The Career of Colonel Polier and Late Eighteenth-Century Orientalism★

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I.

This essay is concerned with the career of a somewhat obscure figure in the early history of Orientalism, Colonel Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier, who is however known both to *aficionados* of the early European manuscript collections in the West, as well as to historians of the more obscure aspects of the Enlightenment on the Continent. The occasion for the research on which this essay is based is, in large measure, a project intended to translate the extensive Persian letter-book that Polier (together with his amanuensis, or *munshī*, Kishan Sahay) produced during his long stay in India; this translation, of a text entitled *I'jāz-i-Arsalānī* (which is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris), has recently been brought to partial fruition by Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi, through the auspices of Oxford University Press (Delhi). In this context, it may be useful to reflect somewhat on the rather extraordinary career, and fascinating *milieu*, of Colonel Polier.[1]

The family records of the Poliers suggest a lineage with origins dating back to mediaeval times. In the twelfth century, for example, they were involved in military engagements against the English, and a Polier is also to be found associated with the French King, Louis IX (St. Louis). The establishment of one part of the Polier family in Switzerland dates, however, to the mid-sixteenth century, and we find traces of a certain Jehan (Jean) Polier, "from Ville Franche" (Rouergue) among the list of supplicants before the Syndics and Council of Geneva, on 5 December 1553.[2] The next year, 1554, he married a certain Catherine de La Boutière, from Cluny-en-Maconnais. Two versions exist of his arrival in Switzerland. The one, less probable, has it that Jean Polier left France to escape persecution at the time of the religious wars that beset the last decades of the Valois monarchy. Another version, generally deemed more probable, would have it that Polier arrived in Switzerland as interpreter and secretary of a French embassy to the Swiss League.[3] Soon after his marriage (and perhaps his conversion to Protestantism),

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★: This essay owes much to Muzaffar Alam, who encouraged me to write it, and equally to Kapil Raj, whose work on the late eighteenth-century intellectual encounter between Indians and Europeans is largely drawn upon here.

[1] The context of the Euro-Indian intellectual encounter in the last years of the eighteenth century has recently been addressed in C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996).

[2] Paul F. Geisendorf (ed.), *Livre des Habitants de Genève, Vol. i (1549–1560)* (Geneva, 1957), pp. 28–9.

[3] Eugène and Emily Haag, *La France Protestante*, Vol. viii (Paris, 1858), pp. 274–83, entry for "Polier".

JRAS, Series 3, 10, 1 (2000), pp. 43–60

Polier left Geneva, to offer his services to the Elector of the Palatinate, where in 1557 he rose to be State Councillor. He seems later to have returned to Geneva, while remaining on good terms with the French monarchy (which would clearly not have been the case had he fled France from persecution). However, the aftermath of the celebrated St. Bartholomew's Day massacre on 24 August 1572 in Paris, when many Huguenots (and most prominently Admiral Gaspard de Coligny), were killed with the connivance of Charles IX, seems to have changed the nature of Polier's relations with France. We find a "Monsieur Polier, secrètaire de Roy", listed on 3 May 1574, among the French and foreigners who had asked for refuge in Lausanne "on account of the massacres and persecutions for the Christian religion", and in April of the following year we are aware that he was granted the status of burgher (*bourgeois*) in that city, where he remained until his death in 1602.[4]

Jean Polier had five children, of whom the second, Jacques Polier (d. 1623), in turn founded a branch of the family that is usually called the "Bottens branch". His son, Jean-Pierre Polier (d. 1677) held a number of significant offices, such as Lieutenant-Colonel of the militia in the Vaud region, and rose in 1655 to the position of burgomaster of Lausanne. He also displayed a certain literary talent, which when combined with a mystical inclination, helps to explain the nature of his principal works on such subjects as the Apocalypse, the Jewish notion of the imminent arrival of the Messiah, and the Fall of Babylon. Of the children of Jean-Pierre Polier, it was the older son, another Jean-Pierre (1670–1747), who continued the line at Bottens. He served at Vaud, and in Prussia, and played a role in the Swiss cantonal wars of 1712 at Villmergen, fighting for the Protestant cantons against the Catholic ones. From his only marriage, with Salomé Quisard, he is reputed to have had as many as twenty-five children, of whom some twelve are known to posterity. Besides these children, he also left behind an unfinished set of memoirs, preserved in manuscript at the Lausanne Library. From amongst his children, it was the oldest, Jacques-Henri-Etienne Polier (b. 1700), who succeeded him, and from his marriage with Françoise Moreau (solemnised in 1721) was born Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier (1741–1795), who is our primary concern here.

The family of Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier may thus be characterised by two tendencies. A number of members served in wars in Europe, fighting in Switzerland, Germany, Spain, and the Low Countries. There was thus a fairly lively military and mercenary heritage, even before the departure of his paternal uncle Paul-Philippe Polier (1711–1758), who went off to serve the English East India Company in India. At the same time, however, there was an intellectual heritage, as we see from the case of the grandfather, and the great-grandfather; a particularly noted intellectual was a great-uncle, Georges Polier (1675–1759), who was Professor of Greek and Moral Philosophy at the Lausanne Academy, later Professor of Hebrew, and the author of a number of works of a religious nature. Of still greater significance is a paternal uncle, Jean-Antoine-Noé Polier (1713–83), the brother of Paul-Philippe, who was noted as a Protestant pastor, but equally as a correspondent of Voltaire and of the Encyclopaedists.[5] Educated at Leiden, where he defended a thesis in 1739 comparing the purity of Arabic and Hebrew, Antoine-Noé Polier (as he is usually known) displayed the same sustained interest in Hebrew that had characterised earlier generations of his family. While his relations with Voltaire were at times uncertain (the latter treating the former with ostensible respect, mixed with a secret contempt), Polier's essay on the Messiah did find a place in Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, with the following quite complimentary introductory remark (in which we may nevertheless discern a sarcastic undertone): "This article is by Monsieur Polier of Bottens. He is the principal pastor at Lausanne. His science equals his piety. He composed this article for the great *Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, in which it was inserted. Only a few portions were suppressed, where the examiners believed that Catholics who were less knowledgeable and less pious than the author could misuse them. It was received with the applause of all wise men."[6]

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[4] "Liste des réfugiés français à Lausanne", in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme*, XXI (1872), p. 476.

[5] On Voltaire, his contemporaries, and India, also see Sylvia Murr, "Les conditions de l'émergence du discours

The most important single document that has come down to us from Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier, of a comprehensive biographical nature, is the personal notice that he dictated to his cousin, and which he is said himself to have revised and corrected.[7] This text was then published by the same cousin, Marie-Elisabeth Polier (or the Chanoinesse de Polier, as she is usually known) in the preface to the posthumously published text by Polier entitled *Mythologie des Indous* (Roudolstadt/Paris, 1809), containing paraphrases of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, among other texts. A brief introduction is needed to the life and work of the Chanoinesse in this context. Born in 1742 (and thus a mere year younger than Polier himself), she was the daughter of his paternal uncle Georges Polier, a colonel in the service of Hanover, Marie-Elisabeth, like her sister Jeanne-Louise-Antoinette (or Eléonore) had literary ambitions, despite the fact that she had a religious vocation as well, as the Chanoinesse of the Reformed Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Prussia. Bilingual in German and French, she is noted for having published a number of translations from the former to the latter, besides participating in a number of literary reviews, most notably the *Journal littéraire de Lausanne*, which she edited from 1793 to 1800. Named Dame of Honour at the court of Saxe-Meiningen, she eventually died in Roudolstadt in 1817.

We are thus dealing with more than a mere scribe here, and one might suspect that Marie-Elisabeth Polier put her own literary talents to use in "improving" Polier's text. This may explain some of the curious inconsistencies that we find there from the very start, where Paul-Philippe Polier is described not as commander of the garrison at Fort St. George, Madras, but of Fort William in Calcutta.[8] Thus, to take the text from its very beginning, Antoine Polier writes:

"Born at Lausanne in the Vaud country, of a family of French origin but established and naturalised in Switzerland, I had from my infancy conceived the desire to see Asia, and

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sur l'Inde au Siècle des Lumières", in *Inde et Littérature, Collection Puruṣārtha* 7, ed. Marie-Claude Porcher (Paris, 1983), pp. 233–84.

[6] Article "Polier", in *La France Protestante*, pp. 278–9, collated with the article "Polier" from the *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Suisse*, Vol. v (Neuchatel, 1930), p. 313.

[7] Section reproduced in Georges Dumézil, "Préface", *Le Mahabarat et le Bhagavat du colonel de Polier (Mythologie des Indous: Selections)* (Paris, 1986), pp. 14–21.

[8] On Paul-Philippe Polier, also see Emile Piguet, "Paul-Philippe Polier et la reddition du fort Saint-David aux Indes", *Revue historique vaudoise*, May-June 1933, pp. 174–86.

there rejoin my uncle, who in English service, was commandant of Calcutta. Though my education had been rather neglected, I was at the age of fifteen years quite advanced in mathematics, and besides, I had my head full of a prodigious reading that I had undertaken, without direction, choice, or sequence; for I had emptied shelf after shelf from the reading cabinets established at Lausanne and at Neufchatel, where I had been sent on a pension to the institute of Professor de Montmollin. I left it, in the year 1756, in order to profit from an opportunity that presented itself to go to England, from where I embarked in the year 1757 for India, and I arrived in this land [India] in the month of June 1758, aged seventeen years. It was in the peninsula below the Ganges, theatre of the war which at that time was going on between the two rival European nations, that I disembarked. Calcutta had been besieged by the French, and the uncle whom I had the intention of rejoining had been killed shortly before my arrival, while defending that place".

This seems a rather curious view of events, for Calcutta in 1758, after the Battle of Plassey, was not being besieged by the French; on the other hand, Fort St. George in Madras was at this time the centre of a protracted conflict. It appears that Marie-Elisabeth Polier has introduced her own notions of India's geography into the text here. The memoir then continues, rather more accurately:

"Absolutely isolated by this event, I entered as a simple cadet in the service of the English Company, and I began my career against the French on the coast of Orissa [Orixa], from where we marched into Bengal to combat the Indians. These diverse campaigns having come to a close, we returned to Patna at the end of 1760. But the English being at war with the Schasada [Shahzada], I was appointed as engineer in the body of the army that was marching against the Nabab. On our return from the campaign, I was employed as inspector of the works in which the inactive troops were engaged, and soon after I was called to Calcutta to fill the post there of assistant engineer (*ingénieur en second*). On arriving in that town, I was given the general charge of all the works of fortification and, in September 1762, I was named Chief Engineer with the rank of Captain. An advancement as considerable as this at the age of twenty-one years augmented my zeal for service, and filled me with hope concerning my military career. However, at the end of two years, a newly-arrived English officer was appointed to the post that I occupied; but my superiors, while informing me of the orders that they had received, gave such positive testimonies of their satisfaction with my conduct, and the prospects that the campaign which was about to begin against Shuja'-ud-Daula and the Marathas gave me such pleasure, that I little regretted the post that was being taken away from me, all the more so for I was allowed to keep my title and my rank of Engineer and Captain. I thus rejoined the army in these two capacities. When the campaign was over, I returned to Calcutta, where I found Milord Cleves [Lord Clive] who was preparing his famous expedition. Promoted to the rank of Major, I joined his army, and he gave me the command of the Cypayes, the body of Indian troops who were a part of the second brigade; and as he had particularly attached me to his own person and since he honoured me with his confidence, he gave me the charge of looking to those of the officers of his army who, unhappy with his operations, conceived of dangerous plots to undermine them".

The reference is presumably to the Buxar campaign of 1764 and the celebrated "White Mutiny" of that time; and here Polier makes a clear reference to the first of his English patrons (of whom there were to be a succession), namely Robert Clive. He then continues:

> "I had the happiness of unmaking their intrigues. The brilliant success that this expedition had is known in Europe. In my own case, I was so content with my position that without an express order from the Government, I would not have changed it. But the government, unhappy with the Chief Engineer who had replaced me in Calcutta, recalled me to that town and, besides handing me back the post that I had occupied, added to it that of the commander of the troops who formed the garrison of that place. Being sensitive to this flattering mark of the contentment that the military administration manifested with regard to my services, I quit the army and settled down in Calcutta, where I awaited with confidence the brevet of Lieutenant-Colonel, which I knew that London was already to send me, when – instead of receiving it – there arrived an order from the Directors of the East India Company which held back my advancement on the pretext that I was not born English (*que je n'étais pas né anglais*). Despite softening the injustice by allowing me to retain the posts that I was occupying, I felt this slight deeply; and once the Bengal Council had unsuccessfully made the strongest representations in my favour in order to obtain for me the redressal of this wrong, I hesitated no more to profit from the goodwill of Mr. Hastings, and from the credit that he had with the Nababs, who had become the allies of the English".

Polier's view of his own situation is thus somewhat ambiguous. He insists that a form of xenophobia reigned at the time, not in Bengal, but amongst the Directors in London, who denied him his due because "I was not born English". It is of minor significance that he prefers the term "English" to "British", the latter allowing the explicit possibility of including the Scots among the privileged. It seems however that Polier does not insist overmuch here on his French origins as the reason for his exclusion, merely his foreign birth. We are aware that in the 1760s and 1770s, a number of battles and intrigues were carried on within the English Company over similar questions. A prominent case is that of William Bolts, author of the celebrated *Considerations on India Affairs*, who was in all probability born in Germany.[9] Ironically, at least some of Bolts's opponents, men who accused him with a certain facility of a lack of "patriotism", were themselves of Dutch descent, as was the case with his arch-enemy Harry Verelst, and also Henry Vansittart. In the case of Polier, while being a Huguenot of French origin, we have seen that his family was very closely involved with German courtly life in the period, not least of all in Hanover, the place of origin of the ruling monarchs of England at the time. Nevertheless, the "pretext", as he himself puts it, of foreign origins was available to be used against him.

Polier's situation may also have been rather more complex in this regard than he admits to in his autobiographical narrative. The Comte du Modave, in his account of this period, does mention him in the context of a curious episode, by which the French Company official Jean-Baptiste Chevalier, managed to get hold of confidential plans detailing the defences of Fort William in Calcutta. As Modave notes:

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[9] Cf. Willem G. J. Kuiters, *Les Britanniques au Bengale, 1756–1773: Une société en transition vue à travers la biographie d'une rebelle: William Bolts (1739–1808)*, (Ph.D. thesis, Paris, EHESS, 1998).

> "Here is the manner in which Monsieur Chevalier procured an exact plan of this place [Calcutta]. There was in the service of the English Company a Swiss officer called Major Polier. He is a man of merit, full of honour and probity, who has some knowledge of geometry and fortifications. He was at that time at the fort of Calcutta, with the charge of making up its plans and elevations. Major Polier likes good company and all honest men are well-received at his home. Monsieur Chevalier availed, or rather abused, of this facility and, by means of a Frenchman who frequented the house of Major Polier, he corrupted a mestizo who was copying these plans and these elevations under the direction of the Major. A small sum of money was enough to settle the matter. The wretch betrayed his master and his duty, and handed over all the papers that were in his charge to Monsieur Chevalier. The governor of Chandernagore applauded this action like a victory, without thinking that those who engage others to commit a perfidious act share the shame that is attached to such dishonesty, in the view of honest men".[10]

Chevalier's path was to cross that of Polier on more than one occasion. Somewhat earlier, between April and November 1763, the French Company official (and future governor of Chandernagore) had found himself in contact with the same personages who were to play a major role in Polier's life in north India, while paying a visit to Faizabad, Agra and Allahabad. Chevalier has left behind a brief account of these dealings in his memoirs, though he unfortunately does not mention Polier in them.[11] Other Frenchmen too, notably René Madec and Jean-Baptiste Gentil, were present in Hindustan during these years, and were engaged in complex dealings with the successors to the Mughals, as well as the Mughal court itself, as we shall see below.[12] All these men have left behind more or less elaborate accounts, and in a number of cases we are aware of contacts, as well as rivalries between them, as well as between Polier and his French contemporaries. Perhaps the most celebrated of those who visited India in these years, and left behind an account thereof, was a personage of a rather different order, a voyager and intellectual, rather than an administrator, a mercenary, or a practical man (as were Gentil, Madec and Chevalier). This was the famous Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), born the son of a grocer in Paris, but later to become a student of Paris University, and sometime disciple of the Jansenists. In February 1755 (shortly before Polier), Anquetil departed for India from Europe, with the express intention of mounting an antiquarian expedition in search of ancient manuscripts, which he hoped to translate by learning the relevant languages in India itself. In early August 1755, he arrived at Pondicherry, and the following year made his way to Bengal. Forced to leave Chandernagore when the place was taken by the English Company on 23 March 1757, he then returned south, making his way first to Mahé, then to Goa, and then, in early May 1758 eventually to Surat. Here he remained till

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[10] Jean Deloche (ed.), *Voyage en Inde du Comte du Modave, 1773–1776: Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état actuel du Bengale et de l'Indoustan* (Paris, 1971), p. 77.

[11] Jean Deloche (ed.), *Les aventures de Jean-Baptiste Chevalier dans l'Inde Orientale (1752–1765): Mémoire historique et Journal de Voyage à Asem* (Paris, 1984).

[12] Cf. for example, E. Barbé, *Le Nabab René Madec* (Paris, 1894).

March 1761, staying in close contact with the local Parsis, during a period of some political turmoil for the French, in which Pondicherry itself fell to the English Company on 18 January 1761. He was then taken back to England with a number of French prisoners, and after a brief visit to Oxford (where he made it a point to challenge the professors on their knowledge of ancient and modern Persian), Anquetil returned to Paris in March 1762.[13]

Anquetil is, curiously enough, the key to at least some aspects of how Polier's later career as an Orientalist must be read, precisely because he is so largely absent from Polier's narrative. Unlike Gentil, who maintained very close contacts with Anquetil (and to an extent with Buffon), Polier preferred – despite the fact of his having been, in his own view, unjustly treated by the Directors of the East India Company – to work through a series of English patrons, of whom we have already noted two: Clive and then Hastings. Gentil (1726–1799) had left France in 1752, to serve as an infantry ensign in Pondicherry, and returned to his motherland only in August 1777. When he did so, he at once addressed Anquetil, asking him to intervene in order to obtain a pension to provide subsistence for his family and himself. Earlier, while spending twelve years at Faizabad (under the patronage of Nawab Shujaʿ-ud-Daula), he had been encouraged by Anquetil to search out manuscripts of Indian texts, including the Upanishads, of which Anquetil was to publish a Latin translation at Strasbourg in 1801.[14] In fact, Gentil had sought out the Persian translation (entitled *Sirr-i-Akbar*) of the Upanishads by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh in the seventeenth century, for his patron's use.

Gentil was, as we have noted above, present in Faizabad for some twelve years, until his departure for Chandernagore on 27 February 1775. He represented French interests there, and at the Mughal court, and was, from 1770–71, Captain in the French service as well as holder of the Cross of St. Louis. Like Polier, he too held a title from Shujaʿ-ud-Daula, namely that of *Mudabbir-ul-mulk Rafiʿ-ud-Daula Gentil Bahādur Nāzim-i-Jang*, as well as revenues amounting to 50 000 *livres* in the form of a *jāgīr*. The complicity between men like Gentil and Polier (and somewhat later, Polier and Claude Martin), ostensibly representing rival powers, but held together by networks of sociability and the transmission of knowledge is altogether fascinating. Both were substantially interested not only in manuscript and minature collection, but equally in cartography and in accumulating gazetteer-like information on the Gangetic plain that had a strategic significance in the epoch. As early as 1770, Gentil had supervised the production of a manuscript atlas of the chief provinces of the Mughal empire in North India, using information drawn in part from Abu'l Fazl's *Āʾīn-i-Akbarī*.[15] On his return to France, he too put down on paper his *Mémoires sur l'Indoustan*, which were however published only much later in (1822) after having been reworked by his son. But, far earlier, in 1778, on the occasion of his audience with Louis XVI at Versailles, he had already presented to the monarch a summary history of India (the *Abrégé historique des souverains de l'Indoustan*), based in large measure on the early seventeenth century Persian chronicle of Abu'l Qasim Hindushah, called "Firishta". As regards their life-styles, however, some apparent differences existed between the two. The Catholic Gentil, born at Bagnols-sur-Cèze, married a Luso-Indian named Teresa Velho (the great-niece of the celebrated Dona Juliana Dias de Castro), and returned with her, his brother-in-law, and his mother-in-law, Lucia Mendes Velho to France.

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[13] For the standard accounts of Anquetil, see Raymond Schwab, *Vie d'Anquetil-Duperron, suivie des usages civils et religieux des Parses part Anquetil-Duperron* (Paris, 1934); Jean-Luc Kieffer, *Anquetil-Duperron: L'Inde en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1983).

[14] Francis Richard, "Jean-Baptiste Gentil collectionneur de manuscrits persans", *Dix-huitième siècle*, XXVIII (1996), pp. 91–110.

[15] Susan Gole, *Maps of Mughal India: Drawn by Colonel Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Gentil, agent for the French Government to the Court of Shuja-ud-daula at Faizabad, 1770* (New Delhi, 1988).

Polier, as we know, made different choices. So let us return to Polier's own narrative then. He now goes on to describe his arrival in Awadh, and his growing closeness to the Nawabs there, as well as his dealings with the powerful figure of the warlord, Najaf Khan. His entry into Awadh is reported thus:

> "I accepted the post of architect and engineer that he [Hastings] procured for me with Soujah Aldowla [Shujaʿ-ud-Daula], who was looking for an European who was capable of taking charge of the buildings and fortifications that he was proposing to make in his states. I thus quit Calcutta, to go to Feizabad, where this Nabab lived and, on establishing myself there, I took on the customs and the usages of the Indians with whom I lived".

Having ostensibly "gone native" then, Polier found himself employed in the wars and skirmishes that occupied north India at that time, in which the Jats, the Sikhs, the Afghans, as well as the Mughals were all involved. These were troubles that considerably interested the English in Calcutta as well. We know that they were supplied with considerable information on these questions by the Jesuit François-Xavier Wendel too, who in the late 1760s wrote a series of confidential memoirs on the Jats, the Sikhs and the Pathans for Brigadier-General Richard Smith in Calcutta.[16] But, once more, Polier rather simplifies a complex situation. In fact, Hastings sent Polier to Awadh in 1773 (in the former's own words) notionally "to direct the construction of some Buildings and complete the works of his [Shujaʿ-ud-Daula's] new Town of Fyzabad", but also to act as surveyor there, within the ambit of the project that the Surveyor-General James Rennell had begun in Awadh that year.[17] It is another matter, as a recent historian puts it, that "Polier disappointed both Hastings and Rennell" namely, that two years after his arrival in Awadh, he had still not sent the reports he had promised, nor done much more than help prepare the "Skeleton" of a map of the area.[18] We know that Rennell had finished his map of Bihar and Bengal by 1776, and extended it up to Delhi by the following year. The extent to which Polier contributed to the published map of India that Rennell produced in 1782, on his return to London, remains open to question at present.[19]

II.

It may be suspected that Polier had lost enthusiasm in these years for Company service, and was more interested in building his own fortune. As he himself put it in a statement to the

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[16] Jean Deloche (ed.), *Les mémoires de Wendel sur les Jāṭ, les Paṭhān et les Sikh* (Paris, 1979); a partial translation may be found in Jean Deloche and James Walker, *Wendel's Memoirs on the Origin, Growth and Present State of Jat Power in Hindustan (1768)* (Pondicherry, 1991).

[17] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A very ingenious man: Claude Martin in early colonial India* (Delhi, 1992), pp. 55–6.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[19] For an overview of survey operations in these years, see Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago, 1997).

Bengal Council (of February 1775): "I set off [for Awadh] with the pleasing conceit... that the few years I had to spend in this Country would pass in Tranquillity of mind and that I had at last a Chance of revisiting Europe with a Competent Mediocrity [of money]".[20] But, one of the other reasons for Polier's inability to be as active a collaborator as Rennell might have wished, is his activity as military commander. Here then is how Polier describes his own involvement in the events that followed:

"The warrior temper of the prince in whose service I had entered did not permit him to remain tranquil for any length of time in his own country. He thus took me along with him on an expedition that he was conducting against other Indian princes. A short while afterwards, since Najafs Kan [Najaf Khan], his ally, to whom he had given troops in order to conquer the city of Agra, sent him word that the siege was being dragged out for lack of officers of genius, he ordered me to go there. When I arrived on the spot, Najafs Kan handed me the command of the besieging troops, and I pressed on with the works with such vigour that at the end of twenty days the town surrendered; after which, I rejoined my Nabab and continued the campaign with him".

The lack of modesty aside, this passage is significant for it is the first record of Polier's participation in the upcountry wars, for a party other than the European Companies. But he then goes on to note his divided loyalties at this time.

"Even though I was in his [Shujaʿ-ud-Daula's] service, I still was in that of the Company too, and the confidence that Soujah Aldowla reposed in me excited the jealousy of an English commander who, believing that I had more credit with that prince than I in fact did, intrigued in such a fashion with the Governor-General of India that he sent me an order to quit the army of the Nabab and to return to Feizabad.[21] I obeyed. Once the campaign was over, the Nabab also returned to his residence, smitten by the malady that was to claim his life two months later [January 1775]. However, that event brought no change in my fortunes, for his son and successor Azaph Aldowla [Asaf-ud-Daula] confirmed me in my employment. I was enjoying my position with security and tranquillity when the renewal of the General Council of Administration once more brought changes to it. The majority of the new members were strongly against Mr. Hastings, I owed him the posts that I held, and since they believed that I was entirely devoted to his interests, they took such umbrage at the position that I occupied that they voted to recall me to Calcutta without even according me time to arrange my affairs before such a move. It was necessary to obey, but on arriving in Calcutta and seeing that after ten years of service I could obtain neither favour nor justice from these Gentlemen, I resigned from the service of the Company in the month of November 1775. Free from my responsibilities, I returned to my home in Feizabad, where I was now solely concerned with my own affairs. For the Nabab Azeph Aldowla, under the influence of the agents of the General Council, had already deprived me of my posts, and soon that said Council, abused its power and forced the Nabab to ask me to leave his Estates".

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[20] Oriental and India Office Collections, London, Bengal Secret Consultations, 24 February 1775, cited in Llewellyn-Jones, *A very ingenious man*, p. 56.

[21] The English commander in question was a certain Colonel Champion, with whom Polier had an altercation in the course of a campaign against the Rohilas; cf. Deloche (ed.), *Voyage de Modave*, p. 442n.

This brings us to the period when Polier quits Awadh for Delhi and the direct service of the Mughal court, which is not the central concern of the Persian letters in the *I'jāz-i-Arsalānī*. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to pursue his account to the end, in order to render his career and its multiple phases rather more coherently. We have seen the young military engineer in the English Company's campaigns in Orissa, Bihar and Bengal at the side of Clive; we have seen the Indianised Polier, acting in part at the behest of Hastings and Rennell, but also on his own account, in Awadh and Agra. The next phase of his career takes him to seek the patronage of General Sir Eyre Coote (1726–1783), for whom he puts together a form of "military ethnography", relating to the major powers in north India in the very end of the 1770s.[22] Then, at last, after the arrival of William Jones in Calcutta in 1783, he would turn his talents to becoming an "Orientalist", before returning to Europe. His account of his transition to direct Mughal service thus resumes as follows:

"Pursued thus by the majority of this iniquitous administration [at Calcutta], several reasons, that it would be pointless to detail, caused me to seek refuge in Delhi. I was already known to the Emperor since the year 1761. I offered him my services, and I not only received the most flattering welcome from His Majesty, but he placed me at the head of a corps of 7 000 men with the rank and title of *Omrah*, adding to this favour the gift and property of the district of Khair, a considerable fief which, compensated for the losses that I had incurred on account of my precipitate departure from Faizabad and even allowed me to establish myself at Dehly in an agreeable fashion. Since my employment attached me to the court, and to the suite of the Emperor, I accompanied him on several expeditions that he conducted against his rebel subjects; they had happy outcomes, and His Majesty on his return to Dehly, wishing to recognise my services and compensate me for the expenses that had been occasioned on these diverse campaigns, gave me a second *jaghuir*, or fief, belonging to the Crown. This was a very considerable grant both from the extent of its territories and the number of vassals therein; but since they did not wish to recognise my authority, I was obliged to make war on them on my own account and I sent a large detachment of the troops under my orders on this expedition. Either on account of his incapacity or his ill-luck, the officer who commanded them – far from having the success of which he had been certain – was forced back, his body of troops defeated, and he himself lost his life in this unhappy affair. I still made some attempts to force the insurgents to submit, but I came up against so many obstacles, and each new enterprise brought forth such expense, that finding such a precarious possession not worthwhile, I abandoned it, and was content with those that I already had. I continued in my service with the Emperor".

Polier's transition from Awadh to Delhi is confirmed by the Comte du Modave, at that time present in northern India. In an entry for the months of March–April 1776, he notes the passage of Major Polier through Agra, en route to Delhi, and adds a brief, rather complimentary biographical sketch.

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[22] Sir Eyre Coote sailed for India in 1754, and was at the Battle of Plassey (1757), and the capture of Pondicherry (1761). He then returned to England in 1762, but came back to India as Commander-in-Chief of the Madras army in 1769. After a further brief stint in England, he returned for the last time to India in 1779, after he had been named Commander-in-Chief in 1777. In 1781, he fought against Haidar 'Ali in the Karnatak, and died in Madras in 1783. Also see, in this context, Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier, *Shah Alam II and His Court*, ed. Pratul C. Gupta (reprint, Calcutta, 1989).

"He is an officer of merit, and a truly sound man (*fort homme de bien*). He comes from a family that originates from Poitou, but that has been long settled at Lausanne. He had been sent to Fez-abad to reside with Sujah-daulat, whose affection and confidence he had gained. The changes that occurred in the English administration of Bengal were not favourable to Major Polier. General Claverings sent him an order to return to Calcutta. It was only with infinite pains that he was able to obtain permission to return to Fez-abad to put his affairs in order. He was obliged to pass so many travails and unpleasantness that he decided to enter into Indoustan (*il prit le parti de passer dans l'Indoustan*), having decided to remain there until the representations that had been made in England concerning the conduct of General Claverings had reestablished the old order in the administration of Bengal. This officer had acquired a considerable fortune from the advantages that Sujah-daulat had afforded him; but he had equally gone on spending it, so that he was in some difficulties to survive. He was very well received by the Emperor, to whom he had been known for a long time. All possible favours were done for him, but he could not solve his problems, and was obliged to sell one after the other the jewels and rareties that he had gathered in the times of his good fortune at Fez-abad. The Padcha [at last] sent him a *paravana* for the possession of a *jaguir* that he ceded to him".[23]

Modave goes on to note that Najaf Khan had then impeded Polier from acceding to his *jāgīr*, mainly because he was piqued at the fact that Polier had approached the Emperor without passing first through him. He also lavishes further compliments on Polier, whom he claims helped him a good deal while he was at Delhi (unlike Madec, to whom Modave is largely hostile in his account). Now, Polier's presence in these years at the court of Shah 'Alam II would permit him to act as a precious source of information in the years that were to follow. His remarks on the Mughal Emperor in this memoir are short, and predictably dismissive:

"This prince, good[-hearted] to the point of weakness, had a Prime Minister so avid for authority and riches, who used his influence on the spirit of Scha Alow for the sole purpose of distancing the prince from the servants who were truly loyal, and then replaced them with his own creatures. The irritation that this conduct inspired in all the Nababs who were to be found at the court, and particularly in Najafs Kan, the most important from amongst them, occasioned so many cabals and intrigues that it was easy to predict the events that were to result from it".

Meanwhile, Polier had not forgotten his earlier attachment to the Company, and obviously kept his ear to the ground for news from Calcutta and London. It was with some relief that he heard therefore that the star of Hastings was once more on the ascendant, after the gloomy phase that he had previously described.

"I had learnt that the General Council of Administration, in its latest renewal, was now composed in the majority of members who were as well disposed to Mr. Hasting as those of the preceding Council had been against him; a circumstance that made me hope that I could, on entering once more into the dependence of the Company, manage to terminate those private affairs that I had left in Faizabad. I occupied myself with the requisite steps towards my intention, when the arrival in India of General Cootes facilitated it. I had known this worthy officer for a long time, and had communicated several historical memoirs concerning the diverse provinces of North-West India to him. He honoured me with his concern, occupied himself with my interests, thus the English Company could not refuse him my recall. I obtained permission from the Emperor to accompany this general to Benares, where I stayed with him during the entire period of his sojourn in those provinces, and by his intercession, I found myself reintegrated with the Nabab Azeph Aldowla in the posts that the mistrust of the Company had caused me to lose".

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[23] Deloche (ed.), *Voyage de Modave*, p. 441.

We thus have the third in the series of patrons that Polier chooses to reveal to us, all of them prominent men in the administration and military hierarchy of the Company in northern India. Polier is again a little disingenuous here, for he does not tell us that he had hedged his bets, and maintained contacts (possibly through his friend Claude Martin), with Sir Philip Francis, the chief rival of Warren Hastings in the Bengal Council between 1774 and 1780. It was thus Francis who, before his departure from India in 1780 (the year when he fought his celebrated duel with Hastings), arranged for permission to be given for Polier to return to Awadh as architect and engineer to the Nawab; and Polier, for his part, purchased miniatures of the Mughal rulers for Francis's personal collection.[24] But since Warren Hastings remained Governor-General till 1785, Polier continued to entertain close contacts with him as well, the more so since Hastings became the inadvertent cause of a new set of problems that Polier came to face. This resulted from changes at the Mughal court, related in part to the growing dominance of Najaf Khan. As Polier himself puts it:

"While I was felicitating myself for this reversal in fortune, there was an insurrection at Dehly, occasioned by the false and dangerous counsels that Sha-Allow had been receiving from his perfidious minister, and this crisis allowed Najafs Kan to open the eyes of the Emperor, who had begun to suspect treason. This prince ordered the arrest and imprisonment of the guilty one, and placed the authority in the hands of Najafs Kan. But this Nabab, despite the essential service that I had rendered him at the siege of Agra and on a number of other occasions, profited from the power that the fall of the Prime Minister had given him, to take over by brute force the fief that I had received from the Emperor. I had just received this unhappy news when, on account of the new arrangements that were put into place between Mr. Hasting and the Nabab Azaph Aldowla, the posts that I occupied with this [latter] prince were abolished, which meant that from the most brilliant heights of fortune I was reduced to nearly nothing. For not only was all that I had acquired during my stay in India now in the hands of this Nabab, but he owed me considerable arrears besides, for which I could not obtain payment".

The reference is to the General Order for the expulsion of European from Awadh, issued by Hastings on 8 November 1781, against which both Polier and Martin duly protested, the former because he was reputedly owed as much as Rs. 27 lakhs by Asaf-ud-Daula. The pendulum swung back once more, though, this time because Hastings intervened again in the matter, granting Polier his exemption in February 1782.

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[24] Llewellyn-Jones, *A very ingenious man*, pp. 92–3.

"As the innocent cause of this last disgrace, Mr. Hasting felt that justice required some compensation. He obtained the brevet of Lieutenant-Colonel for me from the Bengal Council, as well as exemption from service and the right to reside at Laknau, in order to work there towards the arrangement of my affairs and the recovery of my funds. I formed a third establishment there, and it was there that I used my leisure to write down and augment the historical memoirs that I had composed for the benefit of General Cootes, and above all those relating to the history of the Sikhs".

We now move to the last phase of Polier's Indian career, a phase which is notable for its changed orientation, possibly as a consequence of the new intellectual currents that were beginning to establish themselves in Calcutta, through the intervention of such men as William Jones. Jones, born in 1746, already enjoyed a considerable intellectual reputation on his arrival in India in 1783 as junior judge of the Calcutta Supreme Court. This reputation was owed, after his Oxford education, to such enterprises as his translation of the Persian history of Nadir Shah by Mirza Muhammad Mahdi, *Tārīkh-i-Jahāngusha-i-Nādirī*, into French and then English in the early 1770s, as well as his fiery denunciation of Anquetil-Duperron, whose own disdain for Oxford scholarship we have already noted above.[25] The Jones-Anquetil debate has been read and reread in the decades and centuries that have followed, with the pendulum of scholarly approval swinging from the one to the other, but this is scarcely the point at issue. A recent study by Lucette Valensi points to the fact that a certain romanticism prevails in the heroic construction of Anquetil, as the man who opposed the notion of Oriental Despotism in Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) with his own construction of a "rational" East in *Législation orientale* (1778).[26] Despite the praise lavished on him by Raymond Schwab (and more recently Edward Said), it turns out that Anquetil is no particular defender of the oppressed and downtrodden, no great theorist of universal human rights. Instead, his hostility for England led Anquetil as late as 1798, to propose a French project for the conquest of India, to be conducted by the merchant, the soldier and the linguist. Soft India, inhabited by a lazy and torpid people, who are condemned to despotism by their climate, is a theme in Anquetil as much as in those who are often considered to be his ideological opponents. There is thus little point to seeing the couple Jones-Anquetil in Manichaean terms, yet there is some sense in analysing differences in their methods and intellectual standpoints. In this context, it is worth noting that when Polier decided to reinvent himself in his last years in India as an Orientalist, it was in part the Jonesian mode that he chose. This required him, as we shall see in looking to his Persian letters, to invert many of his earlier priorities, and to see India itself through new eyes and categories. Here then is Polier, speaking of himself, but also of all other European savants in India:

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[25] Kapil Raj, "Manufacturing Trust: William Jones and the Anglo-Indian Administration of the East India Company's Territories", unpublished mss.

[26] Lucette Valensi, "Eloge de l'Orient, Eloge de l'Orientalisme: Le jeu d'échecs d'Anquetil-Duperron", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, CCXII, no. 4 (1995), pp. 419–52.

"As the course of my researches on this matter [viz. on the Sikhs etc.] brought me in due time to the Indous [Hindus], and to the religion of this people that is indigenous to India, I found myself embarrassed on a great number of points, and greatly astonished that after such a long stay in India (where I had spent more time with the natives of the land than with the Europeans), I still knew so little, and so poorly understood, the basis of their primitive mythology. However, nothing is so common as this ignorance. First, because on arriving in India, we bring to it ideas that are taken from travellers' accounts which, with a few exceptions, merit little faith for, since most of them have neither the time nor the desire to make a profound study of this system, the little that they have seized upon is so muddled, and a mix of the true and the false, that one can hardly find the thread. Second, because the Indians who are educated and therefore in a position to set out clearly the prodigious chaos of this mythology are such rare beings, that one is easily discouraged. Without the advantage of possessing the Samscrite, or sacred, tongue of the Indous, which the Pundits or savants so constantly draw upon in their usual discourse it is difficult for me to follow their conversation, even though I have a deep knowledge (*je possède à fond*) of the common tongue of India, called *Moors* by the English, and *Ourdouzebain* by the natives of the land".

Polier now continues, pointing to the importance of finding the appropriate "native" interlocutor:

"A happy chance presented me with a man who brought together in himself the qualities necessary to make up for my ignorance of Samscrit, and to meet the desire I had to be instructed in depth on the mythological, primitive and fundamental opinions on the Indous. This man, called Ramtchund, had been the instructor of the celebrated Sir [William] Jones, my friend. He lived in Sultanpour, near Lahore, he had voyaged a good deal and had traversed all the provinces of northern and western India. He was Sikh by religion and from the noble tribe of the Kattris; and even if, unlike the Bramines, he did not have the exclusive access to public instruction, he had like all Kattris the right to hear the sacred books read out. Being gifted besides with a prodigious memory, with a great deal of intelligence, of order, of clarity of mind, and being well-versed in the poetic texts and the Puram [Puranas] that contain the mythological system, Ramtchund also had two Bramines who were constantly attached to his entourage, whom he consulted on difficult points and who, through their explanations, allowed him to respond to all my questions and to instruct me in depth, not only on the religion and the history of the Sikhs, but even on the mythology of the Indous, who are linked to this people [the Sikhs] by so many ties".

Here then is an essential part of the strategy of authority invoked by Polier. He has a Sikh instructor, but at the same time has access to the deep knowledge of two Brahmins. Besides, Ramchand Khattri is not just any Sikh, but someone who basks in the reflected glory of the celebrated Sir William Jones, no less. To conclude the account then:

"Satisfied by the idea of having an instructor who was capable of aiding me in the diverse researches on which I was embarked, I had Ramtchund stay at my home. He never left me, and I began to work, and I wrote down under his dictation the historical précis of three epic poems, the *Marconday*, the *Ramein Purby*, the *Mahabarat* and that of the avatars or incarnations of Vichnou, the history of Chrisnen, and all the fables and legends concerning the Deiotas or intermediate beings, the Bhagts or saints, and the famous personages from their mythology, in a word the entire system such as it was at its origin, such as it was in its variants, and which when seen from its true vantage point, differs greatly from that by which I had considered it before having an in-depth knowledge thereof, and it also differs from the ideas that have been formed thereof in Europe. Once our work was done, I submitted it to the revision of the Bramines and doctors of my acquaintance, or to my friends. They unanimously confirmed the exacitude and the fidelity of the teachings of Ramtchund, from whom I was never separated until the moment when, having managed to recover a great part of the money that was due to me in India, I embarked on the vessel that brought me back to Europe, where I arrived in July 1788, after thirty-two years of absence, of which I had passed thirty in India".

The neophyte Sanskritist Polier had still one more card to play though. A tireless procurer of manuscripts, it turned out that he had managed to obtain manuscripts of the Vedas in Jaipur, through the mediation of his friend Dom Pedro da Silva, physician at the court of Raja Pratap Sing; he sent one copy thereof to Sir William Jones, and the other to Sir Joseph Banks at the British Museum, while visiting London in May 1789. Polier's submission before Jones, and scholarship in England, is total at this point. He declares that he is handing the books over to the British Museum as "an homage and a tribute [testifying to] the respect and the admiration that your country, more than any other, commands from a man who, without being a subject born in England, has devoted a great many years to its service". As for William Jones, he commends Banks to address himself directly to him for any further information, and notes: "I hastened to send them [the volumes] to Calcutta to Sir William Jones, at the time the sole European in India who possessed that tongue [Sanskirt]. I have no doubt at all that the Memoirs of the Asiatic Society will very soon transmit to us the judgement which that famous man, so far above all of my praise, will pass on these books", particularly in relation to the *Atharva Veda*, reputedly of doubtful authenticity.

Much work remains to be done on the history of European Orientalism before the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to India. This is particularly true of the Continental tradition, the English and Scottish tradition being better known in this respect thanks to a series of works by Peter J. Marshall and Thomas R. Trautmann, among others.[27] We may trace some elements of the European image of India back to early medieval times, or even earlier in some cases, to the contacts between Greece and Rome and ancient India. It is nevertheless clear that from the late fifteenth century onward, some fundamentally new processes begin, which are linked both to changing material conditions and intellectual trajectories in Europe and India, and to the considerably intensified human contacts between the two. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, a growing corpus of materials circulated in Europe on India, whether in the form of manuscripts or, more rarely, as printed books, these were accompanied from at least the mid-sixteenth century by visual images, watercolours as well as woodcuts, which helped define the Indian landscape for a European audience.[28]

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[27] Peter J. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1970); Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, 1997).

One of the key groups that defined the form and content of this early proto-Orientalism were the fathers of the Society of Jesus, founded in Europe as part of the Counter-Reformation in the middle decades of the sixteenth century.[29] The Jesuits continued to play a role of great importance until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and were also the target of major attacks, on the part for example of the Jansenists, who had a formative influence on Anquetil-Duperron. Though the Jesuit presence in India was never monolithic (as the debates around the missionary methods of Roberto Nobili show), the Jesuits were perceived in the eighteenth-century context by their rivals as such.[30] This did not prevent these other rivals, who in the case of eighteenth-century France included the Academicians and the Encyclopaedists, from making use of the "raw materials" provided by the Jesuits to their own ends. This is the case for example with Voltaire, who displayed a quite keen interest in India, without ever having been there.[31] Voltaire, like Diderot, joined William Jones in pouring derision on Anquetil, and even denied the existence of Zoroaster, besides casting doubt on the age and authenticity of the *Zend-Avesta*. If the chief protagonists of the French Enlightenment had a periodic tendency to use India and its customs to proffer a critique of Old Régime in Europe (in a time-honoured tactic, dating back to Montaigne's essay on the cannibals), it has been noted equally that certain Jesuits of the same period turned the critique around, and used the anti-clerical rhetoric of the Philosophers to build an argument against the Brahmins of India. The bulk of the French Jesuits remained in general heavily oriented towards Sanskrit and the southern Indian languages.

Much of this debate centred, it is clear, on the content of the socio-religious complex that would be identified little by little under the name of "Hinduism". Indian Islam was of little interest in this context, and even if Anquetil (who learnt Persian) produced a *Vie de Mahomet*, it is amongst the most obscure of his works, suggesting a certain indifference to this matter on the part of his readers. In general, those who were interested in Islam sought their information elsewhere other than in India, and the epistemological status of the Indo-Persian tradition remained problematic in this regard, viewed from the perspective of the "High Orientalism" of the European salons and academies. In northern India itself, matters were somewhat different. Even the Jesuits who were present there at the time of Anquetil, such as J. Tieffenthaler in Agra, or F.-X. Wendel (d. 1803) at Bharatpur, Agra and Lucknow, were open to the possibilities presented by Indo-Persian culture in the domain of knowledge. Indeed, we are aware that the German-born Jesuit Wendel, though an agent of the English, also supplied Anquetil with information in the mid-1760s. We have already noted the efforts of Gentil in this direction, both in respect to the collection of manuscripts, and the attempt to transform Mughal administrative information into a form (and a type of cartographic representation) that would render it more accessible to the European audience of the epoch.

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[28] An interesting discussion of some of these visual materials may be found in Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford, 1977).

[29] Cf. for a general discussion of these materials, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "An Eastern *El-Dorado*: The Tirumala-Tirupati Temple-Complex in Early European Views and Ambitions, 1540–1660", in *Syllables of Sky: Studies in South Indian Civilization in Honour of Velchuru Narayana Rao*, ed. David Shulman (Delhi, 1995), pp. 338–90.

[30] Cf. Ines G. Županov, "Le repli du religieux: Les missionaires jésuites du 17^e siècle entre la théologie chrétienne et une éthique païenne", *Annales HSS*, Nov–Dec. 1996, pp. 1201–23.

[31] Daniel S. Hawley, "L'Inde de Voltaire" in *Studies on Voltaire and the 18th Century*, ed. H. T. Mason (Oxford, 1974), pp. 139–78.

It is just in this trajectory that it seems best to pose the evolving activities of Polier in north India. Coming as he did from a Protestant family with a marked penchant for Hebrew (and later Arabic), Polier in the years before his departure for India may well have imbibed some of this Mosaic conception, as well as reflections of the ferment that had emerged around the Encyclopaedists. Once in India, he appears to have passed from a first phase of military activity (in which he no doubt learnt the first rudiments of the *zabān-i-urdū*) to a form of cohabitation with a particular stratum of Indian society, namely that which was particularly influenced by Perso-Islamic culture. He kept the company of not only high-born Iranians, and Afghans, but Indian converts, Kayasthas, Khattris, and others, all of whom had been formed in the crucible first of Sultanate and then of Mughal-period acculturation. Into this world, Polier slipped without too much difficulty, accepting its idiom, and thus espousing an entirely different view of India than that of say the Jesuits of Pondicherry.

Matters seem to have changed in the early 1780s, after Polier's return to Awadh. These were the years, it is well-known, of the last serious attempt by the French to reflect in terms of an Indian project, and it all came to nought in the years 1782–84. With the Jesuits in disarray from the 1760s onwards, a major conduit through which information in India had passed into France, and Europe more generally, was no longer open. The expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal, then France, then Spain, and eventually the temporary suppression of the Society by Papal Bulls of 1773 and 1774, meant that by the late 1770s no more than a handful of former Jesuits remained in India.

Between this process, and the growing political domination of the English in Bengal and southern India, the stage was set for a change in the overall structure of the European perception of India in the 1780s. One of the key agents in this matter was William Jones, but the entire apparatus set up around the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, was aimed at reordering the relative status of the Sanskrit and the Indo-Persian traditions, which had earlier coexisted (the latter dominating European views of northern India, and the former those of southern India).[32] Jones himself, a belated convert to the joys of Sanskrit from his initial training in Arabic and Persian, led the charge. Polier followed, abandoning in the process the implicit and explicit vision that he had expressed through Kishan Sahay in the letters of the *I'jāz-i-Arsalānī*. The India that he now proposed was to a new audience, a European one, and it was in the vocabulary that was being refined in the Memoirs of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta.

Polier's last years in Europe see the consolidation of his fortune by his marriage to Anne-Rose-Louise Berthoud, the daughter of Jacob, Baron van Berchem, in January 1791. But they also see him moving with his in-laws to France, where he set up the last of his establishments near Avignon, at which he was eventually killed in 1795, ostensibly for his pro-Robespierre leanings, but perhaps for a more complex set of reasons. In these years, at first Lausanne and then Avignon, Polier consolidated the change he had been undergoing in the last years of his stay in India. He abandoned his Indian wives, as part of his turning away from Indo-Persian culture; he shaved off his moustache, and appears much more as the quintessential European savant than the Conradesque "adventurer" in the portraits of the last years. His return to France, motivated no doubt by the belief that the Revolution would inaugurate a new era of tolerance for Protestants, also seems to be part of an attempt to relocate himself in the intellectual map of Europe. In the new French Orientalism of the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the ascendancy of the English and Scottish tradition would be briefly guaranteed, and it was only in 1833 that the efforts of Burnouf eventually restored some respectability to Anquetil-Duperron and those who had supported him against William Jones. The posthumous publication in 1809 of *Mythologie des Indous* thus presents not the Polier of the *I'jāz-i Arsalānī*, but another far more Anglophile Polier. In turn, in later decades, *Mythologie* too would fall into discredit, as rumours began to abound that the text had been tampered with in the process of publication by the Chanoinesse de Polier.

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[32] The treatment of these questions in Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India, 1600–1800* (Delhi, 1995), Ch. 6 and *passim*, is manifestly inadequate.