

FROM *THE LUSIADS* TO *LUZITAYONN*: AN ANALYSIS OF *CANTO VII* OF CAMÕES' EPIC, AND ITS KONKANI TRANSLATION BY OLIVINHO GOMES

D'OS LUSÍADAS A LUZITAYONN: UMA ANÁLISE DO CANTO VII DA EPOPEIA DE CAMÕES, E DA SUA TRADUÇÃO CONCANIM POR OLIVINHO GOMES

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ABSTRACT

Luis de Camões displayed his poetic prowess in his magnum opus, *The Lusiads*. The masterpiece is a unique composition, a combination of historical facts and images from ancient mythology, set in exuberant places discovered by the Portuguese. The extraordinary setting, coupled with the author's opulence of poetic imagination, made *The Lusiads* one of the greatest epics of European literature, with over a hundred editions and translations into more than a dozen European languages (NLR, [S.d.]). This paper seeks to study the translation exercise to an Indian language (Konkani) undertaken by Olivinho Gomes in Goa. Drawing from Gomes' translation (*Luzitayonn* published in 2003), our work aims to interpret select strophes from *Canto VII* of *The Lusiads*. The strophes that form the basis of this study paint iconic scenes dealing with Vasco da Gama's arrival on the Malabar Coast and move on to a eulogy of the Indian subcontinent. Many scenes are significant and have featured widely in luso iconography. While retaining ideas inherent to *The Lusiads*, and the flavour of Camões' epic style writing, Gomes skilfully adapts his translation to the contemporary Indian audience. Through a deft shift of focus away from other ancient civilisations wherever possible, he attempts to (re)place India in the centre of the narrative. *Canto VII* of *Luzitayonn* appears to be retold in places through a translator's Indian gaze. We understand, however, that this is but a feeble attempt, and Camões' references continue to majorly structure the text.

KEYWORDS

Camões; Epic; Translation; Konkani.

RESUMO

Luis de Camões mostrou a sua proeza poética na sua obra-prima, *Os Lusíadas*. Essa obra de arte é uma composição única, uma combinação de factos históricos e imagens da mitologia antiga, ambientada em lugares exuberantes descobertos pelos portugueses. O cenário extraordinário, aliado à opulência da imaginação poética do autor, fez d'*Os Lusíadas* uma das maiores epopeias da literatura europeia, com mais de cem edições e traduções para mais de uma dúzia de línguas europeias (NLR, [S.d.]). Este artigo procura estudar o exercício de tradução levado a cabo por Olivinho Gomes em Goa. Extraído da tradução de Gomes (*Luzitayonn* publicado em 2003), a nossa análise visa interpretar estrofes seleccionados de *Canto VII* d'*Os Lusíadas*. As estrofes que constituem a base deste estudo pintam cenas icónicas relacionadas com a chegada de Vasco da Gama à Costa de Malabar, e passam a um elogio do subcontinente indiano. Muitas cenas são significativas e têm figurado amplamente na iconografia lusa. Embora mantendo as ideias inerentes a *Os Lusíadas*, e o sabor da escrita épica de Camões, Gomes adapta habilmente a sua tradução ao público indiano contemporâneo. Através de uma destra mudança de foco de outras civilizações antigas, sempre que possível, tenta (re)colocar a Índia no centro da narrativa. *Canto VII* de *Luzitayonn* parece ser recontado em lugares através do olhar indiano de um tradutor. Compreendemos, contudo, que se trata apenas de uma tentativa mansa, e as referências de Camões continuam a estruturar maioritariamente o texto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Camões; Epopeia; Tradução; Concanim.

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Camões, a Renaissance classical poet, was inspired by the Greek and Roman epics, and his epic is often compared to Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Homer’s *Odyssey*. Although he transposes his epic, which has since become the cornerstone of Portuguese nationalist literature to a later period, numerous similarities remain. Through the narration of adventures lived by a group of navigators in heroic terms, the story of a people and a race is sung. Heroes are immortalised and mingle with gods as the narrative adopts a marvellous tone. Da Silva Pereira (1982) lists heroic aspects, divine interventions, and themes related to travel and revelation as focal points of commonality between the Greek and Portuguese poems.

The scenes painted in the strophes of Canto VII have been vividly displayed in illustrations on *azulejos* in the vestibule of the Institute de Menezes Braganza⁵ in Panaji, Goa. The depiction below in shades of blue and white, portrays key events - meeting with the Zamorim of Calicut, Venus with her mermaids and the storm at sea.

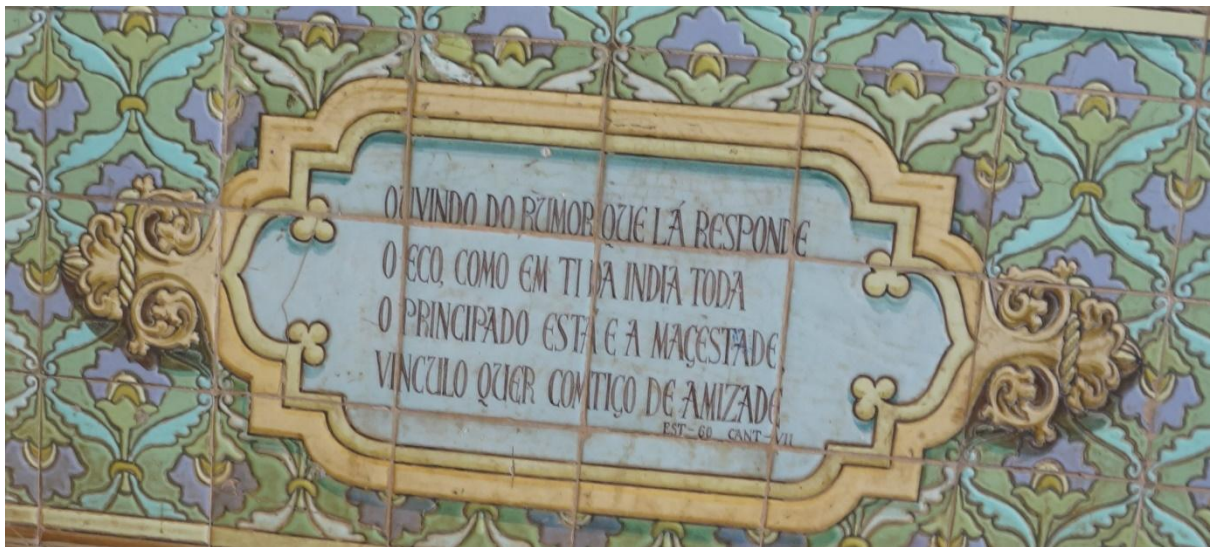


Figure 1: Picture taken by Franz Schubert Cotta, 22/06/2022.

⁵ Founded in 1871 by Tomás Ribeiro, the Secretary-General of the Government, with the support of the governor, Viscount S. Januário, this cultural organization was established in order to encourage the flourishing of the Goan letters, and was named Instituto Vasco da Gama. It composed of a study and conference bureau, a library and a monthly magazine, which published periodically up to 1875(translated) (Devi, Seabra, 1971, p.166). This institute functioned for a short while, and turned dormant for about five decades, between 1875 and 1925.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_Menezes_Braganza#cite_note-IK-3

Following the end of the Portuguese rule in 1961, the Instituto Vasco da Gama became dependent on the Government of Goa, Daman & Diu, and was renamed Instituto Menezes Braganza, after the renowned campaigner against colonial rule.



Figure 2: Picture taken by Franz Schubert Cotta, 22/06/2022.



Figure 3: Picture taken by Franz Schubert Cotta, 22/06/2022.

Strophe XV indicates how a shipwreck crafted by Bacchus is rendered futile through the intervention of Venus and the Portuguese fleet eventually disembarks at their destination - Calicut on the Malabar Coast. Calicut today known as Kozhikode, is situated in the South-western state of Kerala in India (BRITANNICA, 2018). Camões highlights the role of Venus, Goddess of love and victory, instrumental in calming the fury of the raging winds. She is shown to then reveal to the illustrious Portuguese navigators the vast land of India, the fruit of their long and fervent quest. The goddess thus rewards them for their hard work and endurance during the travels.

Strophe XVI throws light on the fishermen who direct the navigators to the city of Calicut. The long-sought destination is evoked in glowing terms, praises are heaped on the reputation and status of its ruler. Camões acknowledges and endorses the righteousness of the Indian king, thus accentuating expectations of cooperation between the peoples. Diversity of rulers and of beliefs is repeatedly stressed upon. Subsequent strophes carry forward the eulogy to the entire Indian subcontinent: a great land bounded on the north by the extensive *Emodio* (AGOSTINHO, 1917) (referring to parts of the Himalayan mountain range), and on the southern side by the sea. From this majestic mountain range which cuts through all of Asia, gush forth springs that are identified by different names in the varied regions through which they flow before meeting the vast Indian Ocean. India's peninsular formation does not go unnoticed by Camões. He uses the archaic term '*Chersoneso*'⁶ (AGOSTINHO, 1917) and the adjective *piramidal* as he paints the contours of the land right up to the island of Ceylon. Through this choice of words that may well be a distant allusion to the ancient revered Egyptian civilisation, Camões stresses on the greatness of the land to which Venus has led the Portuguese people.

In strophe XX Camões evokes India's multicultural diversity, which spans the length and breadth of the geographical space. The eulogy is built around India's Himalayan peaks and sacred rivers. Proximity to the territory of the Ganga confers an enviable position, as regions vie between themselves for the life-giving flow of its waters. The river constitutes a symbol of faith for Indians, being an essential source of livelihood and contributing to economic and socio-religious life. In the regions' scramble for the river, Bengal emerges victorious: here, the Hooghly, Ganga's

⁶ An ancient Greek term referring to a peninsula. <https://www.wordsense.eu/Chersoneso/>

sargas, in which a specific event or intent is told. The sargas themselves are grouped into books called *kandas* (DAS, 2020).

Camões' work is entirely in verse form, consists of octets, and employs a traditional ABABABCC rhyme scheme (SULLIVAN, 2015). Although Gomes's translation does not adhere to the rhyming scheme to the same extent, the sporadic existence of rhyme indicates attempts to infuse the text with a musicality reminiscent of the original. In rare instances, Gomes begins with the ABABAB rhyme scheme but is unable to sustain and replicate the exact effect rendered by Camões. (*lappitt* rhymes with *bollixt*, *gelem* with *fatran*, *disot* with *kott*, *pois* fails to rhyme with *sugur*).

Raj'eo Kambaia-chem zhuzant lapitt,
(Mhonttat eka-kallar Poros-a-gelem):
Narsinga-chem raj'eo, bhovuch xur-bollixtt,
Bhangra-xingran, bhoril'lem moladik fatran
Vir-pursam poros, doria lagim disot,
Unch porvot, patolltta lambdik pois,
Malabar desak zavn ghott' kott,
Zakach lagun Kanara-pasun sugur.⁷

B/ IMAGERY

Images and metaphors from the original are deftly aligned with local expressions in the Konkani translation. Strophe XV states the objective of da Gama's mission. Camões uses imagery that flows from the Bible and is widespread in Christian tradition- sowing the seeds of faith. Gomes conveys the same objective through the word *dhorma*, which is synonymous with Indian religious thought. In place of sowing the seeds of Christian faith (*Onde vem semear de Christo a lei*), the Konkani version speaks of infusing the law of Christ (*Zhoim Kristi dhorma bim te ghaltolet*). The imagery of seeds has been replaced by that of *dharma* - a key concept in Indian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) referring to principles that govern the universe, doctrines and moral laws that dictate human behaviour.

⁷ O reino de Cambaia bellicose / (Dizem que foi de Poro, rei potente); / O reino de narsinga, podersoso / Mais de ouro e pedras que de forte gente: / Aqui se enxerga lá do mar undoso / Um monte alto, que corre longamente, / Servindo ao Malabar de forte muro, / Com que do Canará vive seguro (Strophe XXI).

from the original’s luso-centric perspective and resonates with a distinctly Indian voice. Yet it resists fuller conformity to Indian mythological writing and remains within the framework of Camões’ epic through a deliberate choice to retain certain key references to Greco-Roman/Occidental culture. Wherever viable options exist, the translation adopts them in a visible attempt to restore connections with Indian concepts and realities.

Gomes repeatedly draws upon archaic vocabulary predominant in classical Konkani literature, thus elevating the translation to an epic. Despite the potential reader’s unfamiliarity with such terms, he steers away from colloquial Konkani to avoid trivialising the subject matter through commonplace lexicon. The lexicon employed, although not easily comprehensible, permits Gomes to retain the original flavour of the epic and serves to familiarise young readers with the parlance in use in earlier times in Goa.

Significantly, the strophes studied in this research constitute a eulogy built around the Indian subcontinent, originating from its rich cultural and material heritage. The sacred Ganga, the majestic Himalayas, and the vast Indian Ocean trace the contours of the Indian peninsula and are assigned centre-stage roles. Rulers, kingdoms, territories and peoples add to the eulogy that Camões chooses to eventually extend to his countrymen. Gomes has undoubtedly researched the historico-social references and selected appropriate equivalences and epithets, to recreate a similar impact. In an enlightened vein, he chooses to imaginatively revisit the same eulogy in the light of present-day events, actors, and the current parlance, thus training the spotlight back on India.

NOTES

XV

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| Atam pollen-ia, itle mhonno-sor, zalem | E vejamos, em tanto, que acontece |
| Kitem tea kirtivont tarvotteam-chem, | Àquelles tam famosos navegantes, |
| Venus devten mond’oxokt kelim | Despois que a branda Venus enfraquece |
| Hollxikavnnea ragixtt vareank vaiam. | O furor vão dos ventos repugnantes; |
| Dixtti poddil’lean vhoddlo des tankam, | Despois que a larga terra lhe aparece, |
| Tanchea koxtti-vavrak ont’ghalun, | Fim de suas perfias tam constantes, |
| Zhoim Kristi dhorma bim te ghaltolet, | Onde vem semear de Christo a lei, |
| Novich chal, novoch raza divun. | E dar novo costume e novo rei. |

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