

Professional Missionary and Orientalist Curator; Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo in India and Rome (18th-19th Century)

The Catholic missionary Orientalist knowledge of India came to its apogee, a brief moment of glory, between, roughly, 1770s and the first decade of the 19th century¹. «Orientalism» is usually taken today, after Edward Said's groundbreaking book with the same name, as representing a body of scholarship that shored up European and Western sense of civilizational superiority and inaugurated and embodied the discursive practices such as philology, archaeology, history and anthropology that all claimed to speak for the Oriental civilizations perceived as stagnant or «in decline»². Colonialism/imperialism was put on a trial not only as an economic agent of global impoverishment and local (western) enrichment, but also as a cultural trickster that invented discourses that posed as «science» and «modernity»³.

¹ There is a lack of scholarly research into «Catholic» Orientalism in India in the early modern period. A few excellent studies touching at least some aspects of this vast and unstructured historical field are those by Sylvia Murr, Raymond Schwab, Joan-Pau Rubiés and most recently Maya Jassanof: S. MURR, *Les conditions d'émergence du discours sur l'Inde au Siècle des Lumières*, in «Purushartha», VII, 1983, pp. 251-254; R. SCHWAB, *La renaissance orientale*, Paris, Payot 1950; J.P. RUBIÉS, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2000; M. JASANOFF, *Edge of Empire, Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*, New York, Vintage Books 2006² (New York, Knopf 2005).

² E. SAID, *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon 1978. For the most trenchant, but defensible critique of Said's position see A. AHMAD, *Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said*, in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, ed. by A. Ahmad, New Delhi, Oxford University Press 1999⁵ (London, Verso 1992), pp. 159-220. For most recent study of British Orientalism and empire see A. BURTON, *At the Heart of the Empire; Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1998.

³ Critical literature on this point is a legion. Good introduction can be found in

Most of the European knowledge-claims about India, in light of Said's epistemological critique, turned suspect, uncertain and cynical and provoked a lot of soul searching among the contemporary Indianists⁴. While Said's principal arguments have been criticized, revised and continually revisited, the aim of the present article is to add a historical dimension to the European Orientalist efforts in the early modern period in India by bringing to light those Orientalist practices and discourses that were not directly linked to the British empire.

There is an interesting irony in the way the Indological branch of «Orientalist» disciplines came into being in Bengal in the late 18th century British India in an intellectual circle dominated by Sir William Jones, his *Asiatic Society* and its journal *The Asiatic Researches*. The Orientalist laboratory in Calcutta proceeded by first reprocessing information acquired from their local informants and combined it with European Catholic knowledge developed from the 16th century onwards⁵. Catholic missionary knowledge, in particular, their linguistic achievements was welcomed if not overtly admitted⁶.

In their next move the British Orientalists devalued the acquired tradition on the basis of a dominant European trope – perfected in Portuguese and Catholic missionary accounts – of historical «corruption» and «decadence» of Indian culture and society. Finally, once the Catholic missionary knowledge was absorbed into the interstices of the British Orientalist arguments, it was effaced from the surface of the new «science» and finally no acknowledgement was necessary.

The disrepute and ultimate subalternization of the Catholic mis-

G. PRAKASH, *Against Reason. Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1999.

⁴ See, for example, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament; Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. by C.A. Breckenridge and P.van der Veer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania State University Press 1993.

⁵ For William Jones's pious Christian interests in proving the existence of Mosaic ethnology and the common Aryan origins of Indian and European races see T. TRAUTMANN, *Aryans and British India*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1997.

⁶ The factors of success of the Orientalist scholars to inaugurate the tradition of modern Indological research compared to missionary Orientalist failure is discussed in D. LORENZEN, *Marco della Tomba and the Brahmin from Banaras: Missionaries, Orientalist and Indian Scholars*, in «Journal of Asian Studies», LXV, 2006, pp. 113-141. He also provides an exemplary story of exchanges between lofty Jones and humble Capuchin missionary Marco della Tomba, see p. 125.

sionary «sciences» in Enlightenment was directly linked to the transformation of the European geo-political positioning in India. The Portuguese so-called «empire» was in the late 18th century nothing but a [speck of on is it correct?](#) the map of the subcontinent and the French «empire» never actually developed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos has recently proposed to define Portuguese colonialism as a «subaltern colonialism» for which even the rules of the game, and the discourses about them, were determined *post factum* by the British colonialism. In the last instance, «since the seventeenth century, the history of colonialism has been written in English, not in Portuguese»⁷. The European Catholic monarchies, therefore, decisively lost out to British colonial expansion, which also stimulated Protestant missionary inroads in the 19th century. Another reason for the rejection of the Catholic missionary-savant was because his manner of practicing sciences was increasingly seen as atavistic, obsolete, an offshoot of a «fanatical» and «decadent» post-Tridentine Catholicism.

By looking into the life and work of Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo (1748-1806), born as Filip Vezdin in a Croat family in Austria who became a Discalced Carmelite and a Propaganda Fide missionary in India, my aim is to chronicle his persistent, if belated, effort to preserve Catholic missionary knowledge in Rome, in the context of the Roman church *milieu*, by looking after its most important archival sources assembled in the Propaganda Fide and the Museum in Velletri and by critically engaging his contemporary Orientalist authors both Catholic and Protestant⁸. Comparable to his famous

⁷ B. DE SOUSA SANTOS, *Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identit*, in «Luso-Brazilian Review», XXXIX, 2, Special Issues: Portuguese Cultural Studies, Winter 2002, pp. 9-43: 11.

⁸ For introduction to Paulinus see M. JAUK-PINHAK, *Some Notes on the Pioneer Indologist Filip Vezdin (Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo)*, in «Indologica Taurinensia», XII, 1984, pp. 129-137 and PAULINUS A S. BARTHOLOMAEO, *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language*, a reprint of the original Latin text of 1790 together with an introductory article, a complete English translation, and an index of sources by L. Rocher, Amsterdam, Benjamins 1977, p. XIV. The Dissertation is the introduction to Paulinus' Sanskrit grammar, the first Sanskrit grammar printed in Europe: *Sidharubam seu Grammatica Samscrdamica, cui accedit Dissertatio historio-critica in linguam samscrdamicam, vulgo Sanscret dictam, in qua hujus linguae existentia, origo, praestantia, antiquitas, extensio, maternitas ostenditur, libri aliqui ea exarati critice recensentur, et simul aliquae*

predecessor, a Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, «the last man who knew everything about everything», Paulinus was the last important Roman missionary Indianist⁹. The institutional support and framework provided by the Propaganda Fide and by the patronage network of the Cardinal Stefano Borgia was crucial for Paulinus' Indological oeuvre. When Borgia invited him to organize the Indian collection in his museum in Velletri, Paulinus became, at least for two decades, the most important Indologist of the Catholic world, and Rome became the center of European Indology¹⁰.

Before and After Missionary Fieldwork

A Catholic missionary life in the early modern period is usually divided into two or three stages: 1) before entering the order and being sent to the mission – a stage that makes sense in the hagiographies only if endowed by premonitions and prophetic dreams and visions; 2) a subsequent life in the mission, which is a heroic period of fatigue and eventual martyrdom; 3) for some, but not all, there is a third stage upon return to Europe or to some quiet place with a possibility of writing down recollections and reflecting on the mission fieldwork.

After relatively unmemorable first phase, Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo spent thirteen years between 1776-1789 as a missionary for the Propaganda Fide in South India. He described his missionary life in the Kerala region in the *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, printed in Rome in 1796¹¹. During that time he travelled extensively, learnt both Sanskrit and other local vernacular languages, and met people from the lowest fishermen to kings of Travancore. Written with a hindsight, of course, *Viaggio* documents as much Paulinus's travels and his mission-

antiquissimae gentilium orationes liturgicae paucis attinguntur et explicantur..., Romae, Ex Typographia Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda fide 1790 [1791].

⁹ For Kircher see *Athanasius Kircher; The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, ed. by P. Findlen, New York-London, Routledge 2004.

¹⁰ For Stefano Borgia's museological enterprise see *Le quattro voci del mondo: arte, cultura e saperi nella collezione di Stefano Borgia, 1731-1804*, a cura di M. Nocca, Napoli, Electa 2001.

¹¹ PAULINUS A S. BARTHOLOMAEO, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali, umiliato alla Santità di N.S. Papa Pio Sesto Pontefice Massimo...*, Roma, Antonio Fulgoni 1796.

ary fieldwork as his ongoing interest in European theories and books on just about everything. Paulinus's *Viaggio* belongs to a particular sub-genre of travel literature developed by the Italians and other Europeans in the course of almost three centuries of their Oriental expeditions. The narrative of this kind of travelogues is structured as a museum, with exotic «objects» classified and stored in different «disciplinary» compartments supplemented with author's omnipresent and atemporal voice of assessment¹².

It was upon return from India 1789, Paulinus wrote, as he travelled through France «devastated» by the Revolution that he started «thinking about countries and nations that [he] saw and comparing them with Europeans, my dear compatriots»¹³. Endowed with comparative perspective, after a long fieldwork in Asia, he recognized clearly Europe's weaknesses and achievements. Therefore, he concluded, since China and India were regions with gentile and gentle people governed by simple laws and stable governments, their religion and customs remained unchanged. Europe was, by contrast, «inconstant» and politically volatile, for which he had a historical and racial explanation. What explained it was the influx of the ferocious Scythians from the cold climates at one point in Europe's history. One of the consequences of this inbuilt mobility of the Europeans who also became conquerors of the rest of the world and thus developed excellent armies is that they acquired «one little advantage» compared to Asia. «This advantage lies in arts and sciences», in spite of the fact that, Paulinus argued, it was India where arts and sciences

¹² See the publications of his predecessors: GIUSEPPE DI SANTA MARIA SEBASTIANI, *Prima spedizione all'Indie orientali... Ordinata da Nostro Signore Alessandro Settimo*, Roma, Filippo Maria Mancini 1666; ID., *Seconda spedizione all'Indie orientali... Ordinata da Alessandro Settimo di gloriosa memoria*, Roma, Filippo Maria Mancini 1672; VICENZO MARIA DI SANTA CATERINA DA SIENA (alias Vincenzo Maria Murchio), *Il viaggio all'Indie Orientali del padre F. Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena Procurator Gener. de' Carm. Scalzi, con le osservationi, e successi nel medesimo, i costumi, e riti di varie nationi, et reconditissimi arcani de' gentili, cauati con somma diligenza da' loro scritti, con la descrizione degli Animali Quadrupedi, Serpenti, Uccelli, Piante di quel Mondo Nuovo, con le loro virtu singolari, Diuiso in cinque libri. Opera non meno Utile, che curiosa*, Venetia, Giacomo Zattoni 1678. For the general discussion see D.F. LACH, E.J. VAN KLEY, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 3 vols., Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press 1994-1998, III (1998), *A century of Advance*, pp. 383-385.

¹³ PAULINUS, *Viaggio* cit., pp. 391-392.

were invented and the Europeans only perfected them. His mission upon return to Rome was, therefore, to rescue the forgotten origins of the «authentic» arts and sciences of India by distilling them from the *monumenta* that he brought with him and that the generations of missionaries already stored in Rome. He also thought of himself as uniquely competent for this endeavour since in India he taught himself the languages necessary for the decipherment of the most sacred and arcane books such as Sanskrit dictionaries, grammars, theological treatises and botanical and pharmacological manuals.

Collecting 'necesse est'

In Rome and in Italy in particular collecting and classifying nature, antiquities, oriental manuscripts and curiosities was an established cultural institution closely connected with courtly and aristocratic values of civility¹⁴. Therefore, Catholic missionaries educated in Rome, from the 16th century onwards were encouraged to collect curious objects, manuscripts, take notes and write letters from their missions. Paulinus was from the beginning a diligent collector and writer. The archives in Rome (Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele) contain hundreds of boxes of his various notes and letters in at least a dozen of languages and scripts¹⁵. Some of these documents were written for the local use and consumption such as Christian catechetical and pious texts in Malayalam, others were for the missionary use or addressed to the European audience.

Most of the early Propaganda missionaries in Kerala were also keen students and collectors of manuscripts and of natural objects, such

¹⁴ Scientific culture that emerged in the early modern period was traversed in important ways with the culture of collecting. According to Paula Findlen's admirable study of the late Renaissance naturalists, *scientia* flourished in «civil» spaces well provided with specimens coming from all over the world. P. FINDLEN, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1994. On collecting and collectors see also works by K. POMIAN, *Collectionneurs, amateur et curieux: Paris, Venise, XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Gallimard 1987.

¹⁵ The letters Paulinus left behind in his archives are in Latin, Italian, Portuguese, German, English and Malayalam. Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele (BNVE), Rari e manoscritti, Fondi Minori, Santa Maria della Scala, 22, 30, 33, 37, 38.

as Vincenzo Maria di Santa Caterina da Siena and Matteo di San Giuseppe, an expert Arabist and a botanist who helped Dutch commander of Malabar Hendrik Adriaan van Rheedee tot Drakenstein (1637-1691) with his monumental botanical book *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus* (Amsterdam between 1678 and 1703)¹⁶.

Paulinus also studied oriental languages in Rome before his arrival to Kerala and upon his return became himself a professor of Oriental languages at the Propaganda Mission Seminary. The collection of facts about nature and languages in India was an important part of the Carmelite mission enterprise in Kerala. This is evident from the titles of printed books and manuscripts the missionaries sent back or published after returning to Europe. In this respect they were not unique, since most of the Orientalists in the 18th century were both interested in botany as well as languages. Moreover, the study of nature and the study of languages followed the same line of reasoning at least in terms of understanding morphological and etymological structures¹⁷. William Carey, a Baptist missionary, Orientalist and a professor of Oriental languages in the Fort William College in Calcutta was also an *amateur* botanist who edited and published William Roxburgh's *Flora Indica; or Descriptions of Indian Plants*¹⁸.

William Jones was also interested in botany, which was his «principal amusement» together with «the conversation with the pundits, with whom I talk fluently in the language of the Gods»¹⁹. The two

¹⁶ See I.G. ŽUPANOV, 'Amateur' Naturalist and 'Professional' Orientalist, *Paulinus a Sancto Bartolomaeo in Kerala and Rome (18th-19th c.)*, in «Revista de Cultura/Review of Culture», XX, 2006, pp. 77-101.

¹⁷ P.B. SALMON, *The Beginnings of Morphology; Linguistic Botanizing in the 18th century*, in «Historiographia Linguistica», III, 1974, pp. 313-339. M. OLENDER, *Les langues du Paradis, Aryens et Sémites: un couple providentiel*, Paris, Gallimard-Le Seuil 1989, p. 20.

¹⁸ William Carey edited and published Dr. W. ROXBURGH, '*Flora Indica*'; or *Descriptions of Indian Plants...*, 2 vols., Serampore, Mission Press 1820-1824. Roxburgh (1751-1815) was an eminent botanist, horticulturalist, and physician. From 1793 until his death, he was the Superintendent of the Botanic Garden in Calcutta. In the *Viaggio*, Paulinus mentioned that the British were planning to publish a work on Indian plants, but he doubted that they would have had enough money for that *Viaggio* cit., p. 265.

¹⁹ Quoted in R. ROCHER, *British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century*, in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament; Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. by C.A. Brecken-

contemporaries Paulinus, a Catholic missionary in Kerala and William Jones, an enlightened Orientalist in Calcutta were, therefore, each within their own cultural *milieu* chasing the same scientific paradigm and the same Christian teleology. They both tried to preserve their vision of the Christian world guaranteed by the Bible and confirming the structure of the Mosaic ethnology.

One of the crucial differences between these two early scholars of India was in the manner in which they handled and organized their «research» data and material evidence, and the cultural and social context in which the constituted data were available for scholarly consumption. For Jones and other Orientalists, the newly conquered Bengal and its capital Calcutta provided a fertile space for setting up all the institutions indispensable for scholarly activities – a learned society, a journal, a college and an informal, ever growing pool of local literati ready to be employed²⁰.

Paulinus a Sancto Bartolomaeo, on the other hand, rarely had the opportunity of enjoying and profiting from a closely-knit scientific community during his stay in India. Residing in India resembled more a fieldwork period in which he collected materials rather than studying them in depth. In a way, he was collecting specimens for his future museum – his printed books. Knowledge of India was therefore to be constituted outside of its borders, somewhere in a fixed and framed public space of the Papal court.

Museum collections and «authentic» translations

It was upon return to Europe in 1789 that Paulinus had a chance to put his notes in order and think about a larger picture for his scholarly ambitions. For the next seventeen years he published 26 (or more) books and articles on a wide variety of topics – from catalogues of various museum collections, learned treatises and grammars to short polemical papers in comparative linguistics. Those scattered notes in Paulinus's boxes (*scatole*), today in the Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio

ridge and P. van der Veer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania State University Press 1993, pp. [please, put all the pages of the article](#): 232.

²⁰ The factors of success of the Orientalist scholars to inaugurate the tradition of modern Indological research compared to missionary Orientalist failure is discussed in LORENZEN, *Marco della Tomba* cit.

Emanuele, took shape under various titles and topics. Paulinus sifted through, classified, pruned and prepared for print documents and materials from his prodigious manuscript collection, including his field-work diaries. Within five years that he spent in Rome as a professor of Oriental Languages at the Propaganda Fide Mission seminary, he had managed to publish eight books: a Sanskrit grammar, *Sidharubam seu Grammatica Samscrdamica* (1790), a synthetic treatise on religious and civil organization in Brahmanic India, *Systema Brahmanicum Liturgicum, Mythologicum, Civile, ex Monumentis Indicis Musei Borgiani Velitris, Dissertationibus historico-criticis* (1791), a history of Christianity in India *India Orientalis Christiana* (1794), a few works on various South Asian alphabets and proverbs²¹, and two catalogues/inventories of Oriental manuscripts and objects, one for the Propaganda Fide and the other for the Museum in Velletri²².

His travelogue, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali* was not simply an effort at capturing a larger public, but also a way of quickly storing information that Paulinus probably knew he would not have enough time in near future to organize himself and that may thus be forgotten in the archives. Publishing *Viaggio* was also a way of inscribing himself onto a long list of travelogue writers through India, and to remind his readers of his first hand authority in things Indian.

The most important way in which all these scattered fragments were brought together is translation. Translation was also the key to discovering both origins and the history of an object or a concept. Thus Paulinus wrote in the *Viaggio*, «With incredible inconvenience (*fastidio*) and labor (*pena*) I reunited these Indian Malabar names,

²¹ *Alphabeta Indica, id est Granthamicum seu Sanscrdamico-Malabaricum, Indostanum sive Vanarense, Naganicum vulgare et Talinganicum*, Romae, Ex Typographia Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda fide 1791, p. 24; *De veteribus Indis dissertatio, in qua cavillationes auctoris Alphabeti Tibetani (A.A. Giorgi) castigatur*, Romae, Antonius Fulgonius 1795, p. 54; *Centum Adagia Malabarica cum textu originali et versione latina: nunc primum in lucem edita a Paulino a Sancto Bartholomaeo*, Romae, Antonius Fulgonius 1791, p. 12.

²² PAULINUS A S. BARTHOLOMAEO, *Examen Historico-criticum Codicum Indicorum Bibliothecae Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide...*, Romae, Ex Typographia Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda fide 1792, p. 80; *Id., Musei Borgiani Velitris codices avenses, peguani, siamici, malabarici, indostani, animadvesionibus historico-criticis castigati et illustrati. Accedunt monumenta inedita et Cosmogonia indico-tibetana...*, Romae, Antonius Fulgonius 1793.

with the names in Latin and Portuguese of so many Indian simples (plants) in order to provide the key to Malabar Botany to the *amateurs* of this science²³». Names, of course, came straight from the dictionaries and texts, written or published by other missionaries in India and manuscripts provided by his local informants in vernacular languages and in Sanskrit.

Sanskrit

Just like all 18th century Orientalists, Paulinus was obsessed with Sanskrit, the scholarly language (*la lingua dotta*) of the Indians. In *Sidharubam seu Grammatica Sanscrdamica*, his first Sanskrit grammar printed only a year after his return to Rome in 1790, Paulinus wrote a veritable panegyric to «this language of the ancient sages of India». Without mentioning the name, he quoted William Jones's famous statement that Sanskrit was more perfect than Greek and more copious than Latin²⁴. For Paulinus, Sanskrit was a kind of *omnimedia* for storing and generating culture. First of all, it «possessed all conceivable words», it had «unlimited abundance of nouns and verbs» and it was «the most adequate medium for discussing any subject whatsoever»²⁵. He was not the first Catholic missionary who admired Sanskrit and dreamt of making it a perfect receptacle for Christian message, often called a «local Latin»²⁶. In South India, Roberto Nobili (1577-1656) in the early seventeenth century started writing Christian literature in Sanskrit and in Sanskritized Tamil²⁷. Independently, Heinrich Roth (1620-1668), a Jesuit missionary at the Mughal court, was equally enthusiastic and tried to enlist to the cause of Sanskrit the famous Jesuit polyhistor Athanasius Kircher in Rome. Kircher

²³ PAULINUS, *Viaggio* cit., p. 366.

²⁴ ID., *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language* cit., p. 98.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

²⁶ A Jesuit dream of finding a perfect language receptacle for the Christian message made the missionaries susceptible to all languages cultivated by the learned non-Christian literati. The Jesuits at the Mughal court singled out Persian while those in China thought that Mandarin qualified to become the language of the Mass for the Chinese.

²⁷ I.G. ŽUPANOV, *Disputed Mission, Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth Century India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press 1999.

received bundles and bundles of information from all over the world and some made it into his printed works. While he included five plates with Sanskrit alphabet into his *China Illustrata*, the main text of Roth's Sanskrit grammar remained lost in the archives of the Collegio Romano²⁸. William Jones, who looked down on Catholic missionaries and their conversion methods, unknowingly agreed with them when he stated that the *Muselmàns* and *Hindus* could be easily converted if certain biblical chapters such as the Prophets, «particularly of Isaiah» and one of the Gospels were translated into Sanskrit and Persian. Such translations may cause «a great revolution [read conversion]»²⁹.

Sanskrit was, therefore, a repository and a witness of the Brahmanical high «learning, cultivation of sciences and arts [...] multiplicity of philosophic and religious sects, a variety of castes and trades, a refinement of life, and a most intensive study of logic and metaphysics»³⁰. It was also a mother language of all Indian vernaculars such as, according to Paulinus, *Ceilanica*, *Tamulica*, *Malabarica*, *Canara*, *Maràshda*, *Telinga*, *Bengalina*, *Devanagirca*, *Guzaratica*, *Nepalese* and of two languages that migrated out of India such as *Zendica* (in Persia) and the *Gypsy* vernacular (in Europe)³¹. In the same way, Paulinus continued, Latin was the mother of Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. That is the reason why the one who knows Sanskrit can easily learn all other vernaculars³². In addition, Paulinus proved in numerous convoluted etymological derivations that Sanskrit had also at one point or another penetrated «Greece and Latium»³³. Here again, Paulinus takes a combative stand, in spite of the fact that his own

²⁸ Roth's grammar was discovered in Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele in Rome in 1976 by Arnuld Camps, O.F.M, see Lach, III, 2, plate 129. A. KIRCHER, *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae et artis spectaculis... illustrata*, Amsterdam, Jacob van Meurs 1667.

²⁹ W. JONES, *On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India, written in 1784, and since revised by the President, in Asiatic Researches, or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature of Asia*, 20 vols., Calcutta, Manuel Cantopher 1788-1839 [printed verbatim from the Calcutta edition, London, J. Sewell et al. 1799-1839], I, p. 275.

³⁰ PAULINUS, *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language* cit., p. 103.

³¹ ID., *Viaggio* cit., pp. 258-263.

³² ID., *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language* cit., pp. 124-125.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

conclusions that India, not Egypt or Greece, was the most antique civilization was not so different from, neither irreconcilable with, other scholars and writers such as William Jones whose texts he knew well. By 1798, Paulinus's comparative method produced one of the first studies on the kinship of Indo-European languages³⁴. In his *De antiquitate et affinitate linguae Zendicae, Samscrdamicae et Germanicae dissertatio*, Paulinus juxtaposes linguistic forms in Sanskrit, Avestan and German in order to prove the existence of kinship between these languages³⁵. In fact, Paulinus set out to prove with examples Jones's famous claim in 1786 of the common origin of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit, but it was not until 1802 before he finally came up with decisive pronouncement on the issue³⁶. Thus, he wrote in his *De latini sermonis origine*, both Sanskrit, Zend and Latin possess between them «an intimate affinity» and resemble as «one egg to another»³⁷.

Sanskrit, in Paulinus's opinion, contained truth on the one hand, and many lies on the other. As a repository of the Brahmanical high learning, it also wove into it monstrous «fables» and corrupted the pristine message (presumably Christian, of course). Paulinus was in

³⁴ JAU-K-PINHAK, *Some Notes cit.*, p. 136.

³⁵ PAULINUS A S. BARTHOLOMAEO, *De antiquitate et affinitate linguae Zendicae, Samscrdamicae et Germanicae dissertatio...*, Patavii, Typis seminarii 1798 [1799].

³⁶ The similarity between Latin and Sanskrit was noticed very early. Filippo Sassetti who visited India between 1583 and 1588 described Sanskrit as a language with a well ordered grammar and containing words that resembled Italian. He also hinted at the fact that it was perhaps India the cradle of all languages. D.F. LACH, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 3 vols., Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press 1965-1977, II (1970), 3, p. 520. French Jesuits such as J.F. Pons, J. Calmette and, in particular, P.-G. Coeurdoux were some of the most learned Sanskritists of the first half of the 18th century. Coeurdoux may have been the first to report in 1767 on the close family resemblance between Greek, Latin and Sanskrit terms. This letter was sent to the members of the Académie Royal des Inscriptioin et des Belles-Lettres in Paris. S. MURR, *L'Inde philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire, l'indologie du Père Coeurdoux; stratégies, apologétique et scientificité*, 2 vols., Paris, Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient 1987, II, p. 29.

³⁷ JAU-K-PINHAK, *Some notes cit.* PAULINUS A S. BARTHOLOMAEO, *De latini sermonis origine et cum orientalibus linguis connectione dissertatio...*, Romae, Fulgonius 1802. A ten page manuscript copy of the article with slight differences can be found in Rome, BNVE, Rari e manoscritti, Fondi minori, Santa Maria della Scala, 36 (C), p. 2. The date on the manuscript is 1801. There is another copy *ibid.*, 34, pp. 58-77.

particular interested in understanding the origin and truth of Indian religious and philosophical ideas and he was sure that the Sanskrit and the ancient books were the keys to the enigma. His efforts were not always appreciated, especially by the British Orientalists who denounced him as a fraud.

Alexander Hamilton thought that Paulinus's Sanskrit dictionary, *Amarasinha* printed in 1798, was «a dictionary of the Malabar idiom, which bears the same relation to the Sanskrit that Italian does to Latin»³⁸. It is clear today that the misunderstanding came from the fact that Paulinus transcribed Sanskrit words from the Grantha script and under influence of the Dravidian phonology and into the Italian orthography. On the other hands, the British Sanskritists in Calcutta learnt Sanskrit from their Bengali pundits. Paulinus was aware that the transcription and transliteration of Indian languages was a problem. «The Europeans, Arabs, Persians, Greeks who do not understand Indian language, try to pronounce or write Indian words with the same corruption as dictated by their spirit (*genio*) and secondly according to the pronunciation of their country (*patria*) which leads to another corruption that changes and transforms and corrupts in everything and in part the true native Indian name»³⁹. He castigated in particular the French geographers such as Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782), Guillaume de l'Isle (1675-1726), Andrea Cellario and the French Capuchin François Marie de Tours (d. 1709) for daring to write about India ignorant as they were of the correct spelling of the names. Paulinus, of course, was intended to correct all the names bastardized by the foreigners (*stranieri*) and travelers (*viaggiatori*) and to standardize their pronunciation according to the Italian orthography. Thus, he claimed *Coromandel* should be spelled *Ciòlamandala*.

Taking up William Jones's opinion that «[our] English alphabet and orthography are disgracefully, and almost ridiculously, imperfect», Paulinus added his own more devastating appraisal. «The English alphabet is not only imperfect but plainly ridiculous when it comes to expressing Indian nouns, they horribly corrupt them when writing them in that alphabet»⁴⁰. But, of course, the way European Oriental-

³⁸ TRAUTMANN, *Aryans and British India* cit., p. 36; A. HAMILTON, *title?*, in «Review of Asiatick Researches», VI, 1802, pp. 30-310.

³⁹ PAULINUS, *Viaggio* cit., p. 17.

⁴⁰ W. JONES, *A dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters* by

ist history unfolded, these linguistic decisions were not left to Italians.

One point of similarity between the British and the Catholic Missionary Orientalists is their effort at preserving the relics of the Indian past. In fact, the preservation of the Indian ancient life and wisdom was the prime task of the Brahmans, who according to the European Orientalists not only did a bad job, but also hid and distorted this pristine knowledge, which would, they hoped, confirm the Biblical chronology. It was often repeated that the Brahmans who new by heart the Vedas and were able to recite them did not necessarily understand the meanings. This is why the Brahmans had to be replaced and the first stage in this process was to take control of their learned language and their books.

Replacing Brahmans

The first to take professional interest in Indian «pagan» books and to learn and teach vernacular languages of India were Jesuits⁴¹. The famous method of accommodation, first employed in India by Roberto Nobili, one of the first Jesuit Orientalists, in the early 17th century was geared to displace Brahmans through imitation or partial strategic mimesis. He not only fashioned his public persona in the image of a Brahman, but he also «translated» Christian texts into Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu and practically invented a «new Christian» idiom for his neophytes⁴².

Compared to Nobili, Paulinus stands in between the «corrective» missionary Orientalism and «scientific» British Orientalism in Calcutta. Paulinus's printed texts such as his Sanskrit dictionary and grammar, his *Systema Brahmanicum* and some other books, could be seen as useful to future missionaries, but they were also texts inspired by the *Asiatic Researches* and by other Orientalist scholars in India and Europe. Moreover, the new type of Orientalist knowledge moved

the President, in *Asiatic Researches, or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal* cit., I, p. 13. PAULINUS, *Examen Historico-criticum* cit., p. 6; ID., *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language* cit., p. 92.

⁴¹ I.G. ŽUPANOV, *Missionary Tropics: the Catholic Frontier in India (16th-17th Century)*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press 2005.

⁴² ŽUPANOV, *Disputed Mission* cit.

increasingly away from the sites of «data collection». «The centers of calculation» as far as Indological sciences were concerned, moved to the nineteenth century Europe⁴³.

Well, Paulinus obviously also moved in the right direction when he came back to Rome, where museums and collections of antiquities were in fashion and had as their patrons some of the richest and most influential Papal officials, the most enterprising of whom was probably Cardinal Stefano Borgia. He was an emblematic figure combining in his person all qualities of an eighteenth century Roman *mecenate*. He was from a rich aristocratic family, himself an *amateur* antiquarian and historian as well as a talented Papal administrator. On his family property in Velletri, Borgia founded a Museum of antiquities and relics of the «ancient» civilizations such as coins, manuscripts and artwork. This museum was open to all learned men, of all creed, of his time such as Jacob Georg Christian Adler and Georg Zoega, and many other. Goethe visited the place on February 22, 1787 and described it in his *Italienische Reise* (1829)⁴⁴. It was with Borgia's encouragement and protection, since he was an influential member of the Propaganda Fide that Paulinus was able to work on his publications. More importantly, the Velletri Museum provided a space for various classical and antiquity scholars to meet and exchange ideas and compare notes. Paulinus's comparative perspective was further developed through the access to materials and scholars working on Coptic, Egyptian, Greek and Roman archeology and literature. His printed books are full of references to various Velletri collections and catalogues. Paulinus belonged, therefore, to a community of scholars, all of whom belonged to Stefano Borgia's patronage network. It is clear that their common interest and expertise in antiquities and classical learning defined the topics and agreed-upon set of procedures⁴⁵. For

⁴³ For the notion of «centers of calculation» see B. LATOUR, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*, Cambridge (MASS.), Harvard University Press 1987.

⁴⁴ J.W. VON GOETHE, *Italian Journey, 1786-1788*, ed. by W.H. Auden and E. Mayer, New York, Penguin 1992.

⁴⁵ Paula Findlen described a similar situation in her article on the emergence of natural history as a discipline from the perspective of community formation, cfr. *The Formation of a Scientific Community: Natural History in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, in *Natural Particulars, Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, ed. by A. Grafton and N. Siraisi, Cambridge (MASS.), MIT Press 1999, pp. 369-400.

example, the *lingua franca* of their enterprise was Latin, rather than the vernacular Italian. «Borgia's» scholars were also often employed in cataloguing, ordering, classifying and describing the collections rather than «speculating» about larger philosophical and theological issues of the day.

The purpose of the material sources stored in Papal libraries, museums and books that nourished Roman scholarship was part of an ecumenical and universal Catholic mission of which Borgia and some other «enlightened» cardinals dreamt of on the eve of the French Revolution. However, in spite of excellent materials to which he had access in the Roman archives, Paulinus did not have a sufficiently numerous community of Indologists in Rome and in Italy in general. Moreover, his archival and comparativist work was torn between two differently articulated projects. For Borgia and his Catholic universal mission, Paulinus was a «conservationist» or curator of documents and objects that were to prove what the Church already knew, and prevent theories that would argue against the basic Catholic dogmas. At the same time, as an Orientalist, Paulinus «belonged» to an international community of scholars, most of whom were Christian, but prided themselves on scientific, secular epistemologies and mistrusted in particular Catholic missionaries in India. In a hostile comment, Anquetil Duperron remarked that for Paulinus «all his science comes from the Propaganda Fide library, Museum of Cardinal Borgia, from F. Hanxleden [the Sanskrit grammar] and from *Asiatick Researches* in Calcutta, whether he understands it or not»⁴⁶. Paulinus felt snubbed by the British and French Orientalists, but he avidly read what they wrote and he responded to them in his own works. Besides pointing to their ignorance and errors, he also applauded and invited them to come and consult his books in Rome⁴⁷.

None of the European Orientalist came to Rome, very few read his books and after his death in 1806 and the dispersal of the Borgia Museum in 1812, Paulinus's books sank into oblivion. Rome in general became a backwater on the map of the nineteenth-century Ori-

⁴⁶ PAULINUS A S. BARTHOLOMAEO, *Voyage aux Indes orientales par le P. Paulin de S. Bathélemy, Missionnaire; traduit de l'Italian par M***[Marchesan] Avec les observations de MM Anquetil du Perron, J.R. Forster et Silvestre de Sacy; Et une dissertation de M. Anquetil sur la propriété individuelle et foncière dans l'Inde et en Égypte*, 3 vols., Paris, Tourneisen fils 1808, III, p. 439.

⁴⁷ ID., *Dissertation on the Sanskrit Language* cit., p. 92.

entalist scholars. With a loss of political autonomy through French invasion and the internal «revolutions», there was no more patronage network for missionary Indianists. A new kind of professional Orientalists that appeared in the middle of the 19th century such as Count Angelo de Gubernatis and Giuseppe Tucci had more in common with British, German and French Orientalists than with their immediate Catholic missionary predecessors like Paulinus⁴⁸.

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⁴⁸ A. DE GUBERNATIS, *Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire des études orientales en Italie*, Paris-Florence-Rome-Turin, Leroux 1876. See an interesting view of his «Italian» Orientalist predecessors. While he rejected Paulinus (whom he mistakenly and sneeringly designated as «italianised hungarian») on the basis of his unhelpful and confused ideas and obstinate character, he extolled some other «pure» Italian travelers-Orientalists and missionaries, such as Filippo Sassetti (16th century) and Marco della Tomba (18th century).