

[Borah on Malekandathil and Varadarajan and Farooqui, 'India, the Portuguese and Maritime Interactions: Vol. II: Religion, Language and Cultural Expressions' and Malekandathil and Varadarajan and Farooqui, 'India, the Portuguese and Maritime Intera ...](#)

Review published on Wednesday, October 13, 2021

Pius Malekandathil, Lotika Varadarajan, Amar Farooqui, eds. *India, the Portuguese and Maritime Interactions: Vol. II: Religion, Language and Cultural Expressions*. Delhi: Primus Books,

2019. 610 pp. \$69.95 (cloth), [ISBN 978-93-5290660-4](#).



Pius Malekandathil, Lotika Varadarajan, Amar Farooqui, eds. *India, the Portuguese and Maritime Interactions: Vol. I: Science, Economy and Urbanity*. Delhi: Primus Books, 2019. 656 pp. \$74.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-93-5290659-8.

Reviewed by Monish Borah (University of California- Irvine) **Published on** H-Asia (October, 2021)
Commissioned by Sumit Guha (The University of Texas at Austin)

Printable Version: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=55621>

These two edited volumes titled *India, The Portuguese and Maritime Interactions* contain sixty articles selected from nearly one hundred different papers that were submitted to the International Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History (ISIPH), in February 2013. The exploration of the dynamic interactions between Indians and Portuguese that took place both at a regional level and within the context of a larger Lusophone world is the central theme that unifies all the papers in these volumes. Both volumes are divided into several sections that examine how different actors, regional histories, social, cultural, and religious frameworks, and geographical/maritime factors shaped the relations between the Indians and the Portuguese. In making the different types of interactions the central theme of these volumes, the scholars critique the traditional approaches taken in Indo-Portuguese studies. Until recently Luso-Indian history tended to be limited to a divergent binary based on the perspective of different historians. Historians writing from the Indian perspective tended to look at it through the lens of colonial exploitation; on the other hand the Portuguese perspective was mostly restricted to exploring the glorious achievements of the Age of Discovery. As is made clear in the chapter by Luis Filipe Thomaz in his paper in volume 1, these divergent narratives in Indo-Portuguese history were not always a result of the lack of desire amongst scholars to write new and innovative histories but were due to the challenging nature of the subject. With the Portuguese being the earliest Europeans in India, their influence was not limited to Goa or parts of the Malabar coast; instead they interacted and influenced the lives of Indians living far beyond the coastlines. To unearth these kinds of links one will have to be well versed in several regional histories of India, and that has proved to be a challenge for historians, particularly from outside the subcontinent. Similarly, Indian historians who seem to have a good grasp of Indian regional histories find it difficult to access Portuguese sources, primarily due to linguistic barriers. As a result, according to Jason Keith

Citation: H-Net Reviews. *Borah on Malekandathil and Varadarajan and Farooqui, 'India, the Portuguese and Maritime Interactions: Vol. II: Religion, Language and Cultural Expressions' and Malekandathil and Varadarajan and Farooqui, 'India, the Portuguese and Maritime Intera* H-Asia. 10-13-2021.

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/22055/reviews/8599732/borah-malekandathil-and-varadarajan-and-farooqui-india-portuguese-and>
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.

Fernandes, Luso-Indian history has been overly focused on microcosms where the gaps in the knowledge of regional histories and linguistics could be easily bridged. Therefore, we see many scholars using Goa to understand the totality of the Indo-Portuguese experience or focusing only on certain castes and communities that had deep and extensive dealings with the Portuguese. As Roberto Vecchi puts it in his paper in volume 2, the connections between Indians and Portuguese were much deeper and were felt in a much wider spectrum. He writes that the “India” signifier was used by the Portuguese to comprehend their explorations and political and economic activities everywhere from the South Atlantic to East Asia. He also cites David Jackson’s work to claim that the influence of the Portuguese in India cannot be relegated to the level of a mere relic; instead “they are specters left by the State of Portuguese India which continue to haunt” (p. 313).

Therefore, given such formidable challenges facing the scholars of Luso-Indian studies, the editors of these two volumes must be congratulated for illuminating the pathway ahead through the various obstacles. Their move away from the divergent binaries that had dominated this field to exploring the “threads of connectivities” (p. xxv) appears to be very promising. Such an approach and rigorous research carried out by several authors who have contributed to these books provide a more nuanced understanding to the readers about the space that Indo-Portuguese interactions occupy in the Lusophone world.

Citation: Monish Borah. Review of Malekandathil, Pius; Varadarajan, Lotika; Farooqui, Amar, eds., *India, the Portuguese and Maritime Interactions: Vol. II: Religion, Language and Cultural Expressions* and Malekandathil, Pius; Varadarajan, Lotika; Farooqui, Amar, eds., *India, the Portuguese and Maritime Interactions: Vol. I: Science, Economy and Urbanity*. H-Asia, H-Net Reviews. October, 2021.
URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=55621>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).