

Retracing Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg's Path

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The historiography of European encounter with other cultures in the modern period has begun to extend beyond the frame of what had hitherto been an almost exclusive focus on works produced in the context of formal colonial rule. A renewed focus on religion has been one result of this concern with 'Orientalism and the *Longue Durée*'.¹ Thus Urs App maintains that 'the role of colonialism (and generally of economic and political interests) in the birth of Orientalism dwindles to insignificance compared to the role of religion.' (2010: xi) Suzanne Marchand likewise concludes that 'German orientalism—defined as the serious and sustained study of the cultures of Asia—was not a product of the modern, imperial age, but something much older, richer, and stranger, something enduringly shaped by the longing to hear God's word, to understand the meaning of his revelation, and to propagate (Christian) truths as one understood them.' (2009: 1) In relation to India, Raf Gelders argues that 'our contemporary understanding of Indian traditions has less to do with the imbrications of knowledge and power—as found under colonialism—but more with the limitations of thought within a culture shaped by the Christian theologies long before the conditions of colonialism were established.' (2009: 565)

While this turn to the 'pre-history of Orientalism,' is to be welcomed, Gelders's formulation of the claim about the significance

of religion suggests one of the problems with it.² Where for Edward Said it was colonial interests which produced Orientalism as a 'set of constraints upon and limitations of thought,' (1991/1978: 42) for Gelders the 'structures of representation' were determined by 'the spiritual historiography of the Bible' in such a way that 'the great company of future travelers, religious as well as secular ... incorporated the Christian worldview and reproduced these theological assumptions as commonsense narratives.' (2009: 587) In this account, Christian theology has replaced colonial ideology as the barrier to a successful crossing of cultural boundaries. Both analyses render Europeans prisoners of their own presuppositions, unwilling or unable to learn from their encounter with non-European cultures. Progress in understanding is rendered impossible. Just as Said's notion of Orientalism as a discourse is notoriously ahistorical, (Ahmad 1992: 166) so Gelders, with S. N. Balagangadhara, asserts that 'the vision of the Brahmins as it emerges in [the work of Francis Xavier] has not been altered to this day.' (2011: 112)

Although explicitly denying that 'the European representations of India simply arose out of a closed textual system of books influencing other books,' Gelders and Balagangadhara nevertheless insist that the 'conceptual formats' used by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuits 'forced them to reproduce [an] outline of Indian spirituality that was simultaneously being developed in libraries at home,' so that ultimately 'reports of actual encounters merely provided more fuel to the theological machinery already operating at full speed.' (2011: 121–22) Thus sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources 'did not describe the Indian reality but projected the cultural history of Europe onto an alien setting.' (ibid.: 117) Gelders and Balagangadhara survey European writings on India in an impressive range of languages (Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, and German) and trace how themes such as priestcraft are passed from one writer to another. Notable only by its absence, however, is any consideration of the Indian sources used by early European writers. In practice then, any possibility of 'Indian reality' being represented in these early works is foreclosed. While many of the works Gelders and Balagangadhara consider pre-date the serious study of Indian languages and texts by European writers, their extension of their claim about the conceptual limits on European representations of India to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is unwarranted.³ It is often difficult to identify the Indian sources used by early European

writers on Indian religion, but it is by no means impossible.⁴ This essay will attempt to demonstrate how identifying the sources used by one early writer on Hinduism allows us to escape the iron cages set up by the analysts of colonial discourse and to allow for those moments where cultural borders were crossed, in however limited and imperfect a manner.

ZIEGENBALG'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE TAMILS

Tranquebar, as many of the other chapters in this volume attest, has long been a site of grappling across cultural borders. One of the more profound attempts to cross the border was also one of the more unlikely. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg spent about ten years in Tranquebar during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, and wrote two large books on Hinduism which, together with a host of shorter reports and letters, are documents of enduring value in the attempt to cross cultural borders. Yet, Ziegenbalg's primary purpose in coming to Tranquebar was not to understand Indian culture, but to transform it, through conversion. Ziegenbalg's renown as the pioneer of Protestant mission in India has tended to obscure how little prepared he was for that role. In August 1705, he was asked whether he would accept a commission from the Danish king, Frederik IV, to go to the West Indies as a missionary. At the time, Ziegenbalg was acting as a temporary curate in a small town close to Berlin and was intending to return to university to continue the studies that had been interrupted a year earlier by his poor health and the death of his sister. Three weeks later, when in Berlin to attend a wedding, he was surprised to discover that his initial and somewhat equivocal response had been taken as an acceptance (Lehmann 1957: 32–33). In early October, as he set out for Copenhagen to be ordained, he wrote to a friend to say that he was now be sent to another of the Danish overseas territories in Guinea, West Africa, and that he had heard the climate there was much less healthy than America (*ibid.*: 21). By 29 November 1705, when he embarked, the destination had changed again, now to the 'East Indies'. Ziegenbalg had, therefore, virtually no chance to prepare himself for India and its religions. There is no evidence of his having made any study of what was known of India in Europe prior to his being sent there and during the seven-month voyage on board the Danish ship the only language Ziegenbalg was

able to study was Danish (Lange 1708: 27). Ziegenbalg mentions only one European work on Indian religion which he had read in 1706, Philip Baldaeus's *Wahrhaftige Ausführliche Beschreibung Der Berühmten Ost-Indischen Küsten Malabar und Coromandel* ('True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East-India Coasts of Malabar and Coromandel', 1672). As will be demonstrated below, the impact of this work on his account of Hinduism was minimal in comparison to that of the Tamil texts he collected and studied.

Given his lack of preparation for India, and for mission, it is perhaps unsurprising that Ziegenbalg fully expected to find himself among barbarians in India. While underway to India, he wrote that he was being sent to 'the barbarous peoples' (Lehmann 1957: 25) and in 1708 he recalled that when he first came among the Tamils, he shared the opinion of most Europeans that they were a 'truly barbaric people' (Caland 1930: 11) without learning or morals. What is remarkable is how quickly his view changed, within months of his arrival in Tranquebar. Just over two months after his arrival, Ziegenbalg is already describing the Tamils as 'a very intelligent and rational people' (Lange 1708: 14) who lead a 'quiet, honorable and virtuous life' (Lehmann 1957: 44) on the basis of their natural powers alone. These impressions appear to have been formed initially on the basis of conversations carried out in Portuguese, which Ziegenbalg and his colleague had begun to study soon after their arrival.⁵ While Ziegenbalg reports that many people sought them out for such discussions, a key figure in shaping his early impressions was a 70-year-old schoolmaster. Just two months after the missionaries' arrival in India, he began holding his classes in their house, the missionaries sitting with the children and tracing Tamil letters in the sand. While the schoolmaster spoke only Tamil, Ziegenbalg nevertheless reports daily conversations with him from before the time he began learning Tamil (Bergen 1708: 21). Ziegenbalg emphasises, however, that it was his reading of Tamil literature which transformed his view of the Tamils:

When at last I was entirely able to read their own books, and became aware that the very same philosophical disciplines as are discussed by scholars in Europe are quite methodically taught among them, and also that they have a proper written law from which all theological matters must be derived and demonstrated; all this astonished me greatly, and I developed a very strong desire to be thoroughly

instructed in their heathenism from their own writings. I therefore obtained for myself ever more books, one after the other, and spared neither effort nor expense until I have now—through diligent reading of their books and through constant debating with their Bramans or priests—reached the point where I have a sure knowledge of them, and am able to give an account. (Caland 1930: 11)

Within two years, Ziegenbalg had assembled a collection of well over 100 Tamil texts, a handful of them Muslim and Christian but the vast majority of Hindu or Jaina provenance. In August 1708 he compiled and sent to Europe an annotated catalogue of these texts, which he called the *Bibliotheca Malabarica*. The catalogue includes Christian and Muslim texts in Tamil but by far the longest section is that dealing with 'heathen' works, which has 119 entries (Germann 1880). Ziegenbalg continued to collect Tamil texts after 1708, and although he made no further catalogue, a survey of Tamil Hindu or Jaina works mentioned in his later writings reveals that in total he mentions over 170 such works. Ziegenbalg's later fame as a scholar of Hinduism is based almost entirely on his detailed study of these texts. Although he conversed, and corresponded, with many Hindus, and later travelled somewhat within the Tamil region, it is his textual studies which set him apart from his contemporaries among European writers on Hinduism.

ZIEGENBALG'S TAMIL LIBRARY

Kamil Zvelebil, the great Czech scholar of Tamil literature, described Ziegenbalg's catalogue as 'a relatively complete account of Tamil literature.' (1974: 2) By contrast, Hans-Werner Gensichen, a leading German historian of mission, characterised it as a jumble of 'grammatical and mythological works, songs and stories, philosophy and pornography, astrology and theology.' (1989: 86) The truth lies somewhere between the two. While Ziegenbalg's collection is not representative (in general he has few early works and he had only some sections of the literature which is usually regarded as canonical for Tamil Hinduism), it is not entirely eclectic either. It was driven both by his own interests, and by the nature of his connections with the Tamils who provided books for him. If we are to evaluate Ziegenbalg's understanding of Tamil Hinduism, his success in

grappling across cultural borders, it is crucial to be able to identify and understand the nature of his sources. With R. Ilakkuvan, I have attempted elsewhere to identify the works in Ziegenbalg's catalogue, and to comment on the overall character of his collection (Sweetman with Ilakkuvan 2012). Here I wish to focus on one particular work which was particularly important in shaping his view of Tamil Hinduism. I will argue that this text not only enabled Ziegenbalg to understand how Hindus reconciled the belief in one supreme being with the worship of many manifestations of the divine, but also that the structure of his final work on Hinduism, the *Genealogia der malabarischen Götter* ('Genealogy of the Malabarian Gods', 1713) is derived directly from an identifiable Tamil source.

Ziegenbalg's collection of Tamil texts began with works provided by the elderly schoolmaster. In the *Bibliotheca Malabarica*, Ziegenbalg notes that he was able to recite the whole of *Thirukkural*⁶ and 'many other difficult books accurately from memory' (Germann 1880: 63). Already in September 1706, Ziegenbalg reported that the schoolmaster was copying out books for him. Like most of the very earliest of Ziegenbalg's known letters, the manuscript of this letter is not extant, but a number of printed editions exist. Most often cited is an abbreviated version, published in the 1708 in the second edition of Ziegenbalg's early letters edited by Joachim Lange under the title *Merckwürdige Nachricht* ('Remarkable Report').⁷ An English translation of this version by Anton Wilhelm Boehme was published the following year, under the title *Propagation of the Gospel in the East*.⁸ By that time a much fuller version of the letter had appeared in German in 1708 in a kind of unofficial third edition of the *Merckwürdige Nachricht* edited by Christian Gustav Bergen.⁹ The letter is roughly twice as long in Bergen's edition which, together with other material included in Bergen's edition but not available elsewhere, suggests he had access to the letters in manuscript.

The letter includes an account of Brahma's revelation of four books, one of which was lost along with one of Brahma's heads when he contested Shiva's supremacy.¹⁰ In the version edited by Lange, we read that while Ziegenbalg asked the schoolmaster to transcribe the remaining three of these for him: 'he could not bring himself to do it, for it would be against their law to allow a Christian to have access to them.' (1708: 11) The idea that the Brahmans were unwilling to allow access to the Vedas is one of the standard tropes of early European writing about Indian literature. As early as 1651, the Dutch

chaplain Abraham Roger reported that only Brahmans were entitled to read the Vedas, adding that it was written in Sanskrit like all the 'hidden things' of their heathenism (Caland 1915: 20). Nevertheless, in Bergen's version of the letter, we read that the three books are being written out in Tamil for Ziegenbalg. Ziegenbalg states only that this had never before been done for any Christian, and adds that they would not have done it for him either, had it not been for his familiarity and friendship with them (Bergen 1708: 19). Ziegenbalg had earlier claimed that the schoolmaster would not have copied books for him had it not been for 'the great love' the Tamils had for him (Lehmann 1957:40). The account of their revelation by Brahma suggests that the four books in question are the four Vedas, but this is likely to have been a detail taken from Baldaeus, on whom Ziegenbalg later admits to having relied in this letter (Caland 1926: 14). Ziegenbalg's description of the content of the books suggests that rather than copying out the Vedas, the schoolmaster had identified some Tamil works which he regarded as in some sense equivalent to the Veda. The idea of a 'Tamil Veda', that is, a work or works in some sense equivalent to the Sanskrit Veda but not a direct translation from it, is widespread (Peterson 1989: 57; Carman and Narayanan 1989: 4).¹¹

The schoolmaster also began copying other works for Ziegenbalg, and once Ziegenbalg was able to read them, he abandoned Baldaeus and relied directly on his Tamil sources. He emphasises this in the introduction to his first major work on Hinduism, the *Malabarisches Heidenthum* ('Malabarian Heathenism', 1711), where he notes that Baldaeus 'erred in many ways in his description of this heathenism,' in part because he did not know Tamil and relied on manuscripts produced by Portuguese Jesuits but also because the 'Bramans' on whom he relied either 'knew very little of their doctrine' or, if they did know much about it, were unable to communicate much of it in the 'country Portuguese' they knew, that is, the lingua franca used predominantly for negotiations between Europeans and Tamils dealing with trade (Caland 1926: 14–15).¹²

With the exception of one or two works which he directly ascribes to him, or says that he copied out for him, we do not know precisely which works Ziegenbalg obtained from the schoolmaster, but we do know that Ziegenbalg had many of the works which would have formed the core of the curriculum of traditional Tamil village schools.¹³ We know also that Ziegenbalg obtained books from the schoolmaster's son, who he describes as exceeding his father's

scholarship.¹⁴ I have argued elsewhere that it is likely that it was through their extended family and their connections that Ziegenbalg obtained a text which is closely associated with two non-brahmin Shaiva centres of Tamil scholarship close to Tranquebar (Sweetman with Ilakkuvan 2012).

In the *Bibliotheca Malabarica*, Ziegenbalg names this work as *Tirikala cakkaram* and describes it as ‘a mathematical description of the seven underworlds and the seven worlds above, together with the fourteen seas which lie between the fourteen worlds. Likewise an account of their paradise, or Kailasa, which is the seat of Ishvara with many hundreds of thousands of idols.’ (Germann 1880: 90) He adds, remarkably, that it is ‘virtually the basis of all other Malabarian books, since everything is based on the principles contained in it.’ (Sweetman with Ilakkuvan 2012: 120) While the *Tirikala cakkaram* is, to the best of my knowledge, unknown to the scholarship on Tamil literature and is hardly the basis of all other Tamil books, this work was formative in Ziegenbalg’s understanding of the Hindu pantheon, in persuading him that—despite all appearances to the contrary—Hindu theology is essentially monotheistic, and in helping him structure his own account of the Hindu pantheon in his monograph on the ‘Malabarian’ gods. As Ziegenbalg writes in the *Bibliotheca Malabarica*, the *Tirikala cakkaram* shows ‘the genealogy of the gods ... namely how all the other gods derive from the being of all beings, or the supreme God, and what their offices are, where their residence is, how long they live, how often each is incarnated, etc.’ (ibid.)

The importance of the *Tirikala cakkaram* for Ziegenbalg’s conception of Hinduism has not been fully appreciated, in part because of the difficulty in identifying the text. The *Tirikala cakkaram* is not an independent text, but a section of a work which appears under a separate heading as the next work in Ziegenbalg’s catalogue, the *Puvana cakkaram*.¹⁵ As shall be described below, the *Puvana cakkaram* is a cosmographic work of a kind well-known in Sanskrit literature, which is more often entitled *Bhuvanakoshah*. Although in modern times works of this sort have been published independently, it appears that they earlier appeared as a part of larger works, and served to establish the authority of the work by tracing a lineage back to Shiva’s own original revelation of the contents to Parvati.¹⁶

In the *Bibliotheca Malabarica* Ziegenbalg wrote that he is considering translating the *Tirikala cakkaram*, but is undecided

about whether or not to do so. In fact, he did provide an almost complete translation of the *Tirikala cakkaram* in the second chapter of the second part of his *Malabarisches Heidenthum*.¹⁷ Earlier, in the *Malabarisches Heidenthum*, he quotes what he takes to be an account of the creation, and attributes this to 'Dirugálasakkarum ... vs. 11 seqq.' (Caland 1926: 64–65)¹⁸ This passage, which is in fact, at least in the manuscript I have consulted, the opening of the *Puvana cakkaram*, points to the real significance of this work for Ziegenbalg's account of Hinduism.

The *Tirikala cakkaram* culminates in a vision of Shiva as the supreme being, the transcendent, invisible and unfathomable creator of all that exists. The *Puvana cakkaram* opens with an account of how from this supreme being, the universe arises as the result of a process of differentiation which begins with the emergence of a single androgynous being, neither male nor female but nevertheless beginning to unfold so that male and female elements are distinguishable while remaining a single entity. From these elements emerges the manifest form of Shiva and then from Shiva, in turn, emerge Shakti (the goddess) and the five forms Sadashiva, Maheshvara, Rudra, Vishnu and Brahma. Quoting this account in the *Malabarisches Heidenthum*, Ziegenbalg comments that this is why 'these heathens understand under the name Shiva both the supreme being and the highest God,' (Caland 1926: 65) that is, both the unmanifest and the manifest forms of Shiva. Ziegenbalg believed that the existence of a single supreme being was apparent to all, including the Hindus, by the 'light of nature', and that they had not had to be taught this by Christians.¹⁹ Although other Hindu texts confirmed this, it was the *Tirikala cakkaram* and *Puvana cakkaram* which enabled Ziegenbalg to understand how this belief in one supreme being was combined with the belief in many manifest divine forms.

Moreover, it is the theogony of the *Tirikala cakkaram* and *Puvana cakkaram* which explains the structure of Ziegenbalg's volume on the genealogy of the 'Malabarian' gods (Ziegenbalg 1713). The first part of this book is devoted to the account of Shiva's unfolding just outlined. The second part deals with the five faces of Shiva which, according to Ziegenbalg, 'signify the five great lords or gods, out of which they later make no more than three,' (ibid.: 41r) i.e. Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. Ziegenbalg here conflates five agents of Shiva (Brahman, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshvara and Sadashiva²⁰) with the more familiar *trimurti* (three forms) of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma.

The third part of the above monograph contains the account of village deities for which Ziegenbalg's work is best known. Although Ziegenbalg draws heavily on other sources for his account of these deities (as indeed he does in the other sections), his understanding of their position in the pantheon is drawn from the *Tirikala cakkaram* and *Puvana cakkaram*. With the exception of a male deity named Aiyana, these deities are all female and are said by Ziegenbalg to have their origin in the Shakti discussed in the first part of his book (ibid.: 128v).

Finally, the fourth part of the book returns to follow the *Tirikala cakkaram* more closely. It includes an account of various celestial beings, including the thirty-three crore *devas* (deities), the forty-eight thousand *rishis* (sages), the guardians of the eight directions and others. The attention paid to these mostly obscure denizens of the Hindu cosmos is somewhat out of place in a work which is now cited, if at all, usually only for its ethnographic content. Their place in his monograph on the Hindu pantheon of the Tamils is explicable only because of the account of them in the *Tirikala cakkaram*, where they are mentioned in the calculation of the different life spans of Rudra and the manifest form of Shiva (Caland 1926: 188).

THE SOURCES OF ZIEGENBALG'S ACCOUNT OF THE HINDU DEITIES

The Indian mission historian Daniel Jeyaraj, in his edition and in his translation of Ziegenbalg's *Genealogia der malabarischen Götter* mentions a number of the Tamil works which Ziegenbalg cites, including the *Tirikala cakkaram* and *Puvana cakkaram* (2003: 286, 2005: 255). Nevertheless, like Gelders and Balagangadhara, he traces the source of some of Ziegenbalg's key ideas about Hinduism to European works on India, and to other, more general, works on pagan mythology, rather than to Ziegenbalg's use of Tamil sources. One reason for this is that although he mentions the *Tirikala cakkaram* and *Puvana cakkaram*, he was unable to identify copies of these works and hence to determine their role in shaping Ziegenbalg's account of Hinduism, above all in the monograph *Genealogia der malabarischen Götter* (Jeyaraj 2003: 286, 2005: 330). Jeyaraj's discussion of Ziegenbalg's Tamil sources is preceded by an account of his use of European sources. Jeyaraj claims that 'before his travel to Tranquebar, Ziegenbalg acquired one Latin and four German

books about India.' (2005: 199) The works in question are Boëmus' *Omnium gentium mores, leges et ritvs* (1562), Abraham Rogers' *Offne Thür zu dem verborgenen Heydenthum* (1663), Baldaeus' *Wahrhaftige Ausführliche Beschreibung Der Berühmten Ost-Indischen Kusten Malabar und Coromandel* (1672), Nerreter's *Der Wunderwürdige Juden- und Heiden-Tempel* (1701), and Christoph Langhanß's *Neue Ost-Indische Reise* (1705). Jeyaraj cites German indologist and historian Gita Dharampal-Frick, who in turn cites the printed 1714 catalogue of the mission's library.²¹ The 1714 catalogue lists works by Boëmus, Nerreter and Langhanß, as well as a further work by Burckhardt (*Ost-Indianische Reisebeschreibung*, 1693) not noticed by Dharampal-Frick or Jeyaraj. Ziegenbalg acknowledges using Baldaeus, but there is no evidence that he knew Roger's work, except insofar as it is reproduced in Baldaeus and Nerreter. The catalogue includes no mention of Roger's 'Offne Thür ...', but refers only to a Portuguese translation by Roger of a summary of Christian doctrine in the form of a dialogue. In the preface to his *Malabarisches Heidenthum*, Ziegenbalg states explicitly that he has at hand only Baldaeus and Nerreter. Thus, the only European work on Hinduism which we know for sure to have been available to Ziegenbalg in his first years in India—the years which were decisive for forming his view of Hinduism—is Baldaeus. Moreover, while Ziegenbalg mentions, in *Malabarisches Heidenthum*, that he had read Baldaeus as early as 1706 (and, later, Nerreter), he stresses there that his work is independent of theirs and that he has relied primarily on his reading of Tamil texts (Caland 1926: 14–15). Nevertheless, Baldaeus is identified by Jeyaraj as the source of Ziegenbalg's belief that the Tamils recognise a single supreme being (2003: 275, 2005: 199). The discussion above of Ziegenbalg's dependence on the *Tirikala cakkaram*—a work which, it should be recalled, he describes as 'virtually the basis of all other Malabarian books' and showing 'the genealogy of the gods'—demonstrates that in fact he derives this idea from the vision of the supreme being which the *Tirikala cakkaram* culminates and the *Puwana cakkaram* begins.²²

Jeyaraj further suggests that Ziegenbalg may have taken the idea of a 'genealogy of the gods' itself from Boccaccio's fourteenth-century *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* (2003: 232, 2005: 200). More specifically, he suggests that the table at the head of Ziegenbalg's monograph on the genealogy of the 'Malabarian' gods which structures the work in four parts as described above may follow

a model suggested by Benjamin Hederich in a work on universal history, including Greco-Roman mythology. Not only is there not a scrap of evidence that Ziegenbalg knew Hederich's work, which does not appear either in his writings or in the catalogue of the mission library, but the idea of a genealogy (*Geschlechts-register*) of the gods is already present in Ziegenbalg's account of the *Tirikala cakkaram* in 1708—a year before the publication of Hederich's book. The idea of a genealogy of the gods is as old as Hesiod, and while it may well have been at the back of Ziegenbalg's mind there is no doubt that the structure of his *Genealogia der malabarischen Götter* is taken directly from the *Tirikala cakkaram* and *Puvana cakkaram*.

Ziegenbalg's unusually precise account of his sources enables us to retrace his path across cultural borders and show which works were key in opening up his understanding of Tamil religion. It is because he does not follow Ziegenbalg far enough that Jeyaraj misrepresents Ziegenbalg as projecting European preconceptions derived from Baldaeus or Boccaccio onto the Tamil objects of his study. Although it is not always easy to identify with equal precision the sources of other early European works on India, the possibility that their authors were reliant upon an Indian source rather than their own preconceptions ought not to be ruled out in advance, without any attempt to establish the extent to which a particular author relied on Indian rather than European sources. While there is a great deal of variation in the quality of early European writing on India—and many works indeed project European concerns onto material drawn from India—this is not true to the same extent for all such works. That is to say, there is significant variation in the extent to which different authors were successful in grappling across cultural borders and understanding what lay on the other side.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Underlying the charge that early European writers on India only ever used India as a blank screen on which to project their own preconceptions is the idea that it is in principle impossible successfully to reach across cultural borders and obtain a genuine understanding of a culture other than one's own. This in turn rests upon a model of cultures which is untenable. It suggests that the borders of a culture are somehow fixed, that cultures are isolates, with some sort

of essential nature which is fundamentally incommensurable with other cultures, which are conceived in a similar manner. The idea of such cultures as pure isolates is a fiction, and is one whose history amply indicates its dangers. It may be that the metaphor of a cultural border encourages us to think of cultures in this way, as fixed blocks which bump up against one another. But we need not necessarily to think of borders in this manner. Borders are artificial delineations of where one country begins and another ends. Even when they follow some natural geographical feature such as a river or a coastline, they are purely conventional. If we think of a cultural border in this way, an artificial delineation of one culture from another, then we can continue to use the idea of a cultural border. As many of the essays in this volume demonstrate, such cultural borders were highly malleable, and hence permeable, in Danish Tranquebar, and in the broader Thanjavur region under Nayak, Maratha and British rule.

To say that it is possible to cross cultural borders is not to say that it is easy, or that such a crossing can be complete, or that one can change one's culture on a whim. Ziegenbalg was able, at least to some extent, successfully to cross a cultural border only because of his engagement over an extended period with Tamil language, Tamil literature, and not least with Tamils themselves.²³ But it is, in my view, only because, and to the extent that, he was successful in crossing cultural borders that he is worth studying at all. To retrace Ziegenbalg's path across the cultural border now, some three hundred years after his crossing, is not easy either, and demands a similar engagement with Tamil sources. Although difficult, it remains necessary if we are to avoid projecting our own concerns while seeking to represent his reality as accurately as we are able.

NOTES

1. The phrase is the title of the first chapter of Suzanne Marchand's *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (2009).

2. For the term, see Subrahmanyam (1995: 381).

3. Gelders and Balagangadhara suggest a fundamentally ahistorical view of what they call the discourse of world religions when they write that 'Hinduism became part of the "world religions"', but this discourse of world religions displays no major discontinuity in its structure of representations' (2011: 127).

4. Some of the Jesuits whom Gelders and Balagangadhara regard as merely reproducing a discourse manufactured in European libraries have in fact left detailed records of the Indian manuscripts they collected and consulted. See, for example, the catalogue of manuscripts (Bibliothèque nationale NAF 5442) sent to Paris in 1729–35 (quoted in Omont 1902: 1179–92).

5. From 12 October 1706, Ziegenbalg and his colleague had the services of a former translator, named Alakappan—who knew Danish, German, and Dutch in addition to Portuguese and Tamil—to the Danish East India Company (Liebau 1998: 20). Prior to this, Ziegenbalg's servant Mutaliyappan, who knew Portuguese and Tamil and was learning German from Ziegenbalg, had translated from Ziegenbalg's rudimentary Portuguese (Lange 1708: 14).

6. The *Tirukkural*, a collection of 1330 aphorisms mostly on ethics, is probably the single most famous Tamil work and children are still encouraged to memorise parts of it.

7. The first edition, which appeared already in 1706, contained only one letter, written from the Cape of Good Hope.

8. See Boehme (1709).

9. The second edition edited by Lange appeared in 1708. A further edition by Lange in 1709 was described as a third edition on the title page although Bergen's edition, also described as the third on the title page, had already appeared in 1708.

10. Brahma, the agent of creation, is closely associated with the four Vedas, each of which he recites continually from one of his four heads. There are several versions of a myth in which Shiva punishes Brahma by severing a fifth head. On the mythology of Brahma, see Bailey (1983).

11. On the development of this idea, see Cutler (1987: 7–10).

12. At the end of the century, Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron was also to comment on the pitfalls of relying on 'a Portuguese jargon ... consisting of 150 or 200 words, almost without construction' for discussing matters of religion which would be difficult to express even in one's mother tongue (1786: xii–xiii).

13. For nineteenth-century accounts of these traditional schools see Gover (1873). See also, Senthil Babu (2007); Raman (2010); Ebeling (2010: 37–39).

14. *Der Königlich Dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien eingesandte ausführliche Berichte von dem Werck ihres Amts unter den Heyden* (Halle, 1710–72) 6. Con. 263. The series usually referred to as the *Hallesche Berichte* ('Halle Reports') began with the publication, in 1710, of a single letter, to which further instalments ('*Continuationen*') were subsequently added at irregular intervals. Ziegenbalg's letters are contained in the first two of the eventual nine volumes (consisting of 108 instalments in all). The first volume, edited by August Hermann Francke, containing 12 continuously paginated instalments was complete by 1717. The second (instalments 13–24, 1719–29)

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and third (instalments, 25–36, 1727–32) volumes, edited in part by Francke and later by his son Gotthilf August Francke, were not continuously paginated, so references are given to the instalment (Con.) and page number.

15. There are a number of other cases where Ziegenbalg includes parts of larger works under separate headings in his catalogue, and in fact the relationship between these two works had already been noticed in an edition of Ziegenbalg's catalogue prepared in 1731 by a later missionary Christoph Theodosius Walther. In this edition of the catalogue, there is an annotation, in a smaller hand, to the entry for the *Tirikala cakkaram* which reads: 'This book is inserted into the following one', i.e. the *Puvana cakkaram*, see Walther (1731: 53).

16. Hindu texts, particularly tantras, are often presented as having originally been taught by Shiva to his divine consort, Parvati.

17. Ziegenbalg entitles the chapter 'Of their calculation of years', and attributes it to '*Dīrigālasākkarum* from p.1 to p.10'. See Caland (1926: 189).

18. Several manuscripts of texts obviously similar to Ziegenbalg's *Tirikala cakkaram* are recorded in catalogues of Tamil manuscript repositories, but the text is otherwise unknown to the scholarship on Tamil literature.

19. See the opening statement of the *Genealogia* (Ziegenbalg 1713: 11r).

20. For the Karaneshvaras, or lords of the five *kalas*, or 'portions', of the cosmos, see Davis (1991: 95).

21. Dharampal-Frick writes, 'Gewiß war Ziegenbalg bereits als Neuankömmling mit einem Teil der vorliegenden Literatur über Indien vertraut ... An Literatur mit thematischem Bezug auf Indien sind dort [in the 1714 catalogue] u.a. Werke von Roger, Baldaeus, Nerreter, Boemus und Langhanß (1705) aufgeführt.' ('From the time of his arrival, Ziegenbalg was certainly already familiar with a part of the existing literature on India ... of the literature on India [the 1714 catalogue] lists works by Roger, Baldaeus, Nerreter, Boemus and Langhanß, among others.') (1994: 101–02)

22. Other works important for Ziegenbalg's view of Hinduism are discussed in Sweetman (2004).

23. I would add that his achievement was also dependent on his access to the works of Jesuit missionaries who had spent much longer following a similar path—there is a kind of 'Great Man' Ziegenbalg hagiography to which I do not subscribe.

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