Asia as the Ultimate Homeland of Wisdom: The Encounter with Religious Texts as Revelatory Experience

Franz Winter, University of Graz

1. The Early Modern Discovery of Asia

The European discovery of Asia is a pivotal aspect in the formation of current concepts of modernity. It provided major challenges to longtime dominant interpretative frames of the way the world, its history and fate is seen and interpreted – all that, until then, being primarily dominated by the Christian tradition.[1] This important encounter with Asia includes a vast array of historical developments and layers: it substantially started in the 16th century with the missionary endeavours of the Catholic Church in South and East Asia, which were initially dominated by the Jesuit order with its highly intellectual and advanced approach towards other regions and cultures as well as the relevant *instrumentarium* and appropriate skills.[2] In addition to the various layers of motivation for this encounter, including economic, political, but also social aspects or mere curiosity, the contact with textual sources (in the wider sense of the word) from Asian religious and cultural traditions was an important material aspect of this process. In its early phase, these endeavours to get access to Asian religious and cultural texts provided quite adventurous stories of the transmission, the (if necessary) decipherment, but also the translation and (naturally closely intertwined with that) interpretation of the material starting particularly

1 For the impact and the consequences of this encounter see Osterhammel (2018) and the extensive study of App (2015); the historical developments in the early phase are portrayed in Lach (1994, 89-147); the crucial developments from the eighteenth century onwards are treated in Maillard (2008); see also Rabault-Feuerhahn (2008); for the importance on the development of French philosophy see Pinot (1971).

2 See Brockey (2007); Mungello (2009).

with early modern Europe.[3] All that is linked to a certain fascination due to the discovery of hitherto unchartered intellectual territories thereby gaining access to new insight and a fresh look at the world, its history and interpretation. As a matter of fact, the discovery of Asia and its vast and impressive cultural and religious heritage was a transformative stage in the formation of major patterns of the way we see the world today.

What has been quite often neglected in academic studies, though, is the fact that these texts make up part of a previous history of interpretation and perception. The European encounter never has been their, so to say, first reading, but the way these texts were interpreted relied on then available modes of access and the intermediary sources or contact persons. A specific history such as this is actually in the centre of the present contribution. It aims at providing a detailed study of the perception of one specific group of texts of Indian religious history by two highly different authors who lived in different social, cultural, and religious contexts but were linked together by a fascinating history of textual transmission. Basically, it is about the first-ever interpretations and translations of the Indian textual corpus commonly referred to as the *Upanishads* in two distinct cultural contexts: I will start with the Latin translation of the *Upanishads*, the famous *Oupnek'hat* by the French orientalist Abraham H. Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), which was published in 1801/1802 and shaped the view on India for quite some time due to the immense influence it exerted on figures such as the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. The study continues with the latter's major source, namely a previous translation of the Indian texts provided by the unfortunate Mughal prince Dārā Shukūh (1615-1659) into Persian, a text entitled *Sirr-i akbar* (literally, "the greatest secret"). Both authors are connected through a fascinating history of textual transmission and, as I will try to show, are guided by an intense affection towards their object of discovery that makes encountering the text and its contents a revelatory experience. In accordance with the major topic of this volume the detailed study will not primarily focus on the interpretation and

3 For the importance of early modern Europe as the starting point but also a kind of laboratory of entanglement processes, see Lach (1994), 45-86; see also the recent study by Mulsow (2022) and the information on that below.

the translation technique, but the way the encounter and the discovery of the text was conceptualized intellectually but also on the personal level by the one who discovered and then introduced the text into this respective environment. Consequently, a particular focus will be given to the way the text was perceived and interpreted. As will be shown, the encounter was not understood as a mere intellectual endeavour or a discovery by chance, but – at least in the cases presented here – was guided by the idea that the new text has a crucial, not to say fundamental value: it is introduced as containing something like the ultimate truth surpassing all the then known concepts. All that is linked to an obvious personal affection that connects text and "translator" viz. interpreter who relates the discovery of the text to his own intellectual history. It is exactly this focus on the performativity of textual material which provides the frame for the integration of this particular story in the present volume. In the particular perspective of this paper this is tied to aspects such as a trans-cultural interpreting and diachronic transmission of religious texts. The major argument purported in the following is the idea, that the encounter with Asia was a pivotal process in the intellectual but also personal development of the two interpreters, which is mirrored by the immense affection that is obvious in the reports provided here coming from the importance of the *Upanishads*. Taken from this angle, these examples directly relate to the concept of resonance according to Rosa as both personal deep affection as well as an obvious conviction regarding the overall importance of the *Upanishads* come together.[4]

In this regard, it is important to include as much information as possible on the frame and the motivating factors that guided the discovery which made this specific intellectual encounter possible. Consequently, the following exposition, which is conceptualized as a detailed historical *miniature* portrayal, a vignette, follows the frame as provided in the concept of "overreaches" by renowned historian of the intellectual history of early modern Europe Martin Mulsow in his recently published book *Überreichweiten* (2022). One of its major arguments is that a "global history of ideas" ("globale Ideengeschichte") is only feasible by taking the manifold

4 See Rosa (2016), 229–233.

ramifications and variations of major trajectories under scrutiny and not narrowing down the scope to a mere look on how these texts were received by various authors.[5] This focus on the larger trajectories is also the reason, why the following exposition is not only referring to a "European" author, but shows that his specific interpretation depends on a previous one which originated in a different cultural context. As already stated, in both cases the focus is on the wider interpretative frame and the approach towards the Indian texts which are conceptualised as the outflow of a hidden, hitherto unknown wisdom.

2. Introducing the Major Object of Attention: the Upanishads

What is commonly referred to as the *Upanishads* are beyond doubt the most important sample of religious texts that nowadays is known far beyond the specialists' arena of those dealing with the religious history of India.[6] From a mere historical point of view it is a rather heterogeneous sample that was a kind of laboratory for crucial patterns of thought that became important in the further history of the Indian religion as it is exactly in the *Upanishads* that fundamental religious concepts were formulated, interpreted and debated for the first time in Indian religious history.[7] Taken from this angle, the *Upanishads* are a pool of material and particularly the early *Upanishads* that originated around the middle of the 1st mill. BCE have a very intense history of perception.[8] In their current interpretation they are quite often presented as a separate "book", thereby giving the impression of an isolated group of texts. This is not in accordance with their actual history as they make up part of the immense corpus of the *Veda* and are an integral part of this basic collection of textual material crucial for Indian religious history.[9] The fact, that they are interpreted

5 Mulsow (2022), 17-56.
6 For a history of their perception see the overview in Slaje (2019), 387-397.
7 See, for instance, Bronkhorst (2007), 118-126, 300-308.
8 See Olivelle (1998), 3-28.
9 For their early interpretation in Indian religious history, see the overview in Winter (2018), 30-32.

as a separate category, though, is intrinsically related to their reception history that is in the centre of the following presentation. I will start with the first-ever translation of the *Upanishads* into a European language, the famous *Oupnek'hat* by Abraham H. Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), which was published 1801/1802 and shaped the view on India for quite some time due to the immense influence it exerted on figures such as, amongst many others, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.[10] But the study continues with the latter's basis, namely a previous translation (and interpretation) of the Indian texts provided by a member of the Mughal elite in the 17th century, namely the unfortunate prince Dārā Shukūh (1615-1659), son of emperor Shāh Jahān (1592–1666), and a text entitled *Sirr-i akbar* (literally, "the greatest secret"). Both authors are connected through this fascinating history of textual transmission and, as I will try to show, are guided by an intense affection towards their object of discovery that makes encountering the text and its contents a revelatory experience.[11]

2.1. A European Adventurer and his Fascination with India

Abraham H. Anquetil-Duperron is an eminent figure in the history of the reception of Asian religions. His main heritage is the exploration and description of the Zoroastrian religion, as he was the translator of the so-called *Avesta* into French (and, therefore, practically conceptualized this particular corpus).[12] Furthermore, he published important books on the history of relations between Asia and Europe, criticising the colonialist and arrogant attitude towards Asia of his time.[13] His fierce anticolonial stance earned him lately praise by important scholars such as Edward W. Said, who interpreted his work as one of the first attempts, "to invade the Orient by stripping it of its veils and also by going beyond the comparative shelter

10 See App (2020); Kapani (2011).

11 See Fischer-Lichte (2013), 143, on revelatory experiences and liminality, and the remarks by Gärtner, introduction to this volume, 21, on the interrelation between liminality and transformation (according to H. Rosa).

12 See Kellens (2009).

13 Stausberg (1998), vol. 2, 790-809; Assmann (2018).

of the Biblical Orient".[14] In a recent publication, Jan Assmann, Egyptologist and well-known historian of early European thought, introduces him as the first who laid the foundation for the idea of so-called "axial age" (Achsenzeit), i.e. the concept of a specific time period in the history of humankind where major aspects of a new and totally different worldview were prepared by a couple of important religious and/or philosophical figures.[15]

In this context, the specific focus on India plays a crucial role throughout Anquetil-Duperron's life as its heritage purportedly would enable him "to unravel the archives of the human race" (*pour débroiller les archives du genre humain*).[16] Consequently, the encounter with the *Upanishads* in the form of a Persian translation (that shall be the object of interpretation in this contribution in the second part) at the end of his life, was a kind of culmination of his intellectual development. Anquetil-Duperron saw in it the final proof of a life-long search for the ultimate truth that he always thought to find in India. All that is obvious in the framing he provides for the translation itself: there is a rather lengthy introductory treatise in the *Oupnek'hat* entitled *Dissertatio, in qua e Judaeorum, Ecclesiae Doctorum, et tam Catholicorum, quam Acatholicorum Theologorum scriptis, summa Orientalis Systematis inquiritur* ("a treatise wherein the sum of the oriental religious system is sought for with reference to the scriptures of different traditions, namely the Jews, the Church Fathers, and theologians of Catholic and non-Catholic schools").[17] Anquetil proposes something like a summary of the content of the *Upanishads* according to his approach, which is presented from the background of various commonly known traditions. The *dissertatio* itself is divided into four chapters, the four *articuli*, which are dealing with important features of this *summa orientalis systematis* which Anquetil thought to find in the *Upanishads*, and which are covering all the aspects of the purported universal "oriental system":

14 Said (1979), 76.
15 Assmann (2018); Metzler (1991).
16 Quoted from the biography of Anquetil-Duperron by Schwab (1934), 6.
17 Anquetil-Duperron (1801-1802), vol. 1, xxiii-cxi. All translations of the Latin texts presented here are by the author of this article. The *Oupnek'hat* was only partially translated, namely into German, Mischel (1882), and in an early book on Indian philosophy, Rixner (1808). In both cases the introductory text was not included.

1. The highest being, its nature and its properties (*ens supremum, ejus natura et proprietates*)
2. The question of the "coming into being of the things", either through emanation or through creation (*rerum productio, per emanationem aut creationem*)
3. The existence of a supernatural world which can be grasped by the intellect and which is older than this world which is perceived by the senses (*Existentia mundi supernaturalis, intellegibilis, hoc mundo sensibili longe antiquioris*)
4. The influences of heaven or the stars on earth and the bodies (*Coeli seu astrorum in terram et corpora influxus)*

The most interesting feature of his approach is the way in which he introduces the four topics, on the one hand by referring to and quoting the *Upanishads* themselves, and on the other hand by pointing to various Western, which means European, traditions and using most fascinating examples as parallels to the supposed "Indian" concept. He puts Indian philosophy as he understands it in a very specific frame of references which should help to understand the whole program. His approach is mainly based on the idea of the *prisca theologia*-concept, meaning that India forms part of a stream of ancient wisdom which is the hidden truth now discovered. This idea was initially coined by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) in the Renaissance, but became highly influential in early modern Europe as an interpretative tool to integrate different layers of the historical and cultural development of humankind.[18] Taken from this angle, it was an ideal starting point for the integration of India's vast heritage, but Anquetil-Duperron clearly transcends a mere *prisca theologia*-concept by proposing the theory of a more or less hidden stream of knowledge which found its way from Asia to the West, and which ultimately puts Asia in a superior position. As the historian Urs App has shown, the idea that Asian philosophy had a profound influence

18 Hanegraaff (1998), 390-391, also on the differences to the parallel expression *philosophia perennis*, which became prominent in the 16th century through the book with the same title of the librarian Agostino Steucho published 1540 and is to be interpreted as a reconceptualization of the *prisca theologia*. See also Schmitt (1966); Schmidt-Biggemann (1998).

on the development of important Western concepts probably goes back to the early days of Christian missionary activity in Asia.[19]

An important impulse came from a Portuguese missionary in East Asia, João Rodrigues (1560/1561-1633/1634), who was a fierce and prominent opponent of the irenic and ecumenic missiological approach of the much better-known Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). He advocated a history of a pure atheistic philosophy which originated from the Biblical figure Ham and later spread into various regions of the world.[20] What is most striking about his concept is the idea of a monistic principle which is the cause of everything through the process of emanation – and here presented, of course, as a heresy and abomination. With the first two characteristics of the *ens supremum*, namely its "unity" and the importance of "emanation", Anquetil-Duperron is clearly a direct heir to this tradition. The interpretation of an Asian philosophy centred on the principle of the "one" was also popular with Matteo Ricci and another important Jesuit missionary, Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), but in their interpretation this concept was influenced and imported (to Asia) by various Greek philosophers. As Urs App puts it: "Whereas Valignano and Ricci had argued that Indian and Chinese philosophers had inherited this belief from the Greeks, Rodrigues reversed this genealogy".[21]

An important mediator for the concept of a Pan-Asian religion in Anquetil-Duperron's *Oupnek'hat* must have been the French physician and traveller François Bernier (1620-1688), who was briefly personal physician of the originator of the Persian translation used by Anquetil-Duperron and remained attached to the court of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb for around twelve years during his stay in India.[22] Bernier was a predecessor of Anquetil-Duperron as a traveller to the East with a particular focus

19 App (2010); App (2012).
20 App (2012), 103.
21 App (2012), 108. Rodrigues' view was developed and expanded by the Jesuit Niccolò Longobardi (1565-1655) and plays a major role in the historiographical model proposed by Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), who was a key figure in the further promotion of a Pan-Asian religion.
22 Tinguely (2008), 7-34.

on the various religious traditions they found there.[23] His knowledge, not only of the actual religious landscape of India but also of the learned discussion on Asia in Europe, allowed him to speculate on a Pan-Asian tradition which included India, East Asia and the Muslim Sufi tradition. Interestingly, Bernier proposes a common "quietist" ground for all of this, viz: "the outlines of a mysticism that transcends East and West", which he equates with atheism according to the model described above.[24]

All that provided a frame for Anquetil-Duperron, but he interpreted it differently and this reading is closely linked to another important aspect of his approach. In addition to the idea of a Pan-Asian religion whose influence is substantial not only in Asia but also in the West, a significant driving force behind Anquetil-Duperron's quest was the search for a "book" which might be interpreted as containing the first and primeval revelation transcending the classical biblical scheme.

In this regard it is important to know that the search for a book such as this in India and the equation with the Vedic material is the result of a convoluted interpretation of biblical sources and speculations on the fate of antediluvian books which were destroyed or got lost in the course of history.[25] The great encounter with Asia starting with early modern Europe offered a new opportunity to search for this eminent scripture. Several candidates were cited by early Christian missionaries, such as for example the Chinese *Yijing*, particularly after the identification of its presupposed originator, the mythical Fuxi, with the biblical figure of Enoch.[26] The corpus of the Indian Veda, though, was another ideal object of interest and the fascinating tradition of the forged *Ezour Vedam* which was promoted by the famous French philosopher Voltaire as the ultimate expression of

23 van Damme (2016), 112-114.

24 App (2010), 158. Bernier's approach and theory was substantial for entries in Diderot's widespread and famous *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* on "Asiatiques. Philosophie des Asiatiques en general" and on the (Indian) "BRAMINES *ou* BRAMENES, *ou* BRAMINS *ou* BRAMENS", which are important examples for the popularity of the idea of a general and all-encompassing philosophical and religious grounding of Asia in 18th century France.

25 App (2010), 363-439.

26 Winter (2024), 58-61.

Indian wisdom in the 18th century, can also be interpreted as an attempt to insert the recently detected religious and philosophical tradition into the European intellectual frame.[27] Anquetil-Duperron's initial interest in the Zoroastrian religious texts whose first translations into "Western" languages he provided was a kind of detour, deeply motivated by the search for the original and genuine expression of the ultimate religion. When encountering the Persian *Sirr-i akbar*, and particularly reading the introductory remarks of Dārā Shukūh about the identity of "Brahma" as the originator of the Veda with Adam, the first man in the biblical tradition, his search found its end.[28] The personal affection that accompanies the whole encounter is obvious in the emotional exclamatory statement he gives at the end of the *dissertatio* and as the actual opener for the translation portion itself. He speaks of the "highest light itself, the eternal word, the fountain of all light" that "we shall see", namely when reading the *Upanishads*.[29] The *Upanishads* are not only the gateway to Indian religious and cultural history but provide full access to the truth itself, which Anquetil-Duperron was able to achieve at the end of his life.[30]

27 Killingley (2008), 40-41.

28 See the relevant section in the Latin translation of Dārā Shukūh's preamble in Anquetil-Duperron (1801-1802), vol. 1, 3-4.

29 Anquetil-Duperron (1801-1802), vol. 1, cix: *supremum Lumen ipsum, Verbum aeternum, omnis luminis fontem, sapientem informans videamus.*

30 In this regard the concept of "diachronic resonance" viz. "connectedness" in Rosa (2016), 504, in his chapter on the "mantle of history", is worth mentioning. Therein Rosa mainly refers to so-called "sites of historic *successes*" and "places where one encounters material evidence of entirely different forms of life", such as the pyramids of Giza or the temple complex at Angkor Wat, but it seems fruitful to widen this concept and include textual material as well. In the case of the *Upanishads* and the way Anquetil-Duperron was confronted with them, namely in the form of an intermediary manuscript written by a Persian prince and in a language different from the original which arrived to him on convoluted adventurous ways, the actual encounter itself is highly exceptional. Obviously, this discovery viz. this confrontation is limited because of the temporal restraints. However, Anquetil-Duperron is a liminal personality himself as he actively engaged with India (even travelled to the country), but, in his interpretation, had to follow the patterns relevant for his time, which meant trying to find a place for this *corpus* within a biblically inspired story of transmission of a text. This makes it also comparable to the way his predecessor

2.2. A Persian Prince in Search of True Monotheism in India

Interestingly, this specific take on the *Upanishads* and their interpretation as the culmination of a life-long search for the truth has already a previous episode: As noted already, Anquetil-Duperron was using a Persian translation of the *Upanishads* as the starting point for his own translation and interestingly, this text also provides an interesting story of affection and fascination with the Indian religious and cultural context which eventually led him to the *Upanishads*, but in a totally different setting. It is about a major text entitled *Sirr-i akbar* by the Mughal prince Dārā Shukūh (1615-1659). This peculiar work makes up part of a longer literary production of the prince, who was the first-born son of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahān (1592-1666), but became defeated by his younger brother Aurangzeb (1618-1707) in the struggle for power (and eventually even executed by his own brother).[31] His publications include works on Sufi theology, as well as interesting treatises on the comparability of Hindu- and Islamic teachings with the famous *Majma al-baḥrayn* ("The Co-Mingling of the Oceans") [32] as the peak of these interests.[33]

The translation of the *Upanishads* may probably be regarded as the most eminent achievement and, in his own interpretation, the culmination of a life-long search. Before he focussed on the *Upanishads*, Dārā Shukūh had already initiated the translation of over fifty important Indian texts, amongst whom the *Bhagavadgītā* or the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* are the most eminent ones.[34] In addition, it is worth noting that he is the first to take notice of this specific Indian corpus. In the epilogue to the *Sirr-i akbar* he alludes to the Indian myth according to which the God Brahmā had discovered the once-lost memory of the sacred books (of the Veda) while taking a

---

in the fascination with the *Upanishads*, Dārā Shukūh, dealt with it as will be shown below in this contribution.

31 For the historical background, see Eaton (2019), 244-287; Faruqui (2012), 38-45.

32 For a critical evaluation and contextualization of this text, see Ernst (2003), 186. A recent translation would be D'Onofrio/Speziale (2011).

33 See the summary of the prince's literary and cultural interests in Eaton (2019), 302-305.

34 Ernst (2003), 185-186.

bath in the Yamunā right next to Nigambodh Ghat where Dārā Shukūh had his residence and actually finished this important work. In his interpretation, God brought – through Dārā Shukūh – the corpus to "the outside" (*ẓāhir*).[35]

In order to get insight into his motivations and the general idea of how to interpret the *Upanishads*, the introductory essay shall be in the centre of the presentation as it gives the unique opportunity to follow his general view.[36] This text is conceptualised as a kind of religious autobiography of the prince's journey from the study of the Quran to the in-depth meaning of it as signifying "unity" (*tauḥīd*, namely of God) and his following search for this particular essence of theological teachings in other religious traditions. It is important to keep in mind that the *tauḥīd* in Dārā Shukūh's text explicitly refers to the concept of an esoteric "unity", as expressed in Sufi concepts, and is mainly shaped by the theological concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* ("the unity of all being"), coined by the Andalusian theologian Ibn ʿArabī (1165-1240) which became important for Dārā Shukūh through the Sufi tradition relevant for him founded by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077 or 1078-1166).[37] The formula "he (namely God) is all" (*huwa al-kull*) at the beginning of the introductory essay, and its Persian equivalent *hama ū-st*, which is used multiple times in his interpretation of the *Upanishads* is the *nucleus* of this program and the understanding of the Upanishadic texts.

What is the most remarkable aspect of Dārā Shukūh's approach is that he treats the Indian text as "sacred scripture" in the same category as the texts commonly referred to as textual sources of the so-called "people of the book" (*ahl al-kitāb*), that is, the Jewish Tora, the Psalms, the Christian Gospel, and even, as will be shown, the Islamic Quran. As he states in his

35 Chand/Riḍā Jalālī-Nāʾīnī (1961), 490. Here in the following, this edition of the *Sirr-i akbar* is quoted, published in Tehran in 1961.

36 The Persian text of this preamble can be found in the aforementioned edition of the Chand/Riḍā Jalālī-Nāʾīnī (1961) on three unnumbered pages after p. 345 with critical apparatus; translations of phrases. Translations of the entire preamble into European languages are provided in D'Onofrio (2006), 296-299, into Italian, in Göbel-Gross (1962), 13-18, into German, and also in Anquetil-Duperron (1801-1802), vol. 1, 1-6, into Latin, although the latter should be used with caution.

37 On the indebtedness of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī to the Andalusian Sufi teacher see Geoffroy (2010), 186, describing him as a "worthy emulator of Ibn ʿArabī."

introduction, this search for a new text was primarily motivated by the fact that the interpretation of the Quran—albeit being the "decisive criterion" (*furqān-i ʿazīm*), i.e. the final and ultimate expression of the *tauḥīd*—is difficult because of its "allegorical" (viz. "expressed by signs"; *marmūz*) nature. Therefore, he began to make use of other expressions of the ultimate truth in the "heavenly books" (*kutub-i samāwī*) he had at hand thereby guided by the idea of finding a kind of cross-referential system of commentaries which might help him in his search. He explicitly refers to the already mentioned scriptures of the "people of the book" (*ahl-i kitāb*), that is, the Tora (*taurīt*), the Gospels (*anjīl*), and the Psalms (*zabūr*), wherein he found the *tauḥīd* limited and only "expressed by signs" (*marmūz*) as well. Once again, the prince was confronted with the same problem. This was the reason why he began to search among the Indians, asserting that the "debate on the unity" (*guftugū-yi tauḥīd*) is "frequent" (*bisyār*) and many of its "old theologians and mystics" (*ʿulamā-yi ẓāhirī u bāṭinī-i qadīm-i*) did not "deny the unity" (*bar waḥdat inkārī*) or object to the "monotheists" (*muwaḥḥidān*). Luckily, he found "among that old people" (*dar miyān-i īn qaum-i qadīm*), i.e. the Indians, another sample of "heavenly books" (*kutub-i samāwī*), which are identified with the four parts of the Veda by name. As was the case with all the other revelations, they were also given to the "prophets of that time" (*anbiyā-yi ān waqt*) and the most important of them, namely "Brahma", is linked directly to the Muslim tradition by identifying him with Adam. This lineage of transmission is legitimized in a very general way by quotations from the Quran about divine revelations that were given to the various peoples (particularly Sura 17,15; 35,24, and 57,25) without giving any further proof for the link with India.

The idea that Hindu sacred texts have a divine origin was also expanded by other Muslim teachers and writers, particularly amongst Sufi teachers, such as the famous poet Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207-1273) as a prominent example. However, when taking into consideration the enormous differences to the Islamic tradition, most of them, though, show a certain "hesitation and ambiguity in the appraisal of other religions" since

the superiority of the Islam and Quran could never be challenged.[38] The problem was particularly relevant for those Sufis who had an interest in India and its religious lore since they were in danger of placing the Quran in an inferior position.[39] In this context, Dārā Shukūh obviously transgresses these boundaries and it is beyond doubt that his approach may be perceived as outside the common religious framework, as "heterodox".[40]

This is even more evident in the final culmination of his approach in the introductory essay which clearly shows his deep affection for the text: He identifies the Indian corpus with the enigmatic "hidden book" (*kitāb maknūn*) or the "mother of the book" (*umm al-kitāb*) thereby assigning it a position as "divine word" (*kalām-i ilāhī*). With this terminology Dārā Shukūh draws on a specific Islamic theological discussion which originated in the Quran, where the aforementioned expressions (*umm al-kitāb*, Sura 43,4; *kitāb maknūn*, Sura 56,78, or alternatively also *lauḥ mahfūẓ*, "guarded tablet", in Sura 85,22) collectively refer to a summary of all events past, present and future, contained in a heavenly book. In a more restricted sense, it is the origin of all stages of revelation, the source and totality of all revealed materials which were sent down by God in the history of mankind (including the Quran) through his prophets.[41] Obviously, Dārā Shukūh thought to have found in the *Upanishads* the definite origin of the revelation. As far as can be judged from the introductory text, Dārā Shukūh was shaken by the realization of this fact and ends his preamble with an emphatic outcry: those confronted with "the translation of the divine word" (*tarjuma-yi kalām-i ilāhī*) will become "immortal, fearless, without grief" (*bī-zawāl wa bī-khauf wa bī-andūh*). Obviously, encountering the *Upanishads* was a kind of final revelation for the young Mughal prince because he gained insight into the "old book of God" (*kitāb-allāh-i qadīm*)

38 Keller (1999), 185. This goes even for those Sufi teachers with an openness and obvious positive leanings towards other religious traditions, such as the already mentioned Ibn ʿArabī.

39 See the overview in Friedmann (1975), 217-220; Keller (1999), 193-194.

40 Geoffroy (2010), 191. It is worth mentioning, that one of the accusations in the trial which eventually led to his execution, was his status as "heretic" (*mulḥid*); see Schimmel (1994).

41 For a summary of this concept, see Wisnowsky (2002), 312.

and even the "mother of the book" (*umm al-kitāb*).[42] Consequently, the *Upanishads* are not only introduced as the "essence of the Veda" (*khulāṣa-yi bīd*), but more than that, the "essence of the tauḥīd" (*khulāṣa-yi tauḥīd*) and the "sea of the tauḥīd" (*baḥr-i tauḥīd*).[43]

It is important to note, that aspects of this approach to India and its religious and cultural legacy had their history in the Islamic tradition. The most important figure in the early phase was the Muslim scholar al-Bīrūnī (973-1048), who studied Sanskrit, translated the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali into Arabic[44] and published a book on India,[45] which became the most important encyclopaedia on Indian religions and philosophy over the following centuries. Al-Bīrūnī's book is generally considered "avowedly informative, descriptive and non-polemical"[46] but his approach is best understood when keeping in mind that he was adhering to a distinction between the "common", the "uneducated people" (*al-ʿāmmī, al-awāmm*), and the intellectual, cultural and religious *élite*.[47] It is exactly within that layer of the Indian society, where he assumed a certain monotheistic view,[48] while the major portion was addicted to polytheism and – therefore – wrong.[49] The idea, though, that there is a layer of "monotheists" (*muwaḥḥidūn*) opened the path for further attempts to insert the Indian religious heritage into the framework of Muslim historiography by transgressing the traditional descriptions of India. It is exactly in this vein that Dārā Shukūh finds his own access towards the vast heritage of India, and interestingly it gives the impression of the final achievement in a life-long search that is crowned by the discovery of the *Upanishads*.

42 Quoted from the epilogue of the *Sirr-i akbar* as provided in D'Onofrio (2006), 125.
43 One could refer to the notion of "transformation" according to Rosa (2019), 101-102.
44 See Kozah (2020).
45 Kozah (2016), 23-31.
46 Friedmann (1975), 215.
47 See, for instance, in the translation of the book, Sachau (1888), vol. 1, 112-113.
48 Kozah (2016), 41-45; Friedmann (1975), 215; Wink (1997), 307-309, and a typical passage in Sachau (1888), vol. 1, 27-28.
49 Wink (1997), 319, with a general statement: "Islamic tradition almost equates Indian culture with idolatry."

3. Concluding Remarks

What I wanted to show with these studies of two important interpreters of the Indian *Upanishads*, who both introduced these texts into their respective cultural and religious context for the first time with pioneering works, is the obvious affection that guided them in their search, but also in their interpretation. Due to their special standing and the way they perceived and integrated the textual material, the resonance concept is a suitable model to grasp and locate their specific approach. The strong affection and deep emotion are obvious in their extensive self-presentation which not only describes the actual, so to say, technical process of encounter (and the accompanying challenges such as the difficult translation process), but the transformative importance of this encounter in their respective biographies. In both cases translating and reading the Upanishads has a revelatory dimension: the encounter with the *Upanishads* is described as the culmination of an intellectual memoire that was always under the tension to find the ultimate answer for a life-long quest thereby encircling topics such as the nature of god or the final source of knowledge. Both authors purport to have found exactly that in the *Upanishads* and consequently frame them within specific trajectories which are both guided by their respective cultural and religious contexts, but which are also comparable to a certain extent. Major common concepts would be the idea of a "one" God who expresses himself through a "book" that is an object of a convoluted transmission throughout a purported history of humankind: the *Upanishads* are nothing other than the final and culminating outcome of this process that through their detection deeply affect the one who discovers them. Consequently, their take on them is not just a curious interest in something "other" or exotic but becomes an integral part of their respective interpretation. Taken from this angle, they are literally struck by this encounter on many levels. It is worth noting that in both cases this encounter is a rather late achievement in their lives (although out of rather tragic reasons in the case of the Mughal prince) which gives the whole endeavour an additional flavour: it is the culmination of a life-long search for the truth.

In addition, and in accordance with the major conceptual frame as presented in the introduction of this article, the idea of "overreaches" (Überreichweiten) as introduced by Martin Mulsow shall be referred to once again. Evidently, it is not only used in the present contribution as an interpreting tool of the obvious interrelation and transcultural bond between two early interpreters of an important textual source of Indian religious history, but it can also be applied in regard to the performativity of the texts themselves as evident in the way the two intellectuals were affected by them. In addition to the idea of a "global(ised) history of ideas" (as purported in Mulsow's book) the affective and emotional, even revelatory and transformative, dimension of this encounter is worth being mentioned. Therefore, aligning all of the above with the resonance concept as introduced by H. Rosa seems to be an ideal combination, as it includes many dimensions in the interpretation of processes, including ones which are usually neglected in scholarly evaluations.

Bibliography

Anquetil-Duperron (1801-1802), *Oupnek'hat, id est, Secretum tegendum: Opus ipsa in India rarissimum, continens antiquam et arcanam, seu theologicam et philosophicam, doctrinam, è quatuor sacris Indorum libris, Rak Beid, Djedjr Beid, Sam Beid, Athrban Beid, excerptam : ad verbum, e Persico idiomate, Samskreticis vocabulis intermixto, in Latinum conversum : dissertationibus et annotationibus, difficiliora explanantibus, illustratum*, Strasbourg.

App, U. (2010), *The Birth of Orientalism*, Philadelphia, PA.

App, U. (2012), *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy*, Rorschach 2012.

App, U. (2015), *The Birth of Orientalism*, Philadelphia, PA.

App, U. (2020), "Schopenhauer and the Orient", in: Wicks, R.L. (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Schopenhauer*, New York, 88-110.

Assmann, J. (2018), *Achsenzeit: Eine Archäologie der Moderne*, Munich.

Brockey, L.M. (2007), *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724*, Cambridge, Mass.

Bronkhorst, J. (2007), *Greater Magadha: Studies in the culture of early India*, Leiden.

Chand, T., Riḍā Jalālī-Nā'īnī, M. (1961), *Upānishād. Tarjuma-yi Muḥammad Dārā Shukūh farzand-i Shāh Jahān az matn-i Sānskrīt. Bā muqaddama wa ḥawāshī wa ta'līqāt wa lughatnāma wa i'lām*, Tehran.

D'Onofrio, S. (2006), "Un commento persiano alle Upaniṣad: Il Serr-e akbar di Dārā Šikōh. Dottorato di Ricerca in Studi Indologici e Tibetologici (Ciclo XIX)", PhD thesis, Dipartimento di Orientalistica, Università degli Studi di Torino, Turin.

D'Onofrio, S., Speziale, F. (2011), *Dārā Shikūh: La congiunzione dei due oceani: (Majma ' Al-Bahrayn)*, Milan.

Eaton, R.M. (2019), *India in the Persianate Age: 1000-1765*, Berkeley, CA.

Ernst, C.W. (2003), "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages", *Iranian Studies* 36.2, 173-195.

Faruqui, M.D. (2012), *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, Cambridge, New York.

Friedmann, Y. (1975), "Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95, 214-222.

Geoffroy, É. (2010), *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam, Translated by Roger Gaetani*, Bloomington, IN.

Göbel-Gross, E. (1962), *Sirr-iakbar: Die persische Upanisadenübersetzung des Mogulprinzen Dārā Šukoh: eine Untersuchung der Übersetzungsmethode und Textauswahl nebst Text der Praśna-Upanisad Sanskrit-Persisch-Deutsch*, Marburg 1962.

Hanegraaff, W.J. (1998), *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, New York.

Kapani, L. (2011), *Schopenhauer et la pensée indienne: Similitudes et différences*, Paris.

Kellens, J. (2009), "Philology and the History of Religions in the Study of Mazdaism", *History of Religions* 48.4, 261-269.

Keller, C.-A. (1999), "Perceptions of Other Religions in Sufism", in: *Muslim perceptions of other religions*, New York.

Killingley, D. (2008), "Ezour-Védam: Europe's Illusory First Glimpse of the Veda Europe's Illusory First Glimpse of the Veda", *Religions of South Asia* 2.1, 23–43.

Kozah, M. (2016), *The Birth of Indology as an Islamic Science: Al-Bīrūnī's Treatise on Yoga Psychology*, Leiden, Boston.

Kozah, M. (2020), *Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī: The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, New York.

Lach, D.F. (1994), *Asia in the Making of Europe: Volume I: The Century of Discovery. Book One*, Chicago (first 1965).

Maillard, C. (2008), *L'Inde vue d'Europe: Histoire d'une rencontre*, 1750-1950, Paris.

Metzler, D. (1991), "A. H. Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) und das Konzept der Achsenzeit", in: Drijvers, J.W., Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. (Ed.), *Achaemenid History VII: Through travellers' eyes. European travellers on the Iranian monuments; [proceedings of the 1989 Groningen Achaemenid History Workshop]*, Leiden, 123-133.

Mischel, F. (1882), *Das Oupnek'hat. Die aus den Veden zusammengefaßte Lehre von dem Brahm. Aus der sanskrit-persischen Übersetzung des Fürsten Mohammed Daraschekoh …ins Deutsche übertragen*, Dresden.

Mulsow, M. (2022), *Überreichweiten: Perspektiven einer globalen Ideengeschichte*, Berlin.

Mungello, D.E. (2009), *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800*, Lanham.

Olivelle, P. (1998), *The Early Upanisads: Annotated text and translation*, New York.

Osterhammel, J. (2018), *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*, Princeton, NJ.

Pinot, V. (1971), *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640-1740)*, Geneva.

Rabault-Feuerhahn, P. (2008), *L'archive des origines: Sanskrit, philologie, anthropologie dans l'Allemagne du XIXe siècle*, Paris.

Rixner, T.A. (1808), *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der uralten indischen All-Eins-Lehre*, Nuremberg.

Rosa, H. (2016), *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, Berlin.

Rosa, H. (2019), *Unverfügbarkeit*, Wien/Salzburg.

Sachau, E.C. (1888), *Alberuni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India about AD 1030: Volume 1*, Cambridge.

Said, E.W. (1979), *Orientalism*, New York.

Schimmel, A. (1994), "Art. Dārā Šokōh", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 7.1, 2-5.

Schmidt-Biggemann, W. (1998), *Philosophia perennis: Historische Umrisse abendländischer Spiritualität in Antike, Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/Main.

Schmitt, C.B. (1966), "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steucho to Leibniz", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, 505-532.

Schwab, R. (1934), *Vie d'Anquetil-Duperron. Suivie des Usages civils et religieux des Parsis, par Anquetil-Duperron. Avec une préface de Sylvain Lév*, Paris.

Slaje, W. (2019) (Ed.), *Upanischaden: Arkanum des Veda*, Berlin.

Stausberg, M. (1998), *Faszination Zarathushtra: Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin/Boston.

Tinguely, F. (2008), *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole: les voyages de François Bernier*, 1656-1669, Paris.

van Damme, S. (2016), "Capitalizing Manuscripts, confronting empires: Anquetil-Duperron and the economy of oriental knowledge in the context of the Seven Year's War", in: Kontler, L., Romano, A., Sebastiani, S., Török, B.Z. (Ed.), *Negotiating Knowledge in Early Modern Empires: A Decentered View*, New York, 109-127.

Wink, A. (1997), *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest: 11th-13th centuries*, Leiden.

Winter, F. (2018), "Searching for the Hidden "One": Muslim and Early European Interpretations of the Indian Upaniṣads", *Numen* 65.1, 28-61.

Winter, F. (2024), "Introducing "the Heavenly Empire of China" (le Céleste Empire de la Chine): China versus India in the Quest for an Ancient Model Society in Joseph Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre", *Numen* 71.1, 48-70.

Wisnowsky, R. (2002), "Art. Heavenly Book", in: McAuliffe, J.D. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, Leiden, Boston, MA., 412-413.