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The unquiet religious backdrop to European East Indies trade: Christian polemical literature and the first Portuguese translation of the Bible, 1642-1694

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Abstract

The first systematic translation of the Bible into Portuguese was prepared over the second half of the seventeenth century in the Dutch East Indies by the Portuguese Calvinist João Ferreira A. d'Almeida. Existent historiography tracing the context of its production has been limited either to biographical analyses or typographical surveys of its several editions. Primary sources that correspond to the obstinate Catholic versus Calvinist confrontation underlying its elaboration have been overlooked. We thus assume that only from a deeper analysis of polemical works written within this doctrinal clash is it possible to better understand the historical significance of that unique biblical translation.

Keywords

Bible translation; religious conflict; Dutch East Indies; seventeenth century.

Resumo

A primeira tradução sistemática da Bíblia em Português foi preparada ao longo da segunda metade do século XVII nas Índias Orientais Holandesas pelo calvinista João Ferreira A. d'Almeida. A historiografia a seu respeito tem sido limitada, quer a análises biográficas ou levantamentos tipográficos de suas várias edições. As fontes primárias que correspondem à confrontação obstinada entre católicos e calvinistas que se encontra subjacente à sua elaboração ter sido negligenciada. Será, assim de supor que, apenas a partir de uma análise mais profunda das obras polêmicas escritas dentro desse embate doutrinário é possível entender melhor o significado histórico dessa excepcional tradução bíblica.

Palavras-chave

Tradução da Bíblia; conflito religioso; Índias Orientais Holandesas; século XVII.

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While East India Company doctrine sought in the famous words of Thomas Roe to pursue a “quiet trade” in the East Indies, the religious history of the European settlements there proved quite the contrary. The constant internecine back-biting between the different religious orders and fundamental differences of opinion regarding the concessions the Christian dogma should make to native beliefs and customs fueled both the Malabar Rites and the Chinese Rites controversies, which saw the Pope forced to send out diplomatic legates who were in turn kidnapped, and held to ransom, while the differences in dogma continued to rumble on for the best part of two hundred years and only jeopardized the overall missionary enterprise by failing to present Christianity as a unifying creed. Given this background, the fundamental political opposition between the north European Protestant powers and the southern European Catholic nations was not even the overriding differend, although here too the language adopted by both sides was a highly charged one of Dutch labeling Portuguese “crusaders” (*kruisvaarders*) or “papists” (*papen*), and the Portuguese reciprocating by referring to the Dutch as “heretics,” “pirates, and rebels,” “enemies of the faith,” or men “without faith, without a king, who do not hold their word.”

The Portuguese expelled “heretics” from their territories on charges of “spying” even if fulfilling useful commercial roles and assimilated into local brotherhoods, as the cases of the Augsburger Ferdinand Cron and the Flemish Coutre brothers demonstrate, and (alongside their Spanish co-religionists) attempted to seize Dutch shipping when the situation presented itself (the *Cleen Zeelandt* incident in 1624, for example). They also machinated to assassinate Dutch officials in third countries in the East Indies like Cambodia (the murder of Pieter van Regesmortes and his retinue in Cambodia, 1643; the murder of Isaac Moerdijck, *opperhoofd* of the Dutch factory at Ayutthaya, 1646). The Dutch reciprocally expelled Portuguese population in the wake of their wave of conquests inaugurated from the beginning of the seventeenth century, seized Portuguese shipping as prizes as the *Nossa Senhora da Quietação* and *De Walvisch* incidents reveal in 1641 and 1658 respectively, although at times coming to some sort of grudging agreement if only to retain some population in the settlements who would continue to perform daily tasks necessary for the settlement’s existence, like agriculture and retail commerce (Schouten 1641). While the provocative arguments of Leo Blussé contend that Batavia was essentially a “Chinese colonial town” (Blussé 1981), letters like that of Fr. Manuel Soares S.J. in 1661 (Jacobs 1989) inform us that as much as two-thirds of the population remained “hidden” Roman Catholics to whom Mass was forbidden, and who had to be ministered to secretly by

passing clergy, who themselves had to be careful not to be caught *in flagrante delicto* and suffer denunciation from Dutch pastors, or *domines*, and consequently fines, imprisonment and immediate deportation.³ In neighbouring Malacca, Friar Navarrete O.P. had to administer confessions every morning and evening for twelve consecutive days in 1670, such were the numbers and zeal forced to practise their religion surreptitiously in the woods outside their city (Navarrete 1962, vol. II, 279).

While Jacobs insists that treatment of the Roman Catholic population depended very much on the will of the particular Governor General in Batavia, the hostile and suspicious governance of men like Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1619-23, 1627-9) counterbalanced perhaps by more sympathetic leadership on the part of Johan Maetsuyker (1653-78) or Johannes Camphuys (1684-91), one cannot but observe how the relationship gradually shifted over the course of the second half of the seventeenth century to a less antagonistic one, primarily as it became obvious that there was a third rising power, the English, which by the end of the century was threatening to eclipse both Dutch and Portuguese. The costs of a hawkish policy and the never-ending military campaigns ensuing in the *Westerkwartier* also frightened the Heeren XVII, saw war-mongers like Rijklof van Goens Senior and Junior removed from power, and a general shift away from what the historian George Winius has described as a merchant-warrior company ethos (Winius 2005). Studies of Dutch-Portuguese relations in “neutral” colonial contexts, such as the settlement in Ayutthaya (Carvalho 2009), would confirm the evolution of this general *détente* in Dutch-Portuguese relations, although denominational differences again became a flashpoint in South Asia during the Carnatic Wars of the mid-eighteenth century (Halikowski Smith forthcoming: §3).

But there were other reasons too for this change. As Henk Niemeijer has written in his acclaimed biography of Dutch Batavia, ‘segregatie werket niet’, segregation was a policy that was increasingly proven not to work, and even the promotion of the Dutch language, a *sine qua non* of holding civil office, could not disguise the fact that as a language of interaction (*omgangstaal*) it was a threadbare reality: “bastard Portuguese and Malay enjoyed preference” (*genoten de voorkeur*). (Niemeijer 2005). But the ruling Batavian City Council does not seem to have contemplated the example of Danish Tranquebar, which took the exceptional step in 1646 of allowing a Catholic church to be constructed, though the lot of the Catholics even here was no bed of roses: François Martin, the governor of

³ Wijnhoven 1974 has published a ‘List of Roman Catholic priests in Batavia at the time of the V.O.C.’ 12% of the Batavian population, amounting to 2300 people, were members of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1674, Niemeijer 1996: 212-19.

Pondicherry reported after a personal visit how they felt the taxes they were asked to pay by the governor there were too high (Diller 1999; Martin 1931-4: v. I, 566). In Batavia, church services (*kerkdiensten*) were laid on in the Malay language as from 1633; then in 1673, a wooden church for the mixed-race population of Batavia was built; in 1695, a second one, a *buitenkerk* (lit. 'outside church') was built for Portuguese and *mardijker* residents of the city of Batavia, outside the central area as in Tranquebar, and deliberately low-standing and drab in appearance, so as not to upstage the principal Calvinist centres of worship (Schutte 2002, 212-19). A Dutch sexton, Johannes Hasenbosch (1672-1723), who had switched from the Roman Catholic religion to the Dutch Calvinist Church shortly after the death of his daughter in 1694, was appointed to supervise its running. The incumbent governor Johannes Camphuys generously donated all kinds of sacral instruments of mass, and it became extremely popular amongst native burghers like Thomas Anthonits, who donated a large silver baptismal font twenty-five years later (Haan 1898). The strict injunction that only the Reformed Church, as established at the National Synod of Dordt (1618-19), was to be permitted in Dutch overseas possessions was not, however, rescinded.⁴

As Dutch hostility with regards to the world their fellow imperialist Portuguese had spawned softened, a different problem now emerged to confront the Portuguese colonial authorities, an old bugbear akin to the renegadism, which had afflicted the empire in the sixteenth century, where Portuguese who were offered higher salaries and better living standards amongst the principalities of southern and south-east Asia than they were by their own countrymen deserted to the enemy in exchange for their military know-how, particularly in the management of firearms (Lima Cruz 1986; Couto 1998). In the seventeenth century, the Portuguese presence in the East had taken on a religious justification, and victories there were now won in terms of the numbers of souls harvested. The renegadism here, then, was a religious defection to Protestantism, which became sufficiently widespread for a specific term—*overloopers*—to come into being. The case of João Ferreira A. d'Almeida was amongst the highest profile of these, as rather than doing so quietly, like many traders hoping to benefit from this move such as Francisco de Acha, who carried freight for British interlopers from Madras, Almeida turned to the print medium to produce a steady stream of religious invective which other Portuguese religious

⁴ This decree, located in van der Chijs 1885-90, I: 474-5, was binding on 'Heathens and Moors' too and anyone who openly worshipped differently was threatened with confiscation of property, chain gang, exile or death 'according to circumstances'. The ecclesiastical structure of the new Dutch Reformed Church is summarised well in Schalkwijk 2004.

publicists sought hard to refute (Halikowski Smith 2010: 124). We are in very different waters from those scholars who see Lusophone Protestantisms emerging only in the nineteenth century, a result of “d’allers et de retours à travers l’Atlantique,” and with a “pôle essential” in Madeira (Guichard 1998). From the second half of the eighteenth century assimilation saw increasing numbers of Portuguese in major British colonial cities like Calcutta turn to Protestant worship, chiefly the Baptist movement, but a hundred years earlier this remained a much more controversial, and threatening challenge to one of the very foundations of Portuguese identity, outward Catholic religiosity.⁵

In this context, this article seeks to provide a fleeting survey of the polemical backdrop related to the efforts to produce the first “complete” Bible in the Portuguese language, an already long-standing achievement in Protestant nations like Holland and Germany, where vernacular bibles were produced in 1526 and 1522 respectively, but one whose legitimacy the Council of Trent (1545-63) had questioned. Trent, although it called for a better definition of Catholic orthodoxy, in response to the teachings of the Protestant Reformation, did not go so far as encouraging any new or colloquial translations of biblical Scripture (Prosperi 2008; Hsia 2005). It had insisted that the true doctrine of Christ was contained not only in the written holy texts (*in libris scriptis*), but also in tradition (*et sine scripto traditionibus*), and that printers should be curbed via a licensing system administered by the governing ecclesiastical authorities. There was of course the formidable machinery created for the enforcement of Catholic orthodoxy, the Inquisition, which via the printed Indexes first published in Toledo in 1551 forbade possession of Spanish bibles. At the same time, the idea that only vernacular languages should be used in Catholic nations was condemned, as it was thought that bible readings in the vulgates were one of the principal reasons for the proliferation of Lutheran “heresies,” and Trent advocated the continued use of Latin and the official Latin translation of the scriptures (Second Decree), although shying away from an outright insistence on the exclusive use of Latin in the church (Prosperi, 2008, 56; O’Malley, 2013).⁶

It is a striking fact that the first systematic and literal translation of the Bible into the Portuguese language was made during the seventeenth century in the Dutch domains of the East Indies. The intent was to provide access to Holy Scriptures written in the

⁵ Examples include Willoughby da Costa (1785/6-1841) and Michael Derozio (1742-1809) (Stefan Halikowski Smith forthcoming). Protestantism within Portugal (and Brazil) was only a late nineteenth-century phenomenon (Santos 2000).

⁶ The Index of 1559 and 1564 had gone much further than this in prohibiting the reading of the Bible in the vulgate, see Delumeau 1971, 44. For the relevant decrees of Trent, see “Decretum de editione, et usu sacrorum librorum,” in *O sacrosanto, e ecumenico Concilio de Trento em latim e portuguez*, t. I, Lisboa: na Off. De Francisco Luiz Ameno, 1781, 61.

Portuguese vulgate rather than in Latin. The idea was conceived within this context by the Portuguese João Ferreira A. d'Almeida (c. 1628-1691), a minister preacher of the Dutch Reformed Church of the East Indies. It was striking that the idea had come from the colonial sphere, rather than from within Portugal, where some fragmentary translations circulated hitherto, of the Acts and Catholic Epistles printed in 1505, of the Liturgical Gospels and Epistles printed around 1510, and even some fuller “romanced” versions. Biblical translations had nonetheless been effected into most of the other European vernaculars—initially of the Protestant break-away nations as we have seen, but then into French (1530), into Spanish (albeit published at Protestant Basel in 1569), and even into minor languages like Slovene by 1584 (Greenlade 1995: 3, 125-28). Portugal was nonetheless extremely laggard in producing what the Portuguese *érudit* António Ribeiro dos Santos called the “first complete translation” of the Bible in his pioneering work on the subject two hundred years ago (Santos 1806; Ferreira, 1906; Martins 1979; Moreira 1957).

João Ferreira Annes d'Almeida was born around 1628 in Torre de Tavares (Mangualde), a village in the Beira Interior, and lived as an orphan in Lisbon during his childhood. No one knows the reason why he emigrated to the East Indies around 1641 and 1642, at the age of fourteen. Some say that he was a soldier caught up in the fight between the Dutch and Portuguese for Malacca, which, after several seasonal blockades, eventually fell to the Dutch on 14 January 1641 in as yet unclear circumstances (Halikowski Smith 2009: 225-9). At least two sources suggest he became a Roman Catholic priest in Goa (*Der Königl. Dänischen Missionarien* 1729: Teil 2, 1719: Continuation 13, 12; Prévost 1746-61, vol. XII, 39, n.), and even a Jesuit, although these are almost certainly confusions with the Jesuit António Ferreira S.J. (1606-12 April 1670), as Guy Tachard relates after his own personal enquiries (Tachard 1686, 346). At any rate, he converted to the Reformed Christian church while travelling from Batavia to Malacca in 1642, after having read an “anonymous” pamphlet, the *Diferença d'a Cristandade*, written in Spanish, which disparaged the fundamentals of Tridentine catholic orthodoxy. He remained in Malacca until 1651 like Jean Guidon de Chambelle, another foreign Protestant, perhaps part of a group which the historian Van der Cruysse considers ‘mercenaires de la V.O.C.’, living through the turbulence surrounding the mass expulsion of Portuguese under Heer Vlamingh and destruction of their churches following the failed conspiracy of June 1646 (Chambelle 1645, 134). Here, Almeida started to make efforts to translate the New Testament into the Portuguese language, firstly from Spanish versions of the biblical text (those of Cipriano de

Valera and Casiodoro de Reina, and afterwards, based on the Latin translation by the French Calvinist Theodore de Bèze (1519-1605).

He resided for the next five years in Batavia, the capital of the Netherlands Indies, and worked with the Portuguese-speaking Dutch Reformed Church as a *krankbezoecker*, visiting the sick (Huet 1909; Lopes 1979). At one point, Ferreira de Almeida affirms having consulted the Dutch state-approved text (*Statenvertaling*) and having revised his translation with its basis in the Greek *Textus Receptus*. He tried to pass exams in Batavia to become a preacher in 1654, but failed, apparently because there were no Dutch examining authorities available. Almeida succeeded, however, in 1656 on his second attempt, though he had to preach in French and Portuguese not Dutch. Schutte explains how the number of posts for preachers in the VOC was expanding more rapidly than for other occupations, although remaining modest overall (28 posts or *staandplaatsen* in 1647, 43 three decades later) (Schutte 2002, 93). Almeida was sent to Galle in Ceylon in that year, where it was important to convert the “swarming” Roman Catholic population of the coastal area in order to defuse the potential for a fifth column left behind by the Portuguese amongst the new Dutch overlords (Rijckloff van Goens in Pieris 1929: 280; Van Goor 1996). Almeida then spent a year amongst the Parava fishing community in southern India, which in 1658 also passed under Dutch control. Making converts was hard work here, Protestantism here having to challenge a successful long-standing Catholic mission that went right back to the ministry of Saint Francis Xavier. Despite dispatching some of the most famous preachers of the day like Philippus Baldaeus and Henricus Bongaerts to work actively on the ground, and despite Almeida’s zeal, for which he became known as the “perpetual predikant,” the Dutch found at best a limited audience. In August 1662, for example, the governor of Ceylon complained that Calvinist ministers only “preach for the Dutch chief, his few subordinates and the chairs, benches and walls of the church” (VOC 1239, OPB 1663, fl. 1654 r. Gouver. Van der Meijden van Clijton aan Batavia, 16 June 1662). Early measures adopted during a period of open hostility, like the banning of the popular Our Lady of Snows festival, had to be replaced by a policy of economic and religious liberalization from around 1664, when it became obvious that violence and coercion would get them nowhere, and when edicts of toleration were signed across Europe in the spirit of the Peace of Westphalia (Wink 2000, 2001, 2002). By this time Almeida was already recalled to Batavia,

having proved himself, where he remained as a Minister (*predikant*) appointed by the Batavian Church Council until his death, probably in 1691.⁷

In 1681, he saw the first printed fruit born from his work as translator of the Scriptures: the first complete version of the New Testament in Portuguese was published in Amsterdam.⁸ In the following year, he was awarded a prize for his “zeal (*ijver*) in translating” from the Dutch authorities, and received 200 ducats (Bruijn 1893: 132-4). In the year he died, he already had translated almost all the entire Old Testament, up to the final verses of Ezekiel. He also did not translate the so called deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, because they are not accepted by Protestants as divinely inspired. However, the translation of the other canonical books from the Old Testament was finished in 1694 by another minister of the Reformed Church, Jacobus op den Akker. This Dutch priest, who studied at Utrecht, and was twenty-one years younger than Almeida, came to Batavia in 1688 from Ceylon a little before Almeida’s death, where he spent the rest of his life in ministry and translation work, including a book of psalms to be read at evening meal times (*avondmaalpsalmen*) (Bruijn 1893: 9-10). However, it was not before 1753 that complete translation of the Old Testament was published for the first time, in two tomes, by the printing house of Batavia. Even before this first complete publication, Lutheran missionaries from the Danish Mission of Tranquebar in India had already published a good portion of the same translated work of Almeida.⁹

⁷ Anthropological work likes to assert the development of a curious phenomenon whereby Paravas had become an entrenched Christian caste in Hindu society, see here Kaufmann 1981, though her coverage of the Dutch take-over is poor.

⁸ Other editions came out in Batavia in 1693, at Amsterdam in 1712 (apparently at the cost of the English missions in eastern India), at Tranquebar (1760 e 1765) and in Batavia (1773).

⁹ Editions of the Old Testament were produced at Batavia (Volume 1 in 1748 & Volume 2 in 1753) and at Tranquebar (Historical Books in 1738, Psalms in 1740, Dogmatic Books in 1744, The Major Prophets in 1751 and the Pentateuch in 1757). The missionaries at Tranquebar also published the Pentateuch in 1719 and the Lesser Prophets in 1732, although these translations were not Almeida’s, but produced by the Danish missionaries. Actually, they were written down from books kept in the church at Negapatnam, or brought by a “Dutch merchant of Pulicat,” probably produced in Batavia, see *Der Königl. Dänischen Missionarien*, Teil 1-9. (Continuation 1-108). Teil 2, 1729 (Berichtszeit: 1712-1726) Continuation 13, 1719 (Berichtszeit: 1712-1718) pp. 112-13. Danish missionaries like Johann Ernest Gründler (1677-1720) started to revise the versions discovered alongside de Valera’s Spanish version, but gave up amidst overwork. There is a list of 21 Portuguese works kept at Tranquebar in 1715 but does not unfortunately distinguish between works sent from Batavia and works produced *in situ* (Ziebenbalg 1715).



First edition of the New Testament in Portuguese (Amsterdam, 1681)

Besides the translation of the Bible, João Ferreira de Almeida also produced several other works, most of them of an anti-Catholic polemic nature. In 1650, he translated the Spanish pamphlet *Diferença d'a Cristandade* into Portuguese, through which he himself had come to know the doctrinal foundations of the Protestant Reformation (Matos 2002). In this same year, he translated the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Liturgy* of the Reformed Church, and in the same decade, he revised the Portuguese translation of the *Aesop's Fables*, printed in 1672. Also in this year, he published a set of polemic writings, comprising two long epistles and twenty propositions against the Catholic Church, the latter being directed “to all the ecclesiastics and landlords of the kingdom of Portugal” (Almeida 1672). The following year, he published a Dutch translation of the treatise *Diferença d'a Christandade*, along with a Portuguese appendix and “necessary considerations regarding the purported vehemence of the Appendix” (Almeida 1673).

In all his writings, João Ferreira tried to refute the central dogmas of Tridentine Catholicism, frequently quoting the *Roman Catechism* itself, produced by the order of the Trent Council and first published in Italy in 1566, as well as other derivative catechetic texts, mainly the *Christian Doctrine* written by Jesuit Marcos Jorge, the *Ample Declaration of the*

Christian Doctrine written by Italian Jesuit Roberto Bellarmino and the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine and Spiritual Practices* by Dominican friar Bartolomeu dos Mártires, all of them enjoying a great circulation in Portugal and in its colonies. In this manner, he strove for the propagation of the Reformed doctrine in Portuguese, either through the divulgation of the Scriptures in the vernacular, or through the publication of his apologetica for the Reformation.

In the face of such strong attacks against the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Roman Church, Almeida became a wanted man. Baldaeus tells us that his effigy was brought to Goa where it was burned publicly by the Inquisitional bench (Baldaeus 2000, 648). At least three Catholic priests, missionaries in the East Indies from different orders, rebelled against the polemics and heterodox doctrines of the Portuguese Calvinist. Firstly, around 1670, the Augustinian friar Hieronimo de Siqueira wrote in Bengal the *Carta Apologética em Defesa da Religião Católica Romana*. In this text, several attacks were made on the heretic “predicant of the Calvinist sect”, denouncing not only the errors in his doctrine but also of his character (Siqueira 1670). However, this text remained in manuscript form.

At the same time, theological disputes took place involving Almeida and another Catholic clergyman: Jean-Baptiste Maldonado S.J., a “Belgian” missionary for the Company of Jesus who passed through Batavia in 1667 en route to an anticipated career in the China mission. The Governor General Johan Maetsuycker, a sympathizer who hailed from a Catholic family from Brussels and was denounced by later biographers like Valentijn as a “hidden Jesuit,” was forced to expel him and his colleagues from the city. Some years later, an extensive work was published in the form of a dialogue entitled *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoril, entre o Cura de hua ladea e hum Pastor de ovelhas*. Authorship tends to be attributed to Maldonado, who was also responsible for a more straightforward hagiographical text, the *Illustre Certamen R.P. Joannis de Britto*, which recounted the martyrdom of this second “Francis Xavier” and was written in Macao in 1695 as an exercise in the affirmation of Maldonado’s faith at a time his own career was being rocked by constant wranglings over the authority of his mission in Siam.

Finally, albeit somewhat later, Italian Giovan Battista Morelli, a Franciscan missionary, wrote the work *Luzzeiro Evangelico* in São Tomé de Meliapur in 1708 in order to contradict the Portuguese apologetica for the Reformed Church, particularly one written by João Ferreira, which circulated in the East Indies. In his text, also written in Portuguese, the language of everyday interaction across the Indies till the nineteenth century, Morelli

cited the Calvinist translator and some of his works, vehemently refuting them all (Luzeiro 1710).

In the face of this, the production of the first biblical translation into the Portuguese language, in its historical uniqueness, will not be understood in a satisfactory way without a rigorous analysis of these several controversial writings, which are still barely been explored by scholars. It is essential that we analyze in depth the Catholic-Calvinist conflicts underlying its production, with special emphasis on the particularities related to the unique historical setting in which they were produced. The bibliography on the elaboration of the first Bible in the Portuguese language favours, in general, the individual trajectory of its main translator, emphasizing the difficulties he faced in carrying out this work. The few studies on this subject can be sorted into two main strands. Firstly, we find the confessional literature that extols Almeida for his pioneering work in the translation and propagation of the biblical text into Portuguese (Ferreira 1906; Moreira 1928; Esperança 1993; Barata 2003/4). Besides these, there are also those authors who try to provide a systematic list of the numerous editions of the biblical translation of João Ferreira de Almeida, published over the past four centuries. In these cases, we generally find also a detailed collection of sources related to the production of Almeida's Bible, but lacking a critical or deep historical analysis (Santos 1806; *Dicionário bibliográfico português*, 1859, III, 368-372; Rivara 1866; Alves 2007).

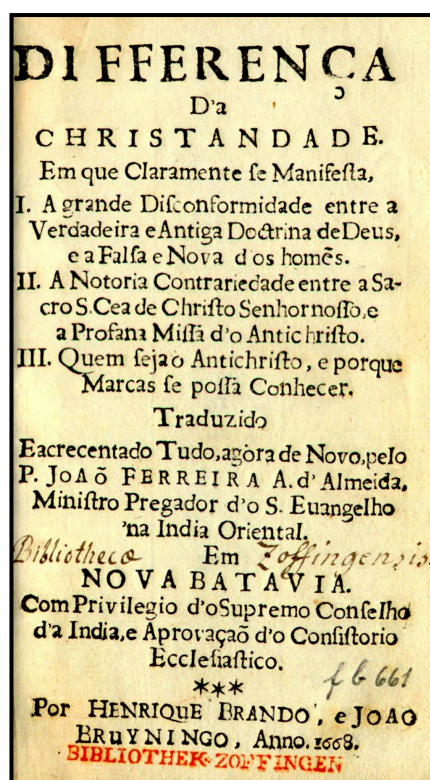
Outside the Lusophone world, only the Dutch scholar Jan Ludwig Swellengrebel dedicated himself to the subject. Although a great scholar, he did not provide a deep analysis of the primary sources at our disposal but concentrated on providing a detailed narrative biography of the Calvinist translator Ferreira de Almeida, with the primary purpose of disclosing the mysteries of his life (Swellengrebel & Hallock 2000).

As this bibliography is essentially biographic and/or typographic, its exponents did not pay enough attention to primary sources concerning the religious confrontation affecting the translation process. Thus, this specific literature regarding the translation of the Sacred Scriptures into Portuguese lacks any deeper historical analysis. With this in mind, we present below three important documentary findings that may enrich historical understanding.

In the first place, it is necessary to elucidate the misunderstandings surrounding the Spanish pamphlet *Diferença d'a Christandade*, which brought Almeida in 1642 to the Reformed Faith. The purpose of the translation of this booklet into Portuguese in 1650 was that of facilitating, according to João Ferreira de Almeida, the 'conversion and

salvation of those who do not know any other language than Portuguese’, given there was as yet no translation of the Sacred Scriptures for them (Swellengrebel 2000: 10). Thus, the efforts of Almeida for the propagation of the Reformed Christian doctrine in the Portuguese language—efforts that comprise all his translation work on the Holy Scriptures—were focused not only on the Kingdom of Portugal itself, but also on the Portuguese-speaking people who lived in the East Indies at that time, the large numbers of often uprooted, miscegenated and downtrodden Roman Catholic believers.

This polemical treatise was printed numerous times in Portuguese in the East Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1668, 1684, 1728 and 1773). Experts, however, are divided about its real authorship: António Ribeiro dos Santos, David Lopes and Jan. L. Swellengrebel, and more recently Manuel Cadafaz de Matos and Herculano Alves, could not identify whether or not there was an original version of the text in Spanish. João Ferreira de Almeida, in the prologue and in the dedication of the work, both signed in 1668, claims to have found an anonymous Spanish version of it in 1642 and from this he made his Portuguese translation. As no one could identify the original Spanish version, some argued that Almeida himself was the one who wrote the treatise and who chose to keep it anonymous for some reason, as suggested by Ribeiro dos Santos and recently endorsed by Herculano Alves. According to the second author, there is a real “myth” surrounding the existence of the original text in Spanish (Alves 2007: 165-6).



Diferença d'a Christandade (Batavia, 1668)

However, it is clear today that the real author of this polemical booklet is Cipriano de Valera (1532-1602), mainly known for his revision of the Spanish translation of the Bible made by Casiodoro de Reina (1520-1594). In fact, the *Diferença d'a Christandade* is nothing but a set of three annexes in the book of Cipriano de Valera entitled *Dos tratados*, about the Pope and the mass (Valera 1588). This work was originally published in 1588, and its second edition came out in 1599 in England. It is important to observe that this set of annexes can be found, in its totality, only in its second edition (Fernandes 2013).

It is very likely that this set of annexes of the work *Dos tratados* by Cipriano de Valera circulated independently in the East Indies, with no reference to the author, and this may be the reason why Almeida did not know who had written it. In confirmation of that, there is an independent version of the annexes, with no information about the author, published in France in 1601, with the text not only in Spanish, but also in French (*Trois Tables* 1601). Nevertheless, there was probably a version of the annex only in Spanish, otherwise, João Ferreira de Almeida would have mentioned that the work was in French and in Spanish.

Besides, it is possible to see that the format of the work is very similar to the *Breve tratado de la doctrina antigua de Dios, y de la nueva de los hombres*, probably written by the Spanish

Protestant Juan Pérez de Pineda, first published in 1560. This is the Spanish version of another work in Latin by German Urbanus Rhegius, entitled *Novae doctrinae ad veterem collatioe*, published in 1526. Therefore, the *Diferença d'a Christandade*, translated by João Ferreira de Almeida in Malacca, is part of a whole tradition of anti-Catholic polemical writings, published in Portuguese in the East Indies within the context of the struggle between Portuguese and the Dutch for the trade and maritime supremacy of that region.

Moreover, without any doubt, the most remarkable polemical writing related to these theological conflicts is the one entitled *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoral*. This is an extensive fictitious dialogue between a priest and a shepherd, about the most important dogmas of post-Tridentine Catholicism. As mentioned before, the consensus hitherto has been that the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Maldonado is its author. The subtitle of the work seems to suggest, in fact, this authorship, wherein it is presented that the book contains “*as razões do mui reverendo e douto padre João Bantisto Maldonado, religioso professo da Companhia de Jesus e missionário apostólico, contra as de João Ferreira A d’Almeida, ministro ou predicante calvinista.*” Nevertheless, there still remains some uncertainty among specialists about this attribution.

Herculano Alves, for example, although considering Jean-Baptiste Maldonado the author of *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoral*, wonders why no catalogue of Jesuit works refers to this substantial piece of written work (Alves 2007: 142, fn 249). Manuel Cadafaz de Matos also considers Maldonado its author, but admits not having analyzed the text and not having found any reference to its authorship in any Jesuit bibliographic catalogues (Matos 2002: LXII, fn. 38). David Lopes, in the same way, claims that Maldonado is the author of this religious dialogue, but notes that Maldonado’s biographer, Bosmans, never mentioned this work (Lopes 1979: 126; Bosmans 1910). Burnay sees Maldonado as the author, but his travel companion on the outward Indies voyage that stopped off at Batavia, Friar Manuel de Santa Teresa O.P., as the textual translator into Portuguese (Burnay 1953).

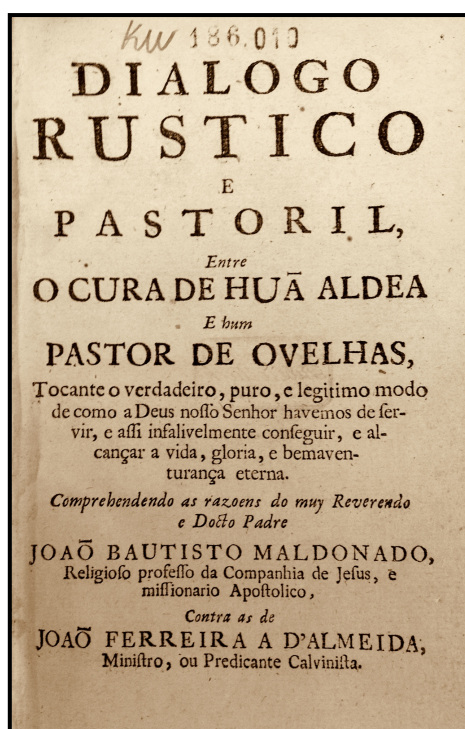
However, there is undisputed evidence to confirm that João Ferreira de Almeida is its real author. Contrary to what might be expected from its subtitle, post-Tridentine Catholic orthodoxy is vehemently attacked in each one of its sixty chapters. It is curious to note that its front page and contents page were purposely structured in such a way so that those unwary readers might at first believe it was an apology to Roman Catholicism. For example, the chapter titles are entitled: “Of the authority of the Holy Scriptures and the Traditions of the Church,” “Of the authority of the Church regarding the Holy Scriptures,” “Of the infallibility of the Pope and other prelates of the Church,” etc. It seems that this “misleading” feature of the writing is responsible for the everlasting doubts about its

authorship. Besides, in the subtitle of the work, the author uses the expression “mui reverendo e douto padre” in reference to the Belgian Jesuit Maldonado, which can only be ironic.

Let us provide an example of Almeida’s subversion here. At a certain point in the dialogue, the priest presents the argument that what renders Catholic doctrine incontestable are the miracles which occur in front of the many believers. The author then compares Catholicism with the gentile religions, referring to holy men and yogis of India, but affirms that are all false. Catholic miracles (*prodígios*) are thus little more than lies, as with gentile religions, for “they too concoct and invent by Satan’s ruse, with malice and scams (*embustes*) on the part of the yogis and holy men.” Mass too is akin to a pagan ceremony, “a horrendous, evil and abominable idolatry: since they worship as God what is not God.” He accuses the Roman Church of “saying and offering masses for the living and the dead, for men and even animals, in order to find lost things and for such things (..) all rustled up (*farfalhadas*), shameful even to name” (*Diálogo Rústico* 1684: 164-5). The author concludes:

In truth the mass is a real, true and refined negation of the unique, true and real expiatory and propiciatory sacrifice which is the death and passion of Jesus Christ (..) As if Christ, Our Lord, died not only for humankind but died as if to satisfy brute animals, and serves to (..) satisfy our bodily and temporal needs, in this life, as if to help sort these out! (Ibid: 164-65)

Not all scholars have so easily attributed this text to Maldonado. Already in the seventeenth century, German lexicographer Christian Gottlieb Jöcher (1694-1758) claimed that João Ferreira de Almeida “translated the New Testament into the Portuguese language [and] also wrote the [...] *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoril entre o cura de uma aldeia e um pastor de ovelhas*” (Jöcher in Alves 2007, 27). Also, in the minutes of the Batavian presbytery, there is a note for 1684 concerning the publication of a “booklet in Portuguese with the title of *Dialogo Rustico*, printed in the homeland under the authority of Reverend João Ferreira, who kept himself some copies” (Mooij, in Alves 2007, 601). There are other hints which confirm that authorship, as follows.

Title page of the *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoril*

First of all, the New Testament quotations in the text are very similar to those published by the Portuguese Calvinist in 1681. Also, the typographical format (type of font, headers, page layout, division of chapters) is near to the version of the New Testament printed in Amsterdam, thus confirming the data in the minutes of the Batavian presbytery stating that the booklet had been “printed in the homeland.” Moreover, the dialogue was written and published in the Portuguese language (even the name of Jean-Baptiste Maldonado has been lusitanized in the subtitle, while Almeida’s name is written exactly as in his other works). Similarly, the *Dialogo Rustico* seems to be addressed—just like the other writings of Ferreira de Almeida—to Portuguese-speaking Roman Catholics residing in the East Indies, and not to the native people (“gentiles”) of the region, as was the case with another famous dialogue *An Argument and Dispute upon the Law between a Roman Catholic and a Brahman* written by the Apostle of East Bengal, Dom António da Rozario, in the late 1660s. Finally, and most importantly, the Catholic Tridentine orthodoxy is vehemently opposed throughout the dialogue in language identical to that used in the other polemical works of João Ferreira de Almeida.

In addition, the Protestant controversial content of *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoril*, full of attacks against the Roman Catholic Church, provoked the response of an Italian Catholic friar active in the East Indies. This was the work *Luzzeiro Evangelico*, written in Saint Thomas

of Mylapore, by the Franciscan Giovan Battista Morelli, a missionary of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* (Halikowski Smith 2011). Although written in the East Indies in 1708, it was dedicated to a Portuguese military officer at Manila in 1709, but only published in Mexico City in 1710 at the Convento Grande de San Francisco.¹⁰ Even though it was written almost two decades after the death of João Ferreira, in 1691, this is the most important Catholic writing produced in opposition to the polemical texts of Almeida.

The book was dedicated on the first page “to the beloved Catholic brothers of Sion [Siam] and Cambodja, Batavia and Malaca, Bengal and Coast of Coromandel, Ceylon and Coast of Malabar, and all the other Christians in the East Indies,” and was written to fortify the faith of these Roman Catholic Eurasian communities at a time it was being called into question by pastors like Almeida, who pushed for the Portuguese-speaking masses to renounce their Roman Church. It is a generalised defence of Tridentine Roman Catholicism reaffirming the “Catholicity” of the Church of Rome, papal infallibility, the existence of purgatory etc. Morelli also tried hard here to defend the cult of saints and images from Protestant attacks, arguing that they were merely vehicles for the contemplation of a greater entity, God (Malvido 1987; Norris 2000). He also went on the attack, pointing out that church’s lack of internal unity other than in the face of attacks on Roman Catholicism. He writes:

And, there is so much discord amongst them that there is only one point on which they are united and together, namely in persecuting, vexing and contradicting Roman Catholics, the destruction of their churches and blocking the practice of their religion. This is something they do not practice against the Moors and Gentiles, and their mesquitas and pagodas, publicly allowing them to worship Mohammed (*Mafoma*) and their devilish idols, and not Jesus Christ and his saints in their Catholic churches, as can be seen from experience in Batavia, Malacca and Ceylon amongst other places. (Luzeiro 1710: 22)

In this way, tolerance for pagan religions appears as proof of the diabolical nature of the Reformed Christian churches. Indeed, they are not concerned with the conversion

¹⁰ This latter was the first and at one point most important of the religious complexes of New Spain, although suffering the greatest setbacks both in terms of lack of recruits, a political shift towards the non-monastic orders, and strain between its eclectic Spanish, *castizo* and *mestizo* constituents during the first decades of the 1700s.

of the gentiles but “only seek, as ministers of darkness (*trevas*), to overturn what is standing, not to raise the fallen; to pervert Christians and not to convert the gentiles” (Luzeiro 1710:27-9). Morelli concludes by drawing attention to the absence, or failure of the missionizing conducted by the Reformed Church amongst Asian populations:

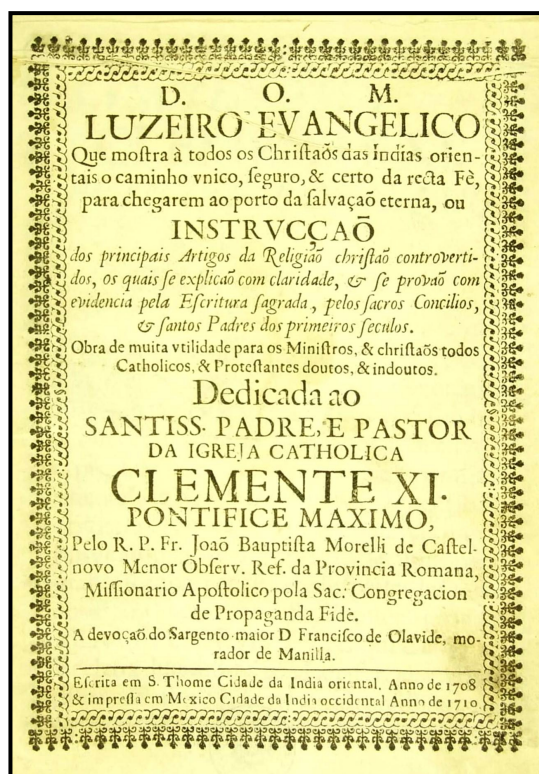
No gentile kingdom up till now has converted to Lutheranism or Calvinism [...] Their goal and zeal is not to convert the gentiles but to pervert the Christians. We have a woeful example of this before our very eyes. In Batavia, which gentiles or Mohammedans have converted to Calvinism over the course of so many years? They only know how to pervert those miserable and ignorant Roman Catholics they find there. In Malacca, Ceylon and other places what else are they doing? (Luzeiro 1710: 131-32)

Morelli’s book has been little understood or, better said, misunderstood by Latin American scholars keen to establish the first Portuguese language book printed in Hispano-American and who consequently make misguided speculation as to the author’s identity. Hallewell thinks it issued from “a (church) father in Spanish Mexico” (Hallewell 2005: 84), with Barboza Mello quick to claim it as “the second Brazilian book ever” (Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro 1979: 314/5, 42).

Besides the *Dialogo Rustico*, the Franciscan quotes in his *Luzeiro Evangelico* other works by the Portuguese Calvinist, including the second edition of his translation of the New Testament (without knowing its authorship), published in Batavia in 1693, and a “book against the mass written by unfaithful João Ferreira,” which almost certainly is the *Diferença d’a Christandade*. Still, Morelli was not aware of the fact that Almeida was the author of *Dialogo Rustico e Pastoral*. In any event, it is important to mention the way the Catholic author refers to that work, which confirms its “misleading” nature, as pointed out earlier. In his own words:

There is a book written in Portuguese, that circulates in the East Indies, under the title Dialogo Rustico e Pastoral, whose author (hiding his name out of shame) presents the conversation of a village priest with a shepherd. [...] The naive and unlearned, mainly those of weak faith, who follow the easy way, may be easily influenced by it. And, for this purpose, the author gave the book, maliciously, a title in the form of a Roman Catholic book, in

order to delude the Christians of the Indies as they read and intake the venom it contains; and, this is done in such a way that I myself was fooled, until I read it and came to perceive the evil and could slaughter this wolf in lamb's clothing. (Luzeiro 1710, 485-86)



Front page of *Luzeiro Evangelico* (1710)

It has been argued here that the religious polemical writings related to the context of the production of the first version of the Christian Scripture in Portuguese—and hitherto the most widely published book over time in the Portuguese language – make clear that this work of translation, undertaken by João Ferreira de Almeida in the Dutch East Indies during the seventeenth century, was not only a literary effort to propagate knowledge of and access to the Bible in a vulgate, but was also part of his polemical attacks on the Catholicism of Lusophone world in that period. In this way, a historical understanding of this biblical translation must go far beyond its biographical and typographical content. The central question must not be ignored, which is the religious conflict related to its context of production. In conclusion, our main goal was to provide fresh new information about that polemical literature written in Portuguese in the East Indies, in order to suggest its value in understanding not only the historical significance of

the making of the first Portuguese Bible, but also the religious tension that involved the Luso-Dutch maritime conflict during most of the seventeenth century.

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