INTRODUCTION

Mr. Campos has collected some interesting facts relative to the commercial, political and religious enterprises of the Portuguese in Bengal. The work done by the Portuguese as pioneers of European commerce in this part of India has not, perhaps, been sufficiently recognized, for it may truly be said that they paved the way for the commercial ventures of the Dutch, the English and other European nations. Mr. Campos quotes an array of authorities in support of his account, which shows that the Portuguese, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, occupied a position in Bengal comparable to that of the British in the middle of the eighteenth, with their settlements and factories, not only at the principal ports, Hughli and Chittagong, but at many other places in Eastern and Western Bengal, and as far up the Ganges as Patna. The earliest British mercantile adventurers in Bengal and the adjacent countries established themselves, naturally, at places where the Portuguese had already found openings for European commerce. Some of the Portuguese settlements in Bengal became virtually independent of the Mughal rulers of India, being directly subject, for a time, to the jurisdiction of the Portuguese Government of Ceylon.

The causes of the decline of the Portuguese power in the East, and the hostilities between the Portuguese in Bengal and the Mughal Emperor, culminating in the Mughal attack on Hughli, the heroic defence, and the tragic fall of that place, are briefly sketched in this book. There is a striking parallel between the early history of Hughli and that of Calcutta, though the circumstances of the taking of Hughli by Kasim Khan in 1632, differed greatly from those of the
capture of Calcutta by Siraj-ud-daula in 1756, which led to the establishment of the British Empire in India.

The Portuguese were the first to introduce Christianity in Bengal, and their Missionaries of different Orders were active at all their settlements. Christian Churches and settlements still existing are the most conspicuous and enduring memorials of Portuguese influence in this province.

The first type-printed works in the Bengali language were a Catechism, a Compendium of the Mysteries of the Faith, and a Vocabulary, published at Lisbon in 1743. It is difficult to realize now, that, at one time, Portuguese was the common language of the important centres of maritime commerce in India, spoken by Europeans of all nations, who came to trade in this country and by the Indians who did business with them. Current Indian languages contain many Portuguese words, most of them connected with trade, or the Christian religion, or names of articles of common use, imported from Europe.

Mr. Campos has evidently devoted much care to the compilation of the book and has drawn on Portuguese sources not often utilized by students in this country. He has been careful to refer to the authorities for statements made by him and his work is, I think, an useful contribution to the history of Bengal and bibliography of the subject with which it deals.

CALCUTTA, 9-1-19.  
F. MONAHAN