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Largos Caminhos e Vastos Mares *Jesuit Missionaries and the Journey to China in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

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On January 12, 1629, Álvaro Tavares wrote a letter from the Lisbon Jesuit noviciate to General Muzio Vitelleschi thanking him for granting permission “to embark, in the company of Padre António Rodrigues, Goa Procurator, for the East Indies.”¹ Expressing his hopes to catch the springtime fleets, Tavares proclaimed his desires “to render some worthy service to God Our Lord” after his arrival in the Society’s mission territories.² This letter gives a glimpse of the exuberance and anxiety that the prospect of imminent departure brought. Literally hoping and praying for word from the Roman Curia, young Jesuits, many still in their formative years, waited for their turn to set sail from the Tagus estuary for the Indies, a journey that was to be the most trying physical experience of their lives. Far greater was the possibility of dying during the journey to the East than the prospect of being martyred. For the period from 1581 to 1712, a recent statistical analysis has shown that 127 of 249 China-bound Jesuits died during the voyage - more than fifty percent.³ Curiously, the historiography of the overseas missions provides little information about the perils of this extended voyage despite the long tradition of naval history that has attempted to bring to life the various travails of the *Carreira da Índia*.⁴ Although documentary evidence of the year-long voyage east from Lisbon is not abundant, the individual testimonies that survive

1 ARSI *Lusitania* 74, fl. 181r. Letter from Álvaro Tavares to General Muzio Vitelleschi, Lisbon, 12 January 1629.

2 On April 18, 1630, Tavares sailed for India in the company of the same Procurator, it is not clear whether he survived the trip or not. See Josef Wicki, “Liste der Jesuiten-Indienfahrer 1541-1758” *Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 7 (1967), p. 293.

3 Various statistics exist of the numbers that perished between Lisbon and Macau. Nicolas Standaert cites a number of them in his article “The Jesuit Presence in China (1580-1773): A Statistical Approach.” Citing a 1789 text, he gives the figures used here. Although he notes that it is difficult to know for certain the exact number who died *in via*, he indicates that there numbers were close to half of all who sailed. See Standaert, “The Jesuit Presence in China (1580-1773): A Statistical Approach,” *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal*, vol. XII (1991) pp. 4-5.

evoke dramatic incidents of shipboard life, from the cramped conditions below deck, to the specter of shipwreck or starvation, and to the clashes between people forced to cohabitate for such a long time.

For most travelers on the Cape route, however, drama was far from a daily occurrence - their largest problems were the very tedium of the journey, and the ever-present threat of disease. One contemporary author even likened the ship to a prison, saying: "Certainly no one, to whom a house was offered, even if it was regally appointed, to live enclosed in it for six months, could remain so long detained and locked in it; much less in a ship, filled with so many and so varied inconveniences."⁵ Others would lament seeing their companions go delirious from scurvy, see sailors and crew fall irrecoverably overboard, or even find themselves stranded on deserted islands after their ships had run aground. Despite nearly insurmountable odds however, the Society aimed to provide a steady flow of missionaries for the East Asian missions and expedite them east efficiently - a challenge it would never overcome. Even when large groups of Jesuits set out for China in the company of a Rome Procurator, only a fraction arrived healthy or even alive in Goa, and still fewer ever set foot in the Middle Kingdom. For example, 6 of the 22 Jesuits who left Lisbon with Nicolas Trigault in 1618 died in Goa, while 12 of the 36 returning with Martino Martini in 1657 died on ship or in India, with more perishing before reaching China. When Procurator Philippe Couplet sailed in 1693, 8 of his 15 companions died during the trip.⁶ Such an intense, continual drain on the mission's allotted resources meant that beyond the problems of selecting adequate, willing candidates, the Society also had to try to structure the journey so that a maximum of potential missionaries would survive. Yet besides merely concentrating on remaining alive, the Jesuits on ship also

4 The most important reference works for any analysis of the *Carreira da Índia* can be found in the numerous works of C.R. Boxer, for example, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*, (London: Hutchinson Press, 1969), or more specifically, "The Carreira da India (Ships, Men, Cargoes, Voyages)" and "The Principal Ports of Call in the 'Carreira da India,' 16th-18th Centuries" in *From Lisbon to Goa 1500-1750* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984). Artur Teodoro de Matos also gives general insights into shipboard life in "'Quem vai ao mar em Terra se avia' Preparativos e Recomendações aos passageiros da Carreira da Índia no século XVII" in A.T. de Matos and L.F. Thomaz, eds., *A Carreira da Índia e as Rotas dos Estreitos: Actas do VIII Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa*. (Angra do Heroísmo: Barbosa e Xavier, 1998). Anthony Disney has also recently analyzed the accounts written by China-bound missionaries Tranquillo Grassetti and Agostino Tudeschini in 1629 in "Getting to the China Mission in the Early Seventeenth Century" in Artur T. de Matos and Luís F. Thomaz, eds., *Actas do VI Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa: As Relações entre a Índia Portuguesa, a Ásia do Sueste e o Extremo Oriente*. (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional das Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses and Fundação Oriente, 1993).

5 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo sobre a Missão dos Embaixadores Japoneses à Curia Romana*, trans. Américo da Costa Ramalho, (Macau: Fundação Oriente, 1997), p. 66.

6 See Standaert, "The Jesuit Presence in China...", pp. 4-5.

engaged in spiritual and corporal ministries that contributed to their formation as effective missionaries. Our analysis therefore will concentrate on the organizational principles that the Jesuit hierarchy devised to face the double ordeal of two separate sea voyages, from Lisbon to Goa and onwards to Macao, aiming to make the journey to the East Asian mission fields as safe and successful as possible. Here we will focus on the missionaries' shipboard activities and the perils confronted on the 'long routes and vast seas' that they need to traverse only to arrive at the gates of the Middle Kingdom.

Da ocidental praia lusitana: preparations and departures

Due to their hierarchical position at the head of the Society of Jesus' Portuguese Assistancy, the officers of the Province of Portugal were charged with directing the logistical operation of dispatching educated missionaries to their assignments. By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the province had developed an efficient system of responding to the manpower needs of the overseas provinces. The provincial procurators, the Jesuits in charge of temporal affairs, were also responsible for the missions to Angola, Madeira, and the Azores and therefore were constantly aware of the comings and goings of ships at Lisbon harbor. Therefore, some form of institutional organization was integral for managing the generous numbers of missionaries shipped abroad yearly on the ships of the royal armada. Besides preparing the cargo destined for the Society's Asian colleges and missions, the procurators also had to assign the Jesuits to the different ships, distributing them so they could ensure the forms of discipline proper to members of a religious order - one that did not readily correspond to the lifestyle of the passengers and crew on the *Carreira da Índia*. In addition to selections drawn from voyage narratives describing the journey, we will use here two invaluable documents that reveal the intended structures of missionary life on ship. These are contemporary compilations of rules written by Jesuit superiors, drawn from over fifty years' experience, that attempted to give a form and a routine to the missionaries' time at sea by providing tips on topics as diverse as managing food and water resources to maintaining the spiritual rhythm of a religious congregation. One of these is the set of orders left by João Álvares after his 1610-1613 visit to the Province of Portugal.⁷ The other, a more specific set of rules especially for the journey to Asia, was composed by

⁷ Álvares was sent as Visitor to Portugal by General Claudio Aquaviva in 1610 to make sure that the Portuguese Jesuits kept the *Constitutions*, decrees, rules, and orders sent from Rome. AN/TT Armário Jesuítico, Livro 5, *Visita da Provincia de Portugal pelo P. João Álvares*. (1613), fl. 26 or ARSI *Fondo Gesuítico* 1540, bundle 6, fl. 23, hereafter referred to as Álvares AN/TT and Álvares ARSI.

Francisco Vieira, visitor of the Japan and China Provinces, in conjunction with the Provincials of Goa and Malabar, in 1616.⁸ Both documents follow the organizational impetus of the Society's *Constitutions*, the order's foundational document written by Ignatius of Loyola, and the more contemporaneous sets of orders written by General Claudio Aquaviva for the various Jesuit offices.⁹ One of the factors that make these *regimentos* such a valuable source is that they were destined to be read aloud once at departure and at various times during the journey so that all would be aware of what was expected of them, just as with the Society's *Constitutions*.¹⁰ Although both sources come from the same decade, they can serve as the model to which both earlier and later travel narratives can be compared.

At Lisbon, two types of planning were required to dispatch the outbound Jesuits: marshalling them at the capital, and organizing them into manageable groups to be divided among the ships composing a fleet. Both tasks were handled by the Lisbon India procurators in conjunction with the Provincial, and both required considerable diplomatic skill to transplant small religious communities into the midst of the cross-section of Portuguese colonial society aboard each ship. Since the Colégio de Santo Antão was the largest Jesuit establishment in the capital, it served as the temporary residence for most of those who arrived to meet the fleets.¹¹ By 1599, after fifty years of dispatching missionaries to the farthest corners of the Portuguese empire, this burden caused the superiors at Santo Antão to claim that only a small in-house community could possibly live there, "because of the many guests of the Society that continually frequent it."¹² If there were delays with the fleet, or if

8 This document bears Vieira's signature along with a notation that it was devised in conjunction with Goa Provincial Jacome de Medeiros and Malabar Provincial Gaspar Fernandes. ARSI *Fondo Gesuitico* 721/II folder 3, *Regimento pera os Padres e Irmãos da Companhia que se embarção de Portugal pera a India feito em Janeiro de 616*. (Goa, January 1616) Hereafter referred to as Vieira.

9 See *Institutum Societatis Jesu*. 3 vols. (Florence: 1893), esp. vol. 3, *Regulae Particulares*. These rules were conceived by a variety of the Society's general and general congregations, but they began under the direction of Aquaviva.

10 Rule 9 in the section entitled "Before Leaving" reads: "Before embarking the India Procurator will read aloud this regimen to all those who are embarking, and will give a copy of it to the ship's Superior [Jesuit], so that during the voyage he can read it a few times to all, and have it obeyed..." Vieira, *Regimento*, fl. 14r. (This instruction also appears in a more abbreviated fashion in Álvares' rules, ARSI *Fondo Gesuitico* 1540, bundle 6, fl. 54.) Luce Giard, discussing the *Constitutions*, notes that public and private readings of the text were encouraged, though it is hard to determine how frequently they occurred. Similar to the *Spiritual Exercises*, this set of rules was meant to be a meditation tool, reminding members of the Society of their institutional unity, rather than their physical unity in a specific place, ministry, or environment. Continual readings of the foundational documents were aimed to keep the administrative rules in the minds of all, especially those living in larger communities. See Luce Giard, "Relire les *Constitutions*" in Luce Giard and Louis de Vaucelles, SJ, *Les Jésuites à l'âge Baroque*. (Paris: Jérôme Millon, 1996).

11 Others stayed at the Professed House of São Roque, depending on how long they lingered in Lisbon.

the ships had to return to port for some reason, missionaries would be sent to the nearest colleges capable of housing and occupying them, usually Évora or Coimbra. Depending on the time of year they arrived at Lisbon, foreign missionaries would often experience considerable delays in Portugal waiting for the armada's next sailing.¹³

The issue of how much time India-bound Jesuits should spend in Lisbon seems to have been one that deeply concerned the province's hierarchy, for both financial and spiritual reasons. Álvares' 1613 regiment notes that those who are to embark, curiously just like those who are to teach Latin, should only be informed of their selection in adequate time for the journey to Santo Antão and a few days' rest. "As experience had shown," those who arrived long before the ships were to leave frequently got ill or lost their missionary vocations, not to mention incurring various expenses on the Asian provinces' account.¹⁴ Vieira's rules are a bit more encouraging on the subject - they remind the India Procurators in Lisbon to ask the General to have those from other provinces arrive at least one month before their scheduled departure "so that they may prepare, with a suave spirit, for such an arduous voyage, retreating for prayer or saying their general confessions, if they like."¹⁵ The Portuguese Provincial was instructed to have his subordinates in Lisbon at least 15 days before the ships are to leave, so that they do not begin their journey in ill health; "for as doctors and experience have said, they should go to sea with their full forces, and not tired."¹⁶ Provisions were also made for outbound missionaries to break their Lenten fasting habits so that their health would not be weakened by devotional practices.¹⁷ The concern for rest and

12 In this year, there were 12 Jesuit professors and 4 scholastics in residence. ARSI *Lusitania* 39, *Catalogo Terceiro que llaman de cosas de la Provincia de Portugal hecho en Octubre de 1599*, (Lisbon?, October 1599) fl. 19v.

13 Noël Golvers notes that François de Rougemont and Ignatius Hartoghvelt arrived at Setúbal, near Lisbon, on April 10, 1655, two weeks after the India fleet had sailed. They were then sent to Coimbra both to learn Portuguese and continue their theology studies. The community of foreign Jesuits at Coimbra seems to have been considerable during the end of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth. The 1601 Brief Catalog for the Province of Portugal lists a set of *Padres e Irmãos Italianos* in various stages of their academic careers. Included among them is Sabatino de Ursis, who left for India the following spring. See Noël Golvers, *François de Rougemont, S.J., Missionary in Ch'ang-shu (Chiang-Nan)*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), p. 14 and [de Ursis] ARSI *Lusitania* 39, *Brief Catalog for Province of Portugal 1601*, fl. 36r. and [de Lessa] ARSI *Lusitania* 74, fl. 288r, Letter from António de Lessa to General Muzio Vitelleschi, Coimbra, 13 April 1642.

14 One of the most frequent phrases used in the orders is 'como a experiencia mostra...' Álvares, fl. 2.

15 Vieira, fl. 13r.

16 Vieira, fl. 13r.

17 Looking over the lists provided by Wicki, one sees that the dates for fleet departures were usually at the end of March or during April. Lent, the forty days preceding Easter, was and is traditionally observed during these months, accompanied by fasting and a heightened rigor of devotions and penance. These practices, especially for the young Jesuits, were of such an intensity that they presented a legitimate health hazard for those departing for India. See Wicki, *op. cit.*

prayer before embarking reminds us of the extremely perilous nature of the voyage, where contemporaries found the best insurance for a safe passage in repeated prayer. Allotting time for general confessions, an exercise typically reserved for people on their deathbeds or in mortal danger, helped to allay the missionaries' fears of eternal peril if they died suddenly at sea with unconfessed sins weighing down their consciences.

Once the departure date had been scheduled and the ships were being loaded with their cargoes, the India Procurator and his assistants would have to organize the packing of the Jesuits' rations. Likewise, the Portuguese Provincial would appoint the mission superiors and consultors, the individuals who would constitute the hierarchy of each group of missionaries. For the practical aspects of loading baggage and rations, the Procurator was instructed to work in conjunction with the travelling party so they would know "where all of the goods were put, and make an inventory, so that during the voyage they will know what they are bringing, and when it is time to use the things they are carrying, things either for the healthy or the sick."¹⁸ Space on board was sorely limited, however, and tales of dangerously overcrowded ships were legion. Although his circumstances appear exceptional, one missionary wrote that "the ship was small and there were more people than there should have been." In his room, he continued, he and his companions "were no more no less than sardines in a barrel. All of the provisions of the *padres*[...]was in the cabin: over here the wine, over there the biscuit, here the salted fish and meat[...] [not] less than forty barrels." The cabin was so cramped that they "could neither stand or sit; to enter [the cabin] it was necessary to drag one's body over barrels and crates, as snakes enter their holes."¹⁹ Both the Procurator and the Provincial were specifically ordered by the 1613 rules to review the items brought aboard by the out-bound Jesuits to make sure they carried no merchandise for sale in Asia either on their own or anyone else's account, such things being contrary to "religious poverty."²⁰ Vieira also forbade outbound Jesuits from receiving any packages, "because these *Padres* have no voyage experience, some get sick, others die, and things get stolen or lost, and in India they are incapable of accounting for them, provoking complaints and scandal..."²¹ By prohibiting their subordinates from serving as

¹⁸ Vieira, fl. 13v.

¹⁹ Biblioteca Nacional Lisbon, Mss. 245, no. 98., fl. 1v. Letter from a Dominican missionary to his Portuguese superior, late 17th century.

²⁰ Álvares AN/TT, fl. 2. The issue of Jesuit trading has long been part of the 'anti-Jesuit myth' recently disproved by Dauril Alden. See *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

²¹ Vieira, fl. 13v.

commercial intermediaries, the Visitors aimed to remove the possibility of infamy that could tarnish their reputation in the small colonial communities in Maritime Asia, not to mention back in Portugal or elsewhere in Europe.²²

The other task entrusted to the Portuguese Provincial, or to any missions procurators returning to Asia, was the division of Jesuits among the fleet's ships. Since those departing were charged with "allotting the usual time for prayer, examinations [of conscience], and spiritual lessons," a form of hierarchy was needed to maintain discipline and devotional regularity. Coming straight from the college environment, most of those who embarked had not yet formally professed vows as full members of the Society, and therefore were not deemed capable of travelling without supervision. For this, it was necessary to appoint temporary superiors for organizing both spiritual and material routines, appointing chores to different individuals, and representing the group of Jesuits in their dealings with the ship's officers. In both sets of rules, provisions were made for the selection of a superior for each ship who carried special dispensatory powers during the voyage, as well as the powers of a local superior, or college rector. It was recommended that this individual be an "older member of the order, charitable, prudent, of good nature, and congenial [de facil condição], so that he does not make the voyage any more of a burden for his companions, since it is in itself so long and arduous."²³ These criteria, similar to those found in the Society's triennial catalog evaluations, sought to ensure that the most diplomatic individuals would be appointed to this managerial position. This superior was also ordered to ask the Provincial with whom he should consult on important matters, who would be the group's confessor, and who would be his first and second replacements "in case Our Lord disposes of him."²⁴ The hierarchy established here on each ship mimics the organization Jesuit colleges, the Society's basic administration units outlined in its *Constitutions*.²⁵ Here, as in

22 Jesuits were also forbidden from acting as witnesses to wills made out by dying passengers, duties best left to the ship's scribe or other officials. See Álvares ARSI, fl. 53 and Vieira, fl. 21r.

23 Vieira, fl. 14r.

24 Vieira, fl. 13v.

25 Josef Wicki's lists of the groups of Jesuits that left for India each year show that, on average, ten to fifteen sailed each year. What is more interesting for our purposes is that each group that sailed was composed of approximately one-third priests and two-thirds brothers (students or temporal coadjutors). Clearly these proportions were variable, yet no fleet sailed without priests, and only brothers, since none of the latter could have been appointed superior. Where Wicki does not give any more indication of the Jesuit grade more than indicate whether each was *padre, irmão* (implying student), or brother (temporal coadjutor), other rarer sources give more specific information. For instance, a list of the Jesuits who sailed to India to the Provinces of Japan, China, Brazil, and Maranhão from 1694 until 1696 shows that those who sailed to China were students either in one of the first three years of their theology studies (including those who had already been ordained) or were finishing the philosophy course. Novices were also found among those who embarked. See Wicki, op. cit. and ARSI *Lusitania* 46, fl. 370r/v, "*Qui navigarunt in Indiam, Brasiliam, Japoniam, Maranonem, ed as Sinas ab anno 1694 usque ad annum 1696 inclusive*", in *Triennial Catalog for the Province of Portugal, 1696* (Manuel Correa?, Lisbon, 1696).

the case of the flexible system of education described in the *Ratio Studiorum*, the Society relied on the same institutional structures that ensured the governance of the largest colleges for the cohesion of even the smallest groups of missionaries. Loosely stated, this meant that the superior, beyond seeking to “keep them happy,” was entrusted to make sure his subordinates kept “all of the rules of the Society which apply and can be well fulfilled, and provide edification to one’s neighbor[...].”²⁶ The combination of prudence and experience found in the description above of the ideal candidate were to form the basis for his good judgement of how to bend or enforce the order’s rules during the journey.

The Floating College: Jesuit communities on the *Carreira da Índia*

Once the ships had weighed anchor in Lisbon harbor, the rhythm of life began in earnest with the Jesuit fathers and brothers exercising their appointed ministries. In order to effectively describe how they dealt with each other and with the passengers and crew, we will separate the various facets of their activities in the same manner that their superiors did: rules for subordinate missionaries, rules for health, and rules for dealing with one’s neighbor. Acting under the supervision of their leader, the Jesuits first sought to plan their own communal life before attending to the spiritual and temporal concerns of the passengers. For this, Vieira’s *Regimento* provides the following recommendation:

“When all of our missionaries are aboard remind them that above all, three things from them are necessary: commending themselves to Our Lord to suffer the voyage with all diligence; taking care of their lives and health so that they can be employed in the missions in India and the salvation of souls; and on ship helping their neighbors in both the corporal and spiritual matters, as is expected of us, and that our predecessors always did on these voyages, leaving great examples [of virtue].²⁷

With these broad concepts in mind, the superiors constructed a daily rhythm of activity that resembled the Society’s ministries in Europe. Tending the sick, preaching the Gospel, teaching doctrine, and providing an edifying example through their virtuous comportment, the young Jesuits slated to be missionaries would get a first taste of their future ministry on ship, while also practicing the core ministries of the Society of Jesus.

²⁶ Vieira, fl. 14r.

²⁷ Vieira, fl. 14r.

In order to provide a recognizable communal routine for the younger Jesuits fresh from their academic training, daily and weekly spiritual activities were instituted. At mealtimes, spiritual books were read with the *Martyriologium Romanum* holding the pride of place. Frequent readings from this book, a compendium of edifying stories of martyrdom read aloud in all Jesuit colleges, helped to sustain the devotional intensity of the young preachers as they traveled to potentially dangerous mission fields. At other times, the usual prayers and examinations of conscience were to be said, and spiritual lessons to be given, just as in any college on *terra firma*.²⁸ And, in order to ensure that every missionary's attention was focused on their prayers, communal meetings were to be held in the staterooms, or on some other part of the ship away from fresh air and out of sight of the ocean. Routine was also provided by the superior's appointments of each Jesuit to a spot within the rotating system of duties. The 1616 regulations suggest scheduling the tasks for month-long intervals, sending one to man the dispensary, another to cook, a third to be the nurse for the sick Jesuits, and a fourth, more robust than the third, for sick secular passengers, possibly aided by a companion. Others were assigned to hear confessions and preach.²⁹ In 1583, João Rodrigues Girão wrote that the superior assigned tasks to all after the ships had reached the open ocean, with him teaching doctrine to the sailors because he was the only one who could speak Portuguese.³⁰ The goal of this repartition was inspired by the very nature of the voyage and claustrophobic conditions of the ships, rotating tasks to diffuse possible jealousies, "because in voyages as long as this, occasions are never lacking for some displeasure, run-ins, or bitterness, even among our own[...]"³¹ Well aware of this political problem, João Álvares had indicated earlier that all missionaries should avoid being nasty to each other "because besides turning charity and fraternal unity lukewarm, it could cause scandal on the ship if others found out[...]"³² And, just as they were commended to treat each other with 'religious respect and courtesy' in front of the passengers, the Jesuits were also ordered to speak softly in their cabins, and only "of things that if seculars heard they could be edified, and in no way feel that there is any immodest bickering [perfiás discompostas] or the shadow

28 Vieira, fl. 16r.

29 Vieira, fl. 15v.

30 The other missionaries were Italian, Spanish, or Flemish. Cited in Josef Wicki, ed. *Documenta Indica*, vol. XII, p. 866. Letter from João Rodrigues Girão to João Correia, Rector of the College of Coimbra, Goa, 1 December 1583.

31 The original text reads "algum desgosto, encontrosinhos, e amaretudines." Vieira, fl. 15v.

32 Álvares ARSI, fl. 50.

of discord among us [os nossos], and this applies even to disputations of academic subjects.”³³

This last note draws the comparison between the groups of India-bound missionaries and the Jesuit colleges even closer. Since the routine of Jesuit college life included regular debates on philosophical and theological themes, as well as public orations of prose and poetry, their life on ship included recreation, academic or otherwise, outside of their ministries among the passengers and crew. Despite having older Jesuits capable of helping their younger colleagues finish their studies during the tedious journey, Vieira ordered that only those who were preparing sermons should spend any time studying, and that the others should only read the bible or other spiritual books, such as the lives of the saints or confessional manuals. Raising his tone, he continued: “But in no way should anyone begin philosophy or theology studies, or read books by saints or preachers taking notes or writing; because in this way we have buried many of ours on these voyages, and even on the mission this year, 1615, 2 or 3 died because they remained in the staterooms on purpose to study.”³⁴ Since the stagnant air of the cabins was considered lethal, Vieira maintained that the Jesuits should limit their academic pursuits to infrequent discussions, debates, or informal courses in navigation and astronomy taught by Jesuit specialists or the ships’ pilots. This practical complement to their natural philosophy studies (the second year of the *curso das artes*) was especially useful for those missionaries bound for the Middle Kingdom, where a familiarity with applied sciences such as astronomy and mathematics would have provided an initial pretext for discussions with educated Chinese. For instance, the future European director of the imperial Chinese observatory Ferdinand Verbiest wrote that during his trip to Asia, “at night under the stars,” China procurator Martino Martini taught about “not superstitious astrology, but the principles of astronomy and the rising stars.”³⁵ Yet outside of prayer and discussion, one is left wondering what the Jesuits were permitted to do for recreation. Some accounts mention “playing musical instruments” or “relaxing the spirit with the fishing,” or contemplating the maritime fauna like albatrosses and flying fish.³⁶ Since they were specifically

33 Vieira, fl. 16v.

34 Vieira, fl. 17v.

35 Letter from Ferdinand Verbiest to Ignace Malgaert, Genoa, February 1656, printed in H. Josson and L. Willaert, *Correspondence de Ferdinand Verbiest, SJ, Directeur de l’Observatoire de Pékin* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1938), p. 9.

36 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo...*, p. 66 and Josef Wicki, ed. *Documenta Indica*, vol. XII, p. 868-9. João Rodrigues Girão describes the flying fish saying “God gave them these wings to flee from an inopportune fish, that there is in the sea, that is called albacore, and so conserve there life.”

instructed not to stay in their cabins or staterooms, but encouraged to spend as much time on deck as possible, it was only natural that they would spend it mingling with the other passengers.³⁷ Besides preaching, Jesuits were encouraged to make use of their experience in public speaking for “entertaining the people with good discourses or readings from a good history book.”³⁸ Such books were most likely drawn from the vernacular literature of the day - from saint’s lives to accounts of Portuguese Asia such as Fernão Mendes Pinto’s *Peregrinação* with the likely exception of popular shipwreck narratives - since few among the crew and passengers would have been able to understand readings from the Greek and Roman historians the Jesuits knew best. Strikingly, Vieira also allowed them to play dice or gamble with the crew and passengers so long as it was done “in a good way so that swearing, fighting, and great losses [of money] can be avoided.” The superior “should not attempt to ban all gambling on the ship, since it is better than idleness.”³⁹ It is interesting to note that here Vieira attempts to reign in some of the excessive morality of the older Jesuits aboard by ensuring they did not turn the ship into the devil’s workshop by reducing all entertainments to a virtuous minimum. All the while, it was necessary for the superior to be particularly vigilant of the recreational conduct of his younger companions, either novices or students, whose moral character would be tested by constant contact with seculars of all stripes in the ‘corrupting’ atmosphere of the Portuguese ships.⁴⁰

O que toca à saúde: health and food during the voyage

In order to maintain the viability of the Jesuits’ missionary enterprise, it was necessary for them to strike a balance between their charitable ministries and the physical limitations of the unhealthy climate of the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* where the filth produced by hundreds of confined passengers mixed with the stench of rotting meat or provisions in the tropical heat.

37 Figures for the number of passengers on the typical *nao* bound for India averaged about 500 people. Disney notes that the two ships that carried Grassetti and Tudeschini in 1629 had 400 and 600 passengers and crew respectively. A.J.R. Russell-Wood tells of a fleet of four ships that left from Lisbon for India in 1677 with 2000 people aboard. He also notes that the average 17th century Indiaman carried 112 crewmen and 250 soldiers. See Disney, p. 102 and A.J.R. Russell-Wood, “Ritmos e Destinos de Emigração” in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri, eds. *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, 5 vols., (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 122, 124.

38 Álvares ARSI, fl. 52.

39 Vieira, fl. 18v.

40 For those who succumbed to temptation and “(God save us) merit a heavy punishment, discipline, imprisonment, enclosure, etc,” the superior was told not to directly confront disciplinary problems or “even threaten such punishments, but leave everything for the Superior of India.” Vieira, fl. 16r.

Yet the Society's concern for the physical and mental health of its members was not something that originated directly from the conditions of early modern travel. In the Society's *Constitutions* (part III), Ignatius of Loyola had already addressed the 'conservation of the body.' These rules aimed to prevent excessive forms of individual devotions that would prejudice one's health, and in turn, the Society's capacity for public ministry.⁴¹ Likewise, João Álvares included a section of his orders specifically devoted to India-bound missionary health, rules amplified in Vieira's later revision. Fasting at sea for "much time" was prohibited, especially the type of severe Lenten fasting that was prohibited before embarking.⁴² To ensure that devotions would not present a health risk, the superior could "dispense with the fasts, and forbidden foods as he sees fit."⁴³ Here again, as in the rules found in the *Constitutions*, the goal was to avoid weakening one's health voluntarily when heading to where other perils were sufficiently abundant.

Given the large number of rules specifically concerned with the missionaries' cabins, one can deduce that they were believed to be the most dangerous areas, even for diligent cleaners like the Jesuits. Therefore they were told to visit the ship's deck frequently, if only for brief periods, so as to not spend too much time below. Vieira left little room for interpretation of his orders on matters as important as missionary health insisting that to stay healthy, Jesuits needed to get out of the cabins early in the morning, when it was not cold nor rainy, for prayer and preaching. Recalling his orders on studying, he declared no one should spend much time below deck "because it has hurt many on this voyage, and even killed those who were always, or for the better part of the day, in the cabins."⁴⁴ One missionary wrote that he "was never in the cabin," and that he believed "for certain that not staying much below accounted for [his] health."⁴⁵ Even the sick were instructed to get on deck, since "it greatly improves one's health to walk about the ship, besides clearing the head, and taking fresh air, it serves as entertainment for the soldiers and passengers[...]"⁴⁶ Emphasis was placed on having all missionaries frequently change and wash their clothing, as well as having their cabins "swept, dusted, and washed with winds [aired out]."⁴⁷ Even so, those who were especially conscious of the risks

41 See Ignatius of Loyola, *Constitutions*, part 3, chapter 2, rule 5, p. 121. (Version used here is Ignatius of Loyola, *Constituições da Companhia de Jesus*, (Lisbon: 1975))

42 Álvares ARSI, fl. 51.

43 Vieira, fl. 14r.

44 Vieira, fl. 17r.

45 The original text reads "cuido por certo quo o não deter me muito em baixo foi minha saude." Biblioteca Nacional Lisbon, Mss. 245, no. 98, fl. 2r.

46 Álvares ARSI, fl. 47, 51.

47 Álvares ARSI, fl. 51.

of sleeping in the cabins would do as one *padre* who “at night for sleeping, looked for crate or other spot above deck to lay down.”⁴⁸

The insistence that one finds regarding the quality of the air is in line with early modern thought about the nature of sickness and disease. Combating the serious illnesses of the *Carreira da Índia*, however, required much more practical than scientific reflection. Apart from the initial nausea that many first-time sailors experienced - an affliction that at least one observer lauded since it “liberated you from the sad memory of home and the fear of the dangers [ahead]” - many would succumb to delirium-inducing fevers and the agony of rotting gums, legs, and arms that scurvy provoked.⁴⁹ Since the equatorial course of the journey with its passage through the doldrums was the part of the voyage that claimed the most lives, high temperatures and still air were seen as especially dangerous. A report by the India Procurator Adrião Pedros on the fleet that had left Lisbon on April 2, 1681 with 19 missionaries aboard gives a good illustration. “It was a voyage without storms,” he writes, “but with such calms near the coast of Guinea, before as well as after crossing the line [the equator], that because of them so many illnesses followed on the ships that on the captain’s ship out of 312 people, only 5 did not get sick. Since the sick were many, our missionaries had the continual experience of the zeal and charity that carried them to India, and since they were molested by the calms and so tired from the labors of attending to the sick of all the 19 only 2 escaped illness and the infirmities were so severe that they took the lives of four.”⁵⁰ Of these four who did not live to see their arrival in India, two were from the China mission and two from the Province of Goa. In 1629 as well, Jesuits attending to those who had succumbed to disease in the African calms, spent so much time assisting the sick that they became ill themselves.⁵¹ At these times, the missionaries would assist at repeated bleedings, a practice seen as the most effective remedy for dealing with the fevers or symptoms of scurvy that knew no other treatment. As Rodrigues Girão wrote in 1583, he himself had been bled four times after falling ill.⁵² Knowing that few who fell ill recovered, provisions were made by both Álvares and Vieira for Jesuits to be buried at sea, where their bodies would be a “meal for ferocious fishes.”⁵³

48 Biblioteca Nacional Lisbon, Mss. 245, no. 98, fl. 2r.

49 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo...*, p. 33.

50 ARSI Goa 9-II, fl. 323r. Letter from Adrião Pedros to Giovanni Paolo Oliva, Lisbon, 7 October 1681.

51 Disney, p. 102.

52 Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, op. cit., p. 872.

53 Ibid., p. 870.

Reading the above passage, one recalls that among the shipboard tasks required of the Jesuits was the tending of the sick, whether members of the Society, passengers, or soldiers. Francisco Vieira's rather detailed set of orders concerning the Jesuits' role as shipboard nurses and pharmacists noted that the first step in dealing with the sick was to make sure they had confessed their sins.⁵⁴ Yet since there were no confessionals aboard Portuguese Indiamen, the very act of getting close enough to hear a private confession was believed to endanger one's health and so Jesuits were instructed "to place themselves in such a way that they do not imbibe the breath [of the infirm]."⁵⁵ Their second task was to find a space in the crew's quarters to make an infirmary, and ask the ship's master to assign a number of cabin boys to keep it very clean.⁵⁶ Following the long-standing tradition of serving as nurses on the India fleets, the superior appointed one or two missionaries to "visit all of the sick two times daily with the doctor, surgeon, or barber and have them assign those remedies available on the ship, knowing that he will be charged with administering most of them."⁵⁷ Besides serving as the bedside attendants, these Jesuits were instructed to see that the sick were given the *provisão do Rey*, or king's provisions, stocks of food and "unguents, precious liquids and various medicines" that were sent with each ship to ensure that the sick had adequate food for their recovery.⁵⁸ The regulations concerning the king's provisions betray a profound mistrust of the crew and other passengers. The Jesuit superior was instructed to assist the captain in verifying that the officials "who guard this food do not eat it or waste it."⁵⁹ Vieira suggested that they ask the ship's captain to store it in locked cases whose keys he would entrust to "some trustworthy and charitable person" who would also help the sick.⁶⁰ Occasionally, the Jesuits themselves were put in charge of these food and medicine supplies. Far from being an easy chore, this task had its perils - as Agostino Tudeschini found out during his 1629 journey, where men were prepared to use force to lay their hands on these drugs.⁶¹

In addition to watching over the *provisão do Rey*, India-bound Jesuits

54 Contemporary sailing orders for ship's captains given by the Portuguese crown ordered them to ensure that as soon as the passengers fell ill, they were to confess and make out their wills. See *Regimento da Nau São Pantalão*, Lisbon, 25 March 1592, in A.T. de Matos, *Na Rota da Índia* (Macau: Instituto Cultural, 1994), p. 167.

55 Vieira, fl. 17r.

56 Vieira, fl. 19v.

57 Vieira, fl. 19v.

58 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo...*, p. 320.

59 Vieira, fl. 19v.

60 Vieira, fl. 20r.

61 Cited in Disney, p. 103.

were admonished to protect and husband their own rations carefully. Stressing the length of the journey and the extreme temperatures they would experience, Álvares cautioned that “since the voyage is long, and that it may happen that an accident causes it to be longer, be careful to not to waste anything at the beginning by being more generous than necessary[...]using first always the things that spoil quickest, because at the end of the voyage needs are always greater.”⁶² Vieira stressed the importance of managing water supplies well, since “in the conservation of sweet water resides everyone’s life.”⁶³ Superiors were ordered to keep the water jars locked, and frequent visits to the store-rooms were mandated to ensure that food stocks were not damaged or stolen.⁶⁴ The key ingredients of the Jesuit shipboard diet included the water and wine mentioned above as well as cured meats (both hams and sausages), chicken, biscuits, dried fruits including figs and raisins, beans, cured olives, cheese, nuts such as almonds and chestnuts, and sweets such as marmalade.⁶⁵ A large part of preservation of health, Vieira also wrote, consisted in keeping regular eating hours: a light breakfast between 8:30 and 9:30, a full lunch after two, and fruit, cheese, or sweets at night along with cold leftovers.⁶⁶ Another health tip ‘proven by experience’ and common to “foreigners and servants who drink more wine” was that all should eat some biscuit and drink a small cup of wine upon waking.⁶⁷

What seems to be a standard rhythm of eating and drinking, however, carried several moral and social problems. As the journey wore on and provisions grew scarce among the passengers, the ample provisions of the Jesuits might draw the covetous eyes of others. As members of a religious order bound by their vows to be charitable, they were frequently asked, or even begged, by the hungry or thirsty, to share their rations. Always responding to these pleas, however, would have put their own health in jeopardy, presenting a moral quandary for the Jesuits that the mission superior was charged with resolving. Vieira’s regulations state that any *padres* or brothers faced with

62 Álvares ARSI, fl. 51.

63 Vieira, fl. 15r.

64 Vieira, fl. 15r.

65 Vieira, fl. 17v. A. Teodoro de Matos confirms that these foods were standard items in the missionaries’ ‘baggage.’ He also mentions that for the captain and crew there were also other specific regimens for managing food stocks. See A.T. de Matos, “A bagagem e os alimentos nas viagens dos Jesuítas do Japão (1576-1604)” in Roberto Carneiro and A. Teodoro de Matos, eds. *O Século Cristão do Japão, Actas do Colóquio Internacional Comemorativo dos 450 anos de Amizade Portugal-Japão*, (Lisbon: Instituto de História de Além-Mar, 1994), pp. 251-258. Elsewhere, he describes in detail the types of foods (and the standard amounts) that were brought on ship for the crew. See A.T. de Matos, “Preparativos e Recomendações” pp. 385-390.

66 Vieira, fl. 17v.

67 Vieira, fl. 17v.

such requests should respond “with all charity [possible], that only the superior to whom they owe obedience, and not they themselves, has this power” but that they will forward such pleas to him if there was an extreme necessity.⁶⁸ Yet while aiming to prevent zealous missionaries from being manipulated by all comers, the orders do instruct the Jesuit nurses to petition the captain and other well-provisioned individuals for food and water for the poor and the sick.⁶⁹ Knowing that there would be times when other passengers would be particularly sensitive to seeing others eating and drinking while they had nothing, Vieira’s rules insist on keeping any signs of abundance, or even subsistence, well hid. He specifically mentions the chickens and sweets carried among the Jesuits’ provisions, saying that they should be eaten with moderation “to not scandalize the seculars,” telling onlookers that such foods are mainly for the sick and convalescing to regain their strength.⁷⁰ Moderation, in Vieira’s opinion, meant eating such delicacies on Sundays, or more frequently if the ships passed Mozambique quickly and seemed to be progressing swiftly towards their destination with few infirm Jesuits.⁷¹

O que toque ao Próximo: spiritual ministries during the journey

Although they were relied upon to look after the physically ill in their times of need, the India-bound Jesuits were more often concerned with something they were fully trained in - providing spiritual education and comfort to their *proximos*, the others on board. In an atmosphere filled with illness, poverty, and natural dangers, the missionaries were given many opportunities to exercise the Society’s spiritual ministries. Through their communal activities and their charity towards the crew, passengers, and *fidalgos*, the Jesuits were instructed to promote the reputation of the order. In fact, both Álvares and Vieira mention that the voyage had always been a good means for the “winning souls for God and many friends for the Society.”⁷² Since the Jesuits often provoked strong emotions from those who knew them in both Europe and Maritime Asia, they sought to build positive relations with individuals destined to live in Portuguese colonies as either merchants and crown officials (potential benefactors), or members of other religious orders (potential secular religious authorities). The physical or spiritual support they could afford during

68 Vieira, fl. 20r.

69 Vieira, fl. 19v.

70 Vieira, fl. 18r.

71 Vieira, fl. 18r.

72 Álvares ARSI, fl. 52 and Vieira, fl. 18r.

the journey, the Visitors knew, could help them when political, religious, or financial circumstances brought the Society under attack. In the regulations we have been analyzing, the various social strata found on each ship are clearly indicated, with specific manners of dealing with different kinds of individuals, whether crewmen, soldiers, ship's officers, *fidalgos*, or other passengers for whom the Jesuits represented either moral or spiritual authority.

One of the qualities required of the mission superior was that he could command a certain degree of respect from the ship's passengers by virtue of his age and experience. Just as the Rector of a Jesuit college was one of the most important religious figures in a Catholic European city and the local representative of the Society's affairs, so the mission superior was to serve as the liaison between the members of the 'floating college' and the ship's nobility and officials. He was specifically encouraged to develop a friendly relationship with the captain, and to respect his orders concerning all matters.⁷³ The superior was also charged to promote peace between the nobles on board. *Fidalgos* accustomed to privileged positions within society, when forced to cohabitate in straining circumstances, frequently let their festering jealousies explode into violent confrontations. One of the crucial tasks of the Jesuit superior, or another delegated by him, was build his own "authority and be esteemed by the men, to maintain peace and harmony on the ship, primarily among the *fidalgos* and nobles; and if there are any disagreements, seek to cut them short so they do not become anything more[...]"⁷⁴ In case he could not summon the moral weight to make peace between the parties involved, this Jesuit was to call upon the captain and the other nobles to defuse the conflict.

Although it was necessary to keep peace between the *fidalgos* on ship for the general peace of the ship, it was even more important to ensure good relations between the ship's officials themselves. Whereas the captain was typically a noble appointed to be the ship's highest authority, the pilot and master were the technical specialists actually responsible for sailing the vessel. Vieira noted that it was crucial for the Jesuits to ensure that these individuals got along, "because many times ships have been lost due to dissensions between these officials[...]" He cautioned, however, that while they should "perform this duty of making all agree, they cannot appear biased or partial towards anyone."⁷⁵ The superior was to mind the missionaries so that they did not "interfere in [the officials'] governing of the ship, speaking neither in front

73 Vieira, fl. 19r.

74 Vieira, fl. 15r.

75 Vieira, *Regimento*, fl. 15v.

of them, nor with others, through whom they could find out and be scandalized.”⁷⁶ João Álvares, aware of the consequences of bad decisions, provided another rule concerning the role that the Jesuit superior was to play among the important individuals on the ship: “In case of doubts over whether to put into port or continue the voyage, to go ashore or not, [...] to fight or not, to keep trying to repair the ships or leave them, [...] ours should not attempt to give their opinion, unless they are consulted [on the matter], [and even then] trying to excuse themselves and when this is impossible, they should declare their opinion to the Captain, but never giving it in writing, nor signing along with others, because of the many serious inconveniences that can follow, [but adding the disclaimer] that these are not things we know about, nor in which we have any experience.”⁷⁷

For the majority of the ship’s passengers and crew, however, the missionaries played the same role of popular preachers and doctrine teachers that they did in Portugal. Amid those gathered on deck in the afternoon they would sing the litanies of the saints, or on Saturdays and feast days, the litanies of the Virgin. Vieira reminded them that these prayers should always include special invocations of the saint that the ship was named after; *Santiago, São Tomé, [Nossa Senhora da] Conceição, Nossa Senhora de Vencimento*[...] ⁷⁸ Foreshadowing a practice that Vieira would institutionalize, Rodrigues Girão noted that since his ship “had the name of the apostle St. James [Santiago], on his feast day we held[...]a procession around the ship, and there was a sung mass, and some artillery was fired, that made everyone happy.”⁷⁹ Processions were also made in times of danger, such as when the winds had calmed or the ships sailed perilously close to the shore. Although individual Jesuits would say masses frequently in private or for small groups, large public masses for all of the crew, passengers, and nobles were only to be said “on the feasts of Christ Our Lord and his mother most holy.”⁸⁰ On a typical voyage that left Lisbon in March or early April and sailed during the spring and summer months, these feasts would include Easter, Pentecost, the Annunciation, the

76 Vieira, fls. 19r/v.

77 Álvares ARSI, fl. 53.

78 Vieira, fl. 16v.

79 They had also made another procession on the feast of *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres*, the patron of sailors. See Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, op.cit., pp. 867-8.

80 Vieira, fl. 16v. Álvares instructed each Jesuit to confess and receive communion weekly. See Álvares ARSI, fl. 50. Maria de Jesus do Mártires Lopes relates that after the Council of Trent, saying mass on the ship of the *Carreira da Índia* was limited to ‘missas secas’, or ‘dry masses’ where the prayers of the mass were said without consecration or communion. This prohibition, she says, gradually gave way at the end of the sixteenth century when full daily masses were said. See Maria de Jesus dos Mártires Lopes, “Devoções e Invocações a bordo da Carreira da Índia (Secúlos XVI-XVIII)” in A.T. de Matos and L.F. Thomaz, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi, Ascension, Assumption, and the Nativity of the Virgin. Vieira's *Regimento* reminded the superiors to consult with the ship's pilot and masters to find the best time for holding large masses, as well as asking the captain for his permission to set up the altar on the deck behind the forecabin.⁸¹ Before these feasts, he insists, the Jesuits should devote their energies to exhorting everyone to confession and to preparing themselves spiritually for receiving communion. Likewise, Vieira states, there should be public preaching when the *padres* are healthy enough for it, and at the times when the "captain, master, pilot, and other nobles" find appropriate, "so that in this way they will attend with greater pleasure and [preaching] can be done with greater fruit."⁸² On the days when no sermons were given, the *padres* and *irmãos* were instructed to "speak about God with the people on board," teaching doctrine to those who did not know it adequately, publicly praying the Rosary, explaining its mysteries, encouraging them to confess, reading from spiritual guides, and teaching them how to examine their consciences. In assisting the dying, hearing confessions, or dealing with seculars, and especially women, the Jesuits were ordered to always have a witness present.⁸³

As we have noted, the corporal and spiritual activities that the Jesuits were instructed to perform on the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* reflect the basic ministries that Ignatius of Loyola envisioned for the Society of Jesus: preaching, teaching doctrine, hearing confessions, performing lowly services, and caring for the sick. The founder had insisted on a third year of novice training after finishing their studies, expressly aimed at giving young students a taste of the various ministries demanded of Professed Jesuits, as well as helping to test the commitment of those who joined the order for its academic ministries.⁸⁴ But those who were sent to the missions were typically sent East before the end of their theology studies, before they would have completed these 'tercian' (third year) experiences.⁸⁵ While evidence from the provincial catalogs and administrative documents is ambiguous about whether or not this third year was completed in India, it is clear that the Jesuit missionaries of the East Asian provinces were fourth-vow professed, and therefore had completed all of

81 Vieira, fl. 16v.

82 Vieira, fl. 16v.

83 Vieira, fl. 19r.

84 See Ignatius of Loyola, *General Examen*, chapter IV, pp. 51-53.

85 Technically, then, the missionary assignments were only given to the Fourth Vow Professed, but the nature of the voyage to Asia required the order to send those who were found to be qualified, but had to await the right age to make their profession, typically after being in the order for at least 17 years. This fourth vow, to attend to any matters anywhere in the world that the Pope should require of them, was unique to the Jesuits and was added to the standard three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

the required training experiences.⁸⁶ The routine of Jesuit ministries during the journey to Asia closely resembles the tertian experiences - attending the sick, taking care of cooking and cleaning, teaching doctrine to the soldiers and sailors, preaching and confessing, all under the direct supervision of the mission superior. For the China Jesuits, these experiences on ship would have been their first concrete experience with the pastoral work and humble service that was to make up the bulk of their missionary activity. It may also have been allowed to replace the tertian year. Whereas their European colleagues would only get a taste of the 'outside world' during that tertian year, the young Jesuits sent to Asia were quickly plunged into a physically demanding experience that involved daily trials. Hardened early on by such intensive service, they would arrive at India ready to be dispatched to their mission fields once they underwent the further difficulty of learning the local language.

Trabalhos de naufrágio: shipwrecks and other ways to arrive in India

As the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* made their way southward and around the Cape of Good Hope, they left the equatorial calm and neared the Indian Ocean where they hoped to find monsoon winds to impel them to the Malabar coast. After passing through the Mozambique channel, the passage to India was relatively swift - at the optimal times for the journey, early August or March, Goa was a little over a month's sail from Africa. But just as during the initial phases of the voyage, disease and disaster still lurked on the crest of every wave. It is a well-known fact that before being optimistically renamed the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of the African continent was known as the *Cabo das Tormentas*. The frequent storms that arise at the nexus between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans were the cause of so many shipwrecks that survivor's tales became one of the most popular literary genres in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European literature. Since articulate Jesuits were often found among the passengers on these doomed ships, accounts of their travails often appeared in continental bookshops and Jesuit college libraries. In 1585, Pedro Martins and five colleagues abandoned the sinking *Santiago* off the coast of Mozambique, where he witnessed four of his fellow

86 In a set of seventeenth century compendia of orders for the Province of Goa, one finds that the Provincial was entitled to dispense with the third year if necessary. Likewise, he was allowed to reduce it to one or two months for Jesuits who had been teaching for many years. The first order was given by Claudio Aquaviva in 1588, the second by the same in 1610. Josef Wicki, "Dois Compêndios das Ordens dos Padres Gerais e Congregações Provinciais de Província de Goa feitos in 1664" *Studia*, 43-44 (1980) p. 511.

Jesuits “consumed by hunger, privations and illnesses, together with many others die, or better, attain eternal life.”⁸⁷ The story of Agostino Tudeschini’s 1629 five-year voyage to China was particularly dramatic - the future missionary heard many last-minute confessions after vainly attempting to calm the storm by suspending relics over the crashing seas, only to be attacked by a crazed passenger once he washed ashore.⁸⁸

Witnesses to the dramatic stories that accompanied each arriving fleet, the Jesuit superiors in India even attempted to provide rules for dealing with such unfortunate occurrences. Both Álvares’ and Vieira’s orders contain the same provisions for saving as many India-bound missionaries as possible, rules that required contrasting Christian moral precepts with practical necessities. Since there would inevitably be sick or convalescing Jesuits on board being tended by healthy ones, the mission superior had to make the crucial decision of who would have to abandon ship. Álvares encouraged all to “remember what Christ Our Lord says, *maiores charitatem* etc.⁸⁹ and what a glorious thing it is to give one’s life to help those who cannot be saved in such instances, and how respectable it is in the eyes of God and the Church to assist them [to die].”⁹⁰ But if there are many Jesuits, he continued, the superior should “save those that are not necessary [for the dying], obliging them even with the precept [of obedience, telling them] that the Lord will give them another occasion to put their lives to good use.” Vieira modified this only slightly, instructing the superior to demand obedience since “not all of them will be necessary for the spiritual benefit of those who cannot be saved.”⁹¹ This suggests that even in the direst of circumstances, the first impulse of the Jesuits would have been to attend to the spiritual needs of the dying, and not to abandon ship. This also implies that the staffing problems of the Asian provinces were partially compounded by the fact that healthy Jesuits sometimes chose to perish alongside their hopeless brothers.

After the heat of Guinea and the storms of the Cape of Good Hope, a stop at Mozambique gave the fleet’s crews and the Jesuits a moment to refresh themselves after months on ship. Although many voyages did not stop at any ports besides Lisbon and Goa, various reasons would have compelled the ships’ captains to anchor at other African ports. Both the 1613 and 1616 ordinances

87 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo...*, p. 323.

88 Disney, p. 105.

89 This Latin phrase refers to John 15:13, “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.”

90 Álvares ARSI, fl. 53.

91 Vieira, fl. 20v.

indicate that the Jesuits arriving at Portuguese port cities should continue their charitable work among the infirm, but not at the risk of getting ill themselves.⁹² Here again, these rules were drawn from experiences such as that of Rodrigues Girão, whose ship paused at Mozambique in 1583 for two weeks, time enough for him to recover from his illness.⁹³ Knowing the nature of relations between Muslims and Christians in the Indian Ocean basin the Visitors provided specific warnings about disembarking in non-Portuguese ports such as Mogadishu, Melinde, Cochin. At ports controlled by “Heathens or Moors,” Vieira wrote, “they should not leave the ship without good reason, nor without the advice of the Captain or other prudent men on when or what they think, due to the dangers and disasters that have happened during similar temerarious disembarkations.”⁹⁴ Although disembarking in these ports might have been safe for Portuguese or other European merchants, the presence of Christian missionaries could have been seen as an open provocation in certain Muslim port cities. And, since tales of kidnappings and murder were legion among the Portuguese communities in Asia, the Jesuit superiors were quick to voice their concerns about unnecessary sorties in openly hostile territories.

The sight of land after six months at sea was a cause for general rejoicing aboard the ships of the *Carreira da Índia*. Before disembarking, however, arriving Jesuits were instructed to wait until the local members of the Society “come find them, as is custom, with the due celebration and happiness,” just as Rodrigues Girão was greeted on September 21, 1583 by his colleagues and choirboys singing a *Benedictus*.⁹⁵ After greeting the Goa Provincial and other superiors, the ship’s superior would hand over the inventory lists and correspondence sent from Lisbon, and ensure that the Procurators for the Far Eastern provinces residing in Goa received their supplies. Other goods, especially uneaten rations, were to be given over to the local Procurator for sale to the *Reinois*, or colonial Portuguese, since “biscuit, wine, olive oil, cheese, and olives, etc.” brought high prices in the *Estado da Índia*.⁹⁶ Likewise, Vieira informed the arriving superior, “do not ignore the crockery, either of tin, copper, or wood, because everything is valuable in India, saving the kegs, containers [quartos], and barrels at least disassembled, because the seamen with more India experience than our countrymen [Reinois], usually ask for these things, saying they are worth nothing, and then selling them in India.”⁹⁷

92 Vieira, fls. 20v-21r.

93 Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, op.cit., p. 872.

94 Vieira, fl. 20v.

95 Vieira, fl. 21r. and Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, op.cit., p. 872.

96 Vieira, l. 15r.

97 Vieira, fl. 15r.

Counting on the demand for foodstuffs from Europe, the procurators also turned the staples of the Portuguese diet into a key source of revenue for the Asian missions. For many Portuguese living in Goa, such items often served as the only reminders the colonists would have of their lives back home. And, since many of the East Asian Jesuits suffered from the same *saudades* as their colonial compatriots, these same foods, especially olives, cheese, *chouriço*, and olive oil, would appear on the lists of goods requested for the college of Macao and even the China mission stations. Sent along the same routes as the yearly shipments of Portuguese sacramental wine used by the missionaries, sausages as well as spices also formed the links between the outposts of empire and the metropolis.

Relíquias de nós mesmos: the last leg of the journey

After being welcomed by their Goan colleagues and visiting the shrine of their patron St. Francis Xavier, the Jesuits fresh from Portugal would have been quickly integrated into the Society's local community while they awaited either onward travel or further study. When the springtime monsoon winds picked up, it was possible for those educated missionaries assigned to the Province of Japan or the Vice-Province to sail onward to Macao. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, while the Japan trade filled the coffers of the *Estado da Índia*, ships sailing for Macao from Goa were plentiful. But after the expulsion of the Portuguese from Nagasaki in 1639, and the fall of Malacca in 1641, the lines of communication connecting Macao to Goa and Portugal were repeatedly severed by European rivals. Dutch control of the key sea routes through the Sunda Straits and the Straits of Malacca made it difficult for Portuguese fleets to arrive at the far-off Portuguese colony. As the interests of the newly restored, yet overextended, Lusitanian crown shifted to defending and consolidating their power in Brazil, much less effort was expended to keep up the Asian outposts of empire. Their reliance on Portuguese shipping, therefore, meant that the Jesuits would encounter numerous problems trying to reach Macao and provision the China and Southeast Asian missions. Although travelling aboard the ships of the English East India Company or the Dutch V.O.C. were options that the China Jesuits used when no Portuguese routes were open, both were fraught with problems. Likewise, the few attempts to discover an overland route from India to China were also found to be too exhausting or too dangerous to consider as viable alternatives - despite the fact that some like François de Rougemont would leave Goa to walk barefoot across India, just like Francis Xavier, hoping to

arrive more quickly at Macao.⁹⁸ Regardless of whether or not it was the most reliable or most efficient way of getting from Goa to Macao, Jesuits heading to this farthest outpost of the *Estado da Índia* typically depended on the infrequent Portuguese fleets.

It is very difficult to encounter descriptions of the voyage from Goa to Macao that provide the same wealth of details as those narratives of the journey from Lisbon to Goa. The few testimonies that survive describe a voyage similar to the first leg of the journey - “very long and very frequently dangerous” - a two month trip typically broken into two legs, Goa to Malacca in the first month, and Malacca to Macao in the second.⁹⁹ Especially dangerous was the passage around Cape Comorin at the southern tip of the subcontinent, where ships frequently risked running aground. Likewise, calms encountered while crossing the Bay of Bengal caused one observer in 1582 to lament “the violence of those dog-days [canícula] that left us all with the fear of coming down with serious illnesses.”¹⁰⁰ The ship’s captain was therefore forced to take up “the conservation and distribution of water,” in order to avoid “some very serious danger” that would cause all to suffer. Prior to 1641, ships passed through the Straits of Malacca that Duarte de Sande described as “so narrow that passing though it for the first time in ships of such big dimensions seemed entirely an example of insanity and temerity.”¹⁰¹ Stopping at Malacca the ships’ crews would restock the rations needed for the haul to Macao while any Jesuits would visit their colleagues at the Society’s local college. After the Dutch had captured this key waystation between India and China, the dangers of being intercepted by the Dutch and held for ransom increased. For example, an account of Visitor Francisco de Nogueira’s 1686 voyage through Southeast Asia mentions an unplanned stop in V.O.C. Malacca where his companion was imprisoned by ‘Calvinist heretics.’¹⁰² But human perils notwithstanding, once the ships exited the straits and turned to the northeast, they would traverse the dangerous South China Sea. One voyager explained the problem saying that because the area was “filled with shoals, since it is strewn with islands, it boils with more violence and agitates more rapidly than that

98 Noël Golvers, *François de Rougemont*, p. 16. In 1602 brother Bento de Góis left from Agra for ‘Cathay’ disguised as an Armenian merchant named Abdullah Isai or Banda Abdullah. In 1656, Johann Grüber and Bernhard Diestel left Rome to go overland to China where they arrived in July, 1658. See Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*. (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1973), pp. 77, 111, 121.

99 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo...*, p. 35, 328.

100 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.

102 Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, Codex 49-V-19, fls. 833r-842v. Anonymous account entitled *Successos da Viagem que fizemos de Goa para Macao*, Malacca Jail, 18 December 1686.

part of the sea that is like an extensive plain without any interval of islands, that goes on for a very long distance[...]and for this the ships[...]are shook with greater violence.”¹⁰³

Just as we have seen above, when the natural dangers seemed ready to send the passengers to be “sadly devoured by the profound abyss of the sea,” the religious pitch of the voyage increased.¹⁰⁴ Confessions were heard, relics carried about in procession, and the saints were implored to calm the wind and waves. When heat and calm threatened disease, one voyager wrote, “we drew recourse from the divine remedies, directing frequent prayers to God, to the Virgin most holy and to all of the Saints of heaven, invoking daily the name of every one, according to the custom of the *padres* of the Society during voyages at sea.”¹⁰⁵ But while the ship sailed under normal conditions, the Jesuits carried out the same ministries that they had before. The 1686 relation of Visitor Nogueira’s trip to Macao mentions that “everyday he said mass[...]and God was pleased that he should never be interrupted by winds, rain, or the swaying of the ship.”¹⁰⁶ He sang the litanies every afternoon and continually encouraged the people aboard with spiritual exhortations, except when he was incapacitated by illness. Making up for his occasional incapacity, he went “at eight o’clock at night to sing doctrine songs with the Kaffirs [the ship’s African slaves] and sailors, to whom he explained the prayers after singing.” Early in the morning, before attending to the sick, he would go to the center of the ship and “in a very loud and devout voice exhort all to praise God and the Virgin most holy, Queen of the Angels.”¹⁰⁷ During this second voyage on the ships of the *Estado da Índia*, Nogueira and the other missionaries had another opportunity to exercise the Jesuits’ central ministries, reinforcing the lessons in pastoral care and preaching they had learned on the way to Goa.

The length and travails of these voyages over “long routes and vast seas,” however, took their toll on many - with over half of all the missionaries dispatched to China dying en-route. “So serious and continual are the illnesses,” wrote André Ferrão in the 1656 Annual Letter from the China mission, “so many the miseries and necessities (not for lack of adequate provisions, but the voyages are very long and the inns, despite being on the water, are very dry [uncomfortable]), so undone and finished do we arrive that they speak well, those who call us relics, not only of the China mission, but of our very selves.”

103 Duarte de Sande, *Diálogo...*, p. 33.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

106 Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, Codex 49-V-19, fl. 834v.

107 *Ibid.*, fl. 834v.

¹⁰⁸ Yet the time that the missionaries spent on the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* was far from wasted. For them, the time aboard ship provided the transition between the European college environment and the mission field, a place where they would be trained in pastoral care under the supervision of older, more experienced *padres*. Besides getting this practical spiritual experience among the passengers and crew, China-bound Jesuits also acquired practical domestic skills, astronomical knowledge and medical techniques that would be necessary at their mission stations. Also, by plunging young missionaries into an extreme physical and emotional trial where they were called upon to be the moral support to others, the voyage helped build the sense of mission that would be necessary to face the hardships of spreading the faith in the Middle Kingdom. Likewise, the shared suffering of seeing friends and companions die forged a unity among the China missionaries that would help them maintain their zeal during times of persecutions or misfortune. Yet even those who had been steeled by the experience such as Ferrão would lament the journey's strains, "because we are flesh, after all, and being missionaries does not mean we are unmovable."¹⁰⁹ Recalling the friends he left behind merely to arrive at the gates of the Celestial Empire, he declared that mission's few successes were better called the fruit of tears - enough tears shed for "such good companions to make another fountain, like the one in Coimbra, called the *fonte das lágrimas*."

108 Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuitas na Ásia*, Codex 49-V-14, fl. 63r. *Annua da Vice Provincia da China*, 1656. André Ferrão, Macau, 29 January 1657.

109 *Ibid.*, fl. 63r.

Abstract

This article is an analysis of unique primary source material concerning Jesuit missionaries on the sea voyage to China during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this period, hundreds of men embarked in Lisbon on the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* for India and beyond. Sailing from Portugal around Africa and eventually to Goa, the members of the China mission had only completed half of their voyage. After months or years waiting at the capital of the *Estado da Índia*, they would board ship once again for another perilous journey around the subcontinent, through the Straits of *Malacca* and over the China Sea to Macao. But far from being a leisurely journey, this trip took a heavy toll on the numbers of zealous missionaries impelled across the world by religious fervor. For the chronically understaffed China mission, who only drew limited numbers of men from Europe, the death of each prospective recruit on the ocean was a tragedy. But since the missionary enterprise was a perpetual one, the Jesuits were forced to make efforts to protect their men as well as possible during the journey east. Using a combination of administrative documents and voyage narratives, this article describes the trials and skills gained during the missionaries' trip to China.

Two sets of official regulations drawn up by the Portuguese Jesuit hierarchy form the basis of this study. These texts reveal how the Society of Jesus organized (or attempted to organize) its members during the year-long passage, making sure that they not only survived, but were also prepared to begin their missionary work. Beyond regulating the everyday life of the Jesuits, touching on aspects from food to study to prayer, the rules instruct them how to deal with the problems of sickness, death, and shipwreck. But as members of a religious order, the Jesuits were obliged to carry out charitable and spiritual work among the crews and passengers who traveled with them. One finds that their tasks on ship among the travelling nobility, crew, and passengers were designed to keep them healthy while carrying out a vital form of pastoral training. Since most of the Jesuits sent to the Asian missions were very young, they gained valuable skills during the journey that would later help them when they headed for their missionary assignments. From doctrine teaching to confession skills to peacemaking abilities, young Jesuits learned how to diplomatically deal with people from all levels of society. Yet while working in the life-threatening environment, the Jesuits were not dupes to the wiles of their less scrupulous fellow passengers - the regulations make clear how to keep zealous missionaries from losing their rations and provisions to the undeserving. With prescriptions for acting at times of crisis and times of boredom, the Jesuit rules for travelling missionaries present an unique look at the routines - and perils of sea travel on the *Carreira da Índia*.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta a análise de uma invulgar fonte documental relativa à viagem marítima dos missionários Jesuítas em direcção à China, nos séculos XVI e XVII. Durante este período, centenas de homens embarcaram em Lisboa nos navios da *Carreira da Índia* em direcção à Índia e outras paragens mais longínquas. Partindo de Portugal, navegando em torno de África, e chegando por fim a Goa, os missionários da missão da China completavam apenas metade da sua viagem. Após

meses, ou anos, de espera na capital do Estado da Índia, esses homens embarcavam de novo para uma arriscada jornada em torno do subcontinente, através do Estreito de Malaca, e ao longo do Mar da China em direcção a Macao. No entanto, longe de se tratar de uma viagem aprazível, este percurso cobrava um pesado tributo no número de missionários zelosos, impelidos pelo fervor religioso a atravessar o mundo. Tendo em conta a situação crítica da missão da China, que recebia um número restrito de homens europeus, a morte de um membro aguardado constituía uma tragédia. Não obstante, na medida em que a actividade missionária era contínua, os Jesuítas viram-se obrigados a fazer um esforço para proteger os seus membros, tanto quanto possível, durante a viagem para Leste. Fazendo uso de documentação administrativa e de relatos de viagem, o presente artigo descreve as experiências vividas e perícias obtidas pelos missionários na viagem para a China.

Este estudo assenta em dois tipos de regulamentos oficiais redigidas pela hierarquia Jesuíta portuguesa. Estes textos revelam de que maneira a Companhia de Jesus organizava (ou procurava organizar) os seus membros durante o ano de viagem, com vista a assegurar não só a sua sobrevivência, mas também a sua preparação para o trabalho missionário. Para além de regular o quotidiano dos Jesuítas, referindo aspectos como a alimentação, o estudo e a oração, os regulamentos instruíam-nos como lidar com problemas como a doença, a morte, e as tempestades. Contudo, enquanto membros de uma ordem religiosa, os Jesuítas eram obrigados a levar a cabo trabalho caritativo e espiritual junto dos passageiros com quem viajavam. Verifica-se que as tarefas a realizar pelos missionários nas embarcações junto da nobreza viajante, tripulação e passageiros destinavam-se a mantê-los saudáveis enquanto levavam a cabo um método vital de treino pastoral. Uma vez que a maioria dos jesuítas enviados para as missões da Ásia eram muito novos, adquiriam uma experiência valiosa durante a viagem que mais tarde lhes seria útil nas tarefas missionárias. Desde a doutrinação, à confissão, e ao apaziguamento, os jovens jesuítas aprendiam a relacionar-se com todos os níveis sociais. Além disso, podiam evitar as artimanhas lançadas pelos passageiros menos escrupulosos - os regulamentos ensinavam os missionários a proteger as suas provisões e rações dos menos sérios. Contendo prescrições sobre a forma como actuar em tempo de crise e tempo de paz, as regulamentações jesuítas para os missionários viajantes constituem uma fonte única para o entendimento da rotina e dos perigos da viagem da Carreira da Índia.