Articles

1. Significance of Japa in Devotion with Special Reference to Japa of the Mantra ‘Om Nameḥ Śivāya’
   Jaya Chemburkar
   01

2. Helārāja on the Eight Padārthas
   Chaitali Dangarikar & Malhar Kulkarni
   07

3. Anustaraṇī: The Myth and the Ritual
   Ambarish Khare
   20

4. Water Management System at Kanheri - Part - I & II
   Suraj A. Pandit
   27

5. Patronage: Ministers, Intellectuals, Businessmen and Jaina Acharyas
   Ratan Parimoo
   46

6. Nātyalocanam of Trilocanāditya - An Introduction
   A. S. Pathak
   63

7. The Four Guṇa-Pāramitās
   C. D. Sebastian
   70

8. The Riddle of the Circular Temple of Mitaoli
   A. K. Singh
   79

9. Manufacturing Activities in the Punjab During the Late Eighteenth Century
   Satnam Singh & Raghubir Singh
   95

10. Parsi Chalk
    Nayana M. Tadvalkar
    105

11. Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s Grants and Constructional Activities Related to His Kalinga War (A.D. 1513-1517)
    Anila Verghese
    115

12. The Goan Historian José Gerson Da Cunha at the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1870-1900)
    Filipa Vincent
    128

Reviews

1. The Touch of Śakti: A Study in Non-dualistic Trika Śaivism of Kashmir by Ernst Furlinger
   Indira Aiyar
   137

2. The War that wasn’t: The Sufi and the Sultan by Fatima Hussain
   Smita Dalvi
   139

3. Kaṇṭakaṇḍaliḥ: A Handful of Thorns by Kaṇṭakārjuna
   Sindhu Dange
   142

4. Kāma Samūha of Śrī Ananta Kavi by Amal Shib Pathak
   Parineeta Deshpande
   144

5. The Torana: In Indian and Southern Asian Architecture by Parul Pandya Dhar
   Kumud Kanitkar
   146
José Gerson da Cunha became a member of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1873, a moment that coincided, not by chance, with his growing interest in historical research, in detriment of the medical publications where he wrote in his early career as a doctor.¹ By analysing all the issues of the institution’s journal published in the last three decades of the 19th century, one can see how Gerson da Cunha’s name became more frequent from the 1870s onwards—from an occasional contributor to a regular one—who, apart from writing in the journal, began to assume a role in the institution’s administration itself. By 1891, he appears as the joint-honorary secretary for the department of numismatics and archaeology, while in the 1893 journal, apart from publishing two articles, he is identified as one of the vice-presidents of the Society.² A few years later, when the British Sanskritist Dr. Peter Peterson was the president, Gerson da Cunha still retained his position of vice-president along with another Indian member, and two British ones.³ The fact that by the end of the 19th century, amongst the four vice-presidents of the Society there were two Indian scholars, reflects an increasing Indian participation within the Society, which was also visible through their written production. The last issue of the Journal before the turn of the century witnesses this change: all the articles were written by non-British fellows, something which, when compared with earlier decades, reveals a profound change of intellectual production on India, within the institution. Apart from Gerson da Cunha’s link to the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, the more prestigious institution in Mumbai with which he
was associated was the Anthropological Society of Bombay, where his name appears amongst the first members. In 1887, he was elected vice-president of this Society - along with three other men, two of British origin, and another of Indian origin - later becoming the general-secretary and the treasurer, posts he occupied until his death in 1900.

At the turn of the century, the Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society reveals the self-consciousness of its own history as an institution, by publishing a list of all its members and their year of entry in the Society, from 1862 onwards. Already in 1869, four years before Gerson da Cunha became a member, there appears another doctor with a Portuguese name, Dr. L. P. de Rozario, while the Society’s journal announces that the Goan public servant and head of the National Press of Goa, Francisco João Xavier, had become a new member in 1877; Pascal António Fernandes, barrister in Goa, in 1879; and Dr. D. A. de Monte in 1887. Beyond the obvious scarcity of Goan members, there is a clear division between those who were residents in Mumbai and those who were classified as “non-residents” (which in practice, meant they lived in Goa) as was the case of the Goan doctor and botanist José Camilo Lisboa (Bardez, 1823-Bombay, 1897), the Goan lawyer and journalist Sertório Coelho (Bardez 1845-Goa 1914) and Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara (Arraiolos, Portugal 1809 - Évora, Portugal 1879). Cunha Rivara, the Portuguese secretary of government, who also used his long stay in Goa to produce vast historical work on the Portuguese empire of Asia and to publish many archival sources, appears as an honorary member as early as in 1866. The relationship between the Mumbai (then Bombay) branch of the Society and Goa seems to have been scarce, not to say non-existent. Very occasionally the Society’s library would receive a book published in Goa or in Portugal, an event invariably announced in the journal with a misspelled name: J.A de Menezes, for example, sent the Almanach Recreativo for 1883 he had just published through the intermediary role of Dr. da Gama, father-in-law of Gerson da Cunha, while the Notas e Documentos inéditos para a Biographia de J.P. Ribeiro, was presented by F. Meirelles de Canto.

In a speech on the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Richard Temple, the Mumbai Governor, highlighted the three names amongst the Society’s foreign members that had accomplished “some distinction in our Anglo-Literary world”, and, amongst them he included both Gerson da Cunha and José Camilo Lisboa. In the same way, when he refers to what had been written on the history of India, he mentions “two special histories written by foreigners regarding the ancient Portuguese possessions on the coast of India”, one being the An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa by José Nicolau da Fonseca. A Goan who lived in Mumbai, and who centred most of his historical research on the Portuguese presence in India, Gerson da Cunha soon came to assume the role of representing the Portuguese viewpoint of the history of India. However, he also played the role of the specialist in European culture within the Society’s intellectual community. This became evident on the two different moments when he demonstrated his knowledge of European literature: on the first occasion, Gerson da Cunha digressed on the “vast and rich” Portuguese literature in front of the other members, responding to a current event - when the University of Bombay decided to suspend the teaching of the Portuguese language. By means of innumerable quotations, comparisons and references, he also proved how he was knowledgeable about the canon of European literature much
beyond the Portuguese case, while also showing his dominion of different chronological periods and geographical spaces, from classical Greece to contemporary Italian criminal anthropology.

The other moment when Gerson da Cunha showed that his intellectual background could be inscribed in a wider idea of European culture that went beyond what was “Portuguese”, took place in one of the Society’s meetings, in 1891. The issue discussed was the possible sale of one of the manuscripts belonging to the Society’s library that had been donated by the late historian and Governor of Mumbai, Mountstuart Elphinstone. It was the *Divina Commedia* by Dante Alighieri, the 14th century Florentine writer. After a lecture on the manuscript given by W.R. Macdonell, and when the members were considering the advantages of selling it, Gerson da Cunha made a statement against the sale. Emphasising the worth of the manuscript as a valuable and rare item of European culture, he revealed his bibliographic knowledge on the many manuscripts and printed versions of Dante’s major work. To reinforce his submission he also reminded the other members of how two Italian scholars - the anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza and the Indianist Angelo De Gubernatis - had seen Dante’s manuscript on their visit to the Bombay Society and had not been over-impressed by it. The large circulation of manuscript versions of the *Divina Commedia*, as early as the 14th century, came to question the rarity that had been attributed to the Society’s copy, which did not have any distinctive features to justify a high price. The meeting ended with another member supporting Gerson da Cunha’s opinion and suggesting that the Society start a collection of works on Dante. Another way Gerson da Cunha had of being a representative of a wider aspect of European culture was through the role of intermediary between European scholars and the Bombay Society. When in 1883 the well-known Italian anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza came to India, the Goan historian, who had met him in Florence a few years before, introduced him to the Society. In 1885, the Italian Indianist and Sanskrit professor Angelo de Gubernatis was honoured at the Bombay Branch of the Asiatic Society in a formal ceremony where Gerson da Cunha, his friend, was the main host.

Edward Rehatsek (Ilok, Austrian Empire 1819–Bombay, 1891) was the person who could better relate to Gerson da Cunha within the Society: none was a native of British India or of Britain; both had lived in Mumbai for a long time, and both came to be identified as the “foreigners”, in a membership mainly composed of British subjects and Anglo-Indians, the name given to Indians born under the British government. A Hungarian who had specialised in Islamic subjects, Rehatsek was also an expert on the Arabic and Persian languages who, like Gerson da Cunha, often contributed both to the Society’s journal and to the Indian Antiquary, the two most important scholarly journals on Indian themes published in Mumbai. If the Goan was seen as the expert on the Portuguese colonial past in India, on Catholicism, the Portuguese language, and anything related to Portuguese India, Rehatsek came to represent Muslim culture and history. The main difference was that while in Gerson da Cunha’s case his knowledge was intertwined with his own biography, because he was of Goan origin, Portuguese nationality and Catholic religion, Rehatsek on the other hand had no Arabic or Persian origin, nor was he a Muslim. His interests were more likely to be related to a German orientalist tradition that had been incorporated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Occasionally, the two “foreign” members of the Society collaborated on the same text or referred to each other’s work: when
Rehatsek gave notice of two unknown Arabic manuscripts for the history of Yemen, it was Gerson da Cunha who added the notes on the Portuguese sources related to the subject.\textsuperscript{16} On the other hand, when writing on some of the talismanic Muslim vases he collected, Gerson da Cunha recommended the reading of Rehatsek’s articles.\textsuperscript{19}

Gerson da Cunha’s close relationship to the Royal Asiatic Society, based in his city, and the fact that his audience was English-speaking and outside Portuguese India, reinforced his role as the intermediary between the “Portuguese world” and the “British world”.\textsuperscript{20} He possessed the linguistic and bibliographic knowledge of the two distinct Indian geographies to which he belonged and where he circulated throughout his life, favouring the double historiographical gaze that is present in all his writings.

**Gerson Da Cunha’s Writings In The Journal Of The Bombay Branch Of The Royal Asiatic Society**

Most of Gerson da Cunha’s articles were published in the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* although he also contributed to *The Indian Antiquary*, where his Portuguese name also contrasted with the majority of British and Indian contributors. According to him, of all the journals published on Asia, that published by the Bombay Asiatic Society was the one which had most articles and sources on the history and archaeology of the Portuguese in the East.\textsuperscript{21} What he does not mention is that this was due mainly, to his own frequent contributions. Indeed, “Portuguese India”, or any other matter related to the Portuguese presence in Asia, was a rare subject among the written instruments of knowledge published in British India throughout the second half of the 19th century, and when it did appear it was usually by the hand of Gerson da Cunha.\textsuperscript{22} Always attentive to what was being translated from Portuguese into English (from editions of Camões’ Lusíadas to sixteenth century historical sources on India) and to what was being written and published on Portugal or Portuguese India in the English language, he frequently also gave this kind of information to his English-speaking readers.\textsuperscript{23}

Beyond his growing protagonism in the life of the Society, what becomes clear when analysing Gerson da Cunha’s articles in the Journal is his specialisation on everything that was “Portuguese” outside Portugal. And if, most of the time, this meant India, it could also involve other geographical zones. When in 1875, the general consul and British political agent in Zanzibar, Major Charles Euan Smith, discovered some Portuguese inscriptions at the Fort of Mombassa, he sent them to Gerson da Cunha through the Bombay Society, so that he could transcribe and translate them for the files of the “Foreign Department of the Government of India”. Again in 1891, the Goan historian was asked to give his verdict on what was happening in Mombassa. Comparing the situation in 1875 and in 1891, Gerson da Cunha reflected on the changing map of European colonialism in Africa, where, “younger and more vigorous” European countries were actively and successfully “questioning the Portuguese right to control those African regions”.\textsuperscript{24} The extant weaknesses of Portuguese colonialism, in contrast with its own past and in contrast with the contemporary experiences of other colonial nations, was a constant theme in his work.

Therefore, it was frequent to see Gerson da Cunha’s name as the author of the notes that added the Portuguese perspective within a subject analysed by another writer, or as the translator, from
the Portuguese language, in the *Journal*. When the *Journal* published the facsimile of a Portuguese inscription sent by Mr. Falle, from the *Marine Survey*, Gerson da Cunha not only translated it into English but also contributed to a long note on the historical context of the material object.²⁵ Found amongst the ruins of Chaul, on which he had already published an article in the *Journal*, the inscription was read as proof of the decline of Portuguese epigraphy in the second half of the seventeenth century, a fact that, according to him, did nothing but reflect the general decline of the Portuguese government in India. This departing from a specific material object found in the present - usually in or amongst ruins - to a general appreciation of the past Portuguese empire in India, was a leit-motif present in many of Gerson da Cunha’s historical writings.

Already in 1875, in one of his first articles, Gerson da Cunha exemplified an historical approach that he would rehearse throughout his career: to analyse, in multiple ways, a particular Indian region that had been, in the past, particularly influenced by the Portuguese presence.²⁶ “An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the Island of Anjediva” began with a geographical description, moving on to a etymological approach to the word Anjediva, from its past uses up to its contemporary ones. Using different kinds of sources written in various languages, from travel accounts, to legends and historical texts, written in different periods, Gerson da Cunha inevitably went through distinct colonial presences within the island. This kind of approach to a specific geographical space throughout a long period of time enabled him to use his knowledge of different national historiographies, mainly the Portuguese and British ones in their relationships to India.

The writing of a history of the Portuguese empire in the East - an ambition he confessed to the pages of the *Journal* - was, in fact, only achieved through a fragmented approach, centred on specific Indian territories, from Chaul, Bassain or Mumbai or on events that were related to Portuguese colonialism of the past.²⁷ Usually inscribing these territories within the comparative discourse of past glory and present decadence that had already become the repeated metaphor of the historicisation of Portuguese India, maybe it was not by chance that Goa, Daman or Diu, the sites of contemporary Portuguese colonialism, were never subjected to this kind of in-depth historical analysis. Doing so could become a conscious or unconscious criticism of the Portuguese government. Therefore, it is clear from Gerson da Cunha’s textual itinerary, that he usually preferred to analyse the past of the Portuguese in India, where he could more safely criticise some of its aspects (from the Jesuits’ flaws to the methods of religious conversion), rather than concentrating on its contemporary politics.

By the end of the 1870s and beginning of the 1880s, *The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* published his various works on Indo-Portuguese numismatics.²⁸ Departing from the study of coins and medals, he established a relationship between historical writing and the material remains of the past which, in this case, were also the main object of his collecting interests. However, during the same period, apart from his research work more centred on Portuguese subjects, even if always using British or British-Indian sources, Gerson da Cunha’s research started to explore historical events that involved both the Portuguese and the British in India. This was the case of an article on “The English and their Monuments at Goa” where he combined his knowledge of both Portuguese and British sources and historiography. With an equivocal title, the essay explored the ways in which
Anglo-Portuguese, as well as Anglo-French relationships in and outside Europe, dominated by the Napoleonic invasions in the early 19th century, reverberated in India, and especially in Goa. By "monuments" he meant the material remains that proved British presence in the Portuguese territories of India during the French threat, mainly the British cemetery of Goa and some tomb inscriptions. This episode, with its transnational perspectives, could only have been studied by someone who knew and could read the different sources on the various sides.

The same could be said in relation to his article on the wedding treaty between the Portuguese princess D. Catarina and the British king Charles II, in 1661, the founding moment of the "greatest Empire a European nation ever acquired in the East". From this symbolic interstice between the history of both empires, somehow representing the end of one and the beginning of another, Gerson da Cunha could also research the history of his city - Mumbai - in what became his less fragmented work and his only book published by the Society immediately upon his death in 1900. His growing authority on Portuguese traces in Mumbai, also went beyond the Journal's pages, and appeared in a variety of other publications.

Conclusion

Historiography on the British Empire in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that looks at the production of knowledge tends to concentrate on Bengal: from the intellectual community linked to the Asiatic Society, to the role of the Indian literary elites on the emerging nationalist movements. More recently, however, many historians have multiplied these geographies, agents and instruments of knowledge, while theorising on new ways of looking at the relationships between colonisers and colonised, or even questioning such limiting categories. There is, thus, an overall tendency towards a more fragmented and plural way of apprehending the production of knowledge on India. Mumbai, however, for many years more associated with commerce than with knowledge or forms of colonial resistance, still tends to be absent from a more cultural and intellectual history of the nineteenth century.

Through Gerson da Cunha's links to the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and its wide and varied community of learned men, another side of Mumbai comes across. The Society and its journal came to occupy the role of congregating the growing number of men who, based in Mumbai, were researching and writing on different aspects of Indian history, culture, natural history, languages or anthropology, the disciplines that were configuring knowledge in what was identified as a European classification. This article tries to demonstrate how the study of the production of knowledge in India can be enriched by the analysis of the situation in Mumbai. Its identification as a cosmopolitan site, enjoying a great ethnic, religious and national diversity, should be taken into account in order to understand the diversity of knowledge and those who produced it. Far from a division between the British as colonisers and the Indians, writing from the place of the colonised, what the Mumbai case reveals, is a more heterogeneous group of men (not yet women), writing, publishing, and taking part in the process of transforming India into a subject, who in their diversity come to problematise any dichotomy.
Gerson da Cunha embodies this instability. Like many others in his social and intellectual circle he challenges any classification: in his multiple itineraries, geographical as much as historical, biographical and bibliographical; in his capacity to confront different histories and voices, in his intellectual cosmopolitanism. Both in his life and in his transnational or transcolonial historical writings Gerson da Cunha embodied the role of cultural-broker, an in-between agent of different worlds. His intellectual and cultural references were not only European or Indian, but belonged to different Europeas and different Indias. He read and wrote Portuguese as well as English, but also other European languages, and some Indian languages. He worked at the archives in Goa and Mumbai, but also Rome and Paris. He read the inscriptions on tombstones in Catholic churches but also Sanskrit inscriptions in Hindu temples. If his present was made of frequent geographical displacements between Mumbai - the city where he lived - and Goa - the place to which he and his family travelled frequently - his past was also made of continuous incursions, transitions, crossings “between empires”, the Portuguese and the British. It was precisely this geographical and identity mobility, his foreignness in relation to the dominant contexts where he moved, that enabled him to produce knowledge on India that went beyond national, colonial or local historiographies.

Gerson da Cunha does not fit into the characterisation of the “colonised” who has no voice, or is even dispossessed of access to writing and to history and appropriates himself of the language and instruments of the colonisers in order to inscribe his voice within the mainstream narratives. Being Goan, the language of the colonisers - that is, the culture and the paradigms of European historical writing - were part of his culture. With the self consciousness inherent to the processes of distinction, he presented himself as a historian “in the European way” but in his case, we cannot say, there is an appropriation of a way of producing knowledge, as it is so often said in the context of recent scholarly approaches to British-Indian 19th century native elites appropriating European ideas with different ends. For the Goan Catholic literary elites, Portuguese culture was embedded by centuries of imposition and presence, it was part of them, not an outsider culture that they could contradict, deny, or use in various ways. Analysing cases such as that of Gerson da Cunha, and his relationship with the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society - a major intellectual product of British colonialism that was growingly being appropriated by the Indian scholars as an instrument for their own knowledge production - has the usefulness of enriching the historical discussions that tend to concentrate on the 19th century context of British India, while ignoring other colonial formations and the multiplicity of producers of knowledge that were based in a city like Mumbai.

Notes and References


3 The other Vice-Presidents were James MacDonald, K. R. Cama and the Honorable Mr. Justice Candy. The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, n° LV, vol. XX (Bombay: Society's Library, 1899).


5 "During the year under report were held (A) and one special General Meeting (on July 11th) to record the deep sense of the loss the Society had sustained by the death of their late Honorary General Secretary and treasurer, Dr. John [sic] Gerson da Cunha", The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1902), Vol. VI, n° 1, p. 2.


7 These names - José Camilo Lisboa, Sertório Coelho, and Joaquim Hellidoro da Cunha Rivasra - deserve a mention in their own right, something I cannot do here; for a first bibliographical essay on the three of them see the very useful work by Aleixo Manuel da Costa, Dicionário de Literatura Goesa, 3 vols., (Macau: Instituto Cultural de Macau; Fundação Oriente, 1999).


12 Abstract of the Society's Proceedings, official, literary and scientific", The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. 1891, n° XLVIII, vol. XVIII (Bombay: Society's Library, 1891), pp. xii-xxv; For another example on the place of "European literature" at the Bombay Society and the role of Gerson da Cunha in its legitimisation see another issue of the Journal where there is a reference to the talk given at the Society by Mr. Karkara on the Carlyle conferences that were still to be published. These conferences on the different periods of European culture were part of the "Anstey manuscript" that was kept at the Society's library. At the Society's meeting, Gerson da Cunha manifested his support of the Society's publication of Carlyle's conferences, in "Proceedings of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society", The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. 1892, n° XLIX, vol. XVIII (Bombay: Society's Library, 1893), pp. xxix, xxx.


Edward Reharsek arrived in India in 1847 and for many years was a professor of Mathematics and Latin at the Wilson College. Only after retiring in 1871 could he dedicate himself entirely to his Arabic and Persian literary, historical and linguistic studies. As he died in Bombay, his body was cremated in the Hindu tradition, being considered the first European to have been cremated in India. The Bombay Society dedicated a session in honour of his memory, where his specialised knowledge was praised, and his "eccentric" character used to explain his distance from the society in the last years before his death, in "Proceedings of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society", The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. 1892, n° XLIX, Vol. XVIII (Bombay: Society's Library, 1893), p. xcviii. Some examples of Reharsek's works are: Essays, Prize Essay on the reciprocal influence of European and Muhammadan civilization during the period of the Khalifs and at the Present time (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1877); Translations, Ibn Ishaq, The Life of Muhammad, Apostle of Allah, ed. Michael Edwardes (London: The Folio Society, 1964); Sādī, The Gulistan, or Rose-Garden of (Benares: Printed by the Kama Shashtra Society for private subscribers only, 1888); Cataloguing of manuscripts, Catalogue raisonnable of the Arabic, Hindustani, Persian and Turkish MSS in the Mulla Firuz Library, etc (Bombay, 1873).


22. For example: An article at the Indian Antiquary reflected on what had been published by the “Asiatic Societies” in the year of 1874. It refers to the article by T. W. H. Tolbert on Authorities for the History of the Portuguese in India published by the Bombay Society’s journal, in “Asiatic Societies”, Indian Antiquary, vol. III, May 1874, pp. 144-149, p. 144.


31. [On the bell of Bombay Castle]: “The bell is thus, it appears, not a Protestant, but a Roman Catholic one, i.e., Portuguese one. What its history has been we know not. Probably Dr. Da Cunha, or some one versed in these matters, will be able to furnish us with it”, in James Douglas, Round About Bombay (Bombay: Bombay Gazette Steam Press, 1886), p. 59, 60, 80; James Mackenzie Maclean, A Guide to Bombay: Historical, statistical, and descriptive, 11th edition (Bombaim: at the “Bombay Gazette” Steam Press, 1886), p. 337.

