

Liza Oliver

Art, Trade, and Imperialism in Early Modern French India

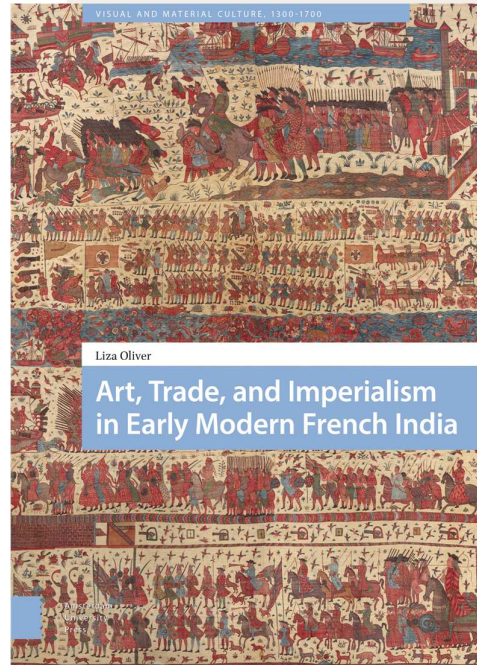
French mercantile endeavors in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century India were marked by novel intersections of aesthetics, science, and often violent commercialism. Connecting all of these worlds were the thriving textile industries of India's Coromandel Coast. This book focuses on the integration of the Coromandel textile industries with French colonies in India from the founding of the French East India Company in 1664 to its debilitating defeat by the British during the Seven Years' War. Narratives of British trade and colonialism have long dominated eighteenth-century histories of India, overshadowing the French East India Company's far-reaching sphere of influence and its significant integration into the political and cultural worlds of South India. As this study shows, the visual and material cultures of eighteenth-century France and India were deeply connected, and together shaped the century's broader debates about mercantilism, liberalism, and the global trade of goods, ideas, and humans.

"Drawing on a dazzling range of visual evidence, Oliver provides a pathbreaking account of how the commerce in textiles shaped the visual, cultural, and political histories of France and India. Deeply researched, theoretically informed, and compellingly argued, Oliver's transregional analysis challenges existing art historical models of cultural encounter and revolutionizes our understanding of eighteenth-century visual culture in both France and India."

Amy Freund, Southern Methodist University

"Paying equal attention to South Indian and French actors and addressing a remarkably wide range of objects and practices—from painted textiles to botanical illustrations to gift giving and iconoclasm—Oliver brings vividly into view the complex entanglements of things and people in French India in a period of expanding long-distance trade and growing imperial ambition."

Kristel Smentek, Massachusetts Institute of Technology



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