Introduction

As Visiting Assistant Professor in the Vasco da Gama Chair in the History of Portuguese Expansion at Brown University between 2001-2004, I was afforded the opportunity to help organise with Rosa Maria Perez (ISCTE, Lisbon) a two-day workshop in May 2003 entitled *Portugal Índico: The Portuguese Presence in Southern Asia in the Colonial Period*, which was funded by Brown University, Fundação Luso-Americana de Desenvolvimento and Fundação Oriente. The idea was that the twelve top international scholars who attended the workshop would subsequently submit a set of previously unpublished primary sources relating to their respective themes, along with a critical introductory essay, and that in this manner an invaluable English-language anthology of sources pertinent to the field of Portuguese expansion in southern Asia would develop. The publication of such a sourcebook in English would bring the field to the attention of a wider audience of students and scholars. Unbeknownst to me, Ashgate Publishers embarked on a similar project at the same time, entitled *Portuguese Encounters with the World in the Age of Discoveries* and consisting of multiple volumes. Although to date only two volumes have appeared, neither is concerned with southern Asia, and the sourcebooks they have produced are eclectic rather than thematic. By contrast, the themes developed in this issue of *Itinerario* and the approaches which they characterize were designed to supplement the available studies on these topics, which are rapidly becoming outdated; most simply do not meet the range of subjects that are of current interest to scholars.

The workshop was a great success, and contributions ranged from the cult of St. Francis Xavier in India, to the correspondence of the Jesuit missions, to the first demographic censuses of Portuguese India, to the experiences of a seasoned India hand like Jorge Albuquerque Coelho. What follows in this special edition of *Itinerario* are five of the contributions submitted and presented at Brown University in 2003, namely by myself, Isabel Guimarães Sá (Universidade do Minho), Helder Carita (Instituto Ricardo Espirito Santo, Lisbon), Ines Zupanov (Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Paris), and Liam Brockey (Princeton University). All of these articles open with a critical introductory essay and contain English translations of valuable and fascinating Portuguese sources from the early modern period.

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