The Portuguese language heritage in the East: Malacca, Korlai, Goa, Damao, Ceylon, Macao, Timor, Diu.........

The Portuguese language (in relation to the trade and colonial expansion of Portugal), was in XVI – XVII – XVIII centuries the trade language of the Indian Ocean shores.

Portuguese was used, at that time, not only in the eastern cities conquered by the Portuguese but was also used by many local rulers in their relations with the other European powers (Dutch, English, Danish, etc.).

In Ceylon, for example, Portuguese was used for all contacts between the Europeans and the indigenous peoples; several Kings of Ceylon were fluently in speaking it, Portuguese names were common among the nobility.

When the Dutch occupied coastal Ceylon they, particularly under Van Goens, took measures to stop the use of Portuguese. However, it had become so well established among the Ceylonese that even the families of the Dutch Burghers started to speak it.

In 1704, the Governor *Cornelius Jan Simonsz* said that "if one spoke Portuguese in Ceylon, one could be understood everywhere".

Also in the Dutch eastern capital city of Batavia (today's Jakarta) Portuguese was the spoken language in XVII-XVIII centuries.

The religious missions contributed to the great spreading of the Portuguese language. Indeed, as many communities converted to Christianity, they adopted the Portuguese mother tongue. Also the protestant missions (Dutch, Danish, English…) that worked in India were forced to use of Portuguese as their evangelisation language.

The Portuguese language has also influenced many an oriental language.

Many Portuguese words were permanently lent to various kinds of Eastern languages such as the Indians languages, Swahili, Malay, Indonesian, Bengali, Japanese, Ceylonese languages, Tetum of Timor, Afrikaans in South Africa, etc…

Besides, where the Portuguese presence was stronger or lasted longer, flourishing communities of "Casados" and "Mestiços" were developed that adopted a variety of the mother tongue: a kind of Creole Portuguese. What remains today is very little. However it is interesting to notice that, to this day, there are small communities of peoples spread throughout Asia that continue to use Creole Portuguese, although for many years (for centuries, in some cases) there had no contact with Portugal.

Another interesting aspect to contemplate is that, during the best period of Portuguese presence in Asia, the number of Portuguese there was never more than 12.000 to 14.000 souls, including the clergy.
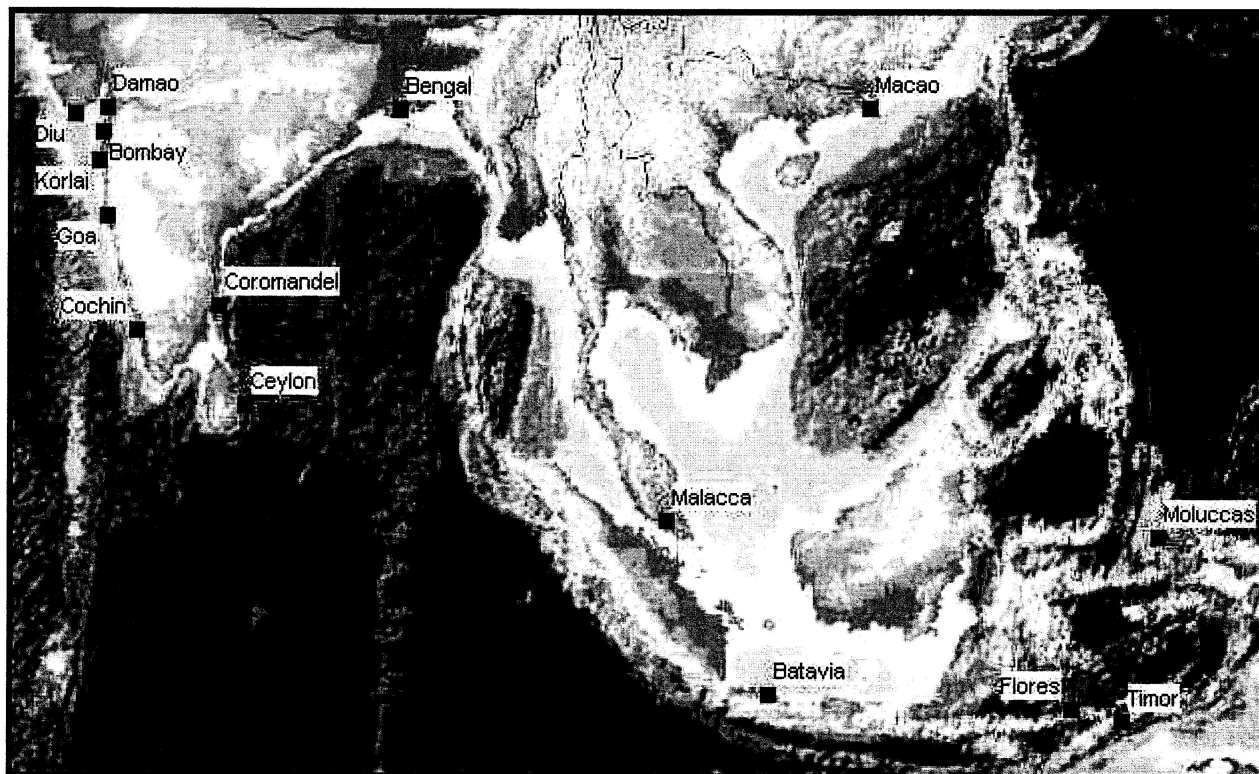
Blue: Portuguese speaking communities in Asia

Red: Places where there were Portuguese speaking communities.

Today, there are Portuguese speaking communities in:

Malacca: *(Portuguese Settlement, Praya Lane, Bandara Hilir).*

About 1000 people speak this Creole Portuguese (**Papia Kristang**). About 80 % of the older residents of the Portuguese settlement in Malacca regularly speak Kristang. There are also some speakers in today's Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Kristang is very close to local Malay in its grammatical structure, but its vocabulary is for 95% derived from Portuguese.

Not many years ago, Portuguese was also spoken in Pulau Tikus (Penang) but now it is considered extinct.

The Eurasian community has 12.000 members in the Malaya Peninsula.

Active are **MPEA** (*Malacca Portuguese Eurasian Association*) and **SPEMA (Secretariat of the Portuguese/Eurasian Malaysian Associations**) with seven separate member associations in Alor Star, Penang, Perak, Malacca (MPEA), Kuala Lumpur, Seremban and Johor Baru.

Portugal lost Malacca in 1641.

Korlai: (near Chaul, India).

About 900 monolingual people speak this Creole Portuguese, this community has his Portuguese church called: "Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Monte Carmelo". Originated around

Verbix: The portuguese language heritage in the East notes

1520 on the west coast of India. Initially isolated from its Hindu and Muslim neighbors by social and religious barriers, the small Korlai community lost virtually all Portuguese contact as well after 1740.

Portugal lost Chaul in 1740.

Damão: *(Damão Grande or Praça, Campo dos Remédios, Jumprim, Damão da Cima).*

About 2000 people speak this Creole Portuguese.

Portugal lost Damão in December 1961.

Ceylon: *[Portuguese Burghers in Batticaloa (Koolavaddy, Mamangam, Uppodai, Dutch Bar, Akkaraipattu); Trincomalee (Palayuttu); Kaffir communities of Mannar and Puttalam].*

It's now used at home only. It was spoken by 250 families in Batticaloa as late as 1984.

Many emigrated to Australia. There are still 100 families in Batticaloa and Trincomalee and about 80 Afro-Sinhalese (Kaffir) families in Puttalam.

Nearly extinct.

In Batticaloa there is the *Burgher Recreio Clube "Shamrock" or "Batticaloa Catholic Burgher Union".*

There is a little community of Portuguese descendants in the village of WahaKotte (circa 7° 42'N. - 80° 36'E) (Central Sri Lanka, six kilometers from Galewala on the road between Galewala and Matale), they are Roman Catholic, but it's about two generations that Portuguese Creole it's not more spoke.

Portugal lost Ceylon in 1658.

Macau:

About 2.000 people speak Portuguese as their first language, and about 11.500 as their second language.

Only a few elderly women speak *Macanese* a Macao Creole Portuguese.

The "*Instituto Cultural de Macau*" and the "*Fundação do Oriente*" are still active.

There is also a TV channel and several newspapers entirely in Portuguese.

Macau is still a Portuguese province. On 20 December 1999 it will revert to China.

Hong Kong:

Several hundreds people speak MACANESE. Essentially, these are people that emigrated from Macao.

Verbix: The portuguese language heritage in the East notes

There is the "Club Lusitano".

Never under Portuguese rule.

Goa:

Portuguese is rapidly disappearing from Goa. It is now spoken only by a small segment of the upper class families and about 3 to 5 % of the people still speak it (estimated at 30.000 to 50.000 people).

Today 35% of Goa's population are immigrants from other indian states.

In the Indian school it is taught as third language (not obligatory). There is a department of Portuguese at the Goa University. However, the "*Fundação do Oriente*" and the *Indo – Portuguese Friendship Society* (*Sociedade de Amizade Indo-Portuguesa*) are still active. The last Newspaper in Portuguese ended the publications in 1980s.

At Panaji many signs in Portuguese are still visible over shops, administrative buildings etc.

Portugal lost Goa in December 1961.

Diu:

Here the Creole Portuguese is nearly extinct.

Portugal lost Diu in December 1961.

Timor:

Portuguese was speaking in 1950 by less than 10.000 people and in 1974 by only about 10%-20% of the population.

In 1975: East Timor had 700 000 inhabitants from which: 35/70 000 knew how to read and write portuguese and 100/140 000 could speak it and understand it.

Until 1981, Portuguese was the church language of Timor, when it was supplanted by Tetum.

However, it is commonly used as the business language in the town of Dili.

Now, Portuguese remains the language for the anti-Indonesian resistance and that of external communications for the Catholic Church.

The Creole Portuguese of Timor (Português de Bidau) is now extinct. It was spoken around Dili, Lifau and Bidau.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975. However, not a single nation recognised this military annexation. The United Nations is sponsoring negotiations between Portugal, Indonesia and Timorese Independence movements.

Flores island: (*Larantuka, Sikka*)

Verbix: The portuguese language heritage in the East notes

Here Portuguese survives in the religious traditions and the Topasses community (the descendants of Portuguese men and local women) uses it in the prayers. On Saturdays the women of Larantuka say the rosary in a corrupt form of Portuguese.

In the Sikka area of eastern Flores, many of the people of Sikka are descendants from the Portuguese and still??? use that language.

There is the Confraternity of "*Reinja Rosari*".

Abandoned by Portugal in 1859.

Until a few years ago, Portuguese speaking communities existed in:

Ceylon: (Creole Portuguese was used amongst the *Dutch Burgher community*).

Till the beginning of the 20th. century Creole Portuguese was spoken by the members of this community.

Untill after the Second World War Sri Lankan Catholics in Colombo met for regular church services conducted in Portuguese (at the parish church of St. Anthony's, Dematagoda).

Up to the middle part of this century prayers were being conducted for diminishing groups in Portuguese at a number of Catholic churches in the city (Dematagoda, Hulftsdorp, Kotahena, Kotte, Nugegoda and Wellawatte). Although as a verbal language Portuguese was fast loosing its original purpose at religious devotions in Catholic churches (to be replaced by English and taken over more fashionably and pursued with greater vigour).

Jakarta-Batavia-Tugu: (a suburb of Jakarta).

Here, till the beginning of the 20th. century, a kind of corrupted Portuguese was still spoken by the Christian population in Tugu. The last creol speaking died in 1978.

Never under Portuguese rule.

Cochin: (*Vypeen*).

It has disappeared in the last twenty years of the 20th. century. The community of Portuguese/Indians (about 2.000 peoples) has his parish church in the old church of Nossa Senhora da Esperança.

Portugal lost Cochin in 1663.

Verbix: The portuguese language heritage in the East notes

Vypeen (Cochin), church of Nossa Senhora da Esperança. Drawing by Ram '99.

Bombaim or do Norte: *(Baçaim, Salsette, Thana, Chevai, Mahim, Tecelaria, Dadar, Parel, Cavel, Bandora-Badra, Govai, Morol, Andheri, Versova, Malvan, Manori, Mazagão)*

In 1906, this Creole was, after that of Ceylon, the most important of Indo-Portuguese Creole. In 1906 there were still 5.000 peoples that speaking Creole Portuguese as mother tongue, of these 2.000 were in Bombaim and Mahim, 1.000 were in Bandora, 500 in Thana, 100 in Curla, 50 in Baçaim and 1.000 in others villages. There weren't, at that time, Creole Portuguese schools and the well-to-do classes tended towards to neglect the use, preferred to use the English. < Costa, Dalgado >

Coromandel: *(Meliapore, Madras, Tuticorin, Cuddalore, Karikal, Pondicherry, Tranquebar, Manapar, Negapatam.....)*

In the Coromandel coast, the Portuguese descendants were generally knew with the name of **"Topasses"**, they were Catholics and spoke Portuguese Creole. With the coming of the English rule in India, they began to speak English in place of the Portuguese and also anglicized theirs names. They are, now, part of the Eurasian community.

In Negapatam, in 1883, there were still 20 families that spoke Indo-Portuguese. < Schuchardt, Dalgado >

Are disappeared for many years those of:

Solor & Adonara: *Solor, Adonara (Vure)*

Java island-Batavia: *(Dutch community of Batavia, Mardijkers)*

The Mardijkers are the descendants of the old slaves from Malacca, Bengal, Coromandel, Malabar, that were converted to Protestantism for which they were set free. They spoke a Creole form of Portuguese and were the main group of the Portuguese community of Batavia. After the Dutch conquest of Malacca and Ceylon their number increased considerably. In 1673, a Protestant church was built, in Batavia for the Portuguese community and later, at the end of the XVII century, a second church was built. In 1713, this community had about 4.000

members. < Lopes >

Until 1750, Portuguese was the first language in Batavia, but, after that period, Malay started to dominate.

In 1808, Reverend Engelbrecht celebrated the last mass in Portuguese. In 1816, the Portuguese community was incorporated in the Malay community.

Also in the Dutch families of Batavia, the Portuguese language was vividly used until 1750, in spite of the efforts of the Dutch Government against its use.

Mangalore:

Cannanore:

Bengal: *(Balasore, Pipli, Chandernagore, Chittagong, Midnapore, Hugli......)*

The Portuguese language was, in the 17th. and 18th. centuries, the "lingua franca" in Bengal. Up to 1811, Portuguese was used in all the Christian (as Catholics as Protestants) churches in Calcutta. At the beginning of the 20th. century, only in a few families a corrupted form of Portuguese was spoke largely mixed with English words. < Campos >

Moluccas: *(Ternate, Ambon, Banda, Makasar)*

TERNATENO, a Creole Portuguese that was spoken in the islands of Ternate and West Halmahera, is now extinct.

AMBON, the Creole Portuguese is extinct but some traces of Portuguese are in the language now spoken in Ambon, the Malay-Ambon, which has about 350 words of Portuguese origin.

Along the Indian shores, there were about 44 communities where Portuguese was spoken.

Last Updated: 10/10/99 # INDEX my e-mail: **mrameri@tin.it**

Verbix: The portuguese language heritage in the East notes

[Populations of the Portuguese settlements] [Voc Empire] [WIC Empire]
[Dutch colonial remains:forts,churches.] [Dutch Possessions in Africa] [Dutch Ceylon: Burghers]
[Sri Lanka Dutch and Portuguese remains.] [Maps Sri Lanka] [Dutch Malacca]
[Dutch Malabar (Kerala).] [Dutch Mauritius] [Dutch South Africa] [Dutch Brazil]
[New Netherlands and New Sweden] [Dutch and Curlanders in Tobago] [Dutch Formosa]
[Danish,Swedish,Spanish,Others colonial remains.] [French Brazil] [Ghana Europeans forts]
[Jesuits] [Danish Possessions] [Bibliography Portuguese] [Bibliography Dutch]
[Bibliography of others European colonialism] [Links]

Verbix: The portuguese language heritage in the East notes