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Rafaela de Vasconcelos

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Rafaela Vasconcelos

https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7989-3236

Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

This paper adopts a comparative approach to 16th-century sources concerning the perception of women through their clothing. It focuses on women in Portugal and Goa within the context of 16th-century Catholic society, using male-authored accounts. Understanding fashion as a marker of cultural belonging, this study examines how religious beliefs and practices influence women's modes of dress. While Portugal maintained its Christian identity throughout this period, Goa — at the time of the Portuguese arrival — was home to a diversity of religious traditions, particularly Hinduism, which this study emphasises due to the greater availability of sources. As part of the broader Portuguese maritime expansion, Goa experienced processes of cultural exchange that shaped the roles and clothing of women in both territories. Foundational reference works include Fernando Oliveira (1993), who analyses the composition of various garments. However, due to the limited academic focus specifically on women's clothing in this context, the study also draws on recent academic theses, such as that of Pedro Castro Cruz (2023), which examines sumptuary dress across the early modern period. The research follows a historical methodology, using comparative analysis of previously studied documentary sources to pose new interpretative questions. Primary sources include the travel accounts of Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1596/1885a, 1596/1885b) and François Pyrard de Laval (1944), as well as the *Leis Extravagantes* (Extravagant Laws) compiled by Duarte Nunes de Leão

(1569). This study is original in comparing female clothing at two geographic and cultural extremes of the Portuguese empire, as interpreted through male perspectives.

Keywords: fashion history and culture, Iberian colonial societies, gendered gaze, early modern period, religion

O Vestuário das Mulheres em Portugal e em Goa, no Século XVI — Um Estudo Comparativo

O presente trabalho tem como intuito uma abordagem comparativa às fontes quinhentistas sobre a forma como as mulheres são percecionadas a partir do vestuário. Focamo-nos na mulher em Portugal e em Goa, no contexto da sociedade católica do século XVI, a partir de relatos escritos por homens. Sabendo que a moda enquadra um indivíduo no seu meio, procuramos entender de que modo a religião influencia o modelo do traje feminino, uma vez que, enquanto no século em questão, Portugal se mantém fiel ao Cristianismo, Goa é, à chegada dos portugueses, um local onde coexistem diversas religiões, nomeadamente o Hinduísmo (religião a que daremos mais enfoque neste trabalho, devido ao maior número de dados). O território de Goa é parte de um processo de expansão marítima, concluindo-se que ocorre uma mútua influência cultural que se irá refletir no papel e vestuário da mulher em ambos os territórios. São obras de referência a de Fernando Oliveira (1993), o qual analisa as diversas peças de vestuário na sua composição. No entanto, devido ao reduzido enfoque da academia neste tema, analisámos teses académica, como a de Pedro Castro Cruz (2023), que investiga as Sumptuárias ao longo do período moderno. A pesquisa deste trabalho segue o método histórico, a partir de uma análise comparativa de fontes documentais já previamente exploradas pela historiografia, mas às quais pretendemos colocar novas questões. São estas os relatos de viagem de Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1596/1885a, 1596/1885b) e de François Pyrard de Laval (1944) e as Leis Extravagantes, compiladas por Duarte Nunes de Leão (1569). Este trabalho é inovador, no sentido em que, pela primeira vez, compara o vestuário da mulher em dois extremos do império português, a partir da visão dos homens.

Palavras-chave: *história e cultura da moda, sociedades coloniais ibéricas, olhar genderizado, período moderno, religião*

Introduction

In the 16th century, "a person's social status was immediately reflected in the way they dressed" (Oliveira, 1993, p. 43). It was a period in which "appearance was a representative state of 'being'" (Louro, 2019, p. 211) for all members of society. As Ferreira (2021) notes, clothing situates individuals within a specific historical moment, context, and society while also functioning as a "proclamation of authority with an economic impact" (p. 660). Dress was, therefore, not merely a practical necessity but a symbolic expression of the wearer's societal value

(Louro, 2019), far exceeding the basic function of protection from the elements (Fialho, 2011). In the case of women, clothing acted as a communicative link with the world. As Salomé Areias (2010) argues, it concealed certain attributes while emphasising others, thereby constructing a particular vision of femininity. This ideal, however, can only be fully understood within its specific social and religious context — and through comparison with other feminine silhouettes shaped by different socio-cultural frameworks. In other words, it emerges most clearly when we compare two coexisting ideals of beauty.

In order to understand what was considered attractive in the female body, it is essential to examine which attributes were valued by a given population (Areias, 2010) — in other words, by the male-dominated community that determined the clothing deemed acceptable for women within their society. As works such as *The Travels of Marco Polo* reveal, the body and its appearance serve as key indicators for understanding different cultures (Freitas, 2023). It is precisely this variation in beauty ideals that this study seeks to explore.

The Portuguese 16th century is characterised by a period of maritime expansion, marked by colonisation, particularly in Goa, the capital of the State of India, which functioned as a "centre of maritime diaspora culture" (Jackson, 2014, p. 13) of the Portuguese empire, where settlers from different European states flocked. It was truly a land between cultures. Under Portuguese administration from 1510 to 1961, the primary objectives of this colonisation were Christianisation, assimilation, and Eurocentric acculturation. Throughout this process, travel accounts were written that reflect the perceptions of travellers such as Duarte Barbosa, Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1596/1885a, 1596/1885b), and François Pyrard de Laval (1944) on women in Goa. Their accounts describe the distinctive nature of Goan dress, which starkly contrasted with European and Portuguese dress, even as the latter evolved during the century due to the influence of new textiles and precious stones from the East. This work[1] aims to conduct a comparative analysis of women's clothing in Portugal and Goa, examining the similarities and differences between them, with a focus on their respective contexts.

In a century marked by the Inquisition and the decrees of the Council of Trent, the Catholic religion strongly influenced the image of women's clothing in the West. This was not the case in Goa before colonisation, as Catholicism was not the predominant religion upon the Portuguese arrival. With the introduction of Roman Catholicism in Goan territory, its values were also incorporated into the customs of the local population. Thus, this study seeks to understand how religion shaped women's clothing in the 16th century and how Western settlers perceived women in Goa.

[1]This text is the result of work conducted within the context of a master's degree in History at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University Lisbon. It offers a comparative analysis of sources on women's clothing in Portugal and Goa in the 16th century, presenting an innovative approach by exploring the social position of women through an examination of their clothing, raising new questions about the sources discussed. Throughout this study, I refer to women in Goa within the context of Catholic society.

We therefore aim to answer the following guiding questions regarding women's clothing in Portugal and Goa:

- How did women's clothing differ from or resemble one another in Portugal and Goa in the 16th century?
- What role did religion play in defining women's clothing and the image of women in the 16th century?

State of the Art

This paper aims to compare the characteristics of women's clothing in Goa and Portugal in the 16th century, within the context of Portuguese expansion, and to explore the role of religion in shaping women's attire. We seek to pose new questions to already known sources and, above all, to conduct a comparative study of societies that, although culturally distinct, were governed by a similar political system, replicated from Portugal to Goa during colonisation.

This research draws on several references, which are listed below. Portuguese academia has not extensively focused on this subject, but it has emerged in academic circles, particularly in thesis dissertations, which is why this bibliography has been predominantly used. Works such as Giorgio Riello's (2012/2013) are pivotal, where the author discusses the evolution of clothing from medieval times to the present day, highlighting its importance within the context of social relations and interactions. Specifically regarding the modern era, Riello demonstrates a clear distinction in clothing between genders. He argues that fashion played a role in establishing female subordination within a patriarchal system, with men being responsible for regulating attire. As Riello states, "Medieval and Renaissance women did not express or communicate their own choices and identities through luxury and fashion. Their conspicuous expenditure is often a proxy consumption for their male partners" (Riello, 2012/2013, p. 25). Additionally, Fernando Oliveira's (1993) work offers an in-depth analysis of the different garments, fabrics, colours, and shapes during the period of maritime expansion, serving as a detailed guide, having surveyed sources such as the inventory of the trousseau of D. Beatriz, daughter of King Manuel I of Portugal.

In the study of women's dress in Portugal, several works offer valuable insights. Pedro Castro Cruz (2023) explores sumptuary laws throughout the modern period, analysing the intentions behind their enactment and how they reflected representations of different social strata. This is particularly relevant to our study, as it sheds light on what types of clothing were available to women and the social conditions that determined their use. Maria João Fialho (2011) provides a detailed examination of women's courtly dress in the 16th century, enabling a clearer understanding of the materials and colours most commonly used by the aristocracy. Andreia Fontenete Louro (2019) focuses on the clothing worn during public and private ceremonies, also within aristocratic circles. Carla Alferes Pinto (2020), in turn, studies the regiment of the Hospital de Todos-os-Santos during

the reign of King Manuel I of Portugal in the early 16th century, demonstrating the dynamics of clothing donations to the most vulnerable populations at the time.

With regard to women's attire in Goa, several key studies proved particularly useful. António Luís Ferro Freitas (2023) explores the representation of Asian women — especially in Goa — and their dress, drawing on accounts from travel literature. Célia Maria Duarte Lourenço (2010), based on the writings of Tomé Pires and Duarte Barbosa, analyses 16th-century Portuguese views of Asian women, highlighting the bias and partiality shaped by a sense of novelty and difference.

In terms of the relationship between religion and women's dress, the work of Isabel dos Guimarães Sá (1994) was especially relevant. Her research provided insights into the concept of female honour and the symbolic associations of Western women with religious figures such as the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.

Methodology

This research adopts the historical method with a comparative approach. The aim was to examine sources already explored by historiography but to pose new comparative questions that had not previously been addressed. The chosen method of analysis is, therefore, the comparative method. Relevant information was selected and critically examined, leading to the conclusions presented in this study. It constitutes an embryonic investigation that may reveal how the perspective of those describing a given reality shapes their perceptions.

The research is based on written sources, in particular, *Viagem de Francisco Pyrard de Laval* (The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil; Laval, 1944), *The Voyage of Jan Huygen van Linschoten to the East Indies* (van Linschoten, 1596/1885a, 1596/1885b), and the *Leis Extravagantes Compiladas por Duarte Nunes de Leão* (Extravagant Laws Compiled by Duarte Nunes de Leão; 1569), alongside relevant secondary literature. Rather than offering a detailed analysis of the sources themselves, the study seeks to identify references to the dress of women in Goa and Portugal in order to assess their similarities and differences.

Viagem and *The Voyage* are modern editions in Portuguese and English, respectively, of the travel accounts by François Pyrard of Laval (1944), a French traveller, and Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1596/1885a, 1596/1885b), a Dutchman. Both travelled through Portuguese colonial territories and described the social and political dynamics they observed. The *Leis Extravagantes* is a 1569 compilation of restrictions concerning textiles and colours designated for different social strata, published by António Gonçalves and housed in the National Library of Portugal. The fourth section of this work is particularly relevant to the research, as it addresses clothing regulations across various segments of society.

The study's limitations arise both from its preliminary nature and from the scarcity of sources and the limited attention given to the topic in Portuguese academic literature. As a result, it also draws on master's dissertations by scholars who have explored this subject.

The society under consideration recorded events according to what was deemed relevant and necessary, and women, along with matters concerning them, were not always included within this spectrum. As a result, accounts of their clothing are scarce, particularly in the case of women in Goa. It is also important to consider that this was a period in which objects had extended lifespans, being used and reused to their limit, with clothing being no exception (Pinto, 2020). Consequently, few material sources have survived, leading to an exclusive reliance on written sources.

It should be noted that in conducting a comparative study between the realities of Goa and Portugal, distinct social strata are also addressed. While differences in women's clothing between castes were less pronounced in Goa than in Portugal, travel literature more frequently focused on women from lower castes. In contrast, in the Portuguese metropolis, little information remains about the clothing of the working classes, unlike the attire of courtly women, which is somewhat better documented due to the greater volume of records left by the nobility and royalty (Louro, 2019). Nevertheless, this study remains feasible, as the basic structure of Portuguese attire was largely similar across social classes, with variations mainly in materials, colour, the whiteness of undergarments, and decorative elements — that is, in luxury (Ferreira, 2021). Similarly, Goan women's clothing was also relatively uniform across castes.

Garment Description

According to Ana Maria Alves (as cited in Louro, 2019), clothing and the decorative arts were among the first elements through which modern values were expressed in Portugal, with dress evolving to have an artistic as well as a utilitarian function, particularly women's.

In the 16th century, in response to the prevailing ideals of masculinity, which emphasised strength and virility, women's clothing began to take on an appearance that was easy and comfortable (Cruz, 2023). It is important to note that during this period, clothing was more closely associated with a woman's status and her relationship with religion than with material innovations (Fialho, 2011). One can detect an intentional portrayal of modesty in women's attire, reflecting the values of the time (Louro, 2019). In an era when religious values held significant sway over the Portuguese kingdom, despite the evident influence of Portuguese expansion on clothing, as will be explored in this work, the Catholic kingdoms of Spain and France, both powerful in Europe, were undoubtedly the primary influences on Portuguese dress, largely due to marriage alliances with Spain (Fialho, 2011). With the rise of Habsburg power in Europe, modesty became

a key requirement for women, which was evident in their dress. Women were expected to reveal no more than their heads and hands, and the ruff became one of the most distinctive features of this type of attire, a collar designed to cover a woman's neck (Fialho, 2011; Louro, 2019).

The shirt, influenced by Islamic styles (Louro, 2019), was the first garment worn by both genders and across all social classes. It was comfortable, loose-fitting, and extended down to the knees. It was made from both coarse fabrics, such as brown linen, and more delicate and exotic materials, like silk (Pinto, 2020). Moorish-style shirts were broader and could feature embroidery or buttons (Oliveira, 1993). The shirt also held symbolic significance, as it represented the concealment of nudity at a time when the naked body was rarely seen (Louro, 2019). The fabrics used and the addition of precious stones determined the social status of the wearer (Pinto, 2020). Women's underpants, or "drawers" (Oliveira, 1993), were introduced during this period as a response to the importance placed on female modesty (Areias, 2010). The use of stockings also became common — though not often mentioned in the chroniclers' accounts — since they were typically covered by the length of the skirts (Oliveira, 1993).

As for outerwear, from the 16th century onwards, a clear distinction emerged between men's and women's clothing, with the latter characterised by the widespread use of corsets (V. Souza, 2018). These garments were primarily designed "to protect the breasts" (Oliveira, 1993, p. 17) and were worn with dresses that became increasingly fitted around the waist (V. Souza, 2018). Women's dresses began to widen at the skirt, and together with the corset, they served to emphasise and exaggerate the curves of the female body. The sleeves were wide and flared, a signature feature of 16th-century fashion, often allowing glimpses of the inner garment (Fialho, 2011). "With the advent of the female doublet" (Ferreira, 2021, p. 661), skirts became a separate garment from the rest of the attire, growing longer and unstructured underneath. Fabrics such as velvet and silk were favoured by the more privileged strata (Louro, 2019), while linen was the material of choice for the less affluent. In the context of wealthier classes, petticoats were also made from finer materials, such as cambric or intricately embroidered gold and silver fabrics (Oliveira, 1993). Although these garments were more modest compared to men's clothing — reflecting the role and position of women in 16th-century society — the costumes were created in vibrant colours and richly embroidered. The silhouette of the female form thus became an important aspect of Western fashion at the time (Areias, 2010).

The Vincentian theatre is a useful element for analysing the clothing of the time in Portugal, as it reflects how awareness of appearance was also managed in this context. The characters had to be easily identifiable through their attire, which helped to shape the narrative of the dramatised story. Each character represented a stereotype of their social stratum, with specific desires and values tied to their clothing. In the play *Auto das Regateiras* (The Farce of the Haggling Women), the wedding dress, which, according to Vanessa Souza (2018), closely resembled everyday attire, consisted of an overskirt, a cap, a gown (dress with

sleeves), and veil (reaching the waist). Women wore scarves, headdresses, and veils as soon as they ceased to be maidens, as well as caps and wide-brimmed hats (Louro, 2019). These were essential elements of their dress (Oliveira, 1993). According to records from the D. Lopo de Almeida Hospital, which served poorer patients, mantles, blankets, and veils were commonly worn, offering versatility and protection for the head (Ferreira, 2021). In the aforementioned play by Gil Vicente, the bride's mother is deeply concerned about locating her lost headdress, underscoring the significance of such accessories in 16th-century Portuguese society (Souza, 2018).

Portuguese expansion facilitated the introduction of new textile materials into a "court with economic power and an eagerness for innovation" (Fialho, 2011, p. 8), most notably silk, which came largely from China (Fialho, 2011) and was particularly favoured by the elites of 16th-century Portuguese society (Cruz, 2023). The economic system of the Ancien Régime valued fine fabrics, as these contributed to a more luminous appearance in clothing (Ferreira, 2021). Although silk was also produced in Portugal, imported silk was reserved for the social elites, who not only had the means to afford it but also dictated clothing trends through their economic power (Garcia, 1986). Nevertheless, changes in elite dress inevitably influenced the lower social strata, who sought to emulate prevailing styles (Fialho, 2011). The popularity of silk in Portugal was such that its consumption had to be regulated by sumptuary legislation. While the 1560 law had relaxed restrictions in order not to undermine visible displays of social status, by 1570, new limitations were imposed to curb excessive expenditure on silk and prevent economic instability (Cruz, 2023). "That from now on, no person, even if they had a horse, should wear it in a dress or anything else (...) since the said things are made of wool or thread & not silk" (Leão, 1569, fl. 113v). The intent, therefore, was to uphold the social hierarchy and safeguard the integrity of the state (Riello, 2012/2013).

Linen markets were always more limited in scope, as linen production remained closely tied to the domestic sphere and was ill-equipped to compete with imported textiles. Woollen fabrics, by contrast, were more widespread than any other throughout the country due not only to their versatility but also to their use across all social strata (Garcia, 1986).

With the opening of the Cape route, the elite gained access to a greater variety and abundance of luxury items that served as markers of social status. These included rubies, diamonds and, above all, pearls, which were especially prized (Louro, 2019). Renaissance dress placed great importance on accessories and ornamentation featuring precious stones (Oliveira, 1993).

Colour was largely restricted to certain social strata, particularly given the limited palette available during this century (Garcia, 1986). It served as a marker of both moral and social standing, although the symbolic associations of colours shifted over time according to various treatises (Louro, 2019). Over the centuries, social barriers to colour usage were replaced by economic ones (Garcia, 1986), as many of the dyes favoured by the aristocracy were imported

and thus costly. Maritime expansion facilitated access to new dyes and colours, allowing garments to become more visually striking (Fialho, 2011). According to Fialho (2011), some of the most common colours in women's clothing were black, blue, and crimson, reflecting the sober influence of Spanish dress. Red was associated with love, and white with purity and perfection (Louro, 2019). Fialho (2011) further notes that black was not considered a fashionable colour but rather symbolised the moral principles expected of courtly women (Louro, 2019).

Turning to the East, during Vasco da Gama's first voyage to India, Asian women were scarcely mentioned, as the primary aim of the expedition was to spread Christianity and establish trade routes (Freitas, 2023). From the 16th century onwards, however, there were various attempts to represent Eastern women — particularly in Goa, which is the focus of this study — in travel literature (Freitas, 2023). Nonetheless, due to the scarcity of testimonies, this sense of "novelty" led many Portuguese authors to concentrate on the exotic features of these women, resulting in accounts that often lacked objectivity (Fialho, 2011). Duarte Barbosa and Tomé Pires, for instance, emphasise only the physical traits they deem "noteworthy" in characterising women — namely, those that distinguish women in Goa from those in Portugal, who are taken as the normative reference (Lourenço, 2010).

Unlike in western Portugal, where the hierarchical structure of society was visibly reflected in the clothing worn by individuals, in the Goan context, attire was largely uniform across social and age groups. It was, therefore, not possible to distinguish a wealthy woman from a young woman of modest means simply by their appearance: "this is their way of being at home, old and young, rich and poor, without exception" (van Linschoten, 1596/1885a, p. 206).

Tomé Pires notes that women in Goa wore garments of very high quality (Lourenço, 2010), while Duarte Barbosa describes their clothing as long, with narrow sleeves, and often covered by cloaks referred to as "chaudes" (Freitas, 2023). According to van Linschoten (1596/1885a), when attending church, women wore extremely expensive garments and adorned themselves with precious jewellery. In India, the use of ornaments had primarily a religious significance (Freitas, 2023); they were not merely objects of ostentation. The fabrics used in their clothing included damask, velvet, and cloth of gold, with silk being regarded as the least luxurious material — contrary to Western norms, where its high value reserved it for the elite (van Linschoten, 1596/1885a).

One element that conveyed a person's social, economic, religious, or professional status was head ornamentation, which carried more symbolic weight than material value. Regardless of the period, women's hairstyles were adorned with flowers, scarves, strings of pearls, and gold ornaments (Freitas, 2023). According to Pyrard of Laval (1944), women wore their hair tied up and uncovered. On their feet, they wore what van Linschoten (1596/1885a) refers to as "moyles" or "pantofles": "[their] garments [are] of damask, velvet, and cloth of gold, for silk is the worst they wear" (p. 206).

Inside the home, women went barefoot and wore a short jacket or waistcoat, known as a "baju", which covered them up to the navel. This garment was made from such fine material (van Linschoten, 1596/1885a) that, according to Pyrard de Laval (1944), it appeared as if they were naked. On the lower half of the body, they wore a cloth decorated with patterns of figures or flowers — usually made of cotton or silk, reminiscent of taffeta — which they wrapped around three or four times (van Linschoten, 1596/1885a).

Laval (1944) notes that most men were reluctant to see their wives wearing their finest clothes on a daily basis, as such attire was considered an artifice that detracted from naturalness; instead, they preferred to see them in their homely garments. This preference reflected an objectification of the female body since what truly attracted the husband was the shape of the body beneath the garments — something less apparent in Western women, whose clothing was typically composed of multiple layers.

> Most men who intend to marry are not content with seeing the women they desire dressed in festive or ceremonial attire, as they consider such garments overly artificial; rather, to finalise the arrangement, they prefer to observe them at home in the homely garments I have mentioned, in order to appreciate them in their natural simplicity. (Laval, 1944, p. 96)

In addition, there is a discernible intention on the part of the "Western man" to determine how his wife should present herself publicly — an idea rooted in Western Catholic values and transposed to the Eastern context.

The Impact of Religion

It is important to bear in mind that, in the 16th century, the Portuguese kingdom was under the influence of the Inquisition (formally established in 1536) and shaped by the determinations of the Council of Trent (V. Souza, 2018). These sumptuary laws, grounded in religious doctrine, restricted access to certain garments according to social class and prohibited individuals from wearing clothing deemed inappropriate for their gender. The Church perceived such transgressions as subversions of proper customs and moral order (Cruz, 2023).

In Portugal, particular emphasis was placed on preserving women's honour, which led to efforts to separate women of different backgrounds and reputations, thereby protecting those deemed chaste from moral contamination — a concern that was widespread in Europe (Sá, 1994). In 1481, the Courts of Évora decreed that women engaged in prostitution should be visibly identifiable, particularly through their clothing, in order to safeguard public morality. To this end, prostitutes were required to wear garments in specific colours — such as green, yellow, blueberry, or burgundy — that differentiated them from "respectable" women (A. R. Souza, 2016). These practices highlight the symbolic importance attributed to clothing as a marker of social distinction and help to contextualise

the labels of "debauchery" and "deviance" later assigned to Goan women, whose cultural norms included the wearing of garments in these same colours.

The Renaissance, influenced by Italian culture, introduced a new concept of nudity that starkly contrasted with religious notions of modesty. Within religious contexts, nudity became synonymous with sexuality, while modesty gained prominence in sumptuary legislation. Women, once seen merely as passive beings serving men's sexual desires, were increasingly perceived as possessing an inherent, unrelenting sexual drive — a view stemming from the concealment of their sexual organs (Areias, 2010).

As Western views of women spread across the Asian continent during maritime expansion, Goa was no exception. The early Portuguese settlers brought with them a deep-seated belief in the moral and intellectual inferiority of women — a mentality often amplified in societies reliant on slave labour, particularly female labour (Boxer, 1975/1977). From the account of Pyrard of Laval (1944), a Christian Frenchman, we see that the male perception of women in Goa was steeped in notions of uncontrolled sexual desire and infidelity: "their husbands are very zealous: but they are so given to love, and carnal pleasures, that as soon as they find the slightest opportunity, they do not let it go to waste" (p. 97).

When the Portuguese colonised Goa, Catholicism was established as the predominant religion, with the aim of distancing Goan women from Hinduism. This was intended not only to promote religious conversion but also to instil patriarchal values, such as the belief that women were created to serve men. In order to facilitate this religious transition, women were granted inheritance and property rights as incentives (Kamat, 1994).

In Catholicism, Mary represented the feminine ideal — devout, charitable, and chaste — to which all women were encouraged to aspire (Sá, 1994). According to Charles Boxer (1975/1977), the veneration of Mary seemed to grow stronger in the overseas territories. Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene was invoked as a means to "redeem" women whose reputations had been tarnished, particularly those who had not adhered to the strict codes of sexual chastity (Sá, 1994). However, the cult of Mary and the emphasis on virginity may have posed challenges to the complete and genuine conversion of Goan women, who came from a culture where "chastity" was not a central societal value. The eventual acceptance of these rules by Goan women was likely more a result of the authority of the Church in the Overseas Territories than a deep commitment to Christian teachings (Boxer, 1975/1977).

Analysing the Results

There were several notable differences between women's clothing in Goa and Portugal during the 16th century. The first key point to note is that in Portugal, clothing varied according to the social stratum of each woman. Not all women

had access to the same textiles or colours, as their appearance needed to convey their social status immediately. In contrast, women in Goa dressed similarly, regardless of their age or caste.

Portuguese clothing sought to conceal female nudity, which was perceived as sinful, largely due to religious influence. The Catholic Church had decreed that nudity should be hidden and avoided, leading to the use of multiple layers of wide garments. Women concealed the natural contours of their bodies by wearing corsets, long skirts, and wide sleeves. In Goa, however, women dressed in fewer garments suitable for the region's climate, opting for fine fabrics and more fitted clothing that revealed the natural contours of their bodies, including more form-fitting sleeves.

We know that women in Goa often walked barefoot or wore footwear similar to slippers, while there is limited information about Portuguese women's footwear. This observation provides insight into the length of women's skirts. Given that it was primarily men who documented these accounts, the fact that they could observe the feet of some women but not others suggests that the length of the skirt did not obstruct the view of the Goan feet. In contrast, Portuguese skirts likely reached the ground, whereas Goan skirts typically extended only to the ankles.

The Portuguese proximity to the East introduced them to new textiles, such as silk, which became the fabric of choice for the elite. The rest of society wore materials like wool, cotton, and linen. This contrasts with Goa, where silk held little importance, and the most common fabrics were damask, velvet, and gold cloth. In terms of colours, influenced by the Spanish court, Portuguese women primarily wore fabrics in crimson, black, or blue, while Goan clothing was described as vibrant and colourful.

One detail that particularly caught the attention of Western men was that omen in Goa kept their heads uncovered inside the house while adorning them outside. This practice was more symbolic than indicative of wealth. In contrast, in Portuguese society, it was unthinkable for women to go without head coverings once they were no longer maidens. Jewellery, too, was worn in both societies but for different reasons: in Goa, it was primarily worn for religious purposes, while in Portugal, it symbolised social status.

While Portuguese women endeavoured to wear their best clothes whenever possible, Portuguese husbands of Goan wives were generally averse to overdressing them, preferring them to wear simple clothes. In Goa, women's bodies were objectified through their clothing, designed to attract and dazzle men. In Portugal, colourful clothing was used as a means to distinguish "honest" women from those whose behaviour was considered immoral, such as prostitutes, thus preventing moral contamination. This concept may help explain why women in Goa, who wore bright colours as part of their cultural dress, were often associated with terms like "debauchery" by Portuguese settlers.

Further studies will determine whether the perception of the observer plays a

role or whether religion is indeed the predominant factor. It can be concluded, however, that religion plays a decisive role in shaping clothing and the perception of women's role in society, transmitting its patriarchal values from European colonisers to the East. It is important to note that women in Portugal were regarded as the ideal model of womanhood, influencing the Western perspective on women in Goa, who, during the period of Portuguese colonisation, were encouraged to abandon Hinduism and embrace Christianity.

Conclusions

In Portugal, clothing was directly tied to a woman's social status, with visible distinctions based on attire. In contrast, the women from Goa described in the sources analysed dressed similarly to each other, without significant social differentiation. Portuguese clothing was designed to cover the body, as nudity was associated with sin, with women wearing wide skirts that left only their hands and heads exposed. In Goa, however, the fine fabrics, suited to the climate, allowed the contours of the body to be visible, which the chroniclers perceived as provocative — a stark contrast to the Catholic values governing Portuguese society. The colours of the clothing in Portugal also served as markers of a woman's virtue, distinguishing those considered "honest" by Portuguese standards.

We have limited information about women's footwear in Portugal, as the male writers of these accounts did not have the opportunity to observe women's feet, which were concealed by the length of their skirts. In contrast, although the exact length of women's skirts in Goa is unclear, it appears that men were able to see either bare feet or feet clad in something resembling slippers. This suggests that the skirts in Goa were shorter than those in Portugal, reaching no lower than the ankles. On the other hand, it was unthinkable to the Portuguese settlers that a woman in Goa would leave her head uncovered, as in Portugal, women always wore head coverings once they ceased to be maidens.

Interactions with the East facilitated the introduction of new textiles, which in Portugal became a symbol of social distinction, with only the elite affording luxurious materials like silk. In Goa, however, the preference was for gold and damask fabrics. Another stark contrast is seen in how women presented themselves: in Portugal, women always sought to wear their best clothes, while in Goa, Portuguese husbands were opposed to their wives dressing too elaborately for anyone other than themselves.

Thus, we conclude that religion played a significant role in shaping the restrictions on women's clothing in both Portugal and Goa. These clothing practices reflect the prevailing social and moral values that perpetuated women's subordination to men.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

Biographical Note

Rafaela de Vasconcelos is a master's student in History, specialising in Modern History and the Age of Discoveries, at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University Lisbon. She holds a bachelor's degree in History from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto. Her historiographical interests focus on the social role of clothing — particularly women's attire — within the political and religious contexts of the 16th century, with an emphasis on Portugal and England. Her research explores how clothing contributed to the construction and reinforcement of gender ideals. She also investigates the role of women during the Portuguese expansionist period. Rafaela has served on the Board of Directors of the History Academic Centre of the University of Porto, participated in the 17th Young Researchers' Meeting at the same university, and contributed to the Porto District Archive volunteer project during the 2023/2024 academic year.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7989-3236

Email: rafaeladevasconceloshistoria@gmail.com

Address: Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade NOVA de Lisboa – Avenida de Berna, 26C 1060-061, Lisboa, Portugal

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