

Chapter 3

Garcia de Orta's *Colloquies*:
Context and Afterlife of a Dialogue

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12 **Prolegomenon**

14 In his famous short text, *On Possibility of Generating Aesthetic Messages in an*
15 *Edenic Language*, Umberto Eco re-enacts a ludic dialogue between Adam and
16 Eve in order to teach us a lesson about the connection between the language and
17 the world. At the heart of the problem, the one that the first couple discovered
18 to their detriment was the Divine trickery. They were victims of the ambiguously
19 phrased prohibition. 'From that moment onward', Eco wrote, 'the world
20 history commenced'.¹

21 While keeping a safe distance from the prelapsarian moment and from
22 Eco's semiotic game, the truth is that the choice of a dialogical form signals the
23 author's intention of linking the ambiguity of the message to the production
24 of history (or knowledge). It has been argued elsewhere that the way Garcia de
25 Orta uses dialogue in the *Colóquios* is to simultaneously elucidate his objects
26 and to camouflage his own self as a subject.² He repeatedly claimed that the
27 truth was painted 'naked' and yet it is impossible to distinguish clearly Orta the
28 character, from Orta the author in the book.³ The reader is flooded with certain
29 kinds of facts and left completely in the dark about other kinds of facts. A variety
30 of inanimate things are displayed by way of description, with names affixed in
31 a dozen languages, while the reader is invited to visualize and to walk through
32 Orta's house, to sit at his table and to look outside at the veranda, to meet his

34 ¹ Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington, 1979), p. 103.

35 ² Ines G. Županov, 'The Wheel of Torments; Mobility and Redemption in Portuguese
36 Colonial India (sixteenth century)', in Stephen Greenblatt et al. (eds), *Cultural Mobility,*
37 *A Manifesto* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 24–74. Eco starts his chapter with Roman Jacobson's
38 argument that 'the aesthetic use of language is marked by the *ambiguity* and the *self-focusing*
39 *character* of the messages articulated by it'. Similarly, in this article it is argued that the use of
40 a dialogue form is geared to produce ambiguity and to conceal authorial intention. Eco, *The*
41 *Role of the Reader*, p. 90.

42 ³ Juan Pimentel and Isabel Soler, 'Painting naked truth. The Colóquios of Garcia da
Orta (1563)', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 18(2014): 101–20.

1 servant Antónia and taste delicious mangoes from his Bombaim garden, to ride 1
 2 a horse in the Goan countryside. There is a complete silence, however, on Orta's 2
 3 family: his wife and daughters, his sisters and brothers-in-law, his mother, all 3
 4 residing in Goa, are not even mentioned in his book. 4

5 Equally intriguing is the fact that Portuguese historiography forgot about 5
 6 Orta for three centuries before he was exhumed and then encased, entombed and 6
 7 transformed into a prototype of a Victorian gentlemen-scientist by the learned 7
 8 Conde de Ficalho.⁴ Orta's nineteenth-century persona appeared uncanny in 8
 9 light of Augusto Silva Carvalho's discovery of Orta files in the archives of the 9
 10 Inquisition, followed by Israel Revah's reconstruction of his New Christian 10
 11 family tree.⁵ In fact, until recently the all too few studies of *Colóquios* tended 11
 12 to focus on Orta's medico-botanico-pharmacological knowledge, staking out 12
 13 certain priority claims for national science or emphasizing his protean role 13
 14 in establishing civilizational dialogue. These were all very valiant efforts by 14
 15 historians such as Jayme Walter, Charles Boxer, Luis Filipe Barreto and others.⁶ 15

16 By approaching *Colóquios* from a social and cultural history perspective,⁷ it 16
 17 is clear that the text and its destiny cannot be separated from the context, time, 17
 18 milieu and the destiny of its author. In a word, it is impossible to analyse the 18
 19 *Colóquios* without taking into account the long shadow of the Inquisition under 19
 20 which it was produced. The chronology of the publication and the posthumous 20
 21 *auto da fé* of the author confirmed a thesis that the *Colóquios* played the role of 21
 22 Orta's lifesaver, or at least the last bulwark against the Inquisition onslaught on 22
 23 him and his family.⁸ 23

24 Although this sociopsychological hypothesis about why Orta wrote his book 24
 25 is still compelling, it does not explain all. Two questions, mutually interrelated, 25
 26 need to be addressed: Orta's literary choice of a dialogue and the publication of 26
 27 the book in Goa. Since we lack archival documents and hard facts, it is necessary 27
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 29

30 ⁴ Conde de Ficalho, *Garcia da Orta e o seu Tempo* (Lisbon, 1983). 30

31 ⁵ Israel S. Révah, 'la famille de Garcia de Orta', *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra*, 31
 32 19 (1960): 407–20; Augusto da Silva Carvalho, 'Garcia d'Orta', *Revista da Universidade de* 32
 33 *Coimbra*, 12 (1934): 61–246. 33

34 ⁶ Jayme Walter, 'Garcia de Orta – relance de uma vida', *Garcia de Orta*, 11/4 (1963): 34
 35 619–622; Charles Boxer, *Two Pioneers of Tropical Medicine: Garcia d'Orta and Nicolas* 35
 36 *Monardes* (London, 1963); Luís Filipe Barreto, *Descobrimentos e Renascimento. Formas de* 36
 37 *Ser e Pensar nos séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon, 1983). 37

38 ⁷ For the constructivist view of history of sciences, see Steven Shapin and Simon 38
 39 Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, 39
 1985). 39

40 ⁸ Ines G. Županov, 'Botanizing in Portuguese India: Between Errors and Certainties 40
 41 (16th–17th centuries)', in Anabela Mendes (ed.), *Garcia de Orta and Alexander von* 41
 42 *Humboldt; Across the East and the West* (Lisbon, 2009), pp. 21–31. 42

1 to take a roundabout way, by closely reading, along and against the archival grain, 1
 2 both the text and the context. And this is what I propose to do in this chapter. 2
 3 As shown by Umberto Eco, a dialogue, as a literary genre, is a particular 3
 4 semiotic game, and a discursive conceit, one that Orta seems to have temporarily 4
 5 mastered in order to win the immediate battle. In other words, a dialogical form 5
 6 helped Orta win the game as a person and save his life, but in the afterlife, at 6
 7 least for three centuries, he lost it as an author, and he lost it in prose. Orta was 7
 8 a *victim* of a successful translation of the *Colóquios* into a Latin prose by Carolus 8
 9 Clusius (Charles de l'Ecluse) (*Aromatum et simplicium aliquot medicamentorum* 9
 10 *apud Indos nascentium historia*, 1567), which in many ways substituted itself 10
 11 to the Goan original and was widely disseminated throughout early modern 11
 12 Europe by way of vernacular translations and editions.⁹ 12
 13 While the dialogue was not a commonly used form for wider dissemination 13
 14 of medico-botanical knowledge in late sixteenth-century Europe, it was an 14
 15 efficient temporary tool in the hands of a particular Goan circle of learned 15
 16 humanists who were part of a European humanist culture of the early sixteenth 16
 17 century.¹⁰ By fashioning his text as a dialogue, Orta emphasized and flagged 17
 18 his membership to this particular local group of *litterati* and erudites. It was his 18
 19 humanist friends, most of whom appear in one way or another in the text, who 19
 20 most probably made the decisive push for the book to be printed. 20

21 _____ 21
 22 ⁹ Carolus Clusius, *Aromatum et simplicium aliquot medicamentorum apud Indos* 22
 23 *nascentium historia* (Antwerp, 1567). The European and Iberian afterlife of both Garcia 23
 24 de Orta's and Cristovão da Costa's medico-botanical work in books printed in Europe 24
 25 by Juan Fragoso, Nicolás Bautista Monardes, Carolus Clusius and others was studied by 25
 26 Teresa Nobre de Carvalho, *O mundo natural asiático aos olhos do Ocidente. Contribuição dos* 26
 27 *textos ibéricos quinhenistas para a construção de uma nova consciência europeia sobre a Ásia*, 27
 28 Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, University of Lisbon (Lisbon, 2013). See also José Pardo 28
 29 Tomás's contribution to this volume in Chapter 10. 29

30 ¹⁰ Some of the naturalists in Europe did use dialogue that Orta probably knew about. 30
 31 Euricius Cordus published in 1534 a small dialogue, *Botanologicon*, in which he and his son 31
 32 Valerius, a naturalist in his own right, take a botanizing trip along the river Lahn in Marburg. 32
 33 Another *scientific* work concerning the production of metals by Georgius Agricola, *De re* 33
 34 *metallica* (Basel, 1556), that used a dialogical form in which a 'learned miner' converses with 34
 35 a traditionally trained physician, is not quoted in Orta's *Colóquios*, although he may have 35
 36 known about it. On the other hand, Orta often quoted António Musa Brasavola's *Examen* 36
 37 *omnium simplicium medicamentorum* (Lyon, 1537); also in a dialogue is Francisco Lopez 37
 38 Villalobos's *Libro intitulado Los problemas de Villalobos: q[ue] tracta d[e] cuerpos naturales y* 38
 39 *morales; y dos dialogos de medicina* (Medina del Campo, 1543). Nicolás Bautista Monardes 39
 40 also wrote a *Dialogo llamado pharmacodilosis o delaracion medicinal* (Seville, 1536) between 40
 41 a physician Nicolás and an apothecary. Without mentioning Orta, the *Colóquios* may have 41
 42 been the direct influence on Charles Boxer, *Opera Minora II*, ed. Diogo Ramada Curto 42
 (Lisboa, 2002). See also, Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th–18th Centuries)* (New Delhi, in press).

1 Briefly, the *Colóquios*, as a printed book with both texts and para-texts, is 1
 2 a curious canvas of Portuguese humanists in Goa gathered around the courtly 2
 3 table of the noble viceroys or governors. By projecting his literary flashlight onto 3
 4 this literary circle and public space, and by folding it into a humanist dialogue, 4
 5 Orta also tricked his readers into forgetting his private and family ties. 5

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8 **A Humanist Dialogue in Goa** 8

9 9

10 Most of the scholars who studied *Colóquios*, at least from the late nineteenth 10
 11 century onwards, expressed surprise and amazement at its dialogical form, but 11
 12 took this fact as an epiphenomena or as an eccentric authorial choice. Those 12
 13 who started with dialogue in order to talk about a larger issue of cultural or 13
 14 civilizational dialogue usually connected this *new* or unexpected genre with 14
 15 the *new* content it proposed to reveal, but stopped short of reflecting on the 15
 16 literary genre itself.¹¹ Conde de Ficalho seemed to have had some doubts about 16
 17 the choice of the dialogic form.¹² However, Orta's self-conscious use of the 17
 18 *humanist dialogue* could not have been an arbitrary choice and it was certainly 18
 19 not something completely *new* in the sixteenth-century Goan intellectual and 19
 20 learned arena. 20

21 Humanist dialogues, as literary works, were both a continuation of medieval 21
 22 philosophico-theological dialogues, and a self-conscious re-adaptation of the 22
 23 classical forms, typologized as belonging to Platonic, Ciceronic and Lucian 23
 24 variety, or in another type of classification to *documentary* or *fictional*.¹³ The 24
 25 popularity of this genre starting in the fifteenth century, and the upsurge in 25
 26 number of works composed in it in the sixteenth century by famous and unknown 26
 27 authors has been attributed to various causes, among which are: 'the emergence 27
 28 of a new type of subjectivity; the expansion of print culture; the interest in 28
 29 utopias; and humanism and logocentrism'.¹⁴ In one of his dialogues, *Dialogi* 29
 30 *ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* from 1406, Leonardo Bruni, a famous Florentine 30
 31 humanist and, according to some, the father of the humanist dialogue, wrote in 31
 32 favour of disputation or conversation for in it 'the topic is placed as it were stage 32
 33 33

34 ¹¹ See Nobre de Carvalho, *O mundo natural asiático aos olhos do Ocidente*, p. 35. 34

35 ¹² Garcia de Orta, *Colóquios dos Simples e Drogas he Cousas Mediciniais da India ...*, Goa, 35
 36 1563 (Lisbon, 1987), vol. 1, p. 21. This is a facsimile edition of an annotated edition by 36
 37 Conde de Ficalho, published in 1891 and reprinted in 1987. 37

38 ¹³ On distinction between documentary and fictional dialogue, see Virginia Cox, *The* 38
 39 *Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts*, Castiglione to 39
 40 Galileo (Cambridge, 1992). See also Dorothea B. Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée (eds), 40
 41 *Printed Voices: The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue* (Toronto, 2004). 40

41 ¹⁴ Dosia Reichardt, 'Printed Voices: The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue', *Paregon*, 41
 42 23/1 (2006): 171–3. 42

1 center and observed by many eyes, so that there is nothing in it which can escape
2 or deceive the view of all.¹⁵

3 However, between 1406 Florence and 1563 Goa, humanist dialogue itself
4 had gone through changes by appropriation and adaptation. Dialogue remained
5 a preferred mode of reasoning and persuasion, but what was less and less true in
6 the sixteenth century was its *libertas discendi*, not yet the freedom of speech, but a
7 freedom to speak. Moreover, on the one hand, the antiquarian excitement which
8 empowered the humanists and created the culture of critical thinking began to
9 disintegrate, in a slow motion, and invisibly at first, under the excitement and
10 challenges of the discoveries of the new worlds and new life forms. This is what
11 is usually called the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. On the other
12 hand, the changing political atmosphere in Europe and in Portugal, and the
13 religious rift *cured*, or intended to be cured, by Catholic Reformation brought
14 about a new type of social organization in Southern Europe which was heavily
15 dependent on clerical administration.¹⁶ Orta's *Colóquios* were published precisely
16 in the interstices of these fundamental changes in which the humanist elites of
17 Orta's ilk were reorienting their writing and activities to fit a new religiously
18 inflected, colonial order.¹⁷

19 What is new and exceptional about Orta's text appearing on the scene,
20 suddenly and as a solitary object, in 1563 is not in the choice of its medico-
21 botanico-pharmacological content. What is exceptional is the fact that Orta
22 or, as I argue, his coterie of friends still managed to publish a book that was
23 completely disconnected from the program of the Catholic spiritual renewal
24 and discipline which would be associated with the printing press in Goa all
25 through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁸

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30 ¹⁵ Christopher S. Celenza, "Lorenzo Valla, "Paganism", and Orthodoxy" *MLN*, 119/1
31 (2004): S72.

32 ¹⁶ The Council of Trent was in particular important in these dynamics. See, Adriano
33 Prosperi, *Il Concilio di Trento: una introduzione storica* (Torino, 2001).

34 ¹⁷ See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia: A Political and Economic*
35 *History* (London, 1993), pp. 80–106. For a fine analysis of the changing orientation of the
36 Estado da Índia in the middle of the sixteenth century, see Giuseppe Marcocci, *A consciência*
37 *de um império, Portugal e o seu mundo (secs. XV–XVII)* (Coimbra, 2012). See also Ricardo
38 Ventura, "Estatégias de conversão ao tempo de D. Gaspar de Leão, primeiro arcebispo de
39 Goa. Reconstituição histórica de uma controveérsia," in *Actas do Colóquio Internacional,*
40 *A Companhia de Jesus na Península Ibérica do sécs., XVI e XVI – Espiritualidade e Cultura*
41 (Porto, 2004).

42 ¹⁸ On the printing press and its religious orientation check Francisco Bethencourt and
Kirti Chaudhuri (eds), *História da Expansão Portuguesa* (Lisboa, 1998, 5 vols), vol. 1.

- 1 **Colóquios: Capturing Accumulated, Common Knowledge in the Empire** 1
 2 2
 3 Orta's *Colóquios* is structured as a Ciceronian and documentary dialogue. It 3
 4 furnishes a forum for the discussion about important medical, botanical and 4
 5 commercial issues but also includes episodes of comic relief, jokes, teasing 5
 6 and light-hearted expressions of intimacy between the interlocutors. In the 6
 7 Ciceronian dialogue, the auteur has a license to speak in multiple voices and to 7
 8 manipulate the conversation towards his preferable definition of the situation, 8
 9 all the while concealing his own opinion. 9
- 10 The first thing Orta wants his readers to believe is that he has the monopoly 10
 11 over knowledge of Indian plants, medical substances and remedies. The dialogue 11
 12 helps him plant this claim into the minds of his readers with a great deal of 12
 13 persuasive pluck and without attracting professional animosities from other 13
 14 possible local claimants, such as other physicians and apothecaries and even 14
 15 religious specialists. He employs a whole crew of local helpers – from his servants 15
 16 such as Antonia, to slaves and local doctors, as well as servants of other Goans 16
 17 who come to deliver messages and requests for help from their masters – to show 17
 18 his own importance in the Goan social context of his time. His inquisitive alter- 18
 19 ego, Ruano, is there to ask the right questions that then open the way for other 19
 20 actors to come on the stage such as Nizamoxá, also called Nizamaluco, the sultan 20
 21 of Ahmednagar,¹⁹ and Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat (Cambaya).²⁰ Some of 21
 22 them Orta claimed to have met in person, but also through them he met their 22
 23 physicians and many other people coming from all over West and Central Asia. 23
 24 All these characters seem to be embedded in each other's stories or presences, in 24
 25 a manner of Russian dolls. In the tenth chapter of *Colóquios* dedicated to what 25
 26 seemed to be an insignificant fruit called *ber* of which there was and is not much 26
 27 to say, Orta provided a whole potted history of contemporary geopolitics of 27
 28 the subcontinent.²¹ 28
- 29 These kinds of historical and political digressions are legion in the *Colóquios*, 29
 30 although they are dispersed through the text and usually pop up unexpectedly. 30
 31 In the tenth chapter, Orta makes us believe that it was at Ruano's request that 31
 32
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- 33 ¹⁹ *Nizamoxá* from *Nizam Shah*, Sultan of Ahmadnagar. There were two who reigned 33
 34 during Orta's time. Burhan Nizam-Shah I (r.1503–53) and Husain Nizam-Shah (r.1554–65). 34
 35 For the history of the Deccan sultanates see Richard Maxwell Eaton, *A Social History of the* 35
 36 *Deccan, 1300–1761: Eight Indian Lives* (Cambridge, 2005), vol. 1. Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, 36
 37 pp. 26, 121–4, 300 and vol. 2, pp. 75, 141, 309. 37
- 38 ²⁰ According to contemporary Muslim sources, Qutb-ud-Din Bahadur Shah, the 38
 39 Sultan of Gujarat, was murdered by the *Franks* (Portuguese) in 1537. See R.B. Serjeant, *The* 39
 40 *Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast: Hadrami Chronicles* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 75–6. Also 40
 41 see, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History; Mughals and Franks* (New 41
 42 Delhi, 2005), p. 13. Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, pp. 29, 97, 120 and vol. 2, p. 140. 41
- 42 ²¹ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, pp. 117–25. 42

1 he told these stories that could easily be taken for *patranhas* [fables] and, he 1
 2 wrote, 'I don't want to spend a chapter on things that are not about *sciencia*'.²² 2
 3 In the same chapter he also managed to put a price on his expertise in terms of 3
 4 local markets. Since he cured *Nizamoxá* and his son on a couple of occasions, 4
 5 he was paid 12,000 pardaos and was offered a rent of 40,000 pardaos a year if 5
 6 he accepted to visit him for some months. 'I did not accept it', wrote Orta, to 6
 7 which Ruano immediately responded, 'Let us go somewhere more agreeable for 7
 8 the eyes', which Markham, the Victorian translator of the book, translated as 8
 9 something like let's change the subject, although since the whole conversation 9
 10 took place on a horse in the Goan countryside, it could have been interpreted as 10
 11 a casual remark to look for a nicer landscape.²³ But Markham may have sensed 11
 12 the true meaning, which perhaps Orta wanted to make visible: that he disproved 12
 13 of such a huge sum of money for medical services and, especially, from an infidel 13
 14 king, and yet that he was worth it. 14

15 On a couple of occasions Ruano presses Orta to say more about both *scientific* 15
 16 things and those that were only tangentially related to them by invoking and 16
 17 conjuring up the *Spanish* audience. 'I know many (people) in Spain who would 17
 18 be glad to know these things that you said'.²⁴ However, right from the beginning, 18
 19 in the second chapter, we feel the ominous cloud against which *Colóquios* fought 19
 20 its uphill battle. 'What hurts me most', said Ruano, 'that neither you nor me, 20
 21 we have no more professors and teachers to whom you could show your works 21
 22 in Salamanca and Alcalá, because they are dead or banned [*desterrados*] far 22
 23 from Spain'.²⁵ It was only in a dialogue and put into the mouth of a 'fictional' 23
 24 character that one could get away with this kind of direct accusation against the 24
 25 Inquisition, that was already pumping religious steam into the Goan political 25
 26 and social atmosphere for at least three years, and that just next door to Orta's 26
 27 house. Indeed, Orta continued to exercise his humanist right to *libertas dicendi* 27
 28 while it lasted. 28

29 But at the same time, dialogue also helped Orta to cover the fact that he had no 29
 30 monopoly of knowledge in Portuguese Asia. In fact, technically and *de facto*, only 30
 31 the Crown had the monopoly on imperial knowledge and on its dissemination. 31
 32 And even the Crown was not able to keep this monopoly intact from other 32
 33 European knowledge poachers. Without diminishing Orta's achievements and 33
 34 immense erudition, the knowledge of Asian plants and medical substances 34
 35 mentioned in detail or casually in the *Colóquios* were common knowledge in 35
 36 Goa among the *casados* and the Portuguese officials, apothecaries, physicians 36
 37 37

38 ²² Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 119. 38

39 ²³ *Ibid.*; *Colloquies on the Simples and Drugs of India* by Garcia da Orta, trans. Clements 39
 40 Markham (London, 1913), p. 68. 'Let us turn to a subject more acceptable to our ears.' 40

41 ²⁴ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 119. 41

42 ²⁵ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 24. 42

1 and merchants. His emphasis on inductive method and first-hand experience 1
 2 meant in mundane terms that he was dependant on myriads of accounts brought 2
 3 to him by a variety of historical actors, his contemporaries in India. It has been 3
 4 established by historians, most recently Teresa Nobre de Carvalho, that Orta had 4
 5 at hand a wide variety of accounts by Portuguese officials and Italian travellers 5
 6 such as Duarte Barbosa, Tomes Pires, Ludovico Varthema, Giovanni da Empoli, 6
 7 Tomé Lopes, Simão Álvares, mentioned anonymously as a *boticairo* in the 26th 7
 8 chapter on pepper, and many others.²⁶ For example, Orta seemed to have had 8
 9 access to the confidential letters, for which not all authors are identified, collected 9
 10 around 1546–48, and available today in the *Codice de Elvas*.²⁷ These were official 10
 11 answers to questions regarding trade, bioprospecting and political information, 11
 12 prepared for D. João de Castro and perhaps also for Martim Afonso de Sousa.²⁸ 12
 13 These were similar to *relaciones geográficas* initiated in 1570 by the Council of 13
 14 the Indies for mapping the Spanish empire. The person in charge of the Castilian 14
 15 project was also a physician and Erasmian, Francisco Hernández.²⁹ 15
 16 Orta's *Colóquios* was obviously the result of the precocious Portuguese imperial 16
 17 mapping. It was summa of the knowledge of natural history and geography, 17
 18 collected in and for the empire. What Orta crucially provided were the scientific 18
 19 references from the old corpus of professional medico-botanico-pharmaceutical 19
 20 knowledge presided by the cherished ancients, Pliny, Dioscorides and Galen, 20
 21 as well as medieval Arabic knowledge of Avicena, Averoes, all the way until 21
 22 Ruellius, Nicolo Leonicensi and many others, including Orta's contemporaries 22
 23 such as Amato Lusitano, Pietro Andrea Mattioli, Andrés Laguna, Leonhart 23
 24 Fuchs and so on.³⁰ 24
 25 _____ 25
 26 ²⁶ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 106. About 'Ludovico Vartemano' Orta wrote that he was 26
 27 dressed as a Muslim and that he did not even travel to Cochín and Calicut. On Giovanni 27
 28 da Empoli see Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 272. On pepper see, Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 2, 28
 29 pp. 241–50. Tomé Lopes, 'A Navegação às Índias Orientais do portuense Tomé Lopes', in 29
 30 *O Porto e os Descobrimientos* (Porto, 1972), pp. 67–147. 30
 31 ²⁷ On the documents in the *Codice de Elvas* see Adelino Almeida Calado (ed.), 'Livro 31
 32 que trata das cousas da Índia e do Japão', *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, 32
 33 24 (1960): 1–138. 33
 34 ²⁸ Nobre de Carvalho, *O mundo natural asiático aos olhos do Ocidente*, p. 223. 34
 35 ²⁹ On Francisco Hernandez de Toledo, see Simon Varey (ed.), *The Mexican Treasury: 35*
 36 *The Writings of Dr. Francisco Hernández* (Palo Alto, 2000). 36
 37 ³⁰ A useful list of authors and their works used by Orta had been compiled by Conde 37
 38 de Ficalho, *García de Orta*, pp. 284–97. Among them are Leonhart Fuchs, *De historia 38*
 39 *stirpium* (Basel, 1543); André Laguna, *Annotaciones in Dioscoridem* (Lugduni [Lyon], 39
 40 1554); Amato Lusitano (João Rodrigues de Castelo Branco), *Index Dioscoridis* (Antwerp, 40
 41 1536); Pietro Andrea Mathioli, *Commentarii, in Libros sex Pedacii Dioscoridis Anazarbei,* 41
 42 *de Materia Medica, Adjectis quàm plurimis plantarum & animalium imaginibus* (Venice, 42
 1554). According to Harold Cook, Jean de Ruelle (Ruellius) was an inspiration for Orta

1 What Orta in fact does is an effort at systematization of the natural objects 1
 2 and substances, the bioresources, as it is common to call them today, by 2
 3 repackaging them into 'scientific objects' of sixteenth-century medicine and 3
 4 botany. Yet, Orta is not sure how to do it, but the dialogic form helps him hide 4
 5 his doubts and uncertainties, precisely by displaying them. For example, the 5
 6 alphabetical order that he imposed on them, discussed in the second colloquy, 6
 7 also appears as not coming from the author but from Ruano. In a sense Orta 7
 8 did not take the responsibility for the classification by providing arguments 8
 9 against it: 9

10
 11 ... what you say about the alphabetical order I don't find it good, because it 11
 12 can happen that the things that are said in the beginning are not so useful and 12
 13 important, nor interesting to read. I have always heard that one has to confess to 13
 14 the confessor the most serious things first and that the best reasons have to be first 14
 15 stated during the lecture, and that when we inquire about some things, those that 15
 16 are most necessary need to be the first.³¹ 16
 17 17

18 And yet Orta employed the alphabetical order, which was in fact the easiest 18
 19 and the less philosophical of scientific choices. Galen, for example, orders his 19
 20 items according to his own pre-established botanical classification based on 20
 21 similarity,³² but he also used alphabetical order in his treatise, *On the Mixtures* 21
 22 *and Powers of Simple Drugs*.³³ Some of Orta's contemporaries whom he does 22
 23 not mention, however, such as Hieronymus Bock (Latin Tragus: 1498–1554) 23
 24 and later Andrea Cesalpino (1525–1603), refused to use alphabetical order in 24
 25 which the medieval herbals were commonly arranged, but tried to group plants 25
 26 26

27
 28
 29 to name his interlocutor Ruano since he was a humanist editor of the Dioscorides's text, 28
 30 *Materia Medica*; Jean Ruel, *Pedacii Dioscoridis Anazarbei de medicinali materia libri* 29
 31 *quinque De virulentis animalibus, et venenis canerabioso, et eorum notis, ac remediis libri* 30
 32 *quattuor* (Paris, 1516). 31

32 ³¹ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 22. Orta seemed to propose that the method for classifying 32
 33 sin is appropriate for classifying plants. His remark is ambiguously phrased, and can be read 33
 34 as a genuine proposal and a tongue-in-cheek statement. 34

35 ³² On difficulty and efforts at classifying plants, and managing the information 35
 36 increase, see Brian W. Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing, Natural History in Renaissance* 36
 37 *Europe* (Chicago–London, 2006). 37

38 ³³ Owen Powel, *Galen, On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (Cambridge, 2003), p. xv. 38
 39 According to Harold Cook, Orta tacitly rejected Galenic physiology and was open to use 39
 40 of distillation and iatrochemistry. See Harold J. Cook, 'Trading in Medical Simples and 40
 41 developing the New Science: Da Orta and his Contemporaries', in *O mundo num livro:* 41
 42 *Abordagens interdisciplinares aos Colóquios dos simples e drogas de Índia de Garcia de Orta,* 42
Goa, 1563 (Lisbon, 2013).

1 according to different criteria, mostly on the basis of perceived natural relations.³⁴ 1
 2 On the other hand, one of the most successful botanists of the period and the 2
 3 pioneer 'of accurate representations of plants in histories of scientific illustration,' 3
 4 Leonhart Fuchs, whom Orta called 'Lutheran heretic,' used alphabetical order.³⁵ 4
 5 Eventually, Carl Linnaeus would provide the criteria, although as arbitrary as 5
 6 any other, in the eighteenth century, but the question was on the table in this 6
 7 period too. 7

8 It is possible that Orta knew about these different discussions in the medico- 8
 9 botanical European scholarly world, but he profited from the dialogic form to 9
 10 choose the alphabetical order and to grumble about it. 10

11 All through the *Colóquios* Orta creates dialogical and also agonistic situations 11
 12 to press his different points, which all shored up his authority, one of which 12
 13 is that the European erudites and scholars from the best universities are quite 13
 14 ignorant and that what is *new* knowledge in Europe, and especially in European 14
 15 universities, is old knowledge in Asia. More importantly, it was also knowledge 15
 16 that had already been known to Muslim and Arab medieval authors such as 16
 17 Avicenna, who had a much better idea of Asian substances than the Greek and 17
 18 classical authors, such as Dioscorides and Pliny.³⁶ 18

19 This complaint about ignorant Greeks and 'ancient' authorities, as already 19
 20 mentioned, was neither new nor Orta's personal opinion. It was a *topos* among 20
 21 Portuguese humanists who, as all humanists, worshipped the antique wisdom 21
 22 and achievements, but started their own quarrel between the ancients and the 22
 23 moderns on the basis of their experience of the empire and its global extension. 23
 24 For João de Barros – and armchair humanist – and João de Castro – a chivalric 24
 25 humanist and an experienced Indiaman – Portuguese were better than the 25
 26 ancients precisely because they already knew more about geography, cultures 26

27

28

29

30 ³⁴ The first edition of Bock's *Kreutterbuch* appeared in 1539 unillustrated: Hieronymus 30
 31 Bock, *New Kreutter Büch* (Strasbourg, 1539). He developed his own system of classification 31
 32 for 700 plants. His 1546 *Kreutterbuch* was famously illustrated by the artist David Kandel. 32
 33 Andrea Cesalpino's *De plantis libri XVI* (Florence, 1583), dedicated to the Grand Duke 33
 34 Francesco I de Medici, is considered one of the most important in the history of botany 34
 35 before Linnaeus. 35

36 ³⁵ Sachiko Kusukawa, 'Leonhart Fuchs on the importance of pictures,' *Journal of* 36
 37 *History of Ideas*, 53/3 (1997): 403–27. 37

38 ³⁶ Orta's admiration of the medieval Muslim authors is evident in the *Colóquios*. In 38
 39 particular, his authority is Avicenna, whose Canon Orta read in Andrea Alpago Bellunense, 39
 40 *Principis Avicennanae Libri Canonis* (Venice, 1527). He often refers and defends Ruano's 40
 41 remarks in the *Belunense* version. Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 158. Guy Attewell, *India and the* 41
 42 *Arabic Learning of the Renaissance: The Case of Garcia d'Orta* (London, 1997). Unfortunately, 42
 this thesis is not available for consultation.

1 and the natural world than the ancients had.³⁷ They simultaneously presented 1
 2 Portugal as a classical setting, highlighting the continuity between Lusitanians 2
 3 and the ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as a mighty kingdom able to control 3
 4 the discovered and conquered exotic territories.³⁸ 4

5 If antiquarian turn combined with the swift overseas extension provided 5
 6 the Portuguese humanists with an unprecedented optimism about the future 6
 7 of the empire and of the progress of sciences, by the time the *Colóquios* appeared 7
 8 in Goa in the middle of the sixteenth century, the situation was beginning to 8
 9 appear more complicated. 9

10 Again with the help of a dialogue, Orta advanced by providing contradictory 10
 11 arguments. Thus he endlessly complained about Portuguese lack of curiosity, 11
 12 lack of letters and penchant for doing things rather than studying.³⁹ In particular, 12
 13 the Portuguese soldiers and merchants were driven only by desires to acquire 13
 14 riches and carnal satisfaction. Early in the Portuguese colonial experience in 14
 15 India, these and similar accusations became commonplace in official and private 15
 16 correspondence from India and in Portuguese literature. This is one of the faces 16
 17 of the literature on *decadência* for example.⁴⁰ At the same time, Orta solemnly 17
 18 admitted that 'today one learns more in one day with the Portuguese than was 18
 19 known in one hundred years with the Romans.'⁴¹ 19

20 It is precisely in between these, at first glance, contradictory claims that 20
 21 Orta flags his special competence, his special practical knowledge, which was 21
 22 perhaps appreciated in the Goan and overseas context. All through the chapters, 22
 23 Orta planted his claim that he can restore the bodily health of his patients and 23
 24 stimulate their vital desires and, as a special bonus, their sexual pleasure. He was, 24

25 _____ 25
 26 _____ 26
 27 ³⁷ On Portuguese humanists, see Giuseppe Marcocci, 'Gli umanisti italiani e l'impero 27
 28 portoghese: una interpretazione della *Fides, Religio, Moresque Æthiopum* di Damião de 28
 29 Góis, in Monica Lupetti (ed.), *Traduzioni, imitazioni, scambi tra Italia e Portogallo nei* 29
 30 *secoli* (Florence, 2008), pp. 61–124. Nuno Martins, *Império e Imagem: D. João de Castro e a* 30
 31 *construção retórica do vice-rei, séc. XVI* (Lisbon, 2013). António Alberto Banha de Andrade, 31
 32 *João de Barros, historiador do pensamento, humanista de Quinhentos* (Lisbon, 1980). 32
 33 José Manuel Torrão, 'Os prólogos de João de Barros: Defesa de conceitos com tributos à 33
 34 Antiguidade', *Ágora: Estudos Clássicos em Debate*, 2 (2000): 137–54. 34

35 ³⁸ Afonso de Albuquerque's and João de Castro's exploits in the Indian Ocean and in 35
 36 India were portrayed in the contemporary and later narratives as feats that surpassed the 36
 37 success of both Alexander the Great and Augustus. The same heroic space had initially 37
 38 been occupied by Henry the Navigator, who had been described as worthier than Romulus, 38
 39 Caesar and Cicero. José Manuel Garcia, 'D. João de Castro: Um homem de guerra e ciência', 39
 40 in Francisco Faria Paulino (ed.), *Tapeçarias de D. Joao de Castro* (Lisbon, 1995). 40

41 ³⁹ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 2, p. 248. 41

42 ⁴⁰ On *decadência* see José Wicki, 'Duas relações sobre a situação da Índia Portuguesa 42
 43 nos anos 1568 e 1569', *Separata Studia*, 8 (1961): 123–221. 43

44 ⁴¹ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 2, p. 210. 44

1 of course, talking only about male sexual pleasure, which was connected to the 1
 2 idea of imperial fertility, natural and political in particular. If he pays occasional 2
 3 lip service to the Christian *pessimist* tradition which kept the umbilical cord 3
 4 between sin and illness unbroken, he did so with little conviction. 4

5 This is why the pages of the *Colóquios* abound in aphrodisiac stimulants 5
 6 to be extracted from tropical plants and substances, and they are laconically 6
 7 prescribed without moralizing. Amber, asafetida, bhang (hashish), benzoin, 7
 8 opium and many other substances contribute to ‘conversation with women,’ 8
 9 ‘to lift the member,’ ‘to increase coitus’ and so on.⁴² Not only do they increase 9
 10 venereal pleasure, they also increase commercial profits. In addition opium and 10
 11 bhang (and soap) represented a significant part of the state revenues from tax 11
 12 farming. An important tip for merchants in Europe (and metaphorically perhaps 12
 13 even tongue-in-cheek for missionaries) planning to trade in Asia was not to 13
 14 import useless items such as *raiz angelica* [angelic root] or *raiz do Espirito Santo* 14
 15 [root of the Holy Spirit], which was reputed to repress sexual desire, since no 15
 16 Indian would want to buy it.⁴³ Substances that change the consciousness, from 16
 17 perfumes to dangerous drugs and poisons, according to Orta, seem to have been 17
 18 especially appreciated by the local population. Their effects liberated otherwise 18
 19 constrained bodies (and minds) to do unimaginable things. The ill-fated Sultan 19
 20 Bahadur confided to Martim Afonso de Sousa that when he wanted to travel 20
 21 the world, to Portugal, Brazil, Turkey, Arabia or Persia, he simply took a bit of 21
 22 bhang.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Orta is quite cautious about the use of narcotics as 22
 23 can be seen in his comment on feeding datura, a dangerous hallucinogenic drug, 23
 24 to the servants in order to ridicule them.⁴⁵ 24

25 This was obviously considered as useful knowledge for the Portuguese living 25
 26 in the tropical empire and for those who were planning to start their careers 26
 27 overseas. Clusius, Annibale Briganti and Antoine Colin, the translators to Latin, 27
 28 Italian and French, preserved religiously all the tips about *apetiti veneri*.⁴⁶ 28

29 It is hard to imagine that Orta experienced and experimented with all the 29
 30 hallucinogenic drugs, opiates and poisons on his own. Although he may have 30
 31 31

32 ⁴² Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, pp. 52, 76, 104 and vol. 2, pp. 170–71. 32

33 ⁴³ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 105. 33

34 ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97. 34

35 ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 296. 35

36 ⁴⁶ Antoine Colin, *Histoire des drogues, especeries, et de certains medicamens simples, qui* 36
 37 *naissent es Indes et en l’Amerique, divisé en deux parties. La première comprise en quatre livres:* 37
 38 *les deux premiers de Mr. Garcei du Jardin ...* (Lyon, 1619). Annibale Briganti, *Dell’historia de* 38
 39 *i semplici aromati, et altre cose; che vengono protate dall’Indie Orientali pertinenti all’uso della* 39
 40 *medicina. Parte prima divisa in Libri IIII. Di Don garzia da L’Horto* (Venice, 1589). Both 40
 41 books were translations of the Clusius’s Latin publications. All mention of ‘venereal pleasure’ 41
 42 was excised in the Victorian English translation by Clements Markham, *Colloquies on the* 42
 43 *Simplex & Drugs of India by Garcia da Orta* (London, 1913).

1 been tempted, given his angry response to Ruano who inquired if Orta tested 1
 2 the effects of datura on his 'blacks'. 'It is against my conscience', he retorted.⁴⁷ 2
 3 Expressed in a humanist dialogue, this matter is left in suspension and doubt. 3
 4 From these and similar stories scattered all through *Colóquios* it is clear that 4
 5 what Orta and Ruano call 'practical' knowledge as opposed to 'speculative' or 5
 6 'school' knowledge⁴⁸ was already practiced and known by the people inhabiting 6
 7 Goa and the greater India, from the Middle East to China, and in the Indian 7
 8 Ocean. Orta's particular expertise as a physician was in prescribing drugs and 8
 9 remedies. In the case of Paula de Andrade, poisoned by datura, he instructed 9
 10 her servant 'to rub her legs very hard and continuously with some coir and 10
 11 apply a clyster, also administering an emetic for which I will write prescription.'⁴⁹ 11
 12 However, these prescriptions are not always precise. Orta rarely discloses the 12
 13 exact dosage of medical substances and the exact procedure of treatment. 13
 14 Physicians probably never did, although Orta and his friends insisted so much 14
 15 on the difference between truth and error, and on the purity of truth. Dimas 15
 16 Bosque, another physician from Goa, writes about Orta that 'he treats pure truth 16
 17 in pure style; because truth is enough.'⁵⁰ If Orta is telling pure truth, 'without 17
 18 rhetorical color' as he boasted in another place, he is not telling all the truth.⁵¹ It 18
 19 is because Orta's text was not only and simply about knowledge. It was perhaps 19
 20 primarily about self-fashioning and self-presentation, and a last-minute apology 20
 21 for humanist dialogue and *libertas discendi* not just for his own sake but for the 21
 22 whole group of Goan humanists that was about to be swept away. 22

23

24

25 Orta's Humanist Circle in Goa

26

27 If Orta's *Colóquios* is important for its knowledge-content, it is crucially 27
 28 important for revealing how learned men performed science in the first half 28
 29 of the sixteenth century in the Portuguese empire. As Stephen Shapin wrote, 29
 30 scientific knowledge in the early modern era had a human face, and the virtues 30
 31 and qualities of the scientists and those who participated in the construction 31
 32 of knowledge validated (or not) its content. In the *Colóquios*, not only in the 32
 33 main text, but also, and significantly so, in the paratexts features the whole 33
 34 social spectrum of *men of science* in the largest possible sense of the word. Some, 34
 35 however, counted more than others and the discursive violence lurks behind the 35
 36 disputes that may have taken place even within the Goan scientific arena. 36

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⁴⁷ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 296.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 295–6.

⁵⁰ Letter to the reader by Dimas Bosque. See also Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 11.

⁵¹ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 79.

1 The *Colóquios* is in this respect a condensed *Who is Who* manual of 1
 2 the Goan humanist world in which Orta operated and reflects both local 2
 3 priorities and political choices, and cosmopolitan gestures.⁵² In the first place 3
 4 it reaffirms, and with a premonition of changes that were already taking place, 4
 5 the tacit pact between humanists such as Orta, Dimas Bosque, Luís Vaz de 5
 6 Camões, Tomé Caiado, all of whom *speak out* from and for the *Colóquios* in 6
 7 the introductory paratexts and their protectors who belonged to the highest 7
 8 Portuguese aristocracy. 8

9 The connection between arms and letters had already been established in an 9
 10 exemplary humanist dialogue, *The Book of the Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione 10
 11 (1478–1529), who dedicated it to his patron Miguel da Silva (1480–1556), a 11
 12 bishop and ambassador of the king of Portugal to Rome.⁵³ The same model of 12
 13 an ideal courtier was also an inspiration for many of the governors of the *Estado* 13
 14 *da Índia*, from Nuno da Cunha and Martim Afonso de Sousa to João de Castro 14
 15 (1500–48).⁵⁴ However, while the European aristocracy, Italian or French nobles 15
 16 in particular, staged their prowess in the Mediterranean, the Portuguese had an 16
 17 immense arena, in Africa, Asia and Brazil, to express chivalry and pluck. 17

18 The singularity of the Portuguese nobility's humanist experience, in 18
 19 comparison to Italian, British, French and German, is that the Portuguese and 19
 20 Spanish *Antiquity Turn* occurred alongside the building of the overseas empire. 20
 21 Invoking the ancient Greeks and Romans as the measure of achievements in 21
 22 science, literature and politics was a *topos* repeated already from the end of the 22
 23 fifteenth century and after the voyage of Bartolomeu Dias to the Cape of Good 23
 24 Hope in 1488.⁵⁵ At the same time and even more so when they finally *discovered* 24
 25 India, the Portuguese saw themselves as not only the successors of the Romans, 25
 26 but as the protagonists of the new golden age. 26

27 Portuguese humanists were joined in this patriotic propagandist campaign 27
 28 and it is within this context that we have to assess Orta and his book. It was 28
 29 showcasing what the humanists, in this case physicians and natural historians, 29
 30

31 ⁵² On Orta as a cosmopolitan man in the context of the sixteenth-century Indian 31
 32 Ocean, see Michael Pearson's contribution to this volume in Chapter 2. 32

33 ⁵³ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* [republication of Horace Liveright's 33
 34 edition, 1929] (New York, 2003). Miguel da Silva was son of the count of Portalegre, and 34
 35 nephew of the Portuguese saint Beatriz da Silva. See Sylvie Deswarte, 'Le Rome de D. Miguel 35
 36 da Silva (1515–1525)', in *Actas do Simpósio Nacional sobre o Humanismo Português, O* 36
 37 *Humanismo Português, 1500–1600* (Lisbon, 1988). 37

38 ⁵⁴ See Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Zupanov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese* 38
 39 *Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th–18th Centuries)* (New Delhi, in press). 39

40 ⁵⁵ See, for the Spanish case, the classic book by Anthony Pagden, *Lords of the World:* 40
 41 *Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven, 1995) and 41
 42 David A. Lupher, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish* 42
 43 *America* (Ann Arbor, 2003). 42

1 can do for the empire and they invoked their close relationship with the
 2 aristocratic patrons. In the dedicatory letter and in the poem dedicated to
 3 Martim Afonso de Sousa, his protector, Orta likened him to a great hero of the
 4 Antiquity. Moreover, he regretted not being able to turn himself into Homer or
 5 Virgil in order to write about Sousa's heroic deeds, but instead fought his own
 6 idleness by writing the *Colóquios*. In a word, Orta's work was a substitute for a
 7 heroic epic. Moreover, it was under Sousa's advice and order that wrote Orta his
 8 'short treatise' and this valourous noble was the only person capable of shielding
 9 it from 'idle people and biting tongues'.⁵⁶

10 Orta's dedication to his protector is matched by Luís Vaz de Camões's
 11 dedication to the Vice-roy Dom Francisco Coutinho, third Conde de Redondo
 12 (died 1564). In a similar way, Camões makes connections between the discovery
 13 of the secrets of Medicine and heroic deeds of Achilles. 'Help who helps against
 14 death/ and you will be just like [that] strong Greek'.⁵⁷ Finally D. Francisco
 15 Coutinho was the one who bestowed Orta with the three-year patent or
 16 copyright on *Colóquios*.⁵⁸

17 The *Colóquios* swarms with references to the viceroys and governors.
 18 Predictably those who were alive were given more space than those who were
 19 dead. For example, João de Castro who wrote himself two dialogues on natural
 20 history, *The Treatise on a Sphere in Questions and Answers* and *Geography: a*
 21 *Dialogue* (1535), must have been a huge inspiration to Orta.⁵⁹ He was also a
 22 perfect 'chivalric scientist', a type recently identified by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra
 23 in the sixteenth-century Iberian world.⁶⁰ And it is possible that his nautical and
 24 geographical knowledge was too important to be published during his life time.

26 _____
 27 ⁵⁶ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, pp. 4–5.

28 ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

29 ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Within a period of three years, whoever reprinted the *Colóquios* without
 30 permission had to pay a fine of 200 cruzados either to Garcia de Orta or to whoever made a
 31 complaint, of which half would be given to charities.

32 ⁵⁹ João de Castro, 'Tratado de Esfera por Perguntas e Respostas', in Armando Cortesão
 33 and Luís de Albuquerque (eds), *Obras completas* (Coimbra, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 15–108. João de
 34 Castro, 'De geografia por modo de dialogo', in Armando Cortesão and Luís de Albuquerque
 35 (eds), *Obras completas* (Coimbra, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 100–114. For other dialogues written in
 36 Portugal and in Spain in the same period see Roger Friedlein, 'El diálogo renacentista en la
 37 *Kontext. Romanische Literaturen Und Allgemeine* (Stuttgart, 2005), vol. 23, pp. 141–6.

38 ⁶⁰ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Crusading and Chivalric Epistemologies; Iberian
 39 Influences on Early-Modern European Science', in William Eamon and Victor Navarro
 40 Brotóns (eds), *Más allá de la Leyenda Negra: España y la Revolución Científica/Beyond*
 41 *the Black Legend: Spain and the Scientific Revolution* (Valencia, 2007), pp. 197–208. Jorge
 42 Cañizares-Esguerra, *Nature, Empire, and Nation. Explorations of the History of Science in the*
Iberian World (Palo Alto, 2006), pp. 7–13.

1 This may help us understand why it was possible to print *Colóquios* right 1
 2 at that very moment in Goa and never again. Precisely, perhaps, because the 2
 3 knowledge and information it contained was a common knowledge. Wrapped 3
 4 in classical and modern medico-botanical erudition and philology, it was not 4
 5 disclosing any strategic secrets. In fact, Orta plays with his readers, again by 5
 6 using Ruano's words, about the destiny of his book, right in the first and the 6
 7 second chapter. It was to be written only for Ruano and maybe for some selected 7
 8 Spanish doctors, and maybe by chance it may be printed.⁶¹ Obviously, knowledge 8
 9 considered important by the Portuguese Crown was that which was not widely 9
 10 disseminated and Orta wanted his readers to believe that his book belonged to 10
 11 the same category. But, of course he knew it didn't. 11

12 The second reason for printing the book was that it was supported by the 12
 13 humanist clique around Orta, among whom Luís Vaz de Camões profited to 13
 14 place his first poem for publication. It is also possible that Orta would not have 14
 15 been able to do this by himself since he was, as described already in 1559 by the 15
 16 Jesuit Luís Fróis, too old and 'decrepit [*decrépito*]'⁶². And this humanist clique 16
 17 was still able to muster support of the nobles such as D. Francisco Coutinho, 17
 18 third Conde de Redondo, who died in 1564. To that we may add, and this is 18
 19 purely speculative, that the printing press in the hands of João de Endem or 19
 20 somebody in charge of selling books may have had their own reasons for wanting 20
 21 to publish the book and sell it in Europe. 21

22 By looking at the books coming out of the printing press after Orta, it is 22
 23 clear why there were no more books of this kind. The humanist preoccupation 23
 24 with the science related to the natural body was replaced with the Catholic 24
 25 Reformation's obsession with the spiritual body and with the soul: as if Orta's 25
 26 words turned prophetic when he said that the 'the worst sins had to be confessed 26
 27 first'.⁶³ The books printed just before and after the *Colóquios* were about sins 27
 28 and confessors written by the archbishop of Goa, D. Gaspar de Leão Pereira, 28
 29 who declared war on Portuguese tropical sins under the banner, already lifted by 29
 30 Francis Xavier, carrying the moto: 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain 30
 31 the whole world, and lose his own soul'.⁶⁴ D. Gaspar simply overwrote *Colóquios* 31
 32 32

33 ⁶¹ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, pp. 19–36. 33

34 ⁶² Luís Fróis reported in his letter to European members, written in Goa around 12
 35 November 1559 that Orta participated in 'conclusoens da medicina e philosophia' held that 35
 36 year in the Jesuit college of São Paulo. Orta was described as 'hum velho já quasi decrepito, 36
 37 dos milhores letrados que caa há nestas partes'. In Joseph Wicki (ed.), *Documenta Indica* 37
 38 (Rome, 1954), pp. 293–4. 38

39 ⁶³ Orta, *Colóquios*, vol. 1, p. 25. 39

40 ⁶⁴ In a letter to João III, the king of Portugal in 1548, St Francis Xavier advised the king 40
 41 to meditate on mt. 16, 26 – 'Quid potest homini si universum mundum lucretur animae 41
 42 vero suae detrimentum patiat' – a quarter of an hour every day. José Wicki, 'La Sagrada 41
 42 Escritura en las cartas e instrucciones de Francisco Xavier', *Manresa*, 24 (1952): 259–64. 42

1 with his own spiritual medicine in the book that was also a dialogue, *Desengano* 1
 2 *de perdidos* (1578), in order to, as he would write, convert back the flesh into 2
 3 the soul again.⁶⁵ 3

4 Far from Goa, the Colloquies acquired a second life in Europe, beyond 4
 5 control of his author, of the Inquisition and of the Estado da Índia. It was 5
 6 Clusius who famously translated the *Colloquies* into Latin and published it in an 6
 7 illustrated volume, a year before Orta's death, entitled *Aromatum et simplicium* 7
 8 (Antwerp, 1567) that went into several (refurbished!) editions.⁶⁶ Clusius took 8
 9 almost everything from the *Colóquios* except the dialogic form. Neither did 9
 10 Cristóvão da Costa, the author of the second (and the last) first-hand pharmaco- 10
 11 botanical treatise on Asian plants and remedies, *Tractado delas drogas, y* 11
 12 *medicinas de las Indias Orientales*, published in the sixteenth century in Burgos, 12
 13 appreciate the form of a dialogue. 'And so, his (that is. Orta's) work deals with 13
 14 various medicines, and plants, and other things concerning human health [*la* 14
 15 *salud humana*], but also deals with others that are useless, and without profit for 15
 16 it (that is, health), because he was forced to deal with them in following a style 16
 17 of a Dialogue.'⁶⁷ Those who speak have a tendency, according to Costa, to amuse 17
 18 themselves and to spill out of the principal topic. Instead of a dialogue, Costa 18
 19 preferred to include pictures [*pinturas*] and drawings of the plants, especially 19
 20 those he asserts to have seen with his own eyes. However, another virtuoso of 20
 21 medico-botanical knowledge, Nicolas, was inspired enough by Orta's work to 21
 22 include at the end of the third part of his *Historia Medicinal*, a '*Dialogo del* 22
 23 *hierro*'. In general, however, and after the volumes of Clusius's publications, 23
 24 the genre of botanico-medical and simply botanical books firmly adopted the 24
 25 Latin prose and thus discarded doubts and uncertainties, or spelled them out 25
 26 clearly, regarding the empirical world of Asian plants. It was the translation from 26
 27 a dialogue into the prose, in addition to translation into Latin, considered as a 27
 28 more appropriate language of the medico-botanical books in the early modern 28
 29 period that became fatal to Orta's memory and authorship. It was not until the 29
 30 Portuguese national science required an early precursor of a heroic (colonial) 30
 31 scientist that his reputation had to be restored and reconstructed. 31

32
 33

34 _____
 35 ⁶⁵ Dom Gaspar's dialogue was not Ciceronian, but Lucian variety in which all Orta 34
 36 wanted to do with his dialogue had to be undone. D. Gaspar de Leão [Pereira], *Desengano de* 35
 37 *Perdidos* (Goa, 1573), ed. Eugenio Asensio (Coimbra, 1958), p. 146. 'Sensualists ... do not 36
 38 have soul because they have converted it into flesh.' 37

38 ⁶⁶ On the various editions of the *Aromatum et simplicium* and, in particular, the 38
 39 illustrations presented in them, see Florike Egmond's contribution to this volume in Chapter 39
 40 9. 40

41 ⁶⁷ Cristóvão da Costa or Christoval Acosta, *Tractado delas drogas, y medicinas de las* 40
 42 *Indias Orientales, con sus plantas debuxadas al bivo por Christoval Acosta medico y cirujano que* 41
 43 *las vio ocularmente* (Burgos, 1578), preface 'Al lector'. 42

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