Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th–18th centuries). Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 386.
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With the destruction of the Royal Academy of History, the House of India, and the Royal Palace in the 1775 Lisbon earthquake, an overwhelming amount of Portuguese archival materials disappeared forever. Historians Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov position their new monograph, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th–18th centuries)*, as an attempt to begin recovering early Portuguese knowledge, specifically related to India. In their prologue, the authors define Catholic Orientalism as "[a] set of knowledge practices geared to perpetuate political and cultural fantasies of the early modern Catholic protagonists and their communities" (xxi). The book's main argument is straightforward: through a variety of methods, imperial actors in India created a repository of knowledge which became "a social, cultural, and epistemological lubricant of the Portuguese imperial venture," and by the nineteenth century was subsumed into secular, national networks of "High Orientalism" (xxi). This argument is particularly engaging as it focuses on the geopolitical changes and cultural mobility that marked colonial experience in early modern South Asia.

The book reveals a small corner of the vast body of (often inaccessible) sources from this period, while examining how this knowledge was produced, by whom, and how it influenced European discursive practices about India. Divided into three major sections and eight chapters, the book follows the actions of Portuguese officials, missionaries, and Goan elites from the empire's beginnings in 1501 to its relative decline in the eighteenth century.

The first three chapters make up a section entitled "Imperial Itineraries."[7] The first chapter shows how early officials such as João de Castro and Tomé Pires deliberately cultivated "the first interpretative framework for Asia" based on the "scientific" mapping of the subcontinent's physical and cultural geographies. The second chapter takes the reader from Portuguese actors writing about India to the co-production of knowledge about India at the local level. The authors argue that

7. Scholars familiar with the authors' previous works will notice that several sections are based in earlier studies. The seventh chapter, for instance, borrows from Ângela Barreto Xavier, "Purity of Blood and Caste: Identity Narratives in Goan Elites," in *Race and Blood in Spain and Colonial Hispano-America*, ed. María Elena Martínez, Max S. Herring Torres, and David Nirenberg (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012), 125–49. The fourth chapter reflects many of Ines G. Županov's previous arguments in *Disputed Mission* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Portuguese officials depended on pre-established "modes of knowing" (e.g., land registers) to collect information and develop their own Christianized systems of administration. In the third chapter, the discipline of natural history, or "bio-knowledge," is a case study for the transmission of knowledge. The authors argue that, using the empirical discipline of botany, rare "native" knowledge could be transformed into information coveted in Europe.

The fourth chapter, which begins the next three-part section, "Catholic Meridian," turns to the role of missionaries in the formation of Catholic Orientalism. Noting especially Jesuit experiments in conversion, the authors show that missionary modes of writing and reliance on Brahminic knowledge constituted "a major epistemic shift" which influenced the next waves of French and British Orientalisms (122). The fifth chapter moves to the writings of Franciscans in India, illustrating both the variety and breadth of scholarship, and the consistent plagiarism and reduction of their "creole perspective" in later European works (159). The sixth chapter shows how Portuguese missionary efforts in translating and transposing Christianity into the vernaculars (particularly Tamil and Konkani) produced an "engaged Orientalism" rooted in and shaped by local culture (238).

The final section, "Contested Knowledge," traces the transformation of the knowledge established in the previous chapters. In the seventh chapter, the authors explore how high-caste Goan "Christianized" elites adopted these Catholic narratives and modes of knowing to position themselves as legitimate actors in Portugal's Indian empire, and to claim their status at its head. The eighth chapter aptly ends the book by tracing the fragmentation of Catholic knowledge and its endpoint in the secularized, disembodied texts of the "High Orientalism" made famous by Edward Said.

The attention to texture throughout these chapters is perhaps the book's greatest strength. Given the liminal nature of Catholic materials from this period, the authors take great care to trace the complex movement of texts such as Garcia de Orta's *Colóquios* and Paula da Trinidade's *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*. They also examine a range of interdisciplinary materials, such as Codex Casanatense 1889, a picture album, and sixteenth-century property registers in Goa. These original, in-depth case studies illuminate the paths of Catholic knowledge, allowing the authors a bird's eye view on a fragmented archive. The breadth of research languages mastered by Xavier and Županov further contributes to this unique texture, as does their commitment to citing a vast amount of non-Anglo-American scholarship. Access to these sources, many of which are pertinent but overlooked by scholars who do not read Italian or Portuguese, is instrumental to their project.

Through this compelling methodology, the authors effectively demonstrate the existence, dissipation, and influence of Catholic Orientalism. By localizing Catholic knowledge *within* the Portuguese imperial project, the book contributes

to an important effort in recognizing the links between religious and colonial networks in Europe and South Asia. However, the use of the term "subalternity" (109) to position the marginalization of the Catholic archive by later scholarship is contentious. Although the authors certainly prove that this knowledge disappeared or was rewritten into new archives, the use of such a charged term fails to remind the reader that European Catholic actors still carried the colonial project of domination with them.

Because Xavier and Županov's sources and methods are both richly dense, the level of detail and analysis is more appropriate for graduate students and scholars of colonial history, Indian Christianity, missionary history, and archival studies, than for undergraduate students. For scholars of South Asian Christian mission, the chapter on the understudied Franciscans is particularly exciting.