Ep 2 | The Goa Inquisition: New Perspectives on the State and Religious Violence

Ângela Barreto Xavier
Professor of History
Institute of Social Sciences
University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

With
Dale Luis Menezes
Georgetown University

1
Dale Luis Menezes: Hello and welcome to this special web series on the Goa Inquisition. The series introduces you to the most recent research produced by internationally recognized scholars. I am Dale Luis Menezes.

2
Our guests will give you a glimpse of their research, as well as the research that has taken place over the last 50 or more years. You will hear directly from the experts about the nature of state and religious violence, as well as the challenges an historian faces in researching a difficult topic such as the history of the Inquisition. Our web series aims to educate the general public about the various aspects of this historical phenomenon.

3
The web series is supported by The Al-Zulaij Collective in Goa. Additionally, the series is also supported by the History of the Inquisitions group, a group of scholars spread across the world with institutional support from the Center for Religious History Studies at the Catholic University of Portugal, and the Chair of the Sephardic Studies Alberto Benveniste at the University of Lisbon. We thank them all for the generous moral support.

4
Our guest today is Professor Ângela Barreto Xavier, a researcher of the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon. She works on the early modern Portuguese empire from a comparative perspective. She has published several books, namely ‘A Invenção de Goa’ in 2008, ‘Catholic Orientalism. Portuguese Empire Indian Knowledge’ in 2015, co-authored with Ines Županov, and ‘Monarquias Ibéricas em Perspectiva Comparada’, in 2018 [edited with] with Federico Paloma and Roberta Stumpf. Ângela, welcome to the series.

5

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Thank you, Dale for inviting me to participate in this session!

Dale Luis Menezes: Let's get to the first question. So, for some time now historians of Christianity in India, be it the early modern period, modern or even the contemporary one, have stressed that the history of Christianity in India is highly controversial. You research the Portuguese empire as it developed in Goa and your work indicates that the institutions of the early modern church were crucial for the Portuguese Empire to thrive in the 16th century.

7

As part of this imperial history, and although the Inquisition is not your primary area of research, you also argue that the existence of the Inquisition was an important institution that sustained state or imperial power. So, could you talk a bit about why this topic is so controversial in India?

8

Ângela Barreto Xavier: It is a difficult question with a difficult answer! Indeed, I was working on the relationship between political power and religious power, and the religious institutions in the [process] that I call the 'Invention of Goa'; and the Inquisition was certainly a part of it. But in order to understand the role of Inquisition in this context, we need to historicize these processes.

9

Sometimes we don't do it, especially in the public sphere; it's difficult [to explain this complexity to the lay public]. So, the Inquisition was part of a frame, a political and administrative frame, that was quite typical not only of Portugal but of several political entities in Europe in the 16th century.

10

Well, not all had the Inquisition but all of them had disciplinary institutions. They were very much related with the religious divisions that happened in Europe in the mid-sixteenth century and with the needs felt by the princes of Europe—let's put it in that way—in this period of controlling the faith of that population. Because there was this belief that the faith of the population was fundamental to the the political conservation of territories.

11

So, in the Catholic countries you have the Inquisition, but in the Protestant countries you have other disciplinary institutions. That's the process that is called 'confessionalization' of the European monarchies. So, these broader contexts, I think, are important also to not singularize the Portuguese Inquisition and the Goan Inquisition. So, that's that!

12

Why is the Inquisition so controversial in Indian history? I mean, the Inquisition was really an awful institution. It was really violent. It did bad things, for sure and I'm not going to try to be indulgent to that, even if we should not judge the past [through the lenses of the present]. Objectively thinking about it, it was not a nice institution at all.

13

But, and I am going to stress this, this idea of the Inquisition that I see in the public sphere, namely in blogs and sites in India, concerning the Goan Inquisition that somehow centralizes in the Inquisition, all the evils of the Portuguese empire, or imperialism itself, I think it is wrong because. This is, on the one hand, to give this institution a power that it didn't have.

14

As big as it is portrayed in this public sphere [of India], and on the other hand, it's also a way of—how to put it without being politically incorrect?—it's also a way of not seeing other kinds of violence that were taking place in India, and in different parts of India, and also in what could be called Hindu political entities.

15

So, I think, it is a part of Hindu discourse, that can also obliterate the violence in other places [instances]. It's easy when you make visible something that is bad, the other, the rest, seems to be nice and good. I'm not saying that it's really conscious, or done consciously to prevent or to avoid or to obliterate a certain dimension of the Indian past that but I think one of the consequences is this.

16

Dale Luis Menezes: I quite agree with you that there is the need for nuance, there is a need to ensure that the discussion isn't one-sided, in addition to having a discussion that is historically informed. So, let's move to the next question and, essentially my next question is about the nature of the Portuguese empire. We, of course, want to learn from you about certain aspects of conversion to Catholicism in early modern Goa because that's part of your work, but before that I thought that we need to talk a little bit about what the Portuguese Empire was.

17

You indicate that throughout your work, I am thinking here about your earlier book 'A Invenção de Goa', which roughly translates to 'The Invention of Goa', that the existence of the Portuguese empire, that is to say state structures, was an important factor in the politics of conversion to Catholicism. Could you therefore give our viewers, a brief outline of what the early modern Portuguese Empire was? Could you also let us know, or could you also talk

about how that empire changed over centuries, because obviously it's not just this one thing that starts in 1510 and remains the same, isn't it?

18

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Actually, I prefer to think that there's not 'a' Portuguese empire (in a way), there were 'many' Portuguese empires. I mean, you can call it the 'Portuguese Empire', but it was [configured] differently in different places, and obviously in different times. So, one of the things that scholars are doing more and more is not to essentialize this very figure of the Portuguese Empire. And when we think about the [early modern] period that I am studying, mostly in the 16th and 17th century, it [the 'many Portuguese empires'] very much applies.

19

First, because—and in what concerns the Goa Inquisition—at least concerning the sixteenth century, we can talk about two types of Portuguese empires. Scholars have already referred to it [the two types of Portuguese empires]. There is change from suzerainty to an empire that is more based on sovereignty. But in practice, these two types of empires, one that is more 'medieval', let's put it in that way, where the power of the king is fragile and is delegated mostly to local powers.

20

Actually, in the first three or four decades of the 16th century, surely [in the] majority of the places where the Portuguese were, [they had] indirect rule. And this was the majority of places where the Portuguese ruled. They had fiscal and military power, but in most of the things, life was actually managed by the local princes, or the local authorities. And this [situation] continued in many places of the Portuguese Empire at least until the eighteenth century.

21

But there were at least two main places like [Goa and Brazil], and Sri Lanka in the 16th and 17th countries tried to be a third place, let's put it that way, where sovereignty came to be the main type of imperial rule…and it was how [Goa] became, what Catarina Madeira Santos explained many years ago, as the 'key to all India'. But this was not from the beginning, it was something that happened from the decade of 1530 onwards, at the center of the Estado da Índia, and where the Portuguese Crown invested really much of this power. And later on Brazil, which is a completely different story. They're not exactly 'colonized', so they are another type of imperialism.

22

[It was] much more like the old Roman colonies—that was the model, the Roman empire was

the model. So, you can see that already in the 16th century, you have a multiplicity of possibilities of being imperial and you have, in a way, several empires within the big structure that you call the 'Portuguese empire'. This changed during the 17th and 18th centuries, also because of the political culture of the Portuguese Crown, of the Portuguese elites, and of the societies with whom they interacted, changed. We cannot, we should not think about this "entity", as you put it, [as] unchallenged and unchanged in the period. Multiplicity, complexity, I think, and also diversity are the adjectives that occurred to me to think about this.

23

Dale Luis Menezes: I am also now reminded of your teacher, António Manuel Hespanha—I do not know if 'decentralization' is the right word—at least from when the Marquis of Pombal comes in that's when the empire starts to centralize, isn't it? Isn't that the general sense? Dale Luis Menezes: You have a very decentered administrative structure, and so only in the late 18th century that centralization as, as we know it, happened within the Portuguese empire?

24

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Yes. As António Manuel Hespanha explained very well that the main political culture, the dominant political culture, of the Portuguese elites and society during the 16th and 17th century, for sure, was plurality. There was this concept of jurisdiction and each institution had its power, that was not to be shared, not even with the king. And the king also had this sense that there was this distribution of power.

25

It's true that a change from suzerainty to sovereignty is also a change in the political culture, towards an increasing centralization of power and less redistribution of that power within the institutions of the Portuguese Crown. But this is not the process that happened from one moment to another; when I say from 1530s onwards, in Goa there is a change in the implementation of policies, I think there was an intention of doing it and there were many expression of it.

26

But the agents, the Portuguese agents, who were in place—the majority of them shared a different kind of political culture. So, also the implementation of this policy were dependent on these sometimes convergent and sometimes divergent ways of understanding what power was. How should it be used? Who had the right to use this? And so on. Yes, so it is not technically centralization [of power] but 'division' of power.

27

Dale Luis Menezes: Right, on that note of multiplicity, as you stress, let's talk now about religion, the main focus of this web series. So, what role did religion play in empire, or to state that question in another way, what role did empire or politics play in religion? And over here, I wanted to also refer to the work of A. K. Priolkar. How does your work differ or is similar to the broad conclusions drawn by Priolkar about half a century ago?

28

Ângela Barreto Xavier: I must say that my work does not differ in many ways from that of Priolkar's great book, 'The Goan Inquisition'. Yes, in many senses we have similar conclusions, but I think I do differ from Priolkar, even if—I mean he is really a great historian who tried to assemble many sources, the one's that were available in the period when he wrote, now we have access to other sources.

29

But where do I differ? I think I differ, first, because I use different sources than the ones Priolkar used, namely some administrative sources that usually are not used, like the inventories of land. Well, Priolkar also used them but he did not analyze them the way I do, because I think that he has a very much 'top-down approach'. I also have it but I try to compliment this more evenly, I would say, in my work.

30

I try to call it the 'bottom-up' approach, even if it is a very imperfect 'bottom-up' approach. It was Kirti [N.] Chaudhuri who was always talking about doing polyphonic history, … and also this was the best thing I learned from him, which was the need of doing a polyphonic history. To hear the voices of different agents, and to put them all together. Sometimes this is not nice to listen to because it is not like a symphony most of the times, it is not!

31

But by doing that you can have a more fair understanding of the historical process. By trying to balance one thing and the other. I think Priolkar's work is really very important also to provide the frame where politics and religion were intermingled, for sure. Interwoven and really interdependent. But, but I think that it's not so clear in his work, these [processes] that we were talking about [regarding] António Manuel Hespanha earlier, that was this multiplicity of sites of power and this multiplicity of sites of power were not only related to the Portuguese Monarchy and institutions.

32

Local societies also had power, their own power, also political power that local elites also had. Michel Foucault talks about the microphysics of power and that power is everywhere. Obviously, it's quite an insightful understanding, but it also can be dangerous, in the sense

that you can just forget about the violence of the dominant and the fragility or weakness of the dominated.

33

We have to be careful, but on the other hand, we have to think, and I do believe it, that sites of power are multiple. I don't think, and I cannot think, it's not reasonable to think that at a certain moment there is 'a power' that has all power, or concentrates all power and then the society, or the dominated are powerless.

34

This is not possible. We just have to think that the population of the Old Conquests of Goa in the beginning of the 16th century was more or less 10 percent of [all] the Portuguese population as as a whole. Portuguese agents were elsewhere in North Africa, or in the West coast of Africa or in the Eastern coast of Africa, or in other parts of India it's unthinkable that they had such a power, that could impose it just like that. It is unreasonable!

35

Dale Luis Menezes: Just to clarify and I don't want to ask a leading question also. So, when I say empire and religion, I shouldn't assume that empire is all powerful, which imposes its power, whether religious or state, without the role of the local society? Did I get it correct?

36

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Yes, you did. Obviously, there is an 'imposing' intention. I am not saying that there was no imposition, there was definitely imposing intention. There was imposition. Depending on the military power that the Portuguese had in different places the negotiation was much bigger then when military power was weaker; and the imposition was higher when the military power was stronger. In Goa, for sure, there's an intention of creating a 'New Portugal', Christianizing and Westernizing in the mid-sixteenth century.

37

Given the demographic imbalance…when I think about the local people…well, it is my argument now that mainly local elites were the ones that really thought that this kind of legal and political framework [was] a window of opportunity. Without this, I am sure that it would be very difficult for the Portuguese to conserve that power in the territories of Goa because I think that it was easier to conquer than to conserve.

38

To conquer would be a moment of conquering where military power was enough to get the territory but to keep it [the territory] when there was a [demographic] imbalance for centuries, like five centuries, it was not possible without the cooperation and collaboration,

you can think ‘choice’—I prefer to use ‘choice’—on part of the powerful people of the local society. So, I think there was imposition for sure, there imperial violence for sure, but there was also local interest that facilitated all these processes. Even Priolkar refers to it…the ‘communal dissensions’ that were helping the Portuguese to thrive. And, I think, this was really crucial for the durability of the Portuguese [empire] in Goa.

39

Dale Luis Menezes: Right, and I think you may have touched upon something that I wanted to ask next, and that was conversion to Catholicism. So, very briefly, I just wanted you to reflect upon, when we talk about conversion we also talk about say power and many of the things that you mentioned about—hegemony on the one hand, and also a negotiation on the other.

40

But, more specifically, you could quickly reflect on whether an institution like the Inquisition had a vice-like grip on the population of Goa. We have just discussed the whole problem with imagining an all-powerful Leviathan, so to speak, as historians are used to thinking of older empires. Would that be true? In your opinion, did the Inquisition, over a period of three centuries, have a vice-like grip on the population?

41

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Yes and no.

42

Dale Luis Menezes: And that’s perfectly fine!

43

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Well, yes in a way, especially in the seventeenth century onwards. We know that in the beginning the Inquisition was not oriented to [policing] people of Indian origin. But to people of Jewish origin and many of them were from Portugal. And the second half of the 16th century they [people of Jewish origin] were the main focus of the Inquisition.

44

Well, from 1575 onwards is when the people of Indian origin, that is those converted to Catholicism starts becoming the focus of the Inquisition. I think there was at the beginning an—what I call in my book—‘anthropological optimism’. Mainly among the missionaries. We should understand that the Inquisition was not concerned with conversion, it was not its jurisdiction. The Inquisition was concerned with conserving orthodoxy.

45

So, sometimes in the discussion there is a confusion with an understanding of the Inquisition

as the institution responsible for conversion. Conversion was in the hands of missionaries mainly, and with the parish priest, with the Bishops and with the secular and regular orders and clergy. And the Inquisition was concerned, like in Portugal actually, with keeping the orthodoxy of the faith.

46

When you start to have more and more converted people, they become one of the targets of the Inquisition. They would soon become the main target of the Inquisition. [But] it is also true that the Inquisition of Goa violated its own jurisdiction. Because [it] started to [target] people that were not converted yet and pushing them towards the conversion. But also converging with this legal framework that would penalize the people that did not convert: taking their lands, limiting their local power, and etc. etc.

47

And you can see that the Inquisitors tends to support very much these policies and it's true that [they] had a heavy hand towards those who were deviant to the religious orthodoxy which are many obviously, because, well, I would say that the demographic majority of Goa that converted in the second half of 17th century were many things. Some of them were nominally Christian, others were more or less Christians but they were also other things, because obviously religious allegiance is not something that you can alter from one day to another.

48

And obviously in the perception of the Inquisition there were many places, people, situations, behaviors that were needed to be restrained, punished and this was a long-term process. Again, I cannot think of institutions as immobile entities. Institutions are made by people, and we cannot pretend—and there's data to show—that the Inquisitors were all the same. Majority of them surely [were very strict orthodox].

49

As were other members of either religious people or political people that were against some of the methods of conversion to Christianity, and so there were many internal differences about what should have been done and how should it have been done, on the one hand. On the other hand, there were members of the Inquisition that had a completely different behavior.

50

I recall a case in the 17th century of a Franciscan Friar, Simão de Nazaré, who was a member of the Inquisition, and the 'Father of Christians' in Bardez. In a report of the Inquisition in 1532, he is described as someone who has many local friends, or Indian friends, in Bardez,

who he protected and who he saved from being persecuted by the Inquisition, for example. And he was the member of the Inquisition!

51

We don't have really much information about them [the members of the Inquisition]—but Bruno Feitler is working on it. But we are far from knowing about the personal stories [of the members of the Inquisition], their interests. But I cannot tell you if there are many cases like Simão de Nazaré…I would say that it is not the only case.

52

So these people had their own local interests [in Goa], they were Portuguese, they were Inquisitors, or members of the Inquisition but they had their local network and they used the Inquisition pragmatically. And sometimes, locals could also use the Inquisition pragmatically. So, yes and no! So, yes that [the vice-like grip] was the main [task of the Inquisition] but when we start to do micro-analysis of the Inquisition and the people who composed it, how they acted, then we can see that there is no one condition but there are many conditions and other types of practices also.

53

Dale Luis Menezes: Right and I take your point that always politics and ideologies on the ground work in a different, in a complex, in an intricate way, let's put it that way. We've talked about violence relating to Inquisition. But any discussion of early modern forms of violence and empire presupposes a pre-existing society right, in other words, there was a non-European or a non-Catholic history in the regions that became Goa. As you observed earlier, in common parlance, one would refer to this pre-Portuguese history as Goa's Hindu past.

54

Thus, one implicitly makes a comparison between what was pre-Portuguese and what became Portuguese. Is it possible, then, to know this pre-Portuguese politics, economy and culture? Could you try to reflect on say what were the local forms of violence were there [in the] pre-Portuguese [times] and I know that there's a near lack of sources for writing this history. But I would think that it is important to discuss this if we are going to discuss the kind of European or the Portuguese forms of violence.

55

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Yes, definitely Dale, I fully agree with you. Actually, in my Ph.D. dissertation, I had written one hundred pages about it, which I did not [include in the book published later]. Then I thought I would publish a separate essay on—I cannot recall the title—the political culture and social organization in Goa at the time of the arrival Portuguese

I rather preferred [‘arrival of the Portuguese’] rather than ‘pre-Portuguese’.

56

I was trying to pull together different information that I was able to collect about Goa at the time of the Portuguese arrival, also using sources from the surrounding territories because in general, we presuppose that Goa had a singular identity, a cultural autonomy, in a way. That’s why I call it ‘The Invention of Goa,’ because I don’t think that there was any such a thing as a pre-Portuguese Goa and a Portuguese Goa.

57

Because Goa was dominated by many political entities, it was always dominated by many different political entities and not all together; [Different] parts [of Goa] were ruled by different political entities. There wasn’t an autonomous [political] and territorial entity before the Portuguese, for many centuries. So, I tried to have a regional approach to the history of Goa, trying to read scholarship about other places, like South India, in order to be able to read against the grain what the [Portuguese] sources tell us.

58

I used this information in my book ‘The Invention of Goa’, but it was not a [proper] chapter but it appeared here and there. But one of the conclusions I tried to make was in this chapter in my original dissertation, was that precisely contrary to Orientalist understanding of ‘pre-Portuguese Goa’, that still persists, and I think it is a very Brahmanical understanding of this period, and that was taken for granted, like the villages were autonomous and homogeneous and integrated and all that stuff.

59

The conclusions that I reached at that moment, it was almost 20 years ago, but my research after that [subsequently] has somehow confirmed my [earlier] insights from that time. That [the orientalist and brahminical understanding of Goan villages] was not the case [that is the existence of a pre-Portuguese polity called ‘Goa’]. I mean, obviously, there was an organization inside the villages and so forth, but we cannot just take for granted that each was working smoothly, because we know that some people were converted to Islam during—we don’t know how many people—we know that people were converted to Islam during the previous dominations.

60

Some of the people, as we know, through Portuguese sources, mainly in the first decades of the 16th century were in these villages. For sure, the [conversions to Islam] created, as conversion to Christianity later created, tensions within the villages. Besides [another type of ’tension’] what we call today ‘caste question’, a word that was brought by the Portuguese.

Again it's not easy to talk about caste in terms that were used in the nineteenth century onwards when thinking about 16th century Goa.

61

But it was quite clear—after the Portuguese arrived that there were conflicts also inside the villages. There was social violence, for sure. The Portuguese and the missionaries were offering land from non-Christians to Christians, or were giving lands to poor people. I am not saying the majority of them—but perhaps enough of this people in order to challenge the balances in the villages. They [the poor] could also see in Christianity a kind of opportunity, because we cannot forget, even if the practice was not that, the discourse of Christianity, was the discourse of human dignity and equality.

62

And actually there is a very interesting decree of the Portuguese king of 1542 saying that, all the people of Goa 'if' they were Christian, independently of their 'nation' or generation, they had the same privileges as the Portuguese people. This was the embodiment of the Christian message. The practice was completely different, but we can see this flag interesting for some people and in this very fact shows precisely the tension that existed in the Indian society at the time of arrival of the Portuguese.

63

So, do I think it is possible to recover this history? I think that, unfortunately, and due to the Portuguese, many of the local archives just disappeared. I tried to do recently a re-reading of the Foral of [Afonso] Mexia of 1526. I think that if we really have these 'Indian' and 'regional' reading of the Portuguese sources (so we really have to know much more of South Indian history and regional history), we can really find the information that allows us, not to have a great and very deep depiction of Goan society—or the territories that we later call Goa—that will really help us understand this process in a more democratic way, which is to give the right weight to to these [subaltern] population in these processes. I think we are still far from achieving this but I believe that we can do it.

64

Dale Luis Menezes: Yes, and I particularly liked your idea about reading a particular decree as in reaction to or suggesting a pre-existing condition and we need to, of course, do it with caution. For my next question, I wanted to talk to you about your rather recent work, especially the work that you did in 'Catholic Orientalism' with Ines Županov. You looked at the identity-making processes, as you call it, of the local elites, but in your other work, as you just mentioned, you also look at a bottom-up approach, where you look at the subaltern sections. So, on the one hand, what can you tell us about the role of elites in this identity-

making processes within the Portuguese empire?

65
And secondly, what can you also tell us about the role of these a local subalterns who converted to Catholicism? I know that sources are a problem and I can only recall a novel by Mahabeshwar Sail, which was published first in Nagri Konkani and subsequently it had an English and a Marathi translation. The English translation is 'The Age of Frenzy'. It gives a slightly different perspective, I would say a nuanced perspective, on why the subalterns converted, and what the pre-existing social forms of exclusion and violence are. So in your research, what can you tell us about both these broad sections of the local society?

66
Ângela Barreto Xavier: As you know, I've been mainly working with the elites because the elites are the one's that leave more traces in the historical record, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I always use social science theories to explain my own research and also the sociology of the elites tends to show that [they] usually try to hold onto their power. We cannot generalize completely but it is a common rule.

67
When you have power you try to conserve it. You don't want to lose it, for many different reasons. One reason is your way of living. If you lose your power, you lose your way of living. So my own thesis, if you know, is that without the role of the local elites, Portuguese power would not have survived for so long in Goa. And that was mainly, or very much because, of these elites. [The] majority of these elites did not want to lose their local power and they would definitely lose it if they did not convert. When they realize that—again I'm talking of the majority of the people not all—but when they did realize that it was not easy to get rid of the Portuguese, as they expected in the beginning, and the Portuguese policies changed [over time]...

68
Their choice was [made] in order to keep their local power. Even if with the intention of keeping their faith, their devotion for their ritual tradition at the same time. I think that was probably what happened in the beginning. With most of the local elites when they converted, when they submitted and engaged with the process of Christianization, pragmatically or not. It is very difficult today to really know the intentionalities of those people.

69
I think, in general, it's more pragmatic in the beginning than genuine. The truth is that the relationship with memory, as we know, changes depending on our historical experience and we can see that at the end of the 17th century, these local elites that were Christianized

attempted to, what Homi Bhabha called, ‘Mimetize’ [or, emulate] the Portuguese and become ‘Portuguese like’. And this was somehow predicted by the missionaries in the 16th century.

70

You have many writings of the missionaries saying: “they [the elites] now do not believe, but their grandchildren, who will be the best soldiers for Your Majesty” as in a missionary letter of the sixteenth century. So this prediction, in what concerns the local elite, for sure, it worked out. And we still have today, not many, but some people of this descent that are fully engaged with Portuguese culture. Or are Westernized still today. Less and less, but we do have them still today.

71

Concerning the ‘subalterns’, or the history from ‘below’ in relation to Goa…Well, this is really a difficult topic to deal with. At the same time it is—how to put it?—it is the most unfair thing, because the stories of the demographic majority are usually untold. Or they are told with microcases, because you don’t have much more than that. I think that the Inquisition records that have now been more and more discovered can somehow [shed some light], besides reading against the grain the missionary records that are really many, we have to be very careful with that reading, and try to see what is descriptive of these records and what is narrative.

72

I think that the combination of different sources can give us insights about the lives of the subalterns. If we are lucky, we will find one day or another, for example, Inquisition processes [trials] or judicial processes, to access unprivileged people’s condition. And we have to invest more and more on different types of sources in order to be able to access more, but I would say that it would be difficult to have a really deep knowledge of this [unprivileged] populations, but we can tell stories [about them] and the more stories we can tell we will have a better understanding.

73

Dale Luis Menezes: I am also reminded about the case of Chorão that you researched and its relationship to the earliest convert population, the subaltern population, and how the relationship to land ownership changed. Could you maybe just briefly talk about that, because that could be any good illustration of what we’re talking about when we are talking about subaltern agency, in this context.

74

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Yes, the picture of Chorão was precisely based on missionary records and inventories of land, and trying to read them against the grain. It illustrates well, what in

the beginning we talked about the sites of power that can be multiple in many places. We can see in these cases [the missionary and other records], the missionaries themselves realized that the power that some subalterns had and how they could help in the process of conversion, namely, in what concerned the services provided to the elites.

75

So, the missionaries they realized that if these people that were providing services to the elites did not perform these services, the elites were unable to keep their status of elites. And their ways of living. In investing in conversion of these [subaltern] people, [the missionaries] told them that you would not be subalterns as before. But in general, they remained subaltern. And, so if we think about all this together then we can also try to grasp how some of these [subaltern] people strove in the new social order to be better off.

76

We have seen that already in the famous marriages of Afonso de Albuquerque, the ones that were promoted in the second decade of the sixteenth century, when the daughters of the local elites didn't want to marry Portuguese soldiers, but the daughters of unprivileged people did want to marry the Portuguese soldiers [because] all these [people] were granted with mercies [favors], with lands and so forth.

77

Dale Luis Menezes: Right. If you think about the unprivileged section who either were willing to get married or convert, it also, I think, as you said earlier, speaks to a pre-existing or pre-Portuguese, let's say, social conflict, and so this is another way to also think about this earliest moment, and a few decades before the earliest moment of the Portuguese arrival, in a much more historically-informed way.

78

Finally, before we end this interview, I just wanted to know what you're researching currently? What we can read from you in the years to come, I know last year has been difficult, it's the best time to do research because archives are closed, and so on and so forth, but still, if you could give us a glimpse of what's to come in the future.

79

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Well, I am involved in too many projects, I must say. One project concerns the public rituals in the Portuguese empire. One of the goals of the project is to identify, to discuss and to analyze, what we call 'the rituals of the others' or the 'others' in the public rituals of the Portuguese.

80

And in this project I am trying to discuss more intensely something that is very present in the Portuguese sources of the 16th and 17th century, which is the management of the wedding rites of the local people. It is a long debate, from the mid-16th century until almost the mid-18th century. We have people against or for, with many different positions during the period. And it is a great source to think about what we were talking previously, about the lives of the people that lived in Goa by the time, well it is not just 'by the time' of the Portuguese arrival—but the persistance of ritual practices of different cultural practices for centuries. It is a very interesting way of thinking about this society. So, this is one of the research I am doing now.

81

Which converges in a way—precisely because I am interested in local society—with another project I am involved in, co-ordinated by a colleague of mine, which is called 'Native Archives', the 'archives of the local societies'. In this project, I am working more systematically with this collection called the Livros das Communidades. The Books of the Communidades of Goa. The books [records] of the Ganvkaris.

82

And this [source] is a mine. It is defintely a mine. It is an amazing source. Even if the records are in a very bad shape [and] very difficult to read. But it is a mine for many different things, namely, for understanding this compliance of the elites with the Portuguese power. Or the persistence also, under the Portuguese rule, of villagers and villages that did not comply so much. And that you can see, for example, in the writing of these books: [it] was not in Portuguese.

83

Some villages started writing in Portuguese very early, while others never do it, even if the Portuguese Crown said: "you have to write it in Portuguese"; and they say: "yes in two years we promise that we will do it". And then they don't do it! So, I am working on these sources to understand what I call, 'imperial micro politics' in Goa. Or politics at the level of the village in an imperial context.

84

And, finally, I am working again on something that has been studied by scholars, which is the famous 'Revolta dos Pintos' in 1797 by using or working with judicial processes [trials] which is a huge source with many local voices and very interesting information on the political culture of these elites that engaged in [the conspiracy]. So these are the three main investigations I am trying to do now.

85

Dale Luis Menezes: And that sounds extremely fascinating. I for one am really looking forward to all these three projects. And, I feel that this work is really timely and you know it should have happened before, but anyways it will happen in the future, so we can only be glad about it.

86

Thank you, Ângela, thank you for the rich reflections, for bringing so much nuance to several of these issues that we've discussed. One of my greatest takeaways from this conversation is that it's easy to conquer but not to conserve. I think that lesson, and I like to learn lessons from history, applies as much to empires as to religion as to local society and the village organization. Thank you once again for your time!

87

Ângela Barreto Xavier: Thank you, Dale, for all the organization and for inviting me. It is great that you can provide this discussion for us scholars for sharing our understanding of these [historical] processes and surely for the people who can watch this session. Thank you so much!

88

Dale Luis Menezes: Thank you again and to our viewers, thanks for watching.