Research article

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The Role of François Marie de Tours in the Capuchin Mission in India and Tibet¹

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Abstract: This paper describes the activities of the French missionary François Marie de Tours who in the beginning of the 18th century laid the foundation of the Capuchin mission to Tibet, which was at that time a rather risky venture. On the one hand he was well prepared by his missionary work in Northern India, where he had started linguistic research by writing a thesaurus of what he called *Lingua mogallana* (a predecessor of Hindustani). On the other hand, he had no experience of the land of the lamas. What had motivated him, was the ancient rumour that there might have been Christian communities in Tibet which had only to be “revitalized”. François Marie presented his Hindustani thesaurus to the Vatican authorities in order to suggest them to agree to his Tibet plan. Besides that, the paper throws some light on François Marie’s theological attitude (perceptible in his discussion of certain missionary methods).

Keywords: Capuchin mission, India, Tibet, missionary methods

Introduction

Two activities of the Capuchin Friar François Marie de Tours († 1709) stand out as particularly important. One is his famous (but still unpublished) dictionary and grammar of what he called *Lingua Mogalana*, a predecessor of Modern Hindustani.² The other is his work to establish a Catholic Mission in Tibet.

The Capuchin Order

In order to understand the personal zeal and missionary attitude of François Marie de Tours it seems helpful to have a look at the origin and development of his monastic order. The Capuchins are a product of internal reforms within the Franciscan Order,³ which was split into the Conventuals and the stricter Observants, with the Capuchins being descendant of the latter, following more closely St Francis of Assisi’s ideal of living a poor and simple life. They originated in the Italian region of the Marches. The founder of the new branch was Matteo di Bassi who in prayer heard a voice exhorting him to “Observe the Rule to the letter”, which means more strictly and in an ascetic way. He soon

¹ This paper is a slightly enlarged version of an introductory lecture for the “Workshop on the European Discovery of ‘Hindi’” (Uppsala University, Department of Linguistics and Philology, June 4–5, 2014). I am grateful to my colleague Britta-Maria Gruber, Bonn, for improving my English.

² In this paper, I am not dealing in extenso with the life of François Marie and the *Thesaurus Linguae Indiae*, because I did not want to interfere with the ongoing major project of producing an edition of the Thesaurus under the guidance of Heinz Werner Wessler (Uppsala). A film on that project is also in preparation.

³ The Franciscan Order as such began missionary work shortly after its foundation (1209 / 1219), and might probably be called “the first missionary Order in the Church” (J. Prasad Pinto, “Cultural Contribution of the Capuchins in India”, in: *Indian Missiological Review* 12 (1990), 137–147, here: 137).

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changed his monastic habit (robe) by forming the cap into a long hood, and this was the starting point of the Capuchin order in 1525. That form of monastic habit was not only a piece of dress for the new congregation, but also a symbol of their return to the time of the origin of the Franciscans; they took for granted that it was the exact type of garment worn by St Francis himself.⁴ Both observing the rule literally and wearing the hooded habit became the distinguishing marks of the new movement. For François Marie de Tours, his Capuchin habit was so important that he wore it continuously in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, as it was proof of their freedom and acceptance in the city, as he told in a letter to his Superior.⁵

The Indian Mission

In March 1639, the first three Capuchins reached the port of Goa, but as soon as they arrived they were robbed of all their belongings and even submitted to cruel torture. One friar remained at Goa, others founded the stations of Surat,⁶ Pondichéry and Madras.⁷ Here, the Capuchins composed several reliable works on Indian languages and literature.⁸

The Pondichéry Mission⁹ had been established in Madras when the French inhabitants of Pondichéry invited the French Capuchins to administer the religious service for them. There was a new mission building, and soon the monks erected a small church. The mission began in 1674 and was officially established on 15 January 1677.¹⁰ In 1690 it was extended to seven small neighbouring towns.¹¹ Surat and Pondichéry were the locations of François Marie de Tours' activity from 1680 onward.

When considering the conflicts with the Jesuits at the beginning of the 18th century, it should be mentioned that the latter first arrived in Pondichéry in 1689.¹² On 10 June 1699, pastoral care was placed into the hands of the Jesuits, with Fr Henri Dolu becoming the parish priest of the Tamil congregation, while only the work with the Europeans and "Europeanized Indians" was left to the Capuchins. This development caused strong disappointment among the Capuchins, who at that time had three Pondichéry churches in their charge. One reason for the bishop's decision was the Capuchins' (alleged or actual) lack of knowledge of Tamil.¹³ For a more general appreciation of the later activities of the Capuchin Mission to India, see Vadakkekara, "Indienmission", *passim*.

4 For a detailed justification of this Capuchin habit in eleven paragraphs compare "Undici dimostrazioni della vera forma dell'abito istituita dal P. S. Francesco", in: Boverio, *Annali*, 615–731.

5 Lhasa 1 December, 1707; cf. Luciano Petech: *I Missionari Italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal*. Parte I-IV, I *Cappuccini Marchigiani*. Roma 1952-1953; here: vol. I, letter CL. 9.

6 Peregrinus [Laziosus]: *Annali dell'Ordine dei Fratri Minori Cappuccini scritti e illustrati*. Vol. 1. Milano 1882.

7 Peter C. Elampassery: *Early Capuchin Missions to India*. Sahibabad 1982, *passim*. Clemente da Terzorio: *Manuale Historicum Missionum Ordinis Capuccinorum*. Isola del Liri 1926, 142-150. Clemente da Terzorio: *Le Missioni dei Minori Cappuccini*. Sunto storico. Vol. VIII. *Indie orientali*. Parte I: Surate – Madras – Pondichery – Tibet. Roma 1932, *passim*; E. R. Hambye: *History of Christianity in India*. Vol. III. *Eighteenth Century*. Bangalore 1997, 145-150, 394 f. On the missions in Surat and Madras, see Rocco da Cesinale: *Storia delle missioni dei Cappuccini*. Tomo III. Roma 1873, 274–328.

8 Cf. the detailed listing in Hambye, *History*, 427–429.

9 There were short periods of French Capuchin activity in Pondichéry before, 1632–1634 and in 1642. At François Marie's time, the city had about 50,000 inhabitants.

10 Cf. Terzorio, *Manuale*, 148. This was the very starting point of that prosperous Catholic mission station.

11 Op. cit., 149. In this connection Fr. Spiritus de Tours (even named "Malabaricorum Apostolus", loc. cit.) is often mentioned, who should not be confused with François Marie de Tours.

12 Julia Lederle: *Mission und Ökonomie der Jesuiten in Indien*. Intermediäres Handeln am Beispiel der Malabar-Provinz im 18. Jahrhundert. Wiesbaden 2009, 140.

13 Hambye, *History*, 171. On the other hand, mention should be made of the many reliable prolific writings of the Capuchin missionaries on the ethnography and literary heritage of India (and Tibet): Pinto, "Cultural contribution", 143 f.; Peregrinus, "Prima missione", *Annali*, 342.

François Marie de Tours' Thesaurus

Nevertheless, in connection with the merits of the Capuchins in the cultural and linguistic fields François Marie's *Thesaurus Linguae Indianae*, which was composed during his stay in Surat, deserves first mention. The manuscript was handed over to the Library of the Sacred Congregation Propaganda Fide (Rome) in 1704, as stated in a note added to the end of the manuscript¹⁴ by C. A. Fabroni, Secretary of the Congregation. Two copies of the Thesaurus are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts Nos 839 and 840 (*BNF indien 200 & 201*).¹⁵

In a letter dated as early as 6 March 1703 François Marie had announced his work to the Sacred Congregation: "Il p. Francisco Maria Turuense Cappuccino, suppliche si stampino dua dizziari e una grammatica da un compositi in lingua indiana", which is contained in the *Acta Sacrae Congregationis*, vol. 73, pp. 63–66. In that letter, he elaborately praises the benefit to be expected from a printing of his books by the Congregation:

This language, which is so important and which at first sight seems so difficult, will be made easier thanks to what I am going to present you, if you would edit my work. It is a grammar, arranged completely according to the Latin grammar with declensions, conjugations and certain rules. (...) It will be the entrance to all the languages of India, which one can learn by starting from it.¹⁶

Critics of François Marie de Tour's Thesaurus

As regards the earliest published reports of the Sacred Congregation Propaganda Fide, mention should be made of the famous Austrian missionary and Indologist Father Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo (1748–1806), who (in 1792) wrote a "historico-critical investigation"¹⁷ of the Indian books stored at that time at the Library of the Congregation. In his *Examen historico-criticum* he presented a well-annotated list of the various manuscripts of the Library.¹⁸ On pages 57–60 he writes as follows (transl. by the present author):

Nr. XIII. Thesaurus linguae Indianae. Handwritten Codex by Rev. Father François Marie, Capuchin friar of the Province of Tours (France), a Missionary at first in Diarbekir [South Anatolia, Turkey], later on in Surat (India). The life story of this man is reported on p. 424 of the said dictionary. He donated this dictionary to the Library of the Congregation [de Propaganda Fide] in 1704, according to the observation by The Right Honourable and Most Reverend Sir C[arlo] A[gostino] Fabroni, at that time Secretary of the Congregation. The said dictionary has been corrected by another Capuchin Missionary to India, Father Cassiano a Macerata,¹⁹ according to another observation in the appendix of the book by His Eminence Cardinal Borgia, at that time Secretary of the Congregation. With the primary activity and promotion by His Eminence Cardinal de Bernis²⁰ this dictionary of the vernacular Hindostani language, as it is used in the city of Surat, has been sent to Mr Anquetil du Perron in Paris, who returned it to the Library in 1784, as stated in the letter written by him on 12 March 1784 in Paris. Anquetil says in this letter: "This really royal kindness (namely sending the book to Paris with approval of His Holiness the

14 Elampassery, *Early Capuchin Missions*, 77–79.

15 Op. cit., 78 f.

16 A French translation of the complete letter, together with an abstract made by the Congregation, is to be found in Dharampal, *Réligion des Malabars*, pp. 337–339.

17 Paulinus a San[c]to Bartholomaeo: *Examen historico-criticum codicum Indicorum bibliothecae sacrae congregationis de propaganda fide*. Romae 1792.

18 By the way, it is from Paulinus, who belonged to the order of the Discalced Carmelites, or Barefoot Carmelites, that we have, among others, a very critical "dissertation" against the well known Alphabetum Tibetanum of 1762/63: *De veteribus Indis dissertatio in qua cavillationes auctoris Alphabeti Tibetani castigantur* (Romae 1795). Cf. Augustini Antonii Georgii: *Alphabetum Tibetanum Missionum Apostolicarum commodo editum*. Romae 1762 [1763]. Reprint Köln 1987 Hrsg. u. eingel. v. Rudolf Kaschewsky. Introduction, pp. *IX–*XI.

19 I.e. Giovanni Beligatti (1708–1791). See Petch, *Missionari* I, p. CXII.

20 1715–1795.

Pope) gave me the enthusiasm, which has let me, in the fire of an effusive but reflecting youth, to pass through the Ghats, to brave the elements, the climates, to devour the difficulties of its three dead languages: the Zend,²¹ the Pahlevi and the Sanskrit.” And further on: “I have copied the whole Thesaurus linguae Indianae, without omission of a single iota, to say it in a kindly way; this publication will be the basis for the Moorish-Persian-French-Latin dictionary which I have prepared.” And further on: “When I was copying the Hindostani column, I saw with surprise that the fourth column, which provides the pronunciation, does not render it completely.”

After this quotation from Anquetil, Father Paulinus continues:

First, the fourth column which is Hindostani is not represented by the European pronunciation, according to the confession of Mr Anquetil himself. Second, in many places the Hindostani text is missing, which is also admitted by Anquetil. Third, this text has been corrected by Father Cassiano da Macerata. Fourth, Reverend father François Marie has composed this dictionary in the city of Surat, namely according to the language which he obtained there, and which certainly is not the holy mother language Sanskrit, but a national and vernacular of the common people, a language derived from Sanskrit, and it is therefore spoiled and interspersed with many Persian and Arabic words. Mr Anquetil had seen a copy of that dictionary in the city of Surat with the Reverend Capuchin fathers. He came back to Europe with empty hands, and only then did he remember it and order the book from the Library of the Congregation. Fifth, *grahana* “constellation” is a Sanskrit word; *graha* means “planet”, *grahasthiti* “position of the planet” – these expressions belong to the Brahmanic vocabulary of *Amarasimha*²² which neither Rev. Father François Marie nor Mr Anquetil has ever read. Therefore, as the book of Amarasimha has *grahana* and not *graha*, as written regularly in the Thesaurus linguae Indostanae, it is without any doubt a corrupt vernacular word of Surat. In the same way, there is written *bout* for *bhūta* “demon, ghost”, *dēn* for *dāna* “gift”, *sāheb* for *kartā* or *nātha* “lord”, *zog* for *sukha* “lust”, *nōcsan* for *nāśa* “damage” and so on.

These and innumerable other words which are listed in the Thesaurus linguae Indianae indicate clearly and openly that the Rev. Father François Marie had no knowledge of the Sanskrit language, and that he has composed the Indian words from the vernacular language of the people of Surat, without reading or having any knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and the Brahmanic vocabulary of *Amarasimha*, and that his Thesaurus, collected from many distorted pieces, had partly been emended by Father Cassiano and was swarming with Persian and Arabic expressions, because the word *Sāheb* is Persian or Arabic, and not Indian or Sanskrit. Now, if we consider all this: as Mr Anquetil du Perron in his Indian investigations has used this and only this book; as that Thesaurus is the basis for the Indian dictionary which he is preparing; as he has never read either the brahmanic grammar nor the vocabulary, or at least has aduced nothing at all from it, it really should be seen by everybody how he himself should have devoured so easily the hardships of the three most difficult languages, how he could explain the Sanskrit words, how he could confuse Indian matters with such audacity, how he could fabricate the most ancient series of Indian kings, and in which manner he could always and everywhere freely transmit the etymologies of the Indian expressions.

The following paragraph of Paulinus’ *Examen* does not deal with François Marie de Tours’s Thesaurus directly, but as it belongs to the same entry in the List of the books of the Sacred Congregation, we present it here:

Compare Anquetil’s *Recherches historiques et géographiques sur l’Inde*, 1st Part, Berlin 1786, p. XXVII: “I am giving the succession of the kings of India, derived from the Tedzkerat Assalattin, who has taken it from Sanskrit books.” But why does he not present it from the genuine Sanskrit books? Why he does not read them, if he writes that he had “devoured” all the difficulties of the Sanskrit language? Why does he draw from the corrupt Persian sources the water which one should draw from Indian sources?

²¹ The language of the Iranian Avesta.

²² I.e. the famous *Amarakośa*.

Surely, if he would have known the book *Yudhiṣṭhira*, which deals with these Indian kings and wars, then he would have fully seen that those kings and wars are fabulous, and that it contains Indian mythology, but not history. The word *Yudhiṣṭhira* he writes “Djedaschter” (p. XXXIII), *Arjuna* he corrupts into “Arjen”, *Vasudeva* into “Basdeo”, *Sahadeva* into “Schahdeo”, and so on (2nd part, p. 298 ff.). The Indian god Viṣṇu – he writes the word as *Beschen* – he calls “Michael”, the God *Brahma* “Gabriel”, *Śiva* or *Mahādeva* “Esrafil”, that means “Raphael” – all this out of Arabic and Persian dreams. Surely, this does not mean to elucidate Indian matters, but to corrupt and entangle them.²³

Questions proposed to the Sacred Congregation

As an aside, we will briefly deal with François Marie’s theological complaints about what he calls “paganizing” practices imposed on the newly baptized Christians by some “new” pastors. He had composed his argumentation in a paper in French and Latin which he presented to the CPF at the same Conference that was also discussing his proposals about printing his Hindostani Thesaurus and establishing a new mission in Tibet. On 7 March 1703 François Marie presented his paper (which was printed one year later in book form) to the cardinals.²⁴

The full title of his paper is “Questions proposed to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda about the pagan ceremonies which certain missionaries allow the Malabar Christians in East India”. It consists of 36 topics describing in detail certain rituals which as he says are not in harmony with Catholic liturgy or even are directly opposed to it. In addition, François Marie presents a very detailed description of the processions, sacrifices, marriages and funerals celebrated by pagans and those made by Catholics. In a sort of appendix, there is an outline of the beginning and the present state of the Christian religion among the Malabars (altogether 85 pages). It seems worthwhile to translate François Marie’s introductory remarks here:

Father François Marie de Tours, Capuchin, Apostolic Missionary in East India, humbly expounds to Your Eminences, that he who has worked in different parts of India for the salvation of the souls, who knows from long experience the rituals and ceremonies which are in use among those peoples, has noticed that one has permitted the Christians several things which would seem less in harmony, not to say in full contrast to our Holy Religion, and which cause much irritation not only to the missionaries, but also to lay people from Europe who are living in that region.

This is the reason why the signatory, in order to relieve his conscience and that of his fellow friars, with profound respect submits to the judgement of Your Eminences the following questions, so that You might kindly express Your wise decisions, as it is to be feared that the Christians of these regions and even the Catholic Faith would be laid open to derision and slander on the part of the heretics, and that the scandals which one can already see now within the minds of the Christians of Europe as well as of India would be getting stronger every day.

Discussions follow on marks used by the pagans, including the “Holy ash”, on processions of the pagans and of the Catholics, on sacrifices of the pagans, marriage rituals of the Christians, and funeral services of the Christians. Most paragraphs start with the (rhetorical?) question “Is it allowed ...?”, e.g. “Are the missionaries or the new Catholics allowed to anoint their heads or other parts of the body with ash which the pagans produce from excrement of cremated cows named ‘sacred ash’ by

²³ In a note the author refers to: the preface of Iohannes Christophorus Amadutius, *Alphabetum Brahmanicum* (Romae 1771), p. XIV; *Asiatick researches*, vol. I, p. 261; Iohannes Clericus [i.e. Jean Leclerc], *Ars critica* [1697], par. 2, chapt. 5, reg. 4.

²⁴ Cf. Hambiye, *History*, 213–217; Sangkeun Kim: *Strange Names of God: The missionary translation of the Divine Name*. New York [a. o.] 2004, 115 note 184; William Strickland: *The Jesuit in India*. Addressed to all who are interested in the Foreign Missions. London 1852. Reprint New Delhi (a. o.) 2001, 62 f.; Streit, *Bibliotheca Missionum*, 12 f.; Trent Pomplun: *Jesuit on the Roof of the World*. Ippolito Desideri’s Mission to Tibet. Oxford 2010, 133.

them?”²⁵ To all of the topics François Marie adds explanatory *Remarques / Notanda*; in this example he emphasizes that according to the pagan ritual law no other ash is permitted, as everything which proceeds from that animal is considered sacred and to purify from all sins, so that man regains his original innocence and sacredness.²⁶

Other topics include wearing the Brahman cord by Catholic priests, superstitious rites after marriage ceremonies, introducing pagan ceremonies within funeral celebrations, having pagan marks on head and body, public Catholic processions also in places occupied by pagans, carrying statues of the Holy Virgin which could easily be confused with those of pagan deities, greeting each other with “Ram, Ram” or similar pagan names, burying corpses on pagan soil, retaining differences of castes among missionaries and neophytes, avoiding the application of *saliva*, salt and the breathing on the candidate for baptism, changing regulations regarding feasts and fasting by an Apostolic Vicar, validity of marriages between heretics and Catholics, participation of a Catholic priest in a marriage between two heretics, canonical permission of hearing confessions, etc. Further paragraphs are concerned with the questions whether missionaries have to present their approbations to the newly arrived Apostolic Vicar, or whether newly arrived missionaries are permitted to erect chapels, celebrate sacraments etc., or whether new missionary stations can be erected at places where missionary stations of other orders already exist.

In a concluding paragraph, François Marie asks whether the permission of certain usages and practices which might be possible in regions ruled by pagan sovereigns would also be valid for regions in which there is no restriction of the Catholic religion.²⁷

François Marie’s treatise is of great value from an Indological point of view. His extremely detailed description of ceremonies, rituals, and rules of social life in the South India of his time, filled with plenty of Tamil terms, fills a gap in our knowledge of popular religion and inter-religious situation. While the theological aspects of the text have been widely discussed, the ethnographic and philological information it presents has so far been neglected.

François Marie was not alone in complaining about those “paganizing” practices. In an exhaustive letter (dated 30 October 1702) his compatriot Paul de Vendôme had expressed quite similar accusations.²⁸ This is probably what François Marie means when he remarks that what he is telling is based not only on his personal views, but also on reports that were sent to him.

François Marie’s report to the CPF might also be a result of the rather strong tensions between the Capuchins and the Jesuits in missionary activities in India (as mentioned above).²⁹ François Marie’s strict attitude regarding a pure and unchanged Catholic religious practice also reflects strictness and consistency of his order³⁰ or, more subjectively, his personality. On the other hand, what Strickland, from his Jesuit standpoint, mentions to justify introducing certain Hindu practices into Catholicism is

25 *An liceat tam Missionariis quam Neophytis ungere caput et alia membra corporis cinere confecto ex stercore vaccino combusto, quem ipsi Gentiles cinerem sanctum vocant? – Est il permit, soit aux Missionnaires, soit aux nouveaux Chrétiens, de s’appliquer sur la tête et les autres parties du corps une certaine cendre que font les Gentils avec des excréments de vache brûlés, et qu’ils appellent cendre sainte?* (paragraph 2 of François Marie’s list).

26 Holy ash, skt. *vibhūti*. On the relevant rituals see <http://www.shaivam.org/campaign/campaign-vibhuthimak-ing.htm> (read 07.01.2017)

27 François Marie de Tours’ “Questions” have been published under the title *Questions proposées à la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande: sur les cérémonies payennes que certains missionnaires permettent aux Chrétiens Malabares dans les Indes Orientales*. 85 pp. Liège (Chez Guillaume Schupper) 1704.

28 *Lettre du R. P. Paul de Vendôme Capucin Missionnaire des Indes Orientales, au R. P. François Marie de Tours Religieux Capucin et Missionnaire des Indes, touchant le différent qui est entre les Jésuites et les Capucins établis à Pondichéry sur la Côte de Malabar*. Blois 1702.

29 On the role of François Marie de Tours in that Conflict see S. J. Stephen, *Caste, Catholic Christianity*, p. 64; Petech, *Missionari I*, p. 22 f.; Pavone, “The History of Anti-Jesuitism”, p. 119.

30 Transmitting the unchanged pure “divine knowledge” is, according to the traditional belief of the Capuchins, the only way which leads the “converts” to God. Cf. Pinto, “Cultural Contribution”, 141, 144 f.

also true: “It is impossible for Europeans who have not lived in India to imagine the power of custom over the Hindoos; to them it is a supreme law, and all that goes against it is blameable and degrading. To oppose their customs would have been to alienate them entirely from Christianity”.³¹ Anyhow, François Marie’s complaints were among the causes for the reaction of the then Apostolic Visitor, Patriarch Charles Maillard de Tournon, who signed a decree (handed over to Fr Guy Tachard, the Superior General of the French Jesuits on 8 July 1704) forbidding most of the relevant practices.³² The Jesuits did not remain inactive, as can be seen from the bulky defence³³ written by Francis Laynes/Layne (delegate of the Malabar Province at the General Jesuit Congregation at Rome).

Preparations for the Tibetan Mission

After working in India (Pondichéry and Surat) François Marie went back to Europe in 1701; he arrived in France in July 1702. From 1703 to 1704 he stayed at Rome, to prepare his projected missionary work in Tibet.³⁴

So, the idea of a Catholic Mission in the land of the lamas had its origin in an initiative of our François Marie. When he presented his magnum opus on Hindostani to the CPF during its special session on 14 March 1703, he grasped the opportunity to make his plan for new missionary activities known, two of them located in India (Gujarat and Bijapur) and the third in an “unexpected country”, namely Tibet. The CPF immediately issued a formal decree repeating word by word François Marie’s proposal on Tibet:

The third mission will be in the interior part of Bengal, turning towards the sources of the Ganges then gradually stepping into Tibet, which has not been penetrated so far. I have heard that in Tibet there are people who in times past were Christians, but now due to the absence of priests do not know to what religion they belong; neither are they heathens; they are very hostile to the Mohammedans, and when by chance Armenian Christian merchants pass through the country they are received most cordially. I have read about the people of Tibet in books and I have heard the same thing from the Mohammedans, the heathens, and the Armenians. For more than three years, I would willingly and without difficulty have gone there, if only I had a companion.³⁵

That reaction of the CPF might also be seen in connection with the ongoing conflict of the Capuchins with the Jesuits in India (and in other missionary fields).³⁶ And François Marie continues:

³¹ Strickland, *Jesuit in India*, 62.

³² For a “summary of those decisions” see Hambye, *History*, 214 f.; Neill, *History*, 77; Lederle, *Mission*, 138 ff.

³³ *Defensio Indicarum Missionum Madurénsis nempe Maysurensis, et Carnatensis edita occasione Decreti ab Illustissimo Domino Patriarcha Antiocheno D. Carolo Maillard de Tournon Visitatore Apostolico in Indiis Orientalibus & suscepta a Francisco Lainez e Societate Jesu, Electo Episcopo Meliaporensi*. Romae. Typis Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1707, Superiorum Permissu. Ab. 650 pages 4°. Cf. Carlos Sommervogel [a. o.]: *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*. 1ère partie: Bibliographie. 2e partie: Histoire. Nouv. éd. Bruxelles/Paris 1932, 1242 f. (also mentioning additional sources). Cf. Pomplun, *Jesuit*, 139.

³⁴ Petech, *Missionari* I, pp. XXXV, XXXVII f.; Henkel, “Versuch einer Missionsgründung”, p. 960. For a more general view cf. Tranquillo da Appecchio OFM Cap, “Brevis relatio Tibettensis Missionis”, in: *Analecta Ordinis Minorum Cappuccinorum* 41 (1921) 250–252.

³⁵ Fulgentius Vannini O.F.M. Cap.: *The Bell of Lhasa*. New Delhi 1976, 39. Latin text: *Tertia missio foret in interiori parte Bengala ad caput Ganges vergendo et sensim ad Thibet utcumque penetrandam, de quo audiavi quod ibi sunt populi qui aliquando Christiani fuerunt, sed defectu sacerdotum iam nesciunt ipsi quid sint, nec enim sunt gentiles, sunt inimicissimi mohametianorum, et quando forte quis Christianus ex mercatoribus Armeniis illic pertransiit, magna illum benevolentia exceperunt. De illis et apud libros legi, de illis audiavi mahometanos quasi eadem dicentes et gentiles et Armenos; et si habuissem socium, sunt tres anni quibus ad illos facile et libens penetrassem*. Cf. Petech, *Missionari* I, XXXV f., cit. *Archiv Prop. Fide, Sacri Congressi*, vol. 8 [1701–04], f. 534 a.

³⁶ On the role of François Marie in this conflict see Jeyaseela Stephen: *Caste, Catholic Christianity*, p. 64; Pavone, “The History of Anti-Jesuitism: National and Global Dimensions”, in: Th. Banchoff and J. Casanova, *The Jesuits and Globalisation*, p. 119.

To reach this third one (i.e. the Tibet Mission) one may either start from Surat and go via Agra, or start from Bengal and travel alongside the Ganges River, as on its banks the French (Galli) have houses for the merchants. Under their protection it would be easy for the Capuchins to establish mission stations, through which roads and communications to the inner regions could be maintained. But after one in the course of time was able to enter Tibet, I think it would be easy to open an access route from Persia to Tibet and China. In this way, it should be possible to invalidate the resistance produced by some because of the distance from the sea and the difficulties to arrive there.³⁷

The official decree of the CPF on the same day, 14 March 1703, stated as follows: “Also it should be negotiated with the aforementioned General Procurator of the Capuchins about the erection of a new mission station of the Italian Capuchins in the regions of the Ganges in the direction of the kingdoms of Tibet or another more suitable place.”³⁸

François Marie de Tours’s statement that until then the regions of Tibet had not been penetrated is rather amazing. Did he really have no knowledge of the missionary activities of, for example, the Portuguese Jesuit Andrade (1580–1634)?³⁹ The idea of a former Christianity that had vanished had also been mentioned by Andrade and other Jesuits. The reason for that rumour may have to do with the unexpected similarities between the ritual cult of Tibetan Buddhism and the Catholic liturgy. Beyond that, the question of traces of an early Nestorian influence in Tibet has often been discussed⁴⁰ but never cogently clarified. Perhaps François Marie’s silence about former Jesuit activities is to be understood in terms of more tactical reasons underlining the necessity of an actual establishment of a mission in Tibet.⁴¹

François Marie de Tours’s journey to India and Tibet

François Marie’s second journey, with Tibet as its final destination, started on 6 May 1704 from Livorno, and he reached Pondichéry only in January 1706. The trip was full of obstacles, among them a disastrous shipwreck and serious illness, which had led to exhaustion, when he arrived at Chander-nagore (modern Chandanagar, West Bengal), his intermediate stop. That French colony in the north of Calcutta had become a main base of Capuchin missionary activities. Soon after, François Marie continued his journey via Patna, the usual starting point for Tibet missions, and Darbhanga, and arrived at Kathmandu on 12 February 1706. On the way, he and his companion Giuseppe d’Ascoli suffered heavily from greedy border officials and local governors. They were forced to stay in Kathmandu for about four months, because they did not have enough money to pay administration fees.⁴² Finally, via the border point Kuti and Gyantse, they reached the Tibetan capital Lhasa in June 1707.⁴³

37 Latin text: *Pro tertia tam de Surat per Agra penetrari potest, quam de Bengala per Gangem, in cuius ripis cum Galli habeant pro mercatoribus mansiones, facile foret capucinis illic missiones sub illorum protectione stabilire, per quas fieret via et communicatio ad interiores terras. Sed cum tempore postquam ad Thibet perventum esset, credo quod facile iter aperiretur a Perside in Thibet et ad Chinas, quod tollere deberet repugnantiam quam habeant aliqui pro illa missione ob distantiam a mari illiusque penetrandi difficultatem.* Op. cit., 534 b.

38 Latin text: *Item agendum cum praefato procuratore Generali Capuccinorum pro erectione novae Missionis Capuccinorum ita ad oram Gangis versus regna Tibet, seu in alio loco opportuniore.* Atti delle Congregazioni Particulari per la Cina e le Indie Orientali, as cited by Petech, *Missionari* I, XXXVII and 184 n. 49 Cf. also Rob. Streit: *Bibliotheca Missionum*. Fortgef. u. erg. v. Joh. Dindinger. Bd. VI: *Missionsliteratur Indiens, der Philippinen, Japans u. Indochinas 1700–1799*. Rom [u. a.] 1964, 13 no. 55.

39 On Andrade, his journey to Tibet and his letters see Jürgen C. Aschoff: *Tsaparang – Königsstadt in Westtibet: die vollständigen Berichte des Jesuitenpaters António de Andrade*. Ulm 1997.

40 Op. cit., 19.

41 On François Marie’s role in preparing the Tibet Mission Project see also Gottardo da Como: *La Missione del Tibet-Hindostan negli scritti di P. Guiseppe da Rovato OFM Cap. Prefetto Apostolico del Tibet*. Asmara 1954, XVI f.

42 Petech, *Missionari* III, 29.

The Khoshot “king” of Lhasa, Lha-bzang-khan, received the missionaries warmly and had a discussion with François Marie.⁴⁴

In that region, which was entirely new to him, François Marie was glad to receive some assistance from a Christian Armenian merchant named Khwaja Dawith,⁴⁵ who served as sponsor and interpreter. As a matter of fact, however, François Marie was unable to undertake any missionary activity, partly because of a lack of funds, and partly also because of inadequate knowledge of Tibetan.⁴⁶ In 1708/1709 François Marie and Giuseppe d’Ascoli composed a rather rudimentary Catechism in Tibetan, and they also began to write a Latin-Tibetan Vocabulary, which was later continued by Domenico da Fano.⁴⁷ In a survey of the linguistic activities of the Capuchins it is stated that “From 1707 until 1745 at least thirteen Capuchin friars were devoted to Tibetan language studies. None of them achieved such knowledge as Fr Franciscus Horatius a Penna”.⁴⁸ Not many details are known about François Marie’s activities in Tibet. But fortunately we have some letters which he wrote before and after entering Tibet.

In a letter from Patna (dated 26 November 1706), written in Latin to the CPF, François Marie mentions reports about Tibet which he had received from Armenian merchants:

The Great Lama, whom they consider as a God, is someone who never dies, and who, whenever he grows old, regains his youth. This Lama, now being young, had taken wives and so had given up the old tradition of the lamas. When he was severely reprimanded by one of his courtiers (*aulici*), he banished him with shame at the suggestion of another courtier. However, that judge (*ensor*) collected an army, returned as victor and sent that young God into prison. What happened afterwards, we will with God’s help soon find out and then write to your Eminences.⁴⁹

This indicates that François Marie was trying to analyse the situation in his future mission region even before reaching it.

In another letter written to the Custodian of the Capuchin missions in India (Fr Laurent d’Angoulême) at Pondichéry (Lhasa, 1 December 1707), he writes that in the beginning it looked suspicious to the “King” (i.e. Lha-bzang-khan) that the Capuchins were not engaged in commerce, and he had asked him what they were doing.

⁴³ For detailed reports on the journey see Petech, *Missionari* I, XLIII–XLVIII. Cf. also: “The Mission to Tibet”, in: Stephen Neill: *A History of Christianity in India*. Vol. II: 1707–1858. Cambridge 1985, 79–86; Vadakkakera, “Indien-mission”, 383.

⁴⁴ Petech, *Missionari* I, 43.

⁴⁵ On him see H. E. Richardson, “Armenians in India and Tibet”, in: *Journal of the Tibet Society* 1 (1981) 63–67, 66. Cf. also Petech, *Missionari* III, 42.

⁴⁶ Petech, op. cit., 30 f.

⁴⁷ Petech, *Missionari* I, LXXXVII, XCI f.; Ioannes de Reifenberg, “De Studiis Linguae Tibetanae a Fratribus Min. Capuccinis peractis (1707–1773)”, in: *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* L [=50] (1934) 15–23 and 43–49, here: 16. R. emphasizes that François Marie de Tours’ excellent knowledge of Hindostani was of much help to him and his fellow friars also in Tibet (ibid.).

⁴⁸ Reifenberg, op. cit., 17–23, 43–49. Francesco Orazio Olivieri della Penna (“Pennabilis”, 1680 July 20, 1745). On the Tibetan dictionary, the authorship of which is most probably to be attributed to him see (Lenhart), “De Vocabulario Thibetano a P. Francisco Horation de Pennabili compilato”, in: *Analecta Ordinis fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* 47 (1931) 303–312.

⁴⁹ Petech, *Missionari* I, 5. This refers to the events of June 1706 when the VIth Dalai Lama was declared deposed, and to the activities of Lha-bzang-khan in that month. See: Tsepon W. Shakabpa, *Tibet A Political History*. New Haven and London 1967, 129–133. On the contacts of the Capuchin friars with the nobility and the lamas in Lhasa see Peter Ramers, “Zwischen Ent-Fremdung und Entfremdung. ‘Weißköpfige Kapuziner-Lamas’ (*Ka bu ji mgo dkar bla ma*) auf dem Dach der Welt (1707–1743)”, in: Petrus Bsteh und Brigitte Proksch (Hg.), *Ordenscharismen im Aufbruch zum Dialog mit den Weltreligionen*. Initiativen und Impulse. Wien (a. o.) 2014, 168–195; Isrun Engelhardt, “Between Tolerance and Dogmatism: Tibetan Reactions to the Capuchin Missionaries in Lhasa”, in: *Zentralasiatische Studien* 34 (2004) 53–97.

I answered him, that we just came to see the country and that at the same time we provided medical care to all for the Love of God. Besides, he asked me whether we had in mind to proceed to China, and I said to him that at the moment it is too cold, and that we are looking for better weather. In the meantime, we lived in full freedom with our Capuchin habit and offered medical treatment to great and small people. I treated the second Lama of the kingdom, who is the doctor of the King and also of the Great Lama.⁵⁰ (...) We are considered as “Lamas of the Europeans”, only a bit different from their own lamas. We devote our time to learning their language, in order to penetrate their religion. Besides that, we are deliberating what to do. We have learned to read and to write, but there are no good interpreters, and even if there were any, we would not have enough to pay them. We just do what we can, until there might come some help. But if this does not come shortly, we will have to go back to present the necessary information.

The said country is absolutely unknown in Europe, and so is their religion. They know there is a God who has become man without human cooperation, born by a virgin, and who has ascended to heaven. (...) I have been told that the ignorant people maintain that there are three gods.⁵¹ The birth of their incarnated god is a bit similar to that of Jesus Christ, as regards time and manner,⁵² but the common people also worship the devil because they are afraid of him. In nearly every village there is a man possessed by a demon, who lets them worship him and who comes from time to time dressed in a strange way as a female demon armed with a lance, a sword, etc. If it enters his mind to kill somebody, one does not speak about that; it is just the destiny of that poor killed man. The people worship the devil if they are struck by misfortune, which they attribute to their insulting him. But they will never point their weapons at the lamas.⁵³

From the letter written to Timothée de la Flèche⁵⁴ (Lhasa, 27 January 1708).⁵⁵

We arrived in Tibet proper and are staying at Lhasa, the place of the Great Lama's residence where we live quietly in our Capuchin habit and are considered “foreign lamas”. (...) I am using the Indian language, but also the Turkish language when communicating with the Kalmuks, as there are two (main) languages, one of the country itself and the other one of the Kalmuks or Sog-pos or Tartars.⁵⁶ We are learning day and night the language of that country, and we have nearly completed a vocabulary of Latin and the language of the country. One copy we keep here to be of use for friars to come, and one other copy we shall take with us to present it in Rome, so I can let them see my tireless efforts. However, we cannot yet speak. Rev. Fr Giuseppe and I can read and write, and we write our vocabularies ourselves, and this will be a great joy for the new friars whom we are awaiting.

In that letter, François Marie complains about “other priests” who believe that

if a Frenchman tells them anything, this means he wants to have them under his control; they think as they belong to a Province which had provided the Superiors of our entire Order it would be unjust that

50 It is (as also Petech confesses) difficult to say whom François Marie de Tours means, possibly the abbot of the dGa'-ldan-Monastery who is considered as second highest in the clerical hierarchy; this would have been Don-yod rgya-mtsho (1680–1740), the 48th abbot of dGa'-ldan (from 1702–1708), who was spiritual teacher (*dbu bla*) of the VIth Dalai Lama. – Generally, medical and socio-economic help belong to the foremost services done by the missionaries (Pinto, “Cultural contributions”, 142 f.).

51 Probably an allusion to the Three Jewels of Buddhism (Buddha, his Teaching, the Community).

52 Possibly an allusion to episodes of the life of the historical Buddha.

53 Italian text (from the Archive of the CPF) in Petech, *Missionari* I, 34 f. (CL. 9). We suppose that the original letter (written by a French person to a French addressee!) was in French, whereas the Italian translation was sent to (or made by) the CPF.

54 Born in 1660. He was Bishop of Beyrouth (member of the Capuchin Order). On his ecclesiastical opinions see his *Mémoires et lettres* (Timothée de la Flèche: *Mémoires et lettres du P. Timothée de la Flèche sur les affaires ecclésiastiques de son temps 1703–1730*. Publ. par U. d'Alençons. Paris 1907), esp. 28–31.

55 Italian text: Petech, *Missionari* I, 39–41 (CL. 12).

56 I.e. the language of the Khoshot Mongols. (*Sog-po* being the Tibetan name for “Mongols”).

they would be subordinate to a French Superior. That's what I have heard from their own mouth. Besides, the greater part of them have an attitude opposed to our Nation and are extremely imperialistic.

From these words of François Marie, sent to a religious compatriot, we also can learn a little about his character. In the letter he then explains his situation, his sickness and financial hardship. What follows, are some remarks about Tibet:

It is as cold as it is in France; in summer it is less warm. We stay at the feet of the highest mountains, from where we always see the nearby snow. We do not know the language of the country, and the inhabitants do not know "Indian",⁵⁷ so we cannot find out anything from the pagans or the Mohammedans, who anyhow do not care about anything else than their commerce. However, what we can see, is that these people are quite attached to meat and drunkenness, being extremely superstitious and idolatrous. They even worship the Devil, to whom they attribute all the misfortune that happens to them, and they venerate him and pray to him he may not harm them.⁵⁸

This region has communications with China via Seling (i.e. Xining) and Terchandos (Dar-rtse-mdo, Chin. Kangding) from where caravans arrive from time to time.⁵⁹

The lamas are like monks, they amount to nearly half of the population of the country, they have numerous monasteries, and there are also some convents of women. There are a great number of false prophets,⁶⁰ and nobody would dare to do anything without consulting them, as it is said that they are possessed by a demon.⁶¹ They never cease to pray to God who as they say is One and Three.⁶² One of that Trinity has become man without any human cooperation in the womb of a virgin whom they call Ioum [yum] or Maïoum [ma-yum]; her son's name is Ze [i.e. tib. *sras* "Son"], he ascended to heaven, and it is he whom they call "Lama Keunjou"; this means "Lama", and they say he is God and Man.⁶³ The laymen wear on their clothes crosses instead of flowers, they say this is auspicious and the weapon which God uses to defeat his enemy, the Devil. The Great Lama who is acknowledged by all the pagans and also by the king of China is incomparable, like the Pope in Rome. He is not considered a God, as is said elsewhere and as I have read. He has under his control several kings who govern the people. I had forgotten to tell you that here they ask for someone who has an inclination to astrology, mathematics and medicine, and for clockmakers.

Regarding François Marie and the Capuchin Mission in Tibet ten years after François Marie's death, the famous Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733) reported from Lhasa to the CPF in a rather derogatory way that François Marie and his companions had not published anything! In the letter (dated 21 December 1719) he told the CPF that the Capuchins did not at all reveal their identity

57 Maybe he means "Hindostani", or more generally: they do not speak any Indian language.

58 The iconographic and ritual representations of the wrathful deities of the Lamaist pantheon have generally struck the religious feelings of the missionaries.

59 These are even today the two main roads from Central Tibet to China, one through Qinghai, the other through Sichuan.

60 Obviously an allusion to the *falsi prophetae* of the Gospel, e.g. John 7:15.

61 The oracles (tib. *sku rten*, also *chos skyong*) play an important role within the religious life of the Tibetans.

62 *un Dio che dicono essere trino ed uno*. François Marie's wording resembles the scholastic description of the Holy Trinity *De Deo Uno et Trino*. In Buddhism, the Buddha, as the primordial principle, is being venerated in a three-fold way, namely as the Buddha himself, his Doctrine (*dharma*, tib. *chos*) and the Community (*saṅgha*, tib. *dge 'dun*). The three are called the Three Jewels (*dkon mchog gsum*).

63 The expression "Lama Keunjou" (*bla ma dkon mchog*) seems to be part of another category, the Four Jewels, which means: to the Three (classical) Jewels a fourth is added, namely the "Root-Lama" (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*), who in Tibetan Buddhism is the Personification of the Buddha principle, through which the Three Jewels are transmitted to the meditating believer. As the "Root Lama" is also a human being (the personal tutor), François Marie's informants might have explained him as God and Man. – The transcription "keunjou" could be evidence to the fact that the letter was originally written in French: tib. *dkon* is pronounced with the o-umlaut (ö, ø), i.e. French *eu*, whereas *dkon* in Italian is usually transcribed *con*. The same is also valid for tib. *yum* "mother", according to Italian pronunciation *jum* or *ium*, or in French *ioum*.

as preachers of the Pure Doctrine; they even behaved as if they had just come for sightseeing. He (Desideri) had received them warmly and had introduced them at the king's court. But among the people and also at the court it was public opinion that the four (Capuchins) only wanted to explore foreign countries.⁶⁴ Desideri probably had had the opportunity to read François Marie's letter (dated 1 December 1707) in which he had frankly admitted that they did not have the chance to perform actual missionary work.

Conclusion

Dealing with the work of François Marie de Tours sheds some light on the indological discussions of his time, which are discernable in the critiques on his *Thesaurus Linguae Indiae* and might have been a reason why scientific research on it started rather late. Besides that we get (through his questions to the Vatican CPF) an impression of the theological controversies on missionary methods which are of a rather practical nature. Finally, François Marie's activity is inseparably connected to the beginning of Catholic Missionary work in Tibet.

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⁶⁴ Luciano Petech: *I Missionari Italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal*. Parte V–VII, Ippolito Desideri. Roma 1954, here: V, 71–74.

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