

Addendum

In my paper ›Relationships Between Early Modern Christian and Islamicate Societies in Eurasia and North Africa as Reflected in the History of Science and Medicine‹ published in an earlier issue of this journal,¹ I mentioned one of my forthcoming papers. The paper in question deals with historiographical issues found in publications by historians of science and medicine and other academics interested in the Portuguese physician Garcia da Orta (d. 1567). Since then, I rewrote a substantial part of this paper because in Winter 2015, a new book on Orta and his work appeared. It is edited by Palmira Fontes da Costa.² The most valuable contribution – in my view – amongst its twelve papers comes from Dr. Costa. Under the header ›Identity and the Construction of Memory in Representations of Garcia de Orta,‹ she discusses the various efforts to glorify Orta as the ›founding father‹ of ›Portuguese‹ medicine, ›the pioneer‹ of tropical medicine, the ›first European‹ writer on Asian medical plants and drugs, a central rallying point for ›national identity‹ and, more recently, as a hero of the East-West exchange of knowledge (Costa 2015: 237–264). She emphasizes that many writers about the Portuguese physician and merchant often represented the content of his book literally and in uncritical admiration, leading to hyperbole and magnification, a situation made worse by a lack of historical knowledge and sophisticated methodology and the also otherwise widespread inclination of academics to repeat the mistakes and judgments of previous authors (*ibid.*: 264). She is one of the first writers on Orta whom I encountered in academic literature who makes clear that such research and

¹ S. Brentjes, ›Relationships Between Early Modern Christian and Islamicate Societies in Eurasia and North Africa as Reflected in the History of Science and Medicine,‹ *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies*, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 85–121.

² P. Fontes da Costa, *Medicine, Trade and Empire: Garcia de Orta's Colloquies on the Simples and Drugs of India (1563) in Context*, London: Ashgate, 2015.

writing practices carry with them political, ideological and scientific legitimation strategies (*ibid.*: 255, 258). In the case of Orta, such value statements are closely linked to positions on Portuguese colonialism, the Portuguese Inquisition, Catholicism and Judaism, scientific progress and the importance of ancient Greek, Islamic, Indian and modern Western contributions to the sciences and medicine (*ibid.*: 255–262). Understandably, she overlooks the very same tendencies in some of the papers included in this new book. But given the substantial shortcomings of previous papers and books on Orta along the lines described by Costa, her analysis as well as the book as a whole are an important step forward towards a more balanced and reliable historical evaluations of the man and his work.

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