

## Hinduism in the Jesuit *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*

If Sylvia Murr's claim that 'at the beginning of the eighteenth century, all discourse on India was tributary to the 'Relations' supplied by the missionaries, Catholic and Protestant',<sup>1</sup> is somewhat overstated, it nevertheless serves to emphasise the importance of such missionary 'relations' prior to the arrival in India of Anquetil-Duperron, who appears to have been the first European to visit India for purely scholarly purposes. Among Protestants, Murr mentions Ziegenbalg and also Lord and Roger, although the latter were not missionaries, nor writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Among Catholics, the main contributors to Indological discourse of the eighteenth century were French, in particular the Jesuits associated with the Carnatic mission, but also the Capuchins Jean-Jacques Tessier de Quéralay and Thomas de Poitiers. At the end of the century another French priest, the Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois, a secular priest of the Missions Étrangères, was responsible for publishing as his own work one of the most significant works of the earlier generation of French missionaries.<sup>2</sup>

These writers produced a number of significant works on Indian religions, among them the *Relation des erreurs qui se trouvent dans la religion des gentils malabars de la Coste Coromandelle*<sup>3</sup> of Jean Venant Bouchet, the *Traité de la Religion des Malabars*<sup>4</sup> of Tessier de Quéralay, *Le Paganisme des Indiens nommés Tamouls* of Thomas de Poitiers, the *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens*<sup>5</sup> of Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux, and the

<sup>1</sup> 'au début du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle, tout discours sur l'Inde était tributaire des 'Relations' fournies par les missionnaires, catholiques ou protestants' Murr 1986: 303.

<sup>2</sup> Despite being 'a respected member of the *Missions Étrangères*, a body traditionally hostile to the Jesuits', Dubois's relations with the Jesuits were good, and he supported the return of the Jesuits to Madurai after the restoration of the Society (Ballhatchet 1998: 3).

<sup>3</sup> A substantial part of the text of the *Relation des erreurs qui se trouvent dans la religion des gentils malabars de la Coste Coromandelle* was printed in Picart's *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* under the title: 'Dissertation historique sur les Dieux des Indiens orientaux.' (Picart 1723: 83–100). This is immediately followed by a 'Lettre de P. Bouchet sur la Religion des Indiens Orientaux' (Bouchet's second letter to Huet, XIII: 95–225). A critical edition of the *Relation des erreurs* from three manuscripts, one of which attributes the work to Nobili was published by Caland (Caland 1923). Dharampal, who has used a fourth manuscript, discusses the origin of the work and its attribution to Bouchet (Dharampal 1982a: 233–239).

<sup>4</sup> Extensive extracts from Tessier de Quéralay's manuscript were published in Burnouf and Jacquet 1835. The full text was published in Dharampal 1982a.

<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Murr identified a manuscript compiled in 1776–1777 by a French artillery officer Nicholas-Jacques Desvaulx as a version of Cœurdoux's lost work, and has shown

infamous *Ezourvedam*.<sup>6</sup> However, only the first and the last of these were published in the eighteenth century. Of more immediate impact were the letters of the French Jesuits, published in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> The Jesuit letters from India had been contributing to European knowledge of Indian religions since the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> It will be argued, however, that for a number of reasons it was the letters of the eighteenth century which were particularly important in the establishment of the concept of a pan-Indian religion, which subsequently came to be called Hinduism. Although this analysis is based primarily on the letters published in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, the other letters, both published and unpublished also played a role, and reference will be made to these and to the other mentioned works on Indian religions by French writers in this period. Among the Jesuits who served in the Madurai, Carnatic and Bengal missions and contributed to the *Lettres édifiantes* were Jean Venant Bouchet (1655–1732, in India from 1688), Pierre Martin (1665–1716, in India from 1694), Pierre de la Lane (1669–1746, in India from 1704), Etienne le Gac (1671–1738, in India by 1709),

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that Dubois's celebrated work, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (1816; *Mœurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des Peuples de l'Inde*, 1825) is based on Cœurdoux (Murr 1987). In his Prefatory note to Beauchamp's 1906 edition, Friedrich Max Müller noticed that the author of the work 'really belongs to a period previous to the revival of Sanskrit studies in India, as inaugurated by Wilkins, Sir William Jones and Colebrooke', although he did not doubt that the author was Dubois.

<sup>6</sup> Among those to whom the *Ezourvedam* has been attributed are, in addition to Nobili, five French Jesuits of the eighteenth century: Bouchet (1655–1732), Pierre Martin (1665–1716), Jean Calmette (1693–1740), Antoine Mosac (1704–c.1784), and Jean de Villette (dates uncertain). Rocher reviews the long debate over the authorship of the *Ezourvedam* concluding that 'the author of the [*Ezourvedam*] may be one of these, but he may also be one of their many more or less well known confreres. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot go any further than that.' (Rocher 1984: 60). If nothing else, this demonstrates the sheer number of Jesuits who had significant knowledge of Indian languages and religions. The *Ezourvedam* was published in 1778 as *L'Ezour-Vedam, ou Ancien Commentaire du Vedam contenant l'exposition des opinions religieuses & philosophiques des Indiens*, but doubts about its authenticity immediately surfaced. Pierre Sonnerat showed it to 'a learned but fanatic Brahman' who convinced him that '[i]t is definitely not one of the four Vedams, notwithstanding its name. It is a book of controversy, written by a missionary' (*Voyage aux Indes Orientales* (1782) I: 215, cited in Rocher 1984: 13).

<sup>7</sup> The letters were widely read, both in the *Lettres édifiantes* and in other publications, for example in Picart's collection in which Bouchet's long, undated letter concerning transmigration (XIII: 95–226) was reprinted (Picart 1723: 100–106). A brief account of the origin, editions and influence of the *Lettres édifiantes* is given by Rétif 1951.

<sup>8</sup> Zachariae goes so far as to say that if Europeans at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century 'were tolerably acquainted with 'Hinduism', with the religion and mythology of India ... that knowledge was attained through the letters which the Jesuit missionaries labouring in India sent to the members of their Order in Europe.' (Zachariae 1921: 151). For earlier Jesuit ethnographic contributions see Rubiés 2000.

Gaston-Laurent Cœurdox (1691–1779, in India from 1732), Jean Calmette (1693–1740, in India from 1725 or 1726), Jean François Pons (1698–c.1753, in India from 1726).

While Ziegenbalg, as we have seen, had a general concept of a religion stretching from Sri Lanka, up the Coromandel coast to Bengal and deep into the Mogul realm,<sup>9</sup> his primary concern was with the religious beliefs and practices of the Tamils. By contrast, in their letters from around the time of Ziegenbalg's death onward, the Jesuits consistently treat 'the system of religion recognized among the Indians' as a coherent religious entity.<sup>10</sup> While they have no single term equivalent to 'Hinduism', they express the same idea in various ways. Bouchet notes that 'one of the points of the Indian doctrine, is that the gods may be changed into men, and the men into gods'.<sup>11</sup> De la Lane, and Le Caron both offer summaries of 'the religion of the Indians'<sup>12</sup> And Calmette reports the successful outcome of his commission to obtain 'the original books of the religion of the Indies'.<sup>13</sup> Le Gac, writing in 1718, twice refers to the threats faced by converts from Hinduism as a result of their renouncing 'the religion of their fathers'.<sup>14</sup> Four years later, the same author recounts a conversation with a local prince, whose evident desire 'to know and to embrace the truth' was 'mixed sometimes with the ideas of Gentilism', for example his wish to continue to wear a *liṅgam*.<sup>15</sup> Although 'Gentilism' had been used in the previous century, for example by Ross,<sup>16</sup> it is used here, in contrast to '*Christianisme*',<sup>17</sup> to refer to the same entity as 'the religion of

<sup>9</sup> See above, p.110.

<sup>10</sup> 'le système de Religion reçu parmi les Indiens' IX: 5. Note however, that while the existence of such a common religion is a shared assumption of the Jesuits, they differed concerning the nature and origin of this religion.

<sup>11</sup> 'un des points de la doctrine Indienne, est que les Dieux peuvent estre changez en hommes, & les hommes en Dieux' XIII,147. Cf. the reference to 'la religion des gentils malabars' in the title of Bouchet's *Relation des erreurs* (Caland 1923).

<sup>12</sup> 'la Religion des Indiens', X: 14. 'La Religion des Indiens est un composé monstrueux de toute sorte de fables.' XVI: 122. De la Lane also refers to 'l'Idolatrie Indienne' X: 17.

<sup>13</sup> 'les Livres originaux de la Religion des Indes' XXIV: 437. A copy of the *igveda* sent by Calmette was received in Paris in 1731 (Dharampal 1982a: 247).

<sup>14</sup> 'la religion de leurs Peres' XVI:183, 208. In this letter Le Gac discusses particularly the former followers of a '*Gourou nommé Chivalingam*' (204) but his comments about the consequences of renouncing 'the religion of their fathers' refer to other converts from Hinduism as well.

<sup>15</sup> "'Dieu vous à donné un fonds de droiture", lui dit le Pere dans le même entretien, "qui est une grande disposition pour connoître & embrasser la verité: mais à cette connoissance vous mêlez quelquefois des idées de Gentilisme qui alterent beaucoup ces heureuses semences.'" XVI: 293–294.

<sup>16</sup> Ross 1696: 63, quoted above p.54.

<sup>17</sup> XVI: 204, 247. Le Gac also refers to 'la Religion Chrétienne' and 'la loi Chrétienne' e. g. XVI: 285, 251. In general, where the Jesuits use 'la Religion' or 'la Foi' without qualification, they refer to Christianity.

their fathers' and in the context of the Jesuits' works is better understood as anticipating the 'Gentooism' and 'Hindooism' which were to appear later in the century,<sup>18</sup> than referring back to the broader concept of 'Gentilism' of a writer such as Ross. The account in the Jesuit letters of the religion to which these different locutions refer shows clearly that they have a concept of Hinduism *avant la lettre*. In order to show that this idea emerged not simply from their preconceptions or apologetic needs, it is necessary to examine the nature of the Jesuits and their missions in India.

### *The Jesuit missions in India*

The Jesuits had been present in India since shortly after the foundation of their Society in the mid-sixteenth century, at first in Goa and the Fisher Coast and then at the courts of Akbar in the north and Venkata II in the south. The seventeenth century saw the experiments in adaptation of Roberto Nobili in the Madurai mission and, toward the end of the century, the establishment of the Bengal and Carnatic missions, based in the French possessions of Chandernagore and Pondicherry respectively. Many of the letters in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* are from Jesuits associated with the Carnatic mission, although crucially several also worked in the other missions, particularly Madurai and Bengal.

The history of the Carnatic mission of the Jesuits begins with the arrival in Pondicherry, in 1688, of a number of Jesuits who had been forced to leave Siam following a revolution.<sup>19</sup> When it became clear that they would not be able to return to Siam, it was decided to start a mission in the region to the north-west of Pondicherry, along the lines of the Madurai mission established in the extreme south by Roberto Nobili at the beginning of the century. Initially the mission consisted of three missionaries, Bouchet, Jean Baptiste de la Fontaine,<sup>20</sup> who had both worked in the Madurai mission, and Pierre Mauduit (1664–1711), under the authority of Guy Tachard (1651–1712) in Pondicherry. Neill notes that '[d]uring the course of the eighteenth century forty French Jesuits served in the Carnatic mission', although '[f]or the greater part of the time there were not more than six missionaries in the whole of the vast

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<sup>18</sup> In 1779 and 1787 respectively. See above, p.56.

<sup>19</sup> For the Jesuits' enterprise in Siam, see Tachard 1686 and 1689.

<sup>20</sup> La Fontaine does not appear in Sommervogel. His death is reported in a letter dated 10 December 1718 from Le Gac, who writes: 'The Carnatic mission ... rightly regards him as its founder.' ('La mission de Carnate ... le regarde avec justice comme son Fondateur.' XVI:232–3).

field.<sup>21</sup> Although some of these missionaries lived into the nineteenth century, the mission effectively came to an end with the dissolution of the Jesuit order in 1773. While their missionary labours yielded ‘no more than a somewhat exiguous reward’,<sup>22</sup> their contributions to European understanding of Indian religions were rather more significant.

Despite the sustained anti-Jesuit polemic throughout his work, the English translator of the Jesuit letters, John Lockman, nevertheless argued that ‘no Men are better qualified to describe Nations and Countries than the Jesuits.’

Their Education, their extensive Learning; the Pains they take to acquire the Languages of the several Regions they visit; the Opportunities they have, by their Skill in the Arts and Sciences, as well as by their insinuating Address, to glide into Courts, where Access is often denied to all but themselves; Their Familiarity with the Inhabitants; their mixing with, and, often, very long Abode among them; these, I say, must necessarily give our Jesuits a much more perfect Insight into the Genius and Character of a Nation, than others who visit Coasts only, and that merely upon Account of Traffic, or from some other lucrative Motives. In case these Mercantile Travellers happen to go up a Country, and make some little Stay in it, the most they are able to do is, to get a few of the most obvious Customs; to describe Habits, Buildings, and what ever else comes under the Notice of the Eye: But as to the Genius of the Inhabitants, their Religion, their Government, and other important Articles, these they can learn only superficially; since they must depend wholly, for Information, upon the Natives, in case they understand their Language; or upon Foreigners who may have resided some Years among them. Upon the Whole therefore, ‘tis my Opinion, that the Jesuits, to speak in general, have the best Opportunity of furnishing us with valuable Accounts of many far distant Countries.<sup>23</sup>

Like Nobili, the Jesuits of the eighteenth century spent extended periods in India. Martin reports that his fellow Jesuit, Emmanuel Lopez, had spent more than fifty years as a missionary in South India.<sup>24</sup> Lopez was unusual, but not exceptional; Cœurdoux was in India for forty-seven years, De la Lane for forty-two. Martin himself spent nearly twenty years in India,<sup>25</sup> and several other missionaries were in India for periods of more than twenty years. In every case this is significantly longer than the Protestant chaplains, Lord and Roger, or the missionaries Ziegenbalg and Gründler, both of whom died prematurely.

<sup>21</sup> Neill 1985: 90, 93.

<sup>22</sup> Neill 1985: 93.

<sup>23</sup> Lockman 1743, I: viii–ix.

<sup>24</sup> V: 14.

<sup>25</sup> Martin was sent to India in 1694. He returned to Rome to represent the Madurai mission, dying shortly afterwards in 1716. In addition to his letters an unpublished account of the mission, and especially of the persecutions it suffered, has survived. (Sommervogel 1890–1909, V: 624–625).

The other factors identified by Lockman, the Jesuits' education, success in learning languages, and willingness to live away from European coastal settlements, would all have contributed to their deeper understanding of Hinduism. Some of these were necessitated by a particular obstacle which the Jesuits found they had to overcome if they were to be successful in their mission. The problem was the view taken of Europeans, and therefore also of their religion, by the Indians. Bouchet comments that 'It is not possible to explain how dreadful is the idea which the Gentiles, who dwell in these lands, have formed of the Europeans who live on the coast.'<sup>26</sup> The problem was not simply behaviour which, from the point of view of the Hindus, was immoral, but that they were *mlecchas*, and as such outside the caste system. The Jesuits realized that in the early years of their mission most of their converts had come from the lowest ranks of the caste system. If they were to have any access to the Brahmans it was necessary for them to avoid being identified as '*Pranguis*'.<sup>27</sup> The Jesuits therefore adopted the dress and manner of life of *sannyāsins* and avoided polluting themselves by such actions as entering outcaste dwellings.<sup>28</sup> Exposure as '*Pranguis*' was a constant concern for the missionaries; Martin notes that it would 'make us contemptible in their eyes, and raise in them an insurmountable aversion to the [Christian] religion'.<sup>29</sup> He writes that the Jesuits in Madurai 'call themselves Brahmans, that is, divines, come out of the north to teach the law of the true God'<sup>30</sup> and Mauduit confirms that this is how they were known.<sup>31</sup> On their own account, in inland areas, they seem to have been successful in this ploy. Martin reports an occasion when he sought an audience with a local Prince to request protection against persecution.

<sup>26</sup> 'Il n'est pas possible de faire comprendre l'affreuse idée que les Gentils, qui demeurent dans les terres, se sont formée des Européens qui habitent la Coste.' XV, 239–40. Cf. Rubino's account of the same problem a century earlier (Rubies 2001: 220).

<sup>27</sup> *Pāraṅgi*, Feringhee, European. In his *Relation des erreurs* Bouchet states that 'we do not have in our European languages a single term which represents all the contempt and the disgust which this word expresses.' ('nous n'avons pas dans nos langues d'Europe un seul terme qui représente tout le mépris et le dégoût que ce mot exprime.' Cited in Dharampal 1982a: 243). Cf. Caland 1923: 84.

<sup>28</sup> Martin notes that Lopez was 'the last Jesuit who wore, in Madura, our European habit.' ('le dernier Jesuite, qui ait paru dans le Maduré avec l'habit que nous portons en Europe.' V: 14).

<sup>29</sup> 'nous rendroit méprisables à leurs yeux, & leur inspireroit pour la Religion une horreur qu'on ne pourrait jamais vaincre' IX: 126.

<sup>30</sup> 'se qualifient *Brames*, c'est à dire, Docteurs, venus au Nord pour enseigner la Loi du vrai Dieu' I: 17.

<sup>31</sup> VI: 9. The title '*Les Brames du Nord*' is still in use in one of the last of the *Lettres édifiantes*, written sometime between 1760 and 1776 (XXXIV: 311). The Jesuits were also known as the '*Saniassis Romains*' (e. g. XVI: 207).

If he had had the least suspicion that I was of the caste of the *Pranghis*, for it is thus that they call the Europeans, he would certainly not have admitted me to his presence, nor sent me food, as was his habit. One of his ministers, an intelligent man, drew in my presence a very ridiculous portrait of the *Pranghis* or Europeans whom he had seen on the Coromandel coast, and he concluded that my manners, and my way of life, so opposed to that of the *Pranghis*, was a convincing proof that I was not of such a contemptible caste.<sup>32</sup>

Of course it was not always possible for the missionaries to convince Indians that they were not Europeans. Bouchet notes that 'it is evident that we are white like the Paranguis',<sup>33</sup> and that the 'Gentils' argued that as 'the faith and the religion that we profess are the same as that of the Paranguis and the Portuguese', the Jesuits cannot deny that they are also 'Paranguis'.<sup>34</sup> Bouchet's response was to argue that just as the Brahmans cannot be 'reproached for being Parias, although they teach the same sects of Viṣṇu and Rudra as the Parias follow', so '[the Jesuits] are not Paranguis [although they] are of the same religion as the Europeans'.<sup>35</sup> The result, according to Bouchet, was that 100,000 converted from 'idolatry' and became Christians. Many European missionaries in India both before and after experienced the same problem, although none of them went quite as far as the Jesuits in the search for a solution. Whatever the difference this policy made to the success of the mission, the attempt to dissociate themselves entirely from other Europeans in India meant that the Jesuits were integrated into Indian life to an extraordinary degree. Moreover both the practice and the defence of what became a controversial policy were important spurs to study and writing on Hinduism.

In addition to the length of time they spent in India, and their integration into Indian society, there are two further factors arising directly from the nature of the Society which influenced the Jesuits' understanding of Indian religion. Unlike other religious orders the Society of Jesus was not based around traditional monastic communal life. To supply the lack of

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<sup>32</sup> 'S'il eût eu le moindre soupçon que j'étois de la Caste des *Pranghis*, c'est ainsi qu'ils appellent les Européens, il ne m'auroit point certainement admis auprès de sa personne, ni envoyé des plats qui sont à son usage. Un de ses Ministres homme d'esprit, fit en ma présence un portrait fort ridicule des *Pranghis* ou Européens qu'il avoit vûs à la Coste de Coromandel, & il concluoit que mes manières, & ma façon de vivre si opposée à celle des *Pranghis*, estoient une preuve convainquante que je n'étois pas d'une caste si méprisable.' XIII: 88. Cf. IX: 233 where Martin reports 'Swami, thus the people call the missionaries'. ('*Souamy* c'est ainsi les Peuples appellent les Missionaires'.)

<sup>33</sup> 'il est evident que nous sommes blancs comme les Paranguis'. Caland 1923: 88.

<sup>34</sup> 'la foy et la religion que nous professons est la meme de celle des Paranguis et des Portugais, et que par consequent ne pouvons pas nier que nous ne soyons Paranguis comme eux'. Caland 1923: 89.

<sup>35</sup> 'reprocher aux Brahames ... qu'ils soient Parias, quoy qu'ils enseignent les memes sectes de Viçnou et de Rutren que les Parias suivent', 'nous ne somme pas Paranguis pour estre de la meme religion que les Européens.' Caland 1923: 89.

regular contact between members, Ignatius had instituted a practice of regular letter-writing, and it is within this broader tradition that the letters from India take their place.<sup>36</sup> What this meant was that the Jesuits in India were able to gather information on religious practices from widely separated parts of India, and thus to recognize patterns of similarity across India. Moreover, the discipline of the Society required that a Jesuit be entirely at the disposal of his superiors, and missionaries could be, and often were, moved from one part of India to another, even if this meant discarding years spent learning a language that would be of little use elsewhere. Thus Tachard notes on being ordered to move to Bengal: 'It was with regret that I left Pondicherry, I knew the Malabar language quite well ... It would be necessary in Bengal to begin to learn an entirely new language; this is not easy at the age of sixty.'<sup>37</sup> Ten years earlier, Martin, having learnt Bengali, had made the opposite journey and had had to apply himself to learning Tamil: 'For it is an order which the Fathers of that Province have wisely established, not to allow anyone to enter the Madurai Mission, but those who have learnt the language of the country.'<sup>38</sup> As a result these Jesuits had personal knowledge, including acquisition of languages, of widely different parts of India; something that writers such as Lord and Roger never acquired, but which Ziegenbalg was perhaps able to replicate through the breadth of his reading. Not all Jesuits had personal knowledge of different parts of India, but through the exchange of letters and other contacts they were able to benefit from the knowledge of their fellow Jesuits. To demonstrate the importance of these factors in shaping the Jesuits' view of Hinduism, we shall begin with the works of Bouchet, perhaps the best known of the members of the Carnatic mission.

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<sup>36</sup> Rétif (1951: 39) notes that, at least since the time of Francis Xavier, the Franciscans had been sending letters from the east reporting their voyages, but that the Jesuits were the first to do so methodically as part of their apostolate, following the recommendations of Ignatius.

<sup>37</sup> 'Ce fut avec regret que je quittai Ponticherry; je sçavois assez de lanque Malabare ... Il falloit à Bengale commencer à apprendre une langue toute nouvelle; ce qui n'est pas aisé à l'âge de soixante ans.' XII: 367–8.

<sup>38</sup> 'Car c'est un ordre que les Peres de cette Province ont sagement établi, de ne laisser entrer personne dans la Mission de Maduré, qu'il a sçache la langue du pays.' V: 36–7. Special care was taken in the Madurai mission because of the need to avoid detection as Europeans.



*Jean Venant Bouchet: 'le système de Religion reçu parmi les Indiens'*

Bouchet was first sent to Siam, where he remained, according to his first letter to Huet, long enough to learn the language.<sup>39</sup> In 1688, he and other Jesuits were forced to leave Siam. Bouchet went to India, first spending twelve years in the Madurai mission at Āur, near Tiruchirāppaḷḷi, where he was introduced to the principles of adaptation laid down by Nobili.<sup>40</sup> Here Bouchet would have begun to live as a *sannyāsin*. In a letter written some time after his move north to join the Carnatic mission he claimed to be accepted as a *sannyāsin* by those among whom he lived.<sup>41</sup> After the arrival in 1703 of Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon, the papal legate appointed to investigate the rites question, Bouchet was chosen by Tachard to explain the Jesuits' practice in part because he had 'applied himself with so much care and ardour to study and to understand the indigenous customs'.<sup>42</sup> In 1704, following the decision of the legate against the Jesuits, he was sent to Rome to protest the Jesuit case. In 1710 he returned to India and succeeded Tachard as superior of the Carnatic mission, remaining there until his death in 1732. Throughout his time in India, Bouchet was in regular contact with other Jesuits, both in person and by letter, and was himself the author of nine letters from India in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*.<sup>43</sup> Two of the longest, both addressed to the former Bishop of Avranches, Pierre-Daniel Huet, are remarkable for the detailed accounts they contain of the Indian gods and of transmigration. It is likely that Bouchet is also the author of the *Relation des erreurs qui se trouvent dans la religion des gentils malabars de la Coste Coromandelle*,<sup>44</sup> written in defence of the Jesuit mission against the charges of Tessier de Quéralay and the Capuchins concerning the Malabar rites, and of other works which emerged from this controversy.<sup>45</sup> Bouchet's

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<sup>39</sup> XIII, 217.

<sup>40</sup> Neill 1985: 90.

<sup>41</sup> XIII: 190.

<sup>42</sup> Tachard, letter to the Père Général de la Compagnie, 18 February 1705, cited in Dharampal 1982a: 235.

<sup>43</sup> I: 55–60; IX: 1–60 and 61–123; XI: 1–73; XIII: 95–225 and 226–228; XIV: 321–410; XV: 1–82 and 209–332.

<sup>44</sup> See above, p.127.

<sup>45</sup> Sommervogel attributes three such works to Bouchet: the 'Décision des Missionnaires Jésuites du Royaume de Carnate' (dated 3 November 1704 and signed by Bouchet, Mauduit, de la Lane and le Petit), the 'Protestation des PP. Jésuites de Pondichéry, Contre l'Intimation faite juridiquement par M. de Visdelou, Evêque et Vicaire apostolique du 15 janvier 1716', and the 'Explicatio Decreti ab Illustrissimo Patriarcha Antiocheno pro Missionibus Indicis lati, quam ipsemet verbo tradidit; datée de Rome, 12 mars 1707.' The first two treatises appear in a work published from the other side of the debate by the Capuchin Pierre Parisot (or Platel) under the pseudonym Pere Norbert, (Pere Norbert 1766, I: 406–8 and II: 221–3).

position in the rites debate presupposes a demarcation between Indian social customs, tolerable in the church and the lives of the missionaries, and Indian religious beliefs and practices. It does not necessarily require a unified conception of Indian religion, but it is evident from his letters and other works that Bouchet did have such a concept.

In his introduction to the ninth volume of the *Lettres édifiantes* Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743),<sup>46</sup> describes the difficulties of gaining more than a superficial knowledge of the Indians' religion: European writers have not been very familiar with the Indians on the coast, or if they have, these Indians have not been well-instructed in the principles of their religion; the Brahmans have not allowed their books to be read by others, in order, says Du Halde, that they can maintain the advantages they have over the other Indians.

Father Bouchet knew how to ease these difficulties which the Europeans have found in instructing themselves in the doctrine of the Indians: he has penetrated deep into the country, where he has remained for over twenty years: among more than twenty thousand idolaters, to whom he has had the good fortune to administer holy baptism, there are found a number of Brahmans, those of reputation in the country, and who are the most able: through them he has obtained their books, which their learned hold so great a mystery; and as he knows perfectly their language, he has read them with attention: beyond which, in the things which are in need of some explanation, he has had long and frequent debates with the converted Brahmans; in short he has lacked nothing which was necessary in order to know profoundly the ridiculous plan of religion which this people has formed.<sup>47</sup>

Bouchet's linguistic capacity owed much to the advantages of being part of the Jesuits' corporate approach to India. He was first taught 'la langue du pays' i. e. Tamil by François Laynes, procurator of the Madurai mission.<sup>48</sup> Like Tachard, he complained of 'the difficulties of beginning to learn, when already at an advanced age, the elements of a language which has no connection with those of which one is apprised in

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<sup>46</sup> Editor of eighteen volumes of the *Lettres édifiantes* after the death of Le Gobien and author of a major work on China, the *Description ... de la Chine* (1735). See Foss 1979.

<sup>47</sup> 'Ces difficultez que trouvent les Européans à s'instruire de la Doctrine des Indiens, le Pere Bouchet a scû se les appllanir: il a pénétré bien avant dans les terres, où il a fait un séjour de plus de vingt années: parmi plus de vingt mille Idolâtres, à qui il a eu le bonheur d'administrer le saint Baptême, il s'est trouvé plusieurs Brames, de ceux même qui sont en réputation dans le Pays, & qui passent pour être les plus habiles: il a eu par leur moyen ces Livres, dont leur Sçavans sont un si grand mystere; & comme il scâit parfaitement leur langue, il les a lû avec attention: outre cela, dans les choses qui avoient besoin de quelque explication, il a eu de longues & de fréquentes conférences avec les Brames convertis; enfin il n'a rien omis de tout ce qui étoit nécessaire pour connoître à fond le plan ridicule de Religion que ce Peuple s'est formé.' IX, xiii–xiv.

<sup>48</sup> XV: 226.

Europe',<sup>49</sup> especially as 'at a certain age the nerves of the tongue are no longer supple enough to catch the pronunciation of certain letters.'<sup>50</sup> However, he notes that he had 'the help of a grammar composed by one of our first missionaries.'<sup>51</sup>

Bouchet claims to have read 'several learned Indian works',<sup>52</sup> and he appears to have had access to some Purāṇas, and also the Rāmāyaṇa.<sup>53</sup> He drew his account of 'la justice s'administre aux Indes' from various śāstras.<sup>54</sup> He also mentions the 'Vedam, or Law of the Indians' which 'consists of four parts. But several of their learned men are of opinion, that there was anciently a fifth, which being lost by time, there was no possibility of recovering it.' It seems, however, that he did not have access to the Vedas: 'Unhappily the reverence which the Indians bear to their law is so great, that it becomes by this means an impenetrable mystery to us.'<sup>55</sup>

In addition to his reading, a great deal of Bouchet's information concerning Hinduism was derived from conversations with Brahmans, both before and, especially, after conversion.<sup>56</sup> Bouchet's primary motive for learning about Hinduism was in order to be able to prevail in these debates:

We have observed that the reasons which Saint Thomas employed against the Gentiles make nothing more than a very light impression on the Indian mind. Thus, in order to disabuse them entirely of a system which is as impious as it is ridiculous, we have recourse to reasonings taken from their own doctrine, their customs, and their maxims: and it is from these reasonings that one makes them

<sup>49</sup> 'dans un âge déjà avancé, les difficultez qui se trouvent à commencer les élémens d'une langue, qui n'a nul rapport avec celles qu'on a apprises en Europe.' XV: 266.

<sup>50</sup> 'Les nerfs de la langue ne sont plus assez souples dans un certain âge, pour attraper la prononciation de certaines lettres.' XV: 267.

<sup>51</sup> 'le secours d'une Grammaire composée par nos premiers Missionnaires.' XV: 266. Possibly that of Henrique Henriques, begun in 1548 or 1549 (Henriques 1982).

<sup>52</sup> 'j'ai lû plusieurs Ouvrages des Sçavans Indiens' XIII: 97.

<sup>53</sup> 'They have eighteen very ancient books, which they call *Pouranam*. Although these books are full of fables, one more crude than another, according to them they contain nothing but incontestable truths.' ('Ils ont dix-huit Livres fort anciens, qu'ils appellent *Pouranam*. Quoique ces Livres soient remplies des fables plus grossières les unes que les autres, ils ne contiennent pourtant selon eux que des veritez incontestables.' XIII: 110). He repeats stories from the Braṃmapurāṇa (XIII: 195) and the Padmapurāṇa (XIII: 143), and also from the Rāmāyaṇa ('*Ramayenam*. C'est selon eux un Livre infallible' XIII: 172).

<sup>54</sup> XIV: 327.

<sup>55</sup> 'Le malheur, est, Monseigneur, que le respect des Indiens pour leur Loy, va jusqu'à nous en faire un mystere impénétrable.' IX: 39. It was not until shortly before the death of Bouchet that Calmette first acquired, through converts, a copy of the Vedas, which he sent to the library of the French king (XXIV: 438).

<sup>56</sup> Bouchet mentions some of these Brahman converts in his first letter to M. Cochet de Saint-Vallier [n. d.] (XI: 20–26). On his trip to Europe in 1704, he was accompanied by a Brahman catechist (XIV: 324).

feel the contradictions into which they fall, which confound them, and constrain them to recognize the absurdity of their opinions.<sup>57</sup>

While Bouchet has harsh words to say about the religion he describes, nevertheless the Indians were not entirely without knowledge of the truth. In his first letter to Huet, Bouchet writes that:

It is certain, my Lord, that the ordinary Indians do not give in to the absurdities of atheism. They have accurate enough ideas of the divinity, albeit altered and corrupted by the worship of idols. They acknowledge an infinitely perfect God, who exists from all eternity, and who contains in himself the most excellent attributes. Thus far there is nothing more beautiful and more conformable to the notion the people of God have of the divinity. But it is here that idolatry has unhappily made additions. Most of the Indians affirm, that this great number of deities whom they worship today, are nothing but subaltern Gods, subject to the Supreme Being, who is Lord of both Gods and men.<sup>58</sup>

He argues that ‘This idea which the Indians have of a Being infinitely superior to the other deities, shows at least that their ancestors worshipped but one God; and that polytheism was introduced among them, in no other way than among the rest of the idolatrous nations.’<sup>59</sup> The similarity between the names of Brahmā and Abraham (and of their wives, Sarasvatī and Sarah), parallels in the stories of Moses and Kṛṣṇa, and a host of other apparent identities, were enough to convince Bouchet that ‘the Indians borrowed their religion from the books of Moses and the prophets [and] that all the fables with which their books are replete do not

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<sup>57</sup> ‘Nous avons remarqué que les raisons dont Saint Thomas se sert contre les Gentils, ne sont sur l’esprit des Indiens qu’une très-legère impression. Ainsi pour les desabuser entierement d’un systeme également impie & ridicule, nous avons recours à des raisonnemens tirez de leur propre doctrine, de leurs usages, & de leurs maximes: & ce sont ces raisonnemens où l’on leur fait sentir les contradictions dans lesquelles ils tombent, qui les confondent, & qui les contraignent de reconnoistre l’absurdité de leurs opinions.’ XIII: 200. This was not simply a matter of Bouchet’s initiative; Martin reports being ordered by his superiors to study Hinduism on behalf of the order at ‘une fameuse Université de Brames’ (I: 6).

<sup>58</sup> ‘Il est certain, Monseigneur, que le commun des Indiens ne donne nullement dans les absurditez de l’Athéisme. Ils ont des idées assez justes de la Divinité, quoiqu’alterées & corrompues par le culte des Idoles. Ils reconnoissent un Dieu infiniment parfait, qui existe de toute éternité, qui renferme en soy les plus excellens attributs. Jusques-là rien de plus beau, & de plus conforme au sentiment de Peuple de Dieu sur la Divinité. Voici maintenant ce que l’Idolatrie y a malheureusement ajoûté. La plûpart des Indiens assurent que ce grand nombre de Divinitez qu’ils adorent aujourd’hui, ne sont que des Dieux subalternes & soûmis au Souverain Estre, qui est également le Seigneur des Dieux & des hommes.’ IX: 6–7.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Cette idée qu’ont les Indiens d’un Estre infiniment supérieur aux autres Divinitez, marque au moins que leurs Anciens n’adoroient effectivement qu’un Dieu, & que le *Polytheisme* ne s’est introduit parmi eux, que de la maniere dont il s’est répandu dans tous les Payis Idolâtres.’ IX: 9–10.

quite obscure the truth'.<sup>60</sup> The idea that the Jews could have taught the Hindus was no doubt given some credibility by the discovery, reported in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, of Jews in the heart of China.<sup>61</sup> However Bouchet was aware that such parallels were not an infallible proof,<sup>62</sup> especially as 'the author of nature has engraved ... [the knowledge of one God] in the minds of all people, and it does not alter among them except by the corruption of their heart.'<sup>63</sup> Moreover, 'beyond the religion of the Hebrew people, which they have taken, at least in part from their commerce with the Jews and the Egyptians, one finds amongst them clear traces of the Christian religion, preached to them by the apostle St. Thomas'.<sup>64</sup> Neill concludes his review of the evidence of Christian presence in India prior to the Portuguese landfall by stating that 'It is almost certain that there were well-established churches in parts of South India not later than the beginning of the sixth century' and that it is at least possible that the apostle Thomas came to India, if only because it cannot be proven that he did not.<sup>65</sup> Although the idea that Judaism and Christianity had anything more than a marginal influence on Hinduism could only have been derived from the evidence presented in India by

<sup>60</sup> 'Les Indiens ont tiré leur Religion des Livres de Moïse, & des Prophetes: que toutes les Fables sont leurs Livres sont remplis, n'y obscurcissent pas tellement la verité'. IX: 4.

<sup>61</sup> See the letter of Gonzani to Suarez [Honan, 1704] (VII: 1–29) and the 'Remarques sur la Lettre du Pere Gonzani' (VII: 29–40). What made this discovery truly significant, for Le Gobien, was the possibility that 'by the means of the books, which are in the hands of these Chinese Jews, one could easily determine the truth of what some of the learned have believed, that since the birth of Christianity the Jews, enemies of the Christians, have altered the sacred books ... in order to give them such a sense as best suits the prejudices of their sect.' ('par le secours des Livres, que sont entre les mains de ces Juifs Chinois, on pourra aisément connoître, s'il est vray ce que quelques Sçavans ont crû, que depuis la naissance du Christianisme les Juifs ennemis des Chrestiens ont alteré les Livres saints ... pour en déterminer le sens suivant les prejuges de leur secte.' VII: Epître).

<sup>62</sup> The view that the Indians had received their religion from the Jews, perhaps via the Egyptians, was shared by many but not all the Jesuits. In an unpublished letter Cœurdoux gave a 'critique de l'opinion répandue par un missionare (i. e. Bouchet) sur les parallèles entre l'Ancien Testament et la mythologie hindoue'. (Cœurdoux, to P. Souciet, 8 October 1739, cited in Dharampal 1982a: 245–6). He gave a more circumspect view in a letter to Anquetil published in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belle Lettres* (XLIX: 668–688).

<sup>63</sup> 'Je sçais que sans un tel secours l'Auteur de la Nature a gravé cette verité fondamentale dans l'esprit de tous les hommes, & qu'elle ne s'altère chez eux que par le dérèglement & la corruption de leur cœur.' IX:10.

<sup>64</sup> 'outre la Religion du Peuple Hebreu, que leur a apprise, du moins in partie, leur commerce avec les Juifs et les Egyptiens, on découvre encore parmi eux des traces bien marquées de la Religion Chrétienne, qui leur a été annoncée par l'Apôtre S.Thomas.' IX: 4. Cf. IX: 277 'the Indian Nations, who, in all Probability, were antiently Christians, but fell back, many Ages since, into the Errors of Idolatry.'

<sup>65</sup> Neill 1984: 49.

someone who was determined to find it,<sup>66</sup> nevertheless Bouchet's speculations again strongly suggest a unified conception of 'the system of religion recognized among the Indians'.

In addition to his letters on religion, Bouchet wrote on Indian law, which he summarized in seven 'maximes générales qui servent de loix aux Indes',<sup>67</sup> and geography.<sup>68</sup> Regarding the latter, Bouchet's interests mean that most attention is given to the religious geography of India, and especially to important temples and pilgrimage sites.<sup>69</sup> In this letter his conception of the pan-Indian spread of 'the system of religion recognized among the Indians'<sup>70</sup> is apparent in his treatment of two holy sites, the city of Vārānāsī and the island of Rāmeśvaram. Pilgrimage sites had been noted by other Jesuits and may have contributed to their conception of a widely-shared religious tradition. For example Tachard noted the large numbers of 'pilgrims who come to Jagganātha [i. e. Purī] from throughout India'.<sup>71</sup> Although Bouchet also remarks that 'Jagannātha is celebrated for its temple' he finds 'that this temple is little known in the southern parts of India'<sup>72</sup> where instead 'the Indians praise extremely the town of Kāśī which is towards the north, and Rāmeśvaram which is towards the south'.<sup>73</sup> Bouchet correctly believes Kāśī to be the same town as 'Banare' [Benares, Vārānāsī]. He proves his point by referring to the reports of Europeans who have travelled there whose description 'conforms to what the Indians report of the temple of Kāśī'.<sup>74</sup> Of the pilgrimage island of Rāmeśvaram,<sup>75</sup> on the other hand, Bouchet can speak with more certainty, having once spent ten days there: 'The temple appeared to me less beautiful and smaller than many others in these lands' and Bouchet believes that it owes its fame to the purifying effect

<sup>66</sup> The role of the Brahman converts, the Jesuits' primary source of information on Indian religions, should not be overlooked.

<sup>67</sup> Bouchet to Cochet de Saint Vallier, Pondicherry, 1714 (XIV: 410).

<sup>68</sup> The discussion occurs in a letter to another Jesuit sent from Pondicherry, and dated 1 April 1719 (XV: 1–82).

<sup>69</sup> In addition to sites of importance for Hindus Bouchet knew that Sri Lanka was important for the Siamese and the Chinese: 'The Siamese say that the god *Somonocodon* [i. e. the Buddha] has one of his footprints on the island [Sri Lanka]. The Chinese ... assert that one of their principal idols came from Ceylon.' ('Les Siamois disent que leur Dieu *Somonocodon* a un de ses pieds marqué dans l'Isle. Les Chinois ... avouent qu'un de leurs principales Idoles est venuë de Ceylan.' XV: 41–42).

<sup>70</sup> 'le système de Religion reçu parmi les Indiens' IX: 5.

<sup>71</sup> 'des Pélerins qui viennent à Jagrenat de toute l'Inde' XII: 433.

<sup>72</sup> 'Jagrenat est célèbre pas son Pagode ... Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que ce Pagode est peu connu dans les parties Meridionales de l'Inde' XV: 28.

<sup>73</sup> 'les Indiens vantent extrêment la Ville de *Cachi* qui est vers le Nord, & *Ramanancor* qui est vers le Sud' XV: 49–50.

<sup>74</sup> 'Europeans qui y ont voyagé ... conforme à ce que les Indiens rapportent du Pagode de *Cachi*' XV: 54–55.

<sup>75</sup> '*Ramanancor*, que les Indiens appellent *Rameissouram*' XV: 55.

which the idolaters attribute to bathing in the sea, especially during eclipses.<sup>76</sup> Bouchet notes that the Indians regard these sites as ‘the two poles of their geography’.<sup>77</sup> Thus although he had personal knowledge only of the south, by combining the information he had from his Indian interlocutors with that from other Jesuits he formed a concept of a religion embracing a much wider area.

### *Hindu diversity in the Jesuit Lettres*

Although Bouchet treats the religion of the ‘Indians’ (or alternatively, the ‘Gentils’, both understood in opposition to the ‘Mores’ [Moors, Muslims]) he knew as essentially the same phenomenon as that reported in the letters of Jesuits from elsewhere in India, he was nevertheless aware of distinct groups within Hinduism. Thus he reports differences among the Indians in their beliefs concerning the soul, for example on the question of how the soul is related to the deity.<sup>78</sup> One of the reasons for the Jesuits’ interest in divisions among the Indians on religion was that they were able to use for their own purposes the arguments that different Indian groups used against each other. Thus Bouchet charges the vegetarian Brahmins: ‘You Brahmins are infinitely more guilty than any other caste that makes use of flesh: for, in killing a sheep, for instance, they commit but one single murder, instead of which you pluck up every day a large quantity of herbs, which you dress, and thereby become guilty of innumerable murders.’<sup>79</sup> Roger reports this argument being put to Brahmins by meat-eating Śūdras.<sup>80</sup>

The Jesuits were also aware of the divisions between Vaiṣṇavites and Śaivites. De la Lane, for example, notes that ‘Viṣṇu and Śiva ... are regarded as the two principal divinities, and divide the Indians into two

<sup>76</sup> ‘Le Pagode m’a paru moins beau & plus petit que plusieurs autres qui sont dans les terres: je croy qu’il n’est si fort estimé qu’à cause du bain qu’on prend dans le mer; car les Idolâtres sont persuadez que ce bain efface entierement les pechez, sur tout si on le prend le temps des Eclipses du Soleil & de la Lune.’ XV: 56. The Ramanatha temple complex on Rāmeśvaram was perhaps at the height of its fame during the first half of the eighteenth century, during which time it was greatly extended under the patronage of the rulers of Ramanathapuram (Michell 1995: 116–118).

<sup>77</sup> ‘les deux pôles de leur Geographie’ XV: 49–50.

<sup>78</sup> XIII: 150–151, cf. XIII: 175 (‘Les sentimens des Indiens sont partagez’), 203–4 (‘ils soient partagez sur cela en deux opinions différentes’).

<sup>79</sup> ‘Vous autres Brame, vous estes infiniment plus coupables que ceux des autres Castes que usent de viande: car en tuant un mouton, par exemple, ils ne sont qu’un meurtre au lieu que vous qui arrachez tous les jours une si grande quantité d’herbes que vous faites cuire, se sont autant de meurtres que vous faites.’ XIII: 216.

<sup>80</sup> Roger 1915: 70.

different sects.<sup>81</sup> The former are referred to as ‘*Vichnouistes*’ [Vaiṣṇavites], and the latter usually as ‘*Linganists* [Liṅgāyats]’.<sup>82</sup> It was however Jean François Pons<sup>83</sup> who, in a remarkable letter of 1740, gave the most detailed account of diversity in the religious philosophy of the Indians:

As among the Greeks there were numerous schools of philosophy, the Ionic, the Academic, &c. there were in antiquity among the Brahmans, six principal philosophical schools, or sects, which were each distinguished from the others by some particular conception of blessedness and on the means of attaining to it, *Nyāya*, *Vedānta*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Patañjali* [i. e. Yoga], *bhāṣya* [‘commentary’, presumably Vaiśeṣika is meant], are those they call simply the six sciences, which are nothing but six sects or schools. There are among them numerous others such as the *āgamaśāstram* [i. e. Jains] & *Bauddhamatam* [i. e. Buddhism], &c. which are as much as heresies in matters of religion, very opposed to the *dharmasāstram* of which I have spoken, which contains the universally approved polytheism.<sup>84</sup>

A distinction between ‘popular’ and ‘philosophical’ Hinduism is drawn by many European writers, both before and after the authors of the *Lettres édifiantes*. However, Pons was the first to establish the distinction on the basis of different textual sources:

That which, after the nobility of their caste, raises [the Brahmans] infinitely above the vulgar, is the knowledge of religion, mathematics, and philosophy. Although they are the ministers of the people, the Brahmans practise their religion

<sup>81</sup> ‘*Vichnou & Chiven ... sont regardez comme les deux principales Divinités, & ... partagent [les] Indiens en deux sectes différentes.*’ X: 19. Cf. Le Gac ‘les différentes Sectes de ce Pays’ XVI: 248.

<sup>82</sup> e. g. ‘les Brames, soit *Vichnouistes*, soit *Linganistes*’ XVI: 240, ‘la secte infame des *Liganistes* [sic]’ XIII: 138.

<sup>83</sup> Pons was born in 1698 and died before 1754. He was sent to India in 1726. His letter of 1740 (XXVI: 218–256) is his only contribution to the *Lettres*. Sommervogel attributes to him an unpublished Sanskrit Grammar, and a treatise on Sanskrit poetry sent to Europe in 1739. (Sommervogel 1890–1909 VI: 999).

<sup>84</sup> ‘Comme parmi les Grecs il y eut plusieurs Ecoles de Philosophie, l’Ionique, l’Académique, &c. il y a eu dans l’Antiquité parmi les Brahmanes, six principales Ecoles, où Sectes Philosophiques, dont chacune étoit distinguée des autres par quelque sentiment particulier sur la félicité & sur les moyens d’y parvenir, *Nyāyam*, *Vedāntam*, *Sankiam*, *Mimamsa*, *Pātanjalām*, *bhassyam*, sont ce qu’ils appellent simplement les six Sciences, qui ne sont que six Sectes ou écoles. Il y en a entre plusieurs autres comme *l’āgamchāstram* & *Bauddhamatham*, &c. qui sont autant d’hérésies en matière de Religion, très-opposées au *d’Harmachāstram* dont j’ai parlé, qui contient le *polythéisme* universellement approuvé.’ XXVI: 239. Pons identifies ‘Bouddha’ as ‘the *Photo* revered by the people of China’ and notes that ‘the *Bauddhistes* are the sects of the Bonzes and Lamas’ (240).



separately ... The *Vedam* contains the theology of the Brahmins, and the ancient *Purāṇam* or poems, the popular theology.<sup>85</sup>

Pons even suggests that ‘popular’ and ‘Brahmanic’ Hinduism may be considered two different ‘theologies’ or ‘religions’:

The two theologies Brahmanic and popular, make up the sacred science, or science of virtue, *dharmasāstram*, which contains the practice of the different religions, the sacred (or superstitious) and civil (or profane) rites, with the laws for the administration of justice.<sup>86</sup>

Pons also knew that the Brahmins belonged to different schools of Vedic transmission, and notes that the ‘*Roukou Vedam*, or according to the Hindustan pronunciation, *Recbed*, and the *Yajourvedam*, are most followed in the peninsula between the two seas; the *Sāmavedam* & *Lartharvana* or *Brahmavedam*, in the North.’<sup>87</sup> Pons had worked in both Bengal and Tanjore, and his observation of this distinction between the north and the south was therefore made on the basis of personal experience. Likewise Calmette realized that *advaitins* were more numerous in the north than in the south.<sup>88</sup> Martin writes that ‘there is a sect of people

<sup>85</sup> ‘Ce qui, après la Noblesse de leur Caste, les élève infiniment au-dessus du Vulgaire, c’est la science de la Religion, des Mathématiques, & la Philosophie. Les Brahmanes ont leur Religion à part, ils sont dependent les Ministres de celle du Peuple ... Les *Vedam* renferment la Théologie des Brahmanes; & les Anciens *Pouranam* ou Poèmes la Théologie Populaire.’ XXVI: 223.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Des deux Théologies Brahmanique & Populaire, on a composé la Science Sainte ou de la vertu, d’*Harmachāstram*, qui contient le pratique des différentes Religions, des Rits Sacrés ou Superstitieux, Civils, ou Prophanes, avec les Loix pour l’administration de la Justice.’ XXIV: 234–235, emphasis added.

<sup>87</sup> ‘*Roukou Vedam*, où, selon la prononciation Indoustane, *Recbed* & le *Yajourvedam*, sont plus suivis dans le Péninsule entre les deux Mers. Le *Sāmavedam* & *Lartharvana* ou *Brahmavedam* dans le Nord.’ XXVI: 223.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Il y a une de leurs Sectes moins répandue ici que dans le Nord, qui reconnoît en Dieu la connoissance & de l’amour. On la nomme la Secte de ceux qui admettent des distinctions en Dieu, pas opposition à celles des *Vedantoulou*, qui rejette ces distinctions, en disant que cette connoissance & cet amour ne sont autre chose que Dieu même, sans s’appercevoir qu’ils ont raison de part & d’autre, & que la vérité se trouve dans l’union de ces deux sentimens.’ XXIV: 442. Calmette seems to have been well acquainted with the Upaniṣads; he suggests, on the basis of ‘difference of language and style’, that the ‘last books of the Vedam ... are later than the first by more than five centuries.’ (‘[Les] derniers Livres du *Vedam*, qui par la différence de la Langue & du style, sont postérieurs aux premiers de plus de cinq siècles.’ XXIV: 439). Le Gac also noted that the ‘*Auidam*’ (*advaitins*) were the more common of the ‘two different opinions which divide the learned Brahmins of India.’ (‘[I] y a] deux différentes opinions qui partagent les sçavans Brames de l’Inde. La premiere s’appelle *Auidam*, & elle est la plus commune. On nomme la seconde *Duidam*.’ XIV: 310).

who, it appears, profess not to acknowledge any Deity; they are called *Nāstika* but this sect has very few supporters.<sup>89</sup>

It is both a consequence and a sign of the genuine advances that the Jesuits made in understanding Hinduism that they were acutely aware of how little was really understood.<sup>90</sup> Pons writes that

The only means of penetrating into Indian antiquity, above all in that which concerns history, is to have a strong taste for that science, to acquire a perfect knowledge of Sanskrit, to spend a king's ransom; until these three qualities are found united in the same subject, with the health necessary in order to sustain study in India, nothing will be known, or almost nothing of the ancient history of this vast kingdom.<sup>91</sup>

Pons' understanding was far advanced for his time; he identified 'Fo, revered by the people of China' as the Buddha and connected the Buddhists 'of the sect of the Bonzes and the Lamas' with the Buddhists reviled as atheists in India.<sup>92</sup> In addition to naming six *darśanas*, he gave detailed accounts of Nyāya, Vedānta, and Sāṃkhya.<sup>93</sup> His work was not surpassed until Henry Thomas Colebrooke's *Essay on the Philosophy of the Hindus* (1823–27) in the following century. Nevertheless Pons writes: 'I am not quite *au fait* with the systems of the other schools: that which I note for you here, is itself not to be regarded as more than a draft, to which the most able hand will certainly have much to add, and perhaps much to retract. It satisfies me to have made known to you that India is a country where many new discoveries can be made.'<sup>94</sup> The confidence

<sup>89</sup> 'il y a une Secte de gens qui sont, ce semble, profession de ne reconnoître aucune Divinité, & qu'on appelle *Naxtagher*, mais cette Secte à très peu de Partisans.' X: 96.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. De la Lane: 'All the books which I have seen suppose the immortality of the soul; though I cannot guarantee that this is the opinion of the numerous sects, nor of many Brahmans. At bottom, their ideas on all these things are so unclear that is it not easy to determine what they think.' ('Tous les livres que j'ay vus supposent l'immortalité de l'ame; je ne voudrois pas pourtant garantir que ce soit l'opinion de plusieurs sectes, non plus de plusieurs Bramins. Mais au fonds ils ont des idées si peu nettes sur toutes ces choses qu'il n'est pas aisé de bien démêler ce qu'ils pensent.' X: 21–22).

<sup>91</sup> 'Le seul moyen de pénétrer dans l'Antiquité Indienne, surtout en ce qui concerne l'Histoire, c'est d'avoir un grand goût pour cette science, d'acquérir une connoissance parfaite du *Samskret*, & de faire des dépenses ausquelles il n'y a qu'un grand Prince qui puisse fournir; jusqu'à ce que ces trois choses se trouvent réunies dans un même sujet, avec la santé nécessaire pour soutenir l'étude dans l'Inde, on ne sçaura rien, où presque rien de l'Histoire ancienne de ce vaste Royaume.' XXVI: 231–2.

<sup>92</sup> 'Les Bauddistes ... sont accusés d'Athéisme ... Boudda est le *Photo* révééré par le Peuple à la Chine, & les Bauddistes sont de la Secte des Bonzes & des Lamas' XXVI: 240.

<sup>93</sup> 'L'Ecole de *Nyâyam*, *raison jugement* [ou] la Logique', 'L'Ecole de *Vedântam*, fin de la Loi' and 'L'Ecole de *Sankiam*, *numérique* fondée par Kafil' XXVI: 242f., 247f., 252f.

<sup>94</sup> 'Je ne suis pas assez au fait des systêmes des autres Ecoles: ce que je vous marque ici, ne doit même être regardé que comme une ébauche à laquelle une main plus habile

expressed by Pons was not misplaced; in 1767, three years after Louis XIV had ordered the disbanding of the Jesuits in French territory (including Pondicherry), one of the last remaining Jesuits in India, Gaston-Laurent Cœurduoux, anticipated William Jones' discovery of the common source of Latin and Sanskrit.

*Gaston-Laurent Cœurduoux: Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens*

Cœurduoux had arrived in India in 1732, and by 1739 was superior of the Madurai, Carnatic and Mysore missions. Cœurduoux's interests were wide-ranging. In addition to his correspondence, a Telugu-French-Sanskrit dictionary, a report to the *Académie des Sciences* on his observation of a comet, and a short treatise on Indian seeds also survive.<sup>95</sup> Of the four letters from him in the *Lettres édifiantes*, two deal with Indian textiles and dyes, and another with paints.<sup>96</sup> In the fourth Cœurduoux discusses measures of distance used throughout India and Sri Lanka, giving the names of the primary measures in Gujarati, Hindi ('la langue Indoustane'), Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu and Sinhala, and their equivalents in French measures.<sup>97</sup> In this letter he also discusses the campaigns of the Marathas and the location of their capital city, which the cartographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville had been unable to place with any certainty, owing to the variation in different units of measure in use in India. He also describes divisions of time, which he believes to be in use 'from Cape Comorin, to the extremities of India, among all the nations with which it is peopled.'<sup>98</sup>

In a 1767 letter to the Abbé Barthélemy (1716–1795) of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, Cœurduoux analysed the similarity between Sanskrit and Latin and argued that it could only be explained by supposing that they shared 'une origine commune'. Cœurduoux's letter was passed to Anquetil-Duperron, who does not seem to have realized the significance of the suggestion.<sup>99</sup> As a result (and partly also because of the French revolution) his letter was not published in the *Mémoires* of the *Académie* until 1808, by which time Jones had already published his now-famous 'Third Anniversary Discourse' to the Asiatic Society of

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auroit bien des traits à ajouter, & peut-être plusieurs à retrancher. Il me suffit de vous faire connoître que l'Inde est un pays, où il se peut faire encore beaucoup de nouvelles découvertes.' XXVI: 256.

<sup>95</sup> Sommervogel 1890–1909, II: 1269.

<sup>96</sup> XXVI: 172–217, XXVII: 413–444, XXVIII, 284–334.

<sup>97</sup> XXXIV: 323–353.

<sup>98</sup> 'Cette division du tems ... est en usage, à ce que je crois, depuis le Cap de Comorin, jusq'aux extrémités de l'Inde chez toutes les nations dont elle est peuplée.' XXXIV: 326.

<sup>99</sup> See Godfrey 1967.

Bengal.<sup>100</sup> Anquetil-Duperron did however, respond to Cœurdoux and the two exchanged letters until 1772. Murr suggests that the abrupt end to this correspondence was prompted by the intervention of Nicholas-Jacques Desvaulx, who alerted Cœurdoux to the ways in which the information sent to Anquetil-Duperron was being used against the church by Voltaire and the authors of the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>101</sup> ‘L’antivoltairianisme latent’ of the *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens* further suggests to Murr that Cœurdoux and Desvaulx may have planned the work to counteract ‘the abusive use which Voltaire and the enemies of religion made of the “Brahmes”’, not least the information on them taken from the *Lettres édifiantes*.<sup>102</sup>

Cœurdoux’s grasp of India as a single land inhabited by several different nations, using several different languages, demonstrated by his letter on measures of distance, provided a sound basis for his *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens* (completed c.1776–1777). Although the emphasis of this work is on south India, Cœurdoux’s conception of Indian religion is not limited to southern Hinduism.<sup>103</sup> In a chapter entitled ‘Conjectures on the true origin of the Brahmans, on the time of their establishment in India, and on the manner in which they were established’,<sup>104</sup> Cœurdoux argues the Brahmans had entered India from the north around 1300 BCE, bringing with them ‘a new religion’,<sup>105</sup> and violently displacing the ‘Boudistes’, whose religion had been established earlier and had spread from Cape Comorin to Tibet, and throughout South-east Asia. On the basis of the similarity between Sanskrit and ‘the learned language under the name of the *Pāli* language’ used in ‘Siam’ and ‘a very ancient list of the provinces of the empire of India’, Cœurdoux concludes that prior to the invasion of the Brahmans, the Indies within and beyond the Ganges had been dominated by a Buddhist empire, ‘the largest which there has

<sup>100</sup> *Asiatick Researches* I (1789).

<sup>101</sup> Murr 1987, II: 53.

<sup>102</sup> ‘l’usage abusif que Voltaire et les ennemis de la religion faisaient des “Brahmes”’ Murr 1987, II: 86.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Dubois, who writes: ‘With regard to caste usages ... my researches were confined to the provinces south of the Kistna River ... [and] I cannot say whether these usages are the same to the north of that river and in Hindustan proper ... Fundamentally, however, caste constitutions are the same everywhere. Furthermore, however many the shades of difference between the different castes, however diversified the customs that control them, only slight differences exist between the various forms of religious belief. Indeed the religion of the Hindus may be said to form a common centre for the numerous elements which constitute Hinduism in its widest sense.’ (Dubois 1906: 10–11).

<sup>104</sup> ‘Conjectures sur la vraie origine des Brahmes, sur le tems de leur établissement aux Indes et sur la maniere dont ils s’y sont établis.’ Murr 1987, I: 18–21.

<sup>105</sup> ‘une nouvelle religion’ Murr 1987, I: 20.

been in the Indies'.<sup>106</sup> He reports that the 'religion of Boud still exists in its entirety in Tibet, in the kingdom of Siam and in many other countries, even in some parts of India, and especially on the island of Ceylon. It has been almost exterminated by the Brahmans in India on this side of the Ganges.'<sup>107</sup> He notes, however, that it appears that the present Brahmans are not the same as those of this early time, who were solitary philosophers and not a separate caste, but an order into which one could be admitted. While Cœurdoux dates Buddhism too early, his date for the incursion of the Brahmans from the north is remarkably close to that accepted by many modern scholars.

The plaudits which Cœurdoux's work (in the guise of Dubois's *Hindu Manners, Ceremonies and Customs*) continued to garner into the twentieth century, are testament to the success of the Jesuits' collective endeavours with respect to Indian religions. For beyond Cœurdoux's own achievement during his more than forty years in India, his work also depended upon his participation in the collection and exchange of information among the Jesuits in India over almost a century. Murr states that the *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens* 'may be considered an extension (a summa) of the *Lettres édifiantes*, in the form of a systematic treatise where the different theses of the Jesuits are integrated in an "authentic" description of the Brahmans of south India'.<sup>108</sup> She points to the importance in Cœurdoux's work of the 'oral tradition and the notes, treatises, memoirs and other manuscript documents by means of which the missionaries transmitted and exchanged their knowledge of the "terrain" in pursuit of effective missionary work ... It is just this tradition which constitutes, conjointly with the personal experience of [Cœurdoux], the true source of the information contained in the *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens*'.<sup>109</sup> It is to this tradition, above all, that we should attribute the confidence with which the Jesuits, unlike isolated individual authors such as Roger, speak of 'the system of religion recognized among the

<sup>106</sup> 'la langue Savante Sous le nom de la langue *Bali* ... une très ancienne Liste des provinces de l'empire de l'Inde ... la plus vaste qu'il y ait eu aux Indes.' Murr 1987, I: 20.

<sup>107</sup> 'Cette religion de Boud subsiste encore en entier dans le Thibet, dans le royaume de Siam, et en beaucoup d'autres pays, même en quelques cantons de l'Inde, et Surtout dans l'isle de Ceylan. Elle a été presque exterminée par les BRAHMES dans les Indes de deçà le Gange.' Murr 1987, I: 20.

<sup>108</sup> 'On peut considérer que *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens* constitue un prolongement (une somme) des *L. É.*, sous la forme d'un traité systématique où les différentes thèses des Jésuites s'intègrent dans une description "authentique" des brahmanes de l'Inde du sud,' Murr 1983: 241.

<sup>109</sup> 'la tradition orale et les cours, traités, mémoires at autres documents manuscrits au moyen desquels les missionnaires transmettaient ou échangeaient leurs connoissances du "terrain" en vue d'une pratique missionnaire efficace ... C'est donc cette tradition que constitue, conjointement avec l'expérience personnelle de [Cœurdoux], la véritable source des informations contenues dans *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens*.' Murr 1987, II: 70.

Indians'.<sup>110</sup> The importance of such a collaborative approach was realized by Anquetil-Duperron. His methodological reflections are worth considering as illuminating the basis of the advances in European understanding of India made by two very different societies, the Society of Jesus and the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

### *Anquetil's travelling academy*

Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), who has some claim to be considered the 'founder of modern Indology',<sup>111</sup> had embarked in 1755 'for the East Indies, with the resolution to bring back the Laws of Zoroaster and those of the Brahmans'.<sup>112</sup> He returned to France in 1762, and fulfilled the first part of his goal with the publication of his *Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre* (1771). This work marks the beginning of the stream of translations which transformed the study of Indian religions. In it Anquetil commented that he had been prompted to produce it by his reflections on the inadequate methods used hitherto by those who had written on Indian religions:

The majority of travellers content themselves with asking the Brahmans (and it is the same way in every country, with regard to the ministers of religion) about the essence of their dogmas, what they believe on such and such a subject. Some go so far as to procure extracts of their theological books. The answers, the extracts may be accurate; they may equally be analogues to the circumstances, to the minds, to the views of those who interrogate.<sup>113</sup>

The language in which such conversations were often carried on, was hardly appropriate to the subject matter. Anquetil notes that 'business is generally done with the natives of the country, and likewise with the other European nations, by means of the Portuguese jargon ... consisting of 150 or 200 words, almost without construction'.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, those

<sup>110</sup> Although Cœurdoux also drew on the work of authors such as Roger. See Murr's discussion of Cœurdoux's European sources (Murr 1987, II: 66ff).

<sup>111</sup> The claim is usually pressed by French scholars, see Schwab 1984: 158, and Filliozat 1984: 136. Following Kieffer (1983) and others, Anquetil-Duperron will henceforth be referred to simply as Anquetil.

<sup>112</sup> 'pour les Indes Orientales, dans le résolution d'en rapporter les Loix de Zoroastre & celles des Brahmes'. Anquetil 1771: 11.

<sup>113</sup> 'Le pluspart des Voyageurs se contentent de demander aux Brahmes (& c'est la même marche dans tous les pays, à l'égard des ministres de la Religion) le fond de leurs Dogmes, ce qu'ils croyent sur tel ou tel objet; quelques uns vont jusqu'à se procurer des Extraits de leurs livres Théologiques. Les réponses, les extraits peuvent être exacts; ils peuvent être analogues aux circonstances, à l'esprit, aux vues de celui qui interroge.' Anquetil 1771: 296.

<sup>114</sup> 'les affaires se sont généralement traitées avec les Naturels du pays, & même avec les autres nations Européennes, par le moyen du *Jargon Portugais*'. 'Le Portugais parlé

who were interrogated were not the most reliable sources: 'These interpreters, for the most part Christians, Parsis, or attenuated Brahmans, unlearned in Indian literature, with neither historical, political nor geographical knowledge, are obliged to respond on every subject; on the commerce of the country, which they have not studied; on the interests of princes, whom they have neither seen nor known'.<sup>115</sup> Quite apart from the Europeans imposing their own beliefs on what they were told, Anquetil warns that the Indians may also introduce such bias: 'if the Indian whom you consult is a Christian, in order to flatter you he will dress the gods of his country in a Christian manner'.<sup>116</sup>

In order to bring home to his readers the degree of distortion introduced into European accounts of Indian religions by these factors, Anquetil asks them to consider how imperfect a knowledge of the Christian religion a 'Tartar' would gain if, 'travelling in the less instructed Christian kingdoms, he should content himself with entering churches, and questioning the sexton or porter of a Portuguese convent. And yet this is the limit of the researches of the majority of travellers in India. They are happy if they take nothing but the simple testimony of a Dobachi, of a Pion, who ... explains to them, in bad Portuguese, the mysteries which he hardly knows, and which his priests would not be able to render without difficulty in the language of the country'.<sup>117</sup> As a result, writes Anquetil, 'the comparison which I have made between that which travellers say of the religion and practices of the Parsis, with that which is contained in their sacred books, has completely convinced me that in the study of opinions, of dogmas and of religious cults, the reading of original books was a necessary preliminary'.<sup>118</sup> He concludes that 'the only means of

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n'est proprement qu'un jargon, consistant en 150 ou 200 mots, presque sans construction.' Anquetil 1786: xii–xiii.

<sup>115</sup> 'Et ces Interprètes, la plupart Chrétiens, Parses ou Brahmes mitigés, sans culture d'esprit, sans littérature Indienne, sans Connoissances historiques, politiques, ni géographiques, sont obligés de répondre sur tous les objets; sur le commerce du pays, qu'ils n'ont pas étudié; sur les intérêts des Princes, qu'ils n'ont ni vus ni pratiqués'. Anquetil 1786: xiii.

<sup>116</sup> 'si l'Indien que vous consultez est chrétien, pour vous flatter il habillera les Dieux de sa nation à la Chrétienne'. Anquetil 1771: xv. The truth of this remark may perhaps be judged with reference to Bouchet's conclusions about the origin of Indian religion.

<sup>117</sup> 'Un Tartare s'exposeroit à ne prendre qu'une connoissance imparfaite de la Religion Chrétienne, si, passant même dans les Royaumes Chrétiens les plus instruits, il se contentoit d'entrer dans les Eglises, de questionner le Sacristain ou le Portier d'un Couvent. C'est pourtant à quoi se bornent dans l'Inde les recherches de la plupart des Voyageurs. Heureux même s'ils ne s'en tiennent pas au simple témoignage d'un Dobachi, d'un Pion, qui, pour ne pas rester court, leur explique, en mauvais Portugais, des Mysteres qu'il connoît à peine, & que ses Prêtres ne pourroient rendre que difficilement dans la Langue du Pays.' Anquetil 1771: 87–88.

<sup>118</sup> 'La comparaison que j'ai faite de ce que les Voyageurs disent de la Religion & des usages de Parses, avec ce que contiennent leurs Livres sacrés, m'a plainement convaincu

knowing the truth, is to learn the languages well, to translate for oneself the fundamental works, and then to confer, books in hand, with the learned of the country on the matters with which they deal.<sup>119</sup>

Anquetil here describes the method by which his *Zend-Avesta* was produced. In regard to the other religions of India, however, Anquetil never realized his ideal; he never mastered Sanskrit, nor did he return to India with the translations he made from Persian to consult with the pandits. In 1787 he published four Upanishads translated into French from Dārā Shikūh's *Sirr-i Akbar*, a seventeenth-century Persian collection of fifty Upaniṣadic texts, the first time such texts had appeared in a European language. However, by the time his Latin translation of the whole of the *Sirr-i Akbar* was published (1801–1802), such indirect translations had been rendered obsolete. In 1799 a direct translation from Sanskrit of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* had been published in an edition of the collected works of William Jones. Nevertheless Anquetil's ideal is a reasonable description of the procedure of scholars such as Colebrooke who came after him and, to a lesser extent, of the more scholarly among the Jesuits who preceded him. More prophetic, however, was his realization of the 'utility of literary societies'<sup>120</sup> for the study of Indian religions.

Anquetil relates that while reflecting in Surat on the pains it had taken him to acquire and to translate the *Zend-Avesta*, he realized that progress in the human sciences required a corporate approach. To this end he proposed the establishment of 'itinerant academies'.<sup>121</sup> Anquetil argues that while 'it is true that several missionaries have already given important works on Asia,' and these have been supplemented by works of other learned writers in Europe, nevertheless for the former 'the occupations attached to the state of a missionary', and for the latter 'the suspension of [French] Eastern trade', and with it the possibility of 'taking a look for oneself among them, of seeing things with one's own eyes' prevent either from acquiring 'an entirely satisfactory notion of these countries. And this gap will never be filled by the accounts of travellers simply military, marine or merchant. There must be professional as well as travelling scholars.'<sup>122</sup>

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que dans l'étude des opinions, des dogmes & les cultes Religieux, la lecture des Livres Originaux étoit un préalable nécessaire'. Anquetil 1771: 86–87.

<sup>119</sup> 'Le seul moyen de connoître la vérité, est de bien apprendre les langues, de traduire soi-même les Ouvrages fondamentaux & de conferer ensuite avec les Savans du pays sur les matieres qui y sont traitées, les livres en main.' Anquetil 1786: 296.

<sup>120</sup> Anquetil 1771: xi.

<sup>121</sup> 'Académies ambulantes'. Anquetil 1771: xi.

<sup>122</sup> 'Il est vray que plusieurs Missionnaires ont déjà donné sur l'Asie des Ouvrages importants, essentiels même en leur genre ont aussi étendu dans le même plan, la sphere de nos connoissances: mais, d'un côté, les occupations attachées à l'état de Missionnaire, de l'autre, la privation du commerce des Orientaux, de l'avantage de prendre chez eux ce



Anquetil envisaged a body of eighty scholars, dispersed in pairs around the world: ‘two at Constantinople, two at Bagdad, two at Ispahan, two at Delhi, two at Astrakan, four in the Grand Tartary, two in Thibet, two in Chinese Tartary, and two in Kamchatka; returning again to the South-West, two would be fixed at Peking, two at Canton, two at Malak or at Siam, two at Patna, two in Bengal in the Ganges basin, two at Pondicherry, two at Ceylon, two at Mahé, two at Pune, two at Surat, two at Bassora.’ Eight more were assigned to the Americas, ten to Africa and eight would remain in France ‘to prepare the things necessary for the Academicians’ elsewhere. Finally, a further eight (two each for the Americas and Africa, four for Asia) would visit those in their places of study to collect their works and to bring supplies. These, together with other scholars, would then constitute in Paris, ‘a particular body charged with receiving, placing in good order, and publishing the curious productions sent from the three largest parts of the world.’<sup>123</sup> The model for the members of this academy would be Anquetil himself.<sup>124</sup> Anquetil expected each to know ‘Hebrew, several modern European languages, ancient history, a little theology, metaphysics and astronomy.’ Having learnt the regional vernacular the scholar’s first priority would be to ‘apply himself to the sacred language, and read the books of the law and the theological works’, which ‘works are the key to all the others’. The scholars ought then to produce grammars and dictionaries, and then a bibliography indicating the relative age and importance of local texts. Only then, once these preliminaries are in place, shall they work ‘on the general history of the country.’

Anquetil believed that ‘the glory of having contributed to the progress of human knowledge, and the pleasure of having passed on an idea of the places, the peoples, the different objects which they will have been occupied with in the course of their voyages, will be just recompense for their labours’, in fact, it must also be the only recompense, for fear that people without of the necessary qualities, and driven by mere commercial

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tour qui leur est propre, de voir les choses de ses yeux; ces inconvéniens (du moins c’est mon opinion) empêcheront toujours, si l’on ne tente pas une autre voie, d’avoir sur ces contrées des notions entièrement satisfaisantes: & jamais ce vide ne sera rempli par les relations des Voyageurs simplement Militaires, Marins ou Marchand. Ce sont des Sçavans de profession qu’il faut & des Sçavans voyageurs.’ Anquetil 1771: x–xi.

<sup>123</sup> Anquetil’s plan is outlined in his preface to the *Zend-Avesta* (Anquetil 1771: xi–xii).

<sup>124</sup> ‘J’ai en quelque sorte ébauché dans mes recherches l’exécution du plan dont je viens de donner l’esquisse.’ Anquetil 1771: xv. Anquetil’s academy is reminiscent of Salomon’s House in Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1627): ‘For the several employments and offices of our fellows, we have twelve that sail into foreign countries under the names of other nations (for our own we conceal), who bring us the books and abstracts, and patterns of experiments of all other parts. These we call merchants of light’ (Bacon 1906: 273).

interest, might take over.<sup>125</sup> Anquetil also allows a place for national pride, presenting his plan for itinerant scholars as ‘a moment which France could have.’<sup>126</sup> In truth, France’s moment had already been, in the work of the Jesuits which emerged as a by-product of their primary purpose in India.

Anquetil concludes his proposal for an academy of travelling scholars by exclaiming: ‘Vain hope, chimerical project! my Academy will never exist: and men, accustomed to their errors or scared of the work which would be demanded by similar researches, will feed on systems, on fantastic portraits, and will continue to study everything, to know everything, except man.’<sup>127</sup> Anquetil’s academy may never have been realized, but the informal network of researchers who later formed the core membership of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (founded thirteen years after Anquetil wrote) was to accomplish much of what Anquetil expected of his academy, at least in respect of Asia. In an appendix added to his *Recherches Historiques et Géographiques sur l’Inde* (1786) after the first part had been printed, Anquetil welcomed the first results of their efforts. Discussing Wilkins’ translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* (1785), he identified himself with ‘the political morality which M. Hastings professes in this excellent letter [prefixed to Wilkins’ work]’ adding that ‘it is for me a very sensible pleasure to see the leading man of the English nation in India, revise the principles which I tried to establish, in 1778, in the *Législation Orientale*.’<sup>128</sup>

While there are many factors which set the Jesuits apart from their predecessors, it is above all to the corporate nature of their approach to Indian religions that we should attribute their conception of a unitary Indian religion. In Le Gac’s ‘Gentilisme’ we see the first direct anticipation of ‘Hinduism’. This concept is, however, not monolithic, and it

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<sup>125</sup> ‘La gloire d’avoir contribué au progrès des connoissances humaines & le plaisir de repasser en idée les lieux, les peuples, les différens objets qui les auroient occupés dans le cours de leurs voyages, seroient la juste récompense de leurs travaux; ce doit même être la seule, de peur qu’avec le tems des vûes d’intérêt, comme dans les Compagnies de Commerce, ne portassent des personnes dépourvues des qualités nécessaires, à briguer cette espece de Direction.’ Anquetil 1771: xii–xiii.

<sup>126</sup> ‘un moment de celle que la France pourroit avoir’ Anquetil 1771: xi.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Vaine espérance, projet chimérique! mon Académie n’existera jamais: & les hommes, accoutumés à leurs erreurs ou effrayés du travail que demanderoient de pareilles recherches, se nourriront de systèmes, de portraits de fantaisie, & continueront de tout étudier, de tout connoître, excepté l’homme.’ Anquetil 1771: xvi.

<sup>128</sup> ‘la morale politique que professe M. Hastings dans cette excellent lettre: c’est pour moi un plaisir bien sensible de voir le premier homme de la Nation Angloise dans l’Inde, revenir aux Principes que j’ai tâché d’établir, en 1778, dans la *Législation Orientale*.’ (Anquetil 1786: 560). Later still, in *L’Inde en rapport avec l’Europe* he was to berate ‘L’audacieuse ALBION ... cruelle et perfide’ for its ‘Machiavélism’ in India (Anquetil 1798: subtitle).

emerges neither from geographical misconceptions nor theological preconceptions, but from a sustained corporate engagement with India and with Hindus. The concept emerges when it does as part of a growing European conceptual grasp of India, expressed for example in the first European maps of the Indian sub-continent, which appeared in the same decade as the last of Bouchet's contributions to the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. The historical and theoretical parallels in the development of these different conceptual tools (the concept of Hinduism and maps of India) will be traced further in the final chapter.