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THE PORTUGUESE IN THE ORIENT

by Clive Willis

Let us get the triumphalism over first! Half a millennium ago, in the third week of May, 1498, there occurred one of the most significant events in the whole of human history. On 18th May the three *carracks* of Vasco da Gama sighted the mainland of the Indian subcontinent; what they glimpsed was a *terra alta*, the mountains of the Western Ghats, brooding over the Malabar Coast of south-western India. Held up for a day by buffeting rainstorms that heralded the season of monsoons, they came to anchor on Sunday, 20th May, two leagues from the city of Calicut. The following day, the 21st, Gama sent ashore a *degredado*, an expendable exiled criminal; challenged by a Spanish-speaking Tunisian Arab, the convict replied with the immortal words, '*Vimos buscar cristãos e especiaria*' ('We come in search of Christians and spices'). All these they eventually found; over at last was the long quest for the sea route to the Orient, the bone-jangling marathon, thrust into motion more than half a century earlier by Henry the Navigator and his even abler brother, Prince Pedro. It is, of course, no coincidence that EXPO Lisbon 1998 bullied off on 21st May, exactly 500 years after the Portuguese convict's landfall.

It is evidently for the established historians rather than for me to rate this occurrence as truly epoch-making. Baroness Thatcher's eighteenth-century hero, the political economist Adam Smith, declared that 'the discovery of America and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind'. With hindsight we may wish to add other events, but further comments are worth noting. In 1949 the Oxford-educated and distinguished Indian historian, Professor K M. Panikkar, observed that the pioneering round-trip voyage of 1497-99 set in train what he called the 'Vasco da Gama era' of Asian history, which lasted down to the dismemberment of the European empires after World War II. A year earlier the great Professor Arnold Toynbee had divided the whole of

world history into what he termed the *pre-da Gaman* and *post-da Gaman* periods. In 1965 Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper laid strong emphasis on the Portuguese contribution to the march of history: (...) it was not Ming China but fifteenth-century Europe, for all its temporary decline, which captured the next stage of history, and (...) within fifteenth-century Europe, it was not Italy or Flanders, or even France or England, which showed the way, but a minuscule kingdom at the back end of Europe, Portugal.

One could cite more examples, but what by 1500 had become plain was that speculation about the nature of the globe and the disposition of the continents was rapidly coming to an end. A new world lay at mankind's feet: this world from 1500 onwards was to be transformed and dominated by the European: it had at last been unified. Whether we place our emphasis on the accomplishments of Dias and Gama and Cabral or on the Spanish-backed voyages of Columbus and Magellan, they were all dependent on the seamanship, navigational techniques and cartography of the Portuguese mariners, by whom they were all schooled, and in which skills Portugal then led the world.

I used earlier the metaphor of a marathon. There is a common assumption, understandably generated by Spaniards and by people from the Western Hemisphere, that, after leading the field for eighty years, the Portuguese were the unlucky runners-up, the silver medallists, that the real prize must go to Christopher Columbus for his remarkable achievement of 1492. Though it was indeed a remarkable feat and accomplished six years earlier, the simple fact remains that the race was to find the sea route to the Indies: one would hardly award a gold medal to a marathon runner if he turned up in the wrong stadium! Moreover, Columbus went to his Maker, endearingly convinced that he had discovered Marco Polo's Cathay and Zipangu, that is to say, China and Japan. But I want to point out another crucial point that is usually either scantily acknowledged or cavalierly ignored. It was not until his third transatlantic voyage of 1498 that Columbus reached the mainland of the Americas; till then he had merely been scudding around assorted islands from the Bahamas to the Caribbean. Merely to discover more Atlantic islands

to add to the Portuguese Azores or Cape Verde archipelagoes was really of no great substance; but the most salient fact of all, and this I firmly wish to establish, is that Columbus landed on the mainland of the American continent, in what is now Venezuela, in August 1498. Venezuela was his 'Cathay', Cuba was his 'Zipangu'. In other words, he had established the sea route to his phoney Oriental landmass three months after Gama had reached the genuine one. When it comes to handing out gold medals, I rest my case.

The fortitude and endurance of Columbus and his crew on their 1492 voyage nevertheless deserves our admiration in respect of their two-and-a half month journey to the islands of their New World; yet they were never out of sight of land for more than thirty days. But if we admire those men, what can we say of Gama and his stalwart Portuguese? They set sail from Belém on the Tagus estuary on 9th July 1497; thus their outward journey lasted over ten months, whilst the return voyage added another year. Twice, firstly in the Atlantic on their outward career, and secondly in the Indian Ocean while making their way home, they had no sight of land for ninety days... Of the 250 'heroes of the sea' who set sail in 1497 only fifty saw Lisbon again two years later. Many had perished from scurvy. Their suffering is unimaginable. Small wonder, then, that their captain-major, Vasco da Gama, along with his mariners, was made immortal by Camões in *The Lusiads*, their apotheosis signalled by their coupling on an enchanted isle with divine nymphs and then sharing a celebratory banquet with them...

The moment has come, however, to subvert the triumphalist tone of all this. In epic, lyric and dramatic verse Camões was outstanding at expressing the highest ideals of Renaissance man, but, despite his genius, Camões was also a street ruffian and a whoremonger (as his two letters from Lisbon amply reveal); moreover, his epic hero, selected to embody the *peito ilustre lusitano* (the noble spirit of the Portuguese), though a man of immense courage, had other less attractive characteristics. Reportedly, he was an irascible aristocrat with a repugnantly brutal nature, behaving arguably as badly, if not worse, than Pizzaro in the Americas; Gama set a standard often imitated in the early years of conquest.

I must supply my evidence at once. One of the earliest of all the chroniclers of Portuguese oriental exploits was Gaspar Correia, in his *Lendas da India* (Records of India), which cover the first half-century of the Portuguese presence in a subcontinent where he himself lived from 1512 onwards, we read the following from the account of Gama's second voyage, in 1502. The Portuguese trading post in Calicut had been found unwelcome and had been overrun. Some fifty of the defenders had perished. Despite an earlier brutal reprisal by Cabral, in which hundreds of Muslim traders had been butchered, Gama took his own additional revenge. His fleet captured and plundered two local ships and sixteen smaller trading vessels laden with butter and rice and bound for Calicut; Correia takes up the story:

"Then the captain-major ordered them to cut off the hands and ears and noses of all the crews and put them all into one of the smaller vessels (...). When all the Indians had thus been dealt with, he commanded their feet to be tied together, as they had no hands with which to untie them; and in order that they should not untie them with their teeth, he ordered his men to smash their teeth with staves, and they knocked them down their throats; then they were put on board, heaped up, one on top of the other, all mixed up with the blood that streamed from them; then he ordered mats and dry leaves to be spread over them (...) and the vessel set on fire: and there were more than 800 of them."

It need hardly surprise us that Correia's account of this stomach-wrenching atrocity remained unpublished till 1858, along with the rest of the barbed comments that characterize the *Lendas da India*. Correia was not witness to the event but drew the details from the diary of a priest, Father João Figueira, who was accompanying Gama. Other acts of cruelty include Gama's sickening behaviour when belatedly becoming Viceroy of India in 1524. On the discovery of three women stowaways on the voyage to Goa, he ordered their public flogging on arrival, despite the intercession of the secular clergy, the Franciscans and assorted noblemen who attempted to ransom them, each woman received 200 lashes. One wonders how

Gama would react to the bare-breasted European women who flagrantly and illegally "strut their stuff" on the beaches of modern Goa in these days of 'political correctness'. It is commonly asserted that all empires are built by thieves and murderers. There was no exception in the case of Vasco da Gama. We need hardly be surprised that the Indian government refused point blank to commemorate the quincentary of Gama's voyage. The only concession was the very neutral Indian pavilion at EXPO 1998.

The Indian historian Panikkar even regarded Vasco da Gama as mediocre, for all his courage. He alleges even that the captain-major's first voyage to India was along known routes. This, I regret to say, simply will not do. Dias in 1488, after the first rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, was forced to turn back just short of what is now the South African city of East London; Arab and Chinese ships had traded as far down eastern Africa as Sofala, close to the modern Beira. 1000 miles separate these two points and mapmakers of the time revealed their very great fear that they were separated not by sea but by a prolongation of Africa, thus land locking the Indian Ocean. We cannot deprive Gama of the credit of proving that fear to be baseless. But certainly, his visit to Calicut in 1498 was largely a diplomatic and commercial humiliation. Panikkar is undoubtedly right to assert that the voyage was important less for what it achieved *per se* than for what it set in train.

Having given this rough-and-ready context to the commemorations (and for some even the celebrations) of the Fifth Centenary year, it will be my purpose, towards the end of this paper, to draw up some kind of balance sheet of Portugal's grandiose oriental adventure. What are the lasting benefits, if any, and, if so, to whom? And what remains from the imperial dream? But we shall have to endure more history first...

It is often maintained that Portugal lost not one empire but three: the Oriental empire of the sixteenth century, the Brazilian empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the African empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But it is a matter of debate whether the great sixteenth century undertaking could ever

really be called an 'empire'. We need to remind ourselves of the terms of the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, sanctioned by that wretched Borgia pope, Alexander VI, according to which a north/south meridian, drawn 370 leagues to the west of the Cape Verde Islands, split the world like an apple, with the western segment awarded to Spain and the eastern chunk to Portugal. Furthermore, the Portuguese collected Brazil into the bargain, much to the chagrin of the Spaniards, who had not anticipated how far to the east Brazil bulged into the Atlantic. (Whether the Portuguese realised this or not is another story!) Argybargy broke out later on two counts: (a) which of the Cape Verde Islands was the measurement to be taken from? (b) where did one draw the antemeridian line in the Pacific? At all events, the Philippines were ultimately claimed for Spain, but the Moluccas or Spice Islands to their south remained in contention, whence Magellan's treacherous but unavailing circumnavigatory voyage of 1519 in the service of the Spanish crown. Matters were made the more complex by the virtual impossibility of calculating longitude at sea, until John Harrison's eighteenth-century sea clocks resolved the problem.

The Portuguese, like the Spaniards, had three masters, God, Caesar and Mammon. Their objectives in the east were to spread Christianity, to smite the Muslim and other 'infidels' wherever possible, and to capture the spice trade, wresting it from the hands of Gujarati and other traders, whose conventional trade route into Europe had been via Mameluke Egypt and Venice and ultimately to Antwerp and Bruges. Vaguely embodied in the Portuguese endeavour was also some notion of encircling Islam and recapturing the Holy Land. It was no coincidence that many of the prominent Portuguese sea captains either were or became knights of the Order of Christ, an order swiftly formed by King Dinis of Portugal, to replace the crusading Knights Templar, after Pope Clement V's shameful dissolution of that order in the second decade of the fourteenth century.

The control of the spice trade was ruthlessly but brilliantly effected by Afonso de Albuquerque. In six short years, between 1510 and 1515, he captured Goa, Malacca and Hormuz, all of them vital

entrepôts in the strategy of the intended Portuguese monopoly. With these, the west coast of India, the Moluccas (the Spice Islands), and the trade route through the Persian Gulf were brought under Portuguese restraint. The one citadel that stubbornly refused to fall was Aden, which inevitably meant leakage via the Red Sea to Egypt and Europe. Calicut, the principal port and power of the Malabar coast, though never taken by the Portuguese, was frequently blockaded and even stormed; indeed, the Portuguese had earlier gained their first footholds in India by forming alliances with the Rajas of Cananor and Cochin against the dominance of the powerful king (or Samorin) of Calicut and by building forts in both places. A trading post at Muscat had been the forerunner of the seizure of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf but the outstanding achievement of Albuquerque was the capture of Malacca, the Singapore of its day.

Forts and trading posts then sprang up everywhere. Alliances, trade agreements, bullying and downright smash and grab set up a constellation, or (in modern parlance) a network, of trade and control, in which there figured sundry ports from the Gulf to the west and east coasts of India, along with the subjugation of most of what is now the island of Sri Lanka, as well as trading posts in Bengal, Burma (now Myanmar) and Thailand. Malacca became the centre of a radial trade system that embraced Goa in India, Macau in China, Nagasaki in Japan, four islands in the Moluccas and three of the lesser Sunda Islands, of which the best known is Timor. Altogether there were some fifty fortresses and trading posts (or 'factories', *feitorias* in Portuguese) under some form of Portuguese dominance or at least influence throughout the sixteenth century. Whether all this could be called an 'empire' is, I repeat, open to debate. The pattern varied considerably, and could change over time. Coastal potentates who formed alliances and/or trade agreements often woke up to find themselves puppets, learning too late that the nearby fort, whose construction they had permitted in defence of their domain from other potentates, was gradually used as a means of their own subjugation. Conversely, the model of 'extraterritorial' trading posts (i.e. outside 'official' jurisdiction) was affected in the main on the Coromandel coast of south-eastern India, around the Bay

of Bengal, initially in Macau in China, and in Nagasaki in Japan.

For a hundred years the Indian Ocean became a Portuguese lake. The former *mare liberum*, where Muslim and Hindu merchants had traded at will, had become a *mare clausum*, where trading vessels were forced to pay for a passport and where their fleets were shepherded by Portuguese warships. Moreover, if they were Muslims, the passport (or *cartaz*) was not always a guarantee of protection! It goes without saying that total Portuguese control did not extend to the east of the Straits of Malacca, but they enjoyed an important rôle in the maritime trade in the South China Sea also. Their 'factory' at Macau, established around 1557, came formally under Portuguese administration when, some twenty years later, China's Ming emperor recognised the 'barbarian' Portuguese as middlemen in trade with Japan, since direct trade between the two oriental peoples was utterly rejected by both parties.

It should be stressed that maritime control of the Indian Ocean was possible in the sixteenth century because of the one, indeed the only, technological aspect in which the Portuguese had massive superiority: cannon power mounted on sturdy ships. Successive war fleets from Mameluke Egypt and Ottoman Turkey failed to dislodge them. But the war junks of the South China Sea commanded much greater respect. The products of the Portuguese oriental trading network included gold from both Sumatra and China, silver from Japan, pepper (by far the major spice in volume), which came from both Malabar and Indonesia; cloves, nutmeg and mace from the Spice Islands; cinnamon from Sri Lanka; silks and porcelain from China; cotton textiles from Gujarat and Coromandel; indigo from various sources; sandalwood from Timor; and, finally and very prominently, horses from Persia and Arabia, for which Albuquerque had established Goa as the sole permitted trading post.

Many of these goods also formed the basis for an Asian inter-port trade. The route around the Cape of Good Hope was principally for pepper and other spices, in return for silver bullion of varied provenance, including the Western Hemisphere. Much of this trade had been a Muslim monopoly, which the Portuguese, rightly or

wrongly, had decided could only be wrested from the Muslims by brute force. Albuquerque, in seizing Goa from Muslim control, had massacred the Muslim males but had adopted an almost egalitarian approach to the Hindu population. Yet, paradoxically, he recommended the Muslim women as wives for his invaders, because such women were paler-skinned and therefore, in his muddled view, bound to be more civilized. His successors took an even less enlightened view of Hindu religion and culture, however, and the destruction of their Goan temples was set in train in 1540. Some specialists argue that the Portuguese could have gained a more lasting position in Asian trade if they had eschewed force; indeed, their brutality varied according to local conditions. Though Daman and Diu effectively controlled Gujarati shipping, nevertheless, as many of the able Gujarati merchants were Muslims, they were not butchered as the Muslims of Goa had been.

The viceroy (or governor) in Goa presided over the whole of the *Estado da India* (State of India) which embraced roughly a dozen east African settlements, from Sofala as far north as Pate, as well as the whole network as far east as Macau and the Moluccas. In fact, Portuguese East Africa was not detached from the *Estado da India* until Pombal's dictatorship in the eighteenth century. The amazing fact is that this vast and ramshackle network hung together for as long as it did, especially as, on the evidence of many, *including* Portuguese chroniclers and commentators, it was characterised by corruption and incompetence, by idleness and brutality, to say nothing of the sundry diseases to which the Portuguese fell victim.

Sixteenth-century Portugal had a population of just over one million; India alone had a population of some 140 million: small wonder that the Portuguese clung to the coast and to islands. Moreover, they were confronted by civilizations that were in most respects their technological equals. The mighty land-based Moghul Empire of north and central India was barely aware of the Portuguese presence, nor was it interested in the sea. Contrast this situation with the mere three million indigenous population of Spanish America or the small and primitive ethnic groups of Brazil, as encountered by the Iberian conquerors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the Orient the Portuguese numbers were microscopic, as they always have been, through to the present century. It is estimated that roughly 2400 Portuguese per annum set sail for Asia in the sixteenth century. With shipwreck and disease not all of them arrived, either, the journey to Goa lasting for five to six fraught months, as opposed to the average seven weeks from Cadiz to Vera Cruz (in Mexico) or to Panama. At any one time, the entire population (regardless of race) of Portuguese Asia was of a mere 200,000, of whom only 15,000 were white Portuguese. These were composed principally of soldiers, convicts, exiles like Camões, adventurers, sailors who had no wish to return to Lisbon, and assorted religious (of whom more later!). There was also a sprinkling of officials, of minor nobility on the make, and of other Europeans. Unlike the Spanish undertakings in the New World or even the Portuguese thrust in seventeenth and eighteenth century Brazil, there were hardly any European women. Such women as there were fell into the categories of stowaways and whores (often one and the same), or a handful of wives, daughters and sweethearts, or the *órfãs-del-Rei* (orphans of the King), these last being orphan girls sent out with dowries consisting of official positions in the system. Of this European population hardly any, apart from the viceregal entourage, ever returned to Portugal. Indeed, in what was called *Goa dourada* (Golden Goa), and elsewhere, the Portuguese males often settled down to a licentious and easy existence with a gaggle of concubines and with assorted black slaves imported from East Africa. Syphilis and death was a common outcome and the hospitals and *Misericórdias* overflowed! Not all had an easy life: the monsoon rains brought unemployment to the soldiers, who were often seen to be begging. Adventurers round the Bay of Bengal and in sections of south east Asia led an even more scandalous existence, mingling trade with piracy and employment as mercenaries, not to mention licence of all kinds.

But God had to be served, as well as Caesar and Mammon, not forgetting Venus. The 1494 Tordesillas Treaty led to the establishment of the *Padroada*, ecclesiastical jurisdiction under royal control, the counterpart of the Spanish *Patronata*. This system

assigned Brazil, Africa and Asia to the Church, especially to the missionary orders; the Dominicans arrived with Albuquerque, the Franciscans (often viewed as bone-idle and licentious) in 1517; the Augustinians and others came later, but the supreme event was the arrival of Father Francis Xavier and his fellow Jesuit shock troops in 1542, the Jesuits outshone by far the efforts of the three mendicant orders.

From 1542 to Pombal's expulsion of the Jesuits in 1759-60, the history of the Portuguese 'pluricontinental' empire was inextricably linked to the history of the Jesuits therein: they provided its backbone. Xavier's remarkable ten years until his death near Macau, at the beginning of his planned Chinese mission, was notable for its carrot-and-stick mass conversions and baptisms, often with three or four zeroes on the end of the dubious statistics. According to his letters, though no great linguist, Xavier and his team learned essential parts of the catechism, once translated into any given local language, and then relied on charisma to get them through; detractors speak of threats as well. Despite the scanty follow-up, the astonishing fact is that the message stuck; wherever Xavier went in India, the Malay Peninsula, the Moluccas and, most notably, Japan, the Church became firmly established. Indeed, the Church survived in many instances the disintegration of Portuguese Asia in the seventeenth century; the priests clung on. One recalls particularly the outstanding work of Father Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit born in 1552, the year of Xavier's death, for his building of the Church in China, especially in Beijing and Nanjing, a Church that still exists. As for Xavier, the saint's apparently incorrupt body still rests in its silver casket in the Jesuit church of the Bom Jesus in Old Goa, a miracle to Catholics and indeed to Hindus and an unexplained mystery to everyone else.

The Inquisition duly showed up in Goa, the capital of the *Estado da India*, in 1560; Goa became the only permanent base for that body, other than Lisbon, throughout the entire Portuguese-speaking world. Its investigations were not primarily aimed at the Jews, as is sometimes thought, but at any 'pagan' and 'infidel' deviance from Roman Christianity. Jews and others were

occasionally burnt at the stake, but normally after strangulation. On average one person every two years perished in this way. Much of the onslaught was on refusal to eat pork or beef, principally, therefore, on Hindus as far as Goa was concerned. The turning of a blind eye elsewhere is amply illustrated by the clustering of Jews in Cochin, where their magnificent synagogue, erected in 1568 and rebuilt in 1664, continues to stand in a city that also has its own ongoing Christian community. Indeed, Christians in India pre-existed the Portuguese, as Gama's convict implied. These are the Nestorian or Syro-Malabar Christians of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, who venerate the tomb of Saint Thomas the Apostle at Mylapore, now a suburb of Madras. Many hesitated to accept the authority of Rome, even after persecution, and divisions continued until a resolution was reached late in 1998.

The Portuguese and Jesuit experience in Japan is a sad one; Portuguese traders plying from Macau raised Nagasaki from being, like Macau, a hitherto obscure fishing village, to a growing and thriving trading post and port; in Nagasaki and elsewhere Jesuit missionaries spent almost a century of successful conversion, building on the two years spent there by Saint Francis Xavier. However, in the 1620s and 1630s, the Tokugawa dictator, the Shogun Iemitsu, despite the continuing value of the trade that came via Goa, Malacca and Macau into Nagasaki, despite all the attested benefits from western cartography, astronomy, botany and medicine, took the view that the whole Christian enterprise constituted, in Professor Charles Boxer's words, a threatening 'Fifth Column' that must be ruthlessly destroyed. Massacres took place, especially from 1626 onwards, though martyrdoms had begun back in the previous century, as Lope de Vega records in his 1618 study, *Triunfo de la fe*. The entire Christian community (as many as 4% of all Japanese) had been eliminated or driven underground by 1638; crucifixions, burnings and torture of the Jesuits (mainly Portuguese, some Spaniards, some Japanese) and of their flocks took place on a scale so obscene as to make Vasco da Gama's actions seem benign. Boxer's historical account in *The Christian Century in Japan* and Shusaku Endo's horrific novel *Silence* underscore this for those who have the stomach to read them. Apart from a small Dutch warehouse

at Deshima, Japan shut itself off from the rest of the world till 1853 (when priestless Christians were still to be found).

There is a curious epilogue: Japanese cities are customarily built on the flat. The Portuguese developed Nagasaki on hilly, undulating terrain: this had the effect of relatively limiting the radioactivity and carnage of the 1945 atomic bomb and is why the focus has always been on the horrors of the other bomb dropped on Hiroshima. As for Nagasaki's Christians, they still persist (Endo is one of them) and they have a priesthood once more.

Though the so-called *Golden Goa* enjoyed its most prosperous heydays in the 1590s, the sombre fact was that the whole Asian enterprise had already started to decline by the middle of the sixteenth century, as Camões and other major contemporaneous writers were quick to point out. The leakage via Aden and the Red Sea I have already indicated, but unscrupulous Portuguese officials, who increasingly profited by it, aggravated this. Apart from returning cooked books and embezzling on a grand scale, they secretly and corruptly collaborated with Gujarati and Arab traders in the full restoration of a trade route that the Cape of Good Hope had been intended totally to replace. Moreover, the spices and other goods arriving via the Cape in Lisbon were sold to other Europeans at a price *higher* than those of Venice and Antwerp (as Erasmus had complained). The sensible mercantile procedure would have been to undercut them. Short-term greed, Camões's *vã cobiça*, had robbed the Portuguese of their wits. So the Red Sea route revived and the Portuguese commercial enterprise came to rely more and more on the Asian inter-port trade. The Lisbon metropolis increasingly lost out. The Portuguese operated originally with 300 ships in the East, crewed mainly by Eurasians and Asians, with a handful of European officers. The strange practice grew of building fewer and fewer ships, with reliance placed on huge 'monster' carracks instead, like the 1600 ton *Madre de Deus* that fell into English hands in 1598, along with its opulent cargo. In view of the threat from stormy seas, from the predatory English, and, with effect from 1596, from the even more predatory Calvinist Dutch, the Portuguese were putting too many eggs in too few baskets. Moreover, around the turn of the

century they lost the Moluccas; the defence was feeble because the huge expense of sending carracks so far East blotted out any possible profits from the cloves, nutmeg and mace: it made more sense to plant them elsewhere.

The Dutch constituted the greatest threat and probably would have done so *without* their enmity towards Spain (in their fight for independence) extending also to Portugal after the junction of the two Iberian crowns in 1580. After all, no love was lost between the newly founded Dutch and English East India Companies. The seventeenth century onslaught of the Dutch on the Portuguese has been dubbed by Professor Boxer the 'real World War I': in Brazil it ended in a Portuguese victory, in Africa it was a draw and in the East the Portuguese had largely been routed by the late 1660s. But then Portugal also spent from 1640 to 1668 winning back and retaining her independence from Spain as well! By the latter date the Dutch had seized the Moluccas (which had temporarily been in Spanish hands), the great entrepôt of Malacca, the entire Malabar coast, and Sri Lanka; as they swarmed into the East Indies they also displaced the Portuguese from their trading post at Macassar.

Meanwhile, the English did a deal with the Moghul Empire in 1618 to gain a footing alongside the Portuguese fort at Surat and thus to prise open the grip of Diu and Daman on Gujarati trade. Then they sent ships to help the Persians take Hormuz in 1622, thus opening up the Gulf trade route again. The English also ousted the Portuguese from their fortified trading post by Saint Thomas's tomb near Madras in 1662, but then switched their policy by entering into a series of treaties with Portugal, owing to the growing English conflicts with the Dutch in the 1650s and 1660s. Amidst all this, Hugh (near Calcutta) fell to indigenous assailants in 1632, sounding the death knell for Portuguese inter-Asian trade. Moreover, in 1650 Muscat was lost to the Omanis, who went on to sweep down the east-African coast, seizing all Portuguese settlements north of Mombasa. (That city itself was finally to capitulate to the Omanis in 1729, after a back-and-forth struggle.) Mean while, Goa had been the victim of two prolonged Dutch maritime blockades, and all the remaining

extraterritorial *feitorias* just melted away (though a tenuous linkage with Thailand was sporadically maintained).

Once Bombay Island had been given away to the English, as part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry to Charles II, essentially all that remained in India, apart from Goa, were Diu, Daman, Bassein and Chaul. Macau was now marooned; Timor (with adjacent wobbly toeholds on the isles of Solor and Flores) was more a Dominican fiefdom than a Portuguese possession. Three centuries of virtual stagnation followed. The proud city of Goa, once home to at least 75,000 inhabitants, had shrunk to a mere 20,000 after more than a hundred years' outbreaks of cholera, malaria and bubonic plague. It was progressively abandoned, save for its majestic churches and chapels, its monasteries, convents and seminaries, for a new capital six miles to the west, at Panjim. Its other buildings became a quarry for Panjim; fortunately, the task was facilitated by the remarkable causeway (the longest in Asia) built between the two cities in 1632 by the then viceroy, the Count of Linhares. The current official population of Old Goa is 196 (nearly all nuns). Panjim is home to 60,000.

It is fairly contended that, even without brutality, corruption and incompetence, the collapse of the Portuguese Asian network would have happened anyway: the Dutch and English were too strong and too numerous. Furthermore, by the time of the seventeenth-century collapse, the trade had been largely reduced to country trade, inland, by virtue of the blockades and of the sinking and capture of Portuguese shipping.

In the eighteenth century, for a while, worse was to come, in the form of an attack from the north by the Maratha army; Bassein (by then more prosperous than Goa) fell in 1739 and so too did Chaul. Goa itself came under heavy siege but survived. By 1760 Pombal had withdrawn all the Jesuits, with adverse consequences in the short term for primary education and agriculture. Pombal's educational reforms eventually took effect and in agriculture the Brahmin caste (both Christian and Hindu) gained control of the estates left by the Jesuits. But there was at last a silver lining from

the 1760s to the 1780s: Daman acquired the two enclaves of Nagar-Aveli and Dadrá, both rich in teak; and Goa expanded north, south and east into Maratha territory, which in modern times has been found to possess considerable deposits of iron ore and manganese. In fact, iron ore has been Goa's major export since the time of Dr Salazar, but it has arguably been surpassed by tourism. A record 17,000 Europeans visited Goa in January 1998, of whom 12,300 were British and, sadly, only a few score were Portuguese. With the New Conquests of the eighteenth century the total area of Goa became 1,350 square miles, roughly the size of an English county. But more humiliation lay ahead, as the three territories of Portuguese India, like Madeira, were occupied for fourteen years by British troops in the Napoleonic wars (to keep the French out). The ubiquitous Arthur Wellesley (later Wellington) even used Goan troops to repulse the Marathas (who were allies of the French).

Goa, Daman and Diu were overrun by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's troops in 1961, Macau returned to China on 20th December 1999 and the future of Timor since 1975 seems to be as part of Indonesia. It is time to draw up our balance sheet!

Michael Pearson, the author of the excellent *Portuguese in India* of 1987, the first volume of the *New Cambridge History of India*, takes a very negative view, insisting in his closing pages that Portugal and Goa are backward and dogged by illiteracy. He urges that Portugal's impact on Asia was 'pre-modern', that it was the British, the Dutch and the French who gave to Asia the benefits of the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution. I would argue, against that, that the past decade has shown Portugal to be the European Union's fastest growing economy and that Goa, when overrun in 1961, already had a higher standard of living than the rest of India. It became the 25th state of the Indian Union in 1987 and, with improved communications and increased primary education, has maintained its level of relative prosperity, but is blighted by the constant flow of impoverished immigrants from all over India, in search of a better life; indeed, they now constitute more than one third of its population. As a consequence, many Goans look back with *saudade*, with nostalgia, to what they call 'the Portuguese time'.

Pearson's Industrial Revolution is all very well but its ugly remains disfigure many countries; after all, it was the British, not the Portuguese, who presided over the mounting squalor of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, all three of them mere coastal villages when the Portuguese left their vicinity.

But, however much we may debate the negative factors (and we could dwell at length on the history of Portuguese racism and religious intolerance), I prefer to look at the more positive heritage. The Portuguese, in the sixteenth century, doubled Asian trade, both internally and with the rest of the world, and, as Panikkar concedes, they effected this 'on a scale the Muslim traders could never have contemplated.' They linked the peoples of the world, who till then had lived so often in isolation in remote continents. The emblematic voyage was that of Cabral in 1500, on the heels of Gama's first: Cabral definitively discovered the sea route to Brazil, then visited east Africa and finally retraced his predecessor's steps in India, thus linking four continents. This brings me at once to consider Portugal's greatest achievement of all, rarely recognised even today: it is what has been called the 'adventure of the plants', the intercontinental transfer of the world's plants and dietary habits. As the *only* nation with a hundred years' head start in *all four* continents, the Portuguese could hardly fail.

In double the volume, I repeat, they brought from Asia to Europe the following spices: cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, nutmeg, pepper (both black and white), sesame seeds, tarragon, and turmeric. As *new* items, however, the list does not include coriander and cumin, as these are indigenous to both Europe and Asia. In addition, the Portuguese transported the soya bean from China. The outstanding triumph, however, was their introduction of tea: it was allegedly Catherine of Braganza who made it fashionable at the court of Charles II, with outcomes familiar to us all, even though this assertion should be treated with some scepticism. But the Orient, Africa and Brazil benefited in turn from the transfer, by the Portuguese, from Europe, of almonds, figs, peaches, pomegranates, quinces, the vine, wheat and other cereals, and practically every vegetable known in medieval Europe.

From the Americas the benefits conferred on Asia and Africa (as well as on Europe) were immense. A limited list includes avocados, cashews, cassava (or manioc, though this was principally to Africa), cacao (cocoa), chillies, maize (the African mealies), pawpaws (papayas), passion fruit, peanuts (groundnuts), pineapples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, vanilla and yams (now one of the great staples of the Chinese cuisine). Arguably less beneficial, except at a commercial level, was the Portuguese introduction of the tobacco plant into Africa and the Orient. Apart from the yams that I just mentioned, it is worth noting that the Chinese benefited also from the import, via Macau, Canton and Beijing, of bean sprouts, dumplings, shrimp paste and watercress. By contrast, bananas are *not* indigenous to the Americas. They originate from India. For those devoted to curries I have left the best to the last. Until the Portuguese brought chillies from the new world, Indian dishes were spicy but never 'hot': the Madras curry, the Ceylon curry and the vindaloo curry were the creation of the Portuguese in the East. The very word *vindaloo* is a corruption of the Portuguese *vinhalhos*, which refers to the *vinho* (effectively wine vinegar) and the *alhos* (garlic) which accompany the chillies in this dish. Those who resort to brinjal pickle should keep in mind that this is pickled aubergine and derives its name from the Portuguese word for that vegetable, which is *beringela*.

It is worth mentioning that it was usually the energetic Jesuits who promoted cultivation of these various imports. It was thanks to them that prawns and shrimps were raised to a vigorous, rather than a casual and local, industry. The same applies to their systematic development of coconut plantations, owing to the many products that that variety of palm tree offers, including coir and cordage for boats and ships. Indeed, the coconut palm was solely indigenous to the East Indies and Polynesia till spread by the Portuguese. Nor must we forget the Jesuits' promotion of the cashew, brought from Brazil, and now one of Goa's leading exports. When it comes to recipes for all this food, any perusal of cookbooks from Goa and Macau reveals a mouthwatering culinary mingling, complete with Portuguese nomenclature, with many Portuguese

recipes adapted to what is locally available. Goa is a gourmet's delight. One of the unexpected pleasures of both Goa and Macau is the popularity of the Portuguese pork sausage, the *chouriço* (in sundry varieties, of course!). Oddly, Portuguese cuisine seems to have profited less. Curried chicken, to be sure, is an old favourite, and appears in a seventeenth-century cookbook, the *Arte de Cozinha*. But I doubt whether chicken *piripiri* owes much to the East. Chinese cuisine, except in very recent years, has never had much following in Portugal, though the occasional Chinese restaurant was always to be found in Lisbon.

The architectural heritage is obvious: forts, some in ruins and now being restored, are dotted picturesquely all over the East; indeed, their style was influential on the construction of castles in Japan. On the debit side, it was the Portuguese who first introduced the Japanese to firearms... The largest fortress of all is that of Diu, outstripped in its category only by those that the crusader Knights of Saint John erected on the islands of Malta and Rhodes. Truly magnificent mannerist and early baroque churches, agleam in their regulation white stucco, and splendid in their sumptuous gilded interiors, still dominate the landscape of the Christian East, except where over-zealous Dutch Calvinists sometimes reduced them to ruins. Old Goa truly deserves its title as 'Rome of the Orient', even though it slightly resembles a theme park today. Furthermore, many of the features of such architecture were incorporated into the Hindu temples permitted from Pombal's time and it was indeed the Portuguese who first taught the Hindu craftsmen how to construct a dome. I shall venture to add that Christianity in the Orient has, on balance, brought some benefits, witness, among others, the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

In domestic architecture the pantile is ubiquitous in the erstwhile Portuguese India, in Macau and in Timor; indeed, it even covers some Hindu temples! But also in Goa, Daman and Diu virtually every house has its *balcão*, a colonnaded veranda-cum-porch. This is the oriental version of the *alpendre*, typical of the province of the Alentejo, especially Évora. Another glory is Sino-Portuguese and Indo-Portuguese furniture. The latter in particular is

richly carved from rosewood (sometimes from other dark woods, namely ebony, *lignum vitae* and teak). It is often inlaid with ivory or bone or mother-of-pearl or metal or with delicate panels of white rattan tracery. It still fills the mansions of semi-feudal landowners, for all their twentieth-century decline.

Goans claim other benefits: men wear shirt and trousers, rather than the diaper-like *dhoti* of so much of India, Goan music is western and stems from the music of the Church, and Goans adore football (though, almost incongruously, since 1961, cricket has also developed a keen minority following). The one thing that Goans detest is Indianisation... One could go on and on. But I must conclude with some reference to the Portuguese language. It was a benefit in that from the sixteenth century it became the oriental *lingua franca*. The great British general, Robert Clive, who knew no Indian language, addressed his indigenous troops in Portuguese. The vocabulary of Portuguese has been *heftily* borrowed by many oriental languages, notably Konkani (the language of Goa), Malay, Indonesian and Japanese. It is significant that Portuguese overshadowed and outlasted Dutch in many places, most notably Sri Lanka and Malacca, still surviving in both locations as a Creole dialect. Such dialects also exist in pockets of Indonesia, especially among Christian communities. The same is true of Bassein and Chaul. Standard Portuguese still clings on in Macau, though its Creole dialect, oddly, is defunct. Indeed, two Portuguese newspapers and a few news sheets are published there for a Portuguese business community enjoying a construction boom, but English has largely taken over as the international language, under the influence of Hong Kong. Portuguese is studied only at the University of Macau. In Goa, Daman and Diu, chiefly those who are Christians speak Portuguese and over the age of fifty (still an appreciable percentage); it is also the tongue of the aristocratic landowners but English again has become the international language. The last Goan Portuguese language newspaper switched to English in the 1980s. The language continues to be studied in some schools and in the University of Goa, but the future of Portuguese, after 451 years' Portuguese presence, is uncertain, even gloomy. In Timor, Portuguese now lags behind the invading Indonesian as well as behind the local Tetum, but is still

taught in one diocesan college and (apparently) in the seminary. Any future degree of independence or autonomy could well restore the position of Portuguese, as the Indonesian language is detested and English seemingly so far a non-starter.

It now seems quite likely that with effect from the year 2000 Portugal at the official level will disengage from the Orient, though there may still be a rôle there for the language teachers of the *Instituto Camões*. The private agencies, however, seem more inclined to hold the cross-cultural line, especially the *Fundação Oriente*, built up since the late 1980s with money from the Macau casinos but now increasingly wealthy from its real-estate investments. With headquarters in Lisbon, it has very active branches in Goa, Macau and Beijing and plans to open another in Colombo. It funds international music and art exchanges, awards scholarships and sponsors the teaching of Portuguese. It is growing apace. The Gulbenkian Foundation is also backing cultural interchange in Cochin. The two agencies constitute the shining hope for the continuance of Portuguese cultural influence in the Orient.

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