Goa: A Post-Colonial Society
Between Cultures

Edited by Rochelle Almeida

Goa-1556 Golden Heart Emporium
2018
Contents

Acknowledgements 5

Kenneth David Jackson
Goa: Between Occident and Orient 7

Rochelle Almeida
Imaginary Goas: Diaspora
Novelists Reclaim a Lost Colony 36

Robert S. Newman
Celluloid Subalterns 53

Cielo G. Festino
Teaching Literature: In Between Multilingualism and Plurilingualism. The Case of Goa, India 73

Victor Rangel Ribeiro
How Goan Identity and India’s Independence Put Britain in a Diplomatic Dilemma 93

Paul Melo e Castro
Atitudes que o Vento Levou: The Stories of Eduardo de Sousa and the post-1961 Vision of a Goan Elite in Decline 103

Kristen Chartier, Basilio Monteiro, Andrew Towers
Education and the Dilemma of the Medium of Instruction: A Perennial and Universal Challenge 125
## CONTENTS

**Anthony Gomes**  
From Post-Colonial to Neo-Colonial: Perils and Prospects  
Facing Goan Culture Today  
145

**Duarte Drumond Braga**  
Portuguese and other Lusophone discourses on Goa  
from 1953 to 1975  
157

**Jonathan Graham**  
Pepper, Padroado and Prester John:  
Portuguese-Thomas Christian Relations and  
the Creation of an Imperial Patron Saint  
169

**Tara Menon**  
Conversion as Translation in Francisco Luís Gomes’  
Os Brâmanes  
195

**Margaret Mascarenhas**  
Partition  
205

**Anthony Gomes**  
Saudades  
213

**Ashley D’Mello**  
Politics in Goa: The Role of the Catholic Church  
215

**Filipa Lowndes Vicente**  
Writing From Many Frontiers – José Gerson da Cunha’s  
Historical and Journalistic Approaches to Past and  
Present Colonialisms in India 1870-1900  
230

**Notes on Contributors**  
257

**Index**  
263

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the outcome of a conference conducted at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, in April 2013 with support from the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies, the South Asian Studies Council and the Kempf Fund of the Macmillan Center for International and Area Studies. The conference welcomed an interdisciplinary group of scholars to a two-day program whose objective was the placement of the former Portuguese empire in the context of contemporary debates on post-coloniality. In addition to international academics and Yale scholars, the conference showcased the work of creative writers from Goa and the Goan diaspora. Had the conference not taken place, this book would never have been published.

Spearheading the organization of the conference was Kenneth David Jackson, Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, who invited me to present a paper on post-colonial writers in English from the Goan diaspora. Thanks to that first meeting, our association has grown into a productive professional partnership for which I feel very grateful. Neither the conference nor this volume would have been possible without David’s enormous efforts in providing funding, inspiration, enthusiasm, guidance and, above all, scholarly expertise. I am honored that he offered me the opportunity to edit this volume and I am profoundly grateful to him for bringing this project to fruition.

The Conference also brought to Yale the Bombay-based journalist Ashley D’Mello, a long-time friend, to deliver the Foynter Lecture on the topic, “Portuguese Colonial History and Contemporary Goan Elections: Impact of the Catholic Church on the Electorate”. It was Ashley’s idea to publish the many provocative papers that were presented as well as his keynote speech. Indeed, it was Ashley who brought Frederick Noronha, publisher of Goa,1556, on board to produce this volume. Ashley also provided early editorial assistance on some of the essays and much advice on Goa’s volatile political situation. I am
Writing From Many Frontiers:

José Gerson da Cunha's Historical and Journalistic Approaches to Past and Present Colonialisms in India (1870-1900)

Filipa Lowndes Vicente

Introduction

In his book on Portuguese men who achieved some prominence abroad, published at the end of the decade of the 1870s, Bernardes Branco confessed he was not sure if Gerson da Cunha was Portuguese or English and commented that he had to contact Cunha Rivara, the Portuguese secretary of the Governor in Goa and also a scholar, to address his doubts: "Mr. Gerson da Cunha is a Portuguese subject, born in Goa, of indigenous race and of the Brahman caste. He is established in Bombay as a doctor" was Cunha Rivara's answer (Branco 448). In fact, Gerson da Cunha studied medicine in Bombay, Edinburgh and London, before making it his profession on returning to Bombay in the 1870s. However, his historical, archaeological and numismatic interests, mainly on themes related to the Portuguese in India, occupied a great part of his time and resulted in numerous articles and books published in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

Gerson da Cunha's social and intellectual world was clearly concentrated in the diverse world of Bombay, a heterogeneous and fast moving world, made up of people of different ethnicities, religions and origins. But the fact that he was Goan and could read Portuguese, apart from other European and Indian languages, influenced the choice of historical subjects he chose to research and write on. By belonging to different spheres, and constantly trespassing—literally and historically—the frontiers between Portuguese India and British India, Gerson da Cunha was able to make comparisons and connections between different histories and different historiographies. And, as we shall analyze in this text, this kaleidoscopic position allowed him to write different things to different audiences.

In-between these two traditions—the Portuguese and the British—he was never fully acknowledged by either one of them. In a historical period—the second half of the nineteenth-century—where India was under different colonial governments, with the obvious predominance of the British, there were also different national traditions in the same territory, that tended to concentrate on different periods, different subjects, which were written in different languages, which worked in different archives and which quoted different historians. Paradoxically, as we will suggest, it was this being in many places and being in none—the fact that he somehow always occupied the frontiers of different worlds—that contributed to his invisibility as a historian, and as a producer of knowledge on the history of India.

Firstly, I will explore Gerson da Cunha's relationship with the Goa of his times, in one of the few texts in which he refers to it. Secondly, I will analyze how his criticism of Portuguese colonial practices was mainly projected in the past, and therefore more historical, while his criticism of British India involved a much more contemporary approach, mainly expressed through journalistic writing and private correspondence. His audiences determined what he wrote on the present or the past. His was conscious of their specificity and adapted his discourse, politics and criticism accordingly.

The Politics of Language: Konkani and Portuguese

The only text we could find where there is a clearer criticism of Portuguese colonialism of the present and not only of the past, even if done in an indirect way, was in his book Konkani Language and Literature published in 1881 (Cunha). Here, Gerson da Cunha revealed some of his ideas on the relationship between language and nationalism which later, in 1893, he went back to in his article on the teaching
of the Portuguese language at the University of Bombay.

Inevitably, language and its usages were affected by the establishment of the Portuguese from the 16th century onwards. Gerson da Cunha condemned the destruction perpetrated by the first missionaries which in their “mistaken zeal to propagate Christianity” did not understand how the preservation of the ancient Indian manuscripts could have been useful for the conversion of “natives”. That which the Spanish had done in Granada, he continued, by destroying Arabic manuscripts, the Portuguese did in Goa with Indian manuscripts. The fanaticism that “blinded these missionaries” (only justified, according to him, by the historical context) prevented the transmission of Christianity through the vernacular languages. According to Gerson da Cunha, a global vision of history helped to understand the violence of that behavior at the time: “The history of mankind is already full of examples of how sectarian differences, bigotry, and superstition have deprived the world of literary treasures of considerable worth” (*The Konkani Language* 25).

This Portuguese policy of eliminating the local language did not restrict itself to the past because, as he notes, by the end of the eighteenth-century, there were still priests advising the Portuguese government on abolishing the Konkani language and other Indian languages, “as if a language were a mere custom to be easily dealt with by a legislative enactment”. Only with the Marquis of Pombal was this policy modified. Perhaps as a way of better justifying his criticism against the Portuguese policies in relation to the local language, Gerson da Cunha quoted Cunha Rivara, a Portuguese resident in Goa, who besides being the respectable secretary of government, also became known for his vast scholarly work on the history of Goa (*The Konkani Language* 25).

The transformations of Konkani and the infructuous attempt to resist them were also subject to his reflection:

Such is, indeed, the transformation a language in the comparatively short period of two centuries undergoes even in autonomous states, which strive, with a view to their national dignity, to preserve the purity of their language by means of literature, arresting all changes, and stereotyping the forms inherited from a former age, that it is no wonder that Konkani, an idiom of a small country, ruled by a foreign race, and without, at present at least, any aspiration to national independence [italics mine], should within only a couple of centuries have assumed a form so entirely different from the old one. (*The Konkani Language* 34)

Gerson da Cunha finished his historical itinerary of Konkani with a pessimistic evaluation of the present, where language and literature were inseparable from colonial rule, and where there was an implicit criticism of foreign governments: “Goa has for centuries been swayed by foreign rulers, who have insisted on making their own the official language, or the language of the court, withdrawing at the same time all encouragement for the cultivation of the native tongue” and only a free and autonomous nation could preserve its language. Facing a contemporary scenario marked by growing pressure from other surrounding Indian languages, which were not subject to the same kind of colonial linguistic policy, he predicted the disappearance of Konkani within one or two centuries. That was, after all, the destiny of those weaker languages, as well as those weaker peoples.

In order to legitimize his argument, Gerson da Cunha also digressed on Konkani literature and, mainly, poetry, indirectly making a harsh criticism of the contemporary Goa state of affairs. The decline of literary production corresponded to a social and political decline—“this is invariably the case where a country is in its decadence, or humiliated, depressed and degraded by despotism, or is swayed by foreign rule”. In spite of the many material benefits that may be brought about by colonialism, as he stated, “it is amidst the elements of national freedom and independence, and the pledges and evidence of former greatness of their country, that poets grow up.” As da Cunha often did, in order to reinforce his criticism, he quoted another author, writing on the direct links between a foreign government and the creativity of a people (*The Konkani Language* 42).

Gerson da Cunha goes further in his argument to suggest that an “Indian Risorgimento” (unification of India) as an independent nation, as it had happened recently with Italy, would only be possible
when there was a “blending of castes” (The Konkani Language 37). Only when caste no longer separated Indians would it be possible to shout “India for the Indians”, as it happened in Goa in 1787 (Kamat 105-23; Rivara). Much earlier than the revolt or “mutiny”, as it was called by the rulers, of 1857, which so frightened the British in India and that had so many repercussions on Indo-British relations and on subsequent British policies, and before other more recent signs of Indian nationalism within the British empire, already the natives of Goa had raised their voices against the Portuguese colonizers. He was referring, of course, to the “Conjuração dos Pintos” in 1787, embodied with French revolutionary ideas, where some of his ancestors were also involved (even if he did not mention this in the article) (Moraes 11-2). When using this episode of Goan history, Gerson da Cunha seems to attribute to Goa a kind of pioneering nationalist consciousness. Apart from sixteenth-century Portuguese orientalism as a whole (and specific initiatives such as the sixteenth-century Imprensa de Goa, the Goan Press), he suggested that one more example of Goan precociousness was a kind of national consciousness, one that also tended to be ignored historiographically by the British. Here, as in other places, he revealed a clear willingness in contradicting the ignorance towards this “other India” within British India.

However, he blamed the Portuguese themselves, and their general attitude towards the past, for this wrongly attributed pioneerism of the British: “the neglect which had so long prevailed in Portugal and her Colonies of their valuable archives, consigning to utter oblivion valuable writings, which have but of late been brought to the light of publicity.” Therefore, only in the nineteenth century, there were prints, or reprints of many of the texts on the presence of the Portuguese in India 300 years previously: from the Lendas da Índia of Gaspar Correia to the Roteiro da Viagem de Vasco da Gama, or the Roteiros of D. João de Castro.

Gerson da Cunha’s relationship with caste may seem confusing at time, or even contradictory. It showed signs of hesitating between a legitimisation of their superiority in a way that also contributed to his own self-identification, and the affirmation that a future Indian unification and independence depended on the dissolution of the caste hierarchies. He sometimes showed pride for the ancestry of his Portuguese name and he never denied his “Portuguese” and “Catholic” identity which, far from contradicting his Brahman identity, even contributed to reinforcing his status and, in his distinction, brought him in-numerous advantages (Siqueira 151-60). Contradicting what he considered to be a common perception, Gerson da Cunha denied that the Brahmins were mere copyists. He explained to the British readership he was addressing something that was difficult for a foreigner to understand and that was also related to his own identity—the existence of Christian Brahmins. Christianity, he explained, had not eliminated caste hierarchies—“it simply conciliated old prejudices with new privileges” (The Konkani Language 37). Goa did not have, unfortunately, as he termed it, a “blend of races, as in Europe” favorable to a future of homogeneity between all; on the contrary, there were as many tribes and castes amongst the Christians as amongst the Hindus. The only noticeable difference between the Christian and the Hindu modes of living according to the norms of their caste was that among the Christians of Goa this was not a determinant in social relations. With the exception of marriages, all castes lived socially together at the same level, “not unlike any of the advanced peoples of Europe”. In this Goan distinctiveness, Gerson da Cunha finds proximity with the existing social European models he valued. He also used the occasion to focus on those Goans that undertook relevant roles in the Portuguese metropolis, in Parliament, at universities, at military institutions as well as civil (The Konkani Language 39). Conscious that an essay on Konkani was not an adequate place to further explore the subject, he nevertheless is valuing what was “Goan”, in a strategy where we could grasp a local nationalism indissociable from larger strategies of valorization—from language to history, and to the peaceful combination of caste and Catholicism that could be found in Goa.

The Aryanism proposed by a few prestigious European orientalists, mainly by Max Müller, was appropriated by some groups of Indians that saw it as a way of assuming a superiority that colonial subjection seemed to contradict or deny. By identifying the superiority of a specific Indian group to which he himself belonged, Gerson
da Cunha seems to use a similar strategy: a specific current of western thought was used as an instrument of affirmation by subjugated peoples. On the one hand, Gerson da Cunha often used strategies to reinforce and legitimate a Brahman distinctiveness (and in his case, and that of many Goans, a Catholic distinction), a kind of aristocracy that deserved to be privileged; on other occasions, he wrote of the need to blur caste distinctions in order to ameliorate the living and educational conditions of the "indigenous" population. The path to a future Indian independence needed a social cohesion that a very hierarchical caste system could not convey.\(^5\) In his particular way of mingling historical and personal instances, Gerson da Cunha's contradictions are never resolved.

In his book on Konkani, Gerson da Cunha already mixed his linguistic interest, associated with a philological and orientalist discourse concentrated in the past, with a discussion of its present uses. Ten years later, in *A Brief Sketch of the Portuguese and their Language in the East*, published in 1892, he does the same temporal digression with the Portuguese language. What led him to publicly defend the Portuguese language was a contemporary debate on the changes that were taking place in the language section of the University of Bombay (190-1). In this historical justification of the relevance of the Portuguese language, Gerson da Cunha clearly acknowledged the political meaning of languages, their uses in forging identities and their intersections with notions of nationalism and colonialism.

When consulting the calendar of the University of Bombay, Gerson da Cunha noticed how the Portuguese language was placed next to Marathi, Gujarati or Canarese, while French was equated to Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. If the University of Bombay did not consider Portuguese worthy of being next to other European languages and placed it within the section of "Indian vernacular", it would be better to simply abolish it, he argued. By relegating the Portuguese language, the University of Bombay was not only marginalizing a language but the whole history of the Portuguese in India, da Cunha's privileged historical subject ("A Brief Sketch" 172). In order to reinforce his argument on the relevance of Portuguese, he mentioned the work of the eminent German linguist Hugo Schuchardt published in the 1880s, with which Gerson da Cunha had himself collaborated, on the number of Portuguese dialects that were spoken in Africa and Asia.\(^6\)

According to Gerson da Cunha, Portuguese, as the official language in the regions under the Portuguese government, should be compared with the use of French in Pondicherry or that of English in Bombay. If religious conversions were not able to reflect the efforts put into the Christianization policies, the present state of the Portuguese language in Goa did not reflect the efforts that were put into its imposition. Even amongst the Indo-Portuguese communities of Bombay, Portuguese was largely being surpassed by English: "Peasants" did not understand it, and the "Bourgeoisie" did not speak it frequently, only the higher classes used it. Here da Cunha was appropriating a European class division and projecting it into India.

Language could not be isolated from many other factors which, in the present, were used to characterize the Indo-Portuguese community. He defended the teaching of Portuguese amongst one minority elite by making a historical digression on the uses of Portuguese in India since the sixteenth century, in commerce, diplomacy, missionization, as well as in the educational establishments of a religious nature. In this incursion into the past, Gerson da Cunha wrote how Brahman-"born missionaries" in his words—had helped disseminate the Portuguese language in the world when they integrated Catholic religious orders. In contrast with the Portuguese, many of whom did not know how to read or write, the Brahman was learned since childhood ("A Brief Sketch" 186).\(^7\) He finished by saying that despite the fact that only a few spoke it and wrote it correctly, it was simply "beautiful" ("A Brief Sketch" 188).

More than ten years after writing on Konkani, in a text that constitutes one of his harshest criticisms of the Portuguese colonial government and its strategy of linguistic annihilation, Gerson da Cunha also manifests himself strongly in favour of the preservation of Portuguese as one of the languages of India. How could such a simplistic concept have seemed a contradiction? How was it possible to defend the language of the colonised and, simultaneously, defend that of the colonisers? This can also be read as a valorization of what was Goan in the
general context of late nineteenth century India, and that meant valuing Konkani as much as the Portuguese language. Both were also part of his own identity, the same that meant being both a Catholic and a Brahman.

Portuguese India of the Past, British India of the Present

Apart from the criticism that Gerson da Cunha revealed in his article on Konkani, his references to contemporary Goa or to the Portuguese Government of India are scarce. His Goan identity was more safely exhibited through the past—through the archaeological, numismatic, and historical interest which Gerson da Cunha demonstrated towards the Portuguese presence in different Indian regions in the previous centuries. It was, in fact, through the distance given by a historical approach that Gerson da Cunha projected his criticism of the Portuguese government and its religious institutions. The present of India, on the other side, tended to signify British India, and not by chance his texts were rich in comparisons between Portuguese colonialism of the past with the British colonialism of the present.

By the end of one of the many conferences he gave at the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, this time on the marriage treaty between the Portuguese Dona Catarina of Braganza and Charles II—a founding moment of the “greatest Empire a European nation ever acquired in the East”—Gerson da Cunha reflected on both empires and, by doing so, on his own identity.

Although not a British subject, and perhaps from this circumstance the more disinterested, I avail myself of the opportunity afforded by the occasion of commemorating, at least academically for the first time in Bombay, the Marriage of the Infant, to express my wish that the liberal principles, which guide the policy of this Empire, may grant it a long life and happier results than those achieved by the ephemeral career of the Old Portuguese Empire, which, though comparatively narrower in its sphere, was nevertheless replete with instructive teachings, and full of most stirring incidents, heroic deeds, no-

ble actions and romantic episodes, a complete history of which remains yet to be written. ("On the Marriage of Infanta" 145-6)

In praising the city where he lived and the British Empire, within one of its more prestigious cultural institutions, Gerson da Cunha reveals the apparently contradictory nature of his position. His “Old Portuguese Empire”, the one he wanted to write about, was a historical entity, safely remote, inoffensive, populated by heroic and noble characters of a “romantic nature”, but also of fatal mistakes and instructive lessons that could be of great utility to the present British Empire, as was so commonly repeated by others—mainly within a nineteenth-century British and Protestant historiographical context.

When referring to the causes of the decadence of the Portuguese Empire of Asia, a central theme for him and for anyone writing on Portuguese India, Gerson da Cunha criticizes those most recent “Portuguese writers” that attribute “all the faults of their impolitic rule at the door of the Spanish yoke”. He is referring to the very common argument, in the nineteenth century or in the twentieth Estado Novo historiography, that the decline of Asia Portuguesa was due to the Spanish dominion of the Felipes. This was a position that, according to the Goan historian, was the best way of avoiding the recriminations that would arise from a Portuguese self-reflection on the past ("An Historical and Archaeological Sketch" 302; Hunter 269). With this position he was making a double criticism: in relation to some contemporary Portuguese colonizing policies, responsible for its own decline; and in relation to a contemporary historiographical position which, instead of reflecting on the mistakes of the past, chose to find the culprits in external causes. A few years afterwards, however, in his history of Indo-Portuguese numismatics, his positions seemed closer to what he had condemned: “The Portuguese had long borne with inimitable patience the weight of the Spanish yoke, which had, by depriving them of their former glorious conquests, atoned in part at least for their past guilty career in the Eastern land and sea.” ("Contributions to the Study" 194) His reading audiences clearly determined what he wrote and how he wrote it.
The *Lusiads*, Luiz de Camões's epic poem, a central text of Portuguese literature, is always present as a historical source, and Gerson da Cunha continuously praises its literary merit, but he also calls attention to its silences in relation to those episodes that “do not add to the glory of the nation.” (“The Portuguese in South” 254-5) As it happened with the poet-soldier in the sixteenth century, there were, in the present, many that only remembered the virtues of the nation and preferred to forget its crimes. While writing on the traditional themes of the historiography of Portuguese India, and making use of its classic texts, he necessarily had to confront many of the ideas of contemporary Portuguese history. In some cases, his historical positions fit into the traditional canon of Portuguese historiography: on many other occasions, he questions, criticizes, or contests a more canonical history making him difficult to place or to classify ideologically.

Gerson da Cunha did not hide his great admiration for the historical character of Afonso de Albuquerque who was the “great founder of the Portuguese empire in the East” and, like “Wellington”, was very attentive to detail (“A Brief Sketch” 177). But in relation to another much invoked cause of the empire’s decadence—the marriage policy of Afonso de Albuquerque, encouraging Portuguese men to marry Indian women—his position was clearly critical and was, in fact, very close to that voiced by Richard Burton in his *Goa and the Blue Mountains*, and in other British contemporary texts. This episode of the past was usually referred to as a historical lesson for the debate that was taking place in the context of nineteenth-century British India—the proof that it did not work and an example of how not to proceed. Gerson da Cunha recontextualised Albuquerque’s gesture—in the Roman Empire tradition, only to classify it as an “experiment that has been found, now that it is too late to repair the evil, to be fruitful of grave evils to both parties.” This approach of a British historiographical tradition, with which Gerson da Cunha clearly identifies himself, contrasts with other uses that later would be made of the same historical event, as it happened with Gilberto Freyre’s *luso-tropicalismo*. The control Gerson da Cunha had over both colonial histories and both contemporary historiographies enabled him to do other less usual comparisons: the union between the kings of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar against the Portuguese, in the sixteenth century, was compared with that suffered by the British during the 1857 Revolt (“Notes on the History” 95).

Religion was, of course, the most controversial issue of Portuguese colonialism in India. But even if Gerson da Cunha’s position cannot be reduced to a single viewpoint, he clearly tends to be critical of the Portuguese methods of imposing Christianity and the ways of eliminating Hinduism. Despite considering himself a Catholic, he did not reveal the nature of his religiosity or the centrality of faith in his life, the violence of the conversion methods was frequently condemned in his writings.

Unlike the policy of the present rulers of Hindustan, which we hope will also be that of the future eras, the spirit which guided the true missionary, in his noble task of imparting to the heathen the news of peace and goodwill, was not of tolerance but of aggression. (“Materials for the History” 184)

As an example of the Portuguese policy where the natives were forced to change their faith under co-action, Gerson da Cunha mentioned the incendiary surge of the Bishop of Goa, Fr. João Albuquerque, by quoting a document that was kept at the Lisbon Torre do Tombo (“Materials for the History” 184-5). The bishop destroyed images and Hindu manuscripts but did not forbid his subordinates from using the local languages as a method of conversion, something which enabled the writing of a series of grammars and vocabularies that were later made known by the Goan Press.

In this apology for a politics of respect towards other religions, Gerson da Cunha compared the different attitudes of two different colonizers of India—the Portuguese of the past, and the British of the present, and clearly revealed on which side he was. By doing so he, again, stood closer to a British-Protestant historical approach where the Portuguese policies to local religions were frequently contrasted, negatively, to the ones practised a few centuries later by the British. Cruelty; in fact, especially when associated with religion, often appeared in descriptions of Portuguese India made by the British or by
Indians of British India (Hunter 268). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827-1894), for example, considered Britain the less cruel of the European nations, in opposition to the Spanish, the French and the Portuguese (Raychaudhuri 70).

One of the subjects of the book Notes on the History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein was the contrast between the past glory and the present decadence of the empire, a persistent subject on the approaches to Portuguese India’s history (v-ix). This was indissociable from religious factors because amongst the causes of decadence was the Inquisition and the religious orders—that “imperium in imperio”—, which Gerson da Cunha attributed to the Jesuits (viii). When, in 1878, two years after publishing his book, he was invited by the Vatican to receive a decoration by the Pope, he confessed his surprise to his Italian friend Angelo De Gubernatis. Yes, he was a Catholic Indian, a scholar and a doctor, but were they aware of what he had written on the Jesuits?

da Cunha manifested his criticism towards the Jesuits and his subsequent praise of the Marquis of Pombal’s policies towards them on different occasions (“Materials for the History” 193). Again, in his praise of the historical character of the Marquis and his criticism of the Companhia de Jesus, he is reproducing a common vision of contemporary British historiography, where the former represented modernity and the lumes, and the latter, the proof of Catholic excesses. Pombal, with his “great genius”, conceived the “admirable policy” of expelling the Jesuits and closing convents, “ nests of idlers” more interested in their selfish interests than in peace and good-will. He also made another harsh criticism but in an indirect way: by quoting a text of another author saying that everything that the Jesuits built was destined to ruin and destruction (“Materials for the History” 187, 192).¹¹

In another article also destined to the readership of British India or of Great Britain, Gerson da Cunha appealed to a historical recontextualization of the Inquisition that “made the Portuguese rule odious to the mild inhabitants of the Konkan”. However, he argued, one could not read the feudal character of that time with the modern codes and could not contrast the despotic militarism and the clerical supremacy of that period with present time, when “the spirit of democracy pervades every political creed, and the French Revolution has taught nations their rights as well as their duties.” (“On the Marriage” 142) In the same period, and in the same journal, he published an article on Dellon, the French doctor and traveller who went to Goa in the seventeenth century and wrote about his personal experience as a victim of the Goan Inquisition (“M. Dellon Materials” 53-62). Gerson da Cunha explains why he considered it a “fabrication”, a “forgery” and a “fraud” but, at the same time, is careful to add that his “denial of the authenticity of the work does not certainly imply the defence of the Inquisition, which I have elsewhere qualified in a manner it ought to be by every liberal-minded man, whether a Catholic or Protestant” (“M. Dellon Materials” 53-62).

British Colonialism in Transition:
Criticism and Complicities

In his article on the Buddha’s tooth and its cult in Ceylon—Mémoire sur l’histoire de la dent-relique de Ceylan, précédé d’un essai sur la vie et la religion de Gautama Buddha—Gerson da Cunha finished with a long quotation of Rodier that had no direct relation with the article’s subject and which reflected on the relations between Europe and Asia, between European colonizers and Indian colonised, on a wider and more contemporary way.

The unchangeable rules of body and soul which the Indian theocrats dared to impose on society, ended up destroying all the elements of progress. The Hindu genius, once so brilliant, so productive, so vivacious has died tightened in a straitjacket. The harsh contact with our civilization will perhaps awake him! We hope the Arian descendants will find, sooner or later, compensation for the pains and humiliations caused by European dominance (...). (“Mémoire sur l’histoire...” 431-2)

Gerson da Cunha was not the author of these words. However, by reproducing them as the epilogue of his text, wasn’t he somehow criticizing the successive governments that had oppressed India and
Ceylon? Wasn't this a strategy destined to reveal his opinions, not only of historical events of the past but of the present of India? Wasn't this a way of defending an ancestral "indianity" incarnated in the Aryans to which he felt he also belonged, and which was repressed through the successive European presences? And with the advantage of doing so by using the legitimizing words of a European? Could the fact that he was publishing in a French journal, and not one of the scholarly journals of British India where he usually published, give him more freedom of expression?

The same argument could be made in relation to Gerson da Cunha’s private correspondence with the Italian Nationalist Angelo De Gubernatis and in his collaboration with the Revue Internationale, one of many journals created by his Italian friend.12 Published in Florence but written in French, the Revue Internationale, as its name suggested, concentrated on contemporary events and literature from different nations. There clearly is a sense of a greater freedom on the fact of voicing his opinions on contemporary India outside India, and in a European country that had nothing to do with India. In the two articles he sent to the journal, there is also a clear consciousness of the changing nature of colonial relationships, and of the more or less evident signs that announced the end of British India.

The period when Gerson da Cunha contributed to the Revue Internationale, 1884-85, was precisely that in which the Anglo-Russian conflicts were more latent, due to the recent Russian occupation of some of the frontiers of the British Empire. Lord Curzon also considered Russia's expansionist policy as a threat toward the British presence in India (see his book Persia and the Persian question). In more direct or indirect ways, Gerson da Cunha sometimes referred to the possibility of Russia being the next colonizer of India. And he did so in a positive way, assuming it as a necessary transitional phase before a full Indian independence. In the intimacy of a letter sent to Angelo De Gubernatis, he wrote what he could not write elsewhere: "The Russian domination, which sooner or later will follow the British, will be an important phase of our political evolution or, to use a somewhat impressive Italian expression, in our Risorgimento [sic]." (Corresp. 6)13

By establishing this comparison between the Indian case and the recent process of Italian unification that led to the birth of the Italian nation, da Cunha stated his belief in a future Indian independence (Bayly). Yesterday colonized by the Portuguese, today by the British, tomorrow by the Russians and, in a day after tomorrow, not too remote, only India. A non-colonised India. In this teleological reflection, he imagined a nation without a foreign presence, and even if he gives no dates, there is a certain eminence in the words "sooner or later" that he uses in his letter. Again, in another letter to his Italian friend based in Florence, he sent his compliments to the Russian princesses that lived in Florence and that he referred to as "future rulers of my country, one that we hope will be the last foreign domination that will prepare [sic] our emancipation."14 In another letter, he wished the Russian princesses a long life so that one day they could arrive in India and cause "panic to [sic] the British" (Corresp. n. 20).15

In the article published in the Revue Internationale, destined to reach a European public, Gerson da Cunha also felt free enough to wonder on the advantages of a hypothetical Russian colonisation of India, mainly when confronted with the British rule of the present (Corresp. n. 17).16 While the British would "leave India impoverished and underdeveloped" because they had conquered India as adventurers and had colonized it as Greeks, by not mixing with the local populations and by being avaricious, the Russians, on the contrary, would colonize India as the old Romans, mixing with the Indians. At the same time, they would contribute to uniting India, appeasing its religious differences and solving the divergences caused by the caste system. The Russian example, with its honesty, would also inspire the Indian people to a spirit of nationality—"that will end up by placing the older brother of the Arian family in the pedestal he has the right to occupy, and that is sanctioned by history".17 His Italian interlocutor—Gubernatis, the Italianist—did not seem to agree, despite being married to a Russian and having a special interest in Russian culture. In his Indian travel journal, he states that a hypothetical Russian invasion of India would be of no benefit because Russia was not more civilized than India itself. Therefore, Indians had no advantage at all in changing "landlords" (De Gubernatis 321-2).
India, many had read the manifestations of joy towards the ex-viceroy as a permanent positive sign of colonial relations. However, the process became unstoppable. When a people were taught about its own rights, this same people started questioning itself on the evolution of these same rights. If they encountered resistance, on the contrary, this progressive evolution would transform itself into revolution. On the other side, as Gerson da Cunha pointed out, rights also meant duties, and these were the last thing on which the masses reflected.

In relation to the apparent loyalty towards the British Crown, the Indian correspondent Gerson da Cunha noted how there was always an element of precariousness in any foreign government. Gerson da Cunha, however, had his doubts. And to demonstrate them he gave an example of historical parallelism taken from the past of “Portuguese India”: those manifestations of joy had been analogous to those that took place in the “flourishing Portuguese Empire in the East”. When D. João de Castro returned to Goa after Diu's conquest, the natives offered him golden flowers and the merchants of Cambaia spread out their most rich and beautiful cotton and silk cloths so that he could walk between the galleon and the cathedral. And what was the result of all these native acclamations of the “last hero”, and of the congratulation of all the Hindu and Muslim princes of India? Nowadays, not even the most cultivated native of India remembers the name of D. João de Castro. This is a clear contrast with the names of D. João de Castro’s contemporary natives, whose memory was still alive, and remembered through popular ballads— “Such is the destiny of all foreign rulers, most benevolent though they be.” Gerson da Cunha ended this reflection with a praise of D. João de Castro’s historical character followed by an event that again enabled him to establish a comparison between both colonial empires—the Portuguese of the past with the British of the present. D. João de Castro died poor, assisted by St. Francis Xavier, whose tomb in Velha Goa Lord Ripon had visited recently. The epilogue of the former empire was already known, while the epilogue of the latter was still to come, but as Gerson da Cunha suggested, it would be similar.

“The inauguration of a spirit of nationality among the natives of this country” had been, in his opinion, the greatest revelation of the event of the transition of power between both governors. Gerson da Cunha's argument would be much repeated in the future, but, in 1884, it was still latent: India had much to gain for its relationship to the most progressive, illuminated, intelligent and energetic of Europe, but Britain had to gradually adjust itself to India’s demands. The colonizer had to please the colonized and win its good-will, mainly when feeling the threat of a potential rival such as Russia. As the Portuguese had become more benevolent with the native when, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the British arrived in Surat, the British also had to please the Indians after the Russians arrived in Kabul. The published article did not print this sentence or idea, nor did it print the section of the article where Gerson da Cunha reflected on the meaning of the 1857 Mutiny while comparing it with the excesses displayed by the masses in Lord Ripon’s cessation (“Corresp. 37). Why were his words cut? Who was the unassumed censor?

Governments, however, did not seem to consider the reflections on contemporary British India that relevant and omitted the many pages Gerson da Cunha had written (“Corresp. 37). Were these reflections too delicate to be published in the journal edited by one considered the major Italian figure of Indian studies and who was about to depart on a major journey to India and somehow needed the support of the British Government of India? Was the Italian troubled with Gerson da Cunha's comments that in some way announced the end of the British colonial government in India?

Conclusion

When referring to Salman Rushdie’s novel Midnight's Children, Edward Said used the expression to take a “voyage in” to designate the “effort” made by those writers, historians and intellectuals from the peripheries of the world “to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories” (Culture and Imperialism 260-1). However, for the Goan historian, or any Goan writer in fact, this division between periphery and centre, India and Europe, or non-European and European did not make sense in the same way implied by Said. Gerson da Cunha was not appropriating the instruments of
Goa: A Post-Colonial Society Between Cultures

Gerson da Cunha's double gaze—the control of the "here and there", within the Indian sub-continent and also outside it—enabled him to make a comparative and transnational and transcultural history much before those words were used in historiography. He went beyond "Portuguese India", even if that was almost always his point of departure. Gerson da Cunha wrote not only on the history of the Portuguese in India but on the historical production that the Portuguese had done and were doing on India, on the ways in which contemporary Portuguese history thought about its own past. His was, however, a history that also took into account other communities, other religions, and other colonial configurations. His was a history of some regions of India that in a certain period crossed with each other and with the history of Portugal, but which had other histories before and after the Portuguese presence. Histories that sometimes were also colonial histories.

Da Cunha's was a kaleidoscopic vision that was distinct from those Portuguese historians that wrote on India from the metropolis, as it was different from those who, being Goan or Portuguese, wrote from Goa. On the one side, he controlled all the bibliographical references of Portuguese historians; on the other side, his vision was as Eurocentric as Indo-centric, and that differentiated him from the historiography of India done in nineteenth or even twentieth-century Portugal—apart from knowing the Portuguese sources, that were in Goan archives as well as in Lisbon ones, and of accompanying what was being published in Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra or Goa. He also knew what was being published in London, Bombay, Rome, Florence, Paris or Calcutta. Apart from Portuguese, he read English and a number of Indian languages, from Konkani to Sanskrit. And this historiographical cosmopolitanism, translated into a knowledge of different national traditions that did not usually cross each other, as was the case of the Portuguese with the British one.

He had access to different kinds of publishing contexts and, I would argue, he was conscious of what he could write and what he could not write in different geographical contexts. Even in a growing cosmopolitan world, when journals, writings and ideas were interchanged between places, when writing in French and publishing in Italy, he knew he could say things that he would not say if publishing in Bombay. In the two main scholarly journals of Bombay—the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and the Indian Antiquary—he inscribed the history of the Portuguese within a wider history of India, oscillating between a legitimization of the pioneering role of the Portuguese in many areas and the criticism of marriage policies, Catholic methods of conversion, and politics of eradicating local language and religion, in ways that should be inscribed in a British historiographical tradition where the "mistakes" of the Portuguese past in India were often quoted to exemplify what should not be done in the present. However, when writing in the privacy of his correspondence with Angelo De Gubernatis, or in a French language journal published in Italy, the British India that emerges is a very different one, as we have seen—one which he questioned. Despite his historical digressions into the past, he also dwells on the present of British India and also on its future—always with an Independent India on the horizon. The same cannot be said in relation to his contemporary Portuguese India, where the criticism tends to be more safely projected in the past. His different voices, the plasticity with which they adapt to different audiences, also reveal the intersection of private and public that marked da Cunha's biography.

It was precisely his geographical, identitarian and publishing mobility, his foreignness in relation to the dominant contexts in which he moved, that enabled him to produce different kinds of knowledge on India. Gerson da Cunha's specific case further complexifies the places from where he writes on colonialism. Somehow he was never in the place of the colonised. By being Goan but not living in Goa, he did not have to live under the Portuguese colonial Government; he lived in Bombay but he was not an Indian of British India, and, therefore, was always somehow a foreigner, never being entirely in a colonised subaltern position; he went to Europe a few times, but apparently he never went to Portugal, and his countries of choice and of intellectual correspondence were Italy and France. These were places where he was never a colonial subject in the metropolis, but an "Indian"
that shared the culture and religion of his European interlocutors. In the frontiers he chose to cross and the places where he lived and from where he wrote, Gerson da Cunha was never completely subject to a colonial context, to a discourse and practice of hierarchies, differences and inequalities. Being always a foreigner enabled him this unlikely freedom, and the possibility of voicing, at least some of his opinions of the different colonialisms of India, of the past and of the present. It also meant, paradoxically, that his intellectual production was never acknowledged by the two dominant historiographical traditions that subsequently reflected on the history of India. His in-betweenness and the fluidity and even contradictory nature of his identities, somehow contributed to his invisibility.

End Notes
1 Angelo De Gubernatis has numerous references to this social and intellectual circle of Gerson da Cunha which, very often, met at his house. Here we will not be able to explore Da Cunha's relations with the different Goan communities settled in Bombay something that, for example, Paulo Varella Gomes has written about, nor his relationship with other Goan scholars based in Bombay, as José Camilo Lisboa, the distinguished doctor and botanist from Bardez, who lived in Bombay: José Camilo Lisboa (Bardês, 1823–Bombaim, 1897) see Costa 192-94.
2 We do not know what kind of relationship Gerson da Cunha had with Angelo Maffei, the Italian Jesuit missionary who, precisely in 1878, some months after the International Congress of Orientalists in Florence, left Naples for India. In the two decades he lived in what today is the Karnataka region, he dedicated himself to mission work and to producing studies on Konkani: see Maffei, A Konkani Grammar and Maffei, An English-Konkani Dictionary. See also all the works of Mons. Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado.
3 The somehow problematic relationship of Gerson da Cunha with his origins, that revealed itself in the need to affirm his belonging to a high caste in different ways, even by using pre-colonial Goan, has been already analysed by George Moraes. This author also tried to demonstrate how Gerson da Cunha had a tendency to favour those authors that belonged to a higher caste while ignoring those which belonged to other social groups. Moraes also suggests that in his historization of Goa, Gerson da Cunha undertook a strategy of valorizing his family origins to the detriment of historical truth. He also wrote that the Goan doctor’s weakness was precisely his “caste complex” (3, 38).
4 See Raychaudhuri and see also Di Constanzo. Di Constanzo gives particular relevance to Müller’s influence in British Orientalism. His ideas on India’s contemporary decay, in contrast to her past, somehow legitimized the regenerative capacity of the British colonial government. However, in order to avoid the mistakes that had led to the Indian Revolt of 1857, Müller argued that the British administration had to modernize and carry out profound reforms.
GOA: A POST-COLONIAL SOCIETY BETWEEN CULTURES

17 "which shall end up by placing the eldest brother of the Aryan family on the pedestal which belongs to him by right, and which is sanctioned by history".
18 Inden analyses the persistence of these essentialized images of India, in contrast to European values and ideals. See Inden 401-46.
19 The article, written in English, arrived by post together with this letter: see Cunha, "Lettre des Indes" 202-4.
20 See also Isaka 151-76.
21 For a biography on Bankim see Sen.
22 See the chapter on Lord Ripon's visit to Goa in my book Entre Dois Impérios.
23 Da Cunha's second contribution was published two months later, on the 25th February 1884.

WORKS CITED

Burton, Richard F. Goa and the Blue Mountains; or, six months of sick leave. 1851.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 6 (Roma, Hotel Minerva, 20 de Outubro de 1878)." 1878. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 16 (Bombay, 37 Hornby Road, 17 de Março de 1879)." 1879. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 17 (Bombay, 37 Hornby Road, 1 August 1879)." 1879. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 20 (Bombay, 39, Hornby Road, 1 de Janeiro de 1880)." 1880. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 22 (Bombay, 39 Hornby Road, 14 de Junho de 1881)." 1881. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 23 (Bombay, 39 Hornby Road, 26 de Julho de 1881)." 1881. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 32 (Bombay, 23 Novembro 1883)." 1883. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Corresp. para Angelo De Gubernatis, n. 37 (Bombay, Hornby Road, 25 de Dezembro de 1883)." 1883. MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis, Florence.
——. "Notes on the History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassin. Illustrated with seventeen photographs, nine lithographic plates and a map. Bombay: Thacker, Vining & Co., 1876. V.IX.

José Gerson da Cunha | Filipa Lowndes Vicente
Goa: A Post-Colonial Society Between Cultures


NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rochelle Almeida is Clinical Professor of the Humanities in the Global Liberal Studies Program at New York University and a Senior Member of St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford, UK. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Bombay and a Doctor of Arts degree in English from St. John’s University, New York. Appointed Fulbright-Nehru Research Fellow for Professional and Academic Excellence, she will be based in 2018-19 at St. Xavier’s College, Bombay, to carry out ethnographic field research on Religious Minorities and Western Performing Arts in Bombay. Specializing in inter-disciplinary studies, she has authored Originality and Imitation: Indianness in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya, The Politics of Mourning: Grief-Management in Cross-Cultural Fiction and Britain’s Anglo-Indians: The Invisibility of Assimilation. She has also co-edited Global Secularisms in a Post-Secular Age and Curtain Call: Anglo-Indian Reflections. She has published extensively in academic journals on the South Asian diaspora particularly Anglo-Indians as a people of mixed racial descent. As an international freelance writer, she divides her time between Connecticut and Bombay.

Duarte Drumond Braga (b. 1981) is a Postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. He holds a Ph.D. (2014) in Comparative Studies from the University of Lisbon (Thesis topic: Orientalism in 20th century Portuguese Poetry). He is currently part of the Thinking Goa Project (Funded by Fapesp, Brazil). From 2004 to 2014, he was a researcher at the University of Lisbon’s Centre for Comparative Studies and was awarded an FCT Doctoral Grant. He lectured on Creative Writing at the same University’s BA in Comparative Arts and Cultures. His current research interests are Poetry in Portuguese (19th-20th centuries), the Lusophone Literatures from Goa, Macau and Timor and Portuguese Orientalist Writing. He has
early, inspired by his readings in the Portuguese, English, and Spanish literary classics and contemporary literature, to which he soon added Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and the Indo-Anglo-American literary scene. Having lived through two empires and survived both, he now describes himself as a post-colonial writer. His short stories have appeared both in India and the USA; he is the author of Tiwalem, a novel, Loving Ayeshu!, a short story collection and a compilation entitled The Miscreant: Selected Stories 1949-2016 which appeared in 2017. Victor has written music criticism for Indian newspapers and the New York Times, and has published a pioneering book on the performance of Baroque music. He also has an abiding interest in Goa's history. His fiction and nonfiction have both been widely anthologized.

Andrew Towers has been a graduate student of International Communication at St. John's University, NY.

Filipa Lowndes Vicente, a historian, is a researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences (ICS) of the University of Lisbon (ICS-ULisboa). In 2015, she was a Visiting Scholar at King's College, University of London and in 2016, at Brown University, Providence, USA. She completed her PhD at the University of London (Goldsmiths College, 2000). Her PhD thesis was the origin for the book Viagens e Exposições: D. Pedro V na Europa do Século XIX (Lisbon: Górica, 2003). Amongst her work on India are the books Other Orientalisms. India between Florence and Bombay, 1860-1900 published in Lisbon (2009), in India and in Italy (2012) and Entre Dois Impérios. Viajantes Britânicos em Goa (1800-1940). Other books include A Arte sem História. Mulheres e cultura artística (séculos XVI-XX) (Lisbon: Athena, 2012) and the edition of the book with 30 authors O Império da Visão. Fotografia no contexto colonial português (1860-1960), published in 2014.