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**Zoltán Biedermann, *The Portuguese in Sri Lanka and South India. Studies in the History of Diplomacy, Empire and Trade, 1500–1650*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014, 265 pp. ISBN: 9783447100625**

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Brockey traced the main aspects of the character, trajectory and career of André Palmeiro within their broad religious, cultural and social framework further to the mere chronological presentation of facts and events. For instance, in the introduction, Brockey explains in depth the role attributed to the visitors within the Society of Jesus, and interprets it within the order's missionary strategies in relation to the special context of Portuguese Asia (pp. 12–6). Indeed, the structure of this book itself reflects Brockey's choice to explain Palmeiro's trajectory and deeds by delineating the broader framework of coeval social, cultural, historical and religious events. The book begins with the "Prelude Nagasaki", 1625 (pp. 1–3). In the conclusion Brockey claims that the news of the Japan martyrdoms contributed to accelerate his death that occurred in Macau on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1635 (p. 419). The 1630s marked precisely the epilogue of the wave of martyrdom of both Christian missionaries and lay people in Japan.

In a still uncommon way among most historians, Brockey shows great skills in the reconstruction of psychological portraits. Whenever possible, he interprets the reasons behind the facts, also from a psychological and personal viewpoint. In the conclusion, Brockey regrets precisely the fact that available primary sources (Palmeiro's necrology constitutes an exception in this respect!) are very scarce on Palmeiro's inner life and spirituality. And he explains this aspect, attributing it to Palmeiro's wish: "The best explanation for Palmeiro's silence on matters that were so important to him is that he viewed his devotions as private concerns to be shared only with God and his confessor (whose identity he does not reveal!)" (p. 415).

To conclude, the book *The Visitor André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia*, by Liam Matthew Brockey, is of great interest for scholars of Jesuits and Portuguese Empire as well as for the public in general. It constructs a lively portrait of the Portuguese Jesuit André Palmeiro as a personality able to decisively determine circumstances and events he was involved with, in particular, during the last and most decisive years of his life as visitor to Jesuit Asian mission.

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**Zoltán Biedermann**, *The Portuguese in Sri Lanka and South India. Studies in the History of Diplomacy, Empire and Trade, 1500–1650*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014, 265 pp. ISBN: 9783447100625.

Zoltán Biedermann's book *The Portuguese in Sri Lanka and South Asia* presents the history of Portuguese interaction with Sri Lanka (and to a lesser extent, southern India) during the heyday of its empire (roughly 1505–1650s). It is in origin an assemblage of six freshly revised case studies woven together via an Introduction and an Afterword, which seek to

provide historical insights into the making of Portuguese power in the region and point out new ways forward in the study of the subject. Taken together, the essays in this book question simplistic contrasts between Europe and Asia as well as between the Portuguese and the Dutch empires highlighting the complex connections between the global and the local in early modern European-Asian interactions.

He starts by setting out his interpretation of the developing historiography in a short Introduction (six pages) entitled “Studying the Portuguese.” It is clear that he dislikes the sterility of quantitative history, epitomised by the work of Vitorino Magalhães Godinho (a hate figure to many historians of the Portuguese world of my generation, which Luís Adão da Fonseca’s recent obituary in the *Electronic Journal of Portuguese History* does not really attempt to grapple with), as well as the “shallowness” or Eurocentrism of collective turn-of-the-millennium projects like Curto and Bethencourt’s *Portuguese Ocean Expansion, 1400–1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), and the multi-volume *História da Expansão Portuguesa* edited by Bethencourt and Chaudhuri, 1998. Emerging in the shadow of these two important clusters, I have turned increasingly to the busy, competing European presences in the seventeenth-century Asian world, overlaid with a heavy missionary presence and church interference in local society, in order to find my voice, while Biedermann has chosen to focus on a specific, bounded geographical area (Sri Lanka) and analyse the workings of Portuguese colonialism at its heyday in the sixteenth century. This is what he has called “the apprenticeship” (*a aprendizagem*) of empire, as his Ph.D. is entitled, which makes a welcome turn from the fixation with the discovery era (the *Grandes Descobrimentos* to the Portuguese) which predates it. The CHAM research centre in Lisbon, to which Biedermann has belonged at important stages in his career, has similarly made crucial forays into this relatively short but formative period of Portuguese imperialism. Biedermann, like Bethencourt, moreover, is clearly interested in power and how it is wielded. Missionary history in Sri Lanka is left to Abeyasinghe and De Silva, something he confesses on page 66 deserves “further research.” It is, in my opinion, all too often left aside.

The six studies here are well written, engaging and carefully edited, but we should perhaps overlook the unappealing blurb which describes “an emphasis on connections, interactions and adaptations” concerned with the Portuguese presence in Sri Lanka and South Asia. Themes explored include Portuguese diplomacy in Asia, the connected histories of Portugal, Sri Lanka and the Habsburg Empire, the importance of cartography for the development of Iberian ideas of conquest, the political mechanisms that allowed for the incorporation of Sri Lanka into the Catholic Monarchy of Philip II, and the remarkable resilience of elephant hunting and trading activities in Ceylon during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these I again recognise some common points of origin, or wavelengths: both of us wrote generalising articles on Portuguese diplomacy in journals in 2005–2006 without knowledge of each other’s work. But while I was more interested simply in bringing human agency back into the picture of the comparative European-Asian sociological research agenda, which had been established by an important figure

in the field, Kirti Chaudhuri, but which had also been purposefully ignored by quantitativists like Godinho, Biedermann was engaged in a more substantial agenda dealing with the discourse of power prior to “*conquista*” via interesting tropes (Biedermann would prefer “*topoi*”) such as “*amizade*”, or amity. Embassies, it struck us both, offered a wonderful glimpse of the confrontation of two worlds, and the difficult, tentative, and suspicion-ridden attempts to find a common ground. The misunderstandings and mistakes which accompanied these embassies could tell us a lot about the hopes, fears and beliefs of both sides. Besides this reside questions as to how diplomacy was carried out: the nuts and bolts of the organisation and logistics of travel, as well as the courtly and diplomatic protocol of both sides. Other essays, such as the evolving European cartography of Sri Lanka, are manifestations of a “spatial turn” whose methodology I observed at close quarters at the European University Institute from other historians like Francesc Relaño and his very close source analysis of one map after another in the larger picture of an evolving map of Africa. Biedermann offers similar levels of detail, resurrects forgotten sources like Albernaz’s *Plantas das Cidades e Fortalezas* from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, embracing urban plans and fortificatory works, and which add further levels of complexity to the picture he presents.

Biedermann’s most substantial contributions to this volume, and which have seen multiple publications in various places, are his essays on the “Malwana Convention,” the “Matrioshka Principle” (perhaps more familiar to English readers as those wooden Russian dolls which fit inside one another) and the Transition to Colonial Rule. They focus on an agreement between local Sinhalese rulers to follow the Portuguese in return for the upholding of the laws and customs of the Sinhalese in 1579. The transition to colonialism thus went largely uncontested unlike, say, the British take-over of Bengal in the 1750s. How much of this convention is simply myth-making, and how could local rulers reconcile this agreement to Buddhist conceptions of universal kingship? These are important questions, which have been recently the thrust of research by other scholars like Alan Strathern, although the wider backdrop of whether Buddhism was in overall decline have not been adequately answered, or rather are repudiated by scholars like Felipe Fernández-Armesto (see chapter 9, Part 2 of his book *Millenium*, 1995).

Amongst other things, Biedermann tries to write the much underused legacy of German travel accounts into the history of Portuguese Asia (see his chapter on the elephant hunt). Then, in chapter 3, Biedermann dwells on “the Habsburg way”—how the accession of Philip II and a different approach to kingship affected political relations in Sri Lanka. Amongst his sources here are legal texts and contemporary dictionaries, these are then tools to investigating imperial writing cultures. One drawback of Biedermann’s work, however, like that affecting many Portuguese scholars, is a superficiality when it comes to Dutch sources. This is perhaps strange given Biedermann’s richly varied personal background and multi-lingual armoury, but it is also a reflection on how little the Dutch world has opened its arms to scholars of Portuguese Asia, something to which

I can well attest from my own personal experience. In the sections on diplomacy, it is true, he includes the account of Joris Spilsbergen, but not much attention is focused thereon, the individual commentaries or pages of this text do not jump out as they should do. The incommensurability of a Portuguese and Dutch historiography, perhaps most ably surmounted in our generation by André Murteira, continues to be the principle stumbling block for Luso-Asian historians—the blame, the prejudice, the rivalry is not adequately surmounted. Important scholars like Markus Vink who have concentrated their work on southern India and the Gulf of Mannar are not even present in this book's Bibliography.

Other concerns I might perhaps express here include one or two incidents of word choice, perhaps most glaringly Vasco da Gama's "anger" (p. 15), taken from the Portuguese "*merencorico*." This is clearly "melancholy" rather than anger, a well-known trope in Golden Age Iberian literature, which recent translators of Gama's crew member's *Roteiro* like Glenn Ames have rendered more accurately as "downhearted" (p. 86 of his 2009 Brill edition).

To conclude, I would strongly recommend this interesting set of essays, and look forward to reading further work, as Biedermann's recent analysis of that important Franciscan Jeremiah Frei Paulo da Trindade suggest will very much be the case.

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**Vicente Montojo Montojo**, *Correspondencia mercantil en el siglo XVII. Las cartas del mercader Felipe Moscoso (1660–1685)*, Murcia: Edit.um – Ediciones de la Universidad de Murcia, 2013, 744 pp. ISBN 9788469569627.

El presente estudio, accesible íntegramente a través de la red, se articula en torno a dos partes bien diferenciadas. En primer lugar, la obra contiene un estudio preliminar donde se contextualiza la correspondencia del mercader Felipe Moscoso desde el puerto de Alicante. Por otro lado, se transcriben minuciosamente las cartas de Felipe Moscoso, tanto las recibidas como las enviadas.

Felipe Moscoso fue un mercader de origen oraní, procedente de los Saportas, familia de judíos de Orán que fueron expulsados por el marqués de los Vélez en 1669. Felipe Moscoso, junto a su padre Jacob Saportas, emigró a Génova unos años antes de esta expulsión. Felipe Moscoso, se trasladó a Alicante (en 1660) recomendado por su amigos del puerto de Liorna. El puerto toscano, dominado principalmente por las actividades de ingleses y de judíos sefarditas, ya se había convertido en uno de los puntos redistributivos fundamentales del comercio mediterráneo y con conexiones muy sólidas con el levante español.