

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, established missions in Africa, India and throughout the Orient. Some of the missions had no problems, but in other locations the missionaries were expelled or imprisoned by the local rulers, or mistreated and even killed by the local people. Even if the missionaries were welcomed and not treated badly, they were not always successful in carrying out their objectives and were able to convert very few to Christianity.

While some missions were located in the principal cities, others were established in remote regions. Perhaps the most forbidding location for a mission was where the Jesuit Padre António de Andrade founded one in the city of Tsaparang in the Kingdom of Guge in western Tibet.

Reports and maps from local traders indicate that they generally took routes that avoided the barriers that surround the Tibetan plateau and visited only the more accessible areas on its borders. However, to reach Tsaparang from northern India where he was located, Padre Andrade had to travel across the Himalayas, the highest mountain barrier in the world and is considered the first recorded European to go into the little known Tibetan plateau. There may have been other westerners who entered Tibet as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century, including Marco Polo, but they are generally considered to have only reached the edges of Tibet and this from the north and east. Confusing this further were the different names applied to regions north of India making it difficult to determine where some of the travelers actually went. It was not until 1605 that Padre Bento de Goís traveled from India around Tibet and to China that it was determined that Cathay and China were the same country.

António de Andrade was born in 1580 to Bartolomeu Gonçalves and Margarida de Abreu in the town of Oleiros in the central Portugal region of Beira Baixa. He entered the school of the Society of Jesus in Coimbra, Portugal, on December 15, 1596 and later went to Lisbon to continue his studies. On April 22, 1600 Padre António departed from Lisbon on the ship *São Valentim* sailing for India. On the same ship were several other Jesuits, as well as the Vice-Roy of India Aires de Saldanha. The ship arrived on October 22, 1600 in Cochin on the southwest Indian coast, and António de Andrade proceeded on to the main Jesuit city of Goa where he continued his studies in philosophy and theology in the Jesuit College of Saint Paul.

After he completed his education in Goa, Andrade received his sacred orders and began work as a missionary in Salsette, an island off the west coast of India. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were several islands in this location that were then joined together to create the current single island on which the city of Mumbai (previously Bombay) is located. Padre Andrade then was appointed Rector of the Jesuit Colleges, which were Communities of Jesuits, at Rachol and Saint Paul, both in Goa.

From Goa the Jesuits sent him in 1612 to the Jesuit Mission in the city of Agra in the Muslim Mogul Empire in north India. While Andrade was living in the Mogul Empire, he learned to speak Persian, the language of the merchants in the cities and along the trade routes from India to the north, as well as along the Silk Road connecting China to the west. He was also able to learn about the culture in Agra, as well as the cultures and religions of the traders who came there from different lands.

When Padre Andrade first arrived in Agra Emperor Jahangir (1605-1627) was the Mogul Emperor. His father was Akbar the Great (1556-1605), who many authorities consider one of the greatest rulers of that time. Akbar was a Muslim, but allowed the practice of beliefs from other religions and open expression of religious opinions. In fact, he encouraged such expression in his court so that he could hear the different their religious viewpoints, however he never wavered from his belief in Islam.

The Emperor Jahangir strengthened the monarchy's ties to Islam while still continuing the practice of religious tolerance. While Andrade may not have agreed with non-Catholic beliefs, he was at least able to become aware of what they were during debates with Muslim and Hindu clerics. Jahangir was followed on the throne by his son Khurran, who is better known as Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and the one who ordered the construction of the Taj Mahal.

After spending several years in Agra, Padre António de Andrade became the Superior of the Mogul Mission and governed the Jesuit missions in the area north of Agra that extended into and over the mountain ranges and included Tibet. After three years in this position, and during the reign of Emperor Jahangir, Padre Andrade started arrangements for his missionary expedition into Tibet and made sure things related to the Mogul Mission were in order. To take care of things while he was gone, he appointed the Italian Jesuit Padre Francisco Corsi (1573-1635) as Superior.

On March 30, 1624, Padre Andrade and Brother Manuel Marques<sup>1</sup> departed with the Emperor Jahangir on his way to Kashmir. When they were in Delhi on May 11 they discovered that a group of Hindu pilgrims was leaving for a temple in the mountains north of Agra. Since Padre Andrade considered the missionary trip to Tibet to be for the glory of God, as well as by the will of his superiors, even though he did not have their official permission, he decided to take advantage of the unexpected chance to depart for Tibet. Padre António de Andrade and lay brother Manuel Marques along with two servants disguised themselves as Hindus and were not even recognized by the Delhi Christians.

They joined the group of pilgrims and left Delhi with them. Since he did not know the route, other than it was dangerous, Andrade used the pilgrims to guide them on the route and also provide them with protection. They went from Delhi through the valley of the Ganges and on May 16 passed through Srinagar on the Ganges in Garwhal, which is in the present-day Indian state of Uttarakhand, not to be confused with Srinagar in Kashmir, as some authors have done. From Srinagar they headed up into the Himalayas.

The journey was difficult and presented a number of dangers. They also faced a number of problems from the local rulers who recognized that they were not merchants and considered them spies for the neighboring ruler. Their compensation was seeing many things unknown to them or other Europeans, including trees and flowers that were not native to Portugal and new peoples with customs not seen before. Padre Andrade and his companions were sensitive to their being the only Christians and the presence of heathens and their gathering at the famous pagoda of Badrinath especially disgusted them and they strengthened their prayers to God for support and protection.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Jesuit hierarchy, the padres dealt with the religious aspects of the churches and missions and the brothers handled all the non-sacramental details of the mission and, in this instance, the journeys they made.

Padre Andrade and his group finally arrived in the city of Tsaparang, in the Kingdom of Guge in western Tibet, at the beginning of August, 1624. Padre Andrade and Brother Marques established their mission in Tsaparang and developed good relations with the King and Queen with whom they had extensive conversations about religion. The king showed great interest in Christianity much to the displeasure of the head of the local Buddhist community, who was his brother. Nevertheless, the royal couple and many of the prominent people in the city favored Christian beliefs over those of their local religion. Since Andrade did not speak Tibetan he had to rely on a translator for these discussions, which sometimes led to misunderstandings, especially when the translator was Muslim and opposed to Christianity. As a result, Padre Andrade made learning the language a priority for future missionaries.

They stayed in Tsaparang for only one season, which was only a few months because of the weather. They had to return India before the snows blocked the passes, but the King was not happy with this and put pressure on Padre Andrade and would only agree to let him leave if he promised to come back. Padre Andrade promised the King he would return as soon as possible and the King wrote a letter to the Provincial in Goa requesting that Padre Andrade return the next year. The King also made a number of concessions, including building a church and providing a safe-conduct pass for the dangerous journey.

On November 8, 1624 Padre Andrade submitted a report about his experiences in Tibet to Padre Andreas Palmeiro in Goa. This report was published in Lisbon in 1626 with the permission of the Inquisition. It was given the title *Novo Descobrimento do Gram Cathayo, ou Reinos de Tibet, pello Padre Antonio de Andrade de Companhia de IESU, Portuguez, no anno de 1624*, and very soon after its publication it was translated into several languages and became a 17th-century “best seller”. The story excited Europeans with its description of this mysterious country, a new world only known to westerners through tales told by merchants who lived near the kingdom concealed behind high mountain barriers.

As he had promised the King and with the permission of the Provincial in Goa, on June 17, 1625 Padre Andrade and Brother Marques set out on their return to Tsaparang following the same route as their first journey and arrived in Tsaparang on August 18. Accompanying them were other missionaries that he had requested from Padre Palmeiro. With his head start from the year before, Padre Andrade’s knowledge about the Kingdom of Guge increased rapidly. He had now realized that there was no “hidden” community of Christians despite the similarity between some Tibetan Buddhist and Christian ceremonies, as well as the resemblance between the figures in the paintings of the two religions. This meant that the Jesuit would be carrying out the customary activities of Christian missionaries.

Padre Andrade accepted the King’s offer to construct a Church and a residence for the Padres and work began on Easter day, April 12, 1626. Several houses near the palace were demolished to construct the buildings and a garden. The relationship between the Padres and royal family and the activities that took place in the Palace and the Padres’ new residence in 1625 and 1626 are included in Padre Andrade’s long letter written August 15, 1626 from Tibet. This second letter of Padre Andrade and includes much more

about Tibetan life, as well as the conflict between the lamas and the secular population friendly to Christianity.

On September 2, 1627, Padre Andrade wrote his third report to Goa; like the second it was from Tibet. It was shorter than the second and continues the description of the activities of the missionaries. The report also includes more details about the conversations between the members of the Royal Family and Padre Andrade and his efforts to convert them to Christianity. While they expressed interest in becoming Christians and joined in some of the religious activities, they never took the final step of being baptized, even though some of their subjects were.

In 1627 Padre Andrade received an invitation to visit from the King of Utsang, where Lhasa is located, and also one from the King of Ladakh, the kingdom neighboring Guge on the west. Nevertheless, there is no record in the letters from Tsaparang that Padre Andre ever went to Lhasa and he probably never went to Ladakh, although there is a reference in Padre Francisco de Azevedo's report from his 1631 trip that indicates Andrade may have been to the latter city.

Another document refers to a secondary mission in the city of Rodok founded by the Tsaparang mission. However, Rodok is 200 km north of Tsaparang and there are no letters indicating that Andrade ever visited there or even sent missionaries there. In fact, the only city that Padre Andrade is recorded as visiting was Tholing, a half-day journey from Tsaparang. He went there in the company of the King who went there to visit his brother, who was the chief lama of the Tholing monastery. The journey and meeting with the chief lama and other lamas is included in the second letter from Padre Andrade.

After about five years of work at the Tsaparang mission, Padre Andrade again left Tibet for Goa in winter 1629 or spring 1630. Since there are no letters in the Jesuit Archives in Rome about the Tibet mission between 1627 and 1631, it is not possible to know for certain if Padre Andrade went on his own, was requested to return or if he knew the reason for his visit. After he arrived in Goa he was given the responsibility to govern the Province of Goa. Since he was now Provincial Padre in charge of all the Goa missions he did not return to Tibet and from this point on the Tsaparang mission did not have a strong leader.

In 1630, during Shah Jahan's reign, the Kingdom of Guge was attacked by the King of Ladakh. Andrade heard about the trouble that had started in Tsaparang and its effect on the mission, the city of Tsaparang and the capture of the King, but he was unable to return to Tibet because of his post in Goa. As a result, in spring 1631 Padre Andrade sent Padre Francisco de Azevedo to Tsaparang as Inspector; Azevedo returned to Goa a year later with his report. The loss of the presence of a friendly king in the war combined with the previous loss of Andrade as a strong leader resulted in a deterioration of the effectiveness of the mission. Comments in letters from some of the missionaries provide support for this and some of the problems that arose.

The fourth report from Padre Andrade was written in Goa on February 4, 1633, to the General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. It describes the war that took place 3 years earlier, the reasons for the war, how it

progressed and what happened afterward. Although the specific cause was not stated, there had been problems between the kingdoms of Guge and Ladakh over the years. In addition, the lamas in Guge were displeased by the King's preferential treatment of the Jesuit missionaries and the mistreatment of the lamas, such as taking away part of their revenue and forcing most of them to leave the monastic life. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the lamas led by the King's brother encouraged intervention by the King of Ladakh.

On February 4, 1633, Padre Andrade sent a letter to Rome about the mission's problems. Not long after this, Padre Andrade was freed of his duties as Provincial and he asked permission to return to Tibet. However, just as he was getting ready to leave along with six other Jesuits in January 1634, he was appointed as Inspector for Japan and China and he never returned to Tibet. Before he left for his new position, Padre António de Andrade suddenly died on March 19, 1634. The supposed cause of his death was poisoning, however, by whom and for what reason can only be speculated. His assassination is most commonly attributed to a servant, a Moorish assassin, a Portuguese assassin, or the son of somebody Padre Andrade was going to report to the Inquisition.

Joseph C. Abdo

[website <http://www.ippolito-desideri.net>]

[Biografia di De Andrade in italiano a cura di E. G. Bargiacchi](#)