Profiles in transition: Of adventurers and administrators in south India, 1750–1810[1]

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> All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.
>
> T.E. Lawrence, *Oriental Assembly*[2]

Introduction

This essay attempts to understand the transition to colonial rule in South India between the mid-eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries through an examination of three contrasting European figures who were present there in those times. The method is a time-honoured one, even if it had fallen into discredit for a time on account of the fashionable distaste for 'biography' as a pursuit of the historian, as well as the idea that the colonial (or would-be colonial) elites were not really worthy of the historian's attention.[3] If there is some novelty to recommend it, it must lie in the choice of the figures themselves, here a French entrepreneur and military commander, a Portuguese ecclesiastic and inveterate maker of unfinished projects, and a Scotsman who eventually participated as an East India Company

[1] The present essay forms part of a larger reflection on European views of India, centering on the figure of Niccolò Manuzzi (ca. 1638–1720). For help in its preparation, I am grateful to Jorge Manuel Flores, Maurice Kriegel and Kapil Raj: a particular debt is to Jonathan Spencer, who was largely instrumental in having me visit Edinburgh.

[2] T.E. Lawrence, *Oriental Assembly*, ed., A.W. Lawrence, London, 1939, p. 143.

[3] An exception to this rule was Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire*, Delhi, 1989.

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administrator both in South India and Gujarat. Further, it is not the career trajectories of the three personages that will interest us so much as their opinions, as expressed in each case through quite voluminous writings. Yet, none of the men concerned was a 'thinker' or theoretician of empire in the normal sense of the term; rather, all of them were political actors and men of action, who also wrote and reflected on their actions as well as on what they saw around them. The reader is thus advised not to look here for the equivalent of Anquetil Duperron, Edmund Burke or James Mill, but for a point of view that is much more constructed in the thick of action, often quite incoherent, but not for that any the less interesting.

In taking these three examples, my purpose is also to re-examine the question of whether there was any common European basis for understanding South Asian society in this time, or whether national or personal understandings were sufficiently different so that it is impossible to speak in such terms. In other words, is it at all justified to lump together a Scotsman, a Frenchman and a Portuguese under the common category of a 'European' understanding, or is it necessary to speak rather of a varied and fragmented view, mediated by personal experience and trajectory and a whole host of other more specific factors, whether cultural or not? In asking such a question, it may seem that my essay places itself at some distance from the preoccupations of Dharma Kumar, whose impatience with studies of 'colonial discourse' was all too well-known. But, this distance may in fact be illusory, for the exercise that I am engaged in may itself be understood in other terms, namely as a form of source-criticism. The historian of South India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, whose interests concern broad social categories (such as service groups, or agrestic serfs) as much as quantitative issues in economic history, must wrestle with the problem of the archival sources in which one finds materials concerning these categories. As Dharma Kumar herself wrote, looking back on her earlier work,

> while I did discuss the need to interpret early official writings with care, reflecting as they often did misunderstanding of Indian society and the drawing of inappropriate analogies with feudal Europe, later work has shown that I did not question my sources sharply enough, nor look for others.[4]

What renders each of our actors and writers the more complex is the fact that they all conceived India not in some purely pre-determined terms, but through their dealings with local interlocutors, who were at least 'native informants' but frequently far more than that. The balance between empirical experience and schematic conceptualisation in determining such views has been much debated in recent years, with the canonical view having gone through some rather violent oscillations in the process. The view that had come to be accepted in the 1960s and 1970s, thanks to such works as Donald Lach's massive and encyclopaedic

[4] Dharma Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India: Agricultural Labour in the Madras Presidency in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd edn, New Delhi, 1992, p. xv.

opus, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, was that Europeans were relatively ignorant about India in about 1500, or at any rate that they possessed forms of knowledge that were wrapped in layers of medieval mystification. The centuries of intensive empirical contact that followed 1500 were supposed, in this view, not only to have peeled away the mystification and obfuscation (thus, the inaccurate map of India presented in about 1500 in say, the Cantino Planisphere, being replaced successively by more and more accurate representations, to take but one example), but also to have led to the accumulation of reliable data.[5] Lach (and his collaborator Edwin Van Kley) thus end the first part of their third volume (significantly subtitled 'A Century of Advance'), with the following phrase:

> In conclusion, the number of books about Asia printed in Europe, the wide diffusion of these books in all European languages, and the references in both popular and scholarly writings to these books and to information about Asia, all enabled seventeenth-century European readers to obtain a better-informed idea than previously of the reality of Asia and a clearer image of its dimensions, its peoples, and its various languages, religions and cultures.[6]

If this were true of armchair thinkers sitting in Europe, we must imagine that it could only have been even more true for those Europeans who actually ventured as far as India: they too must have had ever 'better-informed ideas' and 'clearer images' with the passage of time, as the mists of disinformation and misinformation cleared.

Such a Whiggish view of the articulation between information and knowledge came under severe attack, as is well-known, in the course of the late 1970s and 1980s, in a number of works of both a general and specific nature. One can sense the first hesitant stirrings as early as 1950 in the writings of Raymond Schwab, followed then by such works of the late 1970s as Partha Mitter's *Much Maligned Monsters*, with its wish 'not only to trace misrepresentations of Hindu art throughout history but, more importantly, to challenge the validity of applying Western classical norms for appreciating Indian art'.[7] Though the best known of such critiques is undoubtedly Edward Said's empirically uneven and highly polemical work, the context of the debate can only be understood if one absorbs the critiques that were simultaneously produced of studies of comparative religion, ethnography and cartography. These critiques served to demonstrate that the notion that Europeans—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—were innocent gatherers of information, in the world at large, could simply not be sustained. Still, in more

[5] For a recent reiteration of this viewpoint, see Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Le devisement du monde: De la pluralité des espaces à l'espace global de l'humanité, XVème-XVIème siècles*, Lisbon, 2000.

[6] Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume III: A Century of Advance*, Book 1, Chicago, 1993, pp. 596–97.

[7] Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, 2nd edn, Chicago, 1992, p. xiii (original publication 1977).

recent times, the pendulum has swung back, as we see from a stream of influential publications seeking, as it were, to remake the virginity of the early modern European observer abroad, a concession which is at times extended as far as the early colonial administrators.[8] These newer writings represent the alliance of two quite distinct tendencies. On the one hand, historians of colonial India wish to defend the validity of their stock-in-trade, which is to say the colonial archives and their contents, and hence are desirous of pointing to the excesses of views that focus solely on the processes by which such archives were produced. On the other hand, historians of European ideas have over the years become naturally somewhat anxious concerning the status of their heroes, the omniscient European subjects who master the world through a series of ever more refined tools over the early modern and modern periods. This has naturally led to a situation in which these historians have argued that the works of the second historiographical phase described above have led to an unnecessary and unjustifiable denigration of positive European knowledge.

In order to advance in this direction, three different rhetorical strategies have been employed in combination. The first is that of exaggeration, and suggests that opponents of the positive view of European knowledge of the world at large represent a defence of 'radical incommensurability', that is the view that cultures are fundamentally untranslatable. Thus, any historical evidence of processes of translation and mutual intelligibility must automatically be taken as dealing a mortal blow to the sceptical view. A second strategy is that of banalisation, namely to argue that the relation between any observer and any social object can be thought to raise the same set of problems of perception; why then single out the Europeans and India, if the account of a Portuguese traveller to Italy, or an Arab traveller to Iran suffers from the same notional set of problems? This view is taken to its logical conclusion in the Indian case, for example, by arguing that even if a critique can be mounted of 'European standards of historical coherence' in the sixteenth century, 'Muslim historians of India' were at least as guilty of the sins of 'orientalism' (and probably more so) than their European counterparts. In the view of a recent analyst of travel-literature within a tradition of a European history of ideas, whose familiarity with 'Muslim' texts is ironically entirely mediated by translations produced by western Orientalists, 'it has (. . .) become obvious that there were equally ideological biases in "oriental" Muslim views of other oriental peoples', with the necessary corollary being that an uncalled-for fuss has been made regarding European views of India.[9] A third strategy, somewhat different in nature, consists of using the affective argument. Many Europeans, it is argued, had an affective relationship to non-European cultures, and even to individuals (whether within a sexual relationship or outside of it). This affective bond must be treated

[8] For such a 'heroic' view in respect of figures such as F.W. Ellis, see Thomas R. Trautmann, 'Inventing the History of South India', in Daud Ali, ed., *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, Delhi, 1999, pp. 36–54.

[9] Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 287.

as dissolving (or at least rendering secondary) the problem of perception mediated by, or even related to, the exercise of power in all its complexity.

It is clear that a limpid explication of the relationship between perception (and knowledge) and power is a difficult task, whether in the South Asian case or elsewhere. In its simplest versions, the theorists of a relationship between knowledge and power would posit a causal relationship in one or the other direction: either a change in the form and manner in which power was exercised would cause a corresponding shift in the nature of the knowledge thereby produced, or the shift in forms of knowledge would precede and somehow facilitate the exercise of power. Where the colonial relationship is concerned, historians have tended to favour the former version, seeing colonial conquest as producing a series of institutions (surveys, censuses, the colonial police, and so on) that determine the nature of colonial knowledge. This knowledge might then have an impact in turn on the changing nature of the institutions, but the assumption is largely of a prior shift in the forms of the exercise of power that sets the whole process in motion. It is of course possible to argue, and a minority of authors has done so, that a long term stability exists in the terms of the production of European knowledge on India, that goes back at least to the medieval period; this would then be a sort of 'European essence' in terms of the will to knowledge, that suffers only minor modifications with the move from a situation of relative political parity in say 1700, to one of a rather unequal relationship a century later. In this highly contested historiography, the three careers at hand thus help us to unravel some of the threads in the larger argument, while at the same time permitting a closer look at the historical processes of the transition itself.

A Bishop '*in partibus infidelium*'

The first of the characters that we shall consider here is a certain Dom António José de Noronha, whose career has hitherto remained rather obscure, despite some attention devoted to it by historians of Portuguese India.[10] Noronha was of Portuguese descent and born in July 1720 (probably in Goa) of a certain D. Francisco de Noronha and Dona Cecília Ana de Meneses, both sides of the family having considerable histories of service in Portuguese India. With the early death of his father in a shipwreck, followed shortly thereafter by that of his mother, Noronha was placed in charge of his paternal grandmother who entrusted him to the Franciscans for his education. At the age of sixteen, he received religious orders, and under the name of Frei António da Purificação, was sent to the Portuguese settlement of Mylapore (or São Tomé), today a part of Chennai (Madras), but at that time still autonomous of English control. During the next decade and a half,

[10] For instance Ismael Gracias, *O Bispo de Halicarnasso D. António José de Noronha: Memória Histórica*, Nova Goa, 1903; the most recent biographical sketch is that by Carmen Radulet, 'D. António José de Noronha: ficha biográfica', in D. António José de Noronha, *Sistema Marcial Asiático, Político, Histórico, Genealógico, Analítico e Miscelânico*, ed., Carmen M. Radulet, Lisbon, 1994, pp. xi–xxvi.

Noronha was able to display his considerable political and diplomatic skills. Though initially no more than the vicar of the church of Nossa Senhora da Luz in Mylapore, he began gradually to build links with the French in Pondicherry, using the mediation of the Luso-Indian wife of the French governor Dupleix, Dona Joana de Castro. His activities in the Dupleix household made him the object of considerable suspicion, both from secular Europeans and other Catholic priests, who repeatedly demanded that his affairs be looked into. His rise in the hierarchy, as Visitor to the Catholic Missions of Coromandel and Pegu in 1747, combined with a growing personal fortune, eventually reached an apogee in 1748. In the context of the succession crisis in Arcot in the 1740s, Noronha managed to obtain an extensive *parwana* from Chanda Sahib (one of the contestants for succession to the Nawwabi of Arcot) for the territories around Mylapore, and was even named by the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* to the position of Governor of the City of Mylapore and its dependent villages, as well as 'director and agent of the Portuguese nation on the coast of Coromandel'.

This change in the status of both Noronha and Mylapore in the latter half of 1749 called for a swift response on the part of the English East India Company. Mylapore was attacked by an English force on the night of 14 October 1749, and after some brief resistance, Noronha was seized and transferred as a prisoner to Madras. Despite Portuguese official protests, he was then transferred (still a prisoner) on an English vessel to Portsmouth, and eventually made his way to London, after being freed. Noronha refused some offers of compensation made to him by the English, and proceeded then to Paris, where he was received in the court of Louis XV and given a number of honours. Eventually named in 1751 to the post of Bishop of Halicarnassus (a notional bishopric that did not in fact require a residence on the part of its holder), Noronha then returned to Pondicherry in 1751 through the intercession of the French Company, and on one of its vessels.[11] But the taste for the military life had left a mark on him after the unsuccessful defence of Mylapore, in which he had in fact been wounded. We thus find him not only a diplomat but an active if minor commander allied to the French, and episodically to the Marathas as well as Haidar Ali, in the course of the late 1750s. Indeed, after the fall of Pondicherry in January 1761, Noronha even spent a certain period in the company of Haidar as an auxiliary commander, receiving from him the title of Shamsher Dilawar Jang Bahadur. But after a brief period in this capacity of free-wheeling captain, Noronha eventually decided to return to Portuguese territories, where we find him in various guerrilla campaigns in the Ponda region against the Marathas in 1763, during the viceroyalty of D. Manuel de Saldanha, Conde da Ega. Here is how we find him described by the viceroy himself in a letter of the period, in the context of a military campaign:

> The bishop-elect of Halicarnassus was the first who passed to those lands of Ponda, commanding the body of Sipais of the State in order to effect the

[11] Halicarnassus corresponds to the modern Bodrum in Turkey. Noronha was thus named titular or non-resident Bishop *in partibus infidelium*, a term meaning 'in the lands of the unbelievers'.

> operations as I had decided from the start, without the *Estado* itself being revealed in its true colours, an action that he carried out with great freedom. His character is more that of a soldier than of an ecclesiastic: he has a pretty good knowledge of Asian customs and habits, he speaks the Moorish and Maratha languages, and with the title of Nababo added to his well-known valour, he is feared and respected all over the Concão.[12]

By 1765, Noronha thus was named Chief Brigadier of the Legion of Royal Volunteers of Ponda and General Intendant of the Provinces of Ponda, Zambaulim and Canacona. But this second hour of glory was not destined to last much longer than that in Mylapore. Matters took a turn for the worse with the imprisonment of the viceroy Conde da Ega on his return to Lisbon in December 1766. A number of strident voices began to be heard in the Portuguese colony against the strange figure of Noronha, as we see from a letter of February 1770 written to Lisbon by a certain D. João José de Melo, member of the governing council of Goa at that time, justifying the fact that Noronha had been held prisoner in Fort Aguada from December 1769 in order to prevent him from disappearing to the 'most remote regions of India'. Melo wrote:

> This man is an ecclesiastic in appearance and in his customs he is slipshod (*relaxado*). His religion did not prevent him from becoming a Nababo, in which form or disguise he has gone about with the title of Dilavargenga, and his qualities are those of a great lack of truthfulness and those of an incomparable aptitude for everything that is an intrigue, and with such qualities one usually has a great following in this land . . . .[13]

By 1770, it had hence been decided to send Noronha back to Portugal as a prisoner; on his return there, he remained some 18 months in prison, before being freed in April 1772. But Noronha was not about to suffer such treatment without an adequate response. Thus, he organised a series of petitions to the all-powerful Marquis of Pombal already while in prison, and was eventually restituted to grace, so that we find him en route to India once more in 1773. On his arrival in Goa in January 1774, he recovered a good part of the lands and territories that he had disposed of before his imprisonment, as well as his earlier position in respect of the Legion of Royal Volunteers. His sudden death in Goa in February 1776 brought an end to this eighteenth-century career, of a man who it was claimed 'could manage to understand and speak seven Asian languages and six from Europe, and on thirty-seven occasions had been Ambassador to various Asian courts'.

But Noronha was not merely an ecclesiastic turned man-of-action or mercenary captain. He was also a rather prolific writer, with an almost fanatical attachment to the written word that can seen for example in such minor texts as the 'Diary of

[12] Noronha, *Sistema*, p. xxi.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

the events on the voyage that Dom António José de Noronha, Bishop of Halicarnassus, made from the Kingdom of Portugal to the city of Goa, begun on 21st April 1773'.[14] The central part of his written work must however be taken to be political, and concerns the situation in the Deccan and Southern India in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, particularly in relation to the strategic interests of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*. The three principal entities with which Noronha is concerned are the Marathas, Mysore under Haidar Ali, and the English East India Company, even if a number of other actors also feature periodically in his vision of things, notably the French Company. Now, the position of the *Estado* between the 1730s and the 1760s was undoubtedly a difficult one. After the substantial losses of the years from 1610 to 1660, the Portuguese had managed in the last decades of the seventeenth century to consolidate their territories on the west coast of India, thanks to the complex relationship between the Mughals and the Marathas, which afforded them some margin of manoeuvre.[15] However, the 1730s saw a resurgence of Maratha attacks, culminating in the major loss of the *Província do Norte* in the closing years of the decade. The response of the *Estado* was somewhat slow to come, but consisted eventually, between 1746 and 1784, in building a contiguous territory around the core of Goa rather than the dispersed and rather more strategically fragile disposition that had existed earlier. This was what eventually led to the creation of the so-called 'New Conquests', which were gained largely at the expense of a number of Maratha chieftains in the immediate neighbourhood of Goa, and which more than trebled the area of the territory.[16] Noronha's own actions in the 1760s form a part of this process of consolidation, but he—like a number of other contemporaries—undoubtedly believed that the key to containing the Maratha threat lay in the Mysore state of Haidar Ali. This was the reason why he penned a memorial on Haidar Ali in 1764, which he then submitted to the Conde da Ega, entitling it a 'Historical Memoir of the life of the Prince called Aydar Aly Naique, his birth, his maxims and policies, and the forts that he has captured, their names, of the rivers and lands that he has conquered, of their chiefs, their customs and the reasons for their disgrace'.[17] The strategic character

[14] D. António José de Noronha, *Diário dos sucessos da viagem que fez do Reino de Portugal para a cidade de Goa, D. António José de Noronha, Bispo de Halicarnasse, principiada aos 21 de Abril de 1773*, eds, Carmen M. Radulet and Francisco Contente Domingues, Lisbon, 1995.

[15] Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History*, London, 1993, pp. 188–96; Glenn J. Ames, *Renascent Empire?: The House of Braganza and the Quest for Stability in Portuguese Monsoon Asia, ca. 1640–1683*, Amsterdam, 2000.

[16] For the relative importance of the Old and New Conquests, see Rudy Bauss, 'A demographic study of Portuguese India and Macau as well as comments on Mozambique and Timor, 1750–1850', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (hereafter *IESHR*), Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, 1997, pp. 199–216; and Maria de Jesus dos Mártires Lopes, *Goa setecentista: Tradição e modernidade*, Lisbon, 1996.

[17] The text is published in D. António José de Noronha, *Obras políticas*, ed., Carmen M. Radulet, Lisbon, 2001, pp. 39–54; and had earlier been published by J.H. da Cunha Rivara in *O Chronista de Tissuary*, Nos 10 and 11, 1866, pp. 260–66, 288–94.

and information contained in this succint text need not detain us here, since it has already been studied in some detail by N.K. Sinha;[18] rather, what is of interest is the perspective that Noronha brings to bear on a subject such as this.

The text is a dense one, full of the names of princes and warlords of the epoch, as well as the characteristic politico-administrative terminology which was by then shared by Mughals, Marathas and the rulers of Mysore. It informs us that Haidar's parents were of humble birth, and born in Kolar, and that the father died fighting for the *subadar* of Sira against the forces of Mysore. We then are given a very brief view of Haidar's early military career in Mysore, before plunging directly into a series of details concerning the siege of Tiruchirapalli, in which the personage of Noronha himself appears in the third person, as an actor who was at the time very close to the Marquis of Dupleix. In the rest of the text, Noronha makes a number of further appearances, always in the third person; and the text consistently prefers the objective tone of the chronicler to the seductive voice of the eyewitness. A series of descriptions of campaigns eventually leads to a brief physical description of Haidar ('of a good stature and full bodied, with a proud air, and a brown complexion, thick lips, large and sparkling eyes, he does not laugh easily, and walks with slow and affected steps, he does not trust anyone'). We also learn that Haidar does not know to read or write but that he has a good memory, that he has no other major vices than wine, and that he is an enemy of the Brahmins even though he employs them in large numbers as accountants and scribes. And the text concludes: 'He is very untrustworthy in regard to promises, as has been seen, [and] he is most lascivious, for the complete satisfaction of which he can become a tyrant, for which God will make him pay'.

Here, as on some other occasions, Noronha's religious inclinations emerge to the fore, but what is of interest are the absences in the text, especially in comparison to the title. Little that is systematic in terms of political geography or even the fiscal resources at Haidar's disposal may be found here, of a sort that can easily be found in Robert Orme's papers under such heads as 'An Account of the Revenues which Hyder Ally received in 1767 from the different parts of his Dominions into his Treasury clear of all charges of collecting'.[19] It would seem that Noronha was caught here, so to speak, between two stools. Obviously he knew a great deal more about Haidar Ali than he could reveal in the text, on account of the close proximity that he had enjoyed over an extended period, but he may have felt that to say more would be to compromise his own position. Thus having chosen the relatively dry third-person narrative, he was forced into a form that he was not in fact equipped to deal with, not possessing access to the 'objective' data, whether ethnographic, geographical or statistical, that one would expect in such a memoir.

It may however be unfair to judge Noronha's capacities from this minor text alone. Rather, we must grapple with what is in many respects his *magnum opus*,

[18] Cf. N.K. Sinha, *Haidar Ali*, Calcutta, 1941.

[19] British Library, London, Oriental and India Office Collections (henceforth OIOC), Orme Mss. No. 33, Document 7, 'An Account of Hyderally's Revenues, his provinces, his expences, sent by G. Mackay to R.O.', pp. 111–19.

the work entitled *Sistema Marcial Asiático* ('The Asiatic Martial System'), dated to 1772 (when Noronha was in Lisbon), and dedicated to the Governor who had just been named to the *Estado da Índia*, Dom José Pedro da Câmara. This work is divided into two books, and preceded by an erudite and rather obscure dedication, as well as a prologue, in which Noronha refers to the need to attend to the 'ills of a moribund and suffering Mother, who is the sweet Pátria', thus suggesting that his book is a reform-tract of a sort. 'Here', he tells the reader,

> you will see the system of the Asiatics as well as the progress of arms, as much those of the Portuguese, as of the Agarenes [Angrias ?], Maratas, and all the other nations who inhabit that extensive Empire. In the Second Book, I hope to invite you to continue with the same matter, where I will show you the more modern progress that has been practised by the same nations.

The first book then embarks on the first of its seven chapters, a 'Brief Notice of East India, and a particular relation of the capital of Goa, its situation, forts and fortifications', accompanied by a set of sketches in colour showing Goa as well as some of its neighbouring fortresses. A second chapter takes us to an account of the decline of Goa, and a third to an account of the military forces there. The fourth and fifth chapters deal respectively with the Marathas, both the rulers of Satara and the Peshwas, and of the so-called 'Prince of the Deccan', which is to say the Nizam. The sixth chapter deals with a line of the Bhonsles ('O Dessay Guem Saunt Bounçuló') who rule over the area immediately north of Goa, while the last chapter returns to deal with Haidar Ali Khan Bahadur, a veritable obsession as we shall see with Noronha.

The second book, which is of roughly the same length, is divided into a mere three chapters, of which the first recounts a series of successful campaigns that the Portuguese have carried out in India in recent times. It is followed by a description of some of the more important ports in Asia (including Manila, but excluding Macao), where the Portuguese currently trade. A closing section takes the form of a synopsis, pointing to the major campaigns that have taken place in the last years (meaning the 1760s) between the British, Marathas, Mughals and Haidar Ali Khan, concluding in 1769, the year when Noronha was placed under arrest prior to being sent to Portugal. The text concludes:

> These were the progress of Asiatic and English arms until the year 1769. If God gives me life and health, I will continue the third volume for the better instruction of the curious, which will treat of the same progress along with the revolutions that have taken place amongst the Potentates of Asia, which may be favourable to the State of Goa and to the establishment of its commerce.

From this passage and others, we can see that despite its rather curious title, the book was in fact principally intended to be a chronicle, with some elements of geographical description thrown in to illustrate the places where the Portuguese

resided, or some of the principal actions described in the text took place. The claims to offer more information on the state of the military balance are for the most part misleading. Thus the fourth chapter of the First Book claims in its title to describe (amongst other things) 'the terrestrial forces of the Maratas, [and] the naval forces of the Maratas', but on the latter we hear practically nothing and on the former, a mix of odd anecdotes and a description of three types of cavalry, followed by an extended excursus on the *pindaris*. Noronha also insists that it is only in the last twenty years, that is after about 1750, that some of the Marathas have begun to carry firearms; besides, 'they fight without form, and the greater part of the shots they fire are useless because the arms are pointed in the air'. All in all, then, most of the military forces to be found in the Deccan can hardly be taken seriously if one is to follow Noronha's account, and one scarcely knows whether their military practices are more ridiculous or their idolatries and superstitions.

To the latter he returns time and again, but most notably in a section that forms the closing part of the chapter on the Marathas, and which is entitled 'Origins of their Brahmins and some of their superstitions'. Noronha writes:

> All idolators and principally the Brahmins observe superstitious rites, so irrefragable are they in their inveterate customs and ludicrous sect in which they live engulfed that, in order not to deviate an iota from the law that they profess, they often lose the chance to gain great victories and greater felicities. One of their superstitions, and in truth the most ridiculous of all, is that if on coming out of one of their houses or tents, someone who is in the entourage happens to sneeze, at once, without a moment's hesitation, they turn back fearing the augury of the misfortune that they believe will infallibly occur if they go on with the task for which they had set out.[20]

Other such superstitions are noted, relating to birds or animals of ill-omen, and Noronha concludes that in general the Brahmins are characterised by a lack of courage, which can be seen by their conduct 'in the field of battle or in the escalade of a fortress'. However, they are cunning and unprincipled negotiators and it thus by this means, rather than through their courage or military tactics, that they have managed to advance in their political enterprises. Noronha claims to know these political Brahmins very well, so much so that 'if I were to relate all that I have seen and heard of this nation, it would make a substantial volume'. As for their origins, he assures us on the basis of textual authority that they are of Jewish descent (in fact, 'many believe that they descend from the tribe of Levi'), and that they had long resided in the Caucasus Mountains, where they had been exiled.[21]

[20] Noronha, *Sistema*, pp. 66–67.

[21] This is a creative use of the legend of Alexander and the Jews, for which see Andrew Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200–1600*, Leiden, 1995, Ch. 2; and Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Tradition in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1979, p. 56. The distant origins may be found in the Greek text from the third century C.E. of Pseudo-Callisthène, *Le*

Initially prevented from attaining India by Alexander the Great, they managed on the death of that monarch to arrive there, and took up the pen in order to emerge as scribes and accountants.

If Noronha's views of the Brahmins are negative, his notion of Islam is even blacker, as we see from the curious and garbled history he presents us of Vijayanagara. The central figure in his account is a certain Ramrazá, 'the most powerful Emperor who has ever been seen in that part of the world, so it is affirmed by Pedro Barreto de Rezende and Damião de Góes, in the *Chrónica de El-Rey Dom Manuel*'. Noronha's invocations of great authors are to be taken no more literally here than elsewhere, but it is interesting to note that his library consists largely of Portuguese authors from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Now, it turns out that this Ramrazá (based loosely on the figure of the Vijayanagara regent Aravidu Ramaraya) is actually descended from Indó, a descendant in the eighth generation of Adam, who had been sent to India by Noah and who remained there as the first settler; Ramrazá was his direct descendant, and ruled over the city of 'Vizapur' until he was defeated by the people of the 'damned sect of Mahomed' in a battle in 1563 (or perhaps 1566, a point on which Noronha hesitates). As for Islam itself, it was founded in the year 676, writes Noronha, at the time of the empire of Heraclitus in a place called Sarato in Arabia, and was brought to India by a heretical Nestorian monk called Sérgio and two of his Jewish companions, all disguised as merchants. Since they arrived in Gujarat, 'the first to be infected by this abominable and contagious plague were the Gujaratis, people of Cambay'. The first great Muslim conqueror, Giat Nosorandy, went on to found the city of Delhi, while Ramrazá was busy in his other wars. In the course of time, Ramrazá was captured by his former vassal, Nizamxá, who went on to cut off the head of the 96 year old monarch 'without paying attention to the reverence and respect he owed him, and forgetting the esteem with which he had always been treated'.[22]

Noronha's attempts at providing a coherent history of peninsular India in the eighteenth century, as well as in the centuries leading up to the establishment of the power of Mughals and the Marathas must be counted, all in all, as of limited interest. If his purpose in putting all this down on paper was to influence Portuguese policies with respect to India (as has sometimes been suggested), one can only wonder what readers in Lisbon made of these texts, with their mixture of exotic place-names, Old Testament references, and garbled chronology. Thus, we have the fairly long account of the first Nizam, where it is claimed he died in 1743 at the age of 107 years, and that he was an illegitimate son of one of the Mughal princes. This section of the text is one of the few where Noronha explicitly claims to have had access to written materials in India; his account of the battle for succession after the death of Aurangzeb ('o Imperador Alemguir Gassy'), is based he states on the 'chronicles of the Mogor emperors in the Hindustani language

Roman d'Alexandre: La vie et les hauts faits d'Alexandre de Macédonie, trans. Gilles Bounoure and Blandine Serret, Paris, 1992.

[22] Noronha, *Sistema*, pp. 50–51.

(*língoa industana*) that I read', amongst which he counts one by a certain 'Saed Efandy'.[23]

It is thus tempting to treat Noronha as a throwback, as it were, to an earlier epoch, an impression that is further reinforced when one examines his collection of maps and plans (he has a number of these, including several of Mylapore alone). For his maps and plans do not diverge in their conception from what had been executed in the 1630s by Pedro Barreto de Resende, who—we have seen—is also one of his textual references. In his use of the chronicle form too, his real references seem to be to authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as Diogo do Couto or João de Barros, to whom he refers time and again. As for his limited excursions into the 'ethnography' of India or into dimensions of religion, he seems to come up constantly against his own religious training, his desire to bring everything back into a framework rather strictly defined by the Old Testament, and his fervent and clearly expressed dislike for both Muslims and Brahmins. In this respect, it also easy enough to develop a contrast between Noronha and a slightly younger writer in Portuguese, the Turin-born Carlos Julião (1740–1811), who spent some six years in India as part of an elaborate mission on behalf of the Portuguese Secretary of State, Martinho de Melo, that took him to Brazil and China.[24] Julião produced a text entitled 'Summary notice of the Gentilism in Asia', in 107 short chapters, containing some Sanskrit *shlokas* in transliteration and with a translation, a summary of the *Mahabharata* and of the ten *avataras* of Vishnu (each with an accompanying coloured illustration), thus continuing a tradition of religious ethnography that can be traced back at least to the sixteenth century, and in which the Jesuits and other religious orders played a role of some significance. But what is of significance was that Julião did not pertain to this religious context, but was instead an artillery-captain, with some interest in military engineering.

Returning to Noronha, it is evident that he took himself fairly seriously as an historian, as we see from his attempts to engage in a polemic with two of the best-known historians of the English Company in the eighteenth century, Richard Owen Cambridge and Robert Orme. In two texts, the 'Chronological Deduction' (dedicated to the Marquis of Pombal) and the 'Apologetical and Critical Manifesto', Noronha attempts to demonstrate how the two historians have defamed him, and have also produced a distorted view of history that is essentially designed to defend English interests.[25] Much of the debate centres on the incidents in Mylapore in 1749, and the events that transpired thereafter, and Noronha presents himself both as actor and eyewitness, and as an objective historian. Neither Cambridge nor Orme seem to have responded, and Pombal too does not seem to have been

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.

[24] Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Seção de Iconografia, C. I, 2, 8, 'Notícia summaria do gentilismo da Ásia com dez Riscos Iluminados . . .'. For a brief discussion of the author, also see Lygia da Fonseca Fernandes da Cunha, *Riscos Illuminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio*, Rio de Janeiro, 1960.

[25] Noronha, *Obras Políticas*, pp. 117–44, 161–83.

overly concerned with the anti-English views of Noronha. Certainly by 1770, it would have been foolhardy for the Portuguese to attempt any open opposition to the English Company in India, and Noronha's articulation of history with its moral condemnation of English hypocrisy has had to wait over two centuries before seeing print.

Nevertheless, the case of Noronha appears an interesting one for two reasons. First, we see that as distinct from the traveller or the armchair analyst, a military and political actor such as Noronha, who was close to the centres of power both in Goa and outside it, had a view of India which combined a sense of *realpolitik* and of alliances, with a set of strongly articulated prejudices in respect of almost all the Indian actors with whom he was in contact. These prejudices included the notion that most Indian armies were fundamentally incompetent, that Indians gained ground through devious negotiations rather than on the battlefield, and that most treaties were not worth the paper they were signed on. Yet, all this also comes inserted in a moral discourse, for Noronha is outraged when the English behave in this fashion, suggesting that he holds them to a higher standard than he does the Peshwa or Haidar Ali. A second aspect is Noronha's clear desire to link the state of Southern India in the eighteenth century to a set of religious and Biblical themes of degeneration, the terms in which he analyses both Muslims and Gentiles. Here, his training as a Franciscan may have had a role to play, but as has been remarked, some of these views were also shared by other Europeans in eighteenth-century India. All of this, we must recall, was written from the perspective of restoring some degree of respectability to the *Estado da Índia*, which by the mid-eighteenth century had been reduced to a secondary or even tertiary level power in the politics of Southern India.

Ethno-politics According to Monsieur Bussy

One of the concrete projects that is treated in the second part of Noronha's *Sistema Marcial* consists of a plan to bring together a strike-force of 1500 Europeans in Goa, with the ultimate aim of recovering the Northern Province and particularly Chaul and Bassein. With the possibility of an alliance with the one or the other side in a conflict between the Marathas and Haidar Ali, Noronha expresses his confidence that major gains can be made. His argument is pushed along by way of analogies with other notable successes of the eighteenth century, namely those of the English and French. He thus writes:

> What power does Industão have to resist 1500 Europeans in the Portuguese camp, commanded by a perfectly experienced chief, when with only 400 French Bussy laid down the law in Deccan, and with as many Englishmen we saw Clives (*sic*) conquer all Arcot and Bengal? And I do not even have to speak of the ancient prowess that was shown by the Portuguese nation in the Orient, for it is so well-known that one can do without narrating it again.[26]

[26] Noronha, *Sistema*, p. 139.

Two names to conjure with then in about 1770: Robert Clive and Charles de Bussy. Noronha was of course no particular admirer of Clive, in view of his generalised Anglophobia, but Bussy is mentioned admiringly several times in his diverse works. Thus, earlier in the same chapter of the *Sistema Marcial*, he informs us that Bussy possesses two indispensable qualities, 'prudence and knowledge of the lands', and that these qualities were in evidence 'during a period of nine years when he held a command in the Deccan, at a month's distance from Pondicherry'. Now the name of Bussy, together with that of Dupleix, is all-too-familiar in the annals of French imperial historiography, where the two represent a lost occasion when all of India might have fallen under the tricolour rather than the Union Jack. But what concerns us here are not Bussy's exploits but his attitudes. How did this mid-eighteenth century adventurer see the part of the world where he acted on behalf of the French Company?

A brief summary of the principal stages of Bussy's career may not be entirely out of place here to set the stage.[27] Born in February 1720, thus some five months before Noronha, in a village not far from Compiègne, he belonged equally to a family with a military tradition, his father having been a Lieutenant-Colonel in the infantry. At the age of thirteen, Charles de Bussy entered the military and served briefly under the command of his father, until the latter's death in 1735. Through the intercession of a powerful patron, the Comptroller-General Orry, Bussy was then enrolled into the army of the French East India Company and departed soon after for the Indian Ocean islands under French control. By 1741, he arrived in India itself, first (so it would appear) at the French factory in Mahé, and then the very next year in Pondicherry. Later in the same decade, he appears to have taken part in the Anglo-French hostilities, and he is mentioned among those who defended Pondicherry against the English forces in 1748. In August 1749, at the battle of Ambur in which the French supported Chanda Sahib against Anwar-ud-Din Khan, the newly nominated Nawwab of Arcot, Bussy played a role of some significance, leading to the retreat of the Arcot forces and the eventual death of the Nawwab. This battle, and the successful attack a year thereafter on the massive fort of Senji (captured by the French in September 1750), seem to have made Bussy's reputation, and led to his nomination as head of a French expeditionary force to the Deccan in January 1751.

The complexities of the politics of the Hyderabad state in these years have been dealt with by a number of historians, and need not detain us too long here. After the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah in 1748, his successor Nasir Jang managed to reign for only two years before being assassinated in December 1750. Bussy's task was thus initially to accompany a rival claimant to the Nizamat, a certain Muzaffar Jang, with whom the French Company had an alliance already from 1749, in order both to protect him and assure the stability of his rule in Hyderabad. But, shortly after their departure from Pondicherry for Hyderabad,

[27] For standard works, see Marc Chassaigne, *Bussy en Inde*, Paris, 1976, and Roger Glachant, 'Un conquérant sans étoile, le marquis de Bussy (1720–1785)', *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 1968, No. 4, pp. 289–314.

Muzaffar Jang was killed in a rebellion; Bussy then seized the occasion to nominate one of the dead man's brothers—a certain Salabat Jang—*subadar* of Hyderabad. This was undoubtedly a bold and unprecedented move, since it was normal to await a sign from the imperial court at Delhi before making such a claim. But emboldened by the lack of a clear reaction, Bussy went even further, entering first Hyderabad and then Aurangabad, where he and his entourage began to see themselves in the role of veritable *conquistadores*. A series of complex negotiations, battles and campaigns followed over the next few years, with Bussy at times advising that the French 'pull out of this labyrinth', but at other moments presenting strong arguments for the need to maintain the presence in the Deccan. At times allied with the Marathas, but at times equally engaged in a struggle with the Peshwa, Bussy continued his actions in the Deccan and the so-called Northern Circars (or coastal Andhra north of Masulipatnam) even after the replacement of his superior and protector, Dupleix, who was recalled to France in 1754. By 1758, however, his hour of glory was clearly over. Conflicts with the new head of French military operations in India, the Count of Lally-Tollendal, made his situation ever more fragile. Eventually, in January 1760, in a disastrous battle at Vandavashi, Bussy was captured by the English, who treated him however with much respect.

Once the rose-coloured spectacles of French imperial historiography are taken off, it is clear that Bussy in these years was a formidable warlord, but one who only tenuously felt the control of Pondicherry through the first half of the 1750s.[28] His finances were assured by links to local *sahukars* (as he asserts on more than one occasion in his letters), and by the extensive financial network of Dupleix, who was himself no mean private trader and entrepreneur.[29] Bussy's financial shrewdness extended into revenue-farming and political negotiation, where his loyalty in one or the other situation was often available to the highest bidder. Most remarkable is the fact that after his repatriation to France, he managed successfully to defend himself from the financial charges that sullied Dupleix's reputation, as well as to protect himself from the more serious charges of treason that cost Lally his life. This was no easy affair, as we see from a number of pamphlets that Bussy had published in the 1760s;[30] but in the same period, his social ascension came to be assured through his marriage (with the aristocratic and politically well-connected Arthémise de Choiseul in May 1761), and his acquisition of a title, that of the Marquis of Bussy-Castelnau. We are also aware that after a long absence of two decades, in the early 1780s, Bussy decided to return to active service, and was hence sent to India in order to look to situation there, by now

[28] He is also an excellent example of the 'portfolio capitalist' of the period, for which see Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C.A. Bayly, 'Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India', *IESHR*, Vol. XXV (4), 1988, pp. 401–24.

[29] On Dupleix, see most recently Marc Vigié, *Dupleix*, 1993; and on questions of private trade, Catherine Manning, *Fortunes à faire: The French in Asian Trade, 1719–1748*, Aldershot, 1996.

[30] Charles-Joseph de Bussy, *Mémoire pour le sieur de Bussy, brigadier des armées du roi, expositif de ses créances sur la Compagnie des Indes*, Paris, 1764; Charles-Joseph de Bussy, *Mémoire pour le marquis de Bussy (. . .) contre les syndics et directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes*, Paris, 1767.

reduced to far more modest dimensions where the French Company was concerned. Arriving in Porto Novo in March 1783, Bussy was unable on this occasion to make much of an impression on the state of military affairs. Between 1783, and his death in Pondicherry in early January 1785, his papers are largely concerned with opinions on diverse projects that were proposed for alliances with a number of powers (including—as was natural in the epoch—Tipu Sultan); in terms of concrete action, only the expedition to Trincomalee stands out.

Like Noronha, Bussy too was fundamentally a political actor, but like the Bishop could manipulate the pen as well as the sword. And like his Portuguese contemporary, his views were not simply the theories of a political thinker or the reflections of a traveller at the end of the voyage; they were the concrete notions of an actor, who—as we shall see—also lived to a large extent by his theories. It is necessary in this context to set aside a somewhat romantic construct that opposes a positive French conception of eighteenth-century India to a negative British view;[31] this opposition, which is sometimes symbolically centred on that between Anquetil Duperron and William Jones, is in reality rather hard to sustain. French travellers in seventeenth-century India, and most notably François Bernier, wrote with subtlety and conviction of Mughal politics and social organisation, and one is equally tempted to generalise from these examples. But the world of Bussy derived in the first place from that of Dupleix, and secondly from his own negotiations in the Deccan; and as such these views were as brutal as they were frank. Some months after Bussy's departure from Pondicherry, Dupleix thus advised him in no uncertain terms: 'You know perfectly what sort of race it is that you are dealing with. A well-managed firmness mixed with some affability will get you where you want.'[32] But what sort of 'race' was it indeed? One of Dupleix's preferred words to characterise his Asian interlocutors was *fourbe*, meaning a perfidious or untrustworthy sort. But his views can be found in a number of other passages, which it would be tedious to cite at length. To take but one example, in a letter to Bussy of 22 August 1752, he wrote:

> The Asiatic once he has been seized by an idea, acts without the slightest provision, but he is also dissuaded with the greatest facility and does not know how to take care of those things which his limited intelligence has not allowed him to foresee. You know this rabble (*canaille*) better than I, and you have seen how frightened they were faced with these Maratha vagabonds. How wonderful it will be, my dear Bussy, when you will have been joined by reinforcements, and you can lay down the law to all these races who are damned by God.[33]

[31] This is largely the implication of Jean-Marie Lafont, 'India and the Age of Enlightenment, 1612–1849', in Lafont, *Indika: Essays in Indo-French Relations, 1630–1976*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 23–50, and also seems to underlie Guy Deleury, *Les Indes Florissantes: Anthologie des voyageurs français (1750–1820)*, Paris, 1991.

[32] Alfred Martineau, *Dupleix et l'Inde française, 1749–54*, Vol. IV, Paris, 1928, p. 17, letter dated 24 May 1751.

[33] Alfred Martineau, *Bussy et l'Inde française, 1720–1785*, Paris, 1935, p. 71.

Bussy for his part was of much the same opinion, as we see from a letter he wrote to Dupleix, comparing the Mughals and the Marathas. Written in late November 1751, when Bussy had somewhat recovered from the astonishment that his own success had produced, he asserted in this missive:

> The long commerce that I have had with the people of the country has taught me to know them; I could protest to you that nothing can be based on them [viz. their trust]; perfidy and duplicity come naturally to them, and we shall always be the dupes in the dealings we have with them. I believe that I have still remarked some vestiges of probity and good faith amongst the Marates, and if one had to choose, I would trust them a little more than the Mogols; but the surest way of all is not to trust either the one or the other, and not get mixed up in their affairs; these nations have no control, they are always willing to sacrifice the most inviolable engagements at the altar of their interests.[34]

This view, that it was best 'not get mixed up in their affairs', was however a temporary view from which Bussy had shifted by the next year. But while in this mood, Bussy could declare self-righteously that 'these people (. . .) have no idea of the admirable subordination that reigns in the States of Europe', comparing this with the lack of discipline he claimed was the rule in the political formations with which he was confronted in the Deccan. Despite having left France at a relatively tender age then, Bussy believed himself to be a patriot to the hilt, and—what is important—not merely a Frenchman but a European, as distinct from his counterpart, the perfidious Asiatic. Thus, writing once more to Dupleix, this time in an extensive memoir on the situation in the Deccan in July 1753:

> [To be] a man of the patria and the nation, all these words that are so sacred amongst all other peoples, mean nothing to the Moors compared to their private interest and the hope of personal advantage. Also all these great ideas of the honour of the nation, of public interest, which link all the members of a state to their sovereign and bring them together for a common cause, all are chimeras in this land, where each individual thinks only of himself, and only strives to extract something from the troubles and revolutions that take place.[35]

Or again, in a letter dated 20 May 1754:

> The intrigues that follow one another without interruption are, so to speak, the very alimentation of the Asiatic; those which have occupied me in these last times being no more than bagatelles compared to the labyrinth of cabals and secret dealings which had to be sorted out and discussed in order to establish Salabat Jang [on the throne] and to keep him in the place that he occupies.

[34] Martineau, *Bussy*, p. 80.

[35] 'Mémoire instructif sur l'état politique des Maures et des Français dans le Décan et sur leurs intérêts réciproques', 10 July 1753, in *Ibid.*, p. 108.

In this respect, the term 'Asiatic', which also appears in the title of Noronha's major work, has become more significant than it had been before, but also somewhat reduced in its coverage. Its advantage is that it covers both 'Moors' and 'Gentiles' that one finds in India, even though the former may in fact be Turkoman or Persian in origin; but it is clearly not meant to extend to peoples elsewhere in Asia, say in China or Japan. Once identified, the diagnostic features of the Asiatic can be developed and dilated on, and most importantly can form the basis of a style of politics, which is particular to India, and certainly not that which one would use in a European context. Thus Bussy elaborates on his notion of politics *à l'asiatique* in a letter of 20 June 1754:

> Experience shows sufficiently that the Asiatic does not search an alliance save to the extent that he sees his own advantage in it or when he fears that this ally will become an enemy; it is through this double viewpoint that I envisage our own [alliance], being certain that so long as we are considered in this way, nothing can break or even shake it. The alliance with the Raja of Maïssour, who is of a rank that is clearly inferior to that of the governor (*soubab*) of the Deccan, should be considered purely on account of the interest of the sums that we claim.

We are thus pushed along by this logic into the next series of claims, namely that this style of politics is determining, and the European actor can do nothing other than simply adapt to it. For Bussy, this is in the first place a matter of survival, for he considers himself to be under constant threat, both on the political plane and on a more concrete day-to-day level. This is thus a sort of 'Survival Guide to India', rather than a sanitized artefact to be read before the academies or in the salons of Europe. A letter from Bussy in the same year, 1754, while still in the Deccan, hence declares:

> I find myself in the midst of traitors, of assassins, all of whom affect the most sincere friendship on the outside; one should always be on guard against intrigues and cabals, without letting it be known however that one is not trusting, which would indispose their spirits and render difficult any opening up on their part. The traps that the Asiatic holds out are all the more difficult to perceive and to avoid, since they are covered by a veil, and he claims ardently to uphold your interest when in fact he seeks your ruin; not having anything in common, each one looks to his own interest, and tries to rise up through struggles, through factions, and through treason.[36]

A certain number of such political assassinations did work in Bussy's own favour of course, notably that of Salabat Jang's inconvenient brother and rival, Ghazi-ud-Din, in October 1752. But what is of interest is that Bussy's view has neither

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 185–86.

much ethnographic depth nor much by way of detail in terms of political economy. The view of India is thus largely pragmatic, and the most one learns from looking into the letters and their enclosures are the details of the revenue-capacity and resources of this or that area, of a sort that Léon Moracin was able to produce for example for the Masulipatnam area.[37] But of the usual *topoi* that characterise the traveller's account, Bussy—as much as Noronha—has nothing to say. No scenes of *sati* punctuate his letters, and the word 'caste' scarcely appears. Instead, the letters repeat a simple opposition, that between Europeans and Asiatics, each group with its own characteristics and its own ways of conducting itself in the political sphere.

But Bussy also has another idea, this one a rather fundamental one which is simply expressed and sums up much not only of his own world but that of the servants of the English East India Company who, a few years later, would be engaged in amassing fortunes in Bengal and elsewhere. In a letter to Moracin, soon after the latter had taken stock of the situation in Masulipatnam and its environs, he expounded his viewpoint as follows (the letter is dated 28 November 1753):

> It is not to the Director and Commandant of the French colony that I address myself but to Monsieur Moracin, an old friend, with whom I deal in all frankness and cordiality; I pray him [you] in both capacities to follow what I say exactly; he will see as well as I do that I am guided by good intentions.
>
> (. . .) We must set aside European usages in order to conform to those of this land.
>
> (. . .) As to the surplus that good government might produce, as well as all the presents or *nazers* that will be made to you, both after and during the moment when you take possession, as well as all that will be offered to you for the positions that you can grant, and which you should not hesitate even one instant to receive, we will divide them half and half, you and I. I have similarly agreed with Ibrahim Khan that all that he receives by way of *nazer*, as well as all that exceeds the current revenue of the province in which you will place him, will be divided in three, a third for you, a third for me, and a third for him. You should not hesitate to consider these provinces as pertaining to me. I have explained it all to Monsieur le Marquis Dupleix. They have been given to me, and if we do otherwise, how could I recover the considerable sums for which I am in debt, as well as those that M. Dupleix has given me?

The letter concludes: 'Once again, my dear friend, follow the usages of the land, caress some, threaten occasionally, and allow everyone to entertain hopes . . .'.[38] In a sense, this was the development of an earlier letter, also addressed to Moracin, in which Bussy had stated:

[37] Jean Deloche, 'Le mémoire de Moracin sur Macilipattinamu: Un tableau des conditions économiques et sociales des provinces côtières de l'Andhra au milieu du XVIIIe siècle', *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, Vol. 62, 1975, pp. 125–50.

[38] Martineau, *Bussy*, p. 310.

> In the midst of as perfidious (*fourbe*) a nation as this one with which we have to deal, if one always behaves with honesty and probity, I think one will be duped as we will inevitably be by this race, unless we conform a little to the usage of the country.[39]

To this he had added, quoting a verse attributed to Hannon:[40]

> *Parmi ce peuple faux, à qui garder ma foi?*
> *C'est aux événements à disposer de moi.*
> Amongst this false people, for whom shall I keep my faith?
> I'm but a victim of events.

So once again here, we see a curious tension, for the European while keeping his own identity intact, must nevertheless be prepared to do in India as the Indians do. The letter to Moracin of November 1753 was to embarrass Bussy somewhat when it was produced during the period in Paris in the 1760s when he was embroiled in litigation with other parties, for it suggested a blurring of the distinctions between the public and the private which—at least in principle—were upheld in France in the period. But Bussy did manage to survive unscathed, a fact that is not devoid of significance, suggesting that the idea of 'ethno-politics' (where one adapted to local circumstances, while knowing all the while who one really was) did manage to find its partisans. As to Bussy, the European, he also insisted time and again on this aspect of his identity, as much as on the fact that he had no intention whatsoever of 'dissolving' into the place where he resided. Thus, a particularly telling example is a letter he wrote in December 1753, while already considerably embroiled in the affairs of the Deccan, to his friend Roth, who was at that time on his way back to France where he would become one of the Directors of the French Company:

> As for me, if I were to follow my own inclinations and the natural penchant that draws me towards my patria and my family, I would be very glad to have orders from the Company to withdraw all the troops to their factories. Even if I am decorated with all the titles and marks of honour that the [Mughal] Emperor can grant to the grandees of his empire, generalissimo of the armies of the Deccan, referee between the Mogols and the Marates, and even the title of 'Maymarath',[41] all this means very little to me. How much I would prefer a promenade in the Palais Royal or the Tuileries, and a supper with two or three

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 130–31.

[40] Hanno (or Hannon) being a famous navigator from Carthage of the fourth century B.C.E., we may presume that this verse was in fact taken from a French tragedy in which he was a character, or from a translation of the so-called *Periplus of Hanno*.

[41] The reference is to the *mahi maratib*, or 'fish standard', which had been held earlier by such high *umara* as Ghazi-ud-Din Khan and Zu'lfiqar Khan; cf. Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707–1740*, reprint, Delhi, 2002.

> friends like you, to all the vain pomp of Asiatic grandeur, of which I have had too much, and the grave and magnificent person that I am obliged to play and concerning which we have laughed on occasions when we were *tête à tête*. The honour of the nation and the interests of the Company have so far been opposed to my being able to enjoy such happiness, which I have so far only been able to do in my own mind. Had I so far been less concerned with the gains of the Company, I would be less sensitive to their loss. I would only see it with the pain of a citizen who sees his patria blind to her own interests, and willing to abandon to others, treasures that she refuses only because she does not know them.[42]

Reading Bussy then, it is clear that one can hardly assimilate him to the image of the European savant, reflecting on the difference between 'Self' and 'Other'; yet he is not the pragmatic administrator either, for the few years he spent in the Deccan were not enough for any stable form of administration to emerge. Reading his letters together with reports such as that of Moracin, one emerges with the impression that the degree of French control over the areas that they had notionally been granted by first Muzaffar Jang (after the battle of Ambur) and then Salabat Jang, was in fact highly superficial, no more than a sort of glorified revenue-farm. Nevertheless, the revenues were substantial, as the following figures for the early 1750s show, and the possibilities of skimming money off the top were equally so.[43]

French Revenues in Coastal Andhra (in Rupees)

Areas	*1752*	*1753*
Masulipatnam	170,085	204,187
Narsapur	61,656	71,984
Nizamapatnam	66,584	86,700
Devarakotta	60,000	104,762
Divi Island	20,200	39,263
Kondavidu	–	488,000
Total	378,425	994,896

In any event, the limited knowledge that Bussy had was enough for him to participate in such a system, and we imagine this must have been the case for some of his contemporaries such as Paul Benfield or Robert Clive as well.[44] Certainly in the case of Bussy, he may have had a smattering of spoken Persian, but possessed

[42] Martineau, *Bussy*, pp. 136–37.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 132–33.

[44] The career of Paul Benfield (1741–1810), who claimed that 'by long and extensive dealings as a merchant, he had gained credit at Fort St. George and confidence with the natives of India . . . to an extent never before experienced by any European in that country', would undoubtedly repay closer study. See OIOC, Mss. Eur. C. 307, 'The Paul Benfield papers', in 5 vols.

little else by way of textual knowledge on India; the debates that so animated 'intellectuals' such as Desvaulx, Cœurdoux or Duperron seem not to have interested him in the least.[45] To conquer India in the eighteenth century was in any event no epistemological feat; but holding together the conquest was another matter.

Corrupting the 'Native Ardour'

This takes us to the third of the triptych of transitional personages that this essay considers, namely the Scotsman Alexander Walker (1764–1831). Walker was a clear generation younger than Noronha or Bussy, but figures of such 'adventurers' were still familiar in his world. Walker's own close friend and contemporary, Edward Moor, in a work devoted to a completely unrelated subject, nevertheless reflected in a curious passage on the phenomenon of *mulkgiri*, 'meaning plundering or levying contribution', and mentioned in this context not only a certain Neapolitan called Colonel Filose ('in the service of Dowlat Rao Sindea'), but a personage of his own acquaintance, 'Mr. Boyd, an American gentleman, now a Colonel of militia, and a member of Congress in the United States', who had at one time been in the pay of Tukkoji Holkar, and very nearly obliged to resort to this form of generalised plunder when 'out of employment at Poona'.[46] Unfortunately John Parker Boyd has left behind no collection of papers, besides a letter from the late 1790s describing his services in India, but even if he had done so, it is not necessarily the case that his own portrayal of how matters functioned between the Peshwa, Holkar and Sindhia, would have gone much beyond a concern for strategic and military affairs.

But Alexander Walker is quite another matter. Despite his rather distinguished career, which took him at its end, in the 1820s, to the post of Governor of St. Helena, he is today rescued from obscurity largely by the extraordinary collection of papers that he put together, some of which (those in Indian languages) are held in the Bodleian Library, with the vast majority being in the National Library of Scotland at Edinburgh. The oldest of five children, Walker's father died when he was seven, and somewhat like our other two figures he too had to find his career in Asia from an early age. But before joining the East India Company in 1780 as a cadet, he did have the time to obtain an education at St. Andrew's Grammar School and St. Andrew's University. His career until his nomination to St. Helena

[45] Cf. Sylvia Murr, *L'Indologie du Père Cœurdoux: Stratégies, Apologétique et Scientificité*, Paris, 1987. Incidentally, Duperron did meet Bussy at least once, in Srikakulam in June 1757, and was in general much in awe of him; cf. Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron, *Voyage en Inde, 1754–1762: Relation de voyage en préliminaire à la traduction du Zend-Avesta*, eds, Jean Deloche, Manonmani Filliozat and Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat, Paris, 1997, pp. 146–48.

[46] See Edward Moor, *Hindu Infanticide: An Account of the Measures Adopted for Suppressing the Practice of the Systematic Murder by their Parents of Female Infants*, London, 1811, pp. 216–19. Also see the entry for John Parker Boyd (1764–1830), in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds, *American National Biography*, Oxford and New York, 1999, Vol. 3, pp. 311–12.

was largely Indian, but there was one exception: this was the expedition he made to the north-west coast of America (the region of Vancouver Island) along with James Charles Stuart Strange in 1785.[47] Strange, while returning from Britain to India (where he had served earlier from about 1773 to 1780), decided to explore the Pacific as a consequence of reading the account of Cook's third voyage and Walker was amongst those who accompanied him, producing a quite elaborate account of the expedition.

But leaving aside this interlude, Walker's Indian career can be divided in two broad phases; a first largely concerned with southern India, and especially Kerala in the late eighteenth century; and a second phase in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when he was deputed to Gujarat, in particular to Baroda where he was Political Resident in the court of the Gaikwads. It is in this latter phase that Walker can claim a moment of glory in the colonial annals, as having helped 'suppress' the practice of female infanticide, especially among the Jadeja Rajputs in Kathiawad.[48] This is what led his friend Edward Moor to dedicate his work *Hindu Infanticide* (dated 1811, and including a report from Walker himself written at Baroda in March 1808) to him, noting that the two were drawn together by 'a congeniality of disposition in the promotion of public and private good, that so cordially subsists between our common and highly respected friend Mr. [Jonathan] Duncan and you'.[49] In the course of this Indian career lasting some three decades, Walker thus accompanied a major transformation in the fortunes of the East India Company. In 1780, the Company still faced a number of formidable adversaries, notably the state of Mysore with which Walker himself had an uncomfortably intimate relationship. Three decades later, Mysore had been crushed, British dominance over Malabar had been assured, and the Company's ascendancy over western India too had become clearer even if the *coup de grâce* had yet to be delivered to the Marathas. As for eastern India, the 'bridgehead' of the Company (in the phrase of Peter Marshall), the introduction of the Permanent Settlement had helped bring an end to a long period of fiscal experimentation. It is thus natural enough that the historiography, on the few occasions that it refers to Walker, does see him as an in-between personage. As one of the most recent discussions puts it:

> Alexander Walker was a transitional figure between the men under Lord Cornwallis, who had reformed the administration of the East India Company during

[47] Alexander Walker, *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast of America in 1785 and 1786*, eds, Robin Fisher and J.M. Bumsted, Seattle 1982.

[48] Cf. Colonel Alexander Walker, *Reports on the Resources and c. of the Districts of Neriad, Matur, Mondeh (. . .) in Guzerat (. . .), with memoirs on the Districts of Jhalawar, Kattywar proper; Reports of the Measures adopted (. . .) by Colonel Alexander Walker and by his successors, for the suppression of female infanticide*, compiled and edited by R. Hughes Thomas, 2 vols, Bombay, 1856.

[49] Moor, *Hindu Infanticide*, p. iv. Walker's Report occupies pp. 42–103 of the work, with a postscript (also by him, pp. 103–7) discussing human sacrifice among the Karada Brahmins. On Duncan's interests in such questions, see Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, Delhi, 1998.

> the late 1780s and early 1790s, and the succeeding generation of 'Romantics' associated with Marquis Wellesley.[50]

While this was perhaps true, Walker was also a part of a long Scottish tradition of engagement with India, of which more prominent examples are his contemporary administrators Thomas Munro and Colin Mackenzie, as well as Sanskritists such as Alexander Hamilton.[51] Looking back to the earlier part of the eighteenth century, there are also such figures as James Fraser, author of a history of Nadir Shah, who—like Walker—was an inveterate collector of manuscripts in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, which he largely purchased in Surat, Cambay and Ahmadabad in the 1730s.[52] Walker's own collection of 'Oriental' manuscripts, presented to the Bodleian Library by his son Sir William Walker in 1845, run to some 265 works (from an original collection in 1810, on Walker's return to Britain, which may have had as many as 650 pieces), with about 120 in Persian, a few in Arabic, and the rest in Sanskrit, Hindi and Gujarati.[53] These manuscripts are deserving of a full study in their own right, which must await another occasion. The materials of more direct concern for the purposes of the present essay are Walker's own manuscripts in English, held today in the Walker of Bowlands Collection of the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. There are nearly 600 of these, which touch on a vast diversity of subjects, mostly Indian. They also shed considerable light on Walker himself, as the third of our figures in transition.

A number of the volumes were reworked or reorganised by Walker in his years at St. Helena, when he was manifestly under-employed. Here is how he presents his own motivations and circumstances in the preface to one of the works, the two-volume *Arbores et Herbae Malabaricae.*

> In the remote regions of India I was frequently in situations where the Natives were my only society. I found their conversation amusing and interesting. I was instructed in their manners and habits. In the progress of communication they threw off that reserve which they commonly shew in their intercourse with Europeans, and with strangers in general: it was no difficult matter to acquire their confidence. It was only necessary to convince them that I had their good at heart. They were good humoured and easy to please. It was this disposition under these circumstances doubtless that made them do many things

[50] Fisher and Bumsted, 'Introduction', in Walker, *An Account*, p. 12.

[51] Rosane Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824): A Chapter in the Early History of Sanskrit Philology*, New Haven, 1968; Stein, *Thomas Munro*; Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton, 2001, Ch. 5.

[52] James Fraser, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in Persian, Arabic and Sanskerrit Languages Collected in the East by James Fraser*, London, 1742. The collection includes a number of Persian versions of Sanskrit works, as also original works by Badayuni, Iskandar Beg Munshi, and a number of other historians. Also see Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah, Formerly Called Thamas Kuli Khan*, 2nd edn, London, 1742, for his reflections on Mughal chronicles.

[53] Falconer Madan, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, Vol. IV, Oxford, 1897, pp. 674–79.

> that were agreeable to me, and which they perceived I was desirous of. I speak of men of rank, of Education, or of Property, whose temper and minds were not yet corrupted from their native ardour by the humiliation of long subjection.[54]

This last sentence may seem an odd reflection on the part of a colonial official, who was thus himself part of the process of 'subjection' that is being criticised. But such ambiguities run through Walker's volumes, where the language of affective relations helps sustain the tension. Even in the brief passage cited above we can note several features that relate to this: the idea that by demonstrating that he had 'their good at heart', he could gain the confidence of the natives, linked at the same time to the insistence that he did not consort with untrustworthy riff-raff in India, but with men of rank, education and property. This is the idea of creating a colonial civility (to borrow and modify the terms of Steven Shapin), which would underpin the process of translation that Walker had in mind.[55] For only in conditions of trust could the individual Walker envisage this process; the more institutionalised process by which Mackenzie would collect the mass of materials that today bears his name ('The Mackenzie Manuscripts') sought to resolve the problem by other, but still closely related, means. It is clear that we have moved a step from the world of Bussy, where such 'trust' was impossible, because the relationship was fundamentally an adversarial one, where each side donned one disguise after another in order never to let the other side know what their true view really was. To return to Walker, there is no doubt that the process of conquest of which he was a part did leave him troubled. In a volume of notes towards an account of the castes in Malabar, he thus reflects:

> The influence of the English in changing the sentiments of the Hindus has been considerable but the changes we have effected are cold and philosophical. They are however honourable. We have taught the natives useful arts and improved them in others. We have instilled into them a more rational use of money by enabling them to spend it in security and by making them better acquainted with the elegancies and conveniences of life.[56]

But then again, in a brief note, a note of doubt is sounded (in what appears to be a somewhat Burkean mode):

[54] National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (henceforth NLS), Walker of Bowlands Papers, Mss. 13817 and 13818, Preface, ff. 6–7.

[55] Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*, Chicago, 1994. For a development of the notion of 'civility' in an Indian context, see Kapil Raj, 'Refashioning Civilities, Engineering Trust: William Jones, Indian Intermediaries and the Production of Reliable Legal Knowledge in Late 18th-Century Bengal', *Studies in History*, n.s., Vol. XVII (2), 2001.

[56] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13813, fl. 110.

> There is reason to suspect that the form of the Company's government is unfavorable to the preservation of their Dominion. It has never been found that a free Government was adapted to maintain Conquered Territories. The free-est (*sic*) nations have therefore been obliged to invest their Generals and Governors abroad with much despotic power.[57]

To these doubts and tergiversations, one can add another theme which (as we shall see presently) is very dear to Walker, namely the fact that by the Company's intervention 'Hindoos' have at least been freed from the yoke of Muslim tyranny, of which the archetype is Tipu Sultan. But Walker remains uncertain as to whether colonial rule (which he terms 'English' rather than 'British') will in the long run produce any positive results. He writes:

> In short man is everywhere an animal of imitation. This imitation as far as it relates to India will extend only to objects of necessity, of obvious utility and conveniency. The English govern without forming any part of the society of Hindostan. It is impossible that the natives can learn what we neglect or disdain to teach, and if taught would be of no use, because we have no other intercourse with them than that which subsists between a master and a servant.[58]

It is very easy to idealise such remarks, and rush to claim that this forms part of 'a history of "anti-Orientalism", of European sympathy for Asian cultures, even for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[59] Such claims make sense in any event, only within the framework in which they are posed, in which on the one hand 'Orientalism' is to be identified with 'ethnocentrism and prejudice', while 'anti-Orientalism' is associated with 'European sympathy for Asian cultures'. Rather, the problem is precisely that for the most part colonial Orientalism (unlike the views of Bussy or Noronha) came framed within an overall construct of sympathy, affection, and having 'their good at heart'. Indeed, for Walker, the business of collecting the materials that he amassed in his hundreds of volumes is presented above all as pleasurable, as he writes in another of his prefaces, this one to the vast and eccentric six-volume series entitled 'Miscellaneous Notices of Various Customs, Manners and Practices of India', and which includes relatively short notices on various subjects that strike his fancy, from 'Gunputtee Chatoorthee' to 'Sackcloth and Ashes', 'Ashwamed', 'Concealed treasure', 'Names of Tippoo', and 'Topee', to 'Sir Thomas Rowe'.

[57] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13886, fl. 517. Compare Peter J. Marshall, 'Edmund Burke and India: The Vicissitudes of a Reputation', in Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Lakshmi Subramanian, eds, *Politics and Trade in the Indian Ocean World: Essays in honour of Ashin Das Gupta*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 250–69.

[58] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13813, fl. 110–110v.

[59] Peter Burke, 'The Philosopher as Traveller: Bernier's Orient', in Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, eds, *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, London, 1999, p. 137.

> The following Notices of Hindoo Institutions and ceremonies were chiefly collected in the course of my official transactions with the People. The subjects were often connected with my public duties, and I had occasion to observe that by uniting them together discussions on business became more pallatable, and were made much more agreeable. I fell into the habit of making Memorandums of such circumstances as appeared to me to be in any way remarkable, or to relate to the manner and religion of the Inhabitants.[60]

To this he adds, again stressing the ludic and pleasurable aspect of the whole enterprise (which one can find again in neither Bussy nor Noronha),

> It may be idle to add that these enquiries were intended originally solely for my private amusement and information. But this I may say with safety, that had it not been for some leisure in the decline of life, they would never have been disengaged from the chaotic state in which they were at first written. The composition and language has undergone little alteration. I shall only further premise that I do not hold myself answerable for the absurdity and nonsense which many of the following memoranda will be found to contain.[61]

So, on the one hand, we find the claim to being a faithful translator of native thought, but on the other a disclaimer with respect to the contents. But it is clear that if at times the notices closely follow an informant or a text—the description of the relations between the Rajas of Jaipur and the Minas being taken for example from 'a paper from Navob Nizam ul dein Khan'—on other occasions, they represent Walker's own views and comparative considerations. This is obviously the case with a notice entitled 'The Natives of India, and the Southern Nations of Europe', which runs as follows.

> In many respects the habits of the Natives of India are similar to those of the Southern Nations of Europe. Whether this is the effect of a similarity of climate, or a remnant of Asiatic manners left by the Arabs, who formerly held those parts of Europe in subjection, or of both these causes combined, may be a subject of enquiry, but their food, the use of spices, their dress, treatment of their women, and siestas or afternoon naps, are circumstances of common resemblance.[62]

The influence of climate on habits, customs and character, is of course a common enough reflection in the epoch, to which Walker was certainly not immune, though he brought his own nuances to it. We can see this from a remark of his, in which he notes that 'the Parsees of India afford a remarkable example of a People preserving unimpaired their primitive powers, mental and physical, for Ages. By

[60] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Miscellaneous Notices, No. 13881, 'Preface', p. xiv.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. xviii–xix.
[62] *Ibid.*, Ms. 13886, Miscellaneous Notices, Vol. 6, pp. 487–88.

abstaining from intermarriages, the climate does not appear to have had any operation either on their Minds, or Bodies'.[63] These miscellaneous notices apart, it is clear that several threads run through the rest of the collection, rendering it coherent. Walker thus clearly has well-defined if vast interests, and in the recent past it has been claimed that 'the surviving Walker papers offer voluminous testimony to his eclectic approach to scholarship, including collected materials on history, ethnohistory, anthropology, linguistics, art and religion'.[64] These were certainly not the categories that Walker himself would have used; rather his own classification prefers such headings as 'deities', 'manners, practices and customs', and 'castes and professions', at times accompanied by drawings and figures, either made by Walker or commissioned by him from Indian artists. Some of these drawings certainly reflect a highly ethnographic bent of mind, for instance those that depict the 'Manner of executing criminals on the karoo, or impaling', or 'gestures and salutations to superiors', or a series of representations of board games and square games including Indian chess, and 'the game of fifteen dogs and three tigers'. Again, we have drawings of the act of ploughing, of a ceremony of exorcism, or rope dancing, juggling, and of different types of forehead marks.[65] These drawings would clearly bear comparison with those which Colin Mackenzie had prepared, and which Nicholas Dirks has noted derived 'from several sources, including both his own drawings and those sketched by his surveyors while on tour'.[66] But the differences between the two enterprises are also worth noting: Mackenzie's was a relatively large and systematic affair which formed a part of the operations of the early colonial state, while Walker's was an individual initiative, though framed within the functioning of the same state system. Paradoxically, on occasion, it was Walker whose legacy in this sphere was better assured; this is the case of the drawings that he brought together in the volume entitled 'An Account of various Hindoo Deities', in which 36 of the 88 listed 'deities' come accompanied by illustrations obvious made by an Indian artist (the notations on the drawings are in Nagari and English).[67] These drawings seem to have served as an inspiration for the work of Edward Moor, Walker's close friend who has been referred to above, when he compiled his much larger work called *The Hindu Pantheon* in 1810.[68]

Many of Walker's other foci of interest are predictable. There is an extensive discussion of *sati*, for example, drawing on materials from Rajasthan and Gujarat, which together with female infanticide, obviously represents an aspect of the

[63] Walker, *An Account*, p. 75.

[64] Fisher and Bumsted, 'Introduction', in Walker, *An Account* , p. 11.

[65] For example, NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13816, 'Figures and Drawings'.

[66] Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p. 91.

[67] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13903.

[68] Edward Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon*, London, 1810, has been described as 'a work of considerable value, which for more than fifty years remained the only book of authority in English upon its subject' (entry for Edward Moor, 1771–1848, in Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XIII, Oxford, 1921–22, pp. 781–82). For a discussion, also see Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, pp. 178–81.

'Hindoo religion' that Walker found less than palatable. In general, however, he is very positive towards it, and this contrasts with a more or less consistent hostility to Islam. His introductory chapter, claiming to provide 'a general view of the Hindoo Religion', thus states:

> The Hindoo Religion is distinguished by its antiquity and long continuance. It has resisted persecution and time. It has withstood every change of Government. It has remained unshaken either by violence or argument. Whether we ascribe this to the obstinacy or constancy of its followers, the effect is equally surprising. In a long series of ages those who have been converted to the Christian and Mohammedan religions, or those who have withdrawn from its Doctrines and have adopted any other system, will be found to be extremely few, and inconsiderable, when compared to the great mass who have adhered to the original superstition. It is another remarkable feature of this Religion, that so far from seeking for converts, it will not receive them. They never disturb those of a different religion. They think every religion should be protected. They have neither hatred nor jealousy for those who profess a different faith from themselves. They imagine that the divine Being cannot be displeased with various modes of worship, otherwise he would not suffer them, and that the exercise of piety in whatever shape it is manifested, is acceptable to him. They believe indeed that God for his own purposes has not only tolerated, but has revealed a mode of worship suited to the People, and the climate they inhabit.[69]

Walker makes it clear that this information was brought together by him while at Baroda in 1806, on the basis of conversations with 'a learned Braman', as well as 'notes extracted from their sacred books'. How these notes were extracted is not clear, for like Moor, Walker too does not seem to have known Sanskrit; his knowledge of other Indian languages too is not entirely certain. It is likely that the Brahmin in question was a certain Gangadhar Patwardhan Sastri, to whom one finds scattered references in Walker's papers.

Other themes that Walker deals with, and which have an air of the inevitable about them, include caste, though again he is capable here too of resisting the most facile generalisations of the period. Thus, he remarks in regard to caste that 'it is a mistaken notion that these establishments in India are perpetual and immutable. The minute divisions and subdivisions and distinctions of casts it is evident have followed the progess of society'; and adds, 'They are plainly civil or religious institutions to answer the wants of man in a collective state and to administer to his necessities as he advanced in civilization'. The general nature of caste is stressed too in two passages, one of which (the longer of the two) runs:

> After all are we not more surprised at the distinction of casts in India than the circumstance warrants? In every society advanced a step beyond the state of

[69] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13903, 'An Account of various Hindoo Deities', pp. 1–3.

> nature there exists an inequality. The Jewish tribes, the division of the citizens into classes in Greece and at Rome, resemble the sacred or religious part of the Indian institution of cast.

A last mischievous remark closes his discussion: 'May we not apply some of these observations to the state of professions in England?'. But then, the detailed content of the account itself is scarcely of a piece with these remarks. Sixty-five castes are enumerated and described. And the method that is used is stated clearly, namely a compilation fundamentally deriving from a series of textual authorities.

> The following account of the Casts in Malabar has been obtained from several authentic sources. The Sasters called Astah disha Pooranum, a work of 18 volumes have been consulted for their origin. This work contains a History of all created things; it treats of the Heavens, of the Earth, of man and animals, of trees and vegetables, of insects and every living creature. It is a History of Nature. This work was composed in the Kreda Yogum. It was the joint labour of Gods and Sages. From the Astah disha Pooranum what relates to the origin of each tribe is extracted and translated but not literally as that required an acquaintance with the original language which this writer is not possessed of. The Kerala Olputty Moolum a more modern Malabar work contains the origin of several of the casts and that has been occasionally referred to.[70]

In contrast, the text on plants and trees is based on a rather different method, namely a substantial dependence on 'long and frequent conversations' with the natives, supplemented by 'written notes which were generally brought to my House daily'. Textual authority is invoked sparingly, for example 'the Grandum Saster called Astangumarudayam or Ashtangardewum', with the 'medical uses of different trees', written by a 'Brahman named Vayadaacharin' or the 'Amarasimhum or Ahmavasum composed by a person of the Chitty Cast called Amavasemuen'.[71] But Walker does let his sense of unease show in respect of this method, and concludes: 'It would be endless and of no use to relate all the legends and fictions which these people credit on almost every subject. But in the midest of credulity and ignorance we may discover sound knowledge and the sources of genuine science'.

It may seem then that we have moved a good distance from the world of Noronha and Bussy, to one where 'science', and even the 'progress of society' is invoked.

[70] *Ibid.*, Ms. 13813, fls. 104, 112, 114. Again, it is interesting to compare Walker's *modus operandi* with that of the nineteenth-century German missionary scholar in Kerala, Hermann Gundert, for which see the materials surveyed in Albrecht Frenz and Scaria Zacharia, *Hermann Gundert: Quellen zu seinem Leben und Werk*, Ulm, 1991.

[71] *Ibid.*, Ms. 13818, 'Arbores et Herbae Malabaricae', Vol. II, fl. 285. The texts in question are Vahata's *Astangahrdayasamhita* and the *Amarakosa* respectively; they are discussed in Francis Zimmermann, *Le discours des remèdes au pays des épices: Enquête sur la médecine hindoue*, Paris, 1989, pp. 40–42, 248–49.

But this would be to ignore a vast part of Walker's collection, centering on what obviously constituted a veritable obsession for him: namely, Tipu Sultan.[72] The sources for this are not hard to find, and may relate to the early part of Walker's own career, and his links to the ill-fated expedition of General Mathews to Mangalore in 1782–83, which ended with Tipu's capture of that fortress.[73] Mathew's death in captivity rankled with Walker, and he may also have harboured some personal animosity against the army of Mysore. As he wrote in 1800, a year after Tipu's death: 'The cruelty of Tippoo is a more serious stain on his memory. The fate of the English Prisoners in 1783 is now well-known. It is ascertained that General Mathews was strangled in a small House opposite to the Palace of Seringapatam. His body was afterwards thrown into the River close to the Laul Baug'. The broader theme that is developed can vary, but some consistent features can be found. One of these is Walker's tendency to contrast the tyrannous Tipu with a rather more positive portrayal of his father Haidar; thus Tipu 'wants both the liberality and the open manly appearance and address which distinguished Hyder'.[74] A second feature was to insist on the image of Tipu as a religious fanatic, both with regard to Hindus and Christians. The latter aspect, it is interesting to note, grew more pronounced in Walker's views in the 1790s. As late as 1789, he could write that 'he [Tipu] is in general disliked by the Moormen of Rank in his service, not being sufficiently liberal in his encouragement to them and appears himself to have more confidence in Bramins and Rajpoots, who hold the places of first trust in his court'. But, by 1800, and the death of Tipu, the image has considerably changed. Walker writes by then not only of 'his restless mind, his continual projects, his vindictive temper, and his system of cruelty', but also of 'his childish superstition and a blind zeal for the faith of Mahomed'. True, he noted, he still depended on Brahmins, but this was because he thought 'they had the means of deriving knowledge from the Devil, and it was as demoniacs that he consulted them'.[75] The same drive to measure the havoc wreaked by Tipu on life in South India also led Walker to propose a population estimate of the Tanjavur region in the 1780s, in order to demonstrate the enormous fall in the number of houses and habitants that had accompanied the invasion by the Mysore forces.[76] All in all, Walker's obituary of Tipu is severe.

[72] Unfortunately, the Walker Papers have not been used so far to study the rule of Tipu Sultan, as we see from two recent works: Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain*, Delhi, 1997; and Irfan Habib, ed., *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernization under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan*, New Delhi, 1999.

[73] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13615–A, 'Narrative of the Operations of the Army under General Mathews', fls. 1–25.

[74] *Ibid.*, 'An Account of Tippoo Sultan, His Family, and the Revenues of His Country etc', Fort St. George, 14 December 1789, fls. 27–34v.

[75] *Ibid.*, Ms. 13794–A, 'Preface', p. iv, to a text entitled 'Memoir of the Life and principal transactions of Tippoo Sultaun written by a Mahrattah Sirdar in his service'.

[76] This estimate may be found in *Ibid.*, Ms. 13615–B; for its wider context, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Politics of Fiscal Decline: A Reconsideration of Maratha Tanjavur, 1676–1799', *IESHR*, Vol. XXXII (2), 1995, pp. 177–217.

> It is impossible to speak of the conduct of this Man without being convinced that he laboured under a species of Madness. At one period he announced himself a person commissioned by Mahomet to convert mankind, and that he was invested with a prophetical mission. He had read, or he had been told, of an Arabian Prince, who by his eloquence or by his example, had brought over to the faith some unbelieving Tribes. In Emulation of this achievement Tippoo collected a multitude of Hindoos and Christians from all parts of his dominions. In one day, he caused the assembly to be circumcised and boastingly compared himself among his officers to the Arabian Prince. This religious frenzy discovered itself in the early period of Tippoo's life, but it was remarked that it had considerably abated in his later years. It had yielded to political passions.[77]

But even this reduced religious frenzy was a matter of major concern, if Walker may be credited. In contrast to the earlier vision, where it is the well-born Muslims who are resentful because the Brahmins and Rajputs rule the roost at the court, here is how relations between the communities now appear.

> The Hindoos were the daily objects of Tippoo's persecuting spirit and his conduct to them a constant source of uneasiness to Hyder. Tippoo was perpetually playing them when a youth mischievous tricks. He apprehended some Brahmans privately and circumcised them as he did the Englishmen. It was his chief delight to defile the Pagodas and he thought it a meritorious deed to sprinkle them with Bullocks blood. Tippoo was an excellent Horseman and an adept at the exercise of the spear. It was his favourite amusement to hunt the sightly and fat Bulls belonging to the Swamy Temples. This behaviour brought a thousand complaints to Hyder who frequently expressed the deepest regret and resentment. But neither the force of reason, nor of punishment, could correct these symptoms of vice and folly in his successor. The admonition of his Father Tippoo turned into ridicule, and spoke in public contumaciously of his Government.

This same hostility is carried over by Walker into descriptions of other groups of Muslims, equally considered by him to be fanatical, such as the Mappilas in Malabar. In the part of his papers relating to that region, we find mention of Tipu's agents there, such as a certain Kutti Husain Mappila (allegedly a Tiyya convert to Islam), who is reported to have risen in Tipu's esteem (and the fiscal hierarchy) on account of the large number of Nayars he had circumcised.[78] It also tinges his description of Muharram festivities in western India, in which he notes 'from the tolerating principles of the Hindoos, and their love for processions, this

[77] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13793, Description of Seringapatam etc, written December 1800.

[78] Dilip M. Menon, 'Houses by the Sea: State-Formation Experiments in Malabar, 1760–1800', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17 July 1999, p. 2001. Menon makes extensive use in the essay of the Walker Papers to examine the political situation in Malabar in the 1790s.

Festival is celebrated in many places by the followers of Brama in common with those of Mahomet'. However, the Muslims in these processions are marked by their 'infuriated zeal' and 'dangerous excesses', which is in marked contrast to the 'complimentary and practical attention of the Hindoos to the Musselman ceremonies'.[79] At such moments, one senses that one is not that distant after all from the world of the Bishop of Halicarnassus.

Conclusion

The vast and rapidly-growing literature on 'encounters' within a colonial, or near-colonial context has implicitly or explicitly formed the backdrop to the problem that has been discussed in the preceding pages. This literature has focused largely on the linked issues of communication, translation, knowledge and power, and in this process a series of convenient straw-men have emerged. If it can be demonstrated that besides being ethnocentric, Europeans in India also periodically 'used the Other to criticise their own culture', the facile conclusion is that the issue of power relations in the formation of colonial knowledge-systems has been banished. Again, the fact that the categories and prejudices of their 'native informants' informed colonial census-takers or ethnographers is easily assumed to be evidence of a 'dialogue' between all parties in the operation. Recent attempts to rehabilitate the image of the omniscient European traveller of the early modern period without adequately investigating the concrete procedures by which such knowledge was made reflect similar constructions, as if demonstrating the possibility of 'translation' itself is a triumph.[80] Now the examination of the pragmatics of functioning in a foreign society in any context, even a colonial one, makes it evident that some form of translation is always possible, and to demonstrate it time and again is trivial. But what does one translate? To what end, and using what means?

The examination of the three careers at hand suggests clearly that no matter what the national or regional differences between Europeans in India might have been, by the middle years of the eighteenth century, a sense of commonness, as well as a clear sense of distinctness from the 'Asiatics' existed. This sense of a common identity is articulated by the actors too, but above all is demonstrated in action by the webs of sociability that held them together—and not only in moments of crisis.[81] Perhaps most clearly articulated by Noronha, the same sense certainly informed most other actors in the enterprise of colonial conquest, and formed part of their undoubted will-to-power. That such an identity existed in earlier centuries is not quite so clear, though the issue would bear further investigation.

[79] NLS, Walker of Bowlands Papers, Ms. 13886, pp. 494–97.

[80] William R. Pinch, 'Same Difference in India and Europe', *History and Theory*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1999, pp. 389–407; the critique is directed at Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton, 1996. For a response, see Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 311–12.

[81] Also see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Career of Colonel Polier and Late Eighteenth-Century Orientalism', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. X, No. 1, 2000, pp. 43–60.

If the colonial wars of the eighteenth century divided European nations, and strengthened national identities, it does not necessarily follow that at the same time a collective European identity could not have emerged.[82]

In a sense, therefore, the argument in the present essay has been centred on the development of a paradox. We have seen that in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, in a situation where the relations of power between Indians and various Europeans in South India were highly contested, the actors who were at the centre of the contest were often severely constrained. Their accumulation of knowledge was rather limited, and their bias was largely geared to the hoarding of pragmatic information, which was however located in a system of stereotypes, and underpinned by a theory of 'disguise'. But once the question of power had been more or less resolved, once the conquest by the Company had been placed on a firm and definitive footing, a real 'colonial civility' could be established, within which new forms of knowledge would be produced both by Europeans about India and even by Indians about Europe.[83] For Europeans, even the luxury of self-doubt was increasingly possible, and self-criticism too became an acknowleged (if necessarily minority) form of expression. This is what the transition we have observed represents, and this is why the colonial archives of the nineteenth century are undoubtedly quantitatively richer—and qualitatively simpler—than the dispersed archives of the preceding one, at least so far as the social and economic historian is concerned. This is also why Alexander Walker's papers—a brilliant if eccentric exercise in colonial translation—could not have been put together in 1700.

[82] The discussion by Peter J. Marshall, 'British Assessments of the Dutch in Asia in the Age of Raffles', *Itinerario*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1988, pp. 1–15, is ambiguous on this point.

[83] Juan R.I. Cole, 'Invisible Occidentalism: Eighteenth-Century Indo-Persian Constructions of the West', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3-4, 1992, pp. 3–16, and Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'Europe in India's Xenology: The Nineteenth-Century Record', *Past and Present*, No. 137, 1992, pp. 156–82.