

Presentation

Jesuits played a major role in shaping European perceptions of India from the mid-16th to the mid-18th century (and then on the modern period), influencing much of what Europeans read and discussed about the region. No other European institution in the early modern period produced as many texts, published as much material, circulated as many ideas, and shaped more concepts about India than the Society of Jesus. Grounded in firsthand experience, they created the first European comparative anthropological, ethnological, religious, linguistic, literary, and historical discourses on India. Some Jesuits translated early modern versions of Indian classics, such as the *Panchatantra* and abridged versions of the Mahabharata, into European languages. They made initial efforts at cultural exchange, seeking to connect Indian and Western civilizations, with mixed success across art, culture, and religion. Other Catholic orders and later Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican missionaries followed, but with less impact than the Jesuits. Nevertheless, the Jesuits' influence was mixed; much of their material was produced to promote their missionary work, often manipulating information to enhance their achievements, frequently in a polemical tone, and often depicting Indian culture, religions, and society in a negative light, as they aimed to convert Indians to Catholicism.

Despite these shortcomings, which must be taken into account when analyzing their texts, Jesuit materials on India (Annual Letters, miscellaneous correspondence, treatises on Hinduism, tracts on Indian castes, regional histories, dictionaries, grammars, primers, etc., either manuscript or printed) remain a substantial and crucial source to understand what Europeans wrote about and how they fashioned European representations of India for two centuries. More contemporary religious contributors are also important, though they carried less weight in molding Europe's image of India.

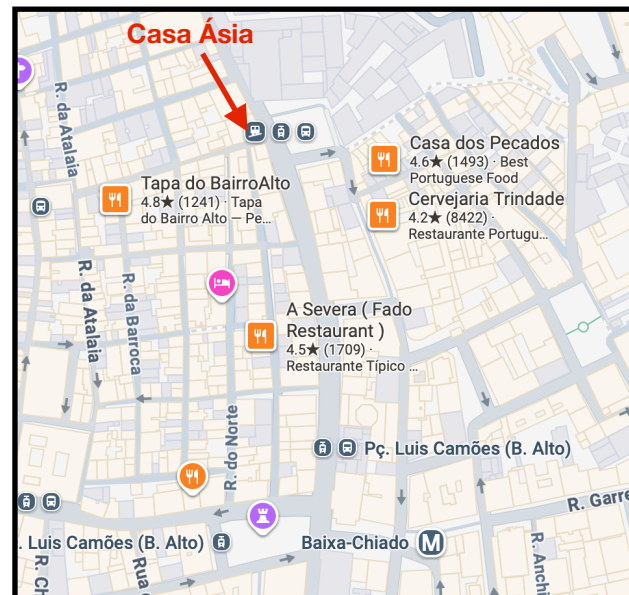
Organizers



COST Action "Europe's Representations of India: Texts, Images, and Encounters" (ESIND) CA23144

Organizing Committee:

João Teles e Cunha (Instituto de Estudos Asiáticos, Universidade Católica Portuguesa); Jakob De Roover (Ghent University); José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim (Centro de História, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa); Teresa Nicolau (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa)



Surveying India: The Jesuit role in the literary, cultural, and artistic exchange with Europe



June 16-17, 2026
Casa Ásia - Coleção Francisco Capelo (SCML), Lisbon

June 16

10h00 Opening Session

10h05 Keynote Speaker – Liam Matthew Brockey (Michigan State University, United States of America): *Jesuit Travels and Intrigues in Early Modern South Asia: The Case of António de Andrade*.

11h00 Coffee break

11h30-13h00 – Morning Session (Indian Dialogues)

Emy Merin Joy (Central European University, Austria): *The Jesuit Mission and Interfaith Dialogues in Malabar (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries)*.

Sona Nersisyan (Department of Diaspora Studies, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia): *Armenian Apostolic Communities and Jesuit Missions in India: Coexistence and Perceptions in the Early Modern Period*.

Santanu Dey (Institute of Oriental Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland): *Jesuit Missions and the Mughal Court: Cultural Encounter and Intellectual Exchange in Early Modern India*.

13h00 Lunch break

14h30-16h00 – Afternoon Session I (European repercussions: Polemics, cultural, and artistic exchanges)

José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim (Centro de História, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal): *The Jesuits' narrative of the conversion of Jews in Hormuz and India in the Early Modern Age: metropolitan translatio and propaganda*.

João Teles e Cunha (Instituto de Estudos Asiáticos, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal): *Before Barradas' Tratado dos Deuses Gentílicos' (Treatise of Gentile Gods) (1618): Debating the Knowledge of Hinduism in Some Portuguese Imprints*.

Maria João Pereira Coutinho (Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, Portugal): *Between Mission and Collection: Jesuit Networks and Inventories in the Early Modern Portuguese World*.

16h00 Coffee break

16h30-18h00 – Afternoon Session II (European repercussions: early Indology)

Marília dos Santos Lopes (Faculdade de Ciências Humanas, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal): *The Jesuits Athanasius Kircher and Heinrich Roth: the birth of modern indology?*

Iwona Milewska (Institute of Oriental Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland): *First Sanskrit grammars as written by Jesuits and their role in understanding Indian culture*.

Yana Stefanova (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria): *From Description to Theory: Jesuit Accounts of India as Early Social Philosophy*.

June 17

10h30-12h00 – Morning Session (Modern and contemporary trends)

Halina Marlewicz (Institute of Oriental Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland): *Framing the Himalayas in Word and Image: Darjeeling and Sikkim in the Illustrated Reports of 'Misje Katolickie' (1891)*

Víctor Luis Vélez García (University of Huelva, Spain): *Vicente Ferrer. A Jesuit at the Margins of the Society of Jesus in India*.

Mark-Anthony Falzon (Department of Sociology, University of Malta, Malta): *Interpreting the world, and changing it: A Maltese missionary-sociologist among the Santals*.

12h00-12h30 – Coffee break

12h30-13h00 – Closing session (Balance and presenting the new conference organized by the Cluster next year in Antwerp).

13h00 Lunch break

15h00 – Guided visit to the Church of São Roque by João Simões (Curator, Museu de São Roque-SCML, Portugal)

17h00 Guided visit to Brotéria – Jesuit Cultural Centre

* Each speaker has 25 minutes to present her/his paper (except the keynote speaker, who has 45 minutes), followed by a period of 15 minutes of debate.