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The Missionary in the World: The Invention of the Soul of Saint Francis Xavier in an Anonymous Sermon: The East, Quito and Rome, 18th Century

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Abstract

The discovery of an anonymous Quito Sermon dating back to 1741 in the Fondo Curia 2223 in the Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome dealing with the historical and metaphorical transit between Rome and the “Orient” of the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506–52), suggests links between the universalist vocation of the Catholic mission, and the local American missionary experiences which the text omits. This article argues that the sermon has a universal resonance that invokes the East in America (as it is written to be read in public); it is a sensory experience that can be adapted to different realities (the trips, relics, and missions of Francis Xavier), but also noted is the omission of local missionary practices (i.e., the sermon is presented as produced in a place unmentioned in the text). It is above all, a reformulation of the “missionary in the world” of Western philosophical commentaries and texts that look toward the East but are enunciated in America.

Keywords

Francis Xavier – soul – mission – global – Quito – China – East – America

1 A “Spirited Hercules”

The discovery of an anonymous Quito Sermon dated 1741 in the Fondo Curia 2223 at the Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome deals with the historical and metaphorical transit of the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506–52) between Rome and the “Orient.”¹ It is suggestive of the links between the universalist vocation of the Catholic mission and local missionary experiences that the text omits. Its location in the Archives is the only clue that this sermon was written by a Jesuit, as there is no information about the author.

We do not know when the sermon of 1741 was written or the intentions of its anonymous author. We also do not know if the sermon was actually read in Quito or in another city. Nor do we know how the original manuscript arrived in Rome, although undoubtedly these aspects would enrich our interpretation of the document. Furthermore, the fact that the document was found at the Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome does not necessarily mean that the author was a Jesuit. That the word “Quito” appears on the first page or that the document includes the date 1741, does not provide enough information to link text, author, and context. From a methodological perspective, this leaves us in a vacuum. However, the complexity of the document from a narrative and analytical perspective is such that it allows us to explore a dense philosophical and theological framework of historical justification of the missionary edifice of Francis Xavier. The “Quito Sermon” seems to assume the saint’s bodily frailty to emphasize the universal appeal of the “spirit-soul” that Xavier stands for in order to promote the missionary zeal. The document, we argue, is a hermeneutic justification of the “failure-success” of the Jesuit saint in East Asia and in the world. In this sense, we observe in the text that the anonymous author proposes to build a theory based on the Old and New Testaments, on the Classics, on the fathers of the Church, on Plato, and on St. Augustine, but also on an exaggerated historical narrative of the travels of Francis Xavier.

In the first section we introduce the sermon; we then present an annotated and detailed reading of the sermon with special attention to philosophical comments, biblical texts, historical contexts, and biographical trajectories of

1 Throughout this article we use the word “Orient” (within quotation marks) as “Oriente” is the word used in the sermon itself (it is mentioned on seven occasions). At the time it was used as a synonym for East Asia, immersed in what Edward Said later articulated as “orientalism,” revealing a prejudicial knowledge of the “other” (2003). That the word “Orient” is symbolically imbued is by now well known, while a critique of Said’s work enriches the ways in which “orientalism” is defined and works, something from which our analysis benefits. We use quotation marks around the word “Orient” to point towards and acknowledge such discussions.

the saint present in the document in order to analyze how Xavier's changes from being a body tied to pain and relics to a soul that floods the preaching of the Catholic orb. In the third section we explore other textual representations of Francis Xavier in order to analyze the construction of the saint which presents diverse interpretations at a textual and iconographic level during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Regarding these textual and iconographic interpretations, the Quito Sermon reveals a scriptural interpretation that aims at synthesizing and transcending the multiple hagiographic, historical, and religious dimensions of the figure of Francis Xavier. Moving beyond the descriptive and discursive dimension of the document, this article wishes to link the sermon with broader historical questions.

2 The Sermon

The "Sermón de San Francisco Xavier predicado en Quito, 1741" (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223) which on its first page states "Prediche e panegirici (in spagnolo) Secolo XVIII," begins with the following epigraph from *Mark* 16:15–16: *Euntes in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creaturae*.² This is not a random choice by the author, but characterizes Xavier as a pilgrim; refers to the universality of the Catholic mission (Delacroix, 1957; Latourette, 1937–45); and points to the world as a stage. However, this "Sermon" on the East, produced in Quito (Willingham, 2014:81–106; Andrien, 1995), and therefore decontextualized as regards its place of origin and directed to actors that do not appear in the text, has multiple complexities that stand in relation to the identity changes suffered by the Jesuit mission and, consequently, with the historical modifications of Xavier's image (Kleinberg, 2008). Xavier was one of the founding members of the Jesuits. Born in the Kingdom of Navarre on April 7, 1506, he led an extensive mission into Asia; when almost extending his mission to China, he died on Shangchuan Island on December 3, 1552. As is reflected in his letters to St. Ignatius, available in the *Documenta Indica*, Xavier embodied the "Ad maiorem Dei gloriam" in his apostolate. Most texts about Xavier have been read in teleological mode conditioned by the early construction of his holiness linked to the suffering body (Walker Bynum, 1995), to the religious conversion of barbarians, to miraculous revelations, to the failure of his mission in China, and to his death throes.

2 The complete biblical passage is: And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

In the same way, his body became a relic before his death and he became a living martyr as appears from the immense textual and iconographic corpus about his life and experiences that circulated between the East and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from the descriptions of his body made by his contemporaries and, finally, from the construction of his iconography directed toward the presentation of the globally venerated saint. In addition, his right arm as a relic in Rome and his incorruptible body in Goa to this day feed the image of Xavier as a pilgrim, a man crucified to the world, one who dedicated his pain and fatigue to the conversion of infidels. The Jesuit, canonized in 1622 and named “Patron of Catholic Missions” in 1922, became an icon of the missionaries of the Catholic world who considered his travels, missionary practices, discipline, and his act of believing in mission as vocation – an action and a contemplation (Prosperi, 2005; 1992: 189–220; O’Malley, 1984: 1–20; 1994: 3–10).

The text can be read as a trace of the change in the interpretation of the role of the missionary in the Society conditioned by the political and religious avatars of the second half of the seventeenth century and expressed in the broad arc of the eighteenth century. It can also be read as part of the “worldliness” of Xavier’s missionary image that can be placed in any context and among different barbarians (Broggio, 2004; Castelnau-L’Estoile, 2011; Marcocci, 2014; Worcester, 2008; Zupanov, 2019).

The sermon is unique in part because of its place of origin and also because it portrays the missionary as a historical being that transits from a “weak and delicate body” to a being that is “independent and perfectly divided from his body” having two “states of soul.”

2.1 *The Soul of the “Missionary in the World”*

The author’s goal in this sermon was to understand how “a weak and delicate body” could travel to convert thousands of infidels on his journey to the “Orient” and become a saint. The document begins by recognizing Xavier’s holiness, built up historically since his death, from his corporeality that became a relic, as well as his bodily avatars during his various trips. For the author, the weak, sick body, “martyr among the living” image does not justify in itself the action in Xavier’s world, so he produces a *sui generis* theory. This theory can be described as a conjunction of non-systematized ideas, constructed through comments, glosses, and quotes from diverse traditions.

From this convergence of scriptural traditions emerges a hybrid philosophical, biblical, and theological justification enunciated from America that would explain the success of the missionary model of the Saint and Apostle of the Indies. We know that Xavier’s travels and conversions have more frailties, missionary frustrations, and failures to convert the Chinese, although as

we have mentioned before, his life was associated with a successful model of missionary holiness in the long term. It is here then, that a curious justification enters, in contradiction to the primary characteristic of Xavier as missionary: his corporeality in the world. In other words, the anonymous author abandons a model of holiness centered on Xavier's body to build a model of missionary holiness based on discussions about the Jesuit's soul and spirit. No known fragment disavows the corporeality that articulated the textual and iconographic corpus since the sixteenth century. But, as this sermon argues, it was the soul and the spirit, and not only his body, that allowed the saint to become a "missionary in the world."

From this perspective, it is possible to suggest that the sermon challenges a fixed space of enunciation in order to, from the global resonance of the sermon itself and the soul-centered model of holiness, position Xavier as a missionary whose figure transcends spatiality and, therefore, is projected in a universal space without geographical limits.

What the sermon intends is to prove philosophically, historically, and theologically, that Xavier fulfilled the words of Jesus and, therefore, is a favorite apostle by means of a panegyric. It is within this context that the opening of the document with the heading of Mark 16: 15–16 is also understood. The Jesuit preached the gospel in "a rational world" which "was the audience that pointed to the fervent zeal of his spirit" (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 1), as the sermon points out. Here, therefore, the two premises of the document emerge: to demonstrate that Francis Xavier is a favorite apostle of Jesus who fulfilled his words as no one else has, and that his successful model is due to the lack of body.

His journey through the world was therefore due to his not being one single Xavier, but "many" Xaviers that distanced themselves from their body and became soul and affections, spirit and intelligence. In the sermon, the body is the flesh that bound it to worldliness, so the distance of the soul and spirit allowed the power of temporal and spatial ubiquity. Xavier is not from Rome, nor from East Asia nor from Quito, but rather from the world that he travelled as a cherub, and a cloud that fertilized the gospel. Ultimately, it is the soul and spirit that made Xavier a "missionary in the world," beyond his corporality or relics, as venerated in the East and West.

The sermon begins with Mark 16, which epistemologically supports the idea of "universal mission" with Jesus' words to his disciples.³ The author summons

3 "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Cf. Matthew 28: 18–20.

Xavier to the New Testament to perform a remarkable exercise in the tradition of the apostles who were pilgrims par excellence, except that Xavier's steps "singled him out among all the apostles" turning him into "the pilgrim Apostle par excellence" (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 1v). Here is the reason for the panegyric: to make Xavier stand out among all the apostles. For that, the author needed to contextualize him historically through his canonization Bull and change him into an exception to the norm:

Whosoever would like to know the latitude of these lands, must consult the Geographic Letters: I will only say that only the lands inhabited by the Japanese make up 66 large kingdoms. But so that you may have a better concept of how much Xavier walked for the health of Souls, listen to Father Nadasi: famous investigator of his pilgrimages [...] For the conversion of souls Xavier was endowed with such a special ability that he walked 100,000 leagues and according to this account our Pilgrim could share out to each of the twelve apostles almost a world of walking. It is not an exaggeration but may be clearly demonstrated as the whole world surrounded by its entire circumference barely measures 9,000 leagues; see now how many worlds could be distributed among the apostles, of the 100,000 leagues walked by Xavier [...]. That life worthy of immortality only lasted ten years and that can be called along with the Nacienceno pure pilgrimage. With 100,000 being the total amount of leagues, 10,000 corresponded to each year of his apostolate. Oh wonder! If Xavier's only job was to make pilgrimages in the world. He still is wonderful for having walked so much. Preaching and doing so many wonders in the world?

APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 1v

The author not only gives an account of the kilometers traveled by the Jesuit and invites the sermon's reader or hearers to see the "geographical letters" to understand the distance of the trips, but he also quotes the Christian archbishop of Constantinople Gregorio Nacienceno (329–389) and the Hungarian Jesuit János Nadasi (O'Neill-Domínguez, 2001: 2796), author of *Hebdomada SS. Ignatii & Xaverii Cultui et Imitationi sacra* (1668). The most important document referenced is the Bull of canonization of August 6, 1623 which brought all the news from the East to Rome and the theological justification of Xavier's holiness (Urbano VIII, 1899: 704–724). Even before the trip began, those 100,000 leagues were shown to Xavier while he slept in a hospital in Rome as a "fearful representation" of the fate of bodily fatigue and the paths he would

travel “on foot many times barefoot and shedding blood.”⁴ In some ways, from the beginning of the sermon, the author continues to respect the canon of the representation of the Jesuit from the 16th century.

However, a strong argument and narrative interrupts that same canon. Those distances, the fatigues, the “immense ocean of work that God showed him” and the 100,000 leagues could not have been made only by Xavier’s physical “steps,” but also by other kinds of steps. Here, the author resorts to book 1 of the prophet Ezekiel when he narrates his “vision of divine glory” and his approach to the throne. The carriage of God was pushed by four living beings with animal faces, wings, and strange bodies.⁵ In the following books of Ezekiel, these strange living beings are called “cherubs.” From here, the author of the sermon begins to wonder about Xavier’s body and spirit, understanding that they are “extremely distant” from each other. The question that is stated implicitly is whether the Jesuit was a cherub or if his travels were pushed by the cherubs. The author does not answer the question but seeks a middle ground between

4 The text states, “Saint Francis Xavier was sleeping in a hospital in Rome as was his custom when God who had destined him to be the Apostle of the Orient, wished to make previous proof of his spirit. He showed him in an imaginary vision a map of 100,000 leagues he would have to walk [...] Those who have read the labors of this Hercules of the Church may conceive some part of this fearful representation. I say ‘part’ because the least of what is known and the most of what was written I only have as witnesses God and the Angels. Unknown seas, implacable winds, furious responses, fearsome days, dark nights, dangerous shoals, hidden pitfalls, lightning, thunder, shipwrecks. Many times, he was shown himself clinging to a board shaken by winds, beaten by waves and fighting with death. Cold was represented to him, so was heat, nakedness, severe weathers, pestilent airs, unknown illnesses faced without a doctor, without medicine, without refuge. He watched himself walking barefoot many times and spurting blood because of the earth because of animals because of thorns under the sun disguised as a sailor, as a slave, as a sweating lackey, hoping, wishing without any more distance between life and death than being recognised or not. Finally, he saw as in a horde all hatreds, envies, ambushes, poisons, dards, machetes, of those barbaric people and how many fears, dangers, sweats and labors he would have to undergo among them for the health of their souls. As though on the beach, Xavier viewed all this enormous ocean of labors shown him by God” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 4v).

5 “and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, and the wings of one touched the wings of another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle” (Ezekiel 1: 5–10).

Xavier as cherub and the cherubs pushing him. If these beings, open to heaven, are winged bodies and spirits at the same time, the Jesuit is also:

Whoever saw Xavier suffer from the rigors of cold and heat in so many and such inclement climates, from the extreme needs of hunger and thirst in so many lands with no relief, the fatigue and weariness of so many and such painful roads, where each footprint was printed with his blood, I would say without a doubt: this is a body that lives subject to so many calamities. Even more so seeing that this body was not altered by alterations, nor did needs weaken it, nor was it dismayed by fatigue, on seeing that labors enough to make a marble goat sweat, did not dent a body of flesh, I would say with reason this is not body, it is spirit [...] Seeing that when leaving Rome for the East he only took along his breviary and papers, that he passed through his fatherland without seeing relatives or dear ones, that having embarked with the dignity of a Nuncio he washed with his own hands his poor rags, slept on a rope at the foot of the sick person, who upon jumping on land, penetrated the wildest jungle to be farther away from men, who bid farewell to the fires of that Volcano that choked his breast with sweet loudly uttered prayers, seeing that his nourishment was fasting and sackcloth his repose, would say, and would rightly say, this is spirit.

APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 3v

According to the sermon, if Xavier is a man, he is a body; but at the same time, he is not body, therefore he is spirit. The author does not seem to want to generate a contradiction between body and spirit, nor enter a philosophical discussion, but rather pose the question of how it is possible that this body could have suffered so many calamities. In other words, what the author sets up is a teleological missionary conjecture. He implicitly urges the reader or listener to wonder how Xavier accomplished his missionary work despite his bodily fatigue. Xavier, being a “perpetual pilgrim” seems to lack a body and this would allow his pilgrim flights through the world. Nevertheless, what makes the Jesuit a “missionary in the world” is not his body that transits but his soul that moves “from one affection to another”. This “pilgrim soul” can move without a body, while the body cannot move without a soul. The sermon refers to St. Augustine as one of the main exponents on the question and the origins of the soul with his theory of the seven degrees of the soul (O’Connell, 1969; Cary, 2000).

Thus, it is stated implicitly that the Jesuit’s soul was linked to reason while his body was linked to the senses; it is the soul, finally, that gives movement to Xavier’s body. The soul dominates the body and guides the passions, identifying

with the *spiritus*, the *mens*, the *ratio*, and the *intellectus*.⁶ Augustine, by means of the Platonic and Christian synthesis, affirms the immaterial character of the soul (Garrod-Haskell, 2019), situating it in the ultra-earthly (Vanzago, 2009) and, based on the Augustinian proposals, the sermon uncenters the Jesuit from his own body and from his salvific construction of holiness.⁷ The objective was to separate Francis Xavier from the “*embarazo y dependencias*” (“embarrassment and dependencies”)⁸ of the body, to produce an image of the Saint with “another light, with another freedom, with another nobility.” Once again, he resorts to authority, in this case to Saint Paul, to lift the walker off the ground and free him from the flesh.⁹

Having expounded the theory of the off-centered body for the saint, the author must justify the power of Xavier’s spatial ubiquity. That gift would have been achieved precisely because his soul was linked to a weak body that allowed him not only to walk the earth, but also walk the air. His journeys through the world are explained because there is not a single Xavier but “*muchos*” (“many”). Their pilgrimages, their flights, amaze even the apostles; his missionary actions transform him in the world:

This is what Isaiah admires in the flight of the Apostles and this is what amazes in Xavier’s pilgrimages over the flights of all the Apostles, because

6 “*Quid ergo hominem dicimus? Animam et corpus tamquam bigas vel centaurum? An corpus tantum, quod sit in usu animae se regentis, tamquam lucernam non ignem simul et testam sed testam solam tamen propter ignem appellamus? An nihil aliud hominem quam animam dicimus, sed propter corpus quod regit, veluti equitem non simul equum et hominem sed hominem solum, ex eo tamen quod regendo equo sit accommodatus, vocamus?*” (Agustín de Hipona, 2011, vol. 1, 4.6).

7 “Souls also go on pilgrimages, said Augustine acutely, as the body moves from place to place, thus a soul moves from one affection to another. But as a soul goes on pilgrimage only with those steps that take place far from his homeland, so the soul goes on pilgrimage with those affections that being opposite to the body and senses are far from the homeland of his flesh and these are the affections that the soul produces as a soul separate and independent from the body” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 4).

8 While “*embarazo*” translates literally as “pregnancy,” and “*embarazoso*” as “embarrassing,” in the text “*embarazo*” is understood to be used as “embarrassment.”

9 “Our souls have two states, one of union, one of separation, and the latter is far more perfect than the former because once the soul is free of encumbrances and dependences of the body it works with another light, with another freedom, with another nobility. It walks, finally free of that weight and company which always throws it to the ground. This way of walking was spoken of by St. Paul when he said his soul, though united to the body acted as though it were separate and independent of the body. When the soul produces affections according to the flesh it walks but walks as in its own country because it walks like a soul that animates and is subject to the flesh. When it produces impious affections and opposite to the flesh it walks independently, it walks like spirit” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 4v).

exceeding them all he travelled through the world having benefited and fertilized the world more. What he did not do and did not undo in the East does not come to light when unwrapping the long fabric of his conquests, but it was not the 200 or 300 years of his life or that Xavier was not a single man but many Xaviers, thirty languages he learned perfectly and it was not enough that God had not multiplied them by making different nations understand the one who spoke in one language. He demolished more than 4800 temples of Idols and almost as many were counted as those consecrated to our God. One million and two hundred thousand were the souls that he baptized by his own hand. But who will be able to enumerate the so new and holy customs he established [...] Or the hatred and enmity he extinguished, the defeated lives that he turned around and the almost insurmountable difficulties he overcame. Suffice it to say: in just ten years Xavier conquered more souls for God than all the Heretics together added to their numbers in more than 1500 years. So when you look closely at the portentous works of Xavier in the East it seems that he could not make a pilgrimage, without its being irrigated, what he accomplished seems incredible [...].

APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 2v

The preceding passage is extraordinary because it shows the specific actions of the missionary contemplated in the document. Mass baptism (Prosperi, 2006: 1–65), the destruction of heretical temples and the use of languages are present in an exaggerated rhetoric that is not different to missionary exaltation. His practices in the “Orient” and, consequently, in the world, as well as his “*obras portentosas*” (“portentous works”) are due to the metaphor of fertilization and to the irrigation of his words that make him like “clouds with the strangest lightness of the birds” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 3).

The author obliquely uses various spaces in the “Orient” to exemplify Xavier’s simultaneous appearances while at the same time demonstrating the universality of the missionary beyond Asian borders. The Jesuit walked through the air and his “exhausted body” unfolds to continue fertilizing Goa, Mozambi, Ambion, Japan, and China¹⁰ with his word. Moreover, one of the ways in which the distance between the body and the soul is projected in the sermon is through the ubiquity of the voice and the preaching which explicitly

10 “At the end seeing that exhausted body in Mozambi, in Goa, in Meliagor or in Camboya. In Maloca, in Amboina, in Japan and in China, and what is more he appeared before someone in places very distant from others walking in the air, as though on earth” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 3v).

emphasizes their simultaneous presence in the orb. His soul travels, his body is doubled, his voice crosses time and space.¹¹ It is these distances between body and soul, between the steps of the earth and the air, between spirit and flesh, between the “Orient” that the sermon mentions and Quito, between the journeys of the apostles and their pilgrimages, which made Xavier the “*misionero mundo*” (“Missionary of the World”), revered, followed, and used as a model of missionary holiness. His soul transits as a perpetual pilgrim of his body and country,¹² which explains why, in Quito, in 1741, a document of this type was written and perhaps spoken. The appropriation of Xavier beginning from biblical, theological, and philosophical citations transformed the Jesuit saint from America, into something infinite that did not depend on his relics, his body, and much less on the “Orient.” The separation of body and soul, finally, made him universal.

2.2 *The Body of Francis Xavier*

The Jesuit from the province of Japan, the Portuguese António Francisco Cardim, published in Rome in 1646 his extraordinary book *Fascicvlus e Iapponicis Floribvs svo adhvc madentibvs sangvine*, which can be defined as a catalog of Catholic missionary martyrs in Japanese lands. With illustrations depicting the missionary’s form of death and brief biographical accounts, Cardim makes an illustrated story of the blood shed as a result of the spreading of the Gospel, as expressed by himself: *catalogus occisorum in odium fidei*. The book opens with an encomium in Latin, written by Jerónimo Petrucci dedicated to Francis Xavier. Petrucci concludes with a metaphor likening Xavier to the sun, the sky, and love, but also as the model of the martyrs of Japan.¹³

11 “Because his presence appeared in very distant places not once but many times. Here he could be seen preaching fervently to his listeners; there he inspired valor in soldiers. Here helping a shipwreck; there giving aid to a boat that was sinking” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 3).

12 “Oh Xavier I am no longer astonished that the blind Orient, struck by your light, asked so often whether you were God. I am not surprised that while you lived, temples were demanded from you as from a supreme Deity. Your body in its pilgrimages seemed like God, the one who was far from his country by land and water for the sake of souls and let us add also by air. He placed between himself and the earth of his flesh all the infinite space of pleasures despised and the infinite distance of all possible works that his body desired anxiously; in conclusion, he was a constant pilgrim in his homeland. Your spirit a perpetual pilgrim of your body. We may forgive then the Orient in believing you a Deity by nature when the catholic Orb has more than enough reason to venerate you as someone divine by grace, certain gift of glory” (APUG, *Fondo Curia* 2223: 6).

13 “*Lumina cui debes, auramque, diemque, fagittis / Quid solem violas, India, Xaverium? / Verbera quid duri ingeminant et vulnera fustes? / Solis et in vultum saxa facesque volant? / Vulnera aque haec Solis, sidera Solis erunt. / Vulnera Sol habet? erumpent de vulnere soles:*

As Antonella Romano writes, these phenomena would articulate a model of “tripolar” missionary space of European experiences in the “Orient” that find a concrete echo in American missionary experiences (2008: 253–277).

3 Further Textual Representations of Francis Xavier: Analyzing the Construction of the Saint

It would be impossible to systematize or count the times the name “Francis Xavier” appears in missionary literature, not only Jesuit literature, but in the literature of all modern religious orders. In the *indipetae* letters of the Society of Jesus, texts written by the young European novices “wishing” or “asking” for the East or West Indies (Roscioni, 2001; Colombo-Massimi, 2014; Maldavsky, 2013; Gaune-Rolle, 2015: 261–275), the name “Francis Xavier”, “Francesco Saverio” or “Xaverius”, in many ways modelled the missionary desire to travel beyond the European limits and convert those “barbarians,” who had since the sixteenth century been hierarchized by José de Acosta and Michel de Montaigne (including, of course, the “barbarians” within the European space).

Since his death in 1552 on Shangchuan Island (from the Portuguese *São João*), in the South China Sea, Xavier became the missionary par excellence, who, in his actions, played out the formula of another of the “first Jesuits” (Scaduto, 1971: 323–390; Curel, 1966: 186–211; O’Malley, 2008; Clossey, 2008), Jerónimo Nadal, *totus mundus nostra habitat fit* (*Epistolae et Monumenta P. Hieronymi Nadal*, 1962; Fabre-Vincent, 2007). He became the missionary face of the Company, the pilgrim with a proto ethnographic spirit, a political mediator in the East, articulator of the *accommodatio* (cultural adaptation) and precedent for Alessandro Valignano in Japan, Matteo Ricci in China, and Roberto de Nobili in India (Funkestein, 1986: 222–271; Standaert, 2003; Mungello, 1985; Prosperi, 1999: 65–87). Xavier’s holiness also became an iconographic construction; alive, he was described as a saint permanently travelling, converting thousands of “barbarians,” and as a man “crucified to the world”, in Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s words in the prologue of the *Constituciones* of the Society of Jesus about the actions of religious operators.

Sideraque Indorum, Martyres exsiliunt / Xaverius parit Heroes per vulnera. Plures / Edat ut Heroas, vulnera plura cupit. / Mille suo parit Heroas de sanguine. Mille / Qui parit Heroas, sidera mille parit. / Cerne coronatum Heroum diademate Solem. / Quàm benè Hic Heroas Sol diadema gerit! / Invidus obscurat Sol sidera. Xaverius Sol / Non flagrat siderum, amore flagrat (Cardim, 1646: 13–14).

The chronology of Francis Xavier is well documented, and there are almost no major variations in the dates of his travels in Europe and the East. His death on December 3, 1552, after several days of agony, marks an end to his Asian adventure. However, his death simultaneously opened the imperishable path of his image as a saint that arrived with his incorruptible body to Goa in 1554, to Bom Jesus chapel in 1613, and that was publicly exhibited from 1624, onward, after his canonization. Before this, in 1614, his right arm was amputated to be sent to Rome as a relic that further encouraged devotion toward the missionary. In a certain sense, he can be said to have returned to the same city he left in 1541 to commence his missionary journey that took him along the coast of India (1542–1544), to the Moluccas (1545–1547) and to Japan (1549–1551). China, finally, will always remain the utopian horizon that he was unable to reach but which also opened paths of vocation and devotion.

It is difficult and daring to write something new about the missionaries whose large corpus of literature (Valignano, 1944) includes hagiographies (García, 1676), biographies (Brodrick, 1956; Léon-Dufour, 1997; Schurhamer, 1973–1982), historiography external to religious orders (Leone, 2010) and historiography marked by the notion of the “global”, as well as collections of letters and missionary, political, spiritual and travel writings (Cutillas, 1886; Sempere, 1944; Solá, 1948; Zubillaga, 1956; Alonso Romo, 2000). Just as an example, we mention here the critical edition of Xavier’s letters by George Schurhamer and Josef Wicki, *Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii Aliaque Eius Scripta* (1944–1945), or the monumental volumes of *Monumenta Xaveriana, ex autographis vel ex antiquioribus exemplis collecta* (1899), or the eighteen volumes of the *Documenta Indica*.

The letters and writings about Xavier have been conditioned by teleological reading and interpretation. The starting point and conclusions are the consecration of the sanctity of a suffering body, revered for its suffering, for being the tireless pilgrim, the scholar in Paris, the thaumaturge, the companion of Ignatius. And this was undoubtedly the image that marked the religious and political imaginary of the Old Society of Jesus as well as the New Society that continues to venerate the right arm as a relic in the Church of Jesus, in Rome. Moreover, that same image was used to exalt the missionary vocation of young European Jesuits: he is a Christ crucified on earth, marked by the pain and the transit of his body through the East Indies, with an immeasurable ambition to convert the Chinese. Xavier himself expressed himself in this way, as we can see in his letter in Portuguese addressed to the Jesuit Francisco Pérez who was in Malacca, a few months before his death, on October 22, 1552 in Shangchuan:

We, considering these dangers of the soul, which are far greater than those of the body, find it safer and more certain to pass through bodily dangers before we will be comprehended before God in the spiritual dangers. So, by any means, we are determined to go to China.

Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii Aliaque Eius Scripta: 254

This image of a “missionary” crucified to the world and in permanent search of conversion was also built through the “iconographic networks in the visual culture of the Baroque” (Torres Olleta, 2009). Bringing together the textual corpus and iconographic elements, art historian María Gabriela Torres Olleta, by linking the textual corpus and the iconographic elements, has managed to systematize a large number of portraits of the Saint on Jesuit emblems, in representations of feasts, hagiographies, allegories, and in the celestial pantheon with the Trinity, Christ, the Sacred Heart, the Virgin, and the life of other saints. In the same way, iconographic typology represents him as a missionary, pilgrim, penitent, priest, thaumaturge, patron, and at the start of his death agony. Within this visual culture, consolidated by the circulation between Europe and Asia of the textual corpus on the saint, the following works of important artists can be found: works of Peter Paul Rubens (*The Miracles of Saint Francis Xavier*, 1617), Anthony van Dyck (*Saint Francis Xavier*, 1622), Nicolas Poussin (*The Miracle of Saint Francis Xavier*, 1641), or Giovanni Battista Gaulli (*The Vision of St. Francis Xavier*, 1675). All of these converge in *The Death of Saint Francis Xavier* (1771–1774) of Francisco Goya. However Xavier’s “most vivid portrait” is to be seen in the saint’s own “letters”, as Jesuit Antonio Vieyra expressed in his sermon “*Pretendientes*” of the panegyric *Xavier dormido y Xavier despierto* (1696); to this, we would add the letters written about the saint which include facial descriptions.¹⁴

The descriptions of Xavier’s contemporaries focused on his suffering body, his severe, cheerful, ascetic, and contemplative semblance; on his body as the focus of narratives and as the recipient of divine grace. His body converges with the comings and goings of the world in a missionary expansion towards the “Orient,” becoming a bodily relic before becoming a relic conditioned by his visions, death agony, and miracles. These physiognomic descriptions of Xavier are added to the textual corpus and the iconographic nets built around his biography composing a dense weaving of narratives which made him from very early in the missionary world into a martyr before being a martyr or in

14 “Many statues of Saint Francis have been sculpted, many images have been painted, many prints have been printed, but in none is he more naturally or more vividly portrayed than in his letters” (Vieyra, 1696: 187).

the writing of Melchor González in Goa on November 9, 1548, a martyr “living among us.”¹⁵ In the same way, Melchior Nunes Barreto, who became the second Provincial Superior of the Indies after Xavier, wrote in Goa, on December 7, 1552 – four days after the death of the Spaniard – probably without knowing the news yet, – a semblance of his “cheerful and serene” face which showed an interior withdrawal that expressed corporal and spiritual joy.¹⁶ However, the narration about Xavier’s death by the Chinese convert, Antonio “*el chino*” (“the Chinese”), Xavier’s interpreter who accompanied him during his death agony, dated December 4, 1552, consecrates the life and death of the martyr – martyr before being martyred, and, likewise, a living relic before becoming a formally consecrated relic. The text of Antonio “the Chinese” is included in chapter 21 of the *Liber de Vita S. Francisci Xaverii* of the *Monumenta Xaveriana*. Here, he writes about the leeching of Xavier’s body, of his extreme fever, of his delirium in various languages, of the continuous pain, looking at the utopic Chinese horizon from an island, until his death on December 3, 1552. His body remained for eternal veneration, as can still be seen today in Goa and Rome:

... with great rest and quietness; and his body and face remaining with a very peaceful countenance and with a rosy colour, his blessed soul went to enjoy his Creator and Lord, and the merit and reward, which he so well deserved for the many and great services he had done to our Lord in these parts of India, and for the continuous and great works he had suffered the ten years he was here.

Monumenta Xaveriana, vol. II, 1899: 896

Xavier’s sanctity is strongly linked to his condition of being a suffering body, the pilgrim par excellence, the saint venerated as a full-body relic before being

15 “un hombre no viejo y de buena disposición, no bebe de ninguna calidad vino, muy esforzado soldado de Christo, como dice San Bernardo: *Fidelis miles vulnera sua non sentit, dum benigne sui regis vulnera intuetur*. De manera que podemos decir que tenemos un mártir vivo entre nosotros, y tengo que lo será presto, porque ya no le veo buscar otra cosa; tiene llevado muchas flechadas por amor de Christo crucificado, y le han quemado muchas casas donde dormía, y noche de 3 y 4” (*Documenta Indica*, vol. I, 1948: 312).

16 “Ó que coração tam encendido em amor de Deus! Com que flamas arde do amor do proximo! Ó que zelo pera acudir às almas que estam enfermas ou mortas! Que diligencia pera as resuscitar e restituir ao estado da graça, sendo ministro de Christo pera a principal obra que nas terras há, ¡que hé a justificação do impio e pecador! Ó que affabilidade que tem, sempre rindo com rosto alegre e sereno, sempre rye e nunca ry: sempre ry, porque tem sempre huma alegria espiritual, com que a charidade e jubilo do espirito se manifesta polo rosto” (*Documenta Indica*, vol. II, 1950: 494).

a relic: body in Goa, right arm in Rome, the feet of the walker. That condition of holiness linked to a suffering body was built mainly by the textual, iconographic corpus and the physiognomic descriptions that his contemporaries made that focused on the “crucified man to the world”: robust, cheerful, good complexion, young, proportionate, graceful. Likewise, the iconography produced between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries systematically represented Xavier as the suffering and miraculous man *par excellence*. The body that suffers during death, during miracles, during revelations and that, above all, fails to initiate the process of conversion that he longed for in China.

From this textual and iconographic construction, Xavier can be described as a case of “success-failure”: his failure to arrive in China and his early and agonizing death conditioned a successful model of missionary holiness that transcended the Jesuit dimension and marked the Catholic orb and the missionary universalist vocation. In this sense, the image of the “Orient” in the sermon spatially articulates the narrative and the author’s argument. It is in the “Orient” where, historically, the canon about Xavier is developed in the text, with brief notes about his passage through Rome. Nevertheless, it is that same “oriental” image of the Jesuit which allows the corporeal and special de-centering which we shall analyze in the next section. “Orient” is used as a pivot to extract Xavier from those frontier margins and locate him in the Catholic orb by means of an American translation of Xavier’s defeat in the “Orient” (by not bringing Christianity to China) is transformed into success at the other end of the word. Although China is never within the Jesuit’s reach, it is that very defeat that converts him in the sermon of the “missionary world” *par excellence*, and it is this that must be justified theologically and philosophically through the historicity of the Jesuit in an “Orient” constructed from America in the text.

Although the expansion of Catholicism in the East sums up more failures than successes (prohibition edict and collective martyrdom in Japan, the Chinese rites controversy, and low territorial dominance, for example¹⁷), the sermon presents this Eastern experience as a utopian missionary space that must be replicated elsewhere; a space that must be mimetically reproduced. The remoteness and utopia of the Asian failure turned into success in the Catholic world is what allows the construction of the missionary in the sermon. The Christianization of the “barbarians” of the “Orient” is built as that past utopia that must be exalted and disseminated in the Catholic world, as a

17 See, for example, Standaert, 2000; Dunne, 1962; Gernet, 1982; Brockey, 2007; Masini, 1996; Ronan-Oh, 1988; Spence, 1984; d’Elia, 1942–1949; Moran, 1993; Cooper, 2005; Elison, 1988; Boxer, 1951; Ross, 1994.

founding and structural part of the universal mission. It is from here that the vicissitudes of Xavier between Rome and the “Orient” obtain historical meaning and are decontextualized but at the same time presented as functional in mid-eighteenth-century Quito.

One of the aspects that stand out in the sermon is the idea of “reaching” the “Orient” (Ollé, 2002) – continuously postponed, as China was never reached – systematically presented as the background. If Xavier failed to reach China in his lifetime, the “Orient” is indeed spiritually conquered through the long-term salvation project he built and represented. The “Orient” is thus a mobile image that is adapted in other contexts, spaces, and by other interlocutors; it is a space of successful conversion of those considered superior “barbarians” that can be read as such by other barbarians and other missionaries. Thus, the Eastern missionary experience is imagined and written from America since the preaching of the Jesuit is simultaneous in all the “uttermost ends of the earth.” Both East Asia and America – despite the fact that this last space does not appear in the text – are the *plus ultra*, reached by the footprints of this “*Hércules animoso*,” or “Spirited Hercules,” in different chronologies and in various forms.¹⁸ The Asian body of the Jesuit, as we shall see, becomes soul throughout the world.

The missionary failure in China and the fragility of the saint’s body, became a prototype that the Society would use during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as part of its identity, and that then began to be modified in the eighteenth century. This missionary identity was established with the publication of Philippe Alegambe *Mortes illustres, et gesta eorum de Societatis Iesu* (Rome, 1657) and *Heroes et victimae charitatis Societatis Iesu* (Rome, 1658), as well as with the publication of the *Illustrious Men of the Society of Jesus* written by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg. The context of this corpus was also conditioned by the treaties signed in Osnabrück and Münster, in 1648, reconfiguring European borders regarding the territorial, political, and religious dimensions, achieving the desired peace of Westphalia. This political movement caused a commotion within the Iberian religion and, consequently, within the Jesuit missionary expansion, as the Iberian monarchy lost political power and the papacy similarly dissipated part of its temporal power. The Society, in turn, had begun to celebrate its centenary in 1640, with the *Imago Primi Saeculi* centered in the province of Flanders (Salviucci, 2004), but with a global scope of salvific and apologetic self-image. Likewise, with the appearance between 1656 and 1657 of Blaise Pascal’s *Lettres Provinciales*, the Society was under attack precisely because of that salvific missionary self-construction. So great was Pascal’s

18 “*Si solo Xavier fue el Hércules animoso, cuyas huellas llegaron donde pudo grabar en inmortales columnas el n[on] plus ultra*” (APUG, Fondo Curia 2223: 1v).

success that the same Society, led by General Giovanni Paolo Oliva (1661–1681), internally persecuted the Jesuits portrayed by Pascal.

The eighteenth-century Society witnessed a shift in its identity as its history became more complex, incorporating new facets to the mission, such as scientific speculation, estates, and a return to empowering the educational force through the Colleges. In addition, the Hispanic missionary predominance is modified, giving way to the German formation. As for missionary spatiality, the reductions of Paraguay, the hostility in the Philippines and the Mariana Islands continued to feed the “desire” for religious conversion and missionary utopia of those who were still willing to travel to hostile and strange territories. Likewise, the discourse about the religious conversion of the East was also modified, since Rome in the eighteenth century entered into a dispute regarding techniques of conversion and *accommodatio* policies carried out by the missionaries in the East Indies that led to the secular controversy about the “Chinese rites” and the *Ex-quo* bull of 1742 that marked the end of the Jesuit adaptation experiences (Brucker, 1932; Mungello, 1994; Ginzburg, 2011: 131–144).

It is within this context of the Society’s transitioning identity that we locate the anonymous Quito Sermon of 1741, on Xavier’s travels, body, and soul. In addition, in 1710, in the book of Francisco de Souza (1642–1712), *Oriente conquistado a Jesú Christo pelos Padres da la Compañía da Provincia da Goa*, the image of Xavier was not that of martyr, but rather soldier who conquers the “Orient”: together with Christ *salvator mundi* he kills off gentiles with a lance. The Quito Sermon, therefore, is situated within this missionary journey of global change, where, undoubtedly, Xavier’s image would also suffer modifications.

4 Conclusion

From an American space that looked at missionary experiences in East Asia as a past utopia, what does it mean to write about a missionary revered throughout the Catholic world? And what does it mean to formulate new interpretations about this person after almost two centuries of textual, salvific, and iconographic constructions, from a space that, in the sermon itself, is not present? The Quito Sermon is important because starting from a discussion and biblical, theological, and philosophical commentaries, it removes Xavier from his essentialist articulation: a suffering and incorruptible body. The sermon builds a textual image where the missionary Xavier is not only a body, but where his acting in the world transcends his own corporality, presenting a suggestive idea of “soul.” In this sense, the image of the missionary crucified to the body which originated in the sixteenth century is repeated while simultaneously

trying to disembody the saint through the idea of “two states of the soul” (“*dos estados del alma*”) and the classification of the “upper and intellectual parts.” From this perspective, through a rereading of the history of Catholicism in the East Indies while subtly situating the “East” in the Americas – decentering a European perspective – the Quito Sermon of 1741 produces a complex image of universal missionary holiness (Romano, 2016).

Thus, the sermon (which can be assumed to have been written to be read publicly), through the inclusion of Western philosophical commentaries, has a universal resonance that places East Asia in America, a sensory experience that can be adapted to other realities (Xavier’s trips, corporality, and missions). The sermon keeps silence regarding local missionary practices (location is not mentioned in the text), but, above all, it seems to propose a reformulation of the definition of “missionary” from commentaries and Western philosophic glosses that look to the “Orient” and are enunciated in America.

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摘要

在罗马教皇大学档案馆的方多库里亚 2223 年发现了一篇匿名的基多讲道，该讲道涉及耶稣会传教士弗朗西斯·泽维尔（Francis Xavier, 1506–52 年）在罗马与‘东方’之间

的转折，从历史和隐喻上表明。这显明天主教传教士的普世使命与当地美国传教士的经历之间有联系，虽然文本省略了美国传教士的经历。本文认为，这篇讲道在美国东方引起普遍的共鸣（因为它为公开阅读而写成）；这是一种感官经历，可以适应于不同的现实（弗朗西斯·泽维尔的旅行、遗迹和任务），但也可留意到讲道特别遗漏了当地传教士的实践（即讲道在文本中未提及地方）。最重要的是，西方哲学评论和文本的“世界传教士”的重新制定，这些评论和文本是面向东方，而在美国被明确叙述的。

Resumen

El descubrimiento en el Fondo Curia 2223 de los archivos de la Universidad Pontificia Gregoriana de Roma de un sermón anónimo de Quito del año 1741 y que trata sobre el tránsito histórico y metafórico del misionero jesuita Francisco Javier (1506–52) entre Roma y el “Oriente”, sugiere vínculos entre la misión vocacional universalista de la misión católica, y las experiencias misioneras locales americanas que los textos no mencionan. Este artículo argumenta que el sermón tiene una resonancia universal que invoca al Oriente en América (porque está escrito para ser leído en público); es una experiencia sensorial que se puede adaptar a diferentes realidades (los viajes, las reliquias y las misiones de Francisco Javier), pero también se observa la omisión de las prácticas misioneras locales (es decir, el sermón se presenta como originado en un lugar no mencionado en el texto). Es ante todo, una reformulación del “misionero en el mundo” de los comentarios filosóficos occidentales y de textos que miran hacia el Este pero que son enunciados en América.