

The Konkani language described by Father Thomas Stephens

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The purpose of this presentation is to show the importance of the Konkani language grammar written by Thomas Stephens in the seventeenth century.

Thomas Stephens is known to have been born in 1549, to have entered the Society of Jesus in 1575, to have reached Goa, India in 1579 and to have died there in 1619 after 40 years of his missionary work in India. Meanwhile, the following three works were published there: (1) Biblical poem in Marathi (1616) (2) Christian Doctrine in Konkani (1622) – a posthumous work (3) Konkani grammar written in Portuguese (1640) – a posthumous work. His grammar gives us a good overview of the Konkani language spoken in sixteenth and seventeenth century Goa, which differs from modern Konkani in various ways, and his Christian Doctrine written in Konkani clearly reflects these differences. For example, the modern Konkani interrogative morphologically has only one nominative form namely *konn* (= *conn*) regardless of its gender and number, while Stephens' grammar gives us several different forms varying according to its gender, number as follows (24r).

| | | masculine | feminine | neuter |
|----------|------------|-----------|----------|--------|
| Singular | nominative | Connu | Conni | Conna |
| | oblique | Conna | Conny | Conna |
| Plura) | nominative | Conna | Conny | Connã |
| | oblique | Connã | Connĩ | Connã |

Some of these forms are clearly reflected in his Christian Doctrine as follows.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Mannuss | Christaõ | zalea | nimitim | <u>connu</u> | manu, |
| Man | Christian | become | in consequence | what | respect |
| -m.sg.nom | -m.sg.nom. | -cond | -pp | -m.sg.nom. | -m.sg.nom. |
| <u>Conni</u> | uhaddiua | taca | zoddata ? | | |
| What | greatness | to him | get/receive | | |
| -f.sg.nom. | -f.sg.nom. | -m.sg.dat.subj | -3m.sg.pres. | | |

(Having become a Christian, what kind of blessings does he receive?)

(Konkani Christian Doctrine f1v)