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# UNEARTHING THE SECRETS OF THE BRAHMANS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY LEIDEN. ETHNOGRAPHY, ANTIQUARIANISM, AND MISSIONARY AMBITION IN THE OPEN DOOR TO HIDDEN PAGANISM

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# Unearthing the Secrets of the Brahmans in Seventeenth-Century Leiden

## Ethnography, Antiquarianism, and Missionary Ambition in the *Open Door to Hidden Paganism*

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**Abstract**

This dissertation is a study in context of the *Open Door to Hidden Paganism*, one of the most detailed European ethnographic descriptions of India of the early modern period. The *Open Door* is remarkable not only for its rich first-hand observations collected by the Dutch *predikant* Abraham Rogerius, but also for the ambitious antiquarian footnotes that were furnished by an anonymous scholar in the United Provinces. These linked but distinct treatises both aim to unearth the secrets of South Indian society and especially those of the Brahmans, with a clear focus on the *religious* aspects of this group. There is a tension here that runs through the work, between the ethnographer Rogerius, who maintains a highly localised view, and the scholarly perspective of the annotator, who incorporates a new, plural understanding of 'religion' to analyse and compare the Brahmans with other forms of paganism, Judaism, Islam, and even Christianity, in a global ethnological framework. Both authors are heirs to a long line of intellectual developments; the first part of this study therefore traces and discusses the various discourses, intellectual spheres, and their entanglements with the economic and political goals and realities of the early modern period. This serial contextual analysis provides a foundation for understanding what the *Open Door* draws from and contributes to, with a focus on travel writing and ethnography on India, the specifically Dutch goals in India and the Reformed mission, as well as antiquarianism and the exploration of ancient and modern paganism and idolatry by European scholars. In part two, moving from serial contextualisation to microhistorical analysis, I discuss the *Open Door* itself, and how, while very much building on existent discourses, it presents something new to European readers in both the main text and the annotations, the combination of which gave an unprecedented impression of 'Indian religion'. I investigate how in the *Open Door*, and especially in the annotations, a picture of Brahman civility is created that may be distinguished from Brahman religion, and how Brahman priesthood is conceptualised by the authors. An important point of discussion is the significance of the portrayals of worship and sacrifice, and the role they play for the presentation of Brahman religion. These discussions happen in the context of Reformed apologetics and scholarly developments in Europe: by providing an analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic information Rogerius collected, the annotator's depiction of idolatry and superstition seeks to contribute to the literature investigating the nature and origins of paganism and idolatry, incorporating the Brahmans into existing ethnological-genealogical models. Finally, I investigate how Brahman religion and belief are depicted by the authors, and how they evince differing interpretations on Brahman monotheism. The epilogue revisits the findings of these chapters, and discusses how a view of 'Indian religion' as a coherent system emerges out of the complementarity of both texts, to what extent their views on religion and the Brahmans differ and how this relates to the missionary field, ending with a brief overview of the lasting legacy of the *Open Door*.

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| BPK2 | Mooij, Jakob. *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis der protestantsche kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië.* Vol. 2. Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1929. |
| LCL | Loeb Classical Library. |
| OBP | *Overgekomen brieven en papieren*, the series of letters and papers received from Asia in the VOC archives. |
| *Open Deure* | Rogerius, Abraham. *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom ofte waerachtigh vertoogh van het leven ende zeden; mitsgaders de Religie, ende Gods-dienst der* Bramines, *op de cust* Chormandel, *ende de landen daar ontrent.* Leiden: Frans Hackes, 1651. |
| *Open Deure 1915* | Abraham Rogerius, *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom*, ed. Willem Caland. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915. |
| *Open Door* | Benjamin Leathley. *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism. Critical Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated English Translation.* Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2025; outside of footnotes *Open Door* refers also to the original publication |
| NA | Nationaal Archief (National Archives of the Netherlands), The Hague. |
| tGp | transcription GLOBALISE project (https://globalise.huygens.knaw.nl/). |
| VOC | *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company); VOC archives in the National Archives. |

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Writing a PhD thesis is a long and often arduous endeavour. The beginning of this work stretches back not only to the start of my PhD, but back to my days as a master student, when Jos Gommans first introduced me to the text and the topic — for which I am still grateful. In the meantime I have worked both on this analysis and investigation of the *Open Door* itself, as well as on the critical edition which I published last year. Many people have helped me and been supportive over the course of these very much entangled projects, and I would like to thank all of them here.

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While the writing of a dissertation involves great amounts of solitary work, discussing my research at conferences, workshops, and other events has been enriching, especially through discussion with many colleagues, and lots of people have also responded to questions, read some of my work, and helped in other ways. I would like to thank, in this context, Margreet Ahsmann, Cátia Antunes, Elisabeth Begemann, Lennart Bes, Peter Bisschop, Richard Calis, Daniele Colonnetti, Maria Vittoria Comacchi, Marianna Ferrara, Peter J. Forshaw, Wouter Hanegraaff, Saverio Marchignoli, John J. Martin, Martin Mulsow, Silvia Notarfonso, Willem Otterspeer, Charles Parker, Daria Pezzoli Olgiati, Sabina Pavone, Goran Proot, Katharina Rieger, Jörg Rüpke, Hans van Santen, Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, Carolien Stolte, Xenia von Tippelskirch, Paola von Wyss-Giacosa, Ricarda Vulpius, Arthur Weststeijn, and Guillermo Wilde.

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*Car toute verité, certes, ne peut pas par raison estre suffisamment prouvée, veu que plusieurs excedent la raison, & la nature. Mais nul mensonge ne peut gaigner par raison contre la verité: nulle verité estre convaincue par le jugement de la raison. Car le mensonge est contraire à la nature, la nature ayde de la raison, la raison servante de la verité, nulle verité contraire à l'autre, c'est à dire à soy-mesmes. Car verité ne peut estre que verité, raison que raison.*

Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay

# Introduction

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## An Outline of the Book

This book is a study of a monograph that is well known, indeed exceedingly well known, to scholars, but has nevertheless not received a proper study analysing it in its entirety and original form. The work in question, *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom*, written by the Dutch *predikant* — a pastor and missionary in one in the context of the East Indies — Abraham Rogerius, and edited and published posthumously in Leiden in 1651, is especially known among Indologists, who have used Rogerius's detailed ethnographic account of South Indian Brahmanism for centuries.[1] Especially around the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century the interest in Rogerius's descriptions remained unabated and at an all-time high, with the famous Indologist A.C. Burnell pointing out that the *Open Door* was 'still, perhaps, the most complete account of S. Indian Hinduism, though by far the earliest'.[2] At the beginning of the twentieth century, Willem Caland, another renowned Indologist, re-issued the *Open Door* through the Linschoten Vereeniging, and made a fateful decision: he replaced the original footnotes of the *Open Door* — most probably written by Arnoldus Wittens, a graduate of the University of Leiden and later city council member[3] — with his own footnotes,

[1] The full title is Abraham Rogerius, *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom: ofte waerachtigh vertoogh van het leven ende zeden; mitsgaders de religie, ende gods-dienst der Bramines, op de cust Chormandel, ende de landen daar ontrent* (Leiden: Françoys Hackes, 1651). *Predikant* is difficult to translate into English: preacher, the most obvious translation, seems reductive. While *predikanten* stood apart from a larger group of lay elders who also held an important role in the multi-layered organisational scheme of the Dutch Reformed Church, in the Reformed tradition we cannot speak of any 'clergy'. The most important role of a *predikant* certainly was pastoral care, yet in a colonial context such as the one inhabited by Rogerius a *predikant* was not only a pastor, but also a missionary. In order to not accurately portray the roles and functions of *predikanten* I will continue to employ the Dutch term.

[2] A.C. Burnell, "On Some Early References to the Vedas by European Writers," *The Indian Antiquary* VIII (1879): 98–100.

[3] I will go into more detail on the identity of the annotator in chapter seven. As I outline also in my translation and edition of the *Open Door*, I find the evidence presented in Cornelis J. Schilt, ""Spectatissimo, Eruditione

as Caland's declared the original notes to be 'worthless' and could therefore 'be left out without harm'.[4] Caland should not be judged too harshly for this decision: in the philologically-charged environment of the early twentieth-century academy, he felt that the antiquarian ramblings of the annotator should not tarnish the ethnographic excellence of Rogerius's account. His own notes instead expanded on what he regarded as more pertinent matters, namely philological and historical clarifications of the source material related to Rogerius. In this manner Caland clarified many a matter and underlined the numerous things Rogerius 'got right' from the point of view of the young discipline of Indology.

Nevertheless, Caland's decision was fateful, and as a consequence the *Open Door* is usually seen primarily as a richly detailed ethnographic presentation of South Indian Hinduism. Extraordinary though this achievement may be, especially for the time in which the account was made, the *Open Door* is much more than a simple source collection on early modern Brahmanism in Pulicat and South India; it must be seen at as an early modern attempt at making sense of Indian culture and religion from different points of view. The footnotes that Caland removed, as some scholars have noted, in many ways are an erudite antiquarian commentary on Rogerius's ethnographic descriptions of Brahman ritual and belief.[5] But the extent, sophistication, and embeddedness in contemporary debates surrounding paganism and idolatry of the annotations have been entirely overlooked. In this monograph we will see how significant the work of the annotator truly was for a contemporary reading of the *Open Door*, how it functions as a cultural translation of Rogerius's ethnography, and how it can and should also be seen as its own account with specific intentions and strategies. It is only by looking at the *Open Door* in its entirety and complementarity that we can appreciate and comprehend its contribution and relevance to contemporary ethnographic and ethnological surveys, missionary agendas, and the changing conceptualisation of religion as a category.

This dissertation can be seen to be part of two complimentary books on the *Open Door*: the first being my translation and edition of the *Open Door*, the first full-length English translation furnished with a long introduction on the context of the books creation and its authors.[6] While that book is focussed on aiding the reader in their own reading of the *Open Door*, this dissertation will furnish an analysis of the book itself, a truly a remarkable and in

& Pietate, Insigno Viro": Abraham Rogerius, the Open-Deure, and the Identity of A.W. JCtus," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 10, no. 2 (2023): 259–277 to be convincing indicators that the 'A.W.' of the *Open Door* refers indeed to Arnoldus Wittens. Without any solid proof, lacking any other writings, whether printed or in manuscript form, of Wittens' I will, however, continue to refer to A.W. as 'the annotator' throughout this book.

[4] *Open Deure 1915*, xxv.

[5] Though most scholars mentions the annotations only in passing, often repeating the old fable of Wissowaty being their author (as we shall see below), some notable exceptions are the work of Joan-Pau Rubiés and the recent article by Schilt, "Spectatissimo."

[6] Benjamin Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2025). Following my translation I will commonly refer to the original publication as 'Open Door'.

many ways unique document which not only deserves its own analysis, but also reveals much about the goals of the seventeenth-century Dutch Reformed Mission, Dutch travel writing and ethnography, on the one hand, but also the entanglement of these discourses with the scholarly analysis of different cultures and the gradual establishment of a field of comparative religion. The *Open Door* is such a rich resource in this regard because of its singular nature, giving us a very rare combination of a first hand account with detailed ethnographic observations on the worship and beliefs of the South Indian Brahmans, with its interpretation and cultural translation, mostly achieved by the armchair scholar that is the annotator. In this manner the *Open Door* is a perfect source for a new global intellectual history of early modern Europe, as it brings together what Martin Mulsow has called the standard sources of global history (merchants, missionaries, explorers) — in this case the ethnographic account of Rogerius — with the sources grappling with this newly available information — in our case the annotations — leading to novel forms of interpretation, apologetics, and over-extension in their analyses.[7] The *Open Door*, especially through the analysis of the first-hand information by the annotator is not only a perfect example of such ambition and over-extension as we will see throughout the ensuing analysis, but also provides us with a rare instance of both kinds of sources in one single document.

## Research Question

The central question of this study may thus be formulated as follows: why was the *Open Door* published in this manner and at this time, in such a rare combination of genres and interests, and what were the underlying agendas of the authors and people involved in getting the book to print? And, following up on this thread of questioning, why did this happened at this specific moment in time in Leiden, in the United Provinces? This finally leads to the more specific questions at the core of the book's content: how do the annotator and Rogerius relate to the Brahmans and their beliefs and practices, especially regarding key notions such as religion, ritual, sacrifice, idolatry, or truth and error? And why and how do the interpretations differ between the two main authors of this work? None of these fundamental questions have yet been answered for the case of the *Open Door*, as treating the work only or mostly as an ethnographical survey does not demand we ask these questions. Yet if we move away from such an anachronistic and reductionist comprehension of the *Open Door* we can appreciate that we cannot truly understand the nature of the work without asking these questions.

In order to answer the latter set of questions regarding the content of the work it is necessary to first investigate matters related to the first set of queries. The nature of the source is peculiar and combines early modern ethnography and travel literature with apologetic Christian writing related to the Dutch Reformed missionary effort as well as the antiquarian armchair scholarship

[7] Martin Mulsow, "Global Intellectual History and the Dynamics of Religion," in *Dynamics of Religion*, ed. Christoph Bochinger and Jörg Rüpke (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 268.

on ethnological theories and the origin and nature of paganism. Not only is this, as already mentioned, a rare combination of genres to be found within one stand-alone work, but it also relates to diverse areas of scholarship. While recently scholars have been looking at these phenomena in concert, especially the scholarship on histories of paganism and idolatry often still gives too little space to the importance of an early modern globalised world impacting European intellectual endeavours, of key importance even when early modern scholars were not actively investigating foreign cultures. This study will look at these topics as highly entangled genres and areas of scholarship. To this end a serial diachronic study in the first part of the work sets out to uncover the longue durée developments of European views on India, Indian 'religion' and paganism as a category. This forms a necessary contextual analysis of how, prior to the *Open Door*, Indian 'religion' was understood by Europeans, and whether and how it fits into the Christian categorisation of paganism and idolatry, enabling us to comprehend both the innovative and unique nature of the *Open Door*. The second part will move from serial contextualisation to a microhistorical analysis of these mutually dependent discourse as detectable in the *Open Door* itself, returning to the key questions.

## Structure and Content of the Dissertation

The structure of this study is thus given by the division of the two parts: the first part retraces the history of the various discourses and historical currents that influenced and culminated in the *Open Door*, and analyses the longue durée development of the European view and engagement with India and its religious traditions, thereby forming the necessary comparative framework in which to conduct the analysis of the *Open Door* itself in the second part. The first six chapters, making up the first part, investigate travel writing and ethnography centred on India, from ancient Greece, to Iberian accounts, all the way to seventeenth-century Dutch writings; the *topoi* and narratives surrounding India and especially the Brahmans; the Dutch context in India and back in the United Provinces in the tumultuous early seventeenth century; as well as the scholarly investigation of myth, ancient culture and religion, and idolatry, from its Humanist establishment in the Renaissance to the erudite histories of paganism and idolatry of the seventeenth century. This first part of the book makes it possible to understand the significance of innovation and synthesis of intellectual and literary genres achieved by Rogerius and the annotator. The second part details the manner in which Rogerius and the annotator of the *Open Door* uncover the details of 'Indian paganism', structured into five chapters. The analysis gives an overview of the book itself and its origins in India, the declaration of intent in the annotator's preface, and especially the manner in which the two authors approach Indian culture and how they differ in their reporting. The chapters follow a topical arrangement, with an analysis of the authors' presentation and conceptualisation of Brahman civility, priesthood, worship, sacrifice, as well as superstition, idolatry, and belief.

Following this overview I will give a brief account of how scholarship has looked and classified the *Open Door*, beginning with the Indological interest in the text in the late nineteenth-century and how Caland's edition influenced twentieth-century scholarship. The remainder of the introduction will be a theoretical discussion of key concepts and terminological considerations, as well as outline the theoretical-methodological foundations of this study. Before moving on to these topics, I want to give a brief presentation of the content of each chapter of the book.

The first chapter, and beginning of part one, will introduce the topics of ancient geography, ethnography, as well as ethnology, within a distinctly Greek and Graeco-Roman tradition. The manner in which especially the annotator, but also Rogerius relate to India necessitates that we seriously engage with this source material. While scholars such as Wilhelm Halbfass have discussed the importance of the ethnographic precedence and theories set by ancient thinkers regarding India, he and others do so from a distinctly modern point of view, where the interest lies in the emergence of the Orientalist study of India and the eventual development of Indology as an academic discipline.[8] For the purposes of this dissertation, on the other hand, it is crucial to begin with ancient views of India, the Brahmans, and Indian religion, not only for these important ethnographical precedents, but also and especially for the narratives that were built around these objects of enquiry. Topoi and narratives from antiquity enjoyed a very long afterlife, and it is thus important for this analysis to look into these narratives, as well as the continuities and breaks from these narratives over the centuries. To a great extent this also informs how mediaeval scholars as well as lay travellers and missionaries saw India, even as the latter increasingly come into contact and ventured to India themselves.

The second chapter investigates this new age of travel, when Europeans, in the wake of the possibilities created by the unified Mongol realm, began journeying to India in earnest once more. While the traditional accounts of India, based still largely on Greek ethnography, continued to play an important role, increasingly travellers established the role of a new critical observer who reported eyewitness testimony. Ancient and mediaeval narratives surrounding India still played a significant role, nevertheless, and were especially relevant for the image of the Brahmans - the ancient *Brachmannes* and *gymnosophists* were well known - as well as for the idea of (esoteric) Indian monotheism, Prester John, and the legends surrounding St. Thomas. The interplay between a new genre of travel literature and ethnography with old narratives surrounding the lands on the edge of the European horizon formed the intellectual background for the Society of Jesus and the Portuguese, and their encounter with India and 'Indian religion'. The Christian perspective on what, from a European point of view, were clearly heathen idolaters naturally played a major role in early modern accounts of the Indian subcontinent. As ever greater numbers of European travellers reached India in the sixteenth century, more complex and nuanced accounts of Indian civility and religion - increasingly seen as two spheres of culture - were created, especially by the Society of Jesus, whose ethnographic

[8] Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

exploits were an important precedent for Protestants such as the Dutch.

Chapter three for the first time shifts the focus to the Dutch. The connected worlds of Dutch Empire in Asia and beyond and the religious tensions in the United Provinces themselves are the main focal points. The chapter explores the presence of the Dutch East India Company, the VOC, in South India, and the context for establishing a Reformed Dutch Mission back in the United Provinces. These topics are inextricably entangled: while the VOC is primarily regarded as economic agent, the company was in fact a tool of the Netherlandish war against Spain and an extension of Dutch Empire across the seas. As the VOC brought more and more riches to the shores of Holland and Zeeland, the calls to bring godliness to unbelievers in exchange for the gain derived from the East Indies began to grow in the United Provinces.[9] Rogerius himself is a product of this context, as he was trained as a missionary at Leiden's short-lived missionary training college. The idea of giving godliness in exchange for the gain brought by the East Indies trade was also very current in the mid-seventeenth century environment of the so-called 'Further Reformation', which is also reflected in the book's dedication, preface, and annotations.

Turning back to travel literature and ethnography on India and its religions, chapter four switches the focus from the works conceived under and often in close association with the Portuguese *padroado* to Protestant accounts. While especially the Jesuits accomplished much in their own missionary ventures in the early seventeenth century, published works in Europe did not reflect the sophisticated ethnographic labours of the Jesuits.[10] With the arrival in India of the Dutch and English, and their respective East India Companies, this was about to change. The Portuguese precedent was of paramount importance, nevertheless: especially the pioneer of Dutch travel writing and navigation, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563 - 1611), whose rutters enabled the first voyages of the Dutch to the East, was himself in the employ of the Portuguese and used Iberian writings and categories for his own *Itinerario* (1596). The major published European ethnographic achievements of the early seventeenth century on the Indian subcontinent originate in Gujarat: EIC chaplain Henry Lord's (fl. 1624 - 1630) account of the Banias (1630), unlike Jesuit works, was quickly published, is a significant work focussed on the *religion* of different peoples in Surat. Dutch VOC personnel in Gujarat also made new strides in observing the culture of different peoples: while the detailed account of Wollebrandt Geleynssen de Jong (1594 - 1674) remained unpublished, Johan van Twist's (d. 1643) work on Gujarat, using the former to a great extent, is perhaps the most important work describing Indian worship, practices, and belief prior to the *Open Door*.

The remaining two chapters of part one turn the focus back to Europe, and the scholarly attempts to make sense of a world with a staggering diversity of beliefs and customs. Chapter five

[9] The classic account of the tension between gain and godliness is Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinsons, 1965).

[10] Agostinho de Azevedo, an Augustinian, also played a crucial role besides Jesuits such as Roberto Nobili, Antonio Rubini, or Giacomo Fenicio.

investigates the way Humanists approached the broad phenomenon of 'paganism'. Humanists had begun looking at the ancient worlds of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and their mythologies, with ever greater sophistication during the Renaissance, leading to detailed antiquarian studies of ancient culture. The mid-sixteenth-century trinity of Italian Humanist scholars Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479 - 1552), Natale Conti (1520 - 1582), and Vincenzo Cartari (c. 1531 - 1590) established a new standard for the investigation of ancient culture, with an increasingly systematic approach to myth and what we might term an anthropological spirit that would influence many of the generations of scholars that came after. This encounter with the cultures of the past greatly influenced the manner in which Europeans approached the newly encountered pagans of the Americas, but also the 'New Worlds' on the far reaches of Eurasia. The comparative ethnology of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484 - 1566) and José de Acosta (1540 - 1600), who gave very different models and interpretations of Amerindian civilisations and religions, would influence not only Catholic thought on the pagan *other*, but also Protestant scholarship on the nature of paganism and idolatry. Especially Acosta, whose *Moral and Natural History of the Indies* was translated into Dutch by Van Linschoten, turned out to be very influential for the conceptualisation of paganism in the United Provinces.

The final chapter of the first part delves deeper into this kind of scholarship. While these 'historians of paganism and idolatry' never ventured to the lands that were now part of an enlarged and ever-increasing European horizon, they did incorporate these new worlds into their analyses, even when their subject matter was nominally located in a more familiar past shaped by the civilisations of the ancient Mediterranean, Levant, and Mesopotamia. Incorporating the findings of the historicisation of the bible as a historical text, the connected endeavour of Orientalists studying Near Eastern languages and cultures, as well as the reports on Asian and American religious traditions, these scholars built universal models of paganism and indeed *religion*: with these scholars we see some of the first comparative religious scholarship, where religion becomes an inherent part of what we would now call culture. The annotator himself seeks to contribute to this scholarship by his placement of the Brahmans within a larger, universal, framework of pagan religion. Especially the scholarship of fellow Dutch intellectuals, like the great Dutch Humanist scholars Hugo Grotius (1583 - 1645) and Gerardus Vossius (1577 - 1649), but also less well known scholars working at Leiden University, like the antiquarian Philipp Clüver (1580 - 1622), advanced the scholarship on paganism. Vossius, who built in large parts on Acosta's classificatory model, published perhaps the most sophisticated universal survey of paganism, which would serve as the main model for the annotator of the *Open Door*.

The serial contextualisation of the first six chapters provides the necessary foundation for the second part, and a framework within which to assess the ethnographic and ethnological presentation of Indian religion in the *Open Door*. The second half of the study forms the main analysis of the *Open Door*, recognising it as a co-authored work belonging to many traditions and contributing to multiple genres. The first chapter of this part and seventh

chapter overall gives an overview of the *Open Door* itself. I give a brief introduction to the two main authors of this work, and discuss the origins of the *Open Door* with Rogerius's sojourn in India, topics dealt with in greater detail in my edition of the book. This chapter thus provides an introduction and overview of the *Open Door*'s contents; another important aspect of this chapter is a discussion of the annotator's preface, which unlike the notes remains detached from Rogerius's descriptions and figures much like a statement of purpose for the annotator's own treatise within the *Open Door*.

Chapter eight delves into the differences in reporting we can observe between Rogerius and the annotator, and discusses the notion and presentation of Brahman 'civility'. While Rogerius predominantly keeps his observations focussed on the very local context in which he was active, the annotator's commentary on Rogerius's ethnographic findings seeks to contextualise and bring the local dimension into a global, comparative context. As we will see in this chapter, while the *Open Door* is split into two parts, there is a constant tension to the distinction of Brahman life and customs (part one) from their beliefs and worship (part two). While we can observe that this dichotomy seems to be a straightjacket for the ethnographic account of Rogerius, it serves the annotator's goals of presenting Brahman priesthood as a civil or social institution akin to the role of priesthood the annotator identifies among the ancient Hebrews. At the same time, the annotator universalises many other Brahman customs, making them into anthropological standards, present in all cultures, but seen as largely distinct from religious practices.

With chapter nine the focus shifts to devotional and ritual practices, the first of three chapters investigating Brahman and Indian 'religion'. The role of Brahman priesthood is revisited from this perspective, and we see how Rogerius sees the Brahmans both as ritual specialist as well as priestly impostors. Rogerius's main informant, the Smarta Padmanabha, majorly informs Rogerius's account of worship and sacrifice, and though Rogerius is unaware of the differences between Vedic sacrifices and the forms of worship centred around a personal God (in the form of *bhakti* or devotion), the tension is perceptible in Rogerius's account, which favours Padmanabha's non-sectarian notion of godhead and devotion. At the same time, the annotator offers his own theories on sacrifice, essentially functionalising its role within religion. For both the annotator and Rogerius, the domain of *action* - as opposed to *thought* - is more fraught with the potential for idolatry. This is particularly clear in Rogerius's discussion of festivities and processions, and the isolated case of devil worship, associated with a popular celebration of a village deity (*gramadevata*), argued by Rogerius to be the devil. This, too, involves a fusion of Rogerius's Dutch Reformed horizon with that of his Brahman informants and the lived traditions of South India, as devil worship is not a phenomenon observable among the Brahmans, but is presented as a specifically low-caste reality, where the male Brahman view on the popular celebration of a female deity is reinforced by European expectations of Indians serving the devil.

Chapter ten expands on the category of error from a European Christian and especially Dutch Reformed perspective, and investigates the portrayal of superstition and idolatry in the *Open Door*. While Rogerius does not himself employ these laden terms — he never uses the specific terms *afgoderije* or *superstitie* — he does very much portray many a custom as superstitious, and naturally casts the image worship of the Brahmans as idolatry. While Rogerius tells us about Indian idols and their worship and thus presupposes a notion of idolatry, he does not offer us a systematised concept of idolatry, nor any theories as to the role of it within Brahman culture. The annotator, instead, makes this one of his main goals, investigating the history, genealogy, and ontology of idolatry. The annotator does not offer us one unified theory of idolatry, but typologises the diverse forms of idolatry and offers his theories on each kind's origins and dispersion, seeking to explain how it arrived in the south of India. The annotator here bases himself on various sources, including patristic and Jewish theories of idolatry, but predominantly borrows from other scholars, especially Gerardus Vossius. The result is a view that confirms the long-standing Christian definition of idolatry as the quintessential confusion of creation or creatures and creator, yet seeing it also from the point of view of a developmental history of religion where, heavily inspired by Protestant and especially Reformed apologetics, a physical cult of error has superseded the ideal spiritual worship of God.

The final chapter of part two and the study explores this aspect, the true worship of God, in more detail. Rogerius tells us unambiguously that the Brahmans acknowledge one unitary God whom they worship, but outlines also how lesser gods as well as the devil are worshipped. His account reflects a close observation of the complex religious and theological landscape of early modern South India — where theistic worship of one God connected to the main sectarian groupings commingled with a wide variety of local and regional deities, forms worship, and magical practices — yet he refrains from going beyond saying that Brahman monotheism is due to natural reason, more broadly evident in a globe-spanning *consensus gentium*. The annotator, instead, builds on Padmanabha's Smartism, visible throughout Rogerius's account, and seeks to show how the Brahmans, though not the common people, are true monotheists from a Reformed Christian point of view. He rejects a simple *consensum gentium* argument, and instead identifies key Christian doctrine in the beliefs of the Brahmans, who in this allegorical reading are shown to believe in the Trinity, Christ as logos, the immortality of the soul, and the role of the Christian church. The annotator walks a thin line between seeing Brahman religion as a corruption of truth, reflecting his readings of the church fathers, and a Christian Platonist reading of their beliefs as essentially Christian.

In the epilogue, which combines a review of the analysis of part two with the foundations of the topics discussed in the first part, I return to the main tensions between the two authors and what sets the *Open Door* apart from earlier and contemporary works. While there is a distinct missionary goal to both Rogerius's and the annotator's text, and indeed this is declared to be the main purpose of the book by both authors, this goal is often lost sight of in the acts

of writing; ethnographic practice and ethnological theories, and, dare I say, sympathy for the Brahmans, end up turning Rogerius and the annotator into ethnographers and ethnologists first, and missionary writers second. It is in this process that a view on South Indian 'religion' emerges, and supersedes the stated goal of the author to provide a summary of the errors of the idolatrous Indians. Both texts worked in concert to present this view of South Indian religion, and in the final section I provide an overview of the legacy of the *Open Door*, and how and by whom it was read in the decades and centuries after it was first published.

## Modern Assessments of the Open Door

While the *Open Door* has been known and used for centuries, modern research on the work itself has been scarce, and due to Caland's removal of the annotator's work (with the exception of the preface) this has meant that the annotations have been almost entirely overlooked.[11] While the lacunae regarding the annotations can be traced back to Caland himself, ironically he is still one of the best sources of information not only on the *Open Door* in its seventeenth-century Dutch context, but also on the annotations. While Caland is not particularly interested in the annotator, he proves satisfactorily that the latter was not, in fact, Wissowatius.[12] In the twentieth century, the focus shifted more and more to the *Open Door*'s and especially Rogerius's role in early scholarship on Hinduism.[13]

Rogerius is in this manner still most often presented in line with similar early European writers such as Henry Lord, Philippus Baldaeus, or François Bernier - not dissimilar to Bernard's presentation - or often merely noted for authoring the first publication which included a translation from a Sanskrit text, sometimes specifically noted also for the text itself (namely the Shatakatrayam by Bhartrhari).[14] In Raymond Schwab's classic *The Oriental*

[11] Rare exceptions are Bettina Noak, "Glossaries and Knowledge-Transfer: Andreas Wissowatius and Abraham Rogerius," in *Dynamics of Neo-Latin and the Vernacular*, ed. Tom B. Deneire (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 251–265, however as Noak follows the interpretation that A.W. actually refers to the Unitarian Wissowatius, this is of little use to my analysis. Schilt, "Spectatissimo" makes a good argument for the identity of the annotator, but does not discuss the content of the notes. Charles H. Parker, "The Seduction of Idols: Dutch Calvinist Readings of Worship and Society in Seventeenth-Century Asia," in *Semper Reformanda. John Calvin, Worship, and Reformed Traditions*, ed. Barbara Pitkin (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 163–184 recognises the work's collaborative nature as being relevant for its universalistic tendencies and discusses the philological-historical character of the annotations, all within the context of the global Dutch mission, yet also repeats the old identification of the annotator being Wissowatius. For more detail see my discussion in *Open Door*, 102-112.

[12] I provide a discussion of this and the annotator more generally in *Open Door*, 102-112.

[13] A work at the crossroads is Ernst Windisch, *Geschichte Der Sanskrit-Philologie Und Indischen Altertumskunde*, vol. 1 (Strasbourg: Karl Trübner, 1917), 1–3. A work which fits in neither category but discusses Rogerius briefly and is also subsequently cited by later scholars is Heert Terpstra, *De Nederlanders in Voor-Indie* (Amsterdam: P.N. van Kampen & Zoon, 1947), 183–188. Terpstra gives a short overview of Rogerius's life, including mentioning that he was a student of Walaeus, and a very superficial account of the *Open Door*. Caland's introduction remains more in-depth and Terpstra adds nothing to the former's discussion of the *Open Door* nor Rogerius.

[14] See for example Peter James Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*

*Renaissance*, Rogerius is accordingly put into the 'doctrinal stages', along with Lord, Bernier, and the Jesuits' *Lettres édifiantes*, next to, more uncommonly, Athanasius Kircher.[15] Whilst Schwab therefore puts Rogerius in a common chronology of growing knowledge of Hinduism, he also mentions some peculiar and interesting aspects of the *Open Door*: he stresses Rogerius's insistence on the Brahmans' monotheism and the monistic undertone present in the work.[16] While Schwab is not incorrect in this regard, as Rogerius's main informant was an Advaita Smarta, monism is discusses at much greater length and with more sophistication in the annotations, which are not discussed at all by Schwab. The same argument could also be made for Schwab's claim that Rogerius identifies the 'hidden paganism' alluded to in the title with non-Christian mysteries (and also the Indian traditions). Schwab here sees Rogerius as an antiquarian, whilst it is clearly the annotator who fits this role. Much like Bernard more than two centuries earlier, Schwab could have made a better argument had he consulted the annotations.[17]

In the extensive work of Donald Lach's *Asia in the Making of Europe*, the *Open Door* is discussed in some detail. Rogerius is mentioned for his translation of Bhartrhari and the references to the Mahabharata in the *Open Door*, and Lach also stresses the importance of the Brahman informants for Rogerius's work more generally.[18] Lach gives a very good summary of the content of the *Open Door* and explains the significance of the work in the history of scholarship on Hinduism. Most of his long treatment on Rogerius is actually a translated extract of the *Open Door*; Lach picks what he considers the most relevant points from across the two parts of Rogerius's treatise and translates these into modern English, giving the Sanskrit terms for Rogerius's archaic Dutch rendering of deities and traditions, along with many other matters. His translation aims to be a tool to understand the content of the *Open Door*, especially as Lach further expands on the discussed material in the footnotes and refers the reader to similar primary sources as well as secondary literature.[19] Whilst Lach therefore gives a good impression of Rogerius' writing, presenting these extracts over twenty-five pages, he does not attempt to analyse the work beyond superficial comments, such as saying that the separation of the work into a religious and non-religious treatise does not do justice to

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 18.

[15] Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East: 1680-1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 138–140. This list of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century pioneers on the study of India and Indian religion has become somewhat canonical in the literature; for good reason, as these writers do indeed give some of the earliest accounts on the specifics of Indian *religions* in an exclusive or near-exclusive manner. See in this context Will Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism: "Hinduism" and the Study of Indian Religions, 1600-1776* (Halle: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003).

[16] Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 140.

[17] Schwab, 138.

[18] Donald Frederick Lach and Edwin J. van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965–93), volume 2, book 1029ff.

[19] Much like Caland's footnotes, these are editorial notes which explain ambiguous terminology and refers the reader to secondary literature when needed. C.f. the notes in *Open Deure 1915*.

Hinduism; without considering, however, the seventeenth-century context in which such a separation is itself evidence of shifts in the meaning of religion, civility, and its boundaries, as we will see.[20] Even more than Schwab, Lach therefore sees Rogerius exclusively in the light of a chronology of scholarship on Hinduism. Importantly, however, Lach stresses the importance of Rogerius's Brahman informant, as well as his surprisingly value-free descriptions.[21] This notion of Rogerius as a remarkably neutral, non-judgemental observer is a long-standing notion about the *Open Door* that, upon closer inspection, does not necessarily hold true, as we will see in the second part of this study.

The works mentioned, as well as other older scholarship mentioning Rogerius only in passing, thus see the *Open Door* through the teleological lens of Rogerius's importance in the development of Indology as an academic discipline. While it is certainly true that Rogerius's account displays a depth of detail on Brahman customs, practices, and beliefs that had not seen the light of publication in Europe up until this point and would not again for some time, seeing the *Open Door* as nothing more than an ethnographic account undermines the manner in and purpose for which it was created, as well as how contemporaries engaged with the material. A pure focus on the ethnography of the *Open Door* is not only often teleological by casting it in a tradition of Indological disciplinary history, but also inevitably ahistorical, as beyond recounting the relative accuracy and value-free judgements of Rogerius such scholarship does not assess the work in the context of its meaning and influence in Europe.[22]

Even though Rogerius and the *Open Door* still take on this same role in a majority of modern research, some newer scholarship has begun to investigate the *Open Door* within the context of European intellectual history and the influence of travel accounts on the intellectual developments in the early modern period, the European Republic of Letters, and the early Enlightenment.[23] Will Sweetman's *Mapping Hinduism* retraces the classic narrative of growing knowledge on Hinduism, and besides Rogerius and the *Open Door*, discusses Henry Lord, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* of the Jesuits.[24] While

[20] See Donald Frederick Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe: A Century of Advance. Volume III*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1030 for this comment. The extracts are to be found at 1031-1055.

[21] Lach and Van Kley, 1056.

[22] Another monograph which acknowledges Rogerius's importance and discusses him briefly in such a context is Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 379–380, 419.

[23] A popular topic in which Rogerius is often mentioned in passim is sati, a tremendously popular topic in early modern travel accounts. See for instance Andrea Major, "'Pious Flames': European Encounters with Sati Before 1805," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 158; Meenakshi Jain, *Sati: Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2016); Sabina Pavone, "Save the Body to Save the Soul. Interpreting Sati in Jesuit Missionary Sources," in *Sacrifice and Sacred Violence: History, Comparisons, and the Early Modern World*, ed. Cristiana Facchini et al. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2025), 351–370. The *Open Door* also was an important source on sati for John Locke, see Daniel Carey, "The Problem of Sati: John Locke's Moral Anthropology and the Foundations of Natural Law," *Journal of Early Modern History* 18, nos. 1-2 (2014): 69–100.

[24] Sweetman's treatment of Rogerius's ethnography is the most in-depth to be found in newer scholarship, as

Sweetman also investigates the canon of early ethnographic writing on India, he makes it a part of the analysis itself: instead of viewing these authors and their writings from a purely Indological perspective, Sweetman investigates them from the point of view of the development of the academic study of religion in Europe and how this manifested in their descriptions of what would become known as Hinduism. One of Sweetman's main arguments is that early modern travellers did not see a unitary Hinduism *avant la lettre*, neither as a single heathen or pagan system nor as a pan-Indian religion like later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans.[25] Sweetman convincingly shows how the definition of 'religion' in Europe itself led the writers to describe traditions in India in a certain way.[26]

This is an important observation, and will occupy much of this current study; indeed, there is a distinct difference between Rogerius's and the annotator's use of 'religion' and 'worship', tied up with the re-conceptualisation of the term 'religion'. While Lach had critiqued that Rogerius did not do justice to Hinduism by dividing the book into 'Manners' and 'Beliefs and Worship', Sweetman shows this to be ahistorical, as at the time such a conception was not yet natural in Europe either and is instead evidence of a shift in the conception of religion occurring at this time.[27] While Sweetman does not investigate the annotations or editorial history of the *Open Door*, he does point out that it may not have been Rogerius who was responsible for the final structure of the *Open Door*.[28] Most importantly, Sweetman convincingly shows how Rogerius's descriptions of Indian religion were bound up with the evolving concept of 'religion', a topic, as we shall see, perhaps even more pronounced in the *Open Door*'s annotations, which evince a more 'modern' notion of the term religion, as well as a less local and more regional and global outlook on the role of 'Indian religion'.[29] The developments that took place in the Protestant context also had their equivalents in the Catholic world: The seventeenth-century developments in the missionary sphere in India that are discussed in the work of Ines Županov shows that the Jesuit method of accommodation not only meant an effectual division between religion and culture, but that the conception of religion was also shifting in the course of accommodation.[30] Joan-Pau Rubiés and Urs App, on the other hand, have stressed the

Lach confines himself to translating parts of the *Open Door* See Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 89–103.

[25] Sweetman, 154–156. See in this context also the the longue durée studies of Raf Gelder on the European view of Indian traditions: Raf Gelders, "Genealogy of Colonial Discourse: Hindu Traditions and the Limits of European Representation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 3 (2009): 563–589; Raf Gelders and S. N. Balagangadhara, "Rethinking Orientalism: Colonialism and the Study of Indian Traditions," *History of Religions* 51, no. 2 (2011): 101–128.

[26] 'India' is also a term and concept in constant flux and development, and Sweetman shows how together with the emerging concept of 'religion', this meant that early modern writers described Indian beliefs in a manner that differed significantly from later travellers and scholars. Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 162–163.

[27] Sweetman, 93.

[28] Sweetman, 91, 99.

[29] 'Far from the religious beliefs and practices of India being forced into a preconceived mould of an objectified heathen "religion", the concept "religion", and the concept which will later be named "Hinduism", are coeval. Works such as Roger's played a crucial role in the contemporaneous formation of both *concepts*.' Sweetman, 102.

[30] See Ines G. Županov, "'One Civility, but Multiple Religions': Jesuit Mission among St. Thomas Christians in

entanglement and mutual dependencies of Catholic and Protestant discourses, especially in the context of the Enlightenment, the European Republic of Letters, and the theorisation on 'Oriental Religion', in which the *Open Door* also plays a crucial role.[31] These topics will be discussed in greater detail in the first part of the current study.

India (16th -17th Centuries).," *Journal of Early Modern History* 9, nos. 3-4 (2005): 284–325; Ines G. Županov, *Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India (16th-17th Centuries)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005); Joan-Pau Rubiés, "From Antiquarianism to Philosophical History: India, China and the World History of Religion in European Thought (1600–1770)," in *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Early Modern Europe and China*, ed. Peter N. Miller and François Louis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 341.

[31] Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). App traces the development of the encounter with and scholarship on Asian religions through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the *Open Door* is relevant as one of the foundational texts for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourse on Oriental religion(s) and its importance for the intellectual developments in Europe. App shows how early information, especially from the seventeenth century, was still deeply influential and formative for great high Enlightenment thinkers and that the *Open Door* remained important through its impact on Bernier, Holwell, Diderot and Anquetil-Duperron. See App, 159 and 166; 330; 411; 416-417. Rubiés discusses the *Open Door* in a number of articles, highlighting the role of Catholic precedent for Rogerius's ethnography, the agency of local informants, and the importance of the notes. Perhaps the most complete assessment is given in Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Reassessing 'the Discovery of Hinduism': Jesuit Discourse on Gentile Idolatry and the European Republic of Letters," in *Intercultural Encounter and the Jesuit Mission in South Asia (16th-18th Centuries)*, ed. Ines G. Županov and Anand Amaladass (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2014), 130, where he acknowledges the important antiquarian context of the annotator's treatise: 'The fascinating anonymous preface to Rogerius's *De open-deure tot het verborhegen heydendom* (1651), published in French in 1670 as *La porte ouverte pour parvenir à la connoissance du paganisme caché* to become the key pre-Enlightenment work on Indian gentilism, turned back on the strict Calvinist tendency to disregard all pagan traditions as worthless idolatry and espoused the more liberal thesis of a hidden philosophical elite monotheism, which (as we have seen) was also central to the Jesuit strategy, and which, with small modifications, would provide the basis for Voltaire's libertine Deism. (It was also the thesis adopted by many antiquarian scholars, like Ralph Cudworth or William Warburton in England, to solve the riddle of pre-Mosaic Egypt and its hieroglyphs).'

# METHODOLOGICAL, THEORETICAL, AND TERMINOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

## Global History, Comparison, and Truth Claims

### Intellectual and Cultural History and the Global

This study may be termed a study in 'global history': the flows of information, entanglement of discourses on the *other*, and the global Catholic mission were necessary precedents for the creation of the *Open Door*, in addition to the role of the United Provinces in their global struggle against the Spanish Habsburg Empire, the flows of merchandise and the roles of the Dutch East and West India Companies, as well as just the relative ease of transporting goods and people across the seas. By global history I mean a perspective that goes beyond established categories spaces and takes into consideration connections, entanglement, and zones of contact.[32] Global intellectual history, I would argue, should be a history of culture as much

[32] See especially Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–762; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 30–50; Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 999–1027; David A. Bell, "Questioning the Global Turn: The Case of the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 1–24; Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016); Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Entanglements of a Man Who Never Traveled: A Seventeenth-Century Chinese Christian and His Conflicted Worlds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Richard Drayton and David Motadel, "Discussion: The Futures of Global History," *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–21; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenments Encounter with Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). For global intellectual history see Quentin Skinner, "On Intellectual History and the History of Books," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1, no. 1 (2005): 29–36; Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

as of ideas.[33] If we agree on the relevance of context for understanding ideas, the creation of knowledge, and its movements in space, a next step might be to ask how we should investigate these contexts. I would like to propose a two-pronged methodology of applying a study in synchronicity that seems particularly appropriate for this study: adding a diachronic layer to the synchronic study of context, and investigating contexts through and via the insights from Italian microhistory. David Armitage has proposed a transtemporal model of intellectual history that builds on serial contextualism to span the longue durée.[34] Examining the *Annales* school's longue durée approach, exemplified especially in Fernand Braudel, Armitage proposes a transtemporal approach for intellectual history which 'links discrete contexts, moments and periods while maintaining the synchronic specificity of those contexts'.[35] We might see analogies not only with the non-intellectual histories of the *Annales*, but even more so with the conceptual histories of *Begriffsgeschichte*, associated primarily with Reinhart Koselleck.[36] Indeed, I believe *Begriffsgeschichte* to be a crucial element of a serially contextualised intellectual history in the manner I present it in this study, as we shall see below with the example of concepts such as 'religion', 'idolatry', or 'paganism'.

While these approaches are particularly useful for the textual dimensions of context, microhistory is a powerful aid for the cultural contexts of knowledge production and transmission.[37] Carlo Ginzburg's study of La Créquinière, similar in context to the current study of the *Open Door*, is a great example of the potential compatibility between microhistory and global history,

[33] An interesting proposal of looking at this is provided by Donald R. Kelley, "Intellectual History and Cultural History: The Inside and the Outside," *History of the Human Sciences* 15, no. 2 (2002): 1: 'cultural history is the outside of intellectual history and intellectual history the inside of cultural history'. See also Brian Cowan, "Intellectual, Social and Cultural History: Ideas in Context," in *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History*, ed. Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 171–188.

[34] David Armitage, "What's the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the Longue Durée," *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 4 (2012): 493–507.

[35] Armitage, 498. See also David A. Bell, "Total History and Microhistory: The French and Italian Paradigms," in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. Lloyd S. Kramer and Sarah C. Maza, Blackwell Companions to History (Malden (Mass.): Blackwell, 2002).

[36] See especially Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010).

[37] Italian microhistory, as summed up concisely by Francesca Trivellato, 'strove less to recover the everyday life of ordinary people than to employ the micro-scale of analysis in order to test the validity of macro-scale explanatory paradigms'. Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 4. See especially Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi: il cosmo di un mugnaio del '500* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976); Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 1999); D. A. Bell, "Total History and Microhistory: The French and Italian Paradigms" Francesca Trivellato, *Microstoria e storia globale*, Storie 11 (Milano: Officina libraria, 2023). For the compatibility of microhistory and global history according to Ginzburg and Levi see Carlo Ginzburg, "Provincializing the World: Europeans, Indians, Jews (1704)," *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (2011): 135–150; Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory and World History," in *The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE. Part 2: Patterns of Change*, vol. 6, The Cambridge World History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 446–473; Carlo Ginzburg, "Ethnophilology: Two Case Studies," *Global Intellectual History* 2, no. 1 (2017): 3–17; Giovanni Levi, "Frail Frontiers?," *Past & Present* 242 (Supplement_14 2019): 37–49; Giovanni Levi, "Letter on the CROMOHS Debate on Global History," trans. Daniel Barbu, *Cromohs - Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, 2023,

and it is also a study of (the study of) religion, within the spheres of a global microhistoy and global intellectual history. As Alister Chapman and John Coffey argue in their introduction to the collection of essays on 'intellectual history and the return of religion', while intellectual history has traditionally assigned a low priority to the history of theology and 'religious ideas' as a broad concept, the latter 'are not simply a separate area of intellectual history, one that can be bracketed off and left to a specialist subgroup. Because religion often plays such an important role in the construction of meaning, it is anything but a hermetically sealed compartment—its influence tends to leak into other areas of intellectual life, coloring other realms of discourse'.[38]

For a global intellectual history of early modernity, and early modern Europe in particular, Martin Mulsow's concept of 'over-extensions' (Überreichweiten) is also very useful. Mulsow argues that early modern scholars engaged in over-extensions spatially as well as temporally, resulting from 'intentional strivings or a collective intentionality which in reaching for something were still not precise and often overshot or missed the mark [...] as the points of reference were mostly vague, askew or completely false'.[39] This trying to make sense of an increased horizon, by attempting to sort new information, peoples, and cultures into pre-existing models and by globalising and universalising historical-antiquarian scholarship is key to understanding the *Open Door* in context. These over-extensions are most notable not in the people who journeyed across the seas (missionaries, merchants, explorers) but in the armchair travellers, the scholars and theologians who interpreted the ever-increasing information on world's peoples, languages, and religious traditions. These over-extension may seem absurd from a modern point of view, but reveal the entanglement of travel, ethnography, theology, and philology, to mention but some of the fields of writing and scholarship. This is connected in a significant way to what James Hankins says about the interpretation of Plato in the Renaissance, where rather than following a Whigghish history that minimises the historical alterity of old interpretations, Hankins invites us to 'try to understand alien forms of thought, not in such a way as to render them epiphenomenal, but rather as a coherent system of cultural values within which a given interpretation, however absurd it may seem to us, can have a meaningful function. This means that in order to understand old interpretations we must establish their context in a much richer

[38] Alister Chapman et al., eds., "Introduction," in *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 9. See also the article by Howard Hotson, "Anti-Semitism, Philo-Semitism, Apocalypticism, and Millenarianism in Early Modern Europe: A Case Study and Some Methodological Reflections," in *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, ed. Alister Chapman et al. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 91–133 on the importance of reading people's religious reasons and R.A. Muller, "Reflections on Persistent Whiggism and Its Antidotes in the Study of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Intellectual History," in *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, ed. Alister Chapman et al. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 134–153 on not assuming strict denominational divisions.

[39] Mulsow, "Global Intellectual History and the Dynamics of Religion," 252. See in more detail Martin Mulsow, *Überreichweiten: Perspektiven einer globalen Ideengeschichte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2022).

fashion.'[40]

In this study I will be employing a global intellectual history in the manner outlined. I employ a transtemporal view in regard to the longue durée tropes and narratives in Europe on 'India' and especially the Brahmans; for a synchronic contextual understanding of the *Open Door* a deeper comprehension of the diachronic dimension of a European perspective on the Indian subcontinent is paramount. These serial contextualisms are followed, in the second part, by a deeper microhistorical analysis of a single text that was authored in two contexts, in Dutch Pulicat in Southeastern India (and by extension in Batavia) and in Leiden, in the United Provinces. In this manner I create a 'thick description' of meaning making in the *Open Door* and what this reveals about the larger, if we like 'global', entanglements of this particular mid-seventeenth-century Dutch project with the phenomena of European encounters with different peoples, Christian apologetics, the over-extensions of European scholarship, and the high-handed goals of a Dutch Reformed Mission.[41] This study mainly is about the European narrative of India and how this in turn shaped the way that Europeans further investigated India; however, whilst the sources naturally have a European (but also Dutch, Reformed, or male) bias, emic voices are far from absent in the *Open Door*, and we will see that far from being a story of Eurocentrism, this is one of creatively approaching a different culture and, as much as a Reformed Christian point of view permitted it, a fusion of horizons.

## Comparing Cultures: Comparison, Ethnography, and Truth

Comparison is at the heart of this book: not only is, as Carlo Ginzburg has put it also in the context of global microhistory, all history comparative history, but the subject matter itself is a comparison of comparisons.[42] While the main analytical method of this dissertation is not comparative, comparison is not only an implicit reality but also explicitly put forward in the second part, as the difference between Rogerius's ethnography and the annotator's antiquarian treatise might only be investigated by comparing their intellectual backgrounds, approaches, and authorial agendas. Yet there are deeper layers to this exercise than my own analysis: Rogerius, and especially the annotator, themselves engage in multi-level comparisons of the Brahmans, India, and Indians more generally with a European, and Dutch, Christian and mostly Reformed Protestant baseline. The annotator systematically goes one step further and builds his own treatise around a global and diachronic comparison of cultures and religions, building on the idea - radical though it may not seem to denizens of the twenty-first century - that 'religions' could be compared. Considering the significant importance of comparison as a concept to my enterprise it is thus necessary to sketch some theoretical notions regarding comparison and the act of comparing, for both the subject, that is the historian doing the

[40] James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1990), xvi.
[41] On 'thick descriptions' see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
[42] Ginzburg, "Microhistory and World History," 461.

comparing, and the object of the comparison, that being the historical actors in question, but also the comparisons they engage in. Two main areas of comparison are of interest here: 1) comparison as a method employed by the historian and 2) comparisons made by historical agents, with a special focus on comparison within the sphere of religion (a term which will also be discussed below), by which I mean comparing religious practices and beliefs.

Comparison as a method in history has more recently been critically examined.[43] This study is not a comparative history, and I build more on the process-orientated approach of entangled history; comparison, however constitutes an important element of the process of writing an entangled intellectual history, especially, following Jürgen Kocka, in larger temporal and spatial dimensions. To make but one broad example, Catholic and Protestant approaches to *prisca sapientia* in the context of antiquarianism and apologetics cannot be understood if not viewed through an entangled framework; however, to posit and distinguish broadly between different approaches based on a historical agent's confession is itself an act of comparison.[44]

[43] Jeffrey Burson, in an article advocating for a process-oriented form of entangled history, sums this up in the following manner: 'When comparative historical analysis occurs, the chosen objects of analysis are most often united by the decisions and framework of the observer, and not necessarily by characteristics intrinsic to the object of study. Natural continuities and networks of interdependence are easily broken by the very comparative framework designed to reveal them. In the words of Jürgen Kocka, "comparison implies selection, abstraction, and de-contextualization to some degree."' Jeffrey D. Burson, "Entangled History and the Scholarly Concept of Enlightenment," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8, no. 2 (2013): 4. On the process-oriented dimension of entangled history or histoire croisée see Werner and Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison," especially 45: 'A process-oriented approach thus makes it possible to grasp more fully the implications of categorial delineations, in particular through examination of their various more or less stabilized components. Reference to categorization therefore involves reasoning not in an abstract and general fashion, but in association with the study of the interpretive schemes and generalization procedures that lead to the institution of a generic category. Such a categorial approach makes it possible, thanks to the introduction of a diachronic dimension, to avoid the influence of implicit and reductive cultural models.' Burson makes important points about the dangers of reification inherent to a comparative approach, and I share Burson's own enthusiasm for a combination of diachronic and synchronic analyses through entanglement; but as Jürgen Kocka has stressed, a strong selective and constructive component is implicit in any kind of historical work, and 'comparative history compels its practitioners to explicitly reflect upon these epistemological premises of their work, while these premises are frequently just implicit in other approaches'. Jürgen Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond," *History and Theory* 42, no. 1 (2003): 43–44. See further Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1996). As Kocka goes on to say, an interest in entanglement does not mean that comparison does not remain indispensable to historians, especially for 'historical studies with global reach if they do not want to become merely speculative or feuilletonistic'. Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond," 44. Compare this Werner and Zimmermann, whose intercrossing of perspectives is hard to imagine without any heuristic application of comparison: 'The aim of histoire croisée is to shed light on this thick fabric of interweavings. In so doing, it does not withdraw into a space of relativist indecisiveness or infinite speculative relationships. On the contrary, it aims to utilize the intercrossing of perspectives and shifts in points of view in order to study specific knowledge effects. Starting from the divergences among various possible viewpoints, by bringing out their differences and the way in which, historically, they emerge, often in an interdependent manner, histoire croisée makes it possible to recompose these elements.' Werner and Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison," 49.

[44] On different 'regimes' of comparison and their implications see the articles collected in Renaud Gagné et al., eds., *Regimes of Comparatism: Frameworks of Comparison in History, Religion and Anthropology* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019). Especially relevant here are Anthony Grafton, "Comparisons Compared: A Study in the Early Modern Roots of Cultural History," in *Regimes of Comparatism*, ed. Renaud Gagné et al. (Leiden:

Moving to the level of the actors themselves, comparison forms an integral part of this book. While Rogerius's observations are, though not deprived of comparisons, mostly an attempt at a 'thick description' of Brahman culture in and of itself, the annotator's treatise is defined by comparison, which forms the foundation of his own analysis and interpretation of Brahman culture. It is important to acknowledge that the notion that any two things may be compared itself requires a basic openness on the side of the comparer regarding the object of inquiry. If the object(s) under analysis were entirely unique and in every way distinct, and exhibiting a totality that cannot be broken up without in turn destroying or degenerating the conceptualisation of the object, then no comparison may take place in the first place. As Jonathan Z. Smith has argued, the act of comparing itself implies that we abandon a monolithic totality, and instead turn to specificities, in the process constructing and deconstructing (new) realities in the creative act of comparison.[45] This is true for comparison in its most general sense, but carries with it an additional import when it comes to religion and theology, where such a re-visioning process itself can be contested, or, as Smith himself shows with the case of scholarship on early Christianity, deeply influenced by apologetic aims, as we shall also see ourselves throughout this study.

The foundation for the comparisons in the *Open Door* are the ethnographic (by which I mean the actual first-hand observations of culture) writings of Rogerius and the ethnological (by which I mean the more general and often comparative writing about peoples and their customs) works of early modern Europe.[46] While the ancient roots of ethnography are generally acknowledged, especially with the role of Herodotus, ethnography as a discipline within anthropology is usually traced back to the Enlightenment.[47] However, early modern ethnology and ethnography, whilst not based on a methodology of fieldwork in the modern sense, already displayed systematic descriptions of culture. As Arnaldo Momigliano has shown long ago, the antiquarians of the early modern period, following in the footsteps of ancient 'archaeologists' and the studies of

Brill, 2019), 18–48; Dmitri Levitin, "What Was the Comparative History of Religions in 17th-Century Europe (and Beyond)? Pagan Monotheism/Pagan Animism, from T'ien to Tylor," in *Regimes of Comparatism*, ed. Renaud Gagné et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 49–115; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Comparing Cultures in the Early Modern World: Hierarchies, Genealogies and the Idea of European Modernity," in *Regimes of Comparatism*, ed. Renaud Gagné et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 116–176; Jonathan Sheehan, "Comparison and Christianity: Sacrifice in the Age of the Encyclopedia," in *Regimes of Comparatism*, ed. Renaud Gagné et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 177–209.

[45] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 53. See also Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[46] On early modern ethnography and ethnology see Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," in *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 1–39; Surekha Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Naturally these are anachronistic terminologies. For a good overview on this distinction in an early modern context see Rubiés, "Comparing Cultures," 117.

[47] I will discuss Herodotus in chapter 1.

Varro, were not so much interested in 'history', with its implied focus on politics, but the cultural contexts of antiquities.[48] The point here is not argue that there is a straight line between Herodotus through to modern anthropology, but to recognise the interconnectedness of antiquarianism, travel writing and ethnographical and ethnological writings. As Peter Miller has stressed, question that were formulated about newly encountered peoples were, in part, of such a high quality because antiquarians had been asking such questions about the ancient world.[49]

While early modern travel literature and ethnography relied on ancient models, the growth of European travel literature, as stressed by Joan-Pau Rubiés, went far beyond ancient Greek and Roman, but also Arab, Persian, or Chinese parallels, and is in many ways historically unique.[50] The importance of ethnography was in its impact on the wider cultural system; while all ethnography entails a negotiation of the self and the *other*, early modern travel writing was more complex than merely exemplifying self-reflection, curiosity, and exoticism, as the surge of new accounts served as a foundation for a 'new, historically informed, scientifically constructed anthropological vision'.[51] These topics will be discussed in greater length throughout the first part, and serve as a basis also for the second part. For now, I would like to briefly touch upon the topics of credibility and authority, and, especially in regards to discussions and constructions of the *other*, Orientalism and the question of 'truth'.

Travel writing had not always been regarded with trust and viewed as an authentic description of an eyewitness. Already in antiquity, this was an oft-discussed point; Strabo, to take but one example, doubted the accuracy of many Hellenistic accounts, including that of Megasthenes, who, as we shall see, wrote one of the most informed treatises on India in antiquity.[52] Mediaeval travel literature was also regarded suspiciously, and at the beginning of the European Age of Exploration, Renaissance cosmographers remained sceptical about new information and reliant on classical knowledge, exemplified, for instance, by Joannes Boemus

[48] Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, nos. 3/4 (1950): 285–315; Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). See on this, by extension Peter Burke, "From Antiquarianism to Anthropology," in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences*, ed. Peter N. Miller (Toronto: Published by University of Toronto Press in association with the UCLA Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies and the William Andrew Clark Memorial Library, 2007), 229–247. An important study of early modern 'anthropology' is Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964). See also Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il nuovo mondo: la nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale : dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500-1700)* (Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1977).

[49] Peter N. Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously: Anthropology and Antiquarianism in Early Seventeenth-Century Histories of Religion," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3, no. 1 (2001): 186. See also the pioneering study of John Howland Rowe, "The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 1 (1965): 1–20.

[50] Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," 3. He goes on: 'The growth of travel literature was, more generally, a major element in the definition of Europe's cultural transformation from its medieval background to its invention of modernity.'

[51] Rubiés, 6.

[52] See for instance Strabo, *Geographica* 2.1.9.

and Sebastian Münster.[53] The question of who one could trust remained important in the early modern period, and not all travellers were deemed trustworthy.[54] The constant growth of travel writing as a genre, with a multiplication not only of volume but also of range, connected with the gradual establishment of modern standards of philology and historiography, meant that travel writing not only emerged as a prominent part of European publishing, but also that new standards were introduced to judge the authority of travellers. This meant that the 'authority of the traveller could be gradually disciplined, and this, in turn, made travel writing much more authoritative'.[55] While the sixteenth century set important standards for the reliability of travellers, the seventeenth century saw a continued growth of ethnography and ethnology, superseding ancient accounts and establishing new knowledge based on empirical and methodical standards in an increasingly global and connected world.[56]

### Perspectives on 'Truth'

While the assessment of *accuracy* was crucial for this process, what may we say about the concept of 'truth'? A distinction between truth and error is fundamental for the Christian basis of seventeenth-century ethnography and ethnology, and I will shortly discuss its implications for the definition of 'religion' as a concept more broadly. What, however, is the relation between empirical eyewitness testimony and Christian conceptions of truth? I will not seek to answer this question here; it will, however, accompany us through most of this study, and forms some of the central tensions in the ethnographical and ethnological discussions we find in the *Open Door*. I would only like to mention two considerations on the topic before moving on to a deeper discussion of the central concepts of religion, idolatry, and paganism.

The first is an anecdote from Peter Bichsel, a twentieth-century Swiss author, who relates how he travelled to Bali, came into contact with Balinese Hinduism, and found himself deeply fascinated and attracted to the pedagogical element he encountered in this tradition.[57] Bichsel tells us that he found himself a young Balinese teacher, whom he questioned on the historicity of the story of Rama, asking his teacher whether these stories were true.

> Without hesitation he answered with 'yes'.
> 'So you believe that Rama lived somewhere, somewhen?'

[53] See for instance Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 97–120.

[54] See Daniel Carey, "The Problem of Credibility in Early Modern Travel," *Renaissance Studies* 33, no. 4 (2019): 524–547; Michiel van Groesen and Johannes Müller, eds., *Far From the Truth. Distance, Information, and Credibility in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2023).

[55] Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Distance and Credibility in Sixteenth-Century Travel Writing," in *Far From the Truth*, by Michiel van Groesen and Johannes Müller (London: Routledge, 2023), 37.

[56] See especially Rubiés, "Comparing Cultures."

[57] Related in Peter Bichsel, *Der Leser. Das Erzählen: Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen* (1982; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 15f. The entire first lecture, discussing the relation between truth and narration, writer and reader, is an illuminating read.

> 'I do not know whether he lived', he said.
> 'So it is a story [Geschichte]?'
> 'Yes, it is a story.'
> 'So someone must have written this story - I mean: a human being wrote it?'
> 'Certainly a human wrote it', he said.
> 'So a human could have also invented it', I said and felt triumphant, as I thought I had proved him wrong.
> Yet he said: 'It is quite possible that someone invented the story. True it is, nevertheless.'
> 'So Prince Rama did not live on this Earth?'
> 'What do you want to know?', he asked. 'Do you want to know if the story is true, or merely whether it happened?'
> 'The Christians believe that their God Jesus Christ was on Earth', I said, 'which is described by men in the New Testament. But Christians believe that this is a description of reality. Their God really was on Earth.'
> My Balinese friend pondered this and said: 'I have been told about this already. I do not understand why it is important that your God was on Earth, but I have noticed that Europeans are not pious. Is this true?'
> 'Yes, it is true', I said.[58]

S.N. Balagangadhara discusses this anecdote to show a supposed incommensurability between a Christian, Western concept of religion and an Indian cultural stance that cannot be called 'religion' in this sense as Indian writings 'lack an object, and they lack the status for being knowledge-claims'.[59] Richard King evinces a similar stance to Balagangadhara, and contrasts this Indian understanding of truth with a Christian, especially Lactantian definition of 'religio' and hence of truth and error.[60] These authors make an important point, and we must comprehend the apologetic roots of the unmistakably Christian concept of 'religion', to which I will turn shortly. Yet, just as also King acknowledges that Hindu revivalism places great stress on the historicity of Hindu mythology, it is pertinent to this study that we recognise that in a Christian context, too, we ought to be more careful in identifying clear distinctions between truth equalling a Christianity and the factuality of sacred history, whilst error is synonymous with everything else. An insistence on incommensurability merely because of the conceptual history of the term 'religion' and its applicability is, I would argue, short-sighted and reductionist.

I offer another interpretation for the different approaches to truth we see between Bichsel and his Balinese interlocutor. While there is certainly a sense of immediate incommensurability to the exchange - although we should remember that Bichsel's whole point in his lecture is to argue for the Balinese understanding of truth, so already here this incommensurability is not

[58] Bichsel, 15–16. My translation.
[59] S. N. Balagangadhara, *'The Heathen in His Blindness'–: Asia, the West, and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 371.
[60] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (London: Routledge, 2013), 39f.

impossible to overcome - I do not think it is useful to see this as a contrast between 'Christian' or 'Western' and 'Indian' or 'Hindu' conceptions of truth, which only risks reifying a stark contrast between a rational West and a mythic East in a neo-Orientalist manner.[61] Rather, I would propose a difference in what Luke Clossey has called 'kens'. The plain ken is what Bichsel exemplifies, and is generally associated with a secular, modern world view:

> The plain ken [...] perceives a world that is sparer, more minimalist: it finds a mess of particular things, a mess of human action. [...] There's no deep meaning beyond what we happen to create. There's no absolute knowledge beyond, or prior to, what is constructed in time. All that is now unknown can be systematically discovered; there are no hidden meanings that can be understood, much less manipulated. There's no certainty. There's no stability. The universe is contingent, accidental, and random. It is a universe so fluky that we have to rely on statistics and probabilities to make sense of it. The plain ken draws from an old Axial Age insight into the possibility of meaningful human action: a cause causes an effect.[62]

The deep ken is very different:

> What is the deep ken? The deep ken allows for all the things the plain ken denies. There is deep, subtle, and real meaning—and meaningful connections—beyond the accidental constructions by humans and the chance encounters of normal spacetime. There is at least the possibility of certainty and stability, for the deep ken is independent of time. A deep intentionality suffuses everything: the deep ken can be divine or universal, the perfect and unmediated expression of the will of God, or a reflection of the underlying order of the universe. There are subtle and powerful meanings, necessities, and connections, found especially in beauty and proportions, so uncanny as to be suspect to the plain-ken mind. Indeed, 'un-*can*-ny'—'un-*ken*-ny'—literally means 'beyond one's ken'—here meaning beyond the plain ken.[63]

Clossey argues that instead of history being 'a story of people vaguely getting smarter on the road to now—with acceleration during periods like the Renaissance and Enlightenment when intellectuals liked to write about how smart they were', an incorporation of the two kens makes history a story of the rise and fall of fashions of thinking more in one or the other ken.[64]

[61] I intend 'Orientalist' in the Saidian sense here, c.f. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) but see also J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). As I discuss in chapter four, we must not discount the strategic aims of early modern European knowledge creation and accumulation in Asia; to see this as Said sees 'Orientalism' in later centuries would, I argue, however be a mistake, as the power relations and imperial possibilities of the Europeans were limited in Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In chapter six I will discuss the early modern Orientalists in the sense of scholars who studied ancient Mesopotamia and the Levant and their respective languages.

[62] Luke Clossey, *Jesus and the Making of the Modern Mind, 1380-1520* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2024), 13–14.

[63] Clossey, 14.

[64] Clossey, 16.

Without discussing the deeper implications, advantages, or pitfalls of this approach, I would like to point to the employment of both kens in the early modern period. While the increasing trust and scrutiny of travel accounts, based on textual criticism, might be seen as a plain ken view, other topics discussed in my study will be more liminal, often mixing the two kens. I would argue that this is especially the case with the notion of Indian or Brahmanic monotheism, and with the genealogical-apologetic discussions surrounding the origins and ontology of paganism. These topics are suffused with a historical and historicist perspective on the subject matter, but often posit 'uncanny' connections and meanings that fall short if viewed only from the perspective of the plain ken. I do not intend to build in any substantial way on Clossey's work here; I merely suggest that, just as Bichsel's interlocutor ought not to be disregarded as non-modern, ahistorical, or backward, we should not disregard the deep ken aspects of these nevertheless deeply learned debates. Much of the idea of an enduring 'ancient wisdom' belongs to the deep ken, even when it is integrated in a very analytical, historical plain ken framework. This can also help us, as Clossey himself argues, to overcome Eurocentric biases, and instead compare similar stances in their own terms: in the *Open Door*, for instance, the annotator can agree with Padmanabha's monistic Smarta cosmology and theology by employing a deep ken perspective on this tradition. To understand the background on these issues better I will now turn to a more detailed discussion of the concepts of religion, idolatry, and paganism.

## Defining Religion, Idolatry, and Paganism

### Religion Deconstructed?

As has already become clear, the conceptual category of 'religion' is closely tied to Christianity, and has been argued to be ill-fitted especially for traditions outside of the monotheist 'Abrahamic' religions, which include, apart from Christianity, also Judaism and Islam.[65] While these deconstructions of religion are valid, to discard a term that has been and is as widely used as religion brings along its own challenges; deconstructing is one thing, but how do we move forward without a meaningful concept? Religion is a fundamental concept in this study, and appears both as 1) an *emic* category used by writers themselves: the annotator of the *Open Door*, in a comparative fashion, compares Christianity with other 'religions', and 2) as an *etic* concept, used in an analytical and descriptive manner by me. Especially in the second part I will provide an in-depth analysis of the emic use of the term by Rogerius and the annotator; in

[65] Besides the already mentioned works of Balagangadhara, *'The Heathen in His Blindness'–*; King, *Orientalism and Religion* see especially Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Daniel Dubuisson and William Sayers, *The Western Construction of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

the first part, however, a significant diachronic dimension underlying this study calls for some clarification on my own, etic use of the concept. Without going into detail on these debates I want to briefly give an overview on why and how I will continue to use 'religion' myself as a conceptual category, before then moving on to a conceptual history of paganism, idolatry, and religion, which shapes seventeenth-century discussions surrounding these topics.

A useful discussion of the problematic of 'religion' and how to reconstruct the term is provided by Wouter Hanegraaff.[66] Hanegraaff notes how debates and deconstructions of religion as a concept are based on a dualistic assumption of religion opposed by 'the secular', but that this dualism actually masks a triadic structure where the third term - itself based on a negative, mainly Protestant definition of religion that excludes the 'superstitious', 'pagan', 'magical', and 'idolatrous' - is removed in a tacit manner from the umbrella of 'religion'.[67] As Hanegraaff pointedly remarks: 'the deep irony is that by thus treating the third term as largely irrelevant to the concept of "religion", thereby rendering it invisible, even contemporary deconstructionists end up perpetuating the very same Christian-Protestant ideologies whose legacy they are trying so hard to deconstruct!'[68] Hanegraaff himself is an expert on the manner in which 'magic' was systematically *othered* not only by religion, but by 'secular modernity', too.[69] At the same time, he asserts that faced with the diversity of human culture, forms of worship, and beliefs encountered by Europeans in the early modern period, 'a concept was needed to enable comparison of the familiar with the new, and my thesis is that "religion" came to fulfill that function. In other words, the technical status of "religion" was that of a *tertium comparationis* or, more precisely, of a "pre-comparative *tertium*."[70] Hanegraaff's argument thus is that we may understand 'religion', instead of as a monotheist and specifically Christian and predominantly Protestant concept, as an implicit *tertium*, a comparative meta- or supra-category, employed when encountering and comparing the new with familiar forms of worship and beliefs. I will follow this as a guideline in my own usage of 'religion': when speaking about ancient, mediaeval, or early modern descriptions of 'Indian religion', I therefore do not aim to assert any specific claims on the underlying nature of Vedic and Indian traditions and culture, but merely to discuss a process of implicit comparison and description. This is not to say that the specific conceptual history of religion is irrelevant; quite the opposite. In the final part of this section I will therefore discuss the genesis and transformation of 'religion' and 'idolatry', as well as the connected concept of 'paganism'.

[66] Wouter Hanegraaff, "Reconstructing "Religion" from the Bottom Up," *Numen* 63, nos. 5/6 (2016): 576–605.
[67] Hanegraaff, 593f.
[68] Hanegraaff, 594.
[69] See especially Wouter Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[70] Hanegraaff, "Reconstructing "Religion" from the Bottom Up," 597. Hanegraaff builds on Ralph Weber, "Comparative Philosophy and the Tertium: Comparing What with What, and in What Respect?," *Dao* 13, no. 2 (2014): 151–171.

## Paganism, Gentilism, Heathenism

Whilst prior to its anthropologisation religion as a terminological choice (so not as a *tertium*) is mainly associated with true religion and faith or piety in a Christian context, paganism is often the *other* that runs counter to it. As we shall see, this is especially true in the form of idolatry, which is commonly argued by theologians to be the antithesis of Christianity. Idolatry has its own specific conceptual history and implications, which will be explored next in concert with a short *Begriffsgeschichte* of *religio* and religion. Paganism itself is a broader concept, and is entangled with the terms 'gentilism' and 'heathenism', which are often used interchangeably in the early modern period but have etymological differences and their own unique implications and meanings in the early modern period but especially today. It is worth briefly disentangling the various terms associated with the broad category of 'paganism'.

A major problem or hurdle in this regard is language: different European languages employ different terminologies. The word used throughout the *Open Door* is the early modern Dutch '*heydendom*', equivalent with German '*Heidentum*', which one might translate literally with the English terms 'heathenism', 'heathendom' or 'heathenry'. The common Germanic root might refer to *heath*, uncultivated land, and thus might be a parallel semantic development to 'pagan': in classical Latin 'paganus' means as much as 'of the country' or, 'rustic', and the most common explanation for the development of the term into 'non-Christian' is that 'paganism' survived more in rural settings than in cities, where Christianisation was more complete.[71] In English, German, and Dutch, heathen and heathenism and its equivalents was used in both depreciative and neutral contexts, making it highly contextual - in modern language, the term has very much gained an association with religious intolerance.

Latin works in the early modern period predominantly speak about '*gentilismo*', which forms the basis for terminologies in the major Romance languages, too. In English 'gentilism' also exists as a borrowing from Latin; but a brief Ngram viewer search reveals that between 1500 and 1800 the term 'heathenism' was much more common than 'gentilism'.[72] The etymology and history of 'gentilism' is less straightforward than that of 'paganism' and 'heathenism'. Deriving from Latin 'gens' - a 'people' or 'nation' - gentilism as a concept in a Jewish and Christian context derives from the Hebrew term 'goyim', which Paul translated into Greek as 'ethnē', rendered as 'gentes' or 'gentilis' in the Vulgate bible; while in Paul there was an attempt to co-opt the concept of the gentile, already in the second century CE Christians adopted an inclusivist stance that abandoned the concept in its Jewish meaning, unlike Rabbinic Judaism.[73]

[71] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'heathen (adj. & n.1)', September 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4048443306 and *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'pagan (n. & adj.)', September 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4846189747.

[72] The same holds true for 'gentile' and 'heathen'.

[73] Amy-Jill Levine, "Gentile," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "The Rise and Fall of 'Gentile' Identity in Early Christianity," in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: Mapping*

The issue, especially from a popular modern perspective, is that 'gentilism' is usually perceived as a Jewish term, to mean 'non-Jew'. At the same time, in early modern usage these terms differ largely in their etymology and language, but refer to the same underlying phenomenon, namely those non-Christians who are not adherents of the Abrahamic traditions. Considering that I will be working with multiple languages that employ different terminologies whilst, arguably, referring to one and the same supra-category, I have chosen to use 'paganism' and 'pagan' throughout this study, no matter what the original term used actually is, as, from a modern perspective, it is the most neutral choice which nevertheless was in use in the early modern period itself. I already employed this same logic in my edition of the *Open Door*, which is why I translated 'heydendom' in the title with 'paganism'.

## Religio, Idolatry, and Religion

Whilst gentilism, heathenism, or paganism all point to the organisation of a cultural practice and did not imply a specific condemnable form of worship but rather a catch-all terminology to speak of non-Abrahamic forms of worship and belief, the Christian (and Jewish) relationship with 'idolatry' was clear as the inversion of true religion. Idolatry is a key concept in early modern ethnographical writing as well as scholarship on the non-European and non-Abrahamic cultures European were increasingly in contact with in the early modern period. Paganism and idolatry are deeply entangled concepts which at times are used synonymously, but nevertheless have their own distinct conceptual history. From an Abrahamic point of view idolatry, expressly forbidden by God, is a grave sin and not compatible with true religion. Paganism more broadly is more complicated: it might show traces of true religion by virtue of natural theology and reason or tradition, and idolatry as a specific practice therefore need not necessarily be synonymous with paganism tout court. To better understand early modern debates surrounding the conceptualisation of paganism vis-à-vis Christianity and the notion that certain practices constitute idolatry and are defined as 'gentile' or 'pagan' as opposed to Jewish or Christian ritual and religion, I must first sketch the deep historical roots underlying these topics. This will then help us understand the role of these concepts in early modern debates and scholarship and its embeddedness in the *Open Door*.

As Daniel Barbu has argued, to understand the history of religion, and the emergence, transformation, and applications of the concept of 'religion', we must comprehend what was seen to stand in opposition to religion and how that itself was conceptualised.[74] In early Christian thought, paganism and idolatry are intimately linked, as the Latin word '*religio*' is understood as a singular term. This differs starkly from modern or even early modern definitions where 'religion' gains its meaning through the implicit diversity and plurality of

*the Second Century*, ed. Matthijs Den Dulk et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2024), 226–245.

[74] Daniel Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 82, no. 2 (2016): 538.

the phenomenon being described. The term 'religio' in its Roman context, on the other hand, is linked to the honouring of gods - perhaps the best example is given in Cicero's *De natura Deorum* - and the term is adopted with this meaning by the early Christian fathers. Lactantius establishes an intimate relationship between 'religio' and '*pietas*', which henceforth becomes crucial: 'religio' becomes a commitment to God, becomes 'true religion'.[75] 'True religion' may here be equated with the sacred, whilst the profane is that which is *against* it, not just independent or separate from it.[76]

Paganism is one sphere of the profane, along with others, such as superstition or idolatry; idolatry in this regard must be understood in a much broader sense than just the worship of idols, namely as any worship that is not addressed to God.[77] Idolatry first and foremost is a polemical concept, used to distinguish those who worship the true God from those who worship 'idols', practice false religion, worship the devil, or deify creation. It is at its core a tool for *othering*.[78] Whilst idols make their appearance already early on in the Old Testament, most notably with the Hebrew worship of the golden calf, theorising about idolatry only happens at a later stage, in a Hellenistic context. The first-century BCE *Wisdom of Solomon* posits that idol worship was rooted in a gradual establishment of rituals towards an image erected in honour of a dead child, which eventually turned into custom and worship.[79] This cult of idols is then described as the essential source of all evil.[80] Early Christian apologetic writing employs

[75] See Lactantius's *Divine Institutes* (I have used Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, ed. Anthony J. Bowen and Peter Garnsey, Translated Texts for Historians, Volume 40 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003)). Ernst Feil, *Religio: die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs vom Frühchristentum bis zur Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 64. On the longue durée Begriffsgeschichte of 'religio' and 'religion' see the entire series, Ernst Feil, *Religio*, 4 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986–2012). See also Giovanni Casadio, "Religio Versus Religion," in *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer*, ed. Jitse Dijkstra et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[76] Jonathan Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane: Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century," *Past and Present* 192, no. 1 (2006): 37.

[77] See on this topic Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Harvard University Press, 1992); Jonathan Sheehan, "Introduction: Thinking about Idols in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 4 (2006): 561–569; Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane"; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Theology, Ethnography, and the Historicization of Idolatry," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 4 (2006): 571–596; Daniel Barbu, "'Idolatry' and Religious Diversity: Thinking about the Other in Early Modern Europe," *ASDIWAL. Revue genevoise d'anthropologie et d'histoire des religions* 9, no. 1 (2014): 39–50; Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions"; Daniel Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," *History of Religions* 61, no. 4 (2022): 389–418.

[78] Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," 539f. More broadly on the construction of *otherness* see Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry" and Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion*, especially 'What a Difference a Difference Makes' and 'Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other'. Idolatry is a concept of the Abrahamic traditions, which is found in differently formulated ways in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It only has applicability within an exclusive conceptualisation of religion and makes no sense in traditions that employ an inclusive stance; without a Mosaic distinction, and the claim of exclusivity, 'idolatry' does not make sense. In the religious traditions of antiquity, for example, the notions of an *interpretatio graeca* or *romana* did not preclude that a god was particular to a certain people, but it could not truly be conceived of as 'false' in the Mosaic sense. See further Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[79] Wisdom of Solomon 14:12-31.

[80] Wisdom of Solomon 14:12. See also Sheehan, "Introduction," 563 and Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 396 and 402.

the concept of idolatry to assert the uniqueness of Christianity and its incommensurability with pagan culture, worship, and belief. For Christian apologists idolatry is linked to seduction, greed, and desire; Paul sees idolatry as a sacrifice to nothing, or to the devil.[81] In Romans 1:25, Paul also argues that the crucial mistake of the idolater is a confusion of creation and creator, where idolatry is the wrongful worship of creation.[82] For Paul, idolatry is a defining feature of the gentile: he states that those who instead leave idols behind and embrace God are no longer gentiles.[83] Within this context of Hellenised Judaism and early Christianity, paganism and idolatry are thus intricately connected and opposed to 'true religion'.

At the turn of the third century CE, the Latin father Tertullian further cements this opposition, but goes much farther than most of his predecessors in finding and defining idolatry.[84] In his *On Idolatry*, Tertullian sees no real distinction between idolatry and heresy: he asserts that idolatry precedes actual idols, arguing for a social theory of idolatry that prohibits any contact with parts of society that were involved in idolatrous conduct, whilst still promoting that Christians remain within the bounds of civil authority.[85] Like Justin Martyr, and building on Paul, he also makes the demonological element of idolatry central. Tertullian argues that demons, abusing the cultural memory of great individuals turned gods - a theory suggested centuries earlier by Euhemerus, a pagan mythographer of the fourth and third century BCE - take for themselves the worship due to God by having men worship idols.[86] While other fathers would not be this radical in their understanding of idolatry - which here becomes truly synonymous with paganism in its entirety - Tertullian is important for his clear dichotomisation of true religion versus idolatry, and Augustine would later, not in a dissimilar manner, oppose the earthly city to the city of God. Writing roughly at the same time as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria - while also promoting the importance of aniconism - identifies the main error of idolatry with a distribution of the one God into many.[87] As I will discuss in chapter 1, Clement also employs euhemerism as the foundation of a developmental model for explaining the origins of polytheistic paganism; for now, however, it will suffice to note that his vision of idolatry, while leaving space for the agency of demons, is mainly built

[81] Sheehan, "Introduction," 562f. See also Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," 545; Feil, *Religio, vol. 1*, 52.

[82] Romans 1:25. See Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," 547.

[83] Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 397–400.

[84] I have used Tertullian, *De idololatria. Critical Text, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. Jan Hendrik Waszink et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1987). On Tertullian and idolatry see further Fredouille, Jean Claude, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique.* (Paris: Études Augustiennes, 1972); Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[85] See especially Dunn, *Tertullian*, 29.

[86] The role of Euhemerus for early Christian apologists is discussed in Arthur J. Droge, *Homer Or Moses?: Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 127f.

[87] See especially Clement's *Protrepticus* and Barbu, "'Idolatry' and Religious Diversity," 43 and Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," 547f. On Clement and idolatry (and images) see also Jonas Grethlein, "Christian Polemics against Idolatry: Clement of Alexandria's Protrepticus," in *The Ancient Aesthetics of Deception: The Ethics of Enchantment from Gorgias to Heliodorus*, ed. Jonas Grethlein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 213–231.

on a philosophical basis and sees idolatry primarily as human error. If we return to the already mentioned Lactantius in the fourth century CE, we see that in his *Divine Institutes* he builds on his predecessors and traces true religion and wisdom by first investigating the ontology and history of error. Lactantius opposes superstition and irrationality in the form of idol worship and idolatry more generally, that which is false, with religion, which must be equated with truth and Christianity. Regarding the history of idolatry, Lactantius establishes the origin of idolatry after the flood, and seems to suggest that idolatry began due to ignorance with the worship of the stars.[88] These notions - that idolatry has a euhemerist basis, confuses creator and creation, and diffuses the one God into many - would also be crucial in early modern debates surrounding idolatry that based themselves in large parts on these writings.

Although idolatry was a distinctly Jewish and Christian concept in antiquity, 'pagan' writers did have much to say on the topics of myth, truth, belief, superstition, as well as religion ('religio'). For them, belief and religion were rather distinct areas and translated differently into everyday life. Orthodoxy as a concept mattered little or was even inexistent; as long as orthopraxy was maintained within a public (we might also say: exoteric) setting in which ritual was performed, the religious duties of an individual were satisfied. Of course this did not preclude faith, piety, and belief in a broad sense. Cicero's *De natura Deorum* (*On the Nature of the Gods*) is in fact an analysis of these topics in the context of Roman 'religio' which also provided later Christian authors with valuable conceptual and theoretical insights.[89] While most Greek philosophers espouse a form of *consensus gentium*, taking the existence of and belief in the gods for granted, Cicero offers a more sophisticated version of this, arguing that belief in the gods had not been 'established by authority, custom or law, but rests on the unanimous and abiding consensus of mankind; their existence is therefore a necessary inference, since we possess an instinctive or rather an innate concept of them.'[90] Cicero further elaborates on what it means to follow religion piously, which he sees as desirable, opposed by impiety and superstition (Latin '*superstitio*' or Greek '*deisidaimonia*') on two opposite ends of the spectrum.[91] Superstition is depicted as empty fear of the gods, whereas religion is the pious cult of the gods.[92] While unfortunately mostly lost, Varro's *Divine Antiquities* offered an in-depth study of Roman 'religio' in an antiquarian manner, that would draw not only both praise and criticism from Augustine, but also inspire early modern antiquarians.[93]

[88] *Divine Institutes* 2.13.10-13. See further Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 409–10; Rubiés, "Theology, Ethnography, and the Historicization of Idolatry," 579; Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 54.

[89] See John Patrick Frederick Wynne, *Cicero on the Philosophy of Religion. On the Nature of the Gods and On Divinitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[90] Cicero, *De natura Deorum* 1.17. Translation from Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, trans. H. Rackham, LCL 268 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 45. See also Peter Harrison, "The Forgotten Proof: The Existence of God and Universal Consent," *The Journal of Religion*, no. 104 (2024): 45–78.

[91] Wynne, *Cicero on the Philosophy of Religion*, 62, 68f.

[92] Cicero, *De natura Deorum* 1.117 and 2.28. See also . Wynne, 280f.

[93] Jörg Rüpke, "Historicizing Religion: Varro's Antiquitates and History of Religion in the Late Roman Republic,"

Plutarch's investigations into myth and religious traditions offer another insight into ancient pagan theory of religion, especially from the perspective of the Platonic tradition. In his *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch analyses Egyptian myth and offers euhemerist and demonological interpretations of the mythological narrative, as well as reading it as physical and metaphysical allegory.[94] Plutarch ultimately is interested in Egyptian tradition not so much as a way of life, but to prove that there is an underlying veiled and actually Greek truth at the core of the Egyptian cult. The *other* emerges as a way to provide proof for Plutarch's universalist agenda of Greek theological superiority.[95] Stoicism and different currents of Platonism thus offered sophisticated ways of theorising about religion and religious difference and similarity, whilst also establishing *others* that are opposed to a superior theology or practice. I will return to these topics in chapter 1.

This brief shift of perspectives shows that while idolatry as a tool for promoting incommensurability and difference was distinct to Judaism and Christianity (and later Islam), Greek and Roman philosophy did offer similar theoretical and theological arguments of differentiation, as well as sophisticated antiquarian, historical, and rhetorical methods to assert them. This dual legacy led to a tension in Latin Christendom between to ideal types: a more strict, fideistic notion of idolatry within the context of sinfulness and demonic influence as can be observed in Augustine, clearly distinguishing between true and false religion, and a more philosophically-inspired presentation of idolatry as superstition, in this case argued to derive from irrationality and political causes.[96] I should point out here that Augustine and other church fathers who make a very clear distinction between true and false religion could nevertheless adhere to models of ancient wisdom, and that Platonic philosophy especially need not be counted as a form of idolatry or paganism in this patristic context. Augustine, like most of the church fathers, did provide space to natural theology, as through observation and reason elemental truths could be learned, whilst revelation was still necessary for more specific doctrine.[97] Augustine was also shaped by his reading of Neoplatonists, and philosophers such as Plotinus and Porphyry influenced his own Christian philosophy to a major degree. A concordance of Christianity with Platonic philosophy is as much an element of Augustinian thought as the opposition of religion and idolatry.[98] Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century antiquarians and historians of idolatry

*History of Religions* 53, no. 3 (2014): 246–268, JSTOR: 10.1086/674241; Peter Van Nuffelen, "Varro's Divine Antiquities : Roman Religion as an Image of Truth," *Classical Philology* 105, no. 2 (2010): 162–188.

[94] Geert Roskam, "Plutarch's Yearning After Divinity the Introduction to on Isis and Osiris," *The Classical Journal* 110, no. 2 (2015): 225.

[95] Daniel S. Richter, "Plutarch on Isis and Osiris: Text, Cult, and Cultural Appropriation," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 131 (2001): 212f.

[96] Rubiés, "Theology, Ethnography, and the Historicization of Idolatry," 573.

[97] An excellent overview on natural theology is Andrew Chignell and Derk Pereboom, "Natural Theology and Natural Religion," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2025, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2025).

[98] The annotator of the *Open Door* in fact uses Augustine in an inclusive way for the latter's Platonist background. The most prominent example is when he says that Augustine, in the *Confessions*, thinks that the entirety of

would make ample use of both patristic and pagan sources and these two frameworks in their attempts to investigate the origins and nature of paganism and idolatry.

If we turn back to the chronological view of the Christian tradition, writers such as Eusebius and Epiphanius of Salamis cement the opposition between true religion, characterised by true worship and knowledge of God, and the diverse traditions of paganism, all connected by the underlying thread of an idolatrous and superstitious worship of a multiplicity of gods (creatures) instead of the one Christian God (creator).[99] The role of demonic influence was especially important in these models and is illustrated by the example of Augustine. Augustine distinguishes between two kinds of possible service or worship, *dulia* and *latria*, an important distinction that Catholics would reiterate also during the Reformation when they themselves were accused of idolatry. Whilst *dulia* is a form of veneration that is permissible towards saints or images, and according to Augustine is a way in which we serve one another in love, *latria* is the worship that is due only to God.[100] Idolatry, thus, is reaffirmed as giving worship, *latria*, to the wrong recipient: Augustine reiterates that idolaters confuse and worship creation instead of its creator.[101] Idols themselves are merely empty statues, he argues, but they are possessed by evil spirits who take their worshippers into captivity. By turning away their attention from God, idolaters display pride much as the angels did before the fall. As William Cavanaugh puts it: 'Pagan idolatry is not just full of unintended consequences; it is born not just of error but of deceit, the deception through which the demons enlist the earthly city to join their rebellion against God.'[102]

The notion that idolatry is defined by wrongful worship of creation instead of creator through the malicious conduct of demonic forces became a standard Christian narrative. A classical and itself foundational account can be found much later with Thomas Aquinas, who, much like the church fathers, understands idolatry to be much broader than merely the worship of images, involving both human error as well as demonic agency.[103] Aquinas also refers to the ancient discourse on superstition, informed by Cicero as well as Augustine, and makes this into a cornerstone of his ontology of error. Indeed, for Aquinas it is superstition that takes on the role of the primary opposition to religion, where worship (*latria*) is given in an erroneous manner to the wrong recipient. Idolatry here emerges as a specific category or form of superstition, which is characterised by the outward giving of *latria* to idols, reflecting inward worship as well, and caused by both human error as well as demonic agency.[104] Idolatry as a

the beginning of the gospel of John could be found in Platonic works, 'if not in the same words, nevertheless with the perfect meaning'. *Open Door*, 174-175, note 152.

[99] Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 415.

[100] See especially book ten of the *City of God*, for which I have used the LCL edition. See also William T. Cavanaugh, "Augustine on Idolatry as Self-Worship," in *The Uses of Idolatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 163 and Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 43.

[101] Cavanaugh, "Augustine on Idolatry as Self-Worship," 161.

[102] Cavanaugh, 162–63.

[103] See Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 394 and Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," 550.

[104] *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, 92-94. I have retained the wording of Thomas Aquinas, *The "Summa Theologica"*

subspecies of superstition thus maintains its opposition to truth; at the same time, though, Aquinas's theology is open enough to interpretation to allow for a reading of certain practices as *dulia* and thus not necessarily in conflict with an orthodox view of Christianity. This allows for various degrees of inclusive and exclusive theologies of foreign peoples.[105]

The notion that idolatry constitutes wrongful worship given to something other than God is equally present in Rabbinic discourses; from a mediaeval Jewish point of view, however, Christianity is also a form of idolatry, because of its Trinitarian aspect.[106] I have already pointed out the divergence of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism for what concerns their conceptualisation of 'gentiles', which diverges primarily due to the exclusivity of Judaism versus the inclusivity stance of Christianity. While both traditions build on the biblical prohibition against idolatry, Rabbinic Judaism, as a more legalistic and aniconic religious tradition, also diverged significantly from early Christian conceptualisations of idolatry. Rabbinic discourses lacked the preternatural element embodied by demons in Christian conceptualisations of idolatry and error more generally. The Rabbis instead present an anthropocentric view of idolatry, which in their reading is entirely due to the workings of humans.[107] The most sophisticated Rabbinic discussion of idolatry came from Moses Maimonides, who himself could draw significantly from both Jewish and Muslim writings on this topic.[108] Maimonides analyses idolatry in detail and strives to understand both it and its origins, especially in his masterpiece *The Guide to the Perplexed*.[109] Like earlier Rabbinic writers, Maimonides traces idolatry back to the earliest days of humanity, to the time of Enoch before the Flood - in marked contrast to most Christian writers who followed Lactantius in tracing the origins of idolatry to the time *after* the Deluge, generally associating it with Noah's son Ham.[110] In Maimonides's discussion of the genealogy of idolatry, two elements are crucial, especially from the perspective of his reception by early modern scholarship. The first concerns the origins of idolatry, a more urgent topic in the Jewish context, we might argue, than in Christian debates, as the error was entirely laid on human shoulders. For Maimonides idolatry did not begin with idols or images, but has its origins in the worship of the stars and celestial objects, the first created objects worshipped

*of St. Thomas Aquinas. Part II (Second Part)*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burnes Oates & Washbourne, 1922).

[105] See Rubiés, "Theology, Ethnography, and the Historicization of Idolatry," 592–93.

[106] See Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Idolatry and Its Premature Rabbinic Obituary," in *Jewish Philosophy Past and Present: Contemporary Responses to Classical Sources*, ed. Aaron Segal and Daniel Frank (London: Routledge, 2017), 126–136 as well as Alfred L. Ivry, *Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed: A Philosophical Guide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 15, 68. On background and evolution of the concept in the Jewish tradition see Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*.

[107] See Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 413f.

[108] See for instance Eliezer Schlossberg and Dov Schwarts, "Sources of Maimonides' Concept of Idolatry as Mediation," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 1, no. 1 (1998): 119–128. For the seventeenth-century context R. Eliezer would be one of the most relevant sources besides Maimonides. C.f. also Barbu, "The Invention of Idolatry," 412.

[109] On which see especially Ivry, *Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed*, 54.

[110] Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 54.

instead of their creator.[111] The second point is that Maimonides promotes Mosaic law as the way through which to avoid idolatry, a conclusion which he reaches through the close study of the 'Sabians', a term which should be understood to be synonymous with 'pagans'. This notion that the intricacies of one's own religious tradition could only properly be understood through the study of its opposite (pagan idolatry) would have a mighty influence on early modern Christian apologists and scholars writing their own histories of idolatry. One of its greatest contributors, Gerardus Vossius, whose son had translated Maimonides's *De idololatria liber* (The Book on Idolatry), echoed this same zeal to comprehend the *other* in order to understand what Christianity is *not*, as we shall see in chapter 6.

The patristic and Jewish conceptualisations of idolatry, as well as the 'pagan' Greek and Roman writings on theology and the history of philosophy, would enjoy a great renaissance in the early modern period among historians of paganism and idolatry, amongst whom Vossius was one of its greatest exponents. The Reformation had shaken the old certainties regarding what constituted idolatry and its intimate connection with paganism; idolatry, newly encountered also in the Americas, had suddenly entered Christianity itself. Idolatry became a tool of confessional polemics and identity, and no one was safe any more from the charge of committing idolatry. The questions that Christianity faced in the wake of the Reformation concerned idolatry to a large degree and resembled those of early Christianity.[112] At the same time, the situation was now significantly different, as the level of internal Christian disagreement on what constituted idolatry was more pressing than ever, and while paganism had largely been banished from Europe, it was now encountered in new places. The ancient and mediaeval sources on religion and idolatry became particularly relevant because for early modern Europeans these were no longer theoretical matters: paganism and idolatry were once more encountered outside of texts and seen to be practised by living human beings. This happened within the context of a Humanist Europe that had rediscovered ancient religion as described by the ancients themselves and ancient literature more broadly. It is within this context that the *Open Door* was conceived.

[111] Barbu, "Idolatry and the History of Religions," 559f. Maimonides was not the first to think this, however, and we have also seen similar Christian assessments of the origins of assigning worship to creation. Especially the identification of the worship of stars is similar to the argument found in Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, chapter 4.

[112] Sheehan, "Introduction."

# Part I

# Foundations: Travel, History, Theology

# CHAPTER 1

# ANCIENT INDIA AND THE SACRED: TOPOI AND NARRATIVES

## 1.1 Early Hellenic Notions of Indian Wisdom and Philosophy

In the Western world, India conjures up certain notions of exoticism and a specific form of spirituality up to this day. Many of these ideas have deep historical routes which connect the present to the early modern period and both the former and the latter to antiquity. The *Open Door* illustrates that even a precise and detailed eyewitness account on India, its people, and their practices such as the one furnished by Rogerius needed to be culturally translated into something that was comprehensible as well as useful to a contemporary European. Long-standing tropes and topoi were immensely important in how new information was interpreted and how peoples and religions were fit into existing and changing models of religion, Christianity, and the diversity of the world's people and cultures. The annotator of the *Open Door*, whilst also using contemporary sources (unlike many of his scholarly idols) is in constant dialogue with ancient sources on India, and they form an important basis for his understanding of India, its peoples, and religious traditions.

To understand how early modern Europe viewed 'India' as a conceptual and physical place it is thus imperative to look at the long history of ancient Greek and Latin mediaeval narratives about India and the Brahmans. Unlike the New World, and even East Asia, India had always been part of the oecumene — the known and inhabited world according to Greek cosmography and geography — in antiquity and remained at the edge of the world for mediaeval Europe. While the discovery of the Americas naturally opened up a new conception about the world and had a tangible impact on the manner in which Europeans perceived India and Indians through a newly heightened anthropological awareness of 'idolatry', customs, and ritual, early modern travel writers, compilers, and scholars kept referring to ancient literature when speaking about

India, even in the presence of new first-hand accounts.

It would be a mistake to dismiss this as backward-looking, scholastic thinkers using ancient findings instead of newer material collected by eyewitnesses — that would not only constitute an anachronistic gaze in judging these intellectuals according to modern standards and ideas, but would also dismiss the findings and approaches of the ancient accounts themselves. The ancient Greeks hold a special distinction in regards to ethnographical models and comparisons between different peoples because these genres grew important among the seafaring Greeks as they came into contact with a great many people. The pervasiveness, sophistication, and use of ethnographical models and descriptions was so significant among the ancient Greeks that it remained unsurpassed until the early modern period, when Europeans were similarly confronted with the shattering of old categories, a shock of discovery, and the need to explain and integrate the new cultural diversity into existing notions of the cosmos.[1]

The father of history was in many ways also the father of Greek ethnography. Herodotus pioneered not only a new manner in which to investigate culture through the study of the past, but he also was among the first to make heavy use of ethnographical findings for his description of various peoples, which differed according to their customs — implicitly rendering the employment of a framework of comparison the next logical step. Herodotus would remain a model to emulate, yet his scant knowledge of India would be surpassed after the conquests of Alexander and the continued Greek presence and links to North India and Bactria. This created a zone of encounter which led not only to a number of ethnographers and historians writing treatises on 'India', but also to other intellectual encounters which are as of yet not clearly understood and heavily debated. Roman writers showed less interest in the subcontinent, even as the trade with India was at a high point, and the Hellenistic presentation of India became somewhat of a literary topos itself which counteracted up-to-date accounts of the distant lands. A purely 'Western' (Graeco-Roman) invention that did not rely on first-hand accounts emerged in late antiquity, where we see Greek philosophical traditions increasingly ascribing an important role to India; some elevated it to be the birthplace of philosophy itself. This would reverberate in patristic and early Christian notions of India and Indian religion.

Ancient Greek ethnographic descriptions, of monsters, marvels, and philosophers, and the mystical significance of India would remain important topoi in the Middle Ages and beyond.[2]

[1] See for instance Raimund Schulz, *Abenteurer der Ferne: die grossen Entdeckungsfahrten und das Weltwissen der Antike* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2016); Raimund Schulz, ed., *Maritime Entdeckung und Expansion: Kontinuitäten, Parallelen und Brüche von der Antike bis in die Neuzeit* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

[2] Wilhelm Halbfass has sketched this rather well himself in Halbfass, *India and Europe*, Chapter 1: The Philosophical View of India in Classical Antiquity. Yet Halbfass does this from the perspective of later Indological scholarship, which claimed the prerogative of establishing factual information on India and Brahmanism, or Hinduism more broadly. Instead, my endeavour here is to trace the ethnographic methodology and the emergent topoi the Greeks employed in their descriptions of India, which would then influence later generations of scholars all the way to the early modern period. We might say that Halbfass is interested in Greek precedents from a modern Indological, disciplinary history perspective, whereas I am interested in these Hellenic models, methods, and tropes for their continued use and especially for their application in an early

Herodotus remained a standard for an ethnography and the historical presentation of India, whilst the companions of Alexander and later writers relying on their information were the principal sources on the famed 'gymnosophists' and Indian philosophers. The models of ancient wisdom into which these were integrated in late antiquity, principally by Neoplatonists, would be inspired by these accounts, but not base themselves on anything Indian itself. These notions would, however, hold a perennial interest for European thinkers, and early modern scholars would readily pick up this thread once again.

### Ionian Logographers and Herodotean Ethnography

Though a far cry from the increasingly globalised world of the early modern period, the archaic Greek and Mediterranean world was already much more interconnected, both regionally and with Africa and Asia, than is often assumed. Not only the Greeks ventured to foreign shores, but also the Phoenicians were a highly mobile people, exploring, trading, and settling far from their original homes.[3] Knowledge about India, beyond even the Mesopotamian sphere of influence, was however very limited in the archaic period of Greek history. Trade routes bringing goods in a westward direction from India had probably arrived in Asia Minor and Greece for centuries at this point, but the volume and nature of this trade is unclear, and even Herodotus identified South Asian products such as cinnamon as Arabian rather than 'Indian'.[4] The first true impetus for amassing greater knowledge on India came with the Achaemenid Empire's late 6th-century BCE conquest of the Indus Valley. Between 535 BCE and 518 BCE, first under Cyrus the Great and then under his successor Darius the Great, the Achaemenids conquered most of modern-day Pakistan and parts of the Punjab, making them into the satrapies of Gandara, Sattagydia, and Hindush. This directly connected ancient India with Greek poleis in Asia Minor within one imperial structure.[5] With Persian rule came a need for more information about the lay of the land, and Darius sent a Greek explorer from within his realm, Scylax of Caryanda (fl. 510s BCE), to survey the new domains, as we learn from Herodotus:

> But as to Asia, most of it was discovered by Darius. There is a river Indus, which of all rivers comes second in producing crocodiles. Darius, desiring to know where this Indus issues into the sea, sent ships manned by Scylax, a man of Caryanda [a Greek city in southwestern Anatolia], and others in whose word he trusted; these set out from the city Caspatyrus and the Pactyic country, and sailed down the river

modern context — the supposed accuracy of information is irrelevant for my endeavour. While I thus share a common interest in this material, my focus differs from Halbfass in a significant way.

[3] See on this Schulz, *Abenteurer der Ferne*.

[4] Karttunen gives an overview of all of this in the first few chapter of Klaus Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1989). The passage in Herodotus is found in 3.107-111.

[5] See Grant Parker, *The Making of Roman India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) for this and the subsequent creation of a Greek discourse on India.

> towards the east and the sunrise till they came to the sea; and voyaging over the sea westwards, they came in the thirtieth month to that place whence the Egyptian king sent the Phoenicians afore-mentioned to sail round Libya.[6]

Scylax wrote an account of his expedition, but much like most information about Scylax more broadly this is no longer extant.[7] Nevertheless, Scylax's fame as the explorer of India — indicating primarily Persian India or at the most northwestern India — remained long after his account had been lost.[8] Most interesting for us is perhaps his pioneering role in establishing Ionian ethnography, along with his successors Hecataeus and of course Herodotus. Whilst it is important to stress that the latter two, as well as later writers, could draw also on Persian and other non-Greek sources for India, and Scylax thus does not constitute the only pillar on which their writing on India is based, it nevertheless formed a foundational function for its ethnography and reporting on the surveyed lands surrounding the Indus river.[9]

Hecataeus (c. 550 — c. 476 BCE) was from another Ionian town in Asia Minor at the time part of the Achaemenid Empire, namely from Miletus. Apart from fragments his writings are lost, but he is worth mentioning briefly as he forms another important link to Herodotus. Where Scylax is a pioneer for a first-hand presentation of India, Hecataeus is one of the foremost Ionian logographers who presents a prose geography of the known world, including India. Herodotus certainly used this work, but the extent of its popularity beyond this is uncertain, and the fragments we have of it make any conclusions about the work near impossible.[10]

No doubt the single most important source before Alexander's conquests, and one that would remain relevant for centuries after, is Herodotus's *Histories*. As the 'father of history' much has been written about Herodotus (c. 484 — c. 425 BCE) in the last two-and-a-half millennia.[11] What is most important here is of course his description of India, the earliest extant account about India written by an individual who may be counted as part of a 'Western' tradition, but also more broadly his ethnography and historical method, which would have a mighty influence on historiographical, geographical, and ethnographical writing in Graeco-Roman antiquity, as well as the Latin Middle Ages and early modern period.[12] Like Scylax, Hecataeus, and the majority of the logographers who came before him (as well as the burgeoning field of philosophy, which cannot be disentangled from these historico-geographical pursuits), Herodotus hailed

[6] Herodotus 4.44. Translation from LCL 118: 242-243. The last part of the quote refers to the legendary exploration of Africa by the Phoenicians at the behest of the Egyptian Pharao, see Schulz, *Abenteurer der Ferne*, PAGES.

[7] Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 65–66. See also G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 14–18.

[8] That 'India' referred primarily to the north-west is shown in detail by Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*.

[9] See Karttunen, 76–78.

[10] Karttunen, 69–73 and G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 18–21.

[11] The moniker was originally given to him by Cicero, *De legibus* 1.5.

[12] There also has been a more recent resurgence in interest in Herodotus, not only from ancient historians, but from a wide range of disciplines. One fascinating example is Joel Alden Schlosser, *Herodotus in the Anthropocene* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

from Asia Minor, namely Halicarnassus. This made gathering first-hand accounts of the Persian wars in the first decades after the fact — Herodotus was born in the period between the battles of Marathon and Salamis, around 484 BCE — a more straightforward endeavour. Herodotus did not remain stationary either, but was very well-travelled, especially for his time. The range of his travels impress even today: his claims and his descriptions make it likely that he voyaged to Thrace and Macedon, Scythia, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, all the way to Babylon.

Herodotus was a talented storyteller and gives us a vivid picture of the various places and peoples he describes. India, which he never visited himself, does also get a description in book three of his *Persian Wars*, albeit not exceeding a few pages. It is worth having a brief look at this nevertheless, as Herodotus is the oldest extant source from the 'West' speaking about 'India' — which for Herodotus mostly means the satrapies of the Persian Empire, but interestingly not only — but also because many tropes trace their origin back to him, even if he likely had his information from Hecataeus or even Scylax. Herodotus and his ethnography, though very innovative in many ways, also continues existing ideas and tropes; more than any Greek before him, however, Herodotus was interested in finding out about what we would term the *culture* of non-Greek peoples, and to give an account of the reasons diverse peoples give for their conduct. Other than in Thucydides and his many admirers over the centuries, *history* for Herodotus was not purely political, and human conduct was shaped much more by culture than by clear-cut realpolitik and rational decision making as suggested by Thucydides.[13] India, which he describes as the easternmost country of the world, is, as a land on the fringes of the oecumene, portrayed as filled with marvels, a borderland between nomadism and civilisation, as well as closer to a mythical golden age — despite or exactly because of its primitivism. These topoi can already be seen in Homer, especially the Odyssey.[14] The actual details regarding India thus fit this ideal. Especially prominent — and long-lasting — was the abundance of gold in India, according to Herodotus dug up by giant ants in the desert.[15] The historical dimension to this anecdote — the Indian satrapies were major tributaries within the Persian imperial organisation — meld here with a marvellous ethnography of the fringes, where physical distance translates into cultural alterity and notions of wondrous faraway landscapes, riches, and people. The primitiveness of the Indians is also reflected in their diet and customs: some eat raw fish, others raw flesh, yet others kill no living being and consume wild grains.[16] The golden age depiction of India is highlighted in the last passage concerning the region, where

[13] A fascinating anthropological perspective on Thucydides and the issues of such an understanding of history are discussed in Marshall Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[14] See Klaus Karttunen, "The Ethnography of the Fringes," in *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 457–474 and Schulz, *Abenteurer der Ferne*. See further Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 122f. on the importance of reading all ancient sources on India with these topoi in mind.

[15] Herodotus 3.98 and 3.102. On the Indian parallels of this story see Karttunen, 171ff.

[16] Herodotus 3.98-3.100. On abundant gold c.f. Karttunen, "The Ethnography of the Fringes," 470.

Herodotus says:

> It would seem that the fairest blessings have been granted to the most distant nations of the world, whereas in Hellas the seasons have by much the kindliest temperature. As I have lately said, India lies at the world's most distant eastern limit; and in India all living creatures four-footed and flying are by much bigger than those of other lands, except the horses, which are smaller than the Median horses called Nesaean; moreover the gold there, whether dug from the earth or brought down by rivers or got as I have shown, is very abundant. There too there grows on wild trees wool more beautiful and excellent than the wool of sheep; these trees supply the Indians with clothing.[17]

Herodotus is thus the earliest account we have for many of the topoi surrounding India, especially the ones that exhibit feature of an idea of golden age primitivism, long before early modern narratives surrounding noble savages.[18]

As relevant as these specific ideas, or even more relevant for my purposes, is the way in which Herodotus approaches the other in his ethnography, and his interest for the *nomos* — the law, character, custom, or habit of a people — and the difference between *nomoi* among various cultures. Herodotus was wont to entertain his readers — and listeners, as it should be remembered that these were originally read to an audience — with fabulous tales that fit literary and mythical expectations. At the same time, however, Herodotus was a critical author, inquiring about the reasons for wars and traditions alike, and criticising theories not properly backed by evidence, often preferring first-hand accounts and his own travels over local traditions.[19] Ethnography was an important element in historical writing in Herodotus's perspective, as a subgenre of history, which means, we should remember, *inquiry*. The debate whether history and peoples are defined by their *nomos* or their *physis* — unalienable nature — was a key point of discussion in the fifth-century Greek world.[20] Herodotus the ethnographer investigates *nomoi* at every point and turn, and, despite giving room to natural factors such as climate, clearly champions the variability of human experience as defined by differing cultural norms.[21] The 'anthropological' (focussed on cultural specificities) detail with which *nomoi* are recorded by Herodotus and the cultural relativism, or 'inverse ethnocentrism' (not universalising Greece, but setting a standard for cultural diversity) of Herodotus are remarkable, and reveal

[17] Herodotus 3.106. Translation from LCL 118: 133-135.

[18] Klaus Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness in the Classical and Medieval West: The Establishment and Development of an Idea of India, of a Myth Called India," *Indologica Taurinensia* 39, no. 2013 (2015): 96, note 2 remarks upon the fascinating parallel in India itself: 'Curiously, the Indian yuga system of similar worsening ages claims that the Kali Yuga, corresponding to the iron age, is only prevalent in the middle, while in outer continents, the golden conditions of the Kṛta Yuga – or at least the next best of the Treta Yuga – are found.'

[19] Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 74.

[20] The best overview is found in Jennifer T. Roberts, "Herodotus as Ethnographer," in *Herodotus: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49–64.

[21] Roberts, 51.

how, despite putting Greece at the centre of the world and seeing its customs as the 'norm', he attempted to accept and understand every culture within its own rules.[22] A beautiful example regards funerary practices and actually involves the Indians:

> I hold it then in every way proved that Cambyses was very mad; else he would never have set himself to deride religion and custom. For if it were proposed to all nations to choose which seemed best of all customs, each, after examination made, would place its own first; so well is each persuaded that its own are by far the best. It is not therefore to be supposed that any, save a madman, would turn such things to ridicule. I will give this one proof among many from which it may be inferred that all men hold this belief about their customs:—When Darius was king, he summoned the Greeks who were with him and asked them what price would persuade them to eat their fathers' dead bodies. They answered that there was no price for which they would do it. Then he summoned those Indians who are called Callatiae, who eat their parents, and asked them (the Greeks being present and understanding by interpretation what was said) what would make them willing to burn their fathers at death. The Indians cried aloud, that he should not speak of so horrid an act. So firmly rooted are these beliefs; and it is, I think, rightly said in Pindar's poem that use and wont is lord of all.[23]

Herodotus may thus rightly be called the father of ethnography as well, and his writings became a model to emulate when describing foreign lands in the subsequent centuries and Herodotus remained a framework into the early modern period. The main features of this ethnography was a combination of serious inquiry into the cultures of other peoples with an acceptance of the relativity of *nomoi* with a poetic interpretation of geography and distance, where the position relative to the centre of the oecumene to a certain degree pre-determined the manner in which a place and its people would be described.

Before moving on to changes brought about by the conquests of Alexander, one last writer must be mentioned, as he also held considerable influence on future discourse on India: Ctesias. A contemporary of Herodotus, Ctesias (fl. late 5th and early 4th century BCE) was a physician from Cnidus in Achaemenid-controlled Caria, and was a court physician to Artaxerxes II Memnon.[24] After he retired in the early fourth century BCE he wrote a *Persica* as well as an *Indica*, the former a long account of Persia, the latter a much shorter ethnographical piece on India, for which we have a significant amount of surviving fragments.[25] Ctesias was not a critical writer like Herodotus, and should not even be called a historian; his *Indica* is meant

[22] Karttunen, "The Ethnography of the Fringes," 459.
[23] Herodotus 3.38. Translation from LCL 118: 51.
[24] On Ctesias see the introduction to Ctesias, *Ctesias: On India*, ed. Andrew Nichols (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011). Further see Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 80–85 and Klaus Karttunen, "Ctesias in Transmission and Tradition," *Topoi. Orient-Occident* 7, no. 2 (1997): 635–646.
[25] Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 80. The *Persica* was made up of twenty-three books, the *Indica* was merely one single volume.

to entertain, and for this purpose he collected curiosities and marvels about India — or at least the remaining fragments fit this description.[26] Ctesias was already widely criticised and labelled a liar in antiquity and his information was quickly invalidated by the campaigns of Alexander. Nevertheless, he was widely read and it is with him that, besides some natural historical information, many a fable originated that survived antiquity and found its way into mediaeval and ultimately early modern marvellous tales about India.[27] The *Indica* would be a main source for the Alexander romances, and introduced fabled creatures such as the manticore and unicorn, which would be kept alive through the centuries by Pliny, Solinus and Isidore of Seville, and then Marco Polo and John Mandeville.[28]

### India After Alexander: the Appearance of Gymnosophists

Herodotean ethnography would remain the model for historical and geographical accounts of the other, and we still see the popularity of not only Herodotus's approach but also his findings on India used all the way to the early modern period. But the main authorities for accurate depictions of Indian geography and nomoi in the form of culture and religion came in the wake of the conquests of Alexander the Great. Having actually travelled to India, these writers would sweep away the inaccurate information of Ctesias and Herodotus and introduce many new narratives about India. Religion and philosophy also finally make a more thorough appearance in these works, and their books include many topoi that will remain with us throughout this historical overview and which we will find also in the discussion of the *Open Door*, especially the for our purposes so relevant famous encounters with Indian asceticism and Brahmanism. Alexander's entourage included geographers, historians, and some well-known philosophers. The most famous of these, both in our day and from the point of view of the early modern scholar, was undoubtedly Pyrrho, the founder of Greek scepticism.[29] Worth mentioning are also Anaxarchus, a Democritean philosopher and Pyrrho's teacher, Onesicritus, a pupil of Diogenes

[26] Nichols points out that the original work went beyond the marvellous, see Ctesias, *Ctesias*, 19f.

[27] Karttunen, "Ctesias in Transmission and Tradition," 637. Early modern philologists rediscovered Ctesias and he was a well-known source on Persia and India. On natural history in this context see Klaus Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1997), 95–128 as well as Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 99–126.

[28] Ctesias, *Ctesias*, 33. On the mythical creatures of Ctesias see Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 97.

[29] While Pyrrho may have been influenced in his philosophy by this travel, the infamous theory of Beckwith — who recreates ancient Buddhism through Pyrrho's philosophy in an admittedly very engaging read — is unnecessarily complicated and far-fetched, as a native origin of Pyrrho's philosophy is a lot more likely than him being a completely orthodox early Buddhist who did not deviate from the latter system in any way. C.f. Christopher I. Beckwith, *Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). Similar theories regarding the interconnectedness and common origin of Greek and Indian philosophy and religious traditions have existed for a long time, without ever bringing forth truly convincing evidence that goes beyond contact and low-level influence. Instances of this type of scholarship may even be read to connect with the themes presented in this dissertation in meaningful ways, as many scholars seek to unify the disparate traditions. Another good example of a relatively recent addition to this kind of scholarship is Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape Of Ancient Thought. Comparative Studies In Greek And Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allworth Press, 2002).

and himself a known Cynic, from whom we have the first account describing a meeting with the famed naked philosophers of India, the 'gymnosophists', as well as officers who wrote works of history, namely Ptolemy and Aristobulus, next to the official court historian Callisthenes.[30]

The companions of Alexander employed an *interpretatio greca* and were not particularly interested in Indian beliefs and customs itself — a presence of worship devoted to Heracles and Dionysus was largely informed a priori by expectations set by Alexander himself and previous generations of Greek writers and poets, where Alexander manages feats even his own divine ancestor Heracles could not boast.[31] This being said, these two cults of Heracles and Dionysus were prominently mentioned in connection with India in the aftermath of Alexander's conquests and it soon became a standard mythographic claim about India for the writers of antiquity.[32] The expedition in this sense was also a voyage to the edge of the world, recreating the conquests and travels of these two heroes who would be granted entrance to Olympus, much as Alexander aspired. We have already seen this motif of Indian remoteness in Herodotus and it also helps explain later fictions about early Greek philosophers travelling to India.[33] Remoteness is thus a central motif when speaking about India, even for the writers who saw the land themselves. India is never just a neutral space described based on what was seen, even though these writers certainly did report on actual places and people; but the literary and mythological import of India being at the ends of the Earth prescribes many a feature a priori, whether a given writers has travelled to India or not.

Some of the encounters that the Greek entourage made with Indians and India would crucially shape the discourse and narratives around India and its inhabitants. One of the most significant, especially for my purposes, is the encounter with Indian philosophers and ascetics, most notoriously among them the famed naked sages or 'gymnosophists'. One of their ranks famously joined Alexander, namely a certain Calanus, who became a friend of the Macedonian king. Calanus is mostly remembered for his death: after struggling with an illness for some time, the elderly gymnosophist chose suicide by fire, which was witnessed by the Greek entourage in attendance and is reported to us through Onesicritus.[34] This is the first of many times suicide by fire is associated with the Indians, even if as a philosopher — the exact sectarian affiliation of this and other ascetics has been hotly debated for a long time —

[30] Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, 38.

[31] Stoneman, 80–98. Karttunen makes an apt remark that this is not confined to the Greeks or antiquity; many early modern travellers speaking of Indian churches or priests — or even religion for that matter — do not differ much from Greeks in interpreting the other within familiar religious frameworks. See Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 81.

[32] Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 105ff. As Karttunen also remarks, other mythological motifs and stories were moved to India by the Macedonians.

[33] Karttunen, 99.

[34] On Calanus see Richard Stoneman, "Naked Philosophers: The Brahmans in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander Romance," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 99–114 and Nathan Powers, "Onesicritus, Naked Wise Men, and the Cynics' Alexander," *Syllecta Classica* 9, no. 1 (1998): 70–85. Calanus was probably not his actual name.

he was an exception. But Onesicritus, interested as he was in local customs, also reported on sati itself, saying specifically that wives are burned with their deceased husbands.[35] Though widow-burning would not yet attain the same fame as the ascetic practices and suicide of the gymnosophists, it would feature in ancient discourse and is prominently mentioned by Cicero, who transforms this into an ideal type of female fidelity.[36]

Alexander's companions never actually used the term 'gymnosophists' (literally: naked sages) themselves, even though it is under this name that later ancient, mediaeval and early modern writers would refer to Brahmans as well as diverse renouncer traditions. At the time of Alexander, writers merely called them sophists, and though in the following centuries other names for diverse Indian sages (such as Gymnetes, Sarmanes, Samanaioi, Semnoi, Gennoi, Hylobioi (Allobioi), or Pramnae) were used, the main common and overarching designation became the outwardly descriptive 'gymnosophist', besides the endonym Brachmanes, which referred to philosophers as well as ethnic groups, depending on the writer and text.[37] The complex contemporaneous philosophic-religious developments in India itself, together with the vagueness and non-differentiation of diverse groups of the Greeks make establishing the exact background of some or all of the gymnosophists a virtually impossible task, and as such it is no wonder that scholars have reached widely differing conclusions.[38]

For my purposes the exact nature of the gymnosophists is less important than their perception by the Greeks, which was influenced to a large degree by Onesicritus's own philosophical stance: he was a pupil of Diogenes and himself a Cynic. When it comes to the naked sages encountered by him on multiple occasions we clearly see him employ Cynic utopianism — the idealisation of a society that has re-evaluated humankind's relation to nature and the role of civilisation in human life and established a new morality based on an immediate relationship to nature — in his portrayal of these Indian philosophers. This is illustrated well in the first meeting of Onesicritus with the gymnosophists: after hearing that they did not visit other

[35] The fragment is found in Strabo 15.1.30: ' The following too is reported as a custom peculiar to the Cathaeans: the groom and bride choose one another themselves, and wives are burned up with their deceased husbands for a reason of this kind — that they sometimes fell in love with young men and deserted their husbands or poisoned them; and therefore the Cathaeans established this as a law, thinking that they would put a stop to the poisoning.' Translation from LCL 241: 52-53. See on this further Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 64–68 and Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, 302–319.

[36] G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 90ff.

[37] Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 56. The terms originally refer to different groups and often derive from Indian words (e.g. Sarmanes being equivalent to Shramana) but these definitions remain unclear in ancient sources. Thus we see distinctions in Megasthenes or later in Clement of Alexandria, but the differences do not take root in the discourses.

[38] Calanus might have been an Ajivika as proposed by Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, 319. Nearchus distinguishes him from a Brahman (Brachman) as well, see Strabo 15.1.66. In Strabo we see the way the groups were nevertheless lumped together, where the Brahmans are part of the larger group just called 'sophists'. Instead, in the Alexander romance the gymnosophists are called Brahmans or Oxydorkai (an ethnic group), see Stoneman, 294. I think Stoneman's suggestion that the philosophers in Taxila might not have all belonged to the same school is a good stance to take, and in later discussions it matters little to writers in any case.

people, Alexander sent Onesicritus to converse with a group of people who always went naked, devoted themselves to endurance, and were regarded highly. Onesicritus indeed met several of these 'sophists', among them Mandanis or Dandamis, the oldest and wisest of the group, as well as Calanus who would later accompany Onesicritus and Alexander.[39] Onesicritus then made an effort at communicating with the sages, though matters of translation — he required three interpreters — made this understandably difficult.

The question has been raised and debated to what degree Onesicritus described actual Indian practices or was influenced by his utopian interpretation of these Indian ascetics; he must have felt vindicated that these people lived the kind of life away from the polis, challenging nomoi, that his teacher Diogenes was arguing for. Clearly Onesicritus met a real group of ascetics, and thus describes an Indian reality, albeit through his own Cynic utopian lens. This may not only be due to his own apologetic reasons and the tradition of Greek ethnographic writing more broadly, however, as one must also admit that the translation efforts, as reported by Onesicritus himself, made the exchange of precise philosophical matters difficult and unlikely. Nathan Powers sums this up rather well and makes a good argument for a middle position in the debate: 'It hardly matters whether any precise philosophical notions were exchanged; the Brahmans need only have said something bearing a family resemblance to Cynicism for Onesicritus to have believed that he was receiving authentic Indian wisdom, and in turn to have his own commitment to Cynic principles reaffirmed.'[40]

After Onesicritus we have another source of major import which details gymnosophist practices, namely Megasthenes (c. 350 — c. 290 BCE). The ambassador of King Seleucus to the court of Chandragupta Maurya (in Pataliputra), Megasthenes travelled to India and saw much in his time there, and Stoneman justifiably says that 'he knew India better than any other Greek, and was able to write from authoritative knowledge and deep experience'.[41] As is the case for Onesicritus, we only have fragments of Megasthenes's only work, his *Indica*. This work was not only a major foundation for many of the later accounts on India that survived to modern times, such as those by Strabo, Diodorus, and Aelian, but Megasthenes's account became the standard source of information on India in general.[42] Megathenes's

[39] See Strabo 15.1.63-65, which corresponds to Onescritus F 17. See also Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, 289–331.

[40] Powers, "Onesicritus, Naked Wise Men, and the Cynics' Alexander," 78. Stoneman changed his opinion from arguing for an a priori Cynic interpretation by Onesicritus to a report of actual practices (compare Stoneman, "Naked Philosophers" with Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*) and brings forward good arguments about the Indian reality of what Onesicritus reports. We must, however, remember that Onesicritus's report is superficial and fits both Indian ascetic ideals as well as Cynic aspirations for the good life. C.f. Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 61. For the purposes of the evolving narratives this is irrelevant in any case, and I shall leave it to the specialists to further debate these topics.

[41] Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, 129.

[42] 'Megasthenes' description of India acquired the status of a classic. His book became the primary, and often the only, source for all later imaginings of India, so that even when Rome had been in trading contact with India for two centuries, Pliny was still describing a world essentially as it had been evoked by the Greek author.' Stoneman, 177.

India became canonised as the *literary* India of antiquity, to which later writers hardly ever added contemporary information.[43] Onesicritus describes the geography, nature, history, and culture of an India that extended much farther to the west and was no longer restricted to the north-west. His account is clearly informed by his own eyewitness testimony; nevertheless it is important to also remember that like his predecessors, Megasthenes wrote for a Greek (and Seleucid) audience, and followed the previously outlined tradition of Greek ethnography with its *topoi* and conventions, which influenced his descriptions (and idealisations of an Indian utopia) to a large degree.[44]

Megasthenes also had much to say on the gymnosophists. He clarified that Calanus and the suicide that so shocked and impressed the Greeks was not the norm. Suicide is clarified not to be a common practice among the philosophers of India — instead, 'those who commit suicide are adjudged guilty of the impetuosity of youth' and Calanus, hardly a youth considering he was a septuagenarian, 'was without self-control and a slave to the table of Alexander'.[45] Megasthenes famously divided Indian society into seven groups or what we might retrospectively call 'casts', first among them the philosophers or sophists.[46] Among these philosophers there are, interestingly, two types distinguished by Megasthenes and quoted by Strabo and Arrian, even if after Megasthenes this distinction became muddled. Megasthenes says that there are Brachmanes (Βραχμᾶνας) and Sarmanes (Σαρμᾶνας), and these two groups are not described in the manner of Onesicritus's sophists.[47] Instead, in Strabo we read how Megasthenes says that 'the Brachmanes, however, enjoy fairer repute, for they are more in agreement in their dogmas',[48] while 'the most honourable of [the Sarmanes] are named Hylobii [forest dwellers] and that they live in forests, subsisting on leaves and wild fruits, clothed with the bark of trees, and abstaining from wine and the delights of love'.[49] A second kind of Sarmanes are physicians and 'humanitarian philosophers' who are frugal but do not live outdoors, and sustain themselves through alms; all Sarmanes practise endurance, whilst some are also diviners and enchanters. Women are also allowed to study philosophy with them but must ' likewise abstain from the delights of love'.[50] Whilst the depiction of Brachmanes has aroused relatively few

[43] Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 101.

[44] Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 76ff. See also Andrea Zambrini, "Idealizzazione di una terra : etnografia e propaganda negli Indiká di Megastene," *Publications de l'École Française de Rome* 67, no. 1 (1983): 1105–1118.

[45] Strabo 15.1.68. Translation from LCL 241:121.

[46] Strabo does not give a name to these, but merely says that the Indians are divided into seven 'parts' (Φησὶ δὴ τὸ τῶν Ἰνδῶν πλῆθος εἰς ἑπτὰ μέρη διηρῆσθαι). The LCL translation does translate this as 'casts'. They are listed as philosophers, farmers, shepherds and hunters, artisans and tradesmen, warriors, inspectors, and advisers and councillors. See Strabo 15.1.39-49 and Arrian, *Indica* 11. C.f. also Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 82 who goes on to give an excellent overview of the scholarly consensus (or rather, lack thereof) regarding the relation of these 'castes' to the varnas and the source of Megasthenes's information.

[47] In Strabo it is rendered as Γαρμᾶνας, but Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis 1.15.71 retains the original sigma. C.f. Karttunen, 57.

[48] Strabo 15.1.59. Translation from LCL 241:99.

[49] Strabo 15.1.60. Translation from LCL 241:103.

[50] Strabo 15.1.60. Translation from LCL 241:105.

disagreements among historians, scholars have been arguing about the exact identity of the Sarmanes. What seems certain is that the term derives from shramana, and might encompass a variety of ascetics and renouncers.[51]

Megasthenes thus clearly distinguishes renouncers from the Brachmanes, who appear as more orthodox and conforming in their conduct and more worldly. The philosophy of the Brachmanes is likened to that of the Greeks in many aspects:

> The Brachmanes are better in deeds than in words, since they confirm most of their beliefs through the use of myths; and that they are of the same opinion as the Greeks about many things; for example, their opinion that the universe was created and is destructible, as also the Greeks assert, and that it is spherical in shape, and that the god who made it and regulates it pervades the whole of it; and that the primal elements of all things else are different, but that water was the primal element of all creation; and that, in addition to the four elements, there is a fifth natural element of which the heavens and the heavenly bodies are composed; and that the earth is situated in the centre of the universe. And writers mention similar opinions of the Brachmanes about the seed and the soul, as also several other opinions of theirs. And they also weave in myths, like Plato, about the immortality of the soul and the judgments in Hades and other things of this kind. So much for his [Megasthenes's] account of the Brachmanes.[52]

With Onesicritus and Megasthenes especially we see the emergence of a trope of wise naked philosophers residing in far-away India. Greek discussions of the gymnosophists paint them as a model of an ascetic lifestyle, that eventually would also be adopted by Christians 'as a sort of precursor of an ideal of ascetic and monastic life'.[53] Relying on Megasthenes, Onesicritus and earlier writers and tropes, Strabo, Arrian, and Diogenes Laërtius codified an image of India as a fabulous land filled with gold and naked sages. Megasthenes, as we see in the quote above, would also spur on many later writers to investigate and compare the philosophy of the Indians with those of other peoples, and especially his description of their belief in the immortality of the soul and the origin of the universe would prove important points of comparison with Christianity.

[51] Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 57f. The Samanaei seem to correspond to Buddhists and we will encounter them when speaking about Clement of Alexandria.

[52] Strabo 15.1.59. Translation from LCL 241: 103.

[53] Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 102. C.f. also Reinhold Bichler, "Herrschaft Und Politische Organisation Im Älteren Indien-Bild Der Griechen Und in Der Klassischen Alexander-Historie," in *Megasthenes Und Seine Zeit. Megasthenes and His Time*, ed. Josef Wiesehöfer et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016).

## 1.2 Neoplatonic and Christian Visions of India and the Brahmans

The wise, naked, and ascetic gymnosophists would be one of the most enduring topoi connected with India. The origin of the topos derived from eyewitness testimony of Brahmans and renouncers, but was filtered through a utopian Greek (and Cynic) lens and distinctly Greek concepts and categories. In late antiquity, India, as the perceived extremity of the Orient, became the locus of another topos, yet this one was invented entirely by the Greeks: the origin of philosophy in India. Ancient Indian wisdom became a prominent trope within Neo-Pythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophy, and would also shape early Christian models of asceticism to a significant degree.

### Late Antiquity and Neoplatonic Models of Indian Wisdom

Let us first assess the situation after Megasthenes. Very few writers or literate men in general seem to have visited India after the famed ambassador, and the Indo-Greek kingdoms of Bactria were outside of the main perspective of the greater Hellenistic space and had little impact on the written Greek world. Thus the companions of Alexander and Megasthenes, writing in the first moment after the 'shock of discovery', became the only reliable, if not entirely trusted, authorities on India. Soon after, with the rise of the Parthians, the land route to India was cut off, yet the sea route was subsequently heavily trafficked by the Romans.[54] The first-hand accounts of India of Ctesias and Megasthenes, itself informed heavily by the tropes and topoi of Herodotean and Ionian ethnography, were increasingly canonised in the Roman era, and are the main sources for Diodorus Siculus (fl. 60-30 BCE), Strabo (64/63 BCE — c. 21 CE), and Arrian (c. 86 — c. 170). The natural histories of Pliny the Elder (23/24 — 79) and Aelian (c. 172 — 235) helped cement the image of India as a land filled with marvellous animals.[55] With the rare exception of Pliny the Elder (23/24 CE — 79 CE), who does mention contemporary India and the trade with South India as well as the island of Taprobana (Sri Lanka), it was primarily a Hellenistic image of India that was preserved in the literature of the Roman era, even as the sea trade was booming and India was very present in the geographies of Strabo and the maps of Ptolemy.[56]

[54] Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 321–327 and G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 48–64.
[55] G. Parker, 71–80.
[56] Parker clarifies the role of bias in adding information gained through traders: 'This tenacity of a canon of information has been shown to rest on written sources. But that conclusion cannot obscure the fact that Roman authors did in fact add some new information, even if somewhat grudgingly. Strabo may have echoed an old prejudice against commercial traders as sources of topographical information, but he does reveal an awareness of them. Claudius Ptolemy, composing his Geography some 150 years later, is even more open to commercially obtained information, and in fact his fuller topography of the Bay of Bengal would not have been possible without information gleaned from traders.' G. Parker, 118. Trade would be especially prominent in the first two centuries of the common era, where the Romans established trading posts in the

By the time of the late Republic and early Principate India was thus already well established as filled with fantastical animals and wise sages at the ends of the Earth. The gymnosophists of India, along with the Persian Magi and the Chaldeans, increasingly were argued to be one of the oldest philosophical classes of the Orient, more ancient than the Greek and Roman West.[57] A look at Lucian (c. 125 — after 180) and Diogenes Laertius (fl. 3rd century) in this regard can be informative on the pervasiveness of the trope of a non-Greek origin of philosophy already in the late second and third century AD. The satirist Lucian attacks sham philosophers in his comic dialogue 'The Runaways', written after 165. As Parker remarks, 'the barbarian origins of philosophy is first inverted [...] only to be explicitly restated'.[58] India thus becomes the locus of the origin of philosophy and we hear a personified philosophy speak to Zeus:

> When I sped off, father, I did not head for the Greeks straightway, but as it seemed to me the more difficult part of my task to educate and instruct the foreigners, I decided to do that first; the Greek world I let be, as possible to subject very easily and likely (I thought so, anyhow) to take the bridle and submit to the harness very soon. Making for the Indians to begin with, the most numerous population in the world, I had no difficulty about persuading them to come down off their elephants and associate with me. Consequently, a whole tribe, the Brahmans, who border upon the Nechraei and the Oxydracae, are all enlisted under my command and not only live in accordance with my tenets, honoured by all their neighbours, but die a marvellous kind of death.[59]

Only after passing the gymnosophists, the Ethiopians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans and Magi in Babylon, as well as the Sythians and Thracians (where she encounters Eumolpus and Orpheus), does philosophy finally go to Greece.[60] In this way Lucian employs the already established trope of a foreign origin of philosophy in his attack on Peregrinus, a Cynic who emulated Calanus and his Oriental suicide by burning himself on a pyre.[61]

Diogenes Laertius is another good source on the popularity of the topos as he was trying so vehemently to dismantle the idea that philosophy was anything but Greek in origin. At the very beginning of his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* Diogenes says that 'there are some who say that the study of philosophy had its beginning among the barbarians'.[62] He mentions the canon of foreign sages that were usually brought as an argument for this idea — the Magi, Chaldaeans, Gymnosophists, and Druids — and ridicules the supposed antiquity of philosophy in Egypt

South of India and there was a certain ease of travel to the subcontinent, which also allowed for the spread of Christianity to India. See Albrecht Dihle, "Early Christianity in India," in *Ausgewählte Kleine Schriften Zu Antike Und Christentum*, ed. Georg Schöllgen (Münster: Aschendorff, 2013), 314–325.

[57] Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 3.

[58] G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 270.

[59] Lucian, *Runaways* 7. Translation from LCL 302: 63.

[60] Lucian, *Runaways* 8.

[61] G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 270. See also Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 13.

[62] Diogenes Laertius 1.1. Translation from LCL 184: 3.

and Persia which supposedly began with Hephaestus and Zoroaster, respectively.[63] Authors who believe such tales 'forget that the achievements which they attribute to the barbarians belong to the Greeks, with whom not merely philosophy but the human race itself began'.[64] Diogenes takes issue with the term and the concept of 'philosopher' that is employed by the writers he attacks. Mentioning Orpheus, he does not debate his antiquity as much as his status as a philosopher; the same is true for the seven sages of antiquity, who were wise men, but not philosophers.[65] Only with Thales does philosophy, a thoroughly Greek endeavour, eventually begin.

Such a distinction between Greek philosophy and predominantly Oriental sages who are clearly identified to be more priests than philosophers would itself have an important career in the Western history of ideas.[66] However, for our current endeavour it primarily shows how widespread and influential the idea of ancient Asian philosophy truly was, and how central a role the Indian gymnosophists inhabit besides the Chaldeans and Magi. At this point the main sources on the gymnosophists were half a millennia old, and there was also a distinct lack of visual representations of the Indian sages.[67] Increasingly a purely idealised idea of India and the gymnosophists emerges that was more and more distant from actual first-hand information. Travel became an important marker of wisdom and many ancient sages and philosophers — among them Pythagoras, Lycurgos, and Democritus — were given stories of travelling to an ancient land of the East, where India is not as prominent as Egypt but nevertheless is connected with certain wise men.[68] This marks a shift away from an ethnographically informed India filled with wise philosophers, the gymnosophists of Alexander, Onesicritus, and Megasthenes, to an ideal type of India, where the gymnosophists are merely the proof of the ancient wisdom of the locus India. The ascetic gymnosophists were still all too present through the Hellenistic accounts; but in late antiquity the ethnographic feature of the gymnosophists becomes increasingly genealogical, as we have seen above, where wisdom or philosophy originates in a specific location and then is brought to other nations.[69] This model would soon find new champions with the ascent of Christianity.

[63] Diogenes Laertius 1.2 - 1.3
[64] Diogenes Laertius 1.4. Translation from LCL 184: 5.
[65] Diogenes Laertius 1.5 - 1.13
[66] C.f. Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 4ff.
[67] G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 143.
[68] Klaus Karttunen, "The Naked Ascetics of India and Other Eastern Religions in the Greek and Roman Sources of the Late Classical Antiquity," in *Melammu Symposia III. Ideologies as Intercultural Phenomena. Proceedings of the Third Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project. Held in Chicago, USA, October 27-31, 2000*, ed. A Panaino and G Pettinato (Milan: Università di Bologna & IsIao, 2002), 137f. and G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 263f. There were some new sources in which India played a relevant role, such as Flavius Philostratus's biography of Apollonius of Tyana in the third century. However, it actually is proof that the real India became less important than the idea of India, as Karttunen remarks: 'There is nothing Indian in this account, even their belief in transmigration is clearly Pythagorean.' Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 103.
[69] See also G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 268.

The growing popularity of seeing the Orient and India as the birthplace of philosophy in late antiquity coincided with transformations in the religio-philosophical landscape of the Mediterranean and the ascendency of syncretic systems such as Neoplatonism and Neopythagoreanism as well as Christianity. Practical and soteriological aspects of diverse traditions became more and more important for the philosophical movements of late antiquity. As Wilhelm Halbfass summarises succinctly: 'The Hellenic confidence in philosophy, theory and the autonomy of human reasoning gave way to a greater readiness for accepting sacred tradition and divine inspiration.'[70] The curiosity that exemplifies Herodotus and classical ethnography as well as philosophy increasingly turned into a 'readiness for self-transformation'.[71] India takes over a relevant role in this regard in the searches for wisdom of Plotinus and Porphyry. These developments were the culmination of longer processes, and in fact we already see the idea of a Greek debt to the Orient prefigured in Aristotle and Plato, and especially in Plutarch.

Plutarch's Middle Platonism of the first and second centuries is in itself a showcase of how Greek philosophical traditions interacted and saw the Oriental other. Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* is particularly relevant in this regard, as it precedes later Platonic and Christian approaches to the other in important ways, and remained a text that was widely read in the early modern period.[72] The popularity of the text in the seventeenth century derives partially from Plutarch's philosophical and theoretical ambitions. Myth, in *Isis and Osiris*, is central and investigated through the mythological narratives surrounding Isis. Different attempts at explanation are given, namely euhemeristic and demonological interpretations, as well as physical and metaphysical allegory.[73] Egyptian tradition is investigated and appreciated by Plutarch not so much as a way of life, but 'as a source of veiled truth, as an almost inexhaustible source of interesting riddles that challenge philosophical thinking'.[74] The nature of the Egyptian tradition outside of what fit Plutarch's Greek expectations were utterly rejected by him; the purpose was for the reader to recognise, through heavy use of etymological and allegorical arguments, that the veiled truth at the core of the Egyptian cult, of Isis itself, is Greek. The other is not important beyond Plutarch's universalist Greek agenda of theological superiority.[75] One can see the appeal for a seventeenth-century Christian apologist.

If we turn forward again to the third century, we see with Plotinus and Porphyry the combination of the processes I have outlined here. India is regarded as the birthplace of philosophy itself, or at the very least an important locus of ancient wisdom. From Porphyry we know that the search for the divine and sacred brought Plotinus himself to seek wisdom

[70] Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 20.
[71] Halbfass, 20.
[72] See Richter, "Plutarch on Isis and Osiris"; Roskam, "Plutarch's Yearning After Divinity the Introduction to on Isis and Osiris"; Pia De Simone, *Mito e verità: uno studio sul "De Iside et Osiride" di Plutarco* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 2016).
[73] Roskam, "Plutarch's Yearning After Divinity the Introduction to on Isis and Osiris," 225.
[74] Roskam, 235.
[75] Richter, "Plutarch on Isis and Osiris," 212f.

in India, and he joined Emperor Gordian III's expedition to the East, only to have to turn back after the emperor's death.[76] Certain similarities and the clear interest of Plotinus have led to many debates surrounding the influence of Indian philosophy on the founding figure of Neoplatonism.[77] Certainly we cannot rule out the possibility of some sort of philosophical exchange; however, we have just seen with Plutarch how an interest in the other does not preclude a high-minded notion of intellectual self-sufficiency and even hostility to anything non-Greek, which — ethnographical curiosity and openness to diversity notwithstanding — is a thoroughly Greek conception of the world which spans the centuries. Seeing Neoplatonic ideas mirrored in India would probably have been thoroughly welcomed by the Neoplatonists, as the antiquity and fame of India added dignity to their own system.[78] Rather than true exchange — by the third century the trade between India and the Roman Empire was waning and thus travel would have also been made more difficult — a more likely explanation for the role of India in the syncretic philosophical systems of late antiquity is the literary India, a fabled birthplace of philosophy inhabited by naked sages.

Christianity, too, would appropriate these discourses and further transform them for its own apologetic agenda. In this way many topoi surrounding the ancient wisdom of the Indians would survive into the Middle Ages and beyond. Before looking at the career of these Greek ethnographic tropes surrounding India and the philosophical ideas attached to the gymnosophists I want to briefly discuss the writings of Clement of Alexandria. Not only does he add some distinct information on Indian philosophy and transforms some of the topoi I have presented for Christian use, he also pioneers a historical investigation of religion that would be highly relevant for early modern scholars.

### Clement of Alexandria — Anthropology and History of Religion Avant la Lettre

We have already briefly encountered Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 CE) in the preliminary discussion on idolatry, for the conceptualisation of which the church fathers provided crucial theoretical groundwork. Clement himself was a prominent voice in this regard, but this is not the reason for his inclusion here; rather it is for the blending of his patristic writing with his Greek learning, exhibited throughout his opera, which show traits of historical scholarship, the history of religion, and even an anthropological understanding of religion akin to that

[76] Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus* 3.

[77] One of the most recent argument for the possibility of this interconnectedness is Joachim Lacrosse, "Plotinus, Porphyry, and India: A Re-Examination," in *Late Antique Epistemology*, ed. Panayiota Vassilopoulou and Stephen R. L. Clark (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 105.

[78] Poetically put by A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus and India," *The Classical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1936): 23 'But surely there was never a people which in its thinking was less open to real influence from abroad. The Greek had a high idea of his intellectual self-sufficiency. But to father his own ideas on an ancient Oriental civilization gave them added dignity and a flavour of romance. Hence what he really liked was to find own ideas mirrored in the words of the philosophers.'

which would develop in the early modern period. In this way Clement was a potent model to emulate for early modern scholars preoccupied with a similar combination of classical learning and Christian apologetics. Moreover, Clement wrote significant tracts on India, themselves important for the further development of ideas on India and its cultures, making him inescapable in early modern scholarly discussions of Indian religion. Clement had converted to Christianity influenced by Pantaenus, his most important teacher and the first head of Christian catechetical School at Alexandria, and Clement also succeeded his mentor as head of the school around the year 180 CE.

In the *Protrepticus* or *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement clearly identifies the errors of paganism and the problem of idolatry, but is not content in merely calling out the error of Greek ways; instead, he offers an explanation for the origin of idolatry and the worship of many gods.[79] He does so from a comparative, historical perspective, which includes, for example, Greeks, Tuscans, Phrygians, and Indians. In this manner Clement offers us a sophisticated anthropological model for the development of paganism, which is based primarily on human error, but leaves open a space for demons to be worshipped through statues erected for the gods. We see many of the methods and arguments used by historians of idolatry and paganism in the early modern period pioneered by Clement: the championing of euhemerism as the basic anthropological principle for the development of polytheism, the use of etymologies to trace the origins of gods, and the confusion of creator and creation are all prominent arguments in Clement's model of the development of paganism and idolatry.[80] Most important, perhaps, is that this is a developmental model of idolatry. Idolatry is said to have first arisen through the deification of the stars, followed by the deification of produce at harvest and of calamities, then by the anthropomorphisation of sensations or emotions into gods, as well as through the impact of history, poetry, and euhemerism, which he elaborates on extensively.[81] This model was based on Stoic theology and can also be found in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, but are used by Clement to explain the origin of error in the history of religion. Whilst not all philosophy is idolatrous in Clement's view, as we shall see, the Stoics and Peripatetics are: the Stoics are guilty primarily of animism, whilst the Peripatetics are pantheists.[82]

This use of Stoic and Ciceronian theology also points to Clement's indebtedness and

[79] Clement describes idolatry, but unlike superstition (deisidaimonia) does not name it with a specific term.

[80] *Protrepticus*, chapters 2-5. I have used LCL 92.

[81] *Protrepticus* 2.26. The seven causes by Clement may be summed up as (following LCL 92: 53): (i.) deification of heavenly bodies, (ii.) deification of the fruits of the earth, (iii.) gods invented to account for calamities, (iv.) gods who are type of human emotions, (v.) gods who arise form human affairs, (vi.) the Homeric pantheon, (vii.) deified heroes.

[82] *Protrepticus* 5.7. Clement calls Cynics and materialsts atheists (Ἄθεοι) whilst describing the nature of Stoics and Peripatetics: 'Nor will I omit the Stoics, who say that the that the divine nature permeates all matter, even in its lowest forms; these men simply cover philosophy with shame. At this point there is, I think, nothing to hinder me from mentioning the Peripatetics also. The father of this sect [αἱρέσεως], because he did not perceive the Father of all things, thinks that he who is called the "Highest" is the soul of the universe; that is to say, he supposes the soul of the world to be God, and so is pierced with his own sword.'

incorporation of Hellenistic philosophy into his theology. Clement was active in the intellectual hub of the Mediterranean that was Alexandria for most of his life. Alexandria was a marketplace of ideas, where empirically-minded Aristotelians mixed with a range of adherents to diverse philosophical schools, as well as with the sizeable Jewish population and increasingly Christian and Gnostic groups, all of them participating in a shared Hellenised society. While Clement claimed that all philosophical sects had some element of truth, it was clearly Platonism which inspired his own Christian philosophy.[83] One of the most important influences for Clement was the first-century CE Jewish philosopher Philo, who elaborated on the logos of Hellenistic philosophy in a Platonised Jewish manner. Philo made heavy use of allegory in his project of harmonising scripture with Greek philosophy and especially Platonism, a strategy which would become pervasive in Clement and many of his fellow fathers of the early church.[84]

The *Protrepticus* was the first part of Clement's planned Christian trilogy; the first work was to build character, the second, the *Paedagogus* meant to evoke action, whilst the final part, the *Didiskalios*, supposedly would have been dedicated to emotion. John Ferguson makes the convincing argument that the *Stromata* or *Stromateis* (Miscellanies) cannot be this final work as it lacked the scope and plan of what should have been his final masterpiece.[85] Instead, the *Miscellanies* emerge as a patchwork of writings from Scripture and Greek sources, concerning both Greeks and non-Greeks. Whilst we already see some aspects of Clement's espousal of a notion of a Platonic wisdom that prefigured Christ and Christianity in the *Protrepticus*, it is in the more esoteric and cobbled-together *Stromata* where we see this elaborated more fully, along with an integration and discussion of Indian religion in this context.

The first of the seven books of the *Stromateis* thus lays out the relationship between philosophy and Christian truth: right at the beginning Clement says that his 'Stromateis will embrace the truth which is mixed in with the dogmas of philosophy — or rather which is covered in and hidden within them, as the edible part of the nut is covered by the shell. [...] I shall suggest that philosophy too is in some manner a work of divine providence.'[86] Clement explains how philosophy is a 'preparatory science for Christianity' (the title of chapter 5) and likens Greek philosophy to the Law of the Hebrews — potentially equalising the epistemological and soteriological relationship between the two societies through this comparative framework.[87] God is the ultimate origin of both of these traditions, and Clement spends most of the first book in arguing for the primacy of the Hebrews relative to the Greeks, how the best elements

[83] See *Stromata* 1.7 and *Protrepticus*, chapter 5.

[84] Clement, *Stromateis. Books One to Three* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 8. See further Johanna Louisa van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Annewies van den Hoek, "How Alexandrian Was Clement of Alexandria? Reflections on Clement and His Alexandrian Background," *The Heythrop Journal* 31, no. 2 (1990): 179–194.

[85] Clement, *Stromateis. Books One to Three*, 11.

[86] *Stromata* 1.1.18. Translation from Clement, 35.

[87] Stromata 1.5.28.3.

of philosophy have their roots in true religion, and how Greek philosophy may serve as a *propaedeutic*, a preparation for the Gospel. These themes are further explored in books six and seven, where he further expounds on the Hebrew foundation of Greek thought and lays out his model for a non-sectarian true philosophy, based primarily on scripture and Plato.

While Clement does not undermine the importance of revelation as the only way to truth, he does allow for different paths that join up with it, 'just like tributaries flowing into a perennial river'.[88] This is true for Greek as well as non-Greek philosophies, whilst the latter actually even precede Greek philosophy and inspired the former.[89] Clement, as an apologetic Christian writer, is a significant participant in the emerging trope of a barbarian and Oriental origin of Greek philosophy which I have sketched above. This serves to undermine the antiquity and originality of Greek thought and to ultimately cast it as derivative, with the best — or true — element deriving from the Hebrews. This genealogical tracing of philosophy and specific practices, beliefs, and tenets through the injection of sacred history into the history of ancient thought is eerily similar to Clement's early modern successors, many of whom had similar apologetic goals.[90] And, in fact, many of them had read Clement's works themselves.

In this context we also encounter India in Clement — and not only the standard knowledge codified with the image of Hellenistic India, but new information that enters European discourse through the *Stromata*. Clement mentions the Indians in a list of ancient philosophical wisdom traditions:

> So philosophy reached a climax long ago among non-Greeks as something precious, and shone brightly through the peoples and later reached the Greeks. Its main authorities were the prophets of the Egyptians, the Chaldaeans among the Assyrians, the Druids among the Gauls, the Samanaeans in Bactria, among the Celts their own philosophers, the Magi among the Persians (who by their magic powers actually foretold the Savior's birth, arriving in the land of Judaea led by a star), the Gymnosophists in India, and other non-Greeks philosophers.[91]

This conforms to the emerging trope of a barbarian origin of wisdom and philosophy that we have seen critiqued by Diogenes Laertius, and does not stand out in particular; this sort of enumeration of Oriental wisdom tradition where the gymnosophists appear with Chaldaeans, Druids, and Magi remained remarkably stable and did not change much until the early modern

[88] *Stromata* 1.5.29.1 Translation from Clement, *Stromateis. Books One to Three*, 42.
[89] Stromata 1.13 and 1.15.
[90] One of the most popular exempla of early modern scholars also appears as a poignant example of Mosaic influence in Clement, namely Numa Pompilius, who according to Clement prevented the erection of (graven) images 'thanks to Moses'. Stromata 1.15.71.1. Translation from Clement, *Stromateis. Books One to Three*, 76. On Numa see Mark Silk, "Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civil Religion in the West," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72, no. 4 (2004): 863–896. On Clement in the context of creating a history of religion see Droge, *Homer Or Moses?*, 125–38.
[91] *Stromata* 1.15.71.3-4. Translation from Clement, *Stromateis. Books One to Three*, 76.

period. Nevertheless, it is a poignant example of how Clement crafts what is essentially a prisca theologia genealogy here: the Greeks with their partial access to truth were preceded by sages from all sorts of nations, some of whom even foretold the coming of Christ. In this way Clement can recast philosophy as both universal and not exclusively Greek and as a derivation of truth via the Hebrews, whilst clearly distancing himself from error in the form of idolatry.

Immediately following this passage, Clement expands on the Gymnosophists in an interesting manner:

> The are two classes of these, called Brahmans and Sarmans. Among the Sarmans, the so-called forest dwellers do not occupy cities or have roofs over their heads. They wear tree bark, take their food from berries and drink water from their hands. They do not recognize marriage or the procreation of children, like our present day so-called Encratites. Among the Indians are some who follow the precepts of Buddha, whom for his exceptional sanctity they have honored as a god.[92]

The distinction between Brahmans and Sarmans likely comes from Megasthenes, who as we have seen highlights the difference between the more orthodox, householder-oriented Brahmans and the Sarmans who are described as renouncers. Clement even uses Megasthenes for his argument that barbarian and especially Jewish philosophy and thought precede the Greeks, by making him say that 'all that has been said by the ancients about nature is also said by philosophers outside Greece, the Brahmans in India, and the people called the Jews in Syria.'[93] The mention of the Buddha, however, is unique to Clement. It is unclear what Clement's sources were in this regard: Alexandria was a commercial centre as well as a melting pot of cultures, so he might have had first-hand information from Indians. The other interesting connection to India is via Clement's teacher, the erstwhile Stoic philosopher turned Christian theologian Pantaenus, who Eusebius reports to have visited India himself and encountered a Christian community there.[94] Based on recent historical scholarship and archaeological findings this would at least theoretically make a lot of sense, as the Roman Empire conducted its extensive trade with India mainly via a sea route going through the Red Sea in which Egypt was the crucial location for receiving Indian goods, people, but also potentially ideas.[95] In any case, this mention of the Buddha is the first of its kind in the Western tradition and also marks the first mention of Buddhism by name.

[92] *Stromata* 1.15.71.5-6. Translation from Clement, 76.

[93] *Stromata* 1.15.72.5 Translation from Clement, 77. Clement was certainly well-informed and well-read and did presumably read the *Indika*, but whether or not Megasthenes said such a thing is unknown, and Clement tends to elevate his Christian mission above historical accuracy, see David H. Sick, "Clement and India," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 64/65 (2021): 32.

[94] *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5.10-11. See also Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 113.

[95] An overview can be found in William Dalrymple, *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024) especially in chapter 2.

Buddhism would not capture the attention of European scholars for another millennium and a half, and Clement's singular mention of the Buddha would not be his main impact on the idea of India. But the wider context of the followers of the Buddha in Clement's discussion of specifically Indian forms of philosophy would shape later philosophical and theological endeavours of other fathers of the church and beyond. The comparison with the Encratites, an ascetic Christian sect contemporary to Clement which abstained from marriage and animal food, illustrates not only Clement's employment of his knowledge about Indian philosophy, but also its incorporation into his comparative framework and model of universal wisdom.[96] Indian philosophy, alongside other barbarian wisdom traditions, is given narrow entrance to a Christian tradition of truth through Clement's genealogical model which makes the Hebrews the most ancient philosophers, and may act as a preparation for the gospel, much like any other philosophical tradition. As I have already sketched, this Christian rendering of ancient Indian wisdom, and the incorporation of a Greek notion of Indian gymnosophists as exempla of endurance into a Christian model of asceticism, became more popular in late antiquity and would be one of the few details on India to survive into the Middle Ages.

## 1.3 India in the Mediaeval European World

In the preceding paragraphs I have primarily spoken about Greek ethnography and philosophy, and its conceptualisation of India, Indians, and Indian religion. Whilst Greek was the major language of the eastern part of the Roman empire, the 'Greeks' constituted more a cultural-linguistic-philosophical group of people, especially after the inclusion of the Greek-speaking areas and former parts of the Diadochi kingdoms. A majority of the writers I have discussed were 'Greek' in that they belonged to a shared Hellenic intellectual tradition and wrote in Greek. But interactions between Europe and India were not restricted to the Greeks, and we have evidence of a thriving trade between the Roman Empire and the Indian subcontinent. Whilst it was the Greek writers of antiquity who most shaped the ancient, and subsequently the Medieval view on India, it would be a mistake to discount the importance of the Roman Empire. The Empire established the monsoon trade during the first centuries of the common era and participated in long-distance trade for centuries, with Latin Roman knowledge focussing more on practical information than the philosophical Greeks. A merchant handbook such as the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* reveals the extent of Roman knowledge concerning Indian coastal regions for the sake of trade.[97]

It was also through the Empire that the Greek philosophical tradition could become a cosmopolitan scholarly project, not restricted to a specific ethnic background or even language. The threads of interest in India from this Greek philosophical tradition — ethnology

[96] C.f. Sick, "Clement and India," 37.
[97] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 14f.

entangled with the search for philosophical wisdom among the Indians — remained exceedingly important for centuries. The fame of Indian sages, of Brachmanes and gymnosophists and their philosophical and theological knowledge, would endure all the way to the early modern period, when the ancient gaze on India and the Greek notion of ancient Indian philosophy was still being reproduced, even as travellers and compilers in Europe increasingly brought forth new and detailed accounts of the subcontinent. The division of the Empire into a Western and Eastern Empire and the loss of control over the Eastern trade in the fourth century increasingly separated the Latin West from India and Asia. Especially after the fall of the Western Roman Empire much of the pre-existing knowledge on India was lost, narrowed, and codified.[98]

### Distilling Greek Ethnography and Ethnology in the Early Latin West

The example of Clement has illustrated how Greek tropes on India and the gymnosophists were incorporated into patristic notions of asceticism and devotion, both as a positive and negative example for Christians depending on the argument. Later church fathers did not necessarily follow Clement's lead, however, despite the concurrent developments of tracing the origins of philosophy to India, and they tend to be more cautious and scornful in their attitude towards Indian philosophers. Tertullian, writing in the third century and focussing on the incommensurability of paganism, mocks the gymnosophists' asceticism of divorcing themselves entirely from worldly life.[99] Augustine, too, exhibits a divided stance on Indian philosophers. He lists Indian philosophers among the 'philosophy that has come nearest to the true Christian faith' alongside Platonists and Pythagoreans, and some other ancient wise people, such as the Chaldeaens and Egyptians.[100] At the same time, Augustine later calls the gymnosophists citizens of the earthly city, who do not live according to God.[101]

Not all later patristic voices had a negative view of Indian philosophy and wise men, however. Ambrose and Jerome, writing at around the same time as Augustine, more readily draw positive comparisons between Indian and Christian modes of conduct.[102] The late antique fathers had a complex view of philosophical schools and wisdom traditions that differed from Christianity, but with which positive and negative examples could be made to inform how Christians should comport themselves. India, known for its ascetic and wilful sages, could thus be seen from multiple perspectives within a single writer, as we see with Augustine. With the

[98] For overviews on the mediaeval tradition on India see Thomas Hahn, "The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History," *Viator* 9 (1978): 213–234; Jacques Le Goff, "The Medieval West and the Indian Ocean: An Oneiric Horizon," in *Medieval Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond*, ed. Joan-Pau Rubiés (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 155–174.

[99] Tertullian, *Apology*, 42.

[100] Augustine, *City of God* 8.9. See further John J. O'Meara, "Indian Wisdom and Porphyry's Search for a Universal Way," in *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, ed. R. Baine Norris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 5–26.

[101] Augustine, *City of God* 15.20. See also Hahn, "The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History," 217.

[102] Hahn, 217–18.

ascendancy of Christianity and the fall of the Western Roman Empire it was this image of the Brahmans and gymnosophists that would be transmitted to the following generations.

Within the broader sphere of how India was imagined and how gymnosophists might play a role in a popular imagination, it is necessary to consider the Alexander Romance. Originally written around the third century CE, the Romance was not a static text, but underwent continuous revision and expansion through the centuries and played a major role not only in its original Greek and Latin versions, but also in its various European vernacular, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish translations, to mention but the most prominent translations. The Romance, a field of study in its own right which can only be touched upon very briefly here, was conceived of as an account of the life of Alexander, in some ways a novel, in some a historical text, yet adapting to the place and time in which it was received.[103]

India was as much a part of this work as of Alexander's real life, and the Alexander Romance reinforced notions of a fantastical India, a popular narrative not only in the Latin West, but also in the Byzantine Empire and the mediaeval Muslim world.[104] The Romance canonised and assured a long life to Alexander's supposed meeting with a group of gymnosophists — as we have seen, Onesicritus reports to have visited the Indian philosopher's on his king's behalf, but already by the time of Plutarch there was a tradition that it was Alexander himself who met and conversed with them. In the Romance, as in Plutarch, Alexander engages in a question-and-answer session with the gymnosophists, a common trope in Buddhist literature as well as a form of instruction and intellectual 'party game' in Greek philosophy according to Richard Stoneman, one that became canonical for meetings with Brahmans.[105] Through the Romance and its derivates, as well as the patristic sources that mention the gymnosophists and Brahmans, a old Greek notion of a remote people that through their marginality exhibit difference is reinforced that might be interpreted as positive or negative, depending on the argument.[106]

With the political and educational structures of antiquity slowly disintegrating, knowledge was increasingly distilled. Isidore of Seville (560-636), who is often considered the last father and writer of antiquity but may also be seen as an early mediaeval writer who lived at a time when classical learning and older structures were disintegrating, compiled the first Christian encyclopaedia in the form of his *Etymologies*, a Christian alternative to works such as Pliny's *Natural Histories*.[107] One of the earliest summae with a long afterlife in the Latin Middle

[103] See the essays collected in Richard Stoneman et al., *The Alexander Romance: History and Literature* (Groningen: Barkhuis, 2018).

[104] See for instance Richard Stoneman et al., eds., *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East* (Eelde: Barkhuis, 2012).

[105] Stoneman, "Naked Philosophers," 110–14 and Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India*, 289–331. See also Plutarch, *Alexander* 64.

[106] See further Chiara Di Serio, "The Brahmans' Utopia from the Greek Sources to John of Salisbury's Policraticus," *In Gremium. Studies in History, Culture and Politics* 15 (2021): 97–113.

[107] A good overview is provided in Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, eds., "Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, ca.

Ages, Isidore draws on classical learning for his conception of the world, geography, and the place of India. India does not loom large in Isidore's summary of universal knowledge, and is reduced primarily to a far-off land of marvels and monsters, such as the Cyclops, unicorns, and gold-digging ants from mythic Greek ethnography,[108] and real 'exotic' animals such as elephants, on the edge of the known world.[109] The gymnosophists are mentioned but briefly, among a list of pagan philosophers.[110]

As the world retracted in the minds of people in the Latin West, so did the specificities of geography. As Thomas Hahn shows, already Jerome confuses India with Persia and Ethiopia, and in a sense we see a return to the simpler yet more abstract patterns of imagining the world we saw at the beginning with pre-classical and classical Greek sources. Isidore is a case in point in this regard: the exact location of certain peoples and lands mattered less than their integration into a Christian cosmology of the world and its nations. The *Etymologies* are indeed filled with genealogies of the various peoples of the world; fifteen derive from Japheth, thirty-one from Ham, and twenty-seven from Shem.[111] The T and O map with its tripartite division of the world into Europe, Africa, and Asia — associated with Japheth, Ham, and Shem respectively and so vastly associated with mediaeval conceptions of the world — is also first seen in Isidore, and must be seen in a similar light as the description of the world's peoples: it depicts a spiritual reality more than a worldly geography.[112] Isidore describes the physical location of Eden to be in Asia, and its description is immediately followed by that of India, an association — built on the common remoteness associated with both semi-mythical locations in the mediaeval mind — that would be reflected on mappae mundi for centuries.[113]

Much as during antiquity among Greek philosophers and Christian thinkers alike, the Brahmans continued to elicit not only curiosity, but proved to be models to emulate, or at least a people with whom to associate certain virtues one would like to see in Christians. This tendency increases over the centuries and takes on a larger role from the twelfth century onwards.[114] A century earlier, and many centuries before the Europeans would go in search of Indian holy books, al-Biruni (973 — c. 1050 CE), active primarily at Ghazni, the capital of the Ghaznavid dynasty, pioneered a comparative study of Indian religion by establishing the Yoga-sutra of Patanjali to be the scripture of the Hindus, in order to compare this Indian faith

625," in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300 -1475* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 232–247.

[108] Isidore, *Etymologies*, 11.3.16, 14.3.6, and 16.15.7. On the tradition of India being associated with monsters and marvels see Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East. A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 159–197.

[109] Isidore also lists many gems (16.6-16.14) which can be found primarily in India, which is reminiscent of the trope about a fabulously wealthy India we see also through the gold-digging ants.

[110] Isidore, *Etymologies*, 8.6.17.

[111] Isidore, *Eytmologies*, 9.2.2.

[112] C.f. Hahn, "The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History," 221f.

[113] Isidore, *Eytmologies*, 14.3.2-7. C.f. G. Parker, *The Making of Roman India*, 232.

[114] See Hahn, "The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History," 225ff. and Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 113.

with his own.[115] Though Al-Biruni's scholarship on India did not make it to the West, the Arabic imprint on mediaeval scholasticism also transmitted some Indian achievements, and Indian philosophy was increasingly associated also with mathematics and other sciences.[116]

From the twelfth century onwards the Brahmans often take on the role of the virtuous pagans par excellence, exhibiting Christian virtues such as simplicity of life and devoutness, and they are cast as masters of natural philosophy, with the earlier negative stances such as those found in some church fathers missing entirely. Peter Abelard and many later philosophers endow the Brahmans not only with natural reason, but with a form of divine understanding, with Hugh of Saint Victor even alluding to the possibility of non-Christian salvation.[117] This of course was not based on any personal interaction with Brahmans or any other potentially virtuous pagans, but is a continuation of the utopian projections associated with the liminal position of India and the Brahmans. Though not everyone went quite as far as Hugh, the association of Brahmans with the proverbial good pagans was well-established and at its peak in the fourteenth century, when travelling to India became a reality again.

Besides the notion of virtuous or even quasi-Christian Brahman philosophers inhabiting India, Latin Christian imagination also saw India as a land of Christians. Christianity of course did not only arrive in India with European missionaries; Indian Christianity — both real and imagined — goes back to the early days of Christianity. Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria's teacher whom we have briefly encountered above, is said by Eusebius to have visited India and there encountered a Christian community who used the Gospel of Matthew, brought to them by the apostle Bartholomew.[118] The standard tradition from at least the fifth century onwards traces the Christian community in South India to another apostle, namely Thomas, who remains at the centre of the tradition of the Indian Syrian Christian — or St. Thomas Christian — church to this day. The St. Thomas Christians are first mentioned in the *Christian Topography* by Cosmas Indicopleustes, a Byzantine Egpytian merchant who describes the presence of a Christian congregation in the land where the pepper grows (Kerala) and on the island of Taprobana (Sri Lanka), both under the Persian church.[119] Whether or not Cosmas travelled to India is uncertain, but he seems to have at least travelled to many of the places he describes due to the detail that emerges in his account.[120] Such contacts between

[115] Mario Kozah, *The Birth of Indology as an Islamic Science: Al-Bīrūnī's Treatise on Yoga Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1–10. Latin translations of Islamicate views on India did reach Europe in the following centuries, but al-Biruni's *India* remained practically unknown in Europe until Edward C. Sachau's translation in the nineteenth century. See "Reception of a Polymath: Biruni in History" in George Malagaris, *Biruni* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 130–47.

[116] C.f. Hahn, "The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History," 225.

[117] Hahn, 228.

[118] Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5.10.

[119] Cosmas, *Christian Topography* 3.7.

[120] On Cosmas and his *Christian Topography* see Stefan Alfred Faller, "The World According to Cosmas Indicopleustes – Concepts and Illustrations of an Alexandrian Merchant and Monk," *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (1 2011): 193–232.

India and the Byzantine Empire were soon interrupted by the rise of Islam, which also cut off contacts between the Indian Syrian Christians and the Christians farther west. The few literary topoi and narratives that were transmitted to the Latin West from India itself were completely reintegrated into a Christian framework, such as the tale of Barlaam and Josaphat, which was originally based on the life of the Buddha but was entirely stripped from its original Indian context and meaning.[121]

Despite, or partially because of the distance to India, all that remained of these early contacts in the cultural memory of the Latin West was the association of India with Christianity, and some mediaeval Europeans even went in search of the mythical Christian land.[122] In the later Middle Ages this notion commingled with the idea of Prester John, the mythical king of a faraway Christian kingdom somewhere to the East. The legend seems to be based originally on a kernel of truth: a visitor calling himself John and claiming to hail from a fabulously wealthy and Christian India where he was a patriarch, visited Rome and met pope Callixtus II in the second decade of the twelfth century, according to two different accounts.[123] Though this self-proclaimed patriarch probably came from Anatolia, not India, the story was given further impetus and credence by the reports, transmitted via the crusader states to Latin Europe, of a faraway battle between Christians and an Islamic leader — in reality the victor was Mongolian and not Christian — and associated with *Presbiter John*.[124]

The most important written document associated with the mythical king appeared later in the century, around 1165-70: the *Prester John Letter*. The letter was clearly a Latin invention; despite being addressed to the Byzantine Emperor, there is no evidence that a Greek original ever existed, and it exhibits mediaeval European utopian ideas that clearly mark it as a Latin forgery. Prester John's kingdom is described to be in the 'Three Indies', the resting place of the apostle Thomas, and to be the richest and most powerful Christian kingdom in existence.[125] The description also contained a number of marvels, such as a fountain of youth, as well as beasts and monsters. Once more, this clearly reflects the tradition of a semi-mythical and utopian India at the extremes of the Earth which we have seen throughout this historical overview and which goes back at least to Herodotus, yet now was combined with the vague knowledge of the existence of the St. Thomas Christians. As Keagan puts it: 'The Letter's fantastic representation of Prester John's kingdom was the continuation of a vast tradition of scholarly representations of the Orient, so much so that in many ways it was simply a new medium for old ideas. In other words, to mediaeval readers the Letter was a confirmation of what was already known, rather than a radical paradigm shift.'[126]

[121] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 22-27 and Karttunen, "India as a Mirror of Otherness," 123ff.
[122] Karttunen, 114–15.
[123] Brewer Keagan, *Prester John: The Legend and Its Sources* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 4–7.
[124] Keagan, 8–9.
[125] Keagan, 10.
[126] Keagan, 3.

Renewed travel by Europeans to the Indian subcontinent and Asia that was made possible by the Mongolian conquests would intensify doubts that were naturally already present about the existence of this magnificent king in the East. Assessing the belief in the mythical ruler is difficult in any case — despite doubt at the letter's authenticity, the geographical reality of John's realm was commonly asserted.[127] Yet even new travel accounts would not immediately disperse this utopian vision. The tantalising possibility of a wealthy and powerful Christian ally would survive despite new accounts of the real India, and the idea of Prester John — perhaps to be found in Ethiopia instead of India, or maybe denoting a title rather than a person — would continue to fascinate Europeans and shape their view of far-away India.[128]

[127] Keagan, *Prester John*, 20. See further Bernard Hamilton, "Continental Drift: Prester John's Progress through the Indies," in *Medieval Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond*, ed. Joan-Pau Rubiés (Ashgate, 2009), 121–154.

[128] C.f. Hamilton, "Continental Drift"; Cates Baldridge, *Prisoners of Prester John: The Portuguese Mission to Ethiopia in Search of the Mythical King, 1520-1526* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014).

# CHAPTER 2

# THE EUROPEAN REDISCOVERY OF INDIA: PORTUGUESE AND JESUIT ASSESSMENTS OF INDIA

## 2.1 A New Age of Travel: Missionaries and Lay Travellers, Real and Imagined

The twelfth century, a time of clerical and feudal expansion and an intellectual Renaissance in the Latin West, marks a turning point in this narrative, as it saw the growing popularisation of the trope of the virtuous Brahman and the birth of the Prester John myth — both based on long-standing tropes but adapted to the culture and needs of the Medieval Latin West. The twelfth century is also significant for the development of a new European form of ethnography which accompanied the expansion of Europe in the following centuries. As a form of describing empirical difference in the observation of groups of people, which went hand in hand with a rediscovery of ancient sources, it was the 'possibility of expanding the cultural horizons of the elite with reference to classical literature and science that made and empirical discourse on human diversity a substantial part of the transformation of a precarious clerical culture into a complex set of Latin and vernacular discourses.'[129]

Missionaries to Asia readily took advantage of the safety of the unified Mongol realm in the thirteenth century to send friars as far as India and China. These missionaries emulated the ethnographic descriptions of earlier clerical writers such as Gerald of Wales, and especially the Franciscans John of Piano Carpini and William of Rubruck who were active in the missionary field in the mid-thirteenth-century Mongol Empire.[130] These first-hand accounts presented

[129] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 42.

[130] Rubiés, 42ff. On Gerald of Wales see Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales, 1146-1223* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); on William of Rubruck Peter Jackson, "William of Rubruck in the Mongol Empire: Perception and Prejudices," in *Medieval Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond*, ed. Joan-Pau Rubiés (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 273–290. For a general overview see Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*,

the Orient to a large European lay culture in the late Middle Ages and provided detailed information on the features of the land, the flora and fauna, and the people. At the same time, whilst report on actual places and people, these accounts remained within the realm of what was expected to be found and reported on, and travel more generally was in many cases explored in writing through the lens of a Christian tradition of pilgrimage. This does not mean that we should disregard mediaeval accounts as reproducing a supposed homogenous mediaeval 'other' without any actual representation of what the writers saw themselves. The importance of these new first-hand accounts lay in the very fact that they did not merely reproduce an ultimately Greek tradition of marvels and monsters — which were still present in one form or another — but in fact created a new ethnographic genre that relied on first-hand reporting.[131]

Some of the most noteworthy accounts of this new missionary ethnographic endeavour in the context of India include those by Dominicans and Franciscans such as Jordan Catala of Sévérac, John of Montecorvino, and Odoric of Pordenone.[132] Jordan Catala of Sévérac (fl. 1280 - c. 1330) was one of the first missionaries to make use of the new possibilities of travel to India and became the first bishop of a Roman Catholic diocese in India, the diocese of Quilon (Kollam, Kerala), after his return to Europe. The Dominican Jordan wrote an account of the places he had visited titled *Mirabilia descripta* (ca. 1330), and the title — literally Marvels Described, or Wonders of the East in Henry Yule's translation — clearly reflects the mediaeval tradition of a fantastical India.[133] India is divided into three parts: India Minor, India Major, and India Tertia, a general trend in shifting from 'India' to 'the Indies'.[134] India Minor is the westernmost of the three, closest to ancient conceptions of India which include modern Pakistan, but also the West-Indian coast down to the northern end of the Malabar coast.[135] India Major made up the stretch of land from the Malabar Coast to Indochina, whilst the 'third India' is located in eastern Africa. The St. Thomas Christians on the Malabar Coast did not impress Jordan, and because of the lack of a powerful Christian kingdom in the South of India Prester John is described to be in this third India or Ethiopia, a shift to locating the

volume 1, book 1, 30-48.

[131] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 45f. See also Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," *Journeys* 1, no. 1 (2000): 5–35. The collection of essays in Joan-Pau Rubiés, ed., *Medieval Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) illustrates the complexities of mediaeval ethnography and ethnological thinking.

[132] For an overview on pre-Jesuit missions in India see Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 230-245 and Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, 1:71–86.

[133] Jordan Catala, *Mirabilia Descripta: The Wonders of the East*, ed. Henry Yule (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863). For a newer edition see Christine Gadrat, *Une image de l'Orient au XIVe siècle: les Mirabilia descripta de Jordan Catala de Sévérac: édition, traduction et commentaire*, Mémoires et documents (Paris: École des Chartes, 2005), who contextualises the account in relation to contemporary travel literature by other missionaries and lay travellers such as Marco Polo.

[134] See Marianne O'Doherty, *The Indies and the Medieval West: Thought, Report, Imagination* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 33ff. This is a long durée development that becomes more prominent thanks to the Prester John Letter.

[135] Catala, *Mirabilia Descripta*, 11, note 1 explains the boundaries of the three Indies.

mythical king outside of Asia which would become more definite in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[136]

The marvels of the Indies should not distract us from the first-hand reporting we find in the *Mirabilia descripta*, much like in other texts of the time. Missionaries were not the only ones travelling to India and describing what they experienced and saw.[137] One of the most famous and influential accounts of Asia of the late Middle Ages was of course Marco Polo's travel account of the East. Latin Europeans of the late thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century all followed similar routes along South India, deriving from the trade routes and mediated by Arab-Persian culture.[138] Both Marco Polo and missionaries such as John of Montecorvino and Odoric of Pordenone thus give us accounts of Gujarat, the Coromandel and Malabar Coasts, and the island of Sri Lanka. As in Jordan, the marvellous does not cease to exist in these accounts, but is displaced to a large degree by empirical observations. The people and places are described in detail, food and eating habits are outlined, and detailed accounts emerge regarding the idolatrous practices of the Indians.[139]

This is a crucial development not only in the context of the view on India, to which truly new first-hand knowledge was added for the first time in centuries, but especially in the context of empiricism and the importance of travel literature more generally. As Joan-Pau Rubiés has argued convincingly, the missionaries and Maro Polo effectively created a new genre in which they shifted the authority away from tradition — in the Indian case still predominantly classical Greek in nature — towards personal, original observations, where the understanding of human diversity became paramount and disentangled itself, if not completely, from preconceived notions.[140] The emancipation of the critical observer was crucial for the further development of travel literature and ethnology in the early modern period, and was a necessary requirement for more detailed accounts of Indian culture and religion in the following centuries, be they by Ludovico de Varthema, Henry Lord, or Abraham Rogerius.[141]

It is in this context, too, that we have to understand one of the most popular travel accounts of the late Middle Ages, the fictional mid-fourteenth-century *Mandeville's Travels*.[142] Mandeville's account was made to look like one of these new travelogues, written by a lay traveller, in this case the fictional English knight John Mandeville from St. Orbans. The account effectively summarised earlier accounts and traditional narratives, borrowing and

[136] See Hamilton, "Continental Drift," 152.
[137] For an overview of late mediaeval travellers to India see O'Doherty, *The Indies and the Medieval West*, 53–199.
[138] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 51f. Ibn Battuta followed a similar itinerary in the mid fourteenth century.
[139] A useful comparison between the accounts of Marco Polo and John of Montecorvino who were both in South India in the 1290s is found in Rubiés, 59–60.
[140] Rubiés, 56.
[141] Rubiés, "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," 20ff.
[142] I have used John Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, trans. Anthony Bale, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

synthesising from established sources such as the Alexander Romance but also the most recent travel accounts on the regions being described, from Turkey to India; for the latter the account of Odoric of Pordenone was especially important.[143] At the same time the book compiles much of the traditional knowledge on the known world's places, much like Isidore had many centuries earlier, and it is clear that the author had access to a sizeable library.[144] The account on India is thus a combination of many of the topoi and tropes that we have seen here with some of the latest information from missionaries. We read about examples of the antipodal position India exhibits in a social sphere — such as the fact that women shave their beards instead of men — just after an account of sati and before the critical representation of St. Thomas Christians of recent accounts, such as the one by Odoric.[145] The idolatrous practices of the majority (primarily found in the chapter on the 'land of India') are clearly distinguished from the pious Brahmans (found in the chapter on the 'land of Prester John'), most likely taken from the Alexander Romance and the long-standing pious Brahman topos:

> Then there's another fine, large and fertile island, with good, honest men who follow a fine faith and lifestyle. Even though they are not Christian, by natural law they are full of excellent qualities. They eschew all sinfulness, all vice, and all malice, as they are not jealous, proud, or covetous, and they are not lecherous or gluttonous, and they only do unto other men as they would have done unto them. They comply with the Ten Commandments, and they place no value in wealth or possessions, and they do not swear oaths—they only say 'yes' and 'no', as they say that one who swears betrays his neighbour. Some people call this island the Island of Brahmins and some call it The Land of Faith. A great river runs through it which people call Thebe. Generally all people in that island and others nearby are more faithful and righteous than in other countries.[146]

In this way the book emerges as an encyclopaedic compilation, summarising from many different sources and drawing on the traditional notion of travel as pilgrimage, thereby offering a cosmological overview of the known world. The authorial figure's stance on religion is especially interesting, even as we turn away from the idealised faith of the Brahmans: the idolatrous practices of the Indians, or the beliefs of Muslims are often shown to be close to the Christian truth or to be evidence of piety.[147] The worship of idols and effigies is not excused, but rationalised, through euhemerism and the theory of God being depicted in many different

[143] See on this Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Carpenter Lectures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 26–51 and Rubiés, "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe."

[144] C.f. the introduction in Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*.

[145] Mandeville, 77f.

[146] Mandeville, 115.

[147] Rubiés, "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," 17. This stands in stark contrast to the one other that Europeans experienced without travelling outside of the Latin West, namely Judaism; Jews are not portrayed in a positive light in Mandeville, and instead fit into the stereotyped mediaeval image of the monstrous, see Debra Hassig, "The Iconography

aspects, and put into the context of an underlying belief in the one God.[148] Much as we have already seen with the topos of the pious Brahman, the object of inquiry for Mandeville is not so much Indian belief, but rather the truth value the utopian Brahmans who are described have for Christian life. The pious model, rather than the accuracy or authenticity of the person inhabiting this role, matters for a Christian.

*Mandeville's Travels* is a reflection of the ongoing process of the formation and assertion of the first-hand empirical observer; Mandeville is authoritative because of the way his account is structured, with him as the observer, whilst the wildest claims are actually ratified through the power of other accounts, which in turn again confirm the eyewitness account.[149] At the same time, it seems counterproductive to me to go to far in analysing to which degree this reflects a mediaeval mentality or notion of authenticity, without employing anachronistic concepts. As much as eyewitness reports grew in importance and the connected cause for empiricism would play a crucial role in early modern intellectual history — be it the Scientific Revolution or the Enlightenment — *truth* and *fiction* are much harder to grasp. The account was commonly accepted as authoritative as it combined the eyewitness structure with traditional authorities, whilst pursuing a religious vision.[150] Whether or not the account was fictional in the eyes of its readers or not, it could either way provide *truth* and true statements about human life, people, and spiritual matters. This, in my understanding, is an important takeaway in this case, and will remain important even in the seventeenth century, when the role of the eyewitness observer is much more stable.[151]

With the strengthening economy of the late-mediaeval and early-Renaissance Mediterranean travel to India became a lucrative opportunity. Genoese, Venetian, and Iberian merchants ventured to the Indian subcontinent seeking to participate in the Indian Ocean trade. Back in Europe, the Italian Humanists were paying renewed attention to ancient sources that had received little consideration in the preceding centuries such as Ptolemy and Strabo, and sought to distance themselves from what they regarded as the fanciful tales of mediaeval travellers, sometimes unfairly disregarded as fabulous — ironically in a similar fashion to Strabo, who

of Rejection: Jews and Other Monstrous Races," in *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1999), 25–46.

[148] See for instance Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, 75: 'There's a great difference between an effigy and an idol: an effigy is an image made to resemble something someone knows, whereas some idols have three heads and are therefore against nature: one of a man, another of a horse, and another of an ox or some other beast nobody has ever seen. You should be aware that those who worship effigies worship them because of ancient estimable men like Hercules and others, who performed many marvels in their day. They say they know full well these effigies are not God, who made all things; but they are godly because of the miracles that they perform, and therefore they worship them.' The aspect theory of God, inspired greatly by Macrobius, will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

[149] Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 34f.

[150] Rubiés, "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," 19.

[151] See on this also Robert Launay, *Savages, Romans, and Despots: Thinking about Others from Montaigne to Herder* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 14–35.

wrongfully dismissed many Hellenistic accounts.I will be speaking about the Humanistic culture and its impact on the mythographic tradition in detail in chapter 3, where I analyse the entanglement of the encounter with new pagan religions and the sophisticated research into ancient paganism in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For now, we can already note that this conjunction of Humanism and Italian ventures impacted the trajectory of travel literature to a significant degree.

One prominent example is the account of Venetian merchant Niccolò de' Conti (c. 1395 - 1469) written down by the Humanist and papal secretary Poggio Bracciolini (1380 - 1459). Bracciolini added an 'air of detached objectivity' as well as references to classical geography to de' Conti's account.[152] In Bracciolini's rendering the Brahmans become a mixture of the noble and sage philosophers of the Middle Ages and fortune-tellers and magicians:

> Throughout all of India, there is a group of philosophers called the Brahmans, who devote themselves to the study of astronomy and the prediction of the future, living lives devoted to a more honourable way of life and moral principles. Among them, [Niccolò] claims to have seen a man who was three hundred years old, considered a miracle among them, as, due to the novelty of the event, children would follow him wherever he went. Their expertise in what they call geomancy is widely known, so much so that they predict the future as though it were the present. They also engage in incantations, so much so that they are often able to stir up and calm storms.[153]

Though the Brahmans are not central in this account, the hint to their dual nature here — wise sages, living exceedingly honourable lives, who nevertheless have what we might easily interpret as a sinister side to them through which they have power over the people — would become exceedingly important in later centuries.

When it comes to the religious practices of India, Bracciolini pays special attention to the Nestorian Christians. Rather than in some other accounts such as the one by Jordan Catala, Bracciolini presents the native Indian Christians as ideal Christians, reinforcing existing hopes of a strong Christian presence in India entangled with the idea of Prester John, who is however

[152] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 97. I have used the edition by Guéret-Laferté: Niccolò De' Conti, *De l'Inde. Les voyages en Asie de Niccolo de' Conti: De varietate fortunae, livre IV*, ed. Michèle Guéret-Laferté, Miroir du Moyen Âge (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004). Detachment is an interesting lens through which to analyse European travel writing; c.f. especially the notion of ironic detachment in seventeenth-century descriptions of food by Europeans travelling to extra-European spaces that is outlined in Robert Launay, "Tasting the World: Food in Early European Travel Narratives," *Food and Foodways* 11, no. 1 (2003): 27–47.

[153] Translation from *De veritate fortunae* 526-534: 'Per universam Indiam philosophorum genus est Bragmones appellati, qui astronomiae et futura praedicendi studio indulgent, honestiori cultui et sanctions vitae moribus dediti. Hos inter vidisse se asserit trecentorum annorum virum, et id apud eos pro miraculo habitum, cum ilium pro rei novitate, quocunque iret, pueri sequerentur. Vulgata est apud multos eius, quam geomantiam vocant, peritia, ita ut futura tanquam praesentia praedicant. Incantationibus quoque deduntur, adeo ut saepius tempestates ciere et sedare valeant.' C.f. De' Conti, *De l'Inde. Les voyages en Asie de Niccolo de' Conti*, 144f. A similar positive assessment lacking the magical elements is found at 119-120.

consciously absent from Bracciolini. The ultimate goal of course, which we see also with the Portuguese later on, would be to gain an ally that could be brought into the Catholic fold.

Bracciolini's rendering of de' Conti's account resulted in a detailed observation of Indian customs and manners. Alongside the cosmographical endeavours of fellow Humanists this set a new critical standard to which genres related to travel, including not only travel writing, but also collections and cosmographies, would be expected to adhere. The first-hand observer thus gradually became a stable authority for information. As such the late-mediaeval emancipation of the lay traveller along with the recovery of ancient authorities which were analysed with a new critical method set up the standard for travel writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[154]

The sixteenth century marks a turning point in this narrative, as the Portuguese entrance into the Indian Ocean widened the possibilities for travel to India like never before. As more and more new, first-hand information arrived from India, influenced also by the discovery of new lands and pagan peoples in the Americas, Humanists were also rediscovering India in ancient sources. This led to breaks in the narrative about India or the Indies surviving from the late ancient and mediaeval period, yet some tropes remained, especially regarding the wealth of the land, the pagan inhabitants and the existence of Christian communities. As lay travellers continued to shape the view on India, it would be especially the Jesuits under the leadership of the Portuguese *padroado* who would change the way Indian religion was approached and analysed. The entrance of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean trade and their territorial expansion on the Indian subcontinent were the beginning of a new relationship between India and Europe. As we have seen, in the late Middle Ages new travellers had ventured to India again after centuries of very little contact between the Latin West and the Indian subcontinent, and reported about their experiences to a Western European audience. At the time Vasco da Gama ventured to India, missionaries had already been going to India in order to convert their huge population for more than a century.

Nevertheless, with the Portuguese and their sea route to India the contact took on a new dimension. The Portuguese effectively expanded and transported their factory system from Europe to India and inserted themselves into the Indian Ocean trade. The mercantilist nature that drove the Portuguese was entangled with a strong religious fervour to further the cause of Christendom and find allies against the Muslims.[155] The religious arrangement between the Portuguese kingdom and the Holy See — the *padroado* — incentivised and channelled the religious fervour, bringing more missionaries to India as the sixteenth century progressed. The Jesuits soon established themselves as the de facto leaders of the padroado, and would remain

[154] See further Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 59ff. Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," 85–124; Dorothy Figueira, *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion: Cross-Cultural Encounters with India* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 58–62.

[155] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1993; Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 53.

the main missionary force in India even as the *propaganda fide* assumed the coordinating efforts of the catholic mission in the seventeenth century. The close connection between the Portuguese evangelising spirit and the universal aims of the Society of Jesus were crucial for the entangled developments of missionary practices, ethnographic practices, and the conceptualisation of different religions.[156]

Lay travellers, though often connected in some way to the Portuguese state such as Ludovico de Varthema or Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, supplied accounts that would reach a vast audience, especially through collections such as those by Ramusio, Hakluyt, or De Bry, and complicate the image of India in Western Europe. This was all the more important as the authority and credibility of travellers, and the standards expected of accounts, continued to rise, despite a continued clash with traditional sources.[157] But it was the Jesuits above all others, who, in their accommodationist zeal to convert, set a precedence for in-depth ethnography and the learning of local languages. Protestant missionaries such as Abraham Rogerius and Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg could thus benefit from the impact of Jesuit methodology and knowledge on European practices of ethnology, ethnography and the systematic approach to other religions.

## 2.2 Rediscovering India: Breaks and Continuities

We have already seen that the development of a new European tradition of ethnography through travel accounts, whether written by men attached to institution such as missionaries or lay travellers, reproduced some of the old fantastical ideas about India, but also undermined the tall tales that survived from antiquity through fresh eyewitness reporting. Some of these breaks were more stark than others: whilst we can still find fantastical beasts and peoples on maps and their cartouches for centuries, travel accounts increasingly reflect the sobering reality of an India that is largely devoid of mythical creatures on the edge of the world. India became less and less peripheral in a world marked by growing horizons, and it turned out to be peopled largely by pagans. This was especially true in South India, which is the locus of the creation of the *Open Door* as well as many other ethnographic encounters, such as those of the Madurai mission, or the writings of Philippus Baldaeus and Bartholomäus Ziegenbald; Europeans also quickly came into contact with the growing Mughal Empire in the north of India, where a large Muslim population existed besides the Indian 'pagans'. The interactions with the Muslim Mughals were formative for European discussions of India, as well, but as I

[156] Županov, *Missionary Tropics*; Giuseppe Marcocci, *L'invenzione di un impero: politica e cultura nel mondo portoghese, 1450-1600* (Rome: Carocci, 2011); Hélène Vu Thanh, "The Jesuits in Asia under the Portuguese Padroado," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 400–426.

[157] See Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*; Carey, "The Problem of Credibility in Early Modern Travel"; Rubiés, "Distance and Credibility in Sixteenth-Century Travel Writing."

am primarily interested in perceptions of people who were regarded as pagans and especially the Brahmans, those will continue to be the main focus of the following discussions.

Whilst late-mediaeval and early modern ethnographers readily integrated the Indian masses into the catch-all category of paganism, the hopes for an Indian Prester John remained, in one form or another. The powerful kingdom of Christians was no longer sought on the Indian subcontinent — yet still in Africa and especially Ethiopia, where there of course actually was a Christian kingdom — but Europeans were nevertheless confronted with a form of Christianity in India, namely the St. Thomas Christians on the Malabar Coast.[158] It increasingly became clear to the Portuguese that the St. Thomas Christians were not quite the powerful potential allies from the tales of Prester John; recognising them instead to be, from a Catholic point of view, heterodox Christians, they were confronted with disappointment and new questions on how to approach this group of native Christians.[159]

The pagans themselves were readily put into the traditional fourth category of gentilism or paganism, next to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity itself. During the Middle Ages the Latin West had less and less contact with contemporary pagans, who increasingly became a thing of the literary past, encountered in patristic polemic or through ancient sources written by non-Christians themselves.[160] Mediaeval Christendom saw themselves mainly in a struggle against Jews and Muslims, whilst many of the pagans, such as the Brahmans, were based less on contemporary ethnographic information than on the allegorical potential they held for Christian writers. Though the ethnographies of the fourteenth and fifteenth century that I have sketched did bring change and new information, Europeans nevertheless had only scant knowledge of non-Abrahmic traditions.

Humanist mythographers presented the intricacies of ancient culture as well as religious life and beliefs in ever-increasing detail, just as present-day pagans were occupying European minds to a degree not seen since late antiquity. This influenced how travellers viewed the people they encountered and created possibilities for comparison, but also for universalist theorising on the nature of paganism, as we will see in much more detail in chapters four and five.[161] Idolatry always loomed large in both Humanist and ethnographic descriptions of pagan religion, and, though not everyone took paganism and idolatry to be synonymous as it was for many church fathers, the two were irrevocably connected. The focus on idolatrous practices and devil worship that becomes commonplace in sixteenth-century accounts of India, especially after Ludovico de Varthema, must thus be understood within a context in which the issue of

[158] C.f. Baldridge, *Prisoners of Prester John*.
[159] See Županov, "One Civility."
[160] See for instance Balagangadhara, *'The Heathen in His Blindness'–*, passim.
[161] See Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Instructions for Travellers: Teaching the Eye to See," *History & Anthropology* 9, nos. 2/3 (1996): 139–190; Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously"; Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography"; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Ethnography, Philosophy and the Rise of Natural Man 1500-1750," in *Encountering Otherness. Diversities and Transcultural Experiences in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. Guido Abbattista, vol. 16 (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2011), 97–127.

idolatry had re-entered European intellectual life — intensified also by the Reformation and its own iconoclast agenda — and in which these kinds of descriptions were very much expected to follow a certain formula.

That paganism was ontologically one unit in the mind of most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ethnographers, ethnologists, and scholars more generally did not mean that the peculiarities of each form of paganism was not recorded and distinguished, although most travellers were as of yet not too concerned with the intricate details of pagan systems of worship. As such, it is also not at all surprising that despite there being a general idea of paganism being practised in India, there was hardly any idea of an overarching Indian religion or civilisation. As the sixteenth century produced more and more accounts on India, with a focus on the coastal regions that were paramount for trade, stereotypes and regional specificities began to emerge in European ethnology, and Banias were distinguished from Malabars, the people of Carnatica, or the kingdom of Narsinga (Vijayanagara). The mythical and fabled India of old, already split in two during the Middle Ages, thus became more and more fragmented and local in first-hand accounts, and generally lacked a notion of one Indian civility or religion.[162]

Especially due to the missionary strategy of the Jesuits, accounts describing Indian practises and beliefs increasingly detached themselves from the catch-all explanation of demonic influence and worship towards more sophisticated analyses of culture, with a specific focus on the Brahmans who were seen as the key elite to convert. The long-standing privileging of the Brahmans as religiously distinct from the idolatrous masses survived despite the turn from allegorical to ethnographical representation, and early seventeenth-century Jesuits integrated the Brahmans into an elite group of priestly classes such as the Confucian Chinese who were presented to follow a form of natural religion particularly ready to welcome the message of Christianity. This dual view on Indian religion with its distinction between the masses, part of an exoteric and idolatrous core common to large parts of the world, and the priestly elite, the esoteric and monotheist Brahmans, is a major topos in the longue durée view of the European study and representation of Indian culture. The Jesuits and many Protestant writers of the early modern period conceptualised Indian religion in this manner, and it would continue to majorly influence the colonial representation of India when the Orientalist notion of a unified Hinduism would gain momentum.[163]

India thus formed part of a grander ethnological agenda of comparison that served the universalist aims of the Society of Jesus, and especially the late-sixteenth century systematic ethnology of José de Acosta greatly influenced informed Catholic as well as Protestant approaches to studying and comparing paganism.[164] In this manner the Jesuits helped establish

[162] Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," 11.

[163] Balagangadhara, *'The Heathen in His Blindness'–*; Gelders, "Genealogy of Colonial Discourse"; Gelders and Balagangadhara, "Rethinking Orientalism"; Rubiés, "Reassessing 'the Discovery of Hinduism': Jesuit Discourse on Gentile Idolatry and the European Republic of Letters."

[164] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*; Pagden, *European Encounters*. See also Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*

religion as a plural concept in which Christianity could be compared with the equivalent cultural conjunctions in other societies, opening the doors to more informed and sophisticated accounts of local religious praxis.

The Jesuit exploration of American and Asian societies was a crucial development not only for the comparative religious theorising that will be the topic of chapters four and five, but also for the travellers and ethnographers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more broadly. Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, one of the founders of early modern Dutch ethnography and an important early pillar of Dutch empire, is a case in point for the legacy of the Portuguese-Jesuit double-edged sword of empire and mission, as he was not only a former agent of the Portuguese in India, but had also translated Acosta into Dutch.[165] Rogerius and the annotator of the *Open Door* were indebted to the Jesuits directly for their foundational ethnographic and scholarly work on India, without which Dutch travel writing and antiquarianism of the seventeenth century would not have been possible in the form it took.

As I will explore in this chapter, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century the form of Indian pagan worship increasingly was investigated in great detail, a stark break from earlier superficial and utopian visions. The nature of Indian and Brahman religion — much like that of the Amerindian pagans — was a matter of great debate, and the issue of idolatry emerges as a central theme of these discourses. What are the boundaries of Indian 'religion', can a pagan society have purely 'civil' practises, and to which degree is Indian society idolatrous? These questions, explored through more and more detailed ethnographic writings, were crucial for the early modern discussion of Indian religion, and would divide also the Society of Jesus from within.

## 2.3 Ethnographies of Sixteenth Century Travellers: From Wonders to Idolatry

At the time of Vasco da Gama's first voyage to India in 1498, European knowledge on the geography and people of India was decidedly limited. As we have seen, the fourteenth and fifteenth century produced novel empirical knowledge for the first time in centuries and brought glimpses of some of the cities, coastal areas, and inhabitants of India to Europe. Nevertheless, the specificities of the geography, the land beyond the coastal areas, and the languages and customs of the Indian subcontinent still lay beyond Portuguese knowledge. The Portuguese, circumnavigating both the Muslim intermediaries and Italian rivals in the spice trade, tried to quickly and jealously guard their secrets. In the past, historiography has tended to assert a tight Portuguese control over information that is no longer sustained by newer research, but the Portuguese state-run spice business naturally did try to keep its governmentally-organised

*and the Invention of the Human*.

[165] See below, chapter three.

information close at hand.[166] Due to the international participation in the Portuguese spice trade, which was not only financed by Italian and German bankers and merchants but also was host to sailors from numerous European nations, information on the East Indies soon breached the confines of Portugal and Iberia: already in 1504 we have a Flemish account by an individual who took part in Vasco da Gama's second voyage to India.[167] The lack of a proper publishing infrastructure in Portugal seems to have been equally important in limiting the circulation of Portuguese information on India. The foundational early Portuguese accounts on India by Tomé Pires (c. 1512) and Duarte Barbosa (c. 1516) only circulated in manuscript form until they reached much wider audiences through their inclusion in Ramusio's mid-century collection, as we will see below.[168]

### Ludovico de Varthema

One account that was published at this early time, and which actually precedes those by Pires and Barbosa by a few years, is the travelogue by Ludovico de Varthema (c. 1470 - 1517), an adventurer from Bologna who chronicled his travels across the Levant, Middle East, and India in the first decade of the sixteenth century in his *Itinerario* (Rome 1510).[169] Almost everything we know about Varthema comes from his account of his travels, where he appears as a fascinating figure in his own right, and may be seen to be illustrative of many of the shifts happening in the early sixteenth century. He was one of the last travellers to reach India using the older land route instead of the Portuguese sea route, thus having to play with and shift his identity, much like de' Conti had a century earlier. At the same time, Varthema is in some ways the blueprint for a new kind of curious traveller of the early modern period: writing in the vernacular and utilising the new print market to transmit an unmediated view of the world as he experienced it to contemporary Europeans for the sake of economic gain.[170] Varthema took the mantle of different roles to gain entrance to places along the way: depending on the place

[166] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 4. A traditional account and overview can be found in Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 151-154.

[167] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India: Words, People, Empires, 1500–1800* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 49. On the transnational and international nature of Portuguese expansion and empire see Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Cátia Antunes, "The Portuguese Maritime Empire: Global Nodes and Transnational Networks," in *Empires of the Sea. Maritime Power Networks in World History*, ed. Rolf Strootman et al. (Brill, 2019), 294–311.

[168] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 3–6.

[169] I have seen the edition of 1517: Lodovico de Varthema, *Itinerario. de Ludouico de Varthema bolognese nello egypto nella Suria: nella Arabia deserta & felice nella Persia nella India & nella Ethiopia la fede: el viuere & costumi de tutte le ... prouincie* (Rome: Stephano Guillireti de Loreno, & maestro Hercule de Nani bolognese ad instantia de maestro Lodouico de Henricis da Corneto vicentino, 1517). On Varthema see the modern edition Lodovico de Varthema, *Itinerario / Ludovico de Vartema ; edizione e commento a cura di Valentina Martino*, ed. Valentina Martino (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2011) and Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 125–163.

[170] Rubiés, "Distance and Credibility in Sixteenth-Century Travel Writing," 46ff. In this way Varthema was similar to later curious philosophical travellers such as Francois Bernier or Gianfrancesco Gemelli Careri.

and whatever suited him best in a given situation he was sometimes a Christian or a Muslim, a physician or a soldier, a merchant or a pilgrim, and even succeeded in visiting Mecca under the guise of being a Mamluk. Once he had arrived in South India he worked for the Portuguese for two years, repenting for his heterodox actions as a Muslim and once again claiming to be a steadfast Christian.[171]

Varthema's account showcases his own experiences as a lay traveller, detached from roles such as missionaries, pilgrims, or merchants, and presents contemporaries with his direct experiences of travelling across Asia for the sake of the reader's entertainment.[172] The reliability of Varthema's overall account was questioned by some of his contemporaries, and there is indeed good reason to believe that Varthema embellished many episodes and perhaps invented large parts of his itinerary, whilst many of the descriptions seem to have been genuine observations.[173] For the present purpose it is enough to note that Varthema did visit South India, and, more importantly, that both his presentation of India and his self-stylisation as a curious traveller — distinct from the pilgrim of the Middle Ages and an important development in the role of the empirical eyewitness observer — would set the scene for future developments.[174]

Varthema's account of South India exhibits a detailed ethnographic survey of its people, but he does generalise based on his experiences in Calicut, claiming an ethnological synthesis for South India — referring back to his description of Calicut as 'being sufficient' on multiple occasions.[175] Varthema's descriptions of religious practices, despite his account not being overtly focussed on the presentation of religion, has been a focal point in historiography, with the depiction of Indian devil worship:[176]

> The King of Calicut is a pagan, and worships the devil in the manner you shall hear. They acknowledge that there is a God who has created the heaven and the earth and all the world; and they say that if he wished to judge you and me, a third and a fourth, he would have no pleasure in being Lord; but that he has sent this his spirit, that is the devil, into this world to do justice: and to him who does good he does good, and to him who does evil he does evil. Which devil they call Deumo, and God they call Tamerani. And the King of Calicut keeps this Deumo in his chapel in his palace. [...] The said devil has a crown made like that of the papal kingdom, with three crowns; and it also has four horns and four teeth, with a very large mouth, nose, and most terrible eyes. The hands are made like those

[171] See Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 132f.
[172] See Rubiés, 135.
[173] Rubiés, "Distance and Credibility in Sixteenth-Century Travel Writing," 47f. As it was meant to be a entertaining work of literature Varthema had an interest in adding whatever information he could gather for his audience.
[174] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 131–141.
[175] Rubiés, 155. Calicut was the most important city for the Portuguese at the time and Duarte Barbosa does much the same shortly after Varthema.
[176] See especially Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 16–20.

> of a flesh-hook, and the feet like those of a cock; so that he is a fearful object to behold.[177]

The major element that we see immediately is the dual worship of God and the devil, where God is recognised as the creator of the world and the devil is merely his vassal. Immediately following this passage, the ritual duties of the Brahmans are described in detail, followed a few pages later by details regarding the Brahmans' conception of purity:

> Every morning the Brahmins, that is the priests, go to wash the said idol all over with scented water, and then they perfume it; and when it is perfumed they worship it; and some time in the course of the week they offer sacrifice to it [...] And when [the Brahmans] are washed, they may not touch any person until they have said their prayers, and this in their house. And they say their prayers in this manner: — They lie with their body extended on the ground and very secret, and they perform certain diabolical actions with their eyes, and with their mouths they perform certain fearful actions; and this lasts for a quarter of an hour, and then comes the hour for eating. And they cannot eat unless the cooking is performed by the hands of a gentleman, for the ladies only cook for themselves.[178]

These short descriptive passages held much influence for the development of descriptions about Indian religion. As Rubiés has pointed out, Varthema combines a depiction of an actual statue — most probably Narasimha, the fourth avatara of Vishnu — with European conceptions of the devil.[179] The woodcuts made by Breu for the German edition of the *Itinerario* thus did not have to embellish much from Varthema's description to create a devilish representation of an Indian idol; but Varthema nevertheless ends up contributing to emerging (visual) stereotypes of describing non-European religion and Partha Mitter's point on the wide influence of Varthema in the literary and pictorial representation of Indian gods remains valid.[180]

Varthema described Indian religion mainly as he saw it himself, which is showcased in the detail he supplies regarding the actions of the Brahmans. As Rubiés points out, 'it would be fairer to say that Varthema interpreted Hindu gods as devils than to say that he saw European devils where he should have seen Hindu gods', as within a Christian universalist framework Varthema *had* to observe what was clearly idolatry — as opposed to the mediaeval utopian perspectives he was reporting actual pagan worship rather than a literary idol of the Brahmans — and he had an interest in portraying himself as orthodox as possible considering his heterodox

[177] The translation is from Lodovico de Varthema, *The Itinerary of Ludovico Di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508*, trans. John Winter Jones (London: Argonaut Press, 1863), 55–56.
[178] Varthema, 56, 60.
[179] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 159. See also Gelders, "Genealogy of Colonial Discourse."
[180] See Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*; Marianna Ferrara, "The Sacrifice of Others: South Asian Religious Practices in Early Modern European Vocabulary," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 82 (2016): 607–628.

past.[181] This also stands in contrast to early Portuguese expectations, who were influenced by the narratives of Prester John and reports of St. Thomas Christians and overestimated Christian power in India whilst underestimating that the overwhelming majority of people would be pagans.[182] Lacking the comparative — and ultimately relativising — language of later travellers, missionaries, and scholars, both Varthema and the Portuguese had only two real options: either interpreting what they saw within a universalising framework where the Indian practices constitute a form of Christianity, or interpret them as the only other option, by perceiving an idolatrous pagan nation which has been seduced by the devil to worship him.

In Varthema we thus see a shift towards an ethnographic form of reporting of the observed religious practices rather than adhering to an ideal type of wise Brahmans or Christians in India. As already mentioned, the religious descriptions do not take centre stage in Varthema, who describes a myriad of cultural details about the people of Calicut, from eating habits, to marriage practices, to social stratification. Despite the infamous account of devil worship, the ethnographic detail marks a tendency towards an awareness that the Indians have a specific form of pagan religion: a creator god, Tamerani, described much like the Christian God, sent forth a secondary divinity to administer justice, Deumo, the devil. Though understood within a Christian theological framework, the creed is described with detail and the divinities have specific names, whilst the worship is characterised by Brahman priests performing rituals on idols. Varthema thus follows an orthodox Christian line of interpretation, but acknowledges the presence of a recognition of God as well as devil-worship, a duality that would become more discussed in the seventeenth century.

### Empire, Trade, and Ethnography

Varthema's popular book is an example of a shift towards greater detail and accuracy in ethnographical reporting, prompted by the pressure to be informative and precise that came about through the increase in travel literature after the arrival of the Portuguese in India.[183] The possibilities produced by the colonial Portuguese empire meant that merchants and officials in the employ of the Portuguese Estado da Índia continue this trend, even though they write from another point of view and within a very different imperial context, where issues such as race and caste attain more importance.[184] From its inception, the emergence of Portuguese India exhibits the entanglements of knowledge and power, as well as the early modern interaction between politics of empire and theology, religion, and missiology.[185] As we shall see in chapter

[181] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 160.
[182] Rubiés, 161.
[183] Rubiés, 162f.
[184] See Rubiés, 201–222.
[185] Giuseppe Marcocci, "Conscience and Empire: Politics and Moral Theology in the Early Modern Portuguese World," *Journal of Early Modern History* 18, no. 5 (2014): 473–494; Giuseppe Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c. 1450-1600," *Anuario Colombiano de*

4, the rise of the Iberian empires in the sixteenth century also produces new world historical surveys, in which ethnological findings were utilised to erect grand narratives about the history of the world and its peoples.[186]

Remaining in the ambit of Portuguese ethnographies of India, some accounts are of special interest, as they give us detailed descriptions of the political and social circumstances in early-sixteenth-century South India. They include those by Duarte Barbosa and Tomé Pires, as already mentioned above, as well as those by Domingo Paes and Fernão Nunes on Vijayanagara. With these accounts we gain substantial information on the Vijayanagara Empire, called Bisnagar or Narsinga by Europeans, which was the major Hindu power in South India at this time and which the Portuguese recognised as a key power broker and a powerful potential ally against the Muslims.[187] As I have already mentioned, the Portuguese also hoped to find Christian allies in India, influenced by the myths about Prester John and stories about the St. Thomas Christians. This led the participants of Vasco da Gama's first voyage to confuse Hindus for Christians, and would also continue to shape the interpretation of observers who knew that they were dealing with pagans.[188]

Tomé Pires's *Suma oriental* (c. 1511-1515) is the earliest of these accounts, but is also less focussed on South India itself. Pires, who served as an apothecary and administrator in Portuguese India, places a lot of attention on Southeast Asia and especially Malacca, where he was the supervisor of the spice trade of the Portuguese factors. Pires is focussed on products and trade and remains rather superficial on cultural and religious aspects of the inhabitants.[189] More than someone like Varthema, the Portuguese accounts are more focussed on local and regional peculiarities, and attempt a depiction of the social and ethnic make-up of society based on local classificatory schemes.[190] Pires, like Barbosa, thus aims for detail in his description of ethnic and social distinction, and, for instance, makes sure to distinguish the Nayar from the Brahmans.[191] While religious customs are once more not at the centre of Pires's account, what is worth mentioning is his portrayal of the Brahmans as an important and respected elite, and his portrayal of Indian religious beliefs broadly speaking: he claims that 'the whole of Malabar

*Historia Social y de la Cultura* 43, no. 2 (2016): 33–57.

[186] See Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Humanistic Culture: A Blunted Impact?," in *Bringing the World to Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Mancall (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 131–168; Giuseppe Marcocci, *The Globe on Paper: Writing Histories of the World in Renaissance Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[187] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 164–200.

[188] Rubiés, 165f.

[189] An overview for Pires is given in Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 185f. A more extensive analysis is found in Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 201–222. For the text with an English edition, and biographical details in the introduction, see Tomé Pires and Francisco Rodrigues, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires : An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 ; and, the Book of Francisco Rodrigues, Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1515*, trans. Armando Cortesão, 2 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944).

[190] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 208–209.

[191] Pires and Rodrigues, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, 67.

believes, as we do, in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three in one, the only true God.'[192] At the same time, earlier in the account he specifies that most of the inhabitants of Gujarat (Cambay) were idolaters, some of whom lead good lives despite that; in any case, he specifies that they believe 'in Our Lady and in the Trinity, and there is no doubt that they were once Christians and that they gradually lost the faith because of the Mohammedans'.[193] The familiar, in Pires's estimate clearly Christian features encountered in India are thus explained within a framework of degradation, from an originally pure Christianity that was gradually corrupted and injected with idolatry.

Duarte Barbosa's book, who also describes much of Africa, China, and Southeast Asia, features a detailed description of South India, excelling in detail and accuracy among contemporary descriptions of Malabar.[194] As a secretary in the employ of the Portuguese he had mastered Malayalam and remained in India for at least fifteen years, giving him access to information most of his contemporaries lacked. Barbosa's account describes the social hierarchy in Portuguese India through castes ('sorti' in Ramusio's translation) or 'laws'; by proposing a number of distinct laws, for instance eighteen for Malabar, within an overarching pagan structure, he promotes both the idea of an intergenerational stratification of society according to caste, as well as their incorporation into a larger, trans-regional gentile law that is common among all pagans of India.[195] Descriptions of actual religious practices and beliefs are not the main interest for Barbosa either, but he mentions the office and role of the Brahmans on multiple occasions. His main experience and longest description was on the Malabar coast, from which he also infers the status of Brahmans in other places such as Gujarat, ending up almost identical to the description of Brahmans on the Malabar Coast. They are described in a similar manner to Pires but with some greater detail, and Barbosa identifies many of the markers of difference he sees with the Brahmans, such as their abstinence from meat, particularities surrounding marriage practices, or the wearing of three linen threads (yajnopavita). Barbosa also describes the Brahman privilege of receiving alms and how they live and work.[196] He also provides an account of their beliefs:

> These Bramenes hold the number three in great reverence; they hold that there is a God in three persons, who is not more than one; their prayers are all ceremonials, they honour the Trinity and would as it were desire to depict it. The name which they give it is *Bermabesma Maceru*, who are three persons and only one God, whom

[192] Pires and Rodrigues, 66.
[193] Pires and Rodrigues, 39.
[194] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 347. The source can be found in Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, trans. Mansel Longworth Dames, 2 vols. (Hakluyt Society, London, 1918–21); Duarte Barbosa, *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, ed. Maria Augusta da Veiga e Sousa, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Inst. de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1996–2000).
[195] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 209f.
[196] Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, I, 217.

> they confess to have been since the beginning of the world. They have no knowledge nor information concerning the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. They believe and respect many truths, yet do not tell them truly. [...] These Bramenes are learned in their idolatry, and possess many books thereof. The Kings hold them in high esteem.[197]

Barbosa, much like Pires, thus presents the Brahmans as Trinitarian monotheists who believe in one God who presents himself in three persons, much like the Christians. In both cases the expectations of finding Christians influenced the Portuguese view on the *trimurti* — the Hindu triad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva — which is misunderstood as a proof for a Christian or vestigial Christian belief in the trinity. What is particular to this passage by Barbosa, however, is how he qualifies the knowledge of the Brahmans: even though they do know many truths, they do not reveal them, whilst they at the same time are learned in idolatry, the implicit opposite of truth. The Brahmans are thus two-sided; they know truth, but perpetuate idolatry, which is described thoroughly in other places in Barbosa and though it is rendered in a mostly dispassionate way is clearly and unmistakably described as idol worship. As guardians of truth and perpetuators of error we may here see an early presentation of the crafty deceitful priest, a notion which would gain traction especially in the seventeenth century and attain great power during the Enlightenment. In this context the notion of crafty priests retaining secret or hidden knowledge whilst feeding the public untruths becomes especially relevant, and as we shall see we also see elements of this in the *Open Door*.[198]

Paes and Nunes produced detailed accounts on Vijayanagara, Paes (account written around 1521) mainly from the point of view as a traveller, while Nunes (account written around 1535) expands on the city and realm as a chronicler.[199] Thus Paes gives us a personal and detailed account of the great capital of the empire, whilst Nunes supplies important historical detail on the kingdom and its rulers. Paes's descriptions are precise and concise, focussed primarily on social, economic, and political realities, and his description of the Brahmans is worth quoting:

> These Brahmans are like friars with us, and they count them as holy men — I speak of the Brahman priests and the lettered men of the pagodas — because

[197] Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, II, 37. Compare also with the description of Gujarati Brahmans: ' These Bramenes and Heathen have in their creed many resemblances to the Holy Trinity, and hold in great honour the relation of the Triune Three, and always make their prayers to God', whom they confess and adore as the true God, Creator and maker of all things, who is three persons and one God, and they say that there are many other gods who are rulers under him, in whom also they believe.' Barbosa, I, 115.

[198] I discuss priestly imposture in the context of the *Open Door* in chapter nine. On its enlightenment context see J. A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); James A. T. Lancaster and Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, "Priestcraft. Early Modern Variations on the Theme of Sacerdotal Imposture," *Intellectual History Review* 28, no. 1 (2018): 1–6.

[199] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 228. On Paes and Nunes more generally see 223-250. A translation of the two complementary accounts is found in Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar). A Contribution to the History of India*, in collab. with Public Resource (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900).

> although the king has many Brahmans, they are officers of the towns and cities and belong to the government of them; others are merchants, and others live by their own property and cultivation, and the fruits which grow in their inherited grounds. Those who have charge of the temples are learned men, and eat nothing which suffers death, neither flesh nor fish, nor anything which makes broth red, for they say that it is blood. Some of the other Brahmans whom I mentioned, who seek to serve God, and to do penance, and to live a life like that of the priests, do not eat flesh or fish or any other thing that suffers death.[200]

This is not only an precise description of Brahmans, albeit naturally from a decidedly Christian perspective where the Brahmans constitute priests, but it is also surprisingly neutral, lacking obvious condemnation or praise. This style of reporting may even remind us of the *Open Door*, and indeed this account is extremely similar to Rogerius's initial description of the Brahmans. Indeed, Willem Caland posited that Rogerius had actually read Paes, based on the eery similarity of Paes's characterisation of burying widows alive with the equivalent in the *Open Door*. The similarity is indeed striking, but it is unclear how Rogerius would have had access to a copy of Paes's manuscript. A more likely source for both of these passages, and many other similarities in reporting, would be Barbosa, whose account was much more accessible through Ramusio. This does not however detract from the usefulness of these early Portuguese ethnographic descriptions for the much later and generally more detailed writings of Rogerius, who, like Philipp Baldaeus shortly after him, could rely on Portuguese precedents.

Nunes offers a less personal but also more complex account of Vijayanagara. The details of Nunes's chronicle and his presentation of Hindu kingship need not concern us here, and I want to instead once more turn our attention to the presentation of religion and the Brahmans. Nunes, in a similar way to Pires, describes the Brahmans as believers in God and the trinity. These clearly monotheist Brahmans are distinguished from the Canarese, who commit clear idolatry in their pagodas; but the 'proper' Brahmans are very much presented as quasi-Christians, who also follow the ten commandments.[201] Nunes also distances the Brahmans from the majority of inhabitants of the city and kingdom, all of whom he declares to be heathen. Idolatry and other 'heathen' acts such as sati are thus othered as pagan and clearly distinguished from the monotheist Brahmans.

These early-sixteenth-century accounts thus engage in two complementary yet opposed presentations of Indian religion, where sati, hook-swinging, and idolatry exist in close proximity to the supposed vestiges of a quasi-Christian monotheism.[202] What is important to recognise is not only that from a Christian perspective elements of truth — in the form of the trinity and monotheism — intermingled with idol-worship and superstition, but that they are presented

[200] Sewell, 245.

[201] Sewell, 390f. See also Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 267, who points out the different reporting about different kinds of Brahmans in Nunes.

[202] As also pointed out by Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India*, 22. The important point however, in my opinion, is the role of the Brahmans within these narratives, without which this discourse cannot be understood.

as distinct spheres. The general population is at best described in a dispassionate way, but idolatry and paganism are clearly recognised by these authors, even if they do not call it devil worship like Varthema. It is primarily the elite, namely the Brahmans and perhaps the king of Vijayanagara, who are represented to know something that goes beyond paganism and pertains in a meaningful way to Christianity. To a European Humanist in the mid-sixteenth century this would have been a familiar theme, as in a Platonic tradition Christianity could be nominally very open towards non-Christian wisdom traditions interpreted within a universalising Christian framework of sacred history.[203]

With this short overview of some key Portuguese authors we also see hints of the entanglement between empire, moral theology and evangelisation in the early stages of Portuguese India, which we will also have to keep in mind in the next section on the Society of Jesus.[204] As 'colonial ethnographers' we see the emergence of descriptions based on caste, and the Portuguese in fact introduced Europeans to the idea of India as a caste society.[205] Until the middle of the century, these accounts only had limited circulation in manuscript form, however, when they were included — in the form of summaries to almost entire accounts — in collections and compilations such as Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (1550-1559) or via histories of the Indies such as Joao de Barros's *Décadas da Ásia* (1552-1563).[206]

I will return to Ramusio and Barros when speaking about Humanism and the European creation of a more global ethnological and historical scholarship in chapter 4. For now it is important to note that it was only with Ramusio that these informative Portuguese accounts, translated into Italian and put alongside other accounts such as those by Marco Polo, de'

[203] I will discuss this in detail in chapter 5. Agostino Steuco's extremely influential presentation of a perennial philosophy was published a mere decade before Ramusio's first volume, see Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia* (Lyon: Sebastian Gryphius, 1540).

[204] See Marcocci, "Conscience and Empire"; Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th-18th Centuries)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015); Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c. 1450-1600"; Ângela Barreto Xavier, *Religion and Empire in Portuguese India: Conversion, Resistance, and the Making of Goa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022) and Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India*, 45–102, especially for his presentation on the connected history of *convivencia*, the knowledge of Jews and Muslims, and the impact of the *Tarikh* tradition on Portuguese chronicles.

[205] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 202; Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c. 1450-1600," 46–49. The imperial organisation in Goa also went on to distinguish between *indiáticos*, men born in India to fully Portuguese parents, as well as *castiços* and *mestizos*, who had some Indian blood. Xavier, *Religion and Empire in Portuguese India*, 295.

[206] Barbosa and Pires were included in partial translations, while Nunes and Paes remained unpublished. The latter two were probably used by Barros for his *Décadas*, extracts of which in turn were included in the second edition of the first volume of the *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, so as early as 1554. See Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, 3 vols. (Venice: Lucantonio Giunti, 1550–59); João de Barros and Diogo do Couto, *Da Asia de João de Barros, dos feitos que os Portuguezes fizeram no descubrimento e conquista dos mares e terras do Orient*, 14 vols. (Lisbon: Na Regia officina typografica, 1778–88). See further Massimo Donattini, "Giovanni Battista Ramusio e le sue navigationi. Appunti per una biografia," *Critica storica* 17 (1980): 55–100; Charles Ralph Boxer, *João de Barros: Portuguese Humanist and Historian of Asia* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1980); Marcocci, *The Globe on Paper*.

Conti, and Varthema, were published and reached a broader, European audience.[207] Ramusio's collection would elicit many to copy his formula, and the collections of Hakluyt and De Bry, which will be discussed in the next chapter, would precede the mid-seventeenth-century Dutch *Begin ende voorthgang*, the most important source for Dutch travel accounts in the first half of the seventeenth century.

## 2.4 The Society of Jesus

The middle of the sixteenth century thus brought India closer to European minds, even though the Ottomans and the Americas would remain more relevant in the popular imagination of the non-European world and formed its principal *other*, and Orientalism still restricted itself to the history and languages of the biblical lands of the Near East. It was also at this time that a new Catholic order was founded which would forever change the European view and approach to India, namely the Society of Jesus.[208] The Jesuits established themselves as a global institution with universal aims almost from their inception.[209] Founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola and six of his companions from the University of Paris, the Society of Jesus set their sights on the East almost immediately. The Jesuits formed a close relationship with the Portuguese Crown and established missionary work as an essential element of the Portuguese Christianising strategy in the East, closely linking the Jesuits to the *padroado*.[210] For the Eastern mission the most important early figure was clearly Francis Xavier (1506 - 1552), one of the founders of the order, who established the Jesuit mission in India and died in China, and with whose arrival the 'Jesuits became the acknowledged leaders of the Christian missionary effort within the padroado'.[211]

The Jesuits established a new form of global mission, centred around a strategy of learning local languages and the crafting of sophisticated ethnographies for the sake of conversion, eventually and famously putting them at the centre of conflict and debate due to their particular

[207] On Ramusio and the *Delle navigationi et viaggi* see Donattini, "Giovanni Battista Ramusio e le sue navigationi. Appunti per una biografia"; Massimo Donattini, "Ombre Imperiali. Le Navigationi et Viaggi Di G.B. Ramusio e l'immagine Di Venezia," in *L'Europa Divisa e i Nuovi Mondi. Per Adriano Prosperi*, vol. 2 (2011), 33–44; Margaret Small, "A World Seen Through Another's Eyes: Hakluyt, Ramusio, and the Narratives of the Navigationi et Viaggi," in *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Claire Jowitt and Daniel Carey (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

[208] For an overview on the Society of Jesus see Sabina Pavone, *I gesuiti dalle origini alla soppressione: 1540-1773*, Economica Laterza (Rome and Bari: GLF editori Laterza, 2013).

[209] Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Michela Catto et al., *Evangelizzazione e globalizzazione: Le missioni gesuitiche nell'età moderna tra storia e storiografia*, Biblioteca della 'Nuova rivista storica' 42 (Castello: Società editrice dante Alighieri, 2010).

[210] Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion 1400–1668* (London: Routledge, 2005), 122–124 and Županov, *Missionary Tropics*.

[211] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 247. See further also Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, 1:111–33.

stance on accommodation and culminating with the Chinese Rites (and to a lesser degree the Malabar Rites) controversy. From the moment of their foundation the Jesuits were focussed on a theologically 'inclusive attitude', which initially included Iberian New Christians and would extend to many elite groups of societies around the world.[212] The search for and belief in a form of primeval monotheism (*Urmonotheismus*) or Indian Christianity, supposedly overtaken or suppressed by Islam or idolatry, is something we have already encountered in my survey of the Middle Ages and the early Portuguese accounts of South India; this narrative continued to exhibit a strong influence on the Society of Jesus, and through the theological assertion of natural theology or an ancient theology common to the sages of pagan societies was a pillar of Jesuit strategy for the practical application of an accommodationist stance along with arguing for the civility of most other practises among the Chinese literati or South Indian Brahmans.[213] The questions asked by Jesuits and the answers they proposed were of pivotal importance for the sixteenth and seventeenth century attitude towards 'Indian religion', for Catholics and Protestants alike, and the information they gathered would also be crucial for the Dutch in India.

## The Jesuits in India

As we have seen, Christian missionary efforts, centred around the Franciscans and Dominicans, had extended to India since the beginning of the fourteenth century. These endeavours, built on the fragile conditions of the pax Mongolica and the tenuous land passage to India, were however limited and ephemeral in comparison to what would follow from the sixteenth century onwards. The Jesuits, by entangling themselves with the Portuguese padroado, established a much more extensive enterprise with a coherent strategy and goals, integrated into a global missionary network.[214] India was not the focus of the early Jesuit mission in Asia, but it was an important location nevertheless, as well as a waypoint and training ground for other missionary arenas.[215] Xavier remained in India just shy of three years before moving his interest to Japan and China, which would continue to be the main foci of the Asian mission for the Jesuits. Nevertheless, Xavier left behind a lasting legacy in the form of a missionary

[212] Stefania Pastore, "Jesuits, Conversos, and Alumbrados in the Iberian World," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 269–292.

[213] See for instance Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 426-427 or Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 36–37. C.f. also Daniel Pickering Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 164–193 and Giuliano Mori, "Natural Theology and Ancient Theology in the Jesuit China Mission," *Intellectual History Review* 30, no. 2 (2020): 187–208.

[214] On the Jesuit's global strategy see Ines G. Županov, "Currents and Counter-Currents: Jesuit Geopolitics in Asia (16th Century)," in *I Gesuiti Ai Tempi Di Claudio Acquaviva. Strategie Politiche, Religiose e Culturali Tra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Paolo Broggio et al. (Rome: Morcelliana, 2007), 205–218; Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions*; Ines G. Županov, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[215] See for instance Joan-Pau Rubiés, "The Jesuit Discovery of Hinduism: Antonio Rubino's Account of the History and Religion of Vijayanagara (1608)," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3, no. 1 (2001): 210–256.

foundation for the Society of Jesus in India. In this initial phase under Xavier the Jesuits build dozen of churches and established a basis for the education and care of the Christians in India, especially the Portuguese Christians who had settled in and around Goa. Under Xavier the Jesuits also celebrated a first victory in missionary field, as the Parava people, living along the Pearl Fishery Coast, were converted to Christianity.[216]

The conversion of the Paravas, a Tamil speaking community which still lives at the most southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, which the Portuguese had already begun before the arrival of Xavier, preceded the more sophisticated and controversial accommodation tactics employed later in the century and especially in the seventeenth century. Instead, the conversion of the Paravas illustrate some of the linguistic issues we confront when speaking about conversion as a binary change from one religion to another, as well as assumptions about 'East' and 'West', or conception of 'self' and 'other', which were 'complicated by the multiple, overlapping (and often times conflicting) political, socio-economic, religious, and ethnic (sub)conscious identities and agendas of subgroups and individuals.'[217] This conversion was not so much due to successful missionary tactics, but rather a marriage of convenience. The Paravas effectively became a Christian caste, who made their Tamil form of Catholicism a key marker of their own identity, whilst skilfully negotiating their autonomy under Portuguese and later Dutch rule. Religious identity and conversion meant different things in an Indian context than it did within the Abrahamic religions. In this sense this episode was already illustrative of the more theologically argued, yet equally tactical, accommodation strategy that would be used in the future, and also showcases the chasm of incommensurability between Christian and Hindu conceptions of religion, conversion, and worship.

The turning point for Jesuit missionary strategy was the arrival of the Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano (1539 - 1606), who appeared in Goa in 1586, twelve years after the death of Francis Xavier. Valignano shaped the Society of Jesus's strategy and the Asian mission until his death in 1606. His focus was on what is now most associated with the Jesuit's early modern mission in Asia and beyond, namely the pursuit of missionary work in the midst of the societies which were to be converted through a focus on learning about the self-declared religious and civil customs of the people and the study of local languages.[218] Valignano's and the Jesuits' encounter with the St. Thomas Christians was in many ways what Ines Županov has called a 'staging ground' for the method of accommodation, which would afterwards be employed on a

[216] Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, 1:140–44; Kenneth McPherson, "Paravas and Portuguese: A Study of Portuguese Strategy and Its Impact on an Indian Seafaring Community," *Mare Liberum* 13 (1997): 69–82.

[217] Markus P. M. Vink, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: The Christian Paravas: A 'Client Community' in Seventeenth-Century Southeast India," *Itinerario* 26, no. 2 (2002): 66. See also S. B. Kaufmann, "A Christian Caste in Hindu Society: Religious Leadership and Social Conflict among the Paravas of Southern Tamilnadu," *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981): 203–234; Xavier, *Religion and Empire in Portuguese India*.

[218] For an overview of Valignano see Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 255-62.

more global level.[219] At the same time, this encounter also illustrates the entanglement between the Portuguese Empire and the Jesuit evangelising mission. The St. Thomas Christians seemed to be one of the most promising and important groups for the Jesuits and the Portuguese, as they could be held up as a model of strong and pious Christians devoted to their faith, but at the same time also were key allies for the Jesuits and the Portuguese due to their role as pepper merchants. Nevertheless, though the St. Thomas Christians could (once again) evoke such a positive model, in reality the Latin Europeans did not consider their Nestorian Christianity to be as orthodox as their Catholic Christianity. The encounter with the St. Thomas Christians, prior to the more famous dealings with the Brahmans, thus made the Jesuits acutely aware of the plurality of customs and the need for accommodation for a successful missionary enterprise, whilst hoping that the St. Thomas Christians could be used as a bridgehead for converting upper-caste Indians in the region.[220]

Valignano's championing of learning local languages as well as investigating the cultures of the peoples who were to be converted for the sake of evangelisation would bear fruit especially in the seventeenth century. Accommodation as a strategy developed at least as much out of the acute needs and challenges faced by missionaries in Asia as it did out of a theological foundation. The power relations in the East were very different from those encountered by the Iberian empires in the West, leading to concrete challenges in the missionary field. The example of the Paravas has already illustrated that conversion could be a strategic choice, especially for marginalised communities or those seeking to establish a specific agreement with the Portuguese. To win over elites in an arena where European did not hold much power, however, it was necessary to study the others' culture and to communicate with them in forms and media other than European languages and customs.[221]

Accommodation as a practical tool had a considerable history within the Christian church completely independent from efforts to convert, and had been employed for centuries among Jewish and Christian theologians. As a hermeneutical tool it had long been used to interpret scripture, an exegetical method employed so that scripture could be adjusted for mankind to understand, receive, and perceive divine providence.[222] Already Ignatius of Loyola reflects on accommodation, using the metaphor of the open door, not in the sense of opening up the secrets of paganism that we see with the *Open Door*, but rather relating to bridging gaps of incommensurability: Ignatius argued that one has to enter the door of the other in order to

[219] Županov, "One Civility"; István Perczel, "Accommodationist Strategies on the Malabar Coast: Competition or Complementarity?," in *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 191–232; Thanh, "Jesuits in Asia." Further see Paolo Broggio et al., eds., *I gesuiti ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva: strategie politiche, religiose e culturali tra Cinque e Seicento* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2007).
[220] Thanh, "Jesuits in Asia," 404–405. See also Županov, "One Civility."
[221] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 316–17. See also Rubiés, "Jesuit Discovery," 221.
[222] Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 213–22; Ines G. Županov, "Accommodation," in *Dictionnaire Des Faits Religieux*, ed. Régine Azria and Danièle Hervieu-Leger (Paris: PUF, 2010), 1–4.

make them come out of their house.[223] The situation in the Americas was different than in Asia, as for instance José de Acosta could assert that the native American peoples were not civilised enough for such a form of conversion. Instead, the civilisations of Asia — not subject to European rule, but instead in a much more powerful situation than the European newcomers — could receive the message of Christianity through reasoned debate and persuasion, just as early Christians did with the civilised Greeks and Romans, with whom they shared an intellectual foundation.[224] In places where the Portuguese *did* hold more power, such as in Goa, the situation unfolded in a different manner, and the Goan Inquisition also held a very opposing view on accommodation and which rites and practices were civil or religious.[225]

The situation in Asia, in the eyes of many Jesuits, thus could be interpreted a parallel situation to what had unfolded more than a millenium before among the Greeks and Romans, as within early Christian and patristic writing Greek philosophy is not necessarily in conflict with Christianity, but seen as a stepping stone or preparation for becoming Christian, a *praeparatio evangelica*.[226] By necessity, this implied a level of understanding and knowledge of the foreign cultures that were to be converted, just as the church fathers had been familiar with Greek learning. Naturally language, intimately entangled with culture and religion, was crucial in this regard, as the knowledge of local languages was a necessity not only for learning about the foreign cultures, but also for communicating about Christianity. The realisation that this was a key strategy in many ways goes back to Xavier himself, and as Ines Županov stresses, Valignano, Ricci, and subsequently Nobili did not 'presume that they were, in fact, inventing any new method of conversion, but rather proceeding in the steps of their famous predecessor Francis Xavier. It became clear early on in India that the problem of multiplicity of languages to which the missionaries had to translate their catechetical texts was closely entangled in questions of culture, sociability and authority.'[227]

[223] See Ines G. Županov, *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 24. A theological use of the open door metaphor was already used by the apostle Paul, when he speaks of doors opening for the gospel to spread, see 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Colossians 4:3. The Dutch usage by the authors of the *Open Deure* seems to combine these two meanings, as the knowledge of the *other* opens up the door for conversion.

[224] Županov, "One Civility," 285. See also Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 314.

[225] See Giuseppe Marcocci, "Rites and Inquisition: Ethnographies of Error in Portuguese India (1560–1625)," in *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, ed. Ines G. Županov and Pierre Antoine Fabre (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 145–164.

[226] Augustine himself famously told the story of his conversion through the aid of Platonism and we have seen the Platonised form of Christianity espoused by Clement of Alexandria. As already discussed in the presentation of the history of the concept of idolatry, attitudes to pagan philosophy could vary considerably, even if taking an ancient wisdom strategy for granted. While Clement also argued for a *prisca sapientia* tradition to legitimise Christianity without entirely othering Greek philosophy, he does so from a more 'inclusive' perspective, while for instance Eusebius, though building very much on the same intellectual foundation, argues that the Greeks stole their philosophy from the Hebrews from the point of view that Christians are 'apostates from Greekness', thus arguing for a radical difference with the *other* rather than seeking commonality. Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 232.

[227] Županov, "One Civility," 286.

Xavier and Valignano, more interested in the cultures of Japan and China, showed little interest in India beyond the most strategic locations around the coasts, and did not have a positive opinion regarding the Brahmans; Valignano identifies them as 'those who take care of the cult and ceremonies of idols, [and] are the most cruel enemies of our holy Christian Law'.[228] Valignano paints the Brahmans as priests of idolatry, who have some knowledge of God, but have completely perverted it through the worship of idols and monsters — hardly the image of a key civilised elite to be converted.[229] It is therefore not surprising that the mission in India would gain impetus only after the death of Valignano, with the arrival of a new generations of Jesuits such as Roberto Nobili. They orientated themselves on the success of the Chinese mission led by Matteo Ricci, who had pioneered a deeply immersive strategy for converting the Chinese literati by essentially becoming one of them in dress and conduct.[230]

### Roberto Nobili and the Madurai Mission

Just like Ricci, this new generation of mainly Italian Jesuits active in India 'went native' by not only learning local languages, but also adopting the dress and conduct of Brahman sannyasis. The most famous case is that of Roberto Nobili (1577 - 1656), but also for instance his contemporary Antonio Rubino engaged in a very similar enterprise, though coming to different conclusions.[231] The key argument used for why these activities were acceptable was in declaring that these were purely social customs, and that by adopting this local culture no *religious* practices were involved; Nobili could in this way take part in Brahman society, don Brahman clothing and symbols, and attend rituals, as these were argued to be civil practices. This meant that Nobili or Brahman converts to Christianity were allowed to continue wearing the yajnopavita, which was a contentious matter within the Society of Jesus and was clearly

[228] '[...] los bramenes, que son especialmente los que tienen cuenta del culto y ceremonias de los ydolos, son cruelíssimos enemigos de nuestra sancta ley christiana' Alessandro Valignano, *Historia del principio y progresso de la Compañia de Jesús en las Indias orientales (1542-64)*, ed. Josef Wicki (Rome: Institutum historicum S.I., 1944), 69.

[229] Valignano, 31–32: 'The sum of the religion of these and all other Indians is that there is a Lord, to whom they give all or almost all the attributes that we give to the true God, adding to them many monstrosities and chimeras' (La suma de la religión destos y de todos los demás indios que hay un señor, al qual ellos dan todos o quasi todos los atributos que nosotros damos al verdadero Dios, añadiendo ellos muchas monstruosidades y chimera).

[230] The literature on Ricci and the Chinese Rites Controversy is ample. See especially D. E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1994); Ines G. Županov and Pierre Antoine Fabre, eds., *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). An interesting perspective on the European discourse on 'Oriental religion' sparked in part by Ricci is App, *The Birth of Orientalism*.

[231] On Nobili see Peter R. Bachmann, *Roberto Nobili 1577-1656: ein missionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zum christlichen Dialog mit Hinduismus* (Rome: Institum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 1972); Županov, *Disputed Mission*; Gita Dharampal-Frick, "Revisiting the Malabar Rites Controversy: A Paradigm of Ritual Dynamics in the Early Modern Catholic Missions of South India," in *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 122–142. On Rubino, Azevedo, and Fenicio see further Rubiés, "Jesuit Discovery"; Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 324–343; Will Sweetman, "The Absent Vedas," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139, no. 4 (2019): 781–804.

seen as a pagan attribute by some like Nobili's superior Gonsalvo Fernandes, who did not approve of the relativising arguments of Nobili.[232] This does not imply any conscious religious syncretism on the part of Nobili and his followers, but instead must be seen as a tactical decision, making it possible to present the Brahmans as the key *social* elite, rather than a purely *religious* or priestly class, that could and should be converted. In this way food restrictions, clothing choices, and daily practices were rendered to be merely social.[233] It is important to note that this fits into a larger Jesuit strategy of converting elites that characterises the global Jesuit mission, even though the Jesuits held more power in places where larger (general) populations of people had been converted such as Goa, where the political balance was also very different and enabled a measure of social control.

This method of accommodation gave this generation of missionaries of the early seventeenth century entry to the previously inaccessible, and primarily also ignored, culture of the Brahmans, and made it possible to study their ritual in depth. This did not automatically entail a sophisticated ethnographic model of the civil and religious life of the Brahmans — the example of Rubino shows that the earlier clear-cut identification of Indian idolatry with devil worship could survive also despite this native immersion.[234] Such a dismissal of Indian religion as merely fabulous and idolatrous and not worth serious investigation is also echoed in the vastly popular work on the history of the Portuguese and Jesuit activities in India, the Humanist Jesuit Giovanni Maffei's *Historiae Indicae* (Florence 1588).[235] But generally around the turn of the century we see a shift from earlier ethnographic writing which in a traditional way equated paganism, idolatry, and devil worship towards a comprehension that paganism was a complex system with its own internal logic. Positive assessments of the Brahmans which stood in contrast to popular idolatry in previous times had always been superficial and relied on a simplistic analogical presentation of Brahmanic beliefs. Fernandes is an echo of such a world-view, as within a binary system where religion in the singular (i.e. Christianity) is opposed by idolatry, adaptation through close study and immersion was not only condemnable, but idolatrous itself. What was knew with Nobili and his generation was the investigation of what lay behind the idols, and the attempt to find a meaningful connection between the idols, mythology, and doctrine.[236]

Where Fernandes perceived difference, Nobili identified much that was familiar. The

[232] Županov, *Disputed Mission*, passim, especially 48.
[233] Paolo Aranha, "Sacramenti o Saṃskārāḥ? L'illusione Dell'accommodatio Nella Controversia Dei Riti Malabarici" 31 (2010): 621; Dharampal-Frick, "Revisiting the Malabar Rites Controversy," 129.
[234] See Rubiés, "Jesuit Discovery." As Rubiés points out, Nobili 'was only the most audacious and successful among a whole generation of missionary writers', Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 321.
[235] Giovanni Pietro Maffei, *Ioannis Petri Maffeij Bergomatis e societate Iesu Historiarum Indicarum libri 16. Selectarum item ex India epistolarum eodem interprete libri 4. Accessit Ignatij Loiolae vita postremo recognita. Et in opera singula copiosus Index* (Florence: apud Philippum Iunctam, 1588). C.f. Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 312. This is even pointed out by A.W. in his own preface.
[236] Rubiés, 311.

aristocratic Italian Nobili saw much of the classic and contemporary Mediterranean reflected in Tamil Nadu: Sanskrit was the equivalent of Latin, Indian philosophical texts were interpreted as the core of a religious scripture of laws and precepts, and the Brahmans, with their notions of purity and social order, formed his only equals in stature and learning.[237] Nobili saw himself as a modern Paul, and the Indians as the seventeenth-century equivalent of the Greeks: thus to convert the Brahmans he had to understand the Brahmans from within their own culture, and had to become a Brahman himself.[238] This was possible only through the presentation of the Brahmans as a social elite and an ideal of indigenous 'civility', where 'Brahmanism informed all Indian social strata and provided, according to Nobili, a template for the behaviour of the common people, who followed it more or less successfully'.[239]

At the same time, Nobili, who was learning Sanskrit and was introduced to the Vedas by his Brahman teacher Shivadharma, argued for a monotheistic core that lay behind all the idols.[240] Nobili applied what we may term a 'proto-Indologist' method to the study of Indian texts, trying to find ancient authentic texts to arrive at a true understanding of Indian culture.[241] After an initial elation at the finding that God was one and triune according to the Brahmans and their books, Nobili rather quickly found out that this was no Christian trinity of persons, and that there was great plurality to be found in Indian 'theology'.[242] Yet this was not to hamper Nobili's own notions of an ancient Indian wisdom which could prepare the way for the Gospel to spread among the Brahmans and subsequently trickle down to all parts of Indian society. Rather than dismiss the entire system as idolatrous, Nobili thought that the errors and ridiculous elements he found in texts could be eliminated by the application of proper hermeneutic discernment.[243] Nobili also saw traces of divine truth in the Indian texts, and he focussed his belief in an ancient wisdom tradition on the fourth and forgotten or lost Veda — the Atharvaveda could indeed not be found any more in manuscript form in South India — which he could construct as containing elements of truth and divine revelation and present himself as the restorer of this lost ancient doctrine.[244]

Two aspects of the Jesuits' investigation of Brahmanism seem to me to be especially important for the development of the discourse on Indian religion and idolatry and paganism more broadly. First is how Nobili and his followers saw a binary opposition between the

[237] Županov, *Disputed Mission*, 25–30.
[238] Županov, 36, 103ff.
[239] Županov, 36. Nobili conceptualised Brahman practices not as pertaining to religious cult, but to be 'indifferent' (or as Zupanov argues 'adiaphora'). See Zupanov 97ff.
[240] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 339.
[241] Županov, *Disputed Mission*, 128.
[242] Županov, 115.
[243] Županov, 117.
[244] Županov, 74 and Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 339. Within the South Indian context Nobili thus seemed more like a revivalist teacher than a Christian missionary: 'In trying to substitute his truth in place of the "lost" one, Nobili inscribed himself into a genealogy of Hindu revivalist gurus, making Christianity appear to his Tamil audience as another Hindu dissident movement.' Županov, *Disputed Mission*, 74.

Brahmans and the monotheistic philosophy that in their eyes superseded the idolatrous especially in their ancient textual sources, and the popular, exoteric practices of the masses, who adored idols. The argument that the Brahmans were a social group whose own philosophical and theological foundation were not idolatrous could in this way be used to counter European identifications of the Brahmans with idolatry.[245] There is a remarkable continuity for this view of the Brahmans as a quasi-Christian, non-idolatrous elite, as we have seen throughout this chapter; what is remarkable is that this notion was asserted by the Jesuits despite the novel ethnographic investigations into the details of Brahmanic creeds and practices — not at all a given as the examples of Rubino and Fernandes show — and that this binary would remain as an important organising principle also in British India, where popular Hinduism was devalued whilst textual Hinduism was elevated to be the true and original religion of India.[246] As we will see in later chapters, the learned discussions of ancient pagan wisdom and its connection to Christian truth were entangled with the ongoing ethnographic missionary discoveries in Asia and the Americas.

The second aspect is broader, and regards the impact of the Jesuits' global accommodation strategy on the conceptualisation of religion tout court. Nobili's insistence on seeing the Brahmans and Brahman practices as belonging to a social sphere, just as Ricci had argued for the Chinese literati, relativised the concepts and opposition between religion and idolatry.[247] These 'anthropological' investigations that uncovered the cultural system of the Brahmans in a detailed ethnographic manner undermined and relativised the universality of the mediaeval understanding of religion.[248] Where 'religion' as a tern once was singular and denoted piety more than a separate sacred sphere — still present in modern usage when saying that something can be undertaken 'religiously' — religion moved conceptually into a specific element of culture. As we shall see in chapters 5 and 6, this was part of a broader, longue durée development where the concept of religion was redefined in an anthropological sense to denote a specific, sacred sphere within a given society and its cultural practices. This ongoing process is acutely visible also in the *Open Door*, as the annotator and Rogerius do not generally mean the same thing when they use 'religion' or 'religiously'.[249]

The Jesuits, by strategically distinguishing civil and religious practices, in this way unwittingly participated in this ongoing process of turning the singular 'religion' into the plural

[245] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 339.
[246] Županov, *Disputed Mission*, 30. See also King, *Orientalism and Religion*.
[247] In stark contrast to Nobili's superior Fernandes, who maintained that the Brahman practices were religious and motivated by the Veda; the role of religion within society was a topic which was debated within the Society of Jesus as well as outside of it. The debate between Fernandes and Nobili which I have alluded to already above is at the centre of Županov, *Disputed Mission*.
[248] Županov, 52; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "The Concept of Cultural Dialogue and the Jesuit Method of Accommodation: Between Idolatry and Civilization," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 74, no. 147 (2005): 237–280.
[249] See Jonathan Z Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–284; Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane."

'religions'. This happened through both their detailed ethnographic investigations into Indian and specifically Brahmanic culture rather than decrying everything as senseless idolatry, and the distinction of sacred and profane spheres *within* a given culture, instead of employing a mediaeval distinction where the sacred is synonymous with Christianity and the profane with idolatry. These two consequences of the Jesuit method of accommodation will continue to occupy great parts of this book, and they were crucial for the development of Dutch ethnography and the creation of the *Open Door*. The Jesuits would continue to be a power to be reckoned with for a considerable time in Asia, but their exclusive access would increasingly be challenged by newcomers. As the power of the Portuguese in the East Indies started to wane, other European enterprises took advantage of this opportunity, and with the English, Dutch, and French traders new accounts and ethnographic analyses emerged that would define the seventeenth-century view of India. Before looking at this in more detail I must however survey the rise of the Dutch in the East Indies and the religious developments back in the Low Countries, which made possible both the development of the Reformed Dutch mission in Asia and the growth of a Dutch culture of travel writing and ethnography within the wide reaches of the VOC.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE DUTCH IN INDIA, INDIA IN THE UNITED PROVINCES

## 3.1 The Dutch and the VOC in India

Just as the history of the English and then the British in India is in many ways a history of the EIC, the history of the Dutch in India and the East Indies is intimately connected with the Dutch East India Company, the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC). While the Dutch had strived to establish a foothold in the Indian Ocean trade already in the sixteenth century — especially with the so-called *voorcompagnieën* (precursor companies) who sent fleets eastwards in the last decade of that century — the foundation of the VOC in 1602 would herald the beginning of what has traditionally been called the Dutch Golden Age.[250] The sudden success of the Dutch was born in relation to its Iberian rivals. The Dutch Revolt against the Spanish Habsburg Empire — in a union with the kingdom of Portugal since 1580 — of the newly established Dutch Republic had been raging for decades now, and the increasingly successful Netherlanders took the conflict to the seas. After Jan Huyghen van Linschoten revealed the navigational secrets on how to reach India, the Dutch quickly built up considerable fleets and the VOC and its more short-lived cousin the West India Company (WIC) would quickly reach the farthest reaches of both East and West, spanning the world's oceans. The United Provinces, still a young polity which emerged out of the conflict with its arch-enemy Spain, challenged the teetering Portuguese in the East Indies and came to dominate the European spice trade

[250] For an overview and introduction to the history of the VOC see Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*; Menno Witteveen, *Een onderneming van landsbelang: de oprichting van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in 1602* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002); Femme S. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003). A good overview of developments in the Netherlands itself is Jonathan Irvine Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

within a remarkably short time span.[251]

The extent to which we might call Dutch expansion and commercial activity in the late sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century 'imperial', whether the VOC was mainly a commercial or also a political entity, or even to which extent it was mainly 'Dutch' remains contentious in the literature.[252] The Dutch built up a commercial structure reliant on what Pieter Emmer has called 'expansion without empire', while the VOC often also acted much like a sovereign state in matters of diplomacy and in governing its dominions.[253] In any case, Dutch overseas activity was never only commercial in nature; the conflict between Habsburg Spain and the newly independent United Provinces impacted the commercial, colonial, and religious goals of the Dutch overseas, and the VOC, though in theory an independent entity, was inextricably entangled both with matters in the home country and with the Atlantic, just as its sister company the West India Company. The VOC may thus be seen as an agent of empire in Asia which was linked and integrated into a larger global network of commerce and information exchange from Brazil to India and Ceylon all the way to Japan.[254] The commercial model with the new corporate form made the VOC — a bellicose combination of traders and pirates not afraid to take things by force — the main European power engaged in the spice trade in the seventeenth century, asserting their power and influence especially against the Portuguese and the English. The seventeenth century thus marks a time during which the Dutch established a thalassocracy characterised by a global power network over the seas that has been called the 'Dutch Moment'.[255]

More than half a century ago, Charles Boxer argued that Dutch expansion was driven

[251] For an overview see Michiel van Groesen, "Global Trade," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Geert H. Janssen and Helmer J. Helmers, Cambridge Companions to Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 166–186.

[252] For an excellent overview and an assessment see Pieter C. Emmer and Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), Introduction. Their view that Dutch Empire was a 'rather fluid conglomerate of overseas activities based on an amalgam of very different rights and privileges managed by a relatively small circle of Dutch regent families" is, in my view, a good baseline to follow. See also Pieter C. Emmer, "The Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800. Expansion Without Empire," *Itinerario* 23, no. 2 (1999): 48–69; Arthur Weststeijn, "The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion," *Itinerario* 38, no. 1 (2014): 13–34; Remco Raben, "The Asian Foundations of the Dutch Thalassocracy: Creative Absorption and the Company Empire in Asia," in *Empires of the Sea*, ed. Rolf Strootman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 312–337; Arthur Weststeijn, "Empire of Riches: Visions of Dutch Commercial Imperialism, c. 1600–1750," in *The Dutch Empire between Ideas and Practice, 1600–2000*, ed. René Koekkoek et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 37–65.

[253] See Emmer, "The Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800. Expansion Without Empire." While it is true that despite some early colonial forays in the Atlantic world, most notably the conquest and establishment of Dutch Brazil from 1630 to 1654 that was planned as a settler colony, the Dutch did not retain many substantial colonies over the course of the seventeenth century. They did hold strategic dominion over smaller areas and effectively also took control of Ceylon, even if this differed substantially from colonialism in the New World. See also Jurrien van Goor and Foskelien van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004); Weststeijn, "The VOC as a Company-State."

[254] See Cátia Antunes and Jos J.L. Gommans, eds., *Exploring the Dutch Empire: Agents, Networks and Institutions, 1600-2000* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[255] Raben, "The Asian Foundations of the Dutch Thalassocracy"; Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

not only by a lust for gain, but also by the religious spirit of spreading godliness.[256] Boxer, however, estimated the Dutch attempts at establishing a mission to be largely a failure.[257] More recent scholarship has attempted to push back against this and has focussed on the religious and missionary elements of Dutch expansion in Asia.[258] Whilst commerce did generally come before evangelisation, a great number of people in the United Provinces and among them many prominent early leaders in the VOC, such as Jacob van Heemskerck and Jan Pieterszoon Coen, were arguing for a more zealous agenda in the mission field and called for the spread of the true Protestant religion through the VOC.[259] Though in effect often subjugated under the commercial ambitions of the VOC, evangelisation was thus an important goal for seventeenth-century policymakers within and outside of the VOC, and the Dutch hoped to establish a Calvinist 'Indian Zion' in Asia.[260] Political, confessional, and commercial ambitions were very much linked in the first half of the seventeenth century, as the Dutch were fighting a religio-political war against Spain, exported via the East and West India Companies, whilst struggling to maintain Reformed orthodoxy at home. Besides its political and commercial activities the VOC was also confronted with unabated competition from Catholic missionaries in Asia even after wresting the control of the spice trade from the Portuguese. This resulted in a hybrid colonial conglomeration where gain and godliness interacted and intermingled in the global political ambitions of the Dutch.[261]

### Gaining a Foothold in India: Struggles Against the Portuguese

While the origins and reasons for the Dutch Revolt are complex and manifold, one of the main reasons for the break with Spain back in the sixteenth century had been religious in nature, as the Spanish Habsburgs followed a harsh anti-Reformation policy in the Low Countries. Though a niche group at the time, the Reformed Netherlanders — who never formed a true majority in the United Provinces even in the Calvinist golden age, as the republic counted many unaffiliated and Catholic citizens[262] - took an early leadership role in the Dutch Revolt. Subsequently

[256] Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, 113–154.
[257] See Boxer, 149–154.
[258] On the VOC and religion as well as Dutch missionary expansion see G. J. Schutte, ed., *Het Indisch Sion: de Gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002) and especially G. J. Schutte, "De kerk onder de compagnie," in *Het Indisch Sion: de Gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, ed. G. J. Schutte (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 43–64; Charles H. Parker, "Converting Souls across Cultural Borders: Dutch Calvinism and Early Modern Missionary Enterprises," *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013); Arthur Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord: Religious Escapism and Experimentation in Dutch Overseas Expansion, ca. 1650–1700," in *Enlightened Religion. From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety in the Dutch Republic*, ed. Joke Spaans and Ineke Loots (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 104–130; Charles H. Parker, *Global Calvinism: Conversion and Commerce in the Dutch Empire, 1600-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).
[259] Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord," 107f.
[260] Schutte, *Het Indisch Sion*; C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 7f.
[261] See Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*; Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord," 113.
[262] See Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008) on the negotiation of civic religion and the role of Catholicism in the

Calvinism became the public faith of the newly independent state, which nevertheless allowed for more thorough religion freedom than their former Iberian overlords, especially if practised outside of the public eye. Reformed Christianity thus found one of its main homes in the Netherlands, but although the Dutch elites were linked to the Reformed faith, internal and external pressures on Calvinism remained. Whilst Catholicism was officially excised from public spaces, if otherwise still largely tolerated, trouble was brewing within the Reformed community. A new faction following the teachings of Jacobus Arminius from Leiden University attempted to formulate a more moderate form of Reformed Christianity, especially in its approach to predestination. These Arminians or Remonstrants came into severe political conflict with the Anti-Remonstrants, who maintained a strict Calvinist understanding of Reformed Christianity. The Synod of Dort, an international council to which Reformed delegates from across Europe were invited, sealed the fate of the cause of the Remonstrants and cemented the Calvinist teaching on predestination. The United Provinces emerged from this crisis as a leading Calvinist nation.[263] At the same time, the Dutch attempted to export the Dutch Reformed Church into their new spheres of influence, attempting to create an *Indian Zion* where political and religious ideals could be realised in a utopian form, unlike the chaotic and divided situation that was the reality in the motherland.[264]

The overseas success of the Dutch in the seventeenth century thus followed a long struggle for the independence of the Dutch Republic from the Spanish Habsburg Empire, as well as internal conflict on what should be regarded as the true religion. The oceans outside of Europe were new spaces which held the potential for economic, religious, and political growth, where the Dutch could continue their fight against Spain and the papist Catholic religion. The main weapons in this war in a non-European context were the chartered companies. The VOC and WIC, though not under direct government control like their Iberian equivalents, were nevertheless instruments of the United Provinces and fought not only for dominance in trade, but also against the imperial and religious agendas of the Habsburgs. This is particularly evident in the Atlantic world with the WIC, which was founded in 1621 — the year the Twelve Years' Truce ended and the war with the Iberians recommenced.[265] Merchant trade and piracy blurred into one another as much as expeditions to find new trading routes doubled as expeditionary forces to destroy Spanish ships, for instance in the Philippines.

In Asia the Dutch sought to displace the Portuguese and their monopoly position in the spice trade. The relationship to Portugal was more complicated than that with Spain: although the Portuguese kingdom had been in a personal union with Spain since 1580, the Dutch were

seventeenth-century Netherlands.

[263] Joel R. Beeke and Martin I. Klauber, eds., *The Synod of Dort: Historical, Theological, and Experiential Perspectives* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Gmbh & Co, 2020).

[264] Schutte, *Het Indisch Sion*; C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*.

[265] See Pieter C. Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580-1880: Trade, Slavery, and Emancipation* (London: Routledge, 1998).

not officially at war with the Portuguese. Hugo Grotius, the great seventeenth-century theorist on natural law whom we will encounter again later for his theological legacy, made a crucial argument in favour of Dutch expansion following the 1603 capture of the Portuguese ship Santa Catarina close to Singapore. The Dutch under Admiral Jacob van Heemskerck had, not only from a Portuguese but also from a Dutch point of view, illegally seized the ship. Yet the loot proved too tempting, and the Dutch decided to keep the ship and its cargo, despite Portuguese demands for restitution. Grotius was asked in the aftermath to defend the seizure of Portuguese assets: he argued against the Iberian notion of a *Mare Clausum*, excluding other powers from encroaching on what they saw as their monopoly, by asserting that the seas were a free domain and military actions to enforce closed seas violated natural law. The Dutch, through the VOC, were thus entitled to plunder and capture when there was no possibility to resolve legal matters in any other way.[266] Grotius's argument in favour of free seas, a *Mare Liberum*, provided an ideological justification for the breakup of Iberian monopolies and led to decades-long war with Portugal, who were gradually displaced from their privileged role in the spice trade.

Though now officially an enemy, Portugal remained a model to emulate, and the Dutch were aware of the importance of Portuguese knowledge for their own ambitions. I have already outlined the most important Portuguese and Jesuit authors for European ethnologies of India; these also played a foundational role for the Dutch, both for their early commercial ventures and their own ethnographic tradition. Perhaps the most important figure connecting the Dutch and Portuguese worlds was Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563 - 1611), who had worked for the archbishopric in Goa and whose 1596 *Itinerario* was one of the foundational works of Dutch empire in Asia, as I will discuss in more detail below. His work was foundational for both the future fortunes of Dutch ethnography as well as the early success of the VOC, as he provided crucial Portuguese rutters to the Dutch public, an invaluable resource for the first Dutch voyages to the East Indies. By revealing the weaknesses of the Portuguese and showing them to be in an increasingly weak position in India, the *Itinerario* was an open invitation for the Dutch (and English) to rupture the Portuguese monopoly on the European spice trade.

Van Linschoten had alerted the Dutch to the fact that while the Portuguese remained in a relatively strong position in India, they had little presence in what is modern-day Indonesia and especially Java. As a consequence it was from here that the VOC subsequently organised their commercial empire, and where they built their headquarters. They chose to give their new foreign capital the Roman name of the Netherlands and its people: Batavia, current-day Jakarta. Although the VOC concentrated their commercial activity on the spice islands and

[266] Succinctly summarised in Emmer and Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600–1800*, 12. See for more detail Martine van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595-1615* (Brill, 2006). The argument was developed in Grotius's 1609 *Mare liberum*, see Hugo Grotius, *The Free Sea*, ed. David Armitage, trans. Richard Hakluyt (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004).

were based to a large extent in what is now Indonesia, the company had strategic interests on the Indian subcontinent, too.[267] India, after all, was an important market for spices and especially textiles, sought after across Southeast Asia. The VOC established its first trading settlement in India on the Coromandel Coast, which was already integrated into a extensive trading network with the Dutch focal zone in the Indonesian archipelago. This enabled the VOC to integrate themselves into these larger intra-Asian trade networks and gather capital for the spice trade through buying and selling Indian cloth.[268] Pulicat, where Abraham Rogerius resided for ten years, was the headquarters of Dutch Coromandel until the end of the seventeenth century, when Nagapattinam took the former's place.

### Dutch Coromandel and Pulicat

The Coromandel Coast stretches the coastlines from Andhra Pradesh to the southern tip of Tamil Nadu. Taking its name from the Cholas and 'Cholamandalam', early modern Europeans were vague in defining its limits: sometimes Coromandel referred to the entire east coast of the Indian peninsula, sometimes it was understood more specifically, limited to the coast south of the Godavari and down to Nagapattinam and its surroundings.[269] The first European to use the term 'Choromandel' for this region, at least in print, seems to have been Ludovico de Varthema, who speaks about a great city called 'Cioromandel' under the jurisdiction of the Vijayanagara king, which most likely would be Nagapattinam.[270] The port of Pulicat, located to the north of modern Chennai and south of the namesake Pulicat lake, is located in the middle of the Coromandel coast and rose to prominence in the fifteenth century as the Vijayanagara Empire stabilised its local rule, leading to the 'crystallisation of stable links between the port of Pulicat and the great imperial city of Vijayanagara'.[271] The trade links of sixteenth-century Pulicat to the east were extensive and reached Pegu (Myanmar) and Malacca. Pulicat, one of only a handful of ports engaging in high sea trade, exported mainly textiles for which there was high demand in Southeast Asia.[272]

When the Dutch arrived at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the northern half of the Coromandel Coast was under the control of Golconda (modern Hyderabad), while the

[267] The name of course fits well with the new Republican identity of the Netherlands, imagined by Hugo Grotius, the great ideologue behind Dutch overseas expansion, to be a rebirth going back to an idealised Batavian past. See Emmer and Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600–1800*, 11. There is a connection with the antiquarian analysis of Europe's pagan past here too, as the Dutch, much like other early modern nations, increasingly imagined their own pagan ancestors to have had access to a special form of ancient wisdom from which other ethnic groups were excluded. See chapter 6 below.

[268] For an overview see Emmer and Gommans, 311–318. See also Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) for a longue durée look at the political economy of South India.

[269] Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690: A Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 1.

[270] Varthema, *Itinerario / Ludovico de Vartema ; edizione e commento a cura di Valentina Martino*, 376.

[271] Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650*, 94.

[272] Subrahmanyam, 95.

Figure 3.1: Pulicat on the Map of the Coromandel Coast by Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, Covens and Mortier 1753, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam NG-501-69.

southern half remained in the hands of Vijayanagara under King Venkata I (r. c. 1585–1614). After the sacking of the capital city in 1565, the formerly great empire only existed as a rump state in the east (with court shifting between Penukonda, Chandragiri, and Vellore).[273] This meant that Vijayanagara access to Goa was lost, whilst the Nayak successor states vied for power and influence in the region, with important courts for instance in Madurai and Thanjavur. While Venkata I succeeded to some extent in regaining power and lost territories, the empire was in fast decline, which in turn weakened the role of the Portuguese and Goa, one of Vijayanagara's main supply ports.[274] This helped opening up trading opportunities for rival European powers in South India, including the Dutch, who would emerge as their main competitors in the spice trade. The Dutch established their first trading locations on the subcontinent in Coromandel via agreements with local princedoms between 1605 and 1610 in Masulipatnam, Teganapatam, Thiruppapulyar, and Pulicat.[275]

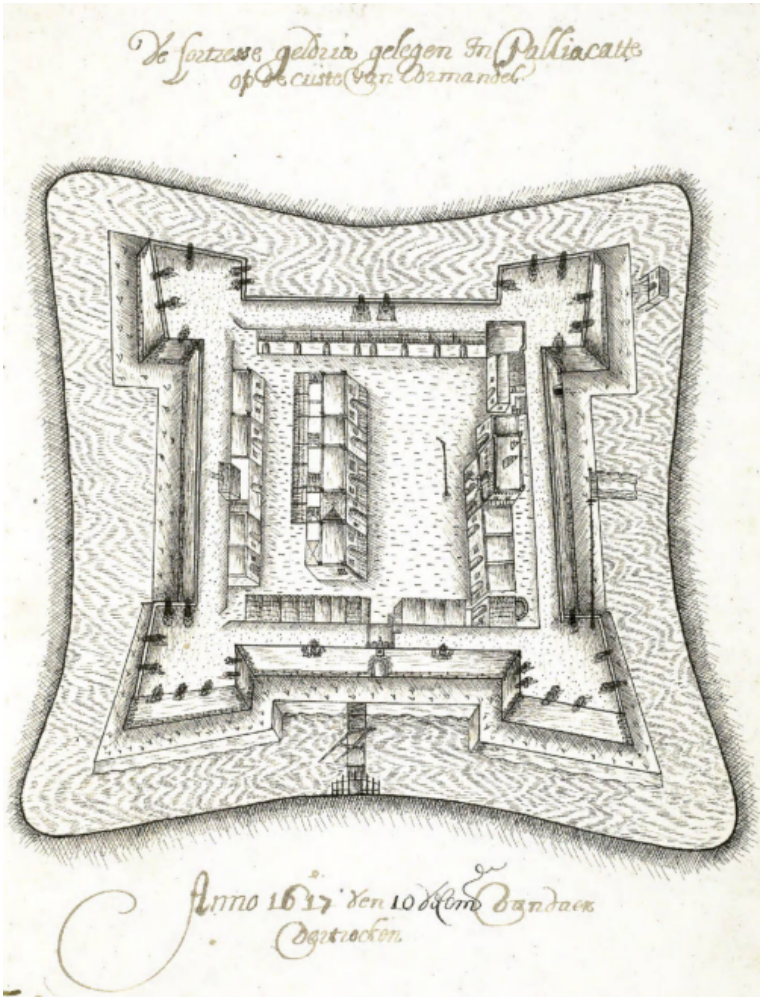
The Dutch had already attempted to open trade relations in Pulicat in 1606, but failed; in 1610, however, they were granted the rights to a factory in the city. The Portuguese attempted without success to sway the king of Vijyanagara not to allow Dutch trade in Pulicat. Despite their diplomatic failure, the Portuguese remained a threat nevertheless, as they sacked the Dutch factory there in 1612.[276] Despite the machinations of the Portuguese who continued in their attempts to convince the local rulers to turn against the Dutch, the latter expanded their influence. They had a fort built at the expense of Vijayanagara to secure their trading post, and in 1613 the Dutch built Fort Geldria, thenceforth the fortified centre of administration for the Dutch. By 1616 the Dutch under the VOC had established a firm position on the Coromandel Coast, with Pulicat becoming the VOC headquarters of the region.[277] The company presence at Fort Geldria requested their own *predikant* to minister to company servants as early as 1613, but it took the VOC twelve years to provide Pulicat with its first *predikant* in the form of Hermannszoon Follinus, who arrived in Coromandel in 1625.[278] Follinus established a consistory and started holding communion, building on the example of Batavia. The first successor to Follinus, arriving in 1632, would be Abraham Rogerius.

The *predikanten* were confronted with a cosmopolitan city with a range of different ethnicities and religions. In the days of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, the town was home to primarily Muslim traders, among whom there were some Arabs, but mostly members of coastal south-eastern Indian Muslim communities, known as Marakkayars in the Coromandel

[273] Lennart Bes, *The Heirs of Vijayanagara. Court Politics in Early Modern South India* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022), 115ff. See also H. Heras, *Beginnings of Vijayanagara History* (Indian Historical Research Institute, 1929).
[274] Emmer and Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600–1800*, 312.
[275] Emmer and Gommans, 313.
[276] Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690*, 20–22.
[277] Raychaudhuri, 28f.
[278] Caspar Adam Laurens van Troostenburg de Bruijn, *De hervormde kerk in Nederlandsch Oost-Indië onder de Oost-Indische Compagnie (1602-1795).* (Arnhem: H. A. Tjeenk Willink, 1884), 43.

Figure 3.2: The City of Pulicat with its Castle, Johan Nieuhof, *Gedenkweerdige Brasiliaense Zee en Lantreize*, Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1682. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-1988-55.

Figure 3.3: Fort Geldria Located at Pulicat / On the Coromandel Coast, Anonymous 1617-1634, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, Biblioteca Publica Latina 952 Fol. 124.



region.[279] Subrahmanyam writes that besides these there were 'the Telugu-speaking Chetties of the Balija and Komatti communities, who were involved not merely in the overseas trade but also in inland procurement and distribution networks. A conspicuous third community were the Armenians, and it was through this community that the Portuguese seem to have gained familiarity with the port in the decade 1510 to 1520.'[280] While compared to the boom time of the first half of the sixteenth century the relative importance of Pulicat, connected also to the fall of Vijayanagara, had declined in favour of Masulipatnam, Pulicat remained an important source for textile exports, which constantly grew in the first half of the seventeenth century.[281] The town's population continued to evolve, too: besides Chetti merchants, mestiços as well as local Christian converts took on an important role in trade, while the Dutch colony itself was sizeable at around one quarter of the town according to seventeenth century Dutch accounts.[282] The VOC also allowed and even encouraged marriages to local women if they accepted Christianity, leading to an increasing amount of Dutch-Indian mestiços as the century progressed.

Abraham Rogerius, like all *predikanten* in Pulicat, was in charge of the spiritual welfare of not only his fellow Dutchmen, but also the other Christians under the protective umbrella of Fort Geldria, and thus preached in both Dutch as well as Portuguese, a common lingua franca. Early on attempts were also made to convert Indian Catholics.[283] Pulicat as a cosmopolitan port city thus boasted a Dutch colony attempting to actively engage with local Christians and several distinct ethnic groups engaged in local and long-distant trade; but it also was home to diverse sectarian Hindu groups, engaging in public discourse within this urban space.[284] Rogerius himself makes it clear in the *Open Door* that there was considerable diversity in the local socio-cultural environment, and is careful to detail the differences especially between Shaiva and Vaishnava, but also gives short overviews of Smartism, Shaktism, and even the atheist-materialist school of Charvaka.[285] As Elaine Fisher has stressed, we can detect a 'radical theologization of public discourse' in early modern South India, defined by a conflict over the tools and resources of intellectual work and a Hinduism which was 'a unity qualified at its core by plurality'.[286] These ostensible co-religionists from different sectarian affiliations carried out contested discussions over religious truth in a public sphere where theological and

[279] Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650*, 96.
[280] Subrahmanyam, 96.
[281] Subrahmanyam, 170.
[282] See Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690*, 203 and Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650*, 63.
[283] See Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690*, 203.
[284] On religion and urbanity see Cristiana Facchini, "Seeing Religion: Religious Diversity and Urbanity," in *Religion and Urbanity Online*, ed. Susanne Rau and Jörg Rüpke (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022); Supriya Chaudhuri, ed., *Religion and the City in India* (London: Routledge, 2021).
[285] Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation*, 142.
[286] Elaine M. Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 17, 48.

philosophical matters were up for debate.[287] Rogerius, who took a special interest in these matters, could not participate in this marketplace of religious ideas himself, but he did have Brahman informants with different affiliations, as Padmanabha was an Advaita Smarta in the tradition of Shankaracharya, whilst Damersa was a Dvaita (Tattvavada) Vaishnava.

Pulicat was an increasingly important market for the Dutch to participate in the intra-Asian trade towards the seventeenth century, as textile exports continued to grow as the century progressed, and formed an important site of encounter through its sizeable Dutch colony that interacted with the town's diverse population. Conflict with other European nations and local wars continued to plague Pulicat, however, and as the seventeenth century progressed the VOC gradually shifted to the more stable and safer south. There the VOC put down firm roots, and eventually, in 1690, the Coromandel headquarters were moved to Nagapattinam.[288] During the time of Abraham Rogerius's residence in Pulicat from 1632-1642, though, the town and the VOC seat at Fort Geldria remained one of the most important ports for Dutch trade in India and exerted great influence on the European imagination of India through the writings of Rogerius, Baldaeus, and Havart. According to Raychaudhuri, Jan Pieterszoon Coen even approved the idea of developing a Christian colony at Pulicat under the protection of Fort Geldria, which seems to have been implemented to a certain extent according to later accounts.[289] This fit well within the Calvinist goals of the VOC and thinkers back in the United Provinces who saw the potential for a Reformed Utopia in India.

## 3.2 Reformed Christianity at Home and Abroad

While the Catholic missionary agenda and their conversion attempts in Asia, especially under the Jesuits, has found much discussion by historians, the missionary activities of the Reformed Dutch have remained less illuminated in the literature. Much of this has to do with a traditional assessment of the Dutch missionary enterprise as a failure, as we read for instance in the influential work of Charles Boxer.[290] While Dutch efforts were certainly more modest than those of the Society of Jesus, they were hardly negligible. In their own East Indian mission, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sent out more than six-hundred *predikanten* - a term which is difficult to translate, as outside of the United Provinces it implied acting as both local ministers as well as missionaries - along with thousands of lay readers and schoolmasters to the East Indies during its 200-year existence. While funding the mission was a constant issue, the VOC concerned itself with furthering the cause of Reformed Christianity, and money was allocated for building and maintaining schools, churches, and seminaries. Another avenue was the printing and distribution of Bibles and catechisms in Dutch and the most important Asian

[287] Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 48.
[288] Emmer and Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600–1800*, 320.
[289] Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690*, 206.
[290] See Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, 149–154.

languages for the context of the VOC, such as Malay and Portuguese.[291]

### A Tale of Gain and Godliness

While Boxer made a point of stressing the religious spirit of spreading godliness in Dutch expansion, he also argued that the Dutch and the VOC consistently put in place a subordination of godliness to economic gain. More recent historiography has to a large extent followed this paradigm, and has underplayed the role of the Reformed church in the affairs of the VOC, holding steadfast to the idea that trade always came before the mission, and that the company followed a restricted and restrained policy of evangelisation.[292] Indeed, if we compare the VOC to its Catholic rivals, as well as investigate money flows, it is hard to disagree that in a certain sense this *does* reflect the reality of the early modern Dutch Republic's interests abroad. It is thus perfectly valid that historians have focussed on the commercial and political aspects and import of Dutch expansion in Asia, and an increasing focus of scholarship has been on agents, networks, and the imperial aspects of the company's early colonial ambitions and achievements, as well as its corporate form.[293]

While these are important strands of research, it is impossible to disentangle religious goals, ideals, and the extension of Reformed agendas abroad from the commercial and political activities of the Dutch. While these latter topics have received most attention among historians, less attention has been paid to the role of religion in the history of the Dutch and the VOC in Asia.[294] Even if we agree that trade ultimately triumphed over the zeal to spread the Reformed religion, the latter was an important aspect of the Dutch strategy overseas. Influenced by a renewed interest in the role of religion in the history of European expansion, more recent scholarship has investigated the entanglement between trade, territorial expansion, empire, and religion in the widespread impact of the VOC in the East Indies. The traditional assessment of the missionary enterprise of the Dutch under the VOC as an utter failure, an opinion we can observe in Boxer but that also extends to the present, has also been reassessed in

[291] Boxer, 133f. and Fred van Lieburg, "Het Personeel van de Indische Kerk: Een Kwantitatiwe Benadering," in *Het Indisch Sion: De Gereformeerde Kerk Onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, ed. G. J. Schutte (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 73. See also C. H. Parker, "Converting Souls across Cultural Borders," 54. Further Troostenburg de Bruijn, *De hervormde kerk*; Jakob Mooij, *Geschiedenis der protestantsche kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1923).

[292] G. J. Schutte, "Verantwoording," in *Het Indisch Sion: de Gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, ed. G. J. Schutte (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 10.

[293] See for instance Weststeijn, "The VOC as a Company-State"; Antunes and Gommans, *Exploring the Dutch Empire*; Giuseppe Dari-Mattiacci et al., "The Emergence of the Corporate Form," *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 33, no. 2 (2017): 193–236; Anne-Isabell Richard et al., "Visions of Dutch Empire: Towards a Long-Term Global Perspective," *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (2017): 79–96; Anjana Singh, "Early Modern European Mercantilism and Indian Ocean Trade," in *Empires of the Sea*, ed. Rolf Strootman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 245–262. C.f. also Femme S. Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC: opkomst, bloei en ondergang*, 11th ed. (Haarlem / Antwerpen: Fibula-Van Dishoeck / Standaard, 1982; Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2012).

[294] Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord," 105.

favour of a more nuanced presentation of the Dutch Reformed mission.[295] More generally it would be a mistake to disregard the role of the church in the affairs of the VOC. The United Provinces was a new Calvinist nation that had thrown off the Catholic Habsburg yoke, and, as G.J. Schutte remarks, the VOC was in many ways an extension of the Reformed homeland and the relationship between the public church and the elites abroad.[296] Church and state were hardly separated in this early modern context, and, as Arthur Weststijn has stressed, the political-religious framework of the Dutch Reformed state and empire, engaged in global conflicts and politics, created a 'hybrid colonial conglomeration where gain and godliness constantly interacted in the creation of a global Dutch empire of trade and religiosity.'[297] While the role of the church certainly was to a great extent internal — Rogerius himself was first and foremost a pastor to the Dutch at Pulicat — it is difficult to separate the missionary goals from the social and political functions with which the church was tasked.

As we have seen, Asia had much to offer to the Dutch: not only could they profit from their inclusion in the lucrative spice trade, but they could also export their conflict with Spain and Portugal into new arenas, a process that often went hand in hand. The Dutch saw not only opportunities for trade and conflict in the East Indies, but also the potential for a new flock of Calvinists in a home away from home. This was to be the Dutch 'Indian Zion', signifying the intent to create a spiritual Jerusalem which could act as a 'religious beacon to nonbelievers in non-Christian domains' and realise more fully the ideal Reformed state that did not materialise in the home country so characterised by internecine religious conflict.[298] This remained mostly a Utopian idea that did not materialise. Nevertheless, while the Dutch were not overly successful in creating a Reformed exclave in the East Indies, the organisation and operation of the church was based on the way the new public church was organised in the Netherlands.[299]

To further the cause of the Reformed church, the VOC — which recreated the Dutch urban landscape in the East Indies and in Batavia built an 'Amsterdam' of the tropics — sent thousands of men to Batavia and beyond to build up the Dutch Reformed church in the Indies and staff its schools, classes, and consistories. Thanks to the records of the VOC and the work of generations of historians we have precise numbers regarding the presence of predikanten and 'ziekentroosters' — literally 'consolers of the sick', lower-ranking clerics who were not allowed to write sermons but otherwise provided pastoral care — for the entire duration of the VOC's

[295] Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, 149–154. See Schutte, *Het Indisch Sion* and especially Schutte, "De kerk onder de compagnie." See further C. H. Parker, "Converting Souls across Cultural Borders" and C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*.
[296] Schutte, "Verantwoording," 11.
[297] Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord," 113.
[298] C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 7. Parker also gives examples from the archive records for the widespread use of the moniker 'Indian Zion'. This was of course connected with the way that the Reformed Dutch saw themselves as a new people of Israel.
[299] Schutte, "Verantwoording," 11.

existence. In this two-hundred-year span, the VOC sent out more than 600 predikanten, as well as almost 2700 ziekentroosters.[300] This means that for roughly every three ships that sailed to the East Indies, two clergy members made the journey eastwards, with the numbers peaking between 1720 and 1730. During Rogerius's time in Asia the numbers were more modest, fluctuating between 77 and 128 total sent per decade between 1620 and 1649.[301]

The VOC and the Dutch church invested mainly in education, and built and maintained many schools across its sphere of influence. Churches and seminaries, too, were erected and maintained in Batavia and beyond. While church memberships remained low, this reflected in many ways the situation back in the United Provinces, where a large share of the population was not officially part of the church. It should be kept in mind that the Reformed consistories maintained very rigorous entry requirements, where a potential member, following thorough education, had to show that they understood religious teachings and display an appropriate lifestyle before they were allowed to take communion.[302] Beyond these numbers, however, the church and its pastoral caretakers exerted influence also to a wider population who were not official members but practised the religion in a hybrid fashion, and attempted to extend its reach via translations of the Bible and several catechisms into Malay and other local languages with the eventual goal being a cascading evangelisation through indigenous teachers.[303]

The mission in Asia was thus to have a stable foundation and to only initially rely on predikanten and ziekentroosters from the United Provinces. In the home country this evangelisation enjoyed broad support; indeed, the missionary aspirations of the Dutch in Asia dates back to the earliest days of the VOC, as the propagation of the Christian religion is referenced in the first charter granted by the States General.[304] Among the supporters of an 'Indian Zion' we can count prominent early VOC leaders, such as Jan Pieterszoon Coen and Jacob van Heemskerck, who called for an active role of the VOC in the spread of the true Protestant religion in the East Indies.[305] To better understand the Dutch evangelisation effort in the Indies, with its adherence to the Reformed church confirmed by the Synod of Dort and the importance of the Heidelberg catechism, among other proofs of faith, we must therefore take a closer look at the religious developments and background in the United Provinces.[306]

[300] Lieburg, "Het Personeel van de Indische Kerk: Een Kwantitatiwe Benadering," 72–73.
[301] Van Lieberg provides a useful graph to illustrate this, see Lieburg, 73. At the peak during the 1720s the VOC sent 333 predikanten and ziekentroosters eastwards.
[302] C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 7. It is difficult to establish to what extent this influenced Rogerius's own missionary endeavours. We might, however, interpret both the preference for Brahmans and the need to properly understand the other's system within this light.
[303] C. H. Parker, 7; C. H. Parker, "Converting Souls across Cultural Borders," 54; Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, 133f.
[304] J. A. Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1882), 3.
[305] Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord," 107f.
[306] C.f. Schutte, "Verantwoording," 12.

## Dutch Protestantism, the 'Further Reformation', and Dutch Calls to Missionise

We have already seen that the global Dutch trading empire of the early seventeenth century grew out of the eighty-years war and revolt against Spain which itself was highly entangled with the Protestant Reformation. Reformed Christianity became increasingly influential especially among the Dutch elite as the sixteenth century progressed, and became the public faith in the young republic. The commercial empire launched by the Dutch at the turn of the century was also from the beginning engaging in a fierce rivalry with its European competitors, especially Portugal as we have seen previously. This combination of political and religious developments shaped the national and global character of Dutch society, culture, and religion. As Charles Parker has concisely formulated, the 'society that emerged by the early seventeenth century in the northern seven provinces was a decentralized republic led by the commercially driven counties of Holland and Zeeland and ordered by a strident brand of Reformed Protestantism' where a specific Dutch form of commerce and religion, created by the war and rivalry with Spain and Portugal, 'shaped the global reach of the Dutch Republic and its Calvinist churches'.[307]

Reformed Protestantism — with its organisation based on consistories, made up mostly of predikanten and some lay elders, organised into classes and those in turn into regional synods — had risen from a small movement to the major religious power in the new country. For many decades conflict and debate over what constituted the right faith continued to be the order of the day, culminating in the controversy surrounding the teachings of Jacob Arminius. Arminius and his disciples — called Arminians or Remonstrants, named after the Remonstrance to the States General by Arminius's followers after his death — advocated the Arminian version of the predestination doctrine.[308] The conflict, originally between Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus, both theologians at Leiden University, centred around the role of predestination: Arminius argued against an absolute understanding of predestination, as it denied any agency to humans and seemed to make God the author of sin.[309] The more flexible Reformed Christianity of

[307] C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 21.

[308] For an overview see Charles H. Parker, "Reformed Protestantism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Geert H. Janssen and Helmer J. Helmers, Cambridge Companions to Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 189–207. On Arminius and Arminianism see Th. Marius van Leeuwen et al., eds., *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60-1609)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009). For a good introduction to the Remonstrants see especially Th. Marius van Leeuwen, "Introduction: Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60-1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009); Keith D. Stanglin, "Arminius and Arminianism: An Overview of Current Research," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60-1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

[309] This is of course a somewhat reductionist view of Arminius's theology, which included many other departure from Reformed orthodoxy, to the extent that there is a debate within scholarship whether Arminius should even be called a Reformed theologian or not, see Stanglin, "Arminius and Arminianism: An Overview of Current Research." On Gomarus and Arminius as theologians and philologists in their own right see Dirk van Miert, *The Emancipation of Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1590-1670* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 55–69.

the Remonstrants clashed with Gomarus and his followers, the Counter-Remonstrants, and the conflict came to a head at the Synod of Dord (Dordrecht), held between November 1618 and May 1619.[310] The Synod rejected all tenets of Arminianism and reaffirmed an orthodox Calvinist Reformed Christianity as the public faith of the republic; this would also be the religion that the Dutch attempted to export overseas with Arminians being kept away from any important posts, even though the Remonstrants would remain an enemy from within for many decades.[311]

In the aftermath of the Synod of Dort, a strict Calvinist Reformed Christianity came to dominate both at home and in the East Indies. Inflexibility regarding predestination and dogma was also the order of the day overseas, and predikanten were expected to place theological principles above pragmatic approaches to conversion, even though, as we shall also see, the Dutch were no strangers to accommodation and its underlying theory.[312] In the years after the Synod of Dort, a wide-ranging pietistic and new reform movement grew in importance in the United Provinces, known as the 'Further Reformation' (Nadere Reformatie) in Dutch scholarship.[313] This movement built on the foundation of the Reformation as a return to biblical Christianity, but advocated for a transformation that went beyond the intellectual and embraced a thorough moral and spiritual form of Reformed Christianity.[314] The political and religious setbacks to the cause of Protestantism during the Thirty Years War and the reignition of war after the Twelve Years' Truce in 1621 drove the reformers to bring about a reformation in all areas of life and to turn the United Provinces into a spiritual Jerusalem.[315] The earliest advocate of this movement was Willem Teelinck, a pastor from Middelburg who himself used the term 'Vorder Reformatie' in reference to the Puritan 'Further Reformation'. Teelinck had studied under both Gomarus and Arminius but was a fervent Counter-Remonstrant and a most prolific writer.[316] With Teelinck we see a nascent entanglement between the Dutch pietists and an engagement for the Reformed mission: Teelinck was an ardent supporter of the mission and urged his congregation to give freely to the cause of evangelisation overseas.[317] Though

[310] On the Synod of Dort see Beeke and Klauber, *The Synod of Dort*.

[311] C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 31. For the purpose of this study the influence of Arminianism is relevant predominantly through the great Dutch scholars Hugo Grotius and Gerardus Vossius.

[312] C. H. Parker, 32.

[313] While a reform programme from the consistory of Utrecht from 1665 bore the same name, the identification and naming of the movement can be traced to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Andreas J. Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency: An Early Modern Reformed Voice* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 132.

[314] C. H. Parker, "Reformed Protestantism," 197.

[315] C. H. Parker, 197–198. The identification with the people of Israel is important in this context. Parker sums this up concisely: ' The children of Israel had formed a prominent source of religious identity for Calvinists across Europe in the mid 1500s and gained even greater ascendancy in the Republic in the following century. The identification with Israel and Jerusalem reflected both a special sense of destiny for Dutch Calvinists and provided a framework from which they viewed contemporary events.'

[316] See Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency*, 139; C. H. Parker, "Reformed Protestantism," 197.

[317] Jos J.L. Gommans and Ineke Loots, "Arguing with the Heathens: The Further Reformation and the

this pietist campaign never reached a mainstream audience, it included many other prominent and influential clergy and devout laity, including Godefridus Udemans, Jacob Cats, Dionysius Spranckhuijsen, Hermann Witsius, Gisbertus Voetius and Johannes Hoornbeeck, many of which were intimately entangled with global trade and the spread of Calvinism.

Godefridus Udemans published *'t Geestelijkck roer van het coopmans schip* (The spiritual helm of the merchant's ship) in 1638, which, though conceived as a sailor's manual, talks at length about issues around the encounter with peoples in the West and East Indies, ranging from practical topics such as whether it is permissible to marry locals, to how to engage with their religion.[318] What emerges clearly in the work is that the Indians, who have unfortunately dwelt in darkness for so long, should be converted just like the ancestors of the Dutch once were, as everyone has been created by the same one God and because the Indians enriched the Dutch through their goods and trade.[319] The notion that in return for material goods the Dutch ought to supply pagans with spiritual goods — which of course means the gospel — is a clear message found in Udemans and other proponents of the Further Reformation, already advocated to some degree in Teelinck and found still decades later in Johannes Hoornbeeck. The need to create a more fully realised, spiritual Reformed Christian society meant that the adherents of the Further Reformation extended this obligations to the entire world: 'It compelled them to introduce the Gospel to the heathens as well in return for the riches that overseas commerce was bringing to the Netherlands.'[320] This notion of 'bringing the gift of God' in exchange for material goods is also echoed in the dedication of the *Open Door*, where the predikant Jacobus Sceperus says that the VOC, which is enriched by Indian trade, jewels and 'all sorts of precious things' must 'go forth to bring them the means for the knowledge of the son of God, which surpasses and goes beyond all the riches of the world.'[321]

The most influential member of the Further Reformation, and perhaps the most influential Reformed Dutch theologian of the seventeenth century was Gisbertus Voetius. Voetius was not only a predikant who was one of the youngest delegates at the Synod of Dort as a staunch Counter-Remonstrant, but later was also a professor of theology at the University of Utrecht for more than four decades.[322] Voetius attempted to chart a golden middle way for the role of the church and religious toleration, between what he saw as two extremes: the zero-tolerance

Ethnohistory of Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617–1666)," *Itinerario* 39, no. 1 (2015): 49.

[318] Gommans and Loots, "Arguing with the Heathens," 50. The book in question, here referenced in its second enlarged edition, is Godefridus Udemans, *'t Geestelyck Roer van't Coopmans Schip* (Dordrecht: Françoys Boels, 1640).

[319] Udemans, 59r, 120v. See also Gommans and Loots, "Arguing with the Heathens," 50; C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 82.

[320] Gommans and Loots, "Arguing with the Heathens," 48. See also Weststeijn, "Colonies of Concord," 115.

[321] Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation*, 126. While Rogerius and the annotator do not themselves declare the same, it should be remember that Rogerius, at least, studied under the Gomarist Walaeus at a time when these notions started gaining traction.

[322] See Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency*, chapter 1.

Christian model of Roman Catholicism and the overtly libertine — and secular — models advocated by Remonstrants and libertines.[323] The mission field was to occupy much of Voetius's thought. Already at a young age, Voetius had an active role in shaping thought on missiology at the Synod of Dort, where his position that adopted children in pagan territories should only be baptised after thorough religious instruction and a public profession of faith was largely taken over by the Synod.[324] Voetius had a broad understanding of mission, consisting of 'the establishment of the ministry of the Word by the instituted church' and being sent into the pagan world.[325]

Voetius, much like many Dutch scholars of the seventeenth century, develops his theology of the missions in dialogue with Protestant, but also Catholic sources, where especially José de Acosta played a large role. Moreover, while he attacks the role of the papacy in the history of the missions, he does occasionally praise Catholic missionaries: most interestingly, he lauds Matteo Ricci for his strategy in China for its basis in language learning, publishing in foreign languages, and its application of scholarship in the mission.[326] Especially in his later writings but already outlined in his disputation *De gentilismo et vocatione gentium* held in December 1638, later published in an expanded form in 1655, Voetius develops a theory and classification of paganism and how to approach the mission to the pagans, developed further by his student Johannes Hoornbeeck.[327] In the published work Voetius incorporates findings from the *Open Door*, just like Hoornbeeck does in his 1669 *De conversione Indorum et gentilium*, and we thus see the findings of the mission influencing the ongoing theorisation of missiology in the second half of the seventeenth century. The theological developments in the Netherlands, especially the Pietistic spirit of the Further Reformation, thus played a large role in theorising, analysing and especially calling for a thorough Christian mission. As Charles Parker has remarked, the Dutch evangelising efforts of the seventeenth century represent 'the first and most sustained endeavour by Protestants to convert peoples outside Europe in the early modern period'.[328] One short-lived attempt of the VOC to respond to this call and further the cause of missiology in the 1620s was the *Seminarium Indicum*.

Voetius makes it clear that philosophical knowledge is essential among cultured peoples in order to weed out false philosophy and theology and to be able to plant the seed of the gospel:

[323] As outline in his disputation *De libertate conscientiae et permissione religionum in Republica* (1643). See Jan A. B. Jongeneel, "The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions," *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991): 49.

[324] See Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency*, 39.

[325] Cited in Jongeneel, "The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions," 52.

[326] Jongeneel, 58.

[327] Gisbertus Voetius, "De gentilismo et vocatione gentium," in *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum. Pars secunda*, vol. 2 (Utrecht: apud Johannem à Waesberge, 1655), 579–648. On Hoornbeeck see Gommans and Loots, "Arguing with the Heathens"; Johannes Hoornbeeck, *On the Conversion of Indians and Heathens: An Annotated Translation of De Conversione Indorum et Gentilium (1669)*, ed. Ineke Loots and Joke Spaans (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[328] Excluding the attempts by Jean de Lery in Brazil in 1558. C. H. Parker, "Reformed Protestantism," 203.

missionaries thus should ideally have philosophical training to engage in religious polemics and show the accordance of reason with Christianity. Voetius says that missionaries must to this end also study the religion and society of the people who are to be converted through the reading of travel writing, ethnologies, and histories, and to learn the languages of the people they seek to convert.[329] Voetius suggest to establish a parallel institution to the propaganda fide for the training of missionaries, echoed by Hoornbeeck in his *De conversione Indorum et gentilium*. Both men knew that this would not be a new idea, but conceived it as a continuation or rebirth of Antonius Walaeus's *Seminarium Indicum*.[330]

### The *Seminarium Indicum*

A seminary for the training of predikanten for the mission overseas derived from a growing consciousness of the importance of the mission for the continued fortune of Reformed Christianity.[331] We have just seen how this continued to manifest with the case of the Further Reformation in the Dutch Republic, whose adherents were supporters of a strong and well-funded foreign mission. While this pietistic movement developed in the aftermath of the Synod of Dort, the Dutch Reformed clarion call for the mission, and a school that gives proper instruction to those charged with leading the missionary activities, traces back to the earliest days of the VOC. A crucial text in this regard was Philippe Duplessis-Mornay's 1581 *De la verité de la religion chrétienne*, a masterpiece of Reformed apologetics which seeks to prove the truth of Christianity through a sustained comparison with any other religious and philosophical position.[332] In 1602, the year the VOC was granted its charter which included the imperative for evangelisation, Johannes Halsbergius published his translation of Duplessis-Mornay's work, given the additional title 'Bijbel der nature' (Bible of Nature), hinting at the work's use of natural theology for apologetic aims and the notion of a 'Book of Nature' that could provide proof of God and his creation as a second book of God besides the Bible.[333]

Halsbergius had been granted exclusive rights by the States General for the publication of this important work, which would be very influential not only in its original French but also

[329] Cited in Jongeneel, "The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions," 69.

[330] Cited in Jongeneel, 69–70.

[331] I have outlined the importance of the seminary in Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation*, on which much of this section is based.

[332] The original French work is Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs ...* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1581) followed shortly by its Latin translation, Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *De veritate Religionis Christianae liber; adversus Atheos, Epicureos, Ethnicos, Judaeos, Mahumedistas, et caeteros infideles: accessit eiusdem authoris, vitae mortisq[ue] atque adeo humanarum actionum Christiana ac pia consideratio* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1583).

[333] Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *Bybel der nature. Dat is, Vande waerheyt der christelijcke religie teghens de atheisten, epicureen, heydenen, Joden, mahumedisten ende andere ongheloovighe*, trans. Ioannes Halsbergius (Amsterdam: Herman de Buck, 1602). On the book of nature discourse see Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575-1715* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

in its Dutch translation. As I will show in chapter 6, the book had a powerful missiological potential, and the translator noted that it arms Christians against any 'dishonourers of the true religion, especially those who travel to Asia and Africa for trade'.[334] Duplessis-Mornay's focus on common notions which could then be used to more successfully convert non-believers was especially important, and a call for studying the languages and religions of diverse peoples became important concepts for achieving conversion.[335] It is in this context that we must understand the earliest calls for a seminary such as the 'Considerations and Advice' from the classis of Delft from 1615, which suggested the foundation of a Leiden seminary dedicated to the instruction of predikanten and 'besides the knowledge of the Malay language [...] [to] also train [them] in the superstitions of the Jews, Mohammedans, pagans, and other heathens, and contemporary religions'.[336]

In 1618, the very year the Synod of Dort would be convened, Justus Heurnius addressed Prince Maurits, the States General, and the directors of the VOC in the dedication of his *De Legatione Evangelica ad Indos capessenda admonitio* (An Admonition on Undertaking the Evangelical Mission to the Indies) (Leiden 1618).[337] Justus — the son of Johannes Heurnius, the famous professor of medicine at Leiden, and brother to Otto who followed in his father's footsteps and would write one of the first global histories of philosophy — had studied medicine and then theology at Leiden.[338] In his 1618 work, Heurnius entreats the Dutch to send out missionaries, to work against the false prophets that are the Jesuits, and to bring the pagans and Jews into the fold of the Reformed Church. Heurnius echoes the anxieties of the Protestants, confronted with a world full of heathens and idolaters, and declares that now, when the Dutch are between the pope on one side and the Muslims on the other, the time has come for 'the Arrow of the Lord's salvation' (Sagitta salutis Domini) to be sent to the East.[339] Heurnius goes on: 'A great door has been opened to us, granting entry to the nations thirsting for living waters, and yearning for the streams of heavenly doctrine.'[340] Heurnius was granted the possibility to be an active agent for change, as he was later indeed sent to the East Indies from 1624 to 1638. Though initially cautious regarding other cultures, Heurnius himself became an

[334] Duplessis-Mornay, *Bybel der nature. Dat is, Vande waerheyt der christelijcke religie teghens de atheisten, epicureen, heydenen, Joden, mahumedisten ende andere ongheloovighe*, unpaginated preface.

[335] See below, chapter 6.

[336] Cited in G.M.J.M. Koolen, *Een seer bequaem middel: onderwijs en kerk onder de 17e eeuwse Voc* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1993), 97–97.

[337] Justus Heurnius, *De legatione Evangelica ad Indos capessenda admonitio* (Leiden: Isaac Elzevier, 1618). On Heurnius see J.M. van der Linde, "Heurnius, Justus," in *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme*, vol. 4 (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Kok-Kampen, 1998), 195–196; Jacobus Richardus Callenbach, "Justus Heurnius: eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis des Christendoms in ..." (Utrecht, 1897). Mooij gives a good impression of his activities in Batavia and beyond in BPK1.

[338] The work of his brother Otto is Otto Heurnius, *Barbaricae philosophiae antiquitatum libri duos* (Leiden: Apud Christophorum Raphelengium, 1600).

[339] J. Heurnius, *De legatione Evangelica ad Indos capessenda admonitio*, 15.

[340] 'Aperta nobis est porta magna, ingressum praebens ad nationes avidas aquarum vivarum, et anhelantes ad flumina doctrinae coelestis.' J. Heurnius, 16.

advocate of language learning for the spread of the gospel. A similar sentiment was professed by Sebastiaen Danckaerts, a predikant in Amboina, which left an impression on the Synod of Zuid-Holland in 1621.[341] Calls for action by influential predikanten like Heurnius, along with the discussions which were increasingly held at classes and synods augmented the pressure on the VOC to heed this advice in the last years of the 1610s. In March 1622 the VOC responded to this call by establishing the *Seminarium Indicum* at the University of Leiden under the auspices — and in the house — of Antonius Walaeus.

Walaeus, like many of the theological heavyweights we have encountered in this chapter, had been taught by Franciscus Gomarus at Leiden and had subsequently played an important role at the Synod of Dort. He then took an appointment at the University of Leiden's theological faculty.[342] A staunch Contra-Remonstrant like his teacher, Walaeus was chosen to head the seminary for educating missionaries at the University of Leiden. The *Seminarium* started accepting students in 1622; this was the very same year that the *Propaganda Fide* was established in Rome. The VOC and Walaeus responded to the calls of the classes and men like Heurnius and established a curriculum based not only on an education in scripture, but also on the study of the religions of the Muslims and pagans, as well as the learning of Oriental languages. This plan included having a dedicated professorship in Malay at the University of Leiden, which however never materialised. The ultimate goal was for these predikanten to found new schools in the East Indies and to have native preachers of the gospel.[343]

Walaeus took his mandate most seriously and outlined the shape of the seminary in a short treatise titled *Necessitas ac forma erigendi collegii seu seminarii Indici* (The Necessity and Form of Establishing an Indian College or Seminary).[344] Walaeus outlines the entry requirements, rules, and study subjects of his seminary, organised into nineteen orders of necessity (necessitas). Necessity fifteen turns out to be especially interesting:

> 15. Indeed, just as due to the influx of people of diverse kinds and religions among us, various precautions must be taken against Libertines, Papists, and other sects, so too, because of the different types of unbelievers found in the Indies, efforts must be made to instruct Jews, Muslims, and pagans separately. This is so that the most solid arguments, which refute their falsehoods and superstitions, may be readily available to them, and the truth of our faith may be defended against them. To this end, they shall be presented with what has been documented by suitable

[341] Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus*, 7–11.

[342] For an overview of Walaeus's life see L.W.A.M. Lasonder, "Walaeus, Antonius," in *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, ed. P. C. Molhuysen and P.J. Blok, vol. 2 (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoffs, 1912), 1514–1517. See also Jan Daniel De Lind van Wijngaarden, "Antonius Walaeus" (G. Los, 1891).

[343] Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus*, 5; Koolen, *Een seer bequaem middel: onderwijs en kerk onder de 17e eeuwse Voc*, 107–35.

[344] Published in Antonius Walaeus, *Antonii Walaei ... Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 437–39.

> writers, especially those writings of Plessis [Duplessis-Mornay] and others on this matter."[345]

This illustrates the need in Walaeus's mind to prepare the predikanten for specific instruction based on the religious background of the peoples they would seek to convert. We see that the idea was not only or mainly to seek the conversion of Catholics in the Indies, as is sometimes asserted of Dutch missionary efforts, but also and especially the conversion of Jews, Muslims, and pagans. The importance of Duplessis-Mornay's theology, outlined specifically by Walaeus, was crucial in this regard to establish a foundation on which to build a conversion effort based on comprehension of the non-believer's culture and language. The *Open Door*, as the title already announces, may be seen to trace its origin directly to the seminary and Duplessis-Mornay in this regard, as the detailed ethnographic knowledge collected was to ideally serve a missionary purpose.

To achieve his goals, Walaeus instructed the seminary's students in the reading of scripture through both the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament, as well as instructing them how best to bring the Gospel to the pagans: this meant that besides the regular curriculum of the theological faculty they were taught about non-Christian forms of worship, although the details remain unclear.[346] This golden age of missionary training did not last long and the seminary was already closed down in 1633, most likely due to the costs incurred by the VOC.[347] The company's official reason was that 'in consideration of the competent number of preachers present in the Indies, and that on occasion here in this country there will be no shortage of candidates to be sent to service the Company in the Indies, Antonius Walaeus is [...] thanked for his service as regent.'[348] While it was active for a mere decade, the seminary boasted a number of achievements. This is illustrated in a letter to Walaeus from predikant Abraham de Roy, who writes that with the exception of Amboina and Molucca, all corners of the Indies are filled with Walaeus's disciples.[349] While this sounds like an impressive feat, which

[345] '15. Quemadmodum vero propter confluxum hominum diversi generis & religionis inter Nostrates adversus Libertinos Papistas atque alias fectas diligenter muniri debent ita & propter infidelium diversa genera quae in India repe riuntur adversus Judaeos Mahumetanos & Gentiles speciatim quoque instruendi sunt ut argumenta firmissima quae falsitatem & superstitio nem eorum convincunt illis in promptu sint & veritas fidei nostrae adversus cos ab iisdem de fendi possit in quem finem iis proponenda erunt quae ab idoneis scriptoribus Plessaeo atque aliis de hac re sunt scriptis consignata.' Walaeus, 438. Also found, in Dutch, in Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus*, 15.

[346] Grothe, 24; Koolen, *Een seer bequaem middel: onderwijs en kerk onder de 17e eeuwse Voc*, 116.

[347] Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus*, 25–26. This is confirmed by a summarised account of the reasons for closing the seminary by the directors of the VOC from 1642, where they say that they reached their decision due to the great costs and sobering results. Koolen, *Een seer bequaem middel: onderwijs en kerk onder de 17e eeuwse Voc*, 123.

[348] In full: 'in consideratie van 't competent getal der aanwesende predikanten in Indië, en dat in voorvallende gelegentheden hier te lande niet en sullen gebreecken proponenten omme ten dienste van de Compagnie na Indië gesonden te werden, goet gevonden èn geresolveert D. Antonium Walaeus voor syne gedane diensten als Regent te bedancken en tot erkentenisse van deselve syn E. te vereeren met een vergulden kop of schale van 120 a 150 gulden.' Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus*, 26.

[349] Cited in Grothe, 25.

it nevertheless was in many ways, De Roy refers to a geographical spread of Walaeus's students: while the number of seminary graduates is difficult to ascertain, they probably did not exceed a dozen or slightly more.[350] Among the predikanten taught at the *Seminarium Indicum* were some of the most illustrious Dutch missionaries of the seventeenth century: Rogerius himself, but also Robertus Junius and Georgius Candidius, the first missionaries to go to Formosa. Baldaeus, though belonging to the next generation, shared a similar education, as Robertus Junius, who was Baldaeus's uncle, had emulated his teacher Walaeus and started teaching *predikanten* at his home in Delft after returning from Formosa.[351]

The aims of the seminary were not always successful, and the Dutch were never as proficient in learning local languages as the Jesuits, for instance: even though especially Malay remained important, often it was Portuguese, a mutually understood lingua franca, that was used to speak to locals from Pulicat to Batavia. A predikant like Rogerius, who fluently spoke Portuguese, was a precious commodity in this context. Jesuit and Portuguese knowledge also often remained more important than what the Dutch themselves produced. Carolien Stolte shows the global and regional entanglement of how information on Indian religion was used, produced, reproduced and copied with the example of Philipp Angel's unpublished work. Angel's *Deex-Autaers*, informed by local knowledge and informants as well as by Jesuits sources, was used alongside the writings of Jesuit Giacomo Fenicio for Baldaeus's presentation of the avataras of Vishnu.[352] The case of Rogerius, of course, is very different, but Rogerius, unlike Nobili or many other contemporaries, seems never to have mastered any Indian language and relied on Portuguese as an intermediate language.

Walaeus's seminary thus did produce some successes. Even so, the number of Dutch predikanten and their achievements were extremely modest in comparison to the amount of Jesuits active in Asia at the same time; while the VOC predikanten never even reached fifty in the seventeenth century, the Jesuits already numbered 132 in 1560, whilst in the seventeenth century alone they had reached multiple hundreds.[353] In the decade Rogerius was in India,

[350] Grothe mentions a dozen when saying that 'in our opinion the Director was not without success, as out of a dozen three are still mentioned honourably after two and a half centuries' ('en naar ons oordeel is de Directeur niet ongelukkig uit wiens 12tal drie nog na 2 1/2 eeuw met eere worden genoem'). Grothe, *Het Seminarie van Walaeus*, 29. He nevertheless only lists eight: Nicolaus Molinaeus, Abraham Rogerius, Petrus Schotte, Willem Holtenus, Michael Clarenbeek, Robertus Junius, Jacobus Vertrecht, and Georgius Candidius.

[351] Baldaeus became one of Junius's students and lived at his house until 1654, when at age 21 he became a predikant and was sent to the East Indies. J. A. Grothe, ed., *Archief voor de geschiedenis der oude Hollandsche zending*, 6 vols. (Utrecht: C. van Bentum, 1884–91), volume II, 173. See also Lieburg, "Het Personeel van de Indische Kerk: Een Kwantitatiwe Benadering," 80.

[352] Carolien Stolte, *Philip Angel's Deex-Autaers: Vaisnava Mythology From Manuscript to Book Market in the Context of the Dutch East India Company, c.1600-1672* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 84–92. See also the introduction in Philippus Baldaeus, *Afgoderye der Oost-Indische heydenen door Philippus Baldaeus: opnieuw uitg. en van inleiding en aanteekeningen voorzien*, ed. A.J. De Jong (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1917). See further Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 99.

[353] See Schutte, "De kerk onder de compagnie," 51 and Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, 253; Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700* respectively. This number excludes

only fifteen predikanten were sent out on VOC ships.[354] Despite their low number, their impact was considerable, and predikanten like Rogerius and Baldaeus changed the Dutch as well as European view of India and Asia.

ziekentroosters.

[354] Lieburg, "Het Personeel van de Indische Kerk: Een Kwantitatiwe Benadering," 73. The number of ziekentroosters was 62. The decade after there were significantly more predikanten with 44.

# CHAPTER 4

# NEW HORIZONS — PROTESTANT AND DUTCH VIEWS OF INDIA

## 4.1 Competing for Power and Knowledge: Novel Protestant Narratives

Jesuits like Nobili and Rubino managed to gather detailed ethnographic information in India and learn local languages, but despite an internal circulation of such Jesuit reports this information was not revealed to a larger audience through print. Popular printed works, such as Maffei's history of India, on the other hand, retained a superficial and derogatory stance on Indian religion. The big difference with accounts such as those by Henry Lord, which will be briefly discussed below, and the *Open Door*, is that they would not remain in archives and be dismissed by someone like Maffei, but reach a broader lay audience through their publication in print. The annotator of the Open Door echoes this when, speaking about the achievement of Rogerius, he says that 'there has been no one who has been able to present to us the true purpose of their religion, their actual beliefs about God and godly matters'.[355]

The late sixteenth century, when Valignano had his eye set on Japan and China and when Acosta published his detailed classification of American paganism, also saw new European powers trying to establish themselves in earnest in the East. Navigational, ethnographic, and economic information was inextricably linked at this time. As we shall see, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten was a key agent in establishing the East India Company in the United Provinces through the navigational and geographical information he gathered whilst in the employ of the Portuguese in the 1580s. The colonial-imperial ambitions of the early modern Netherlands and the VOC were intimately connected with the geographical-ethnographic works of travel

[355] *Open Deure*, *2r.

writing which would succeed the pioneering work of Van Linschoten and to which we must also count the *Open Door*. Corporate ethnography written by the many VOC employees, part of a VOC strategy of gathering knowledge, including on religion, of course supplemented these famous published accounts.[356] As Rogerius himself seems to draw primarily from some key Iberian sources, Van Linschoten, and mostly rely on his own observations, the annotator relies wholly on the key published sources, especially Van Linschoten and those collected in the *Begin ende voortgangh*. I will therefore focus on these types of sources, as well as the precedents to Rogerius's own detailed focus on cultural-religious matters.

### Protestant Travel Collections: Hakluyt and De Bry

We can see a similarly anti-Iberian and Protestant project of colonial aspirations and geography in *The Principal Navigations* by Richard Hakluyt (London 1589; expanded 1598–1600).[357] Hakluyt (1553 - 1616) became a chaplain and then ordained priests following his education, and was an important promoter of the colonisation effort in Virginia. Having shown an interest in geography and cosmology early on in life, after completing his studies at Oxford Hakluyt seems to have also lectured on these topics. His knowledge of other European languages enabled him to collect information from Spanish, Italian, and French travel accounts for his own publications or translations of others' accounts. *The Principal Navigations* came about through Hakluyt's perception that there was a decided lack of such literature on the enterprises and discoveries of the English if compared to other European nations. While Hakluyt's collection of travel accounts was modelled in great parts upon Ramusio's *Navigationi et viaggi* from forty years earlier, it thus differed from the latter in its acutely national character, as it focussed on English achievements and aspirations.[358] The 'paradoxical meeting point of national interests and the cosmopolitan Republic of Letters'[359] that might be observed in Hakluyt is similar to the later

[356] See Antje Flüchter, ""Religions, Sects, and Heresy" –: Religion on the Indian Subcontinent in Early Modern German Texts," *Comparativ* 20, no. 4 (4 2010): 58–74; Antje Flüchter, "'Aus Den Fürnembsten Indianischen Reisebeschreibungen Zusammengezogen'. Knowledge About India In Early Modern Germany," in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 337–359; Guido van Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter: The Dutch and English in Seventeenth-Century South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

[357] See Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation: Made by Sea or Over-Land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth, at Any Time Within the Compasse of These 1600 Years: Divided Into Three Severall Volumes*, 3 vols. (London: G. Bishop, R. Newberie, and R. Barker, 1598–1600). On the Hakluyt see especially Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007); Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt, eds., *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016).

[358] See Small, "A World Seen Through Another's Eyes"; Sven Trakulhun, "Three Tales of the New World: Nation, Religion, and Colonialism in Hakluyt, de Bry, and Hulsius," in *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

[359] Joan-Pau Rubiés, "From the 'History of Travayle' to the History of Travel Collections: The Rise of an Early Modern Genre," in *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 32.

Dutch collection by Isaac Commelin, the *Begin ende voortgangh*, which will be discussed in more detail below.[360]

*The Principal Navigations* focus primarily on English voyages, especially in the first volume, but also included other accounts in the two remaining volumes, taken for example from Ramusio.[361] Hakluyt also included a number of accounts on India and Southeast Asia into his work.[362] As one England's chief authority on the East, he was solicited by the newly founded English East India Company in 1601 on trade possibilities; to this meeting he brought along not only his expanded three-volume collection, but also Ramusio's *Navigationi et viaggi* and Van Linschoten's recently-published *Itinerario*.[363] Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, much as Hakluyt's personal and financial ambitions, thus were intimately enmeshed with furthering the cause of English colonisation, empire, and trade. At the same time, especially through the inclusion of more humble travellers who were not part of an intellectual elite, compilations like Hakluyt's, much like Ramusio's earlier in the century, helped to further establish the authority of modern travellers and eyewitness testimony.[364] The connection between travel literature and the apologetic-theological origins of comparative religion that will be discussed in chapter 6 is especially visible with Hakluyt's successor, Samuel Purchas.

Purchas (c. 1577 - 1626) resembled Hakluyt in many ways: he, too, was a chaplain and armchair compiler. Religion, both in the sense of the true Christian religion in the singular and the multiplicity of customs and beliefs with which it could be compared, would attain great importance in Purchas's works, who is more theologically minded than his fellow cleric Hakluyt.[365] This is clear already from the title he gave to his books. In 1625, having inherited Hakluyt's unpublished manuscripts, Purchas published his own collection of travel accounts focussing on the diversity of religion found throughout the world, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes*. This title, which might be regarded as Purchas's magnum opus, refers to a shorter and earlier work more clearly evoking the theme of pilgrimage: the 1613 *Purchas his Pilgrimage*, a work that is part compilation, part history of religions, part heresiology.[366] Matthew Dimmock has suggested that the pilgrimage here refers not only to the medieval sense

[360] In many ways John Selden was the antiquarian parallel to Hakluyt in this manner, as he, too, combined a focus on the English nation and its ethnic character with more far-reaching research as a distinguished scholar in the Republic of Letters. See below, chapter 6.

[361] Small, "A World Seen Through Another's Eyes," 53.

[362] Nandini Das, "Richard Hakluyt's Two Indias: Textual Sparagmos and Editorial Practice," in *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

[363] Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*, 237ff.

[364] Rubiés, "From the 'History of Travayle' to the History of Travel Collections," 27.

[365] See Rubiés, 33.

[366] Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimage : Or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation Unto This Present. In Foure Parts. This First Containeth a Theologicall and Geographical Historie of Asia, Africa, and America, with the Ilands Adiacent. Declaring the Ancient Religions Before the Floud ... With Briefe Descriptions of the Countries, Nations, States, Discoveries ...* (London: Printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1613). See Matthew Dimmock, "Faith, Form and Faction: Samuel Purchas's "Purchas His Pilgrimage" (1613)," *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 262–278.

of the word through its religious exploration of travel, but also to an internal pilgrimage, where the reader cum pilgrim embarks on a spiritual journey through the reading of his book, where the disturbing multiplicity of non-Christian religions is given an encyclopaedic order and thus orders the world itself.[367] In this manner Purchas shares many features with the scholarly projects of giving order to paganism such as Gerardus Vossius *De theologia gentili* (1641) but also with the more encyclopaedic and well known *Pansebeia* (1653) of Alexander Ross. The footnote apparatus of the *Open Door* also achieves a similar synthesis of compilation, universalism, and systematisation of the world's religions with which Europeans were increasingly confronted.

Hakluyt and Purchas were not the only ones to contribute to a growing Protestant wave of travel collections. Just a year after the publication of *The Principal Navigations*, in 1590 Theodor de Bry, a Reformed engraver from Liège who had met Hakluyt whilst he was in London between 1585 and 1588, published the first volume of his *Historiae Indiae Occidentalis* in Frankfurt, the family's new home, dedicated to travel accounts of the Americas. The family, Theodor and his sons, subsequently split the volumes into this series and the *Historiae Indiae Orientalis*, dedicated to Africa and Asia and published between 1590 and 1634.[368] Traditionally the De Bry Collection has been interpreted as a clear anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish work, partially for its role in spreading the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty in the New World. Newer research, whilst acknowledging its Protestant character, has relativised this by focussing on the De Bry family's attention towards a European book market and that potential anti-Catholic argumentation was toned down or not employed in favour of other themes, showing it to feature confessional as well as market-oriented aspects.[369] As such, the potential connection between pagan and Catholic idolatry, which would become more acute in Protestant works, for instance in Reformed apologetics, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was not overemphasised, and pagan image worship was described without analogy to Catholic practise.[370]

The visual takes on a very important role in the De Brys' collection, which can be read as a 'Protestant visual archive on European expansion' and an important contribution to the central seventeenth-century debate over the meaning of images, idols, and idolatry.[371] The concept of religion still retains its older, piety-inflected meaning throughout most of the De Bry collection, and instead we see a focus on the discussion, and depiction, of idolatry and superstition. In many places, the De Brys enhance the pagan and othering quality of the existing accounts

[367] Dimmock, 265.

[368] On the De Bry Collection see Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590-1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[369] See Groesen, chapters 8-10, especially 253f. See also Helge Perplies, *Inventio et repraesentatio Americae: Die ‚India Occidentalis'-Sammlung aus der Werkstatt de Bry* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2016).

[370] Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*, 222.

[371] Susanna Burghartz, "Idolatry, Markets, and Confession: The Global Project of the de Bry Family," in *Protestant Empires: Globalizing the Reformations*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 143–144. See also Perplies, *Inventio et repraesentatio Americae* and Michael Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

through their illustrations, especially in the title pages of the *India Orientalis* series.[372] Many of the illustrations originate with the primary sources used for the compilations, but the De Brys provided additional visual material as well and devised a interpretative programme based on separate sections which they made their own.[373] The *India Orientalis* series, overseen exclusively by the brothers De Bry, follow a similar theme to the *India Occidentalis* volumes with a focus on the visual depiction of the pagan attributes and general customs of the native populations described in the ethnographic accounts which make up the separate volumes.[374]

The scope of the *India Orientalis* series, which spanned twelve volumes between 1598 and 1628, is staggering, and reaches from West Africa all the way to China and the coast of Australia. Within the present context I want to highlight two aspects of this series: the depiction of idolatry, especially in connection with India, and the role of Dutch ethnography and travel writing. Dutch accounts indeed played a large role in the volumes of the *India Orientalis* series, and, translated into Latin, supplied the majority of the texts that made up the twelve volumes. The *Itinerario* of Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, published in 1596, is particularly present in the *India Orientalis* series. Indeed, while volume one is wholly concerned with Africa through the account of Filippo Pigafetta and includes also a discussion of Prester John, now fully associated with Africa, volumes two to five are almost wholly concerned with the East Indies and are exclusively made up of Dutch travel accounts.[375] While volume five contains the journals of the voyages of Jacob van Neck and Wybrandt van Warwijck, volumes two to four are given over to Van Linschoten's *Itinerario*, with some other texts added to it, split up according to topics; ethnography and geography (volume two), travels (volume three), and natural history (volume four).[376]

Ernst van den Boogart has argued that the De Brys shift the attention from the differing degrees of civility in Asia that dominates the original Dutch publication of Van Linschoten to a broader and more encompassing presentation of East Indian heathendom, which includes China just as much as India.[377] I will talk about the *Itinerario*'s original Dutch publication and Van den Boogart's characterisation of the work below; for now it suffices to concentrate on the De Bry's aim of presenting a vision of globe-spanning idolatry and paganism. This is especially clear from the presentation of China: many superstitious and magic-inflected practices are added in the second volume of the *India Orientalis* to Van Linschoten's very positive portrayal of China, and the frontispiece of the same work, where a three-headed Chinese deity, missing

[372] Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*, 219–247.

[373] Ernst van den Boogaart, "Heathendom and Civility in the Historia Indiae Orientalis: The Adaptation by Johan Theodor and Johan Israel de Bry of the Edifying Series of Plates from Linschoten's Itinerario," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek (NKJ) / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 53 (2002): 72.

[374] Boogaart, 73.

[375] An excellent overview of the volumes, including high quality digital renderings of the texts, can be found on the dedicated website of the Bodmer Lab: https://bodmerlab.unige.ch/recits-et-images/debry/.

[376] Boogaart, "Heathendom and Civility in the Historia Indiae Orientalis," 75.

[377] See Boogaart, especially 92 and Ernst van den Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia: Image and Text in the Itinerario and the Icones of Jan Huygen Van Linschoten* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

from Van Linschoten and taken from Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza's account of China, takes centre stage.[378] This adaptation of travel accounts into a global illustration of paganism spanned both series of the De Bry family. In the words of Van Groesen, the 'title-pages of the three matching volumes of the De Bry collection — India Orientalis II on China, and India Occidentalis I and IV on the Americas — announced the works as exposés of heathendom'.[379]

This is also reflected in a comparison of Van Linschoten's original Dutch and contemporary Latin translation with the version used by the De Brys, the latter of which highlighted gruesome practices more overtly and attaches a clearer idea of an idolatrous paganism to these practices and peoples.[380] Especially the perniciousness and abundance of devil worship, expounded on in the introductions to the series' volumes and illustrated through additional engravings, was enhanced by the De Brys.[381] Potentially anti-Catholic passages, found for instance in Van Linschoten's prominent description of Goa, are almost entirely missing in the De Brys' series; instead paganism, almost never compared to its ancient European form, becomes the overarching *other* in the De Bry collections, juxtaposing Christianity and paganism, as well as civilisation and savagery and not clearly delineating between civility and paganism.[382] As Ernst van den Boogart shows, the De Brys depict civility in a very different manner than Van Linschoten had done: instead of depicting an Asian hierarchy of civility as the latter had done, the De Brys rearranged the original plates from the *Itinerario* according to a geographical West-East order.[383] Religious practices, which already formed an important topic for India in Van Linschoten's account, are adapted by the De Brys: instead of focussing on dietary practices and similar details, the De Brys put a greater spotlight on the perceived barbarous and idolatrous practices of the Indians.[384]

As the De Brys wanted to be successful on a European, trans-confessional market, they made images a central element of witnessing the foreign and essentially *other* non-European world, whilst taking a clear stance against idolatry and the ubiquity of abhorrent pagan practises. In the process the 'De Brys made room for a more or less explicitly Calvinist coding of the European pictorial archive of early globalization' that would greatly influence the imagination of the *other* and later Protestant endeavours attempting a more comparative religious frameworks such as Bernard and Picart, but also other compilations such as the *Begin ende voorgangh*.[385] Details of Indian beliefs and practices make way for a superficial presentation of Indian idolatry,

[378] Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*, 224.
[379] Groesen, 227.
[380] Groesen, 230.
[381] Groesen, 242. As Van Groesen goes on to detail, this was even more pronounced in the German version of the *India Occidentalis* series, where paganism was presented in a more scandalous manner, focussing on ritual, indicating an editorial choice depending on the prospective readership.
[382] Boogaart, "Heathendom and Civility in the Historia Indiae Orientalis," 99f. Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*, 247.
[383] Boogaart, "Heathendom and Civility in the Historia Indiae Orientalis," 86.
[384] Boogaart, 86.
[385] Burghartz, "Idolatry, Markets, and Confession," 176.

exemplified by obscene forms of devotion in the *India Orientalis* series, making India just one locus of a more global pagan phenomenon. While the De Brys' pictorial agenda of illustrating the ubiquity of horrendous idolatry is more reminiscent of the broad condemnation found in someone like Varthema than the more detailed — if still condemning — reporting of Van Linschoten's original account, these writings focussed primarily on the *otherness* of Indian civilisation, where idolatrous practices functioned to illustrate the entanglement of barbarity and error. New Protestant accounts, however, soon would focus on a detailed representation of Indian customs and beliefs in an exclusive fashion: ethnographic detail was singularly focussed on these matters without being integrated in an obvious denigration of Indian civilisation and religion. Rogerius would not be the first Protestant to author a detailed ethnographic account of India, however: Henry Lord, a chaplain for the English East India Company in Surat, would present a detailed account of the Bania in his *A Display of Two Foreign Sects in the East Indies* (London 1630).

## An English Ethnography of Indian Customs: Henry Lord and the Banians

There are some remarkable similarities between Henry Lord and Abraham Rogerius. Both Lord and Rogerius were part of a new wave of European powers seeking to challenge the Portuguese primacy in the Indian Ocean trade and their access to the spice trade. The English East India Company (EIC), much like the VOC that was founded two years later, in 1602, differed from the royally-organised Iberian rivals through its chartered, joint-stock nature. Lord, just like Rogerius for the VOC, was a chaplain in the services of the EIC, whose ethnographic achievements were secondary to his primary role as a pastor to the company personnel. As we shall see, there were also similarities between the characterisation of Indian practises in Lord and those we find in the *Open Door*.

Not much is known about Lord apart from what can be drawn from *A Display of Two Foreign Sects in the East Indies*; we know that he was active in his role as an EIC chaplain in Surat from 1624, and that by the time of the book's publication in 1630 it seems he had returned to England.[386] Lord's book, along with the *Open Door* which was published twenty years later, has long been seen as inaugurating a new ethnographic genre; Sweetman

[386] Henry Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies Vizt: The Sect of the Banians the Ancient Natiues of India and the Sect of the Persees the Ancient Inhabitants of Persia Together with the Religion and Maners of Each Sect* (London: By T. and R. Cotes, 1630). See also the edition with introduction which also provides an overview of Lord's life: Henry Lord and Will Sweetman, *A Discovery of the Banian Religion and the Religion of the Persees. A Critical Edition of Two Early English Works on Indian Religions*, Mellen Critical Editions and Translations (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999). A discussion within the context of early attempts of ethnographies of Hinduism avant la lettre is given by the same author in Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*. On Surat as an urban and intellectual centre in the early modern period see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Hidden Face of Surat: Reflections on a Cosmopolitan Indian Ocean Centre, 1540-1750," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, nos. 1–2 (2018): 205–255; Haig Z. Smith, *Religion and Governance in England's Emerging Colonial Empire, 1601–1698* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022).

himself, while criticising Sylvia Murr's characterisation of *Rogerius* as the founder of a 'proto-ethnologic discourse', himself argues similarly in favour of Lord, and claims that the works of Fernandes and Nobili, who 'also took Indian religions as their object of study [...] served more overtly theological purposes'.[387] Lord and Rogerius certainly established a new, Protestant ethnography, which made the religion(s) of India, separated from a general account of the country and not embedded in a travel writing format, their single focus. But both Lord and Rogerius were also concerned with evangelisation, a subject with has traditionally found less attention in the historiography on the EIC and VOC. While we do not find the clear stance of gathering information on the Brahmans for the sake of conversion from the *Open Door* in Lord's account, Lord was critical of the lack of evangelisation and the 'braines intoxicate with the fumes of Errour and Polytheisme' he encountered in Surat.[388]

Evangelisation was clearly an important element in these early Protestants ethnographic accounts, even if they were embedded in a different institutional framework from their Jesuit forebears and rivals. Rather, as Sweetman also concedes, the difference to the latter was the lack of publication of works such as those of Nobili or Fernandes, which made Lord and Rogerius stand out and led to their incorporation into later compilations such as the *Cérémonies et coutumes* by Bernard and Picart.[389] The difference between unpublished Iberian and Jesuit writings and published Protestant books also stands out with the account of Jacopo Fenicio, whose unpublished *Seita dos Indios Orientals*, likened by Sweetman the more 'directly comparable to Lord's *Display*' was a major source for Philip Angel and Philippus Baldaeus.[390] The precedent formed by and rivalry with the Society of Jesus was an important factor in the creation of the pioneering writings of Lord and Rogerius, who, embedded in novel corporate forms of trade and governance, may not have had the same resources as their Jesuit counterparts but otherwise shared more of their aspirations, methods, and sources than has often been recognised.

Lord's 'two sects' are the 'Banians' and the 'Persees' — much the same as the roughly contemporary but unpublished *Remonstrantie* by Geleynssen de Jongh that will be discussed below — where the 'Banians' refer to the Hindu population more broadly and the Bania caste specifically at times, as well as the Parsis in Gujarat.[391] The latter are described in the second

[387] Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, Footnotes 2 and 3. C.f. Sylvia Murr, *L'Inde philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire*, 2 vols., Publications de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient : Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1987), II: 73.

[388] Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, 94. See also H. Z. Smith, *Religion and Governance in England's Emerging Colonial Empire, 1601–1698*, 149–154 and Amrita Sen and Jyotsna G. Singh, "Classifying the Natives in Early Modern Ethnographies: Henry Lord's A Display of Two Foreign Sects in the East Indies (1630)," *Journeys* 14, no. 2 (2013): 69–84.

[389] Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, Footnote 2.

[390] See Stolte, *Philip Angel's Deex-Autaers*.

[391] On the early modern study of Zoroastrianism (and especially the figure of Zoroaster) more broadly see Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra: Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 1998). On the Parsis see John Hinnells and Alan Williams, eds.,

book, forming an important early European presentation of the Parsis; for the purposes of this chapter, however, the first book is more relevant. Lord's Banians (Bania) had already been described by other Europeans, the first one being Duarte Barbosa, but also featured briefly in the compilations of Hakluyt.[392] Lord, however, made the Bania, a caste comprising mainly Vaishnava and Jain merchants on the Gujarat coast, the centrepiece of his account. Much like Rogerius when he speaks of Brahmans, Lord employs the term 'Banian' in a twofold way, either to refer generally to the Indian inhabitants and their beliefs and practises, or in a specific manner, speaking about 'those that are most properly called *Banians*'.[393]

Lord's account is less analytical than the *Open Door*, and the mythological content that is being relayed determines the structure of his own work: the four yugas, the cycles of Hindu time, form the base scheme of the book.[394] Unlike Rogerius, Lord also employs the Iberian terminology of 'caste' and after an initial chapter outlining God, the creation of the world and the first humans, drawn most likely on the Puranas via an interpreter, goes on to detail a mythological background on the four varnas.[395] The longest chapters, eight and nine, deal with Banian beliefs, where especially transmigration is discussed at length, and ritual, while the remaining chapters deal with the other yugas and the role of the Brahmans.[396]

Sweetman makes the point that Lord's work is neither a work of Christian polemic, nor a travel account, nor a form of proto-Orientalism.[397] While I agree that it should not be overlooked that Lord inaugurated a new genre (in English) 'whose primary purpose is the dissemination of information about Indian religions', I would argue that its other purposes also merit discussion and that such a point of view risks obfuscating some key aspects of the work. Lord portrayed the Banias and Brahmans based on his own interactions with them and the information that he gathered in the process, rather than describing what he expected to see, creating a detailed ethnographic account of seventeenth-century Gujarati (Bania) beliefs and practices. Though originally prompted by the EIC to research the Indian religions he presented,[398] Lord was clearly driven by his own curiosity and shies away from a simplistic rendering of Indian as devil-worshippers. But I would argue that Sweetman paints too stark a picture in trying to portray Lord as an almost proto-enlightened ethnographer; whilst Christian apologist argumentation may be confined to the prefaces, introduction, and conclusion, it is not missing from the work. Neither is the 'sort of speculation about the diffusion and corruption of religious truth that we find in other seventeenth-century accounts of religious diversity'.[399]

*Parsis in India and the Diaspora* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

[392] Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 67.

[393] Compare Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, 6, 83. Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 65.

[394] Sweetman, 68.

[395] Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, chapters 1-5. The order of the varnas is confused in regards to the Shudras and Vaishyas. See also Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 68f.

[396] A good summary is found in Sweetman, 69ff.

[397] Sweetman, 87.

[398] Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, B2.

[399] Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 69.

The passage that Sweetman mentions but does not discuss at greater length can be found in chapter eight, the longest of the book, and is concerned with the kind of early comparative religious hypothesising that we will find much more of in the *Open Door*. Lord, when discussing the precepts of the 'Shaster' (Shastra) of the Banians, employs a Christian rationalistic manner of analysing these commandments, saying that 'the Lawes or Precepts of any Religion, are no further to be allowed, than they seeme to be well grounded, and to carry truth and good reason with them'.[400] Lord's claim that the 'principall part of their Law admitting nothing prodigious to opinion'[401] need not be interpreted as an overt openness to Banian ritual, as commandments calling for fasting, worship, and alms, or cautioning against stealing and lying could hardly be interpreted as inimical by a Christian.[402] Through the use of philosophy and scripture, Lord however goes on to disprove the tenets that no living creature should be killed and that the consumption of wine and meat should be prohibited. Lord argues not only that the prohibition on killing is against God's allowance, but that it is accepted through a *consensus gentium*, that Pythagoras — argued to have lain the ground 'wheron this Secte leaneth'[403] - also slaughtered an ox, and that it was actually practised both in ancient and contemporary India in any case.[404] Lord thus analyses this practice from a Christian rationalist point of view, within a comparative religious framework, and even from the perspective of the tradition itself, arguing that it was neither authentic as a law nor ancient, and thus could not be held to be an 'essentiall part of their Religion'.[405]

We can observe a similar argumentation for the abstinence from wine, which Lord first declares unreasonable, and then compares the Banian abstinence with historical forms of this practice among the Romans, Carthaginians, Egyptians, as well as among Muslims and Jews, separating religious and civil or practical reasons for doing so.[406] Finally, he also uses an example from antiquity, the funeral of Calanus, to prove that the ancient Indians did engage in wine-drinking.[407] The consumption of meat, finally, was immediately connected with metempsychosis by Lord. This is where we can find the diffusionism mentioned by Sweetman, as Lord argues that metempsychosis probably originated in Egypt, whence it spread to Greece and then to other places.[408] We see that Lord also was open to the notion of some form of ancient wisdom, as he says that Plato and Pythagoras were in favour of transmigration as it made people believe in the immortality of the soul, citing the popular *Syntaxes artis mirabilis* — an encyclopaedic work on demonology and magic by the Lullist Pierre Grégoire — as proof

[400] Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, 45.
[401] Lord, 45.
[402] Lord, 41–43.
[403] Lord, 46.
[404] Lord cites Ludovico Ricchieri (Rhodiginus) as his authority on the ancient Indians, a mythographic reference work influenced by Ficino's prisca theologia. See below, chapter 5.
[405] Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, 47.
[406] Lord, 47–49.
[407] Lord, 49f.
[408] Lord, 51.

of this.[409] Having presented this historical and contextual overview, Lord then proceeds in the same manner as already described to dismantle the reasonability of such a prohibition and metempsychosis.

We thus see that while Lord was a curious chaplain who was careful in his presentation of the 'Banian Law' — and indeed gave us one of the earliest published European accounts on specific Hindu practises and beliefs — he was very much a man of his time, familiar with Christian and especially Protestant apologist argumentation. While confined to only a few pages of the ninety-five-page treatise, Lord's account does exhibit many similarities with the more developed antiquarian and comparative religious framework found in the *Open Door* — which we must remember was mainly added by the annotator. In the *Display* we see a turn to a plural concept of religion, an identification of the 'Shaster' as the Banian Bible, and an attempt to understand specific practices — separated into religious and civil — both anthropologically and historically, within a framework of sacred history.[410] Though sparing in his comments, Lord was nevertheless a staunch Protestant chaplain, and it seems a stretch to reduce his, considering the overall page count not inconsiderable, admonishment of Banian religion simply as a justification for publication. Instead, his championing of a Protestant Christianity which can prove the errors of other religions through rationality fits well with contemporary approaches to other religions, especially the model provided by Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, whose *De la verité* was well-known in England through an English translation that had seen four printings by the time of the *Display*'s publication.

The *Open Door* was in many ways a more detailed, longer, and more in-depth analysis of a similar subject matter, even if Rogerius was stationed halfway across the continent from Lord. Both Rogerius and the annotator would certainly have appreciated the English chaplain's presentation of Gujarati customs, but it seems neither were aware of the *Display*. Instead, besides the Jesuit rivals, the Dutch authors of the *Open Door* relied in large parts on Dutch travel writing and ethnography. With the Dutch arrival in India and in the aftermath of Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* we see a surge of Dutch travel literature appearing which speaks about the Indian Ocean world, while the VOC and theologians back in the Low Countries were debating how to approach evangelisation and its methods. Especially important for the *Open Door*'s creation, besides the *Itinerario*, was the Dutch collection of travel accounts by Isaac Commelin, the *Begin ende voortgangh*, and the novel account of Johan van Twist on Gujarat, which shared many features with Lord's *Display* despite its broader interests and presentation of India and Gujarat.

[409] Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*, 52. C.f. Pierre Grégoire, *Syntaxes artis mirabilis*, 3 vols. (Lyon: Antoine Gryphius, 1575–76).

[410] In this regard, despite very seldom citing his sources, Lord's double mentioning of Purchas is certainly relevant, as the latter's model, though very different from Lord's approach, most have loomed large in Lord's mind.

## 4.2 Dutch Ethnography in the Making: The Role of Van Linschoten

In the last chapter we have seen the seeds of Dutch engagement in Asia, as well as the missiological foundations of the Reformed mission under the auspices of the VOC. Dutch travel writing and ethnology itself was intricately connected to the fortunes and development of Dutch Empire in Asia. It was through the writings of Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563 - 1611), an accountant in Goa for the Portuguese, that important navigational information was made public to the Dutch and, together with similar knowledge, enabled the first voyages to the East Indies. Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* (Amsterdam 1596) was also to serve as a foundational piece of travel writing in the young Dutch Republic, where the accounts of the first Dutch voyages were published at the turn from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. At this time we see a myriad of journals and diaries reporting on diverse peoples, products, and places to an eager Dutch public. Within the context of the Indian subcontinent, prior to the more elaborate ethnographic portraits of the *Open Door* and Baldaeus, it was Johan van Twist's account on the Bania of Gujarat which would provide the most detailed information on Indian customs and religion and also captivate the attention of the annotator of the *Open Door*. Van Twist's account, which itself was compiled from a variety of other sources, was first published in 1644-45 in Isaac Commelin's collection of the most prominent accounts of the preceding half-century: the *Begin ende voortgangh*, literally *The Origin and Continuation* of the VOC. While we should be careful to apply any Foucauldian notion of power and knowledge in an era when the Europeans and Dutch were clearly not in a position of dominance in Asia, travel writing as knowledge creation and accumulation was certainly intricately entangled with the business of empire and the nascent national identity of the Dutch.[411]

### The Genesis and Impact of the *Itinerario*

Jan Huyghen (who added 'van Linschoten' to his name later in life to add an air of sophistication and nobility) was born in Haarlem, but spent most of his life in Europe in Enkhuizen. Using the social networks between Portugal and the Low Countries and his own familial networks, Van Linschoten found employment with the Portuguese and worked in Goa from 1583 to 1588.[412] Van Linschoten held a prestigious office, as he worked for the archbishop of Goa, first

[411] See Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter*; Aske Laursen Brock et al., eds., *Trading Companies and Travel Knowledge in the Early Modern World*, Hakluyt Society Studies in the History of Travel (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2022).

[412] On Van Linschoten and the pivotal role of his writings for the rise of the VOC and the Dutch Republic see Nuno Vila-Santa, *Knowledge Exchanges Between Portugal and Europe: Maritime Diplomacy, Espionage, and Nautical Science in the Early Modern World (15th-17th Centuries)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024), 267–322. On Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* see also Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia*; Arun Saldanha, "The Itineraries of Geography: Jan Huygen van Linschoten's Itinerario and Dutch Expeditions to the Indian Ocean, 1594–1602," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101, no. 1 (2011): 149–177;

as an accountant, then as a secretary. As Nuno Vila-Santa points out, despite the impact of Van Linschoten's 1596 *Itinerario*[413] and the fact that he hardly was the first Dutchman to venture to India, the question of how Van Linschoten managed to gather so much relevant information has gone mostly unanswered.[414] Despite the role the *Itinerario* later played in displaying Catholic idolatry in the East Indies, there is no good evidence to doubt that at this point Van Linschoten was anything other than a regular Catholic himself during his time of service.

Van Linschoten's role surrounding the archbishop means that he had access to the archbishop's library, and thus to chronicles such as Barros's *decadas* or Castanheda's *História*; he might have also met Diogo do Couto and Alessandro Valignano in Goa.[415] Van Linschoten could thus rely on Portuguese knowledge in India itself, which was then used for the *Itinerario*. Before the publication of that book, however, the 1595 *Reys-gheschrijft* (Travelogue) already provided crucial navigational information on the best routes to reach India as well as intra-Asian voyages.[416] Vila-Santa makes a reasonable argument that most of the rutters might have derived from the viceroy's palace in Goa: Van Linschoten, through his work for the archbishop, had access to the palace — as also shown in the *Itinerario* — which explains how Van Linschoten managed to acquire this crucial knowledge.[417] The Dutchman's engagement for the Portuguese does not seem to have been driven by a Dutch agenda, however, and Van Linschoten spent five years in Goa and then another three years in the Azores before returning to Enkhuizen in 1592.

While Van Linschoten has long been seen as a 'spy' for the Dutch, both Vila-Santa and Van den Boogart show this claim to be unfounded, as Van Linschoten's time in Asia gives no indication of such a position. Whatever the original intention of Van Linschoten's writings might have been, back in Enkhuizen he and his knowledge soon became the centre of attention. Printer Cornelis Claesz, Van Linschoten's friend and Humanist Bernardus Paludanus, as well as Lucas Waghenaer and Petrus Plancius, saw the potential for Dutch expansion in India that was at their disposal through Van Linschoten's knowledge. The States General gave Claesz a

Vibeke D. Roeper et al., *Reizen Op Papier: Journalen En Reisverslagen van Nederlandse Ontdekkingsreizigers, Kooplieden En Avonturiers* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1996). Also still useful is Charles Mckew Parr, *Jan Van Linschoten : The Dutch Marco Polo* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964).

[413] Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerario: voyage ofte Schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz, 1596).

[414] Vila-Santa, *Knowledge Exchanges Between Portugal and Europe*, 268. Dutch scholarship has not given Van Linschoten the attention that he might deserve, despite his crucial role for early VOC success and Dutch ethnography.

[415] Vila-Santa, 276–281.

[416] Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Reys-gheschrift vande navigatien der Portugaloysers in Orienten ...* (Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz, 1595).

[417] Vila-Santa, *Knowledge Exchanges Between Portugal and Europe*, 281ff. 'The deep knowledge of Portuguese political, social, economic, financial, and religious system in Asia that Van Linschoten exhibits across the *Itinerario* documents the privileged access he enjoyed in both the archbishop's and viceroy's palaces in Goa.' Vila-Santa, 286.

contract for the 1596 publication of the *Itinerario*, and the *Reysgheschrift*, the navigational section, was already published in 1595 just before the first voyage of Cornelis de Houtman to the East Indies.[418] The rutters provided crucial information on how to reach the East Indies, and the success of this first Dutch voyage led to the growth of Dutch merchant enterprises that led to the foundation of the VOC in 1602.

For the *Itinerario* proper, Paludanus aided his friend with his Padovan learning, helping to turn the account from a travel diary into a cosmographical survey and especially adding information on the Americas and Africa. This also manifests itself in annotations within the text (distinguished with a different typeface) of the *Itinerario*, where Paludanus adds natural-scientific information on topics such as porcelain, datura, or pineapple.[419] The final work was one of close collaboration between Claesz, Van Linschoten, and Paludanus.[420] Van Linschoten's oeuvre in this way not only revealed navigational and ethnographic knowledge to the Dutch public, but also supplied other practical knowledge on an array of topics, such as natural history, botanical information on Asian plants, or descriptions of porcelain and its production in China.[421] Whatever the original sentiments of Van Linschoten were regarding the Portuguese, the *Itinerario* also uncovered the growing weaknesses of the Portuguese in the East Indies, as well as key locations such as strongholds, or the best ports for obtaining spices. Especially the *Reysgheschrift* facilitated Dutch expansion in Asia, and the practical information in the *Itinerario* also furthered this goal;[422] Van Linschoten was thus crucial in the entanglement of travel writing, late humanism, and the rise of the Dutch Republic, and Van Linschoten subsequently also played an important role in attempts to find a Northeast passage to the East. All of this is evidence of the Dutch attempts to export the rebellion against Spain and build up a power base in the East Indies, where we might understand 'the production of knowledge as part of a new national project'.[423]

While it is unlikely that Van Linschoten was a spy and even that he originally conceived of the *Itinerario* as an anti-Catholic or anti-Portuguese treatise, through his collaboration with other agents and its role in Dutch expansion the work gained such a reputation in the eyes of many of its readers. Besides Van Linschoten's disdain for the Jesuits, however, the work is mainly concerned with a presentation of the varying levels of civility of the diverse East Asian peoples and societies he describes, where the Portuguese however are included and at

[418] Vila-Santa, 299; Saldanha, "The Itineraries of Geography," 22f.
[419] Linschoten, *Itinerario*, 29, 47, 72.
[420] Vila-Santa, *Knowledge Exchanges Between Portugal and Europe*, 302.
[421] Harold John Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 126.
[422] For the impact of the *Reysgheschrift* see Nuno Vila-Santa, "Jan Huygen van Linschoten and the Reysgheschrift: Updating Iberian Science for the Dutch Expansion," *Historical Research* 94, no. 266 (2021): 736–757; Saldanha, "The Itineraries of Geography"; Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 90–120.
[423] Saldanha, "The Itineraries of Geography," 161.

times strongly criticised for their moral laxity and adoption of Indian customs.[424] As I have already mentioned when discussing the *Itinerario*'s inclusion in the *India Orientalis* series, the *Itinerario* and especially its plates clustered different ethnic groups and places according to civility, with China at the top, followed by Goa, and Malabar, as a corrupted, weak and poor society, at the bottom. This approach was mostly abandoned by the De Brys in favour of an approach which more clearly highlighted crass idolatry.[425] Van Linschoten is also notorious for his presentation of Indian devil-worship, reminiscent in its descriptions of Varthema.[426] As the *Itinerario* was a pioneering work of Dutch ethnography and India in particular, and was a major reference for subsequent travel writers and ethnographers; this includes Rogerius, who implicitly mention Van Linschoten at times and was probably influenced by his systematic presentation of the stratification of society, and even more so the annotator, who uses Van Linschoten as a source for all sorts of matters relating to India and the East Indies more broadly. I will in the following take a closer look at Van Linschoten's portrayal of Indian paganism — within its comparative framework of different regions and classes — and devil worship and idolatry, a topic that has not received the attention it deserves.

## India: Degrees of Civility and Devilish Idolatry

Most of the first thirty chapters of the *Itinerario* are dedicated to an overview of the lands and peoples between East Africa and Japan, followed by some chapters on the Portuguese in Goa. Chapter 33 is on the 'pagans, Indians, and other strangers living in Goa', and Van Linschoten's overview of pagans and pagan beliefs is noteworthy:

> The Moors eat all things except pork, and dying are buried like the Jews; but the pagans, as Decanijns, Gusarates, and Canaras, and other Indians, being dead, are burnt to ashes, and some women are burned alive with them, namely the nobles, and the wives of the Bramenes, who are their idolatrous priests. Also for the merchants, some of them eat all things, except cow or buffalo meat, which they consider to be holy. Others eat nothing whatsoever that has either had life or blood, as those of Gusarata and the Banians of Cambaia, who observe the law of Pythagoras. Most of them pray unto the Sun and Moon, yet they all acknowledge that there is a God who has created and rules over all, and that after this life there is another, wherein men shall be rewarded according to their works. But they have idols, which they call Pagodas, with the most ugly and devilish figures carved so

[424] See on this Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia*.

[425] Boogaart, "Heathendom and Civility in the Historia Indiae Orientalis," 75. Van Linschoten also adopts a racial grading of people, classifying them according to different levels of whiteness or blackness, see Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter*, chapter 1. This also includes the concept of mestizos in Goa (chapter 29 of the *Itinerario*). All of this is likely another element taken over from Portuguese sources and from his lived experiences in Goa. C.f. on this topic for instance Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c. 1450-1600."

[426] Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 21–22.

> that they may be decorated; to whom daily they offer, and say, that those holy men had lived among them, whereof they tell so many miracles [...] and say that they are intercessors between them and God. The devil often-times answers them through those images which they likewise know, and they do him great honour with daily offerings, to keep friendship with him and so that he should not hurt them.[427]

This short passage reveals many of the existing tropes on Indian paganism and establishes some foundations for future Dutch ethnography; as already mentioned, Van Linschoten was most likely familiar with Portuguese chronicles and many of his descriptions are very similar to those of Barbosa, whom he might have read either in Goa or back in the Netherlands through the translation into Italian found in Ramusio. We thus encounter familiar themes and topics: funerary rites, including sati, the general abstention from beef, as well as the dual presence of both a belief in one God and devilish idolatry. The Bania are singled out here as Pythagoreans — believers in the transmigration of souls — and we see a distinct lack of an overarching idea of 'Hinduism'.[428] Van Linschoten thus does not stray far from earlier Portuguese presentations of Indian religiosity and employs a similar lack of interest in investigating Indian religion more thoroughly. Van Linschoten instead is very keen to point out the superstition and all the 'devilish and gruesome idols' that litter the landscape, which is reinforced through the accompanying engravings.[429]

Van Linschoten describes different castes and groups much like different ethnicities, and

[427] 'Die Mooren eeten alle dinck uytghenomen Verkens vleijsch, ende stervende worden begraven ghelijck oock die Joden: maer die Heydenen, als Decanijns, Gusarattes ende Canaras, en ander Indianen doodt zijnde, worden verbrant tot asschen toe, ende sommige vrouwen levendigh met haer, te weten die vanden Adel zijn, ende die Vrouwen vande Bramenes, dat zijn hare afgodische Menistren: oock wel van sommighe Cooplieden; Sommighe onder haer eeten alle dingh, uytgenomen Koyen ende Buffels vleeijsch, 'twelck zy voor heyligh houden; Andere en eeten geen dinck dat bloet noch leven gehadt heeft, gelijck als die Gusaratten ende Banianes van Cambajen, die de Wet van Pitagoras onderhouden. Den meesten hoop aenbidden de Son ende Maen, doch bekennen al datter eenen Godt is die't al geschapen heeft ende regiert, ende na dit leven een ander is, aldaermen loon na zijn wercken ontfangen sal: maer hebben Afgoden diese Pagodes noemen, met die allerleelickste en Duyvelsche figueren uytghehouwen diemen soude moghen versieren; Dese doen zy haer die dagelijcksche offerande, ende segghen dat dese heylighe persoonen onder haer gheweest hebben, daer zy soo veel mirakelen af vertellen, dat het niet om seggen en is; Houden dat dese hare Advocaten tusschen haer ende God zijn. Die Duyvel geeft haer dicwils uyt dese Afgoden andtwoordt, diese oock wel kennen, en groote eere bewysen met dagelicksche offerhande, om hem te vrient te hebben, en dat hy haer niet beschadigen soude;' Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerario, voyage, ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, 1579-1592*, ed. Hendrik Kern ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1910), 150. I will be using the English translation of 1598 as a baseline, but will adapt and refer to the original with my own translation.

[428] My point here is not that this was unusual, as there was no concept of 'Hinduism' or the 'religion of the Gentoos' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See David N. Lorenzen, "Who Invented Hinduism?," in *Defining Hinduism*, ed. J. E. Llewellyn (London: Routledge, 2005); Will Sweetman, "Unity and Plurality: Hinduism and the Religions of India in Early European Scholarship," in *Defining Hinduism. A Reader*, ed. J. E. Llewellyn (London: Routledge, 2005). This notwithstanding, as David Lorenzen and Will Sweetman point out, notions of an implicit unity did exist in early modern India and were reported by informants to Europeans, and Europeans, at the same time, recognised a native diversity of Indian 'sects' such as Lord or Nobili.

[429] Linschoten, *Itinerario, voyage, ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, 1579-1592*, 152.

Figure 4.1: Indian Merchants, Banias, and Brahmans, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, *Itinerario*.

dedicates specific chapters to both the Brahmans (chapter 36) and the Bania (37, along with Gujaratis). The Banians for instance are described as 'yellow in colour like the Bramenes and somewhat whiter, and there are women among them which are much whiter and clearer of complexion than the Portuguese women.'[430] The numerous illustrations — the section on paganism and Goa features by far the most engravings — present the diversity of groups clearly, as we also see in illustration 4.1. This plate also shows that whilst these groups are clearly the elites — the Vaishya (merchant) and Bania men sport elegant dress and writing equipment, while the Brahman is distinguished through his sacred thread and a book which might be the Veda — the background features a horned idol to which the naked general populace is praying.

The Brahmans, at the same time, are clearly distinguished as the 'clergy' of the Indians in the *Itinerario*. Their dietary rules are specified, much like for the 'Pythagorean' Banias, and they are said to be the most esteemed of the Indians.[431] Van Linschoten repeats that they are the 'ministers of the Pagodas of the devilish Indian idols' and that the common man

[430] '[...] zijn van nemen ofte coleur ghelijck die Bramenes geelachtich, ende sommighe wat witter, ende men vint vrouwen onder haer die in witheyt ende schoonheydt die Portugesen vrouwen te boven gaen.' Linschoten, *Itinerario, voyage, ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, 1579-1592*, 169.

[431] Linschoten, 164.

thinks them to be prophets.[432] He details the dual role of Brahmans as devil-worshippers and monotheists here more clearly:

> They have their Pagodas and idols, whose ministers they are, about which they tell wondrous histories and miracles, and say that those Pagodas had been men, and, because of their holy lives and good works done in this world, have become holy men in the other world as a reward; as by their miracles, by the devil performed and manifested unto them, and by their commandments their forms are made in the most ugly and deformed manner possible that may be devised. Such they pray and offer unto, with many devilish superstitions, and steadfastly believe that they are their advocates and intercessors unto God. They believe also that there is a supreme God above, which rules all things, and that the soul is immortal; but that they go out of this world into another, both into beasts and men, and receive rewards based on their works, according to the law of Pythagoras, whose disciples they are.[433]

We see that for Van Linschoten the monotheist element of the Brahmans is subjugated under a Pythagorean nature innate to the Indian elites, which, while better than the naive superstitions of the general populace, does not merit greater investigation. Indeed, the devil is all-present in the *Itinerario*'s description of India. When describing the temples on the island of Salsette, Van Linschoten takes every opportunity to describe the 'Pagodas' as frightful, ugly, devilish, and evil. We can see this illustrated in figure 4.2, where a devilish idol is being worshipped. In the following pages he recounts the theft of the Buddha's tooth from Ceylon, and the superstitions of Vijayanagara, such as hook-swinging or throwing themselves in front of carts which would have a great impact on the European imagination of Indian idolatry and also feature on the frontispiece of the *Open Door*.[434]

Van Linschoten thus repeats the dual nature of Brahman religion presumably taken from Portuguese sources, but in practice presents us with a thoroughly idolatrous and devilish India. While Van den Boogart's argument about how the De Brys amplified idolatry over degrees of civilisations found in the *Itinerario* may be sound, the original publication makes a very clear case for idolatry — at least in India — itself. Neither can we detect any obvious parallels

[432] Linschoten, 164–165.

[433] Hebben hare Pagodes ende afgoden, wiens dienaers ende Menistren zy zijn, daer zy wondere Historiën ende mirakelen af vertellen, en seggen dat dese Pagodes by haer menschen zijn geweest, ende door hare heyligh leven ende goede wercken in dese werelt gedaen zijn door hare verdiensten int ander leven heylighen gheworden, alsse met hare mirakelen deur den duyvel gheopenbaert hebben, ende door haer bevel hare figueren afghemaeckt, inde leelickste ende grouwelickste forme diemen soude mogen versieren; dese bidden zy aen ende doen haer offerhande met veel duyvelsche superstitien, ende ghelooven vastelijck dat het hare Advocaten ende voorspraken by Godt zijn; ghelooven oock alles datter eenen oppersten Godt is diet al regiert, ende dat die ziele onsterffelijck is: maer datse van d'een lijf int ander loopt, so wel van beesten als van menschen naer hare verdiensten, naer die wet van Pitagoras, wiens discipulen zy seggen te wesen. Linschoten, 167.

[434] Linschoten, 189–196. On the Buddha's tooth see John S. Strong, *The Buddha's Tooth: Western Tales of a Sri Lankan Relic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

Figure 4.2: Indian Pagoda and Mosque of the Moors, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, *Itinerario*.

drawn by Van Linschoten between Indian and Catholic idolatry, and the frequent mentions of good works are always interpreted within a Pythagorean framework. The Brahmans, though clearly more civilised than other groups, are also presented as the perpetuators of devil-worship, and are repeatedly called deceivers of the common people. Van Linschoten does not press this point, but their roles as seductive, deceitful priests comes across clearly in the *Itinerario*.

## 4.3 Captains, Traders, Journals: Dutch Travel Literature 1600 to 1650

Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* provided a rich framework for the travellers and journal keepers on voyages to emulate as that the Dutch ventured to the East Indies more and more frequently. The first voyages of the Dutch to the East were quickly chronicled, and publishers fought over new travel writing in an increasingly competitive market for the genre. In the first quarter of the century the accounts by the likes of Jacob Le Maire, Joris Van Spilbergen, and Willem

Cornelisz Schouten quickly followed the *Itinerario* and were published in multiple languages.[435] Towards the middle of the century we see a slow shift and a transition away from more parochial first-hand accounts, where journals are especially important, to accounts by armchair travellers, where rather than narratives focussed on one author, descriptions of specific places became more common.[436] The *Open Door* was published in the middle of this transition period, and the works by Phillipus Baldaeus (c. 1632 - 1671) and Olfert Dapper (1636 - 1689), both published in 1672 just roughly twenty years after the *Open Door*, borrowed liberally from Rogerius and belong predominantly to this later form of travel writing. As Benjamin Schmidt has argued, especially from the 1680s onwards the Dutch created a form of European — as opposed to a more national and parochial — exotic geography that reoriented the authority of the text towards the 'editor cum publisher'.[437] This was facilitated by a stark growth in the sphere of Dutch publishing in the seventeenth century due to a huge internal and external demand for Dutch books.[438] The *Open Door* sits in-between — both chronologically and in terms of genre and audience — the early ethnographic approaches of the Dutch during the first half of the seventeenth century, and the commercial success of Dutch geography commissioned by booksellers and publishers in the second half of the century. A look at the seventeenth century from this perspective illuminates both the significant role Dutch ethnography played for the creation of the *Open Deure*, but also the uniqueness of the latter if compared to earlier and later ethnographic and 'exotic' writing. The rich tradition of travel writing following the *Itinerario* forms a precursor to the more specific and detailed accounting of the *Open Door*, whilst the collection by Isaac Commelin from 1644-45 offers a rich resource for comparison to antiquarians and ethnologists such as the annotator of the *Open Door*.

### Dutch Travel Writing, 1596-1644

Following the publication of Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* in 1596 we see the numerous precursor companies to the VOC (voorcompagnieën) rapidly organise many voyages to the East Indies. Van Linschoten's book not only helped guide the first fleet under Cornelis de Houtman and its successors to the East Indies, it was also a commonly used standard work carried by Dutch ships for the entirety of the seventeenth century, and its many editions and translations — seven Dutch editions and translations into German, French, English and Latin — attest to its popularity.[439] While De Houtman's voyage was not a financial success, as it barely made enough profit to pay for the expenses of the undertaking, the novel trading opportunities the successful return of (most of) the fleet was greeted with great enthusiasm and an impetus for sending many more ships under the flags of several local Dutch companies. The Dutch

[435] Pettegree and Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World*, 90–120.
[436] Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, 125–27.
[437] Schmidt. See also Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*.
[438] See Pettegree and Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World*.
[439] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 435f.

understood the advantages of following Van Linschoten's advice of centring their attention on Java, where the Portuguese were much weaker than in India or Malacca, and hence this region became the main focus of the Dutch early on. While the next fleet of eight ships under Jacob van Neck and Wijbrant van Waerwijck also took the Portuguese route to the East Indies, the Dutch were eager to investigate alternative paths as well. In 1598 Olivier van Noort, at the end of his voyage the first Dutch captain to circumnavigate the globe, sailed west in order to find alternative ways to reach the East Indies and sailed through the Straits of Magellan, a route followed already a few months earlier by the fleet under the command of Jacques Mahu — both expeditions were part of the *Magelhaensche Compagnie* based in Rotterdam.[440] While these expeditions were successful in charting new routes, and also brought the war against Spain to the Philippines and in this way disrupted Iberian trade, they were a financial catastrophe.[441] Even worse were the attempts at finding a north-east passage to reach the East Indies — though once the accounts of these voyages were published, they became very popular.

The Dutch made quick progress in the short years between De Houtman's voyage and 1602. That year the VOC was established so as to not have the several companies compete against one another and instead represent the entirety of the United Provinces in the East. The conflict with the Iberian powers not only led to the growth of the Dutch East India trade, but also meant that many prominent Protestant families in the Southern Netherlands emigrated to the prosperous and independent republic. Among them were many great publishers from the printing centres of Louvain and especially Antwerp who enjoyed more freedom from censorship in the cities of Holland, including Plantin, Blaeu, Elzevier, and Cornelis Claeszoon (or Claesz).[442] This coincided with the growth of the Dutch Asian trade, and though not all voyages to the East produced journals or diaries, many did and were quickly published by the printers in the Dutch Republic. These sources give us indispensable information on India and Indonesia, so much so that William Harrison Moreland, when speaking about early Dutch travel accounts, proclaimed that 'anyone who imagines a motive for any European action in India during the 17th century without having studied the Dutch sources may be fairly confident that he is putting a noose round his neck, to be drawn tight by the first well-informed critic whom he meets; and those sources are certainly indispensable to anyone who wants to study the motives which actuated visitors of all European nations.'[443]

Many of the early accounts were published by Dutch printers such as Claesz, or incorporated in the volumes of collections such as those by the De Brys or Levinus Hulsius, who closely

[440] An overview of the voorcompagnieën can be found in Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*, chapter 1. See further Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 437-450; Frederik Caspar Wieder, *De reis van Mahu en de Cordes door de Straat van Magalhães naar Zuid-Amerika en Japan 1598-1600;* vol. 1 ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1923).

[441] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 441.

[442] Lach and Kley, volume 3, book 1, 435.

[443] Quoted in Charles Ralph Boxer, "Isaac Commelin's 'Begin Ende Voortgangh'. Introduction to the Facsimile Edition," in *Dutch Merchants and Mariners in Asia 1602–1795* (Farnham: Ashgate, 1988), II: 6.

followed the precedent of the *India Orientalis* series.[444] New travelogues continued to be popular, and especially the westward accounts of the 1614-17 Voyage of Van Spilbergen and the contemporary travel of Le Maire and Schoten — who discovered a new southern Pacific Strait named eventually after Le Maire — were bestsellers.[445] We also see the appearance of ethnographies focussed on religion and customs, such as Sebastian Danckaerts's account of Amboina. This is very much in line with the calls for the *Seminarium Indicum*, regarding which, as already discussed, Danckaerts shared Heurnius's and others' support for such an enterprise, which would open its doors the year after Danckaerts account was published.[446] Accounts on India continued to rely heavily on Jesuit and Portuguese, but also on the English sources that were collected by Purchas, as we will see with Johannes De Laet's 1631 treatise on Mughal India. De Laet's book, a scholarly treatise that also incorporated unpublished Dutch sources, in turn was a major source for Johan van Twist's account of Gujarat. Pieter van den Broecke's journal, published in 1634, contains information about the establishment of the VOC in India, yet does not provide any significant detail on Indian peoples or customs.[447] Many of these treatises were re-published or published for the first time — as was the case for Van Twist's Description of Gujarat — in the *Begin ende voortgangh*, published shortly before the *Open Door*. This collection was of paramount importance for the comparative project of the annotator and thus shaped the *Open Door* in a significant manner.

### Isaac Commelin's *Begin ende voortgangh*

By the 1640s many Dutch accounts had thus been published both in the cities of Holland in the original Dutch, or in translation by publishers of collections such as the De Brys or Hulsius. While there were no comparable collections such as these in the United Provinces in the first decades of the seventeenth century, Michiel Colijn, an apprentice of Cornelis Claesz, reissued many of the early accounts from Claesz and brought out a first collection of accounts entitled *Oost-Indische ende West-Indische voyagien* (East and West Indian Voyages).[448] Johannes Janssonius, another Amsterdam published, then purchased Colijn's copperplates after the former's death in 1635.[449] Janssonius rather quickly found a use for these as he reused the plates

[444] Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*, 346–352.
[445] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 445-49.
[446] Sebastiaan Danckaerts, *Historisch Ende Grondich Verhael, Vanden Standt Des Christendoms Int Quartier van Amboina, Mitsgaders Vande Hoope Ende Apparentie Eenigher Reformatie Ende Beternisse van Dien* ('s-Gravenhage: by Aert Meuris, 1621).
[447] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 452.
[448] See M. M. Kleerkooper, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de 17e eeuw* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1914). See further Pieter Anton Tiele, *Mémoire bibliographique sur les journaux des navigateurs néerlandais: réimprimés dans les collections de De Bry et de Hulsius et dans les collections hollandaises du XVIIe siècle, et sur les anciennes éditions hollandaises des Journaux de navigateurs étrangers, la plupart en la possession de Frederik Muller à Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1867), passim and Boxer, "Isaac Commelin's 'Begin Ende Voortgangh'," II: 2.
[449] Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World*, 370.

for the first great Dutch collection of travel literature, the huge *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Origin and Advancement of the Chartered Dutch East India Company; in the following: *Begin ende voortgangh*) edited by Isaac Commelin and published in Amsterdam in 1644 or 1645.[450] The full title announces its purpose to the potential reader: *Origin and Advancement of the Chartered Dutch East India Company, comprising the principal voyages made thither by the inhabitants of the same provinces. All together with the descriptions of the empires, islands, harbours, rivers, streams, roadsteads, winds, depths, and shoals; together with the religions, manners, custom, politics, and government of the people; as well as their spices, drugs, currencies and other merchandise, all enriched by many discourses: also decorated with some copper plates. Useful and serviceable for all those curious and other lovers of seafaring.*

The origins of the *Begin ende voortgangh* are unfortunately shrouded in mystery, and were it not for Tiele's historical detective work we might still not know that it was Isaac Commelin who edited and arranged this collection. Based on one of the additions by Commelin — also remarked upon by Tiele — it seems that Commelin was promised materials and official cooperation by the VOC which then did not materialise.[451] Commelin nevertheless managed to publish a great deal of new material — around fifty per cent of the material in the *Begin ende voortgangh* was first published here in the estimation of Boxer — whilst other accounts appeared in the original Dutch for the first time. The *Begin ende voortgangh* was a successful publication, too, and was quickly pirated by Joost Hartgers (1648) and Gilles Joosten Saeghman (1663-1670). Later it was also translated into French (by de Renneville, 1702-06, reprinted 1725, 1754).[452] It would remain the most important collection of Dutch travel literature for the remainder of the seventeenth century.

The collection includes twenty-one accounts spread over two volumes which each exceed 1000 pages, and include many plates and maps, the original and updated charter of the VOC, as well as a historical outline of VOC activities until 1631.[453] Most of the illustrations were based on the earlier editions by Colijn or taken from the De Bry or Hulsius collections — we

[450] I have used Isaac Commelin, *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius, 1646), which is reproduced in Isaac Commelin, ed., *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie: vervatende de voornaemste reysen, by de inwoonderen der selver provincien derwaerts gedaen. Alles nevens de beschryvinghen der rijcken, eylanden, havenen ... ; mitsgaders religien, manieren ... ; oock neede haerder speceryen, drooghen, geldt ende andere koopmanschappen, met veele discoursen verrijckt: nevens eenighe koopere platen verciert. Nut ende dienstigh alle curieuse, ende andere zee-varende liefhebbers ...*, in collab. with Charles Ralph Boxer (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970). The best source of the Begin ende voortgangh remain Tiele, *Mémoire bibliographique* and Boxer, "Isaac Commelin's 'Begin Ende Voortgangh'." Also very useful is Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 461-473. There remains some uncertainty on the print runs: Boxer asserts that the 1644 run was a sort of trial run, with the 1645 publication date being the first proper print run. The most common version is the 1646 edition which is also the one I used.

[451] Tiele, *Mémoire bibliographique*, 246 and Boxer, "Isaac Commelin's 'Begin Ende Voortgangh'," II: 2.

[452] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 462.

[453] Lach and Kley, volume 3, book 1, 461.

therefore cannot detect the same pictoral agenda as with the collection by the De Brys, which might otherwise have served as a model for Commelin. As editor he instead cut together accounts and added many of his own insertions (in Dutch: inwerps), based on classic accounts such as Marco Polo, Van Linschoten, or Varthema, or diverse material relating to the VOC, which is the titular protagonist of the *Begin ende voortgangh*. The glory of the VOC is already put on clear display in each of the two frontispieces: volume one illustrates the riches reaped by the Dutch through trade with the East Indies, whilst the second volume depicts Dutch exploration of the seas and cartography.[454]

Figure 4.3: Jacob van Meurs: Frontispiece of Isaac Commelin (ed.), *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Part 1, Amsterdam 1646. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-75.321

The first volume is mostly comprised of the earlier accounts leading up to or shortly after the foundation of the VOC — it is thus the *Begin* in the *Begin ende voortgangh*. The accounts include De Houtman's first voyage, the expedition under Jacob van Neck and Wijbrandt

[454] The Rijksmuseum description offers a possible identification of the queen as a personification of America in the frontispiece of volume 2.

van Waerwijck, the first voyage of Joris van Spilbergen, as well as the expeditions of the *Magelhaensche Compagnie* and the attempts at charting a north-east passage. Most of these had been published previously by Claesz or had been included in translation in the De Brys' *India Orientalis* series. Previously unpublished were Jan Sas's description of Admiral Steven van der Hagen's first voyage to the East Indies (1599-1601), the first Dutch printing of Jacob van Neck's second voyage (1600-1602), and the short account of Paulus van Caerden's journal (1599). The voyage to the East Indies under Admiral Wolfart Harmansz had not been published in its entirety either.

Figure 4.4: Hessel Gerritsz: Frontispiece of Isaac Commelin (ed.), *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Part 2, Amsterdam 1646. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-52.606

The second volume contains only accounts of VOC voyages, from the first decade of the seventeenth century to the last years of the 1630s and the first years of the 1640s. It contains the popular accounts of Van Spilbergen, as well as Schouten and Le Maire mentioned above, but also many shorter accounts bundled together. The second volume also contains much more previously unpublished material on diverse places, such as Francois Caron's description of Japan and Joost Schouten's description of Siam. In the context of writing on India — and

certainly for the comparative project of the annotator — the most relevant treatise is Johan van Twist's Description of Gujarat, which I will discuss in more detail shortly.

While the *Begin ende voortgangh* has not received the same sort of attention as the collections by Hakluyt, Purchas, or De Bry, Commelin's two volumes exhibit many similarities with the other Protestant collections of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; while many of the texts and engravings had appeared previously under De Brys, the entanglement of national interest and consciousness with the project of publishing compilations was similar to the English collections. Though, as Boxer remarks, the *Begin ende voortgangh* was aimed at both armchair readers as well as merchants and mariners — evoking the role of Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* — the main audience that took interest in the work was probably armchair travellers and 'library navigators'.[455] For such 'liefhebbers' of travel as they might be called in Dutch, whether merely interested in exotic tales or being of a more scholarly disposition and eager to utilise the knowledge contained, the *Begin ende voortgangh* provided a cornucopia of information on many parts of the world, arranged in a compact format and containing many new accounts. As we may see through its use by the annotator of the *Open Door*, the collection made a comparison between different peoples, their customs, and religions, a more straightforward endeavour, as it provided the reader with a global overview of people, nature, and geography. Lach and van Kley justifiably call the *Begin ende voortgangh* 'the most important collection of Dutch travel literature in the seventeenth century'.[456] While many of the accounts in the collection did not display the same focus on religion that we may find in Van Twist and even more so in Rogerius himself, it was one of the most important sources for the annotator's global ethnological project: he used observations made by these travel writers to expand his sphere of comparison to the entire globe, and specifically compared Rogerius's descriptions of Coromandel with those of Siam, Japan, or Gujarat.

## 4.4 Johan van Twist's Description of Gujarat

Johan van Twist's description of India, mainly a treatise on the Mughal empire and Gujarat, is the most detailed account regarding the Indian peninsula in the *Begin ende voortgangh*. The annotator of the *Open Door*, most probably unaware of Henry Lord's slightly earlier work, used Van Twist's account for its detailed information on Gujarat and to compare Brahman practices in Pulicat with those of Gujarat, as well as with the Banias. Even if he had had access to Lord's work, Van Twist's account provided lots of ethnographic detail, mainly thanks to its compilatory nature. Van Twist (died 1643) was a VOC merchant who became chief factor of the VOC posts at Ahmadabad, Cambay, and Bharuch in 1635 after working in Gujarat for

[455] Boxer, "Isaac Commelin's 'Begin Ende Voortgangh'," II: 6. As Boxer also notes, the inclusion of rutters and other navigational material in the *Begin ende voortgangh* seems to indicate that at the very least one of the intended use cases was its employment at sea.

[456] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 1, 461.

several years.[457] Van Twist might be best known for his mission to the court of Bijapur, where he was sent as an emissary to negotiate the granting of a farman, which was successful.[458] Lach and Van Kley suggest that Van Twist might have written his *Description of Gujarat* during his years as extraordinary member of the Council of the Indies in Batavia. We know little of the genesis of the work: the publication date of 1638 given on the cover is clearly fictitious, as there was no printing press in Batavia at the time.[459] The inclusion in the *Begin ende voortgangh* was the first time the text was published, and it was pirated and reprinted many times after. As Lach and Van Kley note, we might identify the *Description of Gujarat* as a work of compilation, as Van Twist freely used the available material on the Mughal Empire, India, and Gujarat, while adding to this his own eyewitness testimony.[460] While Van Twist used Van Linschoten, Pedro Texeira, and Jesuit material, three sources played an especially great role in the conception of the *Description of Gujarat*: Johannes De Laet's *De imperio magni mogolis sive India* (1631), the *Remonstrantie* of Francisco Pelsaert — a manuscript which if not used by Van Twist was a major source for De Laet — and the also unpublished Gujarat report by Dutch factor Wollebrandt Geleynssen de Jongh, arguably the most important source for Van Twist.[461] Before investigating the presentation of Gujarat and Indian religion in Van Twist, it is therefore useful to take a brief look at these sources.

### Van Twist's Sources

Most likely the earliest major source of Van Twist's *Description of Gujarat* is the *Remonstrantie* of Franscisco Pelsaert. Pelsaert was a VOC merchant and indigo buyer, whose manuscript recounts the author's seven years in Agra, written in 1626 but unpublished until W.H. Moreland brought out an English translation of the manuscript which remains in the VOC archives.[462] Much of the *Remonstrantie* deals with matters of trade, and Moreland cautions that 'readers who are not interested in such topics as the production of indigo, or the trade in spice, may be advised to pass lightly over the opening sections, which are mainly, though not exclusively, technical'.[463] Pelsaert does, however, also offer some short characterisations of society and

[457] An overview on Van Twist can be found in Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 2, 662.

[458] See P. M. Joshi, "Johan van Twist's Mission to Bijapur, 1637," *Journal of Indian History* 24 (1956): 111–137.

[459] Boxer, "Isaac Commelin's 'Begin Ende Voortgangh'," II: 12. See the title page bearing 1638 in Johan van Twist, "Beschrijving van Guseratte, dat is: Cort verhael van de regering, ceremoni ën, handel, vruchten en gelegentheyt van 't coninckrijck van Guseratte, staende onder de beheersching van ... coninck Chanziahan, anders genaemt den grooten Magoll, wt verscheyde autheuren en eyghen ondervindingh vergadert, ende by een ghestelt," in *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische compagnie*, ed. Isaac Commelin, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius, 1646).

[460] Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 3, book 2, 662.

[461] Lach and Kley, volume 3, book 2, 662.

[462] Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India, the Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, ed. W. H. Moreland (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1925). The manuscript copy is the National Archives in The Hague: NA VOC 1.04.02 4906 0007.

[463] Pelsaert, v.

religion at Agra. Much of this is devoted to Islam, but Pelsaert seems to have been interested in 'Hinduism' too. He supplies a short chapter on the pagan Indians, adding that it was his plan to write a thorough study on the topic 'but the fact that it has no foundation beyond elaborate poetic fables, the great number of their gods and their marvellous transformations, and the extraordinary variety of their beliefs — these considerations have deterred me, or indeed prevented me from reaching the truth.'[464] Brahmans are described by Pelsaert as the most influential and reputed group, about whom he says that 'some [...] are very ingenious, good astronomers, familiar with the course of the stars, and usually prepared to foretell the weather. They reckon eclipses very clearly, and they also do a great deal of fortune-telling.'[465]

Moreland mentions that Pelsaert sometimes refers to a 'history of the Mogul Empire, which he had written, or intended to write. No such work is extant, but there are some grounds for inferring that it may have been incorporated in the "Fragment of Indian History", which John de Laet printed in *De Imperio Magni Mogolis*.'[466] As shown by S.N. Banerjee, this seems to indeed be the case: Pieter van den Broecke, chief factor at Surat, sent a manuscript to the United Provinces which was then entrusted to Johannes de Laet, who translated it into Latin. This text, known as Van den Broecke's *Fragmentum* and forming the second part of the monograph, gives a history of the reigns of Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir.[467] De Laet was a scholar and public figure of some renown: he had studied under Joseph Scaliger at Leiden, represented this city as a staunch Gomarist at the Synod of Dort, and had a foundational role in the establishment of the West India Company.[468] De Laet's book on the Mughal Empire otherwise is largely a compilation. Banerjee waxes lyrically on the contents: '[...] his compilations are learned and laborious. No better illustration can be given than the first part of this book and above all, its first chapter. How assiduously he pieces together facts dug out of a host of writings and how closely reproduced they are! Ptolemy and Texeira, Roe and Pelsaert, Terry and Finch, Withington and Hawkins, Steele and Crowther, Benedict and Garcia are all largely drawn upon, making the *De Imperio Magni Mogolis* a monument of painstaking industry and

[464] Pelsaert, 76.
[465] Pelsaert, 77.
[466] Pelsaert, iv.
[467] Joannes De Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogol, a Translation of De Laet's "Description of India and Fragment of Indian History"*, ed. S. N. Banerjee and John Somervell Hoyland (D.B. Taraporevala sons, 1928), iv. De Laet's book is Joannes De Laet, *De imperio Magni Mogolis sive India vera commentarius* (Leiden: ex officina Elzeviriana, 1631). The first part contains geographical, commercial and administrative details derived from various sources. It is difficult to ascertain the exact agency of Van den Broecke and De Laet in the rendering of this text, but Banerjee and Moreland both posit that most information can be traced directly to Pelsaert. De Laet's book is part of a series by the Leiden Elzeviers, thirty-five *Republics* on the different parts of Europe, as well as China, Japan, and of course the Mughal Empire. See Sina Rauschenbach, "Elzevirian Republics, Wise Merchants, and New Perspectives on Spain and Portugal in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic," *De Zeventiende Eeuw. Cultuur in de Nederlanden in interdisciplinair perspectief* 29, no. 1 (2013): 81.
[468] See Michiel van Groesen, "The Anglo-Dutch Lake? Johannes de Laet and the Ideological Origins of the Dutch and English West Indies," *International Journal of Maritime History* 34, no. 4 (2022): 561–575.

a storehouse of varied information.'[469]

While it seems that De Laet took his information on religion primarily from Pelsaert and Terry,[470] his conclusions are different to Pelsaert's bewilderment at Hindu diversity. De Laet mostly sees things in a straightforward manner: 'almost all the Heathens follow the sect and teaching of Pythagoras: for they believe in the immortality of the soul, which they regard as receiving reward or punishment through transmigration into another body. They hold that after death the soul passes into the body of some other animal, either bad or good according to the manner of life it has led: thence again it passes to another condition either better or worse, and so on *ad infinitum*. This is the reason for the great veneration they show for cows.'[471] Where Pelsaert sees only chaos, De Laet sees a more uniform distribution of a Pythagorean religion in India, a rather common association that fits De Laet's interests, as just like Pelsaert, De Laet is not interested in a deeper analysis of Indian religion.

Finally, Geleynssen de Jongh's *Remonstrantie* forms the third major source of Van Twist's account of Gujarat. Wollebrant Geleynssen de Jongh was a VOC factor, who was active in Burhanpur and Bharuch in the 1620s until 1632, when he returned to Europe.[472] This of course coincides with Van Twist's time in Gujarat, and we know that the two factors knew each other from at least 1630 based on their correspondence.[473] After repatriating he was sent to India again and became vice-director of the factory at Surat in 1636 and director of the Persia trade. The major elements of the *Remonstrantie* — a title that was given by Wille, Caland in reference to Pelsaert as the document itself has no title — seem to have been written around 1625.[474] Caland is also adamant that Pelsaert and Geleynssen de Jongh, whilst describing similar matters, most probably did not build on one another's work and produced independent accounts.[475]

Geleynssen de Jongh gives a rather detailed account of the Bania and Parsis; indeed, Caland

[469] De Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogol, a Translation of De Laet's "Description of India and Fragment of Indian History"*, v.

[470] De Laet, 80, asterisked note.

[471] De Laet, 85.

[472] See the short biographical overview in Wollebrandt Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, ed. Willem Caland ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1929), xiv. The National Archives in The Hague (NA, Geleynssen de Jongh, 1.10.30) contain a treasure trove of information on Geleynssen de Jongh. For a biography of De Jong see Hans W. van Santen, *Van Alkmaarse wees tot commandeur van de VOC: het rijke leven van Wollebrant Geleynssen de Jongh, 1594-1674*, Alkmaarse historische reeks 20 (Utrecht: Matrijs, 2022).

[473] Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, xv.

[474] The archival title of the document (NA, Geleynssen de Jongh, 1.10.30 28) is 'Register bevattende: beschrijvingen (door Wollebrand Geleynssen de Jongh?) van den handel, den landbouw, de manufacturen, de scheepsvaart enz. van Brootchia, Brodera, Cambaya en Ahmadabad (1628-1629); — van de middelen van bestaan de wijze van oorlogvoeren, den godsdienst, de wetten, zeden en gebruiken van de bewoners van Hindostan;- van de afkomst, den godsdienst, de wetten, gebruiken enz. van de Parzen in Goeseratte; copie-antwoord van Geleynsen op de vraag van den commissaris Dirck van der Lee hoe de handel te Brootchia ten meesten voordeele van de Compagnie moet worden gedreven.' It is dated 1628.

[475] Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, xv. An overview of the ethnographic reporting in the *Remonstrantie* can be found in Jawaid Akhtar, "Merchant Communities of Gujarat During the 17th Century as Described by Geleynssen De Jongh," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 53 (1992): 290–293.

proclaims that compared to Lord's contemporary account of the same two groups, we find that whilst 'with Lord almost everything is fantasy, Geleynssen de Jongh provides an accurate account of the truth'.[476] Geleynssen de Jongh tells us that the Bania value the giving of alms, practice vegetarianism and attempt to care for animals as much as possible.[477] We find a detailed account of the diversity of Bania groups — both in the terms of the Bania caste and Hindu groupings more generally, as the term is defined in a vague manner — in the *Remonstrantie*, including the Jains who are highlighted for not believing in a supreme god.[478] This is contrast with the majority of the Bania who uphold that there is a 'Ram Ram [Rama] or Permiseer [Parameshvara, i.e. Vishnu or Shiva] who created everything that lives or floats in the world, including the sun, the moon, the air and stars, and rules the same daily according to his pleasure.'[479] Geleynssen de Jongh also describes temples, practices that he saw there himself, and the rituals performed by the 'priests'; practices around marriage, funerary practices and sati; as well as differences between varnas, but also different groups such as Vaishnava and Shaiva.[480] The *Remonstrantie*, while not exclusively dedicated to an account of Bania practices, thus provides a detailed ethnographic portrait of the Hindu population in and around Surat. In a striking parallel to Lord, Geleynssen de Jongh also gives a short account of the Parsis following his account of the customs of the 'Benjans, Mughals, and Hindustanis'.[481]

### The General Description of India

Johan Van Twist's *Description* was first published in the *Begin ende voortgangh* as the sixth text in the second volume under the full title 'General Description of India, and in Particular of the Kingdom of Gujarat, Under the Sovereignty of the Great, Powerful King Chaiahan [Shah Jahan]: otherwise Known as the Great Mogul. Collected From Various Authors and [His] Own Experiences by Johan van Twist, Formerly Chief Factor of the Dutch Factories at Amadabat, Cambaya, Brodera, and Brotchia'. The work thus already advertises itself as primarily a compilation. Besides this main description, which takes up almost seventy pages, there is a short additional treatise on the Deccan, as well as a thirty-page navigational section that has nothing to do with these accounts and instead consists of a series of rutters for the East Indies. It is the first part which is most interesting in the context of this chapter.

Van Twist builds on his sources to give a systematic account of Gujarat and Surat, incorporated into a larger description of 'India', which for Van Twist is roughly synonymous

[476] '[...] bij Lord is nagenoeg alles fantasie, bij de Jongh nauwkeurig relaas van de waarheid.' Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, xv.
[477] Geleynssen de Jongh, 35. A more thorough account of the Bania is found on pages 72-104.
[478] Geleynssen de Jongh, 77.
[479] Geleynssen de Jongh, 79 '[...] datter een ram ram ofte permisseer is, die alles wat in de werelt leeft ofte sweeft, alsmede de son, maen, locht en sterren gemaect heeft ende d'selven dagelijcx regeert naer syn welbehagen.
[480] It is interesting to note that unlike Rogerius, Geleynssen de Jongh uses the Iberian terminology of 'caste', which Van Twist also adopts.
[481] Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, 104–25.

with both the Persianate term 'Hindustan' and the Mughal Empire.[482] After a brief overview of India, Van Twist proceeds to present the different cities of Gujarat (chapters 2-10) and to give an account of the Mughal Empire, clearly derived primarily from either or both Persant and De Laet (chapters 11-15). He then returns to matters relating to Gujarat: its relation to the Mughals, Gujarats's enemies, government, and civil organisation, as well as its inhabitants. With Geleynssen de Jongh Van Twist had a hitherto unused manuscript full of rich detail at his disposal, which clearly was the main source for his presentation of Bania and Brahmans, yet Van Twist offers perhaps a more systematic presentation with his short chapters on different topics. Van Twist describes the Brahmans as the 'Bania Priests' early on and gives an overview of what distinguishes them from other local pagans:

> The Brahmans, who are the Benjan's priests and ministers to their temples and the devilish idols which stand therein, are the most honourable and highest regarded nation among the Indian pagans; they have great authority and esteem among the people, because much does not happen in the right manner without their advice or approval. [...] They will never remove [the sacred thread], even should it cost them their life, because their superstition or law is like wood. [...] They are very subtle in their arithmetic and writing, and shrewd. That is why the other bad Indians, and the common people [...] believe them to be prophets. [...] They are also the servants of the pagodas and idols about which they tell fabulous stories and miracles. [483]

Van Twist also describes Brahman beliefs; in this instance he follows mostly De Laet, although we see some contradictory statements deriving from both his diversity of sources and perhaps a lack of interest and understanding.[484] He says that the Brahmans worship the devil, who revealed miracles to them, and they worship devilish idols with devilish sacrifices and

[482] Johan van Twist, "Generale beschrijvinghe van Indien, ende in't besonder van't coninckrijck van Guseratten, staende onder de beheersinge van den ... coninck Chaiahan: anders genaemt den grooten Mogor," in *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische compagnie*, ed. Isaac Commelin, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius, 1646), chapter 1.

[483] 'De Brahmenes, welck sijn der Benjanen Priesters ende Ministers van haer Tempels ende Duyvelsche Afgoden daer in staende sijn de eerlijckste ende geachte natie onder de Indiaensche Heydenen hebben groote authoriteyt ende aensien onder't volck want sullen gantsch niet uyt rechten sonder haeren raet ofte goet duncken; ende op dat mense mach kennen en van anderen onderscheyden hebben over het naeckte lijf te weten vande schouders dwers over 't lijf nederwaerts tot beneden aen de Gordeel ofte douck onder de armen 3 ofte 4 coordekens gelijck segel garen waer mede men haer kendt ende sullen die nimmer af doen al soudet haer leven costen want haer superstitie ofte Wet alsoo hout; [...] sijn seer subtil in haer reeckeninghe ende schrijven ende scherpsinnich daerom maecken de andere slechte Indianen, ende 't gemeenen volc wondere beuselingen ende grillen diets van haer Religien ende superstitien ende de ghemeene man ghelooft haer als Propheten; [...] hebben oock Pagodes, ende Afgoden wiens dienaers sy sijn daer op wondere Historien ende Miraculen van vertellen [...]' Twist, 31.

[484] We see the rather haphazard way of Van Twist's arrangement of his sources in the fact that much later in the account, in chapter 36, he adds another chapter on 'the pagans and their worship' — despite the fact that he recounted Geleynssen de Jongh's detailed account of the very same across multiple chapters, followed by the latter's presentation of Parsis and a description of Islam.

superstitions, as they believe that those idols are advocates of God. At the same time, he also says that they believe in one supreme God who rules over everything, and in the immortality of the soul — albeit through the transmigration of souls 'according to the law of Pythagoras, whose disciples they say they are'.[485] After an obligatory chapter devoted to sati (chapter 26), Van Twist proceeds to reproduce the detailed ethnographic description of castes and sectarian difference in Gujarat. In this way Geleynssen de Jongh's *Permiseer* enters the Dutch scholarly vocabulary as the supreme deity of the Banias.

Indeed, it is Geleynssen de Jongh's *Remonstrantie* which made Van Twist's *Description* interesting to ethnologists and scholars of paganism — as reflected in its use in the *Open Door* — in the first place. Van Twist says that there are eighty-three 'Bania sects', but at the same time list's four primary or most noble sects: the Ceurawaeh, Samaraet, Bisnou, and Goegy, corresponding to Shravaka (i.e. Jains), Smarta, Vishnu (Vaishnava) and Yogis.[486] Van Twist reproduces the main findings from Geleynssen de Jongh, often verbatim, whilst shortening his overall presentation of Bania groups. The Shravakas, or Jains, practice ahimsa which also implies vegetarianism, do not believe in any supreme deity, and believe in good deeds and the transmigration of souls — thus presenting a strong ethnographic evidence of atheism and a counterargument to an assumed *consensus gentium* that holds true around the world. They stand in stark contrast to the other three major sects. The Smarta, who are the next described, also practice vegetarianism, and while they share many things with the former they differ significantly in their religion:

> Their festivities, weddings, marriages, and other ceremonies, mostly are the same as with the previous, excepting their religion; because the believe that there is one, who made all things and still upholds, governs, and rules daily according to his unchanging will, whom they call Permiseer in their language. Besides this Permiseer they have three other idols whom they hold in great esteem and whom they ascribe control in Heaven: the first is called Brama [Brahma], he has power over all souls he holds in his hand, and distributes them to those Permiseer commands him, be they man or beast; the other Bussiuna [Vishnu], teaches and instructs the world to live according to God's or Permiseer's commandments (which are described in four books); [...] the third has power over the dead and is called Mais [Mahesha i.e. Shiva]; having killed these, the souls come to the secretary of Permiseer in order to receive a reckoning of all their good and bad works have made on Earth; their works having been seen, they are brought to Permiseer for judgement, who then commands to this soul to drive into that man or beast according to that which he

[485] '[...] na het wet van Pytagoras, wiens Discipulen sy seggen te wesen.' Twist, "Generale beschrijvinghe van Indien," 32.

[486] The spelling is slightly different in Geleynssen de Jongh but the *Remonstrantie* is clearly Van Twist's source. I am not sure how Van Twist comes up with the number eighty-three — Geleynssen de Jongh simply says sixty or seventy, c.f. Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, 75. The order of the presentation of the four sects is identical.

> earned in order to there (as in the papist purgatory) be cleansed of his sins.[487]

Based on Geleynssen de Jongh's precise ethnographic investigations, Van Twist thus presents a rather accurate account of Smartism and Hinduism more generally to a European readership, one of the first of its kind with this level of detail. We see a characterisation of the trimurti and the respective roles of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, the importance of karma for rebirth, and a mention of the four Vedas, albeit lacking a name. Though much more condensed than in Geleynssen de Jongh's *Remonstrantie*, Van Twist also presents a short overview of Smarta and Vaishnava society, daily ritual, and festivities. The last chapter devoted to 'Indian pagans' concerns Yogis (Goegys), and again, through Geleynssen de Jongh Van Twist gives us a powerful picture of the ascetic practices and beliefs that characterise these renouncers, erroneously presented as a separate sect. He says that the Yogis do not work and live in solitude and have no temples but go to the 'churches' of the Smartas, mostly to sleep rather than pray, as they have no churches or houses of their own. In a rare case of comparison he likens them to early Christian hermits, as they avoid human company and affairs.[488] While Geleynssen de Jongh and Van Twist notice the similarities in belief, they highlight the difference of the Yogis:

> The Yogis believe that there is one, who created all things, and is present in all animals, men, and cattle, even if he can also take away and break everything again should he so desire. Him they name Bruin [Brahma] in their language, saying that he does not have the form of a human or beast, but that his presence is too clear for any creature to lay their eyes on him or see his magnificence; that he gave light to the sun, the moon, the stars, and just as one cannot look at the sun, one much less can see him (who gave the light) with eyes. When one of their belief approaches

[487] '[...] hare Feeftdagen, Bruyloften, Trouwen, ende andere Ceremonien, comen meest met de vooegaende over een, uytgesondert inde Religie, want ghelooven datter een is die alle dingen ghemaeckt ende dagelijcx naer sijn onveranderlijcke wille noch onderhout, regeert, ende gebiet, die sy in hare Tale Permiseer noemen; nevens desen Permiseer, hebben noch dry anderen Afgoden, die mede in groote aensien houden ende een bedieninghe in den Hemel toe-schrijven: dese eerste wordt geheten Brama, heeft macht over alle de ziele, die hy in sijn hant heeft, en deeltse uyt aen sulcken als Permiseer hem beveelt, 't zy aen menschen ofte beesten: de andere Bussiuna, leert ende onderwijst de werelt naer Godes ofte Permiseers geboden (die in vier Boecken beschreven zijn) te leven; [...] de derde heeft macht over de dooden, en wort Mais genoemt; dese gedoodt hebbende, comen de Zielen by den Secretaris van Permiseer, om reeckeninge te ontfangen van alle goede ende quade wercken, die sy op der Aerden gedaen hebben, welcke wercken oversien wesende worden voor Permiseer gebracht om gheoordeelt te werden; die dan aen sodanige Ziel gebiedt in sulcke Mensch ofte Beest te varen, naer dat hy heeft verdient om aldaer (ghelijck in 't paepsche Dagevier) van haere sonden gereynicht te worden'. Twist, "Generale beschrijvinghe van Indien," 35–36. Compare this with Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, 84 'Onder dese is het trouwen, bruijloften, tonderhouden van hare feestdagen ende diergelycke sermonije meest alst mette voorgaende secte is, maer verschelen veel metten anderen int gelooff , want de desen geloven datter een is, die alle dinck geschapen, gemaect ende dagelycx noch naer syn wil regeert ende onderhout, d'welcke sij in haar spraecke Permisseer noemen; beneffen dese Permisseer hebben noch drie andere die se mede eeren ende in soo groote (off wejmich min) respect als haer Permisseer houden ; dese drie hebben elck een offitie en noemen d'selve als volcht, de eerste Brimma, de tweede Bissinae en de leste Mayis;'. Geleynssen de Jongh goes on to describe all the divinities in more detail and is the only source of Van Twist here, although it is unclear on what basis the latter changed the spelling of the three divinities.

[488] Twist, "Generale beschrijvinghe van Indien," 39.

> death, [they believe that he] goes from this world straight and effortlessly to this aforesaid Bruin to live with him for eternity and be integrated into this brilliance.[489]

While Van Twist condenses and often reduces the accuracy of Geleynssen de Jongh's findings, we thus nevertheless see that in the *Description* we find one of the first detailed European accounts of Hinduism avant la lettre. Unlike in the *Open Door*, as we shall see, much information remained confused: Jains are a 'Bania' sect, revealing the overlap and confusion of sectarian affiliations that are put on the same level as castes and renouncers also visible with the sect of the Yogis, and obvious parallels — distinguishing the Smarta 'Brama' from the Yogi 'Bruin' — are overlooked. Nevertheless, Van Twist outlines the differences and similarities between diverse groups all belonging to an overarching 'Bania religion' and outlines their beliefs and practices.[490] In this way Van Twist *Description of Gujarat* provides a notion of Bania religion or Hinduism defined through its diversity and sectarian difference, but united in some overarching cultural and religious common notions. The *Description of Gujarat* thus offered valuable information on Indian religion to European scholars, even if it was not exclusively devoted to matters of religion such as Lord's *Display* or the *Open Door*; indeed, the annotator made ample use of this other Indian case for his comparative model, and Van Twist is one of his most cited contemporary sources.

This comparative model, however, was important for the success of the *Open Door*, besides its sole focus on religion and lengthy, detailed reporting. Both Rogerius and the annotator made use of a rich tradition of travel writing and ethnography that had sprung up in the wake of Van Linschoten's landmark publication, and the *Open Door* was published at a time when Commelin's 1644 *Begin ende voortgangh* — also pirated four years later in Joost Hartgers's 1648 collection — was still a new and fresh work that rivalled the earlier series by the likes of De Bry and Purchas. What makes the *Open Door* stand out from all its predecessors — be it Iberian, Jesuit, Protestant, or Dutch travel writing and ethnography — is that it not only 'opened the door' to Hinduism in a remarkably detailed and accurate fashion, which by itself would have probably guaranteed it success, but that it also interpreted and in a sense translated this ethnographic information through an ethnological analysis in its footnote apparatus. The annotator relied as much on other ethnographic material as he did on 'secondary sources' regarding paganism and idolatry and its scholarly analysis. The starting point in this

[489] 'Dese Goegijs gelooven datter een is, die alle dingen gheschapen heeft, en in alle gedierten, Menschen ende Vee teghenwoordich is, oock wanneer begeert alles wederom kan wech nemen, en verbreecken; die noemen sy in haer Tale Bruin, seggende dat geen forme heeft van een Mensch, ofte Vee, maer dat syne teghenwoondicheyt te klaer is, soo dat gheen creatuer syn oogen op hem houden, ofte sijn heerlijckheydt beoogen kan; dat hy de Sonne, de Maen, de Sterren het licht ghegeven heeft, ende gelijck men de Sonne niet kan aenschouwen, veel minder Hem (die het licht gegeven heeft) met ooghen aensien kan; wanneer yemant van haer geloove komt te sterven, dat regel recht (als met Kousen ende Schoenen) van dese Wereldt tot den voorsz Bruin gaet om met hem altijdt te leven ende in dese klaerheyt mede vermenght te worden.' Twist, 99. C.f. Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, 84.

[490] Detail regarding everyday life of the different sects and diverse practices were cut more from Geleynssen de Jongh's *Remonstrantie* by Van Twist than the notions of belief.

regard was the mythography of the Renaissance, which itself served a crucial function for the conceptualisation of the new and contemporary paganism that Europeans encountered in the New World.

# CHAPTER 5

# HUMANISM & ETHNOLOGY: DISCOVERING OLD AND NEW PAGANISM AND IDOLATRY

## 5.1 Humanist Mythographers and the Analysis of Myth

Ethnography naturally played a crucial role for the creation of the *Open Deure*, and as I have shown in the previous chapter, Rogerius himself could build not only on the rich heritage of Jesuit ethnography in India, but also on a distinctly Dutch tradition of travel writing and ethnography. Another ethnographic tradition which played a crucial role for the genesis of the *Open Deure* was more important for the antiquarian project of the annotator, namely the ancient Greek works, discussed in chapter 1, that were still all-important in the early modern period. The advent of print and the labours of the Humanists were crucial in organising, commenting, and translating ancient works that had been of little or no interest for centuries, but were now gradually made available to a much wider audience. It is hard to imagine what the *Open Deure* would have looked like had the annotator, who according to all evidence was not particularly proficient in neither Greek nor philological matters, not had access to Isaac Casaubon's critical edition of Strabo, to take but one example.[491]

But the Renaissance Humanists were not only compilers and commentators — the very enterprise of early modern erudite antiquarianism and its preoccupation with paganism and idolatry in many ways starts taking shape with these men of letters. Religion and myth in Graeco-Roman antiquity, as well as the mystical case of Egypt, became an object of enquiry in and of itself, rather than merely serving apologetic and literary aims. The Humanists thoroughly investigated ancient paganism and mythography for its own sake, and in their wake would influence how Europeans viewed the contemporary pagans encountered in the New

[491] Strabo, *Strabonis Rerum Geographicarum libri XVII*, ed. Isaac Casaubon (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1587). The annotator specifically mentions that he used this edition, see *Open Deure*, 89, note 215.

World, but also increasingly in the eastern parts of Eurasia. This confluence of an encounter with the past and an encounter with the new within the spheres of paganism and idolatry, and non-Abrahmic culture more generally, would form the main building blocks of the sophisticated and universalist works of historians of idolatry and paganism in the seventeenth century.

## Humanist Approaches to Ancient Myth and Religion

We have seen in chapter 1 that a critical investigation of 'religion' and myth already developed in antiquity itself, especially in the work of Clement of Alexandria. Other works that critically discussed mythography include Cicero's *De natura deorum* and the lost work of Euhemerus, which we primarily known through excerpts in its apologetic use of church fathers such as Lactantius, Eusebius, and Augustine.[492] Euhemerism — the idea that mythological figures were real people whose grand achievements became exaggerated over time and were thus deified — enjoyed an extraordinarily long career among Christian apologetics and we will come back to this topic many a time. In the early Middle Ages Isidore of Seville built on this apologetic tradition for his own presentation of pagan gods in the *Etymologiae*.[493] Isidore seeks to demonstrate the validity of euhemerism as a system by presenting his own model of world history, divided into six great time periods, and by arguing that even if the pagan gods were not divine, they were based on great leaders and pioneers who ought to be remembered — thus refuting their role, but cementing their status in history.[494] Isidore's successors in the Middle Ages of Latin Christendom largely followed him in this interpretation, and the fanciful genealogies linking nations and royal houses to this or that Trojan hero, given new fervour by Annius of Viterbo, can be seen to adhere to the same narrative topos of acknowledging the deeds of great men in antiquity.[495]

Despite a continuous occupation with Greek and Roman mythology, and some attempts to construct overarching frameworks, these remained relatively restricted in their methodology and scope until the late Middle Ages.[496] It is not until we reach the period that marks the transition from the late mediaeval to the early Renaissance period that we see a more ambitious project, namely with Giovanni Boccaccio and his monumental *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*,

[492] On Cicero see Cynthia L. Thompson, "Cicero's Editing of Mythographic Material in the De Natura Deorum," *The Classical Journal* 75, no. 2 (1979): 143–152.

[493] Katherine Nell MacFarlane and Isidore of Seville, "Isidore of Seville on the Pagan Gods (Origines VIII. 11)," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 70, no. 3 (1980): 1–40. A similar project and distinctly mythographical in nature was the slightly earlier work of Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, see Wilbur Devereux Jones et al., *Fulgentius the Mythographer* (Colombus: Ohio State University Press, 1971).

[494] Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953; New York: Harper, 1961), 14–15.

[495] Seznec, 19–20, 24–26.

[496] Jon Whitman, "Present Perspectives: The Late Middle Ages to the Modern Period," in *Interpretation and Allegory. Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 269. An overview is given in John Mulryan, "The Renaissance Mythographers," in *A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology*, ed. Vanda Zajko and Helena Hoyle (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 59–73.

written and reworked with constant revisions between 1365 and his death in 1375.[497] Bocaccio drew heavily on the work of scholars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and it would be wrong to see him as a sudden pioneer of a burgeoning re-occupation with ancient myth.[498] Yet Boccaccio's work overshadowed previous mythographies in its breadth of treatment and methodological approach to a genealogical structure of a grand opus on ancient myth.[499] He also employed an allegorical interpretation of ancient myth, rendering ancient poets into 'theologians who depict multiple gods to express aspects of one God'.[500] Much like later scholars, Boccacio could rely on Macrobius's works for such a position. Myths, for Boccaccio, are, moreover, parables of historical and political events, and his poetic allegorical reading of myth blurs the boundary between fiction and history, instead uniting theology, philosophy, and myth in a common poetic project.[501] At the same time his genealogy purported that there was a life-span to myth, that they exist within time, and therefore are born, grow, and die.[502] This genealogy of the gods would prove to be very influential for the next generations of Humanists and mythographers. Indeed, Bocaccio's work is usually regarded as the most significant and greatest universal mythography until the publication of Giraldi's *De deis gentium* almost two centuries later.

This does not mean that within these two centuries Humanists did not continue to debate and examine mythography and its origins in manifold and innovative ways. We have seen that the historical foundation for the existence of gods as great men and benefactors of mankind had a long tradition by the time we reach the mythographers of the early Renaissance. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Jacopo Filippo Foresti and Polydore Vergil, for instance, continue in this tradition and argue that Greek and Roman gods were actually inventors of medicine, music, or astronomy.[503] Hermes Trismegistus is an important benefactor of mankind in this model as well, and appears in both of the aforementioned authors as a key inventor.[504] Euhemerism, taken beyond its apologetic function, was a fixture in Renaissance models to

[497] See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, ed. Jon Solomon, vol. 1 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011). See also Vittorio Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore, storico, moralista e mitografo* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2001). In the following I am largely basing my discussion on the exhaustive study found in Peter Schwertsik, *Die Erschaffung des heidnischen Götterhimmels durch Boccaccio*, vol. 63, Humanistische Bibliothek Reihe I: Abhandlungen (Paderborn: Brill | Fink, 2015).

[498] C.f. Schwertsik.

[499] See on this Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore, storico, moralista e mitografo*.

[500] Whitman, "Present Perspectives," 272.

[501] Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Boccaccio: The Mythographer of the City," in *Interpretation and Allegory. Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 355.

[502] Mazzotta, 356.

[503] Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 22.

[504] The annotator of the *Open Deure* actually uses Polydore Vergil's *De rerum inventoribus*, the first edition of which was published in 1499, while the complete eight book edition was published in 1521. A seventeenth-century edition that might have been used by the annotator is Polydore Vergil, *Polydori Vergilii Urbinatis De rerum inventoribus, libri octo: ejusdem in orationem Dominicam commentariolum* (Strasbourg: Sumptibus Lazari Zetzneri Bibliop., 1606). On Polydore Vergil see further Catherine Atkinson, *Inventing Inventors in Renaissance Europe: Polydore Vergil's De Inventoribus Rerum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

explain the genesis not only of myths, but of human culture itself.

Allegorical readings of pagan gods and myth, a favourite rhetorical device especially for more inclusively-minded Christian apologists, were indeed popular throughout the Middle Ages and only became more popular in the Renaissance, as we already have seen with Boccaccio and shall see especially when speaking of Agostino Steuco and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, who illustrate the widely varying use cases and interpretations made possible to creative thinkers. Whilst allegorical readings of a theological reading of ancient Greek and Roman myth were abundant, one of the most fruitful areas for Christian allegorists to explore was ancient Egypt and its supposedly sacred and esoteric script. A fateful event that would change the course of antiquarianism and the interpretation of not only Egyptian paganism, but allegorical readings of paganism more broadly, was the discovery of manuscript by Cristoforo Buondelmonti on the Greek island of Andros in 1419. The manuscript that was brought to Florence by Buondelmonti was a Greek text of the Hieroglyphica of Horapollo, a late-antique 'dictionary' of 189 hieroglyphs, largely spurious due to the lacking philological expertise of the author, but also in part offering genuine interpretations.[505] Thus began a first Humanist obsession to find the meaning behind hieroglyphs and Egyptian religion, which gripped Renaissance Italy. This was further enhanced by the re-discovery of the *Mensa Isiaca*, an Egyptianising tablet most likely of Roman origin, by Cardinal Bembo in 1527.[506] One of the first people to study the *Mensa Isiaca* was Pierio Valeriano, a fellow Humanist who would become one of the foremost students of hieroglyphic writing and its interpretation.[507] Valeriano's 1556 publication of the *Hieroglyphica*, including an edition, commentary, and interpretation of Horapollo, marks a first high point of the early modern study of Egypt and hieroglyphics.[508] Valeriano presented an intriguing way

[505] See Charles Dempsey, "15. Renaissance Hieroglyphic Studies: An Overview," in *Interpretation and Allegory*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 365–381. Dempsey gives a good overview of the topic.

[506] The 9*Mensa Isiaca* would remain an object of study, curiosity, and fascination and also was the subject of a study by Lorenzo Pignoria, about whom I will speak when we reach the chapter of histories of paganism and idolatry. See Peter Mason, "Periculosae Plenum Opus Aleae. The »Mensa Isiaca«, Lorenzo Pignoria and the Perils of Cultural Translation," in *Periculosae Plenum Opus Aleae. The »Mensa Isiaca«, Lorenzo Pignoria and the Perils of Cultural Translation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 133–150; Paola von Wyss-Giacosa, "Through the Eyes of Idolatry: Pignoria's 1615 Argument on the Conformità of Idols from the West and East Indies with Egyptian Gods," in *Through Your Eyes: Religious Alterity and the Early Modern Western Imagination* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 103–144; Paola von Wyss-Giacosa, ""As Reflections in a Mirror" Kircher's Pictorial Argument on Modern Paganism in the Light of Pignoria," *Revue de lhistoire des religions* 239, no. 2 (2022): 257–295. On the Mensa itself see Susanne Gänsicke et al., "Mensa Isiaca: New Findings on Its Composition, Construction, and History," *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 7 (2023).

[507] On Valeriano see Brian Anthony Curran, "'De Sacrarum Litterarum Aegyptiorum Interpretatione.' Reticence and Hubris in Hieroglyphic Studies of the Renaissance: Pierio Valeriano and Annius of Viterbo," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 43/44 (1998): 139–182; Paolo Pellegrini, *Pierio Valeriano e la tipografia del Cinquecento: nascita, storia e bibliografia delle opere di un umanista*, Libri e biblioteche 11 (Udine: Forum, 2002). See also Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 57f. and the still useful Karl Giehlow, "The Humanist Interpretation of Hieroglyphs in the Allegorical Studies of the Renaissance: With a Focus on the Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I," in *The Humanist Interpretation of Hieroglyphs in the Allegorical Studies of the Renaissance*, ed. Robin Raybould (1915; Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[508] Pierio Valeriano Bolzani, *Hieroglyphica sive de sacris Aegyptiorvm literis commentarii Ioannis Pierii Valeriani*

of interpreting hieroglyphs that would become all the more relevant in seventeenth-century conceptualisations of paganism. Curran sums this up excellently:

> Valeriano's syncretic conception of the hieroglyphs represents, to my mind, a turn away from the problem of hieroglyphic 'decipherment' that Pierio's uncle Urbano and his Venetian friends had found so elusive. Indeed, Valeriano's 'multicultural' approach to sources and his notion of the divine origins of hieroglyphic symbolism represent a return to a late Quattrocento, essentially Neoplatonic conception of the hieroglyphs as a divinely inspired language of images. This conception was firmly rooted in the classical tradition. Virtually without exception, the ancient authors (Diodorus Siculus, Tacitus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Plutarch among them) described the Egyptian hieroglyphs as an allegorical, nonlinguistic system of pictographs developed by the Egyptian priests to preserve their histories and religious doctrines for the future enlightenment of the learned, while concealing them, simultaneously, from the eyes of the ignorant and the profane.[509]

We will see that such an allegorical reading of Egyptian religion and its esoteric nature would be significant for the project of comparative and universal studies of paganism in the seventeenth century, and was one of the building blocks of the systems of Philipp Clüver and indeed the annotator of the *Open Door* himself.[510]

Genealogy, euhemerism, and allegory, the main avenues of organising and interpreting ancient myth that we have encountered, met in a fulminant manner in the forgeries of Annius of Viterbo. While Annius's forgeries in his *Antiquitatum variarum volumina XVII* or simply *Antiquities* (Rome 1498) were quickly denounced to be such, it would be wrong to assume that because it was common knowledge that these were forgeries that they carried no weight.[511] Instead, it is important to detect what allegorical, historical, and methodological advantages and opportunities using Annius's writings held, forgeries or not; much the same holds true with the unabated popularity of Hermes Trismegistus and the Hermetic Corpus long after

*Bolzanii Bellunensis* (Basel: Michael Isengrin, 1556). An excellent translation into English with introduction is also available: Horapollo, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, trans. George Boas, Mythos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). The popularity of this work was still great in the seventeenth century and it was a prominent source on Egyptian matters for the annotator of the *Open Door*.

[509] Curran, "De Sacrarum Litterarum Aegyptiorum Interpretatione," 162. Curran adds: 'This notion of a superlinguistic language of images could hardly fail to appeal to the early humanists, who collected or rediscovered, one by one, the ancient sources of hieroglyphic lore. As a result, by the 1430s humanists like Niccolo' Niccoli, Cyriacus of Ancona, and Poggio Bracciolini had come to recognize the carvings on the obelisks as the "sacred letters of the Egyptians" and presumably made the first efforts to "examine and perhaps to decipher them according to the allegorical principles described in the ancient sources."'

[510] For the impact of Valeriano on Western Esotericism, which is outside of the scope of this study but does intersect on a great many issues, see Lina Bolzoni, "Mnemonics," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 793–800.

[511] For an overview see Walter Stephens, "When Pope Noah Ruled the Etruscans: Annius of Viterbo and His Forged "Antiquities"," *MLN* 119, no. 1 (2004): S201–S223. For the larger context of Annius's forgeries see Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (1990; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Casaubon's dating of the latter text. Annius uses his forged texts to explain why a story is true, to demonstrate its veracity through its telling. 'Annius can thus be said to have performed the remarkable feat of forging historical evidence which *inter alia* provides an organon for arriving at historical truth.'[512] In the long term, it is less important how Annius created a genealogy for elevating his native Viterbo, and more relevant how his method impacted contemporary and later scholarship. Most important in this regard is his main forgery, the infamous Chaldaean Berosus. Annius's Berosus traces history all the way back to Adam, making the latter the first historian. Adam's writings were continued by Enoch, Lamech, Noah, and in post-diluvial times by the Chaldaeans, or the Chaldaeans took up Enoch's writings themselves, depending on the version reported by Annius. Hebrew history then begins with Abraham, as an off-shoot from this universal tradition which unites all of humanity's history in one grand scheme. He thus creates historical validity independent from a Mosaic trajectory, but on par with it.[513] For Annius's purposes this is important, as it enables him to trace a non-mythical but historical migration of Noah to Italy and establish a privileged descent of the Etruscan language from an Aramaic *Ursprache*.[514]

Annius's use of etymology and *aequivocatio*, the idea that one name can refer to multiple people, further enabled him to deconstruct myth into functional, historical chronology, which combined with an all-encompassing euhemerism makes it possible for Annius to explain ancient myth and poetry as history.[515] Beyond his own agenda, Annius's historical method gives an impetus to Renaissance universal history writing and its relegation of a Mosaic and Hebrew tradition — a crucial element in the subsequent idolatrisation of the Hebrews, in which scholars increasingly portray them as a people devoted to error and idolatry that we see especially in the seventeenth century — in favour of a new historical tradition based on Noah as the progenitor of mankind. Giuseppe Marcocci has shown how important this model was in the encounter with new peoples in the Americas and for the creation of the global histories of the sixteenth century, which included the New World in this universal schemata.[516] But this model would also be highly relevant deep into the seventeenth century, as it provided unique ways of tracing the histories of peoples and their religions. The argument that Assyria is the crucial locus of ancient history, and idolatry by extension, would also prove essential for historians of paganism and idolatry, as we shall see hereafter. The creative processes between Humanist critiques of forgeries like the Berosus or the Hermetic Corpus, which themselves lead to chronological innovation at the hands of Joseph Scaliger or Isaac Casaubon, and the continued usefulness of these texts beyond the fact that they were known forgeries will be a critical junction for

[512] Christopher R. Ligota, "Annius of Viterbo and Historical Method," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50, no. 1 (1987): 45.
[513] Ligota, 49.
[514] Ligota, 50. As Ligota notes, Annius does not comment on the relationship between Aramaic and Hebrew but makes the former, not the latter, into *the* ancient language.
[515] Ligota, 53f.
[516] Marcocci, *The Globe on Paper*.

models on myth, paganism, and idolatry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### The Sophisticated Mythographic Works of Giraldi, Conti, and Cartari

If we turn back to systematic mythographies proper, we see that in the mid-sixteenth century there is a mythographic moment which produces multiple great works in short succession of each other. The three works in question, by Lilio Giraldi, Natale Conti, and Vincenzo Cartari were published between 1548 and 1567 and would thenceforth be the major mythographical reference works for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his still very useful work Jean Seznec claimed, rather derogatorily, that the 'resemblances between the three works greatly outweigh the differences'.[517] Seznec, who enacts very harsh criticism on these works, is however too dismissive of the value and distinct character of each of these works, which deserve to be sketched out.

Starting in chronological order, we must begin with the Ferrarese Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479 — 1552), one of the most prolific and renowned Humanists of the sixteenth century, and his *De deis gentium* (Basel 1548), which Karl Enenkel justifiably calls 'the most learned and complete Renaissance mythogaphy'.[518] Giraldi was not only highly respected by contemporary Humanists, but also read by generations of students of antiquity, who besides his mythography could also read his writings on the literary history of antiquity and works of Greek and Roman writers. He was also well-connected to Humanist networks in papal Rome under Leo X and Clement VII.[519] The *De deis gentium* indeed impresses with its scale of erudition and scope. Comprising a massive 764 folio pages and excerpts from almost the entire corpus of classical Greek and Latin literature, Giraldi composed a truly universal presentation of ancient myth, which was the sum of a life's work of scholarship.[520] Giraldi himself could rely on more recent mythographic work as well. These include such works as the enormous *Lectionum Antiquarum*, Ludovicus Caelius Rhodiginus's (Lodovico Ricchieri) thirty-volume reference work (Basel 1542), first published in sixteen books in 1516, a collection of Ricchieri's life's work of studying antiquity and ancient authors, employing a Ficinian prisca theologia and referencing Aulus Gellius.[521] One more work is Alessandro Alessandri's *Genialium dierum* (Rome 1522), another

[517] Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 233.

[518] Karl A.E. Enenkel, "The Making of 16th-Century Mythography: Giraldi's 'Syntagma de Musis' (1507, 1511 and 1539), 'de Deis Gentium Historia' (ca. 1500-1548) and Julien de Havrech's 'de Cognominibus Deorum Gentilium' (1541)," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 51 (2002): 10. The work in question is Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *De deis gentium varia multiplex historia, in qua simul de eorum imaginib. & cognominib agitur, ubi plurima etia[m] hactenus multis ignora explicantur, & pleraque clarius tractantur* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus, 1548). A revised and augmented edition was published in Basel in 1560. See further also Simona Foà, "Giraldi, Lilio Gregorio," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 56 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2001); Giovanni Ricci, "L'altro Giraldi : Lilio Gregorio Alle Origini Del Relativismo Culturale," in *Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio Gentiluomo Ferrarese* (Florence: Olschki, Leo S., 2008), 41–51.

[519] Enenkel, "The Making of 16th-Century Mythography," 10–11.

[520] Enenkel, 14ff.

[521] See Lodovico Caelius Rhodiginus, *Lectionum antiquarum libri XXX* (Basel: Froben, 1542). See further

mythographic collection of miscellaneous materials, once again emulating Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, covering the entirety of the ancient world, albeit focussing on Rome, with discussions of rituals and religious laws.[522]

Seznec, in his iconoclast endeavour to shatter myths himself about the unprecedented nature of Renaissance mythography and the Italian Rinascimento more generally in order to highlight continuity above breaks, argues for the important work of mediaeval mythographers and scholars and the high degree of continuity we see in the study of ancient gods, which never went away. Seznec's work remains important and valuable, but by downplaying the achievements of the sixteenth-century mythographers he not only undervalues their work, but also the latter's enormous impact on future scholars. Indeed, Giraldi, whom Seznec casts as continuing the work of mediaeval polymaths in much the same manner, is not only one of the most erudite and philologically precise Humanists of his generation, but also differs greatly from earlier scholars by exhibiting new appreciation for the cultural alterity of antiquity and its forms of worship and belief, as his goal was to achieve a better and genuine understanding of these different cultures.[523] This is a very important step towards the anthropologisation of religion, cult, sacrifice, and ritual, which shall continue to occupy us in this dissertation. Another aspect of difference is the inclusion of 'Eastern' cultures in Giraldi's scholarship. In *De sepulchris et vario sepeliendi ritu* (Basel 1539) he includes not only the Egyptians, for whom sixteenth-century Humanists showed great enthusiasm as already mentioned, but also the Celts, Assyrians, Hebrews, Persians, and Indians in his analysis.[524] Finally, Giraldi also championed precise scholarship which based itself only on the sources, rejecting for instance Boccaccio's idea of the Demogorgon.[525] Instead of genealogy Giraldi's focus was on etymology and philology, in a similar manner that his contemporary Julien de Havrech did.[526] This included a new focus on iconology and archaeological sources, a development we already see beginning in the fifteenth century but which would come into its own through the agency of this new generation of antiquarians and mythographers, of whom Giraldi rightly may be called a founding father.[527]

Franco Pignatti, "Ricchieri, Lodovico Maria," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 87 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2016); Mulryan, "The Renaissance Mythographers," 60; Dominik Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen: Die Entdeckung des nördlichen Polytheismus 1600–1650* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2022), 241.

[522] Alessandro d'Alessandro, *Dies geniales* (Rome: in aedibus I. Mazochii, 1522). See also Domenico Maffei, *Alessandro d'Alessandro, giureconsulto umanista (1461 - 1523)* (Milan: Giuffré, 1956).

[523] Enenkel, "The Making of 16th-Century Mythography," 18.

[524] Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Lilii Gregorii Gyraldi,... de Sepulchris et vario sepeliendi ritu libellus...* (Basel: Michael Isengrin, 1539). See Enenkel, "The Making of 16th-Century Mythography," 19.

[525] Enenkel, 21.

[526] Mulryan, "The Renaissance Mythographers," 61. On de Havrech see Enenkel, "The Making of 16th-Century Mythography."

[527] Enenkel, 53. Enenkel also points out the importance of De Havrech as a founding father alongside Giraldi, but as he himself notes, Giraldi's work begins much earlier and enjoyed a huge success in the following decades and centuries.

After Giraldi we see a continued occupation with mythographer from his fellow Italian Humanists. Shortly after the editio princeps of Giraldi's magnum opus, Vincenzo Cartari (c. 1531 — 1590) published *Le imagini con la spositione de i Dei de gli antichi* (Venice 1556).[528] Cartari, who was also active at the Este court in Ferrara much like Giraldi was for a long time, draws heavily on Giraldi's learned Latin text, which was never translated into the vernacular. In fact, Cartari freely copies entire passages from Giraldi for his own work which was published in the vernacular — the first mythographer to do so, Cartari thus managed to reach a very broad audience beyond merely erudite Humanists with his work.[529] Whereas Giraldi's work was defined by his etymological approach, Cartari's was essentially iconographic and his book stands out among his fellow mythographer's opera through his use (and one might add, misuse) of images.[530] Depending on the edition — twenty-eight printings are mentioned as a minimum by Mulryan for this hugely successful book — there were as many as in excess of one hundred images, thus supplying an important model also for artists.[531] Lorenzo Pignoria, who as we will see was himself an authority on mythography and the growing historiography on paganism in the seventeenth century, furnished a new commentary on the 1615 edition, featuring woodcuts by Filippo Ferroverde.[532] In this way the book enjoyed great success in the seventeenth century and beyond.

Cartari built on the new antiquarianism in the form of images of gods supplied by coins, reliefs and statues, which formed an important source for him. As images and iconography were his main way of approaching antiquity, the origin of *religious* imagery was of course key. Cartari traces the origin of such images to euhemerism and, building on Alessandri, ridicules the ancients' obsession with statues.[533] Whilst his method differed from Giraldi, we see a similar philological expertise and careful treatment of his sources. Employing a thorough cultural analysis of his source material in an 'archaeological' manner, Cartari unearths the ancient Greek and Roman world in his treatise without any philosophical agenda.[534] What emerges is an allegorical reading of ancient iconography that is philologically precise and continues the 'anthropological' spirit of Giraldi's analysis, where myth, as a poetical endeavour, becomes

[528] Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini con la spositione de i Dei de gli antichi. Raccolte per Vincenzo Cartari* (Venice: per Francesco Marcolini, 1556). See also the introduction in the critical editions of Volpi and Mulryan, Caterina Volpi and Vincenzo Cartari, *Le immagini degli dèi di Vincenzo Cartari* (Rome: De Luca, 1996); Vincenzo Cartari and John Mulryan, *Vincenzo Cartari's Images of the Gods of the Ancients: The First Italian Mythography*, ed. John Mulryan (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012).

[529] Mulryan, "The Renaissance Mythographers," 62. On Cartari's sources, which include besides Giraldi also the above-mentioned work of Alessandri, see Volpi and Cartari, *Le immagini degli dèi di Vincenzo Cartari*, 18–19.

[530] The first edition to be illustrated was not the editio princeps, but the 1571 edition, with 98 copper plates. Volpi and Cartari, 23.

[531] Mulryan, "The Renaissance Mythographers," 62.

[532] Mulryan, 62.

[533] Mulryan, 66.

[534] Volpi and Cartari, *Le immagini degli dèi di Vincenzo Cartari*, 22.

the overarching figuration of philosophy, history, and aesthetics.[535] Lorenzo Pignoria, in his commentary to the 1615 edition of the *Imagini* built on Cartari rather than superseding him, and added a further study of iconographical material from the New World.[536]

The third member in our trinity of sixteenth-century mythographers is Natale Conti (1520 — 1582), also known by his Latin name Natalis Comes. Conti published *Mythologiae sive explicationis fabularum libri decem* in Venice in 1567.[537] If I have, following Mulryan, previously characterised Giraldi's and Cartari's approaches as etymological and iconographical, respectively, we might call Conti's *ethical*.[538] Conti provides an orderly and systematic approach to myth which promoted the *Mythologiae*'s use as a handbook. With its twenty-five Latin editions and translations he might also be the most frequently cited of the mythographers.[539]

There is a distinct historical dimension to Conti's presentation of myth, building on the euhemerist tradition but also going into detail concerning the origins of ritual and iconography. At the same time, the allegorical and moral dimension of myth is ever-present in the *Mythologiae*.[540] Conti claims that there is a philosophy to myth which relates either to nature or to public and private morality. His method follows this explanatory scheme: he first provides a historical-textual explanation, discussing the genealogy, life, and works of a given hero or god, before in a second step adding an interpretation of this mythological content. At the centre of his analysis is an understanding of ancient myth as an animist — yet monotheistic — conception of the universe, understood through different levels of one *anima mundi*.[541] This underlying true meaning of myth, known by the philosophers, was transmitted secretly, esoterically, in a disguised form, as the common people might not perfectly understand these wonders of philosophy, which in turn could lead to 'a general falling away from religion and upright living'. Instead this manner of transmitting knowledge through myth could be used 'to instil religion and the fear of the gods, faith, probity, and temperance in the minds of women and the ignorant masses'.[542] This is an old apologetic argument for a two-fold accommodation of elements of paganism which we will meet at its fullest in the seventeenth century, when priests become the two-faced protagonists of histories of paganism. Conti's work displays these allegorical readings of myth alongside a systematic and historical methodology, and a continued engagement —

[535] Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Vincenzo Cartari, Images of the Gods of the Ancients: The First Italian Mythography, Translated and Annotated by John Mulryan. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies Vol. 396. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012. Xxxvi + 457 Pages.," *Ben Jonson Journal* 20, no. 2 (2013): 312.

[536] See on this von Wyss-Giacosa, "Through the Eyes of Idolatry."

[537] The 1551 edition is a phantom. See Barbara Carman Garner, "Francis Bacon, Natalis Comes and the Mythological Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 264–291. I consulted the second edition, see Natale Conti, *Mythologiae sive explicationum fabularum libri decem* (Venice: Da Trino, 1568).

[538] Mulryan, "The Renaissance Mythographers," 63.

[539] Mulryan, 634.

[540] Garner, "Francis Bacon, Natalis Comes and the Mythological Tradition," 265.

[541] Garner, 265–66.

[542] This is from the first book of the *Mythologiae*, quoted in Garner, 265.

like Giraldi and Cartari — with a structured presentation of the history of ancient myth and religion.

These Renaissance mythographies are the necessary foundation for the work done by later sixteenth-century and especially seventeenth-century scholars who presented histories of pagan nations or attempted universal surveys of the history and ontology of paganism. They were not only important sources for the collection, systematic presentation, and interpretation of ancient myth, but also presented an anthropological spirit in the manner in which they analysed ancient culture that would influence not only the next generations of scholars interested in classical Mediterranean religion and culture, but also the individuals who cast their gaze much further afield, to the New World and the expanding horizons of Eurasia. We will see later that while histories of paganism and idolatry and religious compendia of the seventeenth century are distinct genres, they directly build on the mythographic tradition.[543] In the following section we will see how this systematic and profound encounter with the past shaped the perception and categorisation of newly discovered 'pagan' nations.

## 5.2 The Encounter With The Past Shaping the Encounter With the New

The sixteenth century differed in its approach to ancient myth compared to earlier mythographic treatises, both in how myth was interpreted and how mythography was conducted. The Humanists' focus on systematic presentations, philology, and structure, were especially relevant in this regard. The time in which the great mythographies were conducted coincided with a time in which Europe increasingly learnt that pagans were not only a matter of ancient apologetics and myth, but that they existed in abundance in their own time in the New World and in the far reaches of Eurasia. The idea of an existential struggle against paganism was kept alive by the cultural memory of mediaeval Christian Europe; but the real experience of living with pagans had by this time become wholly incommensurate, even if one could encounter its crucial role for Christian apologetics by reading the church fathers.

The spread of Humanism shook up old certainties, renewed interest in sources which had hardly been read in centuries, and made Greek sources available to a much broader audience through Latin and vernacular translations. Renaissance mythography played a big part in a more systematic picture of ancient religion and myth — but the work of the Humanists more broadly was as important in bringing antiquity to life for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers and scholars. Method, as we have seen, was crucial: philology as well as the new study

[543] A beautiful example of this is Alexander Ross, author of the famous Pansebeia (London 1653), who also wrote allegorical treatises on ancient myth. See R. J. W. Mills, "Alexander Ross's Pansebeia (1653), Religious Compendia and the Seventeenth-Century Study of Religious Diversity," *The Seventeenth Century* 31, no. 3 (2016): 286.

of chronology — influenced also by the archaeological discoveries in early modern Rome and forgeries such as those of Annius — aimed to further systematise, order, and properly date texts, but also ended up bringing into question the historicity of scripture itself. Thus a renewed interest in ancient Greek historians and geographers coincided with the discovery of new religious traditions in the New World and in Asia, whilst the Reformation had re-introduced the problem of idolatry as a prominent theological issue and questioned old certainties regarding orthopraxy and orthodoxy.

This confluence of Humanism, Reformation, and the so-called 'Age of Exploration' in the sixteenth century was the context in which the newly discovered peoples in the Americas and Asia would have to be interpreted. As we shall see, the intense occupation with ancient culture and its forms of ritual, worship, and belief would inform how the new pagans were interpreted. The challenges created by inserting the new continent into sacred history and conceptual models of idolatry and religion in turn fuelled the interest in the origin and spread of idolatry and paganism more broadly.

## Encountering New Pagans in a New World

The encounter with the pagan other that I have related so far was a distant encounter. As much as the Humanists brought antiquity 'back to life', the ancient pagans had long ago ceased to exist, even in the more remote corners of Europe. As we have seen, mediaeval travel accounts did bring back tales of India, but they were few and far between, enmeshed with the many fantastical tales of the subcontinent, and had still a very limited impact on the intellectual culture of Europe. This changed in the sixteenth century, where Europeans not only first sailed and explored the Americas and its peoples, but also discovered the breadth and diversity of cultures to the East of Europe, in the North, South, and East of the Eurasian continent. The new worlds 'discovered' by Europeans had an equally important role to play in the transformation of European societies and the Renaissance Humanism surveyed above, and often interacted with Humanism and its antiquarian focus on ancient culture.[544] The new worlds I am referring to are not so much only the Americas, but the new global world encountered by Europeans venturing far and wide. Rather than taking the discovery of the Americas, and its exclusive impact on European culture as a baseline, I agree with Joan-Pau Rubiés that we have to 'take account of a variety of "areas of encounters" overseas, and "contexts of reception" in Europe, in order to address the issue of the actual impact of travel writing on the transformation of intellectual culture, rather than pursuing what is perhaps an illusory measurement of impact according to relative numbers of authors responding directly to new discoveries, and rapidity of response.'[545]

[544] Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Humanistic Culture," 132.
[545] Rubiés, 139.

We have already seen, in regards to India, how travellers like Ludovico de Varthema responded in a new way to the otherness encountered in foreign lands, whilst both adapting to local circumstances as well as remaining within narratives structures and topoi that were well established. Humanism was an important aspect in this regard: while most sixteenth-century travellers did not have a Humanist background themselves, they were usually nevertheless familiar with classical authors and thus were in-between popular and elite discourses.[546] They in turn influenced the Humanist production of collections such as those by Giovanni Battista Ramusio or Richard Hakluyt.[547] Humanism, travel writing, and the writing of ethnography were intimately entangled in the early modern period. A shared *European* Humanist background would continue to be crucial for intellectual endeavours for the next centuries: we have seen and will see again that in the acutely confessionally charged environment of the early- and mid-seventeenth century Dutch Republic Reformed apologists regularly referred back and used the Humanist and scholastic works of the previous two centuries, even when they were themselves informed by a distinctly Catholic and Counter-Reformist agenda. Bartolomé de Las Casas or José de Acosta, with a Humanist and scholastic education, wrote within these traditions and were readily used by Catholics and Protestants alike.

If we for a moment consider again the sophisticated, and anthropological if we will, investigations of the generation of Humanist scholars of Giraldi into the nature of ancient culture and paganism, we can appreciate how this Humanist background impacted people such as the Dominican Las Casas or the Jesuit Acosta. As Peter Miller has so aptly formulated: 'The quality of the questions these men asked about Indian life in the Americas was so good in part because the questions were those that antiquaries had been asking of the ancient world.'[548] Even though what we know call India would turn out to be on the other side of the planet, the encounter with the American 'Indians' was highly significant for intellectual developments in Europe: coming face to face with the — in European eyes — primitive, natural, and gentile man became a defining moment for how Europeans characterised themselves and the pagan *other*.[549] This in turn would have far-reaching consequences for how Europeans viewed the Asian peoples they came into contact with, but also for how they conceptualised natural religion. The impact of this new encounter with paganism thus was one that not only applied to the Americas, but for the wider 'New World' more generally. At the same time, many travel accounts were edited and collected by individuals with a Humanist background, who transformed ethnographies according to their own erudition and methods.[550]

[546] Rubiés calls this 'popular Humanism'. Rubiés, 141.
[547] Rubiés, 141.
[548] Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 186.
[549] On the importance of scholastic theology in this context see Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*; Marcocci, "Blackness and Heathenism. Color, Theology, and Race in the Portuguese World, c. 1450-1600," 38. On the creation of otherness in the missions see Sergio Botta, ed., *Manufacturing Otherness: Missions and Indigenous Cultures in Latin America* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).
[550] Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Humanistic Culture," 152–54.

There has been a common conception that there was a blunted impact of the discovery of the Americas on the learned discussions and society in Europe. While we might observe such a phenomenon with someone like Johannes Boemus, Anthony Pagden points out that to speak of an impact at all is problematic: to speak of a mistaken misrepresentation of the New World due to an assumed threat to anthropological and social notions disregards the fact that the European observers were confronted with something culturally unfamiliar for which they had not readily identifiable antecedents. European observer had to first 'classify before they could properly see; and in order to do that they had no alternative but to appeal to a system which was already in use.'[551] Moreover, as Rubiés points out, much of Asia was also new and unknown to Europeans and missing from accounts of the ancients, and Europeans cast their gaze to a variety of new worlds at the same time.[552] Nevertheless, it was exactly the need to classify the inhabitants of the Americas that led to frameworks in ethnology that impacted not only the study of Amerindian pagans, but paganism more broadly. Initial conclusions varied widely and depended on the individual and his own personal and philosophical stance and preoccupations. This ranged from Aristotelian critiques of Amerindian barbarity, to Neoplatonic-inflected notions that the Amerindians were mostly harmless, docile, if perhaps stupid, but presenting an ideal tabula rasa for the imprint of Christianity, to more sceptical voices arguing for an Amerindian retention of virtues lost to civilisation, most fully developed in the Enlightenment discourse surrounding the noble savage.[553] An appeal to ancient models, crucial in the representation of paganism in the Americas and beyond, were a logical consequence of the confluence of Humanism, scholasticism, and ethnography as well as ethnology that formed the intellectual basis of the writers of first-hand accounts, chroniclers and compilers, and need not be seen in opposition to a continually developing and empirical ethnography.[554]

The details of these sixteenth-century debates need not concern us here; instead I want to briefly survey the models of two thinkers whose models of comparative ethnology turned out to be especially important, namely Bartolomé de Las Casas and José de Acosta. Bartolomé de Las Casas became famous in Europe for his defence of native American peoples and his association with the so-called 'Black Legend', the idea, commonly used as propaganda in the Netherlands and the rest of the Protestant world, that Spain, an ignorant and exploitative power, committed horrible atrocities in its colonial project in the Americas and was the definition of intolerance, cruelty, and religious fanaticism.[555] Las Casas had arrived as a young layman in Hispaniola in 1502 as one of the earliest Spanish settlers, but within roughly a decade he had become

[551] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 4.
[552] Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Humanistic Culture," 138.
[553] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 52.
[554] Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Humanistic Culture," 154. See also Pagden, *European Encounters*; Rubiés, "Instructions for Travellers."
[555] On the Black Legend see Margaret R. Greer et al., eds., *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

an opponent of the colonial *encomienda* system and a defender of Amerindians. His *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias) (written 1542) would be especially influential for the development of the Black Legend through its depiction of Spanish cruelty after failing to improve the situation in the colonies for almost thirty years. But for the development of ethnographic and ethnological thought the *Apologética historia* () — originally intended as a chapter for his larger *History of the Indies* — would be his more relevant contribution to European thought as it was an 'expansive piece of comparative ethnology' the first, according to Anthony Pagden, written in a European language.[556]

Conceived following Las Casas's refutation of the Humanist Sepulveda's *Democrates secundus*, Las Casas sought, over multiple works, to 'find a satisfactory classification of the Amerindian peoples and a convincing, but non-deterministic, causal explanation for their behaviour'.[557] The *Apologética historia* specifically, using ethnographic materials as well as historical texts, seeks to prove that, whilst also explaining the reasons for Amerindian cultural divergence, the societies of the Americas were true civil societies according to Aristotle an thus not barbarians or natural slaves.[558] Las Casas dedicates a lot of space to religion, as a sphere of life that needed much defence, and assesses the religious cultures of the American peoples through a constant comparison with ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman paganism.[559] His defence derived from a focus on the similarity between these temporally and geographically distant societies, and the fact that whilst idolatry was of course wrong, the idolaters in the Americas were no more culpable of this sin than the Greeks and Romans, all of whose devotion to worship was admirable despite them being led astray by demons, claiming for themselves the devotion owed to God.[560] In other places of the Americas men worshipped the sun, as close as man could get to true worship within the limits of reason.[561] Using the research of the mythographers, especially Giraldi, Las Casas found Amerindian religion to be close to that of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and devoted many chapters to a comparison of mythologies and deities between these various societies. Deploying his erudition, Las Casas's goal was to prove that 'cultural and political development went hand in hand with the development of religion [...] and saw in all Amerindian religions, idolatrous though they were, important traces of humankind's original monotheism'.[562] Using empirical, eyewitness testimony, Las Casas marks the first large-scale effort of applying Aristotelian anthropological theory to the pagan

[556] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 122.
[557] Pagden, 120.
[558] Pagden, 121. See also Luis Mora Rodríguez, "Las Casas's Apologética Historia Sumaria and His Vision of the Other," in *The Transatlantic Las Casas* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 330–352.
[559] Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 188; Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 122. See also Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
[560] Sabine MacCormack, "Gods, Demons, and Idols in the Andes," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 4 (2006): 633f.
[561] Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 189.
[562] MacCormack, "Gods, Demons, and Idols in the Andes," 635.

societies of the Americas.[563]

Despite Las Casas's innovative work in the *Apologética historia*, it never reached a broad audience in the early modern period as it remained unpublished in a complete form for centuries, though in manuscript form it was used by Spanish chroniclers. José de Acosta generally shared an intellectual background with Las Casas, but his 1590 *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (*Historia natural y moral de las Indias*), whilst also investigating cultural difference through a historical analysis based on an anthropological theory that all humans are essentially the same, had a different purpose and lacked Las Casas's polemical agenda.[564] Acosta was a member of the Society of Jesus, which shared the Thomist basis of the Dominicans, but had superseded the latter in importance by the second half of the sixteenth century and whose members began to expand and systematise Spanish Thomism with authoritative writers such as Luis de Molina and Francisco Suarez.[565] The *Historia* is, as advertised, a history of the Indies from both a natural historical as well as 'moral' perspective, the latter referring to the customs of the Indians; this endeavour, in Acosta's own judgement, was unusual and new, as even though 'the New World is by now not new but old, since much has been said and written about it [...] this History can in some respect be considered new because it is history together with philosophy, and because it is not only about the works of nature but also about those of free will, which are the doings and customs of human beings.'[566]

Acosta believed in the importance of reconstructing this history of the Indians. Whilst most had sought to destroy the Amerindian past and to assert that everything was the product of superstition, Acosta thought history could present the enquirer with valuable information that could be applied to other places where missionaries were confronted with non-Christians.[567] He does so by applying his erudite Humanist learning — the title of his work resembling Pliny's *Natural History*, as well as the works of Ptolemy and Aristotle — but also through the use of contemporary, eyewitness testimony, clearly superior to much ancient information, as the new world was unknown to them, and with the new tools historians and mythographers had been developing in the mid-sixteenth century.[568] Acosta also had first-hand experience, not only of the natural world in Peru and Mexico, but also of the encounter with Amerindian society, culture, and religion. He ordered non-Christians in a hierarchical model of civilisation: the Chinese, whose society and cultural achievements were comparable to the Greeks and Romans due to their possession of writing and a political systems, were on top. Then followed the

[563] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 145.
[564] José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias: en que se tratan las cosas notables del cielo y elementos, metales, plantas y animales dellas, y los ritos y ceremonias ... y guerras de los indios* (Sevilla: En casa de Iuan de Leon, 1590). See Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 146.
[565] Pagden, 147.
[566] Quoted in MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time*, 153.
[567] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 150.
[568] See Anthony Grafton, "José de Acosta: Renaissance Historiography and New World Humanity," in *The Renaissance World* (London: Routledge, 2007). See further Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*.

Aztecs, Incas, and other Amerindian societies who were organised into a form of government recognisable to Europeans and hence political, yet, according to Acosta, not in possession of writing. On the bottom were those peoples who had no clear form of government or 'law'.[569]

The religion of Amerindian societies was understood within this cultural, anthropological framework, and one of the clear innovations of Acosta is that he portrays Inca civilisation with an appreciation of the power religious devotion and conviction, even pagan, held for within the political and social context of a society.[570] While Acosta was not indifferent to the suffering of the Amerindians at the hands of the Spanish, he took a clear stance on the superiority of Europe and the deplorable idolatry encountered by him and his fellow missionaries. Much like he classifies societies according to different levels of civility, he also orders Amerindian idolatry into different varieties, distinguishing the worship of natural things and localities from more clearly idolatrous practices such as idol worship and a cult of the dead.[571] The classificatory fervour of Acosta had a very real missionary purpose: the more civilised and less barbarous a people or civilisation were, the more easily they could be converted through reason in the manner the civilised Greeks and Romans were. The Jesuits were thus justified in applying a certain method of conversion in China, as Matteo Ricci was attempting at this time, Japan, or parts of India, while the Amerindian people did not warrant such a treatment.[572] Ultimately, Acosta's opinion of Amerindian religion was bleak and clear, despite his efforts to rehabilitate the European view of their civilisations. Like all pagans, the devil was behind the demonic idolatry found in the Americas, and their religion was a twisted inversion of true religion.[573]

Based on the combination of his Humanist background, the developments within historical writing, and his use of first-hand information, Acosta weaved a systematic comparative model with which to investigate the non-Christian world. The optimistic stance of Las Casas, and his morphological view of idolatry, had given way, in light of a colonial context where idolatry proved a more stubborn problem than initially expected, to a more clearly denigrating view of Amerindian religion and the clear agency of the devil in Acosta's *Historia*. As a model for comparative ethnology the *Historia* would be used extensively in the seventeenth century, in Catholic and Protestant contexts alike. A Dutch translation was published only eight years after the original and was translated by none other than Jan Huyghen van Linschoten; the latter's *Itinerario*, with its attention on natural history, especially botany, and the presentation of Asian civilisations according to degrees of civility with the very immanent presence of the devil especially on the Indian subcontinent makes evident the clear influence of Van Linschoten's close reading of Acosta.[574] Acosta provided a model not only for fellow ethnologists, but also

[569] MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time*, 164. See also Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 163f.
[570] MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time*, 97.
[571] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 168; MacCormack, "Gods, Demons, and Idols in the Andes," 640.
[572] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 163f.
[573] Pagden, 174ff.
[574] José de Acosta, *Historie naturael ende morael van de Westersche Indien: waer inne ghehandelt wordt van*

to the interrelated theorists of paganism who will be the topic of the next chapter.

*de merckelijckste dinghen des hemels, elementen, metalen, planten ende ghedierten van dien: als oock de manieren, ceremonien, wetten, regeeringen ende oorloghen der Indianen*, trans. Jan Huygen van Linschoten (Enkhuizen: J.L. Meyn, 1598).

# CHAPTER 6

# HISTORIES OF PAGANISM AND IDOLATRY

## 6.1 Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Intellectual Foundations

The last chapter of this part is devoted to the category of histories of paganism and idolatry, a genre which is called by various names by the scholars investigating these works, but which at bottom is an in-depth analysis of the origin and spread of paganism, in its many guises, and idolatry, variously defined by different scholars. The Humanist study of ancient myth, religion, and culture, and its expansion and adaptation to the new worlds discovered by the Europeans were necessary requisites for this endeavour: if not necessarily always in their scope, for as we shall see many works are interested in specific national or ethnic contexts, they nevertheless build on the demand for cosmographical and ethnographic answers to the puzzle of the world's diversity of culture and religion. Many works, especially the mature works of the seventeenth century, also aim to integrate all of the worlds pagan nations into a universal model of a history of paganism, based on sacred history.

Renaissance models remained very important for this endeavour. Not only must we see the heritage of earlier, especially sixteenth-century historiography and mythography as key in providing method, anthropological systematisations and universal scope, but we need to also take into consideration Renaissance models of history and philosophy. The genealogical model provided by Annius, important for the world historians, would also prove essential for the arguments of these scholars of paganism, as did notions of an elite 'prisca sapientia' or 'prisca theologia', likewise preserved through the ages and traceable through genealogical methods. Especially the orthodox rendering of earlier Ficinian models of ancient wisdom by Agostino Steuco and Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay were hugely influential for the compatibility of Christian apologetics and histories of paganism, and played a larger role than often acknowledged by modern historiography.

By the early seventeenth century the genre had become well-established, especially north of the Alps, and some of the keenest minds of the time were engaged in the craft. I will speak about many scholars who contributed in unique and fascinating ways to the growth and development of the histories, but have chosen to highlight the achievements of key scholars in particular. John Selden, more famous for his legal work and scholarship on the Hebrews, Phillipp Clüver, a relatively unknown pupil of Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon but hugely influential scholar active in Leiden, Hugo Grotius, whom we have already encountered in a different context, and Gerardus Vossius, the renowned polymath, whose *De theologia gentili* might represent the pinnacle of the genre. This will form an ideal conclusion to these chapters focussing on the sources and background of the *Open Door* and an ideal segue to its analysis, as Vossius was one of the greatest inspirations for the work of the annotator.

## Prisca Sapientia and Sacred History in the Quattrocento

We have already come across ancient wisdom models in the first chapter, where we saw that India was increasingly incorporated into Greek models of ancient Oriental wisdom, especially within Neoplatonic philosophy and the movements and people connected and influenced by it such as Gnosticism and many early Christian writers. Indeed, whilst often prisca theologia is primarily associated with Marsilio Ficino, it does originate in the Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic sources he used, as well as the Jewish and Christian writers who engaged with this intellectual tradition. As we have already seen with Clement of Alexandria, it was mainly through the early apologetic tradition of the church fathers that such notions of ancient philosophical wisdom entered Christian discourse, and this in turn also influenced Ficino and his successors.[575]

D.P. Walker defined what he called the 'Ancient Theology' as a 'certain tradition of Christian apologetic theology which rests on misdated texts'.[576] We will see that the dating of these text was not a sine qua non for the application of ancient wisdom models, but the supposed antiquity of texts and the implications that came with that were foundational for

[575] The literature is vast, but especially useful in chronological order are Charles B. Schmitt, "Perrenial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, no. 4 (1966): 505–532; Charles B. Schmitt, "'Prisca Theologia e Philosophia Perennis': Due Temi Del Rinascimento Italiano e La Loro Fortuna," in *Il Pensiero Italiano Del Rinascimento e Il Tempo Nostro: Atti Del 5 Convegno Internazionale Del Centro Di Studi Umanistici . Montepulciano, Palazzo Tarugi, 8-13 Agosto 1968.* Ed. Giovannangiola Tarugi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1970); Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*; Cesare Vasoli, *Filosofia e religione nella cultura del Rinascimento* (Naples: Guida, 1988); Droge, *Homer Or Moses?*; Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis: Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought* (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2004); Wouter Hanegraaff, "Tradition," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter Hanegraaff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1125–1135; Thomas Leinkauf, "Ältestes Wissen: Scientia und sapientia als hermeneutische Perspektiven," *Aegyptiaca. Journal of the History of Reception of Ancient Egypt*, no. 5 (5 2020): 166–188.

[576] Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, 1.

the establishment of a philosophical-theological framework of a vision of the development of philosophy and religion. The Hermetic Corpus, Orphica, Sibylline Prophecies as well as Pythagorean Carmina Aurea, supposed both in antiquity and in the Renaissance to be of a very ancient providence, were in truth written in late antiquity and with knowledge of Christian and Gnostic theology. Dating them to before the coming of Christ instead made it attractive to argue for vestiges of true religion that were in perfect concordance with Christianity and possibly even revelation. The apologists could argue that these remnants of truth found in pagan philosophy, most of all in Plato, derived from earlier, non-Greek sources and ultimately originated with Moses, thus lending the authenticity of antiquity to the Christian tradition whilst undermining the Greekness of philosophy. For the church fathers this was a rhetorical weapon in their fight against real, living pagans, and lead to complex and manifold approaches — often within a single author, as the example of Augustine illustrates — and employment of the Neoplatonic philosophy this was based on. Admiration for this philosophy and its concordance with Christianity coexisted with the claim of the Greeks having 'stolen' their philosophical wisdom from other traditions (and ultimately Moses) and with attacks of their idolatry.[577]

The early modern context was very different: the pagans the apologists were both attacking and trying to convince had long ago disappeared. Tough a Platonic tradition did not disappear in the Latin West during the Middle Ages, scholastic philosophy increasingly built on an Aristotelian framework. Besides the Timaeus from Plato himself, most texts of the Platonic tradition were also not readily available to the majority who spoke no Greek and had no access to these sources. Much of the impetus for giving new life to Platonism and a renewed appreciation for Neoplatonic ideas and the sources circulating in the Gnostic, patristic and Neoplatonic context of late antiquity came, once more, from the East, although less far than India or even the Levant. It was in a Florence before the translations and writings of Marsilio Ficino that Gemistos Plethon reintroduced the Latin West to Platonism. While the actual impact Plethon, who spoke no Latin or Italian, had in situ has been questioned by scholars — and the myth of a Platonic academy born from Cosimo de Medici's attendance of Plethon's lectures followed later by his discovery of Ficino has largely been dismantled — the impact for the history of Western discourse and the role of Platonism is beyond doubt and acknowledged by contemporaries such as Ficino.[578] While Plethon's own vision of a rebirth of a religious pagan Platonism that would replace the other major religions was neither something he seems

[577] See on this most especially Droge, *Homer Or Moses?* See also Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, 4–10 and Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 17–28.

[578] On Plethon see Brigitte Tambrun, *Pléthon: le retour de Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 2006); Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra*, 36–82; Wouter Hanegraaff, "The Pagan Who Came from the East: George Gemistos Plethon and Platonic Orientalism," in *Hermes in the Academy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 33–50. See further Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 1: Parts 1-3; James Hankins, "The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1991): 429–475; John Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism in the Fifteenth Century," in *Reconsidering the Renaissance: Papers From the Twenty-First Annual Conference*, ed. Mario A. Di Cesare (Binghampton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 45–62.

to have sought to teach others to any large extent, nor left a lasting impact on his Italian Platonist successors, the notion of Plethon as a second Plato and his Platonic sources did leave a lasting impression.[579]

Plethon's own vision of ancient wisdom was shaped by the Neoplatonic tradition that had survived in the Byzantine Empire and was influenced by Michael Psellos and the late ancient Neoplatonic tradition itself.[580] From Psellos Plethon knew of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and he subsequently reworked the former's collection, furnished it with his own commentary and assigned authorship to Zoroaster.[581] What is striking is that Plethon consciously breaks with the patristic tradition of assigning Moses ultimate authority in the ancient wisdom framework, instead tracing the origins of true religion to Zoroaster, in many ways adopting Celsus's anti-Christian polemic from antiquity.[582]

Even though the stories of Plethon, the wise man from the East, single-handedly transforming the Latin West and inspiring a Platonic Academy in Florence have been shown to be mostly fables, Plethon's vision of Zoroaster and the Chaldaean Oracles, even if divorced from his pagan Platonist pretensions, would have a significant influence. Marsilio Ficino (1433 — 1499), only around twenty years old when Plethon died, would be the man to revive Platonism proper and leave a mark on Humanist Florence, Italy, and beyond.[583] Ficino was at the centre of Florentine intellectual life in the second half of the fifteenth century, first supported by his most important patron, Cosimo de Medici and later with a more complicated relationship with the Medici, as well as counting many other of Florence's most important and influential citizens as his patrons and friends. After being ordained in 1473 he also became canon of Santa Maria del Fiore, and whilst his life was marked by both medicine and religion, it is the latter that will interest us here.[584]

Ficino had been drawn to pagan wisdom at an early age and actually later regretted some of his youthful enthusiasm for ancient sages bordering on heresy — at a more mature age he did not

[579] See on this especially Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra*, 36–82 and Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism in the Fifteenth Century."

[580] See on this especially Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra*, 57.

[581] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 33.

[582] Tambrun, *Pléthon*, chapters 2 and 3; Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 37f.

[583] The literature on Ficino is vast. Besides already reference literature here see for a good overview and introduction Christopher S. Celenza, "Marsilio Ficino," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2024, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2024). See further, especially in regards to the topic at hand Christopher S. Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72–96; Michael Allen, *Synoptic Art: Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1998); Walter Andreas Euler, *"Pia Philosophia" et "Docta Religio" : Theologie Und Religion Bei Marsilio Ficino Und Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998); Stephen Clucas et al., *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Guido Bartolucci, *Vera religio: Marsilio Ficino e la tradizione ebraica*, Biblioteca di cultura ebraica italiana 1 (Torino: Paideia, 2017).

[584] On a biographical overview of Ficino's life see Celenza, "Marsilio Ficino." Celenza does make the point that these pursuits were related: 'Uniting his medical and priestly missions, Ficino's goal was to help cure the diseases of ignorance and impiety, which he regarded as related.'

abandon his love for Platonism, but integrated it into his own vision of orthodox Christianity.[585] As such, his *Platonic Theology* — written between 1469 and 1474 — is conceived as a sort of Christian corrective to Proclus's eponymous work, itself mostly new at the time in the Latin West.[586] Ficino, rather than seeking a neopagan revival like Plethon, wanted to reveal philosophical truth, but also believed that truth was contained in the works of Plato; Ficino's work, especially his complete translation of Plato, was thus also a form of cultural translation for the Christian Renaissance world he himself was a part of.[587] Truth in the manner of religious truth, synonymous with Christianity, and philosophical truth, Platonism, both refer to the same, indivisible truth, and Ficino was eager to work against a division of these two spheres and to show that Plato was concordant with Christian truth.[588]

The presentation of truth as indivisible and one is crucial for the application of an ancient wisdom model such as Ficino's prisca theologia, and holds up more upon closer scrutiny than Walker's definition of the ancient theology being based on misdated texts.[589] Ficino, in the tradition of Petrarch and Bocaccio, also assigns poetry an important role in the transmission of truth, where myth — as we have already seen — could be argued to disguise truth in an allegorical fashion.[590] While Ficino builds on patristic models — especially Clement of Alexandria — for his presentation of ancient wisdom, he goes far beyond the church fathers.[591] In his translation of the Pimander from 1463, the (in)famous Hermetic treatise attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, Ficino presents a transmission line, tracing back to Proclus, of the prisci: Mercurius (Hermes) Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, Philolaus, and Plato — a list which, with variations, would continue to be important until the seventeenth century.[592] As Wouter Hanegraaff has argued, here Ficino quotes Augustine for the statement that Hermes lived after Moses. But after 1464, without ever changing his mind, Ficino, most likely influenced by Plethon, makes Zoroaster the earliest theologian, preceding not only Hermes but Moses too.[593]

Ficino thus deviates from the patristic model and its adherence to Mosaic primacy. This had a significant impact on the fortunes of prisca theologia and the way it was seen, associated — naturally considering Zoroaster's role as chief of the Magi — with natural magic and occult sciences.[594] We need not dwell on the magical and occult implications here, which Ficino

[585] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 44f.
[586] Celenza, "Marsilio Ficino," 2.1.
[587] Celenza, 2.3.
[588] See Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, 21, 27, 33, passim; Celenza, "Marsilio Ficino," 2.1.
[589] 'The essence of perennial philosophy consists in the concordance of monotheistic theology and philosophy.' Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, 28.
[590] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 45.
[591] Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, 34ff.
[592] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 45. As Frances Yates notion of a 'Hermetic tradition' has been largely dismantled by scholarship I will not devote any space to that here; see Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).
[593] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 46.
[594] Hanegraaff, 46–47.

himself was too cautious to employ; it will suffice to show how Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463 — 1494) incorporated this aspect into his own presentation of prisca theologia. Pico was a nobleman and philosopher, best known, perhaps, for his *900 theses* and his plans to have an internation congregation to debate his theses concerning religion, philosophy, and natural magic. Pico claims that the ancient philosophers knew of the immortality of the soul and God's eternal and absolute nature; as the preambles of faith, Pico here does not stray from patristic models. But Pico adds that in Egypt Pythagoras learnt magic in the Egyptian-Hebrew context of the time, and puts a lot of weight on the importance of Kabbalah, understood strictly within a Christian framework and is presented as the secret wisdom of Moses.[595] Hanegraaff makes a good case that Ficino himself seems to not be too concerned about genealogies in the time before Plato, which seems more non-historical and non-linear, all knowledge deriving and relating directly to God ultimately, whilst Pico put a stronger emphasis on the Mosaic origin of ancient wisdom and makes the Jews own tradition ultimately Christian, as Kabbalah correctly understood shows the (dogmatic) truth of Christianity.[596]

For my discussion it matters little what Ficino and Pico — who both clearly attempted to Christianise pagan and Jewish traditions, arguing that at its core these ancient wisdoms were always Christian — exactly saw as the historical contours of their models or which sources they emphasised above others. What matters more is that they introduced the possibility of different lineages of ancient wisdom, potentially, at least in the mind of readers, displaced the primacy of the Mosaic tradition, employed Kabbalah and magic, and, especially Pico, put attention on the hidden, veiled nature of ancient wisdom. In the following I will outline two reactions to these developments of the Renaissance ancient wisdom model: the orthodox Catholic rendering within a Tridentine context of prisca theologia as a perennial philosophy by Agostino Steuco, and the late sixteenth-century Reformed apologist use of ancient wisdom by Philippe Duplessis-Mornay.

## Adapting Prisca Sapientia: Agostino Steuco's Perennial Philosophy

Agostino Steuco (c. 1497 — 1548) may well be seen as the orthodox Catholic Humanist answer to the questions and issues brought forth by Ficino and Pico. Steuco was an Augustinian cleric who was active as a librarian, becoming papal librarian in 1538.[597] He was also an

[595] See Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, 49–50; Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 59–60.

[596] Hanegraaff, 59ff. For a similar and comparative assessment see Michael Sudduth, "Pico Della Mirandola's Philosophy of Religion," in *Pico Della Mirandola: New Essays*, ed. M. V. Dougherty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61–80. For other assessments of Pico see Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*; Moshe Idel, "Prisca Theologia in Marsilio Ficino and in Some Jewish Treatments," in *Marsilio Ficino. His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 137–158.

[597] The best study of Steuco's life and scholarship is still Theobald Freudenberger, *Augustinus Steuchus aus Gubbio, Augustinerchorherr und päpstlicher Bibliothekar (1497-1547) und sein literarisches Lebenswerk* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1935). On his philosophy and theology see Hermann Ebert, "Augustinus Steuchus

important Counter-Reformation spokesperson, answering the criticism laid on the papacy by some of his fellow Humanists by using historical-philological analyses to prove the necessity of a temporal and spiritual power. Shortly before his death Steuco attended the Council of Trent with irenicist hopes. His use of philology and historical analysis heavily influenced the reaction of Italian humanists in matters of reform, even though his conciliatory hopes where crushed in the post-Tridentine era.[598] While Steuco's *Cosmopeia* (Lyon 1535) already makes use of Platonist thought, the most relevant work for our purposes is the slightly later *De perenni philosophia* (On the Perennial Philosophy) (Basel 1540), a book-length study on ancient wisdom specifically.[599] This work coined the term 'perennial philosophy', even though outside of the title Steuco mostly retained the usage and meaning of the term prisca theologia. I will come back to why a differentiation of these two terms might still be useful in the context of Steuco and later Humanists, and the limitations of these categories when speaking about seventeenth-century scholarship.

The topics Steuco discusses in each of his ten books is already a great insight into his programme, which is at its core Neoplatonic and concerned with the conformity of both philosophy and barbarian wisdom, such as the Chaldaean Oracles, with Christianity. The first book begins with a discussion of origins, but then mostly concerns a detailed overview of the conceptualisation of mind or intellect (*mens* in Steuco's Latin, a translation of the central Neoplatonic concept of *nous* (νοῦς)). He argues that *mens* — comprising both Neoplatonic nous and Christian logos — is identified correctly by Plato, Philo, the Chaldaean Oracles, Hermes Trismegistus, and especially by Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus. The second book starts with a statement that the Greeks had their wisdom from the barbarians, and then moves to a discussion of the knowledge of the trinity among Hermes, the Egyptians and the Greeks. The agreement on the existence of one God in Greek (book three) and Stoic and Middle Platonic (book six) philosophy and Aristotle (book four) is followed by discussions of the nature of God (books five and six), the creation of the world (book seven), angels and daemons (book 8), and the immortality of the soul (book 9). The final book is the nail in the coffin: here Steuco argues that the goal of philosophy and the piety and virtues it preaches are most perfectly realised *only* in Christianity.

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Und Seine Philosophia Perennis. Ein Kritischer Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Philosophie," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 42, no. n/a (1929): 342–56, 510–526; Schmitt, "Perrenial Philosophy"; Schmitt, "'Prisca Theologia e Philosophia Perennis': Due Temi Del Rinascimento Italiano e La Loro Fortuna"; Mariano Crociata, *Umanesimo e teologia in Agostino Steuco: neoplatonismo e teologia della creazione nel "De perenni philosophi"* (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1987); Maria Muccillo, "La 'prisca theologia' nel 'De perenni philosophia' di Agostino Steuco," *Rinascimento; Firenze* 28 (1988): 41–111.

[598] Ronald K. Delph, "Polishing the Papal Image in the Counter-Reformation: The Case of Agostino Steuco," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no. 1 (1992): 509.

[599] Agostino Steuco, *Cosmopoeia* (Lyon: Sebastian Gryphius, 1535); Steuco, *De perenni philosophia*. For this see now Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Günter Frank; übersetzt von Frank Böhling*, ed. Günter Frank, trans. Frank Böhling, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2024). I have used the latter for my discussion of Steuco's *De perenni philosophia*.

The beginning of the first book is illustrative of Steuco's conceptualisation of ancient wisdom. He says that just like there is but one principle of everything, knowledge thereof has always and been the same everywhere and among all peoples, of which the reason and written testimony of many peoples are proof. He declares that this knowledge either originated with the first man — the knowledge of Adam, on which he elaborates more in the following paragraph — or through the observation of diverse things, which led to philosophy.[600] Steuco then traces original Adamic wisdom from Adam to after the flood, and outlines how original wisdom degenerated the farther it was removed from its origin in time and space; whilst he regards Hebrew as the original tongue, together with the special role he attributes to the Chaldaeans, this also is evidence of a displacement of a Mosaic lineage in favour of an Adamic one.[601] Traces of the old wisdom, though now veiled in error, remained for those who understood to see the truth.[602] Philosophy developed later, and originated in the beauty of creation. Philosophy, which he uses synonymously with wisdom and truth, is said to have had three ages: the original, Adamic wisdom, the philosophy of the philosophers in antiquity, and the most recent form, which was not only a rebirth, but the brightest expression of truth. Christianity, which is the last form, is thus cast as the reconstitution of original universal Adamic wisdom, retained in traces in old civilisations and grasped to an extent in philosophy, but best articulated in the Christian religion. But all three forms, and this is the crucial point in Steuco, pertain to the same truth and this wisdom was always the same.[603]

Steuco creates a sacred history of philosophy, which, in the words of O. Willmann, also doubles as a philosophy of history.[604] But unlike the later historians of idolatry, Steuco is not primarily interested with genealogies or tracing specific lines of truth and error, and instead focusses on the universal agreement of all philosophy, Greek and barbarian, with Christianity. Steuco's framework thus rests on a universal form of the ancient wisdom framework, although he carefully avoids mentioning Ficino or Pico as much as possible and they are almost entirely missing from his writings.[605] Schmitt already rightly pointed out that Steuco's narrative lacks any concept of progress in history — as we just saw when he speaks of wisdom always being exactly the same — emphasising instead degradation or continuity; knowledge, originally given by God to Adam, goes from perfection to being scattered and almost entirely lost, except

[600] Steuco, *De perenni philosophia*, 1; 'Ut unum est omnium rerum principium, sic unam atque eandem de eo scientiam semper apud omnes fuisse ratio multarumque gentium ac literarum monumenta testantur. Haec partim nata a prima hominum origine per omnes aetates devoluta est ad posteros, partim ex multiplici rerum consideratione parta Philosophiae nomine semper celebris fuit.' Steuco, *De perenni philosophia 2024*, 9. Already Johannes Reuchlin traced original wisdom in a prisca theologia framework all the way to Adam, see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 62.

[601] C.f. Muccillo, "La 'prisca theologia'," 58, 61ff. As we will see, this is a tendency that will become much clearer in the seventeenth century.

[602] Steuco, *De perenni philosophia 2024*, 15f.

[603] Steuco, 17–19. See also Ebert, "Augustinus Steuchus Und Seine Philosophia Perennis. Ein Kritischer Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Philosophie," 354.

[604] Cited in Muccillo, "La 'prisca theologia'," 43, n. 8.

[605] Schmitt, "Perrenial Philosophy," 524.

through the tradition of prisca theologia and then Christianity through revelation.[606] Steuco adapts a golden age degradation narrative from antiquity for a Christian reading, in order to fully Christianise the Renaissance prisca theologia, as Steuco's perennial philosophy essentially aims be a more orthodox Christian philosophy.

Despite its many overlaps with Ficino and Pico's philosophy, we quickly see how Steuco's perennial philosophy differs from their prisca sapientia model. Especially Ficino saw his ancient wisdom model as an aid for Christian reform, using the wisdom of the prisci for this noble cause. Steuco himself lived in a time that was confronted with a reaction to such a Reform movement, and his book was published at the eve of the Council of Trent; as Maria Mucillo points out, Steuco's work was driven by irenicist hopes to once more find Christian unity.[607] This meant that rather than finding novel ways of reforming Christianity, Steuco's perennial philosophy was an 'extreme attempt' to find conciliation through the application of a philosophico-religious framework in which all people have, essentially, always agreed.[608] This makes the *De perenni philosophia* a non-dogmatic form of Christian apologetics, not destined to convince pagans of the truth of Christianity, but to convince Christians of the underlying unity of their faith. While Ficino was seeking answers in his ancient wisdom searches, Steuco presents answers with his perennial philosophy; this perennial philosophy is built on erudition and a systematic discussion of the concordance of pagan philosophy with Christianity, but does not seek to provide new knowledge, as after all truth is and has always been the same and presents itself most completely in Christianity. There is therefore no point in looking for answers in the prisci.

Arguably this is the most important aspect of Steuco's perennial philosophy and ontologically distinguishes it from the prisca theologia of Ficino and others. The original *prisca theologia* implies loss of wisdom: in antiquity the vision was one of a golden age of wisdom, in Ficino this forms a tool for Christian reform. Steuco instead counterbalances the degradation model with Christianity. Rather than loss and degeneration which Christianity itself was unable to stop or recover, clearly an unorthodox powder keg in regards to the role of revelation and the superiority of the Christian religion, Steuco reworks the concept of prisca theologia to be more theologically sound. Loss of wisdom is replaced with a stress put on the *continuity* of truth: truth has been available in any and all ages, yet the Christian church has been its guardian since the coming of Christ. True wisdom, for Steuco, accordingly includes all the elements of Christianity, such as a creatio ex nihilo by God, monotheism, and the Trinity.[609] This goes hand in hand with what Moshe Idel has called the issue of unilinear versus multilinear transmission of wisdom: whilst different lineages parallel or in competition with the Mosaic tradition create uncomfortable questions regarding revelation(s) and the relation to Christianity, Steuco provides a clear unilinear model of transmission and truth, ultimately always relating to Adamite wisdom,

[606] Schmitt, 517–18.
[607] Muccillo, "La 'prisca theologia'," 46f.
[608] Muccillo, 47.
[609] C.f. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, 428–435.

not in competition or distinct from Christianity, but containing the same truth derived from God.[610] Steuco distances himself from the heterodox magical and kabbalistic aspects of prisca theologia, though not completely absent in some regards, and instead advocates for a universal Christendom informed by Neoplatonic philosophy, hoping to supply a conciliatory antidote to the tumults brought about by the Reformation.[611] In this manner, Steuco presents a systematic form of concordism, in which everyone and every tradition has essentially always agreed with one another on one and the same basic theology. The most perfect truth is indeed found in the Christian church — but because it has always been available, truth has shown itself in key pagan individuals such as Plato or Hermes Trismegistus.[612]

While earlier prisca theologia frameworks, with the exception of Plethon, also clearly work within the limits of sacred history, Steuco goes one step further by completely equating philosophy, truth, Christianity, and ancient wisdom. Following his model there is really no *philosophical* reason to employ the ancient wisdom tradition, as perfect truth is available in Christianity, and only in Christianity in its most complete form. As we will see, many followed Steuco's lead in instead using the ancient wisdom model for erudite apologetics and antiquarian projects, where no lost wisdom is ever truly posited or relevant; this is the case not only for the late sixteenth century, but also for the sophisticated histories of idolatry and paganism that were written in the seventeenth century.[613] Degradation from an Adamic and not necessarily Mosaic source, so central in Steuco's book, became one of the main pillars of seventeenth-century paganism scholarship, where the degraded nature of ancient and modern paganism stood in clear contrast to the original Adamic wisdom and Christianity, traces of which were transmitted through a chain of prisca theologia.[614] The prisca theologia narrative was in this manner tied to Adam and increasingly disentangled from the Hebrews, in whose stead, building on the models of Annius of Viterbo, we often find ethnographic paths leading to specific transmission lines of ancient wisdom such as Selden's Celts or Goropius's Cimbrians.[615] Before moving on to these seventeenth-century scholars working primarily in a Protestant context, it is helpful to survey the most influential late-sixteenth-century work of apologetics which 'reforms' the ancient wisdom model into a purely erudite apologist hermeneutic.

[610] Idel, "Prisca Theologia in Marsilio Ficino and in Some Jewish Treatments." See also Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 138. Hanegraaff's point about Ficino's ahistoricity is in this regard irrelevant, as Ficino could still be *interpreted* to promote a multilinear model where Zoroaster and Chaldaean wisdom contrasts and undermines Mosaic primary. In Steuco's model this is impossible, which made it so attractive as a basis for later apologists, despite its overwhelming irenicist and inclusive stance.

[611] See Muccillo, "La 'prisca theologia'."

[612] See also Constance Blackwell, "Neo-Platonic Modes Of Concordism Versus Definitions Of Difference: Simplicius, Augustinus Steuco And Ralph Cudworth Versus Marco Antonio Zimara And Benedictus Pererius," in *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 317–342.

[613] Still a useful starting point is Ebert, "Augustinus Steuchus Und Seine Philosophia Perennis. Ein Kritischer Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Philosophie," Teil II, who also highlights the impact of Steuco on Duplessis-Mornay.

[614] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 121.

[615] Fugger, 130–33.

### Employing Prisca Sapientia: Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay

Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549 — 1623) is mostly known today for his political career and as a Huguenot diplomat and writer. He lived through the French wars of religion and escaped the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, an experience which would influence his irenicist and ecumenicist political goals, the aspect of Duplessis-Mornay's life that has received the most scholarly attention.[616] At the height of his career in the late 1580s Duplessis-Mornay's influence and position besides Henry IV became so great he gained the moniker 'pope of the Huguenots'. But already his early-twentieth-century biographer Raoul Patry highlights the many areas of activity of Duplessis-Mornay when he calls him 'homme de guerre et homme politique, diplomate, historien, théologien et polémiste'.[617] Especially when it comes to his Dutch connections the Frenchman's political life is relevant also for the present work. Duplessis-Mornay's personal network extended to the United Provinces, and he was close to the Calvinist elite in the Netherlands: not only did he know William of Orange, he is most likely also one of the authors of the *Vindicae contra tyrannos*, which famously supported a citizens' revolt against a tyrant, applicable to both the Huguenot and Dutch case and influential for the nascent Dutch republic.[618] Especially after Henry's accession to the throne and his conversion to Catholicism in 1593, Duplessis-Mornay's influence waned. He played a crucial role in the Edict of Nantes, but then Henry abandoned his association with Duplessis-Mornay.[619] Duplessis-Mornay was also invited to the Synod of Dort, which eventually condemned the theology of the Remonstrants and reaffirmed orthodox Calvinism, as the representative of the Huguenots, but was not permitted to attend by Louis XIII.[620] Retired from political life, Duplessis-Mornay led the Academy of Saumur for twenty years, but after the capture of the academy in 1621 he died in disgrace.[621]

[616] On Duplessis-Mornay's political life see especially Hugues Daussy, *Les huguenots et le roi: le combat politique de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, 1572-1600* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2002) as well as the older, more general biography by Raoul Patry, *Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, un huguenot homme d'État (1549-1623)* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1933).

[617] Patry, 7.

[618] The *Vindicae contra tyrannos* was first published in Basel in a Latin edition in 1579. The scholarly consensus is that it was most likely written by either Duplessis-Mornay, his mentor Hubert Languet, or by both of them in collaboration. See the modern editions and translations: Stephanus Junius Brutus, *Vindiciae contra tyrannos. Il potere legittimo del principe sul popolo e del popolo sul principe*, ed. Saffo Testoni Binetti (Turin: La Rosa, 1994); Stephanus Junius Brutus, *Brutus: Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos: Or, Concerning the Legitimate Power of a Prince Over the People, and of the People Over a Prince*, ed. George Garnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[619] On the Edict of Nantes and the role of Duplessis-Mornay see Hugues Daussy, "Au Cœur Des Négociations Pour l'édit de Nantes : Le Rôle de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (1903-2015)* 144 (1998): 207–224; Nicolas Fornerod, "L'édit de Nantes et Le Problème de La Coexistence Confessionnelle: Dans La Pensée de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (1903-2015)* 144 (1998): 225–252.

[620] See Karin Maag, "Impact Amid Absence: The Synod of Dordt and the French Huguenots," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 52, no. 3 (2018).

[621] On the Academy of Saumur under Duplessis-Mornay see Janet Louise Glenn Gray, "Lay Leadership among the Calvinists: Duplessis-Mornay and the Academy of Saumur" (PhD diss., University of Missouri - Columbia,

In the context of the development of the ancient wisdom model and its applicability to erudite scholarship as well as Christian apologetics Duplessis-Mornay's theological writing is most interesting. His *De la Verité de la religion chrestienne. Contre les athées, épicuriens, payens, juifs, mahumédistes & autres infidèles* (Antwerp 1581) is at first glance an erudite but fairly standard work of Christian apologetics.[622] But the *Verité* stands out for the manner in which it asserts the truth of its author's Reformed Christian faith. Duplessis-Mornay uses a framework of ancient wisdom in a practical manner, neither asserting that any new truths could be found in ancient philosophy, nor, like Steuco, to argue primarily for universal truths found in all the diverse forms of human devotion, increasingly part of the European intellectual horizon. Rather, his aim is to establish common notions shared with the enemies of Christianity. Once these have been found, Duplessis-Mornay moves to attack all of these traditions, and builds a framework for conversion built on the application of Christian rationalism. Duplessis-Mornay was not ignorant of the potential application of his theology for overseas evangelisation, and expressed this in the Latin edition of the work which appeared two years after the French original: 'As a Frenchman, I was eager to first benefit France; as a Christian, I have no doubt that the kingdom of Christ must be spread to all parts of the world — may God grant that I may in some way contribute to this.'[623] Duplessis-Mornay's wish would not be granted by his fellow Frenchmen. Instead it was in the young Reformed nation to the north that this work would not only find wide appreciation from Dutch theologians and scholars, but also from those men concerned with missiology, as we have already seen in my discussion of the Seminarium Indicum.[624]

French historiography has mainly focussed on the political aspects of Duplessis-Mornay's life and works, while an evaluation of his use of ancient wisdom in his apologetic writings, and an assessment of Duplessis-Mornay as a Reformed theologian has mostly taken place in anglophone scholarship, though still in a rather limited fashion. Frances Yates argues that Duplessis-Mornay

1993).

[622] Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs …*

[623] 'Habes, lector benevole, librum nostrum De Veritate Religionis Christianæ, Latinè iam redditum, quem anno superiore Gallicè edideramus. Gallus nimirum Galliæ primùm prodesse studebam: Christianus Christi regnum in omnes orbis partes haud dubiè diffundendum, faxit Deus ut aliqua ex parte promovere possim.' Duplessis-Mornay, *De veritate Religionis Christianae liber*, unpaginated dedication.

[624] A more detailed discussion can be found in Leathley forthcoming. This was achieved also by the translation of the *Verité* into the vernacular languages of Northwestern Europe. After the publication of the Latin translation, overseen by Mornay himself, an English translation begun by Duplessis-Mornay's good friend Philip Sidney and finished by Arthur Golding was published in 1587, and the first Dutch edition was printed in 1602 in Amsterdam. See Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *A Woorke Concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion, Written in French: Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and Other Infidels. By Philip of Mornay Lord of Plessie Marlie. Begunne to Be Translated Into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at His Request Finished by Arthur Golding*, trans. Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding (London: By John Charlewood and George Robinson for Thomas Cadman, 1587); Duplessis-Mornay, *Bybel der nature. Dat is, Vande waerheyt der christelijcke religie teghens de atheisten, epicureen, heydenen, Joden, mahumedisten ende andere ongheloovighe*. By the mid-seventeenth century the work had at least six French, seven Latin, four English and three Dutch print runs. Of those, six were in fact printed in the Netherlands.

uses a hermetic model that is mystical and theological, and the presentation of D.P. Walker of the *Verité* has been put in the same camp by its enemies.[625] Other scholars further elaborate on the use of ancient wisdom in Duplessis-Mornay highlighted by Walker, and Jean Dagens calls the Protestant apologist's book 'le plus complet de la théologie hérmetique de tradition ficinienne', whilst Jeanne Harrie argues Duplessis-Mornay to be the central figure 'linking the Hermetic tradition to irenicism or religious toleration'.[626] These arguments prompted a rebuttal of such a connection between the pope of the Huguenots and his Reformed apologetics and a 'Hermetic' or *prisca theologia* in the tradition of Ficino and Pico, especially by scholars of Philip Sidney, the man who partially translated the *Verité* and was a good friend of Duplessis-Mornay. Alan Sinfield attacks Walker's notion that Duplessis-Mornay integrates Platonism and Christianity and that the latter ascribes true religious knowledge to pre-Christians, saying that 'this is a misreading of *De la Verité* and it has large consequences for the way we think of Sidney. It would be extraordinary for a protestant activist to hold the opinions Walker attributes to [Duplessis-Mornay].'[627] Sinfield shows the place that Duplessis-Mornay accords to reason in his preface, and admits that the apologist argues for many key Christian tenets to have been advanced by pagan philosophers; nonetheless he concludes that whilst 'it might seem nevertheless that Mornay is emphasising the capacities of pagan philosophers, it is significant that by the middle of the book he has brought both the heathen and his readers inexorably to the fall.'[628] Scholars have thus brought forth contrasting opinions on the *Verité*, based largely on selective reading of the first or second half of the work.

Robert Stillman has cautioned against either position's 'eagerness to identify the *Verité* with any single philosophical school, theological camp or confessional identity'; instead the transcendence of sixteenth-century confessional politics and advocacy for a more ecumenical and cosmopolitan Christianity is what Stillman sees fulfilled in Duplessis-Mornay's magnum opus, especially in its Latin translation.[629] While Duplessis-Mornay's lifelong pursuits of

[625] See Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, 196–99. Walker speaks about Duplessis-Mornay in Daniel Pickering Walker, "The Prisca Theologia in France," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17, nos. 3-4 (1954): 204–259, republished in Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. If we look at what Walker has to say on Duplessis-Mornay, we see that his critics have not read him very carefully, and that Walker makes it clear that the latter 'was too competent a theologian to go too far' in the direction of making Plato a strictly orthodox trinitarian, and that Duplessis-Mornay's appeal to reason is what explains his use of an ancient wisdom framework. Walker, 116–126.

[626] Jean Dagens, "Hermétisme et cabale en France de Lefèvre d'Étaples à Bossuet," *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 35, no. 1 (1961): 9; Jeanne Harrie, "Duplessis-Mornay, Foix-Candale and the Hermetic Religion of the World," *Renaissance Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1978): 500.

[627] Alan Sinfield, "Sidney, Du Plessis-Mornay and the Pagans," *Philological Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1979): 27.

[628] Sinfield, 28. See also Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 188. A similar sentiment can be found in Andrew Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism: A Study of Contexts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

[629] Robert E. Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (London: Routledge, 2016), 125. It remains unclear to me why the Latin edition specifically is supposed to exhibit more cosmopolitan or

moderation and ecumenicism certainly shape the *Verité*, calling it an 'anti-confessional text in an age of confessionalism', seems to me too eager to make Duplessis-Mornay fit an almost Platonic ideal of irenicism, as clearly the true religion that Duplessis-Mornay wanted to prevail was Reformed Christianity.[630] Nevertheless, Stillman's analysis of the *Verité* is detailed and careful, with a stress on reading and interpreting the book as a whole. As Stillman shows, if we read the work as a whole, we see the stress that Duplessis-Mornay puts on revelation, without which neither salvation nor true knowledge is possible. Without grace pagan knowledge is incomplete, and only with the coming of Christianity pagan wisdom even becomes wise in the first place. Yet ancient philosophy and wisdom was not without its purpose: it 'could teach [the pagan], as it teaches the Christian, to discern the disease of his fallen condition, to yearn for a remedy of that condition, to discover the marks of the true religion, and in the wake of that religion's revelation — in his knowledge of Christ — to recognize the complementarity of moral and political knowledge from a classical culture with the needs of Christian civilization.'[631]

The complementarity that Stillman speaks about is, as I see it, present on multiple levels and is expressed in more than one way: it is a complementarity of ancient philosophy and Christianity, but also of reason and revelation, the proof of God's existence through the book of nature as well as the unassailable importance of scripture for salvation and beatitude. These are not binary oppositions, however. Reason and the agreement found in ancient philosophy and religious texts with the biblical truth are the necessary preparation in Duplessis-Mornay's model for then supplementing the naturally-derived achievements of the mind with revelation. This acute, contemporary importance of his own writing — different to mediaeval forms of apologetics where most non-Christians had disappeared but closer to the early Christian origins of the genre — is, as I see it, the most important aspect for understanding the work and its impact: it could be used, so the idea, in reasoned debate to convince non-believers of the title of the work of the truth of Christianity. To do so Duplessis-Mornay employs 'common notions' (notiones communes), an important element of Stoic and Ciceronian moral philosophy.[632]

ecumenical ideas, as it is a very faithful translation from the French.

[630] Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, 125. As also Duplessis-Mornay's earlier *Traicté* shows, ecumenicism does not automatically entail non-confessionalism. Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *Traité de l'Eglise, auquel sont disputées les principalles questions qui ont esté meuës sur ce point en nostre temps, par Philippes de Mornay, seigneur Du Plessis …* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1578). The preface of the *Verité* also makes it clear that the need for his book was as great or even greater for Christians than for non-Christians: "respondra & rendra raison incontinent à soy mesmes de l'entreprise de cest œuure, plus necessaire auiourdhuy (& i'ay honte de le dire) entre ceux qui se nomment Chrestiens, qu'il ne fut onq contre les Gentils mesmes & infideles.' Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs …*, †r. While he clearly also had all Christians in mind here, it is clear that what he himself reaffirms is Reformed Christianity.

[631] Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, 138.

[632] See Joachim Schneider, "Notiones communes," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter et al., vol. 6 (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1984), 938–940; Andreas Blank and Dana Jalobeanu, "Introduction: Common Notions. An Overview," *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 8, no. 1 (2019): 9–24. In general see Mogens Laerke, "Aspects of the Early Modern Common Notion. Herbert, Digby, Culverwell," in *The Edinburgh Critical History of Early Modern and Enlightenment Philosophy*, ed. Stephen Howard and Jack

One of the most popular of these notions is the *consensus gentium*; used already in ancient Greek philosophy, early modern philosophy and theology continued using this as evidence for God's existence, especially through the reception of Cicero and the adoption of Platonic-Stoic ideas present in the church fathers.[633] It is also a common argument in Reformed theology: Calvin himself employs a *consensus gentium* argument, and Philip Melanchthon uses a Ciceronian-Platonist reading of common notions in his own work, subsequently influencing other Protestant theologians and philosophers, among them Duplessis-Mornay's mentor Hubert Languet and Duplessis-Mornay himself.[634] Duplessis-Mornay's argument which highlights the importance of natural law and the role of natural theology in this regard does not stand out within the context of Reformed theology. But what makes the *Verité* distinctive is the display of erudition, outlining the common consensus among the ancients of the truth, not only of God's existence, but of the Christian religion more generally.[635]

As a work of apologetics, Duplessis-Mornay is mainly concerned with convincing non-believers of the truth of Christianity. Reason, so he outlines in the preface, is of paramount importance for this, as to dispute against anyone who denies grounded principles is useless, but where common notions can be found reasoned debate is possible.[636] Care must be taken in finding the correct principles, depending on the culture of the those one seeks to convert: while Jews and Christians share a scriptural foundation in the form of the old testament, when dealing with pagans natural reason and theology assumes the greatest importance. Duplessis-Mornay posits broad pagan agreement, either innate or reached through reason and philosophy, on a natural theology which informs pagan knowledge on monotheism, the inherently good nature of God, as well as the immortality of the soul and a search for divine grace.[637] At no point does he posit that all truth can be proven or reached by reason, and though at first glance his use of prisca theologia might seem to imply that truth can be reached by or is available to everyone in the manner of Steuco, the Huguenot apologist remains an orthodox Protestant who affirms the necessity of Christian revelation. He employs the ancient wisdom model in an erudite manner not to show how universally understood truth was at all times, but to prove that the universal truth is synonymous with Christianity.

While this might still sound like the superficially inclusive framework of Steuco, Duplessis-Mornay employs this rhetorical strategy in order to prepare reasoned debate against unbelievers

Stetter (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

[633] See Harrison, "The Forgotten Proof." Cicero, through his Epicurean, Stoic, and Academic speakers devotes considerable space to the consensus gentium in *De natura deorum*.

[634] See Blank and Jalobeanu, "Introduction," 14; Roberto Bordoli, "Osservazioni Sulle Fonti Luterane Della Controversia "De Notitia Dei Naturali Insita in Infantibus"," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 64, no. 3 (2009): 449–467.

[635] Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, 135. Duplessis-Mornay does agree with the consensus gentium argument as well and amply uses it, see Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs …*, 13f.

[636] Duplessis-Mornay, †2r-v.

[637] Duplessis-Mornay, †2v.

and to convince them of the actual truth. He sets out to make his apology of Christianity, and the proofs that build on common notions and their application in evangelisation to be like mathematical proofs, which necessarily prove the truth of Christianity.[638] The vastness of erudition that Duplessis-Mornay applies, citing ancient testimonies ranging from the Pimander, to Iamblichus, to the church fathers and Rabbinic writings, aims to give the reader as much knowledge and ammunition as possible. Whether or not Duplessis-Mornay engages with a prisca theologia framework is less relevant in this regard than *how* he engages with it. In the *Verité* he makes no philosophical argument in favour of *prisca theologia*, and instead exclusively uses it for his apologetic project, as a rich resource to draw on. As I will discuss below, this is an important precedent, and many seventeenth-century scholars engage with *prisca theologia* in this manner. For this reason it also is less relevant to distinguish ontologically between a prisca theologia and a perennial philosophy, as the increasingly heuristic use of an ancient wisdom framework did not aim to make any positive philosophical claims.

This helps us understand that the first part of the book and the second part of the book are not at all in conflict with one another: rather, he outlines the principal common notions shared between Christians and pagans (that is to say: everyone), before then pointing out the deficiencies of non-Christian and especially pagan thought. Listing as many authorities as possible for proving the innateness and reasonability of natural theology and tenets such as the unity of God and the immortality of the soul thus just underlines his points on the potential of reason and natural religion. As much as he thus agrees with Ficino that the philosophers were the first theologians,[639] Duplessis-Mornay makes a clear divide between the sacred and profane, and rejects any potential anthropological turn, stating very clearly that there is but one (true) religion and that the sacred is not relative to time and place.[640] He lists marks of true religion, the first of which is worship of the creator, not creation.[641] He goes on to say that it is not enough to serve God, but that he has to be worshipped in the right manner, emphasising that God cannot be served unless he his properly known, and that again is impossible unless God choses to discover himself to man — that is, unless he reveals himself through his word.[642] The implication is not only clear, but subsequently also made evident by the author: natural

[638] Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs …*, †3r. The invocation of mathematics here is not by chance: especially for Melanchthon, who was a significant influence on Duplessis-Mornay, 'mathematics is a repository of undistorted common notions', and pure mathematics, conceived of in a Platonic manner, makes the mind more acutely able to grasp truth and reach certainty. Blank and Jalobeanu, "Introduction," 15. See further Dana Jalobeanu, "A Natural History of the Heavens: Francis Bacon's Anti-Copernicanism," in *The Making of Copernicus. Early Modern Transformations of a Scientist and His Science*, ed. Wolfgang Neuber et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 64–87. On Melanchthon's influence on Duplessis-Mornay see Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, chapter 3 and passim.

[639] Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs …*, 472.

[640] Duplessis-Mornay, 480ff. 'Si religio n'est rien que celà; quelle science, voire quel art y a il plus vain? Et qu'est-ce autre chose dire, sinon, qu'il n'y en ait du tout point?' Duplessis-Mornay, 481.

[641] Duplessis-Mornay, 483.

[642] Duplessis-Mornay, 486.

theology must only be a beginning, to which revelation necessarily has to be added. According to Duplessis-Mornay, even the pagans 'knewe very well that all the Ladders of their Philosophie were too short to reache thereunto, and that it behoued men to be inlighened and instructed from above.'[643]

The *Verité* thus provided no innovative and definitely no subversive ideas for a Reformed theologian, but instead furnished its audience with an erudite and exhaustive list of shared ideas, either innate or reached by reason, on religion as well as counter-arguments with which to refute criticisms of true revealed religion. The *Verité* served as an important model for Protestant theology, apologetics, and scholarship investigating the nature of paganism. The work was suitable for these purposes as it presented an erudite compilation of pagan theology, without descending into any potentially unorthodox theories or assertions. Where Steuco adapts prisca theologia and makes ancient wisdom synonymous with Christianity, Duplessis-Mornay merely utilises ancient wisdom for apologetic reasons. For the latter it matters little in the end when exactly Hermes Trismegistus lived; natural theology, as well as any wisdom in philosophy was inconsequential without Christian revelation. While Duplessis-Mornay thus uses a form of the prisca theologia framework, it has nothing in common any more with Ficino's philosophy, and is also removed from Steuco; rather it is a Protestant reworking of the patristic employment of ancient wisdom for purely apologetic purposes.

## 6.2 Histories of Paganism and Idolatry

In this present and the previous chapter we have seen how scholars, with philosophical, theological, antiquarian, and apologist goals, approached ancient myth and religion, and how they related this to the study of newly encountered pagan civilisations as well as to the analysis of the relationship between paganism and Christianity. The erudite histories of paganism and idolatry, investigating the origin, spread, and nature of the broad category of gentile or pagan religion may very well be seen as the meeting point of these different spheres of analysis and certainly would not have been possible without the conjunction of missionary strategies, the new genres of ethnography and ethnology through the eyes of classically educated men, and the Humanist re-discovery of ancient myth and religion as well as the philosophical and apologist re-appraisal of Stoic and especially Platonic philosophy.

What all of these spheres of analysis have in common is their confrontation with the *other*, with non-Christian forms of worship and belief. We have seen with the example of India itself that this engagement was hardly new for Christians, and especially the later mediaeval Latin West had increasing contact and awareness of other cultures and religions, especially Judaism

[643] Translation from Duplessis-Mornay, *A Woorke Concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, 361. 'Oyons sur ce les Payens, qui ont certes bien cognu que toutes les eschelles de leur Philosophie estoyent trop courtes, pour y paruenir; & qu'il falloit estre illuminé & enseigné d'enhaut.' Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs ...*, 483.

and Islam, but also pagan cultures farther afield. But in the sixteenth century the horizons of Europeans had greatly expanded, and they found themselves confronted with a cultural and religious diversity hardly imaginable in previous centuries. We have already seen how one of the consequences of this encounter was a rebirth of ethnology and ethnography, becoming great instituters of change not only for the European presentation of the *other*, but also for expanding maritime and economic power.

The Renaissance assessment of ancient culture, myth, and religion, under Humanists such as Giraldi, Cartari, or Conte, influenced the way these new genres were conducted, in conversation, too, with ancient geography, ethnology, and ethnography. At the same time, the vastness of difference found across the globe by Europeans led to new questions about the categories under investigation, and fed back into the study of ancient civilisations. How could commonalities between not only different pagan cultures, but also between paganism and the Abrahamic faiths be explained? What was the relationship between truth and error, what role did allegory play in explaining this relationship, and what does this imply for evangelisation efforts?

In the previous chapter we have seen the first generation of scholars grappling with these questions and attempting to find constructive answers. In the rest of this chapter I will go into the next phase of this scholarly digestion of difference, where scholars from the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century increasingly establish the investigation of the pagan *other* as a distinct scholarly genre. This had far reaching consequences, as formulated by Peter Miller in his classic account of how scholars came to 'take paganism seriously': 'When sensitivity to modern paganism combined with a deeper awareness of the complexity of ancient paganism, the former a function of travel and the latter of archaeology, the history of the gods finally became a history of culture.'[644] This process increasingly meant that different sacred spheres were compared with each other, undermining the Augustinian divide between true and false religion on an analytical level, even though many of these scholars were themselves ardent supporters of such a divide and wrote within an apologist context. It was out of this early comparative religious scholarship that many of the key Enlightenment discourses around religion started taking shape.

## A Genre Taking Shape

While, as Jonathan Z. Smith has highlighted, the question of the plural *religions* through this encounter shaped a new interest in the singular religion, increasingly leading to religion as a comparable aspect of culture, a sacred sphere that could be distinguished in a given society, European scholars did not give up on a sacred history framework nor the divide between true and false religion, even though they themselves aided in undermining it.[645] While we may term them historians of paganism or of idolatry, they also were antiquarians engaging in

[644] Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 193.
[645] See Jonathan Z Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious."

erudite scholarship aimed at knowledge of the past. Whether a given scholar applied themselves personally to antiquarianism in the strictest sense — an archaeology of the past utilising physical objects to learn more about the classical cultures of primarily Greece and Rome — or was more broadly engaged in a philological and more and more historicist approach to ancient cultures matters little here. Antiquarianism as I shall use it may thus be seen to be synonymous with what Daniel Stolzenberg has called 'erudition': an array of scholarly practices that aimed to help its practitioners uncover the details of past cultures and societies, and their beliefs, institutions, and customs.[646]

The foundations of the sophisticated antiquarian histories of paganism and idolatry of the seventeenth century are in the mythographic and philosophical investigations of ancient cultures of the Italian Renaissance. The preceding discussion of prisca theologia in its diverse guises helps explain the state of the art of the sixteenth century and the legacy of this research in the following century.[647] Prior to the shift to an increasingly anthropological understanding of religion, ancient wisdom could be conveniently put in the camp of truth, completely separate from pagan idolatry; whilst someone like Plato may have been a pagan, his philosophy stood in clear contrast to paganism and its epistemic basis. This meant that there was an underlying distinction between wise paganism — pertaining to a monotheistic prisca theologia that ontologically was not truly pagan — and idolatrous paganism with its manifold false gods.[648] As Dominik Fugger has shown with the example of Northern European paganism — but as we shall see may be used for the genre more broadly — this meant that anything from specific objects or beliefs, to whole belief systems could be argued to belong to either an ancient wisdom tradition or an idolatrous paganism; this demarcation line between two opposing interpretative frameworks (Deutungsrahmen) was often more important for scholarly interpretations and disagreements than specificities on a given subject.[649] We have already encountered this in many guises: the spectrum of identifying either primarily idolatry and heresy or philosophical wisdom in the church fathers, or the contrasting ways that Acosta and Las Casas approached Amerindian culture and religion and their potential compatibility with Christianity. We might also call these inclusive and exclusive, where the exclusive framework draws a clear line between true religion and idolatry along a patristic Christianity versus idolatry binary, and an inclusive

[646] See Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 21. Stolzenberg suggests erudition as a replacement for what scholars usually call antiquarianism; as most scholars do indeed, however, use antiquarianism in this broad sense, I too will continue using the latter term. The classical, indeed foundational, and still useful account on antiquarianism is Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian." See further Peter N. Miller, ed., *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi, eds., *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2005); Anthony Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[647] See further on this Francesco Bottin et al., *Models of the History of Philosophy. I: From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia Philosophica'*, ed. Giovanni Santinello et al., vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993).

[648] See on this Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 9–13.

[649] See on this Fugger, 1-60, esp. 13, 36.

framework where true religion is also identified within pagan cultural systems, albeit through a transmission line that traces back to a Mosaic or Adamic revelation as outlined above.[650]

This is a useful heuristic and as Fugger has convincingly shown, helps us understand the tensions and issues that scholars faced; we should, however, be careful in not overstating the differences between the frameworks. Many primarily exclusive scholars, like for instance Gerardus Vossius but also to a large extent Duplessis-Mornay, made heavy use of ancient wisdom and allegory without advocating that paganism contained any wisdom extraneous to Christianity, and inclusive thinkers, often inspired by patristic models, were inclusive primarily in the manner of Steuco, were pagan wisdom might trace back to a common source (Moses, or increasingly Adam) but of course still does not provide more truth than Christianity.[651]

The example of symbols is particularly important in this context. Stolzenberg, who speaks about strong (Neoplatonic) and soft (Aristotelian) theories of understanding myth, has highlighted that for the adherents of the strong theory of symbolism 'the allegorical meaning of ancient myths reflected the profound wisdom of the most ancient wise men who had invented them'.[652] The soft theorists on the other hand, whilst not undermining the underlying symbolic content of symbols, 'understood symbols in terms of Aristotle's definition of metaphor' where 'the rhetorical symbol, unlike the mystical one, was purely conventional, but it was still a powerful vehicle of communication and edification'.[653] As Stolzenberg continues, the adherents of the soft theory nevertheless engaged in allegorical interpretation, but were less likely to believe that the allegorical meaning was the original intention of the myth; though in practice this distinction is difficult to draw in any case. The blurry lines of interpretation and limits of allegory, so important in the antiquarian investigation of symbols found on material artefacts of the past, in many ways were the same in other more textual areas of the study of ancient cultures and religion, with the study of hieroglyphics forming an important connection between antiquarianism and history.[654]

[650] As Martin Mulsow has explained with the example of Lorenzo Pignoria: 'Pignoria's frame of orientation, which draws a clear line between true and false religion, could be called "exclusive." In addition to this framework, there was another, more "inclusive" one: it softened this strict distinction by pursuing the traces of "true" religion — that is, the underlying monotheism — within the realm of "false" religion.' Martin Mulsow, "Antiquarianism and Idolatry: The Historia of Religions in the Seventeenth Century," in *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 195. As explained by Fugger, Pignoria makes the two frameworks synonymous with Aristotelianism and Platonism, but this was hardly a rule that other scholars necessarily followed. Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 16ff.

[651] Along the same lines Stausberg criticises the claim by Walker that prisca theologia led to an open and very liberal form of Christianity that puts an emphasis on similarity rather than difference. Stausberg, in my opinion correctly, argues counter to this is that already Ficino primarily instrumentalises alien religions and universalises Christianity by making paganism Christian, and that this too undermines the autonomy and agency of the other. Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra*, 121.

[652] Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 58.

[653] Stolzenberg, 58.

[654] Stolzenberg, 59ff. Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 26–46. Fugger shows with the example of Danish hieroglyphs that a major point of contention was whether there was a true allegorical or merely ritualistic

While the two ideal types are thus no more than ideal types, they are a useful heuristic when studying the scholarship on paganism. But there was not only tension *between* these rival interpretative frameworks, but also *within* both frameworks themselves. Whilst for instance in central and northern Europe a majority of scholars where mostly not expecting to find wise paganism, systematic analyses of paganism as idolatry quickly ran into problems depending on the corpora of sources one used; euhemerism and the interpretatio romana/greca stood in conflict with one another and thus made different sources or explanations more attractive. Fugger shows this with the scholar Richard Verstegen — whom he contrasts to Abraham Ortelius and his application of an interpretatio romana — who makes idolatry appear after the confusion of tongues, after which he argues each people deified their leaders as separate nations.[655] The details of these discourses need not concern us here, but what is important is the discursive antagonism inherent to the different usages of corpora and historical explanations of paganism.

While prisca sapientia was primarily associated with a Greek tradition around Pythagoras and Plato and their barbarian predecessors — with the wisdom of the Egyptians and especially Chaldaeans being prominent — already in antiquity ancient wisdom was extended to some other groups, besides the Brahmans for instance the Druids. In the early modern period there was an increasing move to connect an ancient wisdom tradition with the ancestral peoples of specific places, in the manner that Annius had done with the Etruscans and their language. One of the most infamous sixteenth-century scholars in this regard was Johannes Goropius Becanus, who in his *Origines Antwerpianae* asserted that Dutch, not Hebrew, was the primordial language spoken in paradise through spurious etymologies.[656] Goropius himself could build on the work of Johann Magnus, the last Catholic archbishop of Uppsala, who made the Goths, through the wise Zalmoxis, part of the ancient wisdom tradition, connecting them to Pythagoras.[657] Goropius goes one step further in this process of creating an autochthonous ancient wisdom tradition that meets ancient narratives, but is distinct from them and establishes a privileged position for a given people or nation within a genealogy of ancient wisdom. This was an important development, then continued by other scholars like Johannes Bureus, Sebastien Roulliard, or John Selden, where the transmission of prisca theologia is 'ethnocentred' whilst still connecting these new genealogies with those of Ficino or Pico.[658]

Stolzenberg calls the ancient wisdom tradition which bases itself on Adam and a Noachite

interpretation to hieroglyphics.

[655] Fugger, 67–83, 103.

[656] Johannes Goropius Becanus, *Ioan. Goropii Becani Origines Antwerpianae, siue Cimmeriorum Becceselana nouem libros complexa* (Antwerp: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1569). See also David Weil Baker, "Etymology, Antiquarianism, and Unchanging Languages in Johannes Goropius Becanus's Origines Antwerpianae and William Camden's Britannia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2019): 1326–1361.

[657] Johannes Magnus, *Gothorum Sveonumque historia* (Rome: Olaus Magnus, 1554). See on this Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 113–115.

[658] See for instance Fugger, 121.

tradition perennial philosophy, whilst Fugger highlights the increasing overlap of prisca theologia and (Christian) Kabbalah.[659] I believe the crucial difference to earlier ancient wisdom formulations — and here scholars could fall back on Steuco's perennial philosophy as much as on Annius's genealogical fables — was that as they established new ethnocentric genealogical paths they reaffirmed these histories as histories of degradation. Casaubon's scholarship was not only directed against the Hermetic Corpus, but against the implied allegorical interpretations it was applied to; but a scholar could easily continue using ancient texts; even if one specific corpus had been philologically redated, the deeper content and framework were not automatically invalid or useless. The same is true for Annius: one could agree that his work was a forgery but use his genealogical models.[660] While Steuco's perennial philosophy offered a model here, the latter's interest lay in stressing that the same truth was available at all times; by adopting Annius's model and shifting the interest to tracing the transmission of wisdom in a historical, genealogical manner through degradation or degeneration and the manner in which some wisdom had been shielded from it gained more importance.[661]

This option was more orthodox, as it did not posit any superior pagan knowledge rivalling Christian revelation as it traces its roots to original, Adamic wisdom traced through Noah, which it merely safeguards in a context of degeneration. It also does not seek to make any philosophical claims, as the ancient wisdom narrative was increasingly used for historical-genealogical and, often in combination, Christian apologetic purposes, though largely bereft of Ficino's spiritual aims. This is why despite the evidence of Annius's fraud and the philological dismantlement of the Corpus Hermeticum by Isaac Casaubon in 1614 scholars continued using these sources and frameworks; not because they were stuck in some sort of Renaissance Hermeticism, but because they were using ancient wisdom as a useful tool in their work without asserting any Ficinian philosophical radicalism. Ancient texts and the prisca sapientia model were thus useful tools for the erudite antiquarian projects of the seventeenth century.[662] To speak in this context of prisca theologia in the same manner as when speaking about Ficino is thus misleading, and undermines the uses and innovations taking place within the frameworks of ancient wisdom. This will become more clear when looking at some concrete example of such histories of paganism by some of its most celebrated and innovative scholars in the seventeenth century.

### Merging Traditions: Phillipp Clüver

With the rival frameworks of paganism, the ancient wisdom based tradition clashed with explanations championing the pervasiveness of idolatrous paganism, increasingly leading to what

[659] Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 63; Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 118.
[660] Fugger, 133–139; Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 217.
[661] As also pointed out be Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 121.
[662] See especially Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus*, 55, 138, and passim.

Fugger has characterised as a crisis within the field of histories of paganism and idolatry. While scholars had brought forward partial explanations, especially with ethnocentric approaches where a specific people safeguarded wisdom, the relationship between the transmission of truth and error was unclear and unsatisfactory. A crucial figure to propose a solution to these divergent frameworks was Phillip Clüver (1580 - 1622), who had studied under Scaliger at Leiden and then ventured to England to work under the guardianship of Casaubon.[663] After Casaubon's death Clüver again found a home at his alma mater in Leiden until his death in 1622; despite his death at a young age, Clüver's work was substantial and would be influential for his colleagues and friends, which included Daniel Heinsius, Hugo Grotius, and Gerardus Vossius.

As a scholar, Clüver was engaging in a combination of historical geography, philology, and the scholarship on paganism. His most popular work that was read for many decades being *Introductio in universam geographiam* (posthumously 1624-29), as the title suggests an overview on geography that became a standard introduction; but more important for this discussion of Clüver were his treatments of specific cultural areas in his *Germania antiqua* (1616) and *Italia antiqua* (posthumously 1624), where historical ethnography, genealogy, and sacred history meet in an attempt to find the underlying truth about ancient cultures and their religions.[664] In his geographical endeavours Clüver espoused scepticism and critique at the ancient sources that were his main information on ancient cultures, and also did not shy away from dismantling politically important myths, such as disentangling the ancient Batavians from the modern Hollanders.[665] This critical approach to his sources was crucial also in establishing the foundations and limits of the religions of the peoples he investigates — espousing for instance a sceptical stance at Caesar's portrayal of the Germans vis-à-vis that of Tacitus, reasserting the existence of priesthood in Germanic lands.[666]

Clüver builds on the philological scholarship of his teachers and makes philology and etymology the cornerstones of his own work. What distinguishes Clüver from an earlier generation of scholars and philosophers employing ancient wisdom is that an atemporal or ahistorical ancient wisdom framework, as we have seen it not only with Ficino, but especially with Steuco and also Duplessis-Mornay, becomes thoroughly historical and historicist, as well as

[663] The most expansive work on Clüver's life and scholarship remains Josef Partsch, *Philipp Clüver, Der Begründer Der Historischen Länderkunde : Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Geographischen Wissenschaft* (Vienna: Hölzl, 1891). On the relevance of his scholarship see now Ralph Häfner, "Das Altertum Interpungieren. Beobachtungen Zur Archäologischen Methodenbildung Philipp Cluvers (1580-1622) Und Ihrer Wirkung," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3, no. 1 (2001): 25–41 and especially Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 146–204.

[664] Philipp Clüver, *Germania antiqua: libri tres. Adiectae sunt Vindelicia et Noricum eiusdem auctoris* (Leiden: Elzevir, 1616); Philipp Clüver, *Philippi Cluveri Italia Antiqua: Opus Post Omnium Curas Elaboratissimum; Tabulis Geographicis Aere Expressis Illustratum; Eijusdem Sicilia Sardiniae et Corsica* (Leiden: ex officina Elsevieriana, 1624); Philipp Clüver, *Introductionis in universam geographiam*, 6 vols. (Leiden: ex officina Elzeviriana, 1624–29).

[665] See Lukas Reddemann, *Staatenkunde als Weltbeschreibung* (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 110–123.

[666] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 156–157.

analytical. For Steuco the ahistoricity of his perennial philosophy is a crucial element without which it would not work; Clüver instead wants to uncover the essential ontology of paganism and its development. Fugger highlights how Clüver was proud of his pioneering work, and indeed the latter declares that as no one has 'shown the origin of the plurality of gods, I have proposed to illustrate this matter briefly, for no other purpose than to make clearer and more intelligible what ancient authors have reported about the gods of the Germans.'[667] To do so he goes far beyond explicating only the origin of German paganism, but in fact investigates the origin of idolatry and ancient wisdom more universally.

At the same time, Clüver was well aware of the important predecessors in this regard, calling out above all others Steuco and Duplessis-Mornay. Before the passage quoted above he argues that it is clear from his own investigations and that of others that the nations of the world disclosed a true theology to the common people only through fables, whilst retaining an esoteric doctrine about the true God and his nature to themselves. The church fathers are then lauded to have laboured to refute the poets, whilst in modern times erudite scholars have shown that the pagans indeed taught the existence of one true God, among whom Steuco and Duplessis-Mornay were the most distinguished.[668] While the latter two illustrated the truth of this especially among the Greeks and Romans, Clüver wants to prove the universality of this belief, for which proof exists for instance for the Egyptians, the Indians (quoting Philostratus), or the Sarmatians whom he makes the ancestors of the Slavs.[669]

The apologetic literature that employed ancient wisdom as a proof of the solitary truth of Christianity was the basis of Clüver's own scholarship; he did not supersede the former as much as he sought answers to formerly unasked questions. Neither Duplessis-Mornay nor Steuco were interested in tracing the exact lines of transmission of ancient wisdom and its relation to idolatry through time and space.[670] In Clüver this becomes the main object of inquiry on the

[667] 'Verum, quia neque hi nec quisquam alius originem pluralitatis deorum ostendit, mihi hunc maxime locum paucis illustrandum proposui: nudo equidem alio consilio, nulla alia de causa, nisi uti ea quae de Germanorum diis auctores antiqui tradiderunt clarius planiusque intelligantur.' Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, 212. C.f. Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 155–156.

[668] 'Per fabulas solummodò atque aenigmata, cum alias universi orbis terrarum genteis, tum Celtas quoque nostros theologiam suam imperito vulgo aperuisse, veros autem de Deo vero & ejus naturâ sermones in arcanis sibi solis habuisse, ex iis quae superiori capite adducta sunt satis abundeque perspectum est. Attestantur idem omnes ferè Graecorum Romanorumque libri, ejusmodi aenigmatibus, sphingibus, ac fabulis referti inexplicabilibus, praesertim poëtarum. Nec quisquam inter tortores, in quibus haud paucos sacris initiatos fuisse existimo, tot saeculis hactenus fuit, qui arcanam illam, per sacramentum sibi commissam theologiam omnem evulgare sustinuerit. Unde est quòd Iustinus, Tertullianus, Arnobius, Lactantius, Augustinus, & alii antiqui auctores ecclesiastici fabulas plurimum poëtarum confutare laboraverint. Nostro demum hoc saeculo fuerunt viri doctrinâ pariter ac pietate conspicui, qui demonstrare summo conatu, maximoque labore aggressi sunt ipsam gentium theologiam unum verum Deum, rerum cunctarum conditorem moderatoremque, tradidisse. Quo in argumento praestantissimam omnium, meo iudicio, locaverunt operam Augustinus Steuchus Eugubinus in opere quod De Perenni Philosophia composuit; & post hunc nuperrime nobilissimus juxtà ac doctissimus vir Philippus Mornæus, in libro quem De Veritate Religionis Christianae conscripsit.' Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, 211–212.

[669] Clüver, 212.

[670] Fugger briefly mentions that Clüver 'secures the Hermetic foundations of his draft by committing to the

other hand, as the antiquarian study of ancient culture is the scholar's primary goal. There is no need to go into detail on Clüver's findings and opinions regarding the ancient Germans, their priesthood and its direct line to Adamic wisdom; it is not relevant for my purposes and has been analysed thoroughly by Fugger. Clüver's solution to the opposing frameworks of ancient wisdom and idolatry within a historical process of degeneration and guardianship, on the other hand is what is most relevant for Clüvers successors in the field and thus for the *Open Door*.

Clüver makes Cain the first idolater, who, having turned away from God began worshipping the stars and celestial bodies. The progeny of Cain then began engaging in euhemerism, worshipping men who had done great deeds, so that by the time of the flood only Noah walked the true path of God.[671] Clüver makes idolatry a pre-deluge phenomenon and universalises the ancient wisdom tradition by making it one, traceable directly to Adam via Noah. This is also a response to the exclusivity models of scholars such as Goropius, as Clüver does not deny these genealogies or secret media (such as hierogylphics) but denies their exclusivity.[672] Ancient wisdom is thus fully universalised and traceable to Adam, not unorthodox as no other revelation is posited and presented as ontologically one religion. Idolatry, having vanished with the flood, immediately re-entered the world through Noah's son Ham, and Ham alone.[673] It is thus logical that idolatry, at its core, is also one, and Clüver does indeed claim this and posits a universal interpretatio romana, employing Plutarch's *Isis & Osiris*.[674] This is not in contrast with the clear and obvious reality of the vast diversity of paganism found in antiquity and increasingly discovered around the globe — diversity could be gained in time through the inventions of poets and priests — but simply a theoretical argument about the underlying nature of idolatrous paganism.[675]

Clüver's solution to many of the underlying issues of scholarship on paganism is to not only assert the basic unity of all paganism, but also to inextricably link the development of prisca sapientia and pagan idolatry in a single two-faced line of transmission. As such he shows how all male deities, all actually solar cults, trace their origins back to an esoteric worship of the true god, whilst all female deities relate to the moon.[676] But the diverse names of the

prominent voices of the opposing confessional groups'. ('Man kann sagen, dass Clüver die hermetischen Grundlagen seines Entwurfs dadurch absicherte, dass er sich prominenten Autoritäten aus den widerstreitenden konfessionellen Lagern verpflichtete.') Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 163. The issue with this idea is neither Steuco or Duplessis-Mornay represented some sort of status quo of prisca theologia (not to mention 'Hermeticism') but used ancient wisdom for apologetic reasons. This is also what connects the otherwise disparate presentations of paganism found in the two authors, as the point was universalising Christianity as the one and only truth. It is this foundation that Clüver builds on, as exemplified also by his reference to the church fathers in the same passage.

[671] Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, 214. Clüver thus follows a Rabbinic rather than a patristic or Lactantian model for the origins of idolatry.

[672] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 163.

[673] Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, 216.

[674] Clüver, 217.

[675] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 169. See also C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 203ff.

[676] Häfner, "Das Altertum Interpungieren. Beobachtungen Zur Archäologischen Methodenbildung Philipp

sun and moon actually refer to the true God, three in unity, and one in trinity.[677] Building on Macrobius, he in this way presents the manifold gods of paganism as a personification of different aspects of the true God.[678]

In this way, the key issue of paganism is a confusion and worship of creation instead of its creator, which we have seen had been a major way in which to define idolatry since Paul. Idolatry, however, essentially one, and ancient wisdom, also one and equal with truth, are very much related, and both before and after the flood idolatry is a corruption of true worship. Whilst originally all paganism was the same, over time further idolatrous confusion is brought about by myths and by priests, who hold perhaps the most central role in Clüver's theory: they are the keepers of truth, maintaining the ancient wisdom, but at the same time jealously guard the truth from the uninitiated, creating the divergence between esoteric and exoteric paganism.[679] Clüver in this way blurs the boundary between ancient wisdom and idolatrous paganism by making the priests the transmitters of both. Universal Adamite wisdom can be traced among all peoples, but there is also a degree of idolatrous confusion that can vary between nations.[680] It is no coincidence that Clüver regards Steuco and Duplessis-Mornay as his most important predecessors: he takes over Steuco's perennial philosophy for ancient wisdom, whilst merging it with the more patristically-informed and Reformed model of delineating idolatry in Duplessis-Mornay, all the while adding a philological and historical analysis for the origins of these divergent worship practices. But the crucial difference to these earlier approaches is that by merging the two genealogies, Clüver — unlike Steuco and Duplessis-Mornay who are keenly defending a strict opposition between truth and error, Christianity and idolatry — understands *paganism* itself as a religion.[681]

### Wise Celts and Assyrian Origins: John Selden

Clüver in this way offered an orthodox Protestant interpretation of paganism that included idolatry and ancient wisdom, in which the priests became the ultimate two-faced elite that kept wisdom alive but shielded it from the masses, which they at the same time seduced with fables and myth, perverting the original worship further and further, leading eventually to the

Cluvers (1580-1622) Und Ihrer Wirkung," 34.

[677] 'Ego, non modò omnia deorum nomina ac numina ad unum pertinere solem, dearum verò ad lunam; sicque & Celtas nostros & omneis olim sensisse genteis: sed ea ipsa varia Solis lunaeque vocabula ad unum, verum, aeternumque Deum esse referenda, quem in unitate trinum, in trinitate unum veneramur, rerum cunctarum Conditorem juxtà ac moderatorem, tum ex Macrobio, tum ex aliis gravissimis priscis auctoribus validissimis demonstrare conabor documentis.' Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, 218.

[678] Compare this also with the notion that idolatry is a diffusion of the one God into many, argued in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.12. As I have outlined, Clement also presented a history of religion not too dissimilar in its key features to those of the historians of idolatry of paganism. See further Droge, *Homer Or Moses?*, 125–138.

[679] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 172.

[680] Fugger, 201.

[681] As also pointed out by Fugger, 198.

diversity of idolatry and paganism found across the globe. Clüver's model would be influential for other thinkers, especially Gerardus Vossius — but not all of his innovations were received positively or even taken great note of, such as his claim that Zoroaster is actually Adam.[682] More broadly discussions regarding the origin of idolatry continued and whether or not it was a antediluvian phenomenon or not was a highly debated topic. scholars expanded the philological methods of the antiquarians to the study of Hebrew or Syriac and other 'Oriental' languages, debated the origins of idolatry, offered diffusionist models or argued that the origins of certain pagan idolatrous rites were to be found in the rituals of true monotheism.[683]

Another prominent and more famous scholar than Clüver engaging in the scholarship on the origins of paganism and idolatry was the English legal scholar John Selden.[684] Selden was a polymath and worked in many fields over his long scholarly career, but is best known for his study of Jewish law and culture, among other things through publications on Hebrew marriage and inheritance law, as well as his antiquarian scholarship concerning Britain.[685] A dual focus on England and the Near East characterise Selden's antiquarian scholarship. In 1640 he published *De iure naturali et gentium iuxta disciplinam ebraeorum* (On Natural and Gentile Law According to the Discipline of the Hebrews) a discussion of natural law in the context of the Rabbinic Noachide laws.[686] While this text is relevant in the context of the scholarship on paganism, more important for this are some of Selden's earlier works. Already when Selden was barely 20 years old he begins his research into the Druids, as Selden makes the Celts the major ancestors of modern Britons. As we have seen, the Druids were often listed as part of an ancient wisdom tradition, and Selden, too, makes them wise monotheists. Already at this stage, and earlier than Clüver, Selden moves towards a dual worship of truth and error in one, but remains vague and not based on a thorough theoretical foundation.[687]

Around a decade later and very shortly after Clüver's pioneering work, Selden published *De diis Syris* (On the Syrian Gods) (London 1617), perhaps his major work within the genre

[682] Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, 194.

[683] Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 198–199; Jonathan Sheehan, "The Altars of the Idols: Religion, Sacrifice, and the Early Modern Polity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 4 (2006): 655–656. On Selden see Martin Mulsow, "John Seldens De Diis Syris: Idolatriekritik Und Vergleichende Religionsgeschichte Im 17. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3, no. 1 (2001): 1–24, on Bochart Zur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 141–204. Mulsow offers a great overview of the origins of this scholarly debate, see Mulsow, "Antiquarianism and Idolatry." An overview of Oriental studies in the early modern period can be found in Daniel Stolzenberg, "What Was Oriental Studies in Early Modern Europe? "Oriental Languages" and the Making of a Discipline," in *The Allure of the Ancient*, ed. Margaret Geoga and John Steele (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 343.

[684] For Selden's biography see Gerald J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[685] On Selden's Hebrew scholarship see Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[686] John Selden, *De iure naturali et gentium iuxta disciplinam Ebraeorum libri septem* (London: Richard Bishop, 1640).

[687] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 122–124.

of scholarship on paganism.[688] Unlike Clüver and as we shall see especially Vossius, Selden is not overtly interested in establishing the underlying ontology of paganism and idolatry, and instead focusses his historical analysis on origins and diffusion.[689] This was less important for Clüver, as all idolatry as well as truth had one origin and then spread out, adapting according to innovations of priests and poets. Selden instead seeks to show that it was a specific Assyrian paganism that was transported to the rest of the world which is the originator of idolatry. Selden stays close to a Rabbinic model for the ultimate origin of idolatry, which he like Clüver places before the flood and with the wrongful worship of celestial objects; this, however, was a worship without idols, in which people performed sacrifices to celestial objects as expressions of 'reverence for the beneficial forces of nature'.[690] After the flood, idolatry, not as clearly linked to antediluvian idolatry as in Clüver, first re-emerges much later in Syria around the time of Abraham. The crucial people to then further its spread are the Phoenicians who bring the knowledge of Hebrew, reconfirmed as the original language, as well as idolatry to the rest of the Mediterranean and beyond.[691]

Antediluvian idolatry, though a wrongful worship of creation instead of creator, is closer to true religion both chronologically and in content. Things get much worse with Assyrian idolatry, as it is a next step in the development of idolatry which adds further confusion and superstition to the practice: the worship of the stars is mixed with a euhemerist demonological belief, which turns the worship of nature into superstitious worship and limitless error. Demons took the names of dead heroes as well as the celestial bodies, leading to the original nature worship turning into a worship of the gods which no longer distinguished between euhemerism, nature worship and demons, as all were worshipped with the same rites and idols. This mixing of a (if misinformed still preferable) natural theology with a demonic theology then leads to the deplorable multiplication of gods into innumerable divinities.[692] In this manner idolatrous paganism is also just one religion, which is adapted to place and people. Selden too assigns an important role to priests, who further expanded or altered rites and gods.[693] But he does so in a less systematic way than Clüver; the same holds true for the way that he links prisca theologia with idolatry, where the original source of idolatry is also a mistaken interpretation of Adamic wisdom, which the wisest of the pagans could and did see past.[694]

[688] John Selden, *De diis Syris syntagmata II. Adversaria nempe de numinibus commentitiis in vetere instrumento memoratis. Accedunt fere quae sunt reliqua Syrorum. Prisca porro Arabum, Aegyptiorum, Persarum, Afrorum, Europaeorum item theologia, subinde illustratur* (London: Stansbeius, 1617). See on this Mulsow, "John Seldens De Diis Syris" and Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 193ff.

[689] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 209f.

[690] 'Quotquot autem coelestia corpora & quae visui obnoxia mundi membra pro Dijs habuêre, etiam diu citra diluuium absq; idolis eos sacra fecisse putamus; sed beneficas Naturae vires tantummodò veneratos esse.' Selden, *De diis Syris*, xlvii.

[691] Hebrew is the topic of chapter 2 of the Prolegomenon, whilst chapter three is on the origin of idolatry. See further Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously," 194.

[692] Selden, *De diis Syris*, xlviiff.

[693] Selden, l.

[694] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 212.

While Selden and Clüver do share important aspects of their paganism and idolatry model, they differ in some key aspects. Selden, too, advocates that there is an esoteric knowledge of monotheism that is hidden from or corrupted by the much more numerous idolatrous masses.[695] But Clüver thinks of idolatry as a more clear chain of transmission that goes back to Cain, while Selden's idolatry tradition is broken by the flood and then is reborn and worsened through the Assyrians. Here demons and euhemerism take on a big role, neither of which are important in Clüver's model. Also the diffusionism of Selden differs from Clüver, as Selden seeks to show the key agency of a specific people rather than advocate for an idolatrous ubiquity that immediately spreads and adapts after the flood. Selden's more intellectually traditional and conservative model would be influential for the genre: Bochart's popular sacred geography builds on a diffusion model where the Phoenicians take centre stage and the popular work on German paganism by Elias Schede takes over most of the base assumptions about the origin and spread of idolatry from Selden.[696] Euhemerism, on the other hand, would become a crucial explanatory element for Gerardus Vossius.[697] Before turning to him, however I want to briefly speak about the apologetic masterpiece of Vossius's good friend Hugo Grotius.

### Hugo Grotius and the *De Veritate Christiana*

Hugo Grotius is not usually mentioned among the scholars engaging in the scholarship on paganism and idolatry. While his work may not be the same as the more specifically scholarly oriented works of Selden, Clüver or Vossius, his apologetics built on Duplessis-Mornay's *Verité* and he uses a framework that similarly acknowledges a limited form of ancient wisdom. The Dutch translation of Duplessis-Mornay's *Verité* indeed continued being popular in the Netherlands, and in 1626 a second edition was published. Grotius's *De veritate religionis christianae* was published in Leiden only one year after the publication of this second edition of the *Bible of Nature*.[698] Grotius's *De veritate* would become one of the most famous and

[695] Mulsow, "John Seldens De Diis Syris," 22.

[696] Samuel Bochart was a Huguenot historian of idolatry; the work in question is Samuel Bochart, *Geographica sacra pars prior: Phaleg, seu de dispersione gentium et terrarum divisione facta in aedificatione turris Babel* (Caen: Typis Petri Cardonelli, 1646), a widely read work that also features in the annotations of the *Open Door*. See further Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds*, 141–204. Schede was a child prodigy who died very young and whose book was published posthumously, see Elias Schedius, *De diis Germanis, sive Veteri Germanorum, Gallorum, Britannorum, Vandalorum religione syngrammata quatuor* (Amsterdam: apud Ludovicum Elzevirium, 1648). On his reliance on Selden see Mulsow, "John Seldens De Diis Syris," 13 and Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 225–232. Schede sees a polycentric origin of idolatry rather than a diffusionist model as the best explanation for the spread of idolatry.

[697] We do also know that Vossius not only read, but greatly admired Selden's *De Diis Syris*, as he also writes to Selden himself. See Letter G. J. Vossius to Selden, Leiden, VII Id. Sext. (Aug. 7) 16272 [draft], in Gerald J. Toomer, ed., *The Correspondence of John Selden (1584–1654)*, Early Modern Letters Online, Cultures of Knowledge, 2015, 62–63.

[698] As Hugo Grotius, *Sensus librorum sex, quos pro veritate religionis christianae Batavice scripsit* (Leiden: ex Office Joh. Maire, 1627). The definitive (authorised) edition which included copious notes for the first time is Hugo Grotius, *Hugo Grotius De Veritate religionis christianae. Editio Nova, additis annotationibus in quibus testimonia* (Paris: Seb. Cramoisy, typographi regii, 1640). On *De veritate* see J. P. Heering, *Hugo*

reprinted works of Christian apologetics, especially after the author's death — already for this reason alone it is worth briefly taking a look at the claims Grotius makes and the development of apologetics from Duplessis-Mornay to the great seventeenth-century Dutch intellectual.[699]

Grotius relied heavily on Duplessis-Mornay's namesake apology of Christianity for his own work, as he himself admits at the very beginning of the work.[700] Like Duplessis-Mornay and many of his Dutch contemporaries, Grotius sees apologetics and his own works as an urgent matter, and wishes to contribute to evangelisation, so that those venturing to the East Indies have a foundation for their efforts. In this context he declares that the Dutch, who surpass all other nations in skill at navigation, must use the ample opportunity given to them, and the time spent at sea, so that when they encounter pagans, Muslims, and Jews they may propagate Christianity.[701] J.P. Heering has shown that Duplessis-Mornay's *Verité* guided Grotius's structure and argument for many parts of the *De veritate*. At the same time, Grotius's aims and intellectual convictions differed quite substantially, which affected his apology to a large degree.[702]

For one, despite their common basis in a Reformed theology where natural theology forms a starting point, Grotius had a more sceptical outlook to the potential and application of reason and the extent of evangelisation through a proof of Christian dogma. Duplessis-Mornay's notion that theological proofs are like mathematical ones is rejected for a notion of evidence that cannot be empirically proven.[703] Heering argues that Grotius 'paid significantly more attention' to the consensus gentium than Duplessis-Mornay, but as Heering himself shows, the difference is more ontological and methodical in nature. Due to their different perceptions of evidence, Duplessis-Mornay puts an emphasis on volume of proof, establishing the common agreement (common notions) of as many people as possible on a given point, in this manner showing its unassailable natural truth. Grotius's more sceptical outlook made his own treatise shorter, as such lists of proof were beside the point and he was not satisfied with a notion of innate

*Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion: A Study of His Work De Veritate Religionis Christianae (1640)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[699] Heering, *Hugo Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion*, 199ff.

[700] 'Non enim ignoras, ut qui omnia legni digna, & quidem tanto cum judicio legeris, quantum excoluerint istam materiam philosophica subtilitate Raemundus Sabundus, dialogorum varietate Ludovicus Vives, maxima autem tum eruditione tum facundia vestras Mornæus.' Grotius, *Sensus librorum sex, quos pro veritate religionis christianae Batavice scripsit*, 1–2.

[701] 'Propositum enim mihi erat, omnibus quidem civibus meis, sed praecipue navigantibus, operam navare utilem, ut in longo illo marino otio impenderent potius tempus, quam, quod nimium multi faciunt, fallerent. Itaque sumpto exordio à laude nostrae gentis, quae navigandi sollertia caeteras facile vincat, excitavi eos, ut hac arte, tanquam divino beneficio, non ad suum tantum quaestum, sed & ad veræ, hoc est, Christianæ religionis propagationem, uterentur. Neque enim deesse materiam, cum per longinqua itinera passim incurrerent, aut in Paganos, ut in Sina et Guinea; aut in Mahumetistas, ut sub imperio Turcæ, Persæ, et Pœnorum; tum vero Iudæos, et ipsos jam Christianissimi professos hostes, dispersos per maximas partes terrarum orbis.' Grotius, 3–4.

[702] See especially Heering, *Hugo Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion*, 95–97.

[703] Heering, 53, 86.

ideas, instead seeking the deeper cause of the consensus gentium.[704] Grotius here is line with Arminian thinkers such as Simon Episcopius in arguing for less innatism and more external proofs in his application of natural theology. The important difference to Duplessis-Mornay, whose clarion call for reason is applied in a more analytical sense by Grotius, is that innatism and its proof through sheer volume is replaced by a search for the *why*.[705] Grotius therefore asks why a consensus gentium even exists at the very beginning of his book, and says that it must be a 'direct oracle of God himself' (revelations) or a 'tradition handed down from the first parents of humankind'.[706]

This is not the place to go into greater detail on Grotius's departures from Duplessis-Mornay and the structure of his own apology, but Grotius's analytical focus is an important point linking Grotius to the scholarship on the history of paganism and idolatry which his friend Gerardus Vossius would so excel at. Grotius here is part of a larger historical and antiquarian turn that happens between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, where scholars increasingly seek to explain the diversity of human societies and civilisations, rather than simply and only accepting theological arguments, a process that would be especially visible with Vossius.[707] This historical and analytical drive is similar to the antiquarian research of Vossius, or Clüver and Selden before him.[708] For instance, Grotius, when speaking of the immortality of the soul, says this is a belief 'transmitted from the most ancient (from whom else, indeed?) parents to nearly all civilized peoples. This appears in the poems of Homer, and among philosophers not only of Greece but also of the ancient Gauls, called Druids, and the Indians, called Brahmans. Nor can any argument derived from nature be found that refutes this tradition.'[709] Natural theology and genealogies of paganism thus meet in trying to find traces of truth in pagan theology, bound up with natural philosophy's empirical drive to investigate the book of nature in the seventeenth century.

[704] Heering, 100. See further John Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism : The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650* (Leiden: Brill, 1982).

[705] C.f. Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575-1715*, 55ff.

[706] '[...] quae alia esse non potest, quam aut oraculum Dei ipsius, aut traditio, quae a primis humani generis parentibus manarit.' Grotius, *Sensus librorum sex, quos pro veritate religionis christianae Batavice scripsit*, 3–4.

[707] See Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Hugo Grotius's Dissertation on the Origin of the American Peoples and the Use of Comparative Methods," in *Travellers and Cosmographers. Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), XI: 2.

[708] Grotius was also himself impressed with the *Germania antiqua* of Clüver, see Häfner, "Das Altertum Interpungieren. Beobachtungen Zur Archäologischen Methodenbildung Philipp Cluvers (1580-1622) Und Ihrer Wirkung," 33.

[709] '[...] quae antiquissima traditio a primis (unde enim alioqui?) parentibus ad populos moratiores paene omnes manavit; ut ex Homeri carminibus apparet, et ex Philosophis non Graecorum tantum, sed et Gallorum veterum, quos Druidas vocabant, et Indorum, quos Brachmanes. Neque vero ullum potest reperiri ex natura petitum argumentum, quod hanc traditionem refellat.' Grotius, *Sensus librorum sex, quos pro veritate religionis christianae Batavice scripsit*, 34–35.

### Gerardus Vossius and his *De theologia gentili*

Gerardus Vossius in many ways epitomised the scholarly investigation of paganism, with his work being the culmination of generations of scholarship.[710] Vossius was also closely connected to some of the main scholars I have discussed so far: Vossius was a close friend of Clüver's and made arrangements that the latter's orphaned children would not suffer in poverty.[711] Vossius was also crucially involved in the publication of Grotius's *De Veritate*; he supplied Grotius with books during his imprisonment at Loevestein, gave feedback on the original Dutch poem, and then arranged the Leiden publication of the first Latin edition.[712] Long before the *De theologia gentili*'s publication Vossius was thus closely connected to the avant-garde of apologetics and the historical-geographical investigation of paganism. The city and university of Leiden was a crucial locus in this regard: Vossius was called to the Collegium theologicum in Leiden in 1615, the year before Clüver published his book on the ancient Germans. Not taking sides in the Arminian controversy, the Synod of Dort would be a decisive moment in Vossius's life: whilst he was spared the worse fate of his friend Grotius, and the even worse fate of people like Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Vossius had to leave his position at the college, but already in 1622 he was chosen as professor of eloquence, teaching Latin literature and world history, at the University of Leiden.[713] The strict dogmatic line at Leiden meant that Vossius was restricted in his theological work and that relating to church history; after ten years in Leiden he became the rector of the new Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam, where the freer intellectual environment gave him more possibilities to resume this type of research.[714]

It was in this time that Vossius conceived his great work on the theology of the pagans, the *De theologia gentili*, first published in Amsterdam in 1641 — a year after the definitive edition of Grotius's *De veritate* — with an expanded edition appearing posthumously in 1668, edited and published under the auspices of Gerardus's son Isaac.[715] Vossius was intimately

[710] For Vossius's biography see Cornelis S. M. Rademaker, *Life and Work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577-1649)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981). On his scholarship see especially Nicholas Wickenden, *G.J. Vossius and the Humanist Concept of History* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Topica Universalis: Eine Modellgeschichte humanistischer und barocker Wissenschaft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), 249–264.

[711] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 149–150.

[712] Heering, *Hugo Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion*, 27ff.

[713] An interesting presentation of the changing fates of Vossius and Grotius, and their own impressions on these is given in Cornelis S. M. Rademaker, "At The Heart Of The Twelve Years' Truce Controversies: Conrad Vorstius, Gerard Vossius And Hugo Grotius," in *Between Scylla and Charybdis. Learned Letter Writers Navigating the Reefs of Religious and Political Controversy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeanine De Landtsheer and Henk JM Nellen (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 465–489. Vossius was a friend of Gomarus as well as of Grotius, and to call him an Arminian is mostly following the Counter-Remonstrant purging agenda. Vossius was, like Grotius, more open than the strict dogmatic position of the Counter-Remonstrants allowed for, especially towards the treatment of the Remonstrants.

[714] Rademaker, 481.

[715] Gerardus Joannes Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana: sive, de origine ac progressu idololatriae* (Amsterdam: Johannes & Cornelius Blaeu, 1641); Gerardus Joannes Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...* (Amsterdam: apud Ioannem Blaeu, 1668).

familiar with ancient literature, patristic writing as well as the Rabbinic tradition. His son Dionysius had actually translated Maimonides's *Laws of Idolatry* into Latin, which Gerardus published after the early death of his son in 1642. This work was closely connected and related with the purpose of the *De theologia gentili*, so much so that although Dionysius's work had already been completed by 1636, it was published only later, at the same time as his father's work on idolatry, as Vossius saw the two works as complementary.[716] In a preface dedicated to the reader Vossius lays out the purpose and foundation of his book.[717] He says that it had been his aim to 'lay open the sacred rites of the pagan religion — for to expose them is the same as to refute them', whilst also investigating the underlying nature of things and their relation to true religion.[718] Vossius makes it clear that erudition and learning for the sake of it are devoid of value; learning should make the scholar wiser and better. Piety is essential in this regard, and it is essential to chose the right disciplines to study, in order to be led to the heights of learning, the 'temple of Piety and Prudence'.[719] These disciplines are the study of nature, history and scripture.[720]

The investigation of nature fits into this scheme in the same manner as in Duplessis-Mornay or Grotius: nature is a proof of the works of God.[721] Vossius reiterates a patristic polemic against idolatry, where he clearly contrasts truth with error: it is necessary to understand impiety to better understand true religion.[722] Vossius says that the pagans came to admire not only the whole of nature, but specific parts of it as gods. The main issue here is the same as always, namely the confusion of creation and creator,[723] and Vossius adds that it is therefore

[716] See Moses Maimonides, *R. Mosis Maimonidae De idolatria liber, cum interpretatione Latina, & notis*, ed. Dionysius Vossius (Amsterdam: apud Ioh. & Cornelium Blaeu, 1642). A discussion is provided in Peter T. van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship, and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century: Constantijn L'Empereur (1591-1648), Professor of Hebrew and Theology at Leiden* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 190f. On Dionysius Vossius's work see Aaron L. Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis: Seventeenth Century Apologetics and the Study of Maimonides' Mishneh Torah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984). A view of Vossius within the larger seventeenth-century context is found in Richard H. Popkin, "The Crisis of Polytheism and the Answers of Vossius, Cudworth, and Newton," in *Essays on the Context, Nature, and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology*, ed. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1990), 9–25.

[717] I have not found this in any 1641 printing, but it is in the 1642 printing by Blaeu and reprinted in the 1668 edition, with Isaac Vossius reiterating that it is the preface to books 1 and 2 of the original edition.

[718] 'Hoc in opere, partim nobis studium fuit, referare sacraria paganicae religionis; quod eâdem est illam refellere; partim pandere rerum naturam, suosque ad fines referre; imprimis veri ad Numinis cultum.' Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, *5.

[719] 'Qua cùm ita se habeant, nihil aequè scito est opus, quàm quibus potissimùm studiis deducamur ad arcem illam doctrinarum, quae iure suo Pietatis ac Prudentiae templum nuncupatur.' Vossius, *5r. For a discussion of Vossius's notion of his own polymathy see Ralph Häfner, *Götter im Exil, Frühneuzeitliches Dichtungsverständnis im Spannungsfeld christlicher Apologetik und philologischer Kritik (ca. 1590-1736)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003), 21–36.

[720] 'Est verò ea omnino tripartita: Naturae scientia, temporum Historia, & Literae Sacrae.' Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, *5r.

[721] This is especially clear from Vossius, *6r, where he says that anyone looking up at the sky must be seized in admiration of the celestial machine.

[722] Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 52–53. See also Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 224–248.

[723] Clearly stated on the very first page of the first book, Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana,*

necessary to investigate the secrets of nature, so that we may understand what led people to forsake god and instead worship nature, whilst others instead only worshipped its creator.[724] The apologetic basis of Duplessis-Mornay is thus still very much the same in Vossius, but like his friends Grotius and Clüver Vossius was trying to understand how paganism and idolatry developed, in a historical manner and utilising findings from natural philosophy. In the same preface he already outlines some of the main features of the book, especially the crucial role of euhemerism, as well as the main point of the analysis being on the ontological status of idolatry, rather than a history of its diffusion, although he does remark that most superstition spread from Syria and Egypt to the rest of the world.[725]

Vossius also does not engage in the debate surrounding antediluvian idolatry and its precise origins, instead limiting himself to post-diluvial paganism.[726] His clear analytical focus on the epistemic nature of paganism, on the anthropological origins of idolatrous worship and its ordering, leads him to a classification of paganism into degrees of degradation, and to an analysis of its underlying relation to true religion. Idolatry, in a broad and simple sense, removed from a specific object of worship, is defined as any worship of a false god.[727] Like all the other historians of paganism and idolatry I have discussed in this chapter, Vossius, too, makes use of the ancient wisdom model. Vossius's relationship to prisca theologia is debated, but also not well-studied. As Fugger rightly points out in his own lengthy analysis of Vossius's paganism scholarship, the issue here is once more that the reference point is a Renaissance prisca theologia tradition, rather than the contemporary paganism scholarship. Such a view is not tenable, as seventeenth century uses of the ancient wisdom model, even if scholars used 'prisca theologia' as a term, differed considerably, and thus such a perspective risks undermining the adherence to contemporary frameworks inherent to the genre and Vossius's thought.[728]

Ancient wisdom is in fact a major explanatory element for the relationship between truth and error. He begins with the preambles of faith, a knowledge given to all people:

> Even though God chose Abraham and his progeny by a singular favour to be his people, he did not thereby entirely deprive others of his grace. Indeed, he preserved among them a certain knowledge [notitiam] — namely, that God exists, that he governs the world, that he ought to be worshipped, and that those who worship Him receive a reward, while those who do not would suffer punishment. These

*sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 1.

[724] Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, *5r. See also Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 287.

[725] Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, *6.

[726] He mentions at the very beginning that Maimonides sees idolatry begin with Enoch, but since everything perished with the flood he will only look at Noah's descendants. Vossius, 1.

[727] Vossius engages with both pagan and patristic theological theory; whilst idolatry is worship (latria) given to the wrong person or object, false worship of the true God instead is categorised as *superstitio*. Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 286.

[728] Fugger, 284.

constitute the foundation of religion as it is universally considered.[729]

While this knowledge was originally revealed, it persisted in the form of tradition, still found among barbarian nations in Vossius's own time.[730] Reasoning very much like Duplessis-Mornay, Vossius says that tradition was aided by reason among the better nations, invoking the book of nature as another proof of God, independent of an ultimately Adamite form of knowledge.[731] Philosophy, following Clement of Alexandria, is thus seen to be a stepping-stone to Christian philosophy, and Vossius spends the first two chapters showing how the keenest of the pagans realised that there is one God, saying that this has most fully been shown by Steuco, even though the latter invokes spurious sources such as Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibylline Oracles.[732] He also argues for an innate sense of God present among all people, which forms the basis of Vossius's theory of a limited form of natural monotheism. Tradition — Adamite wisdom — is seen as part of a clear degradation narrative. Priests, not the obviously two-faced agents of Clüver, but rather presented as having good intentions in keeping their knowledge from the common people who had become deaf to the original ancient wisdom, could only slow the decline of knowledge.[733]

Vossius built not only on ancient sources but also on contemporary travel literature and ethnology, with Acosta being an important source of knowledge and inspiration.[734] Surveying all of paganism, his goal is classificatory: he distinguishes two main cults, the spiritual and the physical cults. The spiritual cult, older and closer to Adamite wisdom in content and time is the superior, and is once again divided into differing levels of degradation. The best is a corrupted form of the worship of the true God, followed by worshipping daemons, and finally the lowest, though still a spiritual cult, is euhemerism, based on Annius's theories of heroic biblical characters being deified.[735] Euhemerism in fact is the core of Vossius's explanatory framework, as he traces diverse gods to biblical figures. Euhemerism is a spiritual cult because the worship is aimed at the souls of dead heroes, which itself is a corruption of the knowledge of the immortal soul. Once more, this is a case of creation, in the form of a mistaken interpretation of the immortal soul, being worshipped instead of its creator. The

[729] 'Et si enim Deus Abrahamum, & posteritatem ejus, singulari beneficio in populum suum elegit: non propterea tamen gratiâ suâ penitus destituit caeteros. Siquidem conservavit in iis quorundam notitiam: ut quòd Deus esset, & mundum administraret, & colendus esset, & cultores praemium, non colentes sua maneret poena. Quae fundamentum sunt religionis universè consideratae.' Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 1–2.

[730] Vossius, 2.

[731] Vossius, 2.

[732] Vossius, 5.

[733] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 288.

[734] See for instance Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 14, 29, 38. Häfner argues that, similarly to Clüver, Vossius in this manner builds a basis of critical geography. Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 233. Acosta was a natural source for Vossius, as they shared a classificatory drive for distinguishing different form of paganism.

[735] Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 15. See further Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 287–294.

doctrine of the transmigration of souls, of crucial importance in an Indian context, falls into the same category, and it too is represented as a misunderstanding of the immortality of the soul.[736]

Vossius thus employs the prisca theologia framework to a large degree, and to deny this would be a clear misreading, or lack of reading, of the *De theologia gentili*. His whole systematic categorisation of paganism is built on differentiating different pagan cults according to the level of corruption of the original Adamite knowledge of true religion. But like Duplessis-Mornay, an apologist employment of sources, genealogies, and key thinkers does not automatically mean that Vossius is a Neoplatonic thinker. In many ways the prisca theologia here is an empty theology, as Vossius moves away from a focus on similarity, and makes a clear effort to show how alien all non-Christian traditions are.[737] Building on Clüver's similar framework, Vossius combines the Platonic-Stoic discourse on irrationality and the political causes of superstition with the Augustinian focus on the incommensurability of paganism and idolatry as false worship, where the latter is reaffirmed as the basic ontological distinction between paganism and Christianity. While Vossius highlights the importance of a monotheistic core within all pagan thought, and agrees with Duplessis-Mornay that many truths could be attained through reason, the importance of revelation was never in doubt for Vossius. All of pagan thought, even philosophy, was prone to idolatry, as illustrated for example by the worship of celestial objects, of which Plato and the Stoics too were guilty.[738] The conflation of God with creation is thus present at all levels of pagan sophistication.[739] As an apologist, this is the impiety which inexorably *others* all forms of paganism and potentially even other Christian confessions; after all, Vossius and many other Protestant historians of paganism see the Catholics as being well on their way to repeating the errors of those peoples who after the flood increasingly turned the true worship of God into superstition and idolatry.[740]

D.P. Walker gives a beautiful summary of Vossius's stance on paganism, that I believe captures the multiple layers of the *De theologia gentili* perfectly:

> Vossius' work has in principle a specific religious aim: it is to show how the Gentiles, searching for God in nature, made the mistake, through lack of revelation, of worshipping and deifying created things; but this aim is frequently lost sight of in a sea of erudition, and the work comes near to being an essay in comparative religion. Vossius is fairly liberal with regard to the pagans, and he knows the Renaissance syncretist tradition, citing Bessarion and Steuco; but he certainly has

[736] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 297–301.
[737] As pointed out by Levitin, "Comparative History of Religions," 57–59.
[738] Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, Book 2, chapter 30. See also Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 247.
[739] Levitin, "Comparative History of Religions," 60–66. Also compare this with Gisbertus Voetius's theological stance, who presented the pagans in much the same way. C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 249–51.
[740] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 305; Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 46.

> no tendencies towards explaining away polytheism, excusing idolatry, or giving any kind of defence of pagan religion.[741]

This comparative, anthropological spirit that is at the basis of Vossius's work, as much as his apologist fervour to declare Christianity the one true religion, would be the main inspiration for the annotator of the *Open Door*, a work which combines the various writings on ethnography, ethnology, and scholarship on paganism and idolatry into a single book.

## 6.3 Summary: 'Religion', 'Idolatry', 'Paganism' — Religious Relativisation and Sacred History

A new anthropological re-definition of 'religion' away from an older Augustinian definition of the term does not imply that 'religion' suddenly became a neutral or secular category, and we must be careful in not assuming anachronistic implications for this shift in meaning. Whilst 'religion' had now attained a meaning very close to the modern equivalent we assign to the term, this analytical re-definition does not mean that the scholars engaging in cultural comparisons and ethnological investigations suddenly became secular. Quite the opposite is the case: as we have seen, Christian apologetics was inextricably entangled with scholarship on paganism and idolatry.[742] A Whiggish teleology which leads from the seventeenth century to modern secular notions of religion may thus be partially justified terminologically, but fall short within their historical dimension. Indeed, we should remember that a specifically Christian universalist bias in categorising religions did not disappear with the fully-fledged emergence of studying non-Abrahamic traditions such as Buddhism or Hinduism. As Tomoko Masuzawa has shown, the nineteenth-century notion of world religions still built significantly on a Christian apologetic and universalist foundation, even when the broader ontological category of paganism had been abandoned.[743]

On a more theoretical level this early form of comparative religion, in which different religious traditions were examined against one another and common threads were investigated, meant that a modern idea of the term 'religion' was being created in order to be able to compare all these different traditions. By focussing on ritual instead of belief, the Augustinian difference between true and false religion was also abandoned by the historians of idolatry, albeit in a different process than for the Jesuits who supplied a majority of the knowledge on

[741] Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, 186.

[742] Mills sums this up succinctly when speaking about Alexander Ross: 'Rather, students of religious diversity like Ross appeared to be grappling with the problem of how to comprehend and organise the evidence with which they were presented. The resulting usage of "religion" in such attempts at comprehension should not be viewed as entailing any neutrality on the part of the theologian." Mills, "Alexander Ross's Pansebeia (1653), Religious Compendia and the Seventeenth-Century Study of Religious Diversity," 287.

[743] See Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*.

foreign peoples being incorporated into this new scholarship.[744] The detailed analyses into the origins of what had traditionally been cast as the profane, namely idolatry in all of its different forms, reformed the relationship between what constituted the sacred and profane: in their projects of comparative religion idolatry was sacralised *into* a religion, elevated to the same level of Christianity.[745] The profane could now be relegated to the sphere of the non-religious, just like the Jesuits in their efforts of accommodation relegated certain practices to the civil arena, thus partaking in the same process of secularisation of everyday life.

[744] Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 30; Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 51.
[745] Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 51.

# Part II

# Indian Paganism Uncovered: The *Open Door*

# CHAPTER 7

# THE *OPEN DOOR*

## 7.1 Introduction: An Ethnographer and an Antiquarian

The *Open Door* defies easy categorisation, and may be seen to fit into all of the areas of scholarship and writing discussed in the first part of this study. The core of the work is a precise, localised ethnography of the Brahmans and general 'Hindu' population in Pulicat and the Coromandel coast, separating their customs (part 1) from their beliefs and worship (part 2). The first four chapters of this study have given us the necessary preliminary evaluation of how Europeans interacted, approached, and saw Indian and Indian religions, with increasing detail and ethnographic vigour especially after the Portuguese arrived in India. This will make it clear that the level of detail we find in the *Open Door*, derived from Rogerius's intimate relationship with several Brahmans over his ten-year sojourn in Pulicat, is in and of itself unprecedented in this context; as I have discussed, none of the precise ethnographic writings of the Jesuits active in India were published in the seventeenth century, and people like Lord or Geleynssen de Jong (through Van Twist) remained more superficial in their reporting than the extremely detailed *Open Door*. Rogerius and his editor(s) also shared a missionary goal with the work, where this detailed knowledge was meant to further the Dutch evangelisation effort in India. But through the annotator the work also participated in the analysis and contextualisation of ethnography in the form of ethnology and paganism scholarship, almost always conducted in separate works at this level of sophistication and not combined in a single book with multiple authors. This is what makes the *Open Door* a unique publication with unusual breadth and purpose.

I have presented the background of the work and its authors in my translation and edition of the *Open Door*, and will only sketch the necessary background information of the work here. This short introduction to the work as a whole should nevertheless provide a foundation for the analysis of the *Open Door* itself in this second part, arranged according to the major

topics discussed in the *Open Door*. As I have shown elsewhere,[1] we must understand the *Open Door* as more than just an ethnographic account written by Abraham Rogerius, but as a patchwork opus, containing different elements, written by multiple authors. Without a doubt, the most important of these treatises are Rogerius's ethnographic presentation of South Indian Brahminism and Hinduism, and the annotator's cultural translation and embedding of this information into the larger framework of European ethnology, travel writing, and especially scholarship on paganism and idolatry. As these are very different genres, and the background and occupations of Rogerius and the annotator differed significantly, the purpose of this second part is not only to analyse the key findings of the authors of the *Open Door*, but to also discuss the tensions and conflicts between the two main authors. This I believe will give us a better appreciation of the work as a whole, and how it could be — and was — received by contemporary and later scholars.

Historians working on prominent and prolific scholars will often be able to draw from multiple works of a given individual, trace their personal networks and investigate their correspondence; all of this, as already briefly mentioned, is unfortunately impossible in the current context. While Rogerius appears in the minutes of the consistory of Batavia, he is mostly absent otherwise from the archival record. His only other surviving work is a catechism in Portuguese, published more than thirty years after his death.[2] Yet the situation is even worse for the annotator. Even if we take the identification of Wittens as A.W. for granted, this scarcely helps us, as Wittens left no known works. Neither do we learn much about him in any other manner: despite his political role as part of the Leiden vroedschap and member of the Admiralty College in Amsterdam, apart from a handful of documents attesting to his political and legal activities we scarcely have more than baptismal records that mention his name.[3] The *Open Door* therefore is our main source for the intellectual sources of the work itself.

[1] See *Open Door* and Benjamin Leathley, "Opening the Doors to Conversion. The Reformed Mission and Antiquarianism in the Open Door to Hidden Paganism," in *Religious Conversion and Imperial Rule. Self, Otherness and Power in a Global Perspective (16th - 19th Centuries)*, ed. Ricarda Vulpius and Guillermo Wilde (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2026).

[2] Abraham Rogerius, *Breviario de religião christão, em maneira de dialogo* (Amsterdam: Paulus Matthysz, 1689).

[3] See for instance Leiden, Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (ELO), Minuutakten van notaris Dirck Jansz. van Vesanevelt, 1638-1640., archiefnummer 0506, Notarissen ter standplaats Leiden (Oud Notarieel Archief), inventarisnummer 348, blad 145; Leiden, Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (ELO), Vierde Register, fol. 211-479, bon Hogewoerd., archiefnummer 0501A, Stadsarchief van Leiden (SA II) (1574-1816), inventarisnummer 6619, blad 391v; Leiden, Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (ELO), Doopboek van de Pieterskerk (NH) te Leiden, 1621 — 3 juni 1644., archiefnummer 1004, Doop-, trouw-, begraaf- en geboorteboeken Leiden (DTB Leiden), inventarisnummer 221.

## 7.2 From 'Baal's Priests' to the *Open Door*

### Abraham Rogerius and the Origins of the *Open Door*

We know little about Abraham Rogerius prior to his arrival in Leiden. Born around 1609 in Haarlem, the young Rogerius studied at the *Seminarium Indicum* in Leiden in the later years of its existence.[4] Rogerius had finished his studies by the latter half of 1630, married, and then journeyed to Batavia, where he was presented to the consistory as a new *predikant* in June 1631.[5] After serving the consistory in Batavia for a year it was decided that he would replace Hermanszoon Follinus, the first predikant of Fort Geldria in Pulicat, and it was here that Rogerius would spend the next ten years of his life, from 1632 to 1642. After his wife died in 1634, Rogerius spent a few years looking for a new wife; after unsuccessful attempts to marry a Dutch woman who was already engaged, Rogerius asked for permission to marry a local as his search for a Dutch wife seemed too complicated. This request was declined, however, but he eventually married Emmeken Cornelisd. Pool in 1637, the same Emmerentia who arranged for her late husband's work to be printed.[6]

While ministering to the Dutch at Fort Geldria was Rogerius's main occupation, he was also the pastor of the larger Christian flock in the town and ideally was to bring more Indians into the Christian fold. Portuguese, as the local lingua franca, was crucial in this regard, and at the beginning of 1636 Rogerius therefore began to preach also in Portuguese, a language in which by all accounts he was very proficient. It is clear that Rogerius sought to reach as many people as possible with his preaching, and we learn from the consistory minutes of Batavia that his aim was to learn Tamil, as well, to further expand his evangelisation effort.[7] We do not know what became of this endeavour, but based on the silence of the sources it seems probable that Rogerius never became proficient enough in Tamil to use if for evangelisation; neither do we have any further archival material on Rogerius's progress, nor any writings, such as catechisms, produced in Tamil. Portuguese, and not Tamil, also seems to have been the

[4] For a more extensive treatment of Rogerius's biography see Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation*. As I have drawn my information from there, for a more complete bibliography the reader is referred to that place. I will mention here some of the main sources of biographical information on Rogerius: Sceperus gives us a brief overview of Rogerius's life in his dedication, otherwise see the source material collected in BPK1 and Troostenburg de Bruijn, *De hervormde kerk*; Abraham Rogerius, *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom*, ed. Willem Caland ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915); L.J. Joosse, "Rogerius, Abraham," in *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse protestantisme*, vol. 5 (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Kok-Kampen, 2001), 433–434; Schilt, "Spectatissimo."

[5] BPK1: 371, 381. Consistory minutes, 5 June 1631; consistory minutes, 5 July 1631. See also Caspar Adam Laurens van Troostenburg de Bruijn, *Biographisch woordenboek van Oost-Indische predikanten* (Nijmegen: P.J. Milborn, 1893), 358–60.

[6] On the attempt to marry a local woman see BPK1: 487. Consistory minutes, 3 November 1636. On the arrival at Pulicat of Emmeken with her father see NA, VOC, OBP 1122, 367v-368r, tGp. Actum Casteel Batavia, 4 February 1637.

[7] BPK1: 410, 505. Consistory minutes, 12 June 1636; consistory minutes, 10 August 1637.

main language of exchange, according to Rogerius's own testimony, when engaging with his Brahman informants. Rogerius tells us that he had a number of Brahmans with whom he talked regularly, and names the most important two by name: A Vaishnava called Damersa and a Smarta, Padmanabha, his main source of information, as acknowledged throughout the *Open Door*, often simply referred to as 'my Brahman'.[8] From the *Open Door* we also know that Rogerius visited many temples, accompanied by these Brahmans, and curiously enquired into all sorts of details of Brahman custom, ritual, and belief.

After ten years in Pulicat, Rogerius was recalled to Batavia in 1642 and replaced by Carolus de la Dossa.[9] He would remain in Batavia with his family for another five years, continuing his engagement with the local population and being esteemed by the consistory especially for his proficiency in Portuguese: he was quickly tasked to start up regular Portuguese services in the town.[10] Though originally opposed to taking up more responsibilities, Rogerius also took charge of the almshouse in 1645.[11] A main occupation of Rogerius during his time in Batavia was writing catechisms in Portuguese, most of which do not survive; one of these, however, was actually printed as late as 1689.[12]

While the source material for the *Open Door* was collected during his time in Pulicat, the first notice we have of the book as a project is from Rogerius's time in Batavia. The consistory minutes of 7 December 1643 mention that Abraham Rogerius conceived a treatise which he had titled 'Baal's Priests, or a true description of the *Bramines* etc.', and asked the consistory to appoint someone to oversee the project so that it might be sent to United Provinces with the intention of having it printed.[13] We know that the work, describing 'the life and manners of the Brahman pagans in the Kingdom of Carnatica on the Coromandel Coast' was indeed sent to the Netherlands, and a letter addressed to the Heeren XVII adds that the work will 'undoubtedly please the avid reader, and we wish to receive twenty to thirty printed copies of it back here, as we believe they will be very useful for the *predikanten* in this country.'[14] By

[8] As related by Sceperus, Padmanabha had sought refuge at the Dutch fort after becoming an outcast. See Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation*, 125. Sceperus also mentions that Damersa was more proficient in Portuguese than Damersa, but it is unclear from where he draws this information.

[9] BPK1: 607. Consistory minutes, 26 May 1642. See also Daniel Havart, *Op en ondergang van Cormandel* (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1693), 132.

[10] BPK1: 622, 623. Consistory minutes, 17 November 1642; consistory minutes, 24 November 1642. That Rogerius continued to minister in Portuguese is attested for instance in NA, VOC, OBP 1150.820, tGp.

[11] BPK1: 765. Consistory minutes, 19 July 1645.

[12] Rogerius, *Breviario de religião christão, em maneira de dialogo*.

[13] 'Abrahamus Rogerius hebbende geconcipieert een tractaet, welc hij hadde geintituleert Baals Priester, of een waere beschrijvinge van het leven der *Bramines* etc. ende synde van sins om het selve naet vaderlant te senden om door den druc gemeen te maecken, communiceert het selve aen den kerckenraet ende versoect dat gelieven yemant te committeren om hetselve tractaet te oversien. Den kerckenraet het voorgestelde versoec in achtinge genomen hebbende committeren den Presiden, mitsgaders den ouderlingh Sr. Vlamingh.' BPK1: 687. Consistory minutes, 7 December 1643.

[14] ''t sal den lees-gierigen leser buijten twijffel aengenaem sijn, ende wenschten daer van 20. à dertigh gedruckte Exemplaren weder herwaerts gesonden werden, alsoo oordeelen voor den predicanten hier te lande seer

1644 it had been decided that the book, to be corrected by fellow seminary graduate Robertus Junius, should indeed be printed, together with a translation of the Psalms of David, yet the VOC was not prepared to bear the costs.[15]

This seems to have been a major impediment to having the work published, as despite the favourable opinion of the consistory and Heeren XVII, no book was ever published under the auspices of the company. 'Baal's Priests' seems to have been an outline of the *Open Door*, and was probably based on the same ethnography that would inform the *Open Door*, published seven years later. However, I doubt that it was even close to being the same text as the *Open Door* as some people have suggested.[16] I believe a collection of some of the main mythological narratives of the *Open Door* — which sometimes span multiple pages without almost any footnotes by the annotator — and an outline of key subject is a more probable assumption for the content of 'Baal's Priests'. Lacking a manuscript of either work my evidence is limited, but there are clues that point in this direction. For one, already in the letter to the Heeren XVII the consistory speaks of small books ('*boeckjens*'), and Rogerius's own letter to the Heeren XVII speaks of the 'life and dealings' of the Brahmans, chosen from what he seems to imply is a larger corpus of writing.[17] The best indication comes from Jacobus Sceperus in the dedication to the Heeren XVII in the *Open Door* itself. We do not know exactly what Sceperus's sources are, but most likely it was first-hand information from Rogerius itself, as the latter had settled in his wife's native Gouda after their return to the Low Countries in 1648. Sceperus says that 'we trust that this complete work (the outline and the raw design of which previously had been shown to your Excellencies and found agreeable) shall not displease, but be more pleasing to your Excellencies than some journals or daily registers of lowly matters.'[18] While no definitive statement can be made on the matter, it nevertheless thus seems very likely that 'Baal's Priests' was much shorter than the *Open Door*, and resembling more an outline or excerpt of the latter's main matter.

Rogerius remained in Batavia until 1647, when after multiple requests to return to the Netherlands — denied more than once due to his highly valued Portuguese skills — the consistory allowed him to take his leave from the East Indies.[19] Rogerius returned to the

dienstigh sullen wesen.' General Missive to the Heeren XVII from 22 December 1643, OBP 1142, 72r. See also Letter from Abraham Rogerius to the Heeren XVII from 18 December 1643, found in Pieter van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, ed. F.W. Stapel and Carel W.Th. baron van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam, 7 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1927–54), 4:89-90. This letter is reproduced and translated in the annex.

[15] BPK1: 24. Governor-General Antonio van Diemen had already requested some copies, see Schilt, "Spectatissimo," 269.

[16] See Troostenburg de Bruijn, *De hervormde kerk*, 423. For this claim he cites François Valentijn, *Zaaken van den godsdienst op het eyland Java,: als ook een beschryving van het Nederlandsch comptoir in Suratte ...* (Dordrecht and Amsterdam: Joannes van Braam and Gerard onder de Linden, 1726), 22. Valentijn does not make such a claim, however.

[17] See Letter from Abraham Rogerius to the Heeren XVII from 18 December 1643.

[18] *Open Door*, 126.

[19] BPK2: 50-51. Consistory minutes, 2 September 1646.

Netherlands at the beginning of August 1648 and settled with his family in Gouda.[20] Back in the home country, Rogerius continued to advocate for better instruction and knowledge among *predikanten* — especially in regards to languages — and saw his own achievements in the missionary arena as an example for others to follow. He did not enjoy a long retirement, as Rogerius died in 1649. After the death of her husband, it was Rogerius's widow Emmerentia Pools who seems to have been the primary agent behind making certain her late husband's ethnographic findings would be published, as is evident from Sceperus's dedication.

### Getting the Book to Print: Agents and Authors

While Pools thus did what the VOC failed to do and made sure the *Open Door* would be printed, she was not involved in any other way, at least as far as we can discern. I have outlined the evidence we have for presuming that *Baal's Priest* was not a true draft of the *Open Door*, but rather an outline of it. What is more difficult to discern is in what state Rogerius's writings were at the time of his death, and whether he still planned to bring a work concerning the Brahmans to print. As I have discussed in my edition of the *Open Door*, we know that two slightly differing versions of the work were published, presumably in very short succession of one another. The earlier version does not contain Sceperus's dedication, but otherwise is identical with the later version, save for one small detail: in the earlier printing the annotator mentions that a 'certain very learned and famed professor at the University of Leiden' divided the book into two parts, and that the annotator and this professor both thought it necessary to bring this work to print.[21] In the later printing this remark about the professor has disappeared, in favour of 'certain good friends' telling him about the work and urging him to annotate it.[22] It remains unclear to me what would have prompted this change: if a professor at the University of Leiden — I have suggested some potential candidates in the edition — was indeed involved, why would he not want to be mentioned?

While this specific conundrum will have to remain mysterious, I see no reason not to accept the assertion that the annotator, with or without this professor, edited Rogerius's work. As we have seen from the investigation of the archival sources, 'Baal's Priests' related the life and dealings of the Brahmans, with no apparent subdivision into customs and beliefs or worship. Such a clear-cut division — despite the fact that the content of the *Open Door* does not lend

[20] The return fleet that brought Rogerius home was commanded by none less than Geleynssen de Jong, left Batavia on 4 January 1648 and arrived back in the United Provinces on 6/7/8 August 1648. As we can see from NA, Geleynssen de Jongh, 1.10.30.307A, Rogerius was a passenger on the ship Tijger, whilst De Jong was on the Walvis. Especially during their extended break on St. Helena, there might have been the time and opportunity for De Jong and Rogerius to exchange information, which might have influenced the content of the *Open Door* — unfortunately we have no further evidence of any encounter or exchange. I would like to thank Hans van Santen for kindly informing me of the coincidence of the two most precise Dutch ethnographers of India of the time finding themselves on the same fleet bound for the Netherlands.

[21] See *Open Door*, 108.

[22] See *Open Door*, 130.

itself perfectly to such a division, but rather seems applied like a straightjacket — might also be seen to suggest a scholarly hand being involved, as the ethnographic account is shoehorned into this two-part distinction that was more characteristic of ethnological discussions than the majority of travel literature and ethnography.[23] As we shall see, it also fit remarkably well into the authorial agenda of the annotator; the possibility that the latter, perhaps together with a professor at Leiden was involved in editing and arranging Rogerius's writings thus seems a likely possibility to me.

Another question is the involvement of the printer, Frans Hackes. There is no reason for us to assume that Hackes received a manuscript of 'Baal's Priests' at any point or that he was involved in any major way besides bringing the book to print.[24] There is really no documentation to believe that Hackes was in possession of any parts of the manuscript prior to receiving the manuscript in its entirety. Moreover, Rogerius himself — or an editor of the work speaking as Rogerius — says on page 126 of the *Open Deure* the he 'did not think that upon returning to the fatherland I would be encouraged by good friends to bring to light that which I have seen, found, and researched, and so I was not so precise in researching this and other things more.'[25] The Hackes, or Hackius, were not such an odd choice as printers in any case: they were a printing family based in Leiden, focussing on scholarly publications and editions of classical texts.[26] While the *Open Door* could be seen to depart from this publication agenda if viewed only through the lens of Rogerius's ethnographic presentation of South Indian Brahmanism and Hinduism, it does not seem so curious if we consider the *Open Door* was in many ways an erudite, scholarly publication through the copious annotations.

While I have discussed the likely identity of the annotator as Arnoldus Wittens in the introduction of my edition, the key findings bear repetition here. In the *Open Door* the only clue we have for the identity of the annotator is his signature at the end of his preface addressed to the reader, which he signs as 'A.W. JCtus' — thus giving us a set of what we can assume are initials as well as a title identifying him as having completed studies in jurisprudence. As suggested by Cornelis Schilt, a probable identity for A.W. the annotator is Arnoldus Wittens, who had studied philosophy at Leiden and theology at the University of Groningen, before starting another course of study in jurisprudence at Leiden where he defended his doctorate in

[23] I might also point out that there are small indications that the work was edited and chapters were rearranged, as sometimes chapter numbers being referred to are incorrect, content is repeated quasi verbatim, and the voice of the writer changes — all of this could of course nevertheless have been present in an original manuscript written by Rogerius.

[24] Schilt, "Spectatissimo," 270 proposes that 'Baal's Priests' might have initially been sent to Hackes through a potential connection to Pieter Hackes, secretary of the College of Aldermen in Batavia.

[25] *Open Door*, 231.

[26] They were active until 1700; despite their considerable output there has been very little research on the printing family. See Paul G. Hoftijzer, "Sic Transit Gloria ... The End of the Officina Hackiana," *Quaerendo* 26, no. 4 (1996): 258–273; Michael F. Suarez and Henry R. Woudhuysen, "Hackius Family," in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, vol. 2: D-Z (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 775.

both laws in 1639.[27] Wittens subsequently became a practising lawyer in Leiden and a member of the vroedschaap (city council) of Leiden in the 1650s.[28]

Wittens is an especially promising candidate for two reasons.[29] The first is a dedication by Hackes for his printing of Jean Mercier's commentary on Job and the books of Solomon, published jointly with Ludwig Elzevier in Amsterdam. In the Leiden edition of the work Hackes wrote a three page dedication, addressed to Wittens. He praises Wittens's exceptional modesty in not being proclaimed too loudly, and mentions that the had helped Hackes many a time with publications, especially having 'more than once taken pains in correcting and restoring the texts of authors and illuminating them with various notes, observations, and commentaries'.[30] Wittens is described as an erudite man of letters who has on more than one occasion annotated or commented works. The second reason we have for making Wittens a prime candidate for A.W. is the catalogue of books up for auction after Wittens's death. Wittens's very sizeable library contained hundreds of books on law, philosophy, and theology, but as Schilt points out, the *Open Door* itself is the only book to be listed twice, making it indeed likely that these would be the two different Leiden editions.[31] The library also contains the Latin classics and Neoplatonic works used by the annotator, as well as the works of Giraldi, Acosta, Conti, Steuco, Duplessis-Mornay, Ficino, Pico, Giraldi, Pignoria, Vossius (including the *De theologia gentili*), Selden, Bochart, Goropius, Clüver, Marcus Boxhorn, Athanasius Kircher, Grotius, the *Begin ende voortgangh* and many more. More so even than the dedication, the correspondence of these books with those cited in the *Open Door* make an identification of A.W. with Wittens rather probable. As we nevertheless have no concrete proof — and as A.W. has been misidentified in the past — I will continue to refer to him as 'the annotator', even if Wittens is the most likely candidate.

While these are good indications for the identity of A.W., it still does not answer the question of why the annotator would sign the preface only with his initials, or why a potentially involved professor would suddenly not want to be mentioned. In any case, and whatever state Rogerius's writings were in, if aided by someone else or not, the annotator radically transformed the *Open Door*. In his preface, which as we shall see was a sort of declaration of intent by

[27] For the first courses of study see Willem N. Du Rieu, ed., *Album studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Bataviae* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1875), 248 and Historisch Genootschap te Groningen, ed., *Album studiosorum Academiae Groninganae* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1915), 32. For his doctorate in both laws see P. C. Molhuysen, ed., *Bronnen tot de deschiedenis der Leidsche Universiteit 1574-1811*, 7 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1913–24), volume 2, 232. See further Schilt, "Spectatissimo."

[28] Schilt, 274–75.

[29] As outlined originally by Schilt.

[30] 'Quantum operae non semel sumpseris in Authorum textibus corrigendis, restituendis, & variarum notarum, atque observationum, ac commentationum, lumine illustrandis.' Jean Mercier, *Commentarii, in Jobum, et Salomonis Proverbia, Ecclesiasten, Canticum Canticorum ...* (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1651), 2r.

[31] Schilt, "Spectatissimo," 276. *Catalogus insignium & rariorum in omni facultate librorum, amplissimi viri D. Arnoldi Wittens, J.C. Dum viveret florentissimae reipubl. Lugd. Bat. Consulis fidelissimi ; quorum auctio habebitur Lugduni-Batavorum in aedibus Petri Leffen, bibliopolae in de Klock-steegh, sub signo Pheonicis. Die martis 26. Aprilis & seqq. anno 1667. stylo novo.* (Leiden: Petrus Leffen, 1667), Cr and C2r.

the annotator, he writes that he added 'short notes which compare the present-day life and belief of these Brahmans with that of the old paganism, and also sometimes with Judaism and Christianity.'[32] This might give us the wrong idea about the nature of these 'short notes', which in fact were substantial, amounting to around forty percent of the total text volume of the two main parts of the work. This made the book into a work by two main authors, where the annotator expanded and culturally translated much of Rogerius's ethnographic findings. As we have seen with the example of Niccolò de' Conti and Van Linschoten, such an involvement was hardly revolutionary or even that uncommon. But the breadth and length of the annotations, their distinctness from the main text both from the perspective of visual arrangement and content, as well as what I would identify as a clear authorial agenda and different sphere of analysis make these annotations stand out.

Turning back to the publisher Frans Hackes, one area where I suspect — once again we lack clear evidence — the printer to have been more heavily involved is with the title page. The *Open Door*, in clear contrast to Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* or the *Begin ende voortgangh*, as well as the later ethnographic treatises that form part of the burgeoning exotic geography literature like Olfert Dapper's works, lacks any visual representations of the exotic localities and peoples described. The only visual element showing the practices described by Rogerius is the title page, made up of eight distinct images arranged into one engraving. We do not know who sketched these images, but as Paola Von Wyss-Giacosa points out, the distinctly South Indian aspects that we can identify in these illustrations might suggest that Rogerius himself made sketches which would then have been used by the printer.[33] Each single illustration also

[32] The earlier edition differs in this exact place, where prior to this the annotator had written: 'From [Padmanabha or his discourse with him] [Rogerius] also received diverse matters regarding the life and practices of the Brahmans, the famed priests and teachers of the pagans, as well as their belief and worship, which he sent to us and, only recently, was divided into two treatises by a certain very learned and famed professor at the University of Leiden; which I, with him, thought thoroughly necessary by any means to make public through print; adding a few short notes, comparing the current life and beliefs of the same Brahmans with ancient paganism, and sometimes also with Judaism and Christianity. With ancient paganism to emphasise that they have retained many things from ancient pagans and preserved them to this day. With Judaism to prove that their progenitors, having seen and heard much from the Jews, still retained something from them and passed it down to their progeny. With Christianity [...].' The remainder of the preface is identical. The original: '[...] van den welcken hy oock verscheyden dinghen, het Leven ende de Zeden der *Bramines*, de vermaerste Priesters ende Leeraers der *Heydenen*; haer gheloove ende Godts-dienst, mitsgaders de practijcke ende oeffeninghe desselfs betreffende, heeft bekomen, ende ons deselve, door seker seer gheleert ende vermaert *Professor* in de Universiteyt tot Leyden, nu onlanghs, in twee Tractaetjens verdeylt, laten toe-komen; de welcke ick, met hem, in alle manieren nootsakelijck geacht hebbe door den druck ghemeyn te maken: met by-voeginghe van eenige korte Aenteyckeningen, het jegenwoordige leven ende geloove der selver *Bramines* met het oude *Heydendom*, ende oock eeniger maten met het *Jodendom* ende *Christendom* verghelijckende. Met het oude *Heydendom*; om te betoonen datse noch vele dingen van de oude *Heyden* behouden, ende tot noch toe bewaert hebben. Met het *Jodendom*; om te bewijsen dat hare Voor-ouders veel van den *Joden* ghesien ende ghehoort hebbende, noch yetwas van haer behouden, ende dese hare nakomelingen hebben laten toe-komen. Met het *Christendom* om dat (behalven alle andere redenen ende motiven) het notoir ende seker is [...].'

[33] See Paola von Wyss-Giacosa, *Religionsbilder Der Frühen Aufklärung. Bernard Picarts Tafeln Für Die 'Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de Tous Les Peuples Du Monde'* (Wabern: Benteli, 2006), 165. See also Ernst Schierlitz, *Die bildlichen Darstellungen der indischen Göttertrinität in der älteren ethnographischen*

relates directly to a passage describing the place, object, or practice in question.

Though displaying great detail and, if indeed sketched by Rogerius based on his own descriptions, not necessarily revealing any specific intent originally, to contemporary European eyes, the composition of the title page portrays the Indians as a barbarous, superstitious, idolatrous, and devil-worshipping people. The reader here is confronted with clearly idolatrous practices and literal idols, as well as foolish superstitions in the form of ascetic practices. It is not a far stretch to hypothesise that Hackes arranged this title page to boost sales, highlighting idolatry and superstition in a manner akin to the extremely successful *Itinerario*, even though this could give the wrong impression of the content of the work.

It also seems likely that Hackes was in some manner involved with the German translation of the *Open Door* which appeared twelve years after the original, published in Nuremberg.[34] The translator in this case was another antiquarian, the scholar and editor of travel accounts Christoph Arnold who subsequently also translated Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia* into German.[35] Arnold had come to the Netherlands after the peace of Westphalia, and matriculated at Leiden University in November 1649, just roughly a year before the annotator signed the preface of the *Open Door*.[36] He was in the Netherlands until mid-1651, and prepared his commentary on Cato which he published in 1652 with Hackes.[37] Arnold published the German translation of the *Open Door* in Nuremberg but his connection to Hackes might explain the high quality engravings in that edition, which features all the single illustrations not in one big arrangement but as single engravings. Through Arnold the Nuremberg printer might have had access to the original copperplate(s) or sketches. The French translation of 1670, translated by the Huguenot Thomas LaGrue who had also studied at Leiden also reproduces the illustrations as single engravings which seem to be copies of the original Dutch illustrations.[38]

Both translations rendered very faithful translations, which included preface and notes, and expanded on the antiquarian character of the annotator's contribution through a comparison of

*Literatur* (Munich: Höfling, 1927). See Leathley, *The Open Door to Hidden Paganism. Abraham Rogerius's Account of South Indian Hinduism (1651): Criticial Introduction, Dutch Text, and Annotated Translation*, 80–91 for a more detailed discussion of each of these elements.

[34] Abraham Rogerius, *Abraham Rogers Offne Thür zu dem verborgenen Heydenthum : oder,warhaftige Vorweisung dess Lebens, und der Sitten, samt der Religion, und dem Gottesdienst der Bramines, auf der Cust Chormandel, und denen herumligenden Ländern : mit kurtzen Anmerkungen,* trans. Christoph Arnold (Nürnberg: In Verlegung Johann Andreas Endters, 1663).

[35] Alexander Ross, *Alexander Rossen unterschiedliche Gottesdienste in der gantzen Welt: das ist, Beschreibung aller bewußten Religionen, Secten und Ketzereyen so in Asia, Africa, America und Europa ... gebräuchlich*, trans. Christoph Arnold (Nuremberg: Endter, 1668).

[36] Dick van Stekelenburg, "Templvm Pacis Germanicae: Eine Leidener Rede über das Achte Weltwunder von Nürnberg," in *Brückenschläge. Eine barocke Festgabe für Ferdinand van Ingen* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 91.

[37] Publius Valerius Cato, *Val. Catonis grammaici dirae*, ed. Christoph Arnold (Leiden: Ex Typographeo Francisci Hackii, 1652).

[38] See Abraham Rogerius, *Le Théâtre de l'idolâtrie, ou la Porte ouverte, pour parvenir à la connoissance du paganisme caché, ou La vraye representation de la vie, des moeurs, de la Religion, & du service divin des Bramines qui demeurent sur les côtes de Chormandel*, trans. Thomas La Grue (Amsterdam: Jean Schipper, 1670).

Figure 7.1: Title page of the *Open Deure*, in Abraham Rogerius, *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom* (Leiden 1651). Special Collections, Radboud University Library.

pagan worship across the globe (Arnold) and an extract of Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* (LaGrue). Before analysing how Rogerius and the annotator relate key topics, however, it is necessary to sketch not only the outline of the *Open Door* generally, but also to look at the annotator's preface, as it stands apart, but in a way introduces the project of the annotations.

## 7.3 The Book: Structure and Contents

The *Open Door* begins with a short dedication to the directors of the VOC (the Heeren XVII) by Jacobus Sceperus, a *predikant* from Gouda.[39] Sceperus, like many of his fellow Dutchmen, plays on the idea of the Dutch as the new people of Israel, and makes his dedicatory foreword into a sort of sermon within a framework of sacred history. Sceperus tells the directors how Rogerius, praising the agency of the VOC, brought the holy gospel to the pagan Indians. While, he says, 'God has up until this time not shown his love to bring the blessed-making knowledge of his son to China and many regions of the East and West Indies, it does now seem that the hour has come when the Lord has mercy on them, as well.'[40] Making a subtle apocalyptic reference, he says that now the final conversion of the pagans seems nigh; through the 'final conversion of the pagans to Christ, God will make the Jews jealous and so make them ask for the same.'[41]

He then gives us a short biography of Rogerius, and gives us a list of the catechetical literature Rogerius had translated into Portuguese during his time in Batavia. Sceperus highlights how Rogerius's widow Emmerentia Pools was in possession of all of these, and ready to give them to the VOC in order for them to come to use. Sceperus is also well informed on the creation of the *Open Door*, as we learn from him that Padmanabha had to seek refuge with the Dutch after cutting the hair of a concubine. As this information is not found anywhere else in the text, this might be something Rogerius, who lived the last period of his life in Sceperus's Gouda, told his fellow *predikant* in person. Sceperus prominently mentions the involvement of Padmanabha, Rogerius's main Brahman informant, as well as that of Damersa, his second-most important informant. Sceperus says that Padmanabha revealed many details of their religion to Rogerius, despite Brahmans not being allowed to do such, and that Rogerius recorded this information; he also mentions that it was subsequently put in the order that can be seen in the *Open Door*, but does not say by whom.[42] After mentioning also the 'Sayings of Bhartrihari',

[39] On Sceperus see A.J. van der Aa, "Jacobus Sceperus," in *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 17 (eerste stuk) (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1874), 178–179; P.H.A.M. Abels, "Sceperus, Jacobus," in *Biografisch Lexicon Voor de Geschiedenis van Het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, vol. 5 (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Kok-Kampen, 2001), 445–446; P.H.A.M. Abels, "Een 'scandpaal voor sceperus'. Goudse dominee en bibliofiel," *Tidinge* 33 (2015): 4–13.

[40] *Open Door*, 123.

[41] *Open Door*, 123.. C.f. Romans 11:25-26. On the importance of apocalypticism in the early modern period see John Jeffries Martin, *A Beautiful Ending: The Apocalyptic Imagination and the Making of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

[42] *Open Door*, 125.

Sceperus stresses the ultimate reason for the book: it is, of course, to further the evangelical endeavours of their fellow *predikanten* in the East Indies.[43] Sceperus accordingly finishes his dedication with a direct call to action to the VOC, in the same manner we have seen was common among members of the Further Reformation, namely by arguing that in exchange for the ample worldly riches wrought by the East India trade the VOC should bring to the Indians the gift of God.[44]

Sceperus's short, five-page dedication — signed by Sceperus 'through and in the name of' Emmerentia Pools, is followed by the annotator's seven-and-a-half page preface addressed to the reader. I will discuss this in more detail just below, as it gives us both a good introduction to the annotator's goal for his own contribution and an overview of the reason for the work's publication more generally from the annotator's perspective, thus also being an ideal preface in the context of this analysis of different styles of reporting and cultural translation in the *Open Door*. As we have already seen, the main text of the *Open Door* is divided into two parts: the 'Life and Customs' of the Brahmans on the Coromandel Coast are detailed in part 1, while part 2 discusses their 'Beliefs and Worship.' I will briefly summarise the main topics discussed in each part.

The book commences with a discussion of the different 'tribes' and 'lineages' found in India (chapters 1-3). Rogerius, despite, or perhaps because of his intimate knowledge of Portuguese does not adopt the Iberian term 'caste', and instead uses the equivalent Dutch words (which I translated literally as 'tribes' and 'lineages') to describe the societal stratification he encountered in South India. Rogerius then details the special status of the Brahmans, speaking about how they differ from other tribes, but also within their tribe (through sectarian affiliation) (chapter 4), the privileges the Brahmans are afforded by the Veda (chapter 5) and what sort of occupations they engage in (chapter 6). Chapters 7 through 9 relate the way Brahmans are raised, their education and how they ought to conduct themselves during the *ashrama* (stage of life) of Brahmacharya. The Brahmans are always the main protagonists in these chapters, but Rogerius also relates to what degree the other *varnas* follow the Brahmans or not. Chapter 10 interrupts this discourse regarding Brahman 'civility' — chapters 11-13 continue this chronologically by discussing Brahman marriage practices and rules — and instead is devoted to philosophical knowledge among the Brahmans. This is a curious choice, especially as Rogerius is very dismissive regarding the 'philosophical knowledge' of the Brahmans, by which he mostly means knowledge of the natural world or — to use an anachronistic term — science. As we shall see, this is a key area of disagreement between Rogerius and the annotator, who has his own agenda in this chapter. Chapters 14 and 15 relate to divination and the *Panchangam* (Hindu calendar and almanac), related to Rogerius by Damersa. The next chapters concern

[43] *Open Door*, 126.

[44] Sceperus himself certainly was a hardline Calvinist himself, see Abels, "Een 'scandpaal voor sceperus'. Goudse dominee en bibliofiel."

quotidian matters in the lives of the Brahmans; chapter 16 deals with their daily routine and chapter 17 relates the story of Gajendra Moksha, sung by the Brahmans in the mornings. The last three chapters concern sickness and death: how Brahmans are treated in these situations (chapter 19), how widow burning and burial occur (chapter 20) and how family and friends grieve (chapter 21).

The second part begins with a chapter on God, on which Rogerius has much to say, but not as much as the annotator in his notes, who makes this another of his key chapters. This chapter speaks of Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma, whose wives are then discussed in the next chapter. Chapter 3 relates what Rogerius managed to discover about the avataras of Vishnu. Chapter 4 relates information on minor deities, while chapter 5 presents the four yugas (ages) as well as Brahman cosmology. Chapter 6 is on angels and devils, important agents in both the ancient wisdom framework and the idea of all-encompassing pagan idolatry, especially if following Augustine. The following chapter treats the soul, and contains some interesting philosophical considerations in both the main text and the footnotes. While the first half of the second part deals chiefly with belief, the remainder of the part is devoted to religious praxis, primarily in the form of worship. Chapters 8 through 11 pertain to the 'pagodas': Brahman worship practices and the building of temples (chapter 8), the visual aspects and contents of temples dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva (chapter 9), how these 'pagodas' are esteemed among the Indian population (chapter 10), and what sort of 'images' (or idols) they erect in honour of their gods (chapter 11). Chapters 12 to 15 are related to worship in different forms. Chapters 12 and 13 discuss festivities, and chapter 14 relates how minor deities are worshipped, which includes sacrifices. Chapter 15 is especially interesting in the context of the longue durée discourse on Indian religion as it discusses devil worship. The title of chapter 16 speaks of how the pagans (note that from chapter 13 it is no longer a focussed study on the Brahmans, but on the pagans on the Coromandel Coast) think they 'can reach a good end' but speaks primarily about karma, while chapter 17 casts a number of ascetic practices, already visible on the title page, as foolish superstition. Chapter 18 through 20 speak about the forgiveness of sin, generally (chapter 18), through the river Ganga (chapter 19), and what those can do who do not have access to the means mentioned in these two chapters (chapter 20). The last chapter treats 'the state of man after death', where the transmigration of souls is discussed as well as the different heavens that can be reached. This is a notable parallel to the end (book 10) of Plato's *Republic*, and since the annotator sought, like many historians of paganism and idolatry, to portray the transmigration of souls as a corruption of the belief in the immortality of the soul, this would have been a logical chapter to end on if he indeed arranged the book.

Each part takes up slightly more than one hundred quarto pages. After the *Open Door* proper, there is what we might call an annex in the form of the so-called 'Sayings of Bhartrihari', subdivided into 'One-Hundred Sayings Concerning the Way to Heaven' and 'One-Hundred Sayings Concerning the Virtuous Conduct of Men'. This is a paraphrased translation related

to Rogerius by Padmanabha in Portuguese and then translated by Rogerius into Dutch, of the *Niti* and *Vairagya Shatakas*, which constitutes the first published translation of a Sanskrit work into a European language. The third shataka of Bhartrihari's *Shatakatrayam* is not included in Rogerius's Dutch version, as, so Rogerius tells us, Padmanabha for some reason did not want to translate these amorous passages for the Reformed *predikant*. These sayings will not be of direct interest to me: it is certainly interesting that Padmanabha chose to relate these texts to Rogerius, and that Rogerius thought them important to tell or perhaps significant for Brahman theology, yet they are a translation which is annotated by Rogerius himself, lacking the characteristic ethnography — ethnology, Rogerius — annotator dynamic of the main text. I do not seek to undermine the importance of its inclusion, however: Rogerius clearly exhibits curiosity and interest in introducing Europeans to Indian literature, ideas, and philosophy here, and Bhartrihari in some ways informs what he relates in the main text, where he in some ways further explores topics through the Shatakatrayam. This element, while not being a focus of this study, will therefore be tangentially relevant as Rogerius makes references to these texts throughout the *Open Door*.

## 7.4 The Annotator's Preface

The annotator's preface both introduces the *Open Door* as a whole, and his own 'treatise' in the footnotes specifically. The annotator was not himself active as a scholar — even if he was not Wittens, there is no other famous scholar who would fit his profile — but rather forms part of the traditionally overlooked middle-stratum of knowledge creators and shapers.[45] Nevertheless, his erudition is impressive. The annotator is very well read on the topic of India, knows the ancient ethnographic and geographic writings of the Greek tradition and the Dutch ethnographic works of the past fifty to sixty years, and also exhibits great knowledge of the patristic and Platonic traditions. He begins his preface addressed to the reader from a historical perspective, and points out that Christians — meaning Europeans in this case — have not only put down flags in the East Indies for over fifty years, but now 'the nature and essence of these countries, even those of China and Japan, have already become so well known among diverse people in Europe, that it is as if they themselves were natives of those lands.'[46] Tacitly referring to the ever-increasing amounts of travel literature, he goes on to say that wile the life and customs of these peoples is well known, the same may not be said the 'foundations of their worship, the core of their religion'.[47] He points out, much like modern historians have, that Maffei, though speaking about how a certain Brahman revealed secrets to the Portuguese and how he was in possession of such an account, never actually made public

[45] C.f. Lynn Hunt et al., *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart & Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3f.
[46] *Open Door*, 127.
[47] *Open Door*, 127.

any such information.[48]

He specifically remarks on the ethnographic precedent and its shortcomings. While others have observed much regarding the outward worship of the Indians, their priests, customs, and places of worship, he claims, no one, until now, has been able to 'present to us the true purpose of their religion, their actual beliefs about God and godly matters'.[49] The annotator gives a number of reasons for this, which are themselves interesting: either Europeans did not manage to penetrate the fables and 'thick darkness' under which the core of Brahman religion, like all pagan religion, was buried, or they did not consider it necessary to investigate the secrets, hidden away by priests from their own people. The annotator, however, is adamant that an investigation of this subject is of paramount importance for the purpose of evangelisation. Those who seek to evangelise ought to know about the religion they are fighting. Building on the foundation of Duplessis-Mornay's theology, the annotator makes a leap here that he does not feel merits explanation, going from saying that knowledge of the *other* is necessary for evangelisation to asking: 'How else should they be able to believe that a different path than the one they are used to tread is better, unless one proves this to them with good reason?'[50] He goes on: 'And how else are they supposed to accept the demonstration of proof, if at the same time they know their customs are entirely unknown to the other?'[51] Building on the church fathers and Duplessis-Mornay, the annotator thus makes it clear from the outset that knowledge of other religious traditions, in this case Brahmanism but applicable more generally, is paramount when trying to convert, an endeavour in which the application of reason in showing the truth of Christianity becomes the best path to convincing unbelievers of the errors of their ways.

Reasoned discourse is only possible with someone who acknowledges the importance of reason, the main foundation of Duplessis-Mornay's apologetics. Accordingly the annotator does not dismiss the religious system of the Indians in the manner of people like Van Linschoten or Pelsaert, but stresses that their teachers (if not the common man) are well aware of the foundations of their religion, and they do indeed acknowledge God and have worship. Building especially on the idea of the book of nature, the annotator says that God did not leave

[48] See G. P. Maffei, *Ioannis Petri Maffeij Bergomatis e societate Iesu Historiarum Indicarum libri 16. Selectarum item ex India epistolarum eodem interprete libri 4. Accessit Ignatij Loiolae vita postremo recognita. Et in opera singula copiosus Index*, 21v: 'Quamquam haud pauca superioribus annis à Brachmane quodam apprime docto, cum se ad Christum aggregasset, nostris hominibus prodita sunt; inque Lusitanum sermonem accurate conuersa, tandem ad me peruenerunt ; merae nugae, & anilia plane deliramenta, quae hoc loco ne leuiter quidem attigiaae operae pretium duxerim.'

[49] *Open Door*, 127.

[50] *Open Door*, 127. He does not cite Duplessis-Mornay but as we have seen the *Verité* and its Dutch translation the *Bible of Nature* were foundational texts in seventeenth-century Dutch thought. Wittens also owned a 1646 edition copy of the *Bible of Nature*, see *Catalogus insignium & rariorum in omni facultate librorum, amplissimi viri D. Arnoldi Wittens, J.C. Dum viveret florentissimae reipubl. Lugd. Bat. Consulis fidelissimi ; quorum auctio habebitur Lugduni-Batavorum in aedibus Petri Leffen, bibliopolae in de Klock-steegh, sub signo Pheonicis. Die martis 26. Aprilis & seqq. anno 1667. stylo novo.*, D.

[51] *Open Door*, 127-128.

himself unnoticed and that the pagans found the unseen God through observation. This Dutch Reformed view on natural theology merges with an ancient wisdom narrative but also with a developmental model of knowledge that is keenly anthropological:

> Even from olden times one could see in them what the light of nature is able to produce. While the Jews had received one law from God according to which they could govern themselves, they instead, deprived of the open work of God, had to follow their natural reason and build everything upon that. From this philosophy emerged, from philosophy, the knowledge of God, and from the knowledge of God, religion. At all times this knowledge was already very great among them; so great, in fact, that it is enough to find them guilty before the judgment seat of God. They knew that there is one God, that God is but one, and that he created the Heavens, Earth and everything that it contains, and that the souls are immortal.[52]

The annotator remains cautious here. He references Minucius Felix and Justin Martyr for the accordance of the ancient philosophers with Christianity, but warns that 'insofar they were enlightened in one way or another, they found out many and diverse matters concerning godly worship', they were nevertheless hindered by their own humanity and prone to error. He reiterates the conclusion of Duplessis-Mornay when he says that 'to look for God, truly, without God and outside the Holy Scripture, is to put oneself into a maze from which there is no exit.'[53] Immediately after he quotes Tertullian (*De anima* 1.1) for the necessity of Christ and the Trinity for true understanding of God. He then lays out a model for the relationship between truth and error, which seems to closely follow Vossius — who is indeed one of the most cited authors in the annotations and whose *De theologia gentili* was clearly an important model for the annotator's own treatise — as it distinguishes the paths to pagan wisdom that are nevertheless fraught with error. One path is, in Vossius's words, tradition: but 'that which they had learnt from the prophets and other men of God, their progeny corrupted.'[54] In his preface, reason and natural theology are however the preferred hypothesis for the Brahmans' knowledge about God. Philosophy, even when it was at its height, was covered with error and fables, and that which the philosophers found out through the application of reason they could not 'reveal fully and entirely, out of fear of the common people'.[55] Quoting Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.168, he is keen to say that the Brahmans and Gymnosophists, not mentioned by Josephus, above all others had knowledge of God through natural theology, but could or would not reveal it to the public. Yet he is very clear in limiting this natural theology here, in

[52] *Open Door*, 128. The 'judgment seat of God' is a reference to Romans 14:10. Calvin, in his own commentary on Romans, argues that pagans will be judged by God according to the law, as they knew its requirements and the presence of a God who ought to be worshipped. See Jennifer A. Herdt, "Calvin's Legacy for Contemporary Reformed Natural Law," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67, no. 4 (2014): 420.
[53] *Open Door*, 128-129.
[54] *Open Door*, 129.
[55] *Open Door*, 129.

a manner similar to Duplessis-Mornay, and quoting Tertullian's *De spectaculis* makes it clear that this knowledge was not gained through revelation.

This knowledge, he continues, has been maintained up to the present. Having thus established the clear foundation of natural theology and the existence of worship and religion among the pagan Indians, the annotator returns to his previous argument about the necessity of knowing these religious foundations:

> These foundations ought to be investigated and known. Because as long as one does not know the foundations of their religion, it is impossible to shut the mouths of their teachers; as long as one cannot make the shepherds silent, it is onerous to win over the sheep to a different voice. What then needs to be done in all earnest is that those who already know that there is one God may also learn how he is; and knowing him, may also come to know Jesus Christ, and praise God, so that to the natural knowledge of God may be added the knowledge through the word, and the son of God, who as the embodied image of his father also reveals the complete knowledge of God to his own.[56]

This passage is important, as the annotator establishes, once more, the unassailable existence of monotheism in India through natural theology, but cements the necessity of adding revelation to this pre-existing knowledge. The missionary context of the publication of the *Open Door*, made very clear already by Sceperus, is reiterated here by the annotator, who says that this is exactly what Rogerius was working towards in his time in Pulicat. The Brahmans, with whom Rogerius 'kept close relations' as the annotator says, are singled out in this regard, and the annotator picks up the narrative of the wise gymnosophists from antiquity. It is with these wise people, who were visited by Plato and Pythagoras and 'from whom one also thinks they borrowed almost all their philosophy and brought it to the Greeks' that Rogerius gained knowledge of their beliefs.[57]

This is where the annotator finally mentions his own role in this endeavour.[58] The 'short' notes that he produced have the aim, so he says, to compare the belief of the Brahmans with that of ancient paganism, Judaism, and even Christianity. From the former two, so he says here and goes to great lengths to show in his footnotes, the Brahmans borrowed or kept many of their own customs and beliefs. A comparison with Christianity, on the other hand, is useful because Christianity did reach Indian shores, through the apostle Thomas, but also others, such as Pantaenus of Alexandria, the teacher of Clement. It therefore could have easily occurred that remnants of this evangelisation effort remained in India beyond the obvious case of the St. Thomas Christians, even if it is covered in errors. These early Christian efforts are more than

[56] *Open Door*, 129.
[57] *Open Door*, 130.
[58] It is here where the two divergent statements can be found, where the annotator either mentions a professor at Leiden University or merely 'certain good friends' who prompted him to take up this matter.

a historical, antiquarian mention in the history of Christianity in India; rather, the annotator sees himself to be following in the footsteps of the church fathers:

> I have thus estimated these notes to be a reasonable addition, to perhaps be of some help to convince them somewhat better, and to fight them with their own weapons and to bring them into the fold, following herein in the footsteps of Cyprian, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine, Lactantius, Arnobius and all the old Fathers who always wrote against the pagans; even the apostle Paul himself, when he disputed with the pagan philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens. None of them ever attempted to first and foremost disprove them with references to scripture: they knew well that among those whose religion they wished to be exterminated and annihilated they would not be heard. Instead, having brought forth the oracles and sayings of Apollo, Trismegistus, the Sybills and others, and having compared and put these together with the Holy Writ in order to convince them of the truth which they had unknowingly learnt, they could proceed further and further, and make them understand the true reasons for this. At all times, this method has been regarded as most necessary by those who sought to advance the conversion of the pagans: this is why Augustine thought that no one who was not versed in the writings regarding their worship was skilled and proper for this endeavour. This is also why we now cannot doubt that by publishing these treatises in this way the Church of God in general, and each Christian especially, will be done a great service.[59]

The most pertinent use of the notes, implied here by the annotator, is not to contribute to scholarship but to be an aid for the Christian apologist in India itself. This makes sense if we consider that Duplessis-Mornay's book was sent to the East Indies for this very purpose and that the consistory in Batavia asked for a number of copies of 'Baal's Priests' to be sent them for the same reason. The large number of church fathers cited by the annotator serves to underline this goal. The annotator sees the *Open Door*, at least in the preface, from the perspective of a modern Paul, with an understanding of the deficiencies of a an evangelising effort that places too much emphasis on biblical exegesis without knowledge of the culture of the one who is to be converted. If we consider here the hermeneutical concept of accommodation, where allegorical readings of scripture take on central importance to bring exegesis and reason into a harmonious balance, understanding not only scripture as allegory is not a great leap.[60] The annotator here proposes to follow the lead of the church fathers in using a strategic form of acculturation, and proving, through comparison and the application of reason, that while the Brahmans know truth to a certain degree, the true origins and reasons for this truth are revealed in Christianity. The annotator makes it clear that the only difference between

[59] *Open Door*, 131.

[60] See Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 213–22. See also the classic work by Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant. The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

the Christians and the pagans is that God revealed himself to the former, whilst the latter remain spiritually blind. The conclusion of the preface, a meaningful ending and introduction to the book proper, is to cast the *Open Door* as the foundation for a more thoroughgoing evangelisation effort. In this way future *predikanten*, 'now having a good foothold, may seek more and more to gain complete knowledge of their belief, to find out the foundations of their religion and, having found them, to rupture them, and instead put down that which is strong and unmoving, and the only thing fit for an everlasting building.'[61]

The annotator thus presents the *Open Door* as a parallel resource to the catechetical literature Rogerius and other *predikanten* used in the East Indies, a manual for the evangeliser to understand, reason, and convert with a deeper understanding of the cultural and religious context in which he finds himself. Rogerius's ethnography is of course key for this endeavour, laying bare the everyday practices and religious secrets of the Brahmans. But the annotator's role, as we understand from his preface, is at least as important, as he performs the work of a cultural translator and Christian apologist, uncovering the underlying historical connections of the described Brahman culture to that of other forms of paganism, Judaism, and Christianity. The *predikant* in the field must know not only the culture of the opponent, but also have the necessary comparisons and arguments with which to defeat it: this is what the annotator declares to provide. But already here we see the tension between allegory, reason, and an orthodox reading of (Reformed) Christianity, as the annotator tries to balance his argument of pagan ignorance and need for truth (based on the idolatrous paganism reading) with an application of an ancient wisdom narrative according to which pagans have access to truth. In this preface the balance is clearly in favour of arguing for the ignorance of the pagans, their blindness and error-riddled culture, necessitating the intervention of the Dutch and the bringing of the Gospel as a medicine for the wandering pagans. But this clear stance becomes more blurred when commenting on actual practices and beliefs in the remainder of the *Open Door*.

[61] *Open Door*, 131.

# CHAPTER 8

# LOCAL ETHNOGRAPHY AND GLOBAL ETHNOLOGY. CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

## 8.1 The Local and the Global in the Analysis of Society

As has become clear, Rogerius's account and the annotator's treatise must be seen as separate accounts, two individual works pertaining to a common subject matter but with different sources, inspirations, and goals; they also should be seen as complementary, the former being culturally translated, further clarified, and put into a comparative framework by the latter. The local and global spheres, as well as the contemporary (ahistorical) and historical dimensions, are not opposed here, and do intermingle; but generally Rogerius's detailed ethnographical reporting relates a distinctly local, mostly ahistorical view of Brahman culture, while the annotator integrates Indian culture, society, and religion, especially when it pertains to the Brahmans, into a universal view and analysis of culture that incorporates both global and historical comparison.

From a modern, more anthropological point of view, the *Open Door*, while it promises to reveal 'hidden paganism', is more than a work on Indian *religion*, as it presents paganism as a cultural system. As we have seen, there is already a tension to this from the beginning, with Rogerius, seemingly, conceptualising pagan customs and religion as one common entity and not distinct spheres of culture; on the other hand, the annotator, perhaps with the help of a mysterious professor, separated these from one another and arranged the book into two discrete parts dedicated to these ostensibly distinguishable areas of life, separating what we might call the sacred from the profane within a culture rather than following an Augustinian anthropology of difference where the sacred is true religion opposed from that which is not, that is the profane.[62]

[62] We might also view this tension and conflation of paganism as culture and religion, whilst also seeking a

This separation is important, and key to the annotator's treatise especially. For the purposes of my analysis I will first zoom out to take into consideration how the authors of the *Open Door* view pagan and Brahman culture as a whole, and how they relate to it, before moving on to more specifically 'religious' matters. The beginning of the book, introducing the reader to the people that are the main subject of the *Open Door*, is a good starting point for this endeavour, too, as it showcases the similarities and differences between the annotator and Rogerius to a large degree. Following this, I will work through the major topics of the first part of the *Open Door*, which are, for the most part, clustered around key topics.

### Tribes and Lineages, Or: Who Are the Brahmans?

We have seen that Europeans had been using the term 'Brahman' in forms such as 'Brachmannes' or 'Bramines' for centuries, but what exactly does Rogerius mean when he refers to 'Brahmans'? Rogerius uses the term 'Brahman' in a similar way to Geleynssen de Jong's use of 'Bania': it may pertain to the Indian population at large, but also, and indeed most of the time, to the specific *varna* of the Brahmans. Rogerius establishes the basic Vedic quadripartite division of society at the very beginning of the work and calls the *varnas tribes* (*stammen*). The Veda is immediately linked to the Brahmans, and Rogerius says that it has brought much esteem to them.[63] Rogerius is meticulous in his presentation, and unlike many of his contemporaries he makes no mistakes in his listing and gradation of the varnas according to status, and gives a highly localised view on the social composition of each varna, such as with his discussion of the Komatis (Vaishya) or the many different Shudra groups.[64] Dietary restrictions were a well-known topos regarding different Indian groups, and Rogerius could draw for instance on the precedent of Van Linschoten, who also clearly remarks on the abstention from beef among the Indians, and all meat among certain groups. Rogerius's ethnography here is detailed and precise, and besides listing the occupations of people according to their *varna* he also talks at length about the diverse 'lineages' (geslachten) especially of the Shudras.

An interesting tension within Rogerius's reporting is instead found in chapter two, which describes the Paraiyars, 'a very despised people among the pagans, a people they do not regard as honourable enough to be counted among their lineages.'[65] Rogerius reports that the

distinction of these spheres, from the point of view of scholarship that has criticised and deconstructed the concept of 'religion' in and of itself, and especially the scholarship that seeks to describe a tradition such as Hinduism. I have already outlined the distinctly Christian history and *Begriffsgeschichte* of the term 'religion' and its seventeenth-century fortunes in the introduction and beyond. Critiques of employing a Western understanding of religion for Hinduism are plentiful in the literature. Those that I have found particularly engaging and constructive — yet also in other ways constricting in their assertion of incommensurability — are Balagangadhara, *'The Heathen in His Blindness'–*; King, *Orientalism and Religion*. For the purposes of this analysis I do not seek to contribute to the debate surrounding the applicability of the term 'religion' to an Indian context, and instead will follow the authors' own usages.

[63] *Open Door*, 134.

[64] *Open Door*, 136-139.

[65] *Open Door*, 140.

Paraiyars 'handle all the foul work than no one wants to do, but they do it willingly, as it is their calling'.[66] At the same time, two paragraphs later, he mentions how the *Siriperen*, the worst of the Paraiyars, are bound to servitude — Rogerius thus seems to rather uncritically reproduce the perspective of his Brahman informers, whilst at times bringing in his own critical perspective on society and culture. This is also evident from the manner in which Rogerius reports, which is generally centred around practice, with little analysis or comparison. Only rarely does he move beyond the purely descriptive, such as here, in the context of the Paraiyars being regarded as unclean by the Brahmans, when he points that the Brahmans value external purity very highly, 'much as the Pharisees'.[67]

The difference with the annotations is stark regarding the overall presentation of the people investigated, but shows a similar intent in privileging the role of the Brahmans. The annotator is less interested in the minute details of minor castes and more invested in establishing historical, genealogical, and universalistic theories based on Rogerius's ethnographic survey. In the very first footnote the annotator immediately equates them with the 'Brachmannes' of ancient sources, but also with the accounts of Brahmans in Joao de Barros and Johan van Twist.[68] He also proposes — though cautiously saying 'many think' — a direct link with the Hebrews, as he repeats the popular goropisation connecting the Brahmans with Abraham, the former here being proposed as the descendants of the latter through Abraham's second wife Keturah.[69] Abraham is supposed to have sent the sons he had with Keturah east with gifts (Genesis 25:6) which the annotator says 'are believed to include the arts and sciences, foremost them astrology and natural magic, in which they have excelled of old.'[70] The Brahmans are thus from the outset identified as the most noble tribe among the pagans, and the annotator, linking them to a genealogy of sacred history, is intent on clarifying their excellent learning, which he already mentions in his preface.

While Rogerius presents us with a view on Indian society predominantly informed by an emic understanding of *varnas* and *jatis* — also telling us the origin of the four *varnas* that we can find for instance in the Bhagavata Purana, with each *varna* coming forth from a different part of the god Purusha, however here identified as Brahma[71] — precise reporting of this kind would ensure praise by Indologists long after the annotations had been disregarded as 'drivel', the annotator seeks to put (South) Indian social stratification into a broader historical and global perspective. He thus says that in 'previous times' the Indians were split into seven tribes (presumably following Megasthenes), among whom the Brahmans, here equated with the gymnosophists, were 'the first and most noble'.[72] Seven are also the number of tribes among

[66] *Open Door*, 140.
[67] *Open Door*, 141.
[68] *Open Door*, 133, note 1.
[69] C.f. Genesis 25:1 and 1 Chronicles 1:32. See also Epiphanius, *Panarion*, De Fide 8.
[70] *Open Door*, 133, note 1.
[71] *Open Door*, 142.
[72] *Open Door*, 134, note 2. The seven tribes are mentioned by Megasthenes, see above page 56 and Strabo

the Egyptians, while in Athens there were four, in Arabia three, and in Rome two.[73] While there is no specific attempt to propose any theories about linking the customs of the Indian on the Coromandel Coast to a greater pan-Indian or 'Oriental' whole, the annotator utilises predominantly Dutch travel writing to note similarities between South Indian Brahmans and those of other places. As we shall see later, he for instance uses the accounts of the voyages of Pieter van den Broecke and Admiral van Caerden from the *Begin ende Voortgangh* to counter Rogerius's claim that the Brahmans are ignorant regarding philosophical knowledge.[74] We should be cautious when seeing any Hinduism *avant la lettre* here, as the annotator does make broad comparisons based on the many East Indian voyages he had read, but without clearly advocating that the different Brahmans or the Banians necessarily were part of one religion, apart from either engaging in idolatrous paganism or being followers of an esoteric religion connected to an ancient wisdom tradition.

With Rogerius we thus get a vivid presentation of the specificities of South Indian society and Brahmanism, whilst the annotator put this into a larger context of regional and global, as well as historical comparison, which is mostly missing from Rogerius's account. Based on sparse comparisons — such as his mention of Herodotus and Diogenes the Cynic (150) when he compares South Indian reckonings of consanguinity with those of Siam and Pegu (171), or especially when he compares Brahman conceptions of sacrifice with Platonic theories in chapter 2.15, as discussed below — as well as the clear Iberian models for his own descriptions of widow burning and burial, this was not due to a lack of knowledge of the relevant literature, but rather outside of the scope of his treatise; or at least made to be such when the work was edited for publication. The annotator on the other hand gives us exactly the sort of contextualisation which, informed by his reading of the scholars of paganism and idolatry, sought to make grander claims about the true origins of these customs and practices. A good example in this regard is the specific role of the Brahmans and their historical origins.

### Brahman Sectarianism and Priestly Parallels

Rogerius tells us that the Brahmans are not merely one homogenous group, and, perhaps more so than any other European before him, presents the diversity of Hindu sectarianism as he encountered it in South India. Once more, we should recognise that Geleynssen de Jong also had an understanding of such complexity, but his presentation of sectarian affiliation, undifferentiated from both castes and non-Hindu groups such as the Jains, remains very confused.[75] Rogerius himself also does not understand any details regarding sectarian difference and the underlying theology of different groups, yet he shows a keen awareness of the difference

15.1.39-49 as well as Arrian, *Indica* 11.

[73] A similar comparison is given for instance for the naming of children, *Open Door*, 156-157, note 84, or when speaking about polygamy; these comparisons are a common analytical tool for the annotator.

[74] *Open Door*, 161, note 102.

[75] See Geleynssen de Jongh, *De Remonstrantie*, 75ff.

between Shaivaites and Vaishnavites throughout the book. While this distinction is clear and constantly reiterated, and will accompany us throughout the rest of this analysis, his understanding of Hindu pluralism, sectarianism, and theology otherwise is more limited. He declares that 'the Brahmans are divided among themselves, either in respect to their faith or regarding the manner in which they live their lives'.[76] He then distinguishes six different theologies, saying that 'as regards faith [professie], there are six types of Brahmans', which are the Vaishnava, Shaiva, Smarta, Charvaka, Pashanda, and Shakta.[77]

Rogerius, who then gives more details on these six 'sects' in the order he recounts them, mentions that the latter three 'are regarded as heretics by the pagans and have very few followers due to their evil beliefs'. This is an interesting statement that perhaps reveals the theology of his own Brahman informants. The heterodoxy of Charvaka is an accurate assessment from Rogerius, and unsurprisingly he compares, or rather likens Charvaka materialism to Epicureanism, and says that they seem to resemble Pliny, making fun of notions of the immortality of the soul.[78] 'Pashanda' refers to heretics who do not follow the Veda, and indeed Rogerius says that they 'say that the law, that is the teaching which is taught among the pagans there, is not true'.[79] Rogerius then references Padmanabha, and the latter's contempt seems on clear display when Rogerius says that they disregard 'differences between the tribes' and ignore markers of (Brahman) civility, not only eating with whomever, but also sleeping with anyone, which includes incest.[80] It is unclear who is exactly meant here, but it is particularly interesting to note that Rogerius, most probably repeating what he was told by the Smarta Padmanbha, says that the Shaktas 'resemble the former in that do not want to submit themselves to the Veda and require everything to be proven to them in such a manner that they can see it with their eyes and feel it with their hands', adding that all three of these sects 'are regarded as heretics by the pagans and have very few followers due to their evil beliefs'.[81]

Shaktism is never again mentioned in the *Open Door*, and thus it is difficult to make a deeper analysis of this topic, but it is a curious matter that Padmanabha — who is mentioned multiple times in this chapter and can be assumed to have been Rogerius's source in this case — as an adherent of the Smarta tradition, would present Shaktism as a completely heretical sectarian group. Shankaracharya's Advaita Smartism, visible throughout the *Open Door* at times when Padmanabha's voice comes through as we shall see, is essentially non-sectarian, according to which the Vaishnava, Shaiva, and Shakta traditions are all true. Moreover, as Elaine Fisher shows, in seventeenth-century South India Shankaracharya is remade as 'the

[76] *Open Door*, 142.
[77] *Open Door*, 142.
[78] *Open Door*, 146. Charvaka materialism was also remarked upon by the Jesuits, both in South India and at the Mughal court. See Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski, "East-West Swerves: Cārvāka Materialism and Akbar's Religious Debates at Fatehpur Sikri," *Genre* 48, no. 2 (2015): 131–157.
[79] *Open Door*, 146.
[80] *Open Door*, 147.
[81] *Open Door*, 148.

original exponent of a domesticated, Vedicized form of esoteric Śākta ritual practice', and 'the Śaṅkarācārya of seventeenth-century south India was not only a devout worshipper of the goddess but also a consummate poet, fusing ecstatic devotion and literary virtuosity in impromptu hymns of praise'.[82] It is likely therefore that the Shaktas mentioned here were transgressive Shaktas who had made a clear attempt to distance themselves from orthodox Brahman practices.[83]

While we do not meet these groups outside of this chapter, the same cannot be said of the Vaishnava and Shaiva traditions, and especially Vaishnavism and its sectarian sub-groupings are described with some detail — perhaps via the Tattvavadin Damersa.[84] The Vaishnavas are identified as the sect which recognises Vishnu as the supreme deity, and Rogerius tells us that there are two distinct groups of Vaihnavas: the Tattvavada or Madhva Vaishnavas and the Ramanuja (Sri Vaishnava) Vaishnavas.[85] Rogerius is unaware of the philosophical and theological differences between these sectarian groups, and does not even mention the opposition between the dualist (dvaita) Tattvavadins and the qualified monist (advaita) Sri Vaishnavas. Instead, he identifies Madhva and Ramanuja — the most prominent proponents of the respective traditions — as the founders of each respective sect, and remarks that the Tattvavadins are great 'rhetoricians' and theologians.[86] Other than this, his assessment of difference is characterised predominantly by appearance, saying that 'these Vaishnava each have their own peculiar art and manner to mark themselves'.[87] Apart from this external, visual difference, which Rogerius almost certainly encountered himself, he says little of the difference between these two traditions, though he does declare that 'there are many other matters, wherein the Ramanuja differ from the Tattvavada Vaishnava'.[88] The Shaiva, too, identified as those who worship Shiva as the highest God, are described according to their markings and the donning of the *lingam*.[89] While Padmanabha's Smartism influenced the presentation of Brahmanism in the *Open Door* to a large degree, Rogerius writes very little on the sect; we read that their founder is Shankaracharya, that they say that Vishnu and Shiva are one and the same, and that they do not seem to have any outward markings by which they

[82] See Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 79, 87.

[83] See in this regard Fisher's discussion of Cidvilasa's retelling of a meeting between Shankaracharya and a group of Shaktas, when 'Śaṅkara responds by refuting their heresy, instructing them in the philosophical orthodoxy of Advaita Vedānta. In short, we can discern in Cidvilāsa's treatment of this event a desire to distance himself from the more esoteric content of Śrīvidyā ritual practice, or from lineages of Śāktas he viewed as too transgressive to take part in normative Śaiva society. After all, the Śāktas he describes had taken steps to visibly demarcate themselves from orthodox Brahmins, abandoning the Śaiva tripuṇḍra, wearing red clothing and kuṃkum — a color with long-standing Śākta resonances — and even branding themselves with the Devī's sandals on their arms and throat.' Fisher, 92.

[84] Identified as such at *Open Door*, 145.

[85] *Open Door*, 142-143.

[86] He argues that 'tadwadi' (i.e. tattvavadin) means 'rhetorician' in Sanskrit, and that 'tadwa' means 'knowledge of God'. *Open Door*, 143.

[87] *Open Door*, 143.

[88] *Open Door*, 144.

[89] *Open Door*, 145.

could be distinguished.[90] As we shall see in later chapters, Smarta monism and rejection of theistic sectarianism, equating and treating as equal the highest godhead of different sectarian traditions, would however be a cornerstone of the conceptualisation of Brahman theology in the second part of the *Open Door*, especially in the annotator's treatise.

Rogerius's presentation of the Brahmans — at least those sects that are presented as orthodox — is thus informed primarily through his observation of local Brahmans and how they could be distinguished from one another, with almost no understanding of the underlying theological and devotional differences between these groups. Vaishnavas and Shaivas are occasionally distinguished throughout the book, but primarily regarding observable practices such as dress, festivities, or burial customs. When it comes to belief and worship on a deeper level, and most 'civil' practices, too, Rogerius speaks merely about Brahmans. This, too, might be partially due to the non-sectarian theology of Padmanabha, but might also reflect ignorance on the part of Rogerius regarding these complex topics.

The annotator is not at all interested in the details of sectarian difference among the Brahmans, and, as we shall see later, primarily takes over Padmanabha's Smarta understanding of sectarian difference, especially regarding the worship of the highest God. Despite the precedent of 'Baal's Priests', Rogerius never actually calls the Brahmans 'priests' in the *Open Door*, even though, as we shall see in the next chapter, does reflect on their priestly function at times. The annotator on the other hand makes this association very clear from the beginning, explicitly calling them priests already in the preface and comparing their priestly role to that of the ancient Arabians as early as footnote 2.[91] He also reiterates that the ancient Brachmannes or gymnosophists and the seventeenth-century South Indian Brahmans are one and the same and equates their role to that of the Greek philosophers, 'the *Magi* among the Persians, the *Chaldeans* among the Babylonians, the *Druids* among the French, and the *Turditans* among the Spanish'.[92] Again, we also see a comparison with other regions of India and South East Asia. When Rogerius mentions that the Shaivas mark 'their head with three or four stripes with the ashes of burnt cow dung', the annotator compares this with the Bania, who 'consider it [...] to be more pure and qualified for such holy work'.[93] Living from alms is another example, and said to be 'a very old practice that was observed by different Egyptian, Greek, and Roman priests. In India it was common and is also still nowadays practised by the *Talapoi*, the priests of Pegu.'[94]

[90] *Open Door*, 146.
[91] *Open Door*, 134, note 2.
[92] *Open Door*, 142, note 32.
[93] *Open Door*, 145 and note 45. Compare with the assessment of dung in Twist, "Generale beschrijvinghe van Indien," 38.
[94] *Open Door*, 149, note 57. The Talapoi are mentioned in Admiral Steven van der Hagen, *Beschrijvinghe van de tweede Voyagie/ Ghedaen met 12. Schepen naer d'Oost-Indien. Onder den Heer Admirael Steven van der Hagen ... Item: De Reyse van 't Schip Delft, (mede onder dese Vloote behoorende) van Bantam naer de Custe van Choromandel, ende elders.*, ed. Isaac Commelin, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius, 1646), 29f.

Brahman priesthood, not existent in name and described from a purely local ethnographic point of view by Rogerius, is in this manner put into a broader context, compared with historical precedent and with coeval social formations across modern India and Southeast Asia. While this comparative framework underlines similarity and might point to a common, though unspecified religion, when it comes to origins the annotator implies a very clear line of transmission from the ancient Hebrews. As we have seen, the annotator already connects the Brahmans with Abraham in the very first footnote, and, still in the first chapter, compares the Indian punishment for killing a Brahman with Jewish law. This comparison becomes more pronounced when Rogerius speaks about Brahman conceptions of purity in the second chapter devoted to the Parayiars, as Rogerius recounts how the latter are considered unclean by the Brahmans, and how the temples, too, would thus be polluted by such uncleanliness. While Rogerius compares this purity with the Pharisees, the annotator makes an argument that stretches the entire first part of the *Open Door*: that the Brahmans derive their own priestly customs and practices from the more ancient Hebrews. Adding two footnotes to the mention of uncleanliness here, he says:

> It is beyond doubt that this is because [the Parayiars] touch and eat that which has been killed. They derive this [conception of purity] from the Jews, amongst whom it was also forbidden to touch any dead and therefore unclean animals, in order not to become unclean. See Leviticus 5:2 and 11:24.[95]

He adds in the next footnote that 'in a similar manner, the Jews also considered the tabernacle of the Lord polluted if someone had touched anything dead without having been purified', citing Numbers 19:13.[96] These are all obvious references to the Old Testament, as the passages all discuss very similar topics among the ancient Hebrews. In chapter five, where Rogerius lists the five privileges granted to the Brahmans by the Veda — sacrificial offerings, teaching, reading and teaching the Veda, and asking for alms — the *predikant* mentions that the Atharvaveda is no longer extant, and that according to Padmanabha the Brahmans would surpass the prestige and power of kings if it were not for this loss. The annotator also compares this with 'the priests in the Old Testament'.[97] This argument becomes particularly clear in chapters six through eight, where the annotator compares the Brahmans not just with the ancient Hebrews and loosely argues for a diffusion towards India, but seeks to equate the Brahmans with the Levites. As Rogerius recounts that kings are obliged to provide the Brahmans with villages, the annotator merely cites Numbers 35, which commands the people of Israel to provide the Levites with cities.[98] Similarly, when Rogerius says that Brahmans

[95] *Open Door*, 140, note 24.
[96] *Open Door*, 140, note 25. See on this also 191, note 182.
[97] *Open Door*, 153, note 73.
[98] *Open Door*, 155, note 79.

need to be descended from a Brahman, the annotator says that 'also among the Jews no one could become a Levite and a priest, only those who were born into the tribe of Levi.'[99] For the annotator the Brahmans are thus Indian Levites. In general he is hesitant to fully commit to one specific line of transmission, as we shall also see with the origin of idolatry; but a transmission of key customs and the hereditary nature of priesthood from the Hebrews to India is nevertheless a clear theory on the part of the annotator. Brahman civility more broadly is put into a comparative schema where custom derives primarily from Hebrew precedent, or can be identified as universal.

## 8.2 Theories of Brahman Custom

While the first two chapters deal with the four *varnas* (as well as those outside of this system), and thus with the foundations of social stratification and how the Brahmans fit into broader South Indian 'pagan' society, most of the remainder of the first part deals specifically with Brahman *civility*, as it was understood in an early modern context. Some chapters stand out, however, and stray from this structure. Chapter ten is especially oddly placed in the first part, as Rogerius outlines the ignorance of the Brahmans in matters of natural philosophy, while the annotator makes this into a key chapter on Brahman natural theology — it seems only to fit here as it follows the chapter on how children are educated. The other topic that falls somewhat outside of this schema is Rogerius's discussion of the *Panchangam*, the Hindu calendar, which he clearly connects with a superstitious employment of divination, a topic we will return to later. At the same time, when speaking about Brahman civility in the context of raising children, important rites of passage, or how the Brahmans spend their days, there is a constant tension between these ostensibly civil practices and their ritualistic and religious meanings.

### Child Rearing and Education: Civil or Religious?

After recounting the privileges granted to the Brahmans according to the Veda, Rogerius discusses more aspects of Brahman society and life in greater detail. The first topic is the office of the Brahmans and the pleasures afforded to them through it. He says that 'the exclusive office of the Brahmans is to occupy themselves with teaching others; not only reading, writing, and arithmetic, but especially to sharpen their [knowledge] of paganism. They are charged with this and must do so for free.'[100] It is in this context that Rogerius mentions that Brahmans must be provided with villages by the kings, in order to prevent poverty among the former. Though Brahmans, according to Rogerius, might be forced to engage in work other than teaching due to necessity, they may not engage in manual labour. While the fifth

[99] *Open Door*, 156, note 81.
[100] *Open Door*, 155.

chapter thus outlines the role of the Brahmans according to their Vedic privileges and duties, especially ritual sacrifice and teaching, chapter six confront this with the ethnographic reality that Rogerius encountered himself during his time in Pulicat and with the recent past, as he cites that under Vijayanagara king Rama Deva Raya (d. 1632, reigned Vijayanagara 1616 — 163) villages given to the Brahmans were temporarily taxed, much to the discontent of those affected. Rather than a chapter on teaching this is thus a chapter on the socio-economic reality of early modern South Indian Brahmans in the context of the Vijayanagara Empire.[101]

Chapters seven through thirteen instead broadly follow the first two *ashramas*, the stages of life according to Vedic traditions. While Rogerius employs the correct terminology for all four *ashramas* (*brahmacharya*, *grihasta*, *vanaprastha*, and *sannyasa*), he does not identify these to belong to a specific system of life stages, and instead discusses Vanaprasthins and Sannyasis in the fourth chapter (dedicated to how the Brahmans differ from one another in their manner of life). The last two *ashramas* are thus presented as separate renouncer groups, distinct from regular Brahman life ('those who dissociate from other Brahmans in their way of life').[102] The stages of brahamacharya and grihasta, instead, are discussed in a chronological manner in chapters seven through thirteen (with the exception of chapter ten) and follow major *samskaras* (rites of passage). Chapter seven thus begins with the act of childbirth, and with the fact that only a Brahman can produce a Brahman, as no one can become a Brahman otherwise — here the annotator makes a key comparison with the Levites.[103] The rest of the chapter is a rather straightforward presentation of the topic and of *jatakarman*, the natal rites. Rogerius recounts how long newborns are considered impure, when a *homa* (fire sacrifice) is performed, and lists a number of common names.

The most interesting part here is perhaps Rogerius's discussion of another *samskara*, the *karnavedha*, the ritual piercing of the ears, which Rogerius attests the Brahmans, unlike other *varnas*, must perform immediately after naming their children.[104] Rogerius says that this is no simple piercing for the sake of wearing jewels in their ears 'as it normally happens', but that it is a 'solemn oath of service' to either Vishnu of Shiva: 'they commit themselves to him forever, without leaving or apostatising him, or taking up another god or worship'.[105] He thus makes it

[101] C.f. Burton Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vijayanagara* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapters 4 and 5 and especially Bes, *The Heirs of Vijayanagara. Court Politics in Early Modern South India*, 117f.

[102] *Open Door*, 148f. He recognises them as 'Brahmans', and, as I discuss below, mentions Sannyasis differing from Grahastas in their eating habits, but does not connect this with stages of life. Instead he does distinguish the Vanaprasthins from the Sannyasis, both 'holy people', saying that the latter renounce almost everything, while the Vanaprasthins live in the woods with wife and child. At the same time he confuses further terminology, claiming that Kshatriya and Vaishya Sannyasis are called *Paramahamsa* (an honorific given to an enlightened guru) and the only the Shudra are called yogis. He also puts Avadhutas on a similar level as Vanaprasthins and Sannyasis.

[103] *Open Door*, 156, note 81.

[104] For an overview on the *karnavedha* see Rajbali Pandey, *Hindu Samskaras: Socio-religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House, 1969), 102–105.

[105] *Open Door*, 157.

very clear that this is not merely a civil ritual, but a sacred rite, which he clearly connects with the worship of God (in the form of either Vishnu or Shiva).

This tension between civil and religious, though remaining unspoken of in the text, may be even more pronounced with the next *samskara*, discussed at length in chapter eight, namely the *upanayana*. Rogerius never speaks of the concept of being born twice, of *dvija*, and we do not see any awareness of the concept's restrictions (based on *varna*) within a social context, as Rogerius even specifically says that he 'often times saw pagans from the tribe of Vaishya, as well as Shudra, who wore this thread', talking about the *yajnopavita*.[106] Nevertheless, the significance of the *yajnopavita* and the moment young Brahmans receive their thread is never in doubt. Rogerius here makes it very clear that 'although the children of the Brahmans are Brahmans, due to their ancestry, they are nevertheless not considered to be Brahmans before they wear the thread, called *Dsandhem* [*jandhyam*], around their neck.'[107] Rogerius mentions the great expense incurred by the Brahmans for the *upanayana*, as the holy fire *homa* must burn for four days, during which food must be provided to attending Brahmans. 'Many ceremonies' are enacted, and prayers are spoken over the fire. Upon receiving the *yajnopavita* (Rogerius uses the Telugu term *jandhyam*), the children become Brahmacharis: a stage of life that is characterised by studying and abstention from sex, betel, and superfluous food, though, Rogerius specifies 'the Brahman Padmanabha asserted that it is not followed so precisely; they do indeed abstain from betel, yet for the rest use their common sense and do not follow so precisely the commandments of the Veda, or the law book of the pagans.'[108] He also outlines the necessity of the thread for being considered a Brahman, the necessity of it being produced by a Brahman, and that it is specifically 'worn as a sign and public profession [betuyginghe] of their faith [gheloof — 'belief']'.[109]

At this point it might be useful to make a comparison with a famous and much discussed case of distinguishing civility and religion in the context of the Brahmans of South India, namely Roberto Nobili and the Malabar Rites controversy, already discussed above. We must remember that distinguishing civility from paganism or idolatry was not in and of itself a breakthrough in ethnographic or ethnological terms; someone like Van Linschoten, who had a very clear Augustinian understanding of truth and error, nevertheless distinguished civility and a sacred sphere concerned with worship, belief, and ritual, without any explicit or implicit anthropologisation of 'religion'. One need not employ the all-encompassing notion that the entirety of pagan culture is idolatrous to argue for an equation of paganism with idolatry in an Augustinian fashion, according to which all forms of non-Christian worship are the definition of the profane, and the work of the devil. On the other end of the spectrum, one need not be

[106] *Open Door*, 159. While Rogerius does not mention a restriction based on gender, the implication is clear that this ceremony and thread is only for males.
[107] *Open Door*, 158.
[108] *Open Door*, 159.
[109] *Open Door*, 160.

an enlightened, secular anthropologist to employ a more anthropologically-informed view of religious traditions as belonging to a common species of meaning-making practices. Nobili, as we have seen, himself donned the *yajnopavita* and had a vested interest in portraying this as a clear civil practice. He in fact stressed the importance of the *upanayana* for becoming a Brahman, portraying the Brahmans as learned men or doctors and downplaying the fact that one needed to be born into this varna to be a Brahman.[110] Rogerius instead makes this point very clear, and while Nobili's Brahmans are learned doctors, the annotator's Brahmans are hereditary priests. But Nobili, as well as Rogerius and the annotator — perhaps predominantly the latter, as it is dubious that Rogerius would have distinguished these 'civil' customs from the 'religious' practices of the second part — exhibit a clear tension in their own conceptualisation and presentation of religion and civility. At the same time, as we have seen also with the scholars of paganism and idolatry, one need not abandon a personal adherence to an Augustinian understanding of truth and error when it comes to a given individual's relationship with Christianity to argue for a comparative model of sacrality in a scholarly context. That Nobili did not seek syncretism between Brahmanism and Christianity and continued to understand Christianity as the exclusive fountain of truth does not mean that through his actions he did not further a distinction of religion as a comparable sacred sphere — naturally based on Christian epistemology and categories — distinguishable from other aspects of culture.[111] Exactly because of the coexistence of a *Weltanschauung* that leaves little space for anything 'secular' with analyses that imply a secularised — if Christian in origin — investigation of different forms of sacrality, tensions between presenting some customs as religious and others as civil are inevitable. The *Open Door* is no exception here.

The annotator in this context also presents us with a notion of these customs as primarily civil. Besides continuing the discourse surrounding impurity which is linked to the ancient Hebrews, and other customs that are linked to them, in his footnotes on these chapters the annotator also works towards comparing Indian customs with those of others more generally. There is universalistic tendency here, where many customs are argued to be anthropological constants, such as waiting a certain number of days before naming children (notes 84, 86, 87) or when Rogerius speaks about the curriculum of children (note 101).[112] While the annotator compares the *yajnopavita* with the Hebrew *Tzitzit*, we see little discussion of this custom and the *upanayana*; mostly we might identify a strategy to indeed portray this as a thoroughly civil, and mostly irrelevant custom that is not exclusive to the Brahmans, and besides comparing it with Hebrew custom the annotator also mentions that the Parsis seem to have learnt this from

[110] Županov, *Disputed Mission*, 114.

[111] In this regard I find the critique of Alexander Ernst Henn, "Roberto de Nobili and the Myth of the Modern Conceptualization of Religion in Seventeenth-Century India," *History of Religions* 62, no. 2 (2022): 156–192 beside the point.

[112] *Open Door*, 156, 157, 160.

the Brahmans.[113] While the tension in this context nevertheless remains — the annotator mentions that the Parsis, too, must buy their thread from their priests, and the annotator has made it abundantly clear that the Brahmans are hereditary priests — the annotations relativise the exclusivity of this custom, if not its sacrality.

The *samskaras* of chapters seven and eight in this way are included into the larger discussion of Brahman civility, especially in the annotations, without placing any further attention on the potentially 'religious' character of these customs. Chapter nine goes on to discuss the importance of education, and how, with the exception of the Paraiyars, all tribes or clans care greatly for the education of their children, and do not tolerate the latter to be taught by teachers from lower tribes. The annotator, as so often, puts this into a larger comparative and universal framework. With the exception of chapter ten, on the philosophical knowledge of the Brahmans, the following chapters continue in a chronological manner along the major events in the life of a Brahman and are concerned with marriage and entrance into the life stage of the householder. The presentation of when, to whom, and how the Brahmans are married is characterised by a continued emphasis on social stratification and a detailed ethnographic rendering of customs by Rogerius and the comparative contextualisation of this information in the footnotes by the annotator.

The latter continues the universalistic positioning and comparisons with all ancient peoples as well with the Turks, the inhabitants of Pegu — Gasparo Balbi's account, cited by the annotator, was included in extracts in the *Begin ende voorgangh* — and the Gujaratis, but the main avenue of comparison here is once more with the ancient Hebrews.[114] We can see this as a direct consequence of the Brahmans being argued to have taken over many customs from the Hebrews and being the equivalent of a lost tribe of Levi by the annotator. One of his major sources in this regard is Selden's *Uxor Ebraica*, which he uses for genealogical and comparative purposes; when Rogerius mentions that the Brahmans may not marry girls who have begun menstruating, the annotator remarks that 'this the Brahmans seem to have borrowed from the Jews. Rabbi Maimonides says that their high priests may not marry daughters who are twelve and a half years old, but must always seek out younger ones', adding the appropriate reference to Selden.[115] When Rogerius adds that the Kshatryias do not bother with such a restriction, the annotator stresses that 'this was also only common among the Jews for high priests.'[116] Rogerius, two pages later, describes a typical marriage ceremony and how the bridegroom throws rice over the head of the bride; the annotator, again citing Selden's *Uxor Ebraica*, says that the Jews — here not confining his comparison to the ancient Hebrews — use wheat, and adds a parenthetical statement claiming that 'apparently these pagans would do this, too, only

[113] *Open Door*, 159, notes 94, 95.
[114] *Open Door*, 166, notes 123, 125, 126; 167, note 129.
[115] *Open Door*, 165, note 120.
[116] *Open Door*, 165, note 121.

that due to its lack they had to abstain from this'.[117]

The priestly Brahmans and their ancient Hebrew origins are thus particularly clearly on display with the example of nuptial customs, further solidifying this connection in the annotations. The object here is primarily antiquarian, and we should not necessarily read a positive framing of this Hebrew connection. This is particularly clear in the chapter on polygamy (chapter thirteen), where in a rather Orientalist fashion (here in the Saidian rather than in the seventeenth-century meaning of the term) the annotator says that 'to marry many women has always been practised in the East, and there it still continues to this day', except for those places 'the light of the Gospel had been able to penetrate'.[118] But the Gospel here is not even the primary cause for the lack of this practice, as the annotator makes it clear that 'in the West, the contrary' had always been true, as among the Greeks and Romans there were very few to engage in polygamy, as it was forbidden by Cecrops and more importantly by Roman Law, adding that 'Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius even forbade the Jews from doing this, notwithstanding that they tolerated different other things.'[119] In the next footnote this East-West opposition is continued, citing the examples of the Numidians, Moors, Thracians, Egyptians, Persians, and, once more the Hebrews.[120] The ancient Hebrews, continuously viewed in a historicist manner, are thus 'orientalised' in this case. The annotator's cited sources are an interesting insight into the two-sided role of Judaism and the Jews: a keen interest for the details of Jewish custom as described by John Selden intermingled with the prejudiced description of Jewish ceremonies and faith by Abraham Costerus, who 'despite his education, neither understood nor cared to understand much of the world beyond his conservative Christian circles'.[121] While the curious, antiquarian focus of Selden is the predominant impulse, the annotator thus also presents us with a very suspect view of Jewish custom and 'the East' or 'Orient' more generally.

In the main text of Rogerius, marriage practices are related in a careful and detailed manner. Rogerius explains that the Brahmans busy themselves early on with finding spouses for their children, and how the marriage ceremony is prepared. As marriage is yet another *samskara*, Rogerius also details how a *homa* fire is made, and how the fire is a witness of the marriage — predominantly the focus here is however on the ceremony, especially the tying of the *tali*, the nuptial necklacke.[122] Rogerius also notes the change from student to householder: 'once the children of the Brahmans are married, they are no longer called Brahmacharis, but *Grahastas*,

[117] *Open Door*, 166, note 128.
[118] *Open Door*, 171, note 143.
[119] *Open Door*, 171, note 143.
[120] *Open Door*, 171, note 144.
[121] Daniel Swetschinski, "Settlement, Toleration, and Association Until 1639," in *Reappraising the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, 2nd ed., ed. Hans Blom et al., trans. David Mckay (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2021), 66. The annotator cites Costerus on page 162, note 162, and 283, note 448.
[122] *Open Door*, 167.

and they receive a second thread'.[123] Social stratification is also brought to the fore once more, and in chapter twelve Rogerius explains that the 'Brahmans may not marry their children, be they sons as well as daughters, to those who are not of their clan, and herein they are very precise.'[124] This chapter further deals with levels of consanguinity and what is considered an incestuous relation, and by introducing the fact that besides their first wife Brahmans may also have additional wives from lower tribes he introduces the topic of polygamy, discussed in chapter thirteen along with adultery.

One topic that arises from Rogerius's discussion of how the Brahmans seek a spouse for their children is the observation of omens and portents. He describes how 'whenever a Brahman goes in search [of a wife] for his son, he will closely observe the signs he encounters, and whether they are good or bad.'[125] He also mentions that the Vaishya observe some signs that the Brahmans think very little of, but what emerges nevertheless is that all pagans observe such signs, including the Brahmans. Chapters fourteen and fifteen then speak of observing signs, divination, and the *panchangam*, the Hindu calendar, readily compared to a European almanac by Rogerius himself.[126] In chapter fifteen an entire Shukra panchangam is related, 'interpreted from his language [probably Tamil] by my Brahman Damersa'.[127] Rogerius, naturally, adds that he will present it not because he considers it worthy, but 'only to satisfy the curious reader and to illustrate on what loose foundation they build'.[128] I will return to these chapters in my discussion of superstition; for now I will continue this discussion of Brahman civility by turning from how major events in the Brahmans life are described in the *Open Door* to the presentation of more every-day customs.

### Daily Life and the Obligations of the Brahmans

The final third of the first part of the *Open Door* concerns how Brahmans spend their time and how they handle the calamities of illness and death. Chapter twenty stands apart somewhat as it discusses widow burning and burial, and Rogerius departs from his usually composed manner of reporting to a more denunciatory style. The annotations continue the comparative analysis of Brahman civility, with the previous highlighting of ancient Hebrew precedent, but also feature some discussions of superstition and, on the opposite side of the religious spectrum, allegorical readings of Brahman belief. This is not altogether surprising, considering that chapters sixteen and seventeen deal with the daily routine of a Brahman, with lots of attention on purity and ritual, while chapter eighteen deals with the myth of Gajendra Moksha — encountered in the Bhagavata Purana but perhaps also deriving from local vernacular sources — given a special

[123] *Open Door*, 168.
[124] *Open Door*, 169.
[125] *Open Door*, 165.
[126] *Open Door*, 175.
[127] *Open Door*, 175.
[128] *Open Door*, 175.

place of pride in daily recitals of the Brahmans according to Rogerius.

Chapter sixteen begins with a revealing retrospective on the part of Rogerius. As different topics are hinted at here to which I will return it makes sense to quote this at length:

> If in the previous chapter[s] something was presented that is hidden from a Christian, and the knowledge of which one can [only] reach with difficulty, because following their Veda the Brahmans may not reveal their secrets and mysteries to anyone, and indeed even keep it hidden from their own nation as is clear from chapter five, then what will be presented in this chapter may be withheld for even more reasons. Because here I shall present and describe the Brahman; not how he conducts himself on the streets and in his dealings with people, but how he conducts himself in his most secret chamber, where he is not seen by men; and [I] shall recount how he begins the day and spends it, as I have heard it from the mouth of the Brahman Padmanabha [...].[129]

As always we might question whether this was written by Rogerius in its entirety, and, in a different vein, if it was indeed written by Rogerius whether it actually referred to the preceding discussion of Brahman civility; in chapter five, referenced here, the Veda is mentioned and not the ostensibly exoteric practices described in part one of the *Open Door*. Most of what Rogerius considers the 'secrets' and 'mysteries' of the Brahmans — although all of that information derives from the epics and Puranas, not from the four Vedas[130] — is revealed in part two. Nevertheless, even if we interpret this to refer liberally to a large part of the *Open Door*, we can notice the clear awareness on the side of Rogerius that the Veda — identified as the 'law book of the pagans, in which is contained everything that they must believe and all the ceremonies that they must perform' in chapter 5 (152) — and the Brahmans, as its keepers, are secretive, a point to which we will return. It is in this context of secrecy and esotericism that Rogerius frames this chapter, revealing this potentially even more secretive matter to Europeans readers.

As the 'secrets and mysteries' of paganism and the secretive Brahmans are inextricably linked, so are the quotidian civil and ritualistic or sacrificial practices of the Brahmans. Rogerius here presents us with an idealised daily routine of an affluent and pious Brahman that follows the Veda: at the end of the chapter he thus says: 'The Brahman Padmanabha stated that the Brahmans are obliged to conduct themselves in the manner we have told, following the

[129] *Open Door*, 187. My translation contains a slight error here, as it should read 'chapters'. C.f. *Open Door*, 406.

[130] It should be noted that the differentiation between shruti and smrti ignores the fluidity and contestation surrounding scriptural authority in Hindu traditions, as Barabara Holdrege shows specifically with the example of the Bhagavata Purana. See Barbara A. Holdrege, "From Purāṇa-Veda to Kārṣṇa-Veda," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies Online* 15, no. 1 (2006). I would like to thank Will Sweetman for pointing me towards this article. While Rogerius was told of the four Vedas as the highest scriptural authority, the fact that he constantly refers to the knowledge he was given by his Brahman informants as 'Vedic' might in fact be read to support a rather blurry distinction of shruti and smrti literature by the very Brahmans who supplied Rogerius with this information, as it seems doubtful that Rogerius would have simply come up with this himself.

ordinance of the law. Yet he also noted that all that has been said is not so precisely followed by all Brahmans, but the more religious [religieus] and zealous someone is in paganism, the more he does his duty to fulfil all of it.'[131] The pious Brahman rises early, one or two hours before sunrise, and begins by calling out the name of God (the practice of *Japa*). Rogerius then relates in meticulous detail the manner in which Brahmans prepare for the singing of the Gajendra Moksha Stotra.[132] Next, Rogerius outlines how the Brahmans wash themselves and put on clean clothing, and what clean signifies according to the purity conceptions of the Brahmans (188-189). Body marking and the naming of the twenty-four names of God (ostensibly Vishnu; this is the *Chaturvimshatimurti*) follow, which Rogerius also says they regard as *Japa* ('Japon' in Rogerius's Dutch). After this follows the throwing of water at the sun (*Arghyapradana*), another common element of the *Sandhyavandanam* (the rituals performed three times each day), and the worship of the sun as well as of the 'chiefs of the sub-heavenly worlds, as they are servants of God for the good of the world.'[133]

While Rogerius just speaks of all Brahmans up to this point, he then clarifies sectarian difference, with the Vaishnava and Shaiva (the latter presumably include the Smarta Brahmans) diverging slightly in their manner of prayer. If all of this has already pushed the distinction between civil and religious near breaking point, the next step recounted by Rogerius could hardly be regarded as civil, as it concerns what Rogerius himself calls an idol. Rogerius

[131] *Open Door*, 192. The 'law' in this case would be the Dharmasutra and Dharmashastra which outline daily obligations. For a good general introduction to this topic within a wider context of Hindu practice see Gavin Flood, ed., *The Oxford History of Hinduism: Hindu Practice*, The Oxford History of Hinduism (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), especially the introduction.

[132] The claim of that this hymn must be sung daily can be found in the Bhagavata Purana (VIII.4.25), as well as the later Vamana Purana and other texts. It is very likely than Padmanabha would have known the Bhagavata Purana, but it is difficult to establish Padmanabha's direct sources based on the information we have from Rogerius, as he may have drawn from a wide range of vernacular sources, too. As Will Sweetman informed me, the story of Gajendra is a good example: while the oldest full account of the story may be in the Bhagavata Purana, earlier peams such as the *Tiruvaymoli* (III.1.9) already mention the story, see Nammallvar, *Endless Song*, trans. Archana Venkatesan (London: Penguin Random House, 2020). It is subsequently also found in local puranas such as the Tamil Kanchipuranam, as well as in Potana's Telugu adaptation of the Bhagavata Purana, the Mahabhagavatamu. We also know that Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, active in the Danish Tranquebar mission, knew of the 'Keschendiramodschum', that is the Kajentiramotcam as a specifically (independent) Tamil tale, see Will Sweetman and R. Ilakkuvan, *Bibliotheca Malabarica: Bartholomaus Ziegenbalg's Tamil library*, in collab. with and Institut français de Pondichéry, Collection Indologie 119 (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2012), 93, while in nearby Tanjore we know of a dance-drama composed by a Nayaka. There are also some details in Rogerius's retelling of the story of Gajendra which might point to the fact that the Bhagavata Purana was not Padmanabha's main source. In the Bhagavata Purana we the elephants are ignorant, not arrogant like we see in the *Open Door* — this is significant departure, as the Bhagavata Purana's version makes the elephant as parallel to our own spiritual ignorance which prevents us from being liberated. In the Bhagavata Purana Vishnu is the one wielding the chakra (a weapon), not Gajendra, and the crocodile is also liberated. For more on the Bhagavata Purana and vernacular sources see Vasudha Narayanan, *The Vernacular Veda: Revelation, Recitation, and Ritual* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1994); Ravi Gupta and Kenneth Valpey, *The Bhagavata Purana: Sacred Text and Living Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Ravi Gupta and Kenneth Valpey, *The Bhagavata Purana: Selected Readings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

[133] *Open Door*, 189.

relates how the Brahmans service the *shaligrama* (a non-anthropomorphic representation of Vishnu) and bring it offerings.[134] Rogerius continues in this manner with the daily routine of the Brahmans until evening, specifying, too, the difference between life stage of Brahmans: Grahastas eat twice a day, while Brahmacharis and Sannyasis — the latter are included here, yet without Rogerius clearly understanding Sannyasa as an *ashrama* as we saw in the previous chapter — eat but once.[135] A.W. reflects the mixture of civil and religious, profane and sacred in the annotations, which partially continue the comparatist agenda of previous chapters, but also speak about superstition and the nature of prayer and polytheism that are elaborated more in other chapters. While the comparative framework, which we can notice throughout the *Open Door*, thus nevertheless produces a sizeable amount of footnotes, it is clear that these chapters are less central to the treatise in the annotations, and especially in chapter sixteen we see many references directing the reader to other parts of the book, a common strategy of the annotator to lead the reader to key chapters of his own treatise.

The tale of Gajendra's liberation must have made an impression on Rogerius, or perhaps Padmanabha told him that this was a particularly important story, as chapter seventeen is dedicated entirely to it. Both parts of the *Open Door* are littered with mythical tales - most of which we find in the Puranas but also the epics (the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*), but as with the story of Gajendra's liberation it is difficult to determine the specific source Padmanabha was drawing from on an individual basis. I will return to the status of myth in the *Open Door* at a later stage; for now it is interesting to note that Rogerius ends this chapter by saying: 'The Brahman said that God is to have said to [the devata]: "Whoever reads your story every day shall receive forgiveness for all of his sins." It is due to this word and this promise of God that the Brahmans read this beautiful story of Gajendra Moksha.'[136] While the annotator is critical of this myth and offers no allegorical reading of it at all, and instead undermines its historical possibility, Rogerius is thus surprisingly positive with his reception of a myth recounting he himself presents to be concerning with the daily forgiveness of sin by Vishnu.

Also the next chapter offers an interesting divergence in narrative strategies and exempla between Rogerius and the annotator that will be relevant when going into more detail on metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls. The chapter more broadly is a fascinating mixture of Rogerius questioning the logic of transmigration, a straightforward account of Brahman diet, and an excerpt from the *Mahabharata*, as Padmanabha gives Rogerius an account of the origin of 'a certain potage' eaten in December in honour of Krishna and his comrades-in-arms.[137] In the final two paragraphs Rogerius also briefly speaks about fasting and mentions, once more, the impact of stratified society on daily life, in this case relating how Brahmans will not eat in the house of someone from another tribe or clan, but also not in the

[134] *Open Door*, 190.
[135] *Open Door*, 191.
[136] *Open Door*, 194.
[137] This is presumably a form of Khichdi.

home of someone from another sect.[138]

Metempsychosis becomes a major topic here for the first time as Rogerius speaks about differing diets of the Indians according to their *varna*. He notes that while the Shudras and Kshatriyas consume everything with the exception of beef, from which everyone abstains, the Brahmans and Vaishyas follow a vegetarian diet. Rogerius makes a rather obvious connection with Pythagoras, any early modern European the most infamous vegetarian and believer in metempsychosis: 'It seems therefore that the teachings of Pythagoras, who expressly forbade his disciples from eating meat, were brought to these far-away nations; and the same reason that moved Pythagoras to forbid the eating of meat was also presented by the Brahman Padmanabha', namely the transmigration of souls, as consuming meat 'could not occur without driving souls out of their bodies, which he considered to be a sin'.[139] This is a straightforward connection to draw for Rogerius, as the vegetarianism and metempsychosis of Pythagoras was not only infamous, but because many other European and Dutch writers had already made this connection, as we have seen with the examples of Van Linschoten, De Laet, and Van Twist. What instead is surprising, at least upon a cursory reading, is the glaring omission of any such connection in the antiquarian footnotes. The annotator makes almost not comparative analysis at all that goes beyond the Indian subcontinent in this chapter. Instead, on this occasion the annotator, more clearly, perhaps, than anywhere else in the book, argues implicitly for a broader 'Hindu' and Indian consensus (as he also mentions how the Parsis follow the same custom) on the abstention from beef and the fact that killing an animal is a sin — without however explicitly speaking of the transmigration of souls and without ever mentioning Pythagoras! In chapter eleven we will see that this is no accident, but due to the narrative strategy followed by the annotator.

### Illness, Death, and Grief

The final chapters on the civility of the Brahmans concern sickness and death, widow-burning and burial, and the manner in which Brahmans grieve. The preceding paragraph on fasting is strategically placed, as Rogerius explains that fasting not only has a cultural-religious significance, but also is used as treatment method when someone is ill. 'Bloodletting is not common here, and what among us is done by bloodletting, they have achieved with fasting'.[140] Mostly the chapter is concerned with death. Padmanabha, through Rogerius, relates how the practice of *Japa* is crucial for reaching Heaven (199-200), how the dying are guided by the terrifying Yamaduta or Vishnuduta to then be judged (204), and how the dead are burnt (205) or buried (206), depending on their sect — the Sannyasis are here argued to all be Vaishnava, yet to follow the burial practice of the Shaiva. Finally, there is also a small section on grieving

[138] *Open Door*, 198-199.
[139] *Open Door*, 194.
[140] *Open Door*, 199.

practices (206-207), which is elaborated somewhat in chapter twenty-one. The greatest part of the chapter is however a prelude for the discussion of sati (widowburning) in chapter twenty.

Rogerius relates how a man, when death appears close and if he is still of a sound mind, will ask his wife whether she will die with him. Rogerius makes the cultural context and the role of women very clear:

> They believe it is proper that she should say yes, because she is bound to do this by the power of the promise she made to her husband; when they enter the state of matrimony, women promise to the man, in the presence of a Brahman and in from of the fire (for according to their belief, the only oath that binds the conscience is the one taken in the presence of a Brahman or before the fire, which they also consider to be a devata) that they shall never leave their husband, so that her soul will accompany his soul in death. [...] They believe that an honourable wife, who loves her husband, will not say no to this, because as the Brahman Padmanabha asserted, following the Veda this is the way of an honourable married woman.[141]

While a woman may not be forced to commit sati, as Rogerius clarifies, it is the most honourable course of action, presented as a very common occurrence and very much glorified (by the Brahmans and Indian pagans more generally) as the act of an honourable wife.[142] To further cement the image of sati as an honourable practice among the Brahmans, Rogerius adds the exemplum of Draupadi for the ideal loyal wife who does whatever her husband asks her to do.[143] This previous incarnation of Draupadi literally stopped the sun from moving out of love for her husband, and Rogerius adds that since she had said 'I want my husband, husband, husband, husband, husband!', repeating 'husband' five times, in another life (as Draupadi) she received five husbands, namely the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharata, which Rogerius sketches in the previous chapter.[144] Besides the exemplum of Draupadi, he references both Padmanabha and Damersa for the fact that a wife 'must hold her husband in such great honour and esteem, that she must first and most of all think about him, that all her thought must revolve around him [...] indeed, the Brahmans say that a woman may do everything with which

[141] *Open Door*, 200-201.

[142] As we have already seen throughout part one above, sati was a favourite topic to comment on in European accounts of India, despite its less than common occurrence. On sati and the way it was perceived by Europeans see Andrea Major, *Pious Flames : European Encounters with Sati, 1500-1830* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006); Andrea Major, *Sati: A Historical Anthology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); John Stratton Hawley, ed., *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994); Jain, *Sati*.

[143] This story is not from the *Mahabharata* itself, as Caland also notes in his critical edition of the *Open Deure*. Again, it is difficult to assert which sources are being used in this context, but we can trace where different figures do appear. Caland is also partially correct in assuming the origin being with a Purana: the story of a husband visiting prostitutes and his wife preventing the sun from rising seems to correspong to that of Ugrashravas and Shilavati from the Brahmanda Purana. The sage in question here is Mandavya. This seems to be mixed with the myth of Nalayani as a previous birth of Draupadi from the southern recension of the *Mahabharata*.

[144] *Open Door*, 197-198.

her husband burdens her without sin, even if it is bad, because the sin shall not be ascribed to her, but to her husband, because she must obey her husband.'[145]

In chapter twenty Rogerius then actually gives us a detailed account of both widow burning and burial, which he claims to have witnessed himself.[146] As I have remarked in my edition of the *Open Door*, already Caland casts doubt on the veracity of the first-hand account of widow burial which follows that of sati. He remarks upon the similarity with Domingo Paes's account from the 1520s, collected by Fernão Nunes.[147] Upon closer inspection one can notice that the section on widow burning is even more similar to that of Paes, all the way to the colour of the shroud. Paes however would most likely not have been available to Rogerius, and it seems likely that the latter based his own account on the more readily accessible writings of Duarte Barbosa.[148] The annotator has not much to say on this section. Rogerius's account on the ideal woman is put into the customary comparative framework; polyandry is remarked upon as a peculiar custom[149] and sati itself is argued to be very old, citing Herodotus and Strabo, but he also mentions the ubiquity of the practice across the Indian subcontinent, Pegu, Siam, and Bali.[150] The actual account of sati, however, was also recognised by the annotator to be a trope and not to be revealing any new information, in contrasts to most of the *Open Door*, and he dryly remarks that while the 'ways used for the burning of women are diverse [...] almost all journal keepers of East Indian voyages give examples of this', to which he refers the reader.[151]

Neither Rogerius nor the annotator are particularly interested in the role of women, but there are some clear and more subtle thoughts in the *Open Door* on the role of women, the ideal wife, and sati from the authors. Rogerius for one interrupts his usually composed and dry style of reporting in favour of a clear condemnation of sati. He calls the practice of the Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra a 'miserable spectacle', but the sati among the Brahmans a 'gruesome matter' carried out with 'even greater savagery', as the widows do not merely jump into the fire, but must lie down on a stack of wood.[152] He adds a veritable lament: 'Oh, inhumane savagery! Who does not shudder at such matters, that are nevertheless true and in use in those places?'[153] Notwithstanding this sudden outburst of emotion, this was well within the bounds of the expected, as the shock at encountering sati was a well-established element of the trope. Perhaps more interesting, if more subtle, is the annotator's comparison of Draupadi

[145] *Open Door*, 202-203.
[146] *Open Door*, 210.
[147] See Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar)*, 391–93.
[148] In Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Primo Volume Delle Navigationi et Viaggi, Raccolto Gia Da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio... Nel Quale Si Contengono La Descrittione Dell'Africa et Del Paese Del Prete Janni, Con Varii Viaggi Della Città Di Lisbona et Del Mar Rosso Insino a Calicut et All'isole Molucche... et La Navigatione Attorno al Mondo, Con La Relatione Dell'isola Giapan... et Alcuni Capitoli Appartenenti Alla Geographia, Estratti Dell'historia Del S. Giovan Di Barros...* (Venice: Lucantonio Giunti, 1550), 302r-v.
[149] *Open Door*, 202, note 213.
[150] *Open Door*, 201, note 208.
[151] *Open Door*, 207, note 236.
[152] *Open Door*, 209.
[153] *Open Door*, 209.

as an exemplum of an obedient wife with similar commands in the bible. He mentions God giving Adam dominion over Eve in Genesis 3, Peter's first epistle, Ephesians 5, and Colossians 3, all on the matter of wives being subject to their husbands. But at the end, he qualifies this: 'But nevertheless, when a man orders his wife to do something that displeases God greatly, she is not expected to fulfil the order of her husband, and she can also refuse this without sinning in the highest degree against God, as one must obey God more than man, said Peter, Act 5:29. So that this example of Draupadi which is told here is not as excellent as the Brahmans seek to make it out.'[154] The annotator thus cautions us against a view that women must blindly obey their husbands based on the equal standing of all humans under God, independent from the more infamous example of sati.

The final chapter of the first part is a very short account of what is done after the death of a kinsman or friend. This does not primarily concern practices of grieving, but what can be done to achieve a better outcome for the deceased after death. This chapter, too, very much blurs the line between civil and religious, and includes the erection of 'pagodas' for the deceased, for whom also services are held.[155] The annotator compares these practices with those of ancient peoples, and also connects this with his discourse on superstition and the development of religion, which will be a major topic in the second part of the book. Perhaps the chapter is also meant to mirror chapter twenty-one in the second part, which discusses the transmigration of souls, thus bookending each part with what happens after death in the context of civil society as well as religion and associated eschatological ideas.

## 8.3 A Picture of Brahman Civility?

This analysis of most chapters of the first part of the *Open Door* has shown us how Rogerius and the annotator structure their separate treatises, the manner in which they conceptualise the Brahmans as a specific elite group within the culture of seventeenth-century Pulicat and South India, and the extent and limits of the concept of Brahman civility.

While the second part discusses the 'belief and worship' of the Brahmans, this first part claims to relate the Brahmans' 'life and customs'. Even though, as we have seen, this is certainly true, many of these customs also pertain to worship, especially in the chapter describing the daily routine of the Brahmans; belief is not only an important element in the chapters of part one I have not yet discussed, but also in the chapter relating the myth of Gajendra, and throughout many other chapters. Moreover, while belief and worship as specific domains of the sacred are distinguished from the life and customs — which itself may also pertain to religion — in the title of each respective part, at the very beginning of chapter one, an opposition of civility and religion is quite clearly stated: 'We shall therefore split this work into two parts,

[154] *Open Door*, 201, note 211.
[155] *Open Door*, 212.

and present in the first part the life and manners of the Brahmans and all that concerns this; and in the second part their religion and opinions of divine matters, including the practice and ritual thereof.[156]

The implication therefore is that the customs related in the first part are distinctly *non-religious*, as the practice and ritual of the religion of the Brahmans is treated in the second part. There is good reason to hypothesise that this first paragraph was written by the annotator (perhaps collaborating with the potential Leiden professor) based on contextual clues such as the authorial 'we', or the style and vocabulary used here that differs from the manner in which Rogerius usually writes — this, however, is obviously conjecture. Nevertheless, Rogerius makes no mystery of the entanglement of the customs related in the first part with the 'religion' of the Brahmans. The Veda is declared to be the 'law book' of the pagans, reminiscent of the role of the Pentateuch for the Hebrews, and Rogerius makes it clear that it is a sacred book.[157] The special status of the Brahmans derives directly from the Vedas (chapter 5). Many of the rites of passage that Rogerius describes in detail, exhibiting precise and largely value-free, observation-based ethnographic reporting, are described by him to relate to oaths (157) and piety (160, 169, 192), or even the servicing of an idol (190f.). Rogerius himself thus does not seem to promote any separation between civil and religious spheres of Brahman and broader South Indian culture. This does not mean that Rogerius is more 'modern' or less biased in his presentation of the Brahmans, even though he might earn praise in this context from contemporary critics of the concept of 'world religions' and the applicability of the terminology outside of the Abrahamic faiths and especially, in our context, of the usefulness of 'religion' in the context of India and Hinduism. We will return to this topic also with the discussion of the theorisation of 'religion', which differs significantly between the annotator and Rogerius himself.

While Rogerius's reporting on the life and customs of the Brahmans constantly pushes the distinction between civil and religious, the annotator's footnotes tell another story. In general, the annotator's treatise has an entirely different function from Rogerius's ethnographic account, and exhibits a complementary but also distinct relationship with the main text. It is naturally difficult to make any claims about the annotator's goals seeing that we lack any other writings from him, however he does provide us with clearly detectable strategies and follows scholarly methods. One of the principal aims of the annotator was certainly to contextualise and culturally translate the pioneering ethnography of Rogerius into something intelligible and useful for a curious and scholarly audience in Europe. His knowledge and employment of travel literature is key: he cites travel accounts, predominantly on the East Indies but also other accounts on all parts of the globe, to construct a comparative framework where the similarity of customs becomes an anthropological question, to be analysed in a historical-antiquarian

[156] *Open Door*, 133.
[157] See especially *Open Door*, 153.

manner. Whereas Rogerius's focus is thus on the immediate local context he encountered personally, with few comparisons and theories regarding the customs related, the annotator puts South Indian society and Brahmanism into a comparative global and historical context. This includes other parts of India, where Brahmans and other groups, for example the Banians of Gujarat, evince cultural similarity that might indicate a common system, though this is never fully argued for or systematically indicated. As we shall see in the following chapters, this also involves a theorisation on 'paganism' as a grander ontological category, with universal elements, notwithstanding the specificities of the Indian and Pulicat contexts, and a view of Indian culture from a historical point of view, incorporating what ancient sources report on the *Brachmannes*, clearly argued to be the same group as the modern Brahmans encountered by Rogerius.

In this manner the annotator contextualises, comments, and digresses on the Brahman customs related in the first part of the *Open Door*. The distinction of Brahman civility from Brahman religion is not explicitly discussed in the annotations, either. We thus see many footnotes dedicated to belief, such as on the transmigration of souls (notes 12, 65, 245), monotheism (32, 47, 110), or superstition (89, 167, 224). With the exception of chapter 10, which is key to the annotator's overall argument, he nevertheless discusses 'religion and opinions of divine matters' predominantly in the second part. Remarks on belief and 'religious' custom do happen, as with the cited notes; but these are situational, dependent on Rogerius's narrative, and often the annotator refers the reader to the key discussions of these topics in the second part. While civility and religion is therefore still intermixed to a degree, almost inevitable considering Rogerius's reporting, unlike the latter the annotator is certainly committed to such a separation.

The two main theories underlying the annotator's discussion and analysis of Brahman civility are the anthropological constants that can be detected across most of the world's societies and civilisations, where he posits universal cultural themes and customs, and the specificity of Brahmanism from a distinctly genealogical point of view, where he clearly suggests a diffusion of ancient Hebrew custom eastwards — perhaps connecting to the very first footnote on the Brahmans being the descendants of Abraham and Keturah — that is then the foundation for many Brahman customs, especially when it comes to the role of hereditary priests (the Brahmans as Levites) and marriage customs, but also more generally. Many more 'basic' customs are put into a larger comparative framework that the annotator uses to argue for the universalism of practices, such as waiting a number of days before naming a child due to high infant mortality. The annotator thus seeks to distinguish areas of civility that are not dependent on culture from those that are, which are usually the more complex or less 'intuitive' customs. The latter are more frequently argued to derive from a Hebrew source, and the priestly context of the Brahmans, with their prerogatives deriving from written 'law', conceptions of purity, and a highly stratified view of society presented to originate with the Hebrews

and paralleling the status and role of the Levites. Brahman civility is thus contextualised and explained, demystified rather than remaining in the highly localised, predominantly emic domain of Rogerius's ethnography.

We will see that many of the topics of this first part on Brahman civility will continue to occupy our attention in the subsequent chapters on Brahman religion, belief, and devotional practices. The key distinction between the highly localised reporting of Rogerius and the comparatist, antiquarian-historical contextualisation of the annotator is present throughout the book. The second part is more dense, however, especially when it comes to the annotator's discussion and theorisation on the origins and nature of Brahman religion and pagan idolatry. Rogerius, too, is more prone to engage with certain tropes, especially those surrounding superstition, 'foolish' displays of idolatrous or superstitious devotion, and devil-worship. This dense material therefore requires a more detailed and less chronological discussion of the subject matter. The next chapter is an ideal segue from the discussion of Brahman 'civility' of this chapter with these topics: the manner in which the role of Brahman priesthood is conceived by the annotator and Rogerius, and the role of sacrifice as well as worship and its ontology in the Indian context.

# CHAPTER 9

# BRAHMAN PRIESTS AND THE NATURE OF SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP

In the previous chapter we have seen that the presentation of Brahman 'civility' in the *Open Door* is concerned primarily with the special status and manner of life of the Brahmans, who are clearly distinguished from the other *varnas* and especially the common people, primarily associated with the Shudras.[158] The separation of civil and religious, as we shall see more clearly in this and the following chapters, is more clear in the annotator's treatise than it is in Rogerius's narrative, and even the former is forced to speak of 'religious' matters regularly in the first part, due to Rogerius's text not making a clear distinction in this regard. The clearest argument in the annotations of the first part is the equivalence of the Brahmans with the tribe of Levi, based on historical-genealogical arguments of a Hebrew origin for much of Brahman custom. As we shall see, while this is not wholly confined to the first part of the *Open Door*, the annotator follows a different strategy and diffusion argument in the second part of the book, which clearly distinguishes the origin of custom from that of religion.

The annotator in this manner takes the priestly role of the Brahmans for granted, and mainly invests time in arguing for the historical roots of their privileges and ordinances. Rogerius, it should be repeated, at no point calls the Brahmans priests, and is aware that the Brahmana *varna* includes many who are engaged in courtly and scribal roles, and mentions that they work many positions excepting those that demand manual labour. At the same time, he reproduces

[158] Rogerius and the annotator both acknowledge the existence of the other *varnas*, but hardly ever speak about them. The vagueness of the term 'Brahman' as they use it makes matters worse: is the distinction primarily between the twice-born (so Brahmans as well as Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) and the rest, or between the Brahmans themselves and all the others? While it is difficult to determine this — and it is equally uncertain whether the two authors employed a strict distinction of these categories — what most clearly emerges in the *Open Door* is an opposition of the 'Brahmans', however defined, and a large pool of common people, often specifically identified with the Shudras or even specific castes, but often also just relegated to an idea of 'commoners'.

a Vedic, Brahmanic point of view on the sacred role of Brahmans, and, though subtle, expresses a not entirely favourable opinion of Brahman priesthood throughout his text that is entangled with the Brahman-centric view on Indian culture, society, worship, theology and belief that he relates via his Brahman informants. While Rogerius's presentation of Hinduism has been praised for its accuracy and lack of condemnation — certainly due to the reproduction of an emic point of view without much digression — Rogerius's own view does shine through in-between his faithful renderings of myth and Brahmanic practice, not dissimilar perhaps from the clear opinion of Henry Lord, who also restricted his condemnation to certain chapters and the preface.

Myth, cosmology, and beliefs, which are almost exclusively dealt with in the second part, are more clearly and dependently elaborated in the *Open Door* than worship and sacrifice, which are largely presented and understood within a material context. In the next chapter we will see that both authors have a clear notion of idolatry and superstition for the South Indian context Rogerius encountered. Their broader conceptualisation of worship and sacrifice naturally is entangled with these concepts, but it makes sense to separate them here as worship and sacrifice are key to the authors' understanding of Brahman priesthood.

## 9.1 Brahman Priesthood

In the first part I have discussed the long durée topos of presenting the Brahmans as priests, from a late antique context all the way to the mid-seventeenth-century context of the *Open Door*. As Klaus Karttunen remarks, in many ways this is very much an etic attempt at commensurability, not unlike the ancient *interpretatio greca* or *romana*, where the foreign is understood in established categories that do not perfectly fit the culture being investigated.[159] The Jesuits' translation efforts were a particularly prominent example of this phenomenon, and a concept as innocuous and obvious to a Christian such as 'God' or 'Heaven' could have serious and long-lasting effects on the Christian mission.[160] In the *Open Door*, too, there is a clear understanding that the Brahmans are priests, argued for more subtly in Rogerius's ethnographic presentation of the Brahmans where we do not encounter the term 'priest' — although we should keep in mind the title of his original work on the Brahmans was 'Baal's Priests' — and discussed more outspokenly in the annotator's treatise, where the Brahmans' role is likened to that of the Levites, as I discussed in the previous chapter. We may therefore ask: what is a 'priest' and what is the context of speaking about priesthood in a seventeenth-century Dutch

[159] Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 81.

[160] The most famous example in this regard is Matteo Ricci. A particularly well-presented and fascinating case study of the Jesuit translation effort in Japan is provided by Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy* (Wil: University Media, 2014). See also Antje Flüchter and Giulia Nardini, "Threefold Translation of the Body of Christ: Concepts of the Eucharist and the Body Translated in the Early Modern Missionary Context," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 7, no. 1 (2020): 86.

setting, whether in India or Europe?

## Conceptual Considerations: Priests, Priesthood, and Ritual

A useful starting point in this regard is not a theoretical consideration of the term 'priest' and 'priesthood', but a historical and confessional point of view. It is not necessary here to sketch the deeper *Begriffsgeschichte* of 'priest and priesthood', which is difficult in any case due to the unclear definition of the term from the perspective of religious studies.[161] What is important to consider, however, is the confessional-linguistic context. The term in Dutch, used both by Rogerius in his earlier treatise and by the annotator throughout the work is 'priester', identical with the German term and equivalent to the English 'priest'. In the long term, the Catholic church had increasingly accentuated the differentiation between priests (sacerdotes) or clergy and laity, and the sacramental nature of consecrated priesthood which stood in opposition to the profane. The Reformation sought to redefine these boundaries and highlight the priestly nature of all the faithful, while rejecting the ritual, cultic nature of the Catholic priest.[162] In the Reformed Dutch church, the synods were dominated by elders — seeking an equivalence with the *presbyters* of early Christianity, whence the term priest originates — and *predikanten*, while charged with looking after the spiritual well-being of their congregation, were not ordained priests like their Catholic rivals. In the Reformed Dutch context, 'priests' are thus immediately *other*, and might be associated either with the Hebrews, with examples of classical antiquity, or with Catholicism.

We have already seen that 'priests', not found terminologically within a Reformed Christianity considers itself the only 'true religion' and rejects the notion of an exclusive priesthood, were readily viewed with suspicion within a Protestant scholarly milieu; especially in Clüver there is a tension between seeing priests as a philosophically inclined group that safeguards knowledge, and viewing priests as deceptive seducers, jealously keeping this knowledge to themselves while feeding idolatry to the masses. From a theological point of view such suspicion was inevitable, with the rejection of Catholic priesthood and the stress on *sola scriptura* with no distinction between the ordained and the laity. A broad usage of 'priest' and 'priesthood' for Catholic and 'pagan' societies alike must therefore always be seen within this context, while from a modern, deconstructivist perspective we might question the broad applicability of this terminology. From the perspective of anthropology and religious studies we might nevertheless try to identify what constitutes a 'priestly' function, and how the authors of the *Open Door* conceptualise the role of priests and priesthood in this regard.

[161] A great starting point for this topic is Leonore Siegele- Wenschkewit, "Priester, Priesteramt, Priestertum," in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon: internationale theologische Enzyklopädie*, 3. Aufl., Neufassung, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 1319–1328.

[162] Siegele- Wenschkewit, 1323–1324. See also Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Max Weber is a good starting point for an identification of the special role assigned to priests. Weber distinguishes an ideal type of priest from the ideal type of the magician: while the latter fights demonic powers with magic, the priest is argued to be a functionary who influences the gods through the medium of devotion. This follows an ideal distinction of 'cult' and 'magic'.[163] Weber acknowledges that in many religions — including Christianity — magic is nevertheless often part of an organised effort to influence the gods; yet as ideal types he asserts the above distinction, where priests are tied to some sort of cultic spaces and the material functioning of the cult dedicated to gods. The opposition to magic, sorcerers, and their fight against demons is an interesting binary that will be useful to keep in mind in the last part of this chapter. Another ideal characteristic suggested by Weber is the institutionalisation of priesthood, in which priests act in the interest of a social structure, as opposed to the free agents that are magicians. Crucially, Weber says that there is no priesthood without any form of cult, while the latter may well exist in the absence of priesthood.[164] In this manner Weber makes ritual action a pillar of his understanding of priesthood, and priests are defined as institutionalised ritual specialists whose office is the ritual worship of the gods for their community, from whom their sacred office is separated in the manner of distinguishing the sacred and profane.

Fundamental anthropological work, too, elaborates this kind of notion on priesthood, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard's discussion of Nuer religion, or, to a lesser extent, the work of Victor Turner.[165] Current definitions of priesthood and priests in this way largely follow Weber's definition. This is true within a scholarly as well as more common place context: the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*, for instance, defines priesthood as 'the office of a priest, a ritual expert learned in a special knowledge of the technique of worship and accepted as a religious and spiritual leader [...] the priesthood has been the official institution that has mediated and maintained a state of equilibrium between the sacred and the profane aspects of human society and that has exercised a stabilizing influence on social structures and on cultic organizations.'[166] As ritual thus is seen to be a crucial element of priesthood, it also makes sense to follow up this brief look at the conceptualisation of 'priesthood' with a discussion of 'ritual' as it pertains to the *Open Door*. In this case my aim is not to contribute or situate my work within the field

[163] Weber's discussion of priests can be found in Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriß der Verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 259–261. 'Die soziologische Seite jener Scheidung aber ist die Entstehung eines »Priestertums« als etwas von den »Zauberern« zu Unterscheidendem. Der Gegensatz ist in der Realität durchaus flüssig, wie fast alle soziologischen Erscheinungen. Auch die Merkmale der begrifflichen Abgrenzung sind nicht eindeutig feststellbar. Man kann entsprechend der Scheidung von »Kultus« und »Zauberei« als »Priester« diejenigen berufsmäßigen Funktionäre bezeichnen, welche durch Mittel der Verehrung die »Götter« beeinflussen, im Gegensatz zu den Zauberern, welche »Dämonen« durch magische Mittel zwingen.' M. Weber, 259.

[164] 'Es gibt kein Priestertum ohne Kultus, wohl aber Kultus ohne gesondertes Priestertum.' M. Weber, 260.

[165] Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969; London: Routledge, 2007).

[166] *Priesthood*, in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2025), by E.O James.

of ritual studies, but to find a concept of ritual that is applicable to writings of Rogerius and the annotator.

In her seminal work, Catherine Bell looks at the way ritual has been approached theoretically by sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of religion.[167] Particularly relevant for the current endeavour is her analysis of anthropological theories of ritual which reify a dichotomy of thought and action. Clifford Geertz's conceptualisation of culture is a prominent example. In *The Interpretation Of Cultures*, Geertz wishes to provide a notion of culture that overcomes the reductionism of subordinating culture to society or society to culture.[168] Within the ambit of religion, an important distinction drawn by Geertz is between 'ethos' and 'world view': a people's ethos 'is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects', while their world view 'is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order'.[169] Religious belief, Geertz goes on, and ritual are mutually interdependent, confronting and confirming one another. The 'ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view describes, and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression.'[170] As Bell notes, by making the world view a people's notion of what constitutes real existence from a cognitive, existential point of view, while making the ethos into the moods and motivations of life, 'not as activity but as the likelihood of activity', these two areas of human existence thus 'clearly lend themselves to a polarization in which ethos is to worldview as action is to thought'.[171]

Bell goes on to show that this opposition between thought and action underlies most theoretical discussions of ritual, and discusses a number of other prominent anthropologists. Her multi-tier presentation of this opposition in Geertz has validity beyond the analysis of his work:

> Most simply, we might say, ritual is to the symbols it dramatizes as action is to thought; on a second level, ritual integrates thought and action; and on a third level, a focus on ritual performances integrates our thought and their action. The opposition of the theorist and the ritual object becomes homologized with two other oppositions, namely, the opposition that differentiates ritual (beliefs versus activities) and the opposition of two fundamental sociocultural forces that is resolved by ritual (conceptual versus dispositional forces). This homology is achieved by a hidden appeal to a type of common denominator, the opposition of thought

[167] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
[168] Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures*.
[169] Geertz, 127.
[170] Geertz, 127.
[171] C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 26.

> and action. In the end, a model of ritual that integrates opposing sociocultural forces becomes homologized to a mode of theoretical discourse that reintegrates the dichotomy underlying the identification of a thinking theorist and an acting object.[172]

Bell's deconstruction of this opposition will be useful for this chapter's discussion of Brahman priesthood; for this it will not be necessary to move towards any other definition of ritual or to go into greater detail on the concept in the manner of Bell. Instead the dichotomy of thought and action will be useful when analysing the conceptualisation of Brahman priesthood and their worship, sacrifice, and ritual in the broadest sense.

### Priesthood in the *Open Door*

We have already seen that in some ways Rogerius presents a familiar picture of the Brahmans. Dutch authors like Van Linschoten and Geleynnsen de Jong, just like Rogerius, highlight common observations about Indian society and the Brahmans, such as social stratification and the role of vegetarianism. Many early modern authors also focus on the sacred duties of the Brahmans; the notion that they are priests and the importance of purity is already highlighted by Varthema, as we have seen above,[173] and Duarte Barbosa simply calls Brahmans 'priests, who are the governors of the prayer houses'.[174] The Jesuits, too, readily presented the Brahmans, along with other elite groups, as priests. While Rogerius, as I discussed in the previous chapter, never employs the terminology of priest or priesthood, and reproduces an impressively emic perspective on the role of the Brahmans in South Indian society, in many ways he presents the Brahmans as priests in a manner not too dissimilar to the authors mentioned here.

The first clear indication of Rogerius's notion of Brahman priesthood occurs in chapter 2.5, when he discusses the prerogatives or privileges afforded to the Brahmans. Ritual sacrifice is highlighted as the first of these, while the teaching of the yajna, the Vedic fire sacrifice, is listed as the second privilege. I will return to this in my discussion of sacrifice; for now it suffices to point out that Rogerius presents this practice as a sacrificial offering 'made by certain Brahmans' — Rogerius here certainly reflects Padmanabha's Smarta and hence smriti (as opposed to the Vedas, the shruti) focus, giving yajna a very relative and limited importance. The third and fourth privileges refer to the Vedas, with the third being the possibility to read the Vedas, and the fourth privilege being the teaching of these texts to others. Rogerius outlines how different *varnas* may or may not interact with Vedic knowledge: the Kshatriyas may read but not teach the Veda, the Vaishyas only engage with the Shastras, while the Shudras may not

[172] C. Bell, 32.
[173] See chapter 2.
[174] Ramusio, *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, 1:302v.

learn any of these. Here Rogerius breaks with his usual composure and gives us an outburst in the form of a Calvinist chastisement of the Brahmans:

> This truly is a strange matter! Because if it is a sacred book, why are they not permitted to read it? That way they may be instructed to live in a holy way; but what else is to be presumed other than that this work is shameful, and that it is as it was with the Eleusian worship, which was celebrated by those of Athens, and in which no one could enter unless they were sanctified [initiated]; and in this way the worship was kept hidden; so that what happened there would not be seen and become evident to the people.[175]

Rogerius here is hardly the non-condemning observer he is often lauded to be: his claim that sacred books ought to be read by everyone is clearly an ethnocentric position that does not necessarily imply judgement, but the implication of the secrecy of the Veda is clearly informed by an underlying notion of priestly imposture or deception. This is already evident here, as Rogerius engages in a rare comparison himself, likening the Veda and its knowledge to esoteric mystery religions in the form of the Eleusian worship — the annotator here merely refers the reader to Diodorus Siculus and Giraldi's discussion of the Eleusian mysteries. The notion of the Brahmans keeping secrets from the larger masses of the populace is not restricted to this passage. We have already seen that the presentation of the Smartas, as opposed to the Vaishnavas and Shaivas goes in a similar direction, with Rogerius not only saying that Smartism 'goes somewhat beyond their understanding' and that the common people cannot grasp it, but highlighting that this is 'all the more so because the Brahmans keep this as a mystery among themselves.'[176] It is doubtful in my opinion that Rogerius had any specific feelings against the Smartas, the sect of his favourite informant Padmanabha, as Rogerius makes similar such remarks about all Brahmans throughout the work. In the first part, in chapter sixteen, we find the passage I discussed in the preceding chapter, where Rogerius speaks about how, if the discussion of Brahmanism is itself a revelation of secrets, his following discussion of what the Brahmans do in their most secret chambers 'may be withheld for even more reasons'.[177] Rogerius here refers back to chapter five, and reiterates that 'following their Veda the Brahmans may not reveal their secrets and mysteries to anyone, and even keep it hidden from their own nation'.[178]

While these are the most obvious examples of Rogerius painting the Brahmans as deceptive priests, we encountered many more subtle indications of this in the second part of the *Open Door*. Chapter 2.8 deals with the 'worship of the Brahmans and the erection of pagodas'; besides a short discussion of what constitutes Brahman worship to which we will return shortly,

[175] *Open Door*, 153.
[176] *Open Door*, 146.
[177] *Open Door*, 187. See above, page 252.
[178] *Open Door*, 187.

this is mostly an enumeration of different Vaishnava and Shaiva temples in modern-day Tamil Nadu, along with mythological narratives linked to certain temples. Rogerius links these narratives with his more outspoken critique of priestly imposture:

> To make their pagodas famous and esteemed, they know how to tell things about them which make them famed in the eyes of poor people: either by telling something in praise or honour of the idol which stands in the temple, or through something special and worthy of marvel that happened in the pagoda.[179]

It is quite clear that Rogerius, as a staunch Reformed Christian, will portray mythological narratives as fables, but the manner in which he relates them differs depending on circumstance. Unlike many other instances in which Rogerius relates myth — the second part especially is full of excerpts from texts such as the Mahabharata, Ramayana, the Puranas, or vernacular texts — Rogerius here goes out of his way to portray these narratives as ludicrous. The continuous use of the conditional here makes for poor style but underlines this: 'In order to bring prestige to the pagoda of Tiruchirappalli, called Srirangam, they purport that the image which stands in the pagoda is the original image which Brahma himself worshipped; and that it is supposed to have been given by him to the ancestors of Rama [...] This gift is supposed to have occurred at the time when Vibhishana returned together with Rama [...] Rama is supposed to have given him this image for his pleasure [...]'. A few pages later he repeats this sentiment when saying that 'they also tell strange things about other pagodas in order to elevate their stature', and ends the chapter very critically by stating 'this and similar such nonsense the Brahmans tell and in this way convince the poor people, so that they may be encouraged to regard the pagodas highly and provide these with rich gifts and donations.'[180] We can detect a similar opinion in the chapter on festivities (chapter 2.12) as Rogerius says: 'To bring fame to this festival among the people, the Brahmans tell the following fable', after which he recounts, with plentiful use of the conditional, the mythical origins of the Ananta Vrata (or Chaturdashi) festival as we might find it in the Mahabharata.[181]

A final example of presenting the Brahmans as priestly deceivers may be found in chapter 2.14, nominally a discussion of the honour given to lesser gods, but containing an interesting excursus in the form of Rogerius querying Padmanabha on the relationship between polytheistic devotional practices and the theistic traditions' insistence that there is but one highest God. At the end of this discussion Rogerius muses that it is strange 'and rightly worthy of marvel' that despite the importance and high stature of Brahma there are no temples nor worship dedicated to this particular deity.[182] Ever the curious ethnographer, Rogerius relates how he

[179] *Open Door*, 251.
[180] *Open Door*, 253.
[181] *Open Door*, 267.
[182] *Open Door*, 276.

asked Padmanabha why this was so, to which Padmanabha responded that 'in olden times a certain saint had said that for Brahma no pagodas shall be erected'; this may refer to the story of Bhrigu testing the trimurti as related prominently in the Bhagavata Purana, which Rogerius already mentioned — though he seems unaware of the connection here — back in chapter 2.2 as the reason for the shape and worship of the lingam via Bhrigu's cursing of Shiva.[183] But Rogerius was clearly not convinced by this explanation for the apparent lack of worship dedicated to Brahma. He ends this discussion and the chapter with an alternative explanation:

> However, some think this to be an indolence of the Brahmans, and that they have invented this in order to recommend themselves all the more to the people, in place of Brahma, in order to acquire some benefit from this. They are indeed very adept at gaining respect among the people and instilling in them the idea that they must esteem them highly, as is clear, among other things, when they say that those who fight and die for the Brahmans and cows shall go to the place of Indra. However, I cannot agree that this should be the reason why Brahma has no pagodas.[184]

Rogerius here seems unconvinced by the available explanations for the lack of worship of Brahma — yet, once more, the Brahmans are here depicted to take advantage of and plant ideas among the common people, convincing them of all sorts of things for their own benefit. Rogerius, who has been lauded for his non-condemning ethnography and accuracy for so long, thus espouses a clear bias against the Brahmans. This does not take anything away from his detailed ethnography, nor his even, matter-of-fact reporting; yet it reminds us that Rogerius was still very much a Calvinist preacher speaking with and to non-Christians. Rogerius, in between detailing customs, myth, and belief with painstaking attention, readily calls out the Brahmans for their selfish predilection for secrecy and deception. The Brahmans thus fit a trope of priestly imposture or priestcraft that would become so prominent in later Enlightenment debates surrounding religion.[185] Rogerius, unlike the annotator, never implies that what the Brahmans keep to themselves is 'true religion' in any manner or form; rather, the Brahmans deceive to accumulate what we may term symbolic, cultural, social, and economic capital. Rogerius does not explicitly connect this priestly deception or imposture with pagan idolatry or compare this with the 'priestcraft' of his Catholic rivals, but these were ever-present points of connection that contemporaries might have picked up on.[186]

The annotator, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, also presents the Brahmans as priests, and makes a clear analogy and often a genealogical-historical connection with the

[183] *Open Door*, 224.
[184] *Open Door*, 276.
[185] See on this Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*; Lancaster and McKenzie-McHarg, "Priestcraft. Early Modern Variations on the Theme of Sacerdotal Imposture" and the articles of this special issue.
[186] See especially S. J. Barnett, "The Book of Priestcraft Open: Fraud and Idolatry," in *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests: The Origins of Enlightenment Anticlericalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 105–128.

ancient Hebrews and particularly with the tribe of Levi. Hebrew religion and society itself is scrutinised intensely by the annotator, as he picks up the discourse of Hebrew idolatry and mostly displaces the primacy of the Mosaic tradition in favour of an Adamic transmission line of true religion and wisdom. Despite his clear use of the imposture *topos* in the preface, where he so vociferously calls for the mouths of the teachers (the Brahmans) to be shut by learning the foundations of their religion, the annotator does not engage much with this view of the Brahmans in his footnotes. Imposture does appear in connection with Muhammad, who is argued to have forged the Koran and Islam 'out of Judaism, Christianity, and paganism; and he took out of each what he liked best, so that there is not one single principle in the whole of the Alcoran which he did not borrow from one of these three', adding that their abstinence from pork was taken from the Jews.[187] Another example is his discussion of the origins of Zoroastrianism, found in a footnote on incest. Here he remarks that among the Persians marriages between father and daughter, son and mother, or brother and sister were allowed, and that this originated with 'one Andsham [Ashavan?], the first priest of the fire; he, who was put into this office by Nimrod, and who was the first to make sacrifices, was told by the devil that no one was worthy of serving the fire but those who commingle with their mother, daughter, and sister. This was done by Andsham, and he has been followed in this by the Magi up to this day.'[188] Yet most of the numerous discussions of priests in the annotations, both the analogies with the Levites and the comparisons with priests from antiquity and those found in travel writing on the East Indies, are rather matter of fact, such as, to make some examples, the adherence to vegetarianism (note 12) the antiquity of begging for alms (note 57), or even the dancing for religious ritual and festivals which the annotator closely connects with the role of the priests without calling this obvious idolatry (note 407).[189]

This is not to say that the annotator does not see superstition and idolatry among the Brahmans; he clearly identifies practices and beliefs that fit these negative categories. What he seems to do, instead, is to identify distinct and specific roles for the Brahmans. The way that the annotator presents the Brahmans is complicated and blurry, but the following table is useful for identifying ideal types according to which he interprets the beliefs and practices told by Rogerius, and will be of use for the remainder of this analysis. While the situation is especially complicated for what I have here termed 'Low Culture' — the beliefs and practices that are common to everyone, where the boundary between 'Brahmans' and the common people becomes very blurry — this is a useful guide to highlight the tendency towards distinguishing thought and action, esoteric and exoteric, practices and beliefs, as well as the elite Brahmans from the common masses. As we will see, these categories are not set in stone, either, but are mutually interdependent and a given category might depend on another for its very existence.

[187] *Open Door*, 134, note 10.
[188] *Open Door*, 170, note 141.
[189] *Open Door*, 137, 149, 262.

| | **Belief — Thought** | **Practice — Action** |
|---|---|---|
| **High Culture** | True Religion | Civil Ritual |
| **Esoteric** | Hidden/Contained | Restricted |
| **Adamic/Mosaic** | Brahman Sages | Brahman Priests |
| **Low Culture** | Superstition, Idolatry | Image Worship |
| **Exoteric** | Inversion/Corruption | Divination, Civil Practices |
| **History of Idolatry** | Brahmans | Brahmans |
| **–>Egypt/Assyria** | Common People | Common People |

Table 9.1: Ideal Types of Thought and Action in the Annotations

The tension between civil and religious that we encountered in the previous chapter in this manner makes more sense. The annotator puts the emphasis in the first part on the origin and nature of Brahman priesthood. Deriving from the ancient Hebrews and at the very least mirroring the tribe of Levi, practices surrounding coming of age, marriage, or everyday affairs are presented as inherently civil acts, with ritual action being put into the background. This is important, as arguing the Brahmans to be fulfilling a civil function in their role as priests in the first part makes it possible to distinguish further roles as well as the loci of true religion and error within this system. In their active priestly role, engaging in (civil) ritual, the religious role of actions is ignored or at least argued to be of small significance. In the second part, instead, Brahman belief is, as we shall see, argued to belong to the domain of true religion, while almost all other practices related to worship, especially the worship of idols, processions, festivities, or other forms of physical devotion, are instead argued to be obvious idolatry.

While Rogerius also follows a dichotomy of thought and action that is analogous to belief and practice, his idea of the Brahmans is more straightforward, where — not unlike many twentieth-century anthropologists — he seems to follow a notion of ritual acting out or performing thought-based belief, but he does not himself adhere to a notion of distinct spheres of Brahman life. The Brahmans are (undeclared) priests when they perform the yajna, when they confirm a marriage, or when they perform acts of worship. But it seems quite clear that for Rogerius a Brahman is always just a Brahman, active in a unified religious culture with no separate 'secular' elements. The distinction of civil and religious is thus *not* a key organising principle to Rogerius's text in and of itself. We shall see this in more detail when further analysing ritual, worship, and sacrifice as Brahman practices, and their relationship to Brahman priesthood in the narratives of Rogerius and the annotator.

## 9.2 Worship, Ritual, Sacrifice

According to the separation of customs vis-à-vis belief and worship that we find in the *Open Door*, we might expect to find worship, ritual, and sacrifice to predominantly be described in

the second part. While belief is indeed concentrated in chapter one to eight of the second part, the situation is more complicated with ritual and sacrifice, which we have already encountered briefly in the last chapter, and worship, which is broadly understood by Rogerius as an organised system of devotion and devotional practices; the annotator in these cases tends to use religion, which however also includes belief, while Rogerius instead predominantly employs 'religious' and 'religion' to denote piety. For Rogerius there is no question that ritual and sacrifice are essential elements of Brahman life, with no apparent separation of sacred and profane areas or divisions. The annotator on the other hand, who as we have seen is the one who seeks such a division between civility and religion, is less interested in the details of Brahman ritual and more invested in outlining what may be related to true religion (if perhaps in a corrupted or even inverted form) and what instead is clear idolatry.

### Delineating Worship

A good starting point for this analysis is chapter eight in the second part, 'Of the Worship of the Brahmans and the Erection of Pagodas'. Rogerius begins the chapter by confirming the dichotomy of thought and action, after delineating belief in the previous chapters, and here arguing that worship is the acting out of belief:

> In the previous chapters we have discussed the highest God Vishnu, and Shiva, and some lesser gods which are honoured among the pagans. And since where there is a God there must also be worship, we shall now turn our attention to examining their practices regarding worship; so we shall seek to investigate how they conduct their worship, and remark whom they serve, in what way, or through which external manifestations.[190]

Rogerius already introduced his discussion of God and the subsequent chapters on Brahman beliefs in a similar manner, where, based on a *consensum gentium*, he argues that there is no living nation that does not know of God, and hence 'it must also have worship'.[191] I will return to the *consensum gentium* argument in chapter eleven; for the current discussion it is important to note the complementarity of belief and worship that follows thought and action that Rogerius asserts in both of these cases.

Rogerius continues this presentation of Brahman worship by putting it into three categories: the worship — according to what they themselves profess, insists Rogerius — 'of the highest God, the lesser gods, and the devil'.[192] We must assume that Rogerius's Reformed view was at all times translating what he saw and heard to a certain degree; but it I should say at the outset here that he reporting what he finds: monotheism was, of course, very much a reality in

[190] *Open Door*, 248.
[191] *Open Door*, 213.
[192] *Open Door*, 249.

seventeenth-century Tamil Nadu, and besides a large pantheon of gods there was and still is believed to also exist certain group of beings who, while not conforming to a Christian notion of the devil, are very much engaged with despite their dangerous and adversarial nature — I will return to this in the final section of this chapter. Large parts of 'Of the Worship of the Brahmans and the Erection of Pagodas' does in fact not deal with this tripartite distinction, but instead presents a list of important temples along with associated myths as already discussed, but importantly Rogerius does provide us with an overview of the key points of Brahman worship, which are divided into inward worship and outward worship. While both are here termed to belong to the category of 'worship', inward worship is related to belief and a devotion of conviction, while outward worship is tied to ritual and displays of devotion, again reifying a dichotomy between thought and action. The list most certainly derives from the Navavidha Bhakti, or ninefold devotion as outlined and exemplified in the Bhagavata Purana (7.5.23-24), listed here in paraphrase: 'The child devotee Prahlada lists nine types of devotional activity: along with hearing and glorifying the supreme (shravana and kirtana, respectively), there is remembrance of Vishnu (smarana); rendering services to him (pada-sevana); performing ritual worship (arcana); submitting prayers [or praise] (vandana); regarding oneself as the Lord's servant (dasya); acting as the Lord's friend (sakhya); and submitting one self to him entirely and exclusively (atma-nivedana).'[193] The distinction into inward and outward seems to derive from Rogerius himself. Inward worship is thus defined by one's personal relationship to God: giving one's soul entirely over to God, remaining steadfast in worship, and contemplating God's magnificence. Hence in the order outlined by Rogerius this seems to correspond to:

1. Man must not be haughty, but must give his soul entirely over to God. — *atma-nivedana*
2. He must remain God's servant. — *dasya*
3. He must always be a great friend to God. — *sakhya*
4. He must contemplate his greatness and magnificence. — *smarana*[194]

The 'outward service' instead is more difficult to tie directly to Prahlada's list, but most probably corresponds in this manner:

5. He must be pleased to hear of his majesty. — *shravana*

[193] Gupta and Valpey, *The Bhāgavata Purāna*, 15. On Bhakti and the Bhagavata Purana see further Barbara A. Holdrege, "Bhāgavata Purāṇa as Text-Avatāra: From Purāṇa-Veda to Embodiment of Bhagavān," in *Bhakti and Embodiment* (London: Routledge, 2015), 109–159. Again, it is of course difficult to establish the exact sources used by Padmanabha, and while the Bhagavata Purana is the *locus classicus* of the Navavidha Bhakti it can be found in other texts, which include vernacular sources, such as the early modern Awadhi Ramcharitmanas, composed by Tulsidas. See on this Philip Lutgendorf, *The Life of a Text: Performing the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsidas*, in collab. with American Council of Learned Societies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

[194] *Open Door*, 249.

6. He must herald his name and excellence. — *kirtana*
7. One must worship his being, and according to the interpretation of the Brahman [Padmanabha] this means regarding the images. — *pada-sevana*
8. One must supply his images with necessities and decorations. — *arcana*
9. One must pay tribute to his images. — *vandana*[195]

Clearly hearing and heralding corresponds to shravana and kirtana, which together with smarana are perhaps the most important of the nine points in the Bhagavata Purana.[196] We may thus ask why not only the daily routine of the Brahmans, but especially the story of Gajendra's liberation made its way into the first part of the *Open Door*; once more, this fits more closely with the annotator's agenda of distinguishing civil and religious spheres of life than with Rogerius's text, although even taking that into consideration it is hard to justify this choice. Yet even remaining with Rogerius's ethnography, it is apparent that here we see the limits of Rogerius's rendering of emic knowledge and categories, and a privileging of not only a superimposed dichotomy of belief versus practice or thought and action, but also a Calvinist preference for personal and intellectual rather than an 'outward' ritualistic form of devotion. The list with its inward and outward forms of worship, far removed from the original order where shravana and kirtana appear first, thus also follows an order of importance (at least according to Rogerius) where the forms of worship move from being in accordance with Christianity to clear idolatry: being a steadfast and loyal believer > exultation of the magnificence of God > idolatrous image worship.

Rogerius then continues with a description of 'what the pagans do by force of and following the content of these commands in their outward worship in honour of Vishnu or Shiva.'[197] The rest of the chapter and the following three chapters are entirely dedicated to temples. 'First of all', he says in regard to the outward worship 'they build temples in their honour', which he follows up with the previously discussed presentation of different temples, where the Brahmans are depicted as experts at priestcraft, deceiving the common people.[198] Chapter 2.9 is predominantly a matter of fact description of Shaiva and Vaishnava temples, especially from the perspectives of their visual appearance and content with a presentation of smaller shrines dedicated to other deities of the associated tradition. He describes the different levels of a temple, where the first part is always open to everyone, the second part is 'closed off with a strong gate' and though open during the day people are not 'permitted to go in by the Brahmans who are the keepers of the pagoda'.[199] Here the description becomes similar

[195] *Open Door*, 249.
[196] Barbara A. Holdrege, *Bhakti and Embodiment: Fashioning Divine Bodies and Devotional Bodies in Krsna Bhakti* (London: Routledge, 2015), 170.
[197] *Open Door*, 250.
[198] *Open Door*, 250.
[199] *Open Door*, 254.

to Varthema's description of Deumo, although Rogerius does not explicitly connect this with devil worship: 'There commonly stand very terrifying statues: men with many heads and arms. It is gruesome to gaze upon these statues. This is followed by the third part, which is again locked away by a strong door; there the idol, be it Vishnu, or be it Shiva, has his place.'[200]

While Rogerius does not employ an anthropological, comparative view of religion that we see prominently in the annotations, in these chapters we do see a subtle comparative analysis of Hindu temples with Christian churches, and he states that Vaishnava and Shaiva temples, though larger than temples for the lesser gods, are 'in no way [...] comparable with the churches in our towns'.[201] He also gives us a detailed account of how the Brahmans consider the 'pagodas', based largely on personal experience, namely when he visited a Shiva temple with Padmanabha. Temples are thus described to be 'sacred places and houses of God, where they believe God lives', and thus places one must traverse 'with extreme humility', which he observes with curiosity, noting that Padmanabha slipped off his shoes and placed his robe in a specific manner.[202] In chapter eleven, which discusses the 'images that the Brahmans erect in their pagodas', Rogerius brings this comparison to a head:

> Over the period of ten years in which I lived in Pulicat, a town in which stands a pagoda in honour of Vishnu and also one for Shiva, both of which I have many times visited, I never had the impression that any assembly of the people occurred in these [pagodas], nor could I ever discern that they had set aside some days for public worship. This I know: on certain set nights they are in the habit of revealing the statue of Vishnu, and also Shiva, and to bear the same on the shoulders through the main streets of the town.[203]

The subsequent discussion outlines processions, which Rogerius describes in a mostly neutral tone; yet it is clear that this is the domain of idolatry: 'from that which has been said we have understood clearly enough that the pagodas are primarily an abode of images, and a respectable palace wherein the same have lodgings like a great lord.'[204] I will return to these topics in the next chapter. For now it suffices to see how Rogerius quickly associates outward worship with idolatry. Much like with earlier travellers we should keep in mind that there was limited agency in depicting clearly apparent idolatry as anything other than idolatry, but it is nevertheless important to remark how Rogerius, despite his predominantly value-free descriptions, makes no mystery of what he thinks of Brahman worship.

The annotator is not overtly interested in the details of Brahman worship outside of connecting it either to an ancient wisdom tradition or idolatry, or, rarely, seeing it within a

[200] *Open Door*, 254.
[201] *Open Door*, 253.
[202] *Open Door*, 257.
[203] *Open Door*, 260-261.
[204] *Open Door*, 263.

developmental model of the history of religion. In the first part there is hardly any acknowledgment of worship or ritual from the side of the annotator, who predominantly seeks to present the Brahmans from a comparative perspective and as old testament priests performing civil ritual. When Rogerius discusses how the Brahmans spend their day in chapter sixteen, he merely adds some notes on the formalities of ritual worship: the act of sitting down for worship according to Numa Pompilius, or the cardinal direction in which adherents of different religions chose to worship.[205] Similarly, he compares the *tirtha*, the sacred water at temples, with the waters of separation 'with which the Jews cleansed themselves', referencing Numbers 19:9, reiterating the connection between Brahman and Hebrew conceptions of purity.[206]

As we shall see, in the second part the annotator is predominantly interested in connecting the Brahmans to an ancient wisdom tradition, whilst also discussing the origins and nature of idolatry as an inversion of truth. Again, worship that does not directly tie into this programme does not seem to interest the annotator very much, or at least he is content in having Rogerius present all the relevant details. One of the most interesting statements indeed tries to establish some sort of connection between the nine forms of worship that Rogerius delineates and a soteriology, while informed by Padmanabha's Smartism, that is very much in line with the simple form of worship of his own Reformed faith: 'They say that those who follow these nine points for a certain time and in a conscientious manner receive great understanding and reach such perfection that they need no longer fulfil these outward duties, which they consider an ABC; but merely by thinking of God he will do him a great service and will reach Heaven.'[207] Mostly the annotator refrains from going into such detail, however, while comparing the idol worship described by Rogerius with historical and contemporary equivalents as we will see in the next chapter.

## 9.3 Typologies of Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a central concept in the *Open Door* and is present in many forms and guises. While we have seen that Rogerius conceives of the Brahmans as priests through their role as priestly deceivers and stewards of temples and the images held there, declared to be central for worship of Brahmans and non-Brahmans alike, sacrifice is shown by Rogerius to be key to the identity of the Brahmans more specifically. While Rogerius certainly did not realise this, he is here roughly reproducing a difference between the role of sacrifice and especially the yajna, the Vedic fire sacrifice, as outlined in the Vedas, and bhakti-centred devotion, as he shows with the navavidha bhakti (ninefold devotion) and his descriptions of theistic traditions centred around personal godheads. The tension between Vedic prescriptions of sacrifice and the eating of meat

[205] *Open Door*, 188, notes 168, 169.
[206] *Open Door*, 191, note 183.
[207] *Open Door*, 249, note 375.

and the tenets of ahimsa (non-violence) and renouncing, which also form a great part of the ethnographic presentation of Brahmanism, is noted by Rogerius and the annotator, and lead to differing conceptualisations of (Brahman) sacrifice. While Rogerius describes sati, as already discussed, and also narrates the Puranic tale of the Daksha yajna where the latter's daughter Sati throws herself into the ritual fire, he does not conceive of widow immolation as sacrifice, and neither does the annotator.[208]

### Vedic Sacrifice

Especially in the form of sacrificial offerings — *offerhanden* in the original Dutch (equivalent to *offer* or *offerande* in modern Dutch), linguistically emphasising the act of giving rather than the sacrality of the ritual — sacrifice is a key distinction and privilege of the Brahmans, described in detail by Rogerius. If we turn back to chapter five in the first part, where Rogerius lists the five privileges granted to the Brahmans by the Veda, ritual sacrifice appears as the very first point:

> 1. That the Brahmans may hold the festivity of *Jagam* [yajna]. In this festivity a beast must be slaughtered, but since the Brahmans may not spill any blood, because they may not commit blood guilt; so it is that the beast which is to be sacrificed is gripped by the neck and they choke its throat, so that it asphyxiates; when the beast is dead they cut it into pieces and burn it with fire and say some prayers over it; and they give the Brahmans, which are present at the festivity some pieces of the heart, which they eat. So that the Brahmans, who in no case nor any circumstance eat meat, do this very thing on the occasion of the yajna. And that is why, said the Brahman Padmanabha, if you ask the Brahmans whether they eat any meat, and when they say absolutely no, they, so he said, do not speak the truth; and you could accuse them with the fact that they eat meat during the celebration of yajna.

A clear element in this description with critique coming from within, namely with Padmanabha supplying an argument against Vedic sacrifice based on his own explanations surrounding dharma and especially ahimsa, is certainly explained by Padmanabha's Smartism and its base in smrti rather than Vedic shrauta (Vedic ritual following the Vedas, i.e. shruti).[209] As Caland

[208] *Open Door*, 221-222. Rogerius does not seem to know that the daughter of Daksha is called Sati, but refers to her as Parvati also in this (previous) incarnation.

[209] On Vedic animal sacrifice see Wilhelm Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991). Halbfass (88-89) also notes: 'Traditionally, the animal sacrifices prescribed for certain Vedic rituals have been in the focus of debate on the relationship between ahimsa and dharma.' On the changing conceptions of the yajna see J.E.M Houben, "To Kill or Not To Kill The Sacrificial Animal," in *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History*, ed. J.E.M Houben and K.R. van Kooij (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 105–183 and Axel Michaels, *Homo Ritualis: Hindu Ritual and Its Significance for Ritual Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially chapter 7.

notes, Rogerius is largely correct in his assessment, even though he conflates two of the usually six privileges according to smrti literature, and overstates the importance and frequency of animal sacrifice for the yajna, which is here not further distinguished.[210] A negative opinion of shrauta sacrifices — as opposed to the smarta yajna, which is not described here and not referred to as yajna in the *Open Door* — is also repeated just a little later, when Rogerius says that 'the offering is made by certain Brahmans, with the conviction that they may after death reach *Dewendre-locon* [Indra-loka], which is a certain place of bliss of which Indra is the chief.'[211] However, he then adds: 'The Brahmans who have their eye on obtaining Heaven itself will not perform this yajna; because where the yajna is celebrated, meat is eaten, many others will by no means find themselves there either, out of fear that they should sin by eating meat, as well as due to the fact that to eat meat is as disgusting to them as some stinking carcasses may be to us.'[212] This is reiterated in chapter fourteen in the second part, where Rogerius says: 'The yajna, done in honour of Indra, only serves to reach Indra-loka, and therefore the Brahmans who have their eyes on Heaven do not want to sacrifice at the yajna in honour of Indra.'[213] The advaitin Padmanabha here comes through rather clearly, and in this manner the Brahmans who perform and attend shrauta sacrifices are presented as less committed to liberation, as they merely seek to reach Indra-loka or Svarga instead of Heaven in the form of moksha (liberation).

### Sacrifice as a Mark of Religion in the Annotations

While the annotator is comparatively silent when it comes to worship, sacrifice is a topic he is more eager to comment on, and he integrates Brahman sacrifice into his antiquarian-historical model. He disagrees with Rogerius on the reasons for not spilling any blood during the yajna: 'I believe that our author errs on this point, and that these are not the actual reasons why the Brahmans asphyxiate the beast which they sacrifice, instead of spilling blood; beyond doubt there could not be any greater sin for them than to kill that which had received life; because the evil can only consist of the expulsion of a soul from its body; and that happens as much when asphyxiating a beast, as it does in any other manner [of killing].'[214] This is an interesting note because it shows that the annotator sees Brahmanism not just as idolatry nor even as a form of ancient wisdom, but as a cultural system based on a reasonable philosophical foundation with an internal logic. The annotator here seems to understand Padmanabha's criticism of animal sacrifice based on the observation of ahimsa better than Rogerius, who simply casts eating meat as sinful.

[210] *Open Deure* 1915, 19. When outlining the second privilege, he says that the Vaishya are excluded from the yajna, which does not follow the Vedas according to which only the Shudras are excluded.
[211] *Open Door*, 152.
[212] *Open Door*, 152.
[213] *Open Door*, 275-276.
[214] *Open Door*, 151, note 65.

While 'worship' as a category is not very useful to the annotator with his focus on either outward idolatry or esoteric ancient wisdom in the absence of idolatry, sacrifice is understood by him to be an inherent aspect of religion as an anthropological as well as Christian phenomenon. However, the annotator posits an important difference between a Christian form of sacrifice, to which Hebrew sacrifices may also be counted, and pagan sacrifice to multiple gods:

> Sacrifices have at all times originated with religion, even at the beginning of Creation, as one sees from the story of Cain and Abel. God had himself ordained several sacrifices in the Old Testament, about which Moses talks throughout. They were proofs of proper invocation and thanksgiving for the benefaction received; there were also some sacrifices of forgiveness, which foreshadowed Christ. But of these the pagans knew little; they have always sacrificed to those whom they considered gods as well, yet only, as Eustathius says, to prove their gratitude and to petition for the continuation of benefits. [...] With the coming of Christ all these bloody sacrifices have come to an end, even though the Christians, too, have their sacrifices. See Hebrews 7:27 and 9:11, Ephesians 5:2, Luke 11:13, 11:14 and 24:ult, Philippians 4:18, and other places.[215]

Rogerius does not engage in an explicit comparative discourse in his presentation of the yayna; but the animal sacrifice with its internal incoherence is implicitly very *other* to the known Christian forms of sacrifice.[216] The annotator, like Rogerius, also uses sacrifice as a marker of otherness, but within a specifically comparative framework and with an underlying theoretical distinction of different forms of sacrifice. We need to here consider theological disagreement on the nature of sacrifice and especially the Eucharist between Catholic and Reformed Christians. For Christians themselves, the sacrifice of Jesus was the one and only sacrifice. Yet while for Catholics the Mass may be seen as a sacrifice itself, the situation is more complicated for Reformed Protestants for whom there is no mass as a sacrament with a priest coordinating this sacrifice, yet there is still the sacrament of the Eucharist with the real (spiritual) presence of Christ.[217] According to Tridentine decree, the Eucharist surpasses other sacraments in its sanctity, as while Christ acts through the other sacraments, he is actually

[215] *Open Door*, 151, note 66.

[216] On sacrifice as a tool for describing otherness see Cristiana Facchini, "Atonement and Sacrifice. Early Debates and Classical Theories," in *Sacrifice and Sacred Violence: History, Comparisons, and the Early Modern World*, ed. Cristiana Facchini et al. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2025), 129–157; Daniel Barbu, "Sacrifice and Idolatry," in *Sacrifice and Sacred Violence: History, Comparisons, and the Early Modern World*, ed. Cristiana Facchini et al. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2025), 159–179. On the specific early modern Indian context from a European point of view, see Ferrara, "The Sacrifice of Others."

[217] On the Eucharist as a sacrifice see Trent Pomplun, "Post-Tridentine Sacramental Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 348–361; Michael Allen, "Sacraments in the Reformed and Anglican Reformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 283–297; Stephen R. Holmes, "A Reformed Account of Eucharistic Sacrifice," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 24, no. 2 (2022): 191–211.

present in the Eucharist.[218] 'The sacrifice of the Mass is, here, the way in which Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is made real and effective to individuals; Trent does not quite deny that one may benefit from Christ's death without receiving the Mass, but the implication that this is the normal and proper way to so benefit is clear.'[219] The issue for Protestants, beginning with Luther, is that if sin may only be forgiven through Christ's death on the cross, the suggestion that any sins could be forgiven through the celebration of the mass contradicts this foundational idea, and opens the door to a conception of celebrating mass as a good work that could secure a forgiveness of sin.[220]

Let us thus turn back to the annotator's note on the ontology of sacrifice. The annotator clearly identifies sacrifice as an essential element of all religion — it is unclear here whether 'religion' indicates true religion, religion as a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon or even both, but in effect he treats it as the latter. Sacrifice in fact has been functionalised: the Hebrews had been ordered by God to perform offerings in order to show gratitude towards their deity. The annotator mirrors the scholarship on the history of idolatry of Selden and Vossius, who engage in the same arguments. Rites in this manner become utilitarian in nature and serving a social function, with the ancient Hebrews distinguishing themselves from the pagan Egyptians through their rituals — as Jonathan Sheehan has remarked, this is a decidedly anthropological way of analysing religion which also had repercussions in the status of theology in late-seventeenth-century scholarship and politics.[221]

The pivotal difference, in any case, between Christians and the rest is historical, namely the sacrifice of Christ. The annotator has to stress the orthopraxy of the Hebrews, as God was the author of some of the old testament sacrifices, which were primarily practices of thanksgiving and proofs of their covenant with God; some sacrifices on the other hand foreshadowed Christ. Implicitly employing a hermeneutical argument of accommodation, there is no tension here, as God adopted a manner of worship appropriate for the Hebrews at the given time and for this people, invalidated by the coming of Christ. The pagans are here differentiated largely from the Christians, and, though to a lesser extent, from the Hebrews. The issue is not so much the sacrifice to a deity — disregarding for a moment the issue of whom the sacrifice is offered to for the sake of argument — to show gratitude, as in the case of the Hebrews, but the 'petition

[218] Holmes, "A Reformed Account of Eucharistic Sacrifice," 197. See also J. F. McHugh, "The Sacrifice of the Mass at the Council of Trent," in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. S. W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 157–181.

[219] Holmes, "A Reformed Account of Eucharistic Sacrifice," 198–199.

[220] McHugh, "The Sacrifice of the Mass at the Council of Trent," 157–158: 'Was the celebration of the mass a good work availing for the remission of sins for the living and the dead? And was it a good work to provide a stipend for a priest who would in return celebrate mass in order to secure such remission or forgiveness? Here was a practical problem affecting every Christian, for it is self-evident that it raised the question, "Can the rich, by providing stipends and founding chantries, buy forgiveness and remission of punishment due to their sins, for themselves and their deceased relatives?"'

[221] Sheehan, "Altars of the Idols." On sacrifice in this context see especially Jonathan Sheehan, *On the Altar: A History of Sacrifice from the Sacred to the Secular* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2026).

for the continuation of benefits', as the sacrifice becomes a transactional exchange, conflicting with the Christian conceptualisation of grace.

The last element of the footnote is interesting, too, for the annotator merely remarks that while bloody sacrifices have disappeared (from Europe at least) due to the coming of Christ, 'the Christians, too, have their sacrifices', followed by a list of scriptural references that turn out to be important for how the annotator conceives of Christian sacrifice. The references to Hebrews clarify that daily sacrifices are no longer necessary due to the sacrifice of the one and only high priest, namely Jesus.[222] Ephesians 5:2 underlines Christ's sacrifice: 'And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.'[223] Philippians 4:18 on the other hand has been interpreted as exemplifying spiritual sacrifice, where sacrificial language is used for the gifts from the Philippians to Paul during his captivity.[224] While the annotator remains subtle here, and merely references these scriptural passages, their specific selection seems to seek to underline

[222] Hebrews 7:27 (NKJV): 'who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.' 9:11: 'But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.'

[223] This is an important scriptural passage in the context of the passion of Christ and the nature of sacrifice, see especially Aquinas's discussion in the Summa 3a, q.48. See article three: 'Objection I. It would seem that Christ's Passion did not operate by way of sacrifice. For the truth should correspond with the figure. But human flesh was never offered up in the sacrifices of the Old Law, which were figures of Christ: nay, such sacrifices were reputed as impious, according to Ps. cv. 38: And they shed innocent blood: the blood of their sons and of their daughters , which they sacrificed to the idols of Chanaan. It seems therefore that Christ's Passion cannot be called a sacrifice. Obj. 2. Further, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei x.) that a visible sacrifice is a sacrament — that is, a sacred sign — of an invisible sacrifice. Now Christ's Passion is not a sign, but rather the thing signified by other signs. Therefore it seems that Christ's Passion is not a sacrifice. Obj. 3. Further, whoever offers sacrifice performs some sacred rite, as the very word sacrifice shows. But those men who slew Christ did not perform any sacred act, but rather wrought a great wrong. Therefore Christ's Passion was rather a malefice than a sacrifice. On the contrary, the Apostle says (Eph. v. 2) : He delivered Himself up for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness. I answer that, a sacrifice properly so called is something done for that honour which is properly due to God, in order to appease Him: and hence it is that Augustine says (De Civ. Dei x.) : A true sacrifice is every good work done in order that we may cling to God in holy fellowship, yet referred to that consummation of happiness wherein we can be truly blessed . But, as is added in the same place, Christ offered Himself up for us in the Passion: and this voluntary enduring of the Passion was most acceptable to God, as coming from charity. Therefore it is manifest that Christ's Passion was a true sacrifice. Moreover, as Augustine says farther on in the same book, the primitive sacrifices of the holy Fathers were many and various signs of this true sacrifice, one being prefigured by many, in the same way as a single concept of thought is expressed in many words, in order to commend it without tediousness: and, as Augustine observes (De Trin. iv.), since there are four things to be noted in every sacrifice — to wit, to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered , what is offered, and for whom it is offered — that the same one true Mediator reconciling us with God through the peace sacrifice might continue to be one with Him to whom offered it, might be one with them for whom He offered it, and might Himself be the offerer and what He offered.' Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas: Part III (Qt. XXVII - LIX)*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washburn, 1926), 317–318.

[224] Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 470: 'An example of a spiritual sacrifice is given in Philippians 4:18, which uses sacrificial language to speak of the gifts given by the community of the Philippians to St. Paul in captivity: "I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."'

an early Christian, Pauline view of sacrifice as spiritual with a 'more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation', as proclaimed in Hebrews 9:11. The Catholic Eucharist, while not explicitly mentioned here, exemplifies the opposite of this view of sacrifice, due to its materiality, transubstantiation, and physical tabernacle. An additional question arises here on how the annotator sees the Catholic Eucharist and mass, and whether it would count as a 'petition for the continuation of benefits', which the annotator clearly sees as a mark of pagan sacrifice and worship. In any case, here we have a conceptualisation of sacrifice which clearly distinguishes between a focus on soteriology, with salvation in true religion, and one of seeking divine benefit in the form of worldly (as opposed to otherworldly) advantages in pagan idolatrous traditions, remarkably similar to what for instance Alan Strathern has distinguished as transcendentalism and immanentism as a basic religious binary.[225]

### The Act and the Offering

Remaining in chapter 1.5, the annotator continues with his discussion of sacrifice with a few shorter notes. The first of these refers the reader to an overview of ancient (animal) sacrifice in Alessandro Alessandri's *Genialium dierium*,[226] after which he comments on Rogerius's statement that the Brahmans meet at this festivity (the yajna): 'Holding some festivities when sacrificing to their gods was very common. See Exodus 32:6 and Numbers 25:2. This they seem to have learnt from the Jews who also did the same. See the First Book of Kings 3:15.'[227] Exodus 32:6 does not speak of any random festivity, but the celebration held by the Hebrews after sacrificing to the golden calf, while Numbers 25:2 speaks of the act of idolatry committed by the Israelites when worshipping Baal Peor. 1 Kings 3:15, interestingly, is the final passage detailing the dream of Solomon, when the king awakes and sacrifices at the ark.[228] This form of sacrificial festivity thus seems to originate with true religion; this is further highlighted in the next footnote where the annotator remarks that also among the Hebrews those who participated in the ritual were given a share of the offering.[229] Yet this participatory division of the offering, as he adds in another, separate note, also happened at Delphi.[230] Though originating with the worship of God among the Hebrews, festivities around sacrifice are thus primarily associated with falling into idolatry, among the Hebrews themselves and among diverse pagans.[231]

[225] Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[226] *Open Door*, 151, note 67. C.f. Alessandro d'Alessandro, *Dies Geniales*, book 3, chapter 12.
[227] *Open Door*, 151, note 68.
[228] NKJV: 'Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.'
[229] *Open Door*, 151, note 69.
[230] *Open Door*, 151, note 70.
[231] See on this topic Barbu, "Sacrifice and Idolatry."

If we turn back to Rogerius, we see that the latter does not conceive of sacrifice in this comparative religion framework, but does clearly equate sacrifice with offerings in the *Open Door*. Interestingly, while Rogerius understands that the fire *homa* used to perform the yajna is crucial for weddings, as we have already seen above and as he repeats in a note in the annex,[232] and he even says that the fire (i.e. Agni) is a witness to the wedding, neither here nor when speaking of the *Upanayana* does he refer to this as a form of sacrifice, despite the fact that he tells us the exact offerings that are thrown into the fire during the *Upanayana*![233] This does not seem to stem from any distinction of civil and religious spheres of life, which the annotator does employ, in Rogerius's narrative, but perhaps derives from the fact that even though Rogerius says at another point that 'they also consider [the fire] to be a devata', he does not consider these occasions to be an offering to a deity for benefaction.[234] Otherwise, in the *Open Door* the yajna predominantly features, outside of chapter 1.5, in Rogerius's frequent summaries of stories from the Puranas and the Hindu epics, such as when he speaks of the *Ashvamedha* horse sacrifice in chapter 1.19, or when he recounts the Daksha yajna in chapter 2.2.

Offerings of food at pujas are very much considered sacrifices, too.[235] In the first part, when detailing the Brahmans' daily routine, he speaks about how the Brahmans 'go to their idol and cover it in flowers', and how, prior to eating, the 'food which is ready for them they will first present to [the idol], because the Brahmans may not eat any food which has not previously been presented to the idol'.[236] We see this especially in chapter 2.14 when Rogerius recounts 'what honour is given to the lesser gods, who are called devatas'. Ganesha, for example, is described as 'the most cherished. He is very commonly found in the houses of the pagans and served as a house god. [...] the women put their confidence in him in order to conceive. To this end they make him a sacrifice of cooked rice, coconuts, and flowers.'[237] Indra and 'the other chiefs of the sub-heavenly realms' are also worshipped and made sacrifices to.[238] While Indra is worshipped 'by dedicating to him the yajna', offers are made to the others for gaining specific benefits, such as power and strength (Vayu) or riches (Kubera).[239] Rogerius seems to conceive of this as obvious idolatry, as he begins the chapter by saying that the Brahmans, as already shown earlier in his narrative, 'also give divine honour to others beside God', and

[232] *Open Door*, 308, note 503 'Homa is a holy fire which is used in sacrifices, to confirm weddings and for other occasions.'
[233] *Open Door*, 166 and 158, respectively.
[234] *Open Door*, 200.
[235] I should note that linguistically there is no distinction between 'sacrifice' and 'offering' in Dutch. Conceptually, however, we can clearly see that while the offerings of food at the homa at weddings are not considered offerings in a sacrificial sense, puja offerings are very much considered to fulfil a sacrificial function.
[236] *Open Door*, 191.
[237] *Open Door*, 274-275.
[238] *Open Door*, 275.
[239] *Open Door*, 275.

build temples for them.[240] Most importantly, he does not conceive of them as proper gods: 'They also place their trust in those whom they do not consider gods, expecting health and all other gifts from them, as evidenced by the prayers they address to them. This is also apparent through the act of making sacrifices to them.'[241] Much like the annotator, Rogerius thus sees Brahman sacrifice as a 'petition for the continuation of benefits' in an idolatrous context; as we shall see, there is also a monotheist Brahman context asserted by Rogerius and especially the annotator, divorced from this notion of sacrifice. Indeed, Rogerius makes it clear that Indra is honoured in the yajna and with the exception of the clearly idolatrous offering of food to an idol described in the daily routine of the Brahmans, all other sacrifices described so far have been to the so-called lesser gods. As we saw above, Rogerius says that Brahman worship is tripartite, and besides serving the highest God and the lesser gods, they also serve the devil. Sacrifice is an important concept in Rogerius's presentation of 'devil worship' and festivities which will provide us with a good introduction to the topic of idolatry and superstition of the next chapter.

## 9.4 Festivities, Devil Worship, and Village Deities

### Festivals and Bhakti

In chapter 2.12, the first of a few chapters on festivals, Rogerius acknowledges the importance of festivities, and connects it with the sixth of the nine points of bhakti or devotion that he outlines in chapter 2.8: 'Due to the sixth point, they are in the habit of celebrating different festivities, as they are charged with calling out the names and magnificence of their gods.'[242] Rogerius then outlines a number of Vaishnava and Shaiva (to which we may also count Smarta) festivities, along with their mythical origins drawn almost exclusively from the Mahabharata, to the extent that half of the chapter recounts the origins of Krishna. For my purposes it is not necessary to go into detail on the festivals themselves; instead, the most relevant element is the way that Rogerius distinguishes who participates in these festivities, and how.

At the very beginning of chapter 2.12, Rogerius says the he will present some festivities held by the Brahmans and the reasons they have for celebrating. 'Before we turn to the matter at hand', he adds immediately after, 'it should be known that not all festivities are held in honour of Vishnu and Shiva; there is also a festivity held each year in honour of the sun, as well as in honour of Ganga, the devil.'[243] We thus see a reiteration of the tripartite worship of God, lesser gods or beings, and the devil. This also structures the current and next few chapters, as chapter 2.12 is on the festivities in honour of Vishnu and Shiva, 2.13 is on the

[240] *Open Door*, 273.
[241] *Open Door*, 274.
[242] *Open Door*, 265.
[243] *Open Door*, 265.

Pongal, according to Rogerius 'a festival in honour of the sun', 2.14 details honours given to the lesser gods, and 2.15 discusses devil worship. At the beginning of chapter 2.12 he says that this chapter tells of the festivities of Vishnu and Shiva and their respective wives, 'celebrated by the Brahmans'.[244] Rogerius adds: 'I say by the Brahmans, as there are also some festivities during the year which are observed by the Malabars, but not held by the Brahmans, some of which we shall also point out.'[245] From the beginning of his discussion of festivities, Rogerius therefore posits a dichotomy between Brahman and 'Malabar' — a term Rogerius only uses in this chapter and 2.18 for the common people, although even here he occasionally also uses 'Shudras' to mean the common people — festivities and ways of celebration which, as we shall see, is relevant for the overall picture of the Brahmans in the *Open Door*.[246]

The first incident of these divergent practices comes in chapter 2.12 itself when Rogerius writes about the major Shaiva festival of Shivaratri.[247] Rogerius says that 'during this festivity they must fast for an entire day and night', but then highlights the difference between ideal and reality: 'Commonly, however, the Shudras pass the night by playing games, so that they can abstain from sleep. Yet the Brahman said that this was not the proper way of observing the festival, but that one is charged with abstaining from food in this time and should spend it in thought about Shiva, and doing service to his image.'[248] Throughout the chapter Rogerius continues to note whether the Brahmans, the 'Malabars' or Shudras, or both celebrate a given festivity, maintaining a very sober, descriptive tone. The Brahmans who in the above quotation emerge as the more orthoprax and spiritually-minded are also presented to be such as they are the priests in the sense of being 'ritual specialists'. Much of this is of course an accurate observation on the part of Rogerius. In the Vaishnava festival of Ananta Vrata, for example, the Brahmans are presented to be the only ones 'allowed to perform the service around the images of the idols, and who arrange to have the festivity observed according to the requirements', and they are the only ones who may give Shudras the anant sutra thread, for which they receive an alms.[249]

While the Brahmans in chapter 2.12 are said to perform a service around the idol during Ananta Vrata, and Rogerius also once more speaks of the Brahmans telling fables to bring fame to this festivity, the Brahmans are described mainly to celebrate and enjoy good food during these festivities. The same is mostly true for the Shudras; yet the above deviation from

[244] *Open Door*, 265.
[245] *Open Door*, 265.
[246] These is of course plenty of precedent for speaking about South Indians, especially the inhabitants not only of the Malabar but also of the Coromandel Coast and everything in-between (corresponding, at the minimum, to modern Tamil Nadu and Kerala) as well as their language (Tamil and Malayalam, two closely related and largely mutually intelligible languages) as 'Malabarian'. What is more peculiar, in this case, is that Rogerius only uses this term very rarely, and exclusively for the common people. Malabarian Brahmans is not something that we see conceptualised in the least.
[247] Rogerius notes that it is celebrated by Shaivaites and Smartas, yet not by Vaishnavas. *Open Door*, 266.
[248] *Open Door*, 266.
[249] *Open Door*, 267.

the correct practice is not an isolated incidence. The festivity of Navaratri is another example: while the wives of the Brahmans and the Brahmans themselves are said to 'regale one another with food' in honour of either Lakshmi or Vishnu, the Shudras 'also observe this festival in imitation of the Brahmans, and delight themselves with good food, slaughter goats, and make sacrifices'.[250] While this representational difference is rather slight in chapter 2.12 — and the intermediate chapters do not really address this matter, with chapter 2.14 being mostly a summary of the worship of gods other than Vishnu and Shiva — it is very pronounced if we turn to the chapter on devil worship.

### Devil Worship: Gangamma and the Devil Ganga

Despite his careful ethnographic presentation of South Indian Brahmanism, with attention laid on sectarian difference, the mythological background of practices, and an in-depth analysis of Brahman beliefs, as we shall see in the last chapter, Rogerius follows many European tropes on the barbarity of the Indians: we have already seen his emotional outburst at sati and the way he shows the Brahmans to be priestly impostors, leading astray the general populace for their own benefit. As I have discussed in the first part, devil worship was one of the most popular topoi in European writing on India, and Rogerius's fellow Dutchman Jan Huyghen van Linschoten had provided a detailed interpretation of Indian religion as devil worship only about thirty years before Rogerius ventured to the East. It is thus not surprising that Rogerius, too, would 'find' devil worship, despite his close relationship with Padmanabha who told him much of the belief and practices of Brahmanism from an emic point of view. As we shall see, it is not *despite* this fact that Rogerius portrayed devil worship as a reality in and around Pulicat, but the latter was actually reinforced by a Brahman-centred understanding of devotion derived from Padmanabha as well as, it must be noted, observation of practices dedicated to figures that indeed take on the adversarial, malicious, and dangerous roles a European would associate with the devil. Rogerius therefore does not abandon ethnography in favour of presenting the reader with salacious stories about devil-worshippers, but in fact renders actual practices in a more Christian manner.

Chapter 2.15 is fully dedicated to devil worship and is titled 'how the pagans on the Coromandel Coast also worship the devil'. Rogerius introduces the topic in this manner:

> That these pagans worship the devil is a notorious fact. We must therefore speak a little of this, and point out what honour and worship they commit to them (sic!). We shall not present and call by name all the devils which are worshipped and feared by these poor people here, but only the two principal ones, those who are most known among them and who are the chiefs of all others: namely *Ganga* and

[250] *Open Door*, 271.

*Gournatha*.[251]

Rogerius here basically tells us that the notoriety of devil worship forces him to discuss the matter, although he clearly does not shy away from identifying many devils — he uses devil worship (as singular) and the servicing of devils or demons indistinguishably — among the *pagans*; not however among the Brahmans. The two 'devils' that he mentions are more difficult to identify than most others too, and Caland was left to speculate.[252] Let us briefly look at the matter, starting with Ganga. Rogerius himself is unsure about the identity of this goddess — later also referred to as 'him', but at the beginning clearly identified as female — saying that she is called *Ganga gramma* 'in order to distinguish her from *Ganga Nadi*, that is the river Ganga. She is a woman who has no husband; however, some say that Shiva is supposed to be her husband. Others say that Ganga is indeed the wife of Shiva, but that it is not Ganga gramma, that is, the town Ganga; but Ganga Nadi, the river Ganga'.[253] My own suggestion would be that *Ganga* is *Gangamma*, a South Indian goddess for whom a yearly festival (*jatara* in Telugu) is dedicated as the goddess's excess 'is one of the explicit reasons for the Gangamma *jatara*: to call the goddess our of her dark stone temple forms and to build up her *ugram* [excess or surplus]. Gangamma expands and becomes more *ugra* through he multiplication of forms; *jatara* rituals then satisfy this excess so that it does not become destructive.'[254] Gangamma is also seen to be Ganga the river goddess, all of which fits with Rogerius's description here.[255] *Gournatha* is more difficult to pin down, as Rogerius almost exclusively speaks of Ganga/Gangamma in this chapter; the most obvious identification here would be that this is *Gaurinatha* an epithet of Shiva, which would fit somewhat with Rogerius saying that 'Gournatha, instead, is indeed a greater master than Ganga, and a son of Shiva, and, according to the Shaivites, that is the worshippers of Shiva, his loyal servant; but according to the Vaishnavites he is a devil.'[256] It might however also be some other local South Indian deity who inhabits some sort of demonic or malevolent role. In any case, as the chapter speaks mostly about Ganga, and the devil worship that Rogerius describes refers to her, we need not dwell on Gournatha.

The idol Ganga is vividly described by Rogerius: 'The image of this Ganga has a head and four arms, and in the left hand it has a small cup, and in the right hand a three-pronged

[251] *Open Door*, 277.
[252] Open Deure 1915, 141-142.
[253] *Open Door*, 277.
[254] Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, *When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 2. On Gangamma see also Don Handelman, "The Guises of the Goddess and the Transformation of the Male: Gangamma's Visit to Tirupati, and the Continuum of Gender," in *One God, Two Goddesses, Three Studies of South Indian Cosmology*, ed. Don Handelman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 63–113.
[255] See Flueckiger, *When the World Becomes Female*, chapter 5.
[256] *Open Door*, 277.

fork. In all places one finds pagodas erected for this devil.'[257] While this is an accurate description of Gangamma, it also evokes the image of devil worship that we encountered in authors from Varthema to Van Linschoten. Rogerius probably witnessed at least parts of this festivity, as he remarks on the great quantities of *pongal* (referred to as rice here, but clearly identified as a specific dish in chapter 2.13) being cooked, and also points out how the goats slaughtered are billy goats and therefore exclusively male.[258] Modern ethnographic literature also supports at least the notion of the austerities of penance performed at the festival described by Rogerius;[259] the presentation of all of this should therefore be seen to still be highly informed by ethnographic practice and close observance, yet also playing into stereotypes of 'foolish' or enthusiastic devotional practices. Both the image of Gangamma herself, as well as the accompanying practices of the 'Ganga yatra' in this manner conform with European expectations of devil worship and ritual excess devoted to the devil.

It is here that Rogerius describes three of the scenes that become the illustrative barbarity of the title page. Rogerius describes hook-swinging in detail, along with the great pain involved: 'They do not want it to be known that it is painful. It occurred in my time [in Pulicat] that a slave of the governor also let herself be convinced that it would not hurt much; [...] afterwards she asserted that she had been betrayed in an ugly manner'.[260] Hook-swinging is mostly associated with the festival of Charak Puja; it is difficult to ascertain whether Rogerius witnessed it, although it does not fit modern accounts of the *jatara* of Gangamma.[261] In any case, the manner in which it is described, where the unknowing populace is seduced into performing dangerous and painful practices, is what is relevant here. Rogerius here quite clearly seeks to evoke a notion of being driven crazy by devotion for the devil. This is even more evident when Rogerius claims that 'it is said that some people further inland are so devout that they throw themselves in front of the carriage of Ganga, so that they are completely crushed and die.'[262] Accounts of people sacrificing themselves by being crushed by temple cars go back to Odoric of Pordenone, but Rogerius probably is referring to Van Linschoten's version, which the annotator also is quick to supply.[263] Rogerius does admit that he cannot say for certain whether this is the truth, as he never witnessed it himself. 'Nevertheless, it could well be since it is said so often, and because the people are so blind that they indeed let themselves be easily convinced to burden themselves with such extreme acts.'[264] Rogerius remains cautious and informs us of his own ignorance on this matter here; yet he is certainly keen to portray the

[257] *Open Door*, 277.
[258] Compare Flueckiger, *When the World Becomes Female*, 91, passim.
[259] See Flueckiger, chapter 10.
[260] *Open Door*, 278-279.
[261] For an overview on hook-swinging and its European reception see Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Popular Religion, Elites, and Reforms: Hook-swinging and Its Prohibition in Colonial India, 1800-1894* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).
[262] *Open Door*, 279.
[263] *Open Door*, 279, note 437.
[264] *Open Door*, 279.

pagan Indians as a foolish populace that lets itself be convinced into devilish excess.

While these descriptions provide a vivid imaginary of barbarous practices, the key practice of the chapter is definitely sacrifices to 'Ganga' or the devil; the 'devil Ganga' has here become exclusively male. During the procession, billy goats are slaughtered for the 'devil Ganga, and with a sharp knife made for this purpose, they are beheaded by the servants of the pagoda, who for their part bear the heads of the sacrificed goats.'[265] During the night on the other hand, a buffalo 'is slaughtered in the pagoda of Ganga, in his honour, and this happens with many ceremonies.'[266] Rogerius did not see this himself, as he did not venture outside of Fort Geldria at night in order to witness these ceremonies; he describes the ritual much as he does the slaughter of the goats. He also claims that there is a certain amount of secrecy surrounding this sacrifice, and the 'common man among the pagans will remain silent, as they are not invited to partake in these secrets too closely, so that it is easy for the servants of Ganga to convince the populace of what they want.'[267] Households sacrificing goats as *bali* (animal sacrifices) as well as the ritual slaughter of a buffalo are both part of the Gangamma *jatara* according to modern observers; it is also certainly true that it is considered inauspicious and dangerous to speak about these rituals among the people involved.[268] The practice thus is once more a mixture of information gathering and European stereotypes. Rogerius does not invent any of these practices, and is certainly correct in his observation that the Brahmans stay away from these rituals dedicated to malicious, adversarial deities, who certainly share aspects with Christian (but also classical Mediterranean) demons and devils. As Isabelle Nabokov shows, such practices in modern Tamil Nadu, frequented by predominantly if not exclusively low caste people, are indeed seen as useful, but dangerous dealings with malicious beings. As Nabokov also remarks in her own brief discussion of the *Open Door*, Rogerius — and many after him — does however focus solely on the negative and punitive aspects of such local deities, even though such deities also had a protective function and were indeed sought out for help.[269] We might therefore conclude that Rogerius does abandon his ethnographic detail in the context of reporting on these practices, but does see the sacrifice to Ganga as a ritual sacrifice to the devil, through a lens informed by his own Christian (and to a lesser extent, Graeco-Roman) notions about demons and the devil.[270]

[265] *Open Door*, 278.
[266] *Open Door*, 279.
[267] *Open Door*, 279.
[268] Isabelle Nabokov, *Religion against the Self: An Ethnography of Tamil Rituals* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[269] Nabokov, 151–152.
[270] A similar point might be made for his rendering of human sacrifice, which is part of narratives surrounding Gangamma, but turned into probable historical fact by Rogerius, who claims that 'the pagans say that in previous times each year a human being is supposed to have been sacrificed to Ganga, and that [Ganga] was pressed by someone to forthwith be appeased with a buffalo. How the matter is I cannot say, only what they tell about it here.' *Open Door*, 280. Compare Flueckiger, *When the World Becomes Female*, 144f.

### Devil Worship in the Tripartite Worship Scheme

After recounting all this, Rogerius in a sense returns to his tripartite scheme of worship (God, lesser gods, devil) and seeks to find out why each category is being worshipped. This is the only time in Rogerius's narrative where the annotator's antiquarian-philosophical account overlaps with Rogerius, who writes much like the former here:

> We have said that many goats are slaughtered for the devil Ganga and sacrificed in his honour at his festival. But nowhere have we mentioned that bloody sacrifices are made for Vishnu or Shiva, because no blood is spilled for them by the pagans. For they hold with Porpyhry that it is not allowed to sacrifice living animals to the highest God. Just as Plato did not permit making sacrifices to the gods, but said that one must slaughter beasts and offer up blood for the spirits of the air, they are of this belief as well. And just as it was a common belief of the pagans in previous times that one must appease the gods so that they may not commit any evil, and must worship some because they will do good. Plutarch also writes that the evil spirits of kings were previously honoured with sacrifices, to ward off their wrath, and the philosopher Porphyry says that it is sometimes necessary to serve the evil spirits, in order that they may not damage the corn, the field and the town. These pagans also believe the same, because as we have understood from what has been said previously, they worship the lesser gods in order to reap benefits from them. Yet this Ganga, and his like, they worship so that they may not be harmed by him or his servants. They seek to appease and attract him with offerings. [...] And for everything they take up, they are worried that some disaster or damage may occur through Ganga, Gournatha, or their servants; which is why they seek to appease them especially.[271]

At the end of this chapter on devil worship, Rogerius thus gives us his unified theory of Brahman worship, ritual, and sacrifice. As we have seen, he portrays the worship of lesser gods to be for the attainment of specific benefits, while the devil or devils are served out of fear, so that these evil beings may not harm them. We have moved far beyond the portrayal of the village deity Gangamma and her festival; this is not only due to Rogerius's Christian gaze, but is also to a certain extent due to Padmanabha's Brahman bias, reproduced in the *Open Door*. Already towards the beginning of the chapter, Rogerius writes that the Brahmans are not permitted to hold the Ganga yatra, and here at the end of the chapter he repeats this: 'This manner of worshipping the devil, which is common among the Shudras, the Brahman asserted not to be permitted to the Brahmans; he thought very little of it.'[272] Not only does Padmanabha think little of it, he says that the people celebrating this festivity will be reborn many times and go through almost unending suffering in Hell. 'Nevertheless, he said that the Brahmans may not condemn this custom among the people, nor discourage them. But he

[271] *Open Door*, 280-281.
[272] *Open Door*, 281.

told me that this custom was very bad.'[273] Rogerius thus synthesises a European Christian trope about the devil worshipping Indians with a male, Brahman view on the non-Vedic female *gramadevatas* (village deities) such as Gangamma, who, in a twist of cruel irony, has been turned into a male devil by the end of Rogerius's chapter. I am not attempting to undermine the reality of ritual sacrifice to maleficent deities, which certainly were, and still are, the object of worship especially in lower-caste contexts, where it is often individual ritualists who are possessed by these deities who then interact with the people.[274] Yet it is clear that the positive, protective aspects of these deities is ignored, whilst the negative context is very much highlighted, from both a Christian and Brahman point of view.

The Brahmans, instead, mostly belong to the first of the three categories of worship, namely the worship of Vishnu and Shiva. This worship of the highest God does not involve any animal sacrifice; sacrifice in general is the ambit of the worship of the lesser gods or the devil(s). Also here it is important to note that Rogerius was neither uninformed, nor simply won over by the arguments of the Brahmans. What Rogerius is here describing is the actual monotheism that he encountered in the form of the theistic traditions in early modern Tamil Nadu, predominantly through the eyes of his Smarta and Vaishnava informants. But as much as he is often at pains to portray the realities of worship as he saw it or as it was reported to him by Padmanabha, with this tripartite scheme he does create a useful reductionist presentation for his own evangelical goals. Just as much as devil worship combined the ethnographic reality with clear Christian and classical notions of devils and demons, here the worship of the highest God is similarly seen through a classical and Christian lens. The Brahmans and the worship of the highest God is in fact shown to belong to a Platonic tradition which does not permit sacrifice to the highest God! How this fits with the overall presentation of Brahman custom and practices, and especially the idolatrous elements described by both authors as well as the monotheism of the Brahmans will be the topic of the remaining two chapters.

[273] *Open Door*, 281.

[274] See the first few chapters in Nabokov, *Religion against the Self*. This fits rather well into the Weberian framework that I presented at the beginning of the chapter, as these are more individual 'sorcerers' or 'magicians' who ward of evil, opposed to the institutionalised priesthood that worships predominantly good or neutral gods.

# CHAPTER 10

## IDOLATRY AND SUPERSTITION

In the previous chapter we have seen that Rogerius and the annotator see a division between the priestly Brahmans and the common people, particularly evident in the presentation of devil worship, which the Brahmans do not participate in. At the same time, Rogerius tells us how the Brahmans *do* perform sacrifices and how they act as priests and indeed often as priestly impostors to the ignorant common people. While in Rogerius these categories overlap constantly, and the Brahmans are presented to be superstitious idolators as well as devotees of the highest God, the annotator presents us with a clearer model of superstition and idolatry, as well as their respective origins and relation to monotheism or true religion. Before we can analyse the presentation of 'religion', monotheism, and 'truth' in the *Open Door*, we must therefore first seek to understand how its inversion is understood by Rogerius and the annotator.

Rogerius, once more, is more cautious and restricted in his terminological choices; whereas the annotator speaks about both superstition and idolatry (afgoderije) multiple times, Rogerius does not use either word at any point. This does not mean that Rogerius does not posit the existence of either phenomenon; he does extensively speak about idolatry in its most literal sense (the servicing of idols) and a range of what might be termed 'superstitious' practices, but does not conceptualise these as specific phenomena. The annotator on the other hand distinguishes between superstition and idolatry: superstition mostly follows the ancient Graeco-Roman lines of discourse, informed largely by Cicero's *De natura deorum* which is cited many times in the annotations, whereas idolatry is defined as a more generally formulated phenomenon, modelled mostly on patristic discussion and especially regarding its ontology and development on Vossius's *De theologia gentili*.

## 10.1 Superstitious Practices

Superstition as a broadly defined phenomenon, as we have seen in the first part, was a common topic in early modern accounts of India. At no point do we encounter a specific chapter on Brahman or Indian 'superstitions' in the *Open Door*, but Rogerius does almost exclusively speak of matters that an early modern Christian would have labelled as such in three chapters: divination or the choosing of days in chapters 1.14 and 1.15, and ascetic practices labelled 'wilful' and 'foolish' types of worship. While in both cases these superstitions are depicted as primarily irrational, divination is shown by Rogerius to be incompatible with the Brahman notion of governorship over human affairs assigned to Brahma, while the ascetic practices are depicted as irrational enthusiasm, by Rogerius but also to a certain extent by Padmanabha himself. Let us first turn to divination.

### Divination

Rogerius already mentions that divination is important for the everyday business of the Brahmans when discussing weddings, as the Brahmans are said to pay especial heed to signs and omens when going in search of a spouse for their children. In chapter 2.14 he thus says that 'this is why it should not be considered beyond our argument to speak a little about the observation of signs and divination.'[275] Rogerius presents divination as crucial for all aspects of life: 'They will not begin anything unless it be a day which is good according to their reckoning; and should on this good day a sign appear to them which according to their sentiment is bad, they will leave [the matter] be, fearing that they may encounter ill luck.'[276] Especially journeys are taken as the prime example of being left to the observation of signs, with the Brahmans postponing entire journeys waiting for good signs, and often missing the 'proper opportunity and convenient time' to successfully bring their business to a close. Rogerius compares this with the presentation of the Sabbath by Seneca, while questioning the logic of divination within what he has heard about Brahmanism:

> So that one may justifiably say of these pagans that which Seneca said of the Sabbath of the Jews: that because of the [Sabbath] many matters, which had to be done out of necessity, were often forfeited due to having been postponed and not done. [...] By lingering they let the good and suitable time of Mouson [Monsoon] go by and were required, after having come for the journey to Pegu, Tanasseri [Tenasserim, Myanmar], and Achim [Aceh], to return with unfinished business. It invites amazement that they do not become more careful in future [endeavours] through their damage and loss, but still continue in their old, foolish and useless practice. I say 'useless' and 'foolish' because the divination of days cannot have any

[275] *Open Door*, 174.
[276] *Open Door*, 174.

> utility for performing their matters; because should the divination of days bring any advantage, so man must be able to change that which has been sent to him by the supreme sovereign through the divination of days, and therefore not follow the decision of the higher power.[277]

Rogerius here most likely builds on Augustine, who in the *City of God*, 6.11 reports how Seneca claims the Sabbath of the Jews to be another of the 'superstitions of the civil theology', suffering loss due to idleness in times of great urgency.[278] This irrationality is further highlighted by focussing on the conflict between acting upon signs and the impossibility of going against the will of God. While Rogerius thought this a perfect argument, Padmanabha was not convinced, despite the fact the he 'dared not say that this supreme power and decision of Brahma [...] could be annulled or changed by human wisdom'.[279] Rogerius does not give more space to Padmanabha's arguments here — even Rogerius might easily have seen that one could argue omens and signs to derive from God — and instead says that despite Padmanabha portraying the decisions of Brahma as certain and unchangeable, he 'nevertheless could not by any means understand that the divination of days is reprehensible and unnecessary, and this opinion is so deeply rooted among them that they cannot be persuaded to leave it behind.'[280] Rogerius thereupon adds the Panchangam of Shukra, a calendar with 'some writings in the manner of our almanacs', not because he considers it to be useful, or a 'worthy piece', but because he want to satisfy the curiosity of the reader as well as 'illustrate on what loose foundation they build'.[281]

The annotator seems rather uninterested in this discussion of divination. He refers the reader to an obscure discussion of Selden in his *De iure naturali et gentium*, where the latter outlines good and bad days in each month, as well as providing an antiquarian overview of predictions 'based on the flight of birds', first found with Prometheus, observed by many nations 'religiously' but also expressly forbidden by scripture.[282] The annotator also does not connect this form of divination with an astrological form of determinism which we do, however, see frequently mentioned in the notes, especially with reference to Giovanni Pico's *Disputationes adversus astrologiam*.[283] In chapter 2.1 he mentions specifically how the 'Astrologers and Mathematicians, the Priscillianists, and others' attributed all matters to the sky and the stars, but that 'not only the Jews and Christians were against this at all times, but even the wisest

[277] *Open Door*, 174.
[278] See Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans, Books IV - VII*, trans. William M. Green, LCL 412 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 360–361.
[279] *Open Door*, 174.
[280] *Open Door*, 175.
[281] *Open Door*, 175.
[282] *Open Door*, 176, notes 155, 156, 157. C.f. Selden, *De iure naturali et gentium iuxta disciplinam Ebraeorum libri septem*, 383.
[283] On this work see Ovanes Akopyan, *Debating the Stars in the Italian Renaissance: Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola's Disputationes Adversus Astrologiam Divinatricem and Its Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

among the pagans'.[284] As we shall see, this disinterest probably derives from the fact that the annotator was more interested in showing the Brahmans to be skilled astrologers and (natural) philosophers, an argument that he makes against Rogerius's own dismissal of these skills, especially in chapter 1.10.

### Wilful and Foolish Worship

Chapter 2.17 discusses 'wilful' and 'foolish' types of worship, and is, besides chapter 2.15 on devil worship, one of the main sources of the engravings of the title page. Rogerius is very precise in detailing the ascetic practices he witnessed himself, and gives the reader the dates of each encounter. Rogerius mentions five different forms of renouncing, but spends the vast majority of the chapter speaking about one particular Brahman, while two of the remaining four descriptions, each no longer than two or three sentences, are depicted in the title page of the *Open Door*.[285] The longest description, which is also visualised on the title page, concerns a fire ascetic whom Rogerius encountered in 'the year 1640, on the 17th of January, in the little pagoda of Parvati which stands in the court of the pagoda of Shiva.'[286] He details the manner of life of the ascetic with great precision. The yogi only ate sweet milk and fruit, but always very little in general, sat in one place the entire day and also slept in a sitting position, and kept repeating 'the thousand names of Shiva'.[287] More impressive were the actions that followed the ceremonies performed for the image of Shiva he had beside him and which occupied most of his day: he stood on his head for 'such a long time that it seemed impossible that a man could stand so long on his head', and prayed in this manner.[288] After another round of mantra recital and image servicing he performed the practice that is depicted on the title page: hung above a fire in a pit, the ascetic swung, upside down, through the flames, stoking the fire while swinging.

Much like the other forms of asceticism, Rogerius is observing different forms of *tapas*, ascetic practices of austerity, but relies almost exclusively on his own observations, without any

[284] *Open Door*, 217-218, note 269. 'The Astrologers and Mathematicians, the Priscillianists, and others have attributed this determination of time, man's fortune and misfortune, and all such matters, to the sky and the stars, and thought that these determined all the comings and goings of man. But not only the Jews and Christians were against this at all times, but even the wisest among the pagans themselves. Suidas [the Suda] says that in Alexandria they imposed a tax on the Astrologers, or stargazers, which was called "βλαχεννόμιον", because they were considered crazy; because a crazy or demented person they called "βλάχα". See Cicero, *De divinatione*, book 2, Sextus Empiricus, *Contra Grammaticos*, chapter 10, and especially Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Adversus astrologiam*. This error is also condemned in the first council of Braga, chapter 8: "Si quis animas & corpora humana", say the fathers gathered there, "fatalibus stellis credit astringi, sicut pagani, & Priscillianista dixerunt, Anathema sit." The Prophet Isaiah also reprimanded them in Isaiah 41 and 47.' See also *Open Door* 217, note 267: 'The Astrologers thought that God did rule heavenly affairs, but that everything that was here on Earth depended on the powers and influence of the stars.'

[285] Namely the ascetic who encloses his head in an iron grid and the yogis dragging heavy chains.

[286] *Open Door*, 284.

[287] *Open Door*, 284.

[288] *Open Door*, 284.

explanations regarding the reasons for these practices.[289] Indeed, Padmanabha and Damersa do not supply much to this discussion, at best confirming Rogerius's perspective on them as engaging in excessive forms of worship and austerity. At the end of chapter 2.16 on Brahman soteriology (how to reach a good end), Rogerius already introduces these ascetics in a negative light, calling them conceited and taking it upon themselves to 'do more than they ought to be doing according to the content of the Veda, and want to be more perfect in life than the Veda asks of them.'[290] By taking up these 'wilful duties', he says, they believe they 'will achieve a great state and glory hereafter', and 'please their God with things which, instead of having a semblance of wisdom, can justifiably be considered to be foolishness.'[291] At the end of the account on the fire ascetic, Rogerius also gives us the opinion of both Padmanabha and Damersa, a very rare occurrence, yet both do not necessarily seem to be particularly impressed with the ascetic's practices:

> The Brahman Padmanabha said that he did not do this in order to reach Heaven, as he considered this to be a certainty for him; but to acquire a higher and more perfect state in Heaven. Yet the Brahman Damersa, who had also seen the actions of this Brahman, said that he did not think him as holy as he made himself out to be, because he did not live in solitude or dwell in a sacred place such as Casi [Kashi, i.e. Varanasi] or the like.[292]

What little comes through from Padmanabha and Damersa is therefore only confirming Rogerius's bias about the pointlessness of this spectacle, which, though represented as impressive in some regards, primarily is criticised by Rogerius as useless and frivolous, saying specifically that the Brahman 'wasted all his time' with this form of worship.[293] These types of austere worship therefore are depicted as irrational as well as potentially 'enthusiastic', as Rogerius points out how these yogis do more even than asked of them by the Veda, making them conceited.[294] He reiterates this at the end of the chapter, saying that 'such wilful forms of

[289] On Indian forms of asceticism see Carl Olson, *Indian Asceticism: Power, Violence, and Play* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[290] *Open Door*, 284.
[291] *Open Door*, 284.
[292] *Open Door*, 285.
[293] *Open Door*, 285.
[294] On religious enthusiasm in the early modern period see Justin Steinberg, "Superstition, Enthusiasm, and Radical Enlightenment from Hobbes to Hume," in *Fanaticism and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Katsafanas (London: Routledge, 2023), 67–82; Lionel Laborie, "Enthusiasm, Early Modern Philosophy, and Religion," in *Encyclopedia of Early Modern Philosophy and the Sciences*, ed. Dana Jalobeanu and Charles T. Wolfe (Cham: Springer, 2022), 589–594; Michael Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable": The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). For a more Dutch, seventeenth-century context, where the 'enthusiasm' or 'geestdrijverij' discourse was not as important as in neighbouring England or the Germanic lands, see Fred van Lieburg, "Warning against the Pietists: The World of Wilhelmus à Brakel," in *Enlightened Religion: From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety in the Dutch Republic*, ed. Joke Spaans and Jetze Touber (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 346–370.

worship, which not even the Veda prescribes to the pagans, are often to be seen, and are taken up by the pagans with the intent to be more than [merely] common in Heaven.'[295]

We should not be surprised by this reaction. Padmanabha and Damersa, as representatives of orthodox Brahman traditions, primarily are sceptical of the yogi's claims, while we should consider that yogis in general were very much considered ambivalent figures prone to trickery, deceit, and the employment of magic.[296] From an orthodox standpoint Rogerius and his Brahman informants could thus agree on the, if not dangerous, at the very least frivolous nature of this 'enthusiastic' practice. Rogerius could however draw on plenty of European models for critique and comparison, so we might conclude that this portrayal represents both an orthodox Brahmanic point of view informed by Damersa and Padmanabha as well as his own, Reformed perspective. While Rogerius connects neither divination or these 'foolish' forms of worship to idolatry — apart from the literal idol worship of the ascetic — he does so primarily because he does not engage with idolatry as a concept; all of these practices nevertheless are marked as false religion.[297] If we turn to the annotator, we will see that he connects these phenomena, but distinguishes them, based on the different corpora used for defining superstition and idolatry.

## Superstition as a Concept in the Annotations

Unlike Rogerius, the annotator both comments on the superstitious practices described by Rogerius and specifically talks about 'superstition' (superstitie) himself. I have already outlined 'superstition' in its relation to idolatry and religion in the introduction, but it is worth going somewhat deeper into the sources of the annotator on this topic, which will also provide us with a necessary segue to the next section on idolatry.

For one, the annotator has a predilection for Cicero, citing half a dozen works of the latter.[298] Besides *De legibus*, the annotator especially cites Cicero's *De natura Deorum*, a debate on the nature of the gods, religion (religio), impiety and piety (pietas), and superstition (superstitio) between three speakers, an Epicurean, a Stoic and an Academic Sceptic, with Cicero generally being thought to have agreed primarily with the Stoic Balbus. Superstition and impiety emerge as two ends of a spectrum in the debate, and Cicero seeks moderation

[295] *Open Door*, 286.

[296] See David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[297] Steinberg, "Superstition, Enthusiasm, and Radical Enlightenment from Hobbes to Hume," 68 sums up the relationship between these categories in a useful way: 'Like "enthusiasm" and "fanaticism," "superstition" was a term of abuse, in this case denoting a particular form of "false" religion involving rituals and ceremonies, engendering belief in the supernatural power of objects or figures (e.g., relics, talismans, amulets, etc.) for protecting, healing, and sanctifying. Practices that were regarded as superstitious typically involved religious authorities presiding over the rituals and unlocking quasi-magical or supernatural powers of objects/figures, thus making the laity dependent on, and in some sense subordinate to, the religious authorities or clergy. Consequently, superstition was associated with idolatry and priestly chicanery.'

[298] *De legibus* (On Laws), *De divinatione* (On Divination), *Tusculanae disputationes* (Tusculan Disputations), *De natura Deorum* (On the Nature of the Gods), *De oratore* (On the Orator), *Somnium Scipionis* (The Dream of Scipio), which is the sixth book of *De re publica*.

of religion that is neither superstitious nor impious.[299] The notion that humans could know the appearance and behaviour of the gods, whom they endow with human frailties, with passions and emotions, is ridiculed in the work as a corruption from 'a true and valuable philosophy of nature', a perversion that has been a 'fruitful source of false beliefs, crazy errors and superstitions hardly above the level of old wives' tales.'[300] When the Epicurean Velleius claims that Epicurus's philosophy frees people from superstition, the Sceptic Cotta argues that this is done at the cost of impiety, as Epicurus effectively robs the gods of all their powers — religion, instead, is the pious cult of the gods.[301] Impiety is thus the absence of proper worship (the action to the thought that is atheism, the absence of having gods), just as piety is the correct worship of the gods (religion), while superstition is characterised by an excess on the other side of the spectrum.

The reason and main characteristic of superstition 'implies a groundless fear of the gods' as proclaimed by Cotta, a notion shared by the Greek term deisidaimonia (δεισιδαιμονία), 'fear of the gods' or literally 'fear of daimons'.[302] While this was originally a positive or neutral term, akin to 'god-fearing', in the writings of philosophers it was quickly made into a pejorative.[303] Plutarch, another of the annotator's preferred ancient writers, makes superstition, like atheism, into one of the worst offences, and paints it as a blindness and ignorance in matters relating to the gods.[304] The excessiveness in all cases — while often referring to normal ritual practices from the point of view of actually lived ancient forms of worship — is to assign something to divinity that is not an actual attribute of the divinity. This is also the case for the Christian Clement of Alexandria, who speaks about deisidaimonia in both the *Protrepticus* (especially chapter 10) and *Stromateis* (especially chapter 7), works that the annotator also cites, along with a specific citation of superstition, as we shall see hereafter.[305] In the *Stromateis* Clement build on his presentation of superstition in the *Protrepticus*, and brings a very similar critique of superstition to that of Cicero, namely that it is irrational to make the divinity resemble the worst of men.[306] Clement contrasts superstitious beliefs with true religious conceptions about God; empty fear, the narrow meaning of deisidaimonia, is clearly a wrong belief about God, as

[299] Wynne, *Cicero on the Philosophy of Religion*, 72.

[300] Cicero, *De natura Deorum*, 2.70. The speaker is Balbus. Translation from Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 190–191.

[301] Cicero, *De natura Deorum*, 1.116-1.117. See on this Wynne, *Cicero on the Philosophy of Religion*, 80.

[302] See Cicero, *De natura Deorum*, 1.117. Translation from Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 112–113.

[303] See Hugh Bowden, "Before Superstition and After: Theophrastus and Plutarch on Deisidaimonia," *Past & Present* 199 (suppl_3 2008): 56–71.

[304] Asher Ovadiah and Sonia Mucznik, "Deisidaimonia, Superstitio and Religio: Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Early Christian Concepts," *Liber Annuus* 64 (2014): 419. On the differing opinions in the writings of Plutarch on whether atheism or superstition (deisidaimonia) is worse, see Bowden, "Before Superstition and After."

[305] See Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); George Karamanolis, "Clement on Superstition and Religious Belief," in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis*, ed. Matyáš Havrda et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 113–130:

[306] See chapter 4 in book seven of the Stromata. I have used Clement, *Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies Book VII; The Greek Text with Introduction, Translation, Notes, Dissertations and Indices*, ed. Fenton John Anthony Hort and Joseph B. (Joseph Bickersteth) Mayor (London and New York: Macmillan, 1902).

fearing him presupposes that he is something other than perfectly good.[307] For Clement the issue then becomes one of atheism: such a superstitious conception of the divine is so alien to the true nature of God, that they effectively do not believe in God at all.[308]

Superstition, in the classical Greek and Roman as well as the early Christian conception, thus becomes at best an overt, unnecessary, and irrational display of devotion, based on equally irrational beliefs, and at worst an act of atheism or idolatry. If we turn back to the example of divination above, we can see how this practice also fits into such conceptions of superstition. For this it is useful to turn briefly to Aquinas, who specifically discusses divination as a subspecies of superstition — the opposition of religion according to the theologian — just like idolatry.[309] Aquinas argues that future causes are threefold: some can be foretold with certainty through observation of their causes, like eclipses. Others, in a similar vein, can be foretold by conjecture, and usually do happen as predicted, like rain or illnesses. But the third kind cannot be known by their causes, because 'these causes have no determinate inclination to produce these effects', and since the knowledge of these matters are proper only to God ' if anyone presumes to foreknow or foretell such like future things by any means whatever, except by divine revelation, he manifestly usurps what belongs to God.'[310] Diviners therefore are frauds, taking what is due to God for themselves. This fits well with the argument about divination that Rogerius brings forward, with his contrast between the claims of divination and the supreme will of Brahma (and by extension God), as well as with the annotator's brief diatribe against the Astrologers and Mathematicians, although both Rogerius and the annotator also focus on the irrationality of these practices.[311]

[307] See Karamanolis, "Clement on Superstition and Religious Belief," 115: 'If this is so, it is the wrong beliefs about God which cause superstition in the sense of godfearfulness, rather than the other way around. And to the extent that these beliefs are evidence of ignorance or false knowledge, the superstitious person is ignorant of what God truly is.'

[308] Karamanolis, 116. Jauregui points out how the opposition of superstition versus religion precedes magic versus religion, yet follows the exact same arguments. See Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, 88n3

[309] *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q.95.

[310] *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q.95, article 1. Translation from Aquinas, *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas. Part II (Second Part).*

[311] The annotator references Cicero's *De divinatione*, book 2 when speaking about the astrologers. *De divinatione*, 2.17-2.18 argues what also Aquinas does, who certainly took this from Cicero: 'How can anything be foreseen that has no cause and no distinguishing mark of its coming? Eclipses of the sun and also of the moon are predicted for many years in advance by men who employ mathematics in studying the courses and movements of the heavenly bodies; and the unvarying laws of nature will bring their predictions to pass. [...] But what course of reasoning is followed by men who predict the finding of a treasure or the inheritance of an estate? On what law of nature do such prophecies depend? But, on the other hand, if the prophecies just mentioned and others of the same class are controlled by some natural and immutable law such as regulates the movements of the stars, pray, can we conceive of anything happening by accident, or chance? Surely nothing is so at variance with reason and stability as chance. Hence it seems to me that it is not in the power even of God himself to know what event is going to happen accidentally and by chance. For if He knows, then the event is certain to happen; but if it is certain to happen, chance does not exist.' Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero. De senectute, De amicitia, De divinatione*, trans. William Armistead Falconer, LCL 154 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1923), 389.

The 'foolish' types of worship, on the other hand, fit perfectly into the narratives around 'excess' that we encounter in Cicero. Instead of having wisdom, Rogerius says, they think that they will please their God with such irrational acts. The annotator underlines that this is a superstitious form of false worship by drawing a comparison with what Epiphanius reports about Egypt: 'Such examples are also told by Epiphanius, *Contra haereses*, book 3, 344-346. And among other things he says: [...] "How many servants of the idol Saturn are there in Egypt, who enclose themselves in iron bands, wear their hair very long, go clothed badly and unsightly, and daily wear a ring in their noses, etc."'[312] While the annotator does not speak of superstition in this instance, these foolish types of worship are thus presented as not only irrational, but, if we follow Epiphanius, as the heretical inversion of what constitutes orthodox Christian culture, based on a polemical ethnography of difference.[313] These superstitious practices thus are indeed examples of false religion, on which the annotator has plenty to say as idolatry, as we shall see in the next section.

While the annotator does not use the term 'superstition' here, he does so explicitly in other instances. When Rogerius says that only specific holy or sacred wood may be used for the fire *homa*, the annotator says that 'nearly all pagans have at all times been very superstitious in this regard; not all wood was adequate for lighting the fire with which they were to burn their sacrifices, but they always chose a certain type [of wood]', referring the reader to Giraldi.[314] The sentiment we may detect here is that the superstitiousness of the act is ascribing a specific meaning to the type of wood used: the superstition is the acting out of a false belief about nature and the divine. The same is the case in a number of other instances. The act of giving food to hooded crows after a friend of relative has died, described by Rogerius to be due to the belief that 'this hooded crow comes to eat the roaming souls of the deceased', is compared by

[312] *Open Door*, 285, note 451. As I mention in *Open Door*, 532, note 280, the annotator had taken this quote from Hervetus's translation of the *Panarion* by Epiphanius of Salamis, see Epiphanius, *Contra octoaginta haereses opus, Panarium, sive Arcula*, trans. Gentian Hervetus (Paris: apud Hieronymum de Manrnef [et] Gulielmum Cauellat, 1564). The *Panarion* ('The Bread Basket') was also called 'Contra Haereses' ('Against Heresy') in early modern Europe, which is also what the annotator calls it here. The passage is from the De fide treatise, 11.2, with a modern translation being: 'As many others in Egypt, who are initiates of Cronus and make a show of putting iron collars on their necks, having their hair loose on top, <wearing> filthy, absurd clothing, and piercing their nostrils as though for nose rings at each [festival] of Cronus in the town called Astus. (This is a small town in Egypt, the chief village of the so-called nome of Prosopitis.) This is how they follow the unclean rites of the general assembly of deluded persons, and the mad instructions of the drum beating ecstatics, if you please! But these people are hopelessly lost.' Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Books II and III. De Fide*, 2nd ed., trans. Frank Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 669. The annotator also refers to the 'Pseudobrachmannos' in note 22 (*Open Door*, 140), which Epiphanius speaks about in *De Fide* 10.2 suggesting that these are the same as the Paraiyars. Epiphanius calls them 'Pseudo-brahmans, the corpse-eaters, the practitioners of obscenity, and those who are past feeling. Because of the great corruption in men, and their practice of evil and < obscenity* >, I consider it unnecessary and not worth my while to speak specifically of the Indian sects and the disgusting things they do.' Epiphanius, 668.

[313] Todd S. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 95.

[314] *Open Door*, 158, note 89.

the annotator to the same practice by Brahmans in other parts of India such as Gujarat and Calicut.[315] Some, says the annotator, will not even eat 'unless they have first thrown a part of the food they wish to eat in front of the crows, superstitiously believing that thereby they are benefiting the souls of their deceased friends and kin.'[316] Another example is the keeping of snakes, discussed in a note on the primordial deity Shesha. Large snakes, he says, can even nowadays be found all over India, and they 'lead the Indians to great superstitions, and they endeavour to bring such snakes into their house; having caught these, they feed them with the best food they can come up with, thinking that if they can obtain such snakes they shall never want for anything.'[317]

All of these examples show that the annotator conceives of superstition as irrational, unnecessary, and based on a erroneous understanding of nature. Yet another example, though not calling out superstition by name, shows that superstition is clearly based on a wrong understanding of nature but also implies an error in the conception of God. In chapter 1.18, Rogerius describes the importance that the Brahmans give to regular fasting. The annotator acknowledges the spiritual usefulness of fasting by referencing Augustine's Letter 36 to Casulanus, where the former is referenced to argue for fasting, but that the new testament does not prescribe specific fixed fast days.[318] But the annotator then adds another note, where he uses contemporary accounts to show and underline the superstitious excess of the pagans when it came to fasting:

> The pagans make a great fuss about fasting and think that they do an exceptional service to their gods with this and also often continue with it for extraordinarily long periods. Johan van Twist writes that he saw different people there who explained that they had not eaten food in 15, 20, or more days, maintaining themselves only by drinking water mixed with some grated wood which is bitter, which gives the body some nourishment. This is also confirmed by the person keeping the journal on the voyage under Admiral van Caerden.[319]

Fasting here is not just unnecessary, but an excessive display of devotion that is however irrational. The 'exceptional service' that they suppose they are providing is clearly neither useful nor based on a true conception of the divine. While the annotator does not call this superstitious here, it is exactly what Clement argues for when he says that deisidaimonia, by being evidence of false knowledge, means that a superstitious person is ignorant of the true nature of God. This is particularly evident when looking at the portrayal of conceptions of purity, which the annotator, as has become clear, connects directly to Hebrews notions of purity.

[315] *Open Door*, 205.
[316] *Open Door*, 205, note 224.
[317] *Open Door*, 226, note 296.
[318] *Open Door*, 199, note 203.
[319] *Open Door*, 199, note 204.

The annotator adds a footnote when Rogerius outlines how the Brahmans wash themselves in the morning, again asserting this as a practice the Brahmans have in common with the 'Jews' as well as other pagans. The annotator remarks how the pagans 'thought that no one may approach God but those who are washed and purified, and he who does something different shall not be heard by God in his prayers', while the Jews ' thought that they must wash their hands because as long as they were not washed they imagined impure spirits resting on them. The mouth and the face because they were shaped in the image of God.'[320] But, he concludes, 'such superstitious ablutions are punished by Christ' adding a reference to Matthew 15:20.[321] The scriptural reference underlines that these acts derive from an erroneous conception of purity that values outward purity instead of inward purity: it is not one's hands or mouth which need to be clean, but one's heart, evil thoughts and actions which defile, not unwashed hands.[322] The outward purity of the Jews and pagans is mere superstition, divorced from the true purity that has to come from within.

A final case of the use of superstition in the annotations must be discussed, as it refers specifically to Clement. At the very end of the first part, Rogerius relates how 'pagodas', temples which however do not house any images, are built on graves.[323] The annotator uses this to argue that this fits into a universal anthropological phenomenon in the history of religion, saying that 'the ancients took so much care of their burial sites, and held these in such high honour, that one firmly believes that churches, and other godly houses, took their origin from there.'[324] He then quotes Clement in the *Protrepticus* for saying that 'Superstition [...] taught [us] how to build temples, because what were at first burial sites of special people, were afterwards called churches, as they were ornamented with magnificent and precious edifices.'[325] This most likely is a paraphrase of a passage in chapter four of the *Protrepticus*: 'It seems to me that tombs are objects of reverence just the same way as temples are; in fact, pyramids, mausoleums and labyrinths are as it were temples of dead men, just as temples are tombs of the gods.'[326] The modern translation clearly evokes euhemerism; the annotator's version may do so too, but remains more obscure — yet the addition at the end, saying that 'Eusebius, Lactantius, Arnobius, and different others' were of the same opinion, more obviously points towards the notion that euhemerism (the superstition in this case) stands at the beginning of a

[320] *Open Door*, 188, note 167.
[321] *Open Door*, 188, note 167.
[322] Matthew 15:19-20 (NKJV): 'For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.' C.f. also *Open Door*, 289, note 456 on the conception of the sea as unclean, a commonality between the Brahmans and the ancient Egyptians.
[323] *Open Door*, 212.
[324] *Open Door*, 212, note 246.
[325] *Open Door*, 212, note 246.
[326] Translation from Clement, *The Exhortation to the Greeks. The Rich Man's Salvation. To the Newly Baptized*, trans. G.W. Butterworth, Loeb Classical Library 92 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1919), 111–113.

developmental history of wrong belief.

Superstition, in the annotations, thus is a varied phenomenon, but clearly marked by irrationality and a wrong conception of nature and the divine. As such it is closely related with idolatry, which pertains to misdirected worship and therefore shares an erroneous conception of God with superstition. It is also with idolatry where the annotator displays the clearest notion of a developmental view of religion, such as we saw just now with the reference to Clement.

## 10.2 Loci of Unbelief in the *Open Door*: Cosmology and Myth

As is the case with superstition, we see a clear dichotomy in regards to terminological use between Rogerius and the annotator. Rogerius, as already mentioned, never uses the word 'idolatry' or 'afgoderije' in his text. He does, of course, speak of idols ('afgoden') extensively, and by describing the servicing of these idols he is clearly writing about idolatry. But Rogerius at no one point connects these idolatrous acts to a wider phenomenon of idolatry. Rather than describing idolatry in the manner that Selden or Vossius, or also Maimonides, speak of idolatry as a theological concept, Rogerius may be said to merely describe idol worship. This is a relevant distinction: the annotator, who was well read on the topic and concept of idolatry sees idol worship only as a specific and distinct form of idolatry, that arose under specific historical circumstances, whilst idolatry more generally precedes idol worship. This topic is at the heart of the annotator's treatise, and he seeks to lay bare the origins of Indian idolatry in a framework of sacred history and to offer, if not a unified theory on the history of idolatry, at least his best guesses for the origin and spread of specific idolatrous doctrine and the manner in which it reached India.

We have encountered idol worship throughout these chapters, as Rogerius relates the daily routine of the Brahmans, describes Brahman worship, or when speaking of sacrifice and festivities. I do not see any necessity in revisiting these descriptions here; Rogerius maintains a very descriptive tone throughout, and refrains from commenting or engaging in specific tropes, with the clear exception being his description of devil worship. Otherwise, idol worship appears rather dull and monotonous — or, from a different point of view, described with ethnographic rigour but little emotion — as for example when Rogerius describes what the Brahmans do after having serviced the *shaligrama*, mentioned in chapter 1.8:

> When the Brahmans have done the aforementioned around the shaligrama, they venture to a copper image, which stands somewhat higher, and this is the image of the same idol they have worshipped; to this image they also give what they have previously given to the shaligrama; on each side of this image they put a candle or even many more, according to what they desire or whether they are wealthy; after this they put freshly cooked food in front of it; if they do not have that, they put milk or some fruit; finally they throw some flowers onto the image and then

> they go, from the right-hand side, around the image three times, some do it many more times; but as many times as they have gone around the image, as many times they must fall down in front of the image with outstretched and folded hands, and take the tirtha, that is the water with which the shaligrama had been washed, and throw it once on the head, and three times into the mouth with a little of the herb Tulsi; and afterwards they stick a little of this herb into their ears. For this they do not take any Tulsi which has not been offered [in worship]. [327]

Beyond idolatry as literal idol worship, perhaps the major idolatrous practice that we can find in the *Open Door* is polytheism, as here worship that ought to be given to God is instead given to a number of false gods. We have already seen this in parts, when Rogerius relates how the lesser gods are worshipped in chapter 2.14, where Rogerius tells us about diverse sacrifices for different gods as well as the imposture theory for why Brahma is not worshipped. In fact many of the chapters of the second part deal with polytheism in some way: chapter 2.2 discusses the wives of the 'highest God', clearly an idolatrous act, the description of which Rogerius concludes by saying that 'from what has been told it is clear enough how the matter rests; and that the Brahmans, following their religion, believe that Vishnu and Shiva entertain themselves with their wives.'[328] Chapter 2.4 discusses the 'origin of some minor gods' and provides in a sense the background on the major Shaiva and Vaishnava deities whose worship is then described in chapter 2.14 and thus also shows Indian polytheism in an explicit way. Much of the content of these chapters, as well as many parts of the *Open Door* more generally, is related through the medium of mythology, as Rogerius explains some of the key elements of Indian and at point specifically South Indian cosmogony, cosmology, and epic myth. Before circling back to the more specifically idolatrous elements here, it is worth taking a brief look at this.

We have seen an important precedent of the importance of mythology for the creation of ethnographic literature in India with Henry Lord, who makes the four yugas or ages of the world a major element of his work. Rogerius, too, speaks about the four yugas in chapter 2.5, which discusses the creation and the end of the world. Rogerius here engages in one of his rare comparisons, as he says that it is already clear from what has been written previously that the Brahmans believe the world to have been created, by Brahma, and that unlike Aristotle they do not think that the world is eternal.[329] Yet the vastness of Indian cosmology almost make this a minor point in the estimation of Rogerius, as he, not incorrectly, surmises that they believe that before this world there was another, and so on, and in this way 'they indeed attempt to make the Earth eternal'.[330] On the other hand, he goes on, they agree with Epicurus and Metrodorus of Lampsacus (a friend of Epicurus and fellow Epicurean) on the plurality of worlds,

[327] *Open Door*, 190-191.
[328] *Open Door*, 225.
[329] *Open Door*, 236.
[330] *Open Door*, 237.

all of which 'in the shape of an egg, float on the water which is outside the world', which they believe to be God himself.[331] The chapter outlines the four yugas and their length, as well as the gradual deterioration of justice and equity with each age, surmising that the 'pagans therefore believe that over time the world has become worse and more evil'.[332] He then also speaks about the fourteen worlds (lokas) and mount Meru, giving Europeans an unprecedented richness of information on Hindu cosmology.

Yet the main thrust of the chapter, furthered by Rogerius's tactical use of comparison and aided by the narration of myth, is to show the utter absurdity of Indian conceptions of time and the universe. There is no allegory for Christianity here; the end of the world, when the Earth perishes through fire according to Padmanabha, is likened to Stoic beliefs — a natural comparison seeing the circular cosmology where patterns keep repeating much like the Stoic system of eternal recurrence — and Heraclitus, and the length of Hindu time is argued more than once to directly go against the 'unassailable truth of God's word'.[333] In most other instances Rogerius's narration of myth is not quite so polemical, and seems to be equally informed by curiosity and an anthropological intent to get to the reasons for specific practices and especially beliefs. Tales that we might find in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata Purana, but also other puranic and probably vernacular literature, in this way account for a good portion of Rogerius's account.[334] Nevertheless, Rogerius is never tempted to allegorise these myths; the curious case of calling the story of Gajendra's liberation 'beautiful' (194) notwithstanding, Rogerius calls these at best 'old histories' in a neutral manner — in chapter 2.8 he clarifies that the Puranas are their 'old histories', but he also refers to the epics in this manner at times — but more often he declares them to be 'fables' ('fabelen'). A good summary of his overall impression and interpretation of Indian mythology might be the summary he gives at the end of chapter 2.19, which discusses the reasons the 'pagans' consider the river Ganga so highly and mostly traces the manner in which it 'came from Heaven to the place of Indra' and 'how it reached the Earth'.[335] Recapitulating that the reason for the holiness of the river is that 'it comes from the water which is God himself', he derisively ends with saying: 'And even though this all rests on very unsound fables, they nevertheless consider it truthful and cannot be dissuaded from it, and believe it because their Veda, their law book,

[331] *Open Door*, 237.
[332] *Open Door*, 239.
[333] *Open Door*, 237, 241.
[334] The major accounts, in chronological order are the following. Chapter 1.17 relates the story of Gajendra, as already discussed; much of 1.18 relates the main points of the Mahabharata, 1.19 speaks about Draupadi, drawn from the Mahabharata, 2.2. draws potentially from different Puranas, most of 2.3 on the avataras of Vishnu is made up of a summary of the Ramayana, much of 2.4 relates the story of Kadru and Vinata from the Mahabharata, 2.12, as we have seen, discusses the origins of Krishna in the Mahabharata, 2.19 relates the triloka myth and the manner in which Ganga reached Bhuloka (the Earth) which can be found in different Puranas.
[335] *Open Door*, 291, 292.

asserts this.'[336] The annotator has his own view of myth, as we shall see in the next chapter.

## 10.3 Tracing the History of Idolatry in the Annotations

Looking at the references the annotator gives in his footnotes, it quickly becomes clear that the phenomenon of idolatry is key to understanding his interest in Rogerius's ethnographic account. As he cites Vossius, Selden, and Bochart at length, it is clear that the annotator was well read on the topic of idolatry. I have also mentioned that he has a clear notion of what idolatry is, and mentions 'idolatry' as a term specifically. So what does the annotator consider to be idolatry?

### The Ultimate Origins of Idolatry: Celestial Worship

Following a patristic and especially Pauline understanding of idolatry — Romans 1 is mentioned twice in the preface — the annotator sees idolatry quite simply as any worship wrongfully given to something other than God, so as the confusion of creation or creature and creator. Polytheism and the cult of idols is certainly an aspect of idolatry, but according to the annotator idolatry is a much greater and widespread phenomenon than simply the worship of graven images. Maimonides — known primarily to the annotator through Dionysius Vossius's Latin translation of the *Laws of Idolatry* and what Selden tells about him if we follow the annotations — also influenced the annotator's understanding of idolatry: unlike the church fathers or even Vossius, the annotator seems rather curious about the potentially antediluvian origins of idolatry, but does not necessarily see it as particularly relevant, either. Like Maimonides, the annotator posits that the ultimate origins of idolatry are due to human error, not demonic influence, and derive from the worship of stars and celestial objects, but is uncertain whether this occurred before or after the flood; the following footnote, commenting on the last point of the nine-point-list of worship Rogerius presents ('One must pay tribute to [God's] images'), illustrates this perfectly:

> When the pagans first began to worship images is not certain. Some say that Prometheus was the first to honour images; others say Hercules; others Janus. But it is beyond doubt that the first has not yet been found, as most nations claim they learnt this from others. The Latins say that they took it from the Greeks (because Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, book 1, says that in the first 160 years [after its foundation] there were no images to be found even in Rome); the Greeks from the Phoenicians and the Egyptians. The oldest memory of images that can be found is from Genesis 31:19. I know well that there are those, especially among the Jews, who believe that images were worshipped before the flood, in the time of Enoch,

[336] *Open Door*, 295.

> but they are without a doubt very much in error. It is not even certain that in those times idolatry was committed, far less so that images were worshipped; for it is certain that the sun, the moon, etc., were believed to be gods, or at least were paid divine honour, long before images were acknowledged as such. See for this Schedius, *De diis Germanis*, syngramma 1, chapter 3, and Dionysius Vossius, *In nota ad R. Moses Maimonides*, De idololatria, chapter 1. The Persians, the Seres, and other peoples, together with the Jews, never wanted to honour images. That is also why Diagoras of Melos, as he put the image of Hercules onto the fire, said in a mocking way: 'In hoc decimo-tertio agone, ut quondam Eurystheo, mihi servias oportet.'[337]

The annotator here gives us a clear account of what constitutes idol worship and idolatry. Idol worship is the newer offence, and he rejects the notion of images being worshipped before the flood; the earliest, according to him, being the mention of household gods in Genesis 31, where Rachel, one of Jacobs two wives, steals her father Laban's gods. The annotator is less certain about the ultimate origins of idolatry more broadly. He does state that it is certain that idolatry originates with divine honour being paid to the sun and other celestial objects, but is unsure whether this might have happened before or after the flood.[338] As we shall see in the next chapter, there is a temptation to see the time before the flood as a time untainted by idolatry, a moment in history where an Adamic Ur-religion — argued by certain Christian apologists to be equivalent with Christianity — was practised in an uninterrupted manner; the annotator seems to err on the side of caution between his ideals of sacred history and lacklustre historical accounts and leave this an open question.[339] But that idolatry started with human error in the form of worshipping celestial objects is made a certainty, underlined in another footnote on a brief mention Rogerius makes of Chandra, the god of the moon:

> That they, however, honour [the moon] and award him honour enough next to the sun seems to be beyond doubt. To these two lights men have committed the very first offence and around them practised idolatry. As those of Assyria, from whom all idolatry and superstition sprouted and spread all over the word, worshipped these above all, so it is apparent that these Brahmans, besides also different other matters concerning worship, have kept this from them; just as also the Phoenicians, and those of Cyprus had learnt this from the Assyrians; and from those the Greeks and the whole of Africa; from them again the Romans, the old Germans, and the Scythians. And in this way this error took over the whole world. The Phoenicians,

[337] *Open Door*, 249-250, note 376.

[338] The remark about 'in the time of Enoch' might also be a reference to Maimonides, although the latter employs a broad conceptualisation of idolatry not restricted to the worship of literal idols.

[339] Jonathan Sheehan sums this up well: 'If idolatry was a pre-diluvial phenomenon, then it had always shadowed true religion: out-side of Eden, truth had been free of error for a mere two centuries. If idolatry was a post-diluvial phenomenon, however, scholars could embrace the time before the Flood as a period of unbroken religious devotion, a Christianity avant la lettre or what Eusebius called the "most ancient organisation for holiness"' Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane," 74.

> Assyrians, and others around served the moon under the name of Astarte (this is Astaroth in the Old Testament, Judges 2:19 and the Second Book of Kings, 23:13.) The Babylonians and Assyrians called them Πύλιττα. The Persians, *Anaitis*, as also the Medes and Parthians. The Arabs *Abilat* or *Alitta*. The Egyptians *Isis*. The Africans, *Coelestis*. The Romans, *Diana*, the Greeks Ἄρτεμις, and so on. See Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, Herodotus, book 1, Strabo, book 11, Pausanias in Laconicis, Diodorus, *Bibliotheca*, and Cicero, *De natura Deorum*, book 2.[340]

With these two notes the annotator makes it very clear that he supports the idea that idolatry first emerged as a phenomenon through the worship of celestial bodies. We can note here that he relies, besides Maimonides, on ancient Greek and Roman sources to underline this fact. Diodorus Siculus, for instance, argues that the Egyptians were the first to conceive that 'two gods were both eternal and first, namely, the sun and the moon, whom they called respectively Osiris and Isis',[341] but also discusses at length the astrological beliefs of the Chaldeans, who assigned divine providence to the course of the stars — the discourses around superstition and idolatry meet in this regard.[342] Cicero on the other hand is cited for the account of Stoic beliefs regarding the divinity of celestial objects. Many of the other works are more topical: Lucian on Syria, Strabo for the Medes and Parthians. The curious missing element is Selden, whose *De diis Syris* was the one work to unequivocally argue for an Assyrian origin of idolatry.[343] In any case, by sheer numbers of followers of this most ancient type of idolatry, and the key goddesses under whom the moon was worshipped, the annotator seeks to underline that idolatry emerged through the worship of the stars.

Interestingly, the annotator also sees solar worship to be a very obvious case of irredeemable idolatry, and not as close as man could get to true worship without revelation, as for instance Las Casas argued. Instead, the annotator takes a very firm stance against solar worship, without at any point making a connection to reason or natural theology:

> To list the nations and peoples by whom, as well as the names under which the sun has been worshipped since ancient times, and [to also list] who were the first who did the same, and which reasons they thought to have for this, would take far too long to tell here. The curious reader may consult on this Vossius, *De idololatriae*, book 2, Elias Schedius, *De diis Germanis*, syngramma 1, chapter 3, Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, book 44, chapter 2, and different others. Here I shall only add that God expressly forbade this, and wished that those who had been found worshipping the sun or moon would be stoned to death, Deuteronomy 17:3. In the Second Book

[340] *Open Door*, 256, note 390.
[341] Diodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.11; translation from Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History, Volume I: Books 1-2.34*, Loeb Classical Library 279 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 37. Compare also 1.13.
[342] Diodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.30-31.
[343] Schedius's *De diis Germanis* was based in large parts on the model of Selden's *De diis Syris*, but argues more rigorously than Selden for a developmental model of idolatry, much like the annotator does for specific forms of idolatrous worship. See Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 217-282, especially 258.

> of Kings this is also put among the reasons why the Jewish Kingdom was destroyed and exterminated. So that we see that Plutarch, even though he was a pagan, spoke most excellently concerning this in the book on Isis and Osiris, when he said that the elements, heavens, the sun and the moon ought not to be worshipped; but that they are only mirrors in which one could feel the special wisdom and art of the one who had created and so excellently decorated the heavens.[344]

The annotator therefore has a very clear stance on the deification of the stars and solar worship, and condemns it in the harshest tones. He is no mere apologist, however, and the focus on the development of idolatry is key to understanding his discourse on idolatry more generally. Nowhere here do we read about demonic influence: instead, the annotator gives an anthropological answer to the question of how idolatry arose, namely by worshipping the most apparent thing, the 'two lights' that could always be seen. The annotator might also be following Clüver's work — whose work, while not referenced at all in the annotations, was likely known to the annotator, considering Clüver resided in Leiden and was connected to the university — who tries to link all female deities to the moon, and all male deities to the sun.[345] Once people started worshipping the stars, this practice quickly spread around the globe, and the annotator sees a direct connection between Assyrian worship of the stars and the Brahmans' own deification of the sun, moon, and celestial objects. The ancient Hebrews are also shown to have committed this sin, since the annotator here say that it was one of the reasons for the destruction of their kingdom. While the annotator does not present us with a complex and sophisticated model of different levels of idolatry like Vossius, from whom he clearly draws, he does distinguish this most ancient form of idolatry from image worship, as we have already seen briefly, as well as from devil worship as a specific category. This form of idolatry arose under different historical circumstances, and derives primarily, so the annotator suggests, from the Egyptians.

### Egypt as a Locus of False Custom

Egypt plays a central role in the annotator's project to trace a genealogical history of culture. While he posits that the cultural practices surrounding priesthood derives from the Hebrews, as we have seen, and the Brahmans in their roles as priests have an analogous role to the tribe of Levi, many other practices are suggested to have originated in Egypt. Egypt is prominent in many of the comparisons that universalise practices, such as the manner in which societies are divided into tribes, incest, the 'very old practice' of asking for alms especially among priests, or

[344] *Open Door*, 273, note 423. See also 188, note 169, where the annotator compares the cardinal direction towards which different peoples prayed; the Hebrews avoided praying towards the west, 'so that they would not appear to be worshipping the sun, like the Persians, but rather the one who created the sun'.

[345] C.f. *Open Door*, 190, note 177, where Heliogabalus as a principle deity among the Phoenicians is equated with the sun.

the shaving of facial hair as a sign of mourning.[346] We have also already encounter polygamy, for which the Egyptians are also mentioned as one of the peoples who practise marrying as many women as one can afford to support.[347] But Egypt does not stand out in the annotator's attempt to compare and trace Brahman civility, which is much less genealogical in nature than his presentation of Brahman religion. Civil customs other than those of the priestly Brahmans instead are predominantly estimated to be cultural constants or simply compared with a host of different cultures, both ancient and contemporary, from the ancient Seres to the seventeenth-century Japanese.[348]

When it comes to belief and especially worship, however, the Egyptians take on a leading role. A good place to start in this regard is cosmology, which the annotator interprets as both a critical Christian apologist and scholar sympathetic to Platonising allegorical interpretations — leading to some incongruous results. One cosmological aspect that he clearly condemns is the cosmological time span of both the Brahmans and the Egyptians, whose chronology was a common point of attack and topic of re-interpretation for early modern scholars. The annotator here has nothing good to say about any of this, and also adds the Chaldeans to the mix:

> Just as the Brahmans have borrowed most of what they know of God and worship from the old Egyptians, so they have also sustained these most excellent and well-thought-out lies from them. The Egyptians, very much boasting about their antiquity and always insisting that no nation could compare to them, attributed an infinite number of years to the world. [...] The Chaldeans are even more prone to exaggeration and say that astrology had been used among them for more than 470,000 years. But Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Adversus astrologiam*, says that Callisthenes [...] found that the most ancient proofs of knowledge about the stars they are supposed to have had did not extend beyond 1,900 years. It could also not be any different, because it is certain that in the writings of the pagans no memories, figures, or other monuments are to be found that predate the flood. It is also apparent that from that time to now no more than 4,000 years have passed.[349]

We will see that not all ancient and Brahman cosmology is as obviously wrong as their chronology in the next chapter; chronology, however, could in no way be defended, as a biblical chronology was of paramount importance to the annotator, much as it was for his fellow historians of idolatry, from Clüver to Vossius. The most interesting element of this footnote is however the manner in which the annotator lays out the argument. He clearly distinguishes their knowledge of God (singular) from their worship, although both are clearly argued to

[346] *Open Door*, 134, note 2; 147, note 52; 149, note 57; 206, note 231.
[347] *Open Door*, 171, note 144.
[348] The Seres are mentioned in *Open Door*, 188-189, note 173. The Japanese are mentioned multiple times — including a noteworthy mention of *Anuda* in note 321 (*Open Door* 235), whom the annotator calls an idol and who is probably to be identified as Amida or Amitabha Buddha. He draws from multiple Dutch travel accounts, but predominantly from Francois Caron.
[349] *Open Door*, 238, note 334.

derive from the Egyptians. While this example is an 'excellent lie', this does not at all apply to everything they inherited from an Egyptian origin. Here the distinction of belief (as thought) and worship (as action) is crucial. Even when the annotator does not argue for an obvious allegorical reading of a given belief, this belief is not decried as false. A good example is when Rogerius recounts that the Brahmans believe the 'many worlds' to float on the water in the shape of an egg, which the annotator compares with Egyptian beliefs, as well as the Orphic egg.[350]

### The Development of Physical Temples

Practices of worship, on the other hand, are described in a completely different manner. The annotator also gives us a tentative answer on the history of worshipping images, false gods, and the devil — a quick history on the origins of idolatrous practice. Now, the annotator, as we have already seen, does posit that worshipping the stars was the very first offence, an anthropocentric explanation for an 'error' that thence spread around the world. While he is not dismissive of this form of idolatry, or sees it any closer to true religion than any other form of idolatry, he does not spend more time on this explanation — it is simply a straightforward case of confusing creation and creator, which then potentially, in a second step, leads to the identification of certain deities with celestial objects, especially the sun and moon. While diffusion is at play here, there is little historical change over time; other forms of idolatry instead are explored from the point of view of a developmental model of religion. The annotator mixes different traditions and explanations here, with a curious but fascinating theory for the origin of places of worship.

> The most ancient peoples did not erect any temples, but served God on mountains, in forests, and elsewhere, as we consistently find in the Holy Scriptures. It was also the teaching of Zeno that temples should not be built for the gods. The Persians, as Herodotus in his history tells us, were very averse to temples. Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton*, also said that man's heart, supplied with justice, honour, and such virtues, was the best and most pleasing temple one could dedicate to God. However, it is beyond doubt that God himself is the author of temples and has desired that they should be built. Moses (Exodus 25-27) had already fashioned a draft for the temple that would be built in Jerusalem. After this the devil even imitated God, and convinced and commanded other peoples and nations that one should build temples in honour of the gods and in order to erect their images there. But when, and by whom this first happened is seen in Giraldi, *De deis gentium*, syntagma 17, at the beginning.[351]

[350] *Open Door*, 237, note 329. He also refers to Proclus's *Platonic Theology*, yet without any clear argument in favour of a Christian reading.
[351] *Open Door*, 250, note 377.

The annotator seems torn here between the simple, spiritual and inward-looking — if potentially Deist, but here presented more as a form of natural religion — worship of God to which he clearly is sympathetic, and the account from the Pentateuch regarding God's authorship of places of worship. The second part of the note is equally interesting. For one, the annotator supports a patristic, especially Augustinian notion of the devil imitating God and taking the latter's worship for himself. By itself this would not be surprising, but it might seem in contrast with his anthropocentric theory for the ultimate origins of idolatry as well as with the developmental model he outlines not only himself here, but also by citing Giraldi. The annotator does not give us the precise passage, but he is most likely referring to Giraldi's discussion of the origin of temples. The latter tells us that most ancient authors think that temples originate with graves. 'I say that so much care was taken with the ancient sepulchres, that the most careful writers, Eusebius and Lactantius, report that the origin of temples and sacred buildings was not derived from any other source.'[352] This in fact agrees with another footnote found in the first part, commenting on a discussion of funerary practices, where the annotator adds that this Brahman custom agrees with Roman Law — citing the appropriate sources — and the laws of Solon. At the end of this note he adds a short comment: 'It was also practised by those of Corinth and others. The Trojans buried their dead right outside their gates. Among the Romans, Trajan was the first who was buried in the city on the Forum; thereafter people gradually started to come to the houses; from the houses to the church yards and the churches.'[353] The origin of temples is thus to be located with burial places; while the annotator does not outright support a euhemerist explanation here, this passage does heavily suggest euhemerism as the origin of worshipping not only in temples dedicated to pagan gods, but potentially also in Christian churches!

How does this fit with the imitation theory of the devil's authorship of pagan temples? First of all, the annotator's argument in favour of a demonic thesis is not an isolated incidence. When Rogerius discusses the way the Brahmans consider the temples in chapter 2.10, the annotator adds multiple notes supporting this thesis. Rogerius says that the Brahmans believe that God lives in the temples, which the annotator backs up with a comparison with ancient Greece and an etymological proof, saying that the Greeks also believed the gods to live in the temples. He adds that, apparently, the 'devil also told the pagans this, as he knew that God had promised the Jews that he would want to live in the temple in Jerusalem.'[354] The annotator adds: 'But in which way God is said to live in the temples is seen in Aretius, *Loci communes*.' Aretius was a Swiss Reformed theologian active in Bern in the sixteenth-century,

[352] In full in the original: 'Porro plerique ex sepulchris initium templa sumpisse arbitrati sunt, ut in Sepulchralibus his verbis ostendimus: Fuit inquam usque adeo sepulchrorum antiquis cura, ut non aliunde templorum et sacrarum aedium originem deductam, diligentissimi scriptores tradant, Eusebius et Lactantius.' Giraldi, *De deis gentium*, 650.
[353] *Open Door*, 205, note 227.
[354] *Open Door*, 257, note 394.

whose work has received practically no attention at all by scholarship.[355] This reference to Aretius turns out to be a crucial element. The annotator is not kind enough to give us an exact location within Aretius's work, but in locus 125 Aretius gives us an account on the origin of temples. It turns out that this is indeed the source of the annotator's information, as the entire footnote is a paraphrase of Aretius's Latin text.[356] Aretius also gives us a developmental model of temples. He says, much like the annotator here basing himself on the biblical book of Exodus, that temples trace their origin back to God only, as Moses was tasked with conceiving the temple and was the first to mention the temple, and that the devil (Satan) imitated the example of Moses, which henceforth meant that idols were worshipped in the same manner as the Patriarchs worshipped God. He then, however, takes a step back, and investigates the concept of a temple beyond the temple in Jerusalem. Abel 'offered God a sacrifice under the sky', Noah built an altar for sacrifice, and Jacob anointed a stone which he gave the title 'House of God'.[357] With Moses there is a first break, and a move to a more noble temple. Aretius also discusses pagan authors, and their inconsistent testimony regarding the origin of temples; what he does propose, however, is that sepulchres were called temples, as he suggests, in a euhemerist fashion, that the dead were given divine honours in places of burial and the temples sprung up in this manner. A second break comes with the increasing impiety of the Jews, and the destruction of the temple, but also the coming of Christ. The Christians took pagan temples and dedicated them to Christ and the martyrs, but soon pontifical superstition meant that 'greater care was spent on the temples than on religion itself'.[358] Aretius does not argue against external temples, which have their uses even if God does not reside in any man-made temple, but he does privilege the spiritual temple of God. Unlike the external temples, which are often contaminated by superstition — repeatedly Aretius goes into diatribes against Catholics — the spiritual temple is internal and holy, and is called by Aretius to be a *living temple* (vivum templum). This is the true temple of God, made up of his congregation: 'we are the temple of God' is what Aretius says very clearly.[359]

The annotator seems to be closely following Aretius here: Christian churches as physical locations derive from pagan structures in many cases, but the true temple of God is spiritual

[355] Benedictus Aretius, *Problemata theologica continentia praecipuos nostrae religionis locos, brevi et dilucida ratione explicatos* (Lausanne: Franciscus le Preux, 1573). I have used Benedictus Aretius, *Theologiae problemata, hoc est, loci communes Christianae religionis, methodice explicati* (Genève: Isayas le Preux, 1617).

[356] Aretius, 708: 'Græci ναόν vocant à verbo ναίω habito: cuius reddunt rationem, διὰ τὸ ἐνναίειν ἐν αὐτῷ ζοὺς ϑεοὺς hoc est, quòd dij in iis creduntur habitare. Id Satan ad Gentes detulit, cùm sciret Deum Ierosolymitanum promisisse velle Templum illud inhabitare.'

[357] Aretius, 708. 'Abel sacrificium Domino offert libero calo [] Noë Aram construit, in qua offert Sacrificium: Iacob Lapidem erigit, quem ungit oleo, & ornat eum titulo Domus Dei Bethel.'

[358] Aretius, 710. 'Mox aucta est superstitio à Pontificibus ut maior cura Templis, quàm Religioni sit impensa.'

[359] Aretius, 714: 'Dicimur Templum Dei, quia in nobis iam Spiritus Dei regnat, quia regeniti sumus, & opera carnis non habent in nobis locum, quia vera adoratio, vera Dei cognitio: vera dilectionis opera exercemus: cælestia meditamur & vitam æternam. Summa, quanti quanti sumus, Dei Spiritu ducimur, qui glorificatur per nos, professione, Vita ac Moribus.'

in any case. Ornamentation needs to be spiritual too, not physical. The true temple is thus an inward temple, whilst most external temples are prone to degenerate into superstition and idolatry — again associating external ritual with idolatry. While the devil is not unequivocally called the author of pagan temples — both Aretius and the annotator swerve between Satan and euhemerism — in the annotations the devil is very much present as an imitator of God. Still in chapter 2.10, for instance, the annotator comments on Rogerius relating how under King Rama Deva Raya someone was sent to take a precious golden crown from the head of an idol. Padmanabha claims that the person sent to do this deed died on the mountain where the temple stands; the annotator comments that the devil 'entirely mimicking God the Lord, sent terrible plagues on those who dared rob his temples. To speak of all of these would be too long to tell.'[360] But the point is that the physical locations, just like the outward affectations of purity discussed above, are largely irrelevant, and may be curiously investigated from a historical perspective without undermining any conception of sacrality, whilst true worship, true temples, and true purity are all argued to be spiritual, inward realities.

The annotator might well be influenced by a general current of spiritualism present in the early modern Dutch Republic; however, his assertions in the *Open Door* to me do not seem to fully veer into dissident terrain. His notions of the compatibility of Brahman beliefs with Christianity which we will see in more detail in the next chapter certainly are unusual and skirting the edges of orthodoxy, but he seeks nevertheless to always retain an understanding of Christ and the church that remains Reformed.[361] The spiritualism that is evinced seems more a confirmation of a basic Protestant spiritualism, opposed to ostensible Catholic and pagan materialism.

### The Devil, Worshipped

Euhemerism and devil worship are presented as historical realities, which can be equally seen to have brought forth the structures of worship of the pagans and eventually the Christians. Devil worship therefore emerges as a specific species of idolatry, rather than as the unilateral explanation for idolatry more generally. As we will see when we contrast devil worship with image worship more broadly, the devil is the true author and recipient of rituals and sacrifices within the idolatrous subspecies of devil worship. The pagans are by no means the only ones to

[360] *Open Door*, 260, note 401.

[361] It is also difficult to speak about tolerance in this political-evangelising context — is the Jesuit method of accommodation, for instance, tolerant? I would not discount any connection or influence of the rational, tolerant discourses of the time, from the Remonstrants, to Cartesianism, to the Collegiants, but it is difficult to establish how the annotator would fit into this. See further on this Andrew Cooper Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Ruben Buys, *Sparks of Reason: Vernacular Rationalism in the Low Countries, 1550-1670* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2015); Francesco Quatrini, *Adam Boreel (1602–1665): A Collegiant's Attempt to Reform Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2021); Gary K. Waite, "Spiritualism and Rationalism in Early Modern Europe: The Case of David Joris," *Church History and Religious Culture* 101, nos. 2–3 (2021): 263–285.

worship the devil: at the very beginning of the chapter on devil worship, the annotator comments that not only is this a very old custom, about which God himself complains in Leviticus, but the Book of Deuteronomy shows that 'the Israelites themselves tainted themselves greatly with this sin, and sacrificed to the devils.' Especially interesting is the very next sentence: 'It is also questionable whether nowadays the Jews are completely free of this.'[362] As Rogerius informs us about the Ganga yatra, the annotator compares these practices with other 'devil worship', both ancient and contemporary. He argues that the pagans have always worshipped the devil only at night or in the afternoon, whilst sacrifices to the gods were performed early in the morning or before noon, wonders whether the goat slaughtered at the ganga yatra might be killed with the left hand in the manner the Romans sacrificed to the devil, and tells us that the Romans were undecided on the question whether food sacrificed to the devil may or may not be eaten.[363] He also adds a long footnote on human sacrifice (as Rogerius mentions that a human is supposed to have been sacrificed to Ganga in previous times), showing the great diffusion of this 'terrible custom' across the ancient pagan world.[364]

Towards the end of the chapter, the annotator then tells us his thoughts on the development of devil worship. Commenting on Rogerius's excursus on tripartite worship and how the pagans agree with Porphyry that bloody sacrifices are never made to the highest God, but only to evil spirits or the devil, the annotator agrees with Rogerius regarding bloody sacrifices, and adds that the Indians have this in common with the Egyptians and 'all those who have borrowed their worship from the Egyptians' among whom the principal ones are the Greeks and Romans.'[365] He also then explains why the pagans, according to Rogerius, worship Ganga and his (sic!) like so that they may not be harmed:

> The Persians, the Egyptians, and with them almost all pagans thought that there were two first causes, or beginnings, from which everything came forth, one good and one evil; and that the good, which is God, was the author of all goodness; and the evil, which is the devil, of all evil. This is why they prayed to God to receive something good from him; and the devil to ward off evil from them. This opinion spread to all pagans, also to those still nowadays living in the East and West Indies.

[362] *Open Door*, 277, note 432. He goes on 'Elia Levita in Thisbi, in the word of Samael, writes that it is said: "Give offerings, sacrifice to Samael on the day of reconciliation." Whence it originated that they sacrifice to the devil on the day of reconciliation is seen in Rabbi Eliezer in his book, which he called Pirke Rabbi Eliezer [Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer], chapter 46, where a miraculous meeting between God and the devil is found concerning this matter.' See also *Open Door*, 277, note 378, commenting on priestly imposture: 'This manner of conduct has always been common and also the Jewish Rabbis have things to say on this; because in the Sanhedrin a seducer, one who brings others to idolatry, is introduced thus: "In such a place is a god, to whom such food, such drink is presented and offered, from whom such and such goods are expected and obtained, etc."'

[363] *Open Door*, 278, notes 433-435.

[364] *Open Door*, 280, note 438.

[365] *Open Door*, 280, note 440. He adds a quote from Augustine (City of God 8.13): '[Labeo thought that] one ought to appease evil spirits with bloody sacrifices; but good ones with the observation of festivities and such pleasures.' I have retained the annotator's wording.

> See the diaries held during the journeys of Admiral Steven van der Hagen, page 31 and Matelief, page 115. Vossius, *De idololatriae*, in addit. to book 1, and others more. Even the Manicheans, who claimed to be Christians, were guilty of this error. See on this in more detail Epiphanius, *Contra haereses* 66, and especially the previously mentioned Vossius, *De idololatriae*, book 1, chapter 5.[366]

Fear turns out to be the driving force behind a dualistic conception of the world, wrongfully elevating evil (the devil) to the same level as the good (God). Devil worship is fully associated with bloody sacrifices, which from Egypt took over the globe. The question remains: what are idols, and are they connected to the devil, to euhemerism, or something else entirely?

### Corrupt Reflections of Truth? Worshipping Images

We have already seen that the annotator says that it is uncertain when the pagans began to worship images, and that the 'first [people to worship them] has not yet been found'. He also gives us many accounts of its universal occurrence among many peoples, for instance regarding the practices of making generous donations to the idols, the manner in which idols are carried during processions, and simply the act of portraying their gods in the first place.[367]

We quickly see, however, that the worship of graven images — at least those not concerning human-like images — is also closely tied to the Egyptians according to the annotator. Idols of gods that are partially or entirely non-human may form a specific species of idolatry yet again, but the annotator does not speak much about the image worship of human-presenting deities; as we will see in the next chapter, this may be connected to his allegorisation of polytheism. Animal deity worship, on the other hand, is clearly associated with Egypt. When Rogerius relates the origins of the *lingam* as we might find it, for instance, in the Bhagavata Purana, the annotator suggests that phallic worship originated in Egypt and traces its roots back to the myth surrounding Isis and Osiris, with the former instituting the erection of phallic images in temples in the aftermath of Osiris's dismemberment and revival after Isis had found all pieces except for his genitalia.[368] The Brahmans learnt this, so he suggests, from the Egyptians, just like the Greeks and Romans. The annotator also says that Garuda seems to be equivalent to 'Epies' (probably Horus) among the Egyptians.[369] But the most interesting case where the annotator posits an Egyptian origin for image worship is a note on Nandi, the bull vahana of Shiva — which Rogerius hardly discusses — and the wider worship of oxen. This is a long footnote, but it is worth looking at it in full:

> To erect images for oxen and to honour them as gods, these *Bramines*, and different

[366] *Open Door*, 281, note 441.
[367] The notes on chapter 2.11 all discuss this topic. See especially *Open Door*, 260, note 400; 261, notes 403 and 404.
[368] *Open Door*, 224, note 292.
[369] *Open Door*, 254-255, notes 384 and 386.

> other Indians, have without a doubt learnt from the Egyptians; for Strabo, book 17, Pliny 18.46 and numerous other authors tell stories that those of Egypt always had two oxen whom they considered gods. One they called Mnevis, and the other *Apis*, *Sarapis*, or *Serapis*; after this Apis the Israelites themselves formed the image of the golden calf in the desert, Exodus 32. See Jerome, *Hosea*, chapter 4, and Lactantius, *De vera sapientia et religione*, chapter 10, Ambrose, Tertullian, and others. Vossius, *De idololatriae*, book 1, chapter 29, considers it certain that with this Apis, or Serapis, the Patriarch Joseph is meant; and this he proves with Suida in voce Σαραπις, Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, book 2, chapter 33, Julius [Firmicus] Maternus, and others. Augustine [Hibernicus], *De mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, also says very explicitly that those of Egypt had an image of an ox by the grave of the Patriach Joseph. To which is to be added that the aforementioned Patriarch is even called an ox himself, Deuteronomy 33:17, [or] at least compared with it. The reasons they had for this were beyond doubt the welfare that they enjoyed through his intellect and wisdom in the interpretation of the dream of the Pharaoh, and the stockpile of grain organised by him, without which they would have all passed away from hunger; because the pagans always symbolised the fertility of grain and other matters with an ox. Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, book 3, chapters 13 & 15. This is also why the Romans honoured Lucius Minucius with a golden ox when he provided the populace with corn, Livy, book 4. So also God the Lord himself meant to signify seven fruitful years with seven fat oxen; and seven infertile years through seven lean oxen. One will also find that those of Egypt, or any other pagans, did not worship oxen before the time of Joseph; so that the opinion of Vossius, in my opinion, is not so strange. See Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, book 3, chapter 12, and it should be easy to understand from this why these Brahmans add an ox to Shiva.[370]

The annotator here suggests that at least this specific form of image worship concerning oxen clearly derives from the ancient Egyptians, and thence spread to all of India. Apis and Serapis — the latter representing a later Graeco-Egyptian syncretic god — were known deities, as there are plenty of ancient accounts speaking about these gods. As the annotator himself shows here, the identification of the golden calf with Apis was an argument drawn from patristic literature, and was thus not a particularly noteworthy thesis.[371] The annotator's argument that the worship of Apis or oxen and bulls more generally derives from the patriarch Joseph is taken directly from Vossius, as the annotator, again, clearly tells us. Vossius's thesis here, repeated by the annotator as trustworthy, concerns the identity of Apis as Joseph, based on ancient mythography, with Vossius arguing details against Giraldi and Scaliger.[372] The antiquarian details of the argument and the entanglements of Mnevis, Apis, and Serapis need not concern us here; what is important is the argument that the idolatrous worship

[370] *Open Door*, 236, notes 336.

[371] See Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 4.10. I have used Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes, Books I-VII*, trans. Mary Francis McDonald, The Fathers of the Church 49 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 263ff.

[372] See Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 109ff.

of oxen derives from a Hebrew source and is connected to Pharao's dream from Genesis 41. The idolatrous practice that developed after, with the annotator here also saying that before Joseph neither the Egyptians nor any other pagans did, in fact, worship oxen, thus derives from the deification of Joseph's systematic handling of fertility and famine in Egypt. Vossius here provides an anthropological explanation for an idolatrous practice, rationalising the development by proposing an origin of this form of worship with a celebration of fertility. At the same time, we here encounter a complex historical development of idolatry, at least with the specific example of oxen worship, as the Hebrews in the time of Moses copied an Egyptian practice, but the Egyptian practice itself actually can be traced back to the Hebrew patriarchs and the agency of God, as Apis is nothing but a corrupted understanding of Joseph's role in saving Egypt from drought.

The argument from the annotator that all oxen worship, including the worship of Nandi in India, derives from an Egyptian source is not a great leap, any more, and the reference to Valeriano seeks to underline the widespread importance of oxen in ancient cultures and its allegorical interpretation.[373] But the argument is significant, nevertheless: not only is the practice of the Brahmans, along with that of the Egpytians and Romans here analysed based on an anthropological explanation for the development of a worship custom, the idolatrous act of the Indians is also connected to the ancient Hebrews and potentially true religion in a direct line of descent via corruption. As we have seen, the annotator hesitates to give us a clear and unified theory of the origin of idolatry: the worship of celestial bodies derives from Assyria, perhaps before but more likely after the flood; devil worship and euhemerism are both suggested to have been important for the erection of temples of worship, which however also gradually developed from primitive into more sophisticated buildings, perhaps also connected to the worship of God; image worship generally is argued to be difficult to trace, as each people say they derive it from another; and the worship of oxen is derived from a corrupted understanding of sacred history.

A general tendency emerges in the annotator's presentation of idolatry. For one, the devil does play a role in leading man astray, but this role seems to be rather restricted. For the most part, instead, the annotator promotes historical-antiquarian-anthropological explanations for the emergence of idolatry, where the worship of creation is a misapplied or misunderstood doctrine rather than deriving from demonic agency. This is also true for the worship of oxen, a grievously idolatrous practice, elevating an animal to the level of a god, as it is in the end merely a misunderstanding of a historical episode. The connection with sacred history and true religion that we encounter here is restricted to this form of idolatry, but is the main argument for the origin of the beliefs of the Brahmans; not only for their monotheism, but also for the transmigration of souls and even polytheism and the manner in which the Brahmans give a wife to God. The assessment of belief, the nature of 'religion' as a concept, and the integration

[373] See Valeriano Bolzani, *Hieroglyphica*, 22–31.

of the Brahmans into a genealogy of ancient wisdom will be the topic of the final chapter of this analysis.

# CHAPTER 11

## RELIGION, BELIEF, MONOTHEISM, AND ESOTERIC WISDOM

Having surveyed the manner in which Brahman civility and priesthood, different conceptions of worship and sacrifice, as well as superstition and idolatry are presented in the *Open Door*, in this last chapter we must investigate the role of monotheism, its connection to the conceptualisation of religion, and the manner in which the monotheism of the Brahmans may or may not be compared to Christianity. While the previous chapters have dealt primarily with Rogerius's and the annotator's views on practices or the intersection of belief and practice, here we must speak of how our authors conceive of Brahman belief. It should be reiterated that this distinction is in the text itself, as the first seven chapters of the second part deal with God (2.1), the wives of God (2.2), Vishnu's avataras (2.4), cosmogony and cosmology (2.5), the role of angels and devils (2.6) and the role of soul (2.7), while the remainder of the second part, as we have seen previously, deals with worship and devotional practices.

While Rogerius does give us a clear account of Brahman monotheism, influenced by both his general observations of actual monotheism as it was practised in South India at the time as well as more specifically to a significant extent by Padmanabha's Smartism, it is the annotator who emerges as the main speaker in these chapters. Along with chapter 1.10, the aforementioned chapters together make up a great part of the annotator's treatise; in most of these chapters — except for chapter 2.3 which outlines the avataras of Vishnu — the annotations account for more and sometimes vastly more text than Rogerius's main text. It is also to these chapters that the annotator makes his frequent in-text references: most of the annotator's references to his own notes — which are surprisingly plentiful — direct the reader to these chapters at the beginning of the second part, along with chapter 1.10 (regarding philosophical knowledge) and 2.21 (discussing the transmigration of souls). In all of these chapters, the annotator unveils his grand theory of Brahman religion, and shows at great length how the Brahmans might be

integrated into a framework of prisca theologia, how erroneous and idolatrous beliefs such as polytheism and the transmigration of souls are actually based on truth, and how in many ways the Brahmans understand Christian doctrine rather well. Before turning to these very detailed analyses of the annotator, I must first discuss the manner in which religion and monotheism is perceived and conceived by both authors in the first place.

## 11.1 Approaching Brahman Monotheism in the *Open Door*

### Matters of Dispute: *Consensum Gentium* and Questions of Innateness

We have seen that Rogerius asserts that worship is to action as belief is to thought, and that belief necessitates worship. He also makes this abundantly clear at the very beginning of the second part, in the opening lines of chapter 2.1, where he shows that this notion is entangled with the idea of an innate natural reason and theology:

> No one should think that these people are like beasts, and do not know of any God or divine worship. We must assert the contrary about them. Seafaring has also taught us that there is no living nation that is so beastly, and deprived of all reason, that it does not know that there is one God; it must also have worship. Likewise, these pagans, too, recognise one God.[374]

Rogerius follows a standard Reformed notion of a limited natural theology here, confirmed, in his eyes, by empirical data: an innate notion of God is present everywhere. Rogerius thus is happy to introduce Brahman monotheism, even before describing what he witnessed himself in this regard, by way of a *consensus gentium*, countering any arguments that the Indian pagans are mere devil worshippers, but at the same time presenting Brahman monotheism as belonging to a very generic species of monotheism based on natural reason.

The annotator here immediately disagrees with Rogerius, and, interestingly, denies the validity of the *consensus gentium* argument. 'If the preceding words are to be understood generally', he says, 'for all nations, even outside of the Coromandel Coast, this may possibly go somewhat too far, and be felt by many to be too sanguine.'[375] Seafaring, he asserts in a direct contradiction to what Rogerius claimed, 'has taught us the contrary', and the annotator adds relevant passages from Le Maire and Schouten's *Australian Navigation* and from the journal of Jacques L'Hermite's Nassau fleet. Ancient precedent is also taken up to show the limits of the *consensus gentium*, listing not only the infamous example of Diagoras of Melos, but also Protagoras and half a dozen ancient atheists, among them Euhemerus himself. He finishes this deconstruction by saying that 'it were to be wished that nowadays, even among

[374] *Open Door*, 213.
[375] *Open Door*, 213, note 249.

Christendom, no one of such an opinion could be found.'[376] Much like we have seen in the discussion of Grotius, the annotator is not content with explanations which claim innateness to be the answer to the question of how monotheism outside of the narrow scope of sacred history may be explained. Rogerius uncritically asserts the *consensus gentium* to be an evident truth, but confronted with the existence of atheism (or what is perceived to be atheism), the annotator cannot accept such a lacklustre explanation. Like Grotius and the annotator's model scholar Vossius, A.W. instead seeks an explanation based on tradition.

### Rogerius's Brahman Monotheism

In chapter 2.1, Rogerius continues his presentation of what the Brahmans think about God by reiterating that the Vaishnavites consider Vishnu to be the highest God — adding an element of South Indian specificity by saying that he is also called *Peremael* [Perumal] and called by a thousand other names — whilst the Shaivites consider Shiva the highest God, who also has a thousand other names.[377] More importantly, Rogerius then says that they 'recognise not only that there is one God, but also that there is one highest God, who is one, and that there is no one else like him.'[378]

Rogerius goes on to say that all agree that 'Brahma created the world and everything it contains', after which he dedicates the remainder of the chapter to the origins and role of Brahma. 'God' in the sense of a supreme deity is still discussed, as Rogerius relates the creation of Brahma from the navel of Vishnu (Rogerius's 'God' in this chapter) that we can find for instance in the Vishnu Purana.[379] Rogerius here gives us a Vaishnava perspective,

[376] *Open Door*, 213, note 249. Calling Euhemerus an atheist is interesting, as from a Christian perspective one might also laud him for uncovering the errors of the pagans, as is done for instance by Tertullian or Lactantius. Euhemerus inherently holds this dual position: he is impious due to his lack of belief and respect, but also uncovers the wrongfully attributed divinity of pagan gods.

[377] *Open Door*, 213-214. The annotator adds a puzzling note, saying that "'Vishnu" in the Bergas language (the language used by the Brahmans on the Coromandel Coast, where our author was) is "Perumal" in Malabarian.' *Open Door*, 213, note 250. As I mention in my edition, it is unclear what the 'Bergas language' is supposed to be; he only other mention of 'Bergas' occurs when Rogerius speaks about a sub-caste of the Shudras, called Bergas. We might also ask what the annotator means by 'Brahmans' in this instance: does he mean the Brahmans themselves, or merely the Hindu population on the Coromandel Coast? Rogerius often speaks of the 'common tongue' and gives many translations of Tamil words, but never tells us the name of the language spoken most commonly in Pulicat, but as I have mentioned before, Malabarian most probably refers to Tamil. A likely hypothesis is that Bergas refers to Telugu: C.A. Grierson remarks that 'in the Tamil country, the Telugu language is known as *Vaḍugu*, the northern langauage, from *vaḍa*, north. *Vaḍugu* is apparently derived from *vaḍa* in exactly the same way as *Telugu* from *teli*. From Vaḍugu is derived the names Waruga in old German books, and Badages which was used by the early Portuguese and in the letters of St. Francis Xavier.' G. A. Grierson, ed., *Linguistic Survey Of India, Vol. 4* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1906), 577. 'Badages' is not too dissimilar from 'Bergas', but it also fits with the available information. Rogerius notes that the Bargeurrea are herders, and that the Berga-willala are mostly farmers — it might therefore make sense that these are Telugu-speaking Vellalas, perhaps the Thuluva Vellala (considering the mention of 'Tolowa' in the same place), a prominent community of predominantly landlords, but who see themselves as the true cultivators or farmers of the land.

[378] *Open Door*, 214.

[379] *Open Door*, 214-216. Rogerius also relates — broadly probably based on the Puranas — how Brahma lost

but that does not mean that he definitively identified Vishnu as God. His understanding of 'God' in the Brahman context remains more broad but also somewhat confused. Padmanabha, upon relating the manner in which Shiva cut off the fifth head of Brahma, says that in the 'other world, that is the world that will come when this one has passed' Brahma will have a lower function than he does now.[380] This demotion is a punishment for having 'acted so haughtily against God', while Hanuman, a 'loyal servant of Vishnu' will instead take the place of Brahma.[381] God is, generally, used in more generic contexts, while Vishnu or Shiva are called by their names (instead of 'God') in more specific and cosmological and mythological contexts.

Two important aspects that undermine the monotheism of the Brahmans quickly emerge. For one, the role of Brahma himself is a problem. Rogerius says that the Brahmans credit Brahma not only with the creation of the world, but 'also with the government and leadership over everything that it contains'.[382] The role of God is thus reduced to that of a first cause or prime mover, as the Brahmans 'think that God does not trouble himself with this, and, like a king, does not want to burden himself with the effort and labour of ruling over everything himself', instead leaving the care of many matters to Brahma, his 'governor'.[383] Rogerius concludes that therefore God does not, in fact, 'concern himself with matters of this world', but has ordered and given Brahma governorship of these worldly matters.[384] This means, Rogerius continues, that Brahma, even though he is himself not the first uncaused cause, is the immediate cause of everything.

Besides the obvious issue of polytheism, the other major problem is endowing God with human qualities. This is exceedingly clear in chapter 2.2, which speaks about how 'the Brahmans also give wives to the highest God' and which Rogerius introduces in the following manner: 'Generally we will find that the Brahmans judge God to be as man; that which is pleasant and affable to man should also be such for God, and that from which man draws pleasure should also bring satisfaction to God.'[385] Rogerius, after relating the origins of Lakshmi and Parvati, returns to the real question from the point of view of Christian apologetics: 'what do Vishnu and Shiva do with a wife, and what purpose do they serve?'[386] Rogerius adds that he asked Padmanabha this very question, to which the Brahman responded that Vishnu (Shiva is excluded here) did not have a wife for the sake of children, but 'only for his pleasure'.[387] In a very purposeful manner, Rogerius next adds an anecdote about him encountering the

his fifth head.
[380] *Open Door*, 216f.
[381] *Open Door*, 217.
[382] *Open Door*, 217.
[383] *Open Door*, 217.
[384] *Open Door*, 217.
[385] *Open Door*, 220.
[386] *Open Door*, 223.
[387] *Open Door*, 223.

*lingam* in a temple of Shiva. Presenting himself as merely curious, he says that he noticed the shape of the image of Shiva, told Padmanabha that it seemed strange to him that this would be the shape of Shiva's image in the temple, and inquired what the reason may be for this. Padmanabha, we are told, did not want to tell Rogerius; yet not because he wanted to prevent the Dutchman from learning about Brahman worship practices and beliefs: 'he was ashamed (even though he revealed so many secrets of paganism to me, visible in this treatise)', and had Rogerius, so the latter says, promise not to laugh.[388] Rogerius then relates the testing of Shiva and the trimurti by Bhrigu as it is related prominently in the Bhagavata Purana. The clear message that Rogerius seems to convey here is that the *lingam* is a ridiculous, shameful way to honour Shiva, and indeed a laughable matter, underlined by Padmanabha's apparent shame. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Padmanabha's voice comes through here (it seems strange to be dismissive of the *lingam*, however), but the goal of Rogerius certainly is to poke fun at this, adding that 'apparently it pained [Padmanabha] much that these matters that so poorly fit the divinity were found amongst them'.[389] The *lingam*, for Rogerius, is thus illustrative of the superstitious endowment of human qualities and passions to God; accordingly, Rogerius ends the chapter by saying that it is sufficiently clear how the matter rests, and that the Brahmans 'following their religion, believe that Vishnu and Shiva entertain themselves with their wives'.[390]

Polytheism is already implied here, but Shiva and Vishnu's wives are still discussed in a sense as accessories to the one highest God rather than for being evidence of the worship of multiple Gods. There is a general tension throughout Rogerius's reporting about the Brahmans' self-reported monotheism and the clear polytheistic reality not only in myth but also in worship practices. This of course in many ways is an accurate representation of the diverse religious landscape of South India in the early modern period, with not only diverse sectarian groupings but also many local forms of worship and a difference, roughly speaking, between urban and intellectual Brahman forms of devotion and rural, often-times lower caste forms of worship, as we have also seen with the example of Gangamma. Neither Rogerius nor the annotator fully grasp this diversity, but both are keen to understand the apparent contradictions they see. Rogerius, for his part, openly asks Padmanabha about the evident contradiction, from a Christian and especially Reformed perspective, of worshipping one supreme deity but also servicing lesser gods.

[388] *Open Door*, 223. This is reminiscent of forms of ironic detachment employed by early modern travellers, inhabiting a space of impartiality and reason from which to judge foreign customs. Launay, "Tasting the World" speaks about ironic detachment in connection to food and foodways, but it is also applicable more generally. Rogerius does not generally fit this type of reporting, but here he does seem to be wearing the hat of someone poking fun at the ridiculousness of the *lingam*, whilst still also implicitly arguing against it from the perspective of Christian apologetics.

[389] *Open Door*, 223.

[390] *Open Door*, 225.

> I presented the question to the Brahman: did God not react bitterly that the honour due to him is given to those who were no gods? And whether by doing so, do they not sin? He said that they do not sin herein if they do not honour them as God, nor beseech them for goods as if those were coming originally from them; yet those who worshipped or prayed to the lesser gods in the belief that all that was good originally came from them committed a great sin. But one is allowed to worship Indra and the others, and to pray to them, if one but thinks that they have received their power from God in order to give the goods to men. Nevertheless, it is the belief of the most humble among the pagans that it is beneficial for man to go higher, so the Brahman said as well that the worship of the lesser gods is only useful for this life, but that the worship of God brings man to Heaven.[391]

Padmanabha here clearly gives an account from the point of view of his own (non-sectarian) monotheism, reiterating what we have already seen when discussing chapter 1.5, where the yajna is subordinated in importance to bhakti. It also fits into Rogerius's tripartite scheme of worship, where the lesser gods are worshipped in an immanentist manner for benefaction, here reiterated by saying that the worship of the lesser gods is merely useful in and for this life. From a Christian perspective, this distinction between praying to the highest vis-à-vis the lesser gods is exceedingly interesting: worshipping the lesser gods is permissible, if one accepts that they themselves have no power of their own, which is with God alone. This looks to be a very close analogue to the distinction between *dulia* and *latria* that we have already encountered in the introduction. Especially a comparison with Augustine is pertinent here, who distinguishes this clearly in his *On the Trinity* (1.6), where he says that *latria* is a service rendered to God alone,[392] and most importantly for our endeavour in the *City of God* (10.1), where he says that even the Platonists 'have restricted the bestowal of true blessedness, whether upon angels or upon men, to the one God; but the question is whether the beings who in the opinion of these philosophers must be worshipped for the sake of this very blessedness, require sacrifices to be made only to the one God or to themselves as well.'[393] As a Reformed Christian, Rogerius however might have seen the explanation of Padamabha as a direct parallel with Catholicism, criticised by the Protestants for its own idolatry in the form of the veneration of saints, which

[391] *Open Door*, 275.

[392] For an English translation see Augustine, *The Trinity*, ed. Stephen MacKenna, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 45 (1963; Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 17.

[393] 'Veram beatitudinem sive angelis sive hominibus per unum Deum tribui etiam Platonicos definisse; sed utrum hi quos ob hoc ipsum colendos putant uni tantum Deo, an etiam sibi sacrificari velint, esse quaerendum.' Translation from Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans, Books VIII - XI*, trans. David S. Wiesen, LCL 413 (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 246–247. See also the passage later in this section: 'Whoever then the immortal and blessed beings may be who dwell in heavenly habitations, if they do not love us or wish us to be blessed, they are certainly not to be worshipped. But if they do love us and wish us to be blessed, assuredly they wish us to receive our blessedness from the same source as they; or is our blessedness derived from one source, theirs from another? (Quicumque igitur sunt in caelestibus habitationibus inmortales et beati, si nos non amant nec beatos esse nos volunt, colendi utique non sunt. Si autem amant et beatos volunt, profecto inde volunt unde et ipsi sunt; an aliunde ipsi beati, aliunde nos?) Augustine, 254–257.

the Catholics instead asserted to be a form of *dulia*. At least for Rogerius, this explanation of how worship is addressed to different deities (supreme God versus lesser gods), does not seem to have elicited any particular sensation of similarity with (Reformed) Christianity — the situation was very different with the annotator as we will soon see — and immediately after this passage he recounts, with the aforementioned imposture thesis, how Brahma is not worshipped.

Rogerius's thus blends a derision at Brahman conceptions of God with a genuine interest in the details of Brahman theology. Particularly interesting in this context is his discussion of how the Brahmans consider 'man and his soul', the topic of chapter 2.7. Rogerius shows that the Brahmans agree with the Christians that man 'is the foremost among all the creatures which have been created'.[394] Where they diverge is the reason for the excellence of man, as the Brahmans do no associate man's special nature with the soul, but with the human body. Rogerius specifies that it is not the soul, as 'they believe that the souls of beasts and those of men are one; and that, regarding being, there is no difference between their souls'.[395] Rogerius here quite correctly notes a difference between Christian and Brahman understandings of the ontology of soul. He is also ostensibly inhabiting the space of a missionary here, as he comments that if one seeks to assert to the Brahmans that the rational soul brings forth extraordinary deeds, found in humans but not animals, the Brahmans will assert that this is due to the excellence of the body.[396] Rogerius, naturally, is not persuaded, but concludes that they 'believe they already have a good foundation to remain steadfast in their belief'.[397]

A common notion instead is found with the belief that the soul is immortal. Here we encounter the best account of Rogerius being privy to sectarian and theological debates, as he remarks that the Brahmans' opinion regarding the origin of soul is very divided. The account that follows is fascinating, and worth quoting at length:

> Through the assistance of the Brahman Padmanabha, at one time I had gathered four Brahmans together in order to understand what their beliefs were regarding this. They said that there were two opinions among them. Some believe that the soul has existed for all eternity. But when I asked them whether they had existed eternally within or outside of God, they responded that there were two beliefs among the Brahmans regarding this. Some thought that they had been in God,

[394] *Open Door*, 245.
[395] *Open Door*, 245. The annotator makes an interesting comment (note 365) here, saying that the 'Brahmans prove throughout that they are proper Platonists', as Plato 'thought that the souls of men showed their noblest nature through their deeds, but that one could not perceive any rational deeds in the souls of animals, even though they are rational and given intelligence.' The ideas about the *anima mundi* perceived in Pythagoras and its connection to transmigration is not further explored by the annotator, and instead investigated as two separate phenomena, one linked to the Holy Spirit and the other to the immortality of the soul.
[396] *Open Door*, 246.
[397] *Open Door*, 246.

> and were contained in his substance, which they seek to elucidate with this simile: just as the sea receives all the waters of rivers, stores them in its body, and becomes one body, in the same manner the souls were also contained in the substance of God, and were as one with God. Others instead believe that they had been outside of God, and that prior to the world they had been sleeping. The Brahmans said that there were also others who believed that the souls have not existed eternally, but that they came into being before the creation of the world, through the will of God, and remained within the substance of God; after the creation [the souls] were sent to this world into bodies, either into those of men or those of beasts, as a punishment for their sins, each according to their merit. The body which the soul inhabits, then, is a cell and prison. It seemed strange to me that they believed that the souls either slept, or if they did not sleep, that they were part of the substance of and one with God, and therefore could not sin; so I asked them how it could be that they were sent to this world into bodies as a punishment for sins. To this the Brahmans replied that since the souls were eternal, their merits were also eternal. And so they established merits and sins where there were no deeds; and punishments for sins where there never had been any misdeeds.[398]

This passage illustrates the theological encounter between Rogerius and Brahmanism perhaps more than any other section of the *Open Door*'s main text. We might already marvel at the circumstances themselves: that Rogerius and Padmanabha, together, organised a theological debate between Brahmans on the nature of soul, at which Rogerius, a foreigner and missionary, was welcome is extraordinary. Will Sweetman has convincingly shown that much of the absence of the Vedas in early modern European accounts of Indian religions is connected to the relative absence and importance of the Vedas in India itself, a fact that was as important as Brahman reluctance to sharing the Veda.[399] We have seen throughout the last chapters that the *Open Door* is further proof for this: while Rogerius continuously stresses that the Veda ordains this or that matter, the information that he claims to come from the four Vedas actually primarily derives from smrti literature, predominantly the epics and Puranas, but presumably also other collections and vernacular sources.[400] While Rogerius also says multiple times that Padmanabha and Damersa shared the 'secrets' of paganism with him, it does not seem that they were particularly inhibited regarding the divulgement of this information. The absence of the Veda, also in the case of the *Open Door*, probably derives primarily due to its relative unimportance for Rogerius's main informants themselves. The fact that Rogerius, who did not attempt to acculturate to Brahman society in the manner of Nobili, was able to participate in this sectarian debate might be evidence that in the South Indian context in Pulicat in which Rogerius moved being a European was not necessarily a deterrent from

[398] *Open Door*, 247-248.
[399] Sweetman, "The Absent Vedas."
[400] As Sweetman notes, Burnell suggests that Rogerius's work reflects the Tamil Vaishnava canonical collection, the Nalayira Tiviyappirapantam. Sweetman, 787.

hearing about theological matters.[401]

The content of the debate that Rogerius relates is a fascinating account of the diverging opinions of Brahmans from different sectarian affiliations. Rogerius unfortunately does not give us any more detail on the actual debate, but does show that there is a clear divergence on the origin and nature of soul depending on the specific tradition. The supporters of the notion that the souls had 'been in God, and were contained in his substance [...] and were as one with God' quite clearly reflect the stance of Padmanabha's own advaita idea that atman (soul) is identical with Brahman (ultimate reality).[402] On the other hand, the doctrine that the souls were outside of God seems to reflect Madhva's (and Damersa's) dvaita assertion of an ontological difference between soul and God. The non-eternality of soul mentioned last is more difficult to place; it might be a misunderstood rendering of the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja, although the non-eternity of soul does not fit in this case.[403]

The final part of the passage then shows Rogerius's consideration of these philosophical options from his own Christian perspective. It does not seem that Rogerius was in any way a part of this Brahman conference that he helped convene — the simple issue of language was probably the main impediment for his participation. But Rogerius does criticise the metaphysical system he is being related from the perspective of the system itself: his critique of merits (or good works, if we want to translate it to a Christian terminology) and sins is not primarily based on Christian dogma here, which of course nevertheless heavily influences his own argument, but rather on a rational deconstruction of the other's system in the vein of Duplessis-Mornay. He ends the chapter by concluding that the most common belief among the Brahmans was that souls have existed eternally. He compares this belief with Plato — not in a favourable manner — saying that they use the same argument as Plato to defend the eternity

[401] Of course this debate does not concern texts; but the importance of oral transmission itself is relevant when it came to Europeans not 'finding' the Vedas and other texts. The 'texts' that Rogerius excerpts were likely also transmitted orally. See further Ludo Rocher, "Orality and Textuality in the Indian Context," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 49 (October 1994). More broadly it should be noted that Rogerius, whilst repeating the notion of the four Vedas as the most important holy books of the Indians from Azevedo, was most likely neither duped by Padmanabha about the source of his information, nor misrepresenting the matter: the issue here is rather what is considered the 'Veda' and 'Vedic'. This is especially true for the Bhagavata Purana, but is by no means limited to it. See Holdrege, "From Purāṇa-Veda to Kārṣṇa-Veda"; Will Sweetman, "Forgeries, Falsifications, Fictions, Fälschungen? : Some Early Modern European "Vedas"," *Entangled Religions* 15, no. 1 (2024).

[402] The annotator keenly remarks on the similarity of the monism of Padmanabha's Advaita Smartism and Plato's monism, with an implicit comparison with the Christian logos: 'As regards the origin of souls, both Plato and the Stoics were of this opinion; because they claimed that the souls did not only originate from God, but also out of God himself; not χατ᾽ ἀ πάρτησιν, and through a narrowing of the substance of God; but χατ᾽ ἀ ἔχτασιν, or through utterance or through emission; much as the light of the sun is spread without however reducing the sun in any way. See on this Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidictur* [That the Worse is Wont to Attack the Better] and Hermes Trismegistus, *Pimander*, chapters 10 & 12, and Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia*, book 9, chapters 8 & 12.' *Open Door*, 247, note 368.

[403] On this topics see the foundational studies on these traditions: B. N. Krishnamurti Sharma, *Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986); Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1969); S. M. Srinivasa Chari, *Fundamentals of Visista* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988).

of souls, namely that nothing which has not existed eternally can ever exist in the future.[404]

Rogerius, we can conclude, gives us a complex account of Brahman monotheism, influenced to equal measure by his own Calvinist point of view, his curiosity, and his careful rendering of what Padmanabha and others told him about Brahman theology. The result is mixed: the Brahmans are said to know that there is one highest God, who is one and unique; but at the same time, Rogerius shows the limits, from his perspective, of their knowledge of God, which is confused by endowing him with human qualities and polytheistic worship. In many ways Rogerius shows what the annotator presents as the achievements of natural reason in his preface: the Brahmans know that ' there is one God, that God is but one, and that he created the Heavens, Earth and everything that it contains, and that the souls are immortal'.[405] Rogerius would probably also have agreed with the annotator's statement, shortly after, that this knowledge is however 'covered in a dark cloud of errors and at best with a cover of fables'.[406] We might ask, then: how does the annotator see Brahman monotheism?

## 11.2 Brahman Monotheism in the Annotations

Back in chapter seven we saw that the annotator exhibits a generous understanding of natural religion, not just in connection with the Brahmans but in the context of paganism more generally. The book of nature is a very powerful tool according to the preface, and natural reason leads to philosophy, which yet again historically led to the knowledge of God, and, finally, to 'religion'. Not only does he think that the pagans knew about God's singularity, his role as creator and the immortality of the soul, which I mentioned again just now in connection with Rogerius's presentation of Brahman monotheism; he seems to agree wholeheartedly with Justin Martyr in his (*First Apology*), whom he paraphrases for the statement that 'the teachings of Plato do not differ much from the decrees of Christ'.[407] The annotator presents many pagans as avid readers of the book of nature, and thus representing an ideal state of *praeparatio evangelica*, ripe for the picking, we might say, for the convincing missionary. But knowledge of truth is quite clearly presented primarily as an achievement of reason, and he even quotes Tertullian, who others paganism most thoroughly, on this subject.[408] He does mention briefly that they pagans learnt things from 'prophets and other men of God', which their progeny subsequently corrupted; but the main impetus of the argument in the preface is on natural

[404] Compare this with Plato's *Phaedo*.
[405] *Open Door*, 128.
[406] *Open Door*, 129.
[407] *Open Door*, 128. Perhaps he is referring to *First Apology*, chapter 20 or chapter 60?
[408] 'As Tertullian *De spectaculis* book 1, chapter 2, says, "naturali jure, non familiari; de longiquo, non de proximo."' *Open Door*, 129. The annotator shortens the quote somewhat, but otherwise the reference is correct. Compare Tertullian and Minucius Felix, *Tertullian: Apology. De Spectaculis. Minucius Felix: Octavius*, trans. T. R. Glover and Rendall, Loeb Classical Library 250 (Harvard University Press), 234–235.

reason.[409]

We might expect the notes on Rogerius's text to follow the same argument. This is not the case, however. Instead, the annotator follows explanations based on tradition, much like Grotius or Vossius, and much as he does in his genealogical tracing of the diverse species of idolatry. Even more so than his own history of idolatry, where he integrates the Brahmans into pre-existing theories on the historical spread of idolatrous customs, this topic forms the main interest of the annotator in his footnotes and the central thrust of his treatise. This is also evident from the annotator's very frequent references to other chapters and his own notes: the majority of redirection to other chapters concern those chapters which discuss the nature of Brahman religion, especially the details of monotheism, their concept of God as well as angels and devils, the transmigration of souls, and natural philosophy. In the remainder of this chapter I will investigate this topics in some more detail.

### Agreeing With Padmanabha: Shiva and Vishnu as One

While the annotator directs the reader predominantly to the chapters in part two for the discussion of God, already in the first part we encounter a number of notes on the Brahmans vis-à-vis the true nature of God. This is especially true in chapter 1.3, in which Rogerius discusses the Brahmans and their different sects. The annotator adds a footnote on Rogerius's introduction to the Vaishnavites, and the fact they consider Vishnu the supreme God. The annotator says that *if* Vishnu is a proper name, this is conflict with scripture as well as Plato 'who says that God is not corporeal; that one cannot say what he is; and that he does not have a name'.[410] He adds the authority of Hermes Trismegistus, as well as Moses (who however is demoted to be mentioned second, and cursed to remain in brackets) who had long before understood the oneness of God and the fact that he did not need any name. Most pagans, the annotator ends, have nevertheless given proper names to their gods. But the annotator is not convinced that Vishnu is a proper name: he believes this to be a common name, much like 'God' or 'Deus'.[411] This idea is somewhat nullified by a note shortly after this one, remarking on the Tattvavada Vaishnavas making an oath to Vishnu to recognise him as the only God. Here the annotator says that such 'oaths can only be made to the true God', but that those made to Vishnu, or 'any other false gods, need not be maintained'.[412] Perhaps the annotator

[409] *Open Door*, 129.
[410] *Open Door*, 142, note 32.
[411] *Open Door*, 142, note 32. The note in full: 'If this word, "Vishnu", is a proper name, (which I really do not believe, but instead think that it is a common name, as "God" is for us, or "Deus" for the Latins) this goes against the Holy Truth, and the opinions of Plato, who says that God is not corporeal; that one cannot say what he is; and that he does not have a name. This he seems to have borrowed from Hermes Trismegistus (or it may very well have also come from Moses), who long before had said that God was one, and that this one God had no need for a name; and that he was also something that had no name, or, as this Trismegistus says in a different place, that his name was not pronounceable by humans. Nevertheless, they are in accordance with almost all other pagans in this, all of whom also gave their gods proper names.'
[412] *Open Door*, 143, note 37.

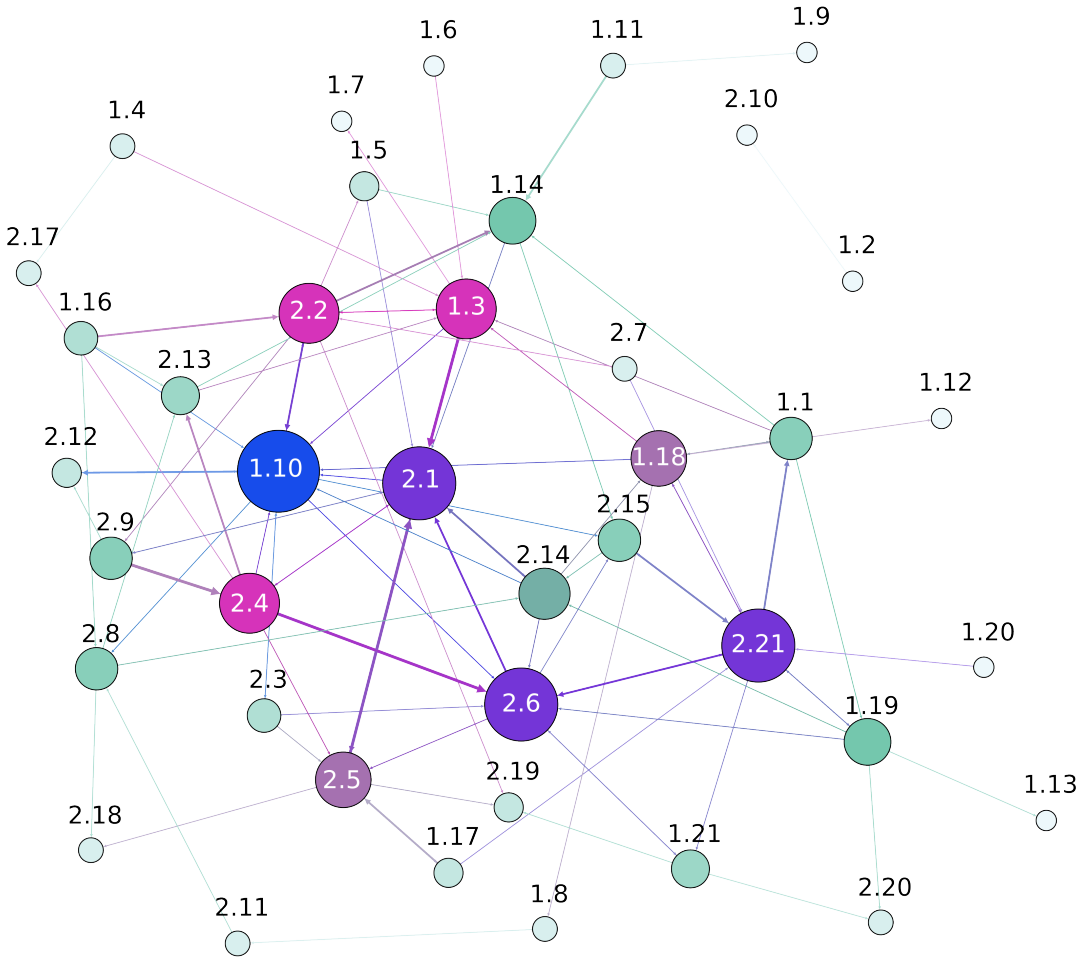



Figure 11.1: References Made by the Annotator to Other Chapters and His Own Notes
Edge thickness and node size indicate number of references

is attempting to have his cake and eat it here: if Vishnu is a common name, this is an oath to the true God, and if it is a proper name, then Vishnu is a false god, and so the oath need not be maintained.

While these remarks remain undecided regarding the Brahmans' knowledge about God, when Rogerius outlines Smartism the annotator adds a much more enthusiastic note. Rogerius, who as we have seen really says very little about Padmanabha's own sectarian affiliation, does remark that the Smartas believe that Shiva and Vishnu are one, a pregnant sentence that the annotator keeps circling back to. Here he adds:

> Herein seems to lie hidden a shadow of truth and that which Christ said: 'I and the Father are one.' See the notes on chapter 10 in this part. The wisest among the pagans have at all times judged there to be but one God, or in any case only one who had the highest domain. To relieve myself of the burden to prove this any further, I shall redirect the reader to Mister Vossius, who has done this, in the first book *De idololatriae*, chapter 2, very aptly, referencing the diverse ancient and best authors. But nevertheless it is not enough to cast aside the multiplicity of gods, and to acknowledge one unitary God, unless one knows him the way he is. Herein almost all pagans have erred; the Jews and the Mohammedans still err, who recognise one God as the creator of Heaven and Earth, but not the way He is, that is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 1 John 5:7.[413]

In many ways this is a reiteration of the preface: the wisest pagans have always known that there is only one God, but it is important to also know his true nature. Vossius, in the referenced passage, argues this very thing, presenting an erudite and scholastic discussion of ancient Greek and Roman knowledge of the one true God. Vossius does see widespread acknowledgment of this in antiquity, especially among the Platonists, and also refers the reader to Steuco for this, not without however chastising the latter for his use of spurious writers such as Hermes Trismegistus.[414] The annotator thus repeats an innocuous argument about the spread of the knowledge of God in antiquity. What is perhaps most interesting is that he very clearly condemns both Muslims and Jews for not knowing the true (Trinitarian) nature of God, whilst qualifying this for the pagans: 'almost all pagans have erred' in this regard, yet, we must infer, *not all* pagans. We will see that the annotator indeed has a theory for Brahman knowledge about the true nature of God.

The one God of the Brahmans is thus confirmed by the annotator to be one unitary God. A.W. seems in this regard, much like Clüver, to be inspired also by Macrobius, whose *Saturnalia* is referenced frequently throughout the annotations. Macrobius interprets diverse deities as different qualities of the sun being deified.[415] Clüver employs Macrobius's argument himself,

[413] *Open Door*, 146, note 47.
[414] Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 5.
[415] See on this Ekkehart Syska, *Studien zur Theologie im ersten Buch der Saturnalien des Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 44 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993), especially 103.

arguing that all male gods are traceable to the sun, female deities to the moon, but all the different names more generally refer to the one true threefold but unitary God.[416] In a note on the Brahmans naming the twenty-four names of God, the annotator says that 'their God Vishnu, or Shiva' has many more names, as will be visible from chapter 2.4. The twenty-four names, instead, are 'without a doubt' due to the fact that they dedicate 'to each of the twenty-four parts of their body a name of God, just as other pagans attributed to each [part] one God', which is why, he goes on, the ancients touched their head for Jupiter, their eyes for Minerva, and so forth.[417] We will see that the annotator employs multiple theories for the concordance of monotheism and polytheism. The aspect theory is an important element, but not to the same extent as for Clüver; nevertheless, the annotator here builds on an aspect theory of God, where the multiplicity of names and deities is not in conflict with a notion of a single God, but where many names emerge as a worship practice to refer to different aspects of the supreme deity. This aspect theory is mostly relevant for the equivalence of Vishnu, Shiva, and, at times, Brahma.

In chapter 1.10, to which we will return soon, the annotator already says that 'it is beyond doubt that Brahma and Shiva signify one and the same, and that they are names which only differentiate between the offices and functions of the same.'[418] The main thrust of this argument, however, is unfolded in chapter 2.1, 'on God', where the annotator adds multiple lengthy notes. When Rogerius says that the Brahmans recognise one God, who is one and the only supreme God, the annotator confirms that 'almost all pagans were of this belief', referring the reader to Vossius, Schedius, and Augustine, the latter being cited for the opinion that the names of the Roman gods 'did not mean to convey so many gods, but only one God who had different traits and powers'.[419] Importantly, the annotator then adds that this belief of giving names to aspects of the one God does not, in fact, seem so strange, 'although it was understood only by the wisest and most learned among them, and not by the common man' — a pregnant comment in connection with the Brahmans.[420] Indeed, whilst the annotator's main inspiration for the wisest among the pagans are certainly the Platonists, Padmanabha's Smartism also plays a significant role, and after quoting Hermesianax, Seneca, and Maximus's letter to Augustine, the annotator concludes this long note by referring all of this back to Padmanabha: 'The Brahman Padmanabha also thought that Vishnu and Shiva in their being

[416] Fugger, *Götter, Heiden, Hieroglyphen*, 173.
[417] *Open Door*, 189, note 174.
[418] *Open Door*, 162, note 109.
[419] *Open Door*, 214, note 252. Compare Augustine, City of God 7.24: 'Now I should like to consider their arguments. Are we to believe, they say, that our ancestors were so stupid as not to know that these things are divine gifts, and not gods?' ('Libet autem eorum considerare rationes. Usque adeone, inquiunt, maiores nostros insipientes fuisse credendum est ut haec nescirent munera divina esse, non deos?') Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans, Books IV - VII*, 90–91. It should be noted that the annotator takes Augustine out of context here; while the latter does admire Varro to a certain extent, Augustine continuously asserts the agency of demons in leading the people of Rome astray.
[420] *Open Door*, 214, note 252.

were one and the same God, and that they were but two names, and different characters, as I have found in the writings of our author.'[421]

Shiva and Vishnu, according to the annotator, are therefore either common names, much like 'God', or, more likely, refer to different aspects of the one God that is worshipped by the Brahmans. This is also why the annotator is not interested in sectarianism: as the truth lies with Padmanabha's non-sectarianism, shining through again and again in the *Open Door*, the annotator regards the difference between Shaivism and Vaishnavism as irrelevant. Building on a hermeneutical interaction between his own Platonist leanings and the non-sectarian Smartism of Padmanabha in the *Open Door*, the annotator asserts that the Brahmans — if not the common man — worship the one true God. Problems remain however with the human qualities given to Vishnu and Shiva, their wives, the other gods that are worshipped, and, perhaps most obviously, Brahma, who is clearly described by Rogerius not to be the supreme God in his (predominantly Vaishnava) rendering of creation. How does the annotator approach these topics in relation to Brahman monotheism?

## 11.3 More Than the Trimurti: Brahman Trinitarianism

### Brahma Becomes Logos

As we have seen in the discussion of Rogerius's presentation of Brahman monotheism, the Dutch *predikant* renders Brahma a secondary cause, who however as creator is the immediate cause of everything.[422] Referencing multiple sayings of Bhartrihari concerning creation, he also says that 'we see, and deem, that in truth it is the belief of these pagans that this Brahma, who according to what they say was the first man, created the world and everything it contains, through the power that God gave him for this.'[423] Brahma therefore is a conundrum for Rogerius: a human, who is supposed to have created the world, whilst God does not care to burden himself with overseeing the universe himself 'like a king'.[424] The annotator, on the other hand, does not regard this as foolish pagan error; on the contrary, he argues that Brahma quite apparently is Christ.

As so often, the annotator also exhibits a measure of uncertainty. In chapter 2.6, in the context of Rogerius saying that angels and devils were begot by men, he says that the Brahmans 'regard Brahma as a simple human', after which he details the diverse beings Brahma is said to have created. But also here, the annotator seems cautiously optimistic — in a chapter ripe with allegory — and the note concludes with the statement that it was the belief of Hesiod, Plato, and others, that 'some devils were created by God, or Christ, with the world, and even that

[421] *Open Door*, 214, note 252.
[422] *Open Door*, 217.
[423] *Open Door*, 216.
[424] *Open Door*, 217.

some humans became devils'.[425] When Rogerius specifically speaks about Brahma creating the world and being its governor in chapter 2.1, the annotator makes a lengthy comparison with ancient philosophy, saying that almost all pagans 'have at all times greatly erred regarding this': the Peripatetics make God the creator, but made a secondary cause the governor of the world, as this would be beneath God; the Stoics are chastised for 'dreaming up' a deterministic *fatum*; the ancient astrologers assigned all power to the stars; and finally, the Platonists 'believed that in general God indeed rules over everything, but that he nevertheless ordered the burden of all singular matters to lesser gods, and the supervision of men to the angels'.[426] Epicurus, following Cicero, was even worse, conceiving of God as unconscious of his own actions. The annotator concludes that there were very few who judged this matter correctly, but, crucially, that 'these Brahmans, when understood correctly, do not regard this [matter] in a strange manner. See Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:2-3, and some more such places.'[427]

So what do the Brahmans judge correctly? The references to scripture bring some clarity. Colossians 1:17 says of Jesus that 'He is before all things, and in Him all things consist', while Hebrews 1:2 says that God had 'spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds'.[428] Brahma having leadership over the world is thus not inconsistent with God being the creator, as the annotator implies that Brahma is actually Christ as logos. Indeed, the annotator makes this clear himself two footnotes later, where he comments Rogerius's statement that Brahma ordains every person's lifetime by explaining that this is because Brahma is 'considered to be God and the son of God. Because God is the only one who determines the timespan of human life'.[429] In this manner he has also found a fitting allegorical answer to Rogerius's claim that Brahma is regarded as a human. Shortly before these notes, still in chapter 2.1, the annotator specifically discusses this topic in one of the longest, most erudite, and most fascinating footnotes of the book; the annotator here completely usurps Rogerius's role as the note takes over the entire page. The annotator says that the belief that a human created the world is not a common belief among pagans. But this is not the entire story here, according to the annotator:

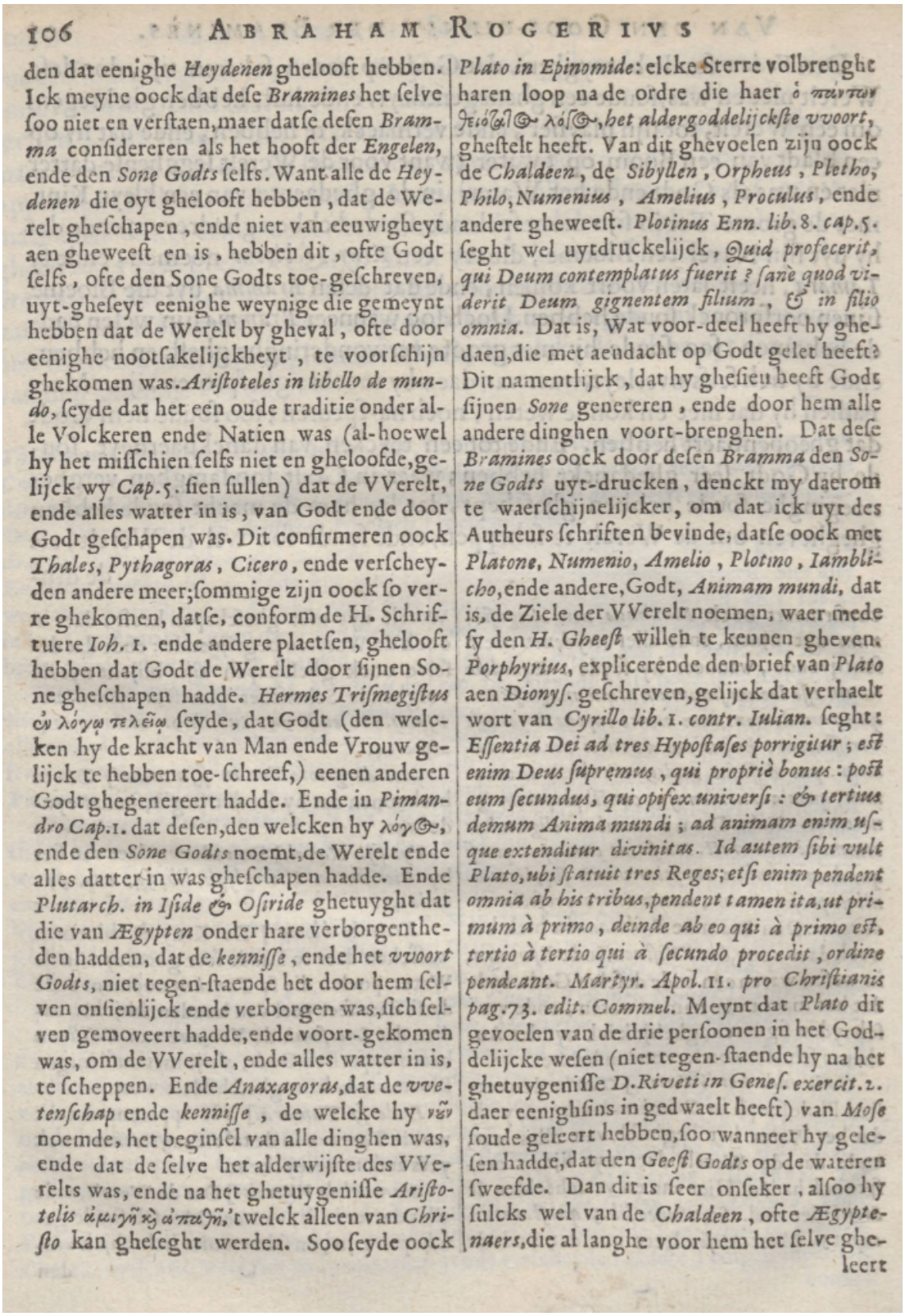
> I also think that these Brahmans do not understand [the story] in this manner, but that they consider Brahma the chief of the angels, and even the son of God. Because all pagans who have ever believed that the world was created and has not existed eternally, have attributed this [creation] to either God himself or the son of God, excepting those few who thought that the world came forth by chance, or by necessity. Aristotle, *De mundo*, said that it was an old tradition among all peoples and nations (even though he perhaps did not believe this himself, as we shall see in

[425] *Open Door*, 242, note 344.
[426] *Open Door*, 217, note 267.
[427] *Open Door*, 217, note 267.
[428] NKJV.
[429] *Open Door*, 217, note 269.

> chapter 5) that the world and all that it contains was created by and through God. Thales, Pythagoras, Cicero, and many others also confirm this. Some, conforming with the Holy Scripture, John 1 and other places, even went as far as to believe that God created the world through his son. Hermes Trismegistus ὁν λόγῳ τελέῖῳ said that God (to whom he attributed both the power of man and woman) brought forth another God. And in *Pimander*, chapter 1, that this one, which he calls "λόγος" and the *son of God*, created the world and everything in it. And Plutarch, *De Iside & Osiride*, asserts that the Egyptians included in their mysteries that the knowledge, and word of God, notwithstanding that it was invisible and hidden by him himself, had moved itself and come forth to create the world and everything it contains. Anaxagoras [said] that erudition and knowledge, which he called "νῦν", was the beginning of all things, and that it was the wisest of all things in the world. And according to the testimony of Aristotle "ἀπιγῆ χὐ ἀ πάρῆ", which can only be said of Christ. [...] That these Brahmans also intend to express the son of God with this Brahma seems to me all the more likely, because, as I find from the writings of the author, together also with Plato, Numenius, Amelius, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and others, they call God *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, with which they mean to indicate the Holy Ghost.[...] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, page 73, edited by Commelinus, thinks that Plato would have learnt this belief in the three persons of the divine being (notwithstanding that, according to the testimony of André Rivet, in Genesim, exercitatio 2, he erred somewhat therein) from Moses, when he read that the spirit of God floated on the water. This, however, is very uncertain, as he could have come to know this from the Chaldeans or Egyptians, who long before [Moses] taught the same. See Agostino Steuco, De *perenni philosophia*, book 2, chapters 3, 4, and some of the following.[430]

The Brahmans, and with them almost all pagans who believe that the world was created — once more, we must here understand 'all pagans' to mean 'all sage pagans', not the common people — are thus argued to believe in a creatio ex nihilo by God or his only begotten son. The previous references to scripture here of course conform with the beginning of the Gospel of John, specifically mentioned here in the context of God creating the world through the word or logos, which is Jesus: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.'[431] The remaining references serve to underline the truth of this matter; not because it needs to be proven, as scripture clearly provides proof for this, but to show the broad consensus (again, at least among the learned, as a general *consensus gentium* is denied) of wise pagans on this matter. Vossius might have criticised the annotator's use of the *Pimander*, the first tract of the Hermetic Corpus; but the annotator, instead of his usual genealogical method, argues much like Duplessis-Mornay in this case, that is by weight of ancient writings confirming Christian truth, rather than advocating for the content of these texts themselves. Following largely Steuco here, he also clearly, once

[430] *Open Door*, 215, note 258.
[431] John 1:1-3 (NKJV).



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den dat eenighe *Heydenen* ghelooft hebben. Ick meyne oock dat deſe *Bramines* het ſelve ſoo niet en verſtaen, maer datſe deſen *Bramma* conſidereren als het hooft der *Engelen*, ende den *Sone Godts* ſelfs. Want alle de *Heydenen* die oyt ghelooft hebben, dat de Werelt gheſchapen, ende niet van eeuwigheyt aen gheweeſt en is, hebben dit, ofte Godt ſelfs, ofte den Sone Godts toe-geſchreven, uyt-gheſeyt eenighe weynige die gemeynt hebben dat de Werelt by gheval, ofte door eenighe nootſakelijckheyt, te voorſchijn ghekomen was. *Ariſtoteles in libello de mundo*, ſeyde dat het een oude traditie onder alle Volckeren ende Natien was (al-hoewel hy het miſſchien ſelfs niet en gheloofde, gelijck wy *Cap.* 5. ſien ſullen) dat de VVerelt, ende alles watter in is, van Godt ende door Godt geſchapen was. Dit confirmeren oock *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Cicero*, ende verſcheyden andere meer; ſommige zijn oock ſo verre ghekomen, datſe, conform de H. Schrifture *Ioh.* 1. ende andere plaetſen, ghelooft hebben dat Godt de Werelt door ſijnen Sone gheſchapen hadde. *Hermes Triſmegiſtus* ὐν λόγῳ πλεῖῳ ſeyde, dat Godt (den welcken hy de kracht van Man ende Vrouw gelijck te hebben toe-ſchreef,) eenen anderen Godt ghegenereert hadde. Ende in *Pimandro Cap.* 1. dat deſen, den welcken hy λόγον, ende den *Sone Godts* noemt, de Werelt ende alles datter in was gheſchapen hadde. Ende *Plutarch. in Iſide & Oſiride* ghetuyght dat die van *Ægypten* onder hare verborgentheden hadden, dat de *kenniſſe*, ende het *vvoort Godts*, niet tegen-ſtaende het door hem ſelven onſienlijck ende verborgen was, ſich ſelven gemoveert hadde, ende voort-gekomen was, om de VVerelt, ende alles watter in is, te ſcheppen. Ende *Anaxagoras*, dat de *vvetenſchap* ende *kenniſſe*, de welcke hy νῦν noemde, het beginſel van alle dinghen was, ende dat de ſelve het alderwijſte des VVerelts was, ende na het ghetuygeniſſe *Ariſtotelis* ἀμιγὴς καὶ ἀπαθὴς, twelck alleen van *Chriſto* kan gheſeght werden. Soo ſeyde oock *Plato in Epinomide*: elcke Sterre volbrenght haren loop na de ordre die haer ὁ πάντων θειότατος λόγος, *het aldergoddelijckſte vvoort*, gheſtelt heeft. Van dit ghevoelen zijn oock de *Chaldeen*, de *Sibyllen*, *Orpheus*, *Pletho*, *Philo*, *Numenius*, *Amelius*, *Proculus*, ende andere gheweeſt. *Plotinus Enn. lib.* 8. *cap.* 5. ſeght wel uytdruckelijck, *Quid profecerit, qui Deum contemplatus fuerit? ſanè quod viderit Deum gignentem filium, & in filio omnia.* Dat is, Wat voor-deel heeft hy ghedaen, die met aendacht op Godt gelet heeft? Dit namentlijck, dat hy gheſien heeft Godt ſijnen *Sone* genereren, ende door hem alle andere dinghen voort-brenghen. Dat deſe *Bramines* oock door deſen *Bramma* den *Sone Godts* uyt-drucken, denckt my daerom te waerſchijnelijcker, om dat ick uyt des Autheurs ſchriften bevinde, datſe oock met *Platone*, *Numenio*, *Amelio*, *Plotino*, *Iamblicho*, ende andere, Godt, *Animam mundi*, dat is, de Ziele der VVerelt noemen, waer mede ſy den *H. Gheeſt* willen te kennen gheven. *Porphyrius*, explicerende den brief van *Plato* aen *Dionyſ.* geſchreven, gelijck dat verhaelt wort van *Cyrillo lib.* 1. *contr. Iulian.* ſeght: *Eſſentia Dei ad tres Hypoſtaſes porrigitur; eſt enim Deus ſupremus, qui propriè bonus: poſt eum ſecundus, qui opifex univerſi: & tertius demum Anima mundi; ad animam enim uſque extenditur divinitas. Id autem ſibi vult Plato, ubi ſtatuit tres Reges; etſi enim pendent omnia ab his tribus, pendent tamen ita, ut primum à primo, deinde ab eo qui à primo eſt, tertio à tertio qui à ſecundo procedit, ordine pendeant. Martyr. Apol.* 11. *pro Chriſtianis pag.* 73. *edit. Commel.* Meynt dat *Plato* dit gevoelen van de drie perſoonen in het Goddelijcke weſen (niet tegen-ſtaende hy na het ghetuygeniſſe *D. Riveti in Geneſ. exercit.* 2. daer eenighſins in gedwaelt heeft) van *Moſe* ſoude geleert hebben, ſoo wanneer hy geleſen hadde, dat den *Geeſt Godts* op de wateren ſweefde. Dan dit is ſeer onſeker, alſoo hy ſulcks wel van de *Chaldeen*, ofte *Ægyptenaers*, die al langhe voor hem het ſelve gheleert

Figure 11.2: Page 106 in the *Open Deure*. Special Collections Radboud University Library.

more, displaces the primacy of the Mosaic lineage in favour of an Adamic tradition, as Plato might have heard of the Trinity via a Mosaic path, but the Chaldeans and Egyptians emerge as (potentially more likely) rival candidates who taught this *before* Moses.

Brahma, at the hands of the annotator, is thus turned from an odd God who does not receive appropriate worship and is also described as a human at times, into a name for Christ as logos within a Trinitarian understanding of divinity. In this way the ambiguity concerning the humanity or divinity of Brahma becomes evidence of his double nature as Christ. The annotator makes this already clear in a footnote in chapter 1.14 on Brahma, where besides referring the reader to this main discussion in chapter 2.1 he further displaces a Mosaic tradition, confirms the Trinitarian beliefs of the Brahmans, and speculates on the epistemology of this knowledge:

> They tell almost everything about him which the Holy Scripture teaches us about Christ; and they seem to have entirely changed the truth into a fable. Or perhaps their ancestors, having heard the sound of the Holy Gospel (even nowadays many [St.] Thomas Christians can be found in India) and not having grasped nor comprehended it fully, attributed what they heard about Christ, whom they did not know, to their Brahma, and conveyed this to their progeny. It could also be (and I would consider this almost certain) that just like Plato, and his successors, they learnt this from the Chaldeans and the Egyptians; because according to the testimony of Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia*, they already knew rather much to say on Christ, his office, and what more there may be. The old Father Augustine, *Confessions*, book 3, also thinks that the whole beginning of the Gospel of John may be found in the books of the Platonists; if not in the same words, nevertheless with the perfect meaning. It is certain that Plato says that everything is done through the word; and Plotinus, that the son of God is the creator; and similar words can be found among many more. See our notes on the first chapter in the second part.[432]

The annotator therefore offers us a straightforward Platonised reading of Brahma being Jesus Christ, underlined by Augustine's own Christian reading of the Platonic tradition.[433] The exact manner of transmission is left ultimately unclear: perhaps the gospel (of John?)

[432] *Open Door*, 174-175, note 152.

[433] The passage he is referencing is not in book three, but from *Confessions* 7.9.(13): 'So by means of a certain person who was puffed up with monumental conceit you acquired for me some books of the Neoplatonists translated from Greek into Latin. There I read the very same idea, with many and varied arguments to persuade me, albeit not in precisely the same words, that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and without him nothing was made.' ('[...] procurasti mihi per quendam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum quosdam platonicorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos, et ibi legi, non quidem his verbis sed hoc idem omnino multis et multiplicibus suaderi rationibus, quod in principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud deum et deus erat verbum. hoc erat in principio apud deum. omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil.') Augustine, *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, ed. Albert Cook Outler (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), 320–321.

made it to India, which might explain both this and the St. Thomas Christians, only to be made into a fable by the Brahmans. But the path of prisca sapientia, linking the Brahmans to the Chaldeans and the Egyptians and, ultimately, Noah and Adam, is what the annotator seems to favour in any case, whether reinforced later by the Gospel or not. The annotator thus has explained two thirds of the Trinity: Vishnu and Shiva are seen as God, implicitly the Father, whilst Brahma is Christ as logos. Unlike other early modern writers who offer a Christian reading of Indian religion, the *trimurti* of Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma is not the main explanation or allegory for the Trinity according to the annotator. The Holy Ghost, instead, is identified as Hanuman.

### Hanuman: The Wind, World Soul, and Holy Ghost

Rogerius does not tell us much about Hanuman, but mentions him prominently in chapter 2.3 when recounting the key elements of the Ramayana, and in chapters 2.4, 2.9, and 2.14 as an important lesser god worshipped by Vaishnavas. Rogerius really says very little about Hanuman, but two key statements are made: Hanuman will take the place of Brahma upon the latter's death, and that Hanuman is the wind. Rogerius's statement that Hanuman is actually the wind must stem from the fact that Hanuman is regarded as the son of Vayu, the god of the wind, although Rogerius does not seem to know this. The annotator mostly dismisses this rather quickly, in any case. He refers the reader to chapter 2.9 where it is explained 'what they understand under this Hanuman', while giving a brief overview of how diverse peoples have worshipped the wind.[434]

The other claim is more intriguing. While the early Sanskrit Ramayanas all include Rama giving immortality to Hanuman, later narrators add more details and specificity. Most relevant here is that in the medieval *Tattva samgraha ramayana* Rama indeed gives Brahma as a boon that he shall be reborn as Brahma and create the world.[435] In the central chapter 2.1, where Rogerius repeats that Hanuman will take the place of Brahma, the annotator merely says that Plato called this one 'anima mundi', so the world soul, but then refers the reader to chapters 2.5 and 2.9.[436] The arguments for this are not as ample or erudite as for Brahma being Christ, but the annotator does attempt to show that Hanuman is a misunderstood rendering of the Holy Ghost in these two chapters. When Rogerius details the end of the world and the death of Brahma, the annotator feels the need to correct Rogerius: he replies that it does not actually seem that the Brahmans would believe that Brahma would die at this point, but that the world having perished, Vishnu will create another one, and that 'Brahma will then take the place of Hanuman (it is beyond doubt that they mean the *anima mundi* of Plato by this), and

[434] *Open Door*, 234, note 318.
[435] Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 229.
[436] *Open Door*, 217, note 265.

Hanuman the place of Brahma'.[437] The annotator makes the clearest case for this in a note in chapter 2.9, where he links everything told by Rogerius about Hanuman:

> Strabo writes that the Hermopilites served such monkeys with long tails (just as our Brahmans portray this Hanuman), but whether they intended to signify Anubis or Mercurius with this is not clear and even the ancients do not agree on this. Since these Brahmans say that Hanuman is actually the wind and in the service of Vishnu on Earth, as we have seen in chapter 4 of this part, and they also believe, as did Plato, that there is one God, one λόγος, and *anima mundi*; so it would not seem so strange that with this they mean the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world or the Holy Ghost, just as with Brahma [they mean] the λόγον, which we discussed more extensively in chapter 1 of this part. From this it should be clear enough which one, Anubis (or Mercurius) the Egyptians meant with this. See Vossius, *De idololatriae*, book 1, chapter 27.[438]

The annotator gives us a very clear account of what he believes: just as Brahma is logos, so Hanuman is the world soul, a misunderstanding or allegory for the Holy Ghost. Hanuman being associated with the wind, much like the Holy Spirit (especially in Greek as *pneuma*) is here the more obvious connection, perhaps, than seeing Hanuman as the *anima mundi*. While finding parallels and allegories for the Trinity among the pagans was common enough, a clear-cut identification and equation of the world soul with the Holy Ghost goes beyond what Vossius or his colleagues would advocate and is probably influenced by the annotator's reading of the Hermetic Corpus and associated texts.[439] He nevertheless cites Vossius here; not because the latter gives us an identification of the *anima mundi* with the Holy Ghost, but because Vossius discusses ancient Egyptian gods, Anubis and Mercurius (Hermes) among them. Mostly this chapter supports Vossius's overall euhemeristic goals by showing that the gods were really deified heroes, and Mercurius is connected to Cham or Ham. This Ham/Mercurius is an interesting figure, as he taught the people to speak with much greater articulation, taught sacrifices and sacred rites, and practised astrological observation.[440] The annotator's

[437] *Open Door*, 241, note 342.

[438] *Open Door*, 254-255, note 385.

[439] In note 258 cited above, the annotator mentions the 'Logos Teleios', which means as much as 'Perfect Discourse' or 'Perfect Revelation'. This is the Greek original of the Latin *Asclepius*. This Greek text (with the exception of fragments) has been lost and the annotator would only have been familiar with the Latin *Asclepius*. Though it forms part of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the text had an independent existence. It is also the largest preserved Hermetic treatise. See Roelof van den Broek, "Hermetic Literature I: Antiquity," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 493. The 'Pimander' or 'Poimandres', on the other hand, is the first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Ficino gave his translation of fourteen treatises of the *Corpus* the collective title of *Pimander*, as he thought the entire *Corpus* was one work, and not many different treatises. The annotator likely refers to this, but by referencing the first chapter he nevertheless also refers to the treatise commonly called *Pimander*, as it is the first treatise (or according to the annotator 'chapter') of the Corpus. See Broek, 489f.

[440] See Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae...*, 100–106. See especially 104-105: 'Nunc videamus de Deorum aliis, qui iisdem temporibus vixerint in Aegypto. Quales

argument is more convoluted here than in the case of Brahma, but perhaps he associates Hermes/Mercurius with the gifts of the Holy Ghost mentioned in the Book of Isaiah 11:1-2, as Mercurius is described by Vossius to bring knowledge and understanding, and what might be understood as fear of the Lord in the form of instituting sacrifices. The annotator leaves all of this unclear, yet we do get an unequivocal opinion that Hanuman is the Holy Ghost.

### Polytheism or Angels and Devils?

The annotator has thus established that the Brahmans are not merely monotheists, but Trinitiarian monotheists, with Shiva and Vishnu being two names for the Father, Brahma signifying the son and logos, and Hanuman the Holy Spirit. Whilst this true belief is clearly distinguished from the devil worship of the pagans due to fear, the annotator, unlike Rogerius, does not give us a theory on the worship of lesser gods. This is because the annotator, other than Rogerius except for some specific remarks, rejects the entire premise of them being gods in the first place.

The first major discussion of this is, once more, found in the notes to chapter 2.1. Rogerius recounts that Brahma has others under him, chiefs who take command over particular matters. The annotator adds that they do not consider these to be gods, 'but only devatas, or angels and servants of God', just as also Orpheus, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Archytas, Philolaus, Parmenides, Plato, and others have done.[441] He adds to this just a little later, as Rogerius repeats his statement from the previous page, and says that 'it has always been the opinion of the pagans that there are some minor gods who supervise particular matters'.[442] The annotator notes that the Romans had a god or goddess for every conceivable thing, and that the pagans of the East and West Indies, China, and other places had the same opinion, but merely refers the reader to Giraldi and Dutch travel literature for more details, as the 'reasons they have are very diverse, and too long to tell of here'.[443] These statements seem in conflict; adding to the confusion is the fact that the annotator, in a note on the places that God traverses himself, says that these are places without devatas, here said to be 'those [who] are the souls of the deceased humans which for a certain time have become angels), who are charged with looking after the Earth and other sub-heavenly worlds, and who are spoken of in the first chapter of

Mercurius, Hercules, Pan, & alii. Nam idem Diodorus testatur, maximo apud Osiridem in pretio fuisse ῾Ερμῆν sive Mercurium: ab hoc edotam esse gentem multo articulatius loqui: variarum etiam rerum nova didicisse nomina: eundem reperisse scribendi legendique artificium: sacrificia insuper, & sacros ritus docuisse, item observasse siderum cursus. Ab hoc item Herme Aegyptus dicta ῾Ερμοχύμιος, ut vulgo quidem legitur apud Stephanum Byzantium in Αἴγυπτής. Sed censeo rescribendum, ῾Ερμοχήμιας, quasi dicas, Chemia sive Aegyptus Hermae. Nam Aegyptus, Chemia sive Chamia; ut superius ostendimus. Quare & corrigendus Hesychius, ubi vulgo sic legitur, ῾Ερμοχοίμιος γῆ ἡ Αἴγυπτής τὸ πρότερον ὅτως ἐκαλεῖτο. Hermochoemia terra (scr. Hermochemia) Aegyptus primo sic vocabatur. Mercurii sepulchrum Hermopoli ostensum, refert Clemens Romanus, vel alius in x Recognitionum.'

[441] *Open Door*, 218, note 271.

[442] *Open Door*, 219, note 275.

[443] *Open Door*, 219, note 275.

this part'.[444]

The annotator gives us a clearer explanation of the matter in some of the following chapters. One of these is chapter 2.6, which is in fact on angels and devils, a chapter that would not exceed a single page were it not for the many voluminous footnotes. The annotator already adds a note to the title of the chapter, where he explains what angels and devils actually are in his reckoning. He equates Christian good and bad angels with the daemons of the philosophers, or the intelligentiae of the Peripatetics. Rather than calling all pagan gods or daemons demons, he actually says that unfortunately there have always been those who did not believe in spirits such as these, and that it would be wishful thinking to suppose that even in his time there were no deniers of this fact, citing many scriptural passages as proof.[445] That all gods besides the already established Trinity are merely angels is confirmed in a note on Rogerius's establishment of Brahman tripartite worship, discussed above, where he once more corrects Rogerius slightly:

> The highest God as God, the lower gods (those are angels or deceased holy men) as advocates and mediators between them and God; and the devil so that he may not harm them. Yet those who serve the lower gods or the devil do not go to Heaven, but when they die they have to be born and reborn many times, until they finally serve Vishnu or Shiva truly, and therefore go to Heaven. See hereafter chapters 13 and 14. And this is also commonly the opinion of all pagans. But Lactantius (*De falsa religione Deorum*, book 1 [of the *Institutiones Divinae*]) correctly says that it has never happened that someone has served God himself if they worshipped someone besides God. And this also cannot happen, because if one grants someone else the same honour that one owes to God, one does not worship God, as it is one of the principal points of religion that God is one, and that only he must be worshipped by man.[446]

The annotator here reaffirms that the lower or lesser gods are all worshipped by the Brahmans merely as mediators between them and God. A.W. also seamlessly switches here between an ethnological account of the Brahmans based on their own cultural categories and his Christian rendering of Brahman religion, speaking about God and Vishnu or Shiva, accepting the reality of transmigration within the belief system of the Brahmans whilst condemning their idolatry. The crucial problem that emerges is, in fact, again one of *dulia* and *latria*, as offering divine worship to anyone but God is here, with the aid of Lactantius, clearly argued to be idolatry. The annotator indeed speaks more about this in the chapters he references, especially in chapter 2.14, which is dedicated to the honour given to lesser gods. We have already discussed that Rogerius here also distinguishes the manner in which the supreme God is worshipped from the way in which the lesser gods are serviced according to Padmanabha,

[444] *Open Door*, 240, note 336.
[445] *Open Door*, 242, note 343.
[446] *Open Door*, 249, note 374.

and that this broadly fits a distinction between *dulia* and *latria*; commenting on this, the annotator in fact repeats that 'they do not consider these lesser gods any differently from angels, as we have seen in chapter 6 of this part'.[447] He is therefore 'certain enough' an believes that the Brahmans 'do not worship nor supplicate to them any differently than as mediators between God and men, just as Plato and his successors recognised spirits such as these'.[448] The most detailed exploration of this as a phenomenon however is slightly earlier in the chapter, commenting only on the fact of giving divine honour to someone besides God. Here the annotator starts by referencing Acosta as an example of the ubiquity of recognising one highest God but nevertheless serving other gods besides him. Many others are argued to engage in this practice, from the contemporary Chinese, Japanese, and West Indians, to the Romans. But what is different in this note is that he makes a distinction we have seen before between wise pagans and the common people:

> It is certainly true that almost all pagans (I speak of those who stood out from the common man in their knowledge and erudition) were of the belief that there is but one God, as we have remarked upon in the notes on the first chapter of this part, and that he was the only one who ought to be shown divine honour; but almost all nevertheless served, besides this one God, also others, (not as natural gods, but as his servants whom he had also created), some following common practice; others also out of fear of the common people.[449]

Idolatrous paganism and wise paganism meet, not in thought, but in action: all the wise pagans always knew that there was only one God and that only he was supposed to be given worship (in the sense of *latria*); even if those created by God are not worshipped as natural gods but as his servants — which also applies to Catholics from a Protestant perspective — worshipping them in any form is idolatrous. The annotator does not need to go into too much detail here, as Padmanabha clearly states that to reach Heaven only God should be worshipped. Ancient sages who nevertheless gave divine honours to lesser gods, instead of merely acknowledging them as God's servants, were following common practice (the example of Cicero must have come to mind) or felt coerced into doing so, like Plato: 'So also Plato, notwithstanding that he knew very well that there was but one God to whom divine worship was due, as we find throughout his writings, nevertheless also worshipped others, out of fear of the common people'.[450] Polytheism disappears as a problem of belief and merely remains one of practice, of action, if undue worship, idolatry, is given to the created beings of the creator. But the wisest Brahmans are not presented to fall into this idolatrous trap.

[447] *Open Door*, 275, note 429.
[448] *Open Door*, 275, note 429.
[449] *Open Door*, 273, note 423.
[450] *Open Door*, 273, note 423.

## 11.4 Christian Allegory Beyond Monotheism

### The Metamorphosis of Metempsychosis

When it comes to belief, the Brahmans thus emerge as Trinitarian monotheists whose beliefs seem perfectly aligned with Reformed Christianity. While the annotator is definitely liberal with his Platonising use of allegory and finding of equivalents, he does not abandon the idea that fables darkened the truth to some extent, especially in more popular forms of devotion. This brings us to another problematic belief of the Brahmans and other pagans, namely the transmigration of souls or metempsychosis. This is a common topic throughout the book, and already in the first chapter the annotator remarks that the supposedly common source for the vegetarianism of the Gymnosophists, Egyptian priests, and ancient Greeks — it is unclear who his sources are — was the 'mistaken belief in the transmigration of souls after death'.[451]

The two main discussions of transmigration are, not surprisingly, in chapter 2.7 (man and his soul) and 2.21 (the state of man after death). We have already seen above that chapter 2.7 provides us with one of the most nuanced depictions of the diversity of South Indian theological-philosophical thought in the entire *Open Door*, and the annotator is happy to comment on the different viewpoints regarding the ontology of soul that come out of the Brahman conference. He already makes a clear argument in favour of the Platonism of the Brahmans at the beginning of the chapter, as the exceptionalism of humans is seen by both Plato and the Brahmans to be due to body and not soul.[452] The eternity of soul, clearly in conflict with the Christian notion of God creating everything ex nihilo and the soul at conception, as well as the origin of soul is also discussed in an erudite manner. While he recognises the popularity of the notion of an eternally existing soul, with Cicero being the prominent cited example and Steuco the reference for its refutation, Plato is argued to believe in a one-sided eternity of the soul *after*, not *before* creation.[453] He qualifies Rogerius's statement of souls coming into existence before the creation of the world by adding 'or with the creation of the world, because this is also the

[451] *Open Door*, 137, note 12. An interesting addition here is the mention that the coming of Christ removed distinctions between foods: 'Among the Christians there were also some who did not want to eat any meat: the Manicheans, Tatians, Eucratians, and others. Marcion said that those who ate meat would not be saved. The Jews were also prohibited from eating some animals, Deuteronomy 14. But after the coming of Christ this distinction between foods was removed. See Matthew 15:11, Romans 14:17, Colossians 2:16, 1 Corinthians 10:25 and also other places.' The annotator also compares the notion of transmigration among the Brahmans in Pulicat with that of the Bania in Gujarat. See *Open Door*, 204, note 222.

[452] *Open Door*, 245, note 365. See footnote x above.

[453] *Open Door*, 247, note 369. He references Gabriele Buratelli in this instance: Gabriele Buratelli, *Praecipuarum controuersiarum Arist. et Platonis conciliatio, ... Authore ... Gabriele Buratello ... Cum rerum omnium memorabilium indice locupletissimo* (Venice: apud Franciscum, Gasparem Bindonum, & fratres, 1573). Buratelli, an Augustinian like Steuco, seeks a reconciliation between Plato and Aristotle regarding philosophy, but tries to avoid the Platonising conciliation of religion found in his contemporary Steuco. See Eva Del Soldato, *Early Modern Aristotle: On the Making and Unmaking of Authority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

true opinion of Plato'.[454] Of course the annotator does not think that this is a good teaching; but as he shows, it is closer to Christian conceptions: 'Whether this notion was foreign to the father Augustine is still not certain. [...] It is beyond any doubt that Origen, Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, book 1, and with him the Priscillianists and Flagellants thought that the souls were created before the bodies.'[455] He then, however, adds: ' This opinion was condemned by the Council of Vienna under Clement V, and the fifth general council, and further others.'[456] He in a similar manner dismisses the idea of souls being sent into bodies as a punishment.[457]

While the eternity of soul is therefore primarily condemned rather than allegorised, the transmigration of souls is a different story. In general, the annotator could base his analysis of this topic on the fact that the Brahmans, like many other pagans, believed in the immortality of the soul. In chapter 2.7, when Rogerius says that the Brahmans believe that the soul is immortal he adds a long note on the ancient tradition of the immortality of the soul:

> That the souls are immortal has been believed by Trismegistus, Musaeus, Orpheus, Homer, Pindar, Pherecydes, the Druids, the Egyptians, the Thracians, the old Germans, and other nations and peoples. Plato also asserted this in different places, and before him two bright lights and greatly renowned heroes who laid the foundations for philosophy among the Greeks and Romans: Pythagoras and Thales. [...] The Jews believed that those who followed the law exactly, and whom they therefore called 'completely righteous', would be living with God eternally [...] but the souls of the pagans or those who died due to the flood they believed would not rise again and would perish with their bodies.[458]

This integration of the Brahmans into a *prisca theologia* tradition which asserted the

[454] *Open Door*, 247, note 370.

[455] *Open Door*, 247, note 370.

[456] *Open Door*, 247, note 370.

[457] *Open Door*, 247-248, note 372: 'Besides different pagans who stuck to this error, (and thought that the souls are even called ψυχὰς due to this, because they were sent into a body due to their sins, estranged from virtue and godliness as if they had been frozen. And the body σῶμα, quasi σῶῆα, a grave of the soul) even Origen was of this opinion. See on this Epiphanius, *Contra haereses*, book 2, tome 1, page 164. Benedict Pereira in Genesis, book 4, chapter 2, verse 7, writes that Rufinus even wanted to accuse the old father Jerome of this heathenism; but not rightfully so, because in his 139th epistle to Cyprian he strongly condemns this teaching of Origen. See also his sixty-first letter written to Pammachius.'

[458] *Open Door*, 246, note 366. The annotator also speaks about the Sadducees and Thnetopsychists (*Open Door*, 146, note 48.) as rare exceptional groups not believing in the immortality of the soul ('Otherwise almost all, be they ancient or current sects or any kind of people, agree with one another in that they believe i the immortality of souls', referring the reader to Vossius once more). Thnetopsychism referst to Christian mortalist groups who believed the soul to die along with the body, or, especially in its early modern form, that the soul would be resurrected along with the body upon the Last Judgement (soul sleep or 'psychopannychism'). The Sadducees were a Jewish sect around the time of the Second Temple period who rejected the resurrection of the body as well as the presence of an afterlife. Thnetopsychism enjoyed a revival with the Reformation, and especially the Anabaptists are prominent believers in psychopannychism. Subsequently, it enjoyed some success in England, with prominent figures such as Overton, Milton, and Hobbes associated with thnetopsychism. The term would therefore have held strong associations with unorthodox Protestant groups and beliefs in the seventeenth century. See Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

immortality of the soul is closely linked by the annotator with the transmigration of souls, as we see in chapter 2.16 and especially 2.21. The notion of the body as a prison and punishment for sins is compared with beliefs of the 'Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and other eastern nations', who, according to Steuco, misunderstood the expulsion from paradise due to sin to mean that Heaven is synonymous with Eden and that 'Adam, or the soul, was pushed out of Heaven and imprisoned in an earthly body, as in a prison, as a punishment for perpetrated sins'.[459] When Rogerius speaks of the transmigration of souls in chapter 2.21, where he also compares this pagan Indian belief with Plato, the annotator expands on this topic and shows that not only Plato, but the Egyptians, Orpheus and Pythagoras agreed with the notion that people would be reborn as something resembling their past misdeeds.[460] Not only pagans were committed to this opinion, but also the Jews and various early Christian teachers and groups: 'Valentinus, Colarbasus [his disciple], all the Gnostics and all Manicheans'.[461]

The term *rebirth* is what leads the annotator to his main allegorical reading of metempsychosis, taken, again, from Steuco. The latter, the annotator says, believes that Plato and everyone else who had this opinion, 'concerning the transmigration of souls, which he calls "παλιγγενεσία" "rebirth" in the Phaedrus [*Phaedo*], and about which the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and the Sibyllines knew much, is only in error because he had badly understood what they had told of the rebirth and union of soul and body which will happen on the day of the Last Judgment.'[462] Otherwise the annotator simply chooses to see transmigration as an erroneous representation of the immortality of the soul, his main argument in the next note. Here he argues that according to Herodotus it was the Egyptians who were the first to believe and teach the immortality of the soul, and that it was them who said that the soul migrates from one body to another, animals and humans. The annotator does not offer us any indication as to who the agents of transmission are, but from the Egyptians truth (immortality of the soul) and error (transmigration) spread to the rest of the world. While transmigration is thus clearly condemned as error, the annotator focusses primarily on the transmission of truth by sages. This is why also Pythagoras is mentioned more in connection with the teaching of the immortality of the soul, and less when the topic is the errors of metempsychosis, such as when Rogerius himself mentions Pythagoras in this context.[463]

The annotator's stance on transmigration being a corruption of the teaching of the immortality of the soul is not particularly noteworthy; we have seen that De Laet makes a similar

[459] *Open Door*, 283, note 450.
[460] *Open Door*, 297, note 466. The annotator does not specify this here, but this idea comes from the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*.
[461] *Open Door*, 297, note 466. Compare this also with 283, note 449, where it is argued that the Jews believe in deeds from past lives: 'because when Christ (John 9) gave a blind-born sight, he was asked by his disciples who had sinned, him or his parents; but Christ taught them and disproved this error. See the same place, and on this Hugo Grotius.'
[462] *Open Door*, 297, note 467.
[463] See above, page 254.

statement about the Pythagorean beliefs of the Indians in his work on the Mughal Empire, and the argument was also commonly employed by scholars of paganism such as Vossius. The difference is that this is but a small part of the annotator's overall analysis of the religion of the Brahmans, and unlike for instance De Laet, A.W. does not perceive a broader 'Pythagorean religion' to be present in India. Instead, as the transmigration of souls illustrates particularly well, the Brahmans and the common people in India believe in a mix of truth, derived primarily through tradition, and error, fables which have darkened and corrupted the truth and turned it into falsehood and idolatry. As we have seen repeatedly, in Rogerius's text, but especially in the annotations, this dichotomy follows largely a distinction between the common people, ignorant and practising idolatrous worship, and the Brahmans, who are part of an elite group of sages and believe in true monotheism and worship only the true God. Perhaps the clearest argument in favour of this interpretation is the annotator's allegorical understanding of myth, based partially on Padmanabha's assertions about the nature of God, and partially on the annotator's Platonising hermeneutics.

### Returning to Eden: Allegories of Genesis, Christ, and the Church

The annotator makes remarks throughout the second part that both deride Indian myth as fabulous whilst clearly implying that there is a deeper, hidden meaning to the many stories related by Rogerius. While A.W. exerts much effort at proving that Brahma is actually Christ, other myths also seem to be corruptions of the life of Jesus to the annotator. A good example is found in chapter 2.3; when Rogerius says that Vishnu decided to be born as Rama, the annotator merely adds that 'the curious reader can easily imagine what they have hidden beneath this fable'.[464] In fact, the annotator already hints at this at the beginning of the chapter, when Rogerius lists the ten different avataras and their forms: here A.W. says that it 'is beyond doubt that these names also signify something else other than what is expressed here. It is apparent that they mean to signify the origins, or the acts themselves, of why God is supposed to have appeared in such a form in this world.'[465] Another common topic throughout different chapters is that the Brahmans have retained an allegorical understanding of paradise. Especially in chapter 2.6 this is pronounced: Rogerius says that the father of the devatas and rakshasas is Kashyapa, whom the annotator makes into Adam, while Diti corresponds to Eve.[466] He also mentions Steuco's theories on a corruption of knowledge about paradise from the books of Moses, referenced once in context with transmigration, as mentioned above, and once when Rogerius speaks about the origins of the river Ganga, although in both instances he makes it clear that this is the opinion of Steuco, without completely adopting this point of

[464] *Open Door*, 228, note 302.
[465] *Open Door*, 225, note 295.
[466] *Open Door*, 242, notes 345 and 346. C.f. also the notes on chapter 2.4, where similar arguments are made, but the reader is mostly redirected to chapter 1.10 and 2.6.

view himself.[467]

In many ways these passages confirm what the annotator said in the preface, namely that the core of Brahman religion is covered by fables and 'thick darkness'. This is explored at length in chapter 2.2, as the belief of Vishnu or Shiva having a wife is not compatible with the annotator's concept of Brahman monotheism. Remarking on Parvati being reborn as the daughter of Himavat, the annotator thus says that the Brahmans 'share with all the old and contemporary pagans that they hide the core of their true religion under very thick and dark fables', almost word for word repeating his statement from the preface.[468] Denouncing the poets in the manner of Plato, A.W. says that one must not take myths of mountains and rivers having children literally, but that they must be understood etymologically. One must not think, he goes on, that the Brahmans would be so foolish to think that a mountain could have a daughter; 'it is without a doubt that they mean something different with this, which can also easily be understood from this fable'. While the annotator is, as so often, cryptic here, he makes the implied symbolism more clear in other places. In the note immediately following this one, he suggests that the love Shiva has for his wife is a corruption of the 'truth of spiritual matters', and that the love talked about here is that which is spoken of in the Song of Solomon (Song of Songs).[469] While originally an erotic poem, the Song of Songs has been read allegorically by both the Jewish tradition and Christians, with the latter interpreting it as an allegory for Christ and the church, his 'bride'.[470] While this is already quite clear, the annotator makes this connection more blatant with other notes. At the very beginning of chapter 2.2 he already claims that the Brahmans do not believe that God has a wife:

> That their God should have a wife as do people here on Earth is not actually their belief. I find in the writings of our author that the Brahman Padmanabha spoke very differently about this; because, he says, should one want to classify the essence of God [of his being], [one will see that] just as he has existed eternally, so he also is no wench, no man, no human, and one cannot know how or what he is. But after this he took possession of a body, a wife, and made a world; and this, he says, is spoken of in a human way. The old pagans thought that their gods were *utriusque naturae*, that is both man and woman [...] but according to all probability, these Brahmans mean something different with this here; and what that may be can easily be gathered from the notes to chapter 10 of the first part.[471]

It is unclear what exactly the annotator is referring to with the 'writings of our author', but once more it seems that A.W. had access to something other than just a manuscript

[467] *Open Door*, 283, notes 450 and 292, note 363.
[468] *Open Door*, 222-223, note 287.
[469] *Open Door*, 223, note 288.
[470] On this topic see Richard A. Norris, ed., *The Song of Songs: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
[471] *Open Door*, 220, note 276.

of the *Open Door*. Building on Padmanabha's Smartism, the annotator makes the God of the Brahmans into a transcendent divinity devoid of human characteristics. So what is the 'something different' referenced at the end? It is, explicitly, that Parvati is actually an allegory for the church:

> Unless perhaps something else lies underneath this, following that which we spoke of in the notes on pages 26 and 55 in general, and page 39 especially; and that by Parvati, as much as she is the daughter of Daetsja [Daksha, father of Sati], the church in the Old Testament can be understood; but in so far as she is the daughter of the mountain Chimmawontam [Himavat, father of Parvati], the church in the New Testament.[472]

This is further cemented in note 283, where the annotator says that 'we Christians believe that even today spiritual children are born to Jesus Christ, in his church and his congregation, as these are also called the bride (John 5:21, Ephesians 5:26) and wife (Apocalypse 21:9) of Christ.'[473] The theory then is that something of the (scriptural) truth reached the Indians and 'was perverted and corrupted by them into this fable'.[474]

The annotator makes multiple references to his own notes here, specifically to those in chapter 1.10 (page 39 in the *Open Deure* is in chapter 1.10). This is, as I have already mentioned, the most directed-to chapter, and oddly it is in the first part of the *Open Door*. While the chapter is titled 'on the philosophical knowledge of the Brahmans', Rogerius actually quickly dismisses the Brahmans as ignorant, knowing barely enough to calculate eclipses and conjunctions of planets.[475] Mostly, the chapter is a presumably Puranic account of the churning of the Ocean of Milk, as the rakshasas Rahu and Ketu are said to fight the sun or moon during an eclipse, and Rogerius takes this as proof of the Brahmans' ignorance. The annotator immediately disagrees with Rogerius and defends the Brahmans' pre-eminence in matters of philosophy and astrology, attested by all ancient writers but also by modern travel writing.[476] Predominantly the chapter figures as a bridgehead to the annotator's treatise, and collects the various allegorical readings he suggests throughout the other chapters. Devatas and rakshasas — good and bad angels, according to both Rogerius and A.W. — are important actors, and so the annotator can refer the reader to this discussion in other chapters.[477] When Shiva is mentioned the annotator says that Shiva and Brahma 'signify one and the same and that they are names which only differentiate between the offices and functions of the same'.[478] And, to return to Jesus and his bride, he repeats that the Brahmans do not believe that God has a

[472] *Open Door*, 221, note 282.
[473] *Open Door*, 221, note 283.
[474] *Open Door*, 221, note 283.
[475] *Open Door*, 161.
[476] *Open Door*, 161, note 102.
[477] *Open Door*, 161, note 103.
[478] *Open Door*, 162, note 109.

wife, but that this is a fable and that Lakshmi is a parable for the 'Church under the Law', whilst Parvati is the 'Church after the coming of the Messiah'.[479]

Within a few pages the annotator thus sums up many of his key allegorical readings of Brahman mythology. More subtle than these very clear statements are the annotator's allusions to Heaven and Paradise. When Rogerius relates the details of mount Meru, the annotator, after giving the details Rogerius supplies in chapter 2.5 about Meru — that it is made of gold, reaches up to heaven and has fruit that grants an end to hunger and thirst, but is inhabited not by humans but devatas, here said to be the faithful — says: 'What they actually understand by this Mountain is easy to find out from this description and the following fable, in which the giving of the law, the assembly of a Church of God, and the promise of the Messiah and his role and function, are, in my judgement, not described poorly.'[480] Presumably, the annotator thus saw Meru as a parable for Paradise, or, considering the specific mention of the faithful, more probably Heaven. The churning of the Ocean of Milk itself becomes a major allegory for the eventual coming of Christ and establishment of a Christian church, which we have seen is Parvati as the 'bride' in the annotator's allegorical reading. The food and drink on mount Meru are also important allegories: not being physical forms of nourishment, these are actually forms of spiritual sustenance. Naturally, when Rogerius himself compares the *amrita* which grants immortality with the nectar of ancient poetry, the annotator readily adds his own considerations on nectar and ambrosia, and what those 'actually are and what they understood by it', for which he refers the reader to Steuco's *Cosmopeia*.[481] While the annotator's page number seems incorrect, Steuco does speak of nectar and ambrosia, which according to sacred theology and poetic theology designate immortality.[482] These divine foods, like the fruits in Eden, are figurative in their reality according to Steuco, and tasting of the fruit should therefore be understood as an allegory for seeing and knowing God, with the immortality being spiritual in Heaven, rather than physical on Earth. The annotator clearly has this in mind when he concludes the note by saying that 'it is beyond doubt that these Brahmans here understand this to be the veritable Nectar, from which if anyone drinks, they will never thirst again'.[483]

[479] *Open Door*, 162, note 110.
[480] *Open Door*, 162, note 105.
[481] *Open Door*, 163, note 112.
[482] Steuco, *Cosmopoeia*, 133. 'Per cibos ergo tam in sacra theologia, quam theologia poetica, quae bona parte imitatur illam veram & sacram, immortalitas est designata. Ac quoniam innumerabilia deprehendimus à theologia Mosaica manasse ad veteres Graeciae theologos, tot exemplis adductus ac persuasus, crediderim illum Deorum cibum, quo vescentes dicebant eos numquam posse senescere, esse quasi fructus istius arboris. Ac sapientes bene norunt, quid sit Nectar & Ambrosia, quid Iuventa apud superos, cibos hos ministrans. Facile id quo respexere poetae percipiunt.'
[483] *Open Door*, 163, note 112.

# EPILOGUE: TWO AUTHORS, TWO TREATISES, ONE MISSION?

## The Complexities of Religion, Belief, Worship, and Truth

After this dense analysis of the manner in which Brahman beliefs are presented by Rogerius and especially the annotator, it will be useful to take a step back and consider this in the context of the broader concepts of religion vis-à-vis worship, as well as truth and error.

With very few exceptions, Rogerius does not speak of 'Brahman' or 'pagan' religion; he sometimes says that certain people act 'religiously' (that is to say: piously) in their way of life or observance of the Veda, but he does not conceive of Brahmanism as a 'religion'. It is apparent that it was not a lack of knowledge that was keeping him from drawing such a conclusion: we have seen the detailed renderings of rituals which are still of paramount importance to modern Hindus, specificities of Brahman theology and disagreements among them regarding certain positions, as well as a large range of devotional practices, from Brahman ascetics to popular village celebrations outside of the Brahmanic sphere of influence. While Rogerius is happy to confirm the presence of monotheism among the Brahmans, and to see devil worship as confined to low-caste villagers, religion remains very much a singular concept in his text, while his observations are, though certainly influenced by his own Reformed Christianity, mostly raw descriptions of what he saw himself, with little analysis. While not anywhere near the volume of the annotator's use, comparison is not absent from Rogerius's text: he, too, makes comparisons with Plato, Pythagoras, and other ancient pagans. But these serve to undermine the validity of Brahman beliefs and practices, to show their incompatibility with 'religion', that is with Christianity. Even though his ethnography is a rich account of the culture of the South Indian Hindus (*avant-la-lettre*) and Brahmans particularly, he does not conceive of their worship and beliefs as a system in and of itself. True, in Rogerius's account belief is to worship and practice as thought is to action, and Rogerius acknowledges the role of the

Veda, the position of the Brahmans, and even outlines very specific details regarding bhakti or devotion — but in the end, though Rogerius creates a grand picture of Brahman religion, he does not take that extra step to regard it fully as a coherent system with its own rules, rather than dismissing it as a combination of priestly imposture, natural religion, and idolatry. The conceptual and terminological dimensions of 'religion' are intensely linked here: even though Rogerius uses an implicit notion of 'religion' as a tertium comparationis (in Hanegraaff's sense, a 'pre-tertium'), namely the paganism which South Indian practices and beliefs may be assigned to, Rogerius does not dignify Brahmanism or Hinduism with the term 'religion' itself. This is not a conscious act on the side of Rogerius; rather, he is a case study of the still incomplete transformation of the term from a singular to a plural concept, even as he is fully engaged in presenting 'Indian religion' to his fellow Dutchmen.

The annotator's view of Brahmanism is more complex, but also more contradictory. Back in chapter seven we saw that he constructs his own contribution, and the usefulness of the *Open Door* in general, around a patristically-informed notion of Brahmanism as *praeparatio evangelica*. The Brahmans' philosophical-rational knowledge, in the form of natural theology, forms the ideal foundation for a Christian mission — naturally a Reformed, Dutch mission — that would supply the true knowledge of God and revelation to those who already know him: to bring, as the annotator says, the knowledge of *how* he is, to those who already know *that* he is. But as we have seen in the second part, and especially in the last chapter, A.W. goes much farther than this at times, and does not present the Brahmans as a group who desperately need to know how God is: because, in fact, they already seem to know this rather well! In the key passages to which the annotator refers the reader, he is primarily occupied with proving that the Brahmans acknowledge the Trinity, understand the immortality of the soul, the role of the church, and many other details of Christian dogma through an idealised allegorical reading of Brahman beliefs and myths. The annotator does not abandon what he set out to do in the preface and its presentation of the Brahmans: throughout the annotations he is concerned with showing that the 'teachers' — that is, the Brahmans — are the only ones who know about God, whilst the common people form the idolatrous masses. But it seems to be primarily Rogerius who calls out the Brahmans as priestly impostors who seduce the commoners and tell them tall tales for their own benefit; the annotator is more busy casting Brahman priesthood as a civil institution, related to the tribe of Levi and the Hebrews more generally. Instead of seductive teachers, the Brahmans more often appear to fit the role of the ancient Brahmans from Greek ethnography and philosophy, wise sages who are privy to more than ordinary knowledge. The annotator is not unequivocal in this; at times he calls out clear idolatry or superstition. But mostly, he seems to advocate for an esoteric element discernible within Brahman religion — which he clearly calls 'religion' — that can be distinguished from the exoteric idolatry that is primarily, if perhaps not wholly, associated with the masses. He does afford an important role to natural religion in the preface, but throughout the annotations

he presents this knowledge primarily as something that can be located historically, via tradition. This more esoteric knowledge may derive from the gospels, or other stories about Jesus that reached India via the apostle Thomas, but mostly, A.W. suggests, can be traced to older lines of transmission that ultimately have their origins with Noah and Adam.

We have seen many examples of this; but perhaps the best illustration is in a footnote on the loss of the Atharvaveda. Here the annotator suggests that the last Veda might have been abolished, potentially shortly after the coming of Christ, and that over time the Veda was either renewed or greatly changed, 'because it is clear from what been argued in this treatise on the Veda that those who instituted the [Veda] were not at all unfamiliar with the knowledge of Christ, even though they covered this under very thick and obscure fables (which is always the manner of the pagans)'.[484] Truth and error here are inextricably linked and entangled with one another. We have seen in chapter ten how the annotator engages with histories of idolatry, and traces the diverse forms of idolatrous worship described by Rogerius to different sources via diffusionist models. While he does not propose one clear point of origin for error, preferring to discuss different types of idolatry individually, in a case by case fashion, Assyria and Egypt turn out to be the central loci within this model. A.W. was borrowing from other scholars in this regard, especially from Selden, Bochart, and, of course, Vossius. His contribution to these debates is not innovative: he takes over all of his theories from other scholars, does not advocate for one specific genealogy or origin to tie matters together, and lacks the 'Oriental' languages necessary to make more sophisticated genealogical arguments in a philological and etymological manner. This does not mean that his own contribution is not significant, even if he belongs more to a disseminating group rather than one of intellectual innovation. What makes his contribution significant is that he applies this scholarship to an unprecedented degree of depth and comprehensiveness to the Indian case: much like with the ancient wisdom narrative, the annotator integrates the Brahmans, who up to that point had mostly been discussed as a historical group from antiquity, into these debates and thus enlarges the scope and universality of this analytical and historical framework. India is no longer a footnote here, where the Brahmans and gymnosophists might appear briefly in a list next to Druids and Magi — Indian beliefs and practices become the actual focus themselves.

Unlike Clüver, the annotator does not suggest that the Brahmans in their role as priests act as both guardians of wisdom and perpetuators of error. Yet the boundaries between truth and error are blurry nevertheless, as we have seen especially with the case of idol worship, as error does often derive from truth. Even though A.W. does not use Clüver's notion of diffusion over time and space being achieved through the medium of priests, in his own model the spread of truth and error are similarly entangled, often going back to the same sources, namely the Egyptians and the Assyrian Chaldeans. Even without naming priests as the singular, two-faced transmitters of truth and error through time and space, true religion and idolatry can often be

[484] *Open Door*, 153, note 72.

traced back to the same lines of transmission, going back to idolaters but also sages in Egypt and Chaldea. What is the significance of this double line of transmission, how does it relate to the conceptualisation of religion, and how can one make sense of truth and error being present at once, as the annotator does with the examples of the Brahmans?

For one, both the annotator and Rogerius seem to follow a dichotomy of thought and action reflected in the distinction between belief and (ritual) practice, as we have seen throughout the second part, and most especially in chapter nine. Rogerius makes this very clear time and again, seeing ritual worship as a natural extension of a belief in God or gods. Rogerius maintains a singular understanding of religion, but clearly he employs a tertium comparationis here where belief and ritual together form some sort of unity, which then may be implicitly or explicitly compared with more familiar forms of ritual and belief. His own Reformed Christian perspective on these topics is apparent even when reproducing emic knowledge and categories, as we encountered, for instance, with the nine-fold forms of devotion, which Rogerius clearly puts into two categories of inward and outward worship. While belief is complex, and is portrayed as a messy combination of natural theology and thus monotheism, superstition, and plain error, outward worship is clearly the domain of idolatry and devil worship. This dichotomy is also present in the annotations, and forms an important element to explain the simultaneous presence of true religion and idolatry in India. Rogerius and A.W. are very much in agreement here, and the latter also gives us a very Reformed perspective on Indian religion: belief is understood allegorically to be either true knowledge or some sort of corruption of true knowledge, potentially veiled by fables. But practice, action, is either non-religious or almost exclusively the domain of idolatry. This seems to also be the case historically: the practice of idolatry, wrong worship addressed to something or someone other than God, is in many cases argued to derive from a misunderstanding of true religious beliefs. The two spheres are very much distinct, but nevertheless have common origins and transmissions. The issue of idolatry, according to the annotator, arises in the practice of religion, when erroneous or superstitious elements are added and thus undermine the proper worship of God; the true beliefs of the Brahmans, on the other hand, are in perfect concordance with the basic points of Christian dogma.

Recognising belief and practice, in the annotator's model, to mostly parallel thought and action helps us understand how he could nevertheless regard these spheres, together, as one system. Especially within the confessionally charged environment of early modern Europe, this need not be regarded as particularly surprising: the Indians might well be seen to parallel Roman Catholics, who, whilst sharing their scriptural corpus and (most of) their beliefs with the Protestants, err primarily in the practice of their religion and their alleged idolatrous worship. Catholics, at least on the surface, are absent from the *Open Door*; but comparisons with other forms of belief and worship more generally are crucial for the annotations of the *Open Door*, while serving a more limited purpose for Rogerius. Much as Jonathan Z. Smith

has argued, echoed also by Wouter Hanegraaff's reconstruction of the term 'religion', and as it has again become clear throughout this study, the act of comparing itself necessitated a category for comparison, and this led to a process where 'religion' was turned from a singular to a plural concept. As we have also seen, this is not a straightforward process that breaks with Christianity's universal claim to truth, but it does bring with it important implications. Coming full circle, we can note the relevance of the styles of reporting of Rogerius and A.W.: the *predikant* remains in the local context and does not attempt to make any grand connections with other parts of India or Asia; occasional comparisons underline the alterity of Brahmin beliefs and practices by employing well known examples from antiquity, but the predominant manner in which Rogerius transmits information is through the reproduction of emic knowledge. The annotator, on the other hand, as the ethnologist, immediately inhabits a global and universal position through which to judge the ethnographic observations of Rogerius. Comparing different beliefs, rituals, and cultural practices here serves to uncover the roots of the South Indian customs, to trace genealogical transmissions and to unmask their true nature. In the process, categories of comparison are reified and universalised: sacrifice, present among both pagans and Christians, is shown to be an essential part of 'religion' and is thus functionalised within religion as a system.

'Brahmanism' is not a monolithic religion in the annotator's treatise, and the esoteric and exoteric elements are very much in conflict with one another — but there is nevertheless the conceptualisation of Brahmanism (avant-la-lettre) as one religion, one cultural system with an internal logic and rules. Perhaps the best example of this is the discussion of the yajna: Rogerius reproduces what Padmanabha tells him, including the perceived incoherence of Brahmans eating meat and the reasons for which to asphyxiate the sacrificial animal. But the annotator disputes this reason and seeks to argue for an explanation that brings together beliefs and practice, all while distinguishing a true basis of belief from the corrupted practices that have ended in idolatry. What the annotator does here, and what Rogerius in the end fails to properly do, is to recognise that the beliefs and practices of the Brahmans together make up one system with an internal logic, with distinct elements that might be compared with similar such elements in other cultural and religious formations. Here I agree with Sweetman's argument that a re-conceptualisation of religion and the genesis of a notion of 'Hinduism' are coeval, a matter for which the *Open Door* is a particularly good case study due to its dual authorship. Rogerius, to a great extent, is indeed the curious non-judgemental observer he has been portrayed to be, although as we have also seen he has a clear opinion on the imposture of the Brahmans. But in the *Open Door*, Rogerius does not seek to answer any greater questions or theories about the coherence of Brahman beliefs and practices, or to integrate them into bigger and broader systems: the local remains local, and the Brahmans, even as they are described in great detail, largely remain 'Baal's priests', who lead the common people astray by teaching them their idolatrous ways. Brahmanism is not a meaningful unit here, not a

religion, but a pagan *other* comprised of mostly false beliefs and idolatrous forms of worship. Practices might very well act out beliefs, but not due to any philosophical sophistication or internal logic. The annotator on the other hand clearly sees Brahmanism as a coherent system, and while there is definitely no notion of 'Hinduism' in his treatise, he does notice the commonalities with Brahmans in other parts of India. All of paganism is, like in Vossius, considered to be ontologically one, which however does not preclude high diversity within different forms of paganism. Vossius and the annotator share with Rogerius their belief in one true religion — but the former's view on paganism as a complex structure with rules and logic, with the functionalisation of ritual, and the historical tracing of its elements in time and place, elevate paganism, within a comparative framework at least, to the same level as Christianity. Rogerius's ethnographic detail was to endure, but his Weltanschauung regarding 'religion' was moribund; instead it was the annotator's comparative religious framework that would become so relevant for Enlightenment debates about religion to which we are still heirs today.

The unique arrangement of the *Open Door*, with its superbly researched and plain presentation of an ethnography of South Indian culture, beliefs, and practices commented, contextualised and culturally translated in the ethnological-genealogical project of the annotator may truly be said to have opened the door to European understanding of 'Brahman' or 'Indian' religion. It is exactly in the tension between the two accounts, and in their complementarity, that we find, if not a notion of 'Hinduism', an understanding that this 'religion' has clear foundations, an internally logical and coherent system of beliefs, and an institutionalised ritual apparatus in many ways headed by the Brahmans, but also contrasted by other, local and lower-caste forms of devotion.

## Opening the Doors to Conversion?

While Rogerius and the annotator differ in their view, interpretation, and conclusions about Brahmanism and religion as a category more broadly, as well as in their distinct but complementary forms of writing where the comparative ethnology relies on the local ethnographic knowledge it aims to contextualise, we have seen that both authors understand their work within a missionary context. Rogerius of course was himself active as a missionary, which formed a part of his more wide-ranging duties as a *predikant* in Pulicat and Batavia. The original treatise the *Open Door* seems to have been based on, 'Baal's Priests', was conceived with one aim in mind, namely to supply fellow *predikanten* with relevant information that could be used in conversion efforts in the missionary field. Sceperus, Rogerius's widow Emmerentia Pools, and the annotator all underline that this was still the primary goal of the *Open Door*. The annotator also casts his own treatise in this light: he seeks to do nothing less than to be a modern Paul or Lactantius, finding compelling and convincing arguments against pagans by knowing their beliefs and their apparent incongruences.

In view of the discussed differences between Rogerius and the annotator, we might note that Rogerius's style of reporting more obviously fits the image of a Reformed mission. His time at the *Seminarium Indicum*, under the tutelage of Walaeus, must have already made it very clear to Rogerius that knowledge of the *other* was crucial for a successful missionary endeavour, and the rest of his life was very much in the service of this mission. Rogerius's matter of fact presentation of emic knowledge and voices, while potentially also deriving from the author's early death and the state of his writings, do make sense if this knowledge was meant for active use in the field: Rogerius gives the relevant information without much flourish or digression, so that a missionary might use this as a foundation for his arguments against the Brahmans and South Indians more broadly. This is not to distract from Rogerius's achievements nor what seems to be an honest curiosity and inquisitive nature. His Brahman conference, for instance, might have had some usefulness for a missionary — but I would think it rather cynical to reduce this and all of Rogerius's inquiries into Brahman culture and religion to missionary ambition. Rogerius was, if not outright sympathetic to idolaters, inhabiting the curious robe of an anthropologist as well as that of the missionary, seeking to find out why festivities happen on a given day, why Padmanabha would put his robe in a specific position when entering a temple, or what constitutes the applications of divination. But the Brahmans and all Indian pagans nevertheless are clear idolaters, have but a limited understanding of natural religion and worship false gods as well as the devil. In religious terms, there is no similarity between them and Rogerius's own faith.

As we have seen, A.W. inhabits a different position. Indeed, the annotator's stance throughout the annotations seems somewhat in contrast with the initial claim that the Brahmans, though knowing of the one and only God, are ignorant of the true nature of this God. In the final chapter we have seen that they seem aware, through reason and tradition, of the Trinity, know about the immortality of the soul, and even recognise the office of Christ. While other scholars elevated the knowledge of pagans of the past to boost the importance of their own nation — Selden's Celts are a good example — the annotator presents a contemporary group of pagans from a different continent in an extraordinarily positive light that goes beyond mere curiosity and the plain *praeparatio evangelica* derived from natural religion outlined in the preface. There seems to be a tension here between an official and orthodox Reformed stance on the mission, echoed also by Rogerius and outlined in the preface, and a more personal sympathy for pagans and the Brahmans, informed by erudition and close familiarity with Neoplatonism and notions of a universal prisca sapientia that has been preserved by pagan sages that we can see in the annotations. Employing a comparative methodology, here the annotator engages in a hermeneutical process that, rather than showing the *otherness* of the Indians, focusses on the *similarity* of the Brahmans to his fellow Christians. Though with his process and model he thus emulates Gerardus Vossius — whose own aim to show how pagans confuse creation for creator ends up frequently lost sight of in a 'sea of erudition', essentially

turning his work into an essay in comparative religion as convincingly argued by D.P. Walker — in his own erudite meanderings the annotator of the *Open Door* seems to undermine a strict distinction between pagan and Christian. And meander he does; but to dismiss the annotations as learned ramblings of a seventeenth-century scholar, just as nineteenth-century scholars have done, would be wrong, as I hope to have proven sufficiently. His ethnological comparative framework and cultural translation of Rogerius's observations made the *Open Door* into much more than an ethnographic account, contributed to and promoted the comparative study of religions, and thus his treatise was perhaps the most interesting element for contemporary readers, attested by the fact that the German and French translation both expanded on the topics of the preface and annotations whilst leaving the original text untouched.

While not fitting into a traditional Reformed position on the mission like Rogerius's perspective, I would argue that we can detect a missionary strategy in the treatise of the annotator that bridges the tension between the declarations of the preface and the inclusive sentiments of the notes.[485] While the Brahmans appear as quasi-Christians in their beliefs, theirs is not the true religion that is Christianity. As the annotator declares in the preface, corruption and fables have always clouded even the best among the pagans, also when philosophy was in bloom, and that which they had learnt from prophets was corrupted by time; this sentiment remains clear in the annotations. This is especially true for the practice of religion, where we see many of the Brahmans falling into idolatry, the worst corruption of all. While the annotator refrains from connecting the Brahmans with priestly imposture in the manner of Rogerius, the notion of the crafty priest does appear in the preface, where A.W. argues that the Brahmans could not fully reveal that which they had gained through reason (and the same argument could be made for ancient wisdom) out of fear of the common man. Despite their ancient wisdom and their philosophy, the Brahmans did not have access to Christian revelation; after all, as the annotator declares in the preface, 'to look for God, truly, without God and outside the holy scripture, is to put oneself into a maze from which there is no exit'.[486] The annotations go much farther than the preface in delineating the knowledge of the Brahmans, but the lack of revelation is clearly still an issue — how could it not be? Even if like many other pagans, and like the Protestants' Catholic rivals, the Brahmans understood the nature of God remarkably well, they were bound to fall into idolatry due to their ignorance of revelation. But, the annotator seems to imply, the sagacity of the Brahmans offers a unique opportunity: as they already understand much about the nature of God — perhaps more than the Jews and the Muslims as the annotator remarks at one point — their conversion should be easy if undertaken in earnest. The notion of Brahmanism as *praeparatio evangelica* is, I would argue, the central point here that ties together the more limited preface and more inclusive

[485] I make this argument in Leathley, "Opening the Doors to Conversion. The Reformed Mission and Antiquarianism in the Open Door to Hidden Paganism."
[486] *Open Door*, 128-129. See above, page 233.

annotations: the exact limits of what the Brahmans know of the nature of God are perhaps less important than the fact that they do know something about God, and are closer to a Christian understanding of divinity than it might seem at first glance. This position and its patristic foundation remains clear throughout the annotator's treatise and seems to support a conversion effort that puts the Brahmans in a similar position to that of the ancient Greek and Roman elites who were educated in philosophy. We might note that this is not unlike the way that Bartolomé de Las Casas presents Amerindian peoples or the manner in which the Jesuits approached China, Japan, or India. We therefore may reasonably read the annotator's stance as one advocating for a top-down conversion of elites that bases itself on thorough knowledge of the other and a recognition of the depth of natural religion and prisca sapientia among the elites. This sounds conspicuously reminiscent of the Jesuit stance on accommodation, sans the 'going native' approach of missionaries such as Ricci or Nobili.

While the annotator in this manner deviates from the more standard Reformed stance that also Rogerius takes, in a mid-seventeenth-century Dutch context the annotator's position may not be as much of a surprise as one might initially think. We have seen that a close study of other cultures was supposed to be the bedrock of the *Seminarium Indicum*, and Duplessis-Mornay, whose writings were studied at the seminary and sent with *predikanten* to the East Indies, also employed a theology privileging the philosophical similarity and knowledge of the other, only to deconstruct foreign systems through the application of reason.[487] If we see this strategy of knowledge accumulation for the sake of conversion as a spectrum, the two authors of the *Open Door* stand at opposite ends: where Rogerius privileges primarily deconstruction, the annotator seems to favour similarity. Both perspectives, and the attempt to construct a thorough presentation and analysis of a foreign theological edifice such as we see it in the *Open Door*, might be a reaction to the harsh reality *predikanten* faced in the missionary field. The annotator's perspective emerges as a particularly optimistic solution for the not-so-open door of conversion; the optimism did not last, however, and the following decades would be dominated by more pessimistic voices echoing a stance of difference, as in the works of Voetius, Hoornbeeck, and Carolinus.[488] In many ways, however, the *Open Door* echoes the optimism of the *Seminarium Indicum*, the goals of the church fathers, and the ancient wisdom detected in the pagans of old, and in this way offered perhaps a new old solution to open the doors to more successful conversion in India and beyond.

Missionary concerns therefore were at the heart of the *Open Door* and are crucial for understanding both the origins of Rogerius's detailed ethnographic observations, and the annotator's erudite comparisons with the world's different forms of paganism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Both authors could and did rely on important precedents: the knowledge

[487] I go into more detail on this topic in a forthcoming article 'The Protestant Pope and the Dutch. An Outline of Philippe Duplessis-Mornay's Verité and Its Influence in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic'.

[488] See on this C. H. Parker, *Global Calvinism*, 223; Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency*; Gommans and Loots, "Arguing with the Heathens."

production methods, and even the specific writings of the Society of Jesus were important models for the Dutch, both in the East Indies and back in the United Provinces. Contemporary ethnography also played an important and ever-increasing role for the theorisation on paganism and idolatry, where we also see the importance of global flows of information that easily pass confessional boundaries. To take but one example, we have seen that it is hard to imagine Vossius's categorisation of paganism without Acostas's classificatory scheme — presented in an account that was translated into Dutch by Van Linschoten, the pioneer of Dutch travel literature — and Vossius's model is ever-present in the *Open Door* and many later studies of paganism. The successful Jesuit rivals must have also loomed large for Rogerius and his fellow students at the *Seminarium Indicum*, which stressed the teaching of many aspects that made the Jesuits gain ground in the missionary arena, such as the learning of local languages and cultures. The Jesuits were more clearly integrated into imperial structures and operated within a global network themselves, while the Dutch conversion effort was decidedly less coordinated, funded, and extensive, and primarily rested on the individual agency of people like Rogerius. This does not mean that the VOC did not want to support such an enterprise — it was just not prepared to sink too many funds into it. The example of the *Open Door* nevertheless shows how the Dutch attempted a systematic missionary strategy within the commercial-religious context of the VOC, which very much acted as an agent of empire for the Dutch Republic; it shows to what extent Christian apologetics, comparative religious scholarship, and ethnography were linked in the seventeenth-century Dutch case, and how agents working within and outside of the VOC attempted to further the Reformed mission within the colonial-imperial structure of the VOC. Rogerius and the annotator both were aware of the importance of knowledge of the religious traditions of those the Dutch sought to convert, and while the annotator's inclusive and optimistic stance proved to be rather ephemeral, pietist theologians who expanded the theory on the missions like Voetius and Hoornbeeck, with the latter making extensive use of the *Open Door*, echoed the importance of such knowledge, calling for the re-establishment of a missionary training college up to the 1670s.

The *Open Door* is a peculiar document that gives us a unique insight into a myriad of different developments and processes occurring in the mid-seventeenth-century. As a document describing India, it puts attention and gives detail on South Indian customs and worship like never before, thanks in large parts to Rogerius's native informants. I have focussed on the two authors of the book whose work we can most clearly differentiate and compare; but Padmanabha, as Rogerius's main source, is ever present in the *Open Door* and his own Smarta Advaitin perspective on the Brahmans and 'Hindus' of Pulicat and South India more generally made Rogerius's account possible in the first place. The *Open Door* showcases the new wave of Protestant ethnography, which builds on Catholic and especially Jesuit models but establishes also new standards: Rogerius is a pioneering figure in developing a tradition of ethnographic writing focussed primarily on the religious traditions of India, and emic knowledge

is put centre stage by the Dutch *predikant*. This ethnographic activity is entangled with the commercial and missionary agendas and strategies of the VOC, as well as the ongoing troubles and developments within the Dutch Reformed Church both before and after the Synod of Dort. The annotator's treatise is indebted to a Humanist tradition that increasingly investigated ancient and pagan culture and not just politics, and it is the conjunction of antiquarianism and Protestant apologetics that define the immediate inspirations, like Vossius, and the treatise of the annotator himself. It is in these writings, through their erudite meanderings and the unintended consequences of comparing ritual and belief of different peoples with one another and with Christianity, that 'religion' gradually becomes the concept we employ today and comparative religion, by definition requiring this plural understanding of religion, emerges as a field. While it may not have opened the door to any long-lasting missionary effort for the Dutch in India and beyond, the *Open Door* did participate and shape all of these processes and phenomena, and was crucial in opening the doors to a better European understanding of India and its religious traditions and gradually creating the idea of 'Hinduism' as a religion.

## The Legacy of the Open Door

Let us briefly survey the impact of the *Open Door* in a more tangible and concrete manner. The *Open Door* — largely divorced from its missionary goals — quickly drew much interest and attracted a large readership, leading to German and French translations within less than twenty years of the original's publication.[489] The first of these was the Lutheran scholar Christoph Arnold's 1663 German edition, titled *Abraham Rogers Offne Thür*.[490] Arnold's translation is very faithful to the original Dutch, leaving the structure of the work intact, while incorporating visual aspects to a much greater extent than the original: he highlights the similarity and transmission of idolatry on a global scale, and gives each of the illustrations of the title page its own engraving, along with additional images taken from various sources for other regions.[491] The scholarly discussions of the annotator is the main interest and point of emulation for Arnold, whose own output evinced similar interests: Arnold had published a supplement to Johann Heinrich Ursinus's 1661 work on the life and works of Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, and Sachuniathon the Phoenician, and would go on to translate Alexander Ross's famous *Pansebeia, Or A View of All The Religions in the World* (London 1652), besides publishing

[489] I have detailed the publication history of the *Open Door* in a thorough manner in my edition of the work. For more detail see *Open Door*, 68-80.

[490] See Rogerius, *Abraham Rogers Offne Thür zu dem verborgenen Heydenthum*. See on this publication Ralph Häfner, "Shaping Early Modern Comparitive Studies: The Significance of Christoph Arnold (1627-1685)," in *Patristic Tradition and Intellectual Paradigms in the 17th Century*, ed. Silke-Petra Bergjan and Karla Pollmann (Heidelberg: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 11 and my discussion in *Open Door*, 71-73.

[491] See on this von Wyss-Giacosa, *Religionsbilder*, passim.

German translations of Dutch travel accounts.[492] His own contribution to the work is an additional treatise, an annex to the *Open Door*, which he titled 'additions on numerous heathen religions'.[493] Much like the annotator's footnotes, these are lengthy additions: Arnold's treatise is about the same length as the entire *Open Door*. Importantly, Rogerius's account here is just a source for this endeavour, whilst the annotator's writings, with their comparative, scholarly function, more clearly resemble Arnold's additions. Naturally Arnold cannot supply his own ethnography of India, yet the focus of his treatise very much fits with that of the annotator: Arnold attempts a universalist discussion of religion(s), embedded in an antiquarian analytical frame, widening the analysis to include contemporary religions and practices in Asia, Africa and America, with peoples like the Chinese or Tatars. Arnold displays less affinity for the church fathers than the annotator, and instead illustrates the global extent and similarity of idolatrous practices, but ultimately he was engaged with and promoted the seventeenth-century comparative study of religions, for which the annotator's treatise was an important contribution and perhaps model.[494]

Not long after the German edition, a French translation was published in Amsterdam under the title *La Théâtre de l'idolâtrie, ou la Porte ouverte, pour parvenir à la connoissance du paganisme caché* in 1670.[495] Much like with the German edition, the French translator is an interesting figure in their own right: Thomas La Grue, after forsaking Roman Catholicism, had settled in Amsterdam in 1651 — the year the *Open Door* was published — and then 'converted' a second time when he presented himself to Leiden's Walloon church. He had previously already graduated in Paris at the Arts Faculty with a thesis on philosophy, but enrolled anew at Leiden, where he studied medicine, as well as at the recently established University of Utrecht.[496] La Grue exhibits many similarities with Arnold: like the latter's, La Grue's translation is very faithful to the original, with only the smallest of changes to Rogerius's narrative and the annotator's notes. La Grue evidently shared Arnold's interest, having also translated Ross's *Pansebeia* into French in 1666, just two years before the publication of Arnold's German edition of the same book.[497] While Arnold added his own treatise at the end of his translation,

[492] Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia or, A View of All Religions in the World: With the Severall Church-Governments, from the Creation, to These Times.* (London: Printed by T. C. for John Saywell, 1653); Ross, *Alexander Rossen unterschiedliche Gottesdienste in der gantzen Welt*; Johann Heinrich Ursinus, *De Zoroastre Bactriano, Hermete Trismegisto, Sanchoniathone Phoenicio, eorumque scriptis, & aliis, contra Mosaicae scripturae antiquitatem; exercitationes familiares, quibus Christophori Arnoldi Spicilegium accessit* (Nuremberg: Michael Endter, 1661).

[493] Discussed by Häfner, "Shaping Early Modern Comparitive Studies: The Significance of Christoph Arnold (1627-1685)."

[494] Häfner, 11.

[495] Rogerius, *Théâtre de l'idolâtrie*.

[496] On La Grue see Armand Lods, "Thomas La Grue 1620 – 1680," *Bulletin historique et littéraire (Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français)* 49, no. 6 (1900): 329–334.

[497] Alexander Ross, *Les religions du monde*, trans. Thomas La Grue (Amsterdam: Jean Schipper, 1666). On this see also Alan Charles Kors, *Atheism in France, 1650-1729: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 138f.

expanding on comparative religion, La Grue added excerpts from Athanasius Kircher's popular *China Illustrata* (1667), as well as a six-page extract that is attributed to an unknown Brahman, given to Arnold Heussen, governor of Dutch Coromandel from 1643-1650.[498] The excerpt from Kircher is on 'Les decrets & opinions des Brachmannes' and since the translation differs from that of Dalquié found in the (first) French translation of the same year, it is likely that La Grue translated these roughly twenty pages himself.[499] While Kircher utilises Jesuit findings, his goals are similar to the annotator's in showing the historical-genealogical connections with other known forms of paganism, especially Egypt. While La Grue's supplement thus is quite different to that of Arnold and retains a closer focus on the Indian context, the intellectual horizon within which either translation and the expansions were conceived is very similar. Arnold and La Grue's translations, especially if we see them within the context of their whole opera, show that they, and by extension their intended audience, saw the *Open Door* as a relevant addition to the contemporary discussion on the origins, similarities, and interdependence of pagan religions and as a contribution to the growing field of comparative religious scholarship. This framework was, in large parts, given by the annotator.[500]

The *Open Door* quickly became a popular and plagiarised work, in both the original and its translations. The popular works of Olfert Dapper and Philippus Baldaeus incorporated much of Rogerius's ethnographic account, especially the armchair scholar Dapper.[501] Adam Olearius's 1696 edition of his *Moskowitische und persische Reise* (originally published 1656) also copied Arnolds' translation of Rogerius's Bhartrihari translation.[502] The work was also a major source

[498] Athanasius Kircher, *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae & artis spectaculis, aliarumque rerum memorabilium argumentis illustrata* (Amsterdam: Jakob van Meurs, 1667). On the latter see Jos J.L. Gommans et al., *Dutch Sources on South Asia, c. 1600-1825* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2001), 325 for an overview of the archival sources relating to Heussen.

[499] Compare Rogerius, *Théâtre de l'idolâtrie*, 342–65 and Athanasius Kircher, *La Chine d'Athanase Kirchere de la Compagnie de Jesus, illustrée de plusieurs monuments tant sacrés que profanes, et de quantité de recherchés de la nature & de l'art: ... : Avec un dictionaire chinois & françois, lequel est tres-rare, & qui n'a pas encores paru au jour* (Amsterdam: Janssonius van Waesberghe, 1670), 206–22.

[500] As Häfner already remarks, the footnotes themselves, which comment, contextualise, and culturally translate Rogerius's findings, were the most interesting element for Arnold and his contemporaries. Häfner, "Shaping Early Modern Comparitive Studies: The Significance of Christoph Arnold (1627-1685)," 12. A similar remark is made by Joan-Pau Rubiés, "From Christian Apologetics to Deism," in *God in the Enlightenment*, ed. William J. Bulman and Robert G. Ingram (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 110.

[501] Olfert Dapper, *Asia, of naukeurige beschryving van het rijk des Grooten Mogols, en een groot gedeelte van Indien* (Amsterdam: By Jakob van Meurs, 1672); Philippus Baldaeus, *Naauwkeurige beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel, der zelver aangrenzende ryken, en het machtige eyland Ceylon: Nevens een omstandige en grondigh doorzochte ontdekking en wederlegginge van de afgoderye der Oost-Indische heydenen* (Amsterdam: By Johannes Janssonius van Waasberge, en Johannes van Someren, 1672). See alsoSweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 89–90. See further Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*.

[502] Adam Olearius, *Des welt-berühmten Adami Olearii colligirte und viel vermehrte Reise-Beschreibungen: bestehend in der nach Mußkau und Persien, wie auch Johann Albrechts von Mandelslo Morgenländischen und Jürg. Andersens und Volq. Yversens Orientalischen Reise ; mit angehängter chinesischen Revolution ... ; nebenst beygefügtem Persianischen Rosen-Thal und Baum-Garten ; ... ein Werck voller wunder- und seltzamen Historien und Begebenheiten, so da in Beschreibung frembder Oerther und Länder, und derselben Gewohnheiten, Natur, Leben, Sitten, Geist-Welt- und häußlichen Stand, u.d. gl. vorgestellet worden ...* (Hamburg: Zacharias Herteln & Thomas von Wiering, 1696). See also Amos Leslie Willson, "Rogerius' 'Open

for Johannes Hoornbeeck's 1669 *De conversione Indorum et gentilium*, a sophisticated work of Reformed missiological theory that we encountered in chapter three.[503] As Clare Calisle has most recently argued, there is also a distinct possibility that Baruch Spinoza read the *Open Door* — not unlikely considering Spinoza's place of residence, networks, and the popularity of the book — and that perhaps its contents influenced his own philosophy.[504]

Dutch works thus did use the original publication and brought its information to a wider audience. A greater influence, though, might be discerned in French and English-speaking early Enlightenment contexts through the French translation. François Bernier, the pupil of Gassendi who had stayed at the Mughal court as a physician and subsequently wrote his own account on India, admits he was greatly indebted to Rogerius.[505] Thomas Lennon has shown how John Locke engaged with the *Open Door*'s philosophical comparisons and theorising on the soul, both in general and more specifically regarding the Brahmans' beliefs on the soul found in the annotations. Locke was also interested in Rogerius's depiction of sati alongside that of Bernier, and it might be through his reading of and acquaintance with the Frenchman that Locke came to read the *Open Door*.[506]

The *Open Door* was in this manner increasingly used as a main source on Indian culture and religion, part of a developing canon of ethnographic writings on the subcontinent. This is especially visible in another great work published in the Dutch Republic: Bernard and Picart's *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (Amsterdam 1723-1743). The *Open Door* achieved a great readership by being included in an abridged version in tome 1.2 from 1723.[507] Bernard decided to use a summarised and cut version of La Grue's

Deure' : A Herder Source," *Monatshefte* 48, no. 1 (1956): 20.

[503] Johannes Hoornbeeck, *De conversione Indorum et Gentilium* (Amsterdam: Janssonius van Waesberghe, 1669).

[504] Clare Carlisle, "Spinoza and India: The Question of Influence," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2025, 1–23.

[505] Bernier specifically says, in his 'Lettres à M. Chapelain envoyée de Chiras en Perse' from 1667: 'J'adjoûteray ces mots pour vous faire sçavoir que je ne suis pas moins obligé à Messieurs Henry Lor & Abraham Roger, qu'aux Reverends Peres Kirker & Roa: J'avois compilé cent choses touchant les Gentils que j'ay trouvées dans les Livres de ces Messieurs, & qui m'auroient bien donné de la peine à ranger comme ils les ont fait. Ainsil je me contenteray de vous dire quelque chose en general de leurs estudes & sciences, non pas en bel ordre comme vous pourriez peut-estre esperer, mais de la façon que je l'ay appris, & apparemment comme il est dans leurs Livres, je veux dire par pieces, par morceaux & sans fuite.' François Bernier, *Suite des memoires du Sr Bernier sur l'Empire du grand Mogol* (The Hague: Arnout Leers le fils, 1671), 180. On Bernier in this context see also Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Race, Climate and Civilization in the Works of François Bernier," in *L'Inde Des Lumières : Discours, Histoire, Savoirs (XVIIe-XIXe Siècle)*, ed. Marie Fourcade and Ines G. Županov (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2013), 63, 72.

[506] Thomas M. Lennon, *The Battle of the Gods and Giants: The Legacies of Descartes and Gassendi, 1655-1715* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 323–326; Carey, "The Problem of Sati," 98 and especially Daniel Carey, "John Locke's India. Religion, Revelation, and Enthusiasm," in *Cultural Histories of India: Subaltern Spaces, Peripheral Genres, and Alternate Historiography*, ed. Rita Banerjee, Routledge Studies in South Asian History (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020).

[507] The text may be found in tome 1.2 from 1723, but after Bernard's later reordering of the book series it is listed as tome 6. Bernard Picart et al., *Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, vol. [t. 6]. t. 1. 2. ptie. Dissertations sur les pratiques religieuses des Indiens Orientaux (Amsterdam: Chez J.F. Bernard, 1723). See on this Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism*, 90; Hunt et al., *The Book that Changed Europe*,

translation of the Dutch *Open Deure*, reworked by Antoine-Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière. As I have remarked in my edition, the decision to cut the annotations from this version is peculiar, as Bernard seems to have arranged the texts with an overall strategy of arguing for original monotheism or natural religion among the Brahmans.[508] The version included in the *Cérémonies* was edited, cut, and stripped of its annotations; but beside further popularising the *Open Door*, giving it a longer-lasting legacy, and indirectly also providing an English translation of this edited text, it helped to strengthen this emergent early canon of ethnographic surveys of India: Rogerius appeared beside Henry Lord, Bernier's *Voyages*, whilst not appearing here in print are cited prominently by De La Martinière, and one of Jean Venant Bouchet's letters, part of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* written by French Jesuits working in India, appears in the same part of the *Cérémonies* as the extracts from Lord and Rogerius.[509]

Mathurin Veyssiere de la Croze (1661 - 1739), who translated and incorporated much of Ziegenbalg's unpublished work into his *Histoire du christianisme des Indes* (1724) and thus made it available to a wide readership, had also read the *Open Door* and critically engaged with it.[510] La Croze, like many others, gives praise to Rogerius exactness, yet does bemoan the fact that the latter had not actually read any Indian holy books himself, but instead relied on Padmanabha.[511] As Urs App has shown, La Croze synthesises Ziegenbalg's findings with what he found in many other sources to arrive at a theory of an Oriental Buddhist religion that spans Asia.[512] While La Croze makes no outright mention of the notes, his own theorising often sounds very close to that of the annotator and it is not unlikely that he would have made liberal use of the annotations for his own theories.[513] A scholar making specific reference to the

227. On the section on Indian idolatry in the *Cérémonies* see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Monsieur Picart and the Gentiles of India," in *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion*, ed. Lynn Hunt et al. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 197–214; Rubiés, "From Christian Apologetics to Deism."

[508] Rubiés, "From Christian Apologetics to Deism," 118f. The differences among Indian 'sects' that is so apparent in Rogerius, who does not principally argue for one Indian religion, did in fact create some discursive challenges for Bernard, as remarked by Subrahmanyam, "Monsieur Picart and the Gentiles of India," 202. An inclusion of the notes would have made a straightforward argument for an ontological theological unity much easier, but would, perhaps, have undermined Bernard's role in making the argument.

[509] C.f. Hunt et al., *The Book that Changed Europe*, 227–234. See also Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism* on all of the above.

[510] See Mathurin Veyssiere La Croze, *Histoire Du Christianisme Aux Indes Orientales* (The Hague: Chez les frères Vaillant & N. Prevost, 1724). On La Croze see Sylvia Murr, "Indianisme et militantisme protestant. Veyssière de La Croze et son Histoire du christianisme des Indes," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 18, no. 1 (1986): 303–323; Martin Mulsow, *Die drei Ringe: Toleranz und clandestine Gelehrsamkeit bei Mathurin Veyssière La Croze (1661-1739)* (Walter de Gruyter, 2011). For the use of Ziegenbalg see Sweetman and Ilakkuvan, *Bibliotheca Malabarica*, 25.

[511] La Croze, *Histoire Du Christianisme Aux Indes Orientales*, 444: 'Entre les Auteurs connus qui ont traitté de la Religion des Bramines , personne n'a été plus exacte qu'Abraham Roger, qui en a donné en Hollandes une elpéce de Systéme, traduit depuis en plusiairs Langues, & qu'on a en François sous le nom de Théâtre de l'Idolatrie. Cet Ouvrage a été composé avec soin , quoique l'Auteur qui avoit fait un long séjour à Palîacatte fur la Côte de Goromandel , n'ait pas lû par lui-même les Livres de Religion des Indiens, & qu'il s'en soit raporté, comme il l'avoue, à ce qu'il avoit appris de la bouche d'un Bramine appellé Padmanaba.'

[512] App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, chapter 2.

[513] Of course we can just assert that La Croze, a very erudite scholar, would have read the same sources

scholarship of the annotations is Etienne Fourmont (1683 - 1745) an Orientalist remembered as a pioneering, if plagiarising Sinologist.[514] In his *Réflexions Critiques Sur Les Histoires Des Anciens Peuples* (1735), Fourmont also reflects on the genealogical links of the Brahmans with Egypt, and quotes multiple footnotes of the annotator, completely agreeing with him.[515] The annotator's ideas regarding the history of Brahman idolatry thus remained relevant in the eighteenth century, alongside Rogerius's carefully collected information.

We might observe a similar trend of using the *Open Door* for a combination of scholarly, philosophical, and religious goals in the work of Andrew Michael 'Chevalier' Ramsay (1686 - 1743) and John Zephenia Holwell (1711 - 1798). Unlike for instance Bernier, who famously argues for the quietism found everywhere in the East, Rogerius and especially the annotator promote the notion of an esoteric monotheist Brahmanism that would attract the attention of Ramsay and Holwell. One example is that Ramsay, as so many others, in the posthumously published *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1748-49), is interested in Brahman notions of soul, and quotes Rogerius (*Open Door*, 2.7); while Ramsay makes no mention of the annotations, his own arguments and discussion closely follow the annotator's

as the annotator; but it seems unlikely to me that he would have been swayed at all by the genealogical arguments made by the latter. See for instance: 'Les Malabares, au lieu de Brama, prononcent Birouma, ce qui approche plus du mot Egyptien. Ajoutez à cela, que dans la Langue des Habitans de l'Ile de Ceylan le mot Pirimiia signifie un homme. Il est proposé pour tel dans le premier exemple des Declinaisons de la Grammaire Singaloise, imprimée à Amsterdam l'an 1708. La Religion des Indiens confirme la signification & l'Orîgîne que nous attribuons à ce nom. Isuren, Vistnou, & d'autres Dîvinitez inférieures sont l'objet de leur Culte; mais, ils n'en rendent aucun (a) à Brama, qui n'est honnoré qu'en la personne des Bramines, qui portent son nom, & qui étant plus blancs que les autres Indiens pourroient descendre de ceux qui ont apporté les Superstitions d'Egypt & dans les Indes. L'Osiris des Egyptiens paroît assez marqué dans l'Isuren des Indiens. Ce premier nom se trouve diversement écrit dans les Ouvrages des Anciens. Eusebe au Livre premier de la Préparation Evangelique l'appeile (b) Isiris. Hellanicus, cité par Plutarque dans le Traité d'isis & d'Osiris, dit qu'il l'avoit entendu prononcer (c) Ysiris par les Prêtrès d'Egypte. Cet Osiris étoit le Bacchus des Grecs, sélon le témoignage d'Herodote, (d) & de tous les Auteurs Grecs. Du côtè de la boisson des liqueurs enivrantes que les Indiens ont présentement en horreur, nous ne saurions trouver ici aucune conformité; mais il y en a une autre bien marquée, qui est l'infamie du *Phallus*, commune à l'une à l'autre prétendue Divinité. Je ne traduirai point ce mot, que tous les Savans entendent, & dont l'idée proposée en nôtre Langue saliroit l'imagination. Il me suffit det remarquer, que cette Abomination a été inventu an Egypte, d'où elle fut portée en Grece [...].' La Croze, *Histoire Du Christianisme Aux Indes Orientales*, 429–431. Compare this with *Open Door*, 224-225, note 293.

[514] On Fourmont see Cécile Leung, *Etienne Fourmont, 1683-1745: Oriental and Chinese Languages in Eighteenth-century France* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002).

[515] 'Le Commentateur de la vie des Bramines l'a bien senti. Après avoir rapporté la façon horrible dont on le montroit à Rome & en Grece, la sotise des Syracusains de porter en procession le μυλλος; In sacris Ofiridis & Bacchi, (dit-il) ils portoient en procesion Phallum, pour signifier principium generationis activum. Ils portoient aussi à Syracuse le μυλλον, pour signifier principium generationis passivum. Je tiens aussi (continuë-t-il) que les Brammines signifient les Dieux avec le lingam. Quoi qu'il en soit, on ne peut pas nier que ce qu'ils font là pour Esvvara, ne soit ce que faisoient les Egyptiens pour Osiris. Page 179. le même Commentateur suppose encore, & il a raifon, que les Bramines ont emprunté des anciens Egyptiens, tout ce qu'ils croyoient de Dieu & du service divin, il veut dire, de son culte.' Étienne (1683-1745) Auteur du texte Fourmont, *Réflexions Critiques Sur Les Histoires Des Anciens Peuples, Chaldéens, Hébreux, Phéniciens, Égyptiens, Grecs, Etc., Jusqu'au Tems de Cyrus,... Par M. Fourmont l'aîné,.... Tome 1* (Paris: Musier père, 1735), 148.

sources and points.[516] While Holwell, working a century and more after the publication of the *Open Door*, was still very much interested in notions of dispersion, ancient wisdom, and the relationship between Indian religion and Christianity, he saw India as the original and oldest place whence knowledge was transmitted to the rest of the globe. While Rogerius's ethnographic information was still very much useful — and perhaps the annotations could still yield interesting sources — as the focus increasingly shifted towards the antiquity of India, theories about the Egyptian origins of Indian religion as we might find them in the annotator's treatise or in Athanasius Kircher became less relevant. Increasingly 'India' also was conceptualised as a specific, demarcated place, and 'Hinduism' (or Gentooism) as the religion of its people, at a time when serious linguistic study of Indian texts under luminaries such as Charles Wilkins and William Jones began to establish a foundation for what would become Indology. While we might detect many overlaps between the philosophical-religious ideas of Wilkins and Jones and the annotator, their methodology and knowledge of texts meant that investigations such as the annotations were merely the ignorant attempts of former times.

With the establishment of the field of Indology, the detailed and factual account of Rogerius, lacking much of the judgement of other earlier and later ethnographies, remained popular - whilst the annotations increasingly came to be seen as antiquarian and outdated. Interest in the *Open Door* remained unabated also in the nineteenth century, and the young field of Indology looked to the work as a reference point for seventeenth-century South Indian Hinduism. Burnell's and Caland's interest in the *Open Door* is thus not surprising, and within an Indological context the *Open Door* remained an important frame of reference past the turn of the century, leading to Caland's critical edition of 1915.[517] While Caland's edition was the death knell for any recognition of the role of the notes in subsequent scholarship, this short overview of the legacy of the *Open Door* already illustrates to what degree Enlightenment thinkers could and did make use of not only Rogerius's ethnographic findings, but also the erudite discussions and comparisons of the annotator. A more thorough investigation would be necessary to uncover the extent to which the annotations and Rogerius's text were used in concert in the period of 1651-1750, but it would be a mistake to, once again, dismiss the importance of the annotations and their role in making the *Open Door* a work of both ethnography as well as ethnology, in which form it was read for at least a century.

[516] Compare *Open Door*, 245-248 with Andrew Michael Ramsay, *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, Unfolded in a Geometrical Order*, 2 vols. (Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1748–49), volume 2, 356f. See on this topic App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, 254–362. On Holwell and Ramsay's use of the *Open Door* see App, 294, 330, 334, 351. On these authors and the construction of Hinduism see also Jessica Patterson, *Religion, Enlightenment and Empire: British Interpretations of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[517] See on this Willem Caland, "De ontdekkingsgeschiedenis van den Veda," *Verslagen en mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen Afdeeling Letterkunde* 5, no. 3 (1918): 261–334.

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# ANNEX

## Letter From Abraham Rogerius to the Heeren XVII, 18 December 1643

Honourable, solemnm, wise, providential Sirs, The Lords Seventeen.

Dear Sirs,

Not only the inclination, but also the opportunity have driven me to investigate the pagans' religion and matters relating to their false worship, and since the opportunity came my way through the familial friendship and exchange with a certain Brahman [Padmanabha], so it occurred that I took up the research on many matters relating to paganism, and my passion and inclination have therein found an outlet. But with the insight that I may do services with this in the evenings and mornings, I continued this work until 4 October 1642, at which time I left Pulicat, having been called by the [governor] general to Batavia to take charge of the Portuguese service besides the Dutch. Seeing that at Batavia I had been cut off from my opportunity entirely, and could not longer further the work, I considered it beneficial to bring to light something regarding this material.

The material I have chosen for this concerns the life and dealings of the Brahmans. This treatise I send to your Excellencies, among the papers of the honourable [governor] general, to whom I made it available with this purpose, and seek in this manner that it will please your Excellencies to make this common through print; provided that I trust that this aforementioned treatise shall be judged worthy, the effect of which will be that when the opportunity arises, it will further demonstrate our willingness to serve others in discovering the foolish pagan errors.

Besides the pastoral letter, this year some psalms which have been translated by me into Portuguese for the Portuguese congregation in these Indies are addressed to the classis of Walcheren; here in Batatvia, following the consent of the synod and approval of the [governor]

general, these are sung in the churches, and to this end I have also sent a copy to Malacca, just as shall also happen for Pulicat, which is the congregation that I served for ten years. I trust that your Excellencies will promote to have them printed with the former.

[To describe] the state and circumstance of the church is not necessary to describe to your Excellencies, considering that the very same is done thoroughly in the pastoral missive. As such, I shall let the matter rest. May God the Lord take you in his care and protection. Actum Batavia, 18 December 1643. The undersigned: your dutiful servant in Christ; signed: Abraham Rogerius.

Aghtbare erntfeste, wijse, voorsienige heeren, de heeren Seventiene.

Mijn heeren,

Niet alleen de genegentheyt, maar oock de gelegentheyt heeft mij bewogen om ondersoeck te doen na der heydenen religie en saecken, die haren valschen godtsdienst betreffen, ende nadien mij die gelegentheyt voorquam door de familiare vrintschap en ommegangh met een seeckere Bramine, soo is 't, dat ick ter hant hebbe genomen vele saecken het heydendom betreffende te ondersoecken, ende mijne lust en genegentheyt heb nu daarin geboet. Dogh met insight, dat ick t'avont of morgen daarmede dienst magh doen, en hebbe in dit werck gecontinueert tot den 4 October '42, terwelcker tijt dat ick van Paliacatte gescheyden ben, door de heer Generaal na Batavia sijnde geroepen om den Portugeschen dienst aldaar nevens den Nederduytschen te bedienen. Dogh vermits dat mij op Batavia de gelegentheyt gantsch was afgesneden en niet meer en konde in dat werck vorderen, soo heeft het mij goetgedagt iets aengaende die materie voor den dagh te brengen.

De materie die ick daartoe verkosen hebbe, is van het leven en den ommeganck der Bramines. Dit tractaet sende ick over aan U Ed. Agtb. onder de papieren van d'Ed. heer Generaal, aan wien het tot dien eynde ter hant gestelt hebbe, en versoeck mits desen, dat het U Ed. Agtb. gelieven door den druck gemeen te maecken, mits dat vertrouw, dat dit gemelte tractaat des weerdigh geoordeelt sal worden, hetwelck effect sorterende, sullen bij gelegentheyt nogh verder onse genegentheyt om andere te dienen betonen in 't ontdecken der dwase heydensche dwalingen.

Desen jaere komen oock over aan de classe van Walcheren, nevens den kerckelijcken brief, eenige Psalmen, welcke door mij in 't Portugeesch tot dienst der Portugesche gemeynte in dit Indien gestelt zijn; hier op Batavia werden deselve volgens goetvinden van den kerekenraat en approbatie van de heer Generaal in de kercken voorgesongen, en tot dien eynde hebbe oock een copie na Malacca gesonden, gelijck oock na Paleacatte geschieden sal, welck de gemeynte

is, die ick omtrent de tien jaer bedient hebbe; vertrouwe dat Uw Aghtb. suit bevorderen, dat se met den eersten gedruckt werden.

Den staet en gelegentheyt der kercke en is niet noodigh, dat ick aan Uw Aghtb. schrijve, dewijl datselve wijtlopigh in de kerckelijcke missive geschiet, dierhalven soo laete dit berusten; Godt de Heere neme Uw Aghtb. in Sijne bescherminge en opsight. Actum Batavia den 18 December 1643. Onderstont: Uwen dienstbereyden dienaar in Christo; was geteeckent: Abrahamus Rogerius.