

SUCH TREASURE & RICH MERCHANTIZE

The exhibit "Such Treasure and Rich Merchantize:" presents botanical illustrations, prints, and maps from seven European books published between 1543 and 1693.

These books provide fascinating glimpses into a little known chapter of the history of East-West interaction and highlight the importance of Indian botanical knowledge to the science and history of the period.

*This medicine is very good, and I have often succeeded with it, yet I feel bound to confess that it is not so valuable nor so certain as the herb * which the Malabaris give...*

Garcia Orta's "Colloquis...", Goa, 1563, Translation, Clement Markham, 1913

"the saide Indies, in so much as one of them held to be Third part of all the Land that is inhabited,... all very fruitful and yielding such treasure and rich Merchantize, as none other place of the whole world can afford."

Introduction to, "John Huighen van Linschoten: His discourses of voyages into ye East and West Indies." From the Old English Translation by John Wolfe, 1598. Reprinted for the Hakluyt Society, London, 1885.

*Codda-panu. Ind.
കൊട്ടപാണു malab.
Korotale
കരതാലം Bram.
قوتالہ Arab.*

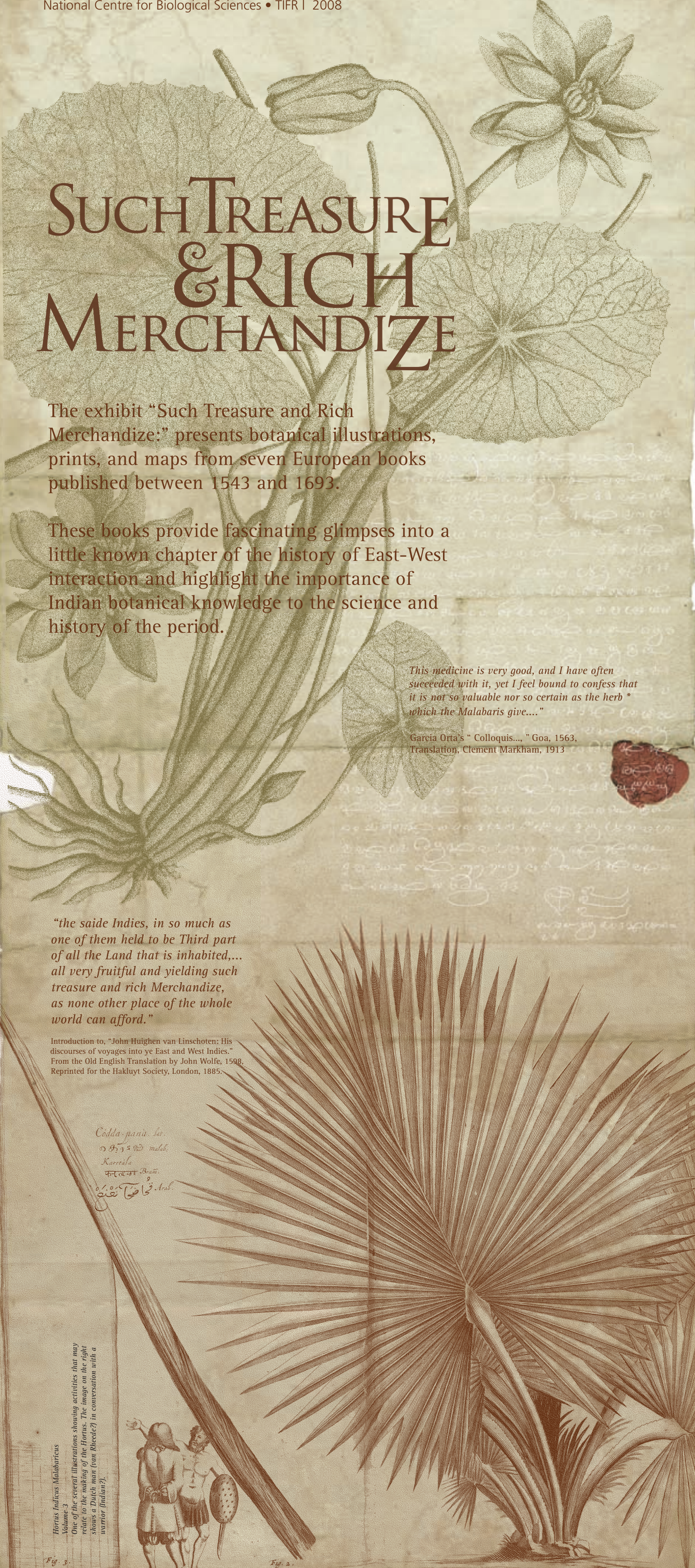
*Horius Indicus Malabaricus
Volume 3
One of the several illustrations showing activities that may relate to the making of the Horius. The image on the right shows a Dutch man (van Rieede?) in conversation with a warrior (Indian?).*



Fig. 3.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 1.



"From here by treaty between the Infidels, a fine fleet of great ships Crossed the Indian Ocean to the Malabar Coast Each year In quest of Spicery"

Portuguese Poet Louis de Camoes, The Lucidas, 16th Century

Until the middle of the 18th Century, botanicals from India were important ingredients of European life as culinary additives, medicines and luxury items. The search for shorter and direct sea routes to India to acquire these commodities was the driving force for the voyages of discovery that profoundly changed both the world's maps, and its history.

East-West trade intensified after 1498 Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut to procure pepper and other natural products for Portugal. Many others followed and along with the commodities they acquired Europeans in India sought out and compiled indigenous knowledge of medicinal and agrarian plants for their use in India and elsewhere. The wealth of botanical knowledge from the thriving indigenous medical traditions and centuries-old agricultural practices made its way into several European books published in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Hortus Malabaricus and the other books presented in the exhibit are important resources to scholars from diverse fields, serving as a window into Indian culture prior to the 18th century. They are also valuable repository of the local medical traditions of South India in the 17th century, many of which have long been hidden in palm leaf manuscript collections or already vanished from the scholarly horizon.



Bambus or the Reede of India, Arbore de Reys or "The root tree". Durioens Original Woodcut, Size 25.0X31.7 cm John Huighen van Linschoten: His discourses of voyages 'into ye East and West Indies. Printed at London by John Wolfe, 1598 Huntington Library Rare Books Collection

An Unidentified Man, Detail of Fig. 4, vol 11, Hortus Malabaricus, 1689. Copper engraving original



Schunda pana, Vol.1, Fig.11, Hortus Indicus Malabaricus, 1678

The highlighted book in this exhibit is the twelve volume pre-Linnaean botanical work "Hortus Indicus Malabaricus", published in Amsterdam from 1678 to 1693 and entirely devoted to the useful and medicinal plants of South India. These volumes are unique in the annals of colonial botany for the quality of the content and for the extent of the collaboration between the Indian and European scholars. For their major contributions to this work, the Indian scholars are individually identified and honored.

Page of the testimonial of Itty Achudem Malayalam, Kolezuthu script Hortus Malabaricus vol.1, ix, Amsterdam, 1678 Copper engraving original



SUCH TREASURE & RICH MERCHANDIZE

Curated by: Annamma Spudich
Scholar in Residence, NCBS

Annamma Spudich is a cell biologist (Ph.D., Stanford University) and carried out cell biology research at Stanford for 25 years. Eight years ago she left basic research to devote her intellectual energies to her life long interest in the history of Indian scientific traditions in the natural sciences. In 2003 Dr. Spudich curated the exhibit "From Forreine Places All the Varietie of Herbes" at The Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University. The exhibit and a conference on the contributions of traditional knowledge to modern science and medicine were supported by the Stanford School of Medicine, and the Asian Religions and Cultures Initiative of the School of Humanities and Sciences. She is currently working on a book on the subject of this exhibit.

Exhibition and related collateral designed and coordinated by Trapeze

"Some of them have no other occupation than temple service and are free from all worldly cares, Constantly studying pagan wisdom, astronomy and natural sciences."

"Hortus Indicus Malabaricus"
H. A. Van Rheede
Volume 1, 1678



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