



COLONIALISM

KNOWLEDGE

HISTORY

POLITICAL CHANGES

SOCIETY

DIVERSITY

CULTURE

16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> C

RELIGIOUS

INFLUENCE

INTELLECTUAL  
CHANGES



21<sup>st</sup> C



## How colonialism affected religious identities

Colonialism is a system based on hierarchy and difference, entailing political, social and cultural exclusion processes. Which are the processes that lead, in imperial settings, some people to exclude others? How did egalitarian worldviews (like Christianity, Universalism) produce imperial societies based on hierarchy and difference (like Christian empires)?

Dr. Angela Barreto Xavier is a historian interested in analyzing these problems through the lenses of early modern imperial experiences, focusing on the Portuguese colonial rule.

In her book *Religion and Empire in Portuguese India*, she has studied the political and cultural history of conversion to Christianity in Goa during Portuguese rule and how this affected social and cultural structures in the territory in the long term. She shows how a minority (the colonizers), coming from different social and cultural backgrounds, contributed to reshaping the identities and the forms of hierarchy and difference that existed in those territories.

Xavier's approach to the history of Portuguese rule is very nuanced and goes beyond the simple colonizer and colonized perspectives. Importantly she looks at the Portuguese imperial agents and Goa's inhabitants not as homogenous masses but as various social groups with a diversity of histories and, therefore, different political, religious and attitudinal worldviews. She also looks at the situation in Goa in the context of what was happening contemporaneously in the larger Portuguese empire at the time which included territories as far afield as Brazil, East Timor, Melaka and other places as well as Portuguese society itself which was diverse in terms of culture and religion. Finally, she also explores how political and religious changes in Portugal, Spain, and Europe affected the trajectory and focus of Portuguese rule in places like Goa.

In *Catholic Orientalism. Portuguese empire, Indian Knowledge*, co-authored with Ines G. Županov, the archives of knowledge about India produced both by Europeans and Indians during the early modern period were studied. On the one hand, this book explores how binomial knowledge and power operated in the context of the Portuguese empire. On the other, it intends to show how the knowledge produced in that context dissolved or was not integrated in the 19th and 20th centuries' Orientalisms. *Catholic Orientalism* argues that geopolitical and intellectual changes between the 16th and 18th centuries, namely the shift of the centres of knowledge production from the South to the North of Europe, led to the demise of certain types of knowledge, therefore considered lesser knowledge. However, this book also demonstrates that processes of intellectual exclusion that were common in imperial experiences also happened in the internal contexts of Europe, where the power variable operated differently.

With her work, Angela Barreto Xavier explores how changes in Portugal and Europe affected the trajectory and focus of Portuguese rule in places like Goa. She also looks at how the Goan people and society, with their own political culture and worldviews reacted to these changes with a special focus on religion. Dr. Xavier goes beyond the simple colonizer and colonized perspectives to analyzing a diversity of perspectives among both sets of people.