



BARBARA KARL

EMBROIDERED HISTORIES

INDIAN TEXTILES FOR THE PORTUGUESE MARKET DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

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Early modern India was an economic core region producing manifold textiles for export. During the sixteenth century a new customer entered the stage and expanded its influence from the city of Goa – Portugal. From early times, the Portuguese had bought and commissioned textiles, among them large embroideries from Bengal and Gujarat, which are the focus of this study. By providing European prints as models for the professional local embroiderers they created a novel product that was successful in Portugal and beyond throughout the seventeenth century. The textiles were deemed valuable and rare enough to be included in different travel accounts, letters and inventories, enabling us to trace their place of production, their transportation to Europe and their reception. Their intricate iconographies reflect political problematics of the time and shed light onto the intercultural circumstances of Portuguese colonial life.

Barbara Karl is Curator of Textiles and Carpets at the MAK – Museum für Angewandte Kunst/Gegenwartskunst in Vienna.

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