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In and out of history:
how a Goan scholar
in Bombay imagined
a colonial Indian past
and a future
independent India
(1870-1900)

Filipa Lowndes Vicente

INTRODUCTION

In his book on Portuguese men that achieved some prominence abroad, published in 1879, Bernardes Branco confessed that he had not been sure if Gerson da Cunha was Portuguese or English, and that he had had to contact Cunha Rivara, the Portuguese secretary of the Governor in Goa and a scholar, to resolve 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.¹ In fact, Gerson da Cunha studied medicine in Bombay, Edinburgh and London, before returning to Bombay in the 1870s and making medicine his profession. However, his historical, archaeological and numismatic interests, mainly in themes related to the Portuguese in India, increasingly occupied a large part of his time and resulted in numerous articles and books published in the last three decades of the 19th century.

José Gerson da Cunha’s biography and bibliography, his personal itinerary as well as his scholarly written production, will enable me to explore the idea of inclusion, and of exclusion, in three different yet interconnected ways. The first is through his actual biographical itinerary. Living across different borders and spaces meant that foreignness and displacement were central words in the narrative of his life. I shall explore how da Cunha strove to be included in certain scholarly national spheres, such as the Italian; while apparently consciously excluding himself from Portugal, where his status would always be that of a Portuguese “other” and, therefore, subaltern in relation to mainstream scholarly local elites. He also profited, I shall argue, from being a foreigner in Bombay, and thus an Indian that was not a colonised subject since, being Goa-born, he was of Portuguese nationality. Caste and religion, and the fact that the historian and doctor combined the most privileged aspects of both identities – Brahmanism and Catholicism – were also central in his self-definition and frequently addressed in his writings.

Secondly, I shall analyse how exclusion and inclusion are central questions in his vast historiographical work. His main aim was to include the Portuguese experience in India within the mainstream historical narrative of Indian history produced in English, in British India and Great Britain. British

1 Branco (1879, 448). Gerson da Cunha’s life and works have already been addressed in other ways, in some of my publications: Vicente (2009-2010, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016).

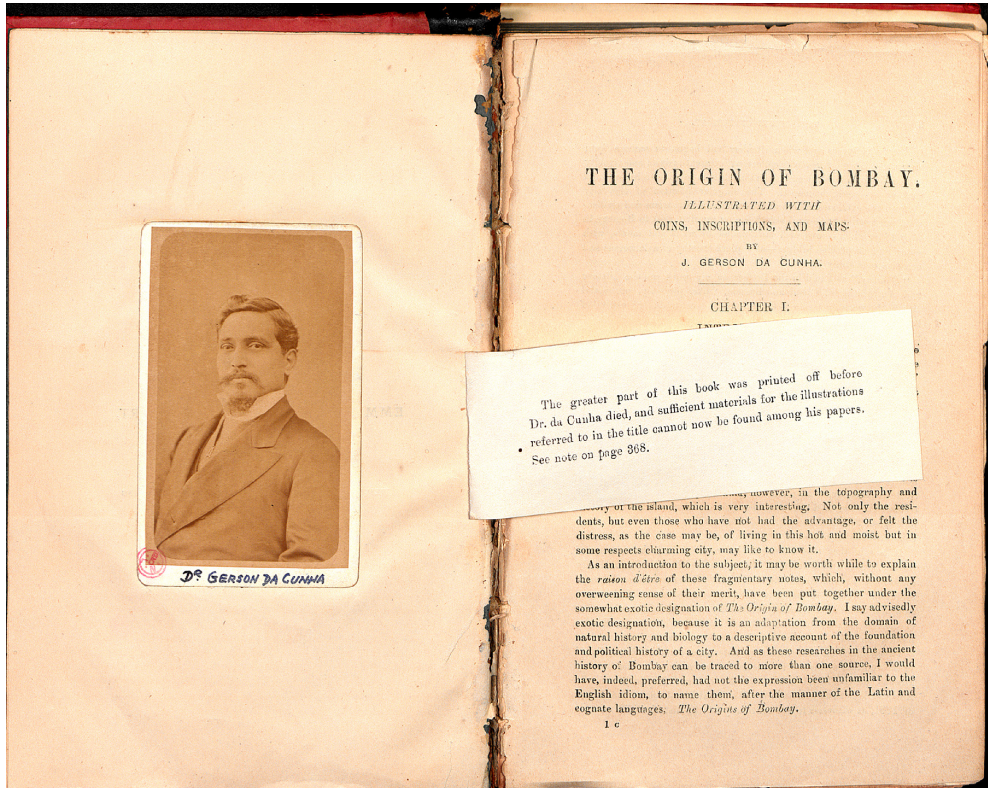
historiography tended to exclude the other main European presence in Asia, that of the Portuguese (as well as the Dutch and French), in the past and in the present. In this article, I will focus on the specific ways in which Gerson da Cunha introduced the Portuguese or Goan perspective in a wider narrative. In some cases, this was done as part of a clear strategy to value what was “Portuguese” or “Goan”, as when he argues for the pioneering character of Portuguese Orientalism, a few centuries before British Orientalism.² He also makes a defence of the teaching of the Portuguese language at the University of Bombay, while, in another publication, he writes a vindication for the valuing of Konkani, the Indian language that had at times been repressed by the Portuguese rule in Goa. In other moments, however, his critical approach turns to the Portuguese past colonial policies – mainly in relation to their religious violence perpetrated against the Hindus. In this apparent reversal of culprits, his goal is to denounce how some historical events and experiences were omitted from Portuguese mainstream historical narratives precisely because they did not favour those who practised them. His reflections on contemporary British India will also be addressed. Writing for an Italian periodical in French, or in a private letter to an Italian Indianist, Gerson da Cunha could be freer in his opinions on delicate political subjects. What was already latent in some of his historical writings became evident in his journalistic impressions: India, an independent and united India, was already in his imagination (Anderson 1991). After colonial India – Portuguese or British – there was another India, the future nation that was becoming tired of her “foreign invaders”.

And thirdly, I will explore the ways in which Gerson da Cunha’s work was excluded from both Portuguese and British historiography. Only in 1955 was one of his works on numismatics translated into Portuguese and published by Luis Pinto Garcia. In his preface, the Portuguese scholar notes how da Cunha’s “*Contributions* [are] very well known and always quoted in the numismatic centres in the Orient and in Great Britain”, but remain “unknown to the great majority of our numismatists and collectors” (Garcia 1955). Before Pinto Garcia, only the eminent Portuguese ethnologist Leite de Vasconcelos had made a

2 On “Portuguese Catholic Orientalism”, see Xavier and Zupanov (2014). On Portuguese Orientalism and Said’s engagement with the Portuguese experience, see the work of Rosa Maria Perez (2006, 2014), and Everton V. Machado (2018).

Figure 12.1

José Gerson da Cunha (1844-1900). Photographic portrait in carte-de-visite format pasted in the endleaves of his posthumously published book. Date and photographer unknown. (Cunha, 1900).



Note: This portrait must have been done in Rome, in 1878, at the photographic studio Lorenzo Suscipi, as it is very similar to another one Gerson da Cunha did there. See Vicente (2012b, 5).

reference to Cunha: in his *magna opera* on Portuguese Numismatics in 1923.³ My argument is that, paradoxically, the cosmopolitanism and hybridity of his life itinerary and historiographical work kept him out of sight of subsequent scholars. As Gerson da Cunha's life and work straddled borders, they failed to be grasped by either of the two main geographies of knowledge in which he moved. British and Indian historiography failed to value an author who was a Goan

3 Vasconcelos (1923, 279-280) wrote on Gerson da Cunha in a section on Numismatic Writings from 1867 until his present on pages 163-165, and even included an offprint of his photographic portrait published in the *Rivista ital. di Numismat.* (1888): 383. The Portuguese author also adds an appendix with a biographical note, in English, on Gerson da Cunha, which had been published in the *Royal Asiatic Society's Journal* after his death: "Biografia Inglesa do Dr. Gerson da Cunha".

of Portuguese nationality and highlighted everything that was Portuguese in India.⁴ Gerson da Cunha was excluded from the Goan and, particularly, the Portuguese historical canon for an array of reasons I will outline further on: one of the major ones certainly being that he only wrote in English. Ironically, the factors that enabled him to combine, compare, confront and cross different Indias, different Europes and different historiographical traditions ended up excluding him from those very traditions.

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE: KONKANI BETWEEN SUPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

I will start by analysing two of Gerson da Cunha's publications. The first was published in 1881 and was titled *Konkani Language and Literature*. It is the only one of his texts where I could find criticism of contemporary Portuguese colonialism rather than the usual discussion of events placed in a remote historical past (Cunha 1881).⁵ The second text I will address, also on the politics of language and how they are embedded in national projects, was centred on the history of the Portuguese language in the East and was published more than a decade later (Cunha 1893, 168-191). Both were published in English and in Bombay, one for the *Bombay Gazetteer* and the other for the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

How local languages and their usages were affected by the Portuguese presence in the region from the 16th century on was the central subject of his essay on Konkani. Gerson da Cunha condemned the destruction perpetrated by the first missionaries who, in their "mistaken zeal to propagate Christianity," did not understand how the preservation of ancient Indian manuscripts could have been useful for the conversion of "natives". That which the Spanish had done in Granada with Arabic manuscripts, he added, the Portuguese did in

4 When Gerson da Cunha's name appears in recent historical books, it does so for his work on Bombay. Gyan Prakash (2011) mentions him once in his *Mumbai Fables. A History of an Enchanted City*, while a recent book on Bombay includes him in the bibliography but not as a subject (Chopra 2011).

5 We do not know what kind of relationship Gerson da Cunha had with Angelo Maffei, an Italian Jesuit missionary who, precisely in 1878, some months after the international congress of orientologists in Florence, travelled from Naples to India. During the twenty years he lived in the Karnataka region, he dedicated himself to missionary work and producing studies on Konkani (Maffei 1882, 1883). See also all the works of Mons. Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado.

Goa with Indian ones. They destroyed them. The fanaticism that “blinded these missionaries” (only justified, Gerson da Cunha argued, by the historical moment) prevented the transmission of Christianity through vernacular languages. According to him, a global vision of history helped to understand the violence, but also the banality of this kind of behaviour during that period: “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” (Cunha 1881, 25).

This Portuguese policy of eliminating the local language did not restrict itself to the past because, as Gerson da Cunha notes, by the end of the 18th century there were still priests advising the Portuguese government to abolish Konkani 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 legitimising his criticism of Portuguese policies regarding local language, Gerson da Cunha quoted Cunha Rivara, a Portuguese resident in Goa who, apart from his scholarly work, was a respectable government secretary (Cunha 1881, 26).

Gerson da Cunha also reflected on the transformations of Konkani and the attempts to resist them:

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* [my italics], should within only a couple of centuries have assumed a form so entirely different from the old one. (Cunha 1881, 34)

Gerson da Cunha finished his history of Konkani and analysis of its uses with a pessimistic evaluation of the present, in which language and literature were considered inseparable from colonial rule, and where there was a reference to foreign governments that clearly distinguishes Goa – pre-existent – from its colonisers: “Goa has for centuries been swayed by foreign rulers, who have insisted on making their own language the official language, or the language of the court, withdrawing at the same time all encouragement for the cultivation of the native tongue” (Cunha 1881, 41). Facing a contemporary context in which there was a growing pressure from other Indian languages not subject

to the same kind of colonial linguistic policy, Gerson da Cunha 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, he added.

In order to strengthen his argument, he also discussed Konkani literature, mainly poetry, indirectly criticising the contemporary state of affairs in Goa quite harshly. 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 a foreign rule”, which most probably will do nothing to “encourage the study of native poetry” (Cunha 1881, 41). In spite of the many material benefits that may be brought about by the colonial presence, he continues, “it is amidst the elements of national freedom and independence, and the pledges and evidence of the former greatness of their country that poets grow up.” As he often did, in order to reinforce his criticism of a specific subject, character or institution, Gerson da Cunha quoted another author, an Archbishop writing on the literature of Spain who wrote on the direct effects a foreign government had on the creativity of a people: great poetry could not emerge from a place with “little or no national life or feeling” (Cunha 1881, 42).⁶ By quoting others with whom he agreed, instead of making the same statement in his name, he was somewhat legitimising his critical position, while making it less direct. And also, by quoting a book on the Spanish golden age that had been published in the previous year, Gerson da Cunha is reinforcing his position as a cosmopolitan and erudite scholar completely in tune with the European scholarly production.

In his book on Konkani, therefore, Gerson da Cunha combined his linguistic interests, associated with a philological and orientalist discourse concentrated on the past, with a discussion of the present uses of Konkani. He is clearly establishing a correlation between a defined space-territory and a language. Mainly, however, he is “imagining” Goa as a nation – a “small country” – that has been, and still is, governed by foreign rulers who have striven to impose their language. However, and as we shall also realise when analysing his text on the Portuguese language in the East, it is not possible to think of Gerson da Cunha’s position on language politics as a straight dichotomy between the language of the colonisers on the one hand, and that of the colonised on the other. In his manifesto promoting Konkani and Portuguese, he claimed the languages had more in common than appeared at first sight. They both

6 Gerson da Cunha is quoting Richard Chenevix Trench (1880).

occupied subaltern spaces; both were an inextricable part of Goan identity and both needed to be actively defended and promoted, in different geographical spaces, in order to thrive.

THE TEACHING OF PORTUGUESE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY: A EUROPEAN LANGUAGE OR AN INDIAN VERNACULAR?

Ten years later, in *A Brief Sketch of the Portuguese and their Language in the East*, published in 1892, Gerson da Cunha focuses similarly on the Portuguese language, analysing its history in India and anchoring this genealogy in the present. What led him to publicly champion the Portuguese language was a contemporary debate on the changes taking place in the language department at the University of Bombay (Cunha 1893, 190-191). In this historical justification of the importance of Portuguese, Gerson da Cunha clearly acknowledges the political meaning of languages, their uses in forging identities, and their intersections with notions of nationalism and colonialism.

When consulting the organisation of the language courses at the University of Bombay, Gerson da Cunha noticed how Portuguese was placed alongside Maratha, Gujarati and Canarese, while French was grouped with Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. If the University of Bombay did not consider Portuguese the equal of other European or classical 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 to second-class status, the University of Bombay was not only marginalising a language but also the history of the Portuguese in India (Cunha 1893, 172). In order to reinforce his argument on the importance of Portuguese, he mentioned the work of Hugo Schuchardt, published in the 1880s, on the quantity of Portuguese dialects that were spoken in Africa and Asia – work on which he had collaborated.⁷

Portuguese being the official language in the regions under the rule of the Portuguese government was a fact that could be compared with the use of French in Pondicherry or that of English in Bombay. Just as religious conversions did not reflect the effort put into the Christianisation policies – the actual

7 “I have had the pleasure of contributing to this interesting study, namely to that part relating to the dialect of Ceylon. The New Testament was published in this dialect in 1852 by the Wesleyan Mission, and a Grammar of the dialect was printed at Colombo in 1811”. He must be referring to the *Kreolische Studien*, published by Hugo Schuchardt between 1882 and 1889.

converted being very few when having in mind the high degree of investment – the state of the Portuguese language in Goa at the time did not reflect the effort put into its imposition. Even in 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. In this social categorisation, Gerson da Cunha is also showing his familiarity with the European contemporary language of social sciences, which stratified classes according to work, wealth and genealogy.

Language could not be isolated from many other factors, which were used to characterise the Indo-Portuguese community. Gerson da Cunha argued for the learning of Portuguese amongst a minority elite through a historical digression on the uses of Portuguese in India since the 16th century in commerce, diplomacy and missions, as well as in educational establishments of a religious nature. In this incursion into the past, he wrote how Brahmins (“born missionaries”, in his words), when joining Catholic religious orders, had helped disseminate the Portuguese language in the world; an idea he had explored in previous publications (Cunha 1893, 168-191). In his study of Konkani, he had reinforced how “Brahmans were not mere copyists but authors of “several works in Konkani on Christianity”, as well as works in Tamil or Sinhalese (Cunha 1881, 36). Moreover, in his long essay on “Oriental Studies amongst the Portuguese”, he had made a list of all publications by these Indian Brahmin men missionaries and scholars. In contrast to the Portuguese, many of whom did not know how to read or write, Brahmins were literate already in childhood.⁸ Gerson da Cunha concluded by saying that despite the fact that only a few spoke and wrote it correctly, Portuguese was simply “beautiful” (Cunha 1893, 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 declares himself strongly in favour of the preservation of Portuguese as one of the languages of India. What could seem a contradiction – how was it possible to defend the language of the colonised and, simultaneously, that of the colonisers – can also be read as a valorisation of what was Goan in the general context of late 19th century India; and that meant valuing Portuguese as much as Konkani. It, mainly, meant valuing Portuguese in India, but outside Goa; and valuing Konkani in Goa.

8 Gerson da Cunha (1893, 186) considered music the great benefit of Portuguese elementary education because “Indian fellow subjects” hardly learnt any music at all.

“OLD PREJUDICES WITH NEW PRIVILEGES”: THE IDIOSYNCRASIES OF GOA’S COMBINATION OF CASTE AND CATHOLICISM

Gerson da Cunha uses his text on Konkani to explain to his readers “a subject of no little confusion to foreigners, especially Englishmen” (Cunha 1881, 36-37). By living in Bombay, the Goan historian, himself a Catholic of Brahmin caste, was conscious how “many Englishmen on this side of India appear to believe that everyone with a Portuguese name is a descendant, pure or mixed, of a Portuguese”. He goes on to explain how this was a mistake that only knowledge of the history of the Portuguese presence in India since the 16th century could help explaining. To “trace historically the influence” that the Portuguese conquest of Goa “has exercised on the natives of the country” was, according to him, the only way to understand the complexity of Goa’s case, unlike any other in the Indian subcontinent. Conversion to Catholicism meant adopting a Portuguese surname and, in most cases, “the habits and customs of Western civilisation”, or even enrolment into Portuguese nobility awarded by merit. It did not necessarily mean, however, mixing with the Portuguese. And the result was the profusion of “pure Indians” with Portuguese names, Catholic religion and Western habits. When speaking of the past history of Goa, Gerson da Cunha is also speaking about himself.

Addressing what he considered to be a common misperception, Gerson da Cunha denied that the Brahmins were mere copyists, and explained to the British readership something that he considered to be difficult for a foreigner to understand and that was also related to him – the existence of Christian Brahmins (Cunha 1881, 36-37). Christianity, he explained, had not eliminated caste hierarchies: “it simply reconciled old prejudices with new privileges” (Cunha 1881, 37). There was not in Goa, unfortunately, a “blend of races, as in Europe” favourable to a future of homogeneity; on the contrary, there were as many tribes and castes amongst the Christians as amongst the Hindus.

Gerson da Cunha’s relationship with caste may seem confusing at times, or even contradictory. He hesitates between a legitimisation of the caste system in a way that contributed to his own self-identification, and the affirmation that the future unification and independence of India depended on the dissolution of the caste hierarchies.⁹ He sometimes showed pride in the ancestry of his

9 The somewhat problematic relationship Gerson da Cunha had with his origins, which revealed itself in the need to affirm his belonging to a high caste in different ways, even by invoking >

name, and he never denied his “Portuguese” and “Catholic” identity which, far from contradicting his Brahmin identity, elevated his status and brought him numerous advantages within a social context that valued Christianity and Brahmanism as the best of both worlds (Siqueira 2006).

The only difference of note between Christian and Hindu modes of living, according to the prescriptions of caste was that, according to Gerson da Cunha, among the Christians of Goa caste was not determinant in social relations. With the exception of marriages, all castes lived together, at the same level, “not unlike any of the advanced peoples of Europe”. In this Goan distinctiveness, Cunha found proximity with the existing social European models he valued. He also took the occasion to emphasise those Goan men who had significant positions in the Portuguese metropolis: in Parliament, at universities, and in military and civil institutions (Cunha 1881, 39).

An essay on Konkani thus becomes the trigger for a much wider valorisation of what was “Goan”, a strategy that reveals a local “nationalism” inseparable from larger strategies of valorisation: areas ranging from language to history. The Aryanism proposed by some prestigious European orientalist, mainly by Max Müller, was appropriated by some groups of Indians who saw it as a way of assuming a superiority that colonial rule seemed to deny.¹⁰ 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, Cunha often used strategies to reinforce and legitimate a Brahmin distinctiveness and, in his case and that of many Goans, a Catholic distinctiveness, a kind of aristocratic combination that deserved to be privileged. On other occasions, as we have seen, he wrote on the need to

► pre-colonial Goa, has already been analysed by George Moraes. Moraes also showed how Gerson da Cunha had a tendency to favour those authors who belonged to a high caste and ignore those who belonged to other social groups. Moraes suggests, furthermore, that in his historicisation of Goa, Gerson da Cunha undertook a strategy of valorising his family origins to the detriment of historical truth. He also wrote that the Goan doctor’s weakness was precisely his *caste complex*, in George Mark Moraes (1967, 38).

10 See Raychaudhuri (2002, 34-25); Di Constanzo (2004). Di Constanzo gives special relevance to Müller’s diffusion and influence within British Orientalism. Müller’s ideas of India’s contemporary decadence, in contrast to its sophisticated past, were used to legitimise the regenerative presence of the British colonial government. However, in order to prevent the mistakes which had led to the Indian revolts of 1857, Müller advocated that British administration had to modernise itself and undertake profound reforms. See Ballantyne (2002); Marchand (2010); Cluet (2004); Murti (2001).

blur the caste distinction and ameliorate the living and educational conditions of the “indigenous” population; and on the fact that the path to future Indian independence required a social cohesion that a very hierarchical caste system could not provide.¹¹ Can this sometimes ambiguous way of defining the idiosyncrasies of Catholic Brahmins – combining the religion brought by the “foreign rulers” with the privileges of the higher position within the Hindu caste system – be also seen as a strategy of resistance to subalternity? Wasn’t this combination of privileges, ancient and newer, Indian and European, also a way of subverting colonial rule?

GOANS AS PIONEERS: INDIAN NATIONAL REVOLTS, ORIENTALISM AND THE PRINTING PRESS

Gerson da Cunha goes further, suggesting that an “Indian *Risorgimento*” – that is, the unification of India as an independent nation, which had the recent Italian example – would only be possible when there was a “blending of castes” (Cunha 1881, 37). Only when caste no longer separated Indians would it be possible to shout “India for the Indians”, as had happened in Goa in 1787 (Kamat 1999; Rivara 1875). Much earlier than the revolt or “mutiny”, as it was called by the British, of 1857, which so frightened the British in India and had so many repercussions in Indian-British relations; and before other later signs of Indian nationalism within the British empire, the natives of Goa had raised their voices against the Portuguese colonisers. Gerson da Cunha was referring, of course, to the “*Conjuração dos Pintos*” in 1787, a revolt imbued with French ideas, in which some of his ancestors had been involved (even if he did not mention this in the article) (Morales 1967, 11-12). When referring to this episode of Goan history, he is attributing a kind of pioneering nationalist consciousness to Goa, anticipating what happened in British

11 José Gerson da Cunha (1884a, 830). Not by chance, one of *Subaltern Studies*’ main criticisms of post-colonial historical approaches was that it was centred on Indian elites. By doing so, post-colonial approaches were reproducing that which was established by colonialism itself – a hierarchy in which these elites occupied the place left empty by the colonisers, and the voices of women and men of low caste still remained unheard. Subalterns, therefore, appear as the victims of both the colonisers and the Indian elites, men of high caste. This same idea had already been proposed in the 19th century, for example, by Bankim, who in his criticism of the discrimination against Indians by the British compares this situation to that which existed between Brahmans and Sudras in ancient India. See Guha (2000); Sarkar (2000); Raychaudhuri (2002, 183).

India exactly 70 years afterwards. The mastery Gerson da Cunha had of both colonial histories and contemporary historiographies – the British and the Portuguese – enabled him to make other less usual comparisons: for instance, he compared the union between the kings of Bijapur and Ahmednagar against the Portuguese, in the 16th century with the Indian resistance endured by the British during the 1857 Indian Revolt (Cunha 1876b, 95).

He considered a kind of national consciousness to be one more example of Goan precociousness that tended to be ignored historiographically by the British. Two other examples were to be found as early as in the 16th century: Portuguese orientalism and the *Imprensa de Goa*, the Goan Press, two subjects which Gerson da Cunha had approached together in his Conference given at the Florentine International Congress of Orientalists in 1878. Here, as in other places, Cunha shows a clear willingness to contradict the ignorance of this “other India” within the kind of Orientalist knowledge being produced in British India.¹²

The main aim of his article was to contest the 18th and 19th century British narrative that they were the first to consistently study the languages, culture and history of India. The British had consolidated a genealogy of orientalist studies where the chronology of the British presence in India coincided with the chronology of a scholarly field, a truly power-knowledge narrative where the previous history – namely the Portuguese – had no place. However, Cunha 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 historically conscious 19th century were there prints, or re-prints of many of the texts on the presence of the Portuguese in India written 300 years before: from Gaspar Correia’s *Lendas da Índia*, to the *Roteiro da Viagem* by Vasco da Gama, or the *Roteiros* of D. João de Castro (Jackson 2005). By turning the argument upside down, in a kind of self-blame, Gerson da Cunha is doing what many of his contemporaries in Portugal were doing to explain Portugal’s peripheral and subaltern place within Europe.

12 I have addressed this subject in my book, *Other Orientalisms*, especially in the chapters dedicated to Gerson da Cunha’s participation at the Florentine International Congress of Orientalists in 1878 (Vicente 2012b). See also Xavier and Zupanov (2014).

Looking inside for the causes and blaming the country itself and its elites for their underdevelopment was a self-conscious exercise that naturally placed those who spoke publicly in the distinguished place of “knowing better”.

CONFRONTING THE PAST OF PORTUGUESE INDIA: HISTORICAL EXCLUSIONS, INCLUSIONS AND REVISIONS

Apart from the criticism in his article on Konkani, Gerson da Cunha's references to contemporary Goa or to the Portuguese Government of India are scarce. His Goan identity was more safely expressed through his study of the past: through the archaeological, numismatic and historical interest he demonstrated in the Portuguese presence in different Indian regions in previous centuries. It was, in fact, through the distance provided by a historical approach that he proffered his criticism of the Portuguese Government and its religious institutions. Present day “India”, on the other hand, tended to signify “British India”, and it was not by chance that Gerson da Cunha's texts were rich in comparisons between the Portuguese colonialism of the past and the British colonialism of the present.

Gerson da Cunha gave many lectures at the *Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* that were then printed in its journal. When finishing his presentation on the 1661 marriage treaty between the Portuguese Catherine of Braganza and Charles II, a pivotal moment in the history of the “greatest Empire a European nation ever acquired in the East”, he reflected on both empires and, in so doing, on his own identity between these two spaces.

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 Infanta, 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, noble actions and romantic episodes, a complete history of which remains yet to be written. (Cunha 1887, 145-146)

In praising the city where he lived and the British Empire, in an article published at the most prestigious scholarly Bombay institution, Cunha reveals

the apparently contradictory nature of his position. His “Old Portuguese Empire”, the one he wanted to write about – as its “complete history” had “yet to be written” – was a historical entity, safely remote, inoffensive, populated by heroic and noble characters of a “romantic nature”, but also characterised by fatal mistakes and instructive lessons that could be of great utility to the present British Empire. This idea that the British in 19th century India could learn from the mistakes made by the Portuguese of the previous centuries constituted a trope within contemporary British and Protestant historiographical context. Some favourite culprits were Catholic attitudes towards local Hindu culture, language and religion, in general; or the Inquisition and the Jesuits in particular.

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 criticises those most recent “Portuguese writers” he does not name who lay “all the faults of their impolitic rule at the door of the Spanish yoke”. He is referring to the argument, already common in the 19th century and later, in the 20th century *Estado Novo* historiography, that the decline of *Asia Portuguesa* was due to the Spanish dominion of the *Felipes*, a position that, according to the Goan historian, was the best way of avoiding the recriminations that would arise from a critical Portuguese reflection on the past (Cunha 1876a, 302; Hunter 1882, 269).

With this position, he was making a double criticism: of some past Portuguese colonising policies, which were responsible for the nation’s decline; and of a contemporary historiographical position which, instead of reflecting on the mistakes of the past, found the culprits in external causes. A few years afterwards, however, in his history of Indo-Portuguese numismatics, Gerson da Cunha’s position seem closer to what he had previously 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” (Cunha 1883a, 194). While writing on the classic themes of the history of Portuguese India, and making use of classic texts, Gerson da Cunha 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, criticises, or contests a more canonical history, making it difficult to place or classify him ideologically.

The Lusíads are always present as a historical source, and Gerson da Cunha continuously praises the poem’s 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 (Cunha 1896, 254-255)”. As happened with the poet-soldier, Camões, by then already considered the greatest figure of Portuguese literary history, there were, in the present, many who only remembered the virtues of the nation and preferred to forget its crimes. Exclusions and inclusions in history are thus denounced by the scholar as ways of manipulating the narratives of the past, in a kind of criticism of fellow historians that inevitably values a critical voice (his own), one capable of confronting instead of excluding, even those parts of history that are not so flattering to the nation’s self-representation.

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”¹³, was very attentive to details (Cunha 1893, 177).¹⁴ But in relation to another much-cited reflection on the empire’s decadence – the marriage policy of Afonso de Albuquerque – Cunha’s position was clearly critical and was, in fact, very close to that voiced by Richard Burton, in his *Goa and the Blue Mountains*, and by other writers of contemporary British texts (Cunha 1876a, 302; Burton, 1991 [1851]; Kennedy 2005, 49-50). This episode belonging to the past – Albuquerque’s policy to encourage the marriage of Portuguese men with local Indian women – was usually referred to as a historical lesson pertinent to the debate that was taking place in the context of 19th century British India on the advantages and perils of policies enabling “mixture” as opposed to “separation”. Within this debate, this marriage policy was generally held as an example of what not to do. The present decadence of the Portuguese empire as the ultimate consequence of that and other policies.

Gerson da Cunha recontextualised Albuquerque’s gesture in the tradition of the Roman Empire, only to classify it as an “experiment that has been found, now that it is too late to repair the evil, to be the source of grave evils to both parties.” This approach, which would fit in a British historiographical tradition, with which he clearly identifies himself, contrasts with later

13 Gerson da Cunha is referring to Arthur Wellesley (1st May 1769 – 14th September 1852), Duke of Wellington, prominent 19th century political and military figure, who was commander of the British troops in Portugal and Spain against the Napoleonic Invasions of the Iberian Peninsula in the early 19th century (1808-1813).

14 Albuquerque also appeared as a positive historical character amongst British authors, being considered fair and magnanimous and someone who had in mind native interests. See Hunter (1882, 268).

interpretations of the same historical event, as happened with Gilberto Freyre's "luso-tropicalismo". Luso-Tropicalism was the concept that the Brazilian anthropologist developed to identify the practice and policy of "miscegenation" between white Portuguese men and women belonging to those Asian, American and African geographies under Portuguese rule.

Religion was, of course, the most controversial issue of Portuguese colonialism in India. The violence of the conversion methods was frequently condemned by someone who, despite considering himself a Catholic, did not reveal the nature of his religiosity or the centrality of faith in his life. And 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 eliminating Hinduism.

Unlike the policy of the present rulers of Hindustan, which we hope will also be that of future eras, the spirit which guided the true missionary, in his noble task of imparting to the heathen the news of peace and good-will, was not of tolerance but of aggression. (Cunha 1880, 184)

As an example of the Portuguese policy under which the natives were forced to change their faith, Gerson da Cunha mentioned the destructive urge against Hinduism shown by the Bishop of Goa, Fr. João Albuquerque (Spain, circa 1479 – Goa, 1553), by quoting a document that was kept at the Lisbon Torre do Tombo (Cunha 1880, 184-185).¹⁵ When the Inquisition was set up, the Bishop of Goa had ordered, according to Gerson da Cunha, the destruction of Hindu images and manuscripts, but did not forbid his subordinates to use the local languages as a means of conversion, something which enabled the writing of a series of grammars and vocabularies that were later published by the Goan official Press.

In this plea for a politics of respect and tolerance towards other religions, Gerson da Cunha compared the contrasting attitudes of two different colonisers of India – the Portuguese of the past, and the British of the present, – and clearly revealed which side he was on. By doing so he, again, stood closer to British-Protestant historical and policy approaches, in which Portuguese strategies regarding local religions were frequently contrasted, negatively, with those practised a few centuries later by the British. Cruelty, in fact, especially when

15 We do not know how Gerson da Cunha had access to this document.

associated with religion, often appeared in descriptions of Portuguese India written by British or by Indians of British India (Hunter 1882, 268). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827-1894), for example, considered Britain – as opposed to Spain, France or Portugal – the least cruel of the European nations.¹⁶ By writing “which we hope will also be that of future eras”, however, Cunha also clearly stated his position towards the present main colonial government of India, the British.

One of the subjects of his 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 topic when treating Portuguese India’s history that was inseparable from religious factors.¹⁷ The Inquisition and the religious orders – that “imperium in imperio”, which Gerson da Cunha attributed to the Jesuits – were amongst the main causes of decadence (Cunha 1876c, viii). When, in 1878, he was invited by the Vatican to receive a decoration by the Pope, he confessed his surprise to his Italian friend, Angelo De Gubernatis.¹⁸ Yes, he was a Catholic Indian, a scholar and a doctor, but did they know what he had written against the Jesuits?

Gerson da Cunha presented his criticism of the Jesuits, and his subsequent praise of the Marquis of Pombal’s policies towards them on various occasions (Cunha 1880, 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, in which the Marquis represented modernity and the Enlightenment; and the Jesuits, 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 selfish concerns than in establishing peace and good-will. Gerson da Cunha also made another harsh criticism, but in an indirect way: by quoting a text of another author stating that everything that the Jesuits built was destined for ruin and destruction.¹⁹

16 Cited by Raychaudhuri (2002, 70).

17 See Cunha (1876c, v-ix). I have written on this past glory, present decadence dichotomy in a text where I concentrate on his work on ruined cities (Vicente 2013, 227-278).

18 BNCF, Manuscripts, Correspondance Angelo De Gubernatis, Corr. José Gerson da Cunha to Angelo De Gubernatis, Cass. 33, n.º 10 (Rome, Hotel Minerva, 29 November 1878).

19 See Cunha (1880, 187). He quoted Dr. Döllinger, in an article published in the *Dublin University Magazine*, in 1877: “the proverb about the Turks – saying that no grass grew under their steps – >

In another article in English, also destined for the readership of British India or Great Britain, he appealed for a historical recontextualisation 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 contemporary ways of thinking codes, nor could one contrast the despotic militarism and the clerical supremacy of that period with the present, during which “the spirit of democracy pervades every political creed, and the French Revolution has taught nations their rights, as well as their duties” (Cunha 1887, 142; 1887-1889). 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 17th century and wrote about his personal experience as a victim of the Goa Inquisition (Cunha 1887-1889). Gerson da Cunha explains why he considered Dellon’s memoir a “fabrication”, a “forgery” and a “fraud” but, at the same time, he is careful to add that his own “denial of the authenticity of the work certainly does not imply a defence of the Inquisition, which I have elsewhere condemned, as should every liberal-minded man, whether a Catholic or Protestant” (Cunha 1887-1889).

HOW FREELY COULD HE SPEAK?

WRITING ON THE CONTEMPORARY BRITISH EMPIRE OUTSIDE INDIA

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 from Rodier that had no direct relation to the article’s subject and historical context, and which reflected on the relations between Europe and Asia, between European colonisers and colonised Indians.

Les réglemens orgueilleusement immuables, pour le corps et pour l’âme, que les théocrates de l’Inde ont eu la témérité d’imposer à la société, ont fini par y détruire tous les éléments du progrès. Le génie hindou, autrefois si brillant, si fécond, si vivace, meurt étouffé dans

► could be applied to the Jesuits, whose buildings always became the victims of a tempest or a flood. By presenting this quotation, Cunha could criticise the Jesuits without exposing himself to criticism. He was criticising the Jesuits but he was doing so indirectly, by quoting someone with whom he agreed. At the same time, by quoting from a Dublin scholarly journal, he was displaying the cosmopolitan nature of his erudition” (Cunha 1880, 192).

une camisole de force! Le dur contact de notre civilisation le réveillera peut-être! Espérons que les descendants des Arias trouveront, tôt ou tard, une compensation aux douleurs et aux humiliations qui leur inflige la prépondérance des Européens. (Cunha 1884b, 431-432)

Gerson da Cunha was not the author of these words. However, by reproducing them as the epilogue of his text, wasn't he criticising, to some degree, the successive governments that had oppressed India and Ceylon? Wasn't this a kind of strategy destined to reveal his opinions, not only about historical events but also about present day India? Could the fact that Gerson da Cunha was publishing in a French journal, and not one of the scholarly journals of British India where he usually published, have given him more freedom of expression? Wasn't this a way of defending an ancestral "Indianness" of the Aryans, a racial and cultural category being widely discussed at the time, and which was repressed through the successive European presences? And wasn't this a stratagem to say what he could not say, with the advantage of doing so by using the legitimising words of a European?

The same could be said about his private correspondence with his friend, the Italian Indianist Angelo De Gubernatis, and his collaboration with the *Revue Internationale*, one of many journals created by De Gubernatis in Italy. In this private correspondence, Gerson da Cunha could express himself more freely knowing his words would remain in a private sphere. While, his two articles for the *Revue Internationale*, as the India correspondent, Gerson da Cunha clearly felt free to voice his opinions on contemporary India. Published in Florence – a European country that had no colonial relations with India – but written in French, the *Revue Internationale*, as its name suggests, concentrated on contemporary events and literature from different nations. However, his manuscript articles do not exactly match his published articles. Having had access to the manuscript versions of the articles he sent to Gubernatis, as the journal editor, and being able to compare them to the published versions, I could verify how some of the more critical positions towards the British Government in India were erased from the final published article. Gubernatis clearly used his role as editor to exclude what he considered controversial or problematic. Therefore, Gerson da Cunha's Indian voice as the India correspondent on current affairs, a voice that seemed freer in that remote Renaissance city of Florence, was somewhat contained and suppressed.

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 fairly evident

signs that announced the end of British India. The period in which Gerson da Cunha contributed to the *Revue Internationale*, 1884-85, was precisely that in which the Anglo-Russian conflict was simmering, due to the recent Russian occupation of some of the borders of the British Empire. Lord Curzon also considered Russia's expansionist policy a threat to the British presence in India (Curzon 1892). Gerson da Cunha sometimes referred, albeit somewhat indirectly, to the possibility of Russia being the next coloniser of India. And he did so in a positive way, assuming that Russian colonisation would be a necessary transitional phase before Indian independence. Benedict Anderson's ideas are pertinent when considering Cunha's ways of imagining the future Indian nation, as well as when thinking of his multiple identities. Both in *Imagined Communities* and in *Under Three Flags*, Anderson's work was especially pioneering in grasping the relevance of 19th century colonial scholarly elites in *imagining* a post-colonial future (Anderson 1991, 2005).

In the intimacy of a letter sent to Angelo De Gubernatis, in Florence, the Goan Historian wrote what he most probably could not write elsewhere: "The Russian domination, which *sooner or later* [*my italics*] will follow the British, will be an important phase of our political evolution or, to use a somewhat impressive Italian expression, in our Risorgimento [*underlined in the manuscript*]." ²⁰ By establishing this comparison between the Indian case and the recent process of Italian unification that led to the birth of the Italian nation, in 1861, united under the same king, the Goan stated his belief in the future – "sooner or later" – independence of India. Colonised yesterday by the Portuguese, and today by the British, India would be colonised tomorrow by the Russians and, the day after tomorrow, which was not too remote, there would be only "India": a non-colonised India. In this teleological reflection, Gerson da Cunha *imagined a nation* without the presence of foreign colonisers and, even if he gives no dates, there is a certain sense of imminence, of inevitability in the words "sooner or later" that he uses in his letter. Here, as well as in other of his writings, we can, as mentioned before, trace many of Benedict Anderson's ideas of how communities were imagined before being (Anderson 1991). In another letter to his Italian friend based in Florence, he sent his compliments to the Russian princesses living in Florence and whom

20 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 6 (Roma, Hotel Minerva, 20th October 1878). This reflection on Russia and India was prompted by a photograph Angelo De Gubernatis had sent him of Princess Galitzine, a Russian princess whom the Goan had met in Florence.

he referred to as the “future rulers of my country, rulers that, we hope, will be the last foreign domination that will precede our emancipation”.²¹ In another letter, he wished the Russian princesses a long life, so that one day they could arrive in India and cause “the British to panic”.²²

In the article published in the *Revue Internationale*, destined for a European public, Cunha also felt free enough to muse about the advantages of a hypothetical Russian dominion of India, mainly when compared to the British colonialism of the present.²³ While the British would “leave India impoverished and underdeveloped” because they had conquered India as adventurers and had colonised it like Greeks, by not mixing with the local populations and by being avaricious; the Russians would colonise India like ancient Romans, mixing with the Indians. At the same time, they would contribute to the unification of India, resolving its religious differences and the conflicts caused by the caste system. The Russian example, Gerson da Cunha goes on, with its honesty, would also inspire the Indian people with a spirit of nationality, “which will inevitably place the elder brother of the Aryan family on the pedestal he is entitled to and which is sanctioned by history”.²⁴ Despite being married to a Russian and having a special interest in Russian culture, his Italian friend Gubernatis did not seem to agree: in his Indian travel diary, he states that a hypothetical Russian invasion of India would be

21 And when Prince Galitzine, brother of the “beautiful Russian princesses” went on a trip to Bombay, Gerson da Cunha offered him his hospitality. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 16 (Bombay, 37 Hornby Road, 17th March 1879); Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 22 (Bombay, 39 Hornby Road, 14th June 1881); Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 23 (Bombay, 39 Hornby Road, 26th July 1881).

22 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 20 (Bombay, 39, Hornby Road, 1st January 1880). He also wrote that this British aversion towards the Russians was “the same aversion that Mahomet had towards bacon”, a common derogatory Portuguese expression.

23 Gerson da Cunha’s interest in Russia was also latent in the article he published in the English language journal *Bombay Gazette* in 1879, on the education of women in Russia. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 17 (Bombay, 37 Hornby Road, 1st August 1879).

24 [“que deve acabar por colocar o irmão mais velho da família ariana no pedestal que lhe cabe de direito, e que a história sanciona”].

of no benefit because Russia was not more civilised than India. Therefore, Indians wouldn't benefit at all by changing "landlords" (De Gubernatis 1887, 321-322).

In his role as the Indian correspondent, Gerson da Cunha sent his "Lettre des Indes Orientales" to the first issue of the magazine at the end of 1883. In it, he identified the state of contemporary India as one of crisis and transition (Cunha 1883b, 202-204; 1884a, 829-831). He started to refer to the widely repeated dichotomy between oriental apathy, on the one hand; and, on the other, the active nature of western peoples said to be affecting the apathy in the Orient.²⁵ The contemplative and even servile nature of the Indians was changing, thanks to European colonialism, into a transitional process favouring a closer and friendlier relationship between the two worlds. The "Indian of the 19th century", Cunha declared, "thinks, moves, communes in mind and sympathy with his Aryan brother of the West, recalls the past greatness of his native country, feels keenly his present partial bondage and aspires to a future full of more promises of success and prosperity."²⁶ Arianism, here, serving to unite East and West, and somehow subverting the inequalities institutionalized by colonial rule.

THE REAWAKENING OF A NATION: INDIA AFTER THE FOREIGN INVADERS

In the second manuscript article Gerson da Cunha sent to be published in the Florentine journal, he highlighted the recent passage of power from Lord Ripon to Lord Dufferin and the grandeur of the acclamation ceremonies with which Lord Ripon was bid farewell. However, the Indians had been very unhappy: "ten centuries of tyranny and oppression by foreign [*underlined in the manuscript*] invaders have made them nearly forget that theirs was one of the seats of an ancient and advanced civilisation". When a Viceroy gave the Indians the political right of "municipal self-government" – a right that

25 See Cunha (1883b, 202). Ronald Inden (1986; 2000 [1990]) analyses the persistence of these essentialist images of India in contrast with European values and ideas.

26 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 32 (Bombay 23rd November 1883). The article, written in English, is sent along with this letter; Cunha (1883b, 203).

had been present in the Indian village communities from time immemorial, – their gratitude was enormous. This happened, according to Gerson da Cunha because in the last ten centuries “of darkness”, the Indian people had received more “blows than kisses, more kicks than pence!”, and had forgotten the privileges they once possessed. Now the process was unstoppable. When a people were taught about their rights, this people started questioning itself about the evolution of these rights. If they encountered resistance, on the other hand, this progressive evolution would transform itself into revolution. However, as Gerson da Cunha pointed out, rights also meant duties, and these were the last thing on which the masses reflected.

“The inauguration of a spirit of nationality among the natives of this country” had been, in his opinion, the greatest revelation of the transition of power. Gerson da Cunha’s argument would be oft-repeated in the future but, in 1884, was still latent. India had much to gain by maintaining its relationship with the most progressive, enlightened, intelligent and energetic nation of Europe, but Britain would have to gradually adjust to India’s demands. The coloniser had to please the colonised and win its good-will, mainly when facing the threat of a potential rival such as Russia. Just as the Portuguese had done when they became more benevolent with the natives at the beginning of the 17th century, when the British had arrived in Surat, argued Gerson da Cunha, so the British had to please the Indians when the Russians arrived in Kabul. The published article did not print this sentence or idea, nor did it print the section of the article in which he reflected on the meaning of the 1857 *Mutiny*, while comparing it with the excesses displayed by the masses present when Lord Ripon ceded power.²⁷ Clearly Gubernatis must have thought that Cunha’s openness was too bold.

In regard to the public’s apparent loyalty to the British Crown, the Indian correspondent noted that there was always an element of precariousness in any foreign government. In India, many had read the manifestations of joy towards the ex-viceroy – Lord Ripon – as a sign of the success and permanence of Britain’s relationship with India.²⁸ Gerson da Cunha, however, had doubts. And to demonstrate them, he gave an example of historical parallelism

27 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 37 (Bombay, Hornby Road, 25th December 1883).

28 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 37 (Bombay, Hornby Road, 25th December 1883).

taken from “Portuguese India’s” past: those manifestations of joy had been analogous to what took place in the “flourishing Portuguese Empire in the East”. When D. João de Castro returned to Goa after the conquest of Diu, the natives offered him golden flowers and the merchants of Cambaia spread out their richest and most beautiful cotton and silk cloths, so that he could walk between the galleon and the cathedral. And what was the result of all of these native acclamations of the “last hero”, and the congratulations of all the Hindu and Muslim princes of India? Nowadays, argued Cunha, not even the most cultivated native of India remembers the name of D. João de Castro. This forgotten name stood in clear contrast to the names of contemporary natives, whose memory was still alive, and was preserved in popular ballads: “Such is the destiny of all foreign rulers, most benevolent though they be.”

Gerson da Cunha ended this reflection with praise of D. João de Castro’s character, followed by the reference to an event that again enabled him to establish a comparison between the two colonial empires: the Portuguese empire of the past and the British empire of the present. D. João de Castro died poor, assisted by St. Francis Xavier, whose Tomb-Relic in Velha Goa Lord Ripon had visited recently. The epilogue of the Portuguese empire was already known, while the epilogue of the British was yet to be written. It would, however, be similar, Gerson da Cunha suggested.

Gubernatis, however, did not seem to think the reflections on contemporary British India should be included in the published version, and omitted many of the pages Gerson da Cunha had written.²⁹ Was the Italian troubled by his friend’s comments, which seemed to announce the end of the British colonial government in India? Were these reflections too problematic to be published in the journal edited by someone who was considered the major Italian figure in Indian studies, and who was about to depart on a major journey to India where he needed the support of the British Government of India? The exclusions Gubernatis decided to make reveal that even away from India, not everything could be said. Gerson da Cunha’s free speech – words written in Portuguese and sent to an Italian city to be translated into French – were still subject to a censorship that we can only explain by asking questions rather than by rehearsing any clear answer.

29 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – Manoscritti – Carteggio Angelo De Gubernatis – Corresp. José Gerson da Cunha para Angelo De Gubernatis, n.º 37 (Bombay, 25th December 1884); This second article as correspondent was published two months after, on 25th February 1884: Cunha (1884a, 829-831).

The conversation about Indian immutability – being transformed by the British presence – was present in much of the writing about India during this period, a fact of which Gerson da Cunha was clearly aware (Temple 1881, 1-2). In the paradigms of progress that the British claimed to have taken to India were the seeds of nationalism that, ultimately, would lead to India's independence. Therefore, the interpretation presented by Gerson da Cunha should be seen in the context of the debates amongst British and Indian elites of the second half of the 19th century. An example of how nationalistic values inspired by the West were used by the Bengali elites has already been analysed by many, Raychaudhuri amongst them (Raychaudhuri 2002). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, for example, recognised how the British, by thinking mainly about their own interests, had also contributed to the unification of India (Raychaudhuri 2002, 62, 65). Bankin Chandra Chattopadhyay, a Bengali writer of the same period, who was especially critical of the British government, recognised that Western education, transmitted in English, was the major benefit of British colonialism, and could even become a link of a pan-Indian union, in a way that Sanskrit could never assure.³⁰

While Raychaudhuri focused on the ways in which the local elites of a specific geographical region embraced Western values in order to sometimes use them *against* the colonial presence, Chatterjee concluded that an Indian national discourse was able to incorporate a critique of the colonial government, while simultaneously accepting the values of modernity that were inseparable from colonialism (Chatterjee 1993). Similarly, Gyan Prakash argued that the nationalists transformed India from a passive element into an active one: from an “object of knowledge” essentialised by Europe to self-identification as a nation (Prakash 2000, 168). Raychaudhuri and Chatterjee give specific examples of intellectuals, historians and Indian writers who, like Gerson da Cunha, have ambivalent positions, which contradict one another and can be also explained through the rich multiplicity of sources from which their thoughts and cultural references derive.³¹ All of these historical figures reveal what could also be said in relation to Gerson da Cunha: it is difficult to

30 See Raychaudhuri (2002, 184) and Isaka (2006, 151-176). But Chattopadhyay could also foresee another consequence of the spread of the Western educational system in India – the profound gap between the Indian elites and the illiterate masses, the majority of the population (Raychaudhuri 2002, 195-196. For a biography of Chattopadhyay, see Amiya P. Sen (2008).

31 See Chatterjee (1993), mainly the chapters “The Nationalist Elite”, “The Nation and its pasts”, and “Histories and Nations”; Raychaudhuri (2002).

assert that these complex positions are in simple opposition to one another. It cannot simply be stated that there was one force on the European or colonial side, which stood against another supporting the colonisers.

THE UNEXPECTED ADVANTAGES OF BEING ELSEWHERE: MOVING BETWEEN HISTORIES AND IDENTITIES

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 marginalised or suppressed or forgotten histories" (Said 1993, 260-261). However, for the Goan historian, or, in fact, a great part of Goan writers, historians and scholars from the Catholic elites, this distinction between periphery and centre, India and Europe, or non-European and European did not apply. Gerson da Cunha was not *appropriating* the instruments of a European culture, because they were part of his education and his Goan culture.

Since Said, a pioneering thinker in so many ways, wrote on the subject, a new field has emerged – global intellectual history –, where an effort has been made to go beyond the Eurocentric traditional focus of intellectual history and examine a rich knowledge production where many authors were colonised subjects (Moyn and Sartori 2013; Bose and Manjapra 2010; Ganger and Lewis 2013). Gerson da Cunha could certainly be included in the approaches of global intellectual history centred on India, which also have a strong biographical line of research as a way of bringing to the fore authors that were unknown and seldom referred to.³² Other works have centred not on specific authors, but on how political and social justice ideas were used and transformed by Indian intellectuals, as happens in C. A. Bayly's book, where the Goan Bernardo Peres

32 Two published collections are examples of such an effort: one is by Oxford University Press, in New Delhi, centred on "short biographies of men and women from the late nineteenth century to the present day, who have contributed in discrete ways towards building modern India", from Mahatma Gandhi to Sri Aurobindo, Raja Ram Mohan Roy or Madan Mohan Malaviya; the other is the *Pathfinders* Series, published in New Delhi by Routledge (Muhammad Iqbal, Veena Dhanammal or Shyamji Krishna Varma, among others).

da Silva is one of the thinkers analysed.³³ In Kris Manjapra's and my own book (Vicente 2012b), another thread of research has privileged the ways in which intellectual relations through correspondence, conferences and journals have been established between Indian and European scholars. Manjapra's *Age of Entanglement* focuses on German and Indian intellectuals from the 19th to the mid-20th century; while my work, *Other Orientalisms*, is centred on the relationship between Italian and Indian scholars between 1860 and 1900 (Manjapra 2014; Vicente 2012b). Specifically on Goa's 19th century intellectual and printing history there are two fundamental works: Rochelle Pinto's book on *Print and Politics* in Goa and Sandra Lobo's PhD's thesis, *Culture and Politics in Goa from Liberalism to the Colonial Act* (Pinto 2007; Lobo 2013).

Gerson da Cunha's double gaze – his control of the “here and there”, of both sides of a border, within the Indian subcontinent and also outside it – enabled him to write a comparative and transnational history that went beyond an interest in “Portuguese India”, even if that was almost always his point of departure. His, however, was a history that also took into account other communities, other religions, and other colonial configurations. His was a history of some regions of India whose history, in a certain period, intersected with that of Portugal; regions which had other histories before, during, and after the Portuguese presence; histories that were sometimes also colonial histories. Gerson da Cunha's was a kaleidoscopic vision that was distinct from that of those Portuguese historians who wrote on India from the metropolis. It was also different from the vision of those who, being Goan or Portuguese, wrote from Goa.

Gerson da Cunha knew all the bibliographical references of those Portuguese historians, yet his vision was as Eurocentric as Indo-centric, and that differentiated his work from the historicisation of India done in 19th or even 20th century Portugal. In addition to knowing those Portuguese sources, found not only in Goan archives but also in Lisbon, and while keeping abreast of what was being published in Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra and Goa, Gerson da Cunha also knew what was being published in London, Bombay, Paris and Calcutta. In addition to Portuguese, he read English, and a number of Indian languages. This historiographical and linguistic cosmopolitanism gave him a knowledge of different national traditions that did not usually cross each other.

33 See Bayly (2012, 46). On Bernardo Peres da Silva, see the groundbreaking work of Luis Pedroso de Lima Cabral de Oliveira (2013, 497-531).

It was Gerson da Cunha's geographical identity and his ability to preserve his foreignness in relation to the dominant contexts in which he moved in multiple countries, which enabled him to produce different kinds of knowledge about India. He had access to different kinds of publishing contexts and, I would argue, was conscious of what he could write and what he could not write in different geographical contexts. Even in an increasingly cosmopolitan world, in which journals, writings and ideas were interchanged between places, when writing in French and publishing in Italy, Gerson da Cunha 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 located the history of the Portuguese within a wider history of India, oscillating between a legitimisation of the pioneerism of the Portuguese in many areas and criticism of Portuguese marriage policies, Catholic methods of conversion, and the politics of eradicating local languages – Konkani – and religions – Hinduism. His approach typified the British historiographical tradition: the “mistakes” of the Portuguese past in India were often quoted to exemplify what should not be done in the present. However, when Gerson da Cunha is corresponding with Gubernatis, or writing for a French language journal published in Italy, the British India that emerges is a very different one, as we have seen. Although Gerson da Cunha occasionally digresses to comment on the past, when discussing British India in these writings he dwells principally on the present state of affairs and also on the future – always with an independent India on the horizon. The same cannot be said of his reflections on Portuguese India, where his criticism safely addresses only the past, avoiding any contemporary reflections.

Gerson da Cunha's specificities further complicate the places from which he writes on colonial experiences and configurations, past and present. He was never in the place of the colonised. By being Goan but not resident in Goa, he did not have to live under the Portuguese colonial government. He lived in Bombay, but he was not an Indian subject of British India, and therefore was always something of a foreigner. His permanent condition of “foreignness”, in this limbo between exclusion and inclusion that is an underlying condition of all experiences of displacement, gave him the freedom to never be in a subaltern position.

And how can we think of him as an “oriental orientalist”? Gerson da Cunha's case, or that of Bhandarkar, another Bombay scholar who travelled to

Europe to attend an international congress, come to subvert the identity of the orientalist as a white European coloniser (Bhandarkar 1887, 72). There were many Indians producing scholarly work, which was identified as “orientalist” and legitimised in the spheres where knowledge was shared between peers: international congresses or scholarly journals. Knowledge and people travelled, and so did the idea of what was an “orientalist”. However, if the growing role and visibility of Indian “orientalists” along the 19th century could serve to question Said’s theories of orientalist knowledge as an instrument of European colonising power, we could also argue that these “orientalist orientals” needed European legitimisation to be accepted and considered. Their work had to fit the norms, traditions and formats of what was considered “orientalist knowledge”, as defined by a European mode. Therefore, in order to be “included”, they had to fit a knowledge configuration that was defined in Europe. Gerson da Cunha was cherished within a certain European orientalist sphere both because he produced knowledge within the same codes and traditions and spoke the same intellectual language.

He went to Europe a few times, but apparently he never went to Portugal, although he exchanged letters with some Portuguese scholars³⁴, and was a correspondent member of the main Portuguese institutions of knowledge, such as the Sociedade de Geografia and the Academia das Ciências, both in Lisbon. France and Great Britain were places to where he returned, but it was with Italy that Gerson da Cunha established more intellectual relationships.³⁵ These were his locations of choice, where he was never a colonial subject in the colonial metropolis, but an “Indian” who shared the culture – because he was a Goan –, and religion – because he was a Catholic – of his European interlocutors. In the places where he lived and in which he wrote, Cunha was never completely subject to a colonial context, to those everyday discourses and practices of hierarchies, differences and inequalities.

Always being a foreigner granted him this unusual freedom, and the possibility of voicing at least some of his opinions on the various colonialisms of India, of both the past and the present. It also meant, paradoxically, that his

34 With Conde de Ficalho, for example, who wrote on Garcia da Orta and therefore shared many scholarly interests with Gerson da Cunha. See Garcia da Orta (1891, 1895).

35 Gerson da Cunha’s relationship with Angelo De Gubernatis, his 50 letters are kept at the Guberantis’ Archive of the National Library of Florence, were the point of departure for my book *Other Orientalisms...* (Vicente 2012b). On Gerson da Cunha’s trips to Paris, see Vicente (2012b, 133-151).

intellectual production was never acknowledged by those historians of India working within the two dominant historiographical traditions, the Portuguese and the British. His in-betweenness and the uncertainty and even contradictory nature of his identities contributed to his invisibility and his exclusion from the canonical layers of historical authorship. This was, however, the other side of the same coin, perhaps the price to pay for the kaleidoscopic nature of his position. He could see many different things, but was missed at the vantage point of those who look at history and historiography from a single place.

CONCLUSION

Gerson da Cunha's intellectual and social world was concentrated in the diverse world of Bombay, a heterogeneous and fluid world, made of people of different ethnicities, religions and origins (Vicente 2012b).³⁶ Through an analysis of a number of his writings, I have explored different ideas of inclusion and exclusion. The central one is the effort made by the historian in mapping, studying and valuing what was Portuguese in India, both in the past and in the present. In this process of knowing and making known, he could concentrate on the past, as when he wrote an article on Portuguese Orientalism *before* the British 18th century Orientalist genealogy. Or he could concentrate on the present, as when he criticised the University of Bombay, his city, for not sufficiently valuing the Portuguese language. Another way of thinking of the idea of exclusion is through those specific historical subjects central to the historiography of "Portuguese India". Exclusion of Hinduism within the making of the Portuguese empire of India – through discriminatory laws, destruction of Hindu material culture and manuscripts, eradication of Konkani and other Indian languages or punishment of religious practices – was a strategy he criticised, for example. However, Cunha was also against the

36 In my book, *Other Orientalisms...* (Vicente 2012b) I analyse Angelo De Gubernatis's numerous references to Gerson da Cunha's social and intellectual circle, which, very often, met at his house, in Angelo De Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vols. I-III (Firenze: Tip. Editrice di L. Niccolai, 1886-1887). In this chapter, I will not be able to explore Cunha's relationships with the various Goan communities settled in Bombay – something that, for example, Paulo Varela Gomes (2007) has written about, – nor his relationship with other Goan scholars based in Bombay and linked to British institutions of learning, such as José Camilo Lisboa (Bardez, 1823 – Bombay, 1897), a distinguished doctor and botanist from Bardez. On José Camilo Lisboa, see Aleixo Manuel da Costa (s. d., 192-194) and Filipa Lowndes Vicente (2017, 323-327).

exclusion of Portuguese from the range of European languages taught at the University of Bombay in the late 19th century. He does not, therefore, enable us to draw simple conclusions, and even less to establish linear dichotomies between those who sided with the foreign colonisers and those with the colonised Indian.

His criticism of Portuguese colonial practices focused mainly on the past and was expressed in his scholarly publications, and was therefore historical in nature. With British India, however, his critical eye tended to address contemporary events and was mainly conveyed through journalistic writing and private correspondence. This division was also an object of my reflection. Policies and practices of exclusion and inclusion – and the dialogues and conflicts over what should be included or “excluded” – were embedded in all colonial spaces and Gerson da Cunha participated in this debate through his historical and journalistic writings. However, I tried to analyse, his audience – the people who were going to read him and the places where he was going to be read – determined what he wrote on India’s present or past. He was conscious of their specificity and adapted his discourse, politics and criticism accordingly and this was not by chance. His position and identity determined what he could say and to whom he could say it.

The fact that Gerson da Cunha was Goan and could read Portuguese, along with other European and Indian languages, was determinant in the choice of historical subjects he chose to research and write about. It was also important for the cosmopolitan community with which he interacted, socially as well as in his role as doctor with a medical practice. By belonging to different worlds, and constantly crossing, literally and historically, the borders between Portuguese and British India, Cunha was able to make comparisons and connections between different histories and historiographies. This contrasted with the majority of written scholarly production, which tended to remain separate and unaware of each other: on one side, the work written in English, published in British India or in London, and concentrating on the geographies and experiences of the British presence in India; and on the other, the bibliography published in Portuguese, in Goa or in Lisbon, and focused on the Portuguese presence in certain Indian regions, mainly in Goa, since the 16th century. This, as we have seen, had two main results: it enabled him to establish unusual comparisons and crossings between both dominant colonising experiences in India, while also meaning that he was not incorporated in either of the historiographies dealing with Portuguese and British India.

Situated between these two traditions – the Portuguese and the British – Gerson da Cunha was never fully acknowledged by either of them. In a historical period – the second half of the 19th century – in which different European colonial governments ruled India with the obvious predominance of the British, there were different national historiographical traditions depending on the place where the writing was taking place and on who was writing. These tended to concentrate on different periods and different subjects, and were written in different languages, by scholars who worked in different archives and quoted different historians. Paradoxically, as I have suggested, it was this belonging to many places while not belonging to a single one – the fact that Gerson da Cunha was always on the borders of different worlds – that contributed to his invisibility as a historian and his exclusion from the canon, as a producer of knowledge on the history of India.

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FILIPA LOWNDES VICENTE
 Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa
 Av. Prof. Aníbal Bettencourt 9 — 1600-036 Lisboa, Portugal
 filipa.vicente@ics.ulisboa.pt
 orcid.org/0000-0002-3334-3064

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