

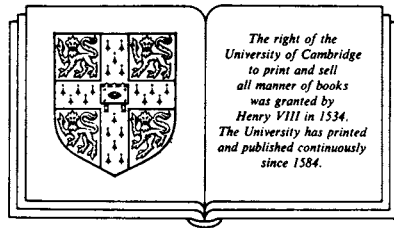
THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA

I · 1

The Portuguese in India

M. N. PEARSON

SCHOOL OF HISTORY,
UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK PORT CHESTER

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1987

First published 1987
Reprinted 1990

Printed in Great Britain by
the University Press, Cambridge

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Pearson, M. N.
The Portuguese in India. –
(New Cambridge History of India)
1. Portuguese – India – History
I. Title
954 DS498

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Pearson, M. N. (Michael Naylor, 1941–
The Portuguese in India.
(New Cambridge History of India)
Bibliography.
Includes index.
1. Portuguese – India – History.
2. Goa, Daman and Diu (India) – History.
I. Title. II. Series.
DS498.7.P36 1987 954'.004691 86–17100

ISBN 0 521 25713 1

Frontispiece: Mughal album painting of a European, about 1590.
London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

CONTENTS

<i>General editor's preface</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Rulers of Portugal 1385-1910</i>	xii
<i>Viceroy and governors of Portuguese India 1505-1961</i>	xiii
<i>Glossary</i>	xvii
<i>Maps</i>	xix
Introduction	i
1 The Portuguese arrival in India	5
2 The system in operation	40
3 Evaluation of the official system	61
4 Indo-Portuguese society	81
5 Catholics and Hindus	116
6 Decline and stagnation	131
7 Toward reintegration	144
<i>Bibliographical essay</i>	163
<i>Index</i>	177

INTRODUCTION

Portugal is the oldest territorial state in Europe; India is one of the world's newer nations. Yet ironically history is much more important, and controversial, for Portuguese than for Indians. It is true that historical writing played a role in the Indian national movement, for some of the writing of the first half of the twentieth century was designed to foster patriotism and pride. Today however Indians are commendably relaxed about their history, as can be seen in vigorous controversies over historical matters in which it seems that all possible points of view can be, and are, presented. These debates are intellectual; the validity of the Indian nation is not dependent on the outcome.

This has usually not been the case in Portugal; too often their history has had present political meanings. Robert Southey visited Portugal in 1796, and 1800-1, enjoyed himself, and spent years working on a huge, and never completed, history of Portugal. It was going to be a wonderful book:

I believe no history has ever yet been composed that presents such a continuous interest of one kind or another as this would do, if I should live to complete it. The chivalrous portion is of the very highest beauty; much of what succeeds has a deep tragic interest; and then comes the gradual destruction of a noble national character, brought on by the cancer of Romish superstition. (Quoted in Rose Maccaulay, *They Went to Portugal*, London, 1946, p. 164)

In Portugal history is indeed of interest, not only to historians but also to the general population and especially to the governing elite. A famous savant wrote in 1898 that 'Perhaps one could say that the memory of and pride in those past times of real although transitory greatness is still today one of the main bonds of our nationalism, one of the things which fortified, and still fortifies, us in those hard times which we later passed through' (Conde de Ficalho, *Viagens de Pedro da Covilham*, Lisbon, 1898, pp. vi-vii). All this was exacerbated during the Salazar-Caetano period. History joined religion as an opiate. It was blatantly used for present political purposes. Portugal tried to retain her colonies, disingenuously renamed overseas provinces. An important bolster was the claim that all were equal in Portugal, both metropolitan

THE PORTUGUESE IN INDIA

and overseas. The criterion was not race but degree of 'civilization'. In a dictatorship where control over information was given a high priority, historians were enlisted to prove this claim for the past. In a country like Portugal, small, insignificant, thanks to Dr Salazar the poorest in Europe, history was used to foster pride and unity.

Since 1974 it has been possible for Portuguese to write what they like about their past and some have availed themselves of this opportunity. Yet among all classes and political tendencies, Portugal's past is still seen as 'important', and usually still as one in which the country can take pride.

The aim of my book is, naturally, to assess the influence or impact of the Portuguese on India. This is an ambitious and difficult task; in particular, sweeping generalizations must be avoided. Rather we need, as they say, to 'disaggregate the data'. When this is done, we find Portuguese influence varying very widely, ranging from massive to minuscule according to three criteria: time, place and category (for example, social, religious, economic, political). At a particular time, in a specified place, we may find a substantial Portuguese impact on a particular category of Indian life; change one or more of these criteria (say a different time or place) and the influence may well decrease to a considerable extent.

The conclusion, if I may anticipate the central finding of this book, is that in many areas the Portuguese impact was minor; in a few it was substantial. Overall there was much more co-operation and interaction than dominance. Let this not be misunderstood. This conclusion was reached on the basis of the evidence before me, and also, I believe, reflects an emerging consensus among specialists in the field. For those like myself who think in the most general way that it is 'wrong' for one group of people to impose their values, their political control, on others, the theme of this book will correctly be seen as one which is *positive* towards the Portuguese imperial effort. True, their leaders hoped to produce major change in India; most of the time they failed, and this, even if inadvertently, made their empire much less deleterious than the later more complete achievement of the British.

Needless to say, my conclusions are in no way influenced by anti-Portuguese or anti-Catholic feeling (whatever these two terms may mean). Several English authors in the late nineteenth century wrote books which criticized the Portuguese on invalid grounds, grounds which showed their own ethnocentrism (as indeed did Robert Southey).

INTRODUCTION

There is a vast difference between racist attacks on the Portuguese, and a dispassionate investigation of their imperial career in India. This book attempts the latter.

C. R. Boxer said that his classic *Portuguese Seaborne Empire* (London, 1969) was 'the product of over forty years' reading, research, reflection and publication on and around its subject matter' (p. 392). I can only claim an interest going back twenty years. As I have tried to sum up what I have learnt in this time, I have become acutely aware of the huge gaps in our knowledge. This is the case for the whole period from the end of Spanish rule over Portugal in 1640 to the end of Portugal's Indian empire in 1961. Vast materials are available; so far they have hardly been sifted. In a book which attempts to reflect the existing state of scholarship, this will explain the brevity, and no doubt superficiality, of my coverage of this later period. Yet even for the comparatively well-researched sixteenth century there are still huge gaps. Consider only Vasco da Gama. We know almost nothing of his early career. On his fateful voyage in 1497-8, why did he (correctly) take an outward route which involved a huge loop far west into the Atlantic? Why was he so ill-informed about Indian conditions that he knew nothing of the status and power of the opulent zamorin of Calicut, and persistently mistook Hinduism for some sort of deviant Christianity? All this book can do is to attempt a synthesis of existing knowledge. Obviously I have drawn heavily on the work of others, and on my own past efforts. The gaps and errors in the book reflect in part the present feeble state of the field, in part my own ignorance.

Two guiding principles underlie this book. It is part of a series about Indian history, and by a person whose speciality is Indian history; I hope India is always to the fore in what I have written. Indeed, I have consciously tried to assess the Portuguese and their activities from an Indian angle, rather than from a European one. Thus in the central and crucial matter of evaluating the Portuguese impact on India, I have to some extent discounted large claims made then and now by Portuguese and other European authors, and been more influenced by the very silence of Indian records on the whole presence of the Portuguese. Yet I also found it necessary to include fairly detailed discussions of what may seem to be purely Portuguese matters. I did this because I strongly feel that the Portuguese in India cannot be seen in isolation: their actions, policies and prejudices were a result of a world view derived from their own European milieu. I had to make some attempt to describe this. If

THE PORTUGUESE IN INDIA

there is too much Portugal and not enough India – and I earnestly hope this is not the case – then I must fall back on blaming the sources. Portuguese sources are relatively full, and accessible; Indian sources for the topic and period are neither. There are obvious problems in using mostly sources from one side; I hope I have been able to transcend the limitations of Portuguese records for one interested in Indian history.

My second guiding principle was to be as comparative and analytical as possible. Here also I hope my book makes some contribution, for much existing writing on the Portuguese in India, and on the history of early European activities in India in general, is antiquarian in the extreme. Years of painstaking work in the archives produces only an elaboration on a political narrative, or more details about the life of some great man. I have tried to discuss such broad historical themes (related, of course, to the history of the Portuguese in India) as the nature of western 'impacts'; the peddling trade of Asia; European contact with Asia in what Jan Kieniewicz has called the 'pre-colonial' period, that is the period (which he extends through most of the eighteenth century) of European expansion, but not domination ('Contact and Transformation, the European pre-colonial expansion in the Indian Ocean world-system in the 16th–17th centuries', *Itinerario*, VIII, 2, 1984, pp. 45–58); and even what J. H. Plumb called society 'before the human-condition was radically changed by the growth of industry' ('The Underside of History', *Guardian Weekly*, July 1982, p. 18). Even when such themes are not overtly stated, they have been in my mind.