

Grammatical studies of Konkani language: Portuguese works (17th century)

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Summary¹

Many Portuguese, having lived or not in India, wrote about its linguistic reality. However, we will not focus our attention on this category of writers here. Instead, we are interested in a group of Portuguese and foreign authors who, having lived in India, were influenced by the Oriental way of thinking, assimilated their languages and, using the Portuguese language as a metalanguage of linguistic description, developed their studies on catechism, grammars, dictionaries, and dialogues. These works are the product of a local “art” adapted to the tradition of the Western grammatical description, through the contrastive observation with Latin (and Portuguese), irrespective of the differences in the languages studied. Between the 16th and the 18th centuries, these authors – Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians settled in Goa – created a rich heritage composed of several and varied works. Due to the fact that the “Indo-Portuguese” notion is primarily connoted with Goa, only the Konkani grammatical tradition of the 17th century written in Portuguese will be mentioned here.

The history of the Konkani grammar, dating back to the 17th century, has been remarkably well accomplished by the Goan philologist Mariano Saldanha (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 8, 2/3, 1936), among other studies. Authors such as the English Thomas Stephens (also known as “Tomás Estêvão” in most Portuguese publications), the Italian Arcamone Ignacio or the Portuguese Gaspar S. Miguel and Christovão de Jesus are outstanding and well known names in this grammatical tradition.

The present paper will focus on the contribution of the Portuguese studies.

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