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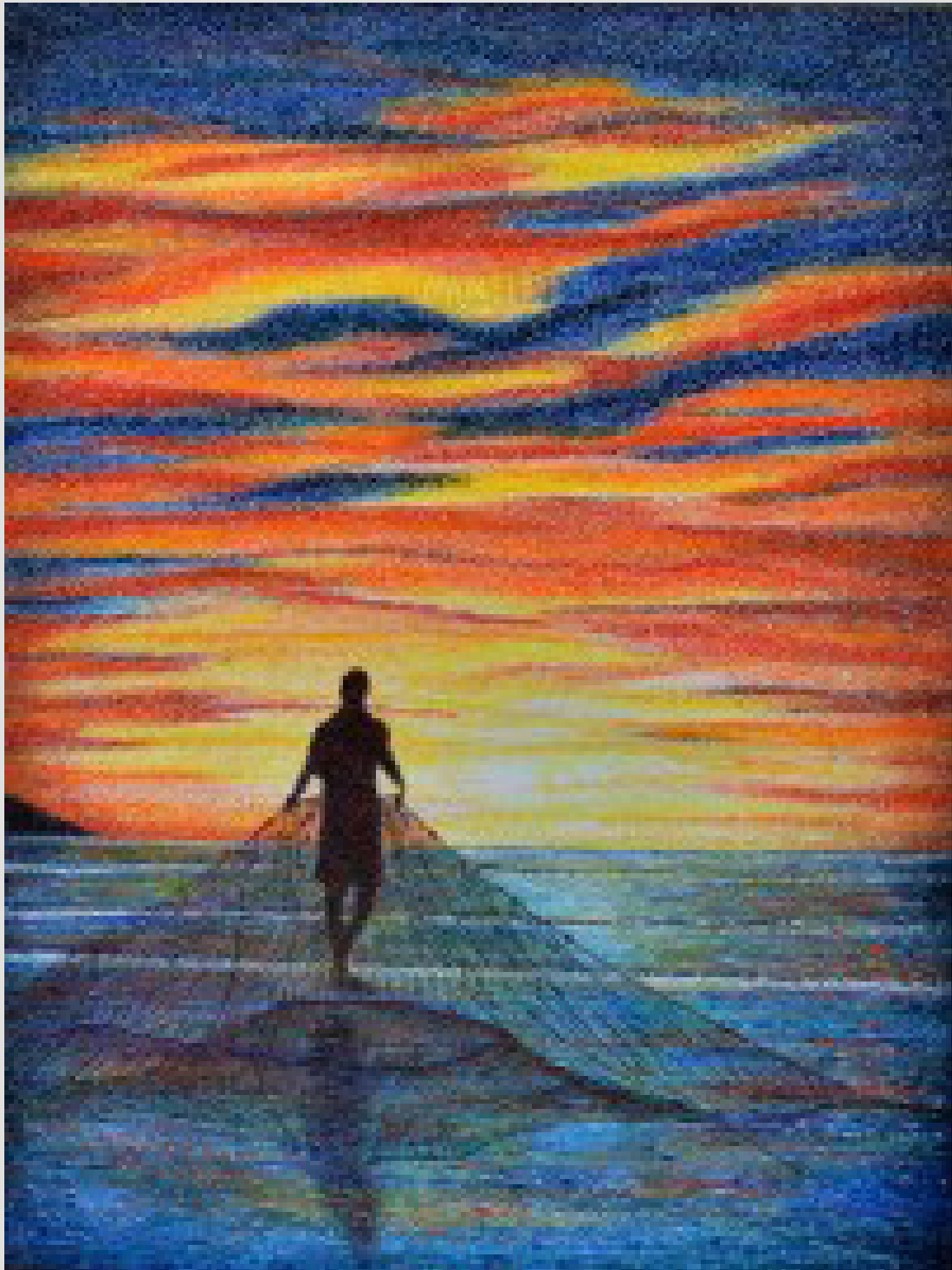


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(courtesy: Clarice Vaz)

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A Revista da Casa de Goa é o órgão oficial da Casa de Goa.

Contém secções regulares, abaixo indicadas, nas quais os artigos têm limite máximo de palavras e figuras.

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Os artigos submetidos devem versar temas relacionados com investigação, preservação e divulgação sobre a identidade cultural de Goa, Damão e Diu.

Os artigos são submetidos à aprovação do Diretor, enviados por correio eletrónico para geral@casadegoa.pt

As opiniões expressas nos artigos publicados não refletem as ideias e pontos de vista dos editores, mas sim dos autores.

A revista é bilingue, sendo aceites artigos em português (o novo acordo ortográfico é opcional) e inglês. Para além do português e inglês, exceção é feita ao Espaço do Concani, reservado para publicação de artigos em concani romano com a respetiva tradução para português. O Conselho Editorial reserva-se o direito de rever aspetos formais, nomeadamente de português e inglês.

Se algum artigo original exceder o limite de palavras, este poderá ser publicado em partes, em números consecutivos da Revista. Em casos excecionais e por decisão editorial, o limite de palavras figuradas pode exceder o acima referido.

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A Revista é de livre acesso e a divulgação é livre. É distribuída por correio eletrónico aos sócios da Casa de Goa, associações de goeses da diáspora e jornais em Goa. Quem deseje receber regularmente a Revista, deve manifestar o interesse ao Secretariado: geral@casadegoa.pt

Graças à parceria editorial com The Global Goan, cada número desta revista disponibiliza a hiperligação para acesso ao número mais recente da Revista da Casa de Goa.

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Articles submitted for publication should address topics related to research, preservation and dissemination of the cultural identity of Goa, Damão and Diu.

Articles are to be emailed to the Director at geral@casadegoa.pt for approval.

The opinions expressed in articles of the Revista da Casa de Goa do not reflect the ideas and points of view of the editors, rather those of the authors.

The magazine is bilingual and articles are accepted in Portuguese (the new spelling agreement is optional) and English. In addition, an exception is made for the Konkani Corner, dedicated to articles published in Konkani language in Roman script, with translation into Portuguese. The Editorial Board reserves the right to review formal aspects, namely Portuguese and English.

If an original article exceeds the word limit, it may be published in parts, in consecutive issues of the Revista da Casa de Goa. In exceptional cases and according to the editorial decision, the limit of words and illustrations may exceed the aforementioned. Other sections may be added occasionally, according to the specific type of articles (testimony, poem, etc).

Articles should contain Abstract (English) and Resumo (Portuguese abstract) and in up to 150 words, respectively, not mandatory for articles with less than 1500 words and for articles previously published in other magazines. If the author is not skilled in writing in any of the languages, the Revista da Casa de Goa undertakes to translate to the other language based on the full version of the article.

Articles previously published elsewhere are accepted, as long as authorization is obtained from publications and authors and appropriately cited. In this context, Revista da Casa de Goa has an editorial partnership with The Global Goan. In each issue of the Revista da Casa de Goa there will be a limited number of republished articles, with priority given to fresh submissions.

Articles submitted for publication are subject to review by the Editorial Board and may be accepted without changes, or subject to suggested changes, or not accepted at all.

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Thanks to the editorial partnership with The Global Goan, each issue of this magazine provides a link to access the latest issue of the Revista da Casa de Goa.

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SHENOI GOEMBAB - THE LANGUAGE LUMINARY

SHENOI GOEMBAB – O LUMINAR DE LÍNGUAS



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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the life and accomplishments of Vaman Raghunath Shenoi Varde Valaulikar, popularly known as Shenoi Goembab. A prominent figure in the domain of Konkani language and culture, Shenoi Goembab played a crucial role in revitalising the Konkani language and identity. He was a true polyglot, being proficient in several languages, including Konkani, Marathi, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Portuguese, and French, among others. His extensive linguistic repertoire enabled him to translate various literary works into Konkani. Through his contributions to Konkani literature and language, Shenoi Goembab helped to bridge the cultural and linguistic divide between communities. This paper briefly summarizes Shenoi Goembab's outstanding achievements, highlighting his exceptional linguistic abilities and invaluable contributions to language and literature.

Resumo

Este artigo oferece uma visão geral da vida e realizações de Vaman Raghunath Shenoi Varde Valaulikar, popularmente conhecido como Shenoi Goembab. Uma figura proeminente na área da língua e cultura Concanim, Shenoi Goembab desempenhou um papel crucial na revitalização da língua e identidade Concanim. Era um verdadeiro poliglota, sendo proficiente em várias línguas, incluindo Concanim, Marata, Hindi, Inglês, Sânscrito, Português e Francês, entre outras. O seu extenso repertório linguístico permitiu-lhe traduzir várias obras literárias para o Concanim. Através das suas contribuições para a literatura e língua Concanim, Shenoi Goembab ajudou a superar a divisão cultural e linguística entre as comunidades. Este artigo resume sucintamente as extraordinárias realizações de Shenoi Goembab, destacando as suas excepcionais capacidades linguísticas e valiosas contribuições na área de língua e literatura.

Introduction

Vaman Raghunath Sheno Varde Valaulikar is a Konkani luminary whose 125th birth year was commemorated as the *Asmitai Vars* (Year of Identity) in the State of Goa. This ‘Konkani Man of the Millennium’ in 2000 (Budkuley 2003, p. 13) was born on 23rd June 1877. He was the son of Raghunathbab and Sitabai Varde Valaulikar who hailed from a Saraswat Brahmin family in Bicholim, Goa. Vaman, under the *nom de plume* ‘Sheno Goembab’ would lead the inspiring Renaissance of the Konkani language and instil a sense of identity in Konkani-speaking people. (Couto 2004, p. 172).

Sheno Goembab was a polyglot, meaning he was proficient in several languages. He was well-versed in Konkani, his mother tongue, and fluent in several other languages, including Marathi, Hindi, English, Portuguese and French. Given his stint at multiple companies, it would be safe to assume that he had Italian and German languages added to his linguistic knowledge repertoire.

Sheno Goembab's knowledge of these languages made him a prolific writer, translator, and editor. He translated several literary works from various languages into Konkani, including the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, and several works of Shakespeare. His proficiency in English and Portuguese also helped him to work as a journalist, and he served as the editor of several newspapers and magazines published in Konkani, English, and Portuguese. His polyglot skills not only helped him to contribute to the development of Konkani literature but also helped to bridge the linguistic and cultural divide between different communities.

This article briefly exposes Sheno Goembab's contributions to the world of language, and presents his mastery over multiple languages, making him a true polyglot.

Spearheading the Konkani movement

While presenting a biography, Jason Keith Fernandes (2018) demonstrates the primary role of Sheno Goembab as a Konkani activist, when Marathi enjoyed a favourable position in the power dynamics of the caste battles. (Fernandes 2018, p. 200). He underlines the resistance that the Konkani language

faced when it was attempted to be introduced into public education.

He further quotes Rochelle Pinto, in her book titled *‘Between Empires: Print and Politics in Goa’* (2007), wherein she suggests that the support in favour of Marathi and against Konkani may have come from the elite Hindus primarily because it stood to overturn what had already been achieved (in this context, the official state recognition for Marathi) through their own efforts and through the official support of the Catholic elite. (Fernandes 2018, p. 187).

In the essay *Reframing the Nineteenth Century*, Pinto *et al.* affirm,

The twentieth century was defined by the increasing intensity of varying nationalist positions addressed both to the post-colonial Indian state and to the colonial state in Goa. Language associations became vehicles of identity formation providing upper-caste intelligentsia with access to state institutions and policy formation. The formation of linguistic states made language the bearer of symbolic value that consolidated dominant identities. (Pinto, Mendiratta and Rossa 2018).



Figure 1. Sheno Goembab
(source: Goa Konkani Akademi)

It is perhaps in this context, then, that Sheno Goembab's investment in the autonomy of the Konkani language and its culture developed.

An anecdote from the life of Sheno Goembab that ignites the spark to bid for Konkani as the *lingua vernacular* (local language) is retold multiple times by various writers. It should be noted that his attachment to the mother tongue is largely related to a call of attention made by the then Inspector of Instruction in Goa, Tomás Mourão Garcez Palha, *Barão de Combarjua* (Baron of Combarjua), regarding a textbook of his authorship written in 1899 with the title '*O Mestre Portuguez*', which was intended to be used in the Marathi-Portuguese schools where he mentioned that the Marathi language as the vernacular language of Goa; The *Barão de Combarjua* who was well versed and knowledgeable in matters related to local languages, called his attention, saying that the vernacular language of Goa was Konkani and not Marathi, as he had written. (Monteiro 2020). This spark would escalate and Sheno Goembab would soon produce significant *oeuvres* that would mark the field of Konkani language. '*Gomantopnishat*' (1928 and 1933), an anthology in two volumes, became a significant milestone in the realm of Modern literary Konkani. In this first volume, the first modern short story in Konkani titled '*Mhoji Baa Khuin Gelli?*' is found. (Budkuley 2000).

Sheno Goembab's body of work presented the Konkani-speaking audience with the literature of quality, and a structure to the language. Through his consistent efforts, prose, and logic, he demolished the assaults of the exponents of Marathi who wished to confine Konkani to the status of a dialect. (Couto 2004, p. 361). Sheno Goembab's efforts to standardize Konkani and create a unified script for its various dialects played a crucial role in developing and recognizing Konkani as an independent language. His legacy continues to inspire Konkani writers and activists to this day, as they work to enrich further and promote the language.

Exploring the Portuguese link

After having completed his primary years of schooling at a Marathi school, Sheno Goembab proceeded to a Portuguese Primary School, where he completed his *primeiro grau* (first grade) and *segundo*

grau (second grade) of education, excelling in his studies to the extent of obtaining the first rank, and completing the courses much before the prescribed time. Post *segundo grau*, the Portuguese education system required students to complete their Lyceum studies, but this was not feasible due to financial constraints and distance. Thus, Sheno Goembab was forced to leave school. (Naik 2007, p. 6).

Much later, he would employ his knowledge and repertoire of the Portuguese Language to write '*O Mestre Portuguez*' (Monteiro 2020) or '*O Mestre Marata-Português*' (Naik 2007), a book designed for use in Portuguese schools, in whose curriculum was included the subject of Marathi to Portuguese translation. While this work is assuredly indicative of his literary capacity, it is also proof of his diligent application of mind and industrious nature. Till date, however, it remains unknown whether this literary work of much use, was eventually published or not.

Throughout his life, Sheno Goembab's linguistic genius permitted him the perusal of documents in Portuguese, in order to work towards the development and dissemination of the Konkani language. In his endeavour to restore the lost glory to his mother tongue, he would meticulously study old documents in Portuguese, and utilize this gigantic fund of knowledge towards the reconstruction of the glorious and resplendent image of Konkani. (Naik 2007, p. 40).

He was drawn to history, and developed a fascination for the Portuguese and pre-Portuguese history of Goa. In this regard, he consulted material in both Portuguese and English, including the chronicles and travelogues of Portuguese navigators, and official Portuguese Government documents. It was then that he was able to produce a methodical account in simple Konkani, entitled "How Albuquerque conquered Goa" (*Albuquerque Goem Kashem Jikhlem*).

Inspired by the French *Chef d'œuvres*

Dr. Kiran Budkuley, in her book titled 'Sheno Goembab: The Man and his work' (2003) dedicates an entire chapter to the translation genius of Sheno Goembab. While lauding his translation work, Dr. Budkuley adds:

"His contribution in terms of translation work will have to be evaluated from a twofold perspective:

the quantum as well as the quality of the work; and the identification of apparent motives behind translational work and their significance. For one thing, it is to his credit that the impoverished corpus of literary Konkani of his time began to be enriched with the valuable addition of select translations from world literature." (Budkuley 2003, p. 55).

Shenoi Goembab was ahead of his time and often stressed the need to eliminate caste barriers and get the lower caste educated. (Kamath 2022). He brought, to the Konkani-speaking audience, the jewels of the literary world. He adapted Shakespeare's plays such as 'Othello', 'Hamlet', 'King Lear' to name a few. Furthermore, he is most remembered for translating the 'Bhagavad Gita' into Konkani titled 'Bhagwantalem Geet' (1959).

Shenoi Goembab earned the reputation of being an able translator and interpreter of the French author Molière. (Sardessai 1972). Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, who adopted the stage name Molière, was a celebrated French playwright, poet, and actor of the 17th century. Renowned for his wit, humour, and social commentary, Molière is considered one of the greatest writers in French and world literature. His vast work includes comedies, farces, tragicomedies, and comédie-ballets, which have been translated into numerous languages and continue to be performed today. The enduring popularity of Molière's plays is reflected in their frequent staging at the Comédie-Française, and his influence on the French language is so profound that it is often referred to as the "language of Molière".

Shenoi Goembab demonstrates his translation brilliance by adapting Molière's *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* in Konkani as *Mogachem Logn*. This translation paved the way for expressing complex theatrical concepts in the Konkani language. By skilfully capturing Molière's humour and wit, and infusing it with a Konkani cultural sensibility, Goembab made the play both accessible and entertaining to Konkani audiences. *Mogachem Logn* has since become a classic of Konkani literature, still regularly performed and studied today.

Another translation of Molière's 'L'avare' into Konkani, titled 'Povnanche Taplem', is a significant milestone in Konkani literature. The translation

skilfully adapted Molière's timeless play on greed and family conflicts to the Konkani cultural context, making it more accessible and appealing to Konkani audiences. Goembab's faithful rendition of Molière's witty and satirical style received widespread praise, and the translation helped raise Konkani's profile as a literary language. Even today, 'Povnanche Taplem' is recognized as a masterpiece of Konkani literature, and its enduring popularity is a testament to the lasting impact of Shenoi Goembab's work.

A tryst with Sanskrit

Post his lyceum studies, at the young age of fourteen, and owing to his financial restrictions, Shenoi Goembab had no choice but to stay home. It was during the next two years, that he dedicated his time to the self-study of English and Sanskrit, procuring for himself all the necessary materials for this purpose. He was able to learn that his own mother tongue, Konkani, had its roots in the Vedic language of Sanskrit, which earned his respect and pride, as well as an intense desire to be an expert in the Sanskrit language.

When in Mumbai, he got himself admitted in the Maratha High School, founded by a renowned Sanskrit scholar, R. R. Bhagwat. Here, he formalized the learning of these languages in a systematic setting. Albeit his study of Sanskrit permitted the determination of the Brahminical roots of Konkani (Fernandes 2013, p. 80), Shenoi Goembab's work was devoid of complex and inaccessible language. Manohar Sardesai, in his work 'A Note on Modern Konkani Literature' states that "(...) Shenoy Goembab himself carefully avoided high-sounding Sanskrit words, and gave preference to pure Konkani ones".

R. N. Naik further affirms,

"Wamanrao's words are ornate and pure; at the same time, they are simple, easy to understand and edifying. His language is fully intelligible to young and old alike. He brings about a complete concord between the words of the educated elite and those of the illiterate labourer." (Naik 2007, p. 27).

Throughout his life, Shenoi Goembab continued to carry out extraneous reading of novels in Sanskrit, among other languages, which is testament to the

view of Naik that “He acquired knowledge for the sake of knowledge”. (Naik 2007, p. 12).

Encounter with other European Languages

Shenoi Goembab contributed significantly to developing the Konkani language, but unfortunately, there is a lack of comprehensive information about his life and work. Despite his industrious efforts, we only have fragments of his legacy due to the absence of a thorough biography or in-depth studies of this visionary figure. However, from the available sources, it appears that Shenoi Goembab had a good command of German and Italian as well.

According to Dr. Kiran Budkuley (2003), who recounts Goembab's early life, he worked at a German company called ‘*M/s Meister Lucius Bruening*’ in British India. During World War I, Germany recalled its citizens from the British colonies, and the company entrusted Shenoi Goembab with the charge of the Mumbai branch before departing. He performed his duties with humility and excellence, as evidenced by the detailed report the company prepared on the branch's transactions and operations during the war years. This report showed that the Mumbai branch was the most successful among all the company's branches. However, Shenoi Goembab eventually resigned from his position due to discriminatory practices by the company's management, who implemented salary cuts citing financial constraints. Interestingly, they had reduced only Shenoi Goembab's emoluments so that his salary would be lower than theirs.

Another incident recounted by Dr. Budkuley (2003) sheds light on Shenoi Goembab's character and principles. In 1904, fearing the limitations of his minimal formal education, Shenoi Goembab accepted a clerical position at the Italian Consulate to make a living. The job was stable and well-paid, but he only stayed there for a year. Despite his diligent and systematic work, he did not receive the due increments that others did. Later, it was discovered that this was because he had refused to stand up when the Consul entered the office premises, which was apparently expected of him. The Consul offered him two increments if he complied, but Shenoi Goembab remained steadfast in his principles and replied:

“I have been doing the work assigned to me properly and to the best of my abilities. Showing undue deference to my superiors is not a part of my duty” (Budkuley, 2003, p. 27).

This incident marked the end of Shenoi Goembab's tenure at the Italian Consulate, but it also exemplifies his integrity and commitment to his beliefs.

Based on Shenoi Goembab's work experiences, one could reasonably speculate that he possessed a considerable understanding of both German and Italian languages. This claim corresponds to the writings of R. N. Naik (2007) who notes in his work titled ‘*Makers of Indian Literature- Shenoi Goembab*’ that: “*Since he knew Portuguese and French very well, he could easily pick up Spanish and Italian. While working in the German firm, he must have acquired considerable proficiency in that language as well.*” (Naik 2007, p. 24).

In the same text, R. N. Naik (2007) continues to affirm that apart from his knowledge of Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Rajasthani, Vraja and Bihari, Goembab also had an adequate acquaintance with Greek. This knowledge of multiple languages establishes his reputation as a skilled polyglot.

Conclusion

Shenoi Goembab's linguistic versatility is widely apparent through his knowledge and use of multiple languages, both Indian and European, and his undying desire to revivify his mother-tongue, Konkani. Francisco da Purificação Monteiro, in his work titled *Shenoi Goembab*, mentions that Shenoi Goembab, a true polyglot, upheld the belief that regardless of the number of languages a person might use and have good command over, one would only truly be capable of communicating perfectly in one's mother-tongue, which he considered to be the language of the soul.¹ (Monteiro 2020, p. 29) Goembab's mastery over languages like Portuguese, French and Sanskrit furthered his efforts to bring a sense of universality to Konkani, through the dissemination of knowledge to the Goan masses in a language that was accessible to all. It is no doubt, then, that the efforts of this ‘Father of Modern Konkani Literature’ led to what one could call the Renaissance of Konkani.

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1. Translated from Portuguese, and paraphrased: “Acreditava que qualquer que fosse o número de línguas que uma pessoa dominasse, apenas poderia comunicar perfeitamente na sua língua materna, nas suas palavras a língua da alma (...)”

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Goa, gravura de Jan Huygen van Linschoten, 1596 | Goa, engraving from Jan Huygen van Linschoten, 1596