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bpjs.cham@fcsb.unl.pt

Universidade Nova de Lisboa  
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Loureiro, Vanessa

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## THE JESUITS IN CAMBODIA: A LOOK UPON CAMBODIAN RELIGIOUSNESS (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century)

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**Vanessa Loureiro**

*Centro de História de Além-Mar, New University of Lisbon*

See through Cambodia the great Mekong go,  
Captain of streams, his name interpreted.  
In summer time so many to him flow  
That, perilous, o'er wide fields his waters spread.  
He has much rising as chill Nile can show.  
His people think (unwisely, be it said)  
That all brute beasts of every sort and strain  
After death live in glory or pain.

Luís de Camões, *The Lusiads*, C. X., V. 127<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, only the ruins of the mythical city of Angkor remained<sup>2</sup> from the splendour and power of the former Kingdom of Khmer in Cambodia. When, in 1511, Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Malacca the Cambodian political situation was so unstable that the governor apparently was not concerned with this territorial entity, even though he had sent messengers to various rulers of the region, namely Siam.<sup>3</sup>

1 Cf. Leonard Bacon, *The Lusiads of Luis de Camões*, New York, Hispanic Society of America, 1966, C. X., V. 127, p. 380. "Vês, passa por Camboja Mecom rio, / Que capitão das águas se interpreta; / Tantas recebe d'outro só no Estio / Que alaga os campos largos e inquieta / Tem as enchentes quais o Nilo frio; / A gente dele crê, como indiscreta, / Que pena e glória têm, depois de morte, / Os brutos animais de toda a sorte."

2 For the history of Cambodia, we used as reference: C. Coedès, "Les États hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie" in *Histoire du Monde*, coord. E. Cavaignac, Tome VII, Paris, Boccard, 1948, p. 303-394; Louis Frédéric, *La vie quotidienne dans la Péninsule Indochinoise à l'époque d'Angkor (800-1300)*, Paris, s.n., 1981; Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire de Angkor*, Paris, Kailash, 1997; N. Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 1 (*From Early Times to c. 1500*), Cambridge, University Press, 1999; and Paul Pelliot, "Mémoires de Tchou Ta-kuan" in *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (BEFEO)*, Tome XXXVI, Paris, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1902.

3 Cf. Maria da Conceição Flores, *Os Portugueses no Sião no século XVI*, Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses/Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1995, pp. 23-28.

Although Portugal's official interest in this small-sized kingdom, compressed between Cochinchina and Siam, and in constant conflicts with its neighbouring states was insignificant, as of the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century private merchants and Portuguese adventurers attracted by products which were not of great value but were rather sought after within the Asian circuits, began to disembark at Cambodian ports.

In fact, the Portuguese merchants would go from Malacca to these points in South East Asia in search of provisions namely, rice, vegetables, meat, fish, wine and butter, but also wood,<sup>4</sup> lead, "(...) benzoin & other drugs (...)", such as natural lacquer and dyeing products.<sup>5</sup> However, what certainly fascinated the Portuguese was the opportunity of trading with the people of Laos and other northern territories which channel gold to Cambodia.<sup>6</sup>

Even though they appeared to have a secondary role in the Asian commercial sphere in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Cambodian ports did indeed thrive with activity, serving as dock to vessels coming from Johor, Cochinchina,

4 Mainly aloeswood, resinous and aromatic wood, much appreciated in Europe.

5 "(...) beijoim & outras drogas (...)." This type of trading was not very appealing to the Portuguese Royal Treasury as it did not generate large income. On the other hand, the great concern of the government of Portuguese India – the question of supplying Portuguese vessels and the maintenance of Malacca which was not self-sufficient in terms of provisions – was resolved through the establishment of official relations, in the first instance, with the Kingdom of Siam and after 1512, with Pegu. The Portuguese authorities had thus no motive to get involved in Cambodian internal conflicts. This topic was largely developed by J. Népoté, "The Portuguese, Cambodia and the Mekong Valley: The Logic of a Discovery" in *The Portuguese and the Pacific* (International Colloquium at Santa Barbara), coord. F. A. Dutra and J. C. Santos, Santa Barbara, Centre for Portuguese Studies/University of California, 1995, pp. 113-128.

The products that the Portuguese would get from Cambodia are mentioned in Tomé Pires, Francisco Rodrigues and Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires e o livro de Francisco Rodrigues*, Coimbra, Universidade de Coimbra, 1978, p. 247; Father António Francisco Cardim and Father Luciano Cordeiro, *Batalhas da Companhia de Jesus na sua gloriosa Província do Japão*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1894, p. 251; Father Nicolau Pimenta, *Cartas que o Padre Nicolau Pimenta da Companhia de Iesu Visitador nas partes do Oriente da mesma companhia, escreveu ao Geral della a 16 de Novembro d 1599 & ao i de Dezembro de 600*, Lisbon, Pedro Crasbeeck, 1602, fl. 38; and *Breues noticias do estado do reino de Camboja em 1704*, B.N. (Biblioteca Nacional), Cod. 8529, fl. 90.

6 In *Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires* [...] there is reference to the abundance of gold in Cambodia (Tomé Pires *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 247). With regards to this, Father Nicolau Pimenta writes to the General of the Company of Jesus: "To some Portuguese elders it seems that the gold that goes to Peking comes from Laos (...) because when the people from Laos came to Cambodia (...) they brought so much gold that the Cambodians became rich; and the people from Laos say that they confine with the Chinese and Tartars (...) a population that only trades with the Cambodians (...)" [alguns Portugueses antigos parece que o ouro que vay a Paquim he das terras dos Laos (...) porque quando os Laos vierão a Camboja (...) Jera tanto o ouro que os Laos trazião por moeda, que ficarão bem ricos os Cambojas; & os Laos dizem que confinão com os Chinas & Tartaros (...) gente que não tem comercio mais que com os Cambojas (...)] (Father Nicolau Pimenta, *op. cit.*, fl. 39).

Japan, China and Portugal.<sup>7</sup> A few decades later, the English and Dutch would also compete for the riches of this kingdom.

The general indifference to which Cambodia was subjected to by the Portuguese authorities, who did not wish to interfere in both their internal and external problems, delayed the first attempts to evangelise the kingdom. In fact, even though the first Portuguese priest had disembarked in Cambodia in 1555, only in the decade of the 80's, did the prelate of the Dominican Order in Malacca decide to send one of their representatives to this territory, a decision which seems to have been taken on receiving a formal request from the local king.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of missionaries in Cambodia should nevertheless be analysed in two, if not in three distinct phases. On one hand, the missions carried out by the Dominican Order, in Malacca, throughout the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; on the other, the missions undertaken during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the College of the Company of Jesus of Macao. Among Dominicans and Jesuits, sources still reveal a Franciscan presence in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Around 1725, the arrival of religious people from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide began to threaten religious hegemony of the Company of Jesus, which permanently abandoned the Cambodian mission in the decade of the 30's.

As true cultural mediators, the missionaries illustrated in their chronicles, official correspondence of the orders and in their own more private correspondence a panoply of topics and problems related to the consequences of the merger of cultures. In order to spread the Christian religion the cultural realities of the regions in which they were installed had to be somewhat familiar to them. In the recreation of the way of life of these missionaries, there are references to habits, customs, beliefs and religious practices of different peoples.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, more than simply analysing the

7 Diogo do Couto conveys an idea of the importance of the Cambodian ports within the commercial circuits of the Indochinese Peninsula when he reports that in 1551, on the occasion of the Malacca siege by a coalition of the Muslim princes, an emissary to Patan with the aim of warning the vessels that arrived from Siam, from Cambodia and from other places in South-west Asia, in the direction of the fortress, not to go into the hands of the enemy (Diogo do Couto, *Década VI*, Lv. 9, Cap. 8, Lisboa, Régia Oficina Tipográfica, 1782). This idea is strongly defended by Father António Francisco Cardim (*op. cit.*, p. 251).

8 According to a letter by Luís Fróis dated 15th December 1555 and published in Artur Basílio de Sá, *Documentação para a História dos Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente: Insulíndia*, Vol. II (1550-1562), Lisbon, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1955, p. 178.

9 Pertaining to the role of the missions in Asia, vide João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, "The Padroado and the Catholic Mission in Asia during the 17th Century" in *Rivalry and Conflict. European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, dir. E. van Veen and L. Blussé, Leiden, CNWS Publications, 2005.

study of the organisation of the missionary congregations and the quantification of the religious contingency, this paper looks to understand the impact of missionary activity within the Cambodian society: how it reacted to the arrival of a religion that easily gathered followers and how it continued almost impenetrable in its beliefs.

## 1. Portuguese religious presence in Cambodia

### 1.1. The Dominican and Franciscan missions: the first attempts of Evangelisation <sup>10</sup>

Friar Gaspar da Cruz was the first Portuguese clergyman to set foot in the Kingdom of Cambodia and to settle here <sup>11</sup> – according to Luís Fróis, “(...) as the king himself requested news from the creator of heaven and land, and of this evangelisation in which the Christians live”.<sup>12</sup> Friar Gaspar da Cruz admits that, even though he had been told in Malacca that Cambodia would be a favourable region “to preach the word of God and to spread Christianity”,<sup>13</sup> the promises of the king were no more than bait used to attract the Portuguese and their vessels. He quickly convinced himself that the conversion of the Cambodian souls into Christians would not be possible and, after having stayed in Cambodia for a year, saw that “he wasn’t able to spread the word of God and he was seriously ill”, he quickly left the region without doing “much and not baptizing more than an heathen that [he left] in the grave”.<sup>14</sup> However, his stay was of great importance due to the description which was left of the religion and the beliefs of the sixteenth century Cambodia.

Portuguese clergyman would only set foot again in this region nearly two decades later. In fact, in 1570 when Apram Langara rose to the throne,

10 On this subject vide François Ponchaud, *La Cathédrale de la rizière. 450 ans d’histoire de l’Église au Cambodge*, Paris, Sarmant, 1990.

11 Friar Gaspar da Cruz, born in Évora, was son of the Convento de Azeitão and integrated the first group of clergymen of the Dominican Order to go to Eastern India, in the year 1548. This missionary is exhaustively mentioned in Friar João dos Santos, *Eastern Ethiopia and Various Stories of Remarkable Things of the*, Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1999, p. 483.

12 “(...) por mandar o proprio rei da terra pedir que lhe desse noticia do criador do ceo e da terra, e desta lei evangélica em que vivem os Christaos” in Artur Basílio de Sá, *ibidem*.

13 “pera se pregar ho evangelho, e pera se frazer fructo”. Cf. Friar Gaspar da Cruz, *Tractado em que se contam muito por estenso as cousas da China com suas particularidades e assi do Reyno Dormuz dirigido ao muito poderoso Rey Dom Sebastiam Nosso Señor*, Lisbon, Typographia Rollandiana, 1829, p. 2.

14 “nam podia fazer fruto alem de padecer graves doenças”; “nhũ proveito e nom [baptizar] mais que hũ gentio, que [deixou] na cova” in Friar Gaspar da Cruz, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-19.

he inherited a depopulated, wiped out kingdom due to the internal conflicts that was unable to face the Siamese<sup>15</sup> threat. Aware that holding onto the kingdom would only be possible with the aid of the Portuguese, the ruler requested that clergymen and the military be sent and promised the missionaries the conditions to spread the word of God<sup>16</sup>. Even though the number of Portuguese religious men in the Far East was limited, the prelate of the Dominican Order insisted in opening a mission in Cambodia.

Thus, in 1582-1583, the priests Friar Lopo Cardoso and Friar João Madeira arrived in Lovek. Contrary to what had occurred in 1555, the Dominicans were well received by the King, who gave them a piece of land on which they could build a house to live in and celebrate mass and gave them authorization to preach throughout the kingdom and convert any individual to Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

However, the death of Apram Langara and the rising to the throne of Barom Reachea II resulted in the inversion of the religious policy. The new King, with deeply rooted Buddhist beliefs, did not hesitate in “revoking their permission of preaching to the natives of the Kingdom”.<sup>18</sup> Facing a variety of obstacles, Friar Lopo Cardoso tried to abandon the mission but was not authorised to do so by the prelate of the Order.<sup>19</sup> In 1584, the Vicar of the Congregation in Malacca sends Friar Silvestre de Azevedo to Cambodia to replace Friar João Madeira and later, Friar Reginaldo de Santa Maria and Friar Gaspar do Salvador<sup>20</sup> to substitute Friar Lopo Cardoso – however, frightened by situation in which the Kingdom was they ended up fleeing.<sup>21</sup>

15 For the study of existing political tensions between Cambodia and Siam during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, we used as reference Maria da Conceição Flores, *op. cit.*; Maria da Conceição Flores, “Portuguese Relations with Siam in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” in *The Portuguese and the Pacific*, pp. 64-76; and N. Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 2 (*From c. 1500 to c. 1800*), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

16 Cf. Friar Luis Cácegas, *Primeira Parte da História de S. Domingos particular do reino e conquistas de Portugal*, Lisbon, Typg. do Panorama, 1866, p. 413.

17 Cf. António da Silva Rego, *Documentação para a história das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente*, Vol. VII, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 1994, p. 415; Friar João dos Santos, *op. cit.*, p. 483; and Friar Luís Cacegas, *op. cit.*, p. 414. In these documents, there are references to the first Christian church whose costs were assumed by the King and the Portuguese living in the capital of Cambodia.

18 “tirar-lhes a licença de pregarem aos naturais do Reino” in Friar Luís Cacegas, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

19 In *Ibidem*.

20 Cf. *Ibidem* and Friar Luís Cacegas, *Terceira Parte da História de S. Domingos particular do reino e conquistas de Portugal*, Lisbon, Typg. do Panorama, 1866, pp. 389-391.

21 The tensions felt by the priests of the Dominican Order in Cambodia must have been so problematic that Father Alexandre Valignano himself, member of the Company of Jesus, sent them support in the form of liturgical material and food: “a silver Communion Cup and priestly garments and a Roman mass book; and so that nothing was missing he added corn-flour and

Alone in Cambodia, Friar Silvestre de Azevedo continued with his mission and slowly began to win the amity and protection of the monarch. He became advisor and dignitary of the kingdom, with the title of “Pa” (Father), which gave him the privilege of sitting in the presence of the king and of using a hat, symbols of royal dignity. Barom Reachea II allows him to once again preach the Gospel and build churches,<sup>22</sup> and he even placed a learned man of the court at his service to assist him in the drawing up of the doctrine *Mistérios da Fé Cristã*<sup>23</sup> in Khmer.

In 1585, more missionaries arrived in Cambodia: Friar Antonio Dorta and Friar António Caldeira, and then another two Franciscan friars.<sup>24</sup> These five men, with the consent of the king and the opposition of the bonzes, baptised approximately 300 children.<sup>25</sup> However, all this empathy shown by Barom Reachea II in relation to Christianity was beyond any doubt because of the need for Portuguese military aid and his good will did not last for long.

Aware that, through the missionaries, Cambodia had established strong political relations with Malacca, the ruler of Johor, concerned with a possible invasion of his territory, sent Barom Reachea II a missive showing disapproval of the friendship with the “common enemies of all the Kingdom of India”.<sup>26</sup> Intimidated, the Cambodian ruler ordered the immediate suspension of the drawing up of the *Mistérios da Fé Cristã*, he forbade the entrance of the Dominican priests in the court of Lovek and their respective circulation in the kingdom and proclaimed that no native was to assist the missionaries and those who did would suffer severe punishments. The attempt to continue preaching the Gospel to the people resulted in the expulsion of Friar Antonio Dorta, Friar Antonio Caldeira and the Franciscan friars, leaving Friar Silvestre de Azevedo once again isolated.

Barom Reachea II, however, quickly understood that these actions had direct repercussions in the political relationship between Cambodia and Malacca and once again began to cover the priests with favours, so Friar

wine from Portugal.” [“hum Caliz de prata com vestimenta aparelhada, e frontal, e Missal Romano; e, porque não faltasse nada, ajuntou farinha de trigo, e vinho de Portugal”] (cf. Friar Luís Cácegas, *Primeira parte da História de S. Domingos [...]*, p. 416).

22 Cf. António da Silva Rego, *op. cit.*, pp. 415-416 and Friar Luís Cácegas, *Terceira Parte da História de S. Domingos [...]*, p. 391.

23 Cf. Luís Cácegas, *op. cit.*, p. 399. No copy of this work is known to exist.

24 Cf. Friar João dos Santos, *op. cit.*, p. 483 and Friar Luís Cácegas, *Primeira Parte da História de S. Domingos [...]*, pp. 397-398.

25 Cf. Friar João dos Santos, *op. cit.*, p. 483.

26 “inimigos communs de todos os Reinos da Índia” in Friar Luís Cácegas, *op. cit.*, pp. 400-401.



Jorge da Mota and Friar Luís da Fonseca,<sup>27</sup> newcomers, managed to baptise many natives and even foreigners.<sup>28</sup>

During the same period, two personalities who would take on an important role within the scope of the Siamese invasions, joined the missionaries: Diogo Veloso and Blas Ruiz de Herman Gonzales.<sup>29</sup> The first, in particular, became the King's favourite and even married into the royal family and was designated by the King as "Adopted Son".<sup>30</sup>

In 1592/1593, fearing the possibility of an invasion by Siam, Barom Reachea II asked for help from Malacca through Friar Silvestre de Azevedo and Diogo Veloso. Never having received a reply, he turns to Manila, and in July 1593 he sends Diogo Veloso with a letter in which he asks for military aid and promises in return, commercial advantages and an area for Evangelisation.<sup>31</sup> This missive left before the entrance of the Siamese troops in the territory and for various reasons, help took long in arriving.

Preah Nareth invaded Cambodia in April 1594 and occupied Lovek holding captive in Siam Friar Silvestre de Azevedo, Friar Jorge da Mota and Friar

27 Cf. Friar João dos Santos, *op. cit.* and Friar Luís Cacegas, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

28 Firstly I grant the Clergymen (...) absolute powers, so that from this day onwards they can baptise all those from Cambodia, Iaóá, Champa & and from any other Nation, (...) who are in my Kingdoms (...). I also grant said Fathers complete control over all those who are already Christians and over those who are yet to become even though they are my slaves or people from my Royal House (...). Furthermore I insist that any slave wanting to become a Christian shall not be held back by his master (...). ["Primeiramente concedo aos Religiosos (...) poder pleno, para que de hoje em diante possam bautizar a toda a pessoa Camboia, Iaóá, Champa & outras de qualquer Nação, (...) que estejam nestes meus Reynos (...). Item concedo aos ditos Padres inteira jurisdição sobre os Christãos, assim aos que já o sam, como os que aos diante forem, ainda que sejam meus escravos, ou gente de minha Casa Real (...). Item mando que todo o escravo que se quizer fazer Christão, lhe não possa seu senhor impedir (...)."], (Friar Jacinto de Deos, *Vergel de plantas, e flores da Província da Madre de Deos dos Capuchos Reformados*, Lisbon, Officina de Miguel Deslandes, 1690, p. 300).

29 Cf. A. Cabaton, *Brève et véridique relation des événements du Cambodge par Gabriel Quiroga de San Antonio*, Paris, Leroux, 1914, pp. v-xii.

30 "Filho Adoptivo". The life of Diogo Veloso is described by Joaquim de Campos, in "Diogo Veloso (Príncipe de Camboja)" in *Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama*, Bastorá, 1940, pp. 6-35 and mentioned by Francis Garnier, in "Chronique royale du Cambodge", *Journal Asiatique*, Paris, Société Asiatique/CNRS, 1872.

According to the Official Chronicle of the Succession of Kings (translated by J. Moura, *Le Royaume du Cambodge*, Paris, Librairie de la Société Asiatique de l'École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, 1883), Diogo Veloso arrived in Cambodia accompanied by Blas Ruyz de Hernan Gonzales, in around 1582. Distinguished in the war against Siam he was rewarded with the nomination of commander of the royal army. Thanks to Diogo Veloso, the province of Prachin was annexed in 1587. In 1593, he led the request for aid against Siam, sent by the Cambodian ruler to Manila. His active role in the restitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the legitimate monarchy, afforded him the title of *chou-fa*, "Adoptive Son", the hand of a lady of the royal family, as well as the province of Ba-Phnom situated east of Mekong.

31 Cf. *A Provisão de el-rei de Camboya*, ANTT (Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo), *Livraria*, Ms. 1104, fl. 79.



Luís da Fonseca, as well as three Franciscan friars: Friar Gregório da Cruz,<sup>32</sup> Friar António da Madalena and Friar Damião da Torre.<sup>33</sup> After the release of the captives, only Friar Silvestre de Azevedo returned to Cambodia.<sup>34</sup>

The last Dominicans to enter this kingdom were the priests Alonso Ximenes and Diego Aduarte, who arrived shortly after the death of this missionary. However, they left almost immediately because they considered their mission null.<sup>35</sup> The activity of the Dominicans in Cambodia finished around this time due to the fact that the prelate of the Dominican Order considered that the constant state of war in the kingdom prevented the success of Evangelisation.<sup>36</sup> Later, with the fall of Malacca, the Congregation of India would find itself to be far from and without communication with Cambodia, so the mission would never be accomplished again.

Pertaining to Franciscans disembarking in Cambodia, the oldest news dates back to 1602.<sup>37</sup> The documented fact is the contact, whilst still a child, of Barom Reachea IV<sup>38</sup> with these priests.<sup>39</sup> Said information describes the entrance of the Franciscans in Cambodia after their arrival in Malacca, in the middle of the decade of the 80's<sup>40</sup> – an assumption which coincides

32 In E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 9, Cleveland, 1903-1908, p. 197, we find the copy of a letter from this missionary, who wrote to the governor of the Philippines from Siam, on 8th October 1594.

33 Cf. Father António Francisco Cardim, *Batalhas da Companhia de Jesus [...]*, pp. 251-252; Friar João dos Santos, *op. cit.*, pp. 485-486; Friar Luís Cacegas, *Primeira Parte da História de S. Domingos [...]*, pp. 411-412; Friar Paulo da Trindade, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, Lisbon, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962/1967, pp. 472-477; Conceição Flores, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

34 Cf. Friar João dos Santos, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

35 A document kept in the National Library of Lisbon and compiled by António da Silva Rego defends that Alonso Ximenes, accompanied by Friar João Maldonado and not by Friar Diego Aduarte, never arrived in Cambodia as he was assassinated in Siam (cf. António da Silva Rego, *op. cit.*, p. 462).

36 *Ibidem*, p. 418.

37 In Fernando Soledade, *História seráfica cronológica da Ordem de São Francisco*, Vol. III, Lisbon, Officina de Domingos Gonsalves, 1736, p. 588.

38 The letters written by “*Prauncar Rey Soberano de Camboja à Ordem, & Casa de São Francisco de Malaca*”, dated 1610/1612, are owed to Barom Reachea IV, Soryopor, who ruled until approximately 1619 (Bernard Groslier, *Angkor et le Cambodge au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle d’après les sources portugaises et espagnoles*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1958, p. 26).

39 This fact is proven in a letter written by the ruler himself: “[in] my youth I became fond & attracted to the customs of Religion, & thus urged by my requests they came from Malacca to these Kingdoms to preach the word of God to the Christians living here” “[na] minha infância tomei amor, & afeição aos costume de sua Religião, & por isto movidos de meus rogos vieram de Malaca a estes meus Reynos a doutrinar os Christãos, que nelles existem, & para pregar, & ensinar Sua Ley santa”] (Friar Jacinto de Deos, *op. cit.*, p. 301).

40 Lourenço Pérez defends that in 1582, the Bishop of Macao asked Father Alexandre Valignano to send missionaries to Cochinchina and Cambodia. As he was unable to satisfy the conditions of

with data from Friar Luís Cacegas who states that, in August of 1585, the Dominicans Friar António Dorta and Friar António Caldeira left for Malacca with two Franciscan priests.<sup>41</sup> In a letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1599 in which he wrote about his first work in the mission,<sup>42</sup> on the other hand, Friar António da Piedade mentions their arrival in Cambodia in 1598.

The Franciscan presence amidst the Cambodian society must have become rather important after the Siamese invasions, in the 90's, because the Dominican Order no longer maintained an active mission after the death of Friar Silvestre de Azevedo. The letters from Barom Reachea IV sent to Convent of Saint Francis in Malacca between 1610 and 1612,<sup>43</sup> afforded a glimpse of the rise of the Franciscan Order in the territory. In the letters, the ruler requests that priests be sent allowing them to build churches and to evangelize the natives and would even allow one of his children to be educated according to Christian faith.<sup>44</sup> Keeping in mind the growth of commercial relations with Malacca he would also hand over territory on which the Portuguese could erect a fortress.<sup>45</sup>

## **1.2. The Company of Jesus: 150 years of mission**

Pledging obedience to the Pope and responsible to him, the Company of Jesus was, in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a centralized institution set on a complex bureaucratic mechanism. Letters, official notices, short and simple news would circulate on a daily basis between the clergy, missions, the regional head-offices and Rome. It is therefore not strange that contrary to what is recorded on the Dominican Order and the Order of Saint Francis, the Jesuit presence in Cambodia is largely documented.

The first requests for a Jesuit mission in Cambodia occurred in 1599 by Father Manuel Carvalho, fascinated by the news brought by a delegation from Malacca in search of religious and military aid: "(...) [the King of Cambodia] sent, in the year 98, representatives to this city with letters for the captain (...) so as to help in (...) the issues of Cambodia (...) & requests that priests be sent as there is much place for their presence, & Diego Veloso

the request, the Bishop turned to the Franciscans (Lourenço Pérez, "Origen de las Misiones Franciscanas en el Extremo Oriente" in *AIA (Archivo Ibero-Americano)*, Vol. 3, s.l., s.n., 1915, p. 21).

41 Friar Luis Cácegas, *Primeira Parte da História de S. Domingos [...]*, p. 402.

42 Cousas que ha no Reino de Camboya [1599], ANTT, *Livraria*, Ms. 1109, fl. 3-8.

43 Dates supplied by Friar Jacinto de Deos – no chronological reference appeared in the letters.

44 As per Friar Jacinto de Deos, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302.

45 Cf. Friar Jacinto de Deos, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

who has his own island or Peninsula by the sea, given to him by the King as a reward for his services (where there is already a fort with artillery), would offer this island and fort to the state of India and devotedly requested that Portuguese of the Company be sent".<sup>46</sup>

However, the Company of Jesus had more enriched areas for evangelisation and only after the banishment of the Jesuits from Japan did they begin to turn to South-east Asia.<sup>47</sup> In the same manner, Cambodia only attracted the attention of the missionaries of the Company of Jesus after merchants from Macao settled in the kingdom seeking alternative port areas due to the constant Dutch ambushes on the traditional routes which linked Macao to India and to Japan. Therefore, after sending missionaries to Cochinchina, the College of Macao in 1616, sent Father Pero Marques, accompanied by a Japanese brother, to explore the possibilities of opening a mission in Cambodia.<sup>48</sup>

46 "(...) mandou [o rei do Camboja] o ano de 98 embaixadores a esta cidade com cartas para o capitão (...) para que ajudassem (...) as cousas de Camboya (...) & pedia com muita instencia lhe mandassem padres porque para todos avia lugar em seus reinos, & Diego Veloso que tem hũa ilha ou Peninsula junto ao mar que el Rey lhe doou em recompensa de seus serviços (honde tem já hum forte com arthelharia) offerencia por suas cartas esta ilha & forte ao estado da Índia & pediu em termos affectuosos o envio de portugueses da Companhia de que esperava grandes coisas". This letter was sent by Father Manuel de Carvalho, on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1599, to Father Nicolau Pimenta, member of the Company of Jesus, who forwarded in to the General in Rome (Father Nicolau Pimenta, *Cartas que o Padre Nicolau Pimenta da Companhia [...]*, p. 39).

47 Cf. the annual letter from the College of Macao dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1615: "[...] as the master of Tenca started pursuing the word of God, he banned all the fathers preaching in his lands and those who had arrived during the months of October and November in 3 ships, sixty-five of which belonged to the Company and of these twenty are Japanese. And the College which to date had only young and modern priests started accepting older priests and therefore one can express the words of Deos Moab during the destruction of Jerusalem habitabunt apud te profugi mei, esta latibulum eorum a facie vastatoris" ["[...] como o senhor da Tenca deu em perseguir a lei de Deos, deitou de suas terras todos os ministros que o lá pregavão e conservavão, por onde este Outubro e Novembro passado vierão em 3 embarcações seçenta e cinco da Companhia de que vinte são irmãos japões e assi o Collegio que ate aqui era somente seminario de irmãos moços e modernos esta agora tambem a colheita de Padres antigos e velhos que Ihe podemos por isso dizer o que dizia Deos Moab na destruição de Jerusalem habitabunt apud te profugi mei, esta latibulum eorum a facie vastatoris."] (João Paulo Oliveira e Costa and Ana Pinto, *Cartas Anuas do Colégio de Macau (1594-1627)*, Lisbon, Comissão Territorial de Macau para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses/Fundação Macau, 1999, p. 142).

48 Cf. the annual letter from the College of Macao dated 8<sup>th</sup> January 1617: "[...] The year before a letter had been written to V. PG. the Father who started the mission in Cochinchina (...). And because in these kingdoms on the coast to Malacca there are some kings that wish to have our men in their lands, in the same year the Father Visitor has sent a Father to explore the kingdom of Cambodia and to inquire on the state of mind of the king; there is a good opportunity for this to take place, since this city has sent there an embassy with the aim of having trade with the aforementioned kingdom." ["[...] Ja o anno passado se escreveo a V. PG. como o Padre provincial dera principio a missão de Cochinchina (...). E porque nestes reinos que ha por esta costa, hindo para Malaca, ha alguns reys, que desejão ter os nossos em suas terras, mandou tambem este anno o Padre visitador a hum Padre que fosse explorar o reino de Camboja para ver que disposição

Even though the Jesuits deposited great hope in the will of the Cambodian in receiving the word of God,<sup>49</sup> when Father Pero Marques disembarked here he found that the English and Dutch had already settled in. As the latter had caused a good impression on the Cambodian ruler,<sup>50</sup> and were more interested in commercial matters than religious affairs, these interceded before the king so as to not accept the Portuguese missionaries.<sup>51</sup> And the king would have satisfied their request... However, Father Pero Marques, who was aware of the dangers that the English and Dutch represented for the Portuguese commercial routes, did not hesitate to instigate a rebellion by the small Portuguese merchant community.

Following the ambush of a Dutch vessel by Captain António de Pina and his crew, conflicts arose in the high seas resulting in the victory by the Portuguese. On land, the priests and merchants who had stayed behind were imprisoned. These men only escaped death thanks to the arrival of Portuguese vessels from Macao and Malacca and because the king feared possible retaliation.

In spite of this incident, in 1617 a mission was opened to the Kingdom of Cambodia.<sup>52</sup> From the very first instance, the great concerns of the Jesuits

achava no rey, e nos de suas terras; offereceo para isto boa occasião, porque esta cidade mandou lá hua como embaixada por ter trato e comercio com o mesmo reino.” (*Ibidem*, p. 164).

49 Cf. the annual letter from the College of Macao dated 8<sup>th</sup> January 1617: “If this mission is to be open then we hope it will be fruitful as there are many eager for [sic] salvation and much is asked about it to the Portuguese who go there.” [“Espera-se muito fruto desta missão, se Nosso senhor a abrir, por ter fama dos que de lá vem, que he a gente daquella terra bem inclinada, e desejosa [sic] da salvação, e perguntão muitas cousas acerca della aos portugueses, que lá vão.”] (*Ibidem*, p. 165).

50 Although Barom Reachea IV, Soryopor, only died in 1619 (Bernard Groslier, *Angkor et le Cambodge au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle [...]*, p. 26) it is possible that his son, Chestha, was already associated to the throne. In fact, it would be strange that Barom Reachea IV (who only became king thanks to the Portuguese who, after the Siamese invasions of 1593/1594, made efforts to restore the throne to its legitimate heir), would take the side of the English and Dutch over the Portuguese.

51 Cf. the annual letter from the College of Macao dated 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1618: “And as the land is rich in food and wood and near Macao, to where they could easily be taken, said the Father to the Portuguese who were there with two small boats from Macao, that it would be rather difficult to prevent the Dutch and English plans, who would do much harm to the boats going to and coming from India to Macao.” [“E porque a terra he mui abundante de mantimentos e madeira, e esta perto de Macao pera onde estes imigos os podião facilmente levar, disse o Padre aos portuguezes que alli estavam com duas embarcações pequenas de Macao, que seria cousa de muito servico de Deus buscar algum bom meyo pera impedir as traças dos olandezes e engrezes, os quaes se sahiam com seu intento fariam muito mal as embarcações que vem e vão da India pera Macao.”] (João Paulo Oliveira e Costa and Ana Pinto, *Cartas Anuas do Colégio de Macau (1594-1627)*, p. 174).

52 We cannot ignore the dynamics of the Portuguese presence in Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: for the Cambodian monarchy, the Portuguese were, undoubtedly, the most convenient allies. On the other hand, the Portuguese believed that by settling a mission in Cambodia they would have some control over the English and Dutch in South-east Asia. For the presence of the Portu-

fell upon the Christians who were already here, many of which were only Christian by name.<sup>53</sup> In a letter dated March 1616, sent to the Head of the Cochinchina Mission, the small Christian community based in Cambodia (which had approximately 70 souls) was in need of a priest and so requested that one be sent.<sup>54</sup> As they did not have a priest to preach the word of God, the community itself dealt with erecting a sort of church with a crucifix and the image of Our Lady and it buried the dead according to Christian practices.<sup>55</sup> In the meantime, as there was no one prepared to say the mass, it is natural that these rituals resembled those practised by the natives of the kingdom.

The number of Christians in Cambodia increased drastically in the 20's of the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the Japanese who has been banished due to their Faith. When in 1623 or 1624, Father Pedro Morejon disembarked in Cambodia, he found a community that was in desperate need of spiritual help, and some dozens of souls from the era of "junks".<sup>56</sup> In view of the appeals made to Macao, Father Justo Kazariya<sup>57</sup> born in Japan, was sent on a mission but would not survive the sickly Cambodian climate for long. Nevertheless, it is still interesting to highlight that only the size of the actual Japanese community would justify sending of a missionary from this archipelago.<sup>58</sup>

With the death of Father Justo, the mission was abandoned until 1630, year in which Father Francisco Buzomi made his way to Cambodia in search

guese in Asia, *vide* S. Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700. A political and economic history*, London/New York, Longman, 1993.

53 Cf. the annual letter from the College of Macao dated 8<sup>th</sup> January 1618 (*Ibidem*, pp. 177-178).

54 The letter received by the Head of the mission in Cochinchina was sent to the member of the Company no Oriente, Father Francisco Vieira, and was only added to the annual letter sent to Rome in 1619 (*Ibidem*, pp. 194-196).

55 Cf. the annual letter from the College of Macao dated 21<sup>st</sup> January 1619 (*Ibidem*, p. 196).

56 Cf. *Livro do principio dos superiores, e benfeitores deste collegio da Madre de Deos de Macau* [s.d.], Biblioteca da Ajuda, J.A. (Jesuítas na Ásia ), 49-IV-66, fl. 77v. Unfortunately, the number of Christians was not accounted for in the territory.

57 *Ibidem*.

58 Moreover, after analysing the catalogues of the priests and brothers of the Province of Japan, it is verified that practically all the priests sent, in the following decades, to Cambodia, were Japanese or fluent in the Japanese language (*Vide Primeiro Catalogo das Informaçoes commuas dos Padres e Irmãos da Prouincia de Japão feito em Setembro de 1620*, in *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu, Provincia Japoniae et Viceprovincia Sinensis (Jap./Sin.)*, T. 25, fl. 112-119).

For the study of Christianity in Japan and the consequences of the banishment of the Jesuits, *Vide* C. R. Boxer, *The Christian century in Japan*, Manchester, Carcanet Press, 1993; João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *A descoberta da civilização japonesa pelos Portugueses*, Lisbon, Instituto Cultural de Macau/Instituto de História de Além-Mar, 1995; and João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, "Os Jesuítas no Japão (1549-1598). Uma análise estatística" in *O Japão e o Cristianismo no Século XVI. Ensaio de História Luso-Nipónica*, Lisbon, Sociedade Histórica de Independência de Portugal, 1999, pp. 17-47.

of aid for some companions which were being held captive in Champa.<sup>59</sup> Seeing the state in which the Cambodian Christian community was in, he settled in the region.<sup>60</sup> Two years later, Father Romão Nishi entered the kingdom fleeing from the internal conflicts in Siam, accompanied by some Japanese.<sup>61</sup> As Japanese was his mother language, he ended up staying here and giving support to the Japanese Christian community<sup>62</sup> and endeavoured to evangelise the natives. However, the conversion of the Cambodians were quite rare.<sup>63</sup>

In November 1637, Father Lopo de Andrade disembarked in the kingdom with presents and letters for the King. In them, the priest of the Company of Jesus requested authorisation for the Jesuits to preach the Gospel throughout the kingdom. Even though he was received with pomp and respect, Father Lopo de Andrade quickly realised that the king was not very keen on supporting the diffusion of Christianity. In fact, the King was visibly favouring the Dutch rather than the Portuguese. Hence, the priest did not hesitate in stating, in the letter sent to his superior, that the presence of the Company of Jesus in the kingdom of Cambodia was not justified as there were so few Christians, all of which were Japanese, and the rare converted natives had long abandoned Catholic practises.<sup>64</sup> In spite of this information, the mission remained open: on the one hand because it was necessary to help the Japanese who had been banished;<sup>65</sup> and on the other hand, because there was a chance that, through Cambodian ports, Jesuits could embark to Japan.<sup>66</sup>

59 *O Livro do principio dos superiores [...], op. cit.*

60 Father Francisco Buzomi led the mission until 1634, year in which he was sent by the Company to Cochinchina (*Nouas das Christandades pertencentes a Prouincia de Japão em Outubro de 637, Jap./Sin.*, T. 161 II, fl. 181v).

61 *Ibidem.*

62 In 1640, Father Romão Nishi received Fathers Alberto Micenjki and António Capechi as pupils. They would become fluent in the Japanese language in order to be able to pass on “secretly and help these Kingdoms and Christians who were much pursued.” [“secretamente a acudir aquelles Reynos e Christandades tão preceguidas”] (*O Livro do principio dos superiores [...], op. cit.*, fl. 78).

63 The evangelisation and conversion of the natives of Cambodia was so difficult that in the *Certidão dos officiaes da Cidade de Macao (J.A., 49-V-13, fl. 161v-162)*, issued in 1635, it was not even accounted for – on the contrary, the baptism of 800 souls in Cochinchina and 10 000 in Tonkin is registered.

64 *Nouas de Camboja [1637], Jap./Sin.*, T. 161 II, fl. 193-193v.

65 With regards to the diaspora of the Japanese Christians throughout Eastern Asia, *vide* Madalena Ribeiro, “The Japanese Diaspora in the seventeenth century, according to Jesuit sources” in *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, Vol. 3, Lisbon, Centro de História de Além-Mar da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, December 2001, pp. 53-83.

66 In April 1634, Father Manuel Coelho was at one of the Ports of Cambodia, disguised as a sandpaper merchant, awaiting an opportunity to embark to Japan (*Relatorio das nouas que*

After the death of Father Romão Nishi in 1640, Father Joze Agnez became responsible for the mission until 1648. He learnt to speak, read and write khmer “a task that to date no one (...) had undertaken”, so that it could be easier to preach to the natives.<sup>67</sup> However, at the end of the 40’s, the Christian community, which had been set up close to Phom Penh, 240 miles away from the mouth of river Mekong, was most probably very small, because in the yearly letter of 1647 it reads: “We arrive in Cambodia (...) and find a home of our own: this is the main land and the fair of the foreigners eighty leagues upstream (...) here we can find the Japanese’s street and these are the only Christians we have there: (...) and this way the occupation of Father Joze Agnes, and of those who passed here, the foreigners and the Japanese living here; which were always treated kindly corresponding to all that we have done for them”.<sup>68</sup> The Cambodians however, remained resistant to the Christian message.

Around 1650, the community resident in Cambodia comprised 300 followers which “during the time of vessels it reached some five hundred or more depending on the number of vessels”.<sup>69</sup> However, this Christianity continued to be exclusively made up of foreigners: once made up mainly of Japanese, it now had some Portuguese, Malay and others from Cochinchina – and occasionally, merchants from Manila, Jakarta and Negapatao. Only now, did the number of Portuguese settled in the kingdom, justify the opening of a “reading, writing, counting and singing school”.<sup>70</sup> Fathers Francisco Rivas and Manuel Pinheiro sought to use the grace of children which, every day before mass would recite the previous days lesson to increase the affluence of followers to the celebration.

*vição de Japão ao Reino de Camboja na soma dos Japões que chegou a 20 de Abril de 634, Jap./Sin., T. 18, fl. 147-151v).*

<sup>67</sup> “trabalho que te então nenhum (...) emprendera de proposito”, *Annua da Província de Japam do anno de 1644, Jap./Sin., T. 64, fl. 225.*

<sup>68</sup> “Entramos em Camboja (...) e acharemos tão bem caza nossa: esta a povoação principal, e a feira dos estrangeiros oitenta legoas pello Rio asima (...) hy ha he a Rua dos Japoins, e elles somente são os Christãos que nos temos nella: (...) e assy a ocupação principal do ditto Padre [Padre Joze Agnes], e dos que aly por vezes estiverão, he com os forasteiros, que aly uem, e Japoins residentes; dos quais forão sempre tratados com mostras de amor e benevolencia correspondendo ao muito que por elles fazemos” in *Annua da Prouincia de Japão que começa por outubro do anno de 1647. ate o seguinte em que estamos de 648, Jap./Sin., T. 64, fl. 254.*

At this time, a total of 2000 reais were spent on missions in Cambodia, Cochinchina and Siam, the same which was being spent in Tonkin. This means that, the Christian communities in the three kingdoms had less followers than the Tonkin mission. (*Informatio por Prouincia Japponia 1646, Jap./Sin., Congr. 71, fl. 281).*

<sup>69</sup> “no tempo de barcos chegara a quinhentos, ou mais conforme o numero de navios” in *Annua da Província do Japão do anno de 1650, J.A., 49-V-13, fl. 648.*

<sup>70</sup> “escola de ler, e escrever, contar, e cantar”, *Ibidem.*



The work of these priests was, however, circumscribed to the Japanese and those from Cochinchina who “lived so freely as if they were prisoners of the Devil to the astonishment of the others”.<sup>71</sup> As a reply to the demands made by Father Manuel de Azevedo, member of the Company of Jesus, according to whom the natives of Cambodia were being neglected, Father Francisco Rivas, supported by two young Cambodians, sons of Japanese, began to preach to the natives “along the river, in boats and in places where they stopped at night [to rest]”. Unable to shake the beliefs of the common population, the missionary decided to attract the direct attention of the Cambodian priests. Although he did not attain great results upon addressing the great *Talapão*, high priest of the Cambodian religious hierarchy, Father Francisco Rivas confesses to be amazed by his character: “a very efficient and curious man who wishes to gain true knowledge and the way to Heaven”,<sup>72</sup> to such an extent that he requested that another Monk “go to the priest’s house every day to teach him the Cambodian alphabet so as to understand our things”.<sup>73</sup>

Driven by the respect and curiosity which the Christian world arose in him, the great *Talapão* sent one of his learned pupils to “Macao to learn the Portuguese language, see the churches and understand the (...) Holy Faith, so that once back in Cambodia he could learn and comprehend what was intended”.<sup>74</sup> He would become the first Cambodian bonze to convert to Christianity under the aegis of the Jesuits. And, as this occurrence appears mentioned in annual letters from 1650 to 1655, it might mean that until then, there had not been any other conversions worthy of highlight.<sup>75</sup> In fact, the

71 “viviam tão livres como se fossem cativos do Demonio com notavel escandalo dos mais”. Cf. *Annua da Província de Japam do anno de 1644, Jap./Sin.*, T. 64, fl. 225.

Their sins, described in the *Annua da Província do Jappão do anno de 1650 (op. cit.)*, were basically adultery, living out of matrimony with pagan women and neglecting catholic practises.

72 “pelo rio, nos barcos, e paragens, em que de noyte [descansavam]”; “homem muyto capaz, curioso e desejoso de saber a verdadeyra sabedoria, e o caminho do Ceo”. The compliments that Father Francisco Rivas pays to this bonze do not end here: “He asked on various occasions things about Astronomy and Cosmography which he also wrote about in his books, although with many lies, clearly aware of the truth that the Father expressed with Prayers and experiences and seeing a map of the world listening to the creation of the world, the sin of Adam he was (...) happy (...)” [“Perguntou em varias occasioens de disputas algumas couzas de Astronomia, e Cosmografia, de que tambem tração os seus livros, posto que fabulosamente, e com muytas patranhas, conhecendo porem claramente a verdade que o Padre lhe declarava com as demais Oraçoens e experiências, e vendo hum mappa do mundo ouvindo a criação do mesmo mundo, peccado de Adam ficou (...) satisfeito (...)”] (*Ibidem*, fl. 650).

73 “que fosse todos os dias a caza do Padre a ensinar lhe as letras cambojicas, para melhor poder depois saber nossas cousa”, *Ibidem*, fl. 649v.

74 “Macao aprender a língua Portugueza, ver as Igrejas, e tomar noticia das couzas de (...) Sancta fé, para que tornando a Camboja pudesse delle aprender o que desejava”, *Ibidem*, fl. 650.

75 The conversion of this bonze, baptised with the name João de Sousa, is the topic of all of the annual letters and news from the kingdom of Cambodia until the date of his death: *Annua da*

only pagans who converted to Christianity were, as before, the Japanese, the Malay and those from Cochinchina.

The conversion of this *Talapão* however, caused some commotion within the closed Cambodian society. Many of his former companions motivated him to deny Christ, and as they were not able to convince him to reject “such a good and fair law as that of the Christians”,<sup>76</sup> they launched numerous accusations in the attempt of discrediting him.<sup>77</sup> Unable to reach their objectives, they eventually assassinated him.

In 1651, the Cambodia mission was handed over to Father João Maria Leria, who had to bear much on account of “some Christians “some Christians of bad living whom he tried to show the way and to comply with their obligations”.<sup>78</sup> These were mainly Japanese who were considered as an example of religiousness in their homeland. Exiled in Cambodia, they accommodated themselves with their pagan concubines but wished to continue receiving the sacraments. As Father João Maria Leria contradicted their intentions, they rose against him with a judicial process in which they demanded to be reimbursed of the offerings that the mission had received over the last 26 years. According to them, the “Church of the Japanese had been built with their silver, so that mass could be said by the Dominican Fathers”.<sup>79</sup> In fact, according to Father Carlos da Rocha, around 1620, the Japanese who had recently arrived in Cambodia, purchased for 35 *taeis* a house which they transformed into a church and handed it over to two Dominicans who had arrived from Manila. These provided spiritual assistance to the community until 1632, year in which they returned to the Philippines leaving the church and its followers in the hands of the Company of Jesus, represented by Father Francisco Buzomi, who had lived in Cambodia since 1630.<sup>80</sup>

*Província do Jappão do anno de 1650, op. cit.*, fl. 650; *Brevis informatio de statu Província Japonia Anni 1650, J.A.*, 49-V-13, fl. 655v; *Regno di Cambóscia [1650], Jap./Sin.*, T. 65, fl. 73-74v; *Annua da Província do Jappão de 1651, J.A.*, 49-IV-61, fl. 456-469; *Annua da Província de Jappam do anno de 1652, J.A.*, 49-IV-61, fl. 566-589v; *Annua da Província do Jappão de 1655, J.A.*, 49-IV-61, fl. 737-757v.

76 “Ley tão boa e justa como era a o dos Christaons”, *Annua da Província do Jappão do anno de 1651, op. cit.*, fl. 462.

77 In *Annua da Província do Jappão do anno de 1652, op. cit.*, fl. 588v: “They accused him of taking three women. Upon knowing this he informed the Priest that he only had 11 thousand, that all were virgins mentioning the 11 virgins that were near the altar in Macao where he received the baptism.” [“Aleuantarão lhe que tinha tomado três mulheres. Elle em o sabendo mandou dizer ao Padre que não tinha senão 11 mil, que todas erão virgens aludindo as 11 mil virgens ao pe de cujo altar se bautizou em Macao”].

78 “alguns Christãos de mau uiuer, a quem procurara emcaminhar, e fazer comprissem com sua obrigação” in *Annua da Província do Jappão do anno de 1665, Jap./Sin.*, T. 64, fl. 406.

79 “Igreia dos Japões leuantada com sua prata, pera nella lhes dizerem missa os P. P. de Sam Domingos”. Cf. *Ibidem*.

80 *Relação da missão do Camboya [1659], Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 27v.

The church must have been very old because it was in such a state of ruin that Father João Maria Leria preferred to build a new one rather than repairing it. The conflicts with the Japanese took on such proportions that the actual natives of the kingdom advised the missionary to erect the building on a road that did not belong to the Japanese.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the attitudes and work of these foreigners scandalised the Cambodians in such a manner that the priest was even advised by the natives to open a process against the Japanese and offered to accompany and support him.<sup>82</sup>

The Christians did not facilitate the evangelisation of Cambodia, and the natives never seemed to be truly interested. In fact, in the 1665 annual letter the strange way in which they looked upon Christianity is quite clear: one of the members of the royal family, during a visit to Father João Maria Leria, came across an image of Christ on the Cross and was so troubled by it that “he showed great hate in relation to the Sacred Images”.<sup>83</sup>

Besides all the circumstances, the Christian community in Cambodia must have become significant in the late 50's,<sup>84</sup> which therefore justified that two missionaries be sent to the kingdom: Fathers Carlos da Rocha and António Lopes. During the few months which they spent in Cambodia, they managed to attract “people (...) who had long distanced themselves”, and to baptise five pagan natives of the region.<sup>85</sup> These conversions had a special

81 In *Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1665*, *op. cit.*, fls. 407-407v: “These evil Christians have taken this in such a badly manner, that after the new Church had been started, with cries and inadequate words they prevented its construction from going ahead; and even though the Priests, the Portuguese and the Christians from Macao pleaded that they stop and remembered that they too were Christians and that was not at all good to arouse a scandal amongst the people and the Muslims. They didn't stop it, but instead they turned to the favourite of the King of Cambodia, persecuting the Priest for changing their old Church; The favourite of the King told the Priest that he could build a new Church, however apparently the Japanese were also against this and he shouldn't built it among them nor in their street, but in some place else; all this made the Priest leave the already started church to go and built another Church in another street.” [“Tomarão isto tanto o mal estes maos christãos, que depois de estar a noua Igreja começada, com grandes gritos, e descompozições de palauras, impedirão que não fosse por diante a fabrica; e por mais que com muita cortesia os Padres, Portugueses, e christãos, vindos de Macao lhe rogarão se aquitassem e se lembrassem que erão tambem Christãos, e não dessem com isto tam grande escandalo aos gentios, e Mouros. Elles nada se abrandarão, antes foram ualer se do priuado do Rey de Camboja, armado demanda ao Padre por mudar a sua Igreja uelha; O priuado disse ao Padre que podia fazer sua Igreja noua, porem que supposto os Japões estauão tam contrarios, e inquietos a não fizesse entre elles, e na sua rua, mas em outro qualquer lugar; com isto foi neçessario ao Padre accomodar se ao tempo deixar a fabrica começada, e ir fazer a Igreja em outra rua.”]

82 *Relação da missão do Camboya*, *op. cit.*, fl. 29.

83 “cobrou grande odio contra as Sagradas Imagens”, *Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1665*, *op. cit.*, fls. 409-410.

84 Unfortunately the sources do not quantify the number of Christians who settled in Cambodia.

85 *Annua da Prouincia de Jappam dos annos de 1659 e 1660*, *Jap./Sin.*, T. 48, fl. 34v: “Some people came to the Church to meet their obligations as Christians, they had been away from church

importance due to the fact that, at the time, the ruler Nac Cham, converted to Islam, had forbidden any Cambodian to abandon their religious faith unless it were to become a Muslim.<sup>86</sup>

The Cambodian mission, would be interrupted in 1659 and 1660 due to the conflicts with Cochinchina.<sup>87</sup> It was restarted in 1661, and Father Carlos da Rocha was once again sent as head of the mission and a year later was joined by Father Germano Mecret, exiled from Makassar.<sup>88</sup>

These missionaries engaged themselves in the rebuilding of the mission's facilities<sup>89</sup> and rendered all the possible spiritual support to the reduced number of Christians who had remained in the kingdom and which "[wondered] like sheep amidst the wolves, who are not believers and come here to trade and whom with their words and bad doctrine and bad examples that they set can do great harm to that small flock of Catholics if they

for long; five from Cochinchina, one from Tonkin, one Malay, and five natives were baptised." ["Vierão algumas pessoas a Igreja a comprir obrigaçoens de Christãos, que auia muito tempo se afastauão, e não chegauão a ella; baptizando se sinco Cochinchinas, hum Tumkim, hum Malajo, e sinco pessoas da gente da terra."]

86 According to the *Relação da missão do Camboya* (*op. cit.*, fls. 2-3), King Nac Cham was rather criticised by his subordinates when he converted to Islam: the Cambodians had nothing against the Islamic religion, however they refused to accept the presence of the Malay, "foreigners seen as infamous and doomed, brothers with the same beliefs as the King, in high political, administrative and military positions within the kingdom. [huns estrangeiros tidos por infames, e por perdidos], irmãos de fé do monarca, nos altos cargos políticos, administrativos e militares do reino] And "never a native from Cambodia became a Moor." ["nunca alcansou natural algum de camboja a se fazer Mouro".]

On the other hand, Etienne Aymonier (*Le Cambodge. Le groupe d'Angkor et l'histoire*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1904) and F. Garnier (*Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine*, I, Paris, Hachette, 1885) defend that Nac Cham rose to the throne after the assassination of his older brother, imposing a tyrannical regime which was never accepted by the Cambodians. According to these authors, the adoption of the Islamic religion by the ruler aimed at integrating the vast and conflicting Malay and Javanese community which was constituted, according to E. Aymonier, by Cham Muslims, exiled in Cambodia since the fall of their kingdom in 1471 (*op. cit.*, p. 773).

87 These conflicts were seen by the missionaries as punishment from God: "For many years the Province of Japan maintained workers in the Kingdom of Cambodia to help the Natives of which many are Christians (...): but being patient the only fruit that the Fathers received from both, God punished them with hunger, war, robbery of farms, burning down of houses, illnesses and deaths and with the loss of the Kingdom, the captivity of the King and the Queen who were taken to another land". ["Cansou se a pobre Prouincia de Jappam muitos annos em sustentar obreiros no Reino de Cambodia, para acodir aos Naturaes, que são gentios, e ha muitos christãos (...): mas assi huns como os outros não dando fruto senão de paciência para os Padres sahio Deos nestes ultimos annos contra todos elles castigando os com fome, guerra, sacco das fazendas, queimas das cazas, doenças e mortes, e para ultimo com a perca do Reino, e catiueiro do Rei, e Rainha leuados em capoeira para outra terra"] (*Relação da missão do Camboya*, *op. cit.*, fl. 1).

88 *O Livro do principio dos superiores* [...], fl. 78.

89 The attacks of the Cochinchina people resulted in the burning down of the church and the house of the Company of Jesus and in the flight of the Christians to other kingdoms on Indochina or to other villages inland of Cambodia (*Relação da missão do Camboya*, *op. cit.*, fl. 1).

don't have Fathers to monitor and defend them".<sup>90</sup> It is interesting to note that for the Jesuit missionaries those who represented real danger to the Christians living in Cambodia were not the actual natives of the kingdom but the English and Dutch merchants who travelled here occasionally. And this, at a time when there was still no protestant proselytism.

The Cambodia mission gained greater strength in the 60's and 70's as it was still possible to pass from this country to Cochinchina and to Champa where around 1663-1664 missionaries and Christians started being oppressed. So in 1669, Fathers Francisco Rivas and Joze Candone and in 1670 Father Bartolomeu da Costa were sent to Cambodia.<sup>91</sup>

The impossibility of converting the national population of Cambodia to Christianity greatly disturbed the prelate of the College of Macao, who, unable to understand the reason for such failure, blamed the missionaries: "The Priests who have been in Cambodia to date all had their hearts set on the missions in the Kingdoms of Japan and Cochinchina where they intended on going to. And there wasn't much effort to convert the people of Cambodia, for this same reason as well as for thinking that they were not able to receive and to maintain our Holy Law, because some of those who received it, did not behave as it was expected".<sup>92</sup> However, aware that the non-conversion of the Cambodians was not due to their inertia, but to the latter's religious beliefs, in 1673 Fathers Joze Candone and André Gomes endeavoured to convince the Company of Jesus to abandon the parishes of Penhalu' and Lolumpe.<sup>93</sup>

Built with the intention of helping the banished Japanese, the parishes lost their function when the refugees started abandoning Cambodia, in the 60's as a consequence of the conflicts with Cochinchina. On the other hand, with the disappearance of this community, the priests had no way of supporting themselves, helping the poorer families and keeping the religious

90 "[andavam] como ovelhas em meyo de lobos, que sam os muytos hereges, que aly vam comercear, os quais com suas palavras, e ma doutrina, e com os ruins exemplos de sua vida podem fazer grande damno naquelle pequeno rebanho de Catholicos, se não tiverem padres, que os vigie, e defenda" *In Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1665, op. cit.*, fls. 260v-261.

91 *Viagem que fez o Padre Bartholameu da Costa do Reino de Camboja ao de Champa e principio daquella Missão [1673], Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 402v.

92 "Os Padres, que até gora estiverão em Camboja, quasi todos estavam, com o coração nas missoens dos Reynos de dentro de Jappão, e da Cochinchina, para onde pertendiam passar por esta via. E nam houve muyta applicação a conversam dos gentios de Camboja, a fim por esta cousa com pelos julgarem pouco capazes de receberem, e confirmarem nossa Sancta Ley, por que alguns, que a receberão nam corresponderam como deviam" *in Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1665, op. cit.*, fl. 260v.

93 Cf. *Razonis para os nossos Padres largarem estas duas Igrejas de Penhalu, e Lolumpe que temos neste Reyno de Camboja, Jap./Sin.*, T. 48, fl. 414. At this time, also in the kingdom, Father Francisco Rivas was responsible for the parish of Lolumpe, (*Rdº admodum in christo Patri Nostro Patri Ioanni Paulo Oliua Societatis IESV Preposito Geerali. Romam [1673], Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 434).

buildings.<sup>94</sup> As an alternative, they proposed the construction of another church in “Cochinchina where, twenty years ago, Father Francisco Riuas had had a church and a piece of land which he had bought”.<sup>95</sup> They would then engage in the conversion of natives (not Cambodians), a cause of the Company of Jesus and at the same time, they would “once and for all close the doors on the French clergy,<sup>96</sup> because if they intended on living in Cambodia (...), they would have to live amongst the people of the Cochinchina, as they had done in Siam, because they do not want to do away with the old Christian parishes”.<sup>97</sup>

Even though Father Luiz Chevreuil from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, in the description of a visit to Cambodia in 1674 only referred to the existence of one church,<sup>98</sup> the truth is that in 1677, the two stated parishes<sup>99</sup> were still operating. In the meantime, André Gomes, who took on the mission alone, since 1675, tried to defend himself against the threats of the priests of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide and

94 According to them, the missionaries received, in 1673, the same as ten years before before, which made it difficult to survive in Cambodia (*Razonis para os nossos Padres largarem estas duas Igrejas de Penhalu, e Lolumpe [...], op. cit.*, fl. 415v). In *Lembranças do que se ha de dar a cada Padre o Frey que va para as missoens desta Provincia de Jappão revista, e aprovada pello Padre Mathias da Maya Provincial da mesma Provincia em Agosto de 1661, J.A.*, 49-IV-66, fls. 31v-32, there is a detailed account of each missionary's assets when the mission opened in 1661.

95 “Pouoação dos Cochinchinas aonde o Padre Francisco Riuas ha uinte annos tinha huma Igreja, e hum pedaço de horta, que comprara”, *Razoens pera os nossos Padres não largarem estas duas Igrejas de Penhalu, e Lolumpe, que temos neste Reyno de Camboja* [1673], *Jap./Sin.*, T. 48, fl. 417v.

96 The “French clergy” are the priests of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide: Father Lambret and companions. In *Expostulatis Missionorum Societatis IESU dolentum propter invasionem factam per Presbíteros Gallos, J.A.*, 49-IV-62, fls. 392-393v, we find reference to the existence of a mission of this Congregation which had already been set up in Cambodia in 1669. Pertaining the settling and mission of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Asia, *vide* J. Gennou, *Missions étrangères de Paris*, Paris, Le Sarmant, Fayard, 1986.

97 de uma uez a porta aos clerigos Francezes, porque se elles pretendem morar em Camboja (...), ham de uir morar entre os Cochinchinas, assi como o fizerão no Sião, porque elles não querem correr com Freguezias de christãos uelhos”, *Razoens pera os nossos Padres não largarem estas duas Igrejas de Penhalu, e Lolumpe [...], op. cit.*, fl. 417v.

98 Unfortunately, Father Luiz Chevreuil doesn't give great thought to this church: he only refers that it was erected in the Portuguese Area, where the merchants from Cochinchina and Malaysia lived, that it was not very big, it had wooden walls and inside, an altar and some images (*Relation des Missions des Evesques Français aux Royaumes de Siam, de la Cochinchine, de Camboye, & du Tonkin, &c*, Paris, Éditions Pierre le Petit, 1674, fl. 145).

99 It is interesting to note that the parish of Lolumpe assisted Christians from Makassar (*Certidão dos Christãos de Lolumpe em fauor dos Padres que assistiram em Camboja* [1677], *Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 440), while the parish of Penhalu was attended by old Christians “born here or that have been living in the Kingdom of Cambodia for many years.” [“aqui nacidos, ou de muitos annos moradores neste Reino de Camboia.”] (*Certidão dos Christãos de Penhalu* [1677], *Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 442).



face the threats from its members.<sup>100</sup> And once again, the natives took the side of the missionaries of the Company of Jesus: when a companion of Father Luiz Chevreuil confined Father André Gomes to a vessel which was heading to Macao, the latter was rescued by natives whose “pity [won] the impiety of a soulless Christian [to whom] some good lashings will teach him to keep the Word of God”.<sup>101</sup>

When Father Ignacio Sanga, born in the archipelago of Japan arrived in Cambodia to substitute Father André Gomes, his main task was exclusively to “provide the Portuguese, Japanese, and other Christians of various nations which had moved there because of trade, with the Sacraments”.<sup>102</sup> Finally convinced that the Cambodians were not going to convert or would ever convert,<sup>103</sup> the Company of Jesus began to show some disinterest in the mission. Father Aleixo Coelho was only sent to the kingdom two years after the death of Father Ignacio Sanga, which just shows the lack of interest and progressive abandoning of the mission.<sup>104</sup>

From the catalogues of the priests from the Company of Jesus sent to the different missions, it is known that in 1607 and 1698 Father João Baptista Maldonado<sup>105</sup> was the Superior of the mission in Cambodia, and in 1700, Father João de Bastos,<sup>106</sup> who left the territory at around 1705,<sup>107</sup> on an order given by The Provincial Priest. The Cambodia mission seems to have been completely abandoned at around this date, after the death of Father Miguel Dono at the hands of the Christians.

100 On the other hand, in the annual letter of 1675, the Jesuits withdraw all the accusations made by Father Luiz Chevreuil against Father André Gomes (*Carta Annua do año de 1675, J.A.*, 49-V-33, fl. 208v). In fact, the actual community which had settled in Cambodia writes to Rome in defence of this missionary (*Certidão dos Christãos de Penhalu, op. cit.*, fls. 442-442v. *Certidão dos Christãos de Penhalu [...] op. cit.*, fls. 440-440v).

101 “piedade [venceu] a impiedade de hum desalmado Christão [a quem] com huns bons açoutes ensinarão a guardar a Ley de Deos” in *Carta Annua do año de 1675, op. cit.*, fls. 208v-209v.

102 “administrar os Sacramentos aos Portuguezes, Japoens, e outros Christaons, de varias nasçoens, que para ahi concorrem por cauza do commercio”, *Breve noticia das missões que a Companhia de IESUS tem nas partes do Oriente [1686], J.A.*, 49-V-33, fl. 250v.

103 *O Livro do principio dos superiores [...] op. cit.*, fl. 78v.

104 *Annua da Provincia de Japam do anno de 1691, J.A.*, 49-V-22, fl. 68 e *Annua Prouvinciae Japponiae ad R. Admodum 1695, J.A.*, 49-VI-1 fls. 172v.

105 According to *Primus Catalogus Patrum ac Fratrum Societ JESV, qui in Prouincia Japponica sunt anno 1697, Jap./Sin.*, T. 25, fl. 232; *Primus Catalogus Patrum ac Fratrum Societatis JESV, qui sunt in Prouincia Japponica Anno Domini 1698, Jap./Sin.*, T. 25, fl. 235.

106 Cf. *Albus Sociorum Prouvinciae Japoniae per loca, et officia confectus 14 Decembris 1700, Jap./Sin.*, T. 25, fl. 249.

107 According to *Litera P.P. Capucinatorum appulsorum ad Cambodiam ad Illustrissimum Busiens; in quibus licentiam petunt ad exercenda ministerial; et multis probare intendunt illam itissionem ad eos pertinere (Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 450), dated 1725, Father João de Bastos abandoned Cambodia at around 1700-1701.



The community of Penhalu still sent a letter to Father José Pires requesting a spiritual aid, threatening a mass conversion to Buddhism.<sup>108</sup> In the meantime, the reply dated July of 1721 only guaranteed the sending of a religious man once a year:

“You ask if, us the Priests of the Company, have left Christianity behind and no longer want to go to Cambodia? Our first answer is that, we will esteem any other priest that will work that Christianity; because by going to Cambodia we will no longer find that disturbance and uproar for nothing as has been the case for many years, and in the current state of that Bandel no Father will arrive to find a positive situation because the Christians are divided into groups, and this way it is impossible for the Father to satisfy everyone (...): so we will not be hurt if they look for another priest of some other Order, from another Nation, mainly that we Priests of the Company have our scruples to leave here in Dounai 5 thousand Christians to go to Cambodia where there are only some three hundred (...). But (...) if no priest is found to preach the Word of God, the Clergymen of the Company will take the risk and will go, as they did in the past to administer the sacrament to these Christians at least once a year, so as to (...) understand the anxiety and wish that we have for their Salvation; however it is necessary that (...) something be done on their part and that the following conditions solicited be met: First. that the King banish from his Kingdom the three assassins of Father Miguel Dono (...). The second is that at the Church of Penhalu, mass will not be said and the sacraments will no longer be administered as it is corrupted and is a scandal for the heathen; so (...) another Church is to be built and for this it would be ideal that everyone got together to live in one single place. We don’t ask for much (...) and if these conditions are not satisfied then there is no need to go to Cochinchina to get Fathers from the Company; because we will not go (...)”.<sup>109</sup>

108 *Litera P.P. Capucinatorum appulsorum ad Cambodiam [...], op. cit., fl. 449v.*

109 “Perguntão (...) se nos os PP. da Companhia deixamos ja essa christandade, e não queremos ir mais a Camboja? Respondemos primeiramente, que achando (...) qualquer outro sacerdote, que ua cultiuar essa christandade, nos o estimaremos muito; por que em irmos a Camboja não achamos mais que perturbaçoens, e embrulhadas sem nenhum fructo, como sempre tem succedido ha muitos annos, e no prezente estado desse Bandel não pode la ir Padre algum, que não ache em lugar de fructo muitos disgostos, por estarem os christãos diuididos em parcialidades, e bandos entre si contrários e desta sorte he impossuiel, que o Padre contente a todos (...): e assim de nenhum modo levamos a mal (...) que procurem outro sacerdote de qualquer Religião, que seja, e de qualquer nação, principalmente que nos os PP. da Companhia não deixamos de ter nosso escrupulo em deixar aqui em Dounai 5. mil christãos para ir a Camboja, aonde quanto muito ha trezentos (...). Com tudo isto se (...) não acharem sacerdotte algum, que queira arriscar

Therefore, when in 1723-1724 the priests of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide disembarked in Cambodia, they found two small Christian communities in constant conflict and without hardly any Gospel support for almost two decades. Satisfied because he could see a way of affording the Christians peace, the monarch gave these missionaries authorisation to preach throughout the kingdom and material support to build a new church which would serve both communities.<sup>110</sup>

The arrival of Father Manuel Camello, in 1724, would threaten this peace which was still precarious. The Jesuit was not well received by the Christians nor by the monarch who did not give him authorisation to preach in the kingdom as he had already given the “said authorisation (...) and not to [be able to] break the provision”.<sup>111</sup> However, the priest stayed in Cambodia, in the Parish of Penhalu until 1727, annually inundating the headquarters of the Company of Jesus in Rome with letters filled with accusations against the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide and the teaching methods of the hooded missionaries.<sup>112</sup> In turn, the latter also sent letters to Rome condemning the behaviour of the Jesuits and warned that “the King annoyed with the priests and the Christians [could banish] all Fathers from his Kingdom thus sacrificing the Holy Law”.<sup>113</sup>

According to the *Livro do principio dos superiores, e benfeitores deste collegio da Madre de Deos de Macau*, Father Manuel Camello was replaced by Father José Pires who stayed in Cambodia until 1729,<sup>114</sup> even though nothing is known of his missionary work. Following this date, it was the responsibility of the priest in Dunay to annually visit the mission.

sua uida, indo uizar ou cultuar essa christandade, os Religiozos da Companhia se arriscarão a isso, e irão, como dantes, sacramentar esses christãos ao menos huma uez cada anno, para que (...) uejão quanta he a anciã, e o dezejo, que temos de sua saluação; porem he necessario que (...) fação tambem alguma couza da sua parte, e ponhão as condiçoens, que nos agora pedimos e são estes: 1º que o Rey ponha fora do seu Reyno os três matadores do Padre Miguel Dono (...). O segundo he que na Igreja de Penhalu se não ha de mais dizer Missa, nem administrar os sacramentos por estar poluta, e ser escandalo dos gentios; e assim deuem fazer (...) outra Igreja commua, e para isto he bom, que todos se ajuntem, e morem em hum mesmo lugar. Não he muito o que pedimos (...) e sem elles he escuzado cançarem se em uir a Cochinchina buscar Padres da Companhia; por que não hauemos ir. (...)” in *Ibidem*, fls. 449v-450.

110 *Ibidem*, fl. 450v.

111 “a dita licença (...) e não [poder] quebrar a chapa” in *Ibidem*, fl. 450v.

*O Livro do principio dos superiores [...] (op. cit., fl. 78v)* confirms the date of the arrival of Father Manuel Camello in Camboja, even though in the catalogue of priests sent to the missions, there is no reference to missionaries sent to this kingdom 1700.

112 *Missionariis Capuciniis illee appulsis [1727], Jap./Sin., T. 76, fls. 456-457.*

113 “o Rey com tantas historias dos PP dos christãos enfadado [poderia lançar] todos os PP fora do seu Reyno em grande perjuízo, e de honra de [sua] Santa Ley”. *Litera P.P. Capucinatorum appulsorum ad Cambodiam [...], op. cit., fl. 453.*

114 Cf. *O Livro do principio dos superiores [...], op. cit., fl. 78v.*

## 2. Perspective of the Portuguese missionaries on the Cambodian religious world

Located on the extreme south-west of the Indochina Peninsula, Cambodia and its exuberant fauna and flora, seemed to be, to the Portuguese missionaries upon disembarking, a pleasant kingdom to live in and very fruitful for evangelising.<sup>115</sup> However, for these priests, mainly European, staying in this territory which was completely flooded during half of the year and continuously infested with mosquitoes, became rather unpleasant.<sup>116</sup>

The Cambodians on the other hand, were seen as sweet people, simple and with a better heart than the natives of other kingdoms in South-east Asia. The Jesuits even described them as individuals “of good nature willing to do good, they easily kept to the Commandments except to the first. Most of their sins resulted from idolatry and superstition. To kill, to steal and to have a relationship with women other than their own (...) are actions rarely performed by the natives of Cambodia”.<sup>117</sup> This description takes on a special importance in the sense that, comparing these natives to Christians, it explicitly says that the only difference resides in the fact that they do not recognise God.

In fact, in almost 200 years of missions, only Father Carlos da Rocha presents a different perspective of the inhabitants of Cambodia: people who are “rude, (...) with bad usage of language (...) lazy, artless and with no eagerness fulfilled by making small baskets, to search for small fish (...) to eat and sow cotton to dress themselves (...) being the Cambodians so unfit in the things of this life, they are very much into the things of life beyond”.<sup>118</sup>

115 The kingdom of Cambodia was greatly described by Friar Gaspar da Cruz, *Tratado das Cousas da China [...]*, pp. 2-10, Friar João dos Santos, *Eastern Ethiopia [...]*, pp. 100-103 and A. Cabaton, *Brève et veridique relation des événements du Cambodge [...]*, pp. 98-101. Much is mentioned about this kingdom in Jesuit correspondence.

116 *Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1650, J.A.*, 49-V-15, fl. 648: “The land is not very fertile and is continuously infested by mosquitoes, that bring much illness specially to those who are not used to these conditions. During the flood period, men suffer more because they have to keep indoors (...) for four months. During said period they have to remain at home and have to have all the necessary supplies to embark”. [“A terra he doentia por ser alagadissa, infestada continuamente com huma praga de mosquitos, que dam muyta pena e molestia, principalmente aos que nam estão a isso acostumados. No tempo de alago se padeceo mais, por estarem os homens como de serco (...) para quatro meses. No quel tempo he necessário estarem embarcado digo e estarem em caza providos de matalotagem como que esta embarcado”].

117 “boa índole inclinada a fazer o bem, excepto o primeiro Mandamento, nenhuma, ou muito pouca dificuldade tem na guarda dos outros, sam os seus peccados quasi todos de Idolatria e superstiçam. Matar, furtar, nem tratar com outra mais que com a mulher própria (...) raras vezes se acha na gente de Camboja” in *Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1665, Jap./Sin.*, T. 64, fl. 260.

118 “rudes, (...) toscas de lingoa (...) si perguiçozas, sem trato, sem arte, e quasi sem cobiça contentado se de fazer vargeas, buscar peixinhos (...) pera comer, e semear algodão pera se

Whether very or little religious, the truth is that the Cambodians showed themselves to be, from the beginning, practically impenetrable to the Gospel. The non-conversion of these natives intrigued the missionaries, who interpreted it as a sign of ignorance,<sup>119</sup> and the superiors of the different Orders saw it as a direct sign of the lack of effort afforded by the priests. However, the justification for the failure of Christianity in Cambodia was registered in the 16th century, by Friar Gaspar da Cruz, who in the *Tractado das cousas da China e do Reino d'Ormuz*, described in detail the religion followed by the people.

According to this missionary, the Cambodians believed in the existence of a supreme god, *Praissur*. It was he who gave permission to the god *Prolocussar* to authorise a third God, *Probamissur*, to form the heavens and the earths.<sup>120</sup> The Cambodians believed there were 27 heavens where beings reincarnated according to their deeds; “even a flea and a louse, as all had a soul”.<sup>121</sup>

In fact, these people recognised the existence of three categories of heavens. Human beings who were still holding on to material aspects were received in the inferior heavens where they would find “food, drink and beautiful women”. Above, were the heavens where religious people were received, in the order of merit, and whose reward was to “rest, refresh in the wind”. Lastly, there were the supreme heavens where only those who had managed to deprive themselves of all desires were received. And their

uestir (...) sendo os Cambojanos tão ineptos, e sem brio pollas couzas desta vida, o são muito mais pollas couzas da outra” in *Relação da missão do Camboja* [1659], *Jap./Sin.*, T. 76, fl. 22.

119 According to the Annual letter of 1684, Cambodia “it is not a Mission of Pagans, because the natives of this Kingdom have difficulty in understanding and are plain ignorant and do not surrender to any affection or reason: To convert them (...) would be a miracle never seen before.” [“não he Missão de Infieis, pois os naturaes deste Reyno são tão duros, capatos ou estupidos, que a nenhuma resão, ou affecto se rendem: O conuerter algum delles (...) sera hum milagre, nunca, ou quasi nunca, athe o presente uisto”] (*Annua da Província de Jappão do anno de 1684*, *Jap./Sin.*, T. 48, fl. 134).

120 Friar Gaspar da Cruz, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

121 “mesmo a pulga e o piolho, pois todos têm uma alma”, *Ibidem*, p. 3. Friar João dos Santos described the Cambodian religion in this manner: “This same primitive mistake has the natives of Cambodia stating that there are twenty-seven heavens, some better than others where the souls of the just are gathered according to their lives on earth, and this includes the souls of the animals; they also say that there are thirteen hells, where sinners go to according to their sins (...) they believe that there is life after death where the good are awarded and the bad are punished.” [“Este mesmo erro tão bárbaro têm os gentios de Camboja, afirmando que há vinte e sete paraísos, uns mais nobres, e melhores que os outros, onde se recolhem as almas dos justos que passam desta vida, segundo seus merecimentos, e também as almas dos brutos animais; e pola mesma ordem dizem que há treze infernos, onde vão os pecadores, uns mais abaixo, outros menos, segundo as suas culpas (...) entendem que depois da morte há outra vida, na qual se dá prémios aos bons, e castigos aos maus”] (*op. cit.*, p. 102).

reward was “rounded body as those of the Gods”. Parallel to this, there are 13 hells, where individuals drown according to the level of their sins.

According to Bernard Groslier, this division corresponds to a more orthodox Buddhist cult: for the mortals there were six paradises (*devaloka*) and for the priests, there were sixteen (*rupabrahmaloka*); those who were able to reach nirvana on the other hand, had four supreme heavens (*arupabrahmaloka*). With this, we can state that in the second half of the 16th century, there was already a *Theravada* Buddhism or “Inferior Vehicle”, implemented in the heart of the Cambodian population imported from Ceylon in the late 13th century.<sup>122</sup>

Based on strict principles, the religion completely dominated daily life<sup>123</sup> and conversions were difficult because Cambodians truly believed “in what the Talapões said and preached”.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, as Friar Gaspar da Cruz says, one third of the population integrated in religious hierarchy, which made the mission even more difficult. In fact, throughout the kingdom, there was an abundance of pagodas – places where those who wished to follow the religious life were educated since childhood.<sup>125</sup> The bonzes, who were recognised by their yellow belted tunics and shaved heads, were, due to their profession of faith, forbidden to lie, kill, steal and have sexual relations. They ate only fish and vegetables and spent most of their day praying.<sup>126</sup>

As the Buddhism of the “Inferior Vehicle” was a religion of monks, for the solitary and an abnegation of the material world, there were indeed, numerous similarities to Christianity which was being preached by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century missionaries. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Cambodians were interested in and wanted to know more about the Christian message, which had principles with which they identified. Therefore, the response to the conversion had always been “(...) this is good, but ours is better(...)”.<sup>127</sup>

122 Cf. Luís de Albuquerque, “The Diocese of Malacca, for the enlightenment of the Gospel in Indochina and Cochinchina (1558-1615)” in *Notícias de Missionaço e Martírio na Índia e Insulíndia*, Lisbon, Publicações Alfa, 1989, p. 38.

123 The implementation of the *Theravada* Buddhism replacing Hinduism, deeply altered the Cambodian way of life: pali replaced the sanskrit as sacred language; the monumental stone buildings were substituted by pagodas which became places for worshipping, teaching and discussion of various aspects related to daily life; the actual political and economical structure of the kingdom suffered significant changes (Bernard Groslier, *op. cit.*).

124 “no que [diziam] e [pregavam] os seus Talapõe”, *Annua da Provincia do Jappão do anno de 1650, op. cit.*, fl. 649.

125 In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the most important pagodas were: the pagoda of Angkor (*Relação da missão do Camboya, op. cit.*, fl. 4v), which was considered a location for pilgrimage, and the south “convent” in Phnom Penh (*Annua da Provincia de Jappam do anno 1655, J.A.*, 49-IV-61, fl. 754v), where 12 000 monks lived.

126 A. Cabaton, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

127 “(...) isto he bom, mas ho nosso he melhor (...)”, Friar Gaspar da Cruz, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

In the meantime, understanding the religious Cambodian world must have been a complex task for the European missionaries. Especially in the Dominican and Franciscan chronicles, one notes that there was a tendency for priests to confuse Buddhism with Brahmanism, with which they had had previous contact in India. In fact, one of the most frequent confusions was the interpretation of *boddhisattvas* as gods: “The main gods are of gold and silver with ruby and diamond eyes; the minor gods are of copper and cast iron”.<sup>128</sup>

In reality however, the definition of Cambodian religion was not simple.<sup>129</sup> If *Theravada* Buddhism was the religion of the majority of the population, in the court, there were in fact traces of Hinduism,<sup>130</sup> which functioned as guardians of the imaginary Khmer. The cult of the Baku was maintained essentially in specific religious ceremonies, on specific “favourable days” and to interpret the omens.<sup>131</sup> However, even though some of the statements by Friar Gaspar da Cruz seemed to be explicit as to the maintenance of this cult of brahmanical origin, we believe that they instead came from the complete lack of knowledge of the Buddhist religion: “The Brahmans are the most difficult people to convert as they are very faithful to their customs and idolatry and the Brahma King and his followers are a great obstacle for the preaching and spreading of the word of God”.<sup>132</sup>

In the same manner, in 15<sup>th</sup> century Cambodia, some animist traditions were maintained, which permitted the natives to understand and organise their lives in the earthly world. Special reference should be made to the cult of the *neak ta*, the native protectors of the territory which ensured prosperity and happiness, keeping away bad spirits and sickness.<sup>133</sup> There are references to masts erected at crossings and intersections, on the ends of which a serpent would be placed. In these places, considered sacred, the

128 “Les principaux dieux sont d’or et d’argent avec dès yeux de rubis et de diamants; les petits dieux sont de cuivre et de fonte”, A. Cabaton, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

129 Topic developed by F. Panchaud, *La Cathédrale de la Rizière (...)*, Attachment 1.

130 Hinduism was abolished as the official religion in the first half of the 14th century.

131 *Vide* O. de Bernon, ‘À propos du retour des bakous dans le Palais royal de Phnom Penh’ in *Renouveaux religieux en Asie*, ed. C. Clémentin-Ojha, Paris, École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1996, pp. 33-58.

132 “Como quer pois que os Bramanes sejam ha mais rija gente de converter, por ser muy pegada a seus ritos e idolatrias sendo el Rey Brâmane e seus estimados e mais privados Brâmanes, este he hum muy grande impedimento naquella terra pera se poder fazer christandade” in Friar Gaspar da Cruz, *op. cit.*, p. 2. Friar João dos Santos (*op. cit.*, p. 461) also refers to the Cambodian Brahmanists

133 Pertaining the cult of the *neak ta*, *vide* Alain Forest, *Le culte des génies protecteurs au Cambodge*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1992 and Evelyne Porée-Maspero, ‘Notes sur les particularités du culte chez les Cambodgiens’ in *BEFEO*, T. XLIV, Fasc. 1, Paris, École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1951, pp. 619-641.

natives would pray and leave offerings, communicating through an animal with the *neak ta*.<sup>134</sup> According to the missionaries, wrongdoers would place themselves under the protection of these caretakers. The animist practices were also reflected in the adoration of natural elements, mainly the sun and moon.<sup>135</sup>

The Cambodian spiritual world was thus, in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the result of a perfect symbiosis between *Theravada* Buddhism, Brahmanism and Animism. Mutually reinforcing each other, these three religions allowed Cambodia to live in harmony with the cosmos, the cycle of the seasons and the forces of nature. Hence, it was impossible for Christianity to be able to break through this spiritual world which had been developed and consolidated over many centuries and imposed itself as a majority religion, offering cosmos-vision and a different and strange or even abnormal theology for the natives of the kingdom and simultaneously proposing the same types of everyday practises.

### **Conclusion: almost 200 years of missions**

Despite the arduous efforts made by the Dominicans and the Franciscans amongst the natives, no more than a handful of conversions were managed in Cambodia. Motivated by the success of the missions in the West Indies,<sup>136</sup> the priests of the Dominican Order tried, from the very first moment, to act within the scope of monarchy, moving to this kingdom in 1583 in a rotating system, groups of two or three missionaries. However, the first initiatives for the evangelisation of Cambodia were developed more because of an interest of the Cambodian authorities than the wish of the Indian state.

In fact, the Portuguese authorities only became directly engaged in the mission after the expulsion of the Jesuits from Japan. However, conscious of the sturdy roots of *Theravada* Buddhism in Cambodia, and that the natives were more interested in gaining access to commerce with the Portuguese than in getting to know the word of Christ, these priests limited their work to the Christians who were settled in the kingdom and others who disembarked occasionally, specially the Japanese.

In fact, as there were few possibilities of converting the natives of the kingdom, this was most probably not a priority of the mission. Supporting

134 Cf. A. Cabaton, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

135 *Ibidem*, p. 100.

136 Pertaining the catholic missions in Asia, *vide* Alain Forest, 'Catholicisme et sociétés asiatiques: quelques réflexions' in *Catholicisme et sociétés asiatiques* (ed. Alain Forest e Yoshiharu Tsuboi), Paris/Tokyo, Editions L'Harmattan, 1988, pp. 205-218.



this line of thought is the fact that, until 1640, none of the missionaries in Cambodia spoke kmer – which made their job almost impossible and justifies the accusations that the missionaries were in Cambodia but thinking of other regions. In the same manner, the annual letters referred to the implementation of solid actions for the evangelisation of pagan Japanese and Cochinchina people, not including it for the Cambodians. The only exception is the 1650 annual letter, but the work of Father Francisco Rivas resulted in the conversion of a single soul: the *talapão* João de Sousa.

Therefore, 174<sup>137</sup> years after the first Portuguese priests stepped into the kingdom of Cambodia, the religious beliefs of its natives remained unchanged. In almost 150 years of missions, Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits managed only to widen the restricted circle of the Christian community beyond the Europeans, some Japanese merchants, Cochinchina people and Malay. The few Cambodians which converted to Christianity never reached twenty<sup>138</sup> and even those, shortly afterwards, embraced their original religion.

The immediate character and quick presentation of results expected from the catholic missions in the East, reflected in no way the Cambodian reality, where the creation of conditions for future conversions would always be a slow process. Extremely clenched to their religious convictions, the Cambodians recognised the value of the words of the missionaries, but never placed the possibility of abandoning Buddhism. In reality, as the priests never really adapted to local culture, they were always seen as foreigners and the creed which they preached was viewed as a reflection of their western attitude. In fact, only Friar Silvestre de Azevedo tried to integrate himself within the Cambodian society with the objective of communicating Christian principles to the largest number of souls possible. Nevertheless, he would be accused of deviating from the divine right by the Congregation.

It is not surprising that, the cordial relations between the missionaries and “priests of idols” were easy to be established. Both the Jesuits, Dominicans and Franciscans never featured in the kingdom of Cambodia as true competitors of the bonzes. In fact, they never constituted a threat to the beliefs and religion of the Cambodians: as they were not accompanied by the military, the missionaries could not conquer with the power of the sword and their words never touch the hearts of the natives.

137 Considered chronological goals, the years of 1555, date in which Friar Gaspar da Cruz arrived in Cambodia and 1729, date in which Father José Pires abandoned the mission.

138 Not accounting for mass conversion of 300 children, in around 1585, by Friar Silvestre de Azevedo, as it was not considered a voluntary act.

### Abstract

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Kingdom of Cambodia that staged internal conflicts and was constantly at war with neighbouring territorial entities, did not awake great interest in the Portuguese royal authorities which had just settled in India. However, as of the first half of said century, merchants and Portuguese adventurers started disembarking at Cambodian ports attracted by products that were apparently not too valuable but very sought after amidst the Asian circuits. The missionaries followed in the steps of the merchants...

Their chronicles, the official mail of the orders and their own private mail illustrate a range of issues and problems pertaining to the consequences deriving from the merger of cultures. Through references made to habits, customs, beliefs and religious practices of the Cambodian people one comprehends the impact that missionary activities had on this society that has remained sturdy in its beliefs.

### Resumo

No início do século XVI, o reino Camboja, palco de conflitos internos e em constante guerra com as entidades territoriais vizinhas, não apresentava qualquer interesse para as autoridades régias portuguesas recém instaladas na Índia. No entanto, a partir da primeira metade deste século, comerciantes e aventureiros portugueses começaram a desembarcar nos portos cambojanos atraídos por produtos não muito valiosos mas que possuíam bastante procura dentro dos circuitos asiáticos. Os missionários seguiriam as pegadas dos mercadores...

As suas crónicas, a correspondência oficial das ordens e a própria correspondência de foro mais privado ilustram uma panóplia de temas e de problemas relacionados com as consequências do encontro de culturas. Nas referências aos hábitos, costumes, crenças e práticas religiosas do povo cambojano, é possível compreender o impacto das actividades missionárias nesta sociedade que conseguiu permanecer praticamente impermeável nas suas crenças.

### 要約

16世紀初頭、内乱が起き、そしてまた隣りの自主的地域と常に闘争のあったカンボジア王国はその直前にインドに移住していたポルトガル国王政権の関心を引くことはなかった。しかし16世紀前半には価値の高いものに見えなかったのだがアジアの諸市場で需要の多い産物に引き寄せられたポルトガルの商人と軍人がカンボジアの港に上陸し始めた。宣教師が商人の跡を辿っていった。彼らの年代記、修道会の職務上の書簡及び個人の私的手紙によって文化融合に関する課題と問題が明らかになる。カンボジアの人々の習慣、風習、信念及び宗教的慣習に関する言及を通して宣教活動が自分の信念を固く守ってきたこの社会にどのような影響を与えたのかが分かる。