



SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST EARLY CONTACTS: JESUIT FIELDWORK REMARKS FROM PIONEER EXPERIENCE IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract: *Intercultural communication, based on tested strategies and skills, was a major concern on the early years of the Jesuit's educational missions centered on Goa. Music and some other knowledge domains played a fundamental role in those hard intellectual works. This communication, based on original reports from the sixteenth century by the hand of Francisco Xavier and Fernão Mendes Pinto, points out and discusses aspects then presented as preoccupations and/or findings; it stresses some fundamental questions identified today as recent trends in the crossroads of arts, intercultural concerns and education; and it points out the beginning of the missionary activity of the Society of Jesus as a pioneering landmark of the policy for Intercultural Education.*

Keywords: *Ethnomusicology, intercultural education, Society of Jesus, Goa, music, intercultural communication, teachers training, social cohesion.*

1. INTRODUCTION: THEN & NOW

Menor filho em exílio maior [Minor child in exile higher], the farewell formulae from Francisco Xavier (1506-52) to Inácio de Loyola (1491-1556) on April 9th 1552, eight months before dying in the small Chinese island of *Sanchão* (an elision of the Portuguese version for Saint John) expresses his feelings after ten pioneering years of intercultural education under extreme harsh conditions. The first hand reports of the Jesuit founder based on Goa, the Portuguese ruled port city, in West India, located in today's smallest and richest state of the country, represent an invaluable source for reflection on education for social cohesion. Francisco Xavier challenges the state and the church powers through their higher representatives, the Portuguese King and the Pope, for local individual interests dependent on cultural, religious, geographical and environmental conditions. His letters and documents, that could take more than one year to get to their recipients, include field notes

like reports, practical advices and personal outflow, direct questions and orders, soft and severe punishments and also rewards and kind advice, application for financial, spiritual, legal and human resources from Portugal or from other European origin, as well as reflections on pedagogical methods and techniques, and on arguments for faith and spiritual discussions and practices of different religions. Among the most impressive references, classified as such by the missionary himself, those that stress the distance between erudite traditions of the Iberian Peninsula home culture and those of the great Japan Island, motivated rather challenging educational paths meanwhile interrupted. Arts and sciences related references in this set of documents involve the valorization of the spoken word, stressing sound, emotion and body expression and also the best contents for the pedagogic texts, the most comfortable hours of the day to teach, the best days in the week and places to locate the classes. Didactical concerns even include

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comments on the kinds and ages of students to group for the success of the intercultural educational enterprise. These multiple aspects are scattered throughout the 137 documents (docs.) written by Francisco Xavier. These documents, known until 2006, were transcribed, classified and in some cases translated from Castilian or Latin into Portuguese in the commemorative centennial edition celebrating 500 years of his birth (Baptista 2006). In addition, the musical references of the long and famous travelogue *Peregrinação* by Fernão Mendes Pinto, who lived and worked for a while in close connection with Francisco Xavier and then with the Company of Jesus before leaving it, were taken into consideration. These descriptions provide contemporary references that in many ways complement the knowledge given in the letters, namely in what concerns music related aspects, and were analyzed by Côrte-Real in 1985 (1996). This presentation brings the theme of pioneer intercultural educational experience to light. Doing so, it stresses two fundamental issues identified today as worldwide recent trends for the success of the crossroads of arts, intercultural concerns and education: the performance practice of educators and the respect for the other in the overall process. In the 16th century the aim of the Jesuit global educational strategy was to save souls, in the 21st century, UNESCO's one, worked on successive world conferences, is to build creative and citizenship capacities (Lisbon 2006) reinforcing socio-cultural dimensions in ambience of social cohesion and cultural diversity (Seoul 2010). Comparable situations, in which most teachers ignore the cultural environments of their students, deserve thus our attention.

2. EMOTION AND PERFORMANCE

Francisco Xavier repeatedly mentions the characteristics of the Jesuit priests needed for different places such as those in Southern India, Malacca, Moluccas, Japan and China

where after Portuguese resistance of sorts his early death impeded his entrance. It seems that no details are missed in his vivid letters in which he stresses good health and constitution to confront extreme conditions of food constrain, cold weather and isolation (doc. 47). He even stresses, in some cases (as for Japan) the preference for Jesuits from the North of Europe (Flemish or German), but with experience of life acquired in Spain or Italy (doc. 107). The five decades of Portuguese presence in India and in many coastal regions of the so-called Far East, however, rendered the Portuguese language a necessity for those early educators in the most isolated places. Local interpreters, needed in the educational settings, understood no other European language. Among the skills needed he stresses good temperament, dilligence in teaching and an obedient character (docs. 49 and 50), experience of life, academic and artistic qualifications (docs. 107 and 110). Different situations required different missionaries: for the small coastal communities of fishermen and Christians (Portuguese personnel in command, traders and some local individuals meanwhile converted, whose children needed education) close to the Cape of Comorin in Southern India (doc. 84), the profile of educators was completely different from that needed for the Japanese court of Bungo, in the Eastern coast of the island, were the local religious intellectuals, with interests in music, literature and astrophysics were eager to know and discuss the Christian doctrine and faith (docs. 96 and 107). Above all skills, however, the most appreciated was a performing one: the capacity to move the listeners and the students to different emotional states. Master Gaspar, who Francisco Xavier nominated as rector of the College of Santa Fé in Goa, had the grace to move listeners to tears when he preached (doc. 107). Francisco Xavier gave great importance to the performance practice in the intercultural context on the field. He described his own behavior in this respect, explaining in detail how he used to teach the prayers, using gestural expression, loud and

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clear voice, call and response vocal technique, and extended repetition (doc. 48). In many instances he reminded Francisco de Mansilhas, a younger Jesuit to recommend his interpreter to use loud and clear voices in his translation tasks. Although Francisco Xavier does not provide many references to music practice in his letters and documents, he mentions the sung mass and the processional singing of Ladaínhas of the young men and friars in Malaca (doc. 84). The use of music in the Portuguese religious services abroad was very appreciated and in especial the Jesuits would be famous for music theory and practice knowledge and development, not only, but especially in China. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), Tomas Pereira (1645-1708) and the non-Jesuit missionary Teodorico Pedrini (1671-1746) were famous composers and music theorists from Italy and Portugal in China, responsible for great intercultural contact through spoken and written language and music. They were authors of pioneer dictionaries (e.g. the first Dictionary of Portuguese-Chinese, lost for long, only found in the 1930s and published as late as 2001) and music treaties, not to mention the compositional and performance work done by all of them.

Among the most vivid descriptions in *Peregrinação* (1614) are many mentioning music performance. Fernão Mendes Pinto (1510/14-1583) was a very good writer, with a keen sense of humor and a sharp critical vision. He described with extraordinary detail not only what he saw, but also what he heard in his most adventurous life in East Asia, then called Far East by Europeans. His descriptions include music and sounds of war and peace, Portuguese and of local traditions, in private and in new public environments in Peking and other places (in Côrte-Real 1996: 190) not yet in use in Portugal by then. He mentions how the local population appreciated the polyphonic church music of the Portuguese church of Our Lady of Conceição in the Chinese city of Liampó interpreted by voices and musical instruments (ibid: 188). As well as the chill created in the local population by the

Portuguese water music played by brass instruments in the small boats in the harbor of the city of Fuchéu in Japan, when the local king of Bungo welcomed Francisco Xavier (ibid: 191). The sensation that the first guitar like instrument, played by the Portuguese Gaspar de Meireles, produced in the local population in China is also object of a curious description by Fernão Mendes Pinto (ibid: 193 and 194). Finally, the descriptions of the religious musical funeral ceremonies of Jesuit practice that accompanied the corpse of Francisco Xavier in Malaca and Goa give us a clear notion of the missionary tradition that included music performance practice in its systematic educational work (ibid: 191). The heaviness of the emotions created by the Portuguese religious music played abroad must have had its impact in the intercultural relations developed by the Portuguese in far lands since the fifteenth century.

3. THE PRICE OF CULTURAL RESPECT

According to his own writings, the intercultural educational policy practiced by Francisco Xavier in coastal regions and islands from India to Japan was characterized by a close connection with the local uneducated or erudite cultures, attending their needs and expectations. The impetus of this procedure may be readily observed in the second letter written from Goa to Inácio de Loyola on the 20th of September of 1542 (doc. 17), in which he transmits what he says is the governors will to exchange the Easter lent period in the year, so that the youngsters and the men, who used to go out then to the sea and land for long term fishery and commerce, could confess and receive communion, then only permitted during that time. The weather calendar was thus proving to be worthy of religious respect and for that reason of justified adjustment. The insistent applications for the authorization of the Pope remained however unanswered. No sign is given in the letters mentioning it. In the court of Bungo, Francisco Xavier managed to interest the king, his intellectuals and religious

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men in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine and faith. Plans were made and later executed for the exchange of missionaries between Portugal and Japan. The interest in the building of an intercultural population of students in the early Jesuit schools is mentioned in several letters in which he describes his plans for the huge college of S. Paulo-o-Velho [St. Paul-the-Old] in Goa for example. *Creio que, dentro de seis anos, há-de ter passados de trezentos estudantes, entre os quais os há-de haver de várias línguas, nações e gentes* [I believe that in six years it will have more than three hundred students, among which there will be various languages, nations and people] (doc. 16). Francisco Xavier's will was however vexed soon. The note 10 to the document 117 states that in his absence, in 1549/50 António Gomes dismissed all "indigenous" students from St. Paul to include twenty eight Portuguese candidates to the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit intercultural policy, as stated by Francisco Xavier, for education was in fact based on principles of cultural respect, promoting cultural proximity and mutual acknowledgement. His letters to the king of Portugal, John the 3rd are impressive, regarding the means he used to convince the monarch about the interest on supporting his educational policy. Equally impressive is the way he notes that the revenues sent back to India are not by any way possible comparable to the richness the kingdom receives from there (docs. 46, 57, 61, 83, 99, and 109). The cultural proximity between the Southern European missionaries mostly of Portuguese, Spanish and Italian origin and the coastal communities through the world, first in Africa, Asia and East Asia, and then also in South America, under the political power of the Iberian kings, was not welcome by the Pope's court in Rome. Pope Bento XIV (1675-1758) finally considered inadequate the Jesuit hegemonic control of the Catholic education abroad. Rome created the Congregation of Propaganda Fide still in the 17th century to coordinate the church missionary activity, counterbalancing the

power of the Catholic colonial domination of the time, in particular by Portugal and Spain under the rules of the Society of Jesus. The two papal bulls about the missionary activity *Ex quo singulari* (1742) and *Omnium sollicitudinum* (1744) mention the Jesuit accommodation of Christian words and uses to express non-Christian ideas and practices of native cultures in India and China.

The intercultural education strategy implanted by the Portuguese policy in Asia and in the South and East Asia regions of the world through the Jesuits was interrupted by the Roman church itself. The Society of Jesus would suffer even larger setbacks, from which it would however subsist and recover. With five centuries of delay, intercultural education would come again to the agenda of some pedagogic groups in the 20th century Australia, Canada and United States first and then as a European and world major effort, not yet however full valorized. Cultural respect then as now, for its imperative need for mutual understanding, discussion, negotiation, and acknowledgement, challenges many installed powers. Neglecting its value implies a price that men did not yet measured effectively.

4. CONCLUSION: SOCIAL COHESION

The field work remarks produced by the two early Jesuits mentioned in this study highlight expressive behaviour, stressing music and non-music performance practice as a major tool for intercultural communication. As mentioned before, namely in studies on music and migration by Baily and Collyer (2006) and Côte-Real (2010) and (2011) among others, this early remarks corroborate that music provides ground and processes for social adjustment (Sorce-Keller 2010) in intercultural context. Social cohesion, a major value in this context, that needs growing attention and careful handling in current times, will benefit from the acknowledgement of such assumption. The said properties of music performance, that have been analysed in Ethnomusicology, to unmask boundaries,

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nurture participation, enhance emotions, challenge categories and renew references (Côrte-Real 2010a) with extreme easiness and efficacy render it a privileged tool not only to study but also to promote intercultural communication.

This old knowledge of worldwide field experience will hopefully inspire new thinkers in our challenging effort to redefine communities, educational strategies and policies for social cohesion in the contemporary global intercultural context.

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