



Orient BlackSwan

Other Orientalisms

India between Florence and Bombay,
1860-1900

Filipa Lowndes Vicente



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Translated from the Portuguese
by
Stewart Lloyd-Jones



Orient BlackSwan

ORIENT BLACKSWAN PRIVATE LIMITED

Registered Office

3-6-752 Himayatnagar, Hyderabad 500 029 (A.P.), India
E-mail: centraloffice@orientblackswan.com

Other Offices

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For my mother Ana and for my daughters Maria and Madalena

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Introduction: The Histories of a Photograph, Bombay 1885

ON 13 DECEMBER 1885, the prestigious Italian weekly newspaper *L'Illustrazione Italiana* dedicated half a page to a sketch based on a photograph received from Bombay (Figure I.1).¹ According to the caption, the image was of 'professor Angelo de Gubernatis with the Brahmans of Bombay'. The three Brahmans—Gerson da Cunha, Shyamaji Krishnavarma and Bhagwanlal Indraji—were identified, despite the orthography of the two Indian names not having survived the trip to Europe. Although their names were understandable, they were both misspelled. There was a short text that explained the meaning of an image that, on its own, would have been difficult for the majority of the newspaper's readers to understand. The renowned linguist and Indologist Angelo de Gubernatis, professor of Sanskrit and Indian literature in Florence—who was at that moment travelling through India studying the customs, languages, myths and religious traditions of that 'mysterious and interesting people'—had been made a Brahman (Figure I.2).

The photograph, which had been taken at the studio of a Bombay Parsi on 10 October 1885—two months before its publication in the newspaper—was the coda to a religious ceremony in which the Sanskrit-speaking pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji (1839–88) initiated his European colleague as a Brahman in recognition of his profound knowledge of the Hindu religion.² As one cannot convert to Hinduism, and can only be a Brahman if one is born into the caste, the ceremony was one of purification. Although Gubernatis does not mention a specific name to designate the ritual, it might have been a ceremony of *upanayana* (initiation), because its central gesture was the investiture of the sacred thread. The initiation rituals carried out by the Brahman pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji meant that Gubernatis could be in contact with the sacred—the main objective of his voyage to India—with more legitimacy. The rituals worked mainly as a symbolic

¹ Another version of this introduction, titled 'The History of a Photograph: Cultural Encounters and Dialogues between India and Italy (1885)', is forthcoming in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, 2–3 (Brill, 2012). 'De Gubernatis Brahmino', *L'Illustrazione Italiana* 12, 50 (13 December 1885), pp. 378–80.

² Angelo de Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane: India Centrale* vol. I (Florence: Editrice di L. Niccolai, 1886), p. 91.



Figure 1.1 Group portrait of José Gerson da Cunha, Angelo de Gubernatis (seated, from left to right), Shyamaji Krishnavarma and Bhagwanlal Indraji (standing), 1885. Lithograph. *L'illustrazione Italiana*, 50, 13 December 1885.



Figure 1.2 Angelo de Gubernatis, c. 1886. Photograph (Fototipia Bruckmaun, Munich).

transformation process. The idea of being photographed with Bhagwanlal Indraji and Gerson da Cunha while dressed as a Brahman came after they had witnessed a Hindu cremation and visited a Jain temple in Bombay. According to Gubernatis, it was Bhagwanlal who offered to transform what had been the simple act of dressing as a Hindu Brahman into an actual religious initiation ceremony in which Gubernatis was presented with the sacred thread of the Brahman.³

A few days after the photograph was taken, Gubernatis was honoured by and elected to the membership of one of the most important learned institutes in British India—the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain—where there were only three European specialists on India. However, this was not enough for Gubernatis. It was in Italy that he wanted to affirm his scientific authority and his status as a cosmopolitan intellectual who was able to move as an intermediary between the new Italian nation he helped unite, and the rest of the world.

Committed to a strategy of self-promotion and social climbing, Gubernatis took full advantage of modern developments in the reproduction and circulation of images and texts that allowed him to increase the public resonance of his time in India. The image was displayed in different contexts: to the readers of the popular newspaper *L'illustrazione Italiana*, which in 1885 was full of images of the Eritrean cities of Massawa and Assab, Italy's first attempts at establishing colonies in Africa; but it was also acknowledged by those who, without having seen the image, had read a description of the Hindu ceremony and of the photograph taken afterwards.

In Calcutta, the musician Pramod Kumar Tagore, son of Sourindro Mohun Tagore, the founder of the Bengal Academy of Music, read Gubernatis's description of the ceremony in the *Bombay Gazette* with great interest, and stated that he was 'proud to see your devotion to our dear India'.⁴ The echoes of the purification ceremony, which Gubernatis described as a Brahman investiture, also reached Rio de Janeiro. The emperor of Brazil Pedro II wrote to Gubernatis in Italian to ask him to send one of the photographs 'in which he is pictured with Bhagwanlal and Gerson da Cunha'. The emperor also regretted not having anything to send Gubernatis in return, since the study of Sanskrit in Brazil was little more than a curiosity for some specialists.⁵ As far as we are aware, the only

³ Central National Library of Florence (BNCF), Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], p. 86.

⁴ BNCF, Manuscript, Correspondence Angelo de Gubernatis, Box 154, letter from Pramod Kumar Tagore (Pathuria Ghata Raj Bati, Calcutta, 18 November 1886).

⁵ BNCF, Manuscript, Correspondence Angelo de Gubernatis, Box 154, letter from Pedro d'Alcântara (Rio de Janeiro, 5 October 1886).

negative reaction to the image emerged in relation to the context in which it was presented in *L'Illustrazione Italiana*. And this reaction came from one of the men portrayed, José Gerson da Cunha (Figure 1.3).

Cunha, a Goan doctor and intellectual living in Bombay, was the only Indian to take part in the Fourth International Congress of Orientalists in Florence in 1878, which is where he first met Gubernatis. Given an Orient of uncertain boundaries that changed at the whim of the political and personal interests of those organising the conferences, the lectures on India along with the oriental exhibition that took place simultaneously in one of the Medici palaces were the highlights of the Florentine conference. It was the beginning of an intense friendship between the two men, a friendship of intellectual complicities and demonstrations of mutual admiration. After seven years of correspondence between Florence and Bombay, the two finally met again in 1885 on Indian soil. Gerson da Cunha was able to repay his friend's hospitality by acting as his intermediary and guide in Bombay, presenting him to his wide circle of friends and scholars, accompanying him on ethnographic and archaeological trips, introducing him to the multi-religious world within the city and helping him collect exhibits for the Indian museum Gubernatis intended to establish upon his return to Florence.

However, emerging from this meeting in India that both men had so desired were some misunderstandings that were brought into the open when Gubernatis, on his return to Italy, wrote to Gerson da Cunha saying everything he did not say while the Italian was in India.⁶ In his rather angry reply, Gerson da Cunha was also accusatory, asking Gubernatis, 'did you ask me for permission to call me a gentile in the *Illustrazione Italiana*?'⁷ It was clear that Gerson da Cunha did not like being described in the caption to that photograph as one of the 'Bombay Brahmans'. Despite the report accompanying the image, which stated that Gerson da Cunha was a 'Christian Brahman from Goa' who had already visited Italy to take part in a conference of orientalists, and despite the inclusion of his title of doctor—which identified him as a surgeon—the photograph's caption, which was more obvious and closer to the picture, made no mention of him being a Christian. The word 'gentile' was entirely absent. However, Gerson da Cunha knew that most people believed being a Brahman meant being a Hindu and not a Christian, which in turn meant being a 'heathen'. In the

⁶ Only the letter Gerson da Cunha wrote in response to Gubernatis's letter could be found. As the other side of this correspondence is untraceable—the letters written by Gubernatis to Gerson da Cunha—we can only assume Gubernatis's accusations by reading Cunha's reply.

⁷ BNCF, Manuscript, Correspondence Angelo de Gubernatis, letter from José Gerson da Cunha, 44 (39 Hornby Road, Bombay, 13 July 1886).



Figure 1.3 José Gerson da Cunha, 1878. Carte-de-visite photograph (Lorenzo Suscipj, Rome).

context of his Goan Catholic upbringing, this was considered offensive. What was it that had offended Gerson da Cunha? Was it seeing himself represented in a way he did not identify with, or was it the possibility that others—in this case 'Europeans' and 'Catholics'—would see him as other than what he was? Who were the observers with whom Gerson da Cunha was so concerned? Was it the Italians he had chosen as his European interlocutors and who had witnessed him being congratulated for being a good Christian by the Pope? Or was it the Goans who, both in Goa and in Bombay, had been surprised to see a Catholic dressed as a Hindu Brahman in an apparently serious photograph?

What is more surprising, however, is that one year before the two men fell out, and a short time after the photograph was taken, Gerson da Cunha wrote to Gubernatis, who was still travelling through India at the time, informing him of

the arrival of 'two photographs of a group of gentiles' that was his 'share of the photographic enterprise'.⁸ In this letter to his friend, in a context that lent itself to both intimacy and irony, Gerson da Cunha was able to joke about the 'group of gentiles', of which he was one, as if it had been a deliberate performance by a group of men united by bonds of friendship and erudition, seemingly in an attempt to surmount religious, national and ethnic differences. However, once the reproduction of the photograph appeared in the Italian newspaper, Gerson da Cunha became aware that his identity could be perceived in another way: as one of the three Indians, apparently Hindus, who served to contextualise Angelo de Gubernatis in the location from which the photograph was sent. In a large-circulation Italian newspaper, Gerson da Cunha became a part of what could be perceived as a group of exotic wise men from a faraway land, a sort of visual prop legitimising the knowledge of Italy's illustrious Indian specialist. His Indianness was reinforced, while the elements of his European identity, his Goan culture, his mother tongue, his Catholic religion and education became almost invisible. Gerson da Cunha's reaction to the possible interpretations of the publicly exhibited image reveals how the making of the photograph was unable to pacify the conflicts that were present in its planning.

Thus, the image, its caption and the accompanying text might suggest to us notions of hybridism and ethnic and religious syncretism, or of an ideal meeting of nations, races and religions, as proclaimed in the inaugural speeches of the congresses and exhibitions that proliferated during the second half of the nineteenth century, including those in which Gubernatis and Gerson da Cunha took part. However, the texts that describe the preparations for the photograph reveal the more or less hidden conflicts among those being photographed, as well as among those not being photographed. As we shall see, the photograph was the result of a series of negotiations concerning who would and who would not be photographed.

Gubernatis and Bhagwanlal Indraji were the only two in the photograph who were present throughout the process, during both the planning and the capture of the image. Before his arrival in India, Gubernatis had heard of this 'learned and holy Brahman' who was a specialist in Sanskrit, epigraphy and numismatics. He also knew that Bhagwanlal had used his skills and knowledge to collaborate with British, German and Dutch scholars, and that the University of Leiden had listed him as one of its professors.⁹ In Bombay, Bhagwanlal Indraji became one of Gubernatis's closest aides and his main contact with sacred

⁸ BNCF, Manuscript, Correspondence Angelo de Gubernatis, letter from José Gerson da Cunha (39 Hornby Road, Bombay, 5 November 1885).

⁹ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 60.

India. It was Bhagwanlal who, at the beginning of October, a short time after Gubernatis's arrival in India, accompanied him when he ordered 'Brahman robes' much like the ones he wore.¹⁰ Suggestions for other people to be present in the photograph were made while Gubernatis waited for his robes to be ready: first, one Çanta-Râm Narâyana, a Brahman lawyer whom Gubernatis knew from Gerson da Cunha's literary salon: His pregnant daughter, who had recited the *Shakuntala* in Gubernatis's honour, 'would also be photographed with me, dressed in Brahman robes'.¹¹ When Gerson da Cunha's wife, Ana Rita, heard that another woman might be joining them, she too expressed an interest in being photographed in Brahman robes.¹² However, according to Gubernatis, the problems began just when 'everything was almost ready for our appearance in front of the camera'.

Once her initial enthusiasm had waned, Gerson da Cunha's wife came to regret her decision, and decided that she no longer wished to be photographed. Nor did she want her husband to be photographed. In the privacy of his unpublished travel journal, Gubernatis wrote that it was probable that her priest had forbidden her from being photographed with 'Indians'.¹³ However, in Gubernatis's published account of the journey, this change of mind was no longer 'blamed' on a single priest, but rather on Catholicism in general and a fear of the reception the photograph would receive in Goa.¹⁴ Ana Rita argued that the image of three Catholics—herself, her husband and Gubernatis—dressed as Brahmans would be a source of laughter for her Goan family. The problem was not so much with Catholics being photographed dressed as Brahmans for a 'bit of fun'; the problem was being photographed with actual Brahmans. When the argument was presented in this way, Gerson da Cunha also had a change of heart and decided not to be photographed with the Italian and the Indians. He apparently did so for religious reasons; however, according to Gubernatis the real reason was the enormous influence his wife had over the doctor. Gubernatis had difficulty understanding this incompatibility: both Gerson da Cunha and his wife were of 'ancient Brahman blood', and Gubernatis thought they could recognise their caste without offending their Catholic religion.

¹⁰ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], p. 77.

¹¹ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], p. 74v.

¹² BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], pp. 90v–91.

¹³ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], pp. 90v–91.

¹⁴ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 87.

Gerson da Cunha suggested taking another photograph, this time including only Catholics; however, Gubernatis refused to take part in a representation determined by religion. He had not travelled to India to be photographed with Catholics.

In the account of this episode published in his book *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, Gubernatis expressed his profound disagreement with 'Mrs da Cunha': there was nothing light-hearted about the photograph; Brahman robes were sacred and it was with a sense of pride that he would be pictured alongside 'real Indians' of that rank. Ana Rita's 'problem', as Gubernatis expressed it in his private diary, was that she wanted to 'pass for a European'.¹⁵ Gubernatis had obvious difficulty in dealing with someone he believed to be hybrid, an attitude similar to that of Isabel Burton, wife of the famous traveller and writer Richard Burton, when living among the Goan elite.¹⁶ Both Isabel Burton and Gubernatis were prepared to witness and to accept India's differences. But when they recognised in 'Indians' the dress, gestures and traditions of Europe—as Isabel Burton saw among the Goan Catholic elites in Panjim, and Gubernatis saw in Gerson da Cunha's wife in Bombay—they struggled to cope with the similarities embedded in the category of ethnic difference. As they searched for a 'true' Indianness, the discovery of 'others' who were 'like them' or 'similar to them' could unsettle their most deeply rooted expectations.

His dislike of Gerson da Cunha's wife led Gubernatis to blame her for other things: by withdrawing from the photograph, she also caused the other woman who was to be photographed—the daughter of Gerson da Cunha's friend, the Hindu lawyer—to be excluded.¹⁷ Since the photograph was going to place Catholics and Hindus side by side, Mrs da Cunha claimed they should all be 'learned'. Despite being one of only 500 women in all of India able to recite the *Shakuntala*, according to her proud father the Hindu lawyer, his daughter's gender and her evident pregnancy excluded her from the 'learned' category. This led Gubernatis to write, in his diary, that the only truly learned man of the projected photograph was Bhagwanlal Indraji.¹⁸

While the photograph says nothing in relation to questions of gender—the women are not present and their absence is not even noted—Gubernatis's

¹⁵ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], pp. 90v–91.

¹⁶ Isabel Burton, *AEI: Arabia, Egypt, India—A Narrative of Travel* (London and Belfast: William Mullin and Son, 1879), pp. 302–5.

¹⁷ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], p. 99.

¹⁸ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], p. 99.

papers reveal that the women were involved in negotiations over who should be in the group. Gender was not necessarily a factor when dealing with religion—Catholic or Hindu—or caste. But once 'knowledge' became a criterion, women were excluded from the photograph, even if this exclusion was, according to Gubernatis, the result of a decision taken by another woman. Thus, we see how the categories of inclusion in or exclusion from the photograph were altered: the texts show how matters of gender, religion, caste and race were involved, and how it was finally a vague notion of erudition that dominated. 'We will see how this farce ends', Gubernatis lamented, expressing his impotence to alter the unexpected consequences of his decision to be photographed in Brahman robes.

The fourth person in the photograph is Shyamaji Krishnavarma (Mandvi, Kutch, 1857–Geneva, 1930), who just happened to be in Gerson da Cunha's home the day before the photograph was taken. As well as being both a Hindu and a Brahman, Krishnavarma was also erudite.¹⁹ Gubernatis had met him in 1881 at the International Congress of Orientalists in Berlin, which Krishnavarma had attended as an expert in Vedic philosophy and religion. His friendship with Gerson da Cunha was older. In 1879, when he was young and promising—and practically unknown—Krishnavarma was Gerson da Cunha's private secretary and Sanskrit teacher.²⁰ When Krishnavarma received an invitation to teach at Oxford as an assistant to the renowned Sanskrit expert Professor Sir Monier-Williams, Gerson da Cunha, as a 'humble servant in the regeneration of my unhappy country', loaned him money for the voyage to Britain as a 'small material contribution towards the progress of this land'.²¹ By the time of the

¹⁹ Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: Four Hundred Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 150–52; Indulal Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* (Bombay: Lakshmi, 1950).

²⁰ Krishnavarma taught Gerson da Cunha Sanskrit during the first half of 1878. The high regard in which Cunha held his tutor is evident in his letter of recommendation, in which he wrote, 'I have never yet met with a *Pandit* so deeply versed in the intricacies of the Sanskrit grammar as Professor Shyamaji. . . . His conduct has been, all the time I have known him, that of a gentleman, and being yet very young with his learning and upright behaviour, there is no doubt that he has a splendid career before him. I take an affectionate interest in his welfare, and his success in life will please me as much as a host of his influential friends who are to be found in every town and city of western India (31 July 1878)' (Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma*, p. 27).

²¹ According to Gerson da Cunha's account, which Gubernatis also recounts, Krishnavarma came to Gerson da Cunha's home in tears. Monier-Williams had offered him a room and board at Oxford in exchange for lessons; however, the young man did not have the money to pay for the voyage. According to Krishnavarma's biographer, he had established a good relationship with Gerson da Cunha: 'This good doctor readily stood by him at a most critical moment of his life.' After Krishnavarma had exhausted all other avenues—individuals, organisations and institutes—in the hope of raising funds to cover the cost

photograph in 1885, Krishnavarma, who had only recently returned from Britain, no longer needed to make a living by classifying Gerson da Cunha's Indian coin collection. He had taken advantage of his time in Britain to study law at Balliol College, where he became the first Indian to be awarded an MA from Oxford. His passage through the imperial metropole meant a change of position when he returned to India. By 1884, he was in India practising as a lawyer in the court in Bombay, where he lived with his wife, the daughter of a rich Bombay merchant.²² Krishnavarma was appointed advisor to the minister for Ratlam, before going back to Britain in 1897. He remained in Europe until his death in 1930 in Geneva. The knowledge of Sanskrit was thus a unifying element between the four men, although Indrajī was more interested in religious practice, Krishnavarma and Gubernatis were more dedicated to Hindu literature and culture, and Gerson da Cunha's interests were more historical and archaeological.

When the day of the photo shoot finally arrived, Gubernatis transformed himself into his own ethnographic object. From his entrance into the photographic studio, until the moment Bhagwanlal tied the sacred thread around his chest and placed the mark on his forehead, identifying it as a *lakshana* (sign) and joyfully exclaiming, 'here is a true Brahman!' Gubernatis was both a protagonist and an observer of the ritual.²³ Readers of the popular Florentine newspaper *La Nazione* were able to read the news of this ceremony before it appeared in *L'Illustrazione Italiana*.²⁴ In the leading newspaper of his adopted city, Gubernatis wrote a small piece about the process of 'going native' embodied in the investiture and purification ceremony, and how he became an equal of the Indians in order to better study them. He said, 'one of these learned Brahmans, recognising me as a Brahman like them, following sacred rites placed upon me the sacred thread that identifies me as a true Indian *pandita*. Thus, by living amongst them, I study them and observe in detail everything that interests me about this religious life.'

of his ticket to Europe, it was Gerson da Cunha and his wife who helped him. 'When all appeared to have been lost, Shyamaji once again fell back on the most intimate relation of his life. He borrowed some money from his wife, who, as ever afterwards, stood faithfully by his side. More, he borrowed from Dr and Mrs de Cunha' (Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma*, pp. 27, 34–35); BNCF, Manuscript, Correspondence Angelo de Gubernatis, letter from José Gerson da Cunha, 16 (Hornby Road, Bombay, 17 March 1879); Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, pp. 87–88.

²² Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma*, p. 7.

²³ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 89.

²⁴ Angelo de Gubernatis, 'Un Italiano in India: Bombay, 14 Ottobre', *La Nazione* (6 November 1885), p. 2.

In his intimate description of the ceremony, Gubernatis revealed his religious ambivalence and the way in which, without abandoning Christianity, he accepted his new status as a Brahman and 'honoured Brahma' as he did 'Christ'.²⁵ However, in the published description of the ceremony, Gubernatis felt the need to be much more assertive in his Christianity for his readers. He was born a Christian and he would die a Christian; however, he justified his participation in the ceremony by claiming that the possibility of being made a Brahman by someone of Bhagwanlal's stature was an enormous honour for an Italian scholar who so admired India.²⁶ He also stressed the importance of the ceremony: that which others may view as a meaningless event was, for him, a solemn blessing that announced his pilgrimage through India's holy places.

However, if in his papers Gubernatis described in minute detail all of Bhagwanlal's gestures and orations before the photograph was taken, the image itself bore no trace of the action that preceded it. It could be considered a classic group portrait in which everyone was posing. Photographic studios normally had a room in which those being photographed prepared for the shot. The idea of transformation inherent in these spaces took shape on this occasion through a Hindu religious ritual, specifically the Vedic rite of *brahmatva*, which 'transformed' Gubernatis into a Brahman, thus preparing him for his religious exploration throughout India. Both events—the ceremony and the photograph that resulted from it—marked the transition between Bombay, a kind of initiatory antechamber, and another India where he could assume his role of a 'pilgrim of science'.

Both literally and metaphorically, Bhagwanlal removed Gubernatis's European clothes and slowly and delicately dressed him in his new Indian robes and bestowed him with the sacred thread.²⁷ By tradition, it was forbidden for a man to study the Vedas and the sacred rituals (only men were permitted to do so) without first having received the sacred thread, which is worn under the clothes and next to the skin. By being presented with the sacred thread, Gubernatis was recognised as an expert in the Hindu faith, and it also gave him more legitimacy in accessing holy places and religious leaders and acquiring religious objects for the museum he intended to establish in Florence. When, during his journey through India, the Brahmans of a temple told him he could not purchase a pumpkin in the shape of an idol, Gubernatis opened his shirt and showed them his sacred thread. They relented immediately and, in addition to

²⁵ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], pp. 101v–102v.

²⁶ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

the pumpkin, they gave him sandals, a small bird, a paper fan and some rupees for his museum.²⁸

As Gubernatis himself witnessed during his travels, a Christian dressed as a Brahman, or disguised as one, was not unusual. At the Jesuit church in Madurai he noticed the portraits of two Italian missionaries dressed as Brahmans (sannyasis), one of whom was Roberto Nobili.²⁹ In a paper he wrote some years later, Gerson da Cunha recalled how Nobili was forced to justify to the synod in Goa in 1618 the strategies used in the conversion of Hindus.³⁰ In the paper, the historian directed the reader towards an engraving in the National Library of New Goa, which showed Nobili dressed in Brahman robes, and described the image as an example of Hinduism's influence among those Christians who were involved in transmitting European beliefs to the native population of India.

It is most likely that this engraving was based on the paintings Gubernatis saw in the church in Madurai, which were, in turn, copies of originals in Rome, where they had been painted by local artists. Gubernatis deeply regretted not having a camera with which 'to take with him these two portraits that would be a worthy decoration for the Indian museum of Florence'.³¹ With photographs of these paintings, Gubernatis would have taken back to Florence proof of religious syncretism, while also legitimating his own gesture in dressing as a Brahman before the Italian public. If missionaries could do it, then he, a missionary of science and of knowledge, could also do it.

When in 1886 Gubernatis finally opened the Indian Museum in Florence with the items he had collected in India, all of the elements that were used in the religious ceremony that preceded the taking of the photograph were displayed in a glass case alongside other relics and Hindu, Christian and Muslim items. An entry in the museum's catalogue identified the 'complete set of Brahman robes, including turban, sacred thread and *uttariya* worn by an Italian *pandita* on the day of his investiture in Bombay',³² while another described the 'threads and

²⁸ Angelo de Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane: India Meridionale e Seilan* vol. II (Florence: Editrice di L. Niccolai, 1887), pp. 74–75.

²⁹ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. II, pp. 263–64.

³⁰ Gerson da Cunha, *The Konkani Language and Literature* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1881), p. 38. For an analysis of the conversion rites practised by the Jesuits in India, and for the case of Nobili, a Christian who, like Gubernatis, immersed himself—although for different reasons—in Hindu religious rites, see I. G. Županov, *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³¹ The only similar image in the Indian Museum was a photograph of Tyrrell Leith dressed as a Muslim. *Catalogo del Museo Indiano Sotto L'Alto Patronato di S. M. Il Re d'Italia nel R. Istituto di Studi Superiori* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1887), pp. 56, 68–69, 71 and 88.

³² An *uttariya* is a piece of cloth usually made of cotton, which is commonly used as a scarf on the upper part of the body.

sandalwood used during the consecration of a new Brahman in Bombay on 10 October 1885'.³³ The catalogue entry made no mention of Gubernatis, nor did it need to, since the whole museum was somehow connected with his voyage.

The many texts concerning the photograph—handwritten and printed travel diaries, newspaper articles, correspondence and museum catalogues—all underline the need to view this image in the context of its production, circulation and reception. Usually, it is easier to trace the different public responses to the same image than the different attitudes of those involved in the production of a photograph. However, the story of this photograph calls into question the idea that the multiplicity of meanings derives solely from the reading of an image. It demonstrates, instead, how unstable meanings can also be present in the context of the making of a photograph and the intentions of the people who were involved in it. This does not imply that we are stepping back from the image, or subsuming it within a hierarchy dominated by the written discourse. Rather, we argue for the need to approach the image as an object that is inscribed in a history, and not as an illustration of a text, or as a different way of saying the same thing. Text and image are interconnected, but one is not a mirror of the other: they must be studied together, but without the methodological limitations that can hinder the grasping of their relationships and commonalities.

In the absence of access to the original photograph, we can only analyse the printed sketch made from it, which is a reproduction of a reproduction. However, while the absence of the original photograph can be viewed as a limitation, it can also be interpreted as an important historical fact revealing the reproductive power the image assumed during this period, and the increasing speed of this process. A photograph taken in Bombay was transported by sea to Milan, where it was reproduced in the form of a drawing by an employee of a newspaper, which then printed and exposed it, two months later, to the gaze of a mainly Italian readership.

Let us now look at the image (Figure I.1). In painting as much as in photography, occupation of the central position in a bi-dimensional space has always been one of the most obvious ways of attributing the role of the protagonist. In this photograph, Gubernatis is clearly the protagonist. Among the other three people in the photograph, all of whom are Indian, there is a clear hierarchy between Gerson da Cunha and the other two. However, we cannot argue that this is due to any colonial or ethnic hierarchy, because it was normal for the protagonist to occupy the position of prominence and to have his closest friends at his side. The division between the seated Catholics and the

³³ *Catalogo del Museo Indiano*, pp. 74–77.

Hindus standing behind them can be explained by the closer links of friendship between the protagonist and Gerson da Cunha.

While it was yet unclear who would be in the photograph, Gubernatis made it clear that Bhagwanlal Indrajī was the only one who had to be in it. However, Bhagwanlal's position in the photographic composition is much more peripheral than that of Gerson da Cunha. We also know from Gubernatis's description that Bhagwanlal was photographed holding a book, the only object in the photograph and, not incidentally, one which identified him as a learned man. However, in the image that was reproduced in the newspaper, the book disappeared under the blank area in which the sketch artist signed his name.³⁴ Is it possible that the photograph deteriorated during the voyage from India to Italy? Or did the sketch artist simply eliminate the only prop that referred to the erudite identity of those being photographed, merely to give better prominence to his name? While at this time books were commonplace in photographic compositions, and were even used by those who could not read, the book being held by Bhagwanlal was not an accidental choice. It reinforced his status as the oldest and most knowledgeable expert in Sanskrit—the master that Gubernatis wanted to be present in order to legitimise his own status.

Upright and looking away from the camera, Bhagwanlal seems to be the least comfortable with the photographic pose. His demeanour is in stark contrast to that of Gubernatis, who is looking directly at the viewer, and of Gerson da Cunha who, striking the pose of a thinker (or maybe showing the ring that proved his status), is occupying as much—if not more—space than the protagonist, and who did not hide the fact that he liked to be photographed. Shyamaji Krishnavarma, the last person to be included in the photographic project, occupies the least defined position in the composition. He had been Gerson da Cunha's Sanskrit tutor, but he was not present as Cunha's respected master in the same way Bhagwanlal was positioned in relation to Gubernatis.

Unlike almost all other cases where Indians and Europeans were photographed together in a colonial context, in this photograph the clothing worn does not reflect any ethnic differences. The only European in the photograph is dressed in the same way as the Indians surrounding him. As a result, only physiognomy can differentiate them, causing a problem that is not easy to resolve. We have only a sketch of the photograph, not the photograph itself. It is possible that the sketch artist in Milan, Mr Cavallotti, made some changes, particularly to emphasise the ethnic differences among those in the photograph. In fact, Gubernatis is shown with blue eyes, a fair beard and white skin. A quick browse through other photographs of Gubernatis reveals that he had much darker

³⁴ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 91.

skin and dark eyes (Figure I.2). Who knows whether the artist, consciously or not, made Gubernatis appear whiter than he was, and represented the others darker in order to highlight differences that were not obvious? Did Mr Cavallotti 'de-nativise' an Italian who could not be distinguished from the Indians, in a photograph in which the colour of the turban as a mark of difference was more apparent than skin colour?

In recent years, the number of studies on colonial photography has multiplied. These studies tend to underline both the diversity and the heterogeneity of the possible relationships between the photographer and those being photographed; however, they almost always concentrate on photographs taken in the colonies by photographers who were in a position of authority, either because they belonged to the group that might be described as the colonisers, or because they wanted to obtain a visual classification that was indistinguishable from other tools of colonial understanding.³⁵ Photography, particularly when used in physical anthropology or in popularised versions of it, was an important instrument in the diffusion of ideas of race within the West, whose knowledge of the East was derived primarily from texts and images. These texts and images often reinforced racial preconceptions, strengthening the hierarchies between peoples and legitimising the needs of the colonial powers. The eight-volume photographic compendium *The People of India (1868–75)* that sought to classify the different people of India in around 500 captioned photographs is just one example of this tendency.³⁶ Photography within the colonial context tends to be studied in relation to its role in the identification, classification and control of colonial territories and the affirmation of colonial power.

However, photography also served a 'colonial culture', as understood by Nicholas Thomas.³⁷ It was used widely by Indians, becoming one of the most

³⁵ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

³⁶ John Falconer, "A Pure Labor of Love": A Publishing History of *the People of India*, in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, ed. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

³⁷ Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). For more on photography in India, see Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (London: British Library, 2008); Malavika Karlekar, *Re-visioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal, 1875–1915* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); Maria Antonella Pelizzari, ed., *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850–1900* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press/Canadian Centre for Architecture/Yale Center for British Art, 2003); Vidya Dehejia, ed., *India Through the Lens: Photography, 1840–1911*, exhibition catalogue (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2000); Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion, 1997); John Falconer, 'Photography in Nineteenth-Century India', in

popular modern technologies in India during the second half of the nineteenth century. Photography in the colonial context, which does not necessarily mean 'colonial photography', had many uses and meanings, and it would be too limiting to define it as a simple instrument in the exercise of authority, differentiating the active actions of the colonisers who took the photographs and the passive actions of the colonised being photographed. In addition to these uses, particularly in the field of anthropology in the colonial context, there were many other forms of photographing and of being photographed. In a debate that has developed in parallel to that surrounding the use of the term 'orientalism' during the past thirty years, and inseparable from the work of both Michel Foucault and Edward Said, the critical theory that has been dedicated to interpreting colonial photography today tends to question the assumptions that limit photography to a relationship between knowledge and power, underlining the complexity and multiplicity of uses of the medium in the colonial context.³⁸ Nevertheless, the majority of studies touching upon photography in the colonial context continue to seek 'to see how photography has functioned to lend powerful support to the ideologies of cultural and racial dominance in the modern age', or to analyse the links between colonial knowledge and photographic production—positions that seem to contradict the stated desire to broaden the approaches to photography.³⁹

Is it possible to consider the photograph in question (Figure I.1) a colonial photograph in these terms? I believe not. On the one hand, we must recognise that its production is inseparable from the colonial context in which the participants evolved. However, the image seems to suggest hierarchies and identities that

The Raj: India and the British, 1600–1947, ed. C. A. Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1990); Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); John Falconer, 'Early British Photography in India', *History of Photography* 16, 4 (1992); John Falconer, ed., *India: Pioneering Photographers, 1850–1900*, exhibition catalogue, Brunei Gallery, SOAS (London: British Library and Howard and Jane Ricketts Collection, 2001); Judith Mara Gutman, *Through Indian Eyes: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Photography from India* (New York: Oxford University Press, International Center of Photography, 1982); Ray Desmond, *Victorian India in Focus: A Selection of Early Photographs from the Collection in the India Office Library and Records* (London: HMSO, 1982); Ray Desmond, 'Nineteenth-Century Indian Photographers in India', *History of Photography* 1, 4 (1977).

³⁸ Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, 'Introduction: Photography, "Race", and Post-colonial Theory', in Hight and Sampson, *Colonialist Photography*; James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion, 1997); Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds, *Picturing Place and the Geographical Imagination* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003).

³⁹ Hight and Sampson, 'Introduction', p. 16; Maria Antonella Pelizzari, 'Introduction', in Pelizzari, *Traces of India*, pp. 13–18.

are different from those that would be anticipated by a purely colonial prism. Moreover, it was those being photographed—and not the photographer—who made the decisions that led to the final image. The participants chose the photographer, and not the other way around, as is normally the case with colonial photography. As an observer, the Parsi photographer owned the camera and pressed the shutter release, but his involvement was as a passive witness of what was taking place at the other end of the lens. As we have already seen, the 'difficult meetings' that took place between those being photographed were not necessarily a consequence of existing colonial hierarchies. Nevertheless, as we will show shortly, while those who were being photographed could be involved in the construction of the image, they were unable, despite all their efforts, to control how it was interpreted.

Could it be that, from another perspective, we can compare this photograph with the orientalised images in which European subjects dressed in Eastern clothes? In fact, the idea of disguise and staging had been a part of photography since its invention. Visual orientalism was one of the most popular ways of appropriating difference in the construction of an image of oneself; this was also true of the pictorial tradition of the portrait.⁴⁰ During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, there was a proliferation of photographs of Europeans dressed in oriental costume, either at masquerades or in the studios of photographers who supplied the necessary props, clothes and backdrops for the transformation.⁴¹ More important than identifying the geographic location in which the costume was worn, or the ethnographic accuracy of the result, was the evocation of an 'Orient' that everyone could recognise as such, even if no one knew exactly where it was.

However, in the image we are analysing, Gubernatis was not simply dressed as an Indian Brahman; he was a Brahman, and everything that he wore was 'genuine', legitimised and sanctified by Bhagwanlal. Just as Richard Burton

⁴⁰ For example, take the case of the Italian traveller Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823), who was pictured dressed as an Indian by two different artists (one of whom was William Brockedon) in an image copied by James Thomson. See Ken Jacobson, *Odalises and Arabesques: Orientalist Photography, 1839–1925* (London: Quaritch, 2007); Nicholas Tromans, ed., *The Lure of the Orient: British Orientalist Painting* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008).

⁴¹ Mary Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2007). The author describes the example of an 'oriental' woman who subverted this persistent European tradition by disguising herself as an 'oriental' when being photographed, and sending the image to her European correspondents. That is, she dressed in the clothes and accessories recognised by contemporary European visual culture as being 'oriental', but which bore little relation to the clothes she normally wore.

went native in order to pass unrecognised, Gubernatis also wanted to mitigate the differences from his 'others', because this blurring of identities would allow him to get closer to the object of his interest: religious India.⁴² It also seems that the photographic studio had not been made to look 'Indian'. Indeed, our image is distinguished by its restraint, and by the absence of the excessiveness that is normally associated with a staged Orient. Even the ethnographic and religious aspects that had preceded the taking of the photograph are absent from the image. More than the costumes and complexions of the subjects of the photograph, what linked the image to India was the text accompanying it. This inseparability again argues for the need to approach text and image with the same historiographical gaze. We could also question the pertinence of trying to classify this image solely in terms of its production in a non-Western space. Shouldn't we accept that, as was the case with photography produced in Europe or the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century, photography in non-Western places—that were sometimes also colonised places—assumed a diversity that is too difficult to narrow down into distinct categories?

One of the main disputes in deciding who was to be photographed (with both Gerson da Cunha and his wife initially agreeing to be photographed, then changing their minds, with Ana Rita finally excluding herself) concerned the inability to define the border between what was genuine and what was false, between robes and costume, between reality and masquerade. As well as understanding Sanskrit, a language he was taught by Shyamaji Krishnavarma, Gerson da Cunha had much in common intellectually with the other three men in the photograph. However, while Sanskrit formed part of an erudite Hinduism that took many different forms—closer to the literary knowledge of Krishnavarma or the religious practice of Bhagwanlal Indraji—Gerson da Cunha's interest was mainly historical and archaeological.

While both Bhagwanlal Indraji and Krishnavarma were dressed in their everyday clothes, consistent with the tradition for Hindu Brahman pandits, Gerson da Cunha's Brahman status was more problematic. Outside his native Goa, part of Portuguese India, to be Brahman meant to be Hindu, and Gerson da Cunha was well aware of this. Basically, he was the only one in the photograph who was wearing a costume to disguise himself as something he was not, and, according to Gubernatis, he did so with a degree of repugnance and only to

⁴² Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 46, 51–55.

please him.⁴³ Separated from his Catholicism, the evocation of his Brahman caste seemed to make Gerson da Cunha uncomfortable because, within the social and cultural context of Portuguese India, both categories needed the other to affirm their sign of distinction.⁴⁴

In his personal diary (but not in the published version), Gubernatis wrote that Gerson da Cunha wore an accessory that would further complicate his religious identity: as both men were changing out of their European clothes in the photography studio, the Italian noticed that Gerson da Cunha was wearing a necklace.⁴⁵ Gubernatis was surprised to see his Catholic friend wearing around his neck something that was ethnographically identified as being the phallic symbol of the ancient Deccan Saivite. However, when he asked Gerson da Cunha why he was wearing the trinket, the doctor, who had been educated in Bombay, Edinburgh and London, within the colonial and metropolitan circuit of Western medical knowledge available to the inhabitants of British India, replied, according to Gubernatis, that it was simply an African stone that protected him from sore throats. On seeing his Italian friend's surprise, Gerson da Cunha seems to have preferred to raise doubts over his credibility as a doctor trained in Western science rather than over his Catholicism. Both Gubernatis and Bhagwanlal pretended to be satisfied with his explanation, although the former confided in his diary that this was proof that the Christians of the region preserved many pagan traditions.

This story, along with many others confided to the intimacy of his personal Indian travel diary, demonstrates Gubernatis's contradictory feelings in relation to the identification of Gerson da Cunha, whom he often believed to be too much of a hybrid. These feelings ranged between the admiration and friendship that were born in Florence a few years earlier, and the difficulty in understanding Cunha's multiple identities, constructed from the diverse intellectual and cultural references of a Catholicism that allowed him to wear, not a cross, but a phallic symbol that he claimed was African, but Gubernatis believed was Indian. Within this religious hybridism that Gubernatis found so difficult to identify, however, there was also much that he had in common with Cunha. The Italian was raised and educated as a Catholic, but he had been criticised by some of his compatriots for betraying Christianity and revealing an excessive enthusiasm

⁴³ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], pp. 102–102v.

⁴⁴ Ângela Barreto Xavier has also explored this idea in her many studies on Goa. See, for example, Ângela Barreto Xavier, 'David Contra Goliath na Goa Seiscentista e Setecentista: Escrita Identitária e Colonização Interna', *Ler História* 49 (2005), pp. 117–19.

⁴⁵ BNCF, Manuscript, Angelo de Gubernatis, *Relazioni del suo Viaggio Nell'India*, autogr., 1885–86 [II, IV, 674], p. 102v.

for Hindu culture.⁴⁶ On the other hand, Gubernatis united his great devotion to religious and erudite India with an awareness of the economic interests of the commercial India that the new Italy was seeking to exploit. In India, the India of Gerson da Cunha, Gubernatis found it more difficult to understand the Indian friend he had so admired when they first met in Florence.

We have seen how, apart from what it represents and who it represents, the photograph also has a history as an object travelling between different contexts; between what it could have been and what it became; between the different meanings that it had for different persons; between the different gazes it could suggest in different places of exposition. Both in its making and in its circulation and display, there were multiple ways of appropriating it. But, as important as the meanings that were projected onto it by those who were portrayed, were the anxieties about how the image would be appropriated by others. Therefore, the written documents that refer to the photograph are rich in 'real' dialogues, but also in imagined dialogues—what would the family in Goa say when seeing the photograph of a Catholic family being photographed next to two Hindu pandits? How would the Italian public see the image in the newspaper?—questions which were also related to cultural encounters and conflicts.

We have also seen how a colonial, national or ethnic perspective in approaching this image has to be combined with an awareness of other kinds of differences and hierarchies beyond those inherent in colonial inequalities. Within a community that shared the same or a similar 'knowledge', in this case knowledge of India, there were other confrontations beyond those that distinguished Europeans from Indians or colonisers from colonised. As we have seen in the published and unpublished dialogues that preceded and followed the making of the photograph, gender, caste and religion became much more important than ethnicity and nationality as criteria of differentiation or even conflict.

There was a strong consciousness among those photographed that the photograph would inevitably unite them in a way that was more enduring than life itself. Those who finally appeared could share with those who finally did not, the same house, the same food, and even many knowledges, cultural references and friendships. But there was something ultimate and absolute about a photograph that detonated all the identity and cultural differences that were present but had not been mentioned. The idea of unification, inseparable from the bi-dimensional representational powers of a photograph, became latent in the final criteria that defined those who should be included: what united them

⁴⁶ Cesare A. de Cara, *Errori Mitologici del Professore Angelo de Gubernatis* (Prato: Giachetti, 1883).

(and not what separated them) was their common knowledge of the languages, literature and culture of India.

If this photograph contributes to undermining some of the premises used in the study of colonial photography, then the path followed by the subjects of the photograph, as well as their relationship with one another, are also not easily reconciled with the normal positions assigned to the colonised. None of the men portrayed had the static identities favoured in the bipolar analysis of colonisers and colonised. Thus, if the photograph that brought these men together, and that was published in a newspaper in an Italy that was beginning to aspire to its own colonial project, could never have been found within a national or colonial historiography based on a nationalist view, the same can also be said in relation to the four participants. All of them lived in a colonial environment, but they were all characterised by the geographical mobility and fluidity of the positions they occupied as producers of knowledge about India.

The historiography of colonialism, in which studies of British India take centre stage, tends to analyse the inhabitants of colonised areas through two prisms. On the one hand, it concentrates on the local elite's collaboration with forms of colonial authority and their appropriation of the colonisers' references. On the other, it values those who, with or without a voice, resist these forms of authority and knowledge. The men in the photograph, standing in an interstice of the colonial world, reinforce the idea that there are many ways of being and of living in a colonial context, and that the 'colonised' could have different ways of relating to colonial agents, institutions and discourses. Beyond the categories of collaboration or subordination, of complicity with the colonial regime or of resistance against it, of Europeanisation or of Indianisation, there are other ideas that perhaps help us understand these persons better as participants in a colonial world.

Above all, these four men were involved in the production of knowledge about India. They all had agency, voice and authority in the construction of an India that was increasingly being identified, described, collected, exhibited and historicised. They all produced that which is commonly known as colonial knowledge, without being colonisers. However, if colonial knowledge means knowledge that is produced or instrumentalised by the colonial power, then this will not enable us to understand the heterogeneity of their knowledge. The construction of knowledge of India was not linked only to the institutions, agents or cultural policies of colonisers who were aware of the interdependence of power and knowledge. Many Indians took part in this process, actively participating in the historical, archaeological, literary and linguistic construction of India, and they did so through writing, photography, organising exhibitions

and opening museums. The meanings of this involvement are not monolithic—if at times it served discourses of progress that were inseparable from a European colonial discourse, at other times it was used to value an Indian culture that was capable of justifying a nationalism in which the British presence could become redundant. This local production of knowledge could also be used to value a Goan culture that was presented as unique, as different from European Portugal while also different from the rest of India.

In many cases, Indians worked as collaborators, intermediaries or interpreters for the British or for Europeans: in archaeological excavations, photographing, drawing or conducting surveys of peoples or objects, copying inscriptions, collecting objects or manuscripts, and translating texts, which very often meant preparing the materials that would then be used by others, mostly Europeans. However, in many other cases, and increasingly during the last decades of the nineteenth century, there were many Indians producing knowledge in their own names and having their work recognised by their contemporaries. Despite being a minority when compared with their European counterparts, a significant number of Indians were involved in different projects where India was the main subject of study. They wrote in scholarly journals, delivered papers at international congresses, belonged to learned societies such as the Asiatic Society, or were part of the commissions that organised the representations of India at exhibitions in India or in Europe. This does not mean that this participation was free of conflicts and hierarchies. In some cases, the role of Indians as producers of knowledge was subordinated, diluted or even extinguished, in a form of intellectual colonisation. This could happen in the contemporary process of divulgation of a specific text or knowledge, or in subsequent historical narratives.

Second, all of the men in the photograph represent types of cosmopolitanism. They all lived in a world of boundaries that were in the process of being defined, boundaries that they strengthened, criticised or questioned. We may here take the example of Krishnavarma. From what we know of his life until the year in which he was photographed, Krishnavarma may be considered a paradigmatic example of a collaborator, a perfect symbiosis of local and metropolitan colonial knowledge. He went up to Oxford to teach Sanskrit as an assistant to a renowned British orientalist. He studied law at Oxford and in London, after which he returned to India where he occupied several prestigious positions within the judicial system that had been created by the British colonisers. However, in the mid-1880s he became familiar with the Indian nationalist movement, which was becoming increasingly visible. In December 1885, two months after the photograph was taken, the first Indian National

Congress meeting was held in Bombay. It was the first of many meetings of Indians motivated by outspoken ideas of independence and of nationalism.⁴⁷

In the second part of his life, Krishnavarma may be placed in the category of an opponent of colonialism. Indeed, he was an active agent of resistance against colonialism right up until his death. He returned to London some years after he posed for the photograph, although this time his stay in the imperial capital had a different purpose. He founded the India House in 1904, a residence for Indian students in London, which was to become one of the centres of anti-colonial resistance and of the struggle for Indian independence. That same year, Krishnavarma established the journal *Indian Sociologist: An Organ of Freedom, and of Political, Social and Religious Reform*, where he published his critiques of the British colonial government's despotism. He had become one of the most active voices in favour of a peaceful transition to Indian independence—a freedom fighter who was later regarded as a precursor of Gandhi, who had lived in the India House alongside others involved in the Indian independence movement. Given this, are the categories 'collaborator' or 'opponent' not too limiting for an identification of Shyamaji Krishnavarma?

What about Bhagwanlal Indraji?⁴⁸ Born in Junagadh in 1839, he is the one who best embodied the sacred India, the Sanskrit India, the India of Hindu Brahman culture. He was the most 'Indian' of all those photographed and, perhaps because of this, he was the one whom Gubernatis most admired. Bhagwanlal had never set foot outside India (although, immediately after the photograph was taken, he told Gubernatis of his intense desire to visit Europe and to take part in the next congress of orientalist in Vienna, provided the rules of his religion were not transgressed).⁴⁹ Indraji was considered an authority on classical Sanskrit and had already collaborated in the translation of the *Laws of Manu* and several other texts, always as an assistant to European orientalists.

⁴⁷ *Report of the First Indian National Congress Held at Bombay on the 28th, 29th and 30th December 1885* (Lucknow: G. P. Varma & Brothers Press, 1885). See also *The Indian National Congress, 1885–1985: An Exhibition in the British Library to Mark the Centenary of the First Meeting of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December 1885* (30 November 1985–February 1986) (London: British Library, 1985). The catalogue of this exhibition contained a photograph of all those who took part in this congress. At that time, Krishnavarma was dewan (chief minister) of Ratlam, and his absence can be explained by the fact that he was not in Bombay at the time of the congress.

⁴⁸ For a recent biography of Indraji, see Virchand Dharamsey, *Bhagwanlal Indraji: The First Indian Archaeologist, Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Past* (Vadodara: Darshak Itihas Nidhi, 2012). See also Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 95–96.

⁴⁹ I believe he never did travel to Europe, despite Gubernatis's guarantee that his religious beliefs would be respected (Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 91).

When the traveller, translator and writer Richard Burton and Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, a member of the Bombay civil service and student of Indian and Persian literature, began to show an interest in the *Kama Sutra*, a third-century religious Sanskrit text, they hired Bhagwanlal Indrajī to collate and compare the many handwritten versions and establish the final version that was to be translated into Gujarati and then into English.⁵⁰

To help finalise the *Kama Sutra*, Indrajī relied on the assistance of Shivaram Parshuram Bhide, a student at the University of Bombay who knew Sanskrit as well as he knew English. Edward Rehatsek, a Hungarian resident in Bombay, a specialist in Persian and Arab affairs and a friend of Gerson da Cunha, also appears to have collaborated in the preparation of the text, although his contribution was diluted in the final version.⁵¹ Indrajī delivered the *Kama Sutra* to Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, who in turn passed it on to Richard Burton, whom history records as the translator of the celebrated text that was revealed to the West in 1883,⁵² in a clear example of the subordination of indigenous knowledge. Burton received the glory and the recognition despite his effective participation being limited to proofreading the English text, introducing some footnotes and, possibly, writing the preface, or part of it. As we see in this case, the chain of intellectual collaboration does not always reduce to the binomial of European scholar/Indian collaborators, but also includes other forms of collaboration, such as that between Indians, for example. Nevertheless, these relations were almost always informed by a set of hierarchies, either assumed or implicit, in which some had more power than others.⁵³ Like so many other intermediaries who were essential to the process of collecting, identifying,

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, pp. 215–16. According to James McConnachie, it was Georg Bühler, a German student of India living in Bombay, who recommended Bhagwanlal Indrajī, who had also collaborated with James Fergusson and James Burgess. See James McConnachie, *The Book of Love: In Search of the Kamasutra* (London: Atlantic, 2007), pp. xiii, 111–18, 122–27.

⁵¹ Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, pp. 216–326.

⁵² *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, Translated from the Sanskrit with Preface, Introduction and Concluding Remarks* (Cosmopoli: Reprint for the Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, 1883); W. G. Archer, ed., *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana*, translated by Sir Richard Burton and F. F. Arbuthnot, with an introduction by K. M. Panikkar (London: Guild, 1990).

⁵³ Mary S. Lovell, *A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton* (London: Abacus, 1998), pp. 610–21. Richard Burton and Arbuthnot began by contacting Edward Rehatsek to collect the manuscript of the *Kama Sutra*, the second erotic work on which the two collaborated. Rehatsek had already translated the first, *Ananga Ranga*. However, feeling incapable of completing this enterprise on his own, he recruited two local experts who had been recommended to him by Dr Georg Bühler, professor of Sanskrit: Bhagwanlal Indrajī and Shivaram Parshuram Bhide. See Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 10.

collating, transcribing, photographing and creating knowledge of India, Indrajī's name did not survive the journey between the knowledge produced by locals and the knowledge of the local (India, in this case) organised by Europeans, which tended to erase the role of Indians in the study of India.⁵⁴ In fact, immediately after the photograph was taken, Gubernatis and Bhagwanlal spoke about the differences between European and Indian scholars. According to Bhagwanlal, Europeans knew how to work the materials while lacking real understanding of them, while the Indians knew a great deal but were unable to organise this knowledge into the form of a book.⁵⁵ He also confessed to Gubernatis that he lacked the ability to transform all of the material he had collected and all of the knowledge he had accumulated, and that he needed to work with a 'European scholar capable of giving light and life' to the material that lay 'like a dark and dead thing' in his hands. It seems, from his words quoted by Gubernatis, that Bhagwanlal Indrajī had interiorised a very common colonial perspective on the ways of producing knowledge and on the useful but subordinate role that natives could play in this process. These different epistemological approaches—widely stated by European orientalists, they could also be assumed, as we see in this case, by Indian scholars—had an implicit hierarchy. While the locals had the benefit of belonging to the place they studied, Western scholars usually emerged as the ones possessing the tools to analyse the local knowledge.

What about Angelo de Gubernatis? What was his position in the geographical, political, social or cultural spaces within which he evolved, and within the spheres of production of knowledge on India? He travelled to India to be 'Indianised', that is, to stop being an 'imperfect, almost false, Indianist', and with the object of creating an Indian museum in Florence.⁵⁶ The Italian had a

⁵⁴ As the case of Bhagwanlal shows, this subordination—like so many other similar processes, especially in the sphere of gender relations—was sometimes reinforced by the consent of those being subordinated. It is just as reasonable to compare the 'Indian collaborators' with female artists or those women who assisted the creative processes of their husbands, lovers or fathers who were artists or writers. Just as many of the Indians who worked for European orientalists saw their names removed from the final work, or relegated to a footnote, so too did many of the women who assisted male artists or writers work in the latter's shadows. On the other hand, there were many female artists between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries who, in life, exercised their professions and were recognised and celebrated, only to become invisible when the history of art, the collectors, the museums and the art market removed these works from their lists. In the same way, the contribution of some Indians was recognised at the time, only to be subordinated by the history of knowledge, which tended to concentrate on European authors.

⁵⁵ Gubernatis, *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, vol. I, p. 91.

⁵⁶ Angelo de Gubernatis, 'Il Viaggio Nell'India ed il Museo Indiano', in Angelo de Gubernatis, *Fibra: Pagine di Ricordi* (Roma: Forzani e C. Tipografi del Senato, 1900), p. 440.

passion for India, but particularly for the India he had imagined before leaving Europe, the India he had studied and taught for so many years. He looked for and accommodated difference; but when India resembled Europe, he had more difficulty in accepting it. Gubernatis was the only European in the photograph. He was a European orientalist, but he came from a part of Europe that had no connection to colonial India, which was dominated by Great Britain, and where Portugal and France survived as minor colonisers in comparison to their European neighbour.

Gubernatis's devotion to ancestral and learned India did not prevent him from being accompanied on his journey by two commercial agents whose mission was to establish an Italian emporium in Bombay. Nor did it prevent him from dreaming of an Italian colony in India, of which Diu—which was poorly exploited by the Portuguese—would be the first conquest. Gubernatis's career as an orientalist and his long-standing involvement with India do not allow us to apply monolithic definitions. Before travelling to India, he had spent more than twenty years writing about it, creating institutes and journals dedicated to an "Orient" in which India was always the leading figure. However, his journey represented a moment of transition, both in his discourse on India and in his opinion on the colonial position of an Italy that, in his words, 'also wanted to leave home'.

In 1885, the year in which Gubernatis travelled to India, Italy's incipient colonial enterprise got under way on Africa's eastern coast, which meant that, as Gubernatis noted, India was now much closer. Gubernatis's position in respect of British colonialism and the uses of an academic orientalism in establishing a colonial vocation was ambivalent, and was transformed during the final years of the nineteenth century. From being openly critical of the abuse of power by the British, he became an accomplice of those who wished to follow the same path. In fact, Italy's new colonial role in Africa had a palpable effect on Gubernatis's orientalist discourse. When Gubernatis returned to Florence with his 'Indian museum' in boxes, he had already lost the innocence of an orientalist who was placed outside the colonial context. By the time of the publication of his three-volume work *Peregrinazioni Indiane*, his pure, holy and scholarly India had become more and more entangled with a commercial and perhaps a colonial project in India. While earlier, Gubernatis's India had been projected in the past, to be studied through history, literature or linguistics, by the mid-1880s, contemporaneously with Italy's growing interest in sharing in the European colonial project, his India had also become very much an interest of the present.

What about Gerson da Cunha?⁵⁷ His frequent trips to Europe, his participation in international conferences, his successive visits to exhibitions in Paris, the sale of his coin collection in a London auction house, his apprenticeship in electrotherapy during his medical training in the Parisian hospital headed by Jean-Martin Charcot, the paper he gave on Dante in Bombay—all this exemplifies a career full of intellectual and cultural references that were not only European or only Indian, but which were from many Europes and many Indias. However, more than being defined by his lifestyle or by his travels, the fluidity of his identity was shaped by various forms of negation. He was a Goan, yet he did not live in Goa; he lived in Bombay, yet he was neither British nor British Indian; he was of Portuguese nationality, and the Portuguese in India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were one of his main objects of study, but he did not live under the Portuguese government, nor, apparently, did he go to Portugal on his European journeys; he studied in the British medical schools created in the metropole to form colonised doctors, but the European country with which he chose to establish intellectual and friendly relationships was Italy, not Portugal or Great Britain. All of these negations somehow gave him the authority of never being in the *position* of the colonised.

Gerson da Cunha's dislocation, his double negation of the colonial space, his difference in relation to all of the dominating contexts in which he moved, may be shown to be determining factors in his position as an individual, in his life experience, and in the place from which he wrote and produced his own discourse. It was precisely this mobility of geography and identity that enabled Gerson da Cunha to produce knowledge of an 'India' that was at the crossroads of different national, colonial or local historiographies. He mastered Indian, Portuguese and British history as historiography, bringing together the multiplicity of his references into a single text. He read and wrote in Portuguese and English and mastered several other languages, both European and Indian. He worked in the archives in Goa, Bombay, Rome and Paris. He read tombstones in Catholic churches and Sanskrit inscriptions in Hindu temples. He collected objects, especially coins, from many Indias. He was a member of the most prestigious learned societies in British India and published in English in the best journals; however, he was also critical of the 'selfish John Bull' and believed that India's liberation was not far away.

Gerson da Cunha's cannot be considered a subaltern voice subverting colonial power, or not having access to discourse. Despite the contradictions of

⁵⁷ I am at present working on a study of the historiographical connections between Portuguese and British India during the second half of the nineteenth century, in which José Gerson da Cunha will be one of the main subjects examined.

his identity, of his occasional condemnation of the British government or his less frequent and more indirect criticisms of the government of Portuguese India, or of his belief in the imminent liberation of India, Gerson da Cunha was not an anti-colonialist. His relationship with the two colonial powers that were part of his life—the British and the Portuguese—does not allow us to place him on one side or the other. Indeed, it was a more subtle and certainly a more complex relationship made up of criticisms and eulogies, of complicities and rejections. Could it be that Cunha's contradictions, his simultaneous embodiment of the values of the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised', come into conflict with a vision of history that does not allow one to be on both sides? These contradictions are invisible to a history of simple ideas of dominators and the subjugated, or to a history that either does not acknowledge the violence of colonialism or acknowledges nothing else. Gerson da Cunha, like many others in his social and intellectual circle in Bombay, challenged these classifications. His multiple identities, the fluidity of his itinerary, both in geographical and historical terms, his ability to bring into confrontation (and not necessarily into conflict) different cultures, histories and voices, his intellectual multiculturalism, his many contradictions, and his improbable choice of European cities to visit, make it difficult to pigeonhole him.

Gerson da Cunha is very far from being the 'colonised' who are characterised as without voice, or who are deprived 'of language or history' and who appropriate 'the language and memory of the colonisers in order to suggest other more heterogeneous histories'.⁵⁸ Being Goan, the language of the colonisers—that is, European culture and historical conceptions—formed part of his own culture. With the self-consciousness inherent in processes of distinction, he presented himself as a historian *à la mode Européen* rather than Indian, as he strove to make clear in some of his historical writings. In Gerson da Cunha's case, it cannot be said there was any "appropriation" of European culture, as English-language historiography has repeated on countless occasions in relation to the Indian elite living in nineteenth-century British India. The fact that he was a Goan makes the notion of appropriation problematic. It makes him the perfect cultural intermediary, both in his life itinerary and in his trans-temporal and transnational historical approach.

While enabling him to cross many frontiers, this multiplicity of references embodied in the same person could be problematic in certain contexts. It

⁵⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, 'Introdução', in *Portugal Não é um País Pequeno: Contar o Império na Pós-colonialidade*, ed. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (Lisbon: Cotovia, 2006), p. 18.

could be problematic for Gerson da Cunha himself, for instance when he combined Brahmanism with Catholicism outside the Goan context, and feared being considered a *gentio* by an Italian readership. It could also pose problems for those who surrounded him, for example when Gubernatis manifested his difficulty in dealing with what he recognised as the European culture of Gerson da Cunha and his family. As a Goan and a Catholic, Gerson da Cunha considered himself closer to the Italian Gubernatis than to the other two Hindu Indians who appeared in the photograph. Gubernatis, though, found it difficult to understand Gerson da Cunha's sporadic uneasiness with those aspects of his culture that were associated with non-Christian India.

Orientalisms and Colonial Knowledge

I chose to begin by analysing the reproduction of a photograph taken in Bombay, because the themes and problems suggested by this image and its history served as an appropriate introduction to this book. Both the image, which was published in a popular Italian newspaper, and the nineteenth-century handwritten texts describing it, are located in Italy, providing an example of a globalised visual culture in which both the people being studied and the photograph that brought them together resist a precise identification. Such an image would never have been found in the historiographical paths between the metropole and the colonies. The problems that this photograph raises speak to the need to overcome the limitations imposed by a colonial or imperial history written from a national perspective, and to undertake a transnational history of colonialism.

To write at this moment is to take advantage of more than thirty years of reflection on colonialism and empires; it is to write from a vantage point that can no longer be called post-colonialism since it excludes many of the criticisms that have been made of that concept. Such a vantage point also benefits from the ability to make use of the accumulation of various theories, ideas and approaches without being obliged to take sides. Like so many others who are writing today, I can use the pioneering ideas of Edward Said and Christopher Bayly without limiting myself to a single line of research; the study can also benefit from being aware of the weaknesses of these perspectives that others have noted.⁵⁹ As Bayly states, during the final decades of the nineteenth century,

⁵⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). The post-Said bibliography, which is dominated by post-colonial studies, is huge. The English-language content dominates the themes chosen—the British Empire, with an emphasis on India—as well as the places in which the books are published—the United Kingdom, the United States and former British colonies. Thus, while Said's book concentrates on the Arab

'Indians were increasingly producing their own knowledge from reworked fragments of their own tradition melded with western ideas and conveyed through western artefacts. Orientalism in Said's sense became reactive and embattled before it had taken on any kind of shape at all.'⁶⁰

It has become almost commonplace in studies of imperialism and in post-colonial studies to begin with a reference to Said's *Orientalism*, and then to add

world, the subsequent literature moves the concept of orientalism to India. Ronald Inden deconstructs the Eurocentric, essentialist and 'orientalist' (in Said's terms) discourses on India in *Imagining India* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000). Dilip K. Chakrabarti's book *Colonial Indology: Sociopolitics of the Ancient Indian Past* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997) concentrates on the European, racist construction of India's past through concepts created by European scholars, such as race, language and culture. Chakrabarti claims that these concepts have never been contested by nationalist Indian scholars. Although Said did not address this type of question, many subsequent studies have dealt with it. Said returned to his idea of orientalism in a later book in which he corrected some of his initial arguments, paying more attention to other geographical spaces and forms of resistance against different forms of Western domination in the non-European world. See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993). See also A. L. Macfie, ed., *Orientalisms: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). Among the better-known critics of Said and his followers are Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); and Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook, 2008). This last book, which concentrates on Islamic culture, is almost a direct criticism of Said's book, declaring itself to be a 'more accurate' history of orientalism. More recently, Irwin restated his arguments against Said's *Orientalism* in 'Lured in the East' (*Times Literary Supplement*, 9 May 2008).

In 2008, there were a number of initiatives to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of *Orientalism*, including the conference 'Framing the Other: Thirty years after *Orientalism*' held at the Courtauld Institute in London on 26 April. The message from this conference was clear: the history of art had finally discovered Said's concept of orientalism and had begun to apply it in strength to all its objects of study. In this, it was inspired by the famous article by Linda Nochlin ('The Imaginary Orient', *Art in America* 71, 5 [May 1983]), in which Said's ideas were applied to orientalist painting for the first time. The nature of these conferences also demonstrated the differences between history and post-colonial studies on the one hand, and the history of art in relation to the theoretical debate over orientalism on the other hand: while the former had seen thirty years of debate on this subject, the history of art, despite being aware of Said's *Orientalism*, had not yet integrated into its approach the discussions raised by the book. Another important intervention within post-colonial studies is subaltern studies, which concentrates on the Indian case. For a critique of this movement, particularly the approaches of Chakrabarty, Chatterjee and especially Spivak, see Sumit Sarkar, 'Orientalism Revisited: Saidian Frameworks in the Writing of Modern Indian History', and Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook, 'After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism and Politics in the Third World', both in *Mapping the Subaltern and the Postcolonial*, ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

⁶⁰ C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 371-72.

the 'but' that obliges us to consider the thirty years of responses and discussions framed by this famous book. Clearly there are 'buts' in all human works, but, despite all the possible limitations of Said's approach, the present book, like so many others, suggests that Said's *Orientalism* regards the construction of knowledge of the 'other' in a politicised sense that remains pertinent as an instrument of analysis. Above all, Said's contribution was crucial in questioning the acritical and congratulatory historiography that dominated European studies of other cultures—particularly in the colonial context.⁶¹ However, when I began this study, I was seeking histories of relationships between the metropole and the colonies that could fit neatly into a Foucaultian or Saidian approach. However, I soon had to confront the difficulties of projecting these models onto the sources and the cases that I encountered along the way.

The terms orientalism, orientalist or oriental were consolidated first at international conferences and in museums, collections, institutions of learning, specialist journals and in the self-denomination of individuals. Later, 'orientalism' was defined by the critical approach initiated by Said. Yet, despite its persistence, the meaning of the term has always been characterised by diversity and multiplicity. The case of the 'orientalists' as a group of individuals—mainly men who were producers of knowledge on anything it was possible to label as oriental—is a good example of how an approach that is merely colonial can be limiting. From the end of the eighteenth century, when the term became banal, until 1978, the year in which Said's book was published, 'orientalist' was understood as including heterogeneous positions and a multiplicity of meanings that could even contain conflicts and contradictions.⁶²

However, from the moment the word 'orientalism' became the title of a book, it ceased to be possible to use it in an unthinking and non-critical manner.⁶³ In a

⁶¹ The fact that the Portuguese translation of Said's *Orientalism* did not appear until 2004—twenty-six years after it was first published—reveals much about Portuguese historiography. See Rosa Maria Perez, 'Introdução: Os Portugueses e o Oriente', in *Os Portugueses e o Oriente: História, Itinerários, Representações*, ed. Rosa Maria Perez (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2006), p. 25; Edward W. Said, *Orientalismo: Representações Ocidentais do Oriente* (Lisbon: Cotovia, 2004).

⁶² Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 105, 127-28.

⁶³ Said's book has had its greatest impact in the areas of history, cultural and post-colonial studies and literature studies, more than among modern 'orientalists'. *Orientalism* was not published in every country simultaneously. Said's ideas were discussed much earlier in the English-speaking world than in other countries, where his book was largely ignored for many years. See Giorgio Renato Franci, ed., *Contributi alla Storia Dell'Orientalismo* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1985). Another Italian book published in 2006 recognised the contribution made by Said's book, but rejected the negative value of the term, restoring to it the meaning it had had in French culture at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

certain way, orientalism as an academic discipline lasted until thirty years ago. Since it is now impossible not to take into account the Saidian and post-Saidian debate when using the term 'orientalism', I feel obliged to explain that, in the title and the pages of this book, I use the words 'orientalism' and 'orientalist' in the broadest sense possible, just as they were used in the temporal and geographical locations of this book, and not in the political sense the term was given by Said. Thus, a critical approach to orientalism that is inseparable from Said and from the many debates that have taken place since then, will be present throughout the text, but this study does not recognise the word in its monolithic sense, constructed of only the negative and colonial meanings of orientalism. I have thus taken the liberty of using the concept without limiting its meanings.

A 'man who has travelled widely' was the ironic meaning that Flaubert attributed to the word 'orientalist' in his *Dictionnaire des Idées Recues*. This definition testifies to the banal quality the term had acquired by 1880.⁶⁴ It was difficult to define what an orientalist was, because an orientalist could be a linguist, a historian, an archaeologist or an anthropologist. Orientalists were those who dedicated themselves to that which was not of the West. In this sense, it was the geography and not the discipline that defined the orientalist. The Orient's boundaries were also fluid and unstable; it accounted for large parts of the world whose only common denominator was that they lay not in the West, but to the east or south of Europe.

A large proportion of the bibliography on the subject of orientalism is dedicated to British orientalism in colonial India, the study of which naturally favours a form of bipolar discourse—of colonisers and colonised, those who write and those who are written about, those who hold power and those who are dominated. In recent decades, however, there has been a growth in the number of studies that demonstrate a multiplicity of voices, contradictions, concessions, silences, hesitations, the heterogeneity of voices and of 'orientalist' discourses.⁶⁵ We must be careful not to fall into a hybridism that can obfuscate the power relations at play, causing us to ignore such aspects as subordination, racial preconceptions, class or gender violence and different forms of humiliation

See Rolando Minuti, *Orientalismo e Idee di Tolleranze nella Cultura Francese del Primo '700* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2006).

⁶⁴ The *Dictionnaire des Idées Recues* was to be part of the second volume of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the novel Flaubert left unfinished when he died in 1880. Gustav Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet with the Dictionary of Received Ideas*, translated and with an introduction by A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 320.

⁶⁵ In the introduction to *Orientalism*, Said recognises the limitations of not including orientalist studies from Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain and Portugal, and explains why he chose not to include them (Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 17–19).

when we speak of orientalist knowledge. However, we must also be careful not to fall back into positing a linear relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Even in the wider context of clearly hegemonic relationships, there are conflicts, friendships, complicities and resistances that come from many places.⁶⁶ In fact, given the diversity of the locations from which people wrote, even in a socio-political context that seemed as clear as it was in the case of India—defined by a colonial regime in which some were on the side of power and others on the side without it—it appears impossible to sustain the existence of a bipolar logic. Personal letters and handwritten diaries as well as public letters to the editors of magazines—examples of some of the materials used in this book—reveal meetings and friendships as well as conflicts. However, as we saw when analysing the photograph, this approach can also suggest other power arrangements that are not always associated with colonial inequality.

At the heart of the debate over the historiographical definition of colonial knowledge is the position that has been attributed to the individuals who were colonised in this process. On one side, there are those authors who downplay the role played by the colonised, relegating them to nothing more than passive informants. Within this view, the colonisers emerged as the active producers of knowledge, using India as a laboratory in which they could test their European ideas, approaches and methods.⁶⁷ One of the most persistent criticisms that have been made in connection with this approach is that, by criticising the structures of colonial authority, one strips power from the colonised, condemning them to the passivity of those who have no access to discourse.

On the other side are those authors who underline the role of indigenous intellectuals and who identify colonial knowledge as the product of a 'complex form of collaboration between colonisers and colonised, and an attendant process of epistemic confrontation and adjustment between European and indigenous systems'.⁶⁸ The former approach relegates native intellectuals to mere 'informants', while the latter grants them the status of 'collaborators' in

⁶⁶ Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, p. 105. Lowe, who adopts a literary approach, has in mind the critical reaction of Indians to E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*; however, her analysis can be adapted to other types of discourse.

⁶⁷ As the works of Said suggest. See also Inden, *Imagining India*; Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Nicholas Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989); and, naturally, all of the inspiring works by Michel Foucault (see Phillip B. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, 4 [October 2003]).

⁶⁸ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, pp. 338–76; Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture*, pp. 1–17.

a dialogue with the colonisers. There can be no doubt that my approach will be closer to the latter, which emphasises the role of indigenous scholars and seeks to overcome the overly rigid boundaries between colonisers and colonised, rejecting the binary approach that has already been criticised by Sara Suleri and many others.⁶⁹

However, I do not believe that it is possible to reduce such people as Gerson da Cunha or Krishnavarma to the role of 'collaborator' or 'native informant', as conceived by Bayly. Nor is it possible to associate them with the generalised concept of 'colonial knowledge'.⁷⁰ Inspired by the native who accompanied the anthropologist and helped him/her get closer to the object of his/her research, the idea of the 'native informant' is often used to describe those members of the Indian elite who were involved in one way or another with British authority.⁷¹ Nevertheless, I believe that there is an implicit subordination, invisibility and silence in the concept that I do not recognise in Gerson da Cunha or in many of the other Indian scholars whom Gubernatis met on his journey through the country.

Should we then use the expression 'colonial knowledge' to denote the writings of Gerson da Cunha and Gubernatis? This expression is normally used to describe the type of knowledge produced by the 'coloniser' in order to better control colonised territories and peoples. Gubernatis produced knowledge about India, but he was not a coloniser; Gerson da Cunha, on the other hand, produced knowledge mainly about Goa, Bombay and other territories that, in the past or in the present, had connections with Portuguese history. He wrote about the Portuguese in India, particularly during the period of colonisation, but he did not write from Goa, nor did he write from Portugal. Moreover, he did not write about the 'colony'; he wrote about India, about some regions of India at a time when the Portuguese presence was more dominant. His India was not only Portuguese India, and his approach always implied the existence of an India that was more than a colony and that could not be reduced to a single, united, static, colonised, homogeneous identity.

⁶⁹ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 4.

⁷⁰ Bayly, *Empire and Information*.

⁷¹ For an analysis of the concept of the local informant that notes the impossibility of reducing its multiple identities to that of an accomplice of the British colonial government, or a mere, uncritical intermediary, see Julie F. Codell, 'Resistance and Performance: Native Informant Discourse in the Biographies of Maharaja Sayaji Rao III (1863–1939)', in *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture*, ed. Julie F. Codell and Diane Sachko Macleod (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

Neither Gubernatis nor Gerson da Cunha—nor many of the Indian and non-British foreign scholars resident in India—fit into these fundamentally limiting categories. As Sara Suleri notes, the danger of the 'rhetoric of otherness', which is central to the discourse of the post-colonial critique of orientalism, is that it involves the same kind of simplistic opposition between 'us' and 'them',⁷² between an 'us' (the all-powerful coloniser) and the 'others' (the colonised and exotic victims), in a process that Suleri compares to the nineteenth-century discourse that she intends to dismantle. It is thus important to take into account 'the complexities of colonial relations, the multiplicity of colonial experiences and their temporal and geographic diversity', and to analyse them without relativising the inequalities and the violence of colonisation.⁷³

Florence: The Location of the Archive

The stories we write are often inseparable from our 'archive stories'. I identify here with the anthropologists, in the ways in which they reflect on their individual experiences in their approaches and in the construction of their goals. I also feel that my relationship with history is inseparable from my own story—the chances, the places, the daily contingencies, the personal experiences that determined the choice and evolution of my work.⁷⁴ However, I have always felt that it is not for historians to recount this part of the story. In this book, my 'arrival story'—as Nicholas Dirks calls the narratives of anthropologists about the moment of their arrival in the field—is inseparable from the perspective of the book itself.⁷⁵ My sources are as primary as they are secondary, because Florence is not merely the place where the documents are located, but also my object of research, a site where knowledge of India was produced during the nineteenth century.⁷⁶

⁷² Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, p. 13.

⁷³ Paulo de Medeiros, 'Apontamentos para Conceptualizar uma Europa Pós-colonial', in *Portugal não é um País Pequeno: Contar o Império na Pós-colonialidade*, ed. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (Lisbon: Cotovia, 2006), p. 340.

⁷⁴ Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories', in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁷⁵ Nicholas B. Dirks, 'Annals of the Archive: Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History', in *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Futures*, ed. Brian Axel (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 48.

⁷⁶ Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever', pp. 12–20; Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science* 2, 1–2 (2002), p. 87; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Unlike many researchers who go to a location to work in the archives they find there, or unlike anthropologists who go to the field in search of their case study, because they know what it is they are looking for, the years I spent in Florence were not intended to be used to study Florentine orientalism and its relationship with India. I received my doctorate elsewhere, and lived in Florence for personal reasons: Florence did not exist as a historical object for me. Instead of dedicating myself to the many opportunities the city offered to study the Renaissance, my new research was directed towards the study of Goa in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the beginning, Florence was even an inconvenient place, where I read books, articles and notes brought from other archives, other libraries and other bookshops, and where I wrote with the feeling that I was in the least adequate place to write about India.

I began the search in Florentine libraries for books on British India before I thought about India in Florence. The Renaissance walls that encircled the city until the nineteenth century remain standing in other ways, so that it is difficult to see beyond them, beyond this Renaissance visual excess that overshadows the city's other personalities. Once I began paying more attention to the relationship between Florence and India, only three themes became evident: Florentine merchants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Filippo Sassetti who wrote about Goa and Cochim; the marble mausoleum that is the tomb of St Francis Xavier that was commissioned by Cosimo de Medici and manufactured in Florence; and the case of a young Indian prince who died in Florence while on the Grand Tour of Europe in 1870, who was cremated and his ashes scattered on the Arno as part of a Hindu ceremony.

Perhaps the best known aspect of the relationship between Florence and the city of Goa, and one that has already been studied in detail, is the mausoleum commissioned by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo III de Medici, who had a special devotion for St Francis Xavier. Sculpted by Giovanni Battista Foggini, the marble work was sent in 1697 to Old Goa—where the apostle's body was kept—to serve as the base for a silver sarcophagus of Indian manufacture.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Francesco Morena, *Dalle Indie Orientali alla Corte di Toscana: Collezioni di Arte Cinese e Giapponese a Palazzo Pitti*, ed. Ornella Casazza, with an essay by Lucia Caterina (Florence: Giunti, Firenze Musei, 2005), p. 151; Annamaria Giusti, 'Ritorno in India: Di Nuovo L'Opificio e il Mausoleo di San Francesco Saverio a Goa', *OPD Restauro*, 11 (1999); Carla Sodini, *I Medici e le Indie Orientali: Il Diario di Viaggio di Placido Ramponi Emissario in India per Conto di Cosimo III* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996); Claudia Conforti, 'Cosimo III de' Medici Patrono d'arte a Goa: La Tomba di S. Francesco Saverio di Giovan Battista Foggini', in *Lo Specchio del Principi: Meccenatismi Paralleli—Medici e Moghul*, ed. Dalu Jones (Rome: Elefante, 1991); Carlos de Azevedo, *Um Artista Italiano em Goa: Placido Francesco Ramponi e o Túmulo de S. Francisco Xavier* (Lisbon: Ministério do Ultramar, 1956 [includes Ramponi's account, *Racconto del Viaggio Dell' Indie Orientali e Occidentali, Fatto da me Placido*

Accompanying the gift of the highest representative of the Tuscan government were Francesco Placido Ramponi and Simone Fanciullacci, who also kept an account of their journey. Cosimo III's intention was to establish commercial relations between Tuscany and the East Indies through Portugal, but the project came to nothing.⁷⁸

However, when India is associated with Florence, common sense almost always leads to the 'Indian' who gave his name to one of the bridges over the Arno: the Ponte all'Indiano.⁷⁹ More than once, I was asked if my research was on 'the Indian' of Florence. This forced me to find out more about the young prince, Rajaram Chhatrapati, maharaja of Kolhapur, who visited Florence in 1870 after a stay in London.⁸⁰ The royal tourist and his retinue installed themselves at the Gran Hotel La Pace on the Piazza Ognissanti; however, the prince suddenly became ill and died there at the age of twenty-one. Following Hindu tradition, it was in that city in which his body had to be cremated. The religious ceremony that culminated in the scattering of the prince's ashes on the river Arno was widely publicised in the local press and remained imprinted in Florentine memories. In 1876, a bust of the young prince was installed at the site of the funeral pyre in the city's Cascine Park. Placed under a pagoda supported by four columns, and very different from the other statues in the city, the 'Indian' came to be a part of the city and even to symbolise 'India in Florence'. However, as a contemporary remarked, 'India in Florence, even at the Indian monument, is very far'.⁸¹

Francesco Ramponi Nell'Anno 1697 sino All'Anno 1700, per Aver Condotta et Eretto là il Deposito di S. Francesco Xaverio D'Ordine di S. A. S. il Gran Duca di Toscana Cosimo III); Panduronga S. S. Pissurlencar, 'O Túmulo, o Caixão e o Bastão de S. Francisco Xavier', *Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama*, 25 (Bastora: Rangel, 1935); Rosa Maria Cimino and Fabio Scialpi, eds., *India and Italy*, exhibition organised in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (Rome: IMEO, 1974), pp. 106–7.

⁷⁸ Morena, *Dalle Indie Orientali*, p. 151.

⁷⁹ Giustino Santi, *L'Indiano di Firenze*, with an introduction by Pier Francesco Listri (Florence: Stratagemma, 1988). When the ashes of the Indian prince were scattered on the Arno at the end of 1870, in accordance with Hindu cremation rites, Angelo de Gubernatis wrote a letter to the daily newspaper *La Nazione* to explain the funeral ceremony. He did so as a local Indian specialist who felt obliged to explain the unusual event to the citizens of Florence.

⁸⁰ Vito Salierno, 'Un Funerale Indiano a Firenze Nell'Ottocento', in *La Conoscenza Dell'Asia e Dell'Africa in Italia nei Secoli XVIII e XIX*, vol. III, part I, ed. Aldo Gallotta and Ugo Marazzi (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989), pp. 375–78.

⁸¹ 'And now you see before you the monument with the bust of the 20-year-old prince and an inscription in three languages, which is here, in the middle of Tuscany and at the most popular meeting place in all beautiful Florence, to remember one of the most original and grandiose scenes of far-off India.' Carlo Reynaudi, *Paolo Mantegazza: Note Biografiche* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1893), p. 153.

Paradoxically, Florence's status as a centre for Indian studies has completely disappeared from the city's historical memory—at the level of both common knowledge and the tour guide, and among the academic and scholarly community. The paradox is that a singular event—an Indian tourist who died in the city and was cremated there—is inscribed in the urban landscape and the toponymy of the city, while the strong tradition of Indian studies carried on in the city for several decades of the nineteenth century, resulting in the foundation of the Indian Museum and several journals and national institutes, has disappeared from the city's memory.

It was in this context that I became aware of the letters by the Goan intellectual José Gerson da Cunha, addressed to an Italian scholar of India in Florence, Angelo de Gubernatis. Maria Luisa Cusati was the first to identify and to write about this correspondence, and it was through one of her articles included in a book published in Goa that I discovered that the correspondence was held by the National Library of Florence.⁸² After reading almost fifty of these letters in Gubernatis's huge personal archive—which contains hundreds of boxes full of letters, papers and some photographs deposited in the 'Manuscripts' section of the National Library in Florence, many of which are yet to be catalogued—I decided that the relationship between Gerson da Cunha and Florence would be one of the chapters of the book about Goa that I was contemplating. However, as happens so often, what was to be a chapter ended up as the book, while the work I had carried out on Goa was put to one side.

Writing from Bombay to Florence, Gerson da Cunha confronted me with a nineteenth-century orientalist city that was new to me; he also introduced me to Angelo de Gubernatis, his principal interlocutor. This archive also reconciled me to Florence, which ceased to be a mere accident of my geography and became a part of my work, the place from which I began to look towards India. By focusing my attention in Florence, I was obliged to leave the space situated between the metropole and the colony: between Portugal and Portuguese India, and also Goa and India, where I had been increasingly involved. The

⁸² Maria Luisa Cusati, 'Angelo de Gubernatis and Goa: Correspondence between Angelo de Gubernatis and José Gerson da Cunha (1878–1899)', in *Goa and Portugal: History and Development*, ed. Charles J. Borges, Oscar G. Pereira and Hannes Stubbe (New Delhi: Concept 2000). Cusati later published another version of this article: see Cusati, 'José Gerson da Cunha entre Goa e Itália: Correspondência entre José Gerson da Cunha e Angelo De Gubernatis (1878–1899)', in *L'acqua era D'Oro Sotto i Ponti: Studi di Iberistica che gli Amici Offrono a Manuel Simões*, ed. Giuseppe Bellini and Donatella Ferro (Rome: Bulzoni, 2001). See also the article in which Cusati published all of the letters Gerson da Cunha wrote to Angelo de Gubernatis, "'Teu do Coração": José Gerson da Cunha e Angelo De Gubernatis', in *Angelo De Gubernatis, Europa e Oriente Nell'Italia Umbertina*, vol. IV, ed. Maurizio Taddei and Antonio Sorrentino (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 2001).

letters Gerson da Cunha wrote were as important as the place in which they were deposited—Florence. They were inseparable, and Florence, as a centre for oriental studies, became decisive in the development of this book and one of the central objects of its narrative.

I firmly believe in the importance of archival research, and in the 'discovery of forgotten or ignored sources' that can then be critically analysed.⁸³ Tony Ballantyne, for example, describes how coming across the private archive of a nineteenth-century individual, as well as his later inclusion in the general imperial 'archive', forced him to redesign his work and explore new ways of envisioning the structure of the British Empire.⁸⁴ Ballantyne came to his 'transnational vision of imperial knowledge' by reintegrating national histories into an imperial history and by defending an 'archival turn' reinvented outside the nation-state.⁸⁵ By analysing the production of knowledge in an imperial context, like other authors, he reinforced the idea of the connection between different histories.⁸⁶ This enabled the identification of cultural and power relationships that eluded a nationalist approach focusing on the comparative perspective. This perspective broadened the horizons from nationalist boundaries toward an imperialist boundary that was not limited to a specific region within the empire, but which took into account the empire as a space. Nevertheless, I believe that what is being presented as one of the innovations of this perspective—allowing a visualisation of the empire as a whole, with all its connections, its knowledge networks, correspondence, the movement of people, ideas and objects—continues to be insufficient for understanding the complexity of the history of colonial spaces. It is a research strategy that can continue to be limiting since it is not conducive to an approach that includes different colonial formations, such as British India or Portuguese India, or that takes into account the intellectual and cultural relationships between a colonial and a non-colonial space, as was true of the relationship between Bombay and Florence. It is a history that, at its roots, continues to be written within a decidedly national context.⁸⁷

⁸³ Sanches, 'Introdução', p. 13.

⁸⁴ Tony Ballantyne, 'Mr Peal's Archive: Mobility and Exchange in Histories of Empire', in Burton, *Archive Stories*, pp. 87–88.

⁸⁵ Ballantyne, 'Mr Peal's Archive', p. 96.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁸⁷ A. G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past and Present* 164 (August 1999), p. 202. This text forms part of a bibliography that calls for a return to an imperial (and not national) history that is very different from traditional imperial history. Another example of this approach can be found in the work of David A. Washbrook; for example, 'Progress and problems: South Asian Economic and Social History c. 1720–1860', *Modern Asian Studies* 22 (1988).

My perspective is different in the sense that I have tried to eschew both these boundaries, the national and the imperial. I argue that this move can introduce new ideas into colonial history, or even help to question it as an analytical grid. The colonialisms of nineteenth-century India are, naturally, present in the Florentine documentation I have studied, as well as in my approach; however, they are often approached or constructed in spaces outside the empire. It is precisely from this improbable viewing place that colonialism can assume new shapes. For all of these reasons, I, like others before me, remain alert to the need for an analysis that does not ignore historical and geographical specificity, and does not forget to take into account the multiplicity of the cultures of colonialism.⁸⁸

The idea of cosmopolitanism—in the sense of the multiplication of centres of historical observation—has been offered as an alternative to transnationalism, which is always accompanied by the underlying idea of the nation even within an approach that requires national boundaries to be overcome. A group of researchers recently sought to provide a response to these limitations of transnationalism, seeking to leave the imperial space and questioning the bilateral circuit between the imperial centre and the colonial periphery.⁸⁹ Employing the oft-repeated idea of the ‘web’, some historians have argued for a transcolonial and transnational approach, but they remain focused on the British Empire. The cases of Gerson da Cunha and Angelo de Gubernatis, including the relationship between the two men, in both Florence and Bombay, confirm the possibilities of a transnational history of colonialism, of a ‘mobile’ history that is capable of looking from many locations, and of shifting linguistic and geographic boundaries that take into account relationships between people that are not defined only by power relations in a colonial context.

Once its main domestic conflicts were resolved, Italy could finally look beyond its frontiers.⁹⁰ The consolidation of a united Italy was inseparable from

⁸⁸ Nicholas Thomas, ‘Cultura e Poder: Teorias do Discurso Colonial’, in *Deslocalizar a ‘Europa’: Antropologia, Arte, Literatura e História na Pós-colonialidade*, ed. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (Lisbon: Cotovia, 2005).

⁸⁹ Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy, eds., *Decentring Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World* (London and Hyderabad: Sangam, 2006).

⁹⁰ Giuseppe Flora argues that scholarly interest in India had already developed in Italy in the first half of the nineteenth century. This interest decreased with the growth of domestic problems during the Risorgimento. Flora, ‘L’India nella Cultura Storica e Civile Italiana della prima Metà Dell’Ottocento’, in *La Conoscenza Dell’Asia e Dell’Africa in Italia nei Secoli xviii e xix*, vol. I, part I, ed. Ugo Marazzi (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1984), p. 32. The bibliography on this period of Italy’s history is vast: Filippo Mazzonis, *La Monarchia e il Risorgimento* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003); Ernesto Ragionieri, ‘La Storia Politica e Sociale’, in *Storia D’Italia*, vol. IV, part 3, *Dall’Unità a Oggi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976); Raffaele Romanelli, *L’Italia Liberale (1861–1900)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1979).

the construction of its place in Europe; however, once it was realised that the possession of colonies contributed to the solidification of its position among the European nation-states, Italy also sought to expand beyond its frontiers. This new colonial project had direct consequences for the configuration of Italian orientalism. During the first decades after unification, the search for relationships with the Orient was mainly intellectual and commercial, constituting a type of ‘innocent’ orientalism. Later, however, the Italian nation felt the need to follow the colonialist example set by other European nations. In the same way that the knowledges and languages of intellectual Europe were increasingly part of the colonisation effort, the new and renewed nineteenth-century disciplines found in the colonies a justification for their scientific development. Angelo de Gubernatis, the central figure in Italian orientalism, is an example of this change in posture. With one eye fixed on the centre of Europe, seeking to imitate its cultural practices and recreate a kind of republic of letters in the humanist tradition, he gradually turned towards the project of constructing a non-European Italy.

Durba Ghosh describes the foreign archive as a ‘contact zone’.⁹¹ Florence in the second half of the nineteenth century was a globalised, transnational and transcolonial ‘contact zone’: a place where Indians or residents of India, men and some women, who wished to be connected with the orientalist initiatives of Angelo de Gubernatis, could send letters and objects; the place where Gubernatis established institutions, journals, exhibition spaces and instruments of knowledge about India; the place where countless travel narratives about India, written by Italians, were published. In other words, it was a place where Indians such as Gerson da Cunha came to participate in the development of knowledge about India. The only difference is that in the case of Florence, we are not speaking of the ‘archive’ of a colonised or colonising nation, but rather of a city that was apparently oblivious to such categories.

Today, evidence of this relationship between India and Florence is completely marginalised in the institutional and cultural structure of the city, just as it is marginalised by its Renaissance-dominated historiographical interests. The institutions, journals and museum that were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century, and which bore in their names the words ‘India’ or ‘Orient’, have all disappeared. And the documents and objects that were central to this discourse are now almost unnoticed, as demonstrated by the exhibits forming the Indian Museum of Florence that was established in 1886. They are now kept

⁹¹ Durba Ghosh, ‘National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegenation: Britain and India’, in Burton, *Archive Stories*.

in the basement of the National Anthropology Museum, invisible to the public as well as to the canons of history.

Bayly defines oriental studies in India as a heterogeneous arena of debate, where the strongest—the British and the Indian elite—appropriated the themes and symbols they believed necessary for their political demands, and adapted their intellectual references accordingly.⁹² However, if this definition takes into account the participation of Indians in these discursive formations, something that is palpable in Bayly's work, it does not contemplate many other cases where the orientalist is neither British nor Indian from British India. In fact, neither Gubernatis nor Gerson da Cunha—nor, for that matter, many of the men in their circles in Bombay and Florence who were involved in the construction of an India that was within and beyond them—fits into this colonial binomial that is projected onto India. If the Florentine experience raises questions about the common association between orientalism and other forms of knowledge and colonial power, it also reveals how orientalism is not a static phenomenon, even when the places or the people who form it are the same. Italian orientalism underwent several transformations over the years, beginning as an 'innocent' orientalism during the first decades, when it focused on an egalitarian dialogue with its 'others', and transforming at the end of the century into a kind of practical and useful orientalism inseparable from the new Italian colonial project.

Analysing Florentine orientalism and its relationship with India, in the form of the relationship between Gubernatis and Gerson da Cunha, enabled me to escape the normal dualism of Britain–India or Portugal–India and also confronted me with other problems. This peripheral orientalism, in which Angelo de Gubernatis was the most active and most visible figure, and in which Gerson da Cunha occupied the privileged position of the 'native' intellectual, the "oriental orientalist", shows us the advantages of studying the peripheries of the knowledge about Asia—the 'other' orientalism referred to in the title. Here the word 'other' is used in its multiple meanings. First, it is used in the sense in which it has been used and abused whenever we speak of the relationship between the West and the rest of the world, 'us' and 'them'. That is, it refers to those orientalism produced by the 'others' who are normally the object of 'our' discourse, the Indians, in their multiplicity and their diversity, and by those who, while not Indians, have lived in India for a long time and who write from there. Second, 'others' is used to refer to 'other' discursive, institutional and exhibitionary orientalist formations that have not been considered central to European orientalism, which is almost always exemplified by such colonial

⁹² Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 360.

metropolises as London or Paris. Finally, I also seek to move the habitual Indian centre of learning from Calcutta to Bombay, a city that is normally associated with commerce rather than with intellectual production. Through Gerson da Cunha's circle of friends, his connections with Bombay's learned institutions and his participation in specialist journals published in the city, this book seeks to show how Bombay also deserves to be part of the geography of Indian knowledge, that is, of 'other' orientalism within India. This can be achieved not only by analysing the production of knowledge about India in Bombay, but also by recognising the city's role in the initial stages of Indian nationalism (the first Indian National Congress took place in Bombay in 1885).

In India as in Italy, off the beaten path between the metropole and the colonial space, we found 'other' orientalism that, in the peripheries, historical as well as historiographical, in the nineteenth century itself as also in current studies on the nineteenth century, can contribute to multiply the centres of this debate. Outside the colonial context, in a provincial city within a recently formed nation that was located at the margins of European power, Florentine orientalism can help question and, above all, enrich many of the categories used in the discussion of the concept of orientalism during the past thirty years since Said published his seminal work. Although this study does not directly examine the history of an overseas space, or analyse the relationship between nation and empire, between the metropole and the colonies, as has been the goal of post-colonial historiography, one of my arguments is that by moving between different spaces, colonialism can be approached from different angles.

From the point of view of a marginal and neutral city like Florence, enclosed in the rhetoric of the Renaissance that prevents the city from revealing its other identities, India, Bombay or Goa necessarily become different spaces, distinct from the spaces exposed by a metropolitan or colonial gaze. From Florence, unconnected as it was with the imperial space, it is possible to observe these same imperial spaces without the limitations that historiography, as much as geography, has the strength to impose. This has allowed me to see without being seen, just like Gubernatis in India, to hear the confidences of Indians who were not afraid to reveal them to an Italian who spoke Sanskrit and who did not appear threatening.

The relative invisibility of Angelo de Gubernatis's archive, in a library in which the nineteenth century is still too recent and unimportant, reflects the marginal nature of Florentine orientalism during the second half of the nineteenth century. As well as the name of Gerson da Cunha, Gubernatis's correspondence contains the names of many other Indians: scholars, princes, specialists in Sanskrit, collectors, people interested in establishing a relationship

with Gubernatis and with the India that he was creating in Florence through his exhibitions, congresses, journals, museums and institutions. This archive, in proving the circulation of an orientalist knowledge outside the colonial or imperial space, casts doubts on the association between the production of knowledge and discourses of authority, particularly of colonial authority. What is at issue is not only the fact that Indian scholars, particularly Gerson da Cunha, were participating in a European orientalism that was outside the British Empire; the issue is that they might have wanted to participate in this orientalism precisely because it was marginal to the colonial space. Florence demonstrated its interest in India, and India also made known its interest in Florence, a city that, at the time, was as well known as it was peripheral. The forms of mobility, the flow of correspondence, the sharing of interests and the exchange of orientalist objects and ideas beyond the frontiers of empires enables an understanding of colonial India through different lenses.

Florence as a Centre for Oriental Studies

Italian Unification and the Role of Angelo de Gubernatis

WHAT WAS THE wider context in which oriental studies in Florence flourished, culminating in the Fourth International Conference of Orientalists in 1878? Among other things, we can isolate the conjunction of two factors: on the one hand, the choice of Florence as the Italian capital between 1864–65 and 1871 and, on the other, the congregation in that city from that moment of a large number of Italian scholars of many disciplines.¹ Naturally, these two factors are inseparable. Even allowing for the fact that the plan to establish Florence as the capital was very quickly abandoned in favour of Rome, which became the capital in 1871, the short period of time during which Florence was the capital was enough for there to be significant consequences. In fact, the nomination of Florence as Italy's capital, after Turin, represented a material investment that facilitated the creation of several academic institutes and organisations, consequently attracting men who were prepared to accept the recently created positions.²

The heterogeneous group of people who came to Florence, which included Turin's Angelo de Gubernatis, was at the centre of the first phase of Italian unification in which the construction of a common identity involved the establishment of relations with intellectual Europe, from which Italy had until then been excluded.³ Gubernatis's efforts to strengthen the links with Europe's

¹ The Grand Duchy of Tuscany ceased to exist in 1859, and Leopold II was obliged to leave the region that now formed part of the recently created Kingdom of Italy. For information on the relationship between German orientalism and the birth of German nationalism, see Marc Cluet, 'Avant-propos', in *La Fascination de L'Inde en Allemagne, 1800–1933*, ed. Marc Cluet (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), pp. 12–13, 23.

² The bibliography on this period, which is commonly referred to as 'Firenze Capitale', is characterised by the vast quantity of books on the subject, including Marcello Vannucci, *Un Amor Literario: Firenze Ottocento* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1992); Giovanni Spadolini, *Firenze Capitale: Gli Anni di Ricasoli* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1979); Spadolini, *Firenze Capitale* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967); Ugo Pesci, *Firenze Capitale (1865–1870): Dagli Appunti di un Ex-cronista* (Florence: R. Bemporad and Figlio, 1904).

³ We could suggest that the Agrarian, Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition of 1861, which was organised in Florence but which had a national flavour, was one of the first examples of a

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