NMML
OCCASIONAL PAPER

HISTORY AND SOCIETY
New Series
28

Interrogating the Historical Discourse on
Caste and Race in India

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Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
2013

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Abstract

In this lecture it will be argued how the epistemological category of 'caste' was structured in colonial India through the transposition of European understandings of race into Indian social conditions. Whilst early modern European observers had a relatively fluid understanding of community structures in India (reflecting their perspectives on the quotidian power relations in the subcontinent where varna norms were superseded by exigencies of practical politics and social mobility), contrastively, from the late eighteenth century onwards, British administrators and scholars interpreted scriptural varna dictates through race-based hermeneutic frameworks. Economic and political subalternisation of Indian communities went hand in hand with the colonial mapping of jatis into imperial grids of 'racialised' caste-based knowledge. This stereotyping compounded with political hegemony and the new science of anthropometry facilitated the incorporation of service personnel into the civil administration (the so-called 'upper castes'), on the one hand, and into the military machinery (the 'martial races'), on the other, as well as the marginalisation and at times even extermination of rebellious rural communities (the 'criminal tribes'). Confronted with this social engineering determined by racialised taxonomic systems, some western-educated Indians deployed the superimposed colonial categories to assert parity with the British, based on a supposed Aryan kinship. Others, including non-Brahmins from the Dravidian South

as well as pan-Indian communities who had become economically and politically disempowered in colonial India, used the racial vocabulary to formulate ideas of subalternity and victimhood vis-à-vis the brahmanised/north Indian/Aryan and western-educated literate groups, thus leading to seismic societal schisms, the resonances of which continue to be felt in Indian political and social discourse today.

I

"Treating caste as a form of race is politically mischievous and scientifically nonsensical".[1] This contentious statement by André Béteille, a renowned Indian anthropologist, was formulated in anticipation of the United Nations sponsored "World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance" (WCAR),[2] held in Durban, South Africa, in August 2001. As a prelude to this international event, an intense debate was sparked off on the issues of caste and race in India and the contested nature of their shared affinities. The controversy itself was catapulted to the centre stage by the demand of Dalit[3] spokesmen for the inclusion of caste, and by implication, the inclusion of the discriminatory practice of untouchability within the wider western discourse on racism, as part and parcel of the agenda of this conference. Presumably the ulterior aim of 'interested' parties was for an international campaign to be launched against caste discrimination under the aegis of the world organisation. This demand, however, was vehemently opposed by the Indian government, as well as by some sections of civil society,[4] partially as a knee-jerk reaction, and partially as a matter of principle, in opposition to the engrained "colonial mentality of attempting to understand Indian reality through western categories of analysis" as averred by D.L. Sheth,[5] a political sociologist and senior research fellow at the CSDS. The ensuing altercation with different stands taken by representatives of the media, academia and the NGO sector generated voluminous literature which was admittedly more politically motivated than being guided by social or academic concerns.[6]

To obtain a meaningful understanding of these heated debates of crucial contemporary socio-political importance, addressing issues

related to caste, race, national cultural identity[7] and, more pertinently, to practices of discrimination and social inequality, this talk aims to trace and deconstruct, in the first instance, the historical genealogy of the category 'caste' as used in the subcontinent from the early modern period (i.e. from 1500) onwards. In doing so, the focus will, secondly, be on the entangled history of the caste-race discourse. An endeavour will be made to foreground how this ideological inter-linkage was instrumentalised from the latter half of the 19th century, both to legitimise as well as to resist systems of domination and socio-political discrimination.

II

Caste, like race, constitutes not only a discursive but also an extremely loaded concept, especially since the discriminatory categories of casteism and racism are implied in these designations, respectively. Needless to say, the inter-linkage of both terms has been a subject of contention which long pre-dates the Durban conference,[8] as underscored by the following succinct quote from Susan Bayly's seminal study on historical developments in Indian society and politics:

> "Of all the topics that have fascinated and divided scholars of South Asia, caste is probably the most contentious. Defined by many specialists as a system of elaborately stratified social hierarchy that distinguishes India from all other societies, caste has achieved much the same significance in social, political and academic debate as race in the United States, class in Britain and faction in Italy. It has, thus, been widely thought of as the paramount fact of life in the subcontinent, and for some, as the very core or essence of South Asian civilisation".[9]

This passage highlights the significance of academic discourse on caste, albeit with due caution: By mentioning the "stratified social hierarchy"[10] Bayly refers to the scaled ordering of the four *varnas* (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras) which, though primarily conceptual categories, have been interpreted as constituting actual social strata. They have been defined as representing four broad

occupational groupings, namely the priests (or Brahmins), warriors and kings (Kshatriyas), merchants and craftsmen (Vaishyas) and labourers and peasants (Shudras); the most influential and yet increasingly controversial interpretation of the fourfold *varna* hierarchical system has been elaborated by Louis Dumont.[11] The conventional definition of caste would also include the practice of endogamy, the high status of the Brahmins, and the marginalisation of the Dalits. Furthermore, as elucidated by Ronald Inden in his post-modern critique of 'Orientalist' scholarship on India,[12] caste has been construed, from the colonial period onwards, as representing the "substantialised agent of Indian society and history"; according to this essentialised reading, caste is castigated for excelling other systems of stratified discrimination. Thus, caste society has been decried, not only as setting India apart from the West (as well as from other Asian civilisations), but also for being responsible, notably in colonial discourse, for the former's arrested civilisation, economic stagnation and political fragmentation. This essentialisation of difference is in itself most intriguing and constitutes a trend that dates from the 19th century.[13] My intention in this short essay is to unravel this transcultural discursive entanglement by contending that the discourse on race has impinged on our understanding of caste, albeit with varying degrees of intensity, and that thereby 'caste' as a hermeneutic phenomenon has to a certain extent been 'racialised'. Whilst elucidating the epistemology of the caste-race discourse, and thereby deconstructing the process by which our knowledge about the concept of caste has been produced, I shall endeavour to highlight the transformations (determined by differing historical-political contexts) that have taken place over the past 500 years.

III

Quite tellingly, in like manner to 'race',[14] the term 'caste' itself, was first introduced into India by the Portuguese at the beginning of the 16th century and had similar broad semantic connotations: The Portuguese *casta* not only embraced several meanings such as 'family', 'stock', 'kind', 'strain', 'clan', 'tribe', or 'race', but was also used to designate various kinds of social groups, besides Hindu ones, such as the "caste of Moors", the "caste of Christians" etc.[15] Hence, it must

be emphasised that the early Portuguese usage was very non-uniform. Moreover, the much-discussed 19th century 'racist' notion of 'purity of blood', deduced from the etymological derivation of the word from the Latin *castus***,** meaning 'chaste' or 'pure', was by no means foregrounded in the early 16th century, but only latently implicit, if at all.[16] This inherent semantic polyvalency of the term caste, including as only one of its meanings the category of race,[17] constituted an instrument employed by external observers to describe the socio-cultural heterogeneity confronted on the western (or Malabar) coast of India.[18] How bewildering this polyphony of social codes must have appeared to an early modern European observer, is apparent from the following brief remark, made in 1516 by Duarte Barbosa, the famous proto-ethnographer of maritime India:

> "This King (of Calicut) keeps 1000 women, to whom he gives regular maintenance, and they always go to his court to act as the sweepers of his palace […] these are ladies, and of good family (*estas saom fidalgos e de boa casta*)." [19]

What apparently struck the Portuguese observer were not merely the numerous women in the King's retinue, but rather the incongruous nature of their lowly occupation.[20] Indeed, social stratification being defined along the axis of purity/impurity *à la* Dumont[21] does not seem applicable here. Furthermore, Barbosa's remark by no means constitutes an odd anomaly, for early modern European accounts are replete with such disconcerting aperçus which contribute towards underscoring the multi-dimensional forms of social organisation in the different regions of India.[22] Yet, despite this focus on empirical heterogeneity, there is an underlying tendency even in these descriptive reports to categorise or conceptually straitjacket the observed polyvalence.[23] But, in German reports dating from the early 16th century, rather than recourse being taken to the linguistically foreign Portuguese *casta*, a variety of other more familiar terms are referred to, such as 'estate', 'family', 'guild', 'nation' etc.**,** representing sociological concepts commonly employed in the early modern European-German context. This terminological usage, whilst constituting a cognitive semantic imposition, is simultaneously indicative of the fact that the

distinctive societal ordering perceived in Indian society was being brought in line with similar European social divisions; India was thus being drawn closer to Europe, be it in the latter's own terms, and not being distinguished from it as was to be the case later on, when India became conquered territory. This implicit acknowledgement of a coeval relationship[24] between India and Europe in pre-colonial times constitutes a striking contrast to later 19th and early 20th century western attitudes.

Admittedly, when observing the ethnically diverse Indian population, physical 'racial' differences were perceived by early European travellers, as is apparent from references made to nuances of differing skin pigmentation; however, these phenotypical differences were not yet categorised according to a 'racist' discriminatory hierarchical scale. Everyday social life in the different Indian regions was viewed basically from a non-brahmanical angle, representative of the mass of the population as against underscoring the perspective of a miniscule brahmanical group, as was to be from the late 18th century onwards. In the early modern period (ca. 1500-1750), moreover, the multi-dimensionality and plurivalency of social formations were highlighted, as exemplified in a study of Tamil society with its 98 groupings by a German missionary, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, at the beginning of the 18th century.[25] In these early proto-ethnographies, with stress laid on occupational variety in the general populace, stereotypical notions about so-called caste society, which were later to achieve hegemonic status, – such as linear hierarchy, rigid occupational specialisation, the racial implications of group endogamy,[26] and last but not least, the pre-eminent status of the Brahmins – were not yet an issue in European perceptions of Indian regional societal formations.

IV

By the late 18th century, this non-dogmatic and less ideologically weighted understanding of the plurality and contextually contingent nature of Indian communitarian society was radically transformed due to a complex cluster of intertwined historical developments: Prominent among them were factors emanating from the colonial situation (and its ideologies of legitimacy[27]); these included, for instance, relationships of increasingly pronounced political asymmetry between Europeans

and Indians,[28] concomitant drastic changes in the Indian socio-political order as a result of political subjugation,[29] economic disruption and impoverishment of wide-sections of the population, leading to demographic and cultural upheavals,[30] new intellectual concerns of the colonial administrator-cum-scholars influenced by ethno-religious theories formulated in Europe,[31] and last but not least, the so-called 'Orientalist' appropriation of selected Indian scriptural traditions,[32] which also involved a certain measure of collaboration on the part of indigenous Brahmin scholars. To understand the way in which this complex scenario had tangible repercussions, not only on Indian societal formations, but also on the perceptions of colonial administrators and scholars, I shall briefly underscore specific aspects of 'oriental' knowledge production whose 'findings' significantly influenced the subsequent streamlining or pigeon-holing of the plethora of Indian social groups.[33]

After the British conquest of Bengal (subsequent to the battle of Plassey in 1757),[34] in order to secure a political foothold as well as to construct a legalistic administrative framework,[35] strategic importance was given to the selective appropriation of the region's cultural heritage. Towards these ends, British scholars were employed at the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta,[36] founded in 1784 under the auspices of the first Governor-General, Warren Hastings.[37] With an aim to classify and codify Bengali (and by extension Indian) society, these Orientalist scholars[38] endeavoured to discover or reconstruct the origins of Indian societal order based on scriptural brahmanical theorisations. This approach was in line with the ongoing European preoccupation with civilisational origins and the belief in the authorative nature of ancient Greek and Roman scriptural traditions.[39] Accordingly, it was no coincidence that the *Manusmriti*,[40] also known as the *Manavadharmashastra,* was translated by the founding father of Indology, William Jones, in 1794.[41] This ancient scripture, rendered into English as the Laws of Manu,[42] attracted Jones' attention since it represented an orthodox brahmanical defense of social status, listing as it did, from a brahmanical perspective, the social obligations and duties of the four stratified *varnas*, theoretically speaking. Paradigmatically, these *varnas* (as mentioned above), constituting merely conceptual social categories, were understood by Jones to

represent actual social groups. Furthermore, erroneously viewed as a generally accepted Indian legal code, the *Manusmriti* was endowed with canonic importance, not least because it was seen to provide transcultural and meta-historical modes of understanding Indian society, which in turn were amenable to British colonial interests of codifying the multivalent social relations into a single (brahmanic) hierarchical register.[43] This re-appropriation by means of a quasi re-invention of tradition was further amplified by the collaboration of Brahmin scholars who possibly intended thereby, not only to maintain, but also to further extend their social influence and heighten their ritual standing by assisting in attributing hegemonic preeminence to specific brahmanical scriptural treatises.[44]

Significantly, on an etiological level, Manu, who in the ancient scripture exemplifies not merely the ancient law-giver but also the progenitor of mankind, was identified by Jones, steeped in Biblical mythology, with Adam in the Book of Genesis.[45] This constructed identification supposedly emphasised the universal truth of the biblical origin myth, echoes or remnants of which, according to Jones' (mis) interpretation, could be found in ancient brahmanical scriptures. Yet even prior to his translation of the Manusmriti, another biblical myth denoting racial origins was brought to bear in a more significant discovery which has also been attributed to Jones: this was the identification of the philological kinship between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Gothic, Celtic and Old Persian, ancient languages which were all shown to originate from a primordial, yet 'lost' *Ursprache* – later to be termed proto-Indo-European.[46] For this 'discovery', Jones was held in esteem for having laid the groundwork for the subsequent elaboration of the Indo-European language family. This apparently modern comparative philological appraisal was, however, as already elucidated by Trautmann and others, rooted in, or at least connected with another much more traditionally oriented project, namely that of defending the Old Testament biblical narrative.

Indeed, in defense of Mosaic ethnology[47] and countering Voltaire's construction of a pre-Mosaic deism, Jones categorised the speakers of these so-called Indo-European languages as being the descendants of one of Noah's three sons, namely Ham. As for the other two sons,

Shem was designated as the forefather of the Arabs, while Japhet was believed to be the progenitor of the Tartars. This categorisation, needless to say, gave a completely different rendering than the later more common interpretation of Japhet being designated as the forefather of the Indo-Europeans, Shem of the Semites, and Ham – the cursed son – as ancestor of the (black) Africans. What is even more significant for our topic is that it was Jones' application of Mosaic ethnology to explain the philological pedigree of Sanskrit that eventually constituted the theoretical basis for conflating the origins of language with those of race.[48] On the one hand, it sewed the seeds which were to germinate and grow into the Indo-European or Aryan family tree; on the other, however, it simultaneously laid the foundations for the advancement of the Aryan theory of race, which would inspire Max Müller[49] several decades later to emphasise with rhetorical flourish that the British and Indians were in fact distant cousins. After having turned once more to the Manusmriti and its origin myth of the four *varnas*, I shall pick up this thread again.

V

As already indicated the Laws of Manu, in pre-colonial times, did not receive widespread empirical validation. From the 19th century onwards, however, the structured hierarchical ordinance elaborated in this ancient treatise was increasingly viewed (due to its obvious cognitive, cultural and ideological appeal) as defining and indeed constituting the Indian caste system: in short, the brahmanical ritualistic and prescriptive *varnashramadharma*[50] (or social ethical code) was interpreted as the organising principle par excellence, representing a cohesive albeit primitive form of Indian social order.

In addition, yet another brahmanical etiological myth, substantiating the Manu scenario, was given canonical status, namely the *Purusha* narrative from the *Rigveda*.[51] This ancient Vedic text details the ritual origin of the four *varnas* from the sacrificial body of the *Purusha* (presumed to be an Indian equivalent of the Greek Prometheus): from his head the Brahmins or priests emanated, from his shoulders the Kshatriyas or kings, from his thighs the Vaishyas, or merchants and craftsmen, from his feet, the Shudras, or the peasants. This integrative

ritual scenario in which Hinduism abounds, signifying from an emic Indian perspective the single racial origin of all social groups, represented primarily the embodiment of a holistic, organic vision of human community. Yet this metaphorical conceptualisation was taken literally by the early Orientalists as designating the ranked functional and religiously sanctioned hierarchy of the Hindu body-politic.

Needless to say, it was this canonisation by British and later European Orientalists of ancient brahmanical scriptural lore, dating from the first or second millennium BCE, that increasingly served as a blue-print for understanding early 19th century Indian society – despite (or perhaps because of) the latter's obvious plurivalency and multidimensionality; and it was this canonisation that, conjoined with the Portuguese term *casta,* not only defined caste organisation as brahmanically hierarchical and discriminatory, but also projected it as stultifyingly ritualised.[52] This, in turn, opened the floodgates of admonitions from evangelical missionaries and Utilitarian minded administrator-scholars, alike. The Baptist missionary William Ward, for instance, made the following statement in 1822:

> "Like all other attempts to cramp the human intellect, and forcibly to restrain men within bounds which nature scorns to keep, this system, however specious in theory, has operated like the Chinese national shoe, it has rendered the whole nation crippled. Under the fatal influence of this abominable system, the bramhuns have sunk into ignorance, without abating an atom of their claims to superiority; the kshutriyus became almost extinct before their country fell into the hands of the Musulmans; the voishyus are no where to be found in Bengal; almost all have fallen into the class of shoodrus, and shoodrus have sunk to the level of their own cattle."[53]

The missionary's denunciation was due in part to the fact that the empirical ground reality of thousands of social communities or *jatis* did not by any means conform to the stratified linear hierarchy of the four-fold *varna* scheme. This was especially true of Bengali society in which the *varnas* of the Shudras and the Brahmins predominated

almost exclusively; the situation was further compounded by the socio-cultural upheaval and economic impoverishment in the aftermath of the Bengal famine of 1770 which resulted in the death of one third of the region's population.[54] Another reason for Ward's condemnation of so-called caste-ridden Indian society, however, can be attributed to the proselytiser's exasperation, given that the adhesive caste community presented very stubborn resistance to Christian conversion. In some despair, another missionary, William Carey,[55] wrote that: "All are bound to their present state by caste, in breaking whose chains a man must endure to be renounced and abhorred by his wife, children and friends."[56] Furthermore, Carey describes caste as "a prison which immures many innocent beings", thus, using a far more forceful metaphor than Ward's "Chinese shoe". Also in line with the French missionary Abbé Dubois, he condemned caste as "a system that brooked neither individual dissent nor any form of freedom of movement". In accordance with Christian polemics caste was declared to be the "most cursed invention of the Devil that ever existed"[57] which had already induced Charles Grant to demand a Christian crusade to be launched against the system.[58] This proselytising zeal was tantamount, in the European context, to the then contemporary abolitionists' calls for anti-slavery legislation. Indeed, the equation of caste and slavery was by no means uncommon among Christian missionaries of the time, as underscored by William Wilberforce,[59] one of the staunchest crusaders of abolitionism whose harsh critique of the perceived inhuman character of caste society induced the British government to endorse full-scale missionary activity on the sub-continent. He articulated this position in a speech before the British Parliament in 1813:

> "Why need I, in this country, insist on the evils which arise merely out of the institution of Caste itself; a system which [...] must truly appear to every heart of true British temper to be a system at war with truth and nature; a detestable expedient for keeping the lower orders of the community bowed down in an abject state of hopeless and irremediable vassalage. [...] Christianity [...] has been acknowledged even by avowed sceptics, to be, beyond all other institutions that ever existed, favourable to the temporal interests and happiness of man: and never was there a country where

there is greater need than in India for the diffusion of its
genial influence. […] Our religion is sublime, pure and
beneficent. Theirs is mean, licentious, and cruel. […]
Equality is the vital essence and the very glory of our English
laws. Of theirs, the essential and universal pervading
character is inequality; despotism in the higher classes,
degradation and oppression in the lower."[60]

Similarly for James Mill, the arch-Utilitarian and author of the
hegemonic *History of British India*[61] (who, never having been to India
himself, relied on Orientalist research), the brahmanicised projection
of Indian society represented:

"a system of priestcraft, built upon the most enormous and
tormenting superstition that ever harassed and degraded any
portion of mankind, their minds were enchained more
intolerably than their bodies; in short that, despotism and
priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body,
were the most enslaved portion of the human race".[62]

In line with Utilitarian reasoning, whilst proclaiming that "the
priesthood holds the greatest authority in the lowest state of society",[63]
Mill proceeded to fix the binary distinction between enlightened Britain,
the civilised nation state, and caste-ridden Indian society. The latter,
being branded as a primitive society *par excellence*, was then declared
— by Mill and like-minded colonial administrators — in dire need of
Britain's civilising mission, to be freed from the slavery of caste.

VI

Paradoxically enough, in the aftermath of the Great Rebellion of
1857,[64] the importance of 'brahmanised caste' as a classificatory
category and an analytical lens through which Indian society was
perceived grew significantly. This was mainly due to the colonial
administration's preoccupation with reinforcing political control. To
achieve this goal, not only could Manu's rigidly defined hierarchical
ordering be instrumentalised most efficiently in establishing social order
(abetted by the philological assistance of reputed Indologists such as

the eminent Max Müller), but also, more importantly, the new science of race was to have a significant impact in refurbishing the British Raj.[65] Subsequently, caste metamorphosed into a racialised avatar, a transformation assisted by various 19th century scientific developments. Firstly, through philological expertise, misconstrued translations, for instance, of the crucial term *varna* (that in Sanskrit signifies 'category' or 'quality', and 'colour' only in a symbolic ritual context) gave rise to an influential rendering (which still holds sway), interpreting it as denoting skin colour or pigmentation, so that the fourfold conceptual hierarchy could be explained in line with racial categories.[66] Similarly other Sanskrit terms concerned with descent groups and kinship relations such as *vamsa, kula, jati* and *gotra* were translated as 'race'.[67]

Secondly, such racially oriented philological scholarship was soon to be complemented empirically by anthropological knowledge in support of the imperialist project.[68] Besides being applied in revamping the army with new recruits from communities originating from north-west India, designated as 'martial races', and in branding oppositional forces as criminal tribes or castes,[69] the new science of anthropology was crucial to the subcontinental decennial census operation initiated in 1871. Apart from policing society and controlling labour migration, the overarching aim of the undertaking was clearly to inventorise India's caste society in like manner to a "cadastral survey of the land".[70] Thereby, the object of the exercise was not so much to list the number of people belonging to individual castes, but rather to determine and fix the relative status of different castes with the aim of providing a pan-Indian operational hierarchy - in line with the brahmanical *varna* scheme - to serve as a necessary controlling adjunct to colonial authority.[71]

On the one hand, this social engineering turned out to be an almost impossible undertaking, due to the strong sense of prestige and status manifested by most individual castes whose resistance to being pigeon-holed into specific hierarchically defined *varna* categories led to endless disputes, counterclaims and petitions. On the other hand, given the rigorous nature of the exercise (testifying to the authoritarian modus operandi of the colonial bureaucratic state) and its reliance on indigenous sociological categories which, though disputed and

theoretical in nature, were nevertheless familiar and commanded a certain authority,[72] as a result, the *varna* hierarchical scheme soon became recognised as a pan-Indian model of social organisation – at least by the westernised classes of society who considered their compliance would yield political and economic dividends. In this gigantic subcontinental census operation, further assistance was sought from the new racial science of anthropometry.[73] The theories and methods of the French race theorists Broca[74] and Topinard[75] and of the criminologist Bertillon[76] about measuring and categorising different bodily features as markers of race were taken up zealously by scholar-administrators of the census commission. In the forefront of these officials were Herbert Risley[77] and Edgar Thurston,[78] who hoped to refine and expand European theories of race by applying them to specimens of Indian endogamous caste society which seemed to serve as an ideal laboratory for late 19th century race science.[79] Through the application of the infamous nasal index, for instance, Risley hoped to demonstrate that "the social status of the members of a particular group varies in inverse ratio to the mean relative width of their noses";[80] his colleague, Thurston, surmised that "intelligence is in inverse proportion to the breadth of the nose."[81] The latter is said to have remarked that "no one with a nasal index exceeding 78 need apply" for the advertised position of clerkship in his office.[82]

Risley's obsession with race as the defining feature of caste led him to proclaim the following:

> "The remarkable correspondence between gradations of [social] type as brought out by certain indices and the gradations of social precedence further enables us to conclude that *community of race*, and not, as has frequently been argued, *community of function*, is the real determining principle, the true *causa causans*, of the caste system."[83]

Risley persisted in upholding racial indices despite innumerable discrepancies in concrete scientific findings, indicative of the fact that measurable biological differences between higher and lower castes were insignificant. However, given that the science of racial anthropology, often employing an *ex ante* deductive methodology,

was driven by its own logic and impetus, set-backs — such as difficulties in providing accurate measurements — did little to dampen the census commissioner's enthusiasm. Further, the census project's aim was not merely to fix Indian social hierarchy, defined according to racial categories, but even more significantly, to determine the racial origins of the disparate Indian populations. Indeed, ascertaining their rank within a typology of races was the crux of the matter.[84]

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VI

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I shall now briefly review the implications of the Aryan theory of race[85] that since the era of William Jones had derived academic sanction from the work of comparative philologists such as Max Müller and Christian Lassen, ideological sanction from Joseph Arthur de Gobineau and political sanction by the end of 19th century from the imperialist project.[86] The basis of the theory, as mentioned earlier, was the equation of language and race (albeit inspired by biblical mythology), and its genesis lay in the philological relationships noticed between Sanskrit and Greek, Latin and other European languages. Yet, it is indeed paradoxical how this theoretical proposition of transculturality, implicit in Jones' universal language family as well as in the averred racial unity of Aryans from the West and the East as posited by Max Müller (and subscribed to enthusiastically by westernised Indians, who wanted to be considered on par with the colonial strata), eventually became the basis for underscoring racial difference on the subcontinent in an almost irrevocable manner. Pivotal to this transformation was the European dichotomy between Aryan and Semitic which served as a conceptual fulcrum facilitating the construction of its Indian counterpart in the Aryan/Dravidian divide.[87]

That this racialised transposition could gain forceful legitimacy is enigmatic to say the least, since the very terminology on which it was founded seems to be contestable, given that the crucial term *arya* – derived from Sanskrit and denoting cultural nobility[88] – did not necessarily possess any racial or ethnic connotations in its Vedic context of origin. For race science, however, this was of little consequence, for the multi-ethnic Indian scenario was far too interesting to be dismissed. To unravel the ethnic puzzle, the following explanation was

construed: the Aryans, as civilising tribes, who supposedly originated from Central Asia, spread in the 2nd millennium BCE westwards to Europe and eastwards to the Indian subcontinent[89] where they came into close contact with an unequivocally dark race, the Dravidians who, due to their assumed lower civilisational status underscored by their dark skin pigmentation and snub noses (apparently indicative of racial inferiority), were conquered by the fair-skinned aquiline-nosed Aryan race.[90] *Summa summarum*: it was supposedly the antagonism between dichotomously opposed races, the Aryan and Dravidian, which distinguished the racial history of India from elsewhere and accounted for the rise of its peculiar institution of caste. With great panache, Risley, the main propagator of this contrived theory, explicated the origins of caste as follows:

> "The principle upon which the system rests is the sense of distinctions of race indicated by differences of colour: a sense which, while too weak to preclude the men of the dominant race from intercourse with the women whom they have captured, is still strong enough to make it out of question that they should admit the men whom they have conquered to equal rights in the matter of marriage."[91]

Hence, as a result of the strict adherence to caste endogamy (defined by racial criteria), the upper-castes were deduced to be the descendants of the Aryans or *arya-varna*, as constituted by the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, while the lower castes or Shudras (as well as the outcastes) were categorised as the conquered non-Aryans or *dasa-varna*. Further explaining that all social differences were reducible to racial differences, Risley delineated the following all-embracing explanation:

> "Once started in India, the principle was strengthened, perpetuated, extended to all ranks of society by the fiction that people who speak a different language, dwell in a different district, worship different gods, eat different food, observe different social customs, follow a different profession, or practise the same profession in a slightly different way must be so unmistakably aliens by blood that

intermarriage with them is a thing not to be thought of."[92]

<p style="text-align:center">**VII**</p>

Needless to say, this racialised interpretation of caste, though criticised for its pseudo-scientific claims,[93] was instrumentalised extensively in colonial discourse, and subsequently greatly impacted on the self-perceptions of educated Indians. Furthermore, caste, reified as a rigid brahmanical system, was held responsible, by Risley and others, for rendering Indians politically impotent, making them the pliable subjects of conquerors. Due to its fragmentary tendencies resulting from racial animosities, caste was considered antithetical to the development of a strong nation state and inimical to national unity.[94] On the one hand, this latter fissiparous characteristic was to a certain extent borne out by 19th and early 20th century movements of self-assertive resistance, entangled as they were in the net of colonialist rhetoric; led by low-caste or non-Brahmin spokesmen in various regions of India, such movements proactively applied the racist theories, in inverse order, to resist systems of economic and political domination.[95] On the other hand, nationalist politicians, such as Mahatma Gandhi, in an attempt to disprove the colonialist verdict, attempted to reform caste society, also by providing more integrative understandings of Indian social ordering.[96] Interestingly, B.R. Ambedkar, leader of the 'untouchables' and one of India's most vehement opponents of the caste system, castigated in no uncertain terms the racist interpretation of its origins.[97]

Yet the racist virus continued to breed: after Independence, despite the fact that the Indian Constitution of 1950 outlawed caste discrimination, the influence of a racialised caste discourse persists into the present day, with Dalits and human rights activists campaigning for the branding of caste discrimination and the practice of untouchability internationally as racism, or as India's "hidden apartheid".[98] Though drawing attention to the persisting virulence of the problem, no viable solutions are thereby being proffered, apart from addressing claims to victimhood and consequently demands for compensation. However, if more fundamental improvement is to be sought, rather than merely stigmatising and transfixing caste as a racist

institution, positive measures need to be taken to empower (politically, socially and economically) the many disadvantaged groups so that the subcontinent's social, cultural and ethnic diversity may finally shed the classifying trammels – in their brahmanised and racist avatar – bequeathed by colonialism.

Reference:

[1] André Béteille, 'Race and Caste', in: *The Hindu*, March 10, 2001.

[2] United Nations, *Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,* Department of Public Information, News and Media Services Division, New York 2002; Ambrose Pinto, 'Caste Discrimination and UN', in: *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 37/398, 2002, pp. 3988-90.

[3] A Marathi term, meaning "broken" or "reduced to pieces", Molesworth's *Marathi-English Dictionary*, 1975, cited by Eleanor Zelliot: 'Dalit: New Cultural Context for an old Marathi Word', in: *From Untouchable to Dalit*, Delhi 2001, p. 267. The term came into general use through the literature of the *Dalit Panthers* in the early 1970s.

[4] Soli J. Sorabjee, 'The Official Position'*,* in: *Seminar* 508, *Exclusion*: *A Symposium on Caste, Race and the Dalit Question*, 2001, pp. 14-16; M. N. Panini, 'Caste, Race and Human Rights', in: *Economic and Political Weekly* vol. 36/35, 2001, pp. 3344-3346; P. N. Bhagwati, 'The Caste and Race Debate', in: *PUCL Bulletin*, vol. 21/7, 2001, pp. 3-8.

[5] D. L. Sheth, 'Caste in the Mirror of Race', in: *Seminar* 508, *Exclusion*: *A Symposium on Caste, Race and the Dalit Question*, 2001, pp. 50-55, citation, p. 55.

[6] Sukhadeo Thorat and Umakant (eds.), *Caste, Race and Discrimination. Discourses in International Context*, Jaipur 2004; Ameena Hussein (ed.), *Race, Identity, Caste & Conflict in the South Asian Context*, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo 2004.

[7] Cf. the contributions in Crispin Bates (ed.), *Beyond Representation. Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Indian Identity*, New Delhi 2006, and Mohan Rao, '"Scientific" Skein', in: *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 38/8, 2003, pp. 697-700.

[8] Crispin Bates, 'Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India: The Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry', *Edinburgh Papers in South Asian Studies,* No. 3, 1995, p. 14; also Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind. Colonialism and the Making of Modern India, Princeton 2001*, pt. III: 'The Ethnographic State', pp. 125-227.

[9] Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge 1999, p. 1 [New Cambridge History of India IV/3].

[10] Challenging this hegemonic interpretation, the sociologist Dipankar Gupta argues that any notion of a fixed hierarchy is arbitrary: Dipankar Gupta, *Interrogating Caste. Understanding Hierarchy & Difference in Indian Society*, New Delhi 2000.

[11] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: Essai sur le système des castes*, Paris 1966.

[12] Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 57, 47-84.

[13] Chris Smaje, *Natural Hierarchies. The Historical Sociology of Race and Caste*, Malden 2002, p. 34: "[…] assumptions [made by Orientalists] are systematically associated with European colonial domination in its attempt to characterise and control the non-European, by working the irreducibly manifold world of meanings, actions and intentions into a singularity which, through devices such as the concept of culture, constitutes the non-European as 'other'."

[14] The term 'race' was apparently first used in the English language in 1508 in a poem by William Dunbar, but notably as a literary term denoting a class of persons or things (Bill Ashcroft et al.: *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London 1998, p. 199.) Etymologically derived from the Arabic 'raz' (head, leader or origin) and the Latin "radix" (root), it came to signify 'race, breed, lineage', and was applied to designate a "people of common descent", or a 'group of people with common occupation' and 'generation' (c. 1560), for details of the conceptual origin, cf. Christian Geulen, *Geschichte des Rassismus*, München 2007, p. 14.

[15] Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson. A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 170ff. [repr. of 1st edition, London 1886]; for more details, cf. Gita Dharampal-Frick, *Indien im Spiegel deutscher Quellen der Frühen Neuzeit (1500-1750). Studien zu einer interkulturellen Konstellation*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 182ff.

[16] Ibid., p. 183. For a refutation of the interpretation of caste organisation constituting "genetic segregation", cf. Morton Klass, *Caste: the Emergence of the South Asian Social System*, Philadelphia 1980, pp. 26ff.

[17] The term race, moreover, in the 16th century did not yet designate a distinct category of human beings with physical characteristics transmitted by descent, and hence was without the later more pronounced 'racist' implications.

[18] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce. Southern India 1500-1650,* Cambridge 1990, p. 338: "Indeed, early Portuguese uses

of the term *casta* […] are notorious for being fluid as an organising rubric."

[19] Yule and Burnell, *op. cit.*, p. 171. It is elaborated further: "Barbosa [...] [did not] apply the word *casta* to the divisions of Hindu society. He calls these divisions in Narsinga and Malabar so many *leis de gentios*, i.e. 'laws' of the heathen, in the sense of sectarian rules of life. But he uses the word *casta* in a less technical way, which shows how it should easily have passed into the technical sense". ibid.

[20] This is quite an eye-opener for today's reader, too, bearing in mind the modern stereotypical notion of the sweeping profession in India being the preserve of low or out-caste untouchables.

[21] Dumont, *op.cit.,* p. 65: "L'ensemble est fondé sur la coexistence nécessaire et hiérarchisée des deux opposes: le pur et l'impur."; and continues later p. 78: "[…] l'exécution des tâches impures par les uns est nécessaire au maintien de la pureté chez les autres."

[22] Gita Dharampal-Frick, *op. cit.*, p. 183 ff, with reference to the reports of early modern travellers such as William Methwold, Antonio Schorer and Pieter Gilliesz van Ravesteyn in: W.H. Moreland (ed.), *Relations of Golconda*, London 1931.

[23] For according to Montaigne (*Essais*, Paris 1962, vol.1, p. 223): "Human eyes cannot perceive things but in the shape they know them by". Consequently, in the Indo-European interaction, the intellectual reservoir from which organising principles have been drawn were, needless to say, eurocentric.

[24] Johannes Fabian (*Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object*, New York 1983, p. 31) argues that the "denial of coevalness" as a distancing device represents "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse". In contrast to this later approach, though India in the early (pre-colonial) period was considered, by European observers, as existing on the same temporal level as pre-industrial Europe, the multi-dimensional nature of intercultural perception and its subsequent representation should not be underestimated; for explanatory details, with regard to the Spanish conquest of America, cf. Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquête de L'Amérique: la question de l'autre*, Paris 1982, ch. 4.

[25] Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, *Malabarisches Heidenthum*, edited by W. Caland, Amsterdam 1926 (ms. completed 1711), pp. 195 ff. For a detailed elucidation of Ziegenbalg's proto-ethnography of Tamil societal groupings, cf. Dharampal-Frick, *op.cit.*, pp. 228-242.

[26] Stanley J. Tambiah: 'From Varna to Caste through Mixed Unions', in: Stanley J. Tambiah (ed.), *Culture, Thought and Social Action. An Anthropological Perspective*, Cambridge/Mass. 1985, pp. 212-251.

[27] Cf. Thomas R. Metcalf: *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge 1998.

[28] For empirical data on the first phase of British colonial conquest, cf. Ramsay Muir, *The Making of British India 1756-1858. Described in a Series of Dispatches, Treaties, Statutes, and other Documents, Selected and Edited with Introduction and Notes*, Manchester 1917.

[29] For an analytical study of the modalities and repercussions of colonial rule, cf. Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India,* Cambridge/Mass. 1997.

[30] Brahma Nandal, *Famines in Colonial India,* New Delhi 2007; Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India,* New Delhi 1983; Hamza Alavi, 'Peasants and revolution', in: Kathleen Gough(ed.), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, New York 1973, pp. 291-337.

[31] Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters. Religion and Modernity in India and Britain,* Princeton 2001; Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Princeton 1996.

[32] Rosanne Rocher: 'British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century. The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government', in: Carol A. Breckenridge (ed.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament. Perspectives on South Asia*, Philadephia 1994, pp. 215-249.

[33] Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 56-97.

[34] For a critical appraisal of colonial historiography with regard to the battle of Plassey which marks a turning point in the colonial conquest of India, cf. Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal. A Corrected Account of the 1756-1765 Events*, London 1963; Biplab Dasgupta, 'Palashi: The Inside Story of a Betrayal', in: Kandiyur N. Panikkar (ed.), *The Making of History. Essays Presented to Irfan Habib*, New Delhi 2000, pp. 202-236.

[35] For details about the establishment of British rule in Bengal, cf. the study by Peter J. Marshall, *Bengal: the British Bridgehead. Eastern India 1740-1828*, Cambridge 1987.

[36] Om P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past 1784-1838*, Delhi 1988.

[37] Henry Beveridge (ed.), *Warren Hastings in Bengal*, Calcutta 1978; for a recent critical examination of the ignominious actions of the first Governor-General, cf. Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire. India and the Creation of Imperial Britain*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 87-131.

[38] William Jones, Nathaniel Halhed, Henry Thomas Colebrooke and Charles Wilkins were the first most prominent scholars; for an overview of British Orientalism, cf. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: the Dynamics of Indian Modernisation,* 1773-1835, Berkeley 1969.

[39] Ronald Inden, 'Orientalist Constructions of India', in: *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20/3, 1986, pp. 401-446; Peter J. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge 1970; Sylvia Murr, 'Les conditions d'emergence du discourse sur l'Inde au siècle des Lumières', in: *Collection Purusartha* VII, Paris 1983, pp. 233-284.

[40] Patrick Olivelle (ed.), *Manu: Manu's Code of Law: a Critical Edition and Translation of the Manava-Dharmasastra*, Oxford 2005.

[41] For a standard biography, cf. Garland H. Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics*, Cambridge 1990; for a critical contextualisation of Jones' indological work, cf. S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth Century British Attitudes to India*, Cambridge 1968. Cf. also: *Institutes of Hindu Law: or, the Ordinances of Menu, according to the Gloss of Cullúca. Comprising the Indian System of Duties, Religious and Civil*, Calcutta 1794, translated by Sir William Jones.

[42] Cf. the more recent critical edition: *The Laws of Manu, with an Introduction and Notes,* translated by Wendy Doniger, London 1991.

[43] Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, *op.cit*, chapter 2.

[44] Furthermore, in this connection, J. Duncan Derrett ('The British as patrons of the Sastra', in: *Religion, Law and the State in India*, London 1968, pp.225-269) lists nearly fifty Sanskrit treatises of law known to have been produced for the British.

[45] Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, New Delhi 1997, p. 58.

[46] Cf. Jones' third anniversary discourse delivered in 1786, cited in Trautmann, *ibid*, pp. 38 ff.

[47] *Ibid*., pp. 42-61.

[48] Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 1992.

[49] Gita Dharampal-Frick, "India - what can it teach us?" – Neue Überlegungen zu einer alten Frage', in: *Saeculum*, 57/2, 2006, pp. 255-268; Trautmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-181.

[50] This term refers to the theoretical concept of a four-fold division of society in *varnas*. A critique against the application of this concept to social reality can be found in Gerald D. Berreman, 'The Brahmanical View of Caste', in: *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 5, 1971, pp. 16-23.

[51] It is doubtful whether prior to its canonisation by British Orientalists this myth had enjoyed pan-Indian validity. It was first published under British auspices as: *Rig-veda-sanhita. A Collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns of the Rig-Veda; the Oldest Authority on the Religious and Social Institutions of the Hindus*, 4 vols., London 1854-57, transl. from the original Sanskrit by H. H. Wilson; this was later reedited by Friedrich Max Müller (ed.), *Rig-Veda-Samhita. The Sacred Hymns of the Brahmans together with the Commentary of Sayanakarya*, 4 vols., London 1890-92.

[52] A perception that was acerbated and intensified by the concomitant repercussions of economic exploitation and political subjugation as a result of colonial conquest.

[53] William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindoos*, Vol. 2, London 1822, pp. 64-65.

[54] Cf. Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline: Eighteenth Century Bengal*, Delhi 1999.

[55] William Carey (1761-1834), founder of the English Baptist Missionary Society in 1792; cf. Timothy George, *The Life and Mission of William Carey*, New Hope 1998.

[56] Cited by Duncan Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policy on Caste of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions in India,* London 1980, p. 26; cf. also William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians: to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens,* Leicester 1792.

[57] Cited by Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, *op. cit.,* p. 27.

[58] Charles Grant, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain Particularly in Respect of Morals and on the Means of Improving it*, London 1793.

[59] William Wilberforce (1759-1833), British politician and philanthropist who

from 1787 was prominent in the campaign to abolish the slave trade and then slavery itself in British overseas possessions. Speaking in Parliament in favour of the Charter Act 1813 he condemned aspects of Hinduism including the caste system, infanticide, polygamy and sati.

[60] "On the Christianisation of India" (speech before the House of Commons, London), *Hansard* (London, 22 June 1813), cols. 831-872, quoted extracts, cols. 861, 871.

[61] James Mill, *The History of India*, 3 vols. London 1817 [citations from 5th edition, London 1858, ed. by H.H. Wilson, 6 vols.]; for a critical appraisal of Utilitarian politics with regard to India, cf. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford 1959.

[62] Mill, *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 131.

[63] *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 128.

[64] In colonial terminology this uprising is usually referred to as the Sepoy Mutiny, thereby denoting its illegitimacy and minimising its extent, cf. George B. Malleson (ed.), *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58*, 6 vols., London 1897, a view which is contested by Indian nationalists, in particular by Vinayak D. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, New Delhi 1970 (1st published 1909); for a review of literature on the subject, cf. Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *The 1857 Rebellion*, Delhi 2007.

[65] Cf. the study by Thomas R. Metcalf, *Forging the Raj: Essays on British India in the Heyday of Empire*, Delhi 2005.

[66] Cf. Trautmann, *op.cit.*, pp. 209-211.

[67] Cf. M. Monier-Williams, *English Sanskrit Dictionary*, New York 1976, p. 652; Romila Thapar, 'Durkheim and Weber on Theories of Society and Race relating to Pre-Colonial India', in: *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, Paris 1980, p. 96.

[68] For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between anthropology and imperialism, cf. Talal Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London 1973.

[69] Cf. Sanjay Nigam, 'Disciplining and Policing the "Criminals" by Birth', in: *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 27/2 &3, 1990, pp. 131-165 & 257-288. Moreover, Cesare Lobroso's theories 'proving' criminality to be inherited found its codification in the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 which, according to Bates (*op. cit.*, p. 25-26), "remained in force and was still being used actively in the Central Provinces and elsewhere in the late 1930s".

[70] Cf. *Ethnographic Survey of Castes and Tribes of India*, Census Department, 10/1901, Appendix, cited by Bates, *op.cit..* p.35.

[71] Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia', in: B. S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi, Oxford, New York 1987, pp. 224-254.

[72] Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', in: Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies* 4, Oxford 1985, pp. 276-329.

[73] Defined as the "measurement and estimation of physical data relating to people belonging to different races, castes and tribes", Dirks, *ibid.*, p. 185. Cf. Rashmi Pant, 'The Cognitive Status of Caste in Colonial Ethnography', in: *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 24/2 1987, pp. 145-162.

[74] Paul Broca (1824-1880), professor of clinical surgery, who founded the Anthropological Society in Paris in 1859, was convinced that human races could be ranked on a linear scale of mental capabilities; cf. Paul Broca, 'Sur le volume et la forme du cerveau suivant les individus et suivant les races', in: *Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, vol.2, Paris 1861.

[75] Paul Topinard (1830-1911), student of Brocard, became one of the leading late 19th c. anthropologists, cf. Paul Topinard, *Anthropology*, London 1878.

[76] Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914), a French law enforcement officer, was the inventor of the first biometric method of identifying criminals.

[77] Herbert H. Risley (1851-1911), census commissioner and superintendent of the Ethnographic Survey of Bengal.

[78] (1855-1935), superintendent of the Madras museum from 1885, Thurston was subsequently in charge of ethnographical research for the Madras Presidency; cf. Edgar Thurston (assisted by K. Rangachari), *The Tribes and Castes of South India*, 7 vols., Madras 1909.

[79] Christopher Pinney, 'Colonial Anthropology in the "Laboratory of Mankind"', in C.A. Bayly (ed.) *The Raj: India and the British, 1600 – 1947,* London 1990, pp. 252-263

[80] Herbert H. Risley, *The People of India*, 2nd ed., London 1915, p. 29.

[81] Cited by Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p. 185.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Herbert H. Risley, 'The Study of Ethnology in India', in: *The Journal of*

the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. 20, 1891, p. 259.

[84] For a discussion of the influential racial and evolutionary theories of the age, cf. G.W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, London 1987.

[85] For a detailed discussion, cf. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India, op. cit.*

[86] Thapar, *Durkheim and Weber, op. cit.,* p. 96.

[87] Ibid.; cf. also Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: a History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, London 1975.

[88] Trautmann, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[89] Archaeological and linguistic evidence for this has been seriously contested; cf. Colin Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: the Puzzle of the Indo-European Origins,* London 1987.

[90] For a deconstruction of how Vedic texts were (mis)interpreted to construct the racist theory of Indian civilisation, cf. Trautmann, *op. cit.*, chapter 7, pp. 208 ff., where the philological extrapolation of Dravidians as dark-skinned, flat-nosed savages is vehemently contested.

[91] Herbert H. Risley, *People of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

[92] Ibid. Contrary to this explanation, according to the popular emic view, *jatis* or sub-castes are formed by the intermarriage of *varnas*, originating from the body of Purusha; hence all groups are considered as being of one "blood", cf. Arvind Sharma, *Hinduism and Human Rights: A Conceptual Approach.* Delhi 2004, p. 179. To explain the origin of social groups other than those belonging to the 4 *varnas*, Risley is said to have coined the term *aprishya-shudra*="untouchable" which appeared for the first time in print in 1902, cf. Simon Charsley, "Untouchable": What is in a Name', in: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, 1996, pp. 1-26.

[93] Other ethnographic administrators such as J.C. Nesfield, D.C.J. Ibbetson and W. Crooke argued that caste, rather being defined racially, was in fact the outcome of "a community of function and occupation", cf. Dirks, *Castes of Min, op. cit.,* p. 79. Max Müller, who had initiated the language and race debate with regard to the Aryan origins of Indian civilisation and Indo-European linguistic family, was later to warn against the dangers of mixing linguistics with anthropology, cf. Speech before the University of Strassbourg, 1872, cited in Nirad Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of Professor the Rt. Hon. Friedrich Max Müller*, London 1974, p. 313.

[94] Risley, *People of India*, *op. cit.,* pp. 272-273. Cf. also Frederick G. Bailey, *Tribe, Caste, and Nation*, Manchester 1971.

[95] For instance, Jyotibai Phule in Maharashtra and E.V. Ramaswamy Naiker (alias Periyar) in the Tamil region laid claims to racial indigeneity or Dravidian origins in reassertion against brahmanical or Aryan subjugation, cf. Dirks*, Castes of Mind, op.cit.*, chapters 7 & 12.

[96] Jürgen Stein, 'Mahatma Gandhi's Evaluation of the Caste System as an Element of the National Independence Movement in India', in: *Journal of Religious Culture* 24, 1998, pp. 1-7.

[97] B.R. Ambedkar, *Who were the Shudras?* Bombay 1970 [1st ed. 1946]. In his meticulous exegesis of the Vedic scriptures, he convincingly shows that the implied hostility between different social groups was due to differing cultic practices and did not stem from racial animosity.

[98] 'Hidden Apartheid: Caste Discrimination against India's "Untouchables", *Human Rights Watch*, vol. 19/3, New York 2007, *http://www.hrw.org/en/ reports/2007/02/12/hidden-apartheid.*