

## Orientalism and the Puzzle of the Aryan Invasion Theory

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### Abstract

The origin of the Aryan invasion theory (AIT) is generally located in the discovery of the Indo-European and Dravidian language families. However, these discoveries cannot account for the emergence of the AIT, because the postulation of the invasion *preceded* the linguistic research. In its search for an alternative account of the cognitive conditions under which this theory could come into being, this article illustrates a particular way of studying the intellectual history of Orientalism. The Orientalist discourse on India is approached as a body of reflections on the western cultural experience of India. This perspective brings us to the thesis that the pre-conditions for the emergence of the AIT lay in the postulation of two entities in the Orientalist discourse on India: the 'Hindu religion' and its 'caste system'. Both these notions and the AIT appeared cogent and coherent to European minds, because they mirrored internal developments within European culture and its intellectual debates, which had given shape to Europe's experience of India.

Perhaps the most heated controversy in the recent historiography of India has been that about the Aryan invasion theory (hereafter AIT). In its classical textbook version, this theory claims that a Sanskrit-speaking Aryan people entered India around (or before) 1500 BC and spread its language, religion and social structure among the indigenous population. More sophisticated versions speak of a gradual immigration of groups carrying Indo-Aryan language and civilisation into the Indian subcontinent.<sup>1</sup> At the other side of the debate, there are those who claim that the Aryan people, its language, civilisation and religion were native to India and that the invasion or immigration never happened.<sup>2</sup> This debate has become highly politicised. The party that claims an Indian origin for the Indo-Aryan civilisation is tied to the agenda of Hindu nationalism and it rejects the AIT as a Eurocentric misconception and colonial imposition. Its opponents, on the other hand, intend to fight the Hindu nationalist misrepresentation of history and retain those elements of the Indo-Aryan migration thesis that find support in linguistic, archaeological and other scientific evidence.

Rather than defending any position on the question of geographical origin or adding another voice to the debate about the quality of the evidence for the AIT, we would like to contribute some new insights into its conceptual emergence. The question of the origins and persistence of the AIT is equally fraught with political overtones. In the wake of Edward Said's critique of Orientalism (1978), many authors have focused on the colonial motives of the nineteenth-century scholars. Some, both academics and amateurs, have argued that the theory served to legitimise the colonial rule of India.<sup>3</sup> While there is truth to the claim that the AIT was sometimes used to justify the colonial project, it does not help us grasp the nature and origin of this theory.

The problem we wish to address is best formulated as a contrastive question: which cognitive conditions allowed the nineteenth-century Orientalists to postulate the invasion of a Sanskrit-speaking people into the Indian subcontinent, *rather than any other hypothesis*? Here, colonial motives fail to do the required explanatory work, since one can never establish any conclusive link between the motives of the Orientalists and the formulation of this hypothesis. To legitimise the European rule of India, one could have constructed a variety of historical accounts of the subcontinent, drawing on notions of false religiosity, divine providence, and cultural or racial inferiority. In other words, even though the theory was sometimes invoked to justify colonial rule, this fact cannot explain its emergence and persistence in the historiography of India.

Instead, we will argue, one has to circumscribe the cognitive conditions that brought the European Orientalists to postulating the invasion. Throughout the history of the sciences, theories have emerged in response to particular problem situations: a new theory answered old questions that had so far not been resolved by any existing theory; it provided solutions to empirical anomalies and conceptual problems of existing theories; or it was developed to account for new discoveries. Our analysis will focus on the following problems: Which old problems or new discoveries did the AIT intend to account for when it was first formulated? What evidence was available at the time? What were the cognitive conditions that made this theory appear cogent to European scholars as an explanation of the ancient religious history of South Asia?

2/26

In our attempt to answer these questions, we will illustrate a specific approach to studying the intellectual history of Orientalism. While this approach also has roots in Said's work, it does not rely on the presumed motives of Orientalist scholars or on the power/knowledge nexus of the colonial state in order to account for the development of Orientalist discourse. Instead, it aims to show how stable conceptual patterns developed within the European descriptions of India, whose internal coherence depends on the religious and cultural common-sense ideas of modern Europe. In order to account for the emergence of the AIT, we will argue, one has to examine how internal developments within Western-Christian intellectual debates gave structure to Europe's cultural experience of India.

### **Nation, Language and Religion**

Generally, the origin of the AIT is situated at the intersection of two discoveries: the discovery of the relation between Sanskrit and the European languages, attributed to Sir William Jones in a lecture delivered in 1786,<sup>4</sup> and that of the Dravidian language family, first made public in 1816 by Alexander Campbell and Francis W. Ellis. Together, these discoveries are taken to have generated the idea that once two different peoples inhabited India, Sanskrit speakers and Dravidians.

Several scholars have argued that the background framework, which led Orientalists from these linguistic discoveries to the claims about the Aryan invasion, was that of biblical chronology. Without the biblical presupposition that each language is linked to a nation or people, one would not have inferred the existence of an Aryan people.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, the main concern of the comparison of languages was to track the dispersal of the sons of Noah. As Bryant notes, the idea of one common source for all languages, related to one original people, was embedded in 'the biblical version of history, in which Noah's three sons, Japhet, Shem and Ham, were generally accepted as being the progenitors of the whole of humanity'. Before Babel, there was 'one human race speaking one language', which was then divided and dispersed over the earth. 'This theme, even when stripped of its biblical trappings, was to remain thoroughly imprinted in European consciousness until well into the twentieth century'.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, at the time when William Jones disclosed the link between Sanskrit and Latin and Greek in 1786, one also postulated a connection between languages and nations. Jones was unambiguous about the project of tracing 'all the nations' of the world back to the three sons of Noah.<sup>7</sup> He approached the linguistic discoveries as evidence for a common ancestry for Indians and Europeans, whom he considered to be descendants of Ham (contrary to most of his contemporaries, who saw in the Indo-Europeans the descendants of Japhet).<sup>8</sup>

While the link between language and nation was indeed of import to the development of the idea of the Aryan race or people,<sup>9</sup> we suggest that it fails to account for the emergence and persistence of the AIT. Max Müller, the scholar often misidentified as the father of the theory, had already explicitly refuted the direct relation between language and race in his *Chips from a German Workshop*.<sup>10</sup> But this affected only the belief that Indians and Europeans belonged to the same race, while the postulate of the Sanskrit-speaking people was not questioned. The explanation of ancient Indian history in terms of the interaction between this 'Aryan' people and the 'Dravidian' aboriginals remained intact. The linguistic evidence was replaced by other 'evidence', namely, dubious interpretations of the Vedas, such as that of *anasa* as nose-less or speechless, *varna* as skin colour, or *dasas* as indigenous people.<sup>11</sup>

3/26

We wish to emphasise that the connection between language and nation was part of a triangle that also included *religion*. The sons of Noah were identified not on the basis of linguistic similarities alone, but also resemblances in religion. Jones, for instance, saw such resemblances between the rites and deities of the ancient Greeks and Romans and those of the modern Hindus, which corresponded to the similarities between

the ancient languages of both groups. He considered these as evidence for the diffusion and degeneration of the original religion given by the biblical God to Adam at the beginning of human history.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of religion to the postulation of the invasion is indicated by several facts. First, the notion of a Brahmanical tribe of foreign origin, with its own religion, had existed long before the discovery of the relation between Sanskrit and Latin and Greek. In the first half of the eighteenth century, several French clerical scholars had already speculated that the Brahmins, the 'ancient inhabitants of India' or the representatives of 'the Brahmanical faith' had originated as an ancient Egyptian colony. Father Catrou had reached this conclusion because of similarities between the 'morals, religion and customs' of the Brahmins and those of the Egyptians.<sup>13</sup> In 1777, Père Coeurdoux had proposed that the Brahmins were the progeny of Japhet. According to him, it was beyond doubt that India had known invasions of groups coming from the north and that one of these had brought the Brahmins and their religion.<sup>14</sup>

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, scholars began to refer to 'the Hindus', the nation that was supposed to have the Brahmins as its priests and the Vedas as its sacred texts.<sup>15</sup> Even though the discovery of the Indo-European language family in this period gave rise to a proliferation of speculations about the origin of the Sanskrit-speaking people, this people continued to be called the 'Hindu' or 'Brahmanical' people and Sanskrit as the 'Brahmanical' language or tongue.

Second, the role of religion was crucial in another sense. During the early nineteenth century, European writings increasingly described the Hindu religion and its caste system as institutions invented by the corrupt Brahmin priesthood, which had imposed a system of sacred law that put the Brahmins at the top, the Kshatriyas one rung below them, and the Vaishyas and Shudras even lower, while it excluded the untouchables or Pariahs. Accordingly as this description gained popularity, European scholars began to see the Hindus as either the first or the first three castes of this caste system. The Shudras, then, came to be seen as the descendants of an indigenous people, which had been conquered and subjected by the Hindus. Initially, it had not been the Shudras, but the Pariahs, who were identified as the aboriginals of India. This idea had already existed in the eighteenth century, without being connected to any idea of a Hindu invasion.<sup>16</sup> However, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the hypothesis emerged that the caste system had been established in India as the result of a Hindu invasion, represented most clearly by the Brahmins, who had subjected the indigenous population and absorbed it as the lowest caste of the system.

4/26

### Between Paris and Madras

The hypothesis of a 'Hindu conquest of India' crystallised in two different locations in the early nineteenth century. The first was the circle of scholars around F.W. Ellis and Colin Mackenzie at the College of Fort St. George in Madras; while the second was the select club of Orientalists at the *Société Asiatique de Paris*.<sup>17</sup>

An early instance of the idea of the invasion is found in *Historical Sketches of the South of India* (1810) by Colonel Mark Wilks. Formerly a political resident at the Court of Mysore, Wilks was appointed as town major of Fort St. George, the capital of the Madras Presidency. Based on his readings of the 'Laws of Manu'—the *dharmashastra* text wrongly identified by the British as the sacred law book of the Hindus—Wilks introduced the notion of a 'Hindoo conquest', which he saw as the cause behind the formation of the caste system.<sup>18</sup> He referred to the traditional tale of a king who in 'about 1450 years before Christ' had 'reduced *Hoobasica*, a *Hulliaor Pariarking*, and all his subjects, to a state of slavery, in which their descendants continue to this day'.

According to Wilks, this story gave 'grounds' for a 'conjecture which many circumstances will support, that these unhappy outcasts were the aborigines of India; and that the establishment of casts was not the effort of a single mind, but the result of successive expedients for retaining in subjection the conquests of the northern Hindoos; for they, also, are confessedly from the north'.<sup>19</sup> Wilks mentioned two nations or peoples, the Hindus as opposed to the aboriginal people they were supposed to have conquered; he identified the Hindus as the superior castes of the caste system and imagined that the establishment of the caste system was the result of the Hindu conquest. Except for the traditional story, he never referred to any facts and failed to mention the 'many circumstances' supporting his conjecture.

5/26

Some of the French Orientalists had come to similar conclusions in the first half of the nineteenth century in Paris, 'the hub of oriental scholarship' during this period.<sup>20</sup> In his *Monuments Anciens et Modernes de l'Hindoustan* (1821), Mathieu Louis Langlès expanded on the thesis of an invasion. Langlès was a

student of Silvestre de Sacy, the influential scholar and founding father of the *SociétéAsiatique de Paris*. The second volume of his work contained an elaborate essay on the religion, laws and customs of the Hindus, where he pitied them for being supplanted first by Muslim conquerors and then by English merchants, similar to the ancestors of the Hindus themselves, who ‘no doubt in a distant past, since the memory of it has been lost, had supplanted the indigenous inhabitants of India, of which the caste of Pariahs probably offers us the sad remains’.<sup>21</sup> Without giving evidence, Langlès described the Pariahs as the descendants of an indigenous population conquered by Hindu invaders; he never defended this claim about the Hindu conquest of an aboriginal people in terms of linguistic differences.

To Langlès these ideas appeared to reflect established facts. However, in a review article of the same work, published by Abel Rémusat in the *Journal des Savans* of 1822, it became clear how new this idea of a Hindu conquest of India actually was. Rémusat was a founding member of the *SociétéAsiatique* and would later become its president. In his review article, he mentioned the hypothesis of a foreign invasion as an idea ‘of little importance’, but noted that the hypothesis at least deserved some elaboration, ‘if only for the sake of its novelty’.<sup>22</sup> Fascinatingly, Rémusat gave the following reason for retaining the hypothesis in spite of the lack of evidence:

This is without a doubt only a hypothesis, one that is strengthened by no historical monument whatsoever; but we have to agree that it offers a high enough degree of probability, and that it is difficult to study the system of castes, and to investigate the origin of the laws that the two first [castes] attributed to themselves with regard to the last two [castes], without the idea of a conquest presenting itself to the mind, as a way to explain the excessive superiority of the ones and the extreme degradation of the others.<sup>23</sup>

In the absence of any linguistic or archaeological facts that supported the hypothesis, Rémusat still considered the hypothesis unavoidable if one desired to understand the caste system.

Even where the hypothesis was questioned, its potential utility as an explanation of the origin of the caste system was admitted. In a review article of a translation of the *Lois de Manou*(1833), Alexandre Langlois, another member of the *SociétéAsiatique*, wondered whether the laws of Manu and the caste system had been ‘imported by the colony that is to have come from the north-west to establish itself in India in a time beyond memory’. Have they, he asked, ‘been imposed on the indigenous people by a more powerful and enlightened conqueror? Or, are they the product of an Indian soil, the result of a slow and progressive civilisation?’ Given the fact that ‘the elements to decide on these questions may be missing for a long time to come’, Langlois favoured the hypothesis that the caste system emerged as a variant of the natural process of growth of all societies, albeit constrained by philosophy in the case of India.<sup>24</sup>

6/26

Similar remarks are found in the work of the renowned Orientalist and professor of Sanskrit at the *Collège de France*, Eugène Burnouf. In a lecture on the Sanskrit language and literature, Burnouf presented the hypothesis that the Indians had once been ‘foreigners’ to their own country.<sup>25</sup> If this is the case, he added, it is probable that there had been original inhabitants of India, conquered by the currently dominant people. The most important and self-evident factual evidence for this claim, he wrote, was the caste system.

According to Burnouf, the first thing every observer of India would notice was that underneath the ‘apparent unity’ rests a variety of diverse cultural elements. On the one hand, the unity consisted in the religious and civil institutions that were spread by an enlightened race. The variety of cultural elements, on the other hand, reflected the remains of the native tribes and nations of India, which ‘had been forced to submit themselves to’ the unity. For, he argued, ‘those rejected castes at the lower ranks of the social hierarchy, are they anything else than the remnants of a conquered people?’

Only then did Burnouf provide further ‘evidence’ about differences in language, skin colour and customs between the higher and lower castes to support this connection between the caste system and the invasion of an alien people. It is important to note that Burnouf does not compare the skin colour, languages or customs of north and south Indians, nor of the speakers of Sanskrit derived vernaculars as opposed to speakers of other languages, but rather the differences between the *lower and higher castes* of India. The hypothesis he intended to defend is not the existence of two distinct races in India as such, but the claim that the lower and higher castes had originally belonged to two different races.<sup>26</sup>

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, most scholars of Indian religion had accepted the hypothesis of the Aryan invasion. Only occasionally did the lack of evidence bring scholars to doubt its truth, but even where they did so, they failed to reject the hypothesis. One of these scholars was Mountstuart

Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay. In his influential work *The History of India* (1841), Elphinstone considered the lack of evidence for the attribution of a foreign origin to the Indians. Nevertheless he felt compelled to acknowledge that the idea of an invasion was a very plausible explanation for the existence of the caste system.

Based on his readings of the Vedas and the Laws of Manu, Elphinstone observed that ‘the three twice-born classes forming the whole community’ were embraced by the law, while the Shudras were ‘in a servile and degraded condition’. Yet, he pointed out, ‘it appears that there are cities governed by Súdra Kings, in which Bramins are advised not to reside’ and that, as the code of Manu stated, ‘there are whole territories inhabited by Súdras, overwhelmed with atheists and deprived of Bramins’.<sup>27</sup> He considered it ‘impossible not to conclude from all this, that the twice-born men were a conquering people; that the servile class were the subdued aborigines; and that the independent Súdra towns were in such of the small territories, into which Hindostan was divided, as still retained their independence’. Not entirely rejecting the idea of an invasion, Elphinstone suggested that the conquerors could have been a ‘local tribe like the Dorians in Greece’ or ‘merely a portion of one of the native states (a religious sect for instance) which had outstripped their fellow-citizens in knowledge, and appropriated all the advantages of the society to themselves’.<sup>28</sup>

7/26

### The Dravidian Design

The discovery of the Dravidian language family is taken to have contributed significantly to the formulation of the AIT. Drawing on the same belief that languages are related to specific peoples, this discovery is to have generated the notion of two distinct peoples, Sanskrit speakers and the speakers of Dravidian languages. While this belief was indeed indispensable for the development of the concept of a Dravidian people, we would like to suggest a different sequence. The discovery of the Dravidian language family did not *generate* the idea of an indigenous Dravidian population, but merely reinforced it. The notion of a distinct language family had existed prior to the linguistic discovery and was based on the belief that the Shudras were a subjected aboriginal people.

Though not yet conclusive, our tentative research suggests that the investigations into the south Indian languages were structured by the search for evidence for the existence of an aboriginal people (rather than vice versa). The pursuit of a language family that could not have stemmed from Sanskrit was inspired by the desire to prove that India had once been governed by another people, with a different language and religion. Similar to the way in which the search for the sons of Noah gave rise to the project of comparative linguistics, we propose that the hypothesis about the Hindu conquest or invasion shaped the research into the linguistic differences between Sanskrit and the south Indian vernaculars.

In his recent work *Languages and Nations* (2006), Thomas Trautmann points in the same direction. Examining the work of F.W. Ellis and his contemporaries at the College of Fort St. George, Trautmann tells the reader that he began his research supposing that the College was the ‘*cause* of the Dravidian proof, in the sense that it was the site where a synoptic view of the Dravidian languages became possible and a body of scholars who had the necessary skills for their comparison had assembled’.<sup>29</sup> However, he later found that ‘the Dravidian idea is already evident in the report that proposed the creation of the College [dated October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1811] and gave it its structure’. In other words, the ‘College was not the cause of the Dravidian idea; rather, the Dravidian idea was the cause of the College’s structure from the outset’.<sup>30</sup> Trautmann thinks that the design of retrieving a common structure in the south Indian languages arose out of the attempt to encourage the study of south Indian languages. In the plans of the College, Ellis indeed argued that if one would study their common structure, this would help one learn any south Indian language. However, this does not explain which ideas inspired Ellis to expect and intend to identify a south Indian family of languages not derived from Sanskrit.

8/26

A circular letter written by Colin Mackenzie in 1807 gives another indication of the fact that the idea of a south India language family preceded the linguistic research. In the circular, Mackenzie gave a list of ‘Desiderata and enquiries connected with the Presidency of Madras’ and Trautmann tells us that it included several passages ‘on the sought-for parent of the South Indian languages and their nonderivation from Sanskrit’.<sup>31</sup> The circular argued that it ‘is certain that the Hindu languages of the south of India are not derived from the Sanscrit, and it is a tradition which this circumstance confirms that the Brahmans, with their religion and language, came from the north’. This brought Mackenzie to the following question: ‘Is

there any trace of a language which may be considered the parent of those now existing in Southern India? If so, what is its name? Where was it vernacular? And how far has it entered into the formation of the other peninsular languages?<sup>32</sup>

Mackenzie also believed in the division between the Brahmanical people and the original inhabitants of India. A few years earlier, he had already remarked that he considered the Brahmins 'through all the different provinces' of India to be of the 'same fair complexion and cast of features'. These, he said, distinguished this class 'among nations varying so much in both, as the Tamuls, the Tellingas, the Canarins, Mahrattas, and Orias'. These 'five families', he added, 'appear to compose the body of the original inhabitants of the peninsula'.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Mackenzie's circular shows that he considered the study of the south Indian languages important, *because* of the significance of showing that they were not derivations from Sanskrit. In this decade, most scholars still believed that all vernaculars in India derived from Sanskrit. At the time, Mackenzie's claim was a conjecture, for hardly any research had been done. Such conjectures, as we know from the history of the sciences, generally take place against the background of a particular cluster of ideas. The circular and earlier writings point to these background ideas: Mackenzie was convinced that Sanskrit was a language that came to the south along with the Brahmins and their religion. Hence, his research design aimed to identify a linguistic structure common to the south Indian languages and different from that of Sanskrit.<sup>34</sup>

9/26

This is how the pioneering research into the Dravidian language family took off at the College of Fort St. George. The first work publishing the results of this research was the *A Grammar of the Telooogo Language* (1816) by Alexander Campbell. In this work we see very clearly that Campbell considered the three inferior classes or castes in 'Telingana', which he specifies as the 'Velmawars, Comtees, and Soodra casts', to have 'descended from the aborigines of the country' and to have abandoned the 'culture of their language, with every other branch of literature and science' to the 'sacred tribe of the Brahmins'. The three inferior classes, he adds, 'retain a great deal of the original language of Telingana, and are more sparing in the use of Sanskrit words than the Bramins'.<sup>36</sup> Viewing Sanskrit as the language of the Brahmins, and the latter as a sacred tribe (much like the Levites among the Jews) and the superior caste, Campbell looked into the number of Sanskrit words spoken by the Shudras as compared to the number used by the higher castes, both groups being Telugu speakers. According to Campbell, the Shudras not only used less Sanskrit words when speaking Telugu, but could also not pronounce these as fluently or correctly as the 'superior classes' such as 'the Vysyus, and pretenders to the Rajah cast'. The latter, he says, increased their use of Sanskrit terms 'in proportion to their greater intimacy with the Bramins, and their books'. Vice versa, the Brahmins did not 'question their pronunciation of pure Telooogo words'. On the basis of these facts, rather than any salient structural difference between Telugu and Sanskrit, he considered it very plausible that Sanskrit had once been a foreign language in the south of India.<sup>36</sup>

The main argument to demonstrate that Telugu was not derived from Sanskrit consisted in the reinterpretation of a classification used by the Telugu grammarians. According to Campbell 'it is certain that every Telooogo Grammarian... considers the two languages as derived from sources entirely distinct; for each commences his work by classing the words of the language under four separate heads, which they distinguish by the respective names of ... *language of the land*, ... *Sanscrit derivatives*, ... *Sanscrit corruptions*, and ... *provincial terms*'.<sup>37</sup> The *deshya* or 'language of the land' category was interpreted as evidence for the existence of a native Indian language, distinct from the Sanskrit language. The same argument was used by Ellis in his 'Note to the Introduction' in Campbell's grammar.<sup>38</sup>

As Trautmann argues, however, Campbell and Ellis were misguided in their interpretation of *deshya* words as words of a native language even though the Telugu grammarians used this classification. One of the most important adversaries of Campbell and Ellis at that time was William Carey. The latter refused to interpret *deshya* as a native language different from Sanskrit. Carey's analysis, Trautmann claims, was in line with the view of the Prakrit grammarians of the Telugu language: 'Campbell, in short, may think he is giving the plain meaning of ancient authors, but he is really expounding a new idea which came about when the European and the Indian traditions of analysis came together in British-Indian Madras'.<sup>39</sup> This interpretation was inspired by the background ideas that had Ellis and Campbell conclude that the introduction of Sanskrit words into Telugu must have taken place in a remote period: 'With the religion of the Bramins, the people of Tilingana could not fail to adopt much of the language of that extraordinary tribe...'.<sup>40</sup>

10/26

In his *British India in its Relation to the Decline of Hindooism, and the Progress of Christianity* (1839), William Campbell also disagreed with the ‘opinion that the Sanskrit is the parent of all vernacular languages’. Nothing, he argued, ‘can be more certain than this, that the Tamul, the Telloogoo, and the Canarese which are the cognate dialects of the peninsula, are of a different family, and have no more connexion with the Sanskrit, than they have with the Persian, or Arabic’.

Three kinds of evidence existed, he said: (1) the fact that the modern and vulgar dialects of these languages are more replete with Sanskrit words than their ancient dialects where one scarcely finds a Sanskrit word; (2) the fact that one finds in the works of the native grammarians of India the same distinction between these three languages and Sanskrit; and (3) a perceived difference in the kinds of words that are used in Sanskrit or in the ‘vernacular tongue’, the latter being ‘expressive of primitive ideas and of such things as are used in the early stages of society’, the former entirely belonging to the sphere of law, literature and religion. And ‘in addition to this the conversation of the Bramins, abounds much more with Sanskrit terms, than that of the other classes who speak their own colloquial dialects best, and who, in attempting to use Sanskrit words, often excite the scorn and derision of their more learned superiors’.<sup>41</sup> On the basis of this evidence, Campbell suggested that Sanskrit had been ‘transfused’ into the vernaculars, implying that the latter were not derivations but different languages that adopted Sanskrit elements. This argument functioned as a stepping-stone to the following conjecture:

The most probable conjecture is, that it [Sanskrit] was the language of the Bramins, that they were a race of conquerors who came from the north, that they easily overran and subdued the continent of India, that they engrafted their system of superstition upon the idolatry which they found among the people, and that, as the sons of Bruhma, they have retained in their hands, the key of knowledge, and the reins of government.<sup>42</sup>

There is no relation between the evidence and this conjecture that the Brahmins or ‘real Hindoos’ were a race of conquerors who subjected the aboriginal tribes of India to its religion and law. Next, Campbell presented his conjecture as fact, when he explained why the ‘Telloogoo which is spoken by the tribes of the north, is more replete, in the vulgar dialect, with Sanskrit words, than the Tamul and the Canarese which are spoken further to the south, and to the south-west’. Since ‘the lower classes of the people are now considered the aborigines of the land’ and ‘since the Bramins are considered a race of conquerors who emigrated from the distant north’, he argued, ‘it would be evident that the dialect nearer to the seat of the aggressors, would be more likely to be affected by the foreign language’.<sup>43</sup>

11/26

There were more Orientalists who shared the aim of finding a south Indian language family in the vernaculars:

Yet if we can trace a language wholly different from the Sanscrit in all the modern dialects, after separating also the easily recognized importations by the Mahomedan conquerors of India, it will seem to follow, that the whole region previous to the arrival of the Brahmans was peopled by the members of one great family of a different origin. That family may have been divided into different branches; one of these may have preceded the other in their migrations, yet oneness of language would seem to point to oneness in origin, especially since both history and tradition are silent as to any widespread influence exercised in ancient times, by any foreign tribe except the Braminical. I call the Brahmans a foreign tribe in accordance with indications derivable from the cast of their features, and the colour of their skin, as well as from their possessing a language which none of the natives of India but themselves can even so much as pronounce; and the constant current of their own traditions, making them foreign to the whole of India, except perhaps a small district to the north-west upon the Ganges. Even in the time of Manu, the whole country to the south of the Vindhya mountains and Nerbudda river, was inhabited by men who did not submit themselves to the Braminical institutions, and among whom he advises that no Brahman should go to reside.<sup>44</sup>

In earlier articles, the Reverend Stevenson had already suggested that there had been an aboriginal people of India, without any reference to linguistic evidence, but purely on the basis of evidence he saw of a religion non-Brahmanical in nature. Moreover, in his linguistic research, Stevenson not only tried to show that there is no affinity between the south Indian languages and Sanskrit, but also argued against structural relations between Sanskrit and Hindi or any of the other vernaculars of India. This bold hypothesis was followed by a theory:

The theory which has suggested itself to the writer as the most probable is, that on the entrance of the tribes which now form the highest castes, those of the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Waisyas, into India, they found a rude aboriginal population, speaking a different language, having a different religion, and different customs and manners; that by arms and policy the aboriginal inhabitants were all subdued, and in great numbers

expelled from the Northern regions, those that remained mixing with the new population, and being first their slaves, and then forming the Sudra caste. The language of these aborigines is supposed to have belonged to the Southern family of languages, the most perfect remaining type of which family is the Tamil.<sup>45</sup>

12/26

The invasion is now invoked as a 'fact' to explain other 'facts'. This theory about the origin of 'the Sudra caste' was supposed to explain a difference in grammatical structure between Sanskrit and the vernacular languages of India, including Hindi, a claim for which Stevenson then produced linguistic evidence. Again this indicates how the linguistic research of the Orientalists was shaped by the earlier postulation of the invasion of a foreign Sanskrit-speaking tribe. The Aryan invasion was not developed to account for new linguistic discoveries; rather it preceded and structured the research that generated these discoveries.

### **Orientalism and the Degeneration of Religion**

To work towards a better understanding of the origins of the Aryan invasion theory, we propose to turn to S.N. Balagangadhara's ideas on the nature of Orientalism.<sup>46</sup> Starting from Edward Said's insight that notions such as 'the Orient' exist as entities in the western *experience* of Asia,<sup>47</sup> rather than as empirical realities in Asian societies, Balagangadhara develops a general hypothesis on Orientalist discourse. He argues that such *experiential entities* have an internal conceptual logic, but this logic corresponds to the structures of the western cultural experience, rather than to the structures of Asian societies.

From this viewpoint, Orientalist discourse is a body of reflections on the western cultural experience of Asia, with the salient property that they are mistaken for factual descriptions of Asian societies. The conceptual structures that shape this western cultural experience have come into being historically, against the background of religious, cultural and intellectual developments *within* Europe. To make sense of Orientalism, then, we have to trace how specific clusters of ideas deriving from Christian theology and the European cultural experience constituted the necessary preconditions for certain descriptions of Asia.

In order to illustrate this hypothesis on the nature of Orientalism, we will further examine the case of the AIT. The aim of our analysis is to uncover the cognitive conditions that compelled Orientalists to produce *this* theory, rather than any alternative. While we do not yet have a complete solution to offer, we will characterise the conceptual background that made the conjectures of the nineteenth-century Europeans appear sensible and intelligible. The linguistic hypotheses about the Indo-European and Dravidian language families cannot play this role, because they were preceded by the belief in the invasion of a Sanskrit-speaking people. From the foregoing, we know that Orientalists postulated a link between the caste system, Brahmanical or Hindu religion, the Sanskrit language and the invasion of a conquering people into India. Let us now sketch different pieces of the puzzle, each of which is necessary to explain how this coherent pattern came into being in the European understanding of Indian history.

13/26

The first piece of the puzzle consists of the biblical triangle of nation, language and religion. From the patristic period onwards, Christianity had told the following story: the biblical God had given the original and true religion to humanity, which was then corrupted among all nations by the devil and his minions, until it was restored in His revelation in Jesus Christ. Together with the biblical account about the dispersal of the sons of Noah and the fragmentation of the original language, this theology structured European investigations into alien cultures like India.<sup>48</sup> This had three important consequences: first, there was the belief that all human beings had retained the awareness of the biblical God and the desire to worship Him and obey His will; second, this led to the belief that religion existed among all nations; and third, any non-Christian society had to be located somewhere on a scale of religious degeneration.

This Christian historiography produced a theological model for understanding 'pagan nations' and 'tribes' and their 'false religions'. The European understanding of pagan nations and tribes drew upon several sources, which we cannot go into here but will explore in future work. On the one hand, there was the Old Testament description of the nation of Israel and its tribes. On the other hand, there was the classical theological understanding of paganism as a false counterpart of Christian religion.

These elements gave rise to a cluster of ideas that often attributed certain properties to the tribes and nations of the 'pagan' world. First, any such nation would have a corrupt religion that expressed its thirst after the true God, but misdirected this towards false gods. Second, this false religion would consist of

human laws and ceremonies, which were prescribed as though they were the biblical God's will. Third, most nations had ancient lawgivers like Moses, who claimed that God had revealed His will to them in the form of certain doctrines, rites and laws. Fourth, a priesthood or specific tribe of priests like the Levites would interpret and enforce the laws on the believers and claim the authority to do so belonged only to their community.

After the sixteenth-century Reformation, this conceptual model underwent further elaboration in terms of the theological struggle between Protestants and Roman-Catholics. The Reformation's claim that Roman-Catholicism had degenerated into idolatry gave rise to identifying the structure of false religion with the priestly hierarchy. The priesthood, the reformers said, had led the church into false religion by keeping Scripture to itself, hiding true revelation behind the Latin language, and inventing rites and dogmas as it pleased; all this to manipulate and exploit the believer. The history of false religion was construed as a progressive degeneration caused by the accumulation of priestly additions to divine revelation.<sup>49</sup> In this way, theological and historical developments within Christianity gave rise to a conceptual cluster that made sense of the degeneration of religion, which would determine the European perception of India.<sup>50</sup>

14/26

This cluster of ideas constitutes the second piece of the puzzle. Guided by this cluster, European missionaries and Orientalists began to look for the doctrines, tribe of priests, law books, ancient lawgivers, and sacred customs of the Indians. They believed that the natives would have retained the desire to worship the biblical God and obey His will, but that they must be misguided by some form of false religion, which had been invented by an ancient lawgiver and enforced by priests whose power would depend on an edifice of complicated laws and rites.

This cluster of ideas provided the outlines for the European conception of the 'heathen religion' of India. By the early nineteenth century, it had successfully constructed 'the Hindu religion' as an experiential entity and conceptual unit in the Orientalist writings on India.<sup>51</sup> The basic model of false religion had compelled missionaries and scholars to identify the Brahmins as the original tribe that had claimed priestly authority, the Hindus as a nation, Sanskrit as their sacred language, the Vedas as the scriptures, Manu as the ancient lawgiver, the *Manavadharma shastra* as the code of law, and the caste system as the legal system that was falsely imposed as God's will.<sup>52</sup>

Our puzzle has more pieces: three images of the Brahmins coalesced in the European understanding of 'Brahmanism' and 'Hinduism'. The first was the belief in the existence of a nation of 'Brachmanes', which had surfaced in the European literature from the late middle ages onwards. European medieval scholars drew upon a tradition of legendary dialogues between Alexander the Great and Dindimus, the leader of the Brahmins, in order to speculate about a noble and ascetic Brahmanical nation, which lived somewhere in the East and practiced a pure proto-Christian religion.

The second image was the understanding of the Brahmins as the local Indian equivalent of the Levites, the tribe of priests among the Jews. This identification took different forms but generally agreed upon the fact that, like the Levites, the Brahmins had invoked a special divine revelation in order to claim the exclusive authority to interpret and impose a body of laws and rites on the heathens of India. The authority claimed by these priests supposedly covered both religious and civil matters. Christian travellers and theologians saw in this one of the deeply problematic dimensions of heathen religion: it connected religion as God's revelation to particular ethnic group and the laws and rites that defined it. Replacing Law with Gospel, Christianity claimed to have superseded these limitations and made religion universally accessible to all humans.<sup>53</sup>

In the period before and following the Reformation, anticlerical sentiment generated a third image of the Brahmin as the evil priest of false religion and idolatry, which incorporated elements of the first two images. Several attempts emerged to reconcile the three images: the most popular solution was the story that, originally, the Brahmins had indeed possessed a relatively pure religion with remnants of divine revelation, but, in the familiar process of religious degeneration, they had more and more corrupted this religion into a convoluted body of rites and laws, which they imposed on the believer.<sup>54</sup> As we have seen, the notion of a Brahmanical nation or a tribe of priests of foreign stock had remained popular among eighteenth-century French scholars and was certainly one of the building blocks contributing to the belief that a Sanskrit-speaking nation had invaded the subcontinent.

15/26

The last piece of our puzzle lies in the stories that different European nations had told about their

own origins. As Poliakov notes, after their conversion to Christianity, these nations traced their genealogy to different biblical personae and, from the sixteenth century, the historical ‘truth’ of such genealogies became of increasing importance: each group desired to trace its history back to one of the three sons of Noah.<sup>55</sup> Commonalities were looked for and ties were postulated between groups that had hitherto been unrelated. In this attempt to construct a genealogical tree of the European nations, larger families of tribes and nations were imagined, such as the Germanic nation. One described these families in terms of the intrinsic characteristics of each people or nation, such as language and religion, but also physical appearance and moral qualities.

Especially in France, seventeenth-century scholars started to link the social position of groups in society to the nation or family that these groups had originally belonged to. That is, social class became a property that supposedly allowed one to distinguish different races or nations from each other. The French nobility began to write histories about its Frankish ancestry and its conquest of the Gallo-Romans. Its elevated social position was explained in terms of the fact that the noblemen had been Franks and belonged to the superior and conquering Germanic race. The lower classes, according to this account, were the progeny of the Gallo-Romans who had been conquered by the Franks.

In the late eighteenth century, when the revolutionary atmosphere threatened the status of the French nobility, Poliakov suggests, such accounts became particularly important in defending its social position.<sup>56</sup> Building on this type of account, nineteenth-century historians constructed a conceptual model to explain differences in social class in terms of historical invasions by foreign races. That is, one speculated that groups with a high position in society had belonged to conquering races or tribes, while the lower classes belonged to a different and vanquished race or set of tribes. To the extent that these conquerors had intermingled with the original population, this explained the degeneration of the nature of the conquering race.<sup>57</sup>

This model, which became dominant in Europe in the nineteenth century according to Poliakov, can help us to make sense of the fact that Europeans were so certain there had been an Aryan invasion of India, when there was no evidence for this thesis. Looking at the early nineteenth-century versions of the AIT, we note that these were explicitly formulated as an explanation of the caste system and the superior position of the Brahmins.

16/26

In spite of the absence of any historical evidence, one conjectured that an invasion of a Brahmanical people, tribe, or race *must have happened*, since this was the only way in which to explain the social hierarchy. Even before the discovery of the Dravidian language family or any other empirical discoveries, the existence of a second, original people had already been postulated. Conquered by the Brahmanical Hindus, the latter constituted the original population of India, which now formed the lower castes and outcastes of the caste system. Towards the second half of the nineteenth century the question also emerged as to which race the Dravidians belonged to and what their origin was.<sup>58</sup> No matter what racial identity or origin one put forward, however, the Shudras were considered to be the aboriginal inhabitants of India that had been conquered by the Aryans.<sup>59</sup>

At this point, we cannot yet establish how exactly these different pieces of the puzzle fit together. We merely intend to argue that these clusters of ideas were necessary as the cognitive conditions that allowed the AIT to crystallize and acquire the status of ‘established fact’ by mid-nineteenth century. By then, Orientalists had imagined a degeneration of religion in India: from the relatively pure worship of Vedism, Indian religion was supposed to have evolved towards the priestly Brahmanism of the Sanskrit-speaking people; Buddhism was taken to be a sort of Protestant revolt against this Brahmanism and its priestly caste hierarchy; but the even more degenerated Hindu religion absorbed Buddhism and Dravidian popular religion into the Brahmanical caste system. This notion of a gradual degeneration of religion depended on the old Christian belief that human ingenuity added ever more falsities to the core of divine revelation.

The perspective on the ancient religious history of India as the amalgamation of Aryan priestly religion and Dravidian popular religion emerged from these notions. The seeds of the story were already present in Burnouf’s work, when he described the variety of religious elements in India as remnants of the original religion of its inhabitants. The AIT now became the framework for explaining the evolution of religion in India. The degeneration paradigm linked the evolution of ‘the original Brahmanical religion’ of the Aryans to the absorption of elements from the idolatrous systems of the aboriginals of India.<sup>60</sup> From

Vedism through Brahmanism to Hinduism, each phase was approached as a progressively more corrupt variant of the former, resulting from the absorption of aspects from popular 'Dravidian' religions.

A decade later, Max Müller could draw upon the achievements of his predecessors to present the reader with the mature version of the Aryan invasion theory, which was received as *the* descriptive framework for the ancient religious history of India. The 'latest researches of Indian scholars like Wilson, Burnouf and Lassen' had established, Müller wrote, 'that the Brahminical people have brought at an early period the light of civilisation into the plains of India; that their language was the language of the nation, though varying in different popular dialects, that their religion constituted the groundwork of the Indian worship, though modified by local traditions; that their laws and manners formed the social ties of the Indian world, though often in struggle with heterogeneous elements'.<sup>61</sup>

17/26

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the AIT had been accepted as the historical and conceptual framework for describing and explaining Hinduism and the caste system. European scholarship put forward an indissoluble link between Brahmanism, Sanskrit and the Aryan people, on the one hand, and the Dravidian languages and an aboriginal Dravidian population with its own popular religion, on the other hand. From then onwards, the development of Hinduism and the caste system was conceived as the result of an interaction between these two peoples and their respective religions.

### Conclusion

The story of the Aryan invasion theory reveals how a thesis that reflected the European cultural experience of India gradually transformed itself into the 'historical truth' about India. This thesis had grown within a specific system of theological and historical beliefs that Europeans shared and depended for its coherence and plausibility on this system. Its fundamental theoretical outlines reflected conceptual patterns in the European cultural experience, rather than any scientific or empirical research into the Indian past.

There is a tragic part to the story about the AIT, but this is better left for another place and time. The colonial educational system placed Orientalist discourse at the same level as Newton's theory of gravitation and taught it as a scientific description of the Indian subcontinent. Indians educated within this system began to adopt this discourse as though it truly were the historical truth about India. They did not do so as passive recipients, but rather became active propagators who appropriated this discourse to fight the presumed historical injustices of Indian society. In the south of India, political parties were created that claimed to represent 'Dravidian' interests against 'Brahminical' supremacy.

More research is needed in order to understand the effects of Orientalist discourse on Indian society. In this article we have pinpointed the problems to be addressed by future inquiries into the origins of the Aryan invasion theory. The nineteenth-century notions of the caste system and its relation to the Hindu religion played a fundamental role here. In order to fully grasp the conditions under which the AIT emerged and flourished, we have to further trace the development of these entities in the Orientalist discourse: What made this link between the caste system, Hinduism and an Aryan conquest so self-evident to the European scholars?

18/26

The importance of examining the origins and nature of the AIT lies in the impact it still has on the way we understand the history and society of India. As Bryant remarks, 'in almost everything South Asian, there is little that has not been predicated on the assumption that Indian culture, history, and religion are the amalgam of external Aryan and indigenous non-Aryan characteristics'.<sup>62</sup> In response, Hindu nationalist authors have advocated the claim that the Aryans are native to the subcontinent. These authors also accept the theory's self-image as a historical explanation, but merely dispute certain elements within the same framework, such as the geographical origin of the Indo-Aryans. If this theory reproduces the specific cultural experience that Europe has had of India in the guise of historical truth, then it is high time to take the ongoing controversy about the AIT out of the realm of partisan politics. We not only need to re-examine the foundations of such historical accounts, but also the framework behind the current understanding of 'Hinduism' and 'the caste system', which also emerged as a part of the Orientalist discourse about India.

### Notes

1. See Allchin, *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia*; Caldwell, 'Whose Goddess?'; Emeneau, 'Linguistic Prehistory of India'; Erdosy, 'Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity'; Mehendale, 'Indo

- Aryans , Indo-Iranians, and Indo-Europeans’ ; Norman, ‘Dialect Variation in Old and Middle Indo-Aryan’; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilisation*; Witzel, ‘Aryan and Non-Aryan Names in Vedic India’, ‘Indo-centrism’.
2. See Elst, ‘Linguistic Aspects Aspects of the Aryan Non-Invasion Theory’; Frawley, *The Myth of the Aryan Invasion of India and Hinduism and the Clash of Civilisations*; Kak, ‘Vedic Astronomy and Early Indian Chronology’; Kenoyer, ‘Culture Change During the Late Harappan Period at Harappa’; Lal, ‘Aryan Invasion of India’; Schaffer and Lichtenstein ‘The Concepts “Cultural Tradition” and “Palaeoethnicity”’.
  3. Bryant, ‘Concluding Remarks’; Frawley, *The Myth of the Aryan Invasion of India*; Thapar, ‘Some Appropriations of the Theory of Aryan Race’, p. 108. See Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture* and Leopold, ‘British Applications of the Aryan Theory of Race to India’ for an overview of the British and Indian applications of the AIT in colonial and nationalist discourses.
  4. Jones, ‘The Third Anniversary Discourse’, pp. 422-23.
  5. Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols*; Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*; Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*; Schaffer and Lichtenstein, ‘The Concepts “Cultural Tradition” and “Palaeoethnicity”’; Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*.
  6. Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*, p. 16.
  7. Jones, ‘Discourse the Ninth’.
  8. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5.
  9. It should be noted here that in the early Orientalist writings the terms ‘race’, ‘nation’, ‘people’, ‘tribe’, etc. were often used interchangeably.
  10. Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, Vol. 4, p. 223.
  11. Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*; Hock, ‘Through a Glass Darkly’ and ‘Philology and the Historical Interpretation of the Vedic Texts’; Sharma, ‘Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on the Aryan Invasion’; Trautmann, ‘Introduction’.
  12. Jones ‘On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India’; see also Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols*.
  13. Père Catrou, *Histoire Générale de l'Empire du Mogol*, p. 54; see also Huet, *Histoire du Commerce et de la Navigation des Anciens*, pp. 36-7 and La Croze, *Histoire du Christianisme des Indes*, p. 427. Both authors consider the Indian nation, with the Brahmins as its priesthood, to be descendants of the Egyptians.
  14. Murr, *L'inde Philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire*, p. 18.
  15. e.g. Jones, ‘The Third Anniversary Discourse’, p. 419.
  16. Lambert, *Receuil d'Observations Curieuses*, p. 37.
  17. While there are significant differences in the approaches of the British and French Orientalists, we will focus on the common structures in their accounts, because this allows us to gain insight into the conceptual conditions that made the AIT appear a cogent account to both groups. We will address some of the internal differentiations within European Orientalism and its understanding of India in future research.
  18. Throughout the article, we use the term ‘caste system’ to refer to the hierarchical system postulated by European observers as the social structure of Indian society. According to the Orientalist account that crystallised in early modern Europe, this was a hierarchy consisting of the four *varnas* and the untouchables, which had its foundations in Indian ‘religious scriptures’ and which organised the relations between the different ‘castes’ in Indian society. Not all European authors used the terms ‘caste system’ and ‘castes’, which became common only during the nineteenth century; instead, they used a variety of terms like ‘tribe’, ‘nation’, ‘cast’, ‘class’, etc. Even where authors do not themselves use the term ‘caste system’, we use it to refer to their conviction that the structure of Indian society was a religiously sanctioned hierarchy of four ‘*varnas*’, ‘castes’, ‘estates’ or ‘classes’.
  19. Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, pp. 150-1.
  20. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 45-6.

21. Langlès, *Monuments Anciens et Modernes de l'Hindoustan*, p. 170.
22. Rémusat, 'Monuments Anciens et Modernes de l'Hindoustan', p. 223.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
24. Langlois, 'Manava Dharma Sastra', pp. 143-4.
25. Burnouf, 'Discours sur la Langue et la Littérature Sanscrite', p. 268.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
27. Elphinstone, *The History of India*, Vol. 1, p. 95.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
29. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, p. 130.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
32. In *Ibid.*, p. 177.
33. Mackenzie, 'Remarks on Some Antiquities', pp. 426-27.
34. A similar research agenda we find in the 'Plan for investigating the languages, literature, antiquities and history of the Dekkan' formulated by John Leyden. John Leyden, came to Madras in 1803, worked under Mackenzie and was a friend of Ellis. In his 'Plan' Leyden, speaking about Sanskrit, says that it 'is not the native or indigenous language of the Dekkan but only *super induced by the propagation of religion and foreign conquest* (in Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, p. 176; italics added).
35. Campbell, *A Grammar of the Teloogoo Language*, p. xv.
36. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
37. *Ibid.*, p. vxii-iii.
38. Ellis, 'Note to the Introduction', pp. 11-21.
39. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, p. 165.
40. Campbell, *A Grammar of the Teloogoo Language*, p. xx.
41. Campbell, *British India in its Relation to the Decline of Hindooism*, pp. 109-10.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
44. Stevenson, 'An Essay on the Language of the Aboriginal Hindus', p. 104.
45. Stevenson, 'Observations on the Grammatical Structure', pp. 73-4.
46. Balagangadhara, 'The Future of the Present'; Balagangadhara and Keppens, 'Reconceptualizing the Postcolonial Project'.
47. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1.
48. Balagangadhara, *The Heathen in his Blindness*'.
49. e.g. Herbert of Cherbury, *A Dialogue between a Tutor and His Pupil and Pagan Religion; Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation*.
50. Gelders and Derde, 'Mantras of Anti-Brahmanism'; Zuesse, 'The Degeneration Paradigm in the Western Study of World Religions'.
51. Balagangadhara, 'Orientalism, Postcolonialism and the "Construction" of Religion'; De Roover and Claerhout, 'The Colonial Construction of What?'
52. De Roover and Balagangadhara, 'Liberty, Tyranny and the Will of God'.
53. For some illustrations from different periods, see Sir Alfred C. Lyall, "Introduction," pp. xi-xii; Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation*, pp. 3-4; Edward Thornton, *India, Its State and Prospects*, pp. 148-52; Henry Whitehead, *Indian Problems in Religion, Education, Politic*, p. 22.

54. Gelders, 'Genealogy of Colonial Discourse'.
55. Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, pp. 17-20.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-31.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 224-238.
58. As Upinder Singh shows, several archaeologists developed the hypothesis that the Dravidians had come from the West and belonged to the Turanian race. As such, she says, "'Turanian" was fashionable in scholarly circles of the time and was used as a catch-all term to refer to sundry groups considered non-Aryan'. Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India*, p. 70.
59. We can see this for instance in the following quote from the famous archaeologists Alexander Cunningham: 'Here I fully agree with Dr Caldwell, that the Sudras were most probably the people with whom the Aryans came into contact in Northern India. But I think that he has unnecessarily hampered himself by supposing that the Dravidians entered from the north-west. On the contrary, I believe that they came from the west, and that they were the Accad or Accadians, a branch of the southern Turanians, who occupied Susania and the shores of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean...'. In *Ibid.*, p. 101.
60. Stevenson, 'On the Ante-Brahmanical Worship of the Hindús in the Dekhan'.
61. Müller, 'On the Relation of the Bengali to the Arian and Aboriginal Languages of India', pp. 325-6; see also Wilson, *India Three Thousand Years Ago*.
62. Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*, p. 310.

21/26

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22/26

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