

put Geelong on the map.<sup>137</sup> The intercultural zone where go-betweeners are still working to create common ground has a tense and active topography.

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## CHAPTER 11

# BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

## *Some Afterthoughts*

SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM

'Historians love cultural brokers.' So begins a gently sarcastic review in the flagship journal of American devotees of Clio, the *American Historical Review*, in its issue of December 2008.<sup>1</sup> The author of the review is a specialist on the religious history of eighteenth-century New England with a marked interest in early modern Atlantic history more generally; the prize-winning book being reviewed is a micro-history that concerns a certain Pierre-Anthoine Pastedechouan, a seventeenth-century Montagnais (or Innu) Amerindian from the St. Lawrence River Valley of Quebec, who was born in about 1608 and lived only to 1636 when 'he starved to death, alone in the forest'. The work is, as its subtitle reminds us, about a 'tragic journey' or, as the title even more bluntly states, a 'betrayal of faith'.<sup>2</sup> Pastedechouan was rather optimistically given by his community to Catholic missionaries when he was only twelve years old, and learnt to be proficient in French and Latin in a *Recollet* convent across the Atlantic. He then returned to the New World, but quickly and more or less consistently disappointed his mentors. He was unwilling or unable to play a proper role as a missionary, but he was also left adrift by circumstances on the fringes of his own community. In short, this is not a celebratory account of the 'hybridity and agency' of the cultural broker but rather of his 'confusion' and 'anomie'. Emplotted in a tragic mode, as a certain number of such tales indeed are, such a work on the place of the go-between is usefully

<sup>1</sup> Erik R. Seeman, 'Review of Anderson, *The betrayal of faith*', *The American historical review* 113 (2008): 1511-12.

<sup>2</sup> Emma Anderson, *The betrayal of faith: the tragic journey of a colonial native convert* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); also compare Allan Greer, *Mohawk saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>137</sup> Adams, David, 'Retracing the trail of an early father of reconciliation.' *Age*, Nov. 1, 2000, 15.

contrasted to others, namely ones that portray the go-between as all-purpose saint, wily trickster, or simply an incarnation of *homo ludens*. For if this is play, it is potentially dangerous play, something akin to heavyweight pugilism perhaps which may at once evoke the beaming entrepreneurial visage of a George Foreman and the painfully trembling one of a Muhammad Ali.

Why do go-betweens exist? This question must, it seems to me, notionally precede any attempt to classify go-betweens or disaggregate their activities and it may therefore appear somewhat ironical that it is posed in the closing reflections of a collection of detailed examinations that take us from colonial Brazil and the United States to Japan and Australia via India, Western Europe and a host of other territories. The essays that precede this one have four major threads in common. First, they all deal with the figure of the 'go-between' whoever he (or far more rarely in the extant literature she) may be and—as the editors' Introduction fruitfully reminds us—they 'are peculiarly concerned with the mobile lives led by such agents; with the relation between their strikingly improvised activities and the robust institutions that they helped produce.' Thus we have fragility on the one hand, and firmness on the other. Second, they largely focus on an epoch that is often characterized in world-history narratives as the 'Age of Revolutions', and which the Introduction to this volume terms 'the fraught period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a conjuncture of global revolutions and massive economic transformations.' Third, they almost always focus on imperial situations, where the empires in question are British, French, Dutch and Iberian, but also occasionally non-European. (Qing China, the Ottomans and Tsarist Russia—to take three other populous imperial formations of the period that also merit extensive attention—are not all that much in evidence here, but they do appear at the fringes of these histories). Fourthly, and finally, the types of go-betweens that these essays are concerned with are largely—if not exclusively—actors within the spheres of knowledge-production or learned culture-production, whether this is a production that is remunerated in cash or merely in kind, through symbolic goods such as prestige.

A radically simple proposition may help to get us started in our closing reflection: go-betweens really exist because transactions exist. But the mere existence of transactions, while it may be necessary, is certainly not sufficient to generate the go-between. In order for that to happen, the transactions must themselves be of a certain type, and be characterized by forms of friction. The go-between is born of this transactional friction. The go-between is thus the third party in a transaction where the two other parties—the principals of the transaction, if one will, and who may be individuals or larger entities—are themselves incapable of completing it in the absence of mediation. This leads us directly to a paradox in terms of social-science knowledge. For long years, economics—a science that was seemingly designed to reflect precisely on the transaction as an activity—proved singularly incapable of theorizing this mediation. We may return to the beginnings of the science of economics

as practiced in early-modern Europe to see why this was so. In its first incarnation, such as in Richard Cantillon's *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général* (written about 1732 and eventually published in 1755), political economy was essentially concerned with production, both in agriculture and in terms of the handicrafts.<sup>3</sup> In this view of the world, deriving from but also modifying the earlier work of William Petty, exchange was really an ancillary and incidental activity and thus probably somewhat lacking in legitimacy. The moral high ground was held by those who invested labour directly in the production of material objects, whether by tilling the land or by fashioning manufactures. The value of what they produced was in turn determined precisely either by the labour invested or, as with Cantillon, with the manner in which the value of land came to be embodied in the final product. 'I will then lay it down as a principle', he wrote, 'that the proprietors of land alone are naturally independent in a state: that all the other classes are dependent whether undertakers or hired, and that all the exchange and circulation of the state is conducted by the medium of these undertakers (*tout le troc & la circulation de l'État se conduit par l'entremise de ces Entrepreneurs*).' Cantillon does not speak of go-betweens as Edmund Burke was to do half a century later, but the term *entremise* that he employs comes close enough to evoking their role: like Burke, it is also clear that for him, such acts are not really productive ones. The notion that activities of mediation are parasitical ones still haunted the bulk of Physiocratic writings later in the eighteenth century, even from the pen of a thinker as subtle as the French theorist and politician Turgot. Even when one turns to the patron-saint of the free market Adam Smith, we find much praise of 'truck, barter and exchange' but precious little in a positive mode about those who engage in it to make a living. Smith denounces certain monopolistic forms of mediation, and is rather scathing regarding such bloated go-betweens as the English East India Company.<sup>4</sup> There is also a sense that we gather from him, deriving in turn perhaps from Mandeville, that mediation need not be a specialized function since each and every human being can and indeed should engage in transactions. In other words, the go-between may well be unnecessary if actors (or principals) can transact freely amongst themselves without having to call upon a third party. To be a go-between here would merely be an aspect of every human's life rather than being a specific social category or vocation.

We are aware that in a second moment, the attention of economics and economists turned away from the business of production to that of consumption, deriving in turn from the influence of Utilitarian philosophy on eco-

<sup>3</sup> Richard Cantillon, *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général*, edited with an English translation by Henry Higgs (London: Frank Cass, 1959); for an interesting analysis, also see Tony Aspromourgos, 'The theory of production and distribution in Cantillon's *Essai*,' *Oxford economic papers*, New series, 41 (1989): 356–373.

<sup>4</sup> Sankar Muthu, 'Adam Smith's critique of international trading companies: theorizing 'globalization' in the Age of Enlightenment,' *Political theory* 36 (2008): 185–212.

nomics. Here once again, in the theories of the latter part of the nineteenth century, what came to drive transactions were acts of consumption determined by the preferences of individuals in society; but the role of those who mediated between producers and consumers was largely neglected. The deep embarrassment of much 'neo-classical' economic theory faced with the category of profit itself reflected this inability to understand what mediation and mediators were all about; we may recall Alexander Gerschenkron reproaching John Hicks as late as 1971 for the central role he gave to mediation in economic history, and claiming that his 'stress on the merchants as the promoters of economic progress appears (...) exaggerated and one-sided.'<sup>5</sup> Why indeed should anyone be remunerated for bringing products from producers to consumers? Surely the two could find a meeting ground without anyone arranging their marriage, and St. Augustine had already declared '*Lucrum habere non poteris, nisi fraudem feceris*'. A place for the go-between was eventually found only by appealing to the possibility that markets might not be characterized by perfect information. The go-between thus emerged in a world of imperfect information, either as someone who enjoyed rents from the information he possessed, or in terms of formal and informal models that portrayed transactions as games, and go-betweens as products of the manner in which these games were played out. Let us take the first of these instances. Information here (which is, for all intents and purposes, seen as practically indistinguishable from knowledge) is portrayed as an asset that yields returns. The principals in a transaction cannot complete it precisely because there is something that is missing, and the go-between—who intervenes to complete the transaction—can thus claim a return for it. We can take this in its simplest form to be a representation of the act of translation, and imagine that the two parties to the transaction do not possess a common language; the go-between possesses the crucial skill of mapping from one linguistic universe onto another. However, we may equally imagine that if the transaction is repeated time and again, the need for the go-between may disappear as the two principals in the transaction comprehend how to find a meeting ground without the presence of a third party. In this view then, the go-between's function may be seen as an ephemeral one, destined to disappear after it has been played for a certain time. The returns to 'gobetweenitude' (to coin a term) are akin to a form of windfall profit that cannot by definition be sustained.

The game-theoretic version offers a more lasting place not necessarily to the individual go-between but to the institution as such. The most celebrated recent variant of this comes from the pen of Avner Greif. Greif draws both on historical materials deriving from the medieval Mediterranean and the analytic powers of game theory to discuss the emergence of the go-between in

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Gerschenkron, 'Mercator Gloriosus,' *The economic history review*, New Series, 24 (1971): 653–66; the critique is directed at John Hicks, *A theory of economic history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

a context of 'strategic interaction'.<sup>6</sup> One of his best-known examples is that of the so-called *podesteria* system, in which the *podestà*, or 'power', was an outsider and go-between who Greif argues was routinely hired in late medieval Genoa on a fixed-period contract to act as administrator and judge over rival clans in the city who would otherwise have been unable to arrive at an accommodation. He claims that this role was carefully circumscribed by custom and regulation; the *podestà* thus had resources enough to function smoothly but not to subjugate the others entirely. Further, it was important that the role circulated and hence the go-between was not allowed to accumulate too much power, put down social roots, or even engage in too many independent activities beyond that of mediation. Greif argues that the functioning of this institution was based upon a game-theoretic understanding of credible threats and rewards. The *podestà* in such a situation 'enabled the factions [in Genoa] to cooperate by creating a military balance among them. By the 'threat' of assisting the other faction he deterred each faction from attempting to take control over the city or to act 'illegally'. Moreover, because the *podestà* was to receive a high wage at the end of this term, this threat was credible.'<sup>7</sup>

This perspective on the go-between has enjoyed a certain degree of success beyond its initial application to a study of merchants and commercial institutions. Thus, a more recent work seeks in part to explain the 'indigenous roots of colonial rule in Indonesia' in terms precisely of such a model, where the stranger emerges first as go-between and eventually as ruler.<sup>8</sup> But others have also been critical. Recent works on Genoese history do not seem to support the excessively generous view of the success of *podesteria* that Greif presents, and see it rather as riven by tension, violence and a great potential for dissolution.<sup>9</sup> Still others have suggested a lack of a fit between a set of theoretically driven models and empirical materials that neither confirm nor disprove them, such as the case of the *podestà*, where speculative hypotheses quickly assume the aspect of proven theories.<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, the attempt is a bold

<sup>6</sup> Avner Greif, 'On the political foundations of the late medieval commercial revolution: Genoa during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,' *The journal of economic history* 54 (1994): 271–87.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 282. Also see Greif, 'Self-enforcing political systems and economic growth: late medieval Genoa,' Robert Bates, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and Barry R. Weingast, *Analytic narratives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 23–63.

<sup>8</sup> David Henley, 'Conflict, justice and the stranger-king: indigenous roots of colonial rule in Indonesia and elsewhere,' *Modern Asian studies* 38 (2004): 85–144.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Gregory Clark, 'A review of Avner Greif's *Institutions and the path to the modern economy: lessons from medieval trade*,' *Journal of economic literature* 45 (2007): 727–43.

one, and one that adds another layer of complexity to perspectives on how one might theorize the role of the go-between.

Two concrete examples may help us see how these distinct perspectives on how to understand the go-between may or may not be useful for our purposes as historians. I draw one of these from the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and the second from a period closer to that which preoccupies the contributors to this volume—namely the mid-eighteenth century. Both are drawn from the world I know best, namely that of South Asia in its interaction with the Indian Ocean world. The first of these concerns a certain Manuel Godinho de Erédia, born around 1558 in the great Southeast Asian entrepôt of Melaka, and who died in 1623. Erédia was a Luso-Asian (termed an ‘hijo de la India y mestiço’ by the powerful Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, who seems to have known and disliked him); his father was in all likelihood a Portuguese soldier of Spanish and Italian descent in the Melaka garrison and his mother was either Malay or Bugis, probably from the Makassar region of Sulawesi.<sup>11</sup> After an education with the Jesuits in Meleka, Erédia moved in his early teens to the Portuguese Asian capital of Goa, where he seems to have been accepted by the Jesuits into their order as a novice in about 1574. But things did not go well for him in this context. After ten years at the fringes of the Society, Erédia was asked to leave, accused by superiors of doing no more than ‘troubling and disturbing others’, and also of having no serious religious vocation. He may have equally been a victim of discriminatory policies which the Jesuits such as Valignano and Mercuriano came to formulate in Asia from the mid-1570s against natives (*naturales*) and those of mixed blood (*mestiços*), something of an irony in view of the tolerance that the same order showed in regard to New Christians in Europe. Nevertheless, Erédia had demonstrated by then that he possessed a certain number of other talents, notably in geometry and mathematics more generally (which he taught), and above all as a draftsman and painter. These, together with cartography (and what he liked to term ‘cosmographia’), were the skills that he would deploy with some measure of success during the rest of life, which he lived out in Cochin (where he married a certain Violante de Sampaio in about 1586), and then in Melaka and western India.

Manuel Godinho de Erédia was thus a characteristic ‘go-between’ from several points of view. As a *mestiço* who affirmed rather than denied his dual heritage, he was in the first place an ‘in-between’ even before he was a ‘go-between’. The manner in which he used this heritage was quite typical of many such go-between figures, in that he inflated the weight and prestige of his genealogy. Thus, on his father’s side he claimed some relationship with the noble

<sup>11</sup> The sections that follow are largely based on John G. Everaert, ‘Manuel Godinho de Erédia: humaniste ou aventurier?’, in Manuel Godinho de Erédia, *Suma de árvores e plantas da Índia intra Ganges*, eds. John G. Everaert, J. Eduardo Mendes Ferrão and Maria Cândida Liberato (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 2001), pp. 23–82.

Italian family of Acquaviva, and in a self-portrait from 1613, he showed himself with the admittedly ill-defined arms of a noble family (*escudos de sua nobreza*, as he himself put it), and suggested that his father was in fact a *fidalg*o. But he gave as much if not more importance to the notion that his mother belonged to the Southeast Asian aristocracy, and it is in this sense that the Portuguese historian Luís Filipe Thomaz has noted that ‘Erédia was, in effect, not just a physical *mestiço* but a cultural *mestiço*, a *topaz*, as used to be said in Portuguese at the time in the East: the term (...) etymologically signifying ‘bilingual’, but better translated by the notion of what we might as a neologism term ‘bicultural’.<sup>12</sup> Here the reference is to the Portuguese version of the Indian term *dubash* or *dubashi*, literally meaning he (or she) of two (*du-*) languages (*bhasha*). An early nineteenth-century French colonial official would define these *topazes* or *dubashes* as follows: ‘they come from the mixture of Europeans with the women of the land, and from Indians who have renounced their caste.’ This means that such a group was made up of a mix of acculturated converts and Eurasians, and was in none-too-good a shape by then, for we learn from the same source that ‘the *topas* population is the most miserable in India, and with the exception of some individuals who are employed as scribes in offices or who have shops, the others have no profession and no employment.’<sup>13</sup>

Unlike those who are referred to in the early nineteenth century, however, Erédia manifestly did not see himself as belonging to some *topaz* community but as pretty much *sui generis*. He also strongly asserted his attachment to a learned culture, that of the Catholic Iberian world. His Jesuit education had brought him into contact with classical authors from Aristotle and Ptolemy to Pliny, and he also had gained some acquaintance with Copernicus and Girolamo Cardano, as well as Petrus Plancius and Mercator. This was a written culture then, quite unlike his Asian heritage. Erédia did have some notions of Konkani, the vernacular language of Goa, as we note from works on botany where he uses terms from that language to designate plants. However, he had a far deeper immersion in Malay which probably stemmed from a childhood spent in Melaka, and perhaps the direct influence of his mother. But his access to both these languages was manifestly through the world of orality, bodies of stories and legends, as well as the life-experiences of mariners and others. Further, he tended to use such materials quite pell-mell and in a credulous manner, whereas he reserved a more critical spirit for his readings of European materials.

Erédia is known for having written about ten works of a quite diverse variety, and it is partly on the basis of this textual production that we can term him a go-between; the other aspect of his life was as a man of action, notably

<sup>12</sup> Luís Filipe Thomaz, ‘Prefácio,’ Godinho de Erédia, *Suma de árvores*, (cit. n. 11), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Achille Bédier and Joseph Cordier, *Statistiques de Pondichéry (1822–1824)*, ed. Jean Deloche (Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, 1988), p. 58.

as a prospector, explorer and military engineer. But these two sides of his life are in reality inextricably mixed up. One set of works thus concerns the plans of fortresses and settlements of the Portuguese, and shows off his skills as a draftsman. A second, and quite diverse work, dating from 1612, is his 'Summary of the trees and plants of India *Intra Ganges*', accompanied again by illustrations from his hand. A third set of works concerns one of his principal obsessions, namely the search for sources of gold in the vicinity of Portuguese Asia, and especially in the broad region of Melaka. These include the earliest of his known works, from 1599–1600, the 'Information on the *Aurea Chersoneso*, or Peninsula, and auriferous, carbuncular and aromatic islands'. Then there are works of geography or pseudo-geography, ranging from his 'Discourse on the Province of Indostan, termed Mogul' from 1611, and the spectacularly confused 'Declaration on Malaca and Meridional India, with Cathay'.<sup>14</sup> Finally, also worthy of attention is a peculiar work of martyrology, concerning the 'History of the services and martyrdom of Luís Monteiro Coutinho', who was killed in Aceh in the 1580s; this shows us that Erédia had not entirely been untouched by his religious vocation.

Some of these works, such as the last-mentioned one, were clearly written in response to a demand by a patron, here the brother of the 'martyr'. But others had a rather different purpose. For Erédia rather fancied himself as an explorer, and from the 1590s is known to have importuned a series of Portuguese viceroys to allow him to explore the gold-bearing potential of Southeast Asia, in a conception that rather paralleled the El-Dorado projects of his contemporary Walter Raleigh. What is interesting, however, is the source for this drive, for it is mixed. If on the one hand it derives from classical works such as that of Ptolemy and their construct of the 'Golden Chersonese', Erédia also drew fully on a range of Malay legends that spoke of a place called *Pulo Mas*, an island where the beaches had golden sands that could be harvested easily. In a similar vein, he developed the idea of a great southern land lying beyond Java that could be explored, drawing it would seem on a mix of tales carried by Malay sailors and maritime communities (or *orang laut*), and rumours that stemmed from the first Dutch sightings of the north coast of Australia. My purpose here is not to revisit the rather futile controversy concerning the 'secret discovery of Australia', but rather to point to how Erédia was able to produce a curious synthesis of classical western, oral Southeast Asian, and contemporary European knowledge, tempered of course by a large dash of his own ungovernable imagination. Further, as we see from his autobiographical *Sumário da Vida*, he was much given to exaggeration regarding his own knowledge, achievements and connections, something that places him within

<sup>14</sup> On these other texts, also see Jorge Flores, 'Two Portuguese visions of Jahangir's India: Jerónimo Xavier and Manuel Godinho de Erédia,' Jorge Flores and Nuno Vasallo e Silva, eds., *Goa and the Great Mughal* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2004), pp. 44–66.

easy reach of the category of 'trickster' as well. For example, the royal grant that he allegedly received from Philip II in 1594 to promote his explorations in Southeast Asia seems to have been either an outright fantasy or a major exaggeration on his part.

A little reflection on Erédia's career, unsuccessful and even 'tragic' though it has been termed, is useful for our ends. What transactional worlds did Erédia mediate, and in what sense did he serve as a go-between? The first point which is worth stressing, and which applies to a great number of figures who have been examined by preceding authors in this volume, is the essentially asymmetrical nature of his mediation. Erédia actually took very little knowledge to the Asian world even though he lived there; rather while performing textual work, he extracted knowledge (or, at times, pseudo-knowledge) from the Asian world into the imperial sphere. His work, like that of many imperial go-betweens, must thus be comprehended as part of a process of epistemological subsumption that accompanied the imperial construction and even characterized it in a profound manner. In part, this was a consequence of the fact that he did not participate in any Asian literate culture, and to this extent we can distinguish him, let us say, from his contemporaries like the Jesuit Jerónimo Xavier, who took part in a major way in the translation of works from Latin into Persian for the benefit of the Mughal court, or from later Jesuit cartographers who mediated inter-imperial relations between, say, China and Russia.<sup>15</sup> A second point worth making is the constant search for rewards on the part of Erédia, who tirelessly lobbied viceroys, the Habsburg king, the Jesuits and even the Pope himself, both for specific material returns and recognition through symbolic honours and the like. This seems once more to be a central part of the 'self-fashioning' of the go-between; and once again, it is significant that the sources from which he sought such rewards were almost exclusively European ones. A third point is however of no less significance in view of our earlier discussion of strategic interaction in determining the possibilities and the outcomes for go-betweens. For it is clear that the actions of someone like Erédia cannot simply be comprehended with reference to his deploying a series of strategies, threats and systems of rewards. Rather his world was one where such calculated, strategic behaviour only accounted for a small proportion of outcomes. Not only did the aleatory play a major role—as we see when his attempt to mount a maritime expedition to eastern Indonesia in the early 1600s was interrupted by Dutch military actions—but his vision of the world was seriously flawed, and based on forms of highly incorrect information which he never seems to have been able to correct. We are best served in some sense by viewing him as an inordinately ambitious actor who was buffeted about by a set of realities about which he had little comprehension.

<sup>15</sup> See Joseph Sebes, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689): the diary of Thomas Pereira, S.J.* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1961).

Our second brief case-study takes us to the eighteenth century, and the history of Ananda Ranga Pillai (1709–61); it is in some respects simpler than that of Erédia, but in other respects also undoubtedly more complex. Much ink has been spilt on this celebrated resident of Pondicherry and even more is likely to be so in the years to come.<sup>16</sup> He was a *dubash* or *courtier*, a quintessential go-between, acting for the French in the context of south-eastern India for several decades in a crucial period of the eighteenth century when French imperial ambitions in the region were at their height. A well-known public figure during his own lifetime, Pillai also kept a remarkable diary of events that touched on his life for almost a quarter-century, from his late twenties until his death. This diary (or *tinacaritai* or *natkurippu*) is an extended first-person account in Tamil of a type that was at the time almost unprecedented in southern India, and it has been the focus of much discussion.<sup>17</sup> Was it an act of creativity that drew upon autochthonous cultural resources, or was it in fact the translation into Tamil of a form that the French were already perfectly familiar with? How does one explain the choice of contents in the diary or journal, which tend to be highly focused on public events, especially those with a military and financial content? Finally, how does one read this text with a number of others in Indian languages that were produced at Ananda Ranga Pillai's behest and which feature him as a central character?

There are some regards in which the figure of Pillai compares well to that of Erédia. Both came from deeply multi-lingual situations, and we are aware that Pillai's father Tiruvengadam had resided in Madras in the early eighteenth century, and knew English and Portuguese as well as Tamil and Telugu.<sup>18</sup> This knowledge was passed on to his son, who also came to know French and even seems to have possessed some knowledge of Sanskrit. Both served empires, Erédia the Spanish and Portuguese ones, and Pillai that of the French. Both were translators in both literal and metaphorical terms even if Pillai's erudition lay largely in the Indian tradition and that of Erédia in the European one. Here, the two cases begin to diverge. Erédia, we have seen, made quite a fetish of the fact that he was a biological *mestiço*, and made a major attempt to valorize his dual Luso-Asian heritage. Ananda Ranga Pillai, on the other hand,

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, C. S. Srinivasachari, *Ananda Ranga Pillai: The 'Pepys' of French India* (Madras: P. Varadachary & Co., 1940); R. Alalasundaram, *The colonial world of Ananda Ranga Pillai, 1736–61* (Pondicherry: Lawspet Post, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> *The private diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, dubash to Joseph François Dupleix, governor of Pondicherry: a record of matters, political, historical, social, and personal, from 1736–1761*, ed. J. Frederick Price and K. Rangachari, 12 Vols. (Madras: Government Press, 1904–28); for the Tamil text, see *Pirattiyekamana Ananta Rankappillaiyavarkalin costa likita tinappati ceti kurippu*, 12 vols. (Putuvai: Cantanam Pirintin Ors, 1998–2005).

<sup>18</sup> For a sense of the multi-lingual milieu of these individuals, one should consult the Centre d'Archives d'Outremer, Aix-en-Provence, Notariat de Pondichéry (Series P), where one finds letters from Tiruvengadam in Portuguese and Tamil (P-14, pp. 101–103, 1717–18).

also seems to have been quite proud of his lineage, but stressed its relative purity and lack of mixture. He seems in fact to have detested Eurasians and those of mixed blood, such as Madame Dupleix, the wife of his chief patron. Further, Pillai was far more successful in most respects than Erédia and successfully consolidated the fortunes of his family. His expertise was threefold. First, he possessed considerable commercial and financial acumen, and acted as a lender and banker even to princes.<sup>19</sup> Second, he was a clearing-house of vast amounts of strategic information, and it is with this aspect that his journal is principally concerned. Third, he was recognized in his lifetime as a master of etiquette and proper comportment, crucial in delicate situations of cross-cultural interaction. A funeral notice for him thus noted that 'his mind was a storehouse of diplomatic precedents; and he could tell with unflinching accuracy whose *vakil* [agent] should receive *pan* [betel-leaf] from the Governor's own hand, and whose from that of an inferior.' The same notice added that he was 'the standing authority on the customs and privileges of the castes of Pondicherry, a matter of no small moment when an inadvertent permission (...) might provoke a riot that would set the whole Indian quarter by the ear.'<sup>20</sup>

It is possible to focus largely on the acts and functions of the go-between, but it may also be necessary to look further, and to seek some sense of his interiority and subjectivity as a certain number of the essays in this volume suggest. The central difficulty one encounters, however, is the opacity of such characters, their obstinate lack of willingness to give anything of their own selves away. This is clear enough in the case of Erédia, whose statements regarding his own past, lineage and intellectual formation, are an improbable concoction that requires constant verification. In this respect, Ananda Ranga Pillai provides us with a far richer subject for reflection. However, this reflection must depend far less on the journal and its claim to write of 'whatsoever wonderful or novel takes place', than the biographies commissioned by Pillai himself. Of these the most important text is one written in Sanskrit by a certain Srinivasa Kavi and entitled *Ananda-Ranga-campu*. It is this text that allows us to comprehend the dilemmas faced by a go-between figure such as Pillai and the existential issues that he, precisely because he was a go-between, confronted in relation to such questions as descent, ascriptive status and the like. Because it is a text written in a high literary language, and a traditional form, the *campu* also allows us to see what Pillai's insertion was in the elevated culture of India, the mirror-image as it were of Erédia's slightly uncomfortable location in high European written culture.

From this text we learn that though he was, in theory, a merchant by pro-

<sup>19</sup> See the note from Raja Pratapasimha of Tanjavur in September 1743, acknowledging a loan of 450,000 Rupees from 'Anandaranga Pille saukar sekin Pudcheri,' in R. Vivekanandagopal, ed., *Modi documents in the T.M.S.S.M. Library*, vol. 1 (Thanjavur: Sarasvati Mahal Library, 1999), Serial No. 11, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Srinivasachari, *Ananda Ranga Pillai* (cit. n. 16), pp. 439–40.

fession, Pillai in fact belonged to a shepherd (*Itaiyan*) caste. However, an attempt is made by his biographer to elevate and attach his family genealogically to the prestigious line of the kings of Vijayanagara in the interior. A triangle thus emerges between merchant, shepherd and king (or major political actor), and it seems to represent the creative tension that determines the characteristic features of the world of the somewhat exalted *dubash*. Srinivasa Kavi makes much of how Ananda Ranga Pillai straddles the world of the old and the new, innovating by such matters as his incorporation of a large European clock into his house while still making extensive use of astrologers and astrology. The hero of the *campu* text, we learn, is something of a specialist in political realism who is not above suborning some of the participants in a crucial battle to get the result he wants; but he is also a devotee and the assistant of other figures who are allowed fully to share centre-stage such as the French governor Dupleix. The language of the text in promoting the figure of the go-between, we learn from an important recent analysis, is 'elevated, suggestive, self-effacing in a subtly self-glorifying way.'<sup>21</sup> When complimented by some of the royal figures of the peninsula for having brought about their success, Pillai is reported to have responded (in the words of Srinivasa Kavi): 'It is not I who am the active cause in a matter such as this. The main thing is the king's conspicuous power. The echo of a lion's roar, from a cave deep in the mountain, still shatters arrogant foes.'<sup>22</sup>

There could be no better statement of a certain type of self-presentation for the go-between, namely the denial that one is really the 'active cause' (*hetu*). Here, once more, the case of Ananda Ranga Pillai provides us with an effective foil to Erédia: in contrast to the latter's incessant boasting and overly insistent presentation of himself, we have with Pillai a far more subtle use of ruses and manoeuvres. We are reminded here, if that were necessary, that the go-between ought never to be confused with the principal, and that even if at one and the same time, Ananda Ranga Pillai carried elements of cowherd and king, in the final analysis he was still the hinge figure, the *dubash*. As we survey the diverse figures that this volume has embraced, and in some instances brought to light, it is a thought that is worth retaining. The go-between no doubt possessed his strategic field of action and his rationality, even if it was frequently a bounded rationality—and also limited by the field of his knowledge and the constraints posed by his illusions. But these were above all figures who, even if they acted at the behest and with the backing of powerful imperial systems, were heavily constrained in their actions, and thus caught as it were between a rock and a hard place.

<sup>21</sup> David Shulman, 'Cowherd or King? The Sanskrit Biography of Ananda Ranga Pillai,' David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, eds., *Telling lives in India: biography, autobiography and life history* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), pp. 175–202.

<sup>22</sup> Srinivasakavi, *Ananda-ranga-campu*, ed. V. Raghavan (Teppakkulam: Palaniappa Bros., 1948), 6.59, translated in Shulman, 'Cowherd or King?' (cit. n. 21), p. 193.

## Contributors

*James Delbourgo* has been going between, and suffering from multiple geography disorder, for as long as he can remember. Born of parents from Ancona, Italy and Aden in Yemen, who lived in Addis Ababa before settling in London, he grew up in Surrey, England and was educated in Norwich, Cambridge and New York. After teaching at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, he is now associate professor of history at Rutgers University. He is usually to be found in London, New York or Rome, or somewhere in-between.

*Robert Liss*, a retired dealer in Japanese antiques, has lived the life of the classic entrepreneurial go-between, mediating between present desires and a commodified past. His contribution to this volume marks his first attempt to translate his market-bound expertise into an object of intellectual value.

*Margaret O. Meredith* grew up in Jefferson County, Kentucky and Annapolis, Maryland and now lives in Maastricht, the Netherlands, all places that feature in her work on transatlantic natural history in the eighteenth century. She is now completing her Ph.D. at the University of California, San Diego while splitting her time between Maastricht and Cambridge, England. Her reflections on polite conversation, the circulation of knowledge and the complex mediation on which communication depended during the Enlightenment have been deepened by her inability to take the communication with others elsewhere for granted, even in the twenty-first century.

*Juan Pimentel* was born in Madrid, where he works as a researcher in the CSIC. He has lived always in that sunny city, except two years in Cambridge. It can be said, then, that his experience as a go-between has been more intellectual than physical. But as a cultural historian of science, an expert in travels and a Spanish scholar in this Anglo centred academic world, one has to be a go-between by definition or by force, a mediator *tout court*.