

## The Organs of Goa, India

Paper delivered by David Rumsey  
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In considering the broader aspects of Portugal's organ culture, in particular the activities of the navigators and those who followed them, we need to ask whether the export of organs was ever a significant part of her colonisation processes. We may think of South America or even the Philippines in this connection, where Spain left such obvious and well-known musical testaments to her wealth and religious culture. We may also think of geographically-transferred organ cultures, through colonialism, that have even helped in the preservation of some organ types - for example Victorian English organs now preserved in Australia. Portugal was present in South America, Africa, and had important smaller colonies, among them, Macao, Timor, Goa, Daman and Diu.

To begin to answer this question it is therefore relevant to investigate the number, kind, and condition of surviving organs in Goa and whether Portuguese instruments ever existed there. We may also find some secondary clues through observing the region's existing church music culture.

Goa is situated 250 Km south of Bombay in India. It is about 60 Km North to South and 30 Km East to West, mostly flat country, broken mainly by two major river systems: the Mandovi and the Zuari. Panajim is the capital city<sup>1</sup>. Indian and Portuguese food, music and language are now generally blended in a culture designated as "Konkani". Other traditions coexist, for example Hindu music is taught to high standards at the Swami Vivekananda music school in Panajim<sup>2</sup>.

The region has always had strong religious connections - it is mentioned in the Mahabharata, was ruled by the Kadamba dynasty from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It then became part of the Kingdom of Vijayanagar, and still later came under the Bahamani Muslims. After 1482 it had an absolute ruler in the person of Yusuf Adil Shah, King of Bijapur. The spice-trade rivalries of the English Dutch and Portuguese were played out in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Goa. Eventually Viceroy Afonso de Albuquerque (1453-Dec.16 1515), took 20 ships and 1200 men up the Mandovi river and overran the city of Ela - now called Velha Goa i.e. "Old Goa" - establishing for Portugal a sovereignty lasting from 1510 to 1961.

The great Missionary of the East, St. Francis Xavier (Apr. 7<sup>th</sup> 1506-Dec. 3 1552), whose remains now lie in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Velha Goa, arrived in 1542 and began the process of Christianization. After this they built fine whitewashed churches, designing, decorating, furnishing and using them in obvious imitation of Lisbon. They are landmarks in the area today, solidly constructed, with gilded altars, abundant relics and associated religious artwork. This whole culture was reflected in all Goan architecture to such an extent that a familiar rhyming couplet announced:

"he who has seen Goa / need not see Lisboa".

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<sup>1</sup> Consistency of spelling is not one of the attributes of the region. Suffixes -pur and -im (the "m" sometimes not pronounced) usually denote city/town names and contractions are common. Portuguese names also appear regularly - including an important suburb named after Vasco-da-Gama. Thus Panaji, Panajim etc. are the same place as are Marmagao, Margao etc..

<sup>2</sup> About 65% of the population are Hindus; apart from this there is a substantial Roman Catholic minority.

Six of the seven organs found in Goa today are placed in western galleries. Only in the cathedral is the organ in a side gallery overlooking the high altar. These buildings also have excellent acoustic potential for music, although this is conditioned by the demands of a very hot climate where air movement is to be encouraged at any cost. Accordingly glass is rarely found in Goan church windows - or if it is, they are usually left wide open. Nevertheless reverberation times of 2 seconds and upwards are encountered.

The conditions for transferring Portuguese organ culture were thus very well-prepared in Goa. And no less than 451 years were available in which to achieve it. These years included the centuries so often referred to as the Golden Age of Portuguese organ building.

Yet there is now no evidence in Goa that it ever happened.

The absence of any trace of Portuguese organs here raises more questions than it answers. Five of the existing seven organs are by Gebrüder Link of Giengen an der Brenz, Württemberg, Germany. German and Swiss missionaries were active in this area at the time. This was probably a strong factor in the presence of German organs. Gebrüder Link is noted for its connections with European Mission Societies involving the provision of organs<sup>3</sup>. The other two are by an Anglo-Indian organ building firm, Hurry Brothers, of Calcutta. They all date from the same stylistic era, the Link organs probably from 1888-1907. All seven organs bear English stop-names, and show no sign of any attempt to emulate Portuguese musical heritage.

Whether earlier instruments were displaced by any of the existing organs is uncertain, but it seems unlikely. If so, then the Cathedral and the Basilica would be the only credible locations where this might have happened. The religious importance of these two edifices, and the fact that they now contain the largest instruments (including the only one two with pedal-boards) might add weight to such a hypothesis.

The only evidence that formerly there might have been an organ of Portuguese provenance in Goa is altogether too circumstantial for any reliable conclusions. The steps up to the Cathedral gallery are quite worn and tell of significantly more traffic than could be expected from the 70 years of organists' ascents and descents that the existing instrument might account for. This becomes more significant in the light of the fact that organ playing has not been properly cultivated in Goa for many years. Stairs in the other six churches with organs show nowhere near the same evidence of wear. But worn stairs could just as easily have been caused by the ascent and descent of cantors or choristers as by organists.

The records of Gebrüder Link make no reference to previously-existing organs. The essential details are summarised in the Appendix. It is not known if Hurry Brothers records are accessible - if indeed they still exist. There may be Portuguese archives relevant to this study but if there are they remain unpublished.

Only one of the seven organs has a second manual, just two, notably in the two most important

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<sup>3</sup> Hermann Fischer and Theodor Wohnhaas, *Lexikon süddeutscher Orgelbauer*, Florian Noetzel Verlag, Wilhelmshaven, 1994 ISBN 3-7959-0598-2,

churches, had pedalboards. None had electric blowing. Most instruments were covered with a large red cloth. All were designed around a tonal basis of 8' Open Diapason, 8' Dulciana and 4' Flute. They were, to all intents and purposes, unplayable.

### **Konkani Church Music**

Today most church music in Goa is part of that blend of Indian and Portuguese culture called "Konkani". Organs are practically never used. Their poor condition would prevent this anyway. Economic circumstances also preclude the restorations necessary to maintain a musical culture around them.

Konkani sacred music might best be described as a kind of religious folk-art that may be heard as much on the streets as in the churches. Generally it consists of solo-, or duet- singing or strands of harmony using simple western tonality, more in the manner of Pacific Islanders than high European musical culture. Nevertheless antiphonal and/or responsorial musical structures, which could well have had Portuguese (or more broadly "European") origins, are perpetuated in this music. These practices generate a need for professional cantors in the Goan community. Accompaniment of Konkani religious music is normally with Western violin and/or Indian Harmonium.

Western Church Music has at times been fostered in the training curriculum of the Rachol seminary in Goa but graduates must generally turn to other concerns when they take on normal Parish duties. The repertoire used in the seminary environment mainly revolves around choral music such as Handel's Messiah: the repertoire of the Parishes mainly revolves around Konkani church music. Organ music is, to all practical intents and purposes, not part of this culture.

### **Conclusion**

It seems reasonable to conclude that dominant English cultural influences from the rest of India overran any vestiges of Portuguese tradition which still survived at the end of the 19th century. Afonso de Albuquerque may have won the war for the Portuguese in 1510, but the English had certainly won the peace 400 years later: when German organs appeared, they had English stop-names<sup>4</sup>.

Compared to Spain in South America, England in Australia, or even France from Algeria to New Caledonia, Portugal seems to have been reluctant to export organs to her Eastern colonies if Goa can be taken as typical. I understand that there are no traces of Portuguese organs in Macao and that Timor probably only has one organ (German? like the Furtwängler and Hammer in Jakarta, but presumably brought there by the Dutch).

It seems that little of the wealth generated by colonisation was ever returned to Portugal. This

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<sup>4</sup> with Gebrüder Link, however, it should be noted that this firm was in the habit of providing organs with stops labelled in the language of the country of destination, as they did e.g. in France. The interesting point here is that they chose English in preference to Portuguese. Their 1931 catalogue showed a clear understanding that they were providing organs for Portuguese and not British territory in India, since these two categories were separated in the lists.

stands in sharp contrast to other colonial powers and may even be seen as a credit to Portugal<sup>5</sup>. Wealth is a highly important prerequisite to any organ culture. No doubt that could be part of the explanation for the absence of Portuguese organs in these regions.

Unfortunately, therefore, this report cannot bring exciting news of horizontal trumpets or other Iberian organ heritage in the region. Today there is no sign to be found there that such instruments and the culture surrounding them were ever established in Goa.

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#### **Appendix - Specifications**

##### **Margao (Marmagao), Church of the Holy Spirit**

Built by Gebrüder Link, Giengen a/Brenz, Württemberg.

Op. 469, 1907.

##### **Manual**

Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Flute	4

Compass: C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes. Blowing: foot-lever (assistant). Mechanical stops and key action.

Console placed at side of case.

##### **Rachol, Seminary**

Built by Gebrüder Link, Giengen a/Brenz, Württemberg.

(1888? - 1904?)

##### **Manual**

Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Flute	4

Compass: C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes. Blowing: foot-lever (assistant). Mechanical stops and key action.

Console placed at side of case. Case pipes painted.

Link Op 130/1887 or 147/1888 or 165/1890 or 190/1892 or 354/1901 or 410/1904 ?/1890

<sup>5</sup> Multimedia Encyclopedia, Version 1.5, Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc., CD-ROM 1992

**Curtorim, St. Alex**

Built by Gebrüder Link, Giengen a/Brenz, Württemberg.

(1888? - 1904?)

**Manual**

Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Flute	4
Octave Coupler	

Compass: C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes. Blowing: foot-lever (assistant). Mechanical stops and key action.

Console placed at side of case. Painted facade pipes.

Link Op 130/1887 or 147/1888 or 165/1890 or 190/1892 or 354 1901 or 410/1904 ?/1890

**Velha Goa, Cathedral of St. Catherine**

Built by Gebrüder Link, Giengen a/Brenz, Württemberg.

(1890, 1914?)

**Manual**

Gedeckt	8
Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Octave Coupler	

**Pedal**

Permanently(?) coupled to manual	
Bourdon (?)	16(?)*
rank exists in casework but not playing in	
1972.	

Compass: Manual C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes, Pedal: C-d<sup>1</sup>, 27 notes. Blowing: foot-lever (assistant). Mechanical stops and key action. Console placed at side of case. Unnumbered Op./1890? or Op. 610 "Dordrecht Bombay" 1914? "Lee" refers to the Cathedral in the 1931 lists (but the *Baubeschreibung* only mentions 3 stops for this organ). Was it enlarged in 1914? This might account for the 2 specifications, the presence of a pedal, and a catalogue which contains one more organ sent to India than appears to exist now. It might possibly also explain the missing Op. No. for an 1890 organ. Did workmanship or standard of materials decline at the factory around World War I? Is this why the 1914 organ is in such a notably more pitiful state than the others? Or could the worn stairs also account for a worn organ?

**Velha Goa, Basilica of Bom Jesus**

Organ by Hurry Brothers of Calcutta. This instrument no longer has stop labels and is in extremely poor condition, therefore the specification was difficult to reconstruct.

**Great**

Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Flute	4

**Swell**

3 stops?

**Pedal**

Bourdon

16

Couplers: ?. Compass: Manuals C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes, Pedals: C-f<sup>1</sup>, 30-notes. Blowing: foot-lever (assistant). Mechanical stops and key action. Console placed at front of case. The casework features Goan hand-carving. The Swell and Great are both enclosed in a common swell-box (hitch-down). The manual action uses splayed backfalls to a chromatic chest rather than roller boards.

**Panajim, Church of the Immaculate Conception**

Built by Gebrüder Link, Giengen a/Brenz, Württemberg.

(1887-1898?)

Unlabelled stops, but clearly:

**Manual**

Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8

Compass: C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes. Blowing: foot-lever (assistant). Mechanical stops and key action. Console placed at side of case. Organ situated in Western Gallery. 5-panel Link casework. Church's situation reminiscent of Sacré-Coeur in Paris, St. Joseph's Oratoire Montréal etc., only on a much smaller scale.

Link Op 130/1887 or 245/1895 or 258/1897 or 272/1897 or 294/1898

**Leutolim, (Salcete) Salvador do Mundo**

Organ by Hurry Brothers of Calcutta, India.

**Manual**

Open Diapason \* 8

Octave Coupler

\* stopped basses.

Compass: C-g<sup>3</sup>, 56 notes. Wind: two pedals (as harmonium) operated by organist. Mechanical stops and key action. The organ faces south but is positioned more or less in the centre of the western gallery. Pipework is at least partly of zinc, nicked, and features high "circular" cut-ups. Casework doors (front and rear) may be opened or closed by hand. Keys feature brass tacks in the ivories (similar feature to some late 19th-century English builders). Pipes are arranged in three flats painted in a faded reddish-brown and yellow, with gilded mouths.

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**Link Factory Norms for organs of the era:**

**Pitch:** all organs tuned to A=435,

**Tempering:** equal tempering,

**Chests:** Cone-chests.

**Casework:** The catalogue of available factory organs distributed by the firm at the time shows the 3-field and 5-field organ case types supplied to Goa organs of Goa.

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**The Link Connection**

Records of the firm show the following organs were exported to India:

Opus No.	Location/Description	No. of Stops	Denomination	Year
121	Bombay, St. Anna	17	Catholic	1885
130	Bombay 2	3	Catholic	1887
147	Goa, Indien	3		1888
165	Bombay 3	3	Catholic	1890
*	Lee, Indien	3	Catholic	1890
190	Bombay 4	3	Catholic	1892
245	Bombay 5	2	Catholic	1895
258	Bombay 6	2	Catholic	1897
272	Bombay 7	2	Catholic	1897
294	Bombay 8	2	Catholic	1898
354	Bombay 9	3	Catholic	1901
410	Bombay 10	3	Catholic	1904
469	Marmagao Indien	3	Catholic	1907
610	Dordrecht Bombay **	5(3)***		1914

\* No Opus number given. "Lee" bears no clear relation to any place or church name in Goa but it is given in the 1931 document of the firm's achievements as "Cathedral". Lee = Ela? Elizabeth? Velha?

\*\* one of a large order for organs for Dordrecht at this time (but the only one identified by location) The others bear

simply Dordrecht plus numbers 1, 2, 3 etc. or, in one case, "salon".

\*\*\* 5 stops given, but the *Baubeschreibung* only mentions 3.

The above is taken from current records of Link's organs.

In July 1931 the firm produced a catalogue of their organs. This catalogue briefly but specifically lists the following organs in India (format reproduced):

<b>Britisch</b>	Bombay	St. Anne's Kirche
	Bombay	kath. "
	Bombay	Mission
	Bombay	Mission
	<b>Portugiesisch</b>	Goa
Goa		" "
Goa		Mission
Lee		Kathedrale
Marmagao		kath. Kirche
Panjim		" "

Thus, 1888-1907 would seem to be the most likely dates for the Goan organs. Goa is first mentioned specifically in 1888 and last mentioned in 1907. Therefore, by excluding the 1907 Marmagao organ for which we have an exact date, a range of 1888 to 1904 is most likely for the remainder.