves Pereira, 1899: 6). The reference to Ms add. 9861 has disappeared and a new totally unknown one is given, and we learn that a copy was made and deposited at the National Library of Lisbon, without indicating its cataloguing number.

In turn, Beccari confirmed in the first volume of his collection in 1903 that “a copy of the London manuscript, has been made in recent years and is now in Lisbon at the National Library, but it is very defective and incorrect” (Beccari, 1903: 5). But he also fails to give a precise reference to the Lisbon copy.

This digression allows us to identify the material Esteves Pereira used for the Portuguese translation and the annotation of the *Chronica de Susenyos*, published in 1900 (657 pages). While the translation is presented in the first 259 pages of the volume, the notes take up more than 350 pages (from page 263 to page 614). The work that went into the notes is considerable, and the scholar mobilized all the documentary resources available at the time, including dictionaries of Ge’ez and Amharic, published chronicles of Ethiopian kings, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century European texts, and the thing that most interests us here, the copy of the *História da Etiópia e alta* by Almeida deposited in the National Library of Lisbon. Almost every page in these notes includes a reference to Almeida’s text. Esteves Pereira quotes long passages from it, which again do not correspond at all to the pagination of the manuscript Ms add. 9861.

Three points should be emphasised here. First of all, the systematic referencing of Almeida’s text, giving it priority over Baltazar Teles’ *História geral de Etiópia e alta*, does not mean that he abstained from quoting Teles or the other Jesuits. Secondly, thanks to this arsenal of notes containing a staggering bibliography of European authors, he seems to be implicitly criticising his own lack of referencing in the 1892 publication of the Ge’ez chronicle. Now, to compensate for the “shortcomings” of the chronicler who had remained silent about the Jesuits’ work in Ethiopia contemporaneous to the events reported in the chronicle, Esteves Pereira splashes references to Almeida’s text everywhere in the notes of the translation volume, elevating it to the status of guarantor of the “veracity” of the chronicle, which testifies to the deeply European-centric approach in the constitution of erudite knowledge at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, there is the question of Esteves Pereira’s fascination with his subject of study and the historical parallels he makes with the events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his (rather brief) introduction to Volume II of the *Chronica of Susenyos* (translation) in

1900, he wrote this uncharacteristically committed statement: “The truth is that the notes in this column about the Portuguese residing in Ethiopia during Susenyos’ reign, and in particular about the Catholic Patriarch and the fathers of the Society of Jesus, are very rare. But that should be no cause for surprise. This chronicle, written by the official chronicler to celebrate and perpetuate the memory of the glorious deeds of King Susenyos, flatters the patriotic sentiments of the people of Ethiopia, who were always very hostile to anything that offends the sovereignty and independence of the nation. The victories the Ethiopian armies achieved and the nation’s conquests during the very glorious reign of Menilek II, increased the kingdom’s power, and gave it unprecedented splendour; but further lasting victories and other conquests now engage the will and energy of the valiant king – that is, defeating the remains of barbarism in his people, leading his nation to become a modern civilisation. The *Chronica of Susenyos, rei de Etiópia*, for which the Ge’ez text exists only in manuscript in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, is already known to the court of Ethiopia today, thanks to its publication by the beneficent Sociedade de Geographia of Lisbon, thus paying tribute to this nation, whose name was used as an incentive for the great discoveries of the Portuguese in the East. And we desire that our work may be a testimony to our deep admiration for the heroic virtues of the people who for more than fourteen centuries have defended their independence against all enemies” (Esteves Pereira, 1900: VI-VII).

Esteves Pereira’s reading of the *Chronica of Susenyos* in the light of Ethiopia’s political situation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is anachronistic and teleological, given that the analogy between the two periods, that of Susenyos (1607-1632) and that of Menelik II (1889-1913), does not allow us to understand the history of Ethiopia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The same may be said of his use of terms such as “the heroic virtues of the people” and “the independence of the nation for more than fourteen centuries” (Labanca, 2014: 69-99).

When piecing together Esteves Pereira’s personal life and scholarly career, it emerges that it is difficult to reach a clear understanding of his motivations, apart from a few scattered elements, one of which was mentioned earlier. The main thread of his career was his passion for Semitic languages and, towards the end, for Sanskrit, with which he had a technical, practical and scholarly relationship. As Lopes wrote in the 1940s: “he was not a man of letters, in its strongest sense, but only the scientist who dealt with literary matter” (1940-1941: 122). The textual objects are carefully analysed, approached, documented, presented according to the canons of textual criticism of the time without us, however, being able to clearly grasp the stakes of his own engagement. It was a solitary work that he carried out, he was not known to have any



“disciples”. He did not found a “school of Ethiopian studies” in Portugal. He was a kind of free electron who certainly, as Basset wrote, “created Ethiopian studies in Portugal”, but studies that ended after his death.

The next inquiry will focus on the journey of an individual with a whole different profile. It was in his capacity as a Jesuit that Beccari came to process a corpus of documents buried in the archives of the Society of Jesus. This documentation covers the same period to which Esteves Pereira devoted the first years of his career as an orientalist, that of the Portuguese and Jesuit presence in Ethiopia. But the link between these two scholars goes beyond a common interest in a specific context and chronological period, as both dedicated themselves to defend and promote a European-centred vision of history and colonialism. The two men met when Beccari travelled to Lisbon for his own research, although we do not know much about what resulted from this encounter.

Esteves Pereira followed Beccari’s various works on Ethiopia closely, as we will see, from a twofold perspective. As he refers in the conclusion of a note he wrote on the publication of the first volume of Beccari’s documentary corpus:

R. P. Beccari’s book, where notices and excerpts from documents relating to the Ethiopian mission are presented, aims to draw the scholars’ attention to the importance of this documentation, which will be successively published in full and in the language in which they were composed. Thus, R. P. Beccari is erecting the most enduring monument of gratitude and remembrance to his Portuguese brothers, who dedicated themselves with the greatest zeal and abnegation to returning the Abyssinians to the Catholic faith, and in this mission they rendered important services not only to the Christian religion, but also to science, and in general to civilization (Esteves Pereira, 1904: 197).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CAMILLO BECCARI (1849-1928): THE “CANONISER”**

## 1. Camillo Beccari: postulator general for the cause of the saints and editor of missionary documents on Ethiopia

### 1.1 Camillo Beccari's intellectual journey (1849-1928)

The archives of the Society of Jesus, especially those known as *Catalogues*, make it possible to reconstruct the journey of each of the members as soon as they enter the community. Of all available biographical notes (*Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 1965: 432; *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1949: 461-462; Raineri, 2003: 513), Zanfredini's in the *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús* is the only one that takes into account the *Catalogues* when reconstructing Beccari's itinerary (2001: 381). But for the period prior to his joining the Society, the *Catalogues* only record his date and place of birth. So, to expand Beccari's biography and learn about his roots, we must delve into another kind of documentation. In 1910, as Beccari assumed his position as "postulator general" of the Jesuits, he published an eighteen-page booklet devoted to his mother's exemplary life (Beccari, 1910, 18 pages). The book is singular, hagiographical and allows us to draw a sociological portrait of Beccari's parents and family. He was born in Rome on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1849, to Maria Polverosi and Giovanni Beccari, both from wealthy Roman property-owning families. Beccari was the eldest of four sons and three daughters, all of which died in adulthood, the last one was already married and died the age of forty (possibly during childbirth). In 1862, his mother took a vow of chastity and devoted herself to charitable works during the next forty-five years, until her death on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1907. The Jesuits are part of the entourage of the Beccari family. His mother's confessor was Father Geminiano Mislei, to whom when she was young she confided her hesitation between consecrating her life to God or getting married<sup>1</sup>.

At the age of fifteen, on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1864, the young Beccari joined the Society of Jesus in Rome. He studied philosophy for two years (1868-1870) at the Roman College, but when Rome fell into the hands of Italian troops, he moved to Maria-Laach (Germany) to continue his studies. He then lived in Laval, in France (1874-1878), where he taught theology for two years (1878-1880). After graduating in philosophy and literature in 1884 at the University of Naples, he taught philosophy at Frascati (1884-1887), and then at Strada (1890-1897) (Zanfredini, 2001: 381).

In 1897, upon his return to Rome, he was appointed Vice-Postulator of the Society (1897-1901) for matters of beatification and canonization, and then Postulator General (1901-1923). His work consisted of gathering evidence for the processes of beatification and canonization that were presented to the Congregation of Rites at the

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<sup>1</sup> All the factual information is taken from this booklet.

Roman Curia. To do this, he would research the archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome, compiling files from the archival documents, collecting them and ordering them, in order to provide evidence in beatification and canonization cases regarding members of the Society. It was in this capacity that he studied a case concerning missionaries who had died as martyrs in Ethiopia between 1635 and 1640 (Bishop Apolinário de Almeida and his companions, Jacinto Francisco and Francisco Rodrigues) (Cohen Shabot, 2003a: 207). This led him to uncover a trove of various unpublished documentation on the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, which had until then lain dormant in the archives of the Society of Jesus, and to “broaden” his research (as Esteves Pereira puts it), which resulted in the monumental publication of the *RÆSOI* 15 volume series, from 1903 to 1917. Having served as Postulator General until 1923, he spent the last five years of his life working as archivist and librarian of the residence of the Gesù in Rome (Zanfredini, 2001: 381).

Zanfredini’s rather dry and linear biographical note has the merit of establishing a link between the position of Postulator General, which Beccari held for more than twenty-five years, and that of historian and editor of sources on the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia. The nature of this dual activity, conducted concurrently, is worth highlighting to help us understand the challenges and dynamics of the development of the *RÆSOI* collection.

Few authors have drawn attention to the connection between the publication of Ethiopian sources and the Italian colonial project. One exception is the analytical bibliography of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, by Leonardo Cohen Shabot and Andreu Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, which rightly emphasises that a renewed interest in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit mission in Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century should be linked to the European colonial context (Cohen Shabot and Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2006: 190-212).

By focusing on the author’s textual production (not limited to Ethiopia), new elements of analysis help reveal Beccari’s opus in its diversity and complexity, and for this the archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu) are the most suitable source to systematically review the author’s bibliography. Although it does not contain Beccari’s exhaustive bibliography, its documentary collection nevertheless offers a panoramic view of the author’s publications. A careful examination of the available bibliography leads to some significant conclusions that allow us to rethink the context of *RÆSOI*’s publication. It will be presented below in four parts, classified according to the type of content and in chronological order of publication dates. Additions in square brackets complete and inform the titles of the bibliography.

## 1.2 A prolific author with varied interests

### I. Publication of documents for the processes of beatification and canonization

1. *Catalogus sanctorum beatorum venerabilium et servorum Dei e Societate Jesu*, Del Rue, 1891, 26 pages.
2. *Articoli di prova testimoniale per i processi apostolici sulle virtù e miracoli del servo di Dio P. Luigi Maria Solari, sacerdote Professo della Compagnia di Gesù*, Roma, Tipografia Agostiniana, 1903, 86 pages.
3. *Stato presente delle Cause di Beatificazione dei servi di Dio appartenenti alla C. di Gesù*, Roma, Tipografia della Pace E. Cuggiani, 1909, 15 pages.
4. *Posizione ed articoli da servire per i Processi Apostolici sulle virtù in ispecie del ven. Servo di Dio P. Paolo Capelloni della Compagnia di Gesù*, Rome, Offic. Poligrafia Editrice, 1909, 145 pages.
5. "Huonder Anton S.I. (1858-1926). Eine missionsgeschichte Quellenpublikation", *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*, 82, 1912, pp. 64-81.
6. *Brevi notizie sul Venerabile Padre Giuseppe Pignatelli di Compagnia di Gesu.*, Rome, Tipografia Cuggiani, 1919, 232 pages.
7. "I resti mortali del B. Fernan Baldinucci", *Analecta bollandiana* 41, 1923, pp. 149-154.
8. *Il Beato G. Pignatelli della Compagnia di Gesù (1737-1811)*, con aggiunte e note del Padre Carlo Miccinelli (S.I.), Isola del Liri-Frosinone, Società Tipografia Macioce e Pisani, 1933, 270 pages. [+ The text is identical to Title 6. An additional preface by Beccari's successor as Postulator General and a series of illustrations have been added to this posthumous edition]
9. *Il Beato Giuseppe Pignatelli della Compagnia di Gesù (1737-1811)*, con aggiunte e note del P. Carlo Miccinelli (S.I.), Rome, Tip. della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1933, 142 pages + ill. [Same as text 8. This is a pocket edition]
10. *Declaratio martyrii... Johannis de Brébeuf and sociorum S.I.*, S. N. N. T. 16x9 150 pages. [no editing date]

### II. Historical articles

1. "Operosità del ven. Roberto Bellarmino as vescovo e come cardinale", *Gregorianum* 2, 1921, pp. 487-512.
2. "Beatification and Canonization", in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1907.

### III. Exemplary life of the author’s mother

1. *Brevi notizie intorno alla vita e alle virtù di Maria Polverosi vedova Beccari*, Roma, Ditta Tipografica Gianandrea & Ci, 1910, 18 pages.

### IV. European document editions on Ethiopia (16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries)

1. *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales inediti a saeculo XVI ad XIX*, 15 vols, Rome, Casa Editrice Italiana, 1903-1917; Brussels, Culture et Civilisation, 1969 [anastatic reprint].
2. *Il Tigré descritto da un missionario gesuita del secolo XVII*, “Istituto coloniale italiano”, Rome, Tipografia dell'unione Editrice, 1909. [Italian translation by Beccari of part of Manuel Barradas’ historical Treaty (1634)].
3. *Il Tigré descritto da un missionario gesuita del secolo XVII*, Seconda edizione con illustrazioni e nuove note, Rome, Ermanno Loescher & C. o, 1912. [Italian text identical to title 2. Deluxe edition with photos and lithographs].

Historians of the Ethiopian mission have limited their focus to the last group of titles (IV), which shaped Beccari’s reputation as an essential reference in European documentation on East Africa, covering the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first set of texts (I), although a significant part of the author’s work, has never attracted their interest, which may be explained by the fact that these editions of documentation, intended to defend the causes of beatification and canonisation of certain members of the Society of Jesus, belong to a very different genre from that of the documents relating to Ethiopia. However, by taking into account these testimonies of Beccari’s main work for more than twenty-five years, we can better understand what motivated him to embark on a project that would contain several thousand pages.

In 1909, he published a booklet entitled *Stato presente delle Cause di Beatificazione dei servi di Dio appartenenti alla C. di Gesù* (III-1), in which he listed the recent pledges to recognise martyrs of the Society of Jesus (from 1897). In this report Beccari deals with the question of the martyrs of Ethiopia and notes the following: “Venerable Martyrs of Ethiopia. After having overcome many difficulties, the Congregation for the acceptance of the cause [of martyrdom] was held in 1902 and decreed that the writings of the Venerable clergymen be examined and approved. Then, a book repelling accusations and slanders levelled against the martyrs and the Ethiopian mission of the Society of Jesus was printed and, therefore, the Sacred Congregation did not follow through on a proposal to hold a special congregation [session] to examine the alleged accusations against the Society. Now the apostolic process is being carried out at the Curia of Naples, thus saving time and money” (Beccari, 1909: 8).

The Ethiopian martyrs' affair or case was presented to the Congregation of Rites, according to the author in 1902, with the following title: *Sacra Rituum Congregatione. Emo ac Rmo Domino Card. Cajetano Aloisi-Masella (relatore), Abissinen. Beatificationis seu Declarationi Martirii servorum dei Apollinaris de Almeida Episcopi Nicaeni. Hyacinthi Franceschi, Francisci Ruiz Abraham de Georgiis Gasparis Paez, Joannis Pereira Ludovici Cardeira et Brunonis Bruni sacerdotum Societatis Iesu in odium Catholicae Fidei Interfectorum. Positio Super introductione Causae*<sup>2</sup>. Beccari refers to the tensions surrounding the presentation of the "Ethiopian martyrs" dossier before the Congregation of Rites to justify the publication of the above-mentioned book that repels accusations against the Ethiopian mission. The "calumnies" and "accusations" of which Beccari speaks are not contemporary with the author, but instead date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the missionaries were expelled from Ethiopia by King Fasiledes (1632-1667). From that time on, the "failure" of the mission was attributed to the Jesuits and their superior, Patriarch Afonso Mendes. The latter, having arrived in Ethiopia in 1625, received in the following year King Susenyos' (Fasiledes' father, 1607-1632) declaration of submission to the Papacy and then continued the mission of Latinising the Ethiopian Church, which had begun with the king's conversion to Catholicism in 1621 (Pennec, 2003: 27-32; Tewelde Beiene, 1983: 236-242). From the end of the 1620s, the Congregation for the Propaganda of the Faith (1622) began intervening in debates about the ritual practices to be respected in "Catholic" Ethiopia<sup>3</sup>.

The postponement of the file on the "martyrs of Ethiopia" in 1902, and the publication of the first volume of RÆSOI, entitled *Notizie e saggi di opere i documenti inediti riguardanti la Storie d' Etiopia durante i secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII*, in 1903, is certainly not unrelated to his function as postulator within the Society, as is made clear in Beccari's note in the *Notizie e saggi di opere*:

I finally inform you that in 1890 the cause of the beatification of two Capuchin Fathers was dealt with, and in 1902, that of eight Jesuit Fathers, killed for the faith in Ethiopia, was published in the *Posizioni*, as the documents in the note state. And although, at the very least, the publishing of these documents cannot be considered as a true publication, because all that is published by the Congregation of Rites concerning the causes of servants of God is not to be made public, I thought I would mention it, since

<sup>2</sup> Copy at the Academia das Cienciais (Esteves Pereira Fund, call number 13. 20. 9.). Beccari is not the author of these texts, but his name and function as postulator general are mentioned several times.

<sup>3</sup> The competition between missionary orders became more complex when the *Propaganda Fide* began criticising the action of the Jesuits in Ethiopia to the Papacy and claiming the right to enter the country, which had been exclusive to the Jesuits (Archivio della Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, Congressi Missioni Miscellanea series, vol. III, f. 203-241v (on Ethiopia f. 236-239), (Metzler, 1971: 146-196; Pizzorusso, 2000: 477-518; 2011: 25-40).

such documents, in Rome and elsewhere, are already known by diverse people (Beccari, 1903: 73-74).

An inventory duly drawn up in the first part of the 519 pages of *Notizie* (1. Histories and Historical Treaties; 2. Relationships and letters of the Jesuits from 1560 to 1713; 3. Relationships and letters of persons outside the Society of Jesus from 1630 to 1800), presents the topics and subject matters of the entire future collection. In the second part, Beccari provides a very detailed analysis of the historical works due to appear in the collection and offers a summary of the content of each text in Italian. Also in this second part, after having chosen from the documental inventory drawn up in the first part, he proposes a summary in Italian of some of them. Finally, in a third section, he chooses a number of documents (chapters of the historical works, letters from the Jesuits and other texts) and publishes them in their original language (Portuguese, Spanish, Latin and Ge’ez<sup>4</sup>), with an Italian translation on the opposite pages. These choices require careful inspection. Each set of documents is accompanied by an introduction in which the author presents all the information concerning the dating of the manuscripts and the reasons for his selection. This first volume is the only one in the collection where Italian is used for the introductions, Latin being the language used for critical introductions of the subsequent volumes.

When publishing this first volume in 1903, Beccari was already certain of the contents of the announced collection. In the introduction, he mentions being in possession of all the photographic copies of the manuscripts (Beccari, 1903: 3). He also informs the reader he had visited the Lisbon archives and received Esteves Pereira’s help and advice there, besides having spent four years in the Propaganda Fide’s archives in Rome (aided by one of the archivists, Rev. D. Pietro Semadini) (Beccari, 1903: VI). The upstream research carried out “essentially in person” (Beccari, 1903: V) is immense and there is reason to believe that the starting point was when he first took the position of vice-postulator of the causes of beatification and canonisation of the Society of Jesus, in 1897.

The concomitance of these two projects invites us to rethink the stakes and intentions of the *RÆSOI* edition and to reassess the motives at work within the Society of Jesus in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The defence of the case of the “Ethiopian martyrs” was closely linked to a reassessment of their activities in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding this, it is worth considering Pierre-Antoine Fabre’s reflection on the “mobility” between “sources” (of the missionary orders, and in particular the Jesuits), the “historiography” and the “history”. Referring to them “as a surprising

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<sup>4</sup> For the Ge’ez he calls upon the orientalist Ignacio Guidi (Beccari, (ed.), 1903: VI).



system of communicating vessels”, he asks, “how can we isolate the ‘sources’ of a historiography that is already at work in the process of preservation - especially with regards to the administration of the missionary enterprise - and how can we ensure that this historiography does not become the historical instrument of a permanent re-foundation of the institution, perhaps even questioning the place of the publication of modern sources of the history of the Society of Jesus in a long-term perspective on a progressive restoration of order throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century?” (Fabre, 2011: 447; Fabre and Romano, 1999: 247-260). It seems to me that this analytical framework is particularly relevant to the case of *RÆSOI*, as the series is not only a collection of unpublished documents but also the manifestation of issues and claims in need of restoration, certainly within the institution itself, but also outside it.

From an internal point of view, the project of the *RÆSOI* was in line with the decision of the Jesuits at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the generalship of Luis Martín García (1846-1906), to work in a manner consistent with the “modern criticism” that had emerged in Germany and generally in Protestant circles (Morales, 2019: 963-964). In 1894, the long work of publishing the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* began (Gilmont, 1960: 133-153; Danieluk, 2006), with the objective of looking back at the origins of the order and defining how the past of the “first” Society was to be read, thus participating in the re-foundation of the order by writing about it. In the spirit of the father general, the *Monumenta* was “an excellent means to further inject into the Society the giant spirit of the founder” (Morales, 2019: 965). The collection began with the publication of Ignatius of Loyola’s letters, and then turned to the history of missions in 1932. Thus, *RÆSOI*’s editorial enterprise was welcomed as “a true and proper series of *Monumenta aethiopica*” by the journal *Civiltà Cattolica* (one of the Society’s media outlets), as early as 1903 (in Tacchi Venturi, 1905: 560), thus participating in the rebuilding (i.e., the rewriting) of the order, and in the normalising of a narrative aimed at updating the actions of the Jesuits in one of the order’s first missions<sup>5</sup>. This “*Monumenta aethiopica*” offers countless documentary resources and “reservoirs” of knowledge. It was enthusiastically received in the circles of the orientalist’s learned societies, as shown by the report of the great Syriacist Father Jean-Baptiste Chabot (published in 1918, one year after the publication of the last volume of the collection), in the following terms:

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<sup>5</sup> The case of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia and the publication of unpublished documents is one example among many others. See, for example, the Brazilian mission and the unpublished documents studied by Laborie 2003: 454-473.

The colonial politics of the Western nations has not been alien to the movement that is pushing scholars towards Ethiopian studies. Work on languages, ethnography, geography and the history of Abyssinia has increased steadily over the past fifty years. Among these many publications, none reaches the extent or surpasses in importance the vast collection of unpublished documents that Beccari has just completed with great erudition, scrupulous care and untiring patience (Chabot, 1918: 83-92).

If the *RÆSOI* edition is to be understood in the context of the defence and existence of the Jesuit order, another aspect needs addressing, that of Italian colonial interests in the Horn of Africa.

## 2. The *Rerum Æthiopicarum...* Knowledge on a topical subject

### 2.1 *RÆSOI* and the European colonial context

While 1880 to 1920 was a time of intensive translation and critical editing of unpublished documents on Ethiopia, it was also the period in which European powers carved up Africa and appropriated their colonial conquests. In the case of the Horn of Africa, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made the Red Sea a highly strategic and commercially important area, leading different colonial powers to seize possessions along its coasts. The Italians settled in Assab in 1882, Massawa and Beilul in 1885, Asmara and Keren in 1889, and Eritrea became an Italian colony in 1890 (Bahru Zewde, 1991: 72-76; Labanca, 2014: 69-99).

More generally, in this global context of the era of imperialism, concerns arose about the relationship between national interests, Christian universalism and the role of missions. The chancelleries of the states involved in the wave of colonialism called for a nationalisation of the missionaries, which posed new difficulties for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which had learn to adapt. As Massimo De Giuseppe points out, the Lombard Seminary for Foreign Missions (the future Pontificio istituto missioni estere, PIME), was conceived using the model of the Foreign Missions Society of Paris. Unlike France, which, since the 1820s, had benefited from an atmosphere of missionary awakening associated with the colonial spirit, the revival of the missionary spirit of the Italian Church came later, and was based on the missionary experiences of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. These began to reverse the decline of the historic congregations and numbers of missionaries, and the demands for a “new

missionary” were linked more to assistance and education, and committed to reflecting on direct confrontation with such matters as the nation, the international community, the civilising mission and modernity. Each congregation contributed to redefining (in response to a request from the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), the spiritual, moral and cultural training of the missionaries. The situation in the colony of Eritrea, due to tensions between the Italian government and the Propagation of the Faith (its goods were sequestered following a decision of the Court of Cassation in 1885), did not incline the Vatican to support the proclamation, in 1890, of the new Italian colony. The situation did not favour Italian colonial ambitions, as was understood perfectly by Francesco Crispi, who, upon returning to government, sought to re-establish good relations with the Roman congregation. In 1894 the apostolic prefecture of Eritrea was established, and was entrusted to the Roman Capuchin Michele Carbonara. After the Battle of Adwa and the crisis of the end of the century, the missions in Italian Somalia were instead entrusted to the Trinitarians in 1904. The next year Asmara (capital of Eritrea) welcomed the Italian Colonial Congress. The territorial powers given to Italian missionary groups provoked tensions, for example, with the French Lazarists, and created tensions even within the Combonians. The presence of Italian missionaries, from different orders and congregations, made it possible to confront the crisis of different institutional models in the colonies, while living the internal contradictions of the “civilising mission”. This helped to test their own missionary methods, their own networks with local political institutions, but also to rethink their idea of nation, empire and Christian universalism (De Giuseppe, 2011).

It was in this context of divergent interests that the enterprise of exhuming sources conducted by Beccari sought to assert the anteriority of the presence of the Jesuits in this zone, even if at the time no members of the order were locally present. The existence of unpublished documentation, and the power of witness through the texts, argued in favour of their publication, as seen by the financing granted by the colonial authorities (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the colonial government of Eritrea), for the whole collection published between 1903 and 1917 (Beccari, 1912: IX-X).

The link between the European colonial context and the implementation of the *RÆSOI* project has been addressed by Martínez d'Alòs-Moner. Through a detailed and convincing analysis, he insists on associating the time of colonial expansion from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the renewed interest of colonial academic circles in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century mission in Ethiopia. As Martínez d'Alòs-Moner notes, colonial historiographers saw these “(re)discovered” documents as useful justifications of the ideology of European expansion (Martínez

d’Alòs-Moner, 2006: 223-233; 2007a: 73-91). The summary table presented by the author, together with a chronological bibliography, provides an overview of the debates that took place in the European academic world at that time, and concludes: “The collection edited by Beccari himself, which is an indispensable tool for research today, would have been unthinkable was it not for the great interest that colonial Italy had in looking for friendly memories in lands it wanted to dominate. At the same time, a few points made by colonial or missionary historiography have been assumed into modern historiography without having endured much revision or criticism” (Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2007a: 82).

Beccari first published two manuscripts written in Portuguese and kept in the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus, the first one by Pedro Páez, *História da Etiópia* (completed around 1622), (ARSI, Ms. Goa 42: 538 fol.), and the second one by Manuel Barradas, *Tratado primeiro. Do estado da Santa Fé romana em Etiópia quando se lanceçou o pregão contra ella; Tratado segundo. Do reino de Tygrê e seus mandos em Etiópia; Tratado terceiro. Da cidade e fortaleza de Adem* (1634), (ARSI, Ms. Goa 43: 204 fol.). The first two books of *História da Etiópia*, by Páez, were published in 1905 (second volume of *RÆSOI*). The last two books (volume III of *RÆSOI*) and the treaties by Barradas (volume IV of *RÆSOI*) were published in 1906. In the following years, 1907-08, he published Almeida’s manuscript (divided into 10 books), the *História de Etiópia a alta ou Abassia, imperio do Abexim, cujo Rey vulgarmente he chamado Preste Joam* (1646) (620 fol.)<sup>6</sup>, kept at the British Museum (now British Museum, Ms., add. MS 9861) of which Beccari obtained a photographic copy. In 1907, volumes V and VI (the first 8 books of the *História*), were published and volume VII (the last two) was published in 1908. In 1909, he published the Latin manuscript of Patriarch Afonso Mendes, the *Expeditionis Aethiopicæ patriarchæ Alphonsi Mendesii* (circa 1650), kept in the archive of the Society of Jesus in Rome (ARSI, Ms. Goa 44: 416 fol.), volumes VIII and IX of *RÆSOI*. In the next five years, Beccari published volumes X to XIV of the collection, dedicated to Jesuit missionaries’ letters but also to and from individuals external to the Society, including Iberian kings, viceroys of India, popes, cardinals, prefects of the Propaganda Fide, etc. (dating from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century).

Finally, in 1917, in Volume XV, Beccari published an analytical index covering the entire collection (each volume itself having an index). This last volume is an invaluable tool to facilitate access to the entire collection. In addition to helping navigate through

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<sup>6</sup> The complete title is: *História de Etiópia a alta ou Abassia, imperio do Abexim, cujo Rey vulgarmente he chamado Preste Joam. Trata da natureza da terra, e da gente que a povoa dos Reys, que nella ouve; da Fe que tiveram, e tem; e do muito, que os Padres da Companhia de Jesus trabalharam pelos reduzir a verdadeira, e sancta Fe da Igreja Romana. Composta pelo padre Manoel d’Almeida da Companhia de Jesus, natural de Viseu.*

the 7,000-page set, Volume XV also produces a “flattening” of the collection by placing stories, treatises and correspondence on the same categorial level.

While one or two volumes of the *RÆSOI* were published every year, following the publication of Barradas’ *Tratados* (in Portuguese) (vol. IV, 1906), Beccari translates the second treaty into Italian. Barradas had joined the Society in 1587 and had been sent as a missionary to India where he served for nearly thirty years. With the conversion of the Ethiopian King Susenyos to Catholicism at the end of 1621, Barradas joined a contingent of missionaries who were sent to Ethiopia (along with Manuel de Almeida, Luís Cardeira and Francisco Carvalho), landing in Massawa in January 1624. He left Ethiopia in 1633 and was taken prisoner by the Turks in the Red Sea. While in detention in Aden that he wrote three crucial geographical treatises, which caught Beccari’s attention (Boavida, 2003: 483-484).

In a revised and simplified Italian version, the most important of the three treatises dealing with the Tigray region (in northern Ethiopia), was published in 1909, under the title *Il Tigré descritto da un missionario gesuita del secolo XVII*, in an Italian colonial journal (Beccari, 1909). Three years later, in 1912, a new luxurious edition came out with ethnographic style illustrations and photographs (landscapes, fauna, flora, portraits, villages, indigenous monasteries, etc.) (Beccari, 1912: XIV)<sup>7</sup>. An offshoot of the *RÆSOI* series, this book is a streamlined Italian translation for which Beccari informed the reader that “This second edition, due to the generous financial contribution of the Central Directorate of Colonial Affairs and the Government of the Colony of Eritrea, is significantly improved and more elegantly presented, with the addition of new notes and a few zinc plate photographs kindly provided by Colonial officials”<sup>8</sup>. Modern historiography has given little importance to this revised and simplified Italian version, preferring to use Barradas’ Portuguese original.<sup>9</sup>

In order to capture the full measure of Beccari’s editorial project and to shed light on its origins it is worth examining these two successive editions of *Il Tigré descritto da un missionario gesuita del secolo XVII*, along with their paratext (introduction, notes, and illustrations). In the introduction, he presents the different stages of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia from a Jesuit-centred perspective, with a biography of Barradas. He then discusses the possible use of the book for modern-day Italian-speaking readers:

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<sup>7</sup> “Questa seconda edizione, dovuta al generoso concorso pecuniario della Direzione centrale degli affari coloniali e del Governo della Colonia Eritrea, si presenta notevolmente migliorata ed in veste più elegante, coll’aggiunta di nuove note e d’alquante zincotipie, da fotografie gentilmente favoritimi da alcuni ufficiali della Colonia”.

<sup>8</sup> In the Italian version, Beccari used square brackets to refer to the Barradas’ original text.

<sup>9</sup> In R. Pankhurst’s full English version of Barradas’ *Tratado secundo do reino de Tygre* in 1996, the editor noted, with further comment, that C. Beccari had proposed two revised Italian editions at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (p. XVII).

I thought it would be pleasant to present readers who do not know ancient Portuguese with an Italian adaptation of the Portuguese treatise, from which we may see how Portuguese missionaries were viewed in the Ethiopian region between the Tacassè River and the sea, and how they believed in the possibility of founding a European colony there that could flourish through the prosperity of trade. And I believe that it is useful for us Italians, who now hold a colony in this same region, to know what importance (that the missionaries) attributed to the climate and products of this same (region), where they remained for many years and about which they diligently noted everything. If the colony of Eritrea had not been discredited for so long by [Italian] political parties, that went so far as to describe it as a sand dune only known for its malignant fevers, and if they had not thus created an atmosphere of almost antipathy towards our colony, perhaps it would have already reached the degree of prosperity that Barradas expected for the Portuguese colony he planned to found from Massua to Marèb (Beccari, 1912: X-XI).

In Beccari’s mind, Barradas’ plan to establish a Portuguese colony in northern Ethiopia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century becomes the legitimating argument for Italian settlement in Eritrea. As Beccari notes: “These are the wise considerations written three centuries ago by Father Barradas, a fine connoisseur of Abyssinian men and things. Tigray is the region described by Barradas, and the inhabitants have not changed either in nature or in custom. I therefore hope that Italy, which has become the patron saint of this vast Ethiopian territory that stretches from the Mareb to the Red Sea, will take advantage of the experience of the old missionary and try once and for all to seriously consider the advantages that it [Italy] has until now neither wanted nor been able to gain from this colony” (Beccari, 1912: 176).

Beccari’s fascination with Barradas’ story is evident: the Jesuit priest who nearly three centuries earlier had authored a precise and “truthful” geographical and ethnographic description of Eritrea had drawn the path for the future of the new Italian colony. In addition to the vision of a time stood still, Beccari’s admiration for the style of writing is unbridled: “the integrity, ingenuity, simplicity and personal experience of the authors (Barradas, Páez, Almeida), of these writings is of incalculable historical value” (Beccari, 1912: IX).

The endeavour of exhuming ancient texts and the publication of an abridged Italian edition concurred in enlightening and convincing doubters and opponents of the Italian occupation in Eritrea and made them recognise the validity of the colonial project. As A. Martínez d’Alòs-Moner rightly points out: “The people engaged in the European colonial expansion considered with admiration the quests of missionaries and Portuguese agents in the early modern times. Accordingly, the Lusitanians were

seen as the ‘pioneers’ in exploring areas that the colonial nations were coveting” (Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2007a: 79).

This detour through the popularising texts produced by Beccari helps to ideologically contextualise the *RÆSOI* project, not as a simple and neutral scientific contribution but as an expanding textual territory imbued with political and ideological claims, whose production requires internal inspection.

## 2.2 The *RÆSOI*, the essential reference

It must be said at the outset that, in methodological terms, the collection of manuscripts is flawless. The careful selection and presentation of the texts, systematically preceded by critical introductions, and strewn with notes of great erudition lend the whole project indisputable value. Beccari conducted a patient work of collation and transcription, scrupulously respected the criteria of the scientific analysis of the time, using those put forward by the methodological school.

Beccari’s methods are in line with those at work within the Jesuit order, and stimulated under the generalship of Luis Martín García (1846-1906), with this main objective: “It is proposed that the historiography of the Society be resumed, but more in conformity with modern criticism” in recommending a history in which “real facts are firm like numbers, and mathematical and physical laws, and are incontestable. History, then, is neither Protestant nor Catholic, nor is it a matter of sects or parties, but has a scientific, immutable and binding objectivity” (Morales, 2019: 963-965). He called on those responsible for the *Monumenta* to be “only editors, not commentators on the documents”, and, as Martin Morales emphasises, “It was believed that the truth, which could always be discussed within the narrative, would be laid bare under the ‘pitiless light’ of the critical edition” (Morales, 2019: 965).

The work of Beccari is in line with what is practised within the Jesuit order and by those charged with contributing to historiography through the use of archives. The *RÆSOI* series, published at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has become an essential reference point, so much so that the majority of contemporary historians who are interested in either the missionary phenomenon in Ethiopia or in the history of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom for the “modern” period, never fail to quote one or more of its volumes. This inescapability is linked to the fact that only *RÆSOI* allows access to some of the published texts (Almeida in its entirety, but also Mendes and the collection of letters in volumes X to XIV). Still, we must bear in mind Beccari’s categorisation of “sources”, the analytical index (vol. XV) providing the means to enter the textual universe and to avoid getting lost in this compilation of more than seven

thousand pages. It was Beccari’s belief that, through this immense organisational task, the entire collection would be able to fill the numerous gaps of Ethiopian local sources, to do “justice” to the activities of his 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> century co-religionists, and more generally to “write an impartial and truthful history of Ethiopia and the various Catholic missions in this region from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Beccari, 1903: 226)<sup>10</sup>. He thus created a specific field of Jesuit knowledge about Ethiopia, much like the Jesuit Serafim Leite did in Brazil, as Jean-Claude Laborie points out. In this, both were part of a broader project: “the affirmation of the unity, and thus the specificity, of the Order [of the Society of Jesus]” (Laborie, 2003: 455)<sup>11</sup>.

Beccari presents a further argument to justify the publication of these unpublished manuscripts, namely that they seemed to be at odds with the prevailing conceptions in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, both in Rome and in Portugal, where, in his opinion, the possibility for a text to be published depended first and foremost on the elegance of its style. That’s how, in 1660, Teles, the provincial of the Portuguese province, published his *História geral de Etiópia...* “in elegant Portuguese and with a style in keeping with the taste of the times”. Without having had any experience of this missionary field, he wrote it using the manuscript of Manuel de Almeida, who had spent nearly ten years in Ethiopia. Beccari’s point of view at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the opposite of his predecessor, Teles. He defends the idea of a return to original sources since for him “truth” emerges from the simplicity of the missionaries’ style, from their field experience and from their observational qualities. As he notes in the preface to Volume II of *RÆSOI*: “With the help of his writings and these documents, all the fables that have long crept into Ethiopia’s history and have been spread to this day by ignorant writers will be easily dispelled” (Beccari, 1905: IV). The recurring idea of “fables that can be dispelled” echoes one of Pedro Páez’s motivations when writing almost three centuries earlier to put an end to the “fables” propagated by the Dominican friar Luís de Urreta.

What Beccari proposes in the *RÆSOI* is to publish all the composite documentation of 17<sup>th</sup> century missionaries in Ethiopia organised into two subsets. In the first, the “histories” and “treatises” written by the missionaries, and, in the second, all the reports and letters exchanged to and from Ethiopia, in response to or dealing with questions relating to the situation of the mission. The material carefully collected by Beccari gives the reader the impression of a most comprehensive collection, where

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<sup>10</sup> It was in these terms that in a final note he presents the various documents published in the second part of the first volume of the collection.

<sup>11</sup> The idea developed by Laborie about Serafim Leite’s endeavour (*Monumenta Brasiliae*, 1956-1960) fits perfectly with Beccari’s.



epistolary documents complement and fulfil whatever matters the longer texts may have failed to address.

Let us quickly clarify the intentions and contents of the treatises. The first two authors, Pedro Páez and Manuel de Almeida, entitle their manuscripts *História da Etiópia*. Theirs is not a question of writing a history of the mission, but rather of integrating it into a broader narrative that goes back to the first centuries of our era when Ethiopia became Christian. The thesis they defend is that the Christianity that took hold in Ethiopia was distorted due to the ecclesiastical links maintained with the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Thus, the convocation of local writings and their partial use (extracts from theological treatises, hagiographical accounts, chronicles and royal lists, etc.), arguably support their demonstration and highlight how time and isolation have led Christian Ethiopia to “stray” from the “true” faith. Therefore, the account of their presence in Ethiopia, describing in minute detail the Jesuits’ actions to reform this heretical Christianity is inserted into a long-term narrative. Páez’s text ends in 1622, just before his death from high fever and at a crucial juncture, that of King Susenyos’ conversion to Catholicism. The other three treatises were written by Almeida, Barradas and Mendes, who lived through the expulsion of the missionaries from Ethiopia in 1633, thus lending an additional dimension and another level of interpretation to their accounts - that the return to “true” path failed due to the obstinacy of the Ethiopian clergy and the deep-rooted Alexandrian faith<sup>12</sup>. While their texts were intended to insert the Catholic mission story within the broader Ethiopian religious history, the *RÆSOI*’s unpublished correspondence (vol. X to XIII) focused only on the period of their presence and post-expulsion from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

While the first set (volumes II to IX) made the missionaries’ manuscripts visible in their entirety with the complete critical apparatus, the second set (volumes X to XIII) of *RÆSOI*, which was supposed to offer a different perspective on the missionaries’ writings, actually amounted to simply collating the Jesuits’ accounts by editing supplementary documents related to the mission. The correspondence is organised in such a way that the chosen extracts look as if they respond to each other, to give the impression to the reader of a causative coherence in their activities and highlight the validity of their claims – for instance, by selecting an extract from a letter of the Portuguese sovereign, it seems that he is responding to a missionary letter, when in fact he is not.

The push to publish unpublished documents having the slightest link to or evoking the Ethiopian mission within a framework connecting the missionaries’ writings (the

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 4.

manuscripts are rendered in full), with those produced outside Ethiopia (in Goa, Rome and Lisbon), of which only extracts dealing exclusively with Ethiopia are published, forces one into an oriented reading intent on creating a linear historical sequencing that breaks the texts’ generic relationships.

Beccari thus presents the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit mission in Ethiopia in a strict chronological order:

- Book One, Patriarcha Andreas Oviedo (1534-1592) *RÆSOI*, 10, 1910.
- Book Two, Pater Petrus Páez (1589-1623), *RÆSOI*, 11, 1911.
- Book Three, Patriarcha Alfonsus Mendez (1622-1635), *RÆSOI*, 12, 1912.
- Book Four, Missionis Eversio (expulsion) (1633-1672), *RÆSOI*, 13, 1913.

The first three books enshrine a towering figure that is, in Beccari’s vision, representative of the period covered by the documentation, but the proposed chronology does not correspond to any personal history of each of the three Jesuits. He naturalised the chronology, fixed the periods of the mission and brought certain individuals to the forefront. This is particularly clear in the case of Father Pedro Páez, who had remained on the edge of the mission’s history and who, in his opinion at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had to be rehabilitated.

### **2.3 Volume 1 of *RÆSOI*: the intentions and issues of the collection**

Let us return to the first volume of *RÆSOI* (1903), which is, in Ethiopian historiography, generally viewed as an inventory summarising the rest of the collection. In fact, it is much more than a simple inventory or an abstract what Beccari intended to publish. The third part of this first volume reveals and captures the intentions and issues of the collection. Reviews in European scholarly journals appeared as soon as it was published (Tacchi Venturi, 1905: 560). One such review, written by Lucien Bouvat in the famed *Journal Asiatique* in 1904, described Beccari’s selection of documents for publication as “a most curious choice” (Bouvat, 1904: 359-361). Let it be said that Beccari’s choice, far from being curious (even in the true sense of curiosity), shows the full measure of his intentions when publishing thirty-two sets of previously unpublished documents in chronological order, starting in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and leading up to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Beccari, 1903: 229-499). His intentions can be summarised in three arguments. The first concerns the question of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit martyrs. Documents XI to XIII are signed letters from Apolinário de Almeida, bishop and auxiliary of the patriarch and Bruno Bruni, which describe the circumstances of the persecution against the Jesuits, which began in the first year of Fasiledes’ reign (1632-1667). Publishing them here was intended to give additional

evidence to this concomitantly published case. As Beccari wrote in the introduction to the documents: “All [these letters] are distinctive and of considerable importance, and give us an idea of the temperament, culture and spirit of these three individuals<sup>13</sup> who did so much for the mission [...], after countless efforts in its favour, they generously shed blood for the faith they preached” (Beccari, 1903: 345).

The second argument involves giving full and complete legitimacy to the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia. Documents I and II are authored by Ignatius of Loyola: the first, addressed to the Portuguese king João III, regards the office of a future Catholic patriarch and two coadjutor bishops for Ethiopia and was written between 1551 and 1553 (Beccari, 1903: 229-230). The second contains his instructions to Patriarch João Nunes Barreto to “reduce” (i.e., to convert) the kingdoms of Prester John to the union of the Church and the Catholic religion, and was written between 1554 and 1555 (Beccari, 1903:237-254; *MHSI*, 1908: 680-690; Pennec, 2003: 58-71). These texts, the oldest references to the Jesuit mission, are foundational in two ways. They were written by the founder of the Society of Jesus for whom the mission in Ethiopia was of capital importance. And they are also foundational in the sense that they set out the terms and the overall programme that the missionaries were to implement in future decades. Finally, they highlighted the very specific links between the Society of Jesus and the Portuguese *padroado*, namely the right given to the Portuguese king to appoint the ecclesiastical hierarchy called to go to the mission lands. The following documents, in Saggio III, consist of unpublished letters signed by king Susenyos (1607-1632) attesting to his will to submit to the Roman Church on condition of receiving European military assistance. Written in Ge’ez and followed by a Latin translation for the first one, or a Spanish and Portuguese translation for the others, they legitimise the missionaries’ involvement in Ethiopia’s religious and political affairs in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and testify their compliance to the founder’s programme.

This choice of documents allowed Beccari to argue that the textual production of the Jesuits was both highly accurate in their understanding of the political and religious situation in 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia, and in terms of the situations they lived. As a counterpoint, he published a number of non-Jesuitical documents as evidence of their great ignorance of the political and religious situation in Ethiopia. Documents XIV to XVIII by the first two Franciscan apostolic prefects, Friar Antonio da Virgoletta and Brother Antonio da Pescopagno, letters addressed to the Sacred Congregation for the Propaganda of the Faith, between 1639 and 1648 (Beccari, 1903: 373-396) refer to their inability to reach central Ethiopia, given that foreign Catholics were barred from the country in the wake of the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1633 by the

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<sup>13</sup> In this subset of documents is also a signed letter from Pedro Páez, saggio X.

new Ethiopian ruler, Fasiledes (1632-1667). The only information they were able to provide came from Ethiopians passing through Suakin, which was under Ottoman rule (Beccari, 1903: 373). The anthology of non-Jesuitical documents (document XIX) also includes a letter sent by Matteo de Castro, Friar Minor, Bishop of Chrysopolis and Apostolic Vicar of Ethiopia, addressed to the Jesuit Parisiani, Moka, on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1650. In his introductory remarks, Beccari explained his choice as follows: “Matteo de Castro’s writing [...] would not deserve in truth to fade into the obscurity in which it has remained until now; it is full of acerbic and vulgar invective against such a respectable missionary, Fr. Parisiani, and against a religious order as a whole; but I wanted to publish it to show that Patriarch Mendez, when in his letter to the S. C. of the Propaganda of the Faith and then in his *History*, an unflattering portrait of the said bishop, gave proof of great moderation and did not delve into all that he could have” (Beccari, 1903: 397). Beccari’s decision to select this letter is quite deliberate and echoes the second part of this first volume in which the main manuscripts were presented, in particular that of Afonso Mendes, *Expeditionis aethyopicae Patriarchae Alphonsi Mendesii...* His book IV devotes several chapters (from 20 to 28) to Mendes recounting of the events from his point of view and refutes the main calumnies contained in the *Monitorio* written by Matteo de Castro to the Jesuit Parisiani (Beccari, 1903: 108-115). Without going into the details of the controversies, what seems worthy of interest is the way Beccari revisits these mid-17<sup>th</sup> century controversies.

The soul-seeking foisted by the traumatic expulsion of the Jesuit missionaries from Ethiopia in 1633 meant that its causes need to be determined, both within the Society and in wider Church circles. First and foremost, that is what Patriarch Afonso Mendes and the other survivors of the mission did upon their return to Goa. The explanations they provided dipped into the untenable political situation that Ethiopian King Susenyos had faced following his conversion to Catholicism (in 1622). The many uprisings of his “vassals” had forced his successor Fasiledes to “return to the faith of Alexandria”, as the Jesuits of the mission wrote in a document written by several different people (between October 14<sup>th</sup> and December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1641). This document aimed to testify to Patriarch Mendes’ excellent “leadership”, thus exonerating him – and by implication the whole group – from blame (Beccari, 1913: 208-209)<sup>14</sup>. This relatively short two-page document summarizes the position held by the missionaries, and is but one of many documents (edited by Beccari in the thirteenth volume of *RÆSOI*), dealing with the causes of their expulsion. For all practical purposes, their management of religious affairs in Ethiopia was not to be questioned.

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<sup>14</sup> The signatories were António Fernandes senior, Jerónimo Lobo, João de Sousa, Francisco Carvalho and Manuel de Almeida.

However, in Rome and from the perspective of the Sacred Congregation for the Propaganda of the Faith (created in 1622) (Nembro, 1971: 626-627)<sup>15</sup>, the fact that the Jesuits were the only order present on Ethiopian territory was considered problematic. Since the congregation of July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1627, the commission had campaigned for the right of missions in Ethiopia to be extended to other orders, especially to the Franciscans. So, in their view, the expulsion from Ethiopia meant the Society was indeed to blame for the mission's failure, namely by 'forcefully' imposing Latin rites and customs on the Ethiopian Church. So, sending representatives of another religious order, in particular the Franciscans (in the person of Antonio da Virgoletta and two other companions) would allow them, firstly, to explore the possibility of a resumption of the Catholic mission in Ethiopia, and secondly, to remedy the "damage" caused by the Jesuits. This decision was confirmed by the Congregation on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1634 (Nembro, 1971: 627-628)<sup>16</sup>.

In revisiting these 17<sup>th</sup> century issues and controversies between the Jesuits linked to the Portuguese *padroado* on the one hand, and the willingness of the *Propaganda Fide* to take the lead in the Church's missionary activities on the other, Beccari was keen to defend his co-religionists and insisted on, and documented, their good management of religious affairs in Ethiopia and also on their knowledge, which he believed to be infinitely superior to that of the following religious orders.

The edition of document XX (a copy of a letter from Jesuit Father Francesco Storer to Father Giovanni Calaça, Rector of the Diu College. From Gondar - Ethiopia -, 1657) (Beccari, 1903: 403-411) pointed out how twenty-five years after the expulsion of the Jesuits from Ethiopia, once again, only the Company had succeeded in bringing one of their own into Ethiopia. Their skill, their precise knowledge of the situation and the insistent requests from Patriarch Afonso Mendes, who had remained in Goa, led to this (small) success. Having reached the court of the Ethiopian king Fasiledes (the Jesuits' "destroyer"), posing as an Armenian doctor, the Jesuit Storer was able to assess the religious situation at the very heart of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom.

Beccari presents Document XXI as the last direct testimony from Ethiopia, claiming it was written by the priest Melchior da Sylva on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1695. According to him, this final document was clear proof of the existence of a Catholic community in Ethiopia fifty years after the expulsion of the Jesuits and thirty-three years after the Storer's death. When establishing 1695 as the time of writing of this manuscript and as the last eyewitness account, Beccari would not have failed to note the homonymy

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<sup>15</sup> Created by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 for the direction of the Church's missionary activity (Nembro, 1971: 626-627).

<sup>16</sup> Acta vol. 4 (1626-1627) f. 260rv; Acta vol. 8 (1632-1633) f. 317r; Acta vol. 10 (1634-1635) f. 4v-5r".

between this author and the one who had reached Ethiopia at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and to whom the Jesuit writers refer extensively.

In fact, the examination of this manuscript kept at the National Library of Lisbon in the Pombaliana collection (to which Beccari refers), leaves little doubt as to the real date of the document, which is [15]98, as per the *incipit*. The handwritten letter ends in this way, “desta Ethiopia oie cinco de Agosto de 98 annos”<sup>17</sup>. The copy of the letter that is kept at the Arquivo Distrital de Braga (ADB, MS. 779, *Cartas annais das missões da Etiopia*, doc. 56, fol. 692-698v) bears the same date. Furthermore, the letter offers internal details that confirm it was written at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. When discussing “current” Ethiopian political situation, the letter says that “it is the Empress who is in command, since the Emperor is a child” (Beccari, 1903: 429). This mention of a female regency agrees, not the with situation at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but with that at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as confirmed by Ethiopian documentation, in particular the *Brief Chronicle*, concerning Ya'eqob, the son of the deceased king (Särsä Dengel, 1563-1597), who was crowned when he was seven years old (Perruchon, 1896: 273-278). Furthermore, the text mentions the death of Father Francisco Lopes as a recent event (Beccari, 1903: 433). This missionary was part of the Jesuit contingent (six in total), that arrived in Ethiopia in 1557 with Bishop André de Oviedo, and he was the last survivor of the fathers of this first mission and died in May 1597 (Beccari, 1903: 122).

This document was definitely written at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and not in 1695, by the secular priest Melchior da Sylva (certainly his baptismal name), a Brahmin from Goa who had converted to Catholicism and who had served at the seminary of Saint Paul and then as a priest at Saint Anne’s Church (Beccari, 1903: 96; Páez, 1906: 212-213; 2011: 147-148). The end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a crucial period for the Ethiopian mission. The Jesuits who had arrived in 1557 were not relieved due to the difficulties of the Red Sea crossing, as its ports were controlled by the Ottomans making it virtually impossible either to reach or leave the Ethiopian kingdom<sup>18</sup>.

Páez devoted several chapters of his *História* to recounting the circumstances and decisions that were taken by the superiors of the Society of Jesus in Goa. After the martyrdom of Abraham de Giorgii (a Maronite Christian who became a Jesuit), a decision was made to ordain a brother with dark skin, so that he could more easily breach the Ottoman siege and reach Ethiopia. The urgency of the decision was motivated by the arrival in Goa of letters from the small Portuguese community in

<sup>17</sup> BNL, Collecção Pombalina, *Miscellanea, papeis varios*, “Carta do padre Belchior da Silva, Etiópia, 5 agosto 98”, fol. 53-59.

<sup>18</sup> Beccari made a very detailed account of it in the introduction to the *History of Páez*, *RÆSOI*, 2, 1905.

Ethiopia informing them that Father Francisco Lopes had died. They argued that to prevent being “contaminated” by their Ethiopian customs, they urgently needed a Catholic priest, adding that an Indian would have better chances than a European of reaching the country. He could easily disguise himself as a Banian, since these Indian traders were established in the various ports of the Indian Ocean as well as in Massawa (Pankhurst, 1974: 185-212; Páez, 1906: 211-212; 2011: 147). Páez writes that this proposal was accepted by Count Admiral Dom Francisco da Gama, the viceroy of Portuguese India, and Dom Aleixo de Menezes, the Archbishop of Goa, and the choice of the priest was left to the Jesuits. Manuel de Almeida, in turn, speaks of a general agreement from the authorities that a secular priest named Melchior da Sylva be sent to Ethiopia in March 1598, and mentions that he arrived in Massawa in early May of the same year (Páez, 1906: 213; 2011: 148; Almeida, 1907: 464), managing to get through and entering the northern Ethiopian highlands, where he joined the members of the Portuguese Catholic community living in Tigray. This letter signed by Melchior da Sylva, dated 5<sup>th</sup> August [1]598 and not, as Beccari claims, 5 August 1695, is indeed a witness to a situation that dates back to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and not the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The letter touched upon two issues: informing the Goa provincial how to reach Ethiopia with minimum risk and giving an assessment of the moral and material situation of the Portuguese Catholic community in Ethiopia. His observation is drastic: “these Catholics were in great danger of being mixed with schismatics, who call themselves Christians” (Beccari, 1903: 416). These considerations were similar to those of the Jesuit missionaries in their letters written twenty years before about this same community (Beccari, 1910: 308). The news sent to Goa by the secular priest were convincing enough to renew attempts to send missionaries to Ethiopia in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

A possible reason for Beccari to alter the date of Father Melchior’s letter and place it at the very end of this anthology of unpublished documents may be his willingness to intervene in the ecclesiastical competition between the beatification of the Jesuit martyrs of Ethiopia in the 1630s and that of the Capuchin martyrs, which occurred at the turn of the century. As Martínez d’Alòs-Moner points out, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Capuchins and Lazarists carried out important missions in Ethiopia under the leadership of charismatic figures such as Guiglelmo Massaja (1809-89) (Forno, 2009; Rosso (ed), 1984<sup>19</sup>) and Giustino De Jacobis (1800-60) (Crummey, 2007:

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<sup>19</sup> In 1990 the Capuchin Order organised a colloquium devoted to their mission in Ethiopia and published, *Atti del Convegno sul Card. G. Massaja all’Antoniano di Roma 24 febbraio 1990*: Guglielmo Massaja, vicario apostolico dei Galla (Etiopia), Rome 1990.

264-265; Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2007b: 526-527; Ceci, 2003: 618-636), who were both very popular in Europe. Massaja, who was made cardinal by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) in 1884, was encouraged by the latter to write his own Ethiopian missionary experience, known as: *I miei 35 anni di missione nell’alta Etiopia*, published by the press of the *Propaganda Fide*, between 1885 and 1895. Luis Martin, the general of the Society of Jesus, who had an interest in historiographical research, encouraged the quest for memories relating to the Jesuits in Ethiopia (Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2007a: 77-78). The prolonged textual exhumation that Beccari carried out is part and parcel of this historiographical endeavour within the Society of Jesus.

The third set of arguments present in the documentation published in the third part of Volume 1 deals with questions related to geography. Documents V, VI, VII and IX are chapters from various historical works of the Jesuits of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first is a chapter of Barradas’ *Treaty* (the V), entitled “Seaports of this kingdom [Tigray], in particular Massua [Massawa]”, which Beccari presents as a narrative with potential to offer a knowledge base for the Italian occupation of Eritrea, as he writes in the introduction: “I thought it proper to offer as a document the chapter in which he deals with Massaua, not because it is the most important, but because, after Italy’s occupation of this port and neighbouring region, it seemed to me that it would have a certain appeal, presently” (Beccari, 1903: 293). The same is true for one chapter from Afonso Mendes’ *Expeditionis aethyopicae Patriarchae Alphonsi Mendesii* (doc. IX Beccari, 1903: 333-343). Patriarch Mendes’ expedition through the Danakil region (northeast Ethiopia, south of the port of Massawa) and its geographical and ethnographic description was deemed to be of interest in this anthology of documents, especially since he had been the only missionary describing the region that was now part of the Italian colony of Eritrea.

Beccari’s decision to publish a facsimile of the map drawn by Almeida in the 17<sup>th</sup> century comparing it with a contemporary map from 1903, and also to include a chapter on the sources of the Nile from Almeida’s manuscript (revising Páez’s), doc. VI (Beccari, 1903: 303-309) and VII (Beccari, 1903: 311-318), had a broader purpose, that of adding to the debate on historical geography by extolling the place that Jesuits had occupied in the field of cartography. Beccari highlighted the founding quality of Almeida’s map and its relevance for debates related to geographical issues, which justified publishing it in the first volume of the collection: “the map is of vital importance for the history of geography, being the first drawn by a European hand of these places, and upon it all others were based during the next century” (Beccari, 1903: 303).



Beccari's decision to publish excerpts from treatises of the 17<sup>th</sup> century missionaries and various documents covering the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Volume 1 of the *RÆSOI* collection, had a clear motivation. He wanted to emphasise the role occupied in Ethiopian history by the Jesuits in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries by bringing to light a stock of rich documentation that had remained unpublished, thus implicitly contrasting, for his contemporary Catholic readers, the Jesuit mission with those of the Franciscans, Capuchins and Lazarists.

*RÆSOI*'s context of production demands that reading it, studying it, and quoting from it, goes beyond seeing it as a neutral collection of data but we must consider it as "a monument, a series of successive architectural changes that result in a final structure" (Bazin, 2008: 272). Beccari's parallel, or rather converging, careers are the context upon which he drew the motivation and to which he dedicated his monumental undertaking.

In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at Pedro Páez's *História da Etiópia*, as published in volumes 2 and 3 of the *RÆSOI* collection. For obvious chronological reasons, it was the first complete manuscript Beccari published, since Páez was the first of the missionaries to write such a "history". But the primacy Beccari attributed to this writer and his text within the collection had important repercussions on the understanding of their very status at the time of writing, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We shall also focus on the moment of its critical reedition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when research related to the text and its author has highlighted aspects hitherto absent, such as considering the concrete production of the text, its phases of writing and the history of its two surviving manuscripts, since their collation has led to a novel edition, among other outputs.

## CHAPTER 3

### **PEDRO PÁEZ AND THE *HISTÓRIA DA ETIÓPIA*. DEFINING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN DIFFERENT PRODUCTION AND PUBLISHING CONTEXTS**

The missionary Pedro Páez, who spent almost half his life in Ethiopia (from 1603 to 1622), is a key figure in the history of missions of the early modern era. His notoriety comes chiefly from the role he had in converting the Ethiopian king Susenyos to Catholicism in 1621, but also from his *História da Etiópia*, written while on Ethiopian soil between 1614 and 1622. *História da Etiópia* is generally recognised as an essential document for different fields of study - the history of Catholic missions in this country and of the relations between European religious orders, general religious history, the history of geographical exploration and of the political context of the Ethiopian kingdom, the study of material culture and of the territorial structure of the early modern Ethiopian kingdom. His work is an immensely valuable body of empirical knowledge about Ethiopia's political geography, religions, customs, flora and fauna, it is a lively account of the activities of the Jesuit mission in the country, and is a personal travelogue. It also incorporates a wide variety of documents such as the first translations into a European language (Portuguese) of a large number of Ethiopian literary texts, from royal chronicles to hagiographies.

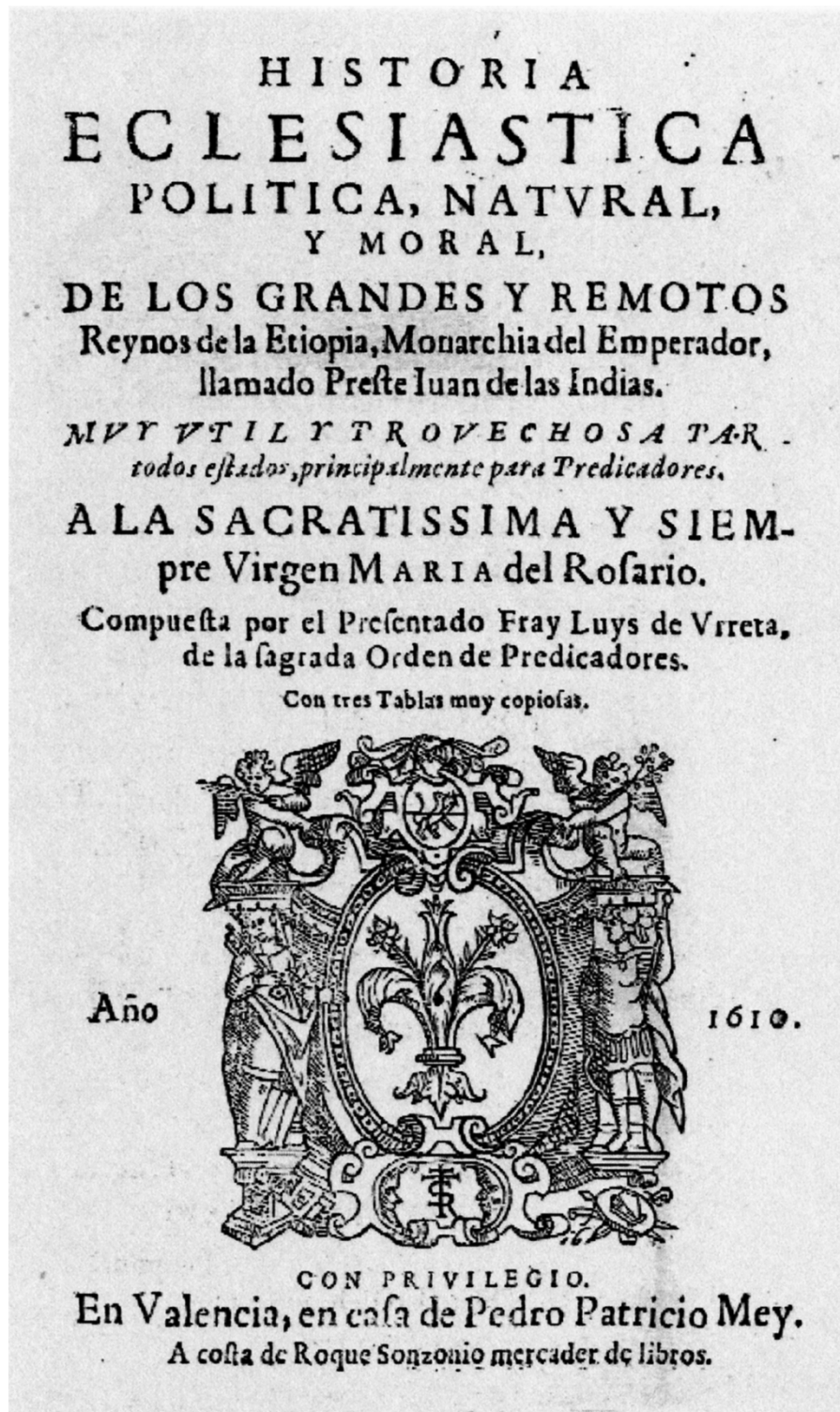
These different aspects of his work were never equally and simultaneously recognised. Depending on the time and place, they were each linked to particular production contexts, mindsets and insights regarding the work and its author. The identification of the moments and individuals who shaped these processes and questions allows a better understanding of the historical variations in Páez's public visibility and in the construction of his biography. We will thus adopt an emic and comparative approach to better read the multiple temporal and contextual layers of interpretation of the author and his writings and avoid the temptation to generate linear narratives on the construction of knowledge.

## **1. The writing exercise of the *História da Etiópia* (17<sup>th</sup> century). A dialogue about geographical knowledge**

While in Ethiopia, Páez was commissioned by the Jesuit central authorities to write a refutation of the views expressed by Friar Luís de Urreta, a Dominican scholar from Valencia, Spain (ca. 1570-1636), in two books published respectively in 1610 and in 1611, *Historia eclesiástica, política, natural, y moral, de los grandes y remotos Reynos de la*

*Etiópia, Monarchia del Emperador, llamado Preste Juan de las Indias*<sup>1</sup>, and the *Historia de la sagrada Orden de Predicadores, en los remotos Reynos de la Etiópia*<sup>2</sup>.

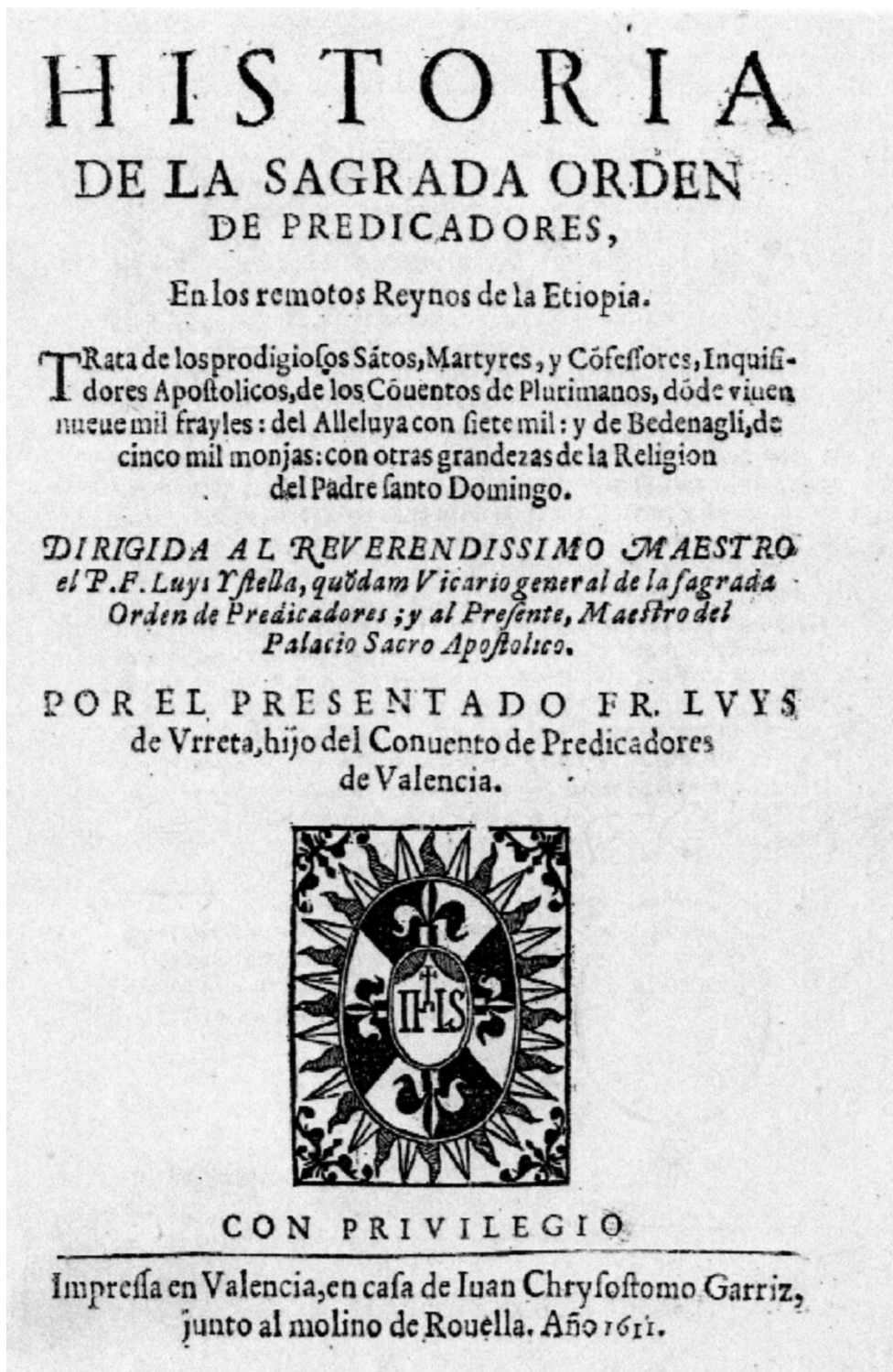
Figure 5 – Frontispiece of *Historia... de la Etiópia* by Friar Luís de Urreta, 1610.



<sup>1</sup> Valência, 1610. The 731 books are divided into 3 volumes of respectively 33, 15 and 6 chapters.

<sup>2</sup> Valência, 1611, 20 chapters and 410 pages.

Figure 6 – Frontispiece of *Historia... de Predicadores* by Friar Luís de Urreta, 1611.



Páez mobilized an immense array of knowledge to properly contest Urreta's extravagant and fantasist vision of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom. To illustrate his *modus operandi*, we shall focus on one example concerning missionary knowledge about the Ethiopian geographical space. We will compare his writings with the reports

and listings produced by contemporary Jesuit writers on the same topic, and the way they dialogue by mirroring or borrowing from each other, offering a mix of overlapping and independent information. The goal is not to combine them in order to disentangle the “true” from the “false”, to cross-check, verify, correct or cross-reference information<sup>3</sup>, but rather to bring them together as textual and social productions. Our aim here is not to rectify the ruptures their “mapping from the field” has caused<sup>4</sup>, but rather to grasp how this partly field-based missionary knowledge has been produced and harmonised, and to analyse the contexts of its production, the reasons and objectives governing its creation. Put simply, our aim is to question the way different sources produced knowledge and made it publicly available.

Thus, I will focus on two documents listing the “kingdoms” and “provinces” over which “Prester John” ruled,<sup>5</sup> as provided by two Jesuits who lived in this mission land. These were Luis de Azevedo (who arrived in Ethiopia in 1605 and died there in 1634 (Cohen Shabot, 2003b: 418) and Páez. The two men are contemporaries but their lists differ. Páez, who most probably read Azevedo, does not comment on the modifications, additions or deletions regarding the prior lists<sup>6</sup>.

### 1.1 Luis de Azevedo: from geopolitical knowledge to propaganda knowledge

Listing the “kingdoms” and “provinces” was a fairly classic operation carried out by missionaries in the areas where they worked. The Jesuit curriculum included teachings related to “the sphere, cosmography and astronomy” (Dainville, 1940: 165). This training allowed them once in their missionary field to provide their hierarchical superiors with geographical descriptions of the mission places and spaces. Azevedo had been entrusted by the leader of the mission, Páez, with the responsibility of reporting on the “spiritual and material state” of the Ethiopian mission for the years

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<sup>3</sup> Frugoni, 1993; see, in particular, the introduction (IX-XVII) by Alain Boureau who discusses A. Frugoni’s criticism of the method of combination in history.

<sup>4</sup> Bertrand Hirsch tried to reconstruct the stages of geographical knowledge developed by the missionaries and identified, in particular, two individuals responsible for the remarkable ruptures that emerged in European cartography at the end of the 17th century: Páez, who resided in Ethiopia from 1603 to 1622, and Almeida, who lived there from 1624 to 1633 (he was expelled by the new Ethiopian ruler, like many of his co-religionists). Hirsch emphasises: “The break-up made by Páez is essential. It is a question of detaching Æthiopia, which covered half of the continent on 16<sup>th</sup> century maps from historical Ethiopia, the one he explores and aims to convert. [...] Páez therefore carried out a first revision of Ethiopia’s geography, through an implicit criticism of the geography and mapping of his time. Almeida continued his work by explicitly criticising the [previous] cartography and producing a new map” (Hirsch, 1990: 524).

<sup>5</sup> Here, I repeat Father Páez’s formula; in the *História da Etiópia*, he uses this term for convenience by indicating that in Europe the King of Ethiopia was so designated (Páez, 2008: 71; 2011: 67).

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the question of missionary knowledge, Beckingham and Huntingford report but do not comment on these differences (1954: 11).

1605-1607. He wrote the usual annual letter for the year 1607, where he detailed the “kingdoms” and “provinces”, both those directly ruled by the Ethiopian king and neighbouring ones. Azevedo proposed a list of names from 27 “kingdoms”. For each, he recorded the religious denomination of the inhabitants (Christians, Moors or “gentiles”), and the nature of the relationship of each “kingdom” with the Ethiopian sovereign, according to whether or not they were his vassals (Beccari, 1911: 130-132). The list was followed by that of 14 “provinces” for which he used the same classification categories (Beccari, 1911: 132-133). The territorial complex he presented is part of a circular north-south geography, starting with the northernmost “kingdom” (Tigray and its port of Suakin) located at the 18th degree North, passing through the 12<sup>th</sup> degree (at Zeyla) to reach Mombasa (here, no indication of the degree), and finally taking a westward direction to go back north towards Cairo (Beccari, 1911: 130-322). After presenting the “geopolitical” situation of this area, he points out that at the time of writing, the space dominated by the “emperor” was reduced to six “kingdoms”: “The Tiger [Tigray], Abagamedrî [Begemder], Dambêâ [Dembya], Goiâma [Gojjam], Xaoâ [Choa], Amarâ [Amhara]” (Beccari, 1911: 133).

Azevedo, who had arrived in Ethiopia two years before, reports having collected the information from a “local” intermediary, João Gabriel, “who was captain of Portuguese Tigray for a few years” (Beccari, 1911: 126). Gabriel (ca. 1554-1626) was the son of an Ethiopian woman and an “Italian” soldier who went to Ethiopia in 1541, under the leadership of D. Cristóvão da Gama, the commander of the military expedition sent to assist the Ethiopian king Gelawdewos (1540-1559) against the Muslim army led by Ahmed ibn Ibrahim’s (known as Grañ, “the left-handed” by the Ethiopians). Many of the survivors from this expeditionary force settled in Ethiopia after the military campaign. Gabriel received his religious education first from the Jesuit fathers of the first mission (1557-1597), and then in the Ethiopian monastery of Debre Libanos where he learned Ge’ez (the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Church and clergy). He was appointed by the Ethiopian king as “captain of the Portuguese”, thus succeeding António de Góis, and accompanying the various kings in their movements, either to wage war or to collect tributes. He held this office until 1606-1607 (Boavida, 2005c: 632-633). Azevedo relied on his military experience and on his perspective as conqueror and enforcer to draw up his lists.

What kind of knowledge was Azevedo producing? The purpose here is not to judge the validity of the information but rather to highlight the nature of the knowledge that he transmits to his superiors in his annual letter. His description is a synthetic and impressionistic presentation of the religious geopolitics of this African region, as seen from a soldier engaged with the Ethiopian royal power, who would list the

“kingdoms” and “provinces” that were subject to the “emperor”, by distinguishing those who paid tribute from those that did not. And, as someone sensitive to religious issues, he was able to distinguish the religious identities of each of the “kingdoms”. The Jesuit hierarchy (both Goan and Roman) was keen to know every aspect of the situation in which the missionaries were engaged. Thus, this geostrategic description was sent to the Goan provincial (to whom the letter is addressed) (Beccari, 1911: 82), and then to Rome, and was to be used internally within the limited framework of the Society of Jesus, to allow the risks and potentialities of this missionary terrain to be assessed.

The moment of writing of this letter is to be seen in the context of the second Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, which began at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, a first mission had been sent to Ethiopia in 1557, composed of six Jesuit priests, who were met with opposition from inside the royal court, persecuted under the reign of Minas (1559-1563), and, with less intensity, under that of his successor Sarsä Dengel (1563-1597). Until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the missionaries lived far from the court, constrained to stay in May Gwagwa (Fremona), in the northern the province of Tigray. When the port city of Massawa was occupied by the Ottomans they were further marginalised, as access to the Ethiopian highlands was forbidden to Europeans and so relief could not arrive (Pennec, 2003: 15). The reactivation of the Ethiopian mission in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was decided by Philip II, sovereign of Spain and Portugal. His motives were both diplomatic and religious as he expected to renew the alliance with Christian Ethiopia to fight the Ottomans in the Red Sea. He was also acting in response to the pleas of the Portuguese Catholic community in Ethiopia, who feared being left without “spiritual guidance”, as the priests from the 1557 mission were either dead or very old. Philip II entrusted the task of carrying out his will to his representative in the territory of Estado da India, Viceroy Manuel de Sousa Coutinho, who approached the Jesuit Provincial to persuade him to send missionaries to Ethiopia. A first attempt was made in 1589, and two missionaries, António de Monserrate and Páez, were sent from Goa to Ethiopia. The vessel in which they travelled was shipwrecked off Dhofar (southern Arabia) and they were captured by a Turkish ship. They were held prisoner in various parts of the Arabian Peninsula, their detention ending in September 1596, after a large ransom was paid (Beccari, 1905: XII-XX). In 1595, a second attempt was made and another Jesuit, Abraham de Giorgii, was sent but was captured in Massawa and then beheaded that same year (Pennec, 2003: 100-111; Páez, 1906: 202-203; 2011: 138-139).

Azevedo’s letter must be read in this context of geopolitical tensions and the information he provided was likely to give his superiors the picture of a regional



geopolitical situation that could have consequences for the physical situation of his staff. Therefore, the “knowledge” produced in this context should not be understood as answers to the questions that cartographers in Europe were asking at the time. As Hirsch stresses, “what remained constant in the geographical literature on Ethiopia throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century was the vastness of the Ethiopian territory. The belief that the pagan regions south of the Christian kingdom are close to the Cape of Good Hope remains alive in the geographical literature on Ethiopia throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, in perfect harmony with what is shown in the cartography” (Hirsch, 1990: 425). Finally, whether or not this letter was to be published was absolutely of no concern to the author and the fact that it was is totally unrelated to the missionary’s intentions and expectations.

Azevedo’s letter was probably written in triplicate, to be sent by three different routes (Loyola, 1991: 711-716), as was common practice with correspondence from Ethiopia and other Eastern missions (India, Japan, Brazil) to reach Rome and Lisbon, via Goa. It was published under the auspices of the Jesuit Fernão Guerreiro, who, since 1603, had specialised in printing, in abbreviated and revised form, the annual reports from mission lands. In 1611, having obtained the necessary authorisation from the General of the Society, Claudio Aquaviva, he published a collection of letters from 1607 and 1608, under the title “Annual Report of the Things the Fathers of the Society Did in the Regions of Eastern India [...]” (Guerreiro, 1942).

For the most part, for Eastern Africa, Guerreiro uses the geographical information provided by Azevedo’s letter, distorting some of the names of Ethiopian “kingdoms”, such as “Goroma” for “Goiâma [Gojjam]”, eliminating the 27<sup>th</sup> “kingdom” and interpreting “Moçambique” (the eastern African coast) as “Manomotapa” (Monomotapa, the inner kingdom of south-east Africa) (Guerreiro, 1611: fol. 60-63 [reed. 1942]: 64-66). It is important to stress the staging developed around this letter and others, and how and from what perspective Guerreiro presented them. The Jesuit describes the “things of Ethiopia” in seven chapters (Guerreiro, 1611: fol. 28 [reed. 1942]: 31), addressing “the temporal state of this Ethiopian empire”, and the way in which “the king related to the fathers and matters concerning the reduction to the holy Roman Church” (Guerreiro, 1611: fol. 30v [reed. 1942]: 33). Thus, Azevedo’s letter is integrated into previously oriented chapters, and Guerreiro recounts the circumstances of the Ethiopian king’s conversion to the Roman faith - which had not yet happened and would only occur much later in 1621. Seen from Europe and Goa, the conversion of the Ethiopian king to Catholicism would automatically imply the submission of his “great empire” (Pennec, 2003: 277; 2011: 196).

According to this perspective, information about the 26 “kingdoms” and the religious practices of its inhabitants was aimed at accentuating the immense missionary work that still needed to be accomplished. Despite the (non-factual) Ethiopian king’s conversion to Catholicism, Guerreiro wished to stress that the five missionaries faced a considerable task. The publication of these texts on Ethiopia was, on the one hand, most probably meant to stimulate the apostolic zeal of young recruits studying in Jesuit colleges in Europe. The desire to go abroad was fostered by letters from missions that were read aloud during meals (Masson, 1974: 1030-1041; Laborie, 1998: 10-11). On the other hand, Guerreiro’s report on Ethiopia was in accord with the system the Society set up during the 1550s<sup>7</sup>, very soon after its foundation in 1540, for circulating the letters of its missionaries spread throughout the world in order to acquire “a notoriety and a flattering reputation among the greats of Europe” (Laborie, 1998: 17; Dainville, 1940: 122-123; Broggio, Cantù, Fabre, Romano, 2007: 5-18; Romano, 2015: 353-357).

Still, the notion of an audience that would have been “fond of these ‘curious letters’, describing savage cannibals or the mysteries of the kingdom of Prester John”, as Laborie writes, is certainly to be reinterpreted because it does not explain this Ethiopian example, where collecting geographical information was of little use except to those whose objectives were related to issues connected to the Nile river system and the inner workings of Prester John’s “empire”.

Thus the “geographical” knowledge (a tiny part of the information contained in Azevedo’s letter) is produced according to a specific logic and responds to concerns that derive from a particular social context and from the modalities of *in situ* enunciation. It is preferable to focus on the dialogue in which this kind of knowledge is used.

## 1.2 The *História da Etiópia*: a knowledge-based refutation

Páez’s list of “kingdoms” and “provinces” appears in Chapter 1 of Book I of his *História da Etiópia*. His enumeration differs from Azevedo’s. He mentions 35 “kingdoms” and 18 “provinces” (Páez, 1905: 15; 2008: 72; 2011: 70-71) and, even though Azevedo’s letter was in his hands, according to Guerreiro, he did not include all the information contained in it. Chapter 1 of Book I addresses the controversy between Jesuits and Dominicans at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century over the Ethiopian missionary terrain – which was a European, not an Ethiopian issue.

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<sup>7</sup> *Avisi particolari delle Indie; Novi avisi di piu lochi de l’India.*

Namely, the conflict between two religious orders competing over jurisdictions in mission territories that mirrored political tensions between the two Iberian countries.

In early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dominican Order invested heavily in the question of East African mission lands and with this in mind sponsored the publication of two important books. The first was published in Évora, Portugal, in 1609, under the title *Etiópia Oriental, e vária história de cousas notáveis do Oriente*, written by Friar João dos Santos, a Dominican missionary assigned to Mozambique under the Portuguese *padroado*. The second was printed in two volumes, in Valência, in the following two years, and was written by Friar Luís de Urreta (ca.1570-1636). These publications had very different fortunes. While the work of Friar João dos Santos, especially the first part, was widely disseminated and taken up by authors such as the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval (Santos, 1999: 32-36)<sup>8</sup>, Friar Urreta's books provoked an indignant reaction within the Society of Jesus. Both, however, can be read as claims in favour of the Dominican Order's right to carry out missionary work. Both argued for the precedence of the Dominicans in these two areas and both stressed the idea of exclusivity, of a right to do missions without competition in territories considered to be peripheral at a time when the Society of Jesus was extending its sphere of action.

In his book, dos Santos totally ignores the Jesuit mission of the 1560s to the kingdom of Monomotapa, in East Africa (Santos, 1999: 12; 488-490; Santos, 2011: 27), and Urreta's *Historia...de la Etiópia* proclaimed that the Dominicans had a primordial (made-up) role in the conversion of the Ethiopian kingdom to Catholicism in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, through the work of a group of eight Dominican preachers<sup>9</sup>. The objective was to "show that the Abyssinians of Prester John had not been schismatic and separated from the Catholic Church, but were well and truly Catholic and subject to the Church" (Guerreiro, 1611: fol. 265; [reed. 1942]: 287), thus giving flesh to the affirmation of a hypothetical Dominican presence in Ethiopia, at least two and a half centuries before the arrival of the Jesuits. Through this device, which was close to a *reductio ad absurdum*, the Dominican friar claimed to establish the illegitimacy, in principle, of the papal privilege granted to the Jesuits, who had been given the exclusive right to establish a mission in Ethiopia in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.

Urreta was born in Valencia (Spain). He joined the Convent of Preachers (Dominicans), where he became a lecturer in 1588. He studied theology and obtained the rank of master. As far as can be ascertained, he never left the Dominican province

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<sup>8</sup> Alonso Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catecismo evangélico de todos Etiopes* (Sevilha, 1627).

<sup>9</sup> According to various Dominican authors, and in particular Serafino Razzi, Urreta and João dos Santos identified these early preachers with the nine saints venerated by the Ethiopian Christian Church (Santos, 1999: 427-29; Urreta, 1611: 13-30).

that covered Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia, through which he journeyed as a preacher every year during Lent. When he died on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1636, he left many papers with annotations and various writings in a cellar, which according to a colleague of his time was a “quasi bookstore”<sup>10</sup>. But these were later lost at a feast in the convent because they were used to cover ornaments<sup>11</sup>. Apart from his books on Ethiopia, he left a few sparse manuscripts, and a two-volume text entitled *Combite de la naturaleza*<sup>12</sup>. Notes on Urreta in the catalogues of Dominican writers emphasize his simple and candid character, suggesting the truthfulness of everything he wrote concerning Ethiopia (Gimeno, 1747: 333; Fuentes, 1930: 334).

Actually, the notion of Urreta’s ingenuity began with his very critics. The responsibility for the “lies” he told was gradually attributed to his informant rather than to him. However, the figure of the informant who played an authoritative role in many of the testimonies discussed in the *Historia...de la Etiópia*, is rather questionable.

### 1.3 European reactions: Jesuit defence against the Dominicans at the dawn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century

The publication of Urreta’s first book, *Historia ecclesiastica y politica...*, in 1610 did not go unnoticed by the Society of Jesus. Indeed, since the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits had been engaged in an attempt to do missions in this kingdom, whose Christianity differed greatly from that of Rome. The Ethiopian Church’s links to the Orthodox patriarchate of Alexandria and its adherence to monophysite doctrine (a doctrine centred on the divinity of Christ incarnate), were the two main points of divergence that Ignatius of Loyola, the first general of the order, raised in his letter to the Ethiopian sovereign, Claude (Gelawdewos, 1540-1559) (Pennec, 2003: 27-71; Loyola, 1991: 918-922)<sup>13</sup>. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the new group of Jesuit missionaries that had been sent to Ethiopia were far from succeeding in converting the Ethiopian sovereign and his people to the Roman faith, and the Dominicans’ public statements urged a reply from the Society of Jesus.

The first reaction came in a book Father Guerreiro published, following the volume on the annual relations of the Eastern missions of 1607-1608. In an appendix entitled “Addition to the relationship of the things of Ethiopia, with greater information, more

<sup>10</sup> Falcón, *História de algumas cosas más notables...*, ms. 204, fol. 644.

<sup>11</sup> Information collected in Agramunt, El Palacio Real de la Sabiduria, ms. 148-49, vol. 2, fol. 512-13. The notebook writings were collected by Josef Agramunt, who ordered them to be bound.

<sup>12</sup> “The Invitation of Nature”. These manuscripts were still in the monastery’s library in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (see Rodríguez, 1747/1977: 310).

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Ignatius of Loyola to King Claudius (Gelawdewos), Rome, 23.02.1555.

certain and very different from what Frei Urreta follows, in the book he printed of the History of the Empire of the Prester John” (Guerreiro, 1942: 287-380), Guerreiro dissected Urreta’s arguments point by point and opposed them with information from the letters of the Ethiopian missionaries written between 1560 and 1608. The controversy concerned Urreta’s assertions about the “Catholic faith of Ethiopians and the Dominican presence prior to that of Jesuits in Ethiopia”. Thus began the series of criticisms against the Urreta that was to last until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

To properly address Guerreiro’s arguments, a few clues and some additional information about this Jesuit are needed. From 1603 to 1611, Guerreiro, superior of the Jesuit professed house in Lisbon, published one volume every two years of the *Relaçam annual das cousas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus nas partes da India Oriental...*<sup>14</sup> These annual reports were written by missionaries in the field, under the Portuguese *padroado* (Japan, China, Malacca, India, Ethiopia, Monomotapa, Angola, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Brazil...). Each mission (not each missionary) had to write an annual detailed report “of the things that the Fathers of the Society” did *in situ*. Guerreiro’s task during the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century continued a practice established since the foundation of the Society in 1540 when letters about the work of the first missionaries to the “East Indies” were quickly published, as was the case of the *Cartas do Japão* (including those of Brazil), from 1549-1551 (Garcia, 1993). Throughout the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuit annual reports from the overseas missions were published on a regular basis. Thus, Guerreiro’s undertaking was part of the established practice in the institution of disclosing its evangelising activities.

Vaz de Carvalho, the author of the most recent biographical note on Guerreiro, commented, “As Lisbon was the confluence point of many letters on the activities of

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<sup>14</sup> A set of five volumes. The first was published in Evora (1603), and the others in Lisbon (1605, 1607, 1609, 1611). *Relaçam annual das cousas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus na India, & Japão nos annos de 600 & 601 & do processo da conversão, & Christandade daquellas partes: tirada das cartas Gêraes que de lá vierão pelo Padre Fernão Guerreiro da Companhia de Jesus. Vai dividida em dous livros, hum das cousas da India & outro do Japam*, 1603; *Relaçam annal das cousas que fezeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas partes da India Oriental, & no Brasil, Angola, Cabo verde, Guiné, nos annos de seiscentos & dous & seiscentos & tres, & do processo da conversam, & christandade daquellas partes, tirada das cartas dos mesmos padres que de lá vieram. Vai dividido em quatro livros. O Primeiro do Japã. O II da China & Maluco. O III da India. O IV do Brasil, Angola, & Guiné*, 1605; *Relaçam annal das cousas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesu na partes da India Oriental, & em algumas outras da conquista deste Reyno nos annos de 604 & 605 & do processo da conversam & Christandade daquellas partes. Tiradas das cartas dos mesmos Padres que de la vieram. Vai dividida em quatro livros, o primeiro de Japam, o segundo da China, terceiro da India, quarto de Ethiopia & Guiné*, 1607; *Relaçam annal das cousas que fezeram os padres da Companhia de Jesu na partes da India Oriental, & em algumas outras da conquista deste Reyno no anno de 606 & 607 & do processo da conversam & Christandade daquellas partes. Tiradas das cartas dos mesmos Padres que de la vieram. Vai dividida em quatro livros. O Primeiro da Provincia do Japam, & China. O segundo da Provincia do Sul. O terceiro da Provincia do Norte. O quarto de Guiné, & do Brasil*, 1609; *Relaçam annal das cousas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesu na partes da India Oriental, & em algumas outras da conquista deste Reyno...*, 1611.

the Jesuits overseas, he undertook the work of compiling them and grouping them by place of origin” (Vaz de Carvalho, 2001). The author rightly underlines the specificity of Lisbon as a crucial point of arrival of the annual letters. But Lisbon’s strategic position is not enough to explain why Guerreiro devoted almost ten years of his life to collecting, reorganising and publishing these missionary letters. Vaz de Carvalho’s biographical note reflects the same view as those of various biographical and bibliographical dictionaries<sup>15</sup>. Guerreiro’s ten years of textual production made him one of the most active and visible authors of his time, offering synthetic and apologetic stories with “this effect of spatial simultaneity” as Ines Županov wrote (2007: 209). Historians of the Catholic missions interested in the Portuguese *padroado* have at one point or another been obliged to quote this author in their bibliography, each time “primary” sources went missing (either because they were lost or were not kept in public archives), Guerreiro therefore being the only reference available. As a result, he tends to be quoted as a “secondary” source, thus fostering few, if any, serious investigations into his work. Moreover, the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus contain few traces of what was once a major publishing project,<sup>16</sup> widely circulated thanks to translations made into other European languages, such as Castilian, German and French<sup>17</sup>.

While Guerreiro was working on his refutation of Urreta’s first book (from 1610), a second volume was published in the second half of 1611, entitled *Historia de la Sagrada*

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<sup>15</sup> According to the *Catalogus Defunctorum* (HS 43a, 18r, Lusit.), he was born in Almodovar, South Portugal, in 1550 or 1567 and died on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1617. De Backer mentions that in 1608 he was the superior of the professed House of Lisbon when Father Pierre du Jarric corresponded with him about the French translation of these annual letters.

<sup>16</sup> Personal investigations in the ARSI in April 2013 were frustratingly inconclusive, and no correspondence between the province of Portugal and Rome about the successive editions of Guerreiro exist in the archives.

<sup>17</sup> Christoval Suarez de Figueroa, *História y anal Relacion de la cosas que hizieron los Padres de la Compañia de Iesus, por las partes de Oriente y otras, em la propagacion del Santo Evangelio, los años passados de 607 y 608. Sacada, lima, y compuesta de Portugues em Castellano por el Doctor Christoval Suarez de Figueroa*, 1614; *Ethiopische Relation oder Bericht, Was sich in dem grossen Königreich Ethiopia (so man sonst der Abyssiner, oder Priester Johan[n] Land nennt) vom 1604 und folgenden Jahren, so wol in Welt- alß Geistlichen sachen zugetragen, Darinn auch insonderheit das Leben und ableiben H. Andreae Oviedi, Ethiopischen Patriarchen und seiner Gefährten, glaubwürdig beschriben: Auß Portugesischer zu Lißbona gedruckten Exemplaren ins Teutsch gebracht*, 1610. *Historischer Bericht, Was sich in dem grossen unnd nun je lenger je mehr bekandten Königreich China, in Verkündigung deß H. Evangelii und fortpflanzung des Catholischen Glaubens, von 1604. und folgenden Jaren, denckwürdig zugetragen, Auß Portugesischen zu Lisabona gedruckten Exemplaren ins Teutsch gebracht*, 1611 *Seconde partie. De l’Histoire des choses plus memorables aduenues tant ez Indes Orientales, que autres païs de la decouverte de Portugais, en l’establissement & progresz de la foy Chrestienne et Catholique, et principalement de ce que les religieux de la Compagnie de Iesus y ont fait, et enduré pour la mesme fin, depuis qu’ils y sont entrez jusques l’an 1600. Le tout recueilly des lettres et autres Histoires, qui en ont esté écrites cy devant, et mis en ordre par le P. Pierre du Jarric Tolosain de la mesme Compagnie*, 1610; *Troisiesme partie de l’Histoire des Choses plus memorables aduenues tant ez Indes Orientales, qu’autres païs de la decouverte des Portugais en l’establissement et progresz de la foy Chrestienne, et Catholique et principalement de ce que les religieux de la Compagnie de Jésus y ont fait, & enduré pour la mesme fin depuis l’an 1600 jusques à 1610, par le P. Pierre du Jarric, Tolosain de la mesme Compagnie*, 1614.

*Orden de Predicadores, en los remotos Reynos de la Etiopía*, with an expanded description of the (supposedly) pioneering missionary activity of the Dominicans in Ethiopia.

Shortly afterwards, between 1613-1614 and 1616, the Jesuit provinces of Portugal and Goa, apparently acting jointly and simultaneously, commissioned works from three separate authors to refute and delegitimise the Dominican friar's books. Their clear intention was to widely circulate the Jesuit case against the allegation that Ethiopian Christianity followed the Roman Catholic faith, and challenge the insinuation that the Society of Jesus had settled there under false pretences.

A Latin version, intended for a wide audience, was entrusted to Father Nicolau Godinho (1561-1616), whose work *De Abassinorum rebus deque Aethiopiae Patriarchis Ioanne Nonio Barreto, & Andrea Oviedo* was published in 1615 (Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, 2005: 821-822). The chronicler Diogo do Couto (1542-1616) wrote a lay version in Portuguese, now lost, entitled *História do Reyno da Ethiopia, chamado vulgarmente Preste Joao, contra as falsidades, que nesta materia escreveo P. Luiz Urreta Dominicano*.

After the do Couto's death, the manuscript was sent to the Archbishop of Braga, Dom Aleixo de Meneses (Machado, 1965: 649), an clear sign of the Church hierarchy's interest in the matter and even that of the political authorities, given that Dom Aleixo had a seat at the Madrid Council of State. A request for a third book was sent to the highlands of Ethiopia, where the direct testimony of the missionaries themselves was called upon to provide a more definitive argument, and re-establishing, in the Society's view, the principles of truth and discursive authority. Páez, the superior in charge of the mission, took on this task and worked on it until his death.

Páez's unpublished corrections and rectifications (his *História* was, as mentioned, only published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, by Beccari) of Guerreiro's book on Urreta helps to shed light on this vast collective enterprise. Urreta's two books and Guerreiro's refutation reached Ethiopia at the earliest in 1613 and at the latest in 1614, as Páez himself suggests in two letters addressed to two different recipients<sup>18</sup>. His approach to refutation was to follow the order of the chapters of Urreta's books and respond to them one by one, so much so that the organisation of his "Book I"<sup>19</sup> is identical to Urreta's first book (1610), a procedure he kept in Books II and III – not in Book IV, which is an attempt to insert the work of the missionaries within Ethiopian

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<sup>18</sup> Biblioteca Pública de Braga (BPB), hereinafter BPB, Ms. 779, doc. XIb, f<sup>o</sup> 154, letter addressed to the Provincial of Goa, Francisco Vieira (4 July 1615); "Relationes et Epistolæ", vol. 11, pp. 359-360, letter to Thomas de Ituren (20 June 1615); see Pennec, 2003: 249-251, for a more developed argument.

<sup>19</sup> The *História* manuscripts begin directly with Chapter 1, after the dedication and prologue to the reader (ARSI, Goa 42, f<sup>o</sup> 3; BPB, Ms 778, f<sup>o</sup> 3), so it is for convenience that this first part (composed of 37 chapters) is called "Book I". Books II, III and IV, on the other hand, have titles.

politics, and makes no reference to Urreta since it deals with events that occurred after Urreta's writings.

The question of the lands ruled by "Prester John" is the subject of Chapter 1 of "Book I". Páez's main concern was to systematically review and question what he labelled as Urreta's fabulations; for this, being there, on the spot, able to observe, question, hear and note, were essential measures of his legitimacy to refute. His process of deconstructing Urreta's account by countering it with a "lived" knowledge, by "being there", was a rhetorical tool very similar to that used by modern anthropologists (Lévi-Strauss, 1973: 25).

He countered the "fables and great confusion" (Páez, 2008: 71; 2011a: 67) of the Dominican, with information gathered in the field, from local intermediaries often referred to by name. Having become a confidant of King Susenyos (1607-1632), whose military campaigns he followed, had also forged precious links with the royal court's scholars, and in particular with Tino, the king's historiographer, and also with the "grandees of the royal camp", men of war who regularly participated in military campaigns and toured the conquered regions. Thus, when listing the kingdoms and provinces of the "empire of Prester John", he specified: "The emperor's principal secretary listed all this for me and, afterwards, so that I could be more certain, in the presence of the emperor himself I asked a brother of his, named Erâz Cela Christôs, and he told me likewise. But the emperor added that, even though his predecessors possessed all these kingdoms and provinces, he now had little control over some of them, since the majority had been taken by some heathens that they call Gâla [Oromo]" (Páez, 2008: 72; 2011a: 69).

Páez's geographical knowledge was not based on measuring instruments, which he did not have, as he wrote (Páez, 2008: 71; 2011a: 67), but came rather from the experience of his informants who were used to calculating distances from one point to another on walking days, so much so that the results varied from one person to another, as he noted for the sake of precision. He thus proposed three ways to measure the kingdom's North to South extension: two months, fifty, and forty-five days. He retained the median measurement by estimating the distances covered at eight leagues per day, or a total of four hundred leagues from North to South. He carried out the same operation to calculate distances from East to West, with variations from two hundred and forty to three hundred leagues. His calculations to circumscribe the Ethiopian kingdom's territory, or more precisely what it had been in previous centuries, were aimed at deconstructing Urreta's data, which he cites, to disprove him. From North to South, six hundred and eighty leagues, and from East to West, four hundred and seventy (Páez, 2008: 71-72; 2011a: 68). The Jesuit appealed to local



participation for “proof”, since without his informants, he would have been unable to give these estimate measures, as he himself had never set foot inside the borders of the former Ethiopian territory. Here, he was not interested in the space dominated by the Ethiopian king at the time of writing his text, because his concern was elsewhere.

His aim was to demonstrate the falsity of Urreta’s claims, since even when in previous centuries Ethiopian kings ruled over a wider territory (if the Ethiopian claims were problematic, it was not his intention to question them), its scope was, according to his information, only half of that mentioned by Urreta.

Páez was perfectly aware that the knowledge he was presenting was out of step with the time of writing, and he did not fail to point out the political changes that the “empire of Prester John” had undergone in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century under pressure from the Oromos (“Gallas”), considerably reducing the kingdom’s territory. By contextualising Páez’s writings in dialogue with Urreta, we understand why he did not use Azevedo’s geographical information.

It is of relative importance that the information differs from one document to another. What must be noted is the dialogical relationship. The afore-mentioned lists were not initially intended to be distributed to an audience of geographers and cartographers, but rather to be only circulated within the Society of Jesus. Therefore, to return to the use made by historians of this Jesuit documentation, Páez’s proposed new reading of Ethiopian space was not intended to add to European geographical knowledge. To attribute to it the desire for an epistemological rupture is a reverse reading of the sources, lacking in contextualization and perspective of the issues at the time of writing. He was nevertheless, even if unwillingly, an important link in an unravelling a scientific chain (Pennec, 2011: 191-207; Besse, 2015: 157-175).

Páez’s entire manuscript was written while he was in Ethiopia and the years that coincided with the time of writing were a relatively favourable period for the establishment of Catholicism, with the support of part of the Ethiopian political and religious elite, even if individual resistance was expressed here and there. The apex of this period came with the conversion of king Susenyos to the Roman faith, at the end of 1621. The author experienced the establishment of Catholicism at the highest level of the monarchy “directly”<sup>20</sup> and therein found what he saw as the definitive argument to convince potential readers of the validity of the Jesuit missionary undertaking in Ethiopia, in order to bring out the “truth” over the Dominican Urreta (Pennec, 2003: 244 sq.).

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<sup>20</sup> From 1605 to 1620 there were five missionaries in Ethiopia: Pedro Páez, António Fernandes, Francisco António de Angelis, Luís de Azevedo and Lourenço Romano.

Páez's commissioned text, a manuscript of no less than 538 folios, circulated initially among members of the Society of Jesus in Ethiopia and in Portuguese India, but after a few misadventures was shelved and forgotten in the Jesuit archives (believed to be lost for a time - as we shall see), from where it was "salvaged" by Beccari in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The previous chapter on Beccari's itinerary sought to relate the entire collection he published between 1903 and 1917. Now, it will be a matter of looking more closely at what he sought to assert by presenting Páez's *História da Etiópia*.

## 2. Beccari's edition of *História da Etiópia* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: a writer and an explorer is discovered

The history of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia as a whole has been known in Europe since 1660, when the Jesuit provincial from Portugal<sup>21</sup>, Balthazar Teles, published his *História geral de Ethiopia a alta... composta na mesma Ethiopia, pelo Padre Manoel d'Almeyda, natural de Viseu, Provincial, e Visitador, que foy na India. Abreviada com nova releyçam...*<sup>22</sup>. His *History* was an abridged version based on the Almeida's ten-part manuscript, completed before 1646 in Goa. In the prologue to the reader, Teles stated that he was inspired by first-hand eyewitness accounts:

The first [testimony] was a great servant of God and a very distinguished priest, Father Pero Pays of our Company, who with great certainty we may call the first Apostle of this Ethiopia (as we will see in this book), who in a handwritten treatise, preserved in our secretariat in Rome, relates all things from Ethiopia, from the year 1555 until 1622, the year of his holy death in Ethiopia. The second renowned testimony is that of our very important, very docile and very authoritative Father Manoel d'Almeyda, Provincial and Visitor who lived in India and in Ethiopia [...] to whom the special title of composer of this History is given... (Teles, 1660, prólogo ao leitor).

<sup>21</sup> Teles published in 1645-1647 a *Chronica da Companhia de Iesu, da Provincia de Portugal*.

<sup>22</sup> Teles, *História geral de Etiópia a Alta ou Abassia do Preste Ioam, e do que nella obraram os Padres da Companhia de Iesus: composta na mesma Etiópia, pelo Padre Manoel d'Almeyda, natural de Viseu, Provincial, e Visitador, que foy na India. Abreviada com nova releyçam, e methodo pelo Padre Balthazar Tellez, natural de Lisboa, Provincial da Provincia Lusitania, ambos da mesma Companhia*, 1660; Leite, 2001: 3718.

Teles relied on these two authors, not having been to Ethiopia himself. Thus, the chronology in its broad outlines, the different events, the history of the mission, and the various activities of the missionaries are depicted in polished style, adapted to the taste of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese language and accessible to a wider public. The book soon found a place in the international catalogue of missionary literature.

Beccari, with the obvious intention of highlighting the importance of the unpublished manuscripts, did not fail to stress that Teles' was not a living first-hand account in touch with the reality of the missionary field, even if he claimed to have been nourished by the manuscripts left by Páez and Almeida. According to Beccari, the situation surrounding Páez's manuscript was quite different to Almeida's (on which Teles claimed to base his work) because it had been almost completely unknown until then. As he wrote: "apart from this vague information and some excerpts that Tellez inserted in his *História Geral de Ethiopia a alta...*, it was unknown" (Beccari, 1903: 3).

Beccari's aim in publishing the *RÆSOI* collection was not to completely rewrite the story of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia but rather to add to it by stressing the legitimising role of the manuscripts' authors as eyewitness to the accepted Jesuit narrative. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Beccari pointed out, "Páez's manuscript was believed to have been long lost<sup>23</sup>, and some authors (Desborough-Cooley, 1872: 533) believed that his work had been almost literally inserted into Fr. Manuel de Almeida's History. But this is not true, as we shall see" (Beccari, 1903: 3).

Beccari answers the question of why the historical works on Abyssinia remained unpublished for centuries in two ways. One reason would have been an issue of literary style and use of language. The style used by the three missionaries, Páez, Barradas and Almeida, was flat, simple and graceless, which must have looked anomalous when compared to the flowery and inflated language in vogue at that time in Portugal, particularly by Jesuit writers. The other reason would be that in the 1650s, there was little interest in Ethiopian studies<sup>24</sup>. Hence, the immense value of the missionaries' extensive work of translating and editing Ethiopian literature (chronicles of Ethiopian kings, liturgical and theological texts, legends, etc.), was not recognised by their contemporaries, so much so that Teles in his *History* (in 1660) makes almost no mention of them (Beccari, 1903: 115). Beccari's main argument is that,

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<sup>23</sup> Sommervogel, 1895: 82-84, indicates that Páez's *Historia Aethiopiae*, "formerly kept in the archives of Assistance of Portugal".

<sup>24</sup> The second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw a renewed interest in Ethiopian studies with the publication of the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (*Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Rome, Vitalis Mascardi, 1652-1654), Teles (1660) and the linguist Hiob Ludolf (*Historia Aethiopica, sive Brevis & succincta descriptio regni Habessinorum*, Frankfurt: Joh. David Zunner, 1681 and *Iobi Ludolfi aliàs Leutholf dicti ad suam Historiam aethiopicam antehac editam commentarius*, Frankfurt: Joh. David Zunner, 1691).

despite the rudimentary and “flat” style of the missionaries, the material they collected, translated and interpreted, had not yet been given its true worth. So, by publishing Pedro Páez’s manuscript, he was arguing for his double rehabilitation, not only as an explorer but also as a writer.

### 2.1 Pedro Páez: the discovery of a missionary writer

This is how Beccari, in the Latin introduction to Páez’s *História da Etiópia* addresses his reader:

To the reader.

Great esteem must be given to the historical books and letters of these men who, from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, travelled to Ethiopia to spread the Catholic faith, and remained there for eighty consecutive years, as no one should ignore. And yet, as is well known, these writings, abandoned until now in an undeserved oblivion, lie buried in archives. Moreover, Father Pedro Páez’s manuscript, a uninterrupted history of Ethiopia dating back to the early days, was considered lost. [...] But as so many scholars today strive to explore Ethiopia’s history in depth, with much work and enthusiasm it seemed to me that it was appropriate, if not necessary, to publish these writings in their entirety. Indeed, not only do they tell at length of the great actions of the missionaries, but they also explore in depth the names, religion and ancient history of Ethiopia, and accurately describe the sites, nature and civilisation of this region, which was in their age almost unknown to the West. With the help of these writings and documents, all the fables that have long crept into Ethiopia’s history, and have been spread to this day by ignorant writers, will be dispelled without great difficulty (Beccari, 1905: III).

In editing the manuscript of the *História da Etiópia*, Beccari reinstates Páez as the author from whom all later writers had drawn inspiration from but who, over time, had been forgotten and whose manuscript was thought to have been lost. Beccari was about to totally change the landscape of missionary knowledge of Ethiopia. From now on, no one could afford not to take Páez into account. By giving him centre-stage in the “circuit of knowledge”, he restored missionary’s and explorer’s credits and rehabilitated him as an innovative author who went against the judgments and standards of the mid-seventeenth century<sup>25</sup>. And the point which he most strongly emphasises is how absolutely indispensable the *História* is to properly “dispel all the fables that have crept into the history of Ethiopia”.

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<sup>25</sup> See previous note by Patriarch Mendes.

Beccari was intent on highlighting the innovative and unique nature of Páez's endeavour. In the first volume of the collection, document X, he had already included a letter signed by Páez, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1616, and addressed to the Jesuit General, Claudio Acquaviva. He had included it in the volume since it "contains very interesting details, which are not found elsewhere, not even in the *Annue* [Annual Relations], about the relations between Susenyos [the Ethiopian king] and the same Páez with the Turks of Massaua, and about the minimal importance Spain attributed to Ethiopia's conversion" (Beccari, 1903: 345-346). Beccari insists on Páez's absolutely remarkable activities, and on the fact that he had for almost twenty years instilled "new life into the apostolic work" (Beccari, 1903: 345). This choice reveals his clear intention of putting Pedro Páez at the heart of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In his introduction to *História da Etiópia* (Beccari, 1905: III-XXXII), Beccari used unpublished documents to bridge relevant gaps in Páez's life, something that previous authors had neglected to do:

I felt it was probably necessary to say something about his life and the sources of his work. But in order not to hold the reader back for too long by telling him about events that are largely developed first by Tellez, [...] I will summarise all this in a few notes and I will spend more time examining in depth details that have either been completely unknown until now, or that, even if Tellez reports them, can now, thanks to newly discovered sources, be illuminated from a new, more authentic angle (Beccari, 1905: VII).

For Beccari, the authentic, unpublished, precise new sources took total precedence over questions of style, which before him had been paramount in judging, and castigating, Páez. He raised him to the status of an absolutely indispensable author for the understanding of Ethiopia and the Jesuit mission there. Also, at the heart of his claims was Páez's fundamental role as an explorer and particularly as the "discoverer" of the sources of the (Blue) Nile.

## **2.2 Rehabilitation of an explorer, and a plea in favour of the Society of Jesus**

Beccari took great strides to contravene the accepted notion that the Scottish traveller James Bruce (1730-1794) was the first "discoverer" of the sources of the Blue Nile (Abbay, as the river is known in Ethiopia), by highlighting the fact that Páez, in his manuscript, described at length his own travels to identify them, and even his

procedures to measure their location and depth. Beccari went through the entire dossier from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup> to the time of his writing<sup>27</sup>. As editor of Páez's handwritten manuscript, he felt he was in possession of a valuable masterpiece that would finally put to rest the heated controversy of the previous century. Bruce had argued that when he returned to Europe, he visited Italy and having gained access to three (sic) copies of Páez's manuscript (in Milan, Bologna and Rome), he claimed that "the latter had never been at the origin of the Blue Nile because in his *History* he made no mention of this discovery" (Bruce, 1791: 705 sq.).

Beccari's inclusion of chapter 26, book I, of Páez's *História da Etiópia*, in the first volume of the *RÆSOI* (in 1903), where the missionary offers a precise and detailed account of his visit to what he identified as the "sources of the Nile", in 1618 (Beccari, 1903: 269-291), put an end to Bruce's claims and publicly rehabilitated the Jesuit's feat. What had been published in Europe in the mid-seventeenth century was not Páez's text, but a Latin version by Kircher (1601-1680), a Jesuit scholar who in 1652 published his *Aedipus Aegyptiacus...*, only partially reproducing Páez's description of the sources of the Nile. Beccari insisted that Bruce had merely relied on Kircher's Latin text and was unaware of the other books, such as Teles's (1660), which actually included Almeida's description of the sources of the Nile, or Jerónimo Lobo's *Itinerary*, published in French by Le Grand in 1728 and in English by Samuel Johnson in 1789 (Beccari, 1903: 269-271; Teles, 1660; Le Grand, 1728, 1789).

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<sup>26</sup> The first reaction to Bruce's text was that of a Jesuit, Tiraboschi, 1795: 152 sq.

<sup>27</sup> Beccari, 1903: 269-291, takes up the dossier of Bruce's claim to be the first European reaching the Nile sources – something that fascinated European academies throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See regarding this the words of Charles Tiltstone Beke (1848: 237-239): "A word, in conclusion, about the spirit and subject of this memorandum. No one, as far as I know, free from any spirit of prevention, will misunderstand the thoughts and motives that have guided me throughout this long and difficult work. In undertaking to rehabilitate the memory of Paéz and Lobo, I imposed on myself the obligation not to go further. The truth has come to light on its own, and the only merit I have is that I have made it easier and smoother. However, I cannot defend myself from a very strong emotion by thinking that I have only been writing for two years (note, A Statement of Facts relative to the Transactions between the writer and the British Political Mission to the Court of Shoa, London, 1845, p. 13), that I had been happy enough to certify by my personal testimony Bruce's visit to the source of the river he regarded as his Nile, a certainty which, although generally accepted today, could only be avoided if another traveller transported to the same place had verified the accuracy of the report he had given. How far away I was then to believe that I was, as soon as I had to give up the rank of his apologist! In my new position, however, I would think I was lacking the spirit of loyalty that guided me in this presentation, if I did not hasten to state that, in many respects, the Scottish traveller's report is accurate in relation to the description of the source of Azerbaijan and adjacent places and that where Bruce remained within these limits, without trying to go beyond them, he shows a precision that often goes so far as to be meticulous, and I will mention as proof of his accuracy the cliff of Giesh, the cave of this cliff, the hill of the church, the view of the plain of Assoa, etc. His observations to determine the latitude of the source are similarly confirmed by mine. To be true, I would add that, by relating entirely to his report, I had, until recently, only had a very superficial knowledge of Tellez's and Kircher's works, certain that I was until then satisfied with those of Ludolf and later writers, and that a large part of this memorandum had already been written before the observations and remarks of Tiraboschi and Hartmann came to my knowledge. Ch. Beke. London, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1847".

As the publisher and the “discoverer” of Páez’s manuscript, Beccari strongly contested Bruce’s accusations that the Jesuit had never reached the sources by providing “irrefutable” evidence of Páez’s presence there more than a century before Bruce. The typographical process Beccari used to prove this is as follows: he displays two columns, with Páez’s Portuguese text on the left, and Beccari’s Italian translation on the right. Under the right-hand column, he added another two columns, with Kircher’s Latin text on the left and, to the right of it, Bruce’s English text (Beccari, 1903: 273-91). This allowed him to show that, on the one hand, Kircher’s Latin text was inspired by Páez’s chapter, but that it was not a *verbatim* copy, and that it contained many geographical errors not present in the original. On the other hand, he was able to show Bruce’s confusion (or malice) since, despite his claims to have accessed two copies of Páez’s manuscript in Italy on his return from Ethiopia, he had in fact relied only on Kircher’s Latin version.

Beccari’s intervention had an important double effect. On the one hand, he was able to counter the accusation that Páez and Kircher were impostors and, on the other hand, he successfully restored the merits of the Society at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the Catholic renewal led by Pope Leo XIII (Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2007a). His publication drew immediate interest from European academic circles. In Portugal, Esteves Pereira reacted, first in an article (in 1904) on the publication of the first volume of *RÆSOI*, emphasising Páez’s contribution to geography and cartography and discussing chapter 26, the description of the sources of the Nile (Esteves Pereira, 1904: 193-197). Then, in a second article (in 1905), he reproduced the entire chapter with a very brief commentary on the true “discoverer” of the Blue Nile (Esteves Pereira, 1905: 193-200). In Italy, Pietro Tacchi Venturi wrote an article about Páez (in 1905) entitled “Pietro Páez. Apostolo dell’Abissinia al principio del sec. XVII” (560-580), in which he was on a par with his colleagues Alessandro Valignano, Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili in naming him the apostle of Ethiopia (as Almeida, Teles, and Beccari did).

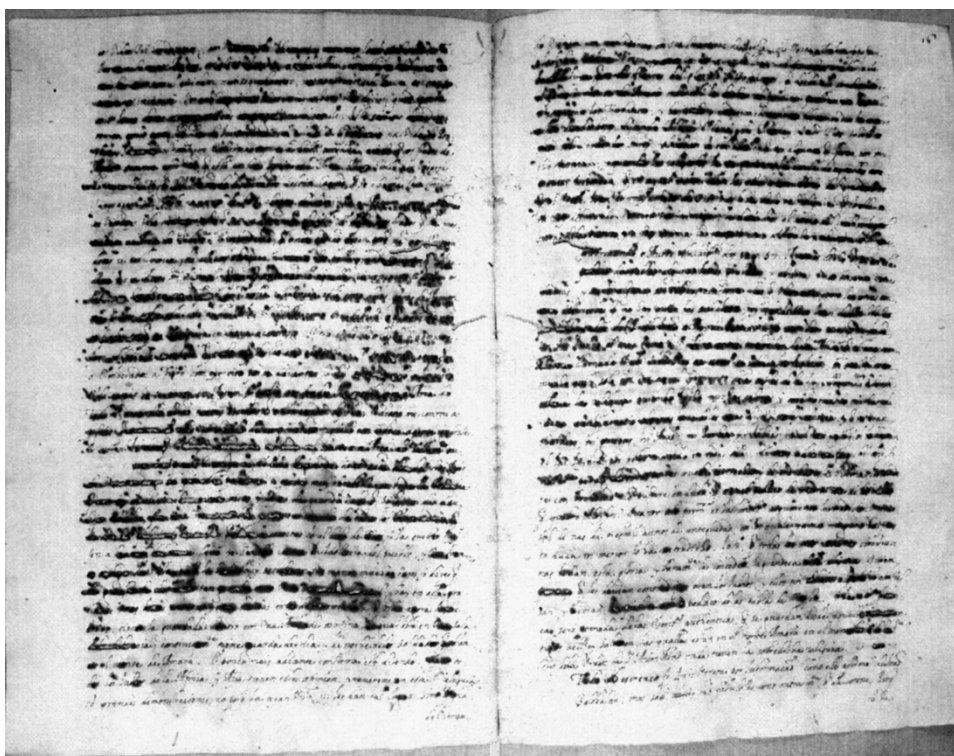
### **3. A new critical edition of the *História da Etiópia* and contemporary issues**

#### **3.1 Comparison of the two manuscripts for a critical edition**

Pedro Páez’s *História da Etiópia*, written in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in Portuguese, while he was in Ethiopia, was not published in its entirety until the early

20<sup>th</sup> century by the Italian Jesuit Beccari<sup>28</sup> in the collection *RÆSOI* (1904-1905), from the manuscript, Goa 42, kept in the archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome. Beccari delivered a richly documented critical edition with an introduction in Latin and a critical apparatus of erudite notes. In the 1940s, a second manuscript of the *História da Etiópia* was unearthed in the archives of Braga Municipal Library, in northern Portugal (Ms 778, 491 folios)<sup>29</sup> and published in three volumes by the Civilização Editora, in Porto, in 1945-1946 in the series *Ultramarina*, No. 5, with a palaeographic reading by Lopes Teixeira, a biographical note by Alberto Feio and an introduction by Elaine Sanceau. The critical apparatus of this edition was very thin, and was limited to Sanceau's short, impressionist and poorly documented text, and Feio's bio-bibliographic record. Although the publication of the Braga manuscript did not ignore Beccari's edition, it merely pointed out that there were considerable variations (Pais, 1945: XXVII) between the two texts, without detailing them at any point in the book.

Figure 7 – Damaged folios in BPB, MS 778.



Given the mounting interest in Páez's manuscript in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its crucial importance for a revised understanding of the political and religious history of the Ethiopian kingdom, and the history of Catholic missions, the need for a new critical edition (in Portuguese, as this was the language chosen by Páez

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> Very poor general condition, the ink used has burned the paper, which often makes reading difficult.



for the writing of his text), taking into account the two manuscripts, grew accordingly. The comparison and collation of the two manuscripts made it possible to record this documentation historically, prompted reflection on the production conditions of the *História da Etiópia*, and redrew the boundaries of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia. This project, which began in 1998 under the auspices of the National Commission for the Commemoration (of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary) of the Portuguese Discoveries, was a ten year long collaboration between three researchers, Isabel Boavida, Manuel João Ramos and myself. This project implied systematic research in different European archives (Rome, Braga, Lisbon and Valencia) and established that the Braga manuscript was but a copy of the Roman manuscript, and not, as Feio wrote in the 1940s, “made under the eyes of the author” (Pais, 1945: XXVII).

Indeed, to cite just one example, one of the last folios (f. 537, see Figure 8) of the Rome manuscript contains a note by the patriarch Afonso Mendes of 4<sup>th</sup> December 1624 (Páez, 1906: 508; 2008: 794, 2011b: 355), in Baçaim [Bassein, now Vasai], one of the Portuguese trading posts on the west coast of India, north of Goa, where the Jesuits were settled.

Figure 8 – Annotation added by Father Afonso Mendes at the end of the *História da Etiópia*, dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 1624 (ARSI, MS Goa 42, f. 537).



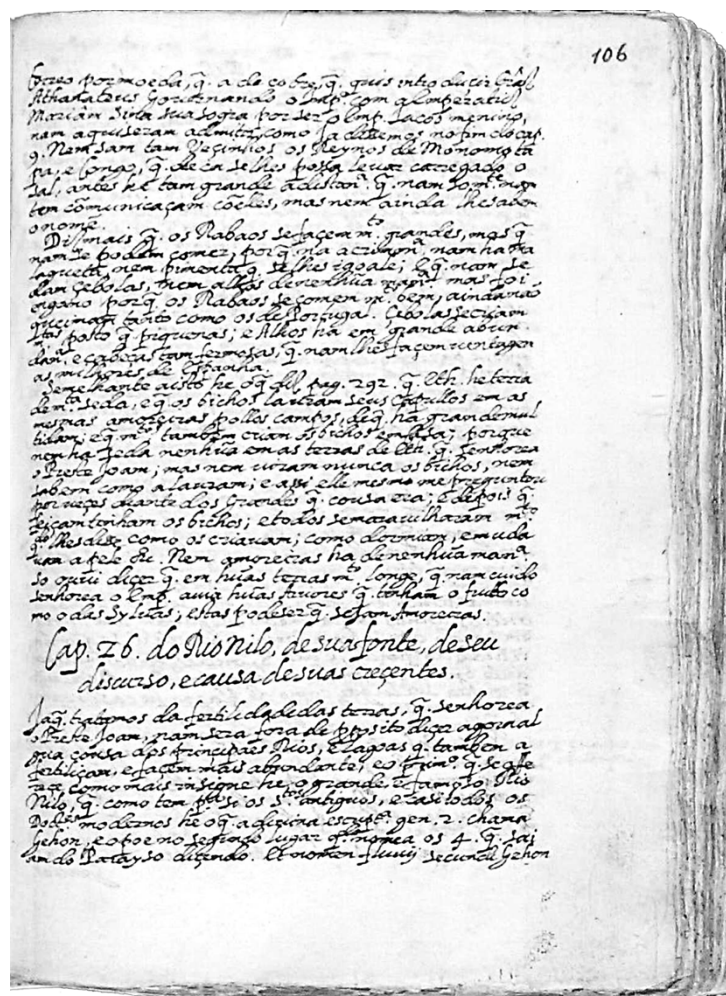
537

Conforme em Baçaim Deste de Meli, q̄ vindo do  
Cipho no anno de 1685. na rua S. Francisco Agitama,  
ella era sapieço na forma de Manduca, q̄ a per-  
ta no baxo do bido, q̄ indo comichando pela  
Caxaria, e sendo muito no mais de seus embudo  
Dante dho quatro. Por se fonger, e q̄ se i ta  
ta frequẽta de todo os e antes em imanche-  
do, e dho q̄ uitta se o. S. Co. Mito, e  
uitta por Provincial na q̄ se, e de q̄ se i  
Bai do Japed, e de dho Amigo q̄ se i em do  
e q̄ se i, e ha de dho de ma lãna q̄  
ji. Ella este de tãto de dho de dho  
com novo anivo, e dho, e dho. Mas auita  
nover apoa, ha de dho de dho de dho  
Ja dho, e de dho de dho. S. Co. S. Co. S. Co.  
e dho de dho de dho de dho, e de dho de dho  
de de de dho de dho de dho de dho. Co  
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Antonio S. Co. S. Co. S. Co. S. Co. S. Co.  
L. P. Baçaim 4. de Dez. de 1624.

A. Patriarca da Etiópia

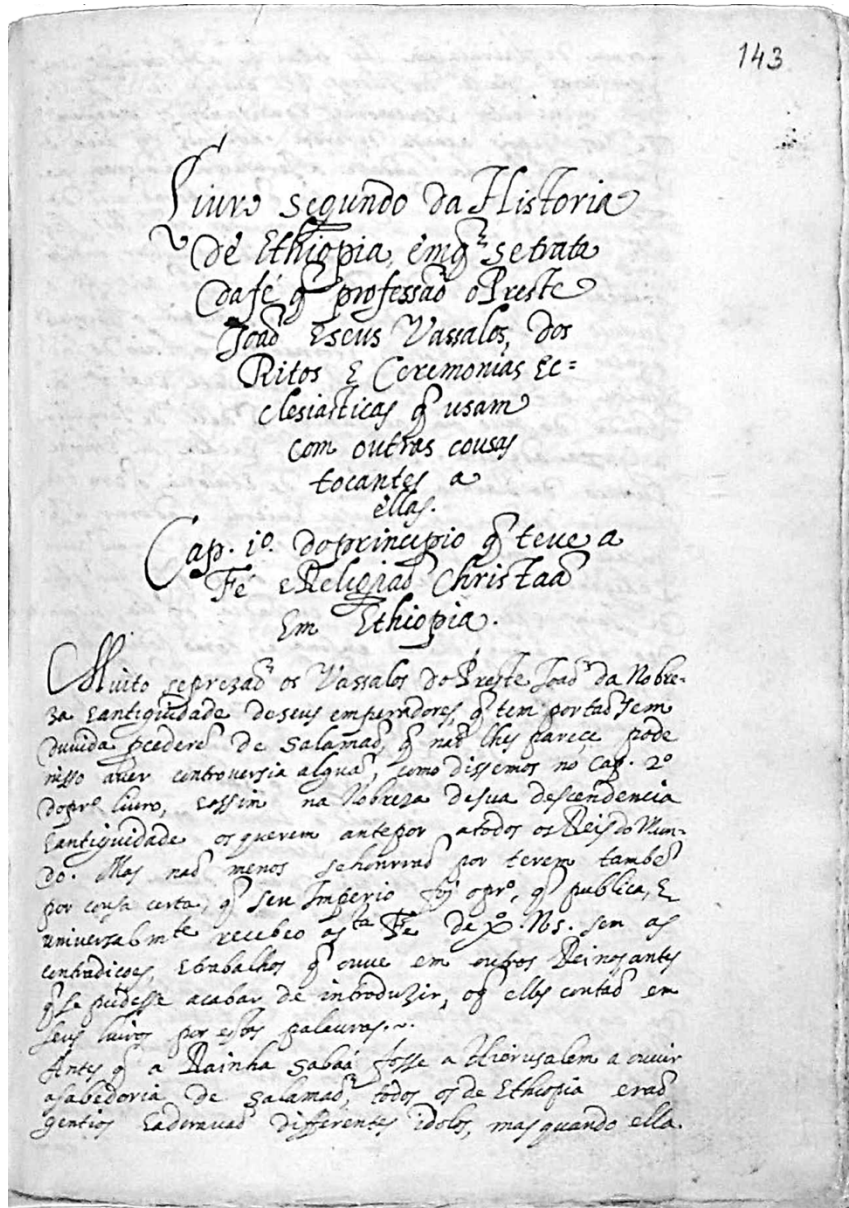
The patriarch's commentary is not directly related to the text of the *História da Etiópia*, but it testifies in favour of the presence of the manuscript in India on that date. The Braga manuscript uses the patriarch's side annotation *in extenso*, without making a distinction between the end of the History and the letter itself, which underlines the fact that the copyist relied on the manuscript kept in Rome and that its copy was made after the end of 1624 (BPB, Ms. 778: f. 491v/479v). This confrontation gave rise to a whole series of questions related to the materiality of the documentation, such as the visible corrections on the Rome manuscript, the additions in its margins, the writings from different hands (for example, Book II of the Rome manuscript is in a different hand from Books I, III and IV in Páez's hand<sup>30</sup>). The aim of the project was to help redefine the contours of the *História da Etiópia*, and reopen Beccari's authoritative dossier on Páez by questioning knowledge in the making.

Figure 9 – Autograph folio from book I of Páez's *História da Etiópia* (ARSI, MS Goa 42, f. 106).



<sup>30</sup> The comparison of the handwritten letters kept in European libraries (Rome and Braga) with Books I, III and IV leads to this conclusion. Beccari, 1905: XL. Book II occupies folios 143 to 314 of the ARSI manuscript, MS Goa 42.

Figure 10 – First folio of book of Páez’s *História da Etiópia*. Book II is written in a different hand from the remainder of the manuscript (ARSI, MS Goa 42, f. 143).



### 3.2 Moments in the writing of the *História da Etiópia*

Some of the manuscript’s redaction moments were decisive, not only in the economics of the history of the mission, but also concerning issues related to the diffusion of the text of the *História da Etiópia*. The extended research that we carried out, and the opportunity to examine the manuscript from very close up helped us to identify an array of details that fostered a better understanding of Páez’s writing process.

At what point in his Ethiopian journey did Pedro Páez start writing his *History*? In his introduction to the whole future collection (the first volume of the *RÆSOL*, 1903),

Beccari presented the text of the *História da Etiópia* and suggested that Pedro Páez started writing sometime in 1620 and completed it in 1622 (Beccari, 1903: 3). He repeated this hypothesis in the critical introduction to the publication of the entire manuscript in 1905, without providing any additional meaningful information but noting rather vaguely that “Father Páez wrote his work in the last years of his life” (Beccari, 1905: XXX). Alberto Feio, who published the Braga manuscript in 1945-46, pointed out in his introduction that Páez allegedly began working on the manuscript in 1607, drawing his argument from a letter by Azevedo to the Provincial of Goa, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1607, where the missionary reports on Páez’s activities: “he was very tired because of too much writing” (Beccari, 1911: 134). In other words, none of the scholars provided any relevant and precise details as to when Páez’s started the writing the *História*.

If we take into account not only Páez’s manuscript but also his contemporaries’ documentation, we can easily identify with precision the moment when Páez started writing. Also, there are two autographed letters by Páez. The first, dated July 4<sup>th</sup> 1615, was written in Gorgora (Ethiopia) and was addressed to the Goa provincial, Father Francisco Vieira. In it, Páez asks the addressee if he had received a summary sent the year before with testimonies collected from the annual letters that could be enlisted to refute the “religious man of Valencia” (i.e., Luís de Urreta)<sup>31</sup>. It was therefore in 1614, probably in July, that Páez sent the commissioner of the refutation, the provincial Francisco Vieira, a first report of his work, though the archives have no trace of that letter. It is also highly likely that he was already in possession of Urreta’s books by that date.

The second clue can be found in a letter Páez wrote on June 20<sup>th</sup> 1615, to Father Tomás de Iturén, where he states:

When I was about to conclude this letter, I received one from Your Reverence from 1614. I was greatly consoled to hear such recent news from Your Reverence, but I cannot reply to it since the bearer of this one is hurrying me too much. Your Reverence may later have a full report of the matters of this empire because obedience now requires me to respond to two books that have come out in Valencia [in 1610 and 1611] on the matters of Ethiopia, in which they condemn the information given from here to the Supreme Pontiffs by the Patriarch Andrés de Oviedo and the other fathers of the Society who died here and, consequently, that which I have given (Beccari, 1911: 359-360).

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<sup>31</sup> ADB, Ms. 779, doc. XIb, fol. 154.

In June 1615, Páez is suggesting to the person who had been one of his teachers in Europe that he was working on a reply to Urreta, following a recent commission (“now”, i.e. in 1615). It is therefore probable that he received Urreta’s books via Goa, between 1613 and 1614, with a letter asking him to provide a detailed report about them. Having sent a first draft to Goa in 1614, as we have seen, he received a favourable opinion from the provincial and was officially instructed to start writing his refutation sometime in 1615. The objective was clearly stated. He was to respond to the content of two books about Ethiopia published in Valencia, which suggests that the report he refers to was what became the *História da Etiópia*.

Another letter, dated June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1621 from Diogo de Mattos, addressed to the company’s Superior General, establishes a link between Páez’s work in 1615 and the writing of the *História*:

Residence of Gorgorrâ. ... residing in it at present are Father António Fernandes, superior of this mission<sup>32</sup>, and Father Pedro Páez, who both, in addition to working hard on the administration of that church and the cultivation of the Portuguese and Abyssinian Catholics from the whole kingdom of Dambiâ, who are many and widely scattered, and are extremely busy, one with the history of Ethiopia, the other with the refutation of all its errors ... (Beccari, 1911: 484).

Thus, the refutation of Luís de Urreta’s books, which Páez announced to Father Tomás de Iturén in 1615, had not yet been completed in 1621 or even in 1622, since the *História* itself contains several references to that year (Páez, 1905: 176, 517; 1906: 388; Pais, 1945, 151; 1946: 150; 158). Our research relied on a contextualisation of Páez’s writing process within his missionary work, by checking the material and intellectual constraints of the activities of the members of the mission and highlighting the writing processes as integral to the mission’s activities. We were also able to gauge the personal relationship between the mission’s members. As the investigation progressed, it became clear that Páez and Fernandes were key figures not only within the mission but in the royal court and in ecclesiastical circles in Ethiopia. A closer look at the Páez manuscript (and in particular its dedication page) suggested a number of hypotheses.

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<sup>32</sup> António Fernandes arrived in Ethiopia in 1604, one year after Páez did (Beccari, 1906: 269; Pais 1946: 58). In 1619, he held the position of superior of the Ethiopian mission, a position previously held by Páez (Beccari, 1911: 484).

### 3.3 Corrections after the author's death (1622)

The dedication page of Páez's autographed manuscript (the one kept in Rome), states:

To [the very Reverend in Christ Our] Father Muzio Vitelleschi<sup>33</sup> [Superior]<sup>34</sup> General of the Society of Jesus [...]

And I am certain that there will be nothing in these things that can be criticized by anyone who has seen and experienced them, and even less in the other things that I write, as Your Paternity will be able to see, for every year you receive good information on what happens here in the letters from my companion fathers. And because of this, and ~~because of the of the obligation that I have~~ [because Your Paternity is so particularly the father of this mission]<sup>35</sup>, it seemed to me that I should offer to Your Paternity ~~this work, so that, if it is such that it may be published, you may give permission for that to happen, or if it is not then order it to be left, because my intention has been merely to comply with my obedience to the Father Provincial and to satisfy the desire of the Fathers who have asked for it~~<sup>36</sup> [this modest work. With your blessing and holy sacrifices and prayers I very much commend myself to the Lord.

From Dancas<sup>37</sup>, the emperor's court, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1622]<sup>38</sup>.

P. PAES<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> General of the Society of Jesus from 1615 to 1645.

<sup>34</sup> The words "Most Reverend in Christ Our" and "Superior" have apparently been added by another hand.

<sup>35</sup> Margin note apparently written with another hand in the MS. Goa 42 ARSI; included in the body of the text in MS. 778 BPB.

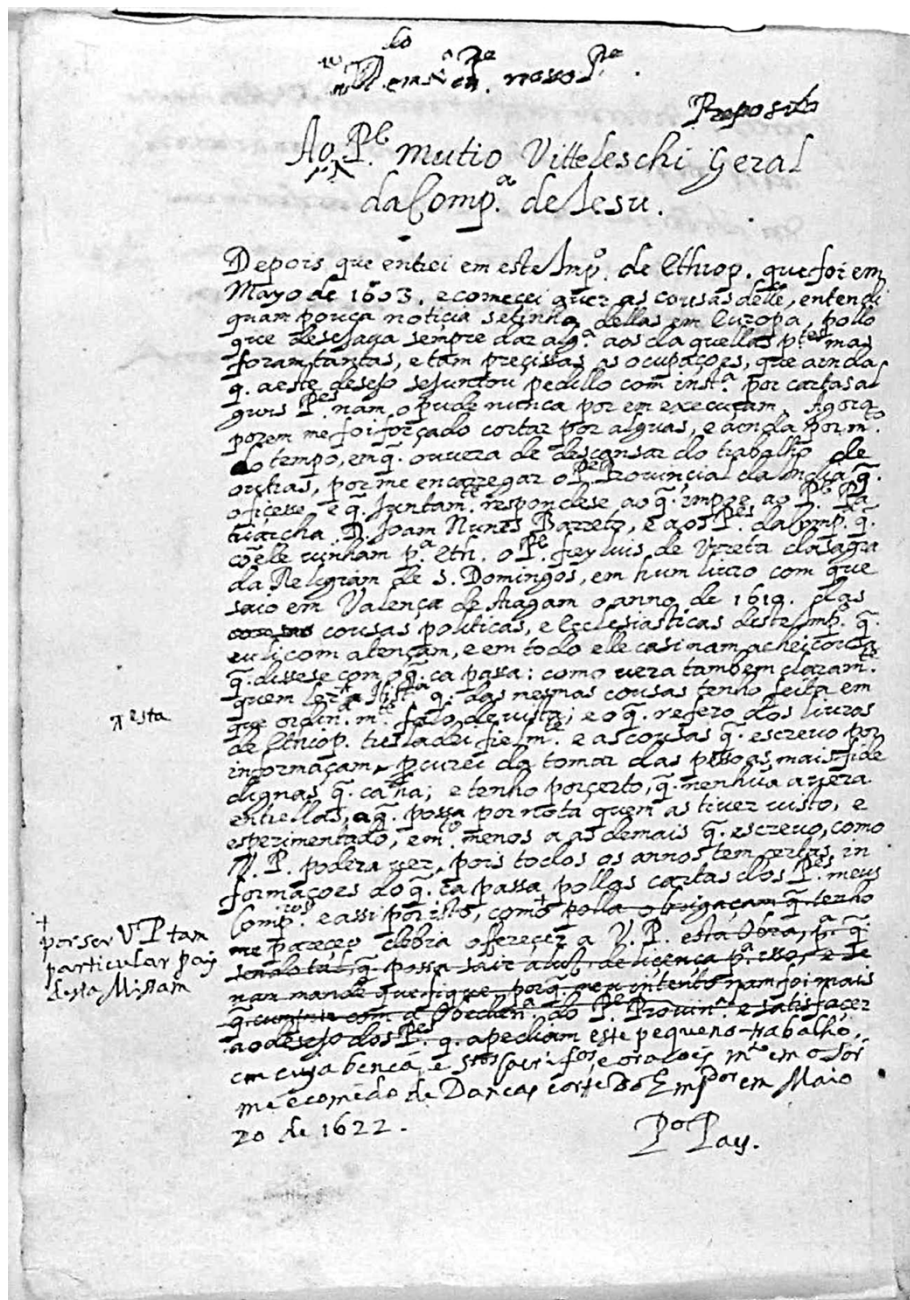
<sup>36</sup> Missing passage from the MS. 778 BPB.

<sup>37</sup> See Páez, 2011b, Glossary (Dancas/Dencâz/Denqez): 369.

<sup>38</sup> In MS Goa 42 ARSI, this bracketed passage was written in the same hand as the one that wrote the margin note mentioned above to replace the crossed-out passage.

<sup>39</sup> MS. 778 BPB: PERO PAIS.

Figure 11 – Dedicatory letter to the General of the Society of Jesus, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1622 (ARSI, MS Goa 42, unnumbered folio.



Having lived for nearly twenty years in Ethiopia, Páez, died of a high fever in May 1622. The question of the exact date of his death was difficult to determine since the information diverged according to different voices (Almeida, 1907: 360)<sup>40</sup>. The most likely date is that of May 20<sup>th</sup> 1622, mentioned in the annual report of 1621-1622, of

<sup>40</sup> Almeida, 1907: 360, talks about the first days of May; among the modern authors who use the information from Almeida are A. Kammerer, 1949: 356; Tewelde Beiene, 1983: 149; Teles, 1660: 357, May 3, 1622; Caraman, 1988: 184.

June 28<sup>th</sup> 1622, written by Diogo de Mattos<sup>41</sup>. While there is consensus around May 20<sup>th</sup> 1622<sup>42</sup> as being the date of Páez's death, this does pose some problems. We do not know the details of his condition when he signed the dedication to the General of the Society while running a high fever, nor why he would sign the dedication in Denqez and then travel to Gorgora, where he died (Almeida, 1907: 360). While Beccari did note that a few lines at the end of the letter had been crossed out, he did not mention that the five additional lines were written in different handwriting, as shown in Figure 11. At first sight the difference between the two handwritings was not obvious, but closer examination shows differences in the way the capital letters are formed (the D, the E and the M). From this material observation we could determine that the date and signature of the dedication was not written by Páez but by someone who knew the date of Páez's death.

Secondly, the corrections made were not in Páez's favour. Altering "this work" to "this modest work", can either indicate modesty, a virtue cultivated by all missionaries, or can be interpreted as a commentary aimed at diminishing the value of *História*. The deleted part was actually a request for the publication of the manuscript, a clear sign of the author's intention to have it printed. However the request for permission was addressed directly to the General of the Jesuits, Father Muzio Vitelleschi, bypassing Páez's direct hierarchy - the commission for this text had been commissioned by the province of Goa, to which the Ethiopian mission was attached.

At the time of Páez's death, if not him, who could have written the last sentences of this dedication? The choice was limited, because the mission was reduced to only four people: The superior, António Fernandes, who was temporarily in the province of Dembya with Luís de Azevedo, but ready to go wherever necessary, António Bruno was in Gojjam and Diogo de Matos was in the province of Tegray (Beccari, 1911: 520). The person who appeared to be most directly involved was the superior of the mission. According to information provided by Almeida, Páez had returned to Gorgora after visiting the royal court and was received by António Fernandes who did his best to treat him (Almeida, 1907: 360). In terms of opportunity, the superior would be well placed to make the changes on his own initiative. In fact, the comparison between the last lines of the dedication (figure 11) and letters written by

<sup>41</sup> Arquivo distrital de Braga (Ms 779, doc XVI, fol. 215-225), "Carta annua desta missão de Etiópia do anno 621 e 622" by Father Diogo de Mattos, 28. 6. 1622 (copy in very poor condition). This letter is partially quoted by A. Feio in his introduction to the edition of Pais, 1945: XXXIV-XXXV. It was published in an abridged Italian version, *Relatione d'Ethiopia degli anni 1621-1622, 1627*: 45 et seq. (reference cited by Beccari, 1905: XXVIII).

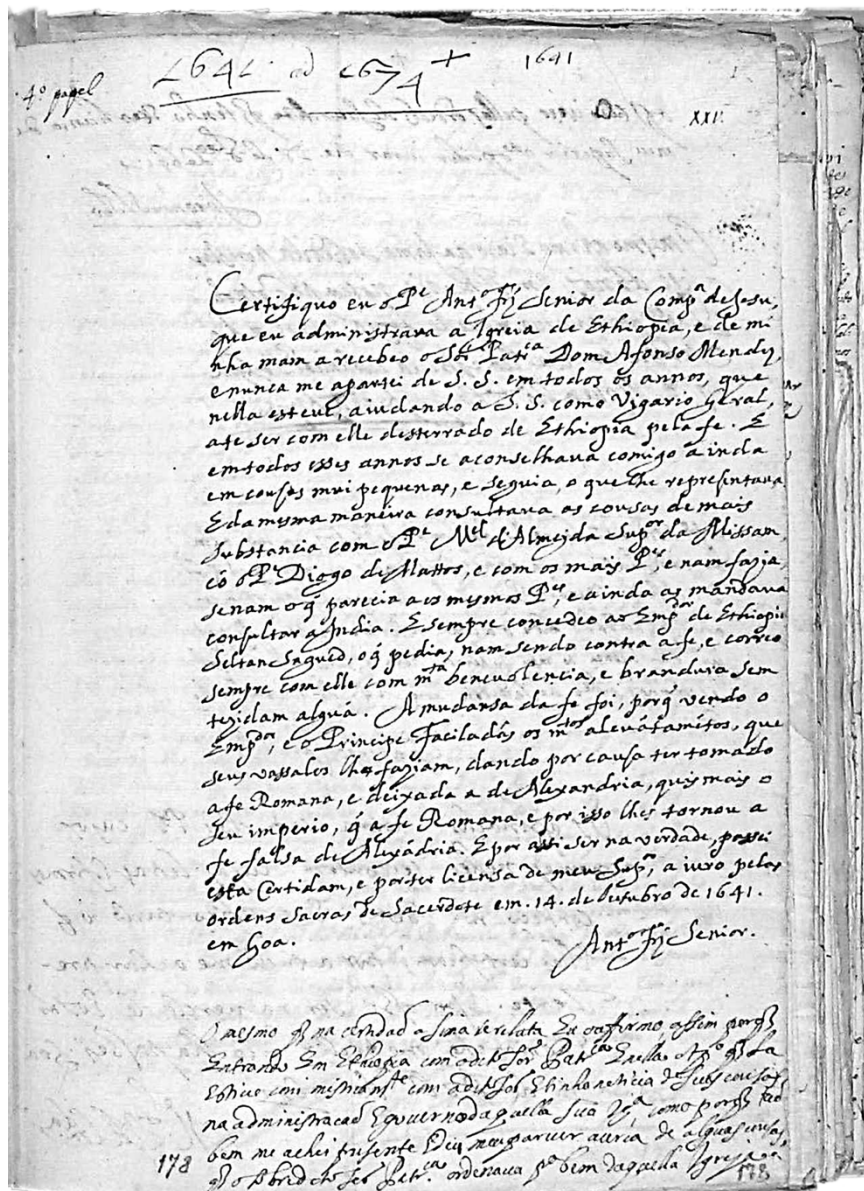
<sup>42</sup> If the edition of this text by Beccari omitted the number 20<sup>th</sup> of May, on the other hand the manuscript is very clear as to the date. This must be an omission of the author, because in the 1905 edition, Beccari proposed the facsimile of the folio where number 20 appears clearly. ARSI, Goa 42, published in Beccari, 1905: 4.



António Fernandes (figure 12) supports this hypothesis as there is a certain similarity in the writing, particularly in the way capital letters such as P and D are formed.

If we go back to the date added at the end of the dedication, which is the best indication of the completion of the manuscript and of the author's death, it seems plausible that António Fernandes, signing on behalf of his companion who suffered from high fever, took care to insert the correct date.

Figure 12 – Signed copy of a letter by Father António Fernandes, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1641 (ARSI, MS Goa 40, *Historia Aethiopiae* 1630-1659, f. 178).



Differences in handwriting were another problem that arose from the review of the ARSI manuscript. Contrary to the rest of the long manuscript, the handwriting of Book II of the *História da Etiópia* is not Páez's (Beccari, 1905: XL) (see figures 9 and 10). We

can still argue in favour of Páez's authorship of the second book, which is its structural coherence with the rest of the work, regardless of who wrote it. It retains the same internal organisation, the same rhetoric devices of refutation and references to his personal experience, written in the first person singular. Either Páez dictated Book II to a third person before his death or a companion had been able to write it from his working notes<sup>43</sup>. There is supporting evidence in favour of this second option. When Almeida arrived in Ethiopia in January 1624 (Almeida, 1907: 338), the manuscript of the *História da Etiópia* had still not left Ethiopia. It was sent to Goa that year, as evidenced by Almeida's letter dated May 8<sup>th</sup> 1624, addressed to the General of the Society of Jesus Muzio Vitelleschi:

We are sending hence this year the book of the affairs of Ethiopia that Father Pero Páez, who is in glory, wrote. I ask the fathers superior in India to have it copied out there and, leaving one copy in Goa, to send the others to Your Paternity. And I ask Your Paternity to have it printed just as it was written by the father in Portuguese, because I believe it will have much authority as it was written by a native Castilian father and also impugns Friar Luís de Urreta and treats as they deserve the things of the Portuguese who came here once and the things of Ethiopia and says what he saw with his eyes in almost twenty years that he lived here. Once printed just as the father wrote it, it could, if Your Paternity sees fit, be copied and printed in Latin so that it may circulate in all parts of Europe (Beccari, 1912: 51).

Why was the manuscript which, according to the dedication page, was completed on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1622, still in Ethiopia in May 1624? If the text was finished before Páez's death, Fernandes, the superior of the Mission, does not seem to have made any arrangements to send it to India. Or else the manuscript had to have been finished before or after Almeida's arrival, that is, between January and May 1624. It is obviously difficult to decide in favour of which hypothesis, but these remarks invite us to err on the side of caution when establishing the date of the *História's* conclusion as that of 20<sup>th</sup> May 1622.

The role played by Superior António Fernandes in this case raises some doubts. If the manuscript was finished he did nothing to send it to India, and thus to respond to the injunctions of the superior of Goa as Páez had been bound by his dedication letter:

After I arrived in this empire of Ethiopia – in May 1603 - and began to see the things in it, I realized how little news one had of them in Europe, and thus I always wanted

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<sup>43</sup> There is still a need to investigate ways of writing in the mission, paper being a scarce commodity. Did the priests write a text in one go, or did they go through intermediate steps, writing early drafts?

to send some to people in those parts. But my occupations were so many and so pressing that, {even though} in addition to this desire a number of fathers insistently asked me in letters to do so, I was never able to put it into practice. Now, however, I have been forced to rush through some tasks and also to use much of the time I should have been resting from work, because the Father Provincial of India<sup>44</sup> has charged me with writing such news and, at the same time, he has given me the task of responding to the allegations made against Father Dom João Nunes Barreto and the priests of the Society who came with him to Ethiopia, by the Father Friar Luís de Urreta of the holy religion of Saint Dominic, in a book which he published in Valencia in Aragon in the year 1610 on the political and ecclesiastical matters of this empire (Urreta, 1610) (Páez, 2011a: 59).

Although it was probably not until Almeida arrived that Book II was finished, the superior does not seem to have been involved in sending the manuscript, according to the excerpt quoted, but it was Almeida who did so, showing great enthusiasm for Páez's book. For him, this work would be an excellent case for the defense of the Jesuit enterprise in Ethiopia against the Dominican claims. Moreover, since the author was Castilian, the argument of those who might see this testimony as a partisan work against the Portuguese would fall flat. In his view, Pedro Páez's manuscript should be printed and his proposal for a Latin translation reinforced his belief that the book should be widely distributed.

### **3.4 A *História da Etiópia* unsuitable for publication**

As Almeida indicated in his letter of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1624, Páez's manuscript would travel with him to India. Everything suggests that this was so, because as previously reported, one of the last folios of the ARSI manuscript (537) contains a note by the patriarch Afonso Mendes dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 1624, in Bassein, one of the trading posts on the west coast of India<sup>45</sup>. The manuscript was therefore in India by the end of 1624 and, as the above-mentioned documents indicate, and it came to be in the hands of Afonso Mendes, who had just been sent from Portugal with the powers of patriarch of Ethiopia and whose stay in India lasted until early April 1625 (Beccari, 1912: 143). Insofar as Almeida's letter of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1624 accompanying the manuscript, it can be assumed that his enthusiastic recommendations regarding the *História da Etiópia* were read by the patriarch. However, they did not receive the expected response since no

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<sup>44</sup> Francisco Vieira, Provincial of India from 1606 to 1615 (Beccari, 1910: XII).

<sup>45</sup> See Figure 8.

copies seem to have been sent to Europe. The manuscript was to remain in India until a new missionary contingent left for Ethiopia in early April 1625 (Beccari, 1912: 143). It apparently returned to Ethiopia in Mendes' luggage, instead of leaving to Europe to be published.

When editing Páez's text, Beccari had already mentioned that the manuscript had returned to Ethiopia:

From the day of the affixing of this note [that of f. 537 of MS Goa 42], it is obvious that the codex of the Páez manuscript had already been sent from Ethiopia to India and kept at Bazaim [or Bassin] College in 1624. However, it is accepted that the same codex returned to Ethiopia from 1624 to 1633. While it is true that Father Almeida, who wrote the first nine books of his own book in Ethiopia, admits that he had extracted much of it from Páez's codex, one may suspect that Patriarch Mendez himself, while sailing from India to Ethiopia, brought Páez's codex with him in case it would be useful for a thorough knowledge of the mission's situation (Beccari, 1906: 508; Kammerer, 1949: 296 note 1).

Beccari's note (in Latin) underlines the extent to which he had an extremely thorough, in-depth knowledge, capable of grasping and measuring all the subtleties related to the itinerary and the history of these texts. However, his reasoning that the manuscript would have been useful for a better knowledge of the mission situation, may be questioned if we consider the role Patriarch Afonso Mendes and the mission's superior, António Fernandes, played.

Mendes was in India when the Páez manuscript arrived. He took note of it and, unlike Almeida's favourable view for future publication and wide distribution in Europe, he considered the work unfit for publication. He deemed that the manuscript would be more useful in the hands of the missionaries in Ethiopia than in the libraries of royal cabinets, Jesuit colleges and universities in Europe. Having reached Goa in the second half of 1624, the manuscript was not to go beyond India. The fact that it returned to Ethiopia in the patriarch's luggage the following year underlines the idea that Mendes must have had an (undeclared) opinion on the future of Páez's codex.

While he keeps his opinion to himself during that period, he expressed a critical opinion about Páez's text in the 1650s. He notes that Páez had written in Portuguese although he was Castilian and his use of the Portuguese language was very clumsy, mixing it with his mother tongue ("enxacoco")<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Mendes, 'Carta', this letter of 29<sup>th</sup> September 1655 is included in Teles, 1660.

The request made a few years later to Almeida in Ethiopia to rewrite Páez's *História da Etiópia* would seem to confirm that this point of view held by the superior had won.

### 3.5 Differences of opinion: António Fernandes vs Pedro Páez

Indeed, it was Superior António Fernandes who entrusted Almeida with the task of rewriting Páez's *História da Etiópia*, when the Ethiopian fathers met, either at the end of 1625 or in early 1626, for a practice of the Spiritual Exercises in a plenary assembly<sup>47</sup>. Twenty years later, in the prologue to his own manuscript Almeida explained the reasons for writing and noted the following:

Above all, I desire it to be known that Father Pedro Páez (of whom I shall speak at length below) began to compose this *História da Etiópia*, the superiors [of the Society of Jesus] in India having sent him a copy of a book which had appeared recently in Valencia, written by Father Frei Luís de Urreta. This was in order that he might refute the many lies and errors that John Baltezar had put into the head of the aforesaid author. Father Pedro Páez did his task, but as his main purpose was to refute, he did not produce such and orderly and well organized history as was desirable. Moreover, he was Castilian and somewhat uncertain in the correct use of the Portuguese language in which he wrote, having already forgotten most of his Spanish, which had not used for many years. But he made frequent use of Arabic, Turkish, Amarinha [Amharic], and the other languages of the books about Ethiopia which he had learnt. For these reasons the superior [of the Ethiopian mission], who at that time was Father António [Fernandes], called me from among the many fathers who happened to be present at an assembly we were holding at Gorgorra at the beginning of the year 1626, and ordered me for the service of God, so that the circumstances of that Christianity might come to the notice of many, to take it upon myself to describe them<sup>48</sup>.

This excerpt, written in 1646 when Almeida was about to complete his *História da Etiópia*, is particularly significant in relation to his own changes in the appreciation of Páez's text. The difference between Almeida's two testimonies is clear. The first, in 1624, was over-enthusiastic in its praise of the Páez manuscript, while the second basically repeats Mendes' criticisms. The first lines are explicit as to his gratitude to Páez for the genesis of his own *History*. Almeida, having arrived in Ethiopia in 1624,

<sup>47</sup> With the exception of those of the northern province (Tigray) due to distance, ARSI, Goa 39 II, Hist. Æthiopiæ, doc. 52, f° 312 (Extract from the annual letter from 1625 to 1626 written by Gaspar Páez, Tamq̄hâ, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1626).

<sup>48</sup> I used the English translation of this excerpt (Ross, 1921-1923: 786).

recounts events previously narrated by the Páez. His *História da Etiópia*, not only reproduces a considerable part of the documentary material collected and translated into Portuguese by Páez (lists, royal chronicles, hagiographies, etc.) but is a rewriting of Páez's text, both in terms of rhetoric and argumentation, but also grammatically (we will return to this later). His prologue makes an interesting u-turn in that the arguments he had presented in 1624 as reasons to publish Páez's manuscript had now become reasons not to.

First, there was the argument concerning Pedro Páez's nationality. In his first report, Almeida had welcomed it as an important asset as a pre-emptive measure against the expected criticism that would see the refutation as a settling of scores along national lines, between the Portuguese and Spanish. For Almeida, in 1624, it seemed advantageous that a Castilian (Jesuit) was responding to a Valencian (Dominican). Almost twenty years later, the argument had worn out or even been reversed, most probably due to important political changes in the balance within the two-crown regime that was the Iberian union (1580-1640). Now, the fact that Páez was a native Castilian was used as the reason for not publishing his manuscript, as he did not have the necessary mastery of the Portuguese language.

But this is a secondary argument, the main one being the accusation of "mediocrity" brought by his peers. To them, Páez had indulged in doing what he had not been asked to do. He had been commissioned to write a refutation and not a hybrid object, a refutation-cum-treatise. Páez had engaged in a completely new formula, a controversial anthropological treatise. It was precisely this controversy study method that had prompted him to conduct extensive surveys of Ethiopian documentation and interviews with local interlocutors, make systematic observations, to verify or contradict Urreta's assertions, to translate Ethiopian texts that were totally unknown in Europe, and to propose a totally new analytical framework for the understanding of Ethiopia.

In his prologue to the *História da Etiópia*, Almeida also names António Fernandes as the head sponsor of the rewriting project, which led to the decision taken at the priests' meeting at Christmas 1625<sup>49</sup>. In addition, the patriarch Mendes, freshly arrived in Ethiopia with Páez's manuscript in his luggage, should not to be neglected in the process that led to the request made to Almeida.

Finally, our research into and around Páez's manuscript addressed Father António Fernandes' role. Upon his arrival in Ethiopia in 1604, he was given the task of producing a detailed catalogue of theological questions considered by the Jesuits to

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<sup>49</sup> Not including those in the northern province (Tigray), unable to cover the distance in due time, ARSI, Goa 39 II, doc. 52, fol. 312 (Extract from the annual letter from 1625 to 1626 written by Gaspar Paes).

be “errors” of Ethiopian Christianity in need of rectification. The annual letter from the province of Goa of 1610<sup>50</sup> contains a letter from António Fernandes to the visitor from India, where he complains that a book was yet to be printed in Goa to respond to the Ethiopians’ theological errors. He sends a catalogue again, insisting that it would be more proper if a book written by the missionaries in Ethiopia be printed<sup>51</sup>. In 1621, according to Diogo de Mattos, he was still engaged in writing a book to refute Ethiopian theological “errors”, the completion of which would address controversies between Catholics and Orthodox that had been simmering since 1610 (Beccari, 1911: 484).

Páez and Fernandes, formally engaged in the same enterprise, that of Ethiopia’s conversion to Catholicism, were also in competition. While ancient and recent historiography has remained silent on the competitive nature of their relationship, our research in the archives and detailed textual analysis revealed a number of details supporting this hypothesis. Páez’s *História* was only published at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but a book by António Fernandes was published much earlier, in 1642 in Goa, under the title *Magseph Assetat* [*Mäqsäftä Häsetat*] (Esteves Pereira, 1886)<sup>52</sup>. There is every reason to believe that Fernandes’ unfinished manuscript mentioned by Mattos in 1621 was the one that was printed in the typography workshops in Goa (Silva, 1993: 136-137)<sup>53</sup>. Almeida establishes the link between the father’s work produced upon his arrival in Ethiopia and the publication of this book about which Esteves Pereira wrote a note with Basset’s assistance<sup>54</sup>. The book was printed at St. Paul’s College in Goa in 1642, and translated into the Ethiopian classical language, Ge’ez, thanks to the collaboration of Ethiopians who accompanied the priests in their escape to India after their expulsion (in 1633). It is an essential and fundamental empirical work in the struggle of religious ideas, published almost ten years after the missionaries had left Ethiopia.

The archival research and close reading of the documents made it possible to redraw the outlines of the mission and detail the roles assumed by both missionaries and Ethiopians<sup>55</sup>, and thus to highlight some aspects of the daily life of the Jesuits on

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<sup>50</sup> ARSI, *Goa 33 I*, doc. 31, fol. 333-334.

<sup>51</sup> The excerpt from the annual letter was published in Beccari, 1911: 201-203.

<sup>52</sup> This is a book aimed at addressing the controversies between Jesuits and Ethiopian religious men, a copy of which can be found in the National Library of Lisbon. For a recent and detailed study see, Cohen Shabot, 2009: 113-140.

<sup>53</sup> The author lists the publications from the typography workshop of the College of St Paul of Goa, which include the *Magseph Assetat* / *Mäqsäftä Häsetat*.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>55</sup> For a prosopographical analysis of Ethiopian and European documentation concerning relevant Ethiopian political and religious figures, see in particular Pennec, 2003: 185-240.

Ethiopian soil and at the same time to re-read the missionary knowledge produced *in situ*.

### 3.6 Pedro Páez, the Castilian Jesuit: nationalistic instrumentalisation

In the late 1990s, the Spanish embassy in Ethiopia pursued a policy of redrawing the history of diplomatic relations between the two states that implied highlighting links dating back to the “ancient days”, meaning focusing on the period when Jesuits were present in Ethiopia from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> to mid-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This operation was all the more delicate as this historical period was shrouded in very negative light from the point of view of official national Ethiopian history, which was dominated by an Orthodox Christianity. The Catholic period of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom (1621-1632) is still officially considered to be an inconvenient parenthesis, an “accident of history”, and the political, religious (and academic) authorities sought to erase this unfortunate episode as early as the mid-seventeenth century. In Ethiopian texts mentioning Europeans (under the term “Franks”), either indifference prevails or they are characterised as treacherous and greedy<sup>56</sup>. As Romain Bertrand pointed out in the Javanese context, the arrival of Dutch sailors in the bay of Banten, Java, in June 1596 was seen as an epiphenomenon in Javanese history. Sailors were only interlocutors, “merchants without manner received by aristocrats who were obsessed with propriety... Many characters other than Europeans monopolized Malaysian and Javanese imaginations throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Old connections have continued to dominate in the palaces and ports of the elite in economically, politically, religiously or aesthetically important locations” (Bertrand, 2011: 445-447). He rightly insists on this event-driven approach, inspiring us to take a step sideways and to use a wide-angle lens to attain a broader historical perspective. The arrival in Ethiopia of a small mission of six Jesuits and a few more companions in 1557, who died before the end of the century, and the subsequent arrival in 1603 of a lonely Jesuit (Pedro Páez), and others in the following years, must be placed in a panoramic frame. Their presence

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<sup>56</sup> The missionaries of this second mission (1603-1622) relaunched the strategy that André de Oviedo had abandoned on the grounds it was impracticable almost half a century before, won the confidence of the elite, whose conversion would guarantee that the population would then convert in mass. The first missionary of this second “wave” to arrive in Ethiopia was Father Pedro Páez in 1603 (Beccari, 1911: 50-51) and he was followed in 1604 by Fathers Francisco António de Angelis and António Fernandes (See Book 4, Chapter 10 of the *História de Etiópia*; Almeida, 1907: 363; Boavida, 2005: 530; note this is a different António Fernandes to the one who participated in the first Jesuit mission), and, in 1605, by Fathers Lorenzo Romano and Luís de Azevedo (See Book 4, chapter 12 of the *História de Etiópia*; Beccari, 1911: 60; Cohen Shabot, 2003b: 418). Finally, two other Jesuits, Diogo de Matos and António Bruno, joined them in 1620 (Beccari, 1911: 473).



certainly achieved interesting results, but their existence only gains centre-ground if we look at it and study it from a European-Jesuitical-centric point of view.

Páez, a Castilian who had left Spain to become a missionary in the Portuguese oriental *Padroado*, was for centuries virtually unknown to the Spanish public and academics, was now to become the figure-head of a multipronged effort by the Spanish embassy in Addis Ababa to extoll the antiquity of the ties between Spain and Ethiopia, which is part of a wider geopolitical transformation of Spanish African connections at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the Castilian discoverer of the sources of the Blue Nile (Abbay) his “Spanish nationality” was used to activate political and economic interests between the two nations. To this end, generous resources from the Spanish ministry of Foreign Affairs were put in place to restore Páez to the position of a central historical figure. The writer and journalist Javier Reverte was invited by the embassy to travel throughout northern Ethiopia in 1998 and commissioned to write a eulogical biography of Pedro Páez (Reverte, 2001). The Spanish village where Páez was born, Olmeda de las Cebollas (now Olmeda de las Fuentes<sup>57</sup>, about fifty kilometres from Madrid), learned that it had been the birth place of a famous historical figure and acted accordingly by publicly praising the “explorer”, “discoverer” and “missionary”. The success of Reverte’s book started wide media coverage of Páez and Ethiopia (in print, television, radio, social media, etc.), with important economic effects<sup>58</sup>.

In 2003, in (discrete and cautious) collaboration with the Portuguese Embassy, Spanish diplomacy organised the “Workshop commemorating the fourth centenary of the arrival of Father Pedro Páez in Ethiopia”, held in Addis Ababa at the Hilton Hotel.<sup>59</sup> For and during the event, Isabel Boavida, Manuel João Ramos and myself

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<sup>57</sup> Internet page about Olmeda de las Fuentes, with this section on Páez (original text by Miguel Ángel Alonso Juliá), <https://turismo.olmedadelasfuentes.es/history-of-pedro-paez-jaramillo> and music from Pedro Paez: <https://turismo.olmedadelasfuentes.es/music-from-pedro-paez>. 1) Orientalizing painting by Páez 2) Map of Goa from the book *La aventura española en Oriente*, p. 189; 3) A photo of Gondar Castle 4) Photo of the “sources of the Nile“ when it concerns the cataracts of the Blue Nile at Tis Abbay. The information on this site is as good as that in Reverte’s book, a series of historical and current approximations aimed at promoting tourism to a Spanish public that has been increasingly important since the 2000s to travel to the Ethiopian highlands.

<sup>58</sup> By 2010, Spanish travel to Ethiopia grew to become one of the major sources of Ethiopian touristic income. “It is important to note that Ethiopia has also become the first or second sending country for France, Spain and Italy. Together, all countries processing intercountry adoption with Ethiopia placed a total of 3,551 children in 2008. France, for example placed 403 children in 2007 (Ethiopia was the top sending country) and in 2008, the number increased to 484 placements (French Central Authority, 2010). Belgium placed 14 children from Ethiopia in 2005 and in 2009, 143 children were placed making Ethiopia the top sending country to Belgium (Belgium Central Authority, 2009). Italy, for example, placed 256 children in 2007 and increased that number to 338 in 2008 (Italian Adoption Commission, 2009); illustrating that Ethiopia has become the so-called country du jour for the majority of receiving countries” (Rotabi, 2010), see also (Gallego Molinero, 2013: 203-212).

<sup>59</sup> The proceedings were translated from English into Spanish, and published by the Spanish International Cooperation Agency in 2007 without being proofread by a scientific committee, *Commemoration of the IV Centenary of the arrival of the Spanish priest Pedro Páez in Ethiopia. Actas del seminario internacional celebrado*

were invited to compose a photo exhibition entitled “The Indigenous and the Foreign. The Jesuits’ presence in 17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia”<sup>60</sup>. This exhibition, composed of personal photographic shots taken during previous field surveys, was an opportunity to give visibility to areas in Ethiopia that were mostly abandoned and in advanced ruin, but which, in our view, could also be an opportunity to raise awareness among the authorities and the scientific community to conduct more sustained and long-term archaeological investigations beyond a simple “surface archaeology”.<sup>61</sup>

The renewed interest in Páez as the European discoverer of the Blue Nile sources prompted an, albeit short-lived, urgency in the study and preservation of this newly-found historical heritage. In the wake of the afore-mentioned conference organised by the Spanish Embassy in Addis Ababa, a delegation sent by the Real Sociedad de Geografía visited the sources of the Abbay River (the Blue Nile) and placed a plaque there, celebrating Páez’s “discovery” to the amazement of the local population. He thus posthumously became a sort of hagiographic figurehead combining distinct profiles as an “architect”, an “explorer”, and – not least – he was Spanish<sup>62</sup>. The Spain’s political and diplomatic institutions formally and informally have associated themselves with a series of initiatives aimed at celebrating the figure of the Jesuit missionary, expanding his fame domestically and facilitating the entrance of Spanish companies and NGOs in Ethiopia and also promoting the new-found partner as a tourist destination for a growing number of Spanish travellers, and an easy source for child-adoption, in recent years.

In 2005, archaeologist Víctor M. Fernández, a reputed specialist in African prehistory, was invited to visit the ruined Jesuit churches in the Bahir Dar and Gondar regions and to set up an long-term international excavation project funded by the Ministry of Culture under the title “Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits in the Kingdom

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*en Addis Ababa del 9 al 11 de diciembre de 2003*, (trad. Enrique Gismero), Madrid, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación.

<sup>60</sup> This exhibition, co-curated by Isabel Boavida, Manuel João Ramos and Hervé Penneç, was first displayed in Addis Ababa and later in different places in Europe. In London, the exhibition was also co-curated by Tania Tribe (“The Indigenous and the Foreign. The Jesuits presence in 17th century Ethiopia”, SOAS – Brunei Gallery, London (July-September 2004). In Portugal, the exhibition bore the title “De fora, da terra. Presença Jesuita na Etiópia do Séc. XVII” and was displayed in Lisbon (Universidade de Lisboa and Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa), Braga, Almada. See website in Portuguese and in English: [http://home.iscte-iul.pt/~mjsr/html/expo\\_jesuits/indice.htm](http://home.iscte-iul.pt/~mjsr/html/expo_jesuits/indice.htm).

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>62</sup> See the *Dios, el Diablo y la Aventura*, by Javier Reverte (2001), or the biography of Páez by Philip Caraman, (1985, trans. 1988). Páez’s role in the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia has also been highlighted in the specialist literature. Some historians have chosen to emphasize the supposed negative aspects of his work in the context of developing a ‘black legend’ (Merid Wolde Aregay, 1998: 31-56; 2007: 69-91). Others have glossed the ‘golden legend’ constructed by Jesuit historiography since the seventeenth century, giving his biography an almost hagiographical tone (Alfonso Mola and Carlos Martínez Shaw, 2004: 59-75; 2007: 47-67; Soto Artuñedo, 2020).

of Prester John (1555-1634): an ethno-archaeological survey in the region of Lake Tana (Ethiopia)”, which lasted from 2006 to 2015.

While the new Portuguese edition was published in Lisbon by Assírio & Alvim in 2008, the Spanish edition (book 1) was published in 2009, with a prologue by Reverte that was totally unattuned to our critical introduction to the *História* and demonstrated a remarkable lack of knowledge of the literature on the topic. Reverte’s prologue sought mainly to promote his own book on Páez by repeating platitudes from the biography he had written a few years earlier (Páez, 2009: 11-19)<sup>63</sup>. Finally, in 2011, after intensive collaborative work with translator Christopher Tribe, an English version was published in two volumes by the prestigious Hakluyt Society.

Apart from minor editorial idiosyncrasies (for instance, on how to incorporate the manuscript’s marginal notes in the body of the text) and differences on the weight and type of the critical apparatus, the overall textual contents of the *História da Etiópia* have remained much the same since it was written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and have generally been kept intact in its various editions and translations. By identifying and questioning the moments of its production, reproduction and edition, it is possible to gauge how each update triggered corresponding modes of reception, revision and reappraisal.

In a first instance, that of the writing of the manuscript, the production of this knowledge was in the service of the Society of Jesus and was intended to add to an existing controversy between rival religious orders (the Jesuits and the Dominicans), with echoes of opposing national identities and claims (Portuguese and Spanish). The knowledge produced was restricted to the Jesuit archives and offered the missionaries in Ethiopia the deep insights and experience of one of their predecessors.

In the second moment, its rediscovery, the matter was still one of knowledge in the service of the Society, but now it went far beyond the internal framework of the institution, because its publication inserted it into another history, that of modern scientific knowledge. The *História da Etiópia* became a monument of knowledge, an immensely erudite and engaging voice from the 17<sup>th</sup> century pressing for another kind of action, that of building knowledge about that Eastern African region and about that fascinating and, to many Ethiopians, traumatic period, by rehabilitating the entire *History* for public reading. The *História da Etiópia* hence evolved into an objective instrument of knowledge with its author, Páez and, above all, the Society of Jesus, becoming seen to be a reputed producer of knowledge.

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<sup>63</sup> The choice of the cover photo, the monolithic church of Gyorgis de Lalibela, made no sense in relation to the story of Páez. It was simply a sales-oriented argument for tourists alluding to one of the historical tours of Christian Ethiopia.

Finally, in the latest instance, which revolved and revolves around the issues of a critical re-edition (comparison of manuscripts, recreation of the intertextual ties to related Jesuit and Ethiopian literature, etc.), had the somewhat regrettable but expected effect of reactivating nationalist identities and rivalries, having been published in Portuguese in a reputed collection of classic Portuguese literature endorsed by the Portuguese National Library and Portuguese Institute of Literature<sup>64</sup>. An abortive translation into Spanish came out the following year (Book 1), prefaced by a Spanish writer who had previously been recruited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to canonise him as an outstanding Spanish hero<sup>65</sup>. Within two years, the *History* had joined another pantheon, that of the erudite and authoritative series of the Hakluyt Society, which made Páez available in English in the most reputed academic libraries of Anglo-Saxon countries, and more so. Not so much the book but its author, previously an ignored footnote in the history of the Spanish “golden age” (mostly because he worked in a Portuguese-led mission, wrote in Portuguese, and lived in a region in which the Spanish state never had any claims, according to the famous Treaty of Tordesillas), became the object of a national(ist) issue at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A native of Castile, his postmodern revival became a sorry puppet in a greedy and pragmatic plan to quickly forge diplomatic relations between Spain and Ethiopia, absurdly claiming that they had existed since precolonial times. From then on, he was dressed up as a Castilian actor<sup>66</sup> in a mission carried out in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, playing the parts of the “discoverer” of the Blue Nile sources, the “architect” of grand Catholic churches in Gondar, and the “apostle” converting the heretic Ethiopian king to Catholicism.

Nevertheless, this new, and still ongoing, moment of the *História da Etiópia* is an interesting plea for a more nourished and informed disciplinary dialogue. The external boundaries, much of them illusionary, between archaeology, anthropology and history have become an issue of intelligibility during this long period. The interacting layers of time and cultural context keep reminding us how essential it is to heed the complex object that is the *História da Etiópia*.

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<sup>64</sup> An irony that hasn't been lost on its editors, Isabel Boavida, Manuel João Ramos and myself. In fact, Páez's manuscript hadn't been published in the 17<sup>th</sup> century because, being Spanish, the literary quality of his Portuguese writing was questionable. Now, not only was it rehabilitated by the Portuguese National Commission for the Commemoration of the Discoveries, mostly a cultural and literary endeavour, but it was welcomed in the closed garden reserved to the “Portuguese classics”.

<sup>65</sup> Two editions of the *Historia da Etiópia* in Spanish were published in 2014 and 2018, A Coruña: Ediciones del Viento. By Soto Artuñedo, the Spanish version of 2014 is a translation of the Portuguese edition of 1945 (2020: 61).

<sup>66</sup> Actually, in an internal report of the Spanish archaeological team for the officials of the Ministry of foreign Affairs, there is a figure representing Páez appearing in Oriental attire, promenading in an architectural fantasy in the Azazo compound.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SOURCES, ARCHAEOLOGY, CONTEXTS. ISSUES AROUND CAL / CHUNAMBÔ, NORRA / NURÂ (LIME MORTAR)**

In a study of Indo-Portuguese architectural standards in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese historian Helder Carita investigated a series of documents entitled *Os Livros de Acordãos e Assentos da Câmara de Goa, 1592-1597*, to analyse how Portuguese technical construction processes had arrived in India in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and how they had been assimilated and adapted by their local partners. The local term *chunambô*<sup>1</sup> (lime mortar) was placed at the heart of these interactions and had repercussions on the evolution of architecture, which the author summarises as follows:

Portuguese pragmatism, in its attitude towards adapting to local cultures, exploited Indian traditions of construction with lime and chalk bases and applied them to contemporary architecture. Initially referred to in the literature as “oyster lime” or sea-lime, this is increasingly referred to in contracts of the Câmara de Goa using the indigenous term *chunambô*, signalling Portuguese appreciation of its superiority over the standard lime then in vogue. Used in India only in classical showpiece architectural works, the chalk-like *chunambô* was mixed from various vegetal ingredients and though extremely difficult to produce was an extremely strong binding agent (Helder, 2007: 71-86).

Arguing in favour of Portuguese pragmatic acclimatisation to local cultures as the explanation for the exploitation and incorporation of new techniques is to insist on a diffusionist schema of a Western “science”. Another, more comprehensive way of understanding such processes would be to consider the history of this technical knowledge as a co-construction, as defended by Kapil Raj (2007, 2015: 11-30, 305-325). Such a shift in analysis offers the possibility to look at the way in which this kind of intercultural knowledge is developed, without discarding the effects of asymmetry and inequality of status.

The series of events that took place in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the region of the present-day city of Gondär, in the Christian highlands of Ethiopia, is a good illustration of these processes of technical innovation. In 1624, according to Almeida, a type of stone was discovered in the northern region of Lake Tana which, once fired, “produced lime or *chunambô* as they call it in India, and here they call it *nurâ*” (*fazer cal or chunambô como lhe chamão na India e cá chamão nurâ*).<sup>2</sup> This discovery made it possible to bind the cut stones together and thus greatly strengthen structures. He

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<sup>1</sup> Or *chuna*, an Indo-Portuguese term for a mixture of clay, sand, straw and crushed oyster shells.

<sup>2</sup> Almeida, 1907: 76. The term “nura” is used to refer to the lime used in building the church of Gorgora Nova, according to the Chronicle of Susenyos, (Esteves Pereira, 1892: 290 (Ge‘ez text); 1900: 224 (Portuguese text)).

recounts this event in the *História da Etiópia alta e Abassia* (which he began to write in Ethiopia from 1626 and completed in 1646<sup>3</sup>), as follows:

Manoel Magro came with us from India, as I said. In 1624, he had seen a kind of stone in the Cambaya lands [Cambay - northwest India] from which they made *chunambô*, and he noticed this type of stone in several places in Ethiopia. By placing it over the fire, by cooking it, *chunambô* or excellent lime comes out. It was this thing that the emperor, the *ras* Cellâ Christos and all the fathers most wanted to find to build palaces and churches like those in India and Europe. Magro advised the emperor and showed him the stone and how to cook it and make lime out of it. He [the king] esteemed him greatly and rewarded him greatly, and as soon as the winter ended [at the end of September], at the end of 1624, he began building at Ganeta Jesus, next to the church, wonderful stone and limestone palaces, with two floors, with terraces, two rooms and four bedrooms below and the same number above. Outside, they had two turrets or ramparts at the two corners with gave them a fortress-like appearance, and thanks to them they found kept themselves in safety. He [Magro] did this work in three or four years, and it took so long to complete due to the lack of workers. He soon he ordered a wall of ramparts to be built around the church (Almeida, 1907: 390; see also Ramos, 2018: 134).

According to Almeida, *chunambô* didn't exist in Ethiopia before 1624, and afterwards this binding substance known for its resistance and solidity came into use, as was already common throughout the Portuguese empire (Helder, 2007: 71-86). He stressed that this technical discovery had totally transformed the relationship of the Ethiopian elite to buildings, giving them the possibility of building palaces and churches equivalent to those in India and Europe. He stressed the similarity between Indian and European techniques, and the possibility of doing the same in Ethiopia. The introduction of this building material and technique in Ethiopia would have a significant effect on the various construction projects (churches, palaces, ornamental basins and bridges), that were carried out during the decade of 1620-1630 (Pennec, 2003: 171-181).

But this “discovery” of a type of stone in 1624, according to Almeida in his *História*, represented a monopolisation of a technical process by the missionaries and their companions alone, and was read as a sign of Western superior knowledge. From the 1980s onwards, this issue became the centre of a number of historiographical debates in Ethiopian studies that continue to this day, as evidenced by the written production that came out of the archaeological surveys (see Fernández *et al.*, 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3.

This historiographical discussion is at the heart of a number of epistemological tensions. It can be argued that a less Eurocentric and more comprehensive view of the history of knowledge may be achieved if we re-assess the sources comparatively and plead for a history of the “co-construction” of knowledge in the Ethiopian context rather than insisting on a diffusionist scheme centred on the “superiority” of Western science and technology. For this, we must first clarify the motivations that led Almeida to attribute this “discovery” to non-Ethiopians, and appeal to the production context of his *História*. A literal reading of what he writes limits us to a delusional disentangling of the “true” from the “false” by cross-checking information. It seems to us preferable to examine the conditions under which his account emerged. Rather than considering it as a neutral container of information, it must be understood as a social production to be read as a form of action and claim to power.

## 1. Historiographical debates from the 1980s to 2017

### 1.1 Debate on the *chunambô* and *norra* of the 1980s: internalist history versus externalist history

In the 1980s, the late Ethiopian historian Merid Wolde Aregay, who mastered both Portuguese documentation, namely the writings of the Jesuit missionaries, and Ethiopian sources concerning the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, challenged Manuel de Almeida’s 1624 account about the “discovery” of lime mortar in Ethiopia. In an article on technological mastery in the Ethiopian highlands between 1500 and 1800, he noted, among other aspects, that the Ethiopian texts contained the words *genfal* and *nora*, synonymous with lime, and that the Jesuit sources themselves described buildings built with this binder that were previous to the missionaries’ arrival (Merid Wolde Aregay, 1984: 134-137).

Luís de Azevedo (a missionary who arrived in Ethiopia in 1604) described in a letter dated from 1607 the remains of a church at Aksum (in Tigray, in the north of the country) and mentioned the presence of lime there (Beccari, 1911: 129). He added that Páez himself in his *História* (completed around 1622), when describing construction work in Ethiopia, referred to the building of a royal palace on top of a peninsula in Lake Dambiâ (Lake Tana) and mentioned the existence of lime (*chunambô*) in this region long before 1624, an extract that is worth being quoted *in extenso*:



Book 1, Chapter 20, which deals with Ethiopia's cities and government buildings, distinction of inhabitants and costume.

The buildings are very poor, as we have said on other occasions. There are little houses made of stone and mud or round poles, comprising just one storey and very low, covered with timber and long straw. Some are wide and have a {wooden} column or post in the middle on which the timber frame is supported. Others are long with wooden posts in a line down the middle that support all the timber. These too are roofed with straw and are single-storey, and they are called *çacalâ*, and the emperors ordinarily used to live in them [...]. In some parts, principally where it does not rain much, they make houses with flat roofs, not from *chunambô*, but from well-beaten earth. All houses used to be just one storey high. For a long time they rarely used to make any two-storey buildings, and they did not last long, because they did not know how to make them. But on a peninsula in Lake Dambiâ which they call a sea, Emperor Seltan Çaguêd [Susenyos], {who is now alive}, is making some fine palaces of well-cut white stone, with his private rooms and halls. The upper house is fifty spans long, twenty-eight wide and twenty high. As the winter wind blows very hard there, and as the lower house is also tall, they did not raise it any higher. Above the main door there is a fine, large veranda and two smaller ones at the sides with very good views. The timberwork is nearly all very fine cedar, and the halls and one private room upstairs where the emperor sleeps have many paintings in various colours. It has a flat roof made of *chunambô*, and the parapet around it has very fine stone columns with large balls of the same stone on their capitals, except for the four corner columns, which have balls of gilt copper with fine decoration. Above the staircase leading up to the roof there is another small house with three large windows, which he uses as a lookout, because not only is the house located on the highest part of the peninsula, which is large, but it is sixty spans high<sup>4</sup>. And so the whole city, [f<sup>o</sup> 82v] which he also built anew, lies below it and it has views over large tracts of land and almost the whole lake, which must be some twenty-five leagues in length and fifteen or more wide, with very good fresh water. This lookout too is covered with a flat roof with stone columns around it like the ones below and has gilt copper balls in the four corners. One of the emperor's brothers, *Erâz Cela Christôs* by name, later made other palaces similar to these in the kingdom of Gojâm, where he is viceroy, but they are not so large. These two buildings are the largest that exist in the empire (not counting the churches). All the other houses are poor, as I have said (Páez, 2011a: 200-203).

This passage written is of great relevance as it answers whether or not *chunambô* or cal (lime mortar) was in use in Ethiopia before 1624. However, this information was

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<sup>4</sup> See Páez, 2011b, Glossary "Gorgora Velha and Gorgora Nova / Old Gorgorã and New Gorgorã", 375-376.

neglected when the debates continued and crystallized around the twofold question of the veracity of Almeida's information, and, in the background, that of European diffusionism.

The first author that responded to Merid Wolde Aregay's view was the French archaeologist Francis Anfray. In his study on Gondarian monuments, he discussed these remarks and explicitly shared his point of view. Nevertheless, he stressed that while in Tigray (a northern region), ancient buildings already showed the use of lime, on the other hand "It remains that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, before the third decade, the use of lime is not attested to in the architecture of the western regions (Begamder and Gojjam)" (Anfray, 1988: 24). Anfray's study was limited to quick surveys and collection of samples (whose results he hasn't published), and he never cared to cross-reference them with the available written sources, European or Ethiopian. But the reading of Páez's *História* (see the previous extract) show that, on the one hand, outside the northern region of Tigray, other areas were familiar with the use of lime, and, on the other, that royal buildings had used this binder before 1624.

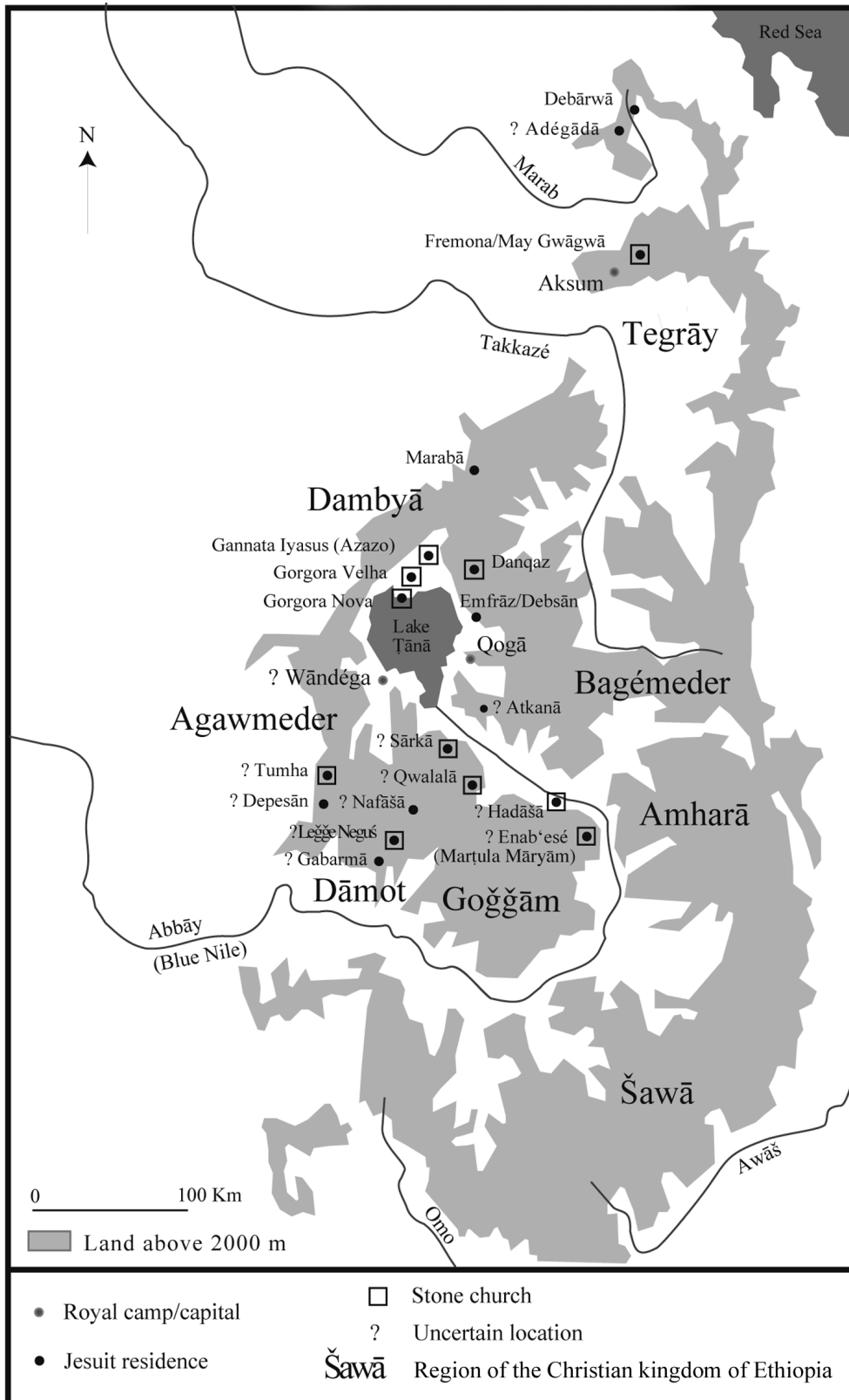
## 1.2 Discussion resumed in the late 1990s

In a previous study on the formation of an Ethiopian Catholic space from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century until the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1633 (Pennec, 2003), I matched the missionaries' sources of information with an extensive *in situ* field survey, to overcome the lack of inventories identifying and locating 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit settlements in Ethiopia. The study of missionary writings complemented with material evidence (the ruins of the buildings still visible), made it possible to draw up a geography of Catholic settlements in Ethiopia, and to build a new cartography, in order to gauge the Jesuits' material occupation and the temporal limits of their presence (Pennec, 2003: 139-184)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> I conducted field surveys and interviews in the region between Gondär and Lake Tana during a field mission to Ethiopia in June 1998, with the financial and logistical support of the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies (CFEE Addis Abeba) and of its Director, Bertrand Hirsch.

Figure 13 – Map of the Catholic churches and Jesuit residences in Ethiopia in the early seventeenth century. Drawn by Pennec and Ramos. Base map: R. Oliver, Geography section, City of London Polytechnic (Pankhurst, 1982).





Taking into account that lime mortar was indeed a technique used in religious and palatial constructions built from between 1624 and 1632, Almeida's claim about its introduction in Ethiopia is problematic, as Merid Wolde Aregay's criticism (and the remarks of Anfray) shows. Almeida had attributed this "discovery", not to an Ethiopian or a European, but to Manuel Magro, an Indian brought to the country by the missionaries in 1624. A possible interpretation would be that Almeida did not intend to devalue the architectural innovation capacities of the Ethiopians since for him, India and Ethiopia were two parts of a world (if not an administrative entity) that was being bound together by the Jesuits (Pennec, 2003: 177-178). But a close reading of Páez's *História da Etiópia* and the conditions of its production, coupled with the study of the results of the archaeological research and recent anthropological surveys conducted in the region north of Lake Tana, can offer a more comprehensive interpretation of the issue of "the introduction of lime mortar". For some (the Jesuits after 1624) this "discovery" was a decisive turning point, but for others (the Ethiopian royal power) this was already a technique used in construction.

### 1.3 Recent surveys and further historiographical discussion

The archaeological excavation campaign conducted since 2006 by a team of Spanish archaeologists led by Víctor M. Fernández (Departamento de Prehistoria, Universidad Complutense de Madrid), was partly carried out in collaboration with anthropologist Manuel João Ramos (ISCTE - Lisboa) and myself.<sup>6</sup> In particular, we both participated in the surveys and excavation of the Azazo site (called Gennete Iyesus in 17<sup>th</sup> century sources), about fifteen kilometres south of the present-day city of Gondar. It was clear that archaeological excavations would help shed new light on a controversial period of Ethiopian history during which Jesuit missionaries were not only present, but active co-builders of architectural structures related to the royal court.

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<sup>6</sup> This excavation campaign in 2006 and the subsequent ones until the end of the project in 2014 were financed by the Dirección General de Bellas Artes of the Spanish Ministry of Culture (from 2012 by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports). My own mission was financed by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR - Cornafrique): "Ecrire l'histoire de la Corne de l'Afrique (XIIIe-XXIe siècles): textes, réseaux et sociétés", (project leader, Hirsch - University of Paris 1). In addition to the project manager, Víctor M. Fernández (Departamento de Prehistoria, Universidad Complutense de Madrid), it included two postgraduate students, Jorge de Torres and Jaime Almansa from the Universidad de la Complutense, Dawit Tebebu, the archaeological representative of the Authority for the Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCCH) at the Ministry of Information and Culture of Addis Abeba; Fasil Ayyehu, deputy head of the Culture and Tourism Bureau at the Amhara Regional State in Baher Dar; Astchlew Werqu, head of Culture and Tourism Bureau of the North Gondär Zone; Mengeša Zewde, the manager of historical monuments for the city of Gonder; Silvia Cravero, an architect working as the team leader of site planning and conservation activities in Gonder at the Ethiopian Cultural Heritage Project and Sisay Sahile, an anthropology student at Gonder University.

The choice of Gennete Iyesus in Azazo was most pertinent, as it was a royal establishment with which the Jesuits had been very closely associated. It offered a unique opportunity to complement written documentation with the “testimony of the ruins” and relativise the “Jesuit” specificities of the place, the buildings, and the architectural characteristics, in order to write them in the history of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom. For what was constantly emphasised both from the point of view of Jesuit and Ethiopian historical sources was King Susenyos’ extraordinary character, in the first case because he converted to Catholicism (in 1621), and in the second, because he had reneged the ancient Orthodox faith. But the written sources did not fully explain if this king’s religious policy was really a departure from the policy of his predecessors in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries on the question of royal establishments, now supported by a new, foreign, religious group, the Jesuit missionaries.

Gennete Iyesus is doubly interesting for the study of the question of royal religious establishments in a long-term perspective and to reread the characteristics of the reign of the “Catholic king Susenyos”. Indeed, one of the files that shed light on these questions of royal foundations was the work carried out.

In the late 1990s, Marie-Laure Derat dealt with the issue of the Ethiopian royal establishments in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Derat, 1998, 2003; Bosc-Tiessé, 2001, 2008), and her conclusions offered the possibility of a comparative analysis with Susenyos’ religious policy in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Derat and Pennec, 1997: 17-34). The foundation of the royal churches and monasteries erected by Ethiopian rulers was a means of legitimising their power, guaranteeing the eternal salvation of their soul and, more practically, interacting and controlling diverging monastic movements. Derat insisted that royal churches and monasteries of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries were distinct from those of other religious institutions. Firstly, they were royal establishments, decided on by a king or queen, regardless of ecclesiastical influence. Secondly, it was the king who most often formally founded the church itself and attributed it to a mother house (i. e. one of the Ethiopian monastic orders). Thirdly, the church’s clergy was selected by the king. Fourthly, both the church and the royal monastery were richly endowed with land by the sovereign. And fifthly, some of these establishments were intended to house the remains of the deceased king.

On the basis of this historical model of the royal religious establishments of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the phenomenon could be questioned in a slightly different way in the case of King Susenyos’s reign (1607-1632), partly because he adopted the foreign Catholic faith. The analysis of the Gennete Iyesus site evidenced the characteristics of a royal church in the light of the sources and showed that Susenyos - despite his position in favour of Catholic doctrine in November 1621 - pursued the same policy

of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries' kings by maintaining in his own specific way the institution of royal churches and monasteries. The site harboured a royal church similar to those of previous periods, while introducing new practices. Thus, the example of Gennete Iyesus underlined the king's desire to associate a particular church to his reign, and, according to his Chronicle, this was the first church built by this king, and one to which he paid special attention. This means that the architectural innovations introduced as a consequence of the relations of the royal power with "foreigners" need not be overemphasised. From the point of view of royal power, this new church was meant to legitimise his power and seal his alliance with a religious movement (the Jesuits accepting a role that was similar to that of the monks before them). It was supposed to be a guarantee of the salvation of the king's soul. Still, for the Ethiopian monks, the religious and material disruption was considerable and traumatic (Pennec, 2003: 188-203).

These were, in broad terms, the expectations envisaged by my colleague Ramos and me when, in early 2005, we accepted Victor M. Fernández's invitation to participate in the project and integrate the first campaign of archaeological excavations that was to take place between 18<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2006<sup>7</sup>. However, soon it became clear that our analytical perspectives were significantly at odds with that of the archaeological team from the Complutense University of Madrid. After a first reconnaissance trip in June 2005 with his team in and around the Gondar sites, Fernández returned to Spain with the following determination:

It was as a result of our 'discovery' of the church ruins that I decided there was a need for a serious study of the Jesuit settlements in Ethiopia, and I consequently began designing an archaeological project focusing on the Jesuit mission as soon as I had arrived back in Spain. Such a project seemed particularly important given the decay and neglect of the missionary residences, combined with the severe climatic conditions of the Ethiopian highlands, which would destroy the material evidence within the space of a few decades. Hence it was vital that we intervene to salvage important archaeological evidence of the Jesuit presence there, particularly as the only previous record of the mission's ruins, the pioneering work of French archaeologist Francis Anfray, was now several decades old and was not sufficiently detailed, given the archaeological evidence we had seen (Fernández, *et al.*, 2017: 4-5).

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<sup>7</sup> For details, see the amply illustrated book that is the result of these archaeological excavations, Fernández, *et al.*, 2017: 5-6. Without knowing the ins and outs, it is interesting to note that Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner published his PhD, 2015, in this same collection (vol. 2). The Internet page shows a remarkable annual production of texts (<https://brill.com/view/serial/JS?qt-qt>).

Be it because of the need to secure financing from the Spanish government or for other undisclosed motives, the fact was that for the archaeologists the stated focus was to study the Jesuit settlements in Ethiopia and “salvage” the evidence of their presence. Even though the early reports recognised the mission had run under the auspices of the Portuguese oriental *padroado*, they also stressed that the commissioning sovereign at the time, King Philip II, was Spanish as was the head of the mission in Ethiopia, Pedro Páez.

Thus, theirs and our approaches were, from the outset, irreconcilable and led us to very divergent positions, from which we not willing to ask the same questions nor were we able to find analytical common ground. After the first campaign, the excavations continued, but we felt progressively uncomfortable with way the research was being framed, as in our view the surveys, excavation and outputs were being bent to satisfy an ideological programme that was extraneous to our stance. Hence, after the second excavation campaign, having exhausted our arguments in favour of a non-Eurocentric and non-Jesuit-centric approach to the site and its revelations in early 2009<sup>8</sup>, we chose to withdraw from the project, which was to stay essentially, and narrowly, focused on the question of Jesuit occupation. The heuristic research into the Spanish project of an “archaeology of Jesuit sites in Ethiopia” presented an unfortunate departure from the research that grew out of Francis Anfray’s 1980s inventory of palatial and church buildings he called as “Gondarine”, i.e. referring to a period defined by, and confined to, the Christian royal presence in the Gondar region. For Anfray, a study focusing on the Jesuit occupation sites did not make sense in itself, only if integrated into an architectural ensemble that demanded a long-term perspective<sup>9</sup>.

#### 1.4 Archaeology at the service of the Jesuit mission

These divergences notwithstanding, the practical outcome of the excavation campaigns carried out at the Gennete Iyesus site (literally “Jesus’ paradise”) in Azezo

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<sup>8</sup> In March 2009, thanks to funding from the ANR (Cornafrigue), a seminar took place in Madrid (the Complutense University) to discuss and overcome divergences regarding perspectives, methods and goals. At the end of the seminar, exchanges having remained unsuccessful, we decided to completely withdraw from the project. See reports and studies on the archaeological project in Fernández, 2008; Fernández, *et al.*, 2009; Fernández, 2010; Fernández, *et al.*, 2011, 2012a, 2012b: 72-91, 2013, 2015: 173-182, 2016: 153-175; 2017; Fernández, 2020a; 2020b: 395-416. These reports and publications seem to suggest they are the result of an intensive and varied writing programme on the topic, but in fact each new publication simply picks up on the structure of the previous ones, updating them annually with complementary information. The 2017 book is the most complete compilation of results, and is the one we will refer to in our comments in the following pages.

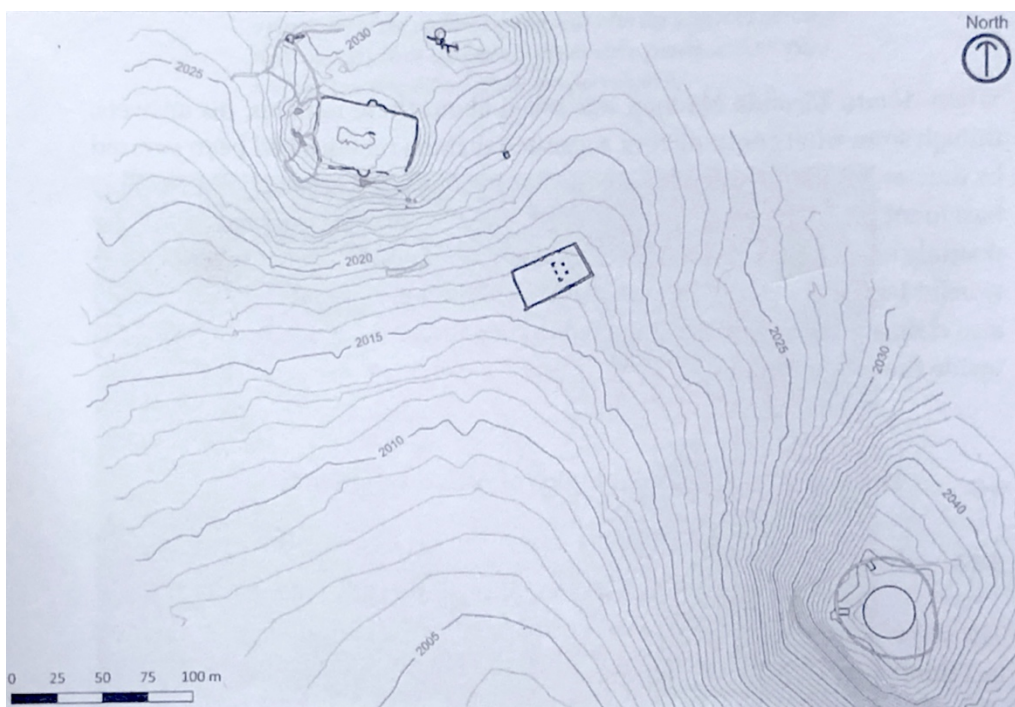
<sup>9</sup> Paradoxically, this vast survey is dedicated to Anfray.



between 2006 and 2011, are of obvious archaeological and historical interest. Due to its favourable geographical location (8 kilometres from Gonder), for the logistics of the excavations and given the fact that the site consists of ruins under farm land that were only lightly disturbed by oxen-driven ploughing, except for an Orthodox church compound that was understandably off-limits, the excavations did not, initially at least, face many difficulties or setbacks.

The topographical characteristics of the area are as follows: on the lower of two low hillocks (see topographical map fig 3. 3. 3. 1. (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 60)), lie the ruins of the architectural complex of the former site of Gennete Iyesus, comprising a palace, a (Catholic) church, and the remains of an enclosure with conical towers in different places. Midway between the two hillocks lie the remains of a basin that once bore a pleasure pavilion at its centre (*huma casa de praser*). On the highest mound, 400m away, stands the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Tekle Haymanot (linked to the hegemonic monastic network of Debra Libanos), which was restored during King Hayle Sellasie's reign (around 1960). An enclosing wall, with two square towers built into it, limits access to the church, which is still in use. Interestingly, inlaid in the walls of the church and of an adjacent building, as well as in the ramparts themselves, isolated carved blue-stone slabs (such as fleurs-de-lis, rosettes, etc.) can be found. As the British independent researcher Ian Campbell pointed out in an inventory article on Azezo from the late 1990s, these decorated slabs (mentioned in the missionaries' writings) were most probably taken from the adjacent ruined buildings to the Tekle Haymanot church (Campbell, 2004: 21 fig. 8).

Figure 15 – Topographical map of the Gännätä Iyäsus and the modern church of Täklä Haymanot (from Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 60).



The 2006 excavation campaign focused on surveying and surface digging at the first hillock to search for what the archaeologists supposed to be the site of the former Catholic church (built in 1621, according to the missionary chronology). The uncovering of the foundation walls and the identification of lime mortar holding together large bluish limestone slabs aroused particular interest among the team members, because they seemed to directly refute Almeida's chronology, according to which 1624 was the year lime mortar had been discovered, although Almeida himself had mentioned that the church had been built before that date. It was consecrated on the day of the Holy Spirit in 1623, which means that the church was erected before lime mortar was "discovered" (Almeida, 1907: 388). And yet, there it was, lime mortar binding its foundation slabs, in obvious contradiction to Almeida's chronology. As palatable as this interpretation was, others were also considered: could the foundation walls we were dealing with be those of a more recently rebuilt structure? Were the remains of the walls being unearthed now in fact those of a building never consecrated as a Catholic church?

*Figure 16 – Tower of the enclosing wall of the Täklä Haymanot church in Azezo  
(photo 2006, Pennec ©)*



*Figure 17 – Inlaid rosette in the upper part and stones cut at the corners of a tower at Täklä Haymanot church of Azezo (photo 2006, Pennec ©)*



*Figure 18 – Tower of the surrounding wall of the Täklä Haymanot church in Azezo. “Bluish” cut stones recovered from the old church (photo 2006, Pennec ©).*



These initial surveys, followed by more extensive excavations in 2008, then in 2009 and finally the removal of the surrounding wall in 2011, made it possible to reformulate the hypotheses and partly answer the questions raised during the first excavation campaign.

Our excavation unearthed a roughly rectangular, artificial mound of around twenty-two x eleven metres, with an east-west orientation, as is common for (p. 79) Catholic churches. Evidence of walls bound with mortar was visible on the surface throughout the area, and a higher mound of earth was recorded to the west. It was initially believed that this mound corresponded to the façade of the building and thus to one of the most important areas in the church. However, the lower height of the mound in the middle could simply be the result of the 1998 campaign and excavation<sup>10</sup>.

But the cleaning of the space would complicate the model we had initially imagined:

It became clear that the higher mound on the west side did not belong to a building built with mortar, but to a later building erected on the remains of the previous Jesuit church. It was a rectangular construction of about twenty x seven metres in dimension with an east-west orientation and round external corners. The walls were about one metre thick and were made up of stones and mud, with numerous examples of reused materials from the former church (e.g. ashlar, large piece of lime mortar). A wall separating two different rooms divides the internal space (room W: 6.85 x five metres, room E: 10.6 x five metres) (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 81).

Thus a later stone and mud building was built on the remains of the first building (identified as the Jesuit church made of ashlar and lime mortar), for which the archaeologists proposed the following identification:

The abundant domestic pottery suggests the building once had a habitational function, but this may have been the case solely in the final phase in which it was occupied. The building is larger than a domestic house, and its square shape differs from the normal circular outline of most historical and recent constructions in the Amhara region. In addition, the division of the building into two adjacent parts, with a smaller interior room that is only accessible from the larger room, and the east-west orientation, attests to its original function as an Orthodox church, although it has a less common, rectangular ground plan. The transformation of previous Jesuit constructions to the Orthodox cult has been registered on most sites - where the original building was rearranged with a new building erected on top of the ruins of the original Catholic church. It is possible that the smaller inner room was the

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<sup>10</sup> Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 78-9. Indeed, in 1997 and 1998, archaeological student Tsega Michael Gessesse dug into the perimeter of the church and uncovered some human graves. He also dug the water basin in the lower part of the site, cleaned the stairs leading to the water tank floor and the foundations of the central pavilion. He presented his results in a very incomplete mission report (Tsega Michael Gessesse, 1998).

sanctuary or *māqdäs*, while the bigger was the *qeddest*, the external part (*qené mahlet*) being constructed in wood, which has not been preserved to the present day. Yet the opposite could have also be true, since in the rectangular Orthodox churches the *maqdas* is always located toward the east (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 81).

This hypothesis and these results are in line with both the missionaries' documents and the Ethiopian texts about the events that followed the marginalisation of the Jesuits and their later expulsion from the Ethiopian Christian kingdom. In 1632, King Fasiledes (1632-1667) ordered their confinement in Tigray with a view to their later eviction and the Gennete Iyesus compound was ascribed to the Ethiopian monastic order of Debra Libanos as mentioned in the *Short Chronicles*:

After that, King Fasiledes banished the people of Rome with their *mamher* Afonso [patriarch Afonso Mendes] to their country. He confiscated the *gult* lands they had previously received, and gave them to Dabra Libanos. Then the priests from Dabra Libanos brought the *tabot* of our Lady Mary into the church the people of Rome had built for Jesus' *tabot*. The *eccage* Batra Giyorgis consecrated this church. After a long time, King Fasiledes and the *eccage* Batra Giyorgis, with the priests of Dabra Libanos, held counsel and said: "May the *tabot* of our Lady Mary be removed from the church of the people of Rome, but we will build rather another church so that it may remain there". And they built it and brought it into this church. Now, the history of the coming of Our Lady Mary's *tabot* from Dabra Libanos, the monastery of our father Tekle Haymanot and the history of his stay in the land of Azazo, is finalised (Foti, 1941: 115-118)<sup>11</sup>.

The episode recounted by the Ethiopian chronicle is confirmed by the archaeological excavations. The conflict between the Jesuits and the Ethiopian monastic order of Debre Libanos was solved by the construction of a new building (an Ethiopian church), on top of the abandoned Catholic church. This means that this architectural site, this royal Ethiopian settlement, kept being used by Ethiopian kings after the expulsion of the Jesuit missionaries (Campbell, 1994: 6-15).

A final discovery made during one of the excavations led to the following hypothesis:

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<sup>11</sup>*Histoire des moines de Dabra Libanos* (163-164). The missionary documents confirm Gennete Iyesus' attribution to the monastic order of Debra Libanos; see M. Barradas' letter written in Fremona on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1633; Barradas, 1906: 71): "The body [of the king] was buried in our church in Ganete, but the services were performed by heretical monks, because his wife, or his wives and sons, wanted it so. And a few days later the same church was given to the schismatic monks for the same reason [...]. The church, when it was ours, was called [Gannata] Jesus. They discarded this name because it did not satisfy them, and they called it Debralibanos, or Lebanon church" (Almeida, 1908: 206).

However, if building A was the Catholic church, then this would contradict the written evidence, as the preserved parts of the church were composed of mortar masonry with the exception of the square ashlar foundation, yet the missionary record suggests that *chunambô* (lime mortar) was introduced no earlier than 1624 (i. e. when the church had already been built). As the production of mortar would have been a major achievement, one which would almost certainly have been mentioned by the missionaries, it is possible that Gennete Iyesus was completely refurbished at a later date, or, as was the case of Gorgora, that it was built entirely anew shortly before the mission's demise.

It should also be noted that two different phases of construction were detected in some parts of the church, especially in the southern area where the carefully placed courses of ashlar that set the foundations of the building were occasionally replaced by layers of stone and mortar that filled holes in the original courses, as though some of the previous sandstone blocks had been partially removed. This could also explain the broken, reused ashlar found in the north-eastern room, which were mixed with irregular stones and mortar. The written sources also mention that the area had been extensively remodelled in 1627 or 1628, when the church was fortified. The remodelling is alluded to in a letter written by Almeida, dated June 1628, which states that "during the time the fathers were there (in Gennete Iyesus), they did not have time to spare in attending to the works at the church, which is being enclosed by a wall with bastions". An ulterior problem, one that seems to reinforce the idea of a building refurbishment, is related to the dimensions of the excavated church (more than twenty-four x eight metres), which do not match those mentioned for the original church as described by Páez (18.5 x 6.2 metres), Almeida (13.2 x 4.8 metres), or Susenyos' chronicle (27 x 7.7 metres) (the last of these being the closest). Since the church's length was not entirely preserved, it was not possible to verify which of the figures were correct (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 90-93).

The 1624 date from Almeida's *História da Etiópia* visibly conditioned the hypotheses and conclusions of archaeological team. Instead of discussing the reason for the attribution of Almeida's date, they went about proposing hypotheses that could agree with it and with the notion that the "discovery" of lime mortar had "revolutionised" the autochthonous architectural knowledge. The hypothesis relating to the reuse of the Jesuit church by the Orthodox priests, after 1624, seemed to prove Almeida right and at the same time confirm the dimensions of the church as they appear in the Royal Chronicle of Susenyos<sup>12</sup>. Unfortunately, it does not explain why both the Ethiopian

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<sup>12</sup> Esteves Pereira, 1900: 199: "On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of hedar [9<sup>th</sup> November 1621] the king of kings chose a beautiful place in the countryside of Dembya, which was called Azezo [...] and the king began building a church. He took the stones on his head, and laid the foundation of the church. The foundation of the church was two cubits (1m) and

chronicle and Almeida's account name "Padri Pay" (Pedro Páez) as the "master builder" of the church of Gennete Iyesus in 1621, refurbished (not to say rebuilt) after 1624. If this hypothesis is indeed correct, the fact that these two independent sources indicate Páez as the "author" of the construction even if it was later rebuilt requires an explanation.

Here, it is a question of detail in a broad archaeological programme, encompassing several campaigns and at different sites, to whose outcomes we refer the reader. The conclusions mentioned at the end of these vast surveys may be summarised as follows: a prime goal of the research was to obtain archaeological evidence from the architectural remains of the Jesuit period documented in the literature.

1. Lime mortar is to be associated with the final years of the Jesuits' presence in Ethiopia and is a crucial technical input in this period even if the chronology given by Almeida poses some problems. Archaeological evidence demonstrates it was used in the Azazo buildings. An alternative explanation for the introduction of lime mortar before the arrival of the Jesuits could be considered. The "Portuguese" soldiers and technicians who arrived with the Christovão da Gama expedition in 1541-1542 and remained in Ethiopia could have found the proper stone and introduced its use.
2. Another issue also raised during these excavation campaigns was the need for archaeological and architectural analysis to evaluate the characteristics of the buildings and their influences based on European models, especially for churches, which clearly show that they are copies of the buildings in Portuguese India.
3. The obliteration of the entire Jesuit contribution in the surveyed sites (from 2006 to 2015) was due to the excesses of post-colonial theories. These theories were first "embraced" by European researchers and then, unsurprisingly, by

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its two outer sides were 56 cubits (28m) and its width was 16 cubits (8m) [...] And the one who started the foundation of the church and outlined the shape of its construction was a *Franc*, who was the master of the construction whose name was Padri Pay [Pedro Páez]". See also the account (after their expulsion (in 1633), as he speaks of Tino's martyr, the one who wrote part of Susenyos' chronicle by Almeida (even if he was not physically present): (p. 355) "What Emperor Seltan Cagued said when he required all those in his court to be in favour of the Catholic faith on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1621. Declaration of the emperor about his new faith (p. 357): Then the secretary *azage* Tinô, the glorious martyr rose (and also gave a pro-Catholic speech...) With the whole court four leagues from [Dancaz] in a place called Azazô, in which he traced houses, and threw the first stone of the church he wanted to build here with the plan of the one of Gorgorrâ. He dedicated it to Jesus because the place was very fresh and the houses he asked to build with gardens around, were like fields. He wanted the place to be called Ganeta Jesus, as it was now called, which means Jesus' garden or paradise. The construction of the church was overseen by Father Pero Páez, who worked there intensively. But he did not finish it because he died, as we will mention later. Father Luis de Azevedo completed it, coming from the Agâus mission where he was based...". (Almeida, 1907: 355-357. Book VII, Chapter 33).



Ethiopian historians. They have therefore switched from a European-centred approach to an Afrocentric approach, deemed problematic given that it imposes a unilateral, indigenous perspective.

4. The survey results offer a historical archaeology that is concerned with the so-called modern period, hence, it is also an archaeology of colonialism and of the origins of capitalism. The Jesuit missions in Ethiopia are to be studied as a facet of the vast fresco that is the history of colonialism, relating to the Portuguese enterprise in Africa and Asia. Differently from the Spanish imperial project, the Portuguese opted to set up small trading posts along the African and Asian coasts, whose presence often contributed to strengthening local strategies that tended to learn and incorporate European technical knowledge.
5. In addition, one of the most enduring influences of the European military and missionary presence in 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia was that it fostered the creation of a modern Ethiopian state, whose most significant change during this period was the transition from mobile to fixed capitals, first in Azazo, then in Denqez and then, finally, in Gondar. This state architecture – using stone and mortar - has visually occupied the territory and warranted the sustainability of these capitals. The lack of lime mortar in later buildings coincided with the decadence that marked the end of the Gondarian period, which is further evidence of the close links that had been established between architecture and power.
6. In short, the materiality of the royal residences delimited a whole set of social relations of subordination. The Jesuits contributed to the appropriation and redesign of the long-established elements of the European palace system that transformed the traditional system of royal camps. In this way, royalty consolidated its own power over the regional aristocracy and the poorest peasant communities for centuries to come (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 457-478).

This brief summary of the programme's conclusions highlights the poverty of the statements produced, the repetition which has long been discarded, and even a certain ideological perniciousness. Four hundred years apart, the debate on the discovery of lime mortar that was a concern for 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuits, especially for those who had been expelled from Ethiopia, is clearly still an issue for archaeologists, albeit in different terms. Finally, the last line of questioning of these excavations concerns their place in the editorial system. The results of this research were published in a collection by the Dutch academic publisher Brill, named "Jesuit Studies. Modernity through the

Prism of Jesuit History” (vol. 10)<sup>13</sup>, whose publishing committee is composed of the most diverse and representative scientific personalities. The title of the collection is telling, as it defines the perspective chosen for the selective criteria: “through the prism of Jesuit history”. Such an approach is in itself questionable, as it aims to simply reiterate, book by book, the history of the Society of Jesus, and a European-centred history, which helps us to understand why the principal output from the archaeological programme, concerned with “Jesuit” buildings, could find its place in this prestigious collection.

A second remark concerns the irreconcilable discussion mentioned above. From one perspective, archaeological and architectural evidence is mobilised to “explain” a period of Ethiopian history through its foreign influences (Jesuit, European, Indian, etc.). Another perspective is that the effort should be directed at understanding the architectural environment in which the actors evolved, the concrete objects that had been manufactured, how this knowledge was acquired by walking, digging, cutting stones and firing them to turned them into lime mortar.

As the Spanish archaeological team was primarily focused on the sites built during the missionaries’ presence (selected in accordance with the Jesuit inventories and sources), its outputs are tautological, as can be read in the words of the experts’ presentation of the analysis of mortars collected from Gorgora nova, Denqez, Azezo and Debsan:

An ultrasonic pulse transmission test was applied to the mortar samples from the four sites (Gorgora nova, Denqez, Azezo and Debsan). This non-destructive test yields information about the internal hollows, state of conservation, and durability of the mortars. The results are shown in Table A. 4.5 and Figure A. 4.13, presenting a highly homogeneous quality of the mortars from the different the sites, with high strength and compactness (only second to that of the sandstone rocks), and with quite good conservation, all this being much in agreement with the other analysis described earlier. [...] As aforementioned, both the mortars and the stones used in missionary buildings are of a very high homogeneity and quality. This explains their endurance to the present day in a very difficult environment, with large variations in temperature and humidity throughout the year. Notwithstanding this, some consolidation and restoration of the most-affected parts is necessary in the short term (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 516-517).

The results of the ultrasonic pulse transmission analysis show simply that the mortar-making technique was the same in the four contemporaneous sites. It would

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<sup>13</sup> <https://brill.com/view/serial/JS?qt-qt>

have been fitting to take mortar samples in one or two other sites from Anfray's list of so-called Gondarian buildings, such as the Yebaba site (in Bahr-Dar district) (Anfray, 1980-1981: 12-14, fig. E), and submit them to the same battery of tests. As Dimitri Toubkis pointed out, the Yebaba compound was a crucial bulwark for the kingdom's control of the Gojjam region and beyond to the south and southwest from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This expansion came after the expulsion of the Jesuits, that is, if one "leans towards a high chronology concerning its construction, maybe at the time of Fasiledes (1632-1667), but in any case before or during that of Iyasu I (1682-1706)" (Toubkis, 2004: 638-642). The exterior stone walls of this compound, which is still standing though in ruins, are bound with mortar and still partially covered with a mortar coating (see Figure 18). The study of this and other sites of later construction could have provided an important basis for a comparative study of the mortar-making techniques.

Figure 19 – Sketch of the royal site of Yebaba (Anfray, 1980-1981: 12-14).

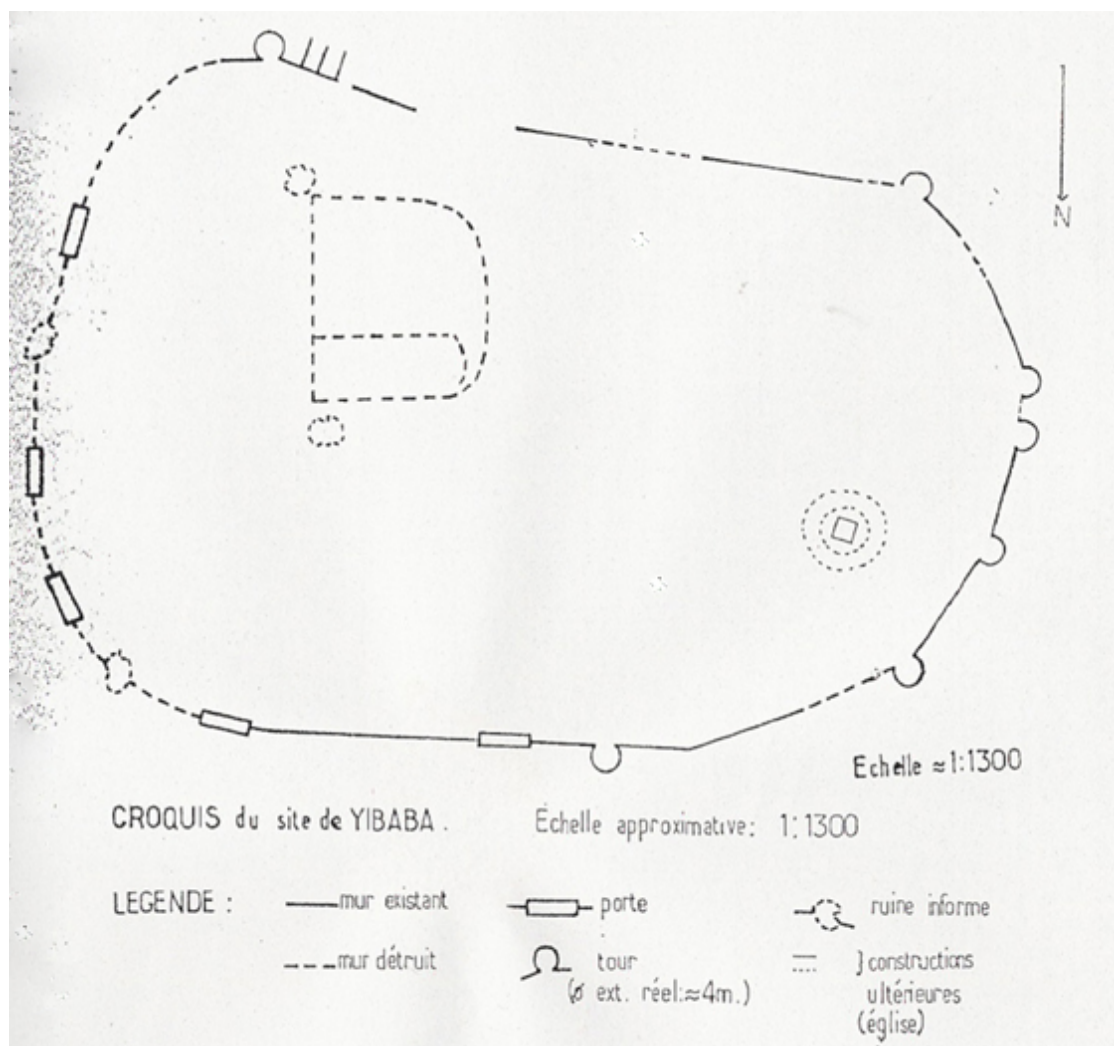


Figure 20 – Yebaba site. Remainder of the enclosing wall partially covered with a mortar coating  
(Photo 2006, Pennec ©).



To go beyond a Jesuitical-centred vision, it is helpful to consider another set of sources and question them in a way that is unhindered by preconceived and uncritical categories. For this, we must revise the association of the lime technique (*chunambô*, *nurâ/nora*) with Páez, and wonder why, for instance, Martínez d'Alòs-Moner eulogises him as a most accomplished, "imaginative and ambitious" architect, and claims he has played "a pioneering role in the introduction of the Indo-Portuguese style in Ethiopia" (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 22-23). Of course, one can only speculate whether it is simply coincidental that Páez was Spanish, that the Spanish embassy in Addis Ababa was interested in making him the figurehead of the mission, that the Spanish government was pouring important financial donations into the archaeological project, and that the research team was mostly composed of Spanish archaeologists and historians.

## 2. In praise of a “kaleidoscopic”<sup>14</sup> history

The critical edition of Páez’s *História da Etiópia* (already discussed in the previous chapter)<sup>15</sup> that Boavida, Ramos and myself carried out was meant as a steppingstone for a renewed historiographical debate. As discussed in the book’s introduction, our aim was to link Páez’s writing endeavour with its social and textual contexts and explore the motivations that led him to embark on producing such an overarching fresco, to tap into its internal and external paths and rationale and, finally, to capture the events, concepts and actions that conspired against the publication of his *História da Etiópia* in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A close reading of Páez’s text led us to reconsider Almeida, recurrently presented as his neutral follower.

The second important steppingstone was the publication (in 2000, 2010 and 2018 English text), of Ramos’ book *Histórias etíopes. Diário de Viagem*, where the author transcribes and analyses a corpus of oral stories (*afatarik*) he collected in the Gonder region between 1999 and 2006 (Ramos, 2018: 121-200). When introducing the contribution of one of his main informants, the late elder Ato Wale, he writes, “His oral narratives generally follow the canon of the most traditional Gonderine *afatarik* (oral stories). But, with greater freedom than in his writings, he includes in them echoes of the religious *gedlat* (hagiographies) from the libraries of Debra Berhan Sellase, Medahne Alem and many other churches located outside Gonder, as well as his readings of the standard historiography of Haile Sellasie’s reign (particularly by the historian Takla Tsadiq Mekuria) and, with that, echoes of the Portuguese epic and missionary literature” (Ramos, 2018: 122). Ramos’ long-term programme of collecting oral histories in this region, must be mobilised in a re-examination of the history of this period, not only to critically revise the evidence drawn from written sources and archaeological excavations, but also to re-evaluate the ideological and semantic conditions of naive historiographies.

The issue of lime mortar has a specific narrative function in the oral histories collected by Ramos, where the manufacture of *norra / nura* is socially thought of as a royal prerogative, “a secret technique exclusive to kings” (Ramos, 2018: 53-5; 166). The Ethiopian oral legends help reframe Almeida’s claim (since that is what it is) regarding the “discovery” of lime mortar in 1624.

A third stepping-stone is the urgent need for a critical re-evaluation of Almeida’s drafting of *História da Etiópia a alta*. Insufficient emphasis has been placed on what was

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<sup>14</sup> The expression is from Veyne, 1971.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 3.

at stake in the writing of each of the two *Histories*. The two Jesuits did not have the opportunity to meet physically, since Páez died in 1622 in Ethiopia, while Almeida only arrived in Ethiopia in 1624. They “met” each other through Páez’s manuscript, most probably completed before or in any case shortly after his death on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1622. As mentioned at length in Chapter 3, Páez’s purpose for writing was to refute Luís de Urreta and oppose the Dominican efforts to do missions in Ethiopia, while, in very different contextual circumstances, Almeida’s explicit purpose was argued in a language that requires close analysis.

### 2.1 The circumstances of the writing of Almeida’s *História da Etiópia e alta* by: the writing of a trauma

Almeida’s account offers interesting internal chronological clues that help identify the times of writing and show that some parts of his manuscript<sup>16</sup> were written while in Ethiopia, but others were written later, after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1633 (1643 being the last date mentioned in his *História*)<sup>17</sup>. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1646, Afonso Mendes, the former Catholic Patriarch of Ethiopia, when writing from Goa to the Company’s Superior General, reported that “Father Manoel d’Almeida, a respectable man, also composed a *História da Etiópia* from the beginning until now with promptness and truth, which is now also sent to Portugal and dedicated to the King Our Lord [João IV]. I think there is reason to be very satisfied (Beccari, 1913: 261)<sup>18</sup>. Almeida died in Goa on May 10<sup>th</sup> of the same year, after completing his manuscript. This means that two thirds of the *História* were written in Goa, arguably in a very different psychological mood from that of Páez’s. It would have been one of sulkiness resulting from the mission’s failure.

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<sup>16</sup> At present, there are three manuscripts of (full title) the *História de Etiópia a alta or Abassia, imperio do Abexim, cujo Rey vulgarmente hé chamado Preste Joam. Trata da natureza da terra, e da gente que a povoa dos Reys, que nella ouve; da Fe que tiveram, e tem; e do muito, que os Padres da Companhia de Jesus trabalharam polos reduzir a verdadeira, e sancta Fe da Igreja Romana. Composta pelo padre Manoel d’Almeida da Companhia da Jesus, natural de Viseu*. The first one is in the manuscript department of the British Museum (Add. MS 9861) used by Beccari for the edition in the *RÆSOI* collection, volumes 5-7, 1907-1908. The second is in the Lisbon National Library (uncertain classification, COD 1769). This is a copy of the British Museum manuscript that was made in 1861. Its condition is defective, and has little value in establishing validity of the text. The third is in the Manuscript Department of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, MS. 11966). The latter was used by Beckingham and Huntingford for the partial English translation of 1954. For a more precise description, see Pennec, 2003: 260-262; Kleiner, 2003: 207-209.

<sup>17</sup> He began writing in 1628, while in Ethiopia, as evidenced by passages in Book I, Almeida, 1907: 22 “Agora ha dous annos, na era de 1626 (addition in the margin of the manuscript consulted by Beccari), depois que nesta terra se achou pedra pera fazer cal”. Book II is said to have been partly written in Ethiopia.

<sup>18</sup> According to Beckingham and Huntingford, this copy was lost (1954: XXXI).

Once again, the prologue to his *História* sheds light on his motivations for writing. Presenting the collective decision made in Ethiopia in 1626 to entrust him with “rewriting” Páez’s *História*, he says:

This I did, but I had many things to do and they compelled me to spend almost all my time on long journeys. Since then, during these years in India, I have not been without responsibilities. Particularly when I saw how badly Ethiopia fulfilled her great promise and became a squalid ruin, I took no pleasure in writing and not merely delayed but began to forget the work.

However, an order from our Very Reverend Father General Muzio Vitelleschi written in a letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1639, compelled me to continue, with these very words: ‘The work which your Reverence has taken in hand on the *História da Etiópia* will, I expect, attain that degree of perfection with which, I am sure, you will compose it. And even if your official duties should not give your Reverence time to complete it quickly, in any case I recommend that your Reverence may arrange to push the work forward so that it may be issued in due time as well-achieved as is participated.’ Under this injunction I applied myself to the work with determination. As I say, I have profited greatly from what Father Pedro Páez wrote. In the historical part I have added certain things which time has brought to light and I have supplemented it with everything that has happened since the Father’s death. These events have been so many and so various that in the space of twenty years they have surpassed all those of many centuries past. I will arrange them in the best order I am able, and this will be the order (Beckingham and Huntingford, 1954: XXXIV-XXXV; Ross, 1921-1923: 787).

This excerpt makes it clear that the traumatic events in Ethiopia impinged on Almeida’s early willingness to write, the mission being a vanished hope that left only “squalid ruin” behind. The “ruin” was the mission’s failure but also, as he well knew, the destiny of Catholic church buildings in the country. The unwillingness to write was coupled with the phenomenon of oblivion. It was only to obey the general of Society of Jesus, Muzio Vitelleschi (1615-1645), that he forced himself to return to his commissioned manuscript. It is quite significant to note the general’s interest in this affair, as it was to him that Páez had dedicated his *História da Etiópia*, and it was also to him that Almeida wrote on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1624, praising the Páez manuscript and asking that it be printed as soon as possible. For the Roman government of the Society, the question of Ethiopia (its conversion to Catholicism, then ten years later the expulsion of the missionaries) and the writing of its history should not be relegated to the boxes of the Jesuit archives but ought to be made publicly available.

Almeida's *História* must be read with these elements in mind. The author repeatedly weighed the lack of success of the Ethiopian missionary enterprise. For example, his chapter 1 of Book IV (written after 1639) reflects on the trauma caused by the failure of the mission. He insists on the wasted "human capital", insisting on the energies expended, "first by the Serene Kings of Portugal and the entire Portuguese nation and secondly by Saint Ignatius and his sons" (Almeida, 1907: 333) and completes its quantitative unfolding with the 1639 martyrdom of the missionaries who had stayed behind in Ethiopia (Almeida, 1907: 340). Finally, he addresses his readers:

Now, let those who read this story think if I am right to say that Saint Ignatius and this small company put into this mission an enormous and precious capital of so many sons, who did not consider abandoning their beloved homelands, who did not fear the waves of the Ocean, the torments [of the Cape of] Good Hope, the insults and affronts of the Arab Moors, on whose ships and through whose lands many came, the scimitars of the Turks by means of which they entered, the difficult captivities that some suffered for so many years, and which others risked, the hunger, thirst and violent death, which many suffered, and the blood they shed, and the exile of a lifetime at the farthest and darkest edge of the world, in which all voluntarily put themselves, piercing with a generous soul this cloud thick with iron, fire and blood. And for more than 75 years they worked with pains in this vineyard of Christ and by the mercy and grace of this same Lord, who gathered the sweet and precious fruit of the reduction of this empire and stored it in the attics of the heavens of souls without counting (Almeida, 1907: 340).

Almeida invites his readers to judge sacrifices of the Portuguese nation as a whole and suffering endured by the sons of Ignatius, the Jesuits, on a land that has become worse than barren. But what he emphasises above all is the idea of the unnecessary waste of "human capital" of several generations of missionaries and the lost contribution of many talents.

Almeida used the figure of the biblical king Solomon to explain one of the reasons for the reverse side of the mission. Susenyos' libido had lost Catholic Ethiopia, just as women and concubines had distanced King Solomon from the "true" God. Almeida did not hesitate in writing that Susenyos was like Solomon, "The older he got, the more firmly embedded he became in vice" (Almeida, 1908: 135). In another register, he reinterprets previous descriptions of events, such as a court meeting in which the Jesuits participated to prepare Susenyos' act of obeisance to Rome, recounted by Gaspar Páez in his annual letter of 1625-1626, as follows:



One cannot here easily explain the joy that the Emperor, the Patriarch, *ras*, and the Fathers felt on this day with all [...]. The Emperor cried like a pure jubilant boy, seeing his desires and long hopes. [...] Then the day was determined, the following Wednesday, when all the lords would gather together and all, along with the Emperor, would swear public obedience to the Roman Pontificate with a solemn oath, to live and die, and to fight for the holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Faith<sup>19</sup>.

In his *História*, Almeida revises this episode thus:

A serious absence was noted here, the letters of His Holiness and of His Majesty that were sent to the Emperor, recommending to him the person of the patriarch and the matter of the reduction to the holy faith and the obedience that he should give to the pulpit of Rome. The absence [of these letters] was not insignificant. The emperor felt it very much, but then concealed it, and then sought the opportunity to declare his regret. He was offered a good apology, but that absence was considered by all to be a failure and was considered significant (Almeida, 1907: 480).

Reading Almeida's passage against the background of the traumatic effects of the downfall of the Jesuits' in Ethiopia, it is possible to capture his writing in ways that do not solely rely on historical information. By the time he completed his text (in 1646), the plan to return to Ethiopia had been judged completely unrealistic and, as Martínez d'Alòs-Moner points out, the missionaries expelled and exiled in India engaged in producing a body of literature that was unrivalled in the world of Jesuit missions at the time, "the mission became a literary subject in its own right, thus entering the field of history and memory" (2015: 323-325).

Therefore, as we generally do with any author, his account of the "discovery" of lime mortar must be questioned and looked at more closely in the light of the agenda of the writer tasked to deliver one of the most accomplished institutional histories (Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, 2015: 325). Lime mortar had made it possible to build many buildings in a short time (an idea he emphasises) and had made them solid and durable for the glory of God. We know the symbolic value given by the missionaries to the construction of stone churches, and in particular the first one in Gorgora Velha, at the beginning of 1619 (Beccari, 1911: 406), hailed by the missionaries as "the material oeuvre and the spiritual building of the Roman faith in this empire" (Beccari, 1911: 417). To build with stone was to exist in the territory, as opposed to what the missionaries used until then, churches "in the manner of the locals, made of straw and

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<sup>19</sup> ARSI, *Goa 39 II, Goana Hist. Æth. 1549-1629*, doc. 52, fol. 306.

branches” (Beccari, 1911: 412). The Jesuit presence went from provisional to definitive, the Catholic faith was rooted in Ethiopia, its Church established.

Adding lime mortar contributed (as we will see later in the case of the first Catholic church) to the strength and durability of the buildings, as the missionaries contributed to the durability of an Ethiopia full of promise. Once they left, the Ethiopian edifice collapsed and became a “squalid ruin”.

## 2.2 Pedro Páez, church builder in Ethiopia?

The research made on the manuscripts of the *História da Etiópia* (those of Rome and Braga) and the reconstruction of the missionary’s itinerary from the existing documentation was an opportunity to question the contemporary historiographical view of Páez, namely that he had been a renowned missionary and had also distinguished himself as an architect, mason and even as a carpenter, his name being associated with the construction of palaces and churches in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In 2003, at the above-mentioned Conference in Addis Abeba (commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Páez’s arrival in Ethiopia)<sup>20</sup>, I proposed a reflection on Pedro Páez’s real or imagined participation as an architect in the Company, with the following title: “Pedro Páez: architect, mason, carpenter?” (Pennec, 2007: 113-123). The absurdity of the ensuing debate was that, for some, the topic became the pretext for a treasure hunt in search of “evidence” that Páez had indeed been an architect. One of those who conducted research on the topic a few years later (having not been present at that conference) was Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, who first published a biographical note on Pedro Páez in the *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* (2010)<sup>21</sup>, and later the book version of his PhD thesis, *Envoys of a human god. The Jesuit mission to Christian Ethiopia, 1557-1632*, (2015) and a chapter in the book edited by Fernández, *The Archaeology of the Jesuit Missions in Ethiopia (1557-1632)* (2017)<sup>22</sup>. Although these three texts strive to present

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>21</sup> Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2010: 89-90. It is nevertheless necessary to recall the circumstances of the writing of this note. While the scientific editors of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (Siegbert Uhlig with the cooperation of Alessandro Bausi, for volume 4) had entrusted the writing of Páez’s note to Ramos and myself and as we delivered the proofs of the text in which there appeared the possibility of a legendary construction built later by Almeida on Páez’s skills as architect. Uhlig asked us to withdraw this hypothesis, but we refused. The decision was taken to remove our note and entrust it to Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, who at the time was working as part of the team in Hamburg for this vast company of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*.

<sup>22</sup> Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2015; Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 16-34. Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, 2010: 89-90. After our withdrawal from the project of Ramos and myself in 2009, the association with the young researcher Martínez d’Alòs-Moner for the following excavation campaigns was carried out with no dialogue or exchange of ideas or hypotheses.

the most complete information from the various documents consulted by the author, they illustrate a continuous search for consensus regarding information from different registers without distinguishing between contemporary and subsequent sources. Let him express himself:

Hence by about the early 1610s, as soon as the fathers had gained a secure footing in the court, they strove to upgrade the mission's infrastructure, and it was during this period that the first important building associated with the mission was erected. Significantly, it was a secular construction. Susenyos reportedly commissioned the missionaries to build him "some houses [*paços*] like the best in [our] [...] land" (quote from Almeida, 1907: 294). The responsibility for the construction work (the *fabrica*, in missionary parlance), fell to the Spaniard Pedro Páez. Although by no means an architect or even a mason, Páez had earlier participated in the preliminary works on the church and house of São Paulo in Diu, which may have provided him with some experience in masonry and building design (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 20-21).

Martínez d'Alòs-Moner plays with two different registers. The construction of this civil building in the 1610s, which the author used to demonstrate the establishment of a mission infrastructure, is based on a quote from Almeida, who states:

The emperor found himself in May 1614 at Gorgora, where, for two years he established his royal winter camp, which is like his court. And this camp was a beautiful site, because it is located on a peninsula almost totally surrounded by the water of the great lake of Dambea [Lake Tana], which they call the sea. And on the highest point in the middle of the peninsula, Father Pero Páez built houses for him in the style of ours in Europe, so well done that any prince could live in it. This was the opportunity for the father to do this work. ...] The emperor asked the fathers to make him palaces like the best in our lands, and he offered to pay the expenses. The fathers apologised, saying that they lacked workers and materials, which were stone, lime and wood, which was a false excuse. Then the emperor moved his camp into this place, and he charged Father Pero Páez... (Almeida, 1907: 293-295).

Pedro Páez gave a description of exactly the same site (Gorgora nova) in Book 1, Chapter 20 of his *História* (excerpt quoted above) and he did not describe himself as the builder of this palace (Páez, 2011a: 200-203). It was Almeida, when writing his own *História*, that attributed the palace's construction to Páez. It was Almeida who gave him the status of architect and builder. The anachronistic evidence is obvious.

To prove that Páez was an experienced architect and mason, Martínez d'Alòs-Moner cites a supporting document that is in fact totally irrelevant, as it only states

that Páez was present in Diu at the time a Jesuit college and a church were built (Beccari, 1911: 30)<sup>23</sup>.

His conclusions on Páez's role as "architect" are the following:

Páez died on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1622 and with him the mission lost an imaginative and ambitious "architect". The work on the chapel of Gennete Iyesus has been taken over by Father Azevedo. However, the degree of involvement of this father in the task of construction is not clear, especially since Azevedo had been engaged in intellectual tasks on an ongoing basis. However, Páez had clearly innovated. Although he is not a great builder, as the structural problems of his buildings in Kund Amba and Ombabaqua (the Jesuit Gorgora) seem to prove, his architectural contribution has been remarkable. Indeed, he played a pioneering role in the introduction of the Indo-Portuguese style in Ethiopia, which developed successfully in Western India thanks to the joint work of Iberian laymen, religious orders and local Indian craftsmen and architects (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 22-23).

For Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, Páez had been an imaginative and ambitious "architect" who had played a pioneering role in the introduction of a novel architectural and construction technique in Ethiopia. In support of his argument, he appeals to the words of the Portuguese historian Rafael Moreira, specialist in Portuguese and Brazilian architecture and who briefly toured the Gondarine sites in a week after participating in the afore-mentioned Addis Ababa conference in 2003 (Moreira, 2007: 132), to produce a wounding verdict on my working hypothesis. "The historian, Hervé Pennec, on the contrary, maintains that Páez's architectural skills were a fabrication of his companion, Almeida, but he does not provide any convincing empirical evidence in support of his claims" (Fernández *et al.*, 2017: 23 note 25). This criticism offered me the chance to return to the subject and better convey my interpretation.

This meant I could look closely at the possible meanings of the word "architect" in early modern times, to follow Jesuit practitioners in the building and architectural trades and, finally, to examine Almeida's obituary of Páez's in his *História da Etiópia Abassia e alta* (first published in the *RÆSOI* collection in 1907 and 1908 in volumes 5-

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<sup>23</sup> Beccari, 1911: 30. Letter from Páez, from which the following is an extract "Tiennenos ya dado en dinero cerca de três mil ducados, con que compramos unas casas pequenas con una huerta grande, en que hacemos una iglesia muy hermosa, porque hay aqui mucha piedra y muy buena". Similarly, when he notes that "Several passages from the historical record indicate that Páez had strong architectonic inclinations and that during his years in India he was involved in building. See Bartholomé Alcazar, "Chrono-História de la Compañía de Jesús em la provincia de Toledo, década V", c. 1710. The quotation from this book, written many decades after the end of the Ethiopian mission, follows a phraseology that was by then already widespread and of another register entirely; Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, 2010: 89.

7), where he calls him an architect, comparing his profile with those of the other missionaries about whom Almeida also wrote.

The consensus that was progressively built around the notion of Páez ever being an architect is an unfounded delusion of someone who has never engaged in any critical reflection about the meaning of the word. Nor did they examine the reasons why this word was used or who initially used it, let alone attempt to disentangle early modern concepts from contemporary ones. In an issue of the *Revue de synthèse* (1999) devoted to the Jesuits in the early modern world, Pierre-Antoine Fabre refers to Gauvin Bailey's observation on Jesuit "art" and on Jesuit "architects", "that not all Jesuit architects were Jesuits, and conversely, not all Jesuit architects worked for the Society alone", thus requiring a comparative study of individual trajectories (Fabre, 1999: 437). Similarly, Alexandre Cojannot points out that "The [architect's] model that emerged from the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the rest of Europe [with reference to the Italian concept of the architect as a universalist man] is less imbued with theoretical reflection and humanist culture, and has a more professional and technical, but no less ambitious, character" (Cojannot, 2014: 121).

Cojannot the researcher insists on what became apparent, in France at least, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, "the idea of a versatile architect, both an art man and an artist, a cabinet man and a man of action, occupying a unique and central place in the architectural production system", and he states that, "While they are generally too incomplete to judge the work actually done by a 17<sup>th</sup> century architect, the sources nevertheless confirm that few had all the qualities and skills necessary for the full exercise of their functions. Even when they brought them together, the circumstances of the order and the multiplicity of their occupations did not allow them to assume all the responsibilities themselves, and they had to find ways to delegate to third parties" (Cojannot, 2014: 122).

This set of ideas about the function of architect in modern times leads us to question the practices carried out within the Society of Jesus itself, which was not to be outdone in the exercise of architecture, both in Europe and in the West and East Indies. This requires that three questions be addressed. The first is that of the sources and training; the second, the actual architectural skill and empirical experience; and lastly, the use of third parties or collaborations.

On the question of sources and training within the Society of Jesus, the idea is not to propose a study on the training of "architects" among Jesuits in modern times, within the framework of this chapter, but rather to grasp from some examples how one became an architect. The study conducted by Adriana Sénard on Etienne Martellange (1569-1641), "the most active architect of the Society of Jesus in France in

the 17<sup>th</sup> century”, describes an individual who entered the Jesuit novitiate in Avignon at the age of 21 in 1590 and who took his vows as a temporal coadjutor in Chambéry in 1603. It is from this date that he is referred to as an architect in the Catalogues of the Society of Jesus, whereas until then, his status was that of a painter (Sénard, 2012: 213). Being unable to reconstruct his formative years, she seeks the modalities of his apprenticeships in the training that Jesuits received in the colleges but not outside. In any case, from 1603 to 1637, Martellange worked as an architect (and also as a painter and a draftsman on the projects he was overseeing), and for this period the sources are more abundant (plans, sections and elevations, memoirs, building specifications, etc.), for the analysis of the Jesuit’s working methods (Sénard, 2012: 214-231). Thence, the title of “architect” is used in the registers as recognition of his achievements. The fact he had designed and managed the construction of a building created the competence and earned him the title.

Still on the question of sources and training, Cristina Osswald’s study on Jesuit buildings in Goa between 1542 and 1655 proposes that the “local Catholic art, the *modo goano*” was an offshoot of the Society’s *modo nostro*, and analyses how this local art played a role in the history of post-Tridentine Catholicism. The book’s appendix lists the “biographies of the artists who worked in Goa between 1542 and 1655”. The category of “artists” seems indeed most relevant to designate the thirty-three Jesuits identified by the author in the Society’s sources and who exercised their multiple talents as sculptors, engravers, draftsmen, painters, architects, project managers, masons and blacksmiths (Osswald, 2013: 305-315). Grouping them together in a set of trades necessary for the construction of the different types of buildings allows her to emphasise (when sources indicate it), that they are specific individuals the Society of Jesus called temporal coadjutors<sup>24</sup>, who were in charge of the material aspects related to the needs of the Society.

The contemporary sources of the Ethiopian mission are very few and scattered in the documentation. Some information is provided on a certain João Martins (Juan Martínez), a native of the village of Corpa (Cerpa), in Castile, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1598 at the age of 26<sup>25</sup>. When he embarked for Ethiopia, he already had the rank of temporal coadjutor. He arrived there in 1625 with the contingent of Patriarch Afonso Mendes, which consisted of six Jesuit priests and thirteen other individuals, including young men gifted in music and two masons, whom the missionaries in Ethiopia had previously required for the building of churches (Beccari, 1912: 143-144).

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<sup>24</sup> It would be important to review all the documentation consulted by Osswald, in particular the *Catalogues*, in order to check the “artists” that she does not signal as temporal coadjutors.

<sup>25</sup> ARSI, *Goa* 25, fol. 35v.

According to a letter by Manuel de Almeida, this Brother João was in Gorgora Nova in the Dembya region, in 1628, engaged in the construction of the church there, and in that year he was also in Gojjam during the Octave of Easter, staying at the residence of Nebessê [‘Eneb’esé], tracing and preparing the reconstruction of the Mertule Maryam church. In the same letter, Almeida extols João Martinez’s qualities as the builder of a boat that was launched during the festivities of the dedication of the church of Gorgora Nova and also praises his talents as a painter of a portrait of Jesus Christ (Beccari, 1912: 269-270). The fact that he is mobile and not stuck with priestly duties ensured that he could attend to at least six Catholic church building sites in all the provinces where the Jesuits were established (Pennec, 2003: 172-174).

He returned to India in 1629, if we heed Almeida’s words, “In 1629, not mentioning the patriarch, there were in Ethiopia eighteen fathers of the company and a brother [...] We were two short since last year Father João de Velasco fell ill with cruel pains in his eyes that lasted a very long time, and he was forced to return to India to see if he would regain his health, and Brother João Martinez went with him to help him during the trip” (Almeida, 1908: 67). In 1633, according to the *Catalogues*, João Martinez was at the Diu College in India<sup>26</sup>. But at no time do the sources mentioned above speak of this temporal coadjutor as an architect. It is more what he does that makes him an architect, a painter, and a boat builder. When it comes to qualifying the practical skills of one of their own, missionary sources do not use terms or categories such as architect, painter, or sculptor. Why then should we take them literally when they use them for an individual who clearly does not have the requested profile, as we have tried to define it?

It is essential to go beyond a simple reading of the sources, missionary documents being much more than a receptacle of reality, but rather spaces of struggle and stakes to defend. Páez’s “talent” as an architect was a claim that developed, not during his lifetime, but immediately after his death, which means that it is important to understand this as a shift in his characterisation and to unveil the reasons for it.

### 2.3 The obituaries of Páez’s companions by Almeida

To revisit Páez’s Ethiopian biography, it must be confronted with that of the other missionaries who were his contemporaries in the Jesuit mission. Páez landed in Ethiopia in 1603. The four priests who followed him there were Francesco António de Angelis and António Fernandes in the following year, and Lourenço Romano and Luis

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<sup>26</sup> ARSI, *Goa* 25, fol. 58.

de Azevedo in 1605. The goal here is not to summarise the course of their lives or to retrace their work, but rather to analyse their obituaries written by Almeida in his *História da Etiópia Abassia e alta*. They were written not in Ethiopia but while Almeida was already in India, after the expulsion of the Jesuits from Ethiopia (which is an important aspect as we tried to emphasise earlier).

The comparison between the different obituaries offers a window to understanding his biographical method and how he singlehandedly built Páez's enduring reputation as a missionary endowed with infinite qualities, an hagiographical process that started immediately after his death in 1622. The highlighting of Páez as the main protagonist of this second mission (1603-1622) overshadowed the presence and contributions of the other four priests who, in terms of missionary duration, the functions they occupied and personal investment, contributed just as much as Páez to the introduction of Catholicism among the Ethiopian elite and to the royal conversion on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1621 (Esteves Pereira, 1892: 258; 1900: 198; Beccari, 1906: 386).

Not only Páez's, but all five obituaries written by Almeida are hagiographical in nature. The life of each Jesuit is outlined since his entry into the Society, some information is given about his career and his life before his arrival in the Ethiopian missionary field, the various works and activities carried out in mission are listed, and the remarkable virtues of each of them is mentioned. A comparative approach offers us the means to gauge the choices he makes when highlighting the virtues and talents of each missionary, in order to grasp the lasting effects of their different reputations, as shaped by Almeida. Two of the five obituaries have received special treatment, those of Páez and Fernandes, particularly in the sense that he focuses on their talents and virtues, which is not so evident in the other three cases.

Referring to Páez, Almeida does not mince his words: "He was chosen by God to be the Apostle of Ethiopia"; he showed great pugnacity to enter Ethiopia despite "his seven-year captivity" on the Arabian Peninsula. He was already a skilled theologian when he arrived in India, and in the missionary field "was so kind that he won the good will of all"; he "became not only master and preacher, but also doctor, nurse, architect, mason and carpenter to build churches for God and houses for the emperor" (Almeida, 1907: 361). As for Fernandes, Almeida also underlines his many virtues: "virtue in prayer and long penances", "virtue of extreme poverty", "perfection in his way of writing, similar to that of Saint Ignatius", "author of a treatise on the errors of Ethiopians translated into the language of the book [Ge'ez] and printed in Goa under the title *Magseph Assetat* (the *Whip of lies*)", "of a life of the Virgin Mary", "a treatise *De opere sex dierum*, correcting the many errors of an Ethiopian book, *Haymanot Abau* [*The*



*Faith of the Fathers*]", “was vicar general of the patriarch [Afonso Mendes]” and “his death was in conformity with his holy life” (Almeida, 1908: 472-477).

Compared with Páez and Fernandes, the obituaries of the three other Jesuits (Angélis, Romano and Azevedo) are relatively poor in terms of the praise for their talents and virtues. All three stand out in the learning of Ethiopian languages (Ge’ez and Amharic) (Almeida, 1907: 228-229; 335; 363), two of them being “excellent translators of Bible commentaries in Ethiopian language” (Almeida, 1907: 363; 1908: 228-229). Finally, the qualities that each of them demonstrated are mentioned. Angélis, having exercised his ministry in the region of Gojjam, was called “the Apostle of Gojjam” and demonstrated qualities such as joy and kindness (Almeida, 1907: 363). Romano distinguished himself by his charity and, above all, for his extreme devotion “to the poor, the sick and the plagued” (Almeida, 1907: 335). As for Azevedo, he was a “good apothecary, who knew the local healing plants and brought them from India”, was renowned for his “great affability, indulgence and charity” (Almeida, 1908: 228-229). The comparison between these five praises seems to suggest clearly that it was Almeida’s intention to highlight two main figures who, in his mind, played a leading role in the Ethiopian mission: Páez and Fernandes. But it also provides an opportunity to highlight how Almeida played with reality by writing Páez’s praises.

Almeida’s claim that Páez acquired his training and skill as a theologian in Europe, before being sent to India, is total invention, as it was in Goa that he began his theological studies, as confirmed by the catalogues of the province of Goa<sup>27</sup> (from 1588 to 1620). He first studied for three and a half years at the Jesuit College of Belmonte (Spain, Province of Cuenca), to obtain the rank of Master of Arts,<sup>28</sup> after which he pleaded with his general to be allowed to serve as a missionary in the East Indies (under the Portuguese *Padroado*).<sup>29</sup> He embarked in March 1588 on the São Thomé, a ship that was bound for Goa, where he arrived in September 1588. Upon arrival, he enrolled on the theology course at St. Paul’s College,<sup>30</sup> an undertaking that was cut short since in January 1589 he was selected to accompany Father António de Monserrate on a

<sup>27</sup> The *Catalogues*, from 1574, were one of the instruments of the centralising nature of the Society of Jesus. This archival documentation, which was held within the institution - because it is kept by the provincial in charge of the administration of a province - contains information on each Jesuit in the form of short notes and draws up an abbreviated career path for each member of the Order, a cumulative career path, which is updated every three years, taking into account the learning and new experiences of each member. In this way, the data sheet held essentially by the Jesuit hierarchy (in the Ethiopian case by the provincial of Goa), offered useful information for a better exploitation and judgment of the Jesuit’s personal capacities (cf. Demoustier, 1995: 4-5).

<sup>28</sup> The duration of an “Arts” course is defined in the *Constitutions* of the Society (Loyola, 1991: 508).

<sup>29</sup> The *Indipetae* of Páez, was first published by Tacchi Venturi, 1905: 560-580.

<sup>30</sup> ARSI, *Goa 24 I*, fol. 163-5, edited by Wicki & Gomes, 1979: 823: “En la nave que se llama San Thomé fueron los siguientes: (6.) Hermano Pero Páez, español, natural de Olmeda (en note La Olmeda de la Cebolla, in the province of Madrid), arzobispado de Toledo, 23 años de edad o 24 y 5 de la Compañía, de la Provincia de Toledo y colegio de Belmonte (in the province of Cuenca) ha oído el curso de las artes”.

mission to Ethiopia. In a letter to Tomas Ituren, his philosophy teacher at the Belmonte College, he wrote, “The provincial father told the viceroy that he needed to ordain a brother for this purpose [i. e., for missionary duty in Ethiopia] and he immediately sent a message to the archbishop saying that it would be appropriate for his majesty’s service if he did so” (Beccari, 1911: 3-6). It was therefore as a young priest with an unfinished theological course that Páez was recruited to accompany António de Monserrate, a spiritual coadjutor on a dangerous and uncertain voyage.<sup>31</sup> According to the provincial, Father António de Monserrate was chosen for the mission despite already being very old because he was “competent and particularly skilled at dealing with these kings”. Indeed, years before, he been sent with other Jesuits to the court of Akbar (reign of 1556-1605), called by the Portuguese the Great Mogol<sup>32</sup>, in an effort to convert him to Catholicism, a mission that proved to be a pipe dream (Subrahmanyam, 1999: 189). Considering that the Goan authorities thought that the right man to face the sovereign of Ethiopia, a Christian king, could be the same man who had tried to convert the Great Mogol, a Muslim king, might suggest that they had not fully grasped the nature of the difficulties facing the missionaries sent to Ethiopia in 1557. Their travails resulted from the unsurmountable theological differences between Ethiopian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, demanding specialised preparation in Christology.

The two missionaries sailed from Goa on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1589, stopped at Bassein and Diu, and crossed the Western Indian Ocean on their way to the Red Sea. Their vessel was shipwrecked off Dhofar (southern Arabia) and they were captured by a Turkish ship and taken inland. They were held prisoners in various parts of the Arabian Peninsula for seven years, when in September 1596 they were freed, in exchanged for a large ransom<sup>33</sup>. The details of their misadventure are not reported in the *catalogues*. There is only a brief note referring to their “captivity by the Turks”, either for six or seven years (depending on the year of each particular *catalogue*), which is repeated from 1599 to the 1620, the last *catalogue* mentioning Páez.

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<sup>31</sup> Letter from Bassein (Western Port of India) dated 16. 02. 1589, by Páez: “The father with whom I am sailing is called António de Monserrate, of Catalan nationality, very competent in these matters and with a particular ability to deal with these kings: he was one of those who found themselves in the Mogor kingdom and court [the Great Mogul]; moreover he knows enough of the languages needed. This mission was carried out because the King Our Lord [King of Spain] had urged him to do so when he received the [Ethiopian] King’s letters, and the Viceroy [of India] immediately came to our house to ask Father Martinez, provincial of that province, to send this mission” (Beccari, 1911: 3-6).

<sup>32</sup> From the 1570s onwards, the Mogul established a new political order in the Indian subcontinent, expanding from the north across the Ganges Valley to become an empire with access to both the Western and Eastern Indian Ocean, from Gujarat to the Bay of Bengal (Subrahmanyam, 1999: 187).

<sup>33</sup> For the account of their captivity in South Arabia, see Beccari’s introduction to the *História* (1905: XII-XX).

Once released from captivity, Paez went back to St. Paul's College in Goa, in December 1596<sup>34</sup>. But he again interrupted his studies, this time because the illness he suffered during his imprisonment forced him to leave Goa for Salsette (Assalona) in the hope of restoring his health. The *catalogue* dated December 1597 reports him staying at the Jesuit residency in Chaul, and active as preacher and confessor<sup>35</sup>. Given this chronological information, what the *catalogues* (from 1599, 1605, 1608, 1608, 1614 up to 1620)<sup>36</sup> mean when they mention Páez's "two years of theology" is that these two years had not been completed. The first one because he embarked on his first doomed mission to Ethiopia with Father Monserrate, and the second because of prolonged illness upon his return from captivity, meaning that at no time does the *catalogue* grant him the title of theologian. On the other hand, three of Páez's companions (Fernandes, Romano and Angelis) are credited with four years of theology by the same *catalogues*, having completed their course in Goa before joining the Ethiopian mission.

It was quite rare for Jesuits to have completed their theology studies (at least four years) before being sent to India, and most of those who did then started their theological studies at St. Paul's College in Goa. Almeida himself, was in his first year of theology in 1605<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand, if a priest arrived in Goa with a complete theological course that was a sign that he was an extremely special team member whose skills should be used with the greatest care. By indicating in his note that Pedro

<sup>34</sup> ARSI, Goa 24 II, ff. 266-269v, edited by Wicki, 1988: 776-789.

<sup>35</sup> ARSI, Goa 24 II, ff. 272-274, edited by Wicki, 1988: 843-856.

<sup>36</sup> ARSI, Goa 24 II, f. 286v (Catalogo dos Padres e Irmãos da Companhia de Jesus da India feito em Dezembro 1599, "P. P<sup>o</sup>. Pais Castelhana de Olmeda Arcebispado de Toledo, idade 35, boas forças; 15 da Com[panhi]a. Estudou Artes e Theologia dous anos; foi 7 anos Cativo dos Turcos, indo pera o Preste; foi hum ano ministro em Baçay, e alguns mezes pay dos X pãos."); f. 369v (Catalogo primeiro da Prov.a de Goa da India oriental feito 15 de Dezembro de 1605. Missões, "P. Pero Páez Castelhana de Olmeda Arcebispado de Toledo de 41 años. da Comp.a 21. boas forças, estudou theologia 2 años. Foi ministro do collegio de Baçay hum año, pay dos christãos alguns mezes, esteve captivo dos Turcos 6 años indo pera Etiópia, ha 3 años que esta missão"); f. 410v (Catalogo 1<sup>o</sup> da provincia de Goa da India Oriental feito em novembro de 1608. Missão do Etiópia, « P. Pero Pais Castelhana natural de Olmeda Arcebispado de Toledo de 44 annos de idade e da Comp.a 24 Boas forças, estudou philosophia, e 2 annos theologia, foy ministro no Collegio de Baçaim hum anno e algum mezes, esteve cativo dos Turcos 6 annos ha 6 que esta na Missão de Ethyopia supor della: Ja lhe foy profissão de 4 votos"); ARSI, Goa 25, f. 7 (Catalogo primo da provincia de Goa f[ei]to em outubro de 1614: casa Professa. Missão de Etiópia, "P. Pero Páez n<sup>ale</sup>. de Olmeda id<sup>e</sup>. 50 annos boas forças 30 da Comp<sup>a</sup>. Estudou 2 annos theologia foi Ministro de Baçaim, cativo dos Turcos 6 annos vay em 12 que he sup<sup>or</sup>. da sua Missão fez profissao a 24 de Junho de 1609"); f. 29v (Catalogo 1<sup>o</sup> da Provincia de Goa em novembro de 1620. Caza Professa. Missam de Etiópia, "P. Pero Paes de Olmeda idade 56 annos da Comp<sup>a</sup> 36 boas forças estudou 2 annos de theologia esteve captivo 7 entre Turcos foi sup<sup>or</sup> de Etiópia 8 ou 9 fez profiçãõ de 4 votos a 4 julho de 609").

<sup>37</sup> ARSI, Goa 24 II, Catalogo primeiro da Prov.a de Goa da India oriental feito 15 de Dezembro de 1605 (ff. 361-370v) here fol. 363v: "Ir. Manoel d'Almeida da cidade e bispado de Viseu, de 25 annos e da Comp.a 11: Boas forças, ouvio artes e hum anno theologia, leo retorica 3 annos".

Páez had completed his studies, Almeida tries to enhance the prestige of the missionary, whom he describes as “an apostle to Ethiopia”.

Also, when Almeida qualifies Páez as already being a *professed* before his second departure for Ethiopia, he is once again carefully embellishing Páez’s biography. According to the biographer, that had happened when he returned from his Arabian captivity. Within the Society of Jesus the highest rank was that of *professed*, meaning he had completed his vows (the fourth being that of particular obedience to the Pope), usually granted after four years of theological studies (excluding the humanities and arts studies). But in some cases the years of missionary experience in the field could replace the years of study. Pedro Páez was one such case, as he pronounced his vows on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1609, according to the three-year catalogue of the year 1614 – that is, after six years of missionary activity in Ethiopia. By making Páez a *professed* before his second departure for Ethiopia, Almeida clearly seeks to enhance the Jesuit’s prestige.

He was not unaware of the situation in the province of India at that time. The *professed* were rare in that province, and it was appropriate, from the perspective of missionary policy, to use these Jesuits for more established and promising missions than that of Ethiopia. In 1603, the signs of Ethiopia’s adherence to Catholicism were relatively weak for it to be an absolute priority of the Society of Jesus. On the other hand, the priority was to preserve the Catholicism within the Luso-Ethiopian community (numbers vary between 800 and 1200) that, in the eyes of the Goan and European authorities (Pennec, 2003: 100-115), was showing signs of being absorbed by Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Finally, as for Páez’s supposed qualification as a builder, architect, mason and carpenter, it is essential to note that in Almeida’s letter reporting on what Brother João Martins (Juan Martínez) did in church construction in Ethiopia, he never called him an architect, a title he didn’t hesitate to use when referring to Páez.

Rather than pure invention, Almeida engages in literary exaggeration aimed at highlighting Páez’s “talents”. One of his contemporaries, Luis de Azevedo, when reporting on the construction of the first Catholic stone church in 1619 (of which we spoke before), in a letter addressed to the official of the province of Goa, wrote: “Father Pero Paiz, who was the architect of the work...”. In the same letter, however, he says that he and the other priests, when questioned by the Ethiopian king and wishing to meet his expectations regarding the construction of this church “replied that we would seek to satisfy His Highness in all, but as the undertaking implied a great effort for which we were not qualified, we would build first, if it seemed good to His Highness, a small church” (Beccari, 1911: 414 and 416).

Páez himself wrote a letter to the Company's Superior General, Muzio Vitelleschi, the same year, and reported on negotiations with the king and local elite on the choice of the location of this new church, as follows:

In the letter I wrote to Your Fatherhood last year I reported how *Erâz* Cela Christôs, brother of the Emperor, strongly advised me to build a church in our own way (indeed theirs are usually round and very obscure), in the residence that we have near the court and which is the most beautiful that can be, as the curiosity to see something new will bring many people and we will have more opportunities to declare our things, and that he himself would contribute with everything necessary for the construction of this building and he would supply the ornaments in damask, velvet and brocade, and that I [should] request from Your Fatherhood an image of Our Lady of the Assumption, great and beautiful for the church. He warns me that it would be good to ask the emperor for permission before starting, because those who are not devoted to us will then not dare to speak up afterwards. And since I was waiting to ask him for permission, Our Lord wished and he told me himself, that he wanted to build a church in the manner of the Portuguese, because he had been told that they were very clear and beautiful, and he requested that I deliver the plan to him so to start immediately. I replied that it would be better to build a small one first, because the one we had was not adequate, and if it satisfied him, he could then ask us to do it [i.e., a bigger one]. This seemed good to him and he asked that the stone be cut with diligence, but that we do not start until he saw the site on which we had decided to build.

Nevertheless, we immediately began to carve the very good quality stone our Lord had provided us, which is white and red, and found near our house, where we never imagined, because it was covered with earth and both of us carved a good quantity (Beccari, 1911: 402-3).

What emerges from these two excerpts around an identical event is indeed Páez's very militant position around the question of a Catholic stone church in "the manner of the Portuguese", his qualities as a negotiator for the good of the local Catholic community and the dependence of the missionaries on political power. Without royal authorisation, the project could not proceed and without Páez's dedication at the construction site, and even in its management, no church would have been built. This is how the term "architect" used by Azevedo should be read, in the same way as in a sentence of an Ethiopian document, the *Chronicle of Susenyos*, about the church of Gennete Iyesus: "It was a Franc who was the master of the construction, whose name was Padry Pay [Pedro Páez]" (Esteves Pereira, 1892: 259; 1900: 199).

Moreover, Almeida, when narrating the circumstances of the construction of this same church in his *História* (Book VII), writes: “The construction of the church was in the hands of Father Pero Páez, who worked there a lot. But he did not finish it because he died, as we will later tell; Father Luis d’Azevedo finished it, when he returned from the mission of the Agâus” (Almeida, 1907: 357). Azevedo, who was entrusted with the completion of the church, was not an architect either but was appointed to oversee the smooth running of the operations until the end of the construction. The same Almeida, this time in the annual letter of 1626-1627, wrote about the church in Gorgora:

Gorgora is a day away south of Ganeta Iesus: a little over half a mile from the lake, the church we had, as it was built in stone and clay, was demolished over time, due to the weight of the very heavy beams and roof. But from its ruins another one will rise which will be the Phoenix of Ethiopia. The church is being built according to the plan of the Diu College [India]; and the master builder is the same brother João Martins [...]. The place in which it is constructed is a peninsula where the emperor had his camp for seven years, and the emperor had the houses that Father Pero Páez built there in good memory.<sup>38</sup>

This excerpt is crucial since it tells us that the church completed in 1619 was made of stone and clay, not lime, and that was the motive Brother João Martins was rebuilding it (not exactly in the same place, but Almeida doesn't go into details). Then, that Pedro Páez “of good memory” made houses for the Ethiopian king on this peninsula of Gorgora (which was a royal camp). The idea that Páez had made houses for the Ethiopian king was still very much alive in 1627 and had clearly enthralled Almeida (to the point that he took it up again in his *História*). The first Gorgora church was built in stone and clay by Páez, if we follow Azevedo, and was finished in 1619. As, according to Almeida, it was in ruins, a much larger one was built by a master builder, not necessarily in the same emplacement. The first church had been ephemeral and its “architect” a poor builder, as Azevedo wrote in 1619, “as the undertaking implied a great effort for which we were not qualified, we would build first, if it seemed good to His Highness, a small church” (Beccari, 1911: 414 and 416). Almeida’s annual letter of 1626-1627 shows how Almeida preferred to present Páez.

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<sup>38</sup> ARSI, Goana 39 II, Goana Hist. Æth. 1549-1629, doc 54d, fol. 418r-441 [ici f. 423]. Letter signed by Manuel de Almeida and written from Gorgora, April 17, 1627: “Esta Gorgorâ de Ganeta Iesus hu[m]a jornada pera o sul: pouco mais de m[ei]a legoa da lagoa a igreia que aqui tinhamos como era de pedra, e barro, e o pezo das traves e terrado muito excessimo foi co[m] o tempo aruinado. Porem de suas ruinas se vai a levantando outra q[ue] sera a Phenix de Etiópia [...] a igr[e]ja fazçe polla traça da de collegio de Dio [...] e o mestre da obra he o mesmo irmão João Martins [...]. O lugar em que se fez e hu[m]a peni[n]sula em que o emp[erad]or teve sete annos o seu arrayal, e as cazas que o p[adr]e Pero Páez de boa memoria ahi fez ao emp[erad]or”.

While he does not name Páez as the builder/architect of this first church that was already in ruins in 1627 (i.e., less than ten years after its completion), he nonetheless describes the “Apostle of Ethiopia” as the builder for the Ethiopian king on the Gorgora peninsula and in the royal camp (Pennec, 2003: 204-212). Here we have a good summary of the ambiguous and uncomfortable situation in which Almeida found himself. As he had been mandated, in 1626, to rewrite Páez’s *História da Etiópia* (as mentioned above), evoking Páez’s reputation as a builder rather than a writer was a way of highlighting Páez’s ongoing living memory, while justifying, by omission, his status as an author. It was probably already on Ethiopian soil that Almeida began playing with the idea that Páez was an “architect”, as this was certainly encouraged by local memories of him. This image took on its full significance when he wrote his *História*.

What Almeida writes is something very different from simply describing Páez as a building manager or contractor. What he actually does is to endow him with the general “talent” of an architect, a builder, which he did not do for Azevedo. His purpose was to highlight Páez’s character and role as the driver of the missionary policy implemented in Ethiopia during the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By picking on a momentary episode of the missionary’s almost twenty years of activity in Ethiopia and transforming one task into a general “talent”, Almeida was able to portray him as “the apostle of Ethiopia, chosen by God”, the builder of Catholicity in this missionary land, the one who built “churches for God and houses for the emperor”, making him an “architect”, even though he was aware that Páez did not have the training and the necessary qualifications to deserve that title. Through this benevolent fiction, that served him well in the moment, he became a “ménardian” writer (Borges, 1939; Lafon, 2011; Chartier, 2015: 288-298), and Almeida unwillingly sealed Páez’s reputation as an architect to this day.

Consequently, the information that Almeida manipulates is based on a double logic. Pointing to the “discovery of lime mortar in 1624” and making Páez the architect of the palace built for the king in 1614 reinforced, on the one hand, the feeling of material and symbolic waste of a mission that had become a “squalid ruin” and, on the other hand, discreetly eclipsed Páez’s other great “talent”, his quality as a writer. That quality he implicitly reserved for himself and explicitly, as we have seen, for António Fernandes, and his obituary was instrumental in shaping Fernandes image of a holy man, virtuous in every respect, author of theological treatises, one of which had been published at the College of Saint Paul in Goa in 1642, the *Magseph Assetat* [“The Whip of Lies”] (Silva, 1993: 136-137).

In 1872, M. W. Desborough Cooley (one of the founders of the Geographical Society and the Hakluyt Society) wrote these sensible words about Páez:

Some people have attributed to Páez not only the talents of an apostle, but also those of a mason and an architect, and yet they have, for all this, only missionary reports filled with wonders and illusions. Like forming the best materials for a popular history, one avidly grabs what brings the lout to bay with astonishment while awakening the philosopher's mistrust. Páez was only a man of great and varied talents, but the conversion of the emperor, which is the main basis of his fame, must perhaps be attributed above all to the lightness and polite simplicity of the Abessin, to his preference for a foreign and skilful priest and to his desire to mortify and humiliate the dictatorship of the indigenous hierarchy. The missionary had no leisure time for physical work (Desborough-Cooley, 1872: 544).

Except for noting the racist condescension typical of its time regarding “the Abyssians”, this rather simple but no-nonsense remark does not require any further comment. The Portuguese reedition and the Spanish and English translations of Páez's *História da Etiópia* as well as Martínez d'Alòs-Moner's various reflections have helped revise a set of questions both about the text and about the author that have raised questions about how knowledge is produced, and how it is impacted by dialogical conflicts, which pleads in favour of the notion that knowledge is not cumulative but rather reactive and updated according to the issues and paradigms of its time.

#### 2.4 Oral histories: the *nurâ/norra* at “the heart of the matter”<sup>39</sup>

One of the trends emerging from the oral legends that Ramos has been collecting in the Gondar region is that of the dialogical and contested nature of the local memories about the royal buildings of the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As he explains:

My questioning of the Denqez farmers about Susenyos's problem of excessive body hair has not helped me understand why the king is described as feeling so intensely ashamed that he has to kill anyone who sees him naked. I did not find an explanation in Gennete Iyesus either, although there the version of the story contains a possible solution to the problem and a hint as to the reasons. The priests relate that Susenyos used the baths in Azezo to shave off his overabundant pubic hair. However, Ato Naga, a shimagele (elder) of the Qemant community in Azezo, tells me that the

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<sup>39</sup> Title of the novel by Graham Greene (1948).



Qemant were brought from Egypt by Fasiledes [note 58: When I ask him whether it might not have been Susenyos who ordered the palace to be built, Ato Naga is categorical: it was definitely Fasiledes. This view seems to be confirmed by the discovery of two sets of palace foundations, one overlying the other, found by Spanish archaeologists currently researching the site.] – who was a Qemant himself – to build the Azezo palace. The king made the Qemant workers shave off all their body hair to mix with eggs and water in order to make the *norra* used in the building work. Leaving aside the aura of mystery that surrounds the manufacture of *norra* (I recall that according to tradition it was a secret technique known only to kings), it should be noted that shaving off hair is a ceremonial act of mourning among the Amhara peasantry.

Among Orthodox Christians in particular, the idea of mourning is also symbolically present in the shaving of hair on the eve of important religious rites of passage such as baptism and monastic and clerical appointments.

Susenyos's shaving of his own body hair and Fasiledes's use of Qemant hair to cement a palace on top of the foundations of his father's building may perhaps be equated with mourning for a monarchy seized by Catholic dementia and anticipation of a dynastic (and religious) renewal. (Ramos, 2018: 164-165).

The idea of a "Catholic" disruption of the royal institution and of its traumatic social and religious impact seems to me to be quite significant in terms of the impression still felt today by the local populations about this period in Ethiopian history. According to the metaphorical treatment of the question, King Susenyos' excessive hairiness symbolises the disruption of the social and political order, "rebels, dissenters, outlaws, the imprisoned, the excluded... distinguish themselves by their marginal appearance", if we follow Christian Bromberger's anthropological analyses on hair and bodily hair (2010: 155). The meaning of the link between hair and *norra* production in these oral histories is difficult to explain, but the notion of a secret practice exclusive to kings in the manufacture of *norra* points to a clear stratification between royal and common buildings.

From this point of view, the two missionaries, Páez and Almeida, writing their *História* thirty years apart, offered, as has already been said, very different narratives about the techniques used in building palaces in the region around Lake T'ana. The fact that they provide divergent information and interpretations is all the more relevant because they allow us to stress a point raised at the beginning of this chapter concerning palatial constructions in Ethiopia in the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In Chapter 20 (book 1) of his *História*, Páez mentions how modes of construction signalled a social stratification. The dwellings of the common people were round, had only one level, without pavement, and were made of stones and clay with a wooden

structure. The buildings of the elites were paved stone palaces and, an essential detail, used *chunambô*. The author pointed out that the use of *chunambô* was a practice reserved for kings and the elite. What is particularly relevant for the present argument is that Páez never claims Europeans were involved in the construction of these royal buildings, something he would certainly have been eager to do if this had been the case. It was King Susenyos who built the palace, in the sense that he was the one who ordered its construction.

On the other hand, Almeida, whose narrative diverges greatly from Páez's, says that in 1614 the king supposedly asked the missionary to build him a "house in the style of those of Europe" (Almeida, 1907: 293; Teles, 1660: 334), "a house of stone and clay", as there was no lime in the region (Almeida, 1907: 294; Teles, 1660: 335). While Páez notes the use of *chunambô* in the palace's terrace, Almeida's text notes its absence, thus remaining consistent with what he writes elsewhere concerning the "discovery" of lime mortar in 1624. In so doing, he draws a supplementary stratification. Now the use and manufacture of *chunambô* as a royal prerogative is obliterated and becomes a Jesuit prerogative. Making Páez the architect of the Susenyos palace corresponds to one of the components of the project that underlies his *História*. While Páez wrote in clumsy Portuguese and with the essential aim of refuting Urreta, Almeida was commissioned to rewrite the whole *História*, sifting through Páez's precious information (which he acknowledged several times). A plausible hypothesis is that Almeida, feeling indebted for the late Páez's gift (the unwitting appropriation of his *opus*), sought to return the favour by making him a talent, other than that of author. By lifting him up to the status of an architect, in the sense of a builder of the whole Ethiopian missionary enterprise of establishing an Ethiopian Catholicity, both symbolically and in concrete terms, by granting and exaggerating a host of talents, he placed him above the rest of his contemporaries active in Ethiopia. That would be a reward of the highest level.

We are hence faced with a kaleidoscopic history with multiple inputs. It is preferable to acknowledge that we do not have all the answers to our questions than insist on reifying the same old narrative frameworks and epistemological categories that give us an already predetermined interpretation. Regarding the debate about how knowledge is produced and shaped in the making, it is by reconstructing the contexts upon which it is based that we can better understand whatever it aims to convey.

## EPILOGUE

These different surveys conducted herein a long-term perspective touching different moments, different individuals and case-studies, present a sinuous path. The notion behind the category of missionary knowledge is that it is necessary to look at the making of its process as a precondition to use it, lest we abuse it. It is a field in itself that requests careful reconstruction. What emerged from the examination of Esteves Pereira's life and scholarly work is that the common thread of his career can be summarised as his passion for Semitic languages (extended, towards the end of his life, to Sanskrit), with which he had a technical, practical, scholarly, and possibly emotional, relationship. He analysed, documented and presented his textual documentation with the utmost care and rigour, according to the canons of textual criticism of the time, and we must admit that we are not fully able to grasp the stakes of his engagement. He led a solitary, almost autistic career in Portugal, as he was not known to have formed any disciples or established an "Ethiopian school", possibly because he was a military man far removed from Portuguese academia. He was like a free electron who certainly, as Basset wrote, "created Ethiopian studies in Portugal", studies that were instantly eclipsed when the electron stopped vibrating.

The study on Beccari offered the opportunity to revisit the *RÆSOI* afresh. His overarching goal cannot be dismissed, which was not to provide academic historians with the state of the art of the unpublished documentation on Ethiopia from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but to historically rewrite the role played by Jesuits in Ethiopia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, making it publicly visible again by publishing a treasure trove of forgotten manuscripts and re-asserting, via this historical claims, the activities of the Jesuits over that of other orders (the Franciscans, the Capuchins and the Lazarists) in the Catholic world at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The selection he made in Volume 1 of the *RÆSOI* collection, of excerpts from the various treaties of the 17<sup>th</sup> century missionaries, and from various documents covering the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was integral to that very specific intention. The survey of Beccari's trajectory and of the context in which *RÆSOI* was produced invites us to take a step back and refrain from reading and using this collection as if it were a simple, neutral repository of "facts" but rather to see them "like a monument, where a series of successive architectural changes result in a final structure" (Bazin, 2008: 272). Considering Beccari's multifaced career allows us to see how and for what reasons he became involved in such an undertaking. Other personalities from this world of late 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars that have been mentioned here also merit similar in-depth investigations into their intellectual journey.

Unearthing the history of Páez's *História da Etiópia* by identifying the different periods – its birth, its rewriting, its oblivion, its rebirth, its success, and its questioning – is essential to better reflect on what kind of knowledge each of these moments and contexts produced. Hence, the collective experience of embarking on a ten-year journey of reading, unearthing, analysing, comparing, editing and publishing such an astounding manuscript offered me the means to read his *História da Etiópia* with the attention and sensitivity needed to recognise the specific contexts and stakes of its production and the temporalities of its reception. Only by taking them into account in an historical analysis can we allow the object to fully participate in the dissemination of knowledge.

These historical surveys of this corpus of texts appeal to a greater interaction with other disciplinary fields, be it anthropology, archaeology or literary analysis. The chapter on the relation between textual sources and archaeological digging shows the limits and difficulties that sometimes arise from the articulation between disciplinary fields, especially when nationalist ideologies intervene. It makes a critical plea for the production of knowledge in several voices, and does away with the ever present risk of reification of determined outcomes and a more humble approach to our own

capacity of providing answers to the questions posed. As Maurice Blanchot once put it, asking a good question is already halfway to reaching a good answer.

The deconstruction of a set of investigations in need of improvement has been a valuable opportunity to turn a new page in my own research and to reflect on the validity of ideas submitted for debate and anticipating criticism.

The other idea was that of a discussion about the fabrication or production of knowledge and especially knowledge in the making. On this point, I remain convinced that it is by reconstructing their relevance that we can try to understand what message this knowledge has to transmit.

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