

## Henry Lord's Discovery of the Banians

Henry Lord's *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies* (1630), is the first work in English to deal with the religions of India neither as part of a general description of India in an account of a voyage, nor as part of a compendium of all religions in the world, but rather as an object of study in their own right.<sup>1</sup> It will be argued that as such it inaugurates, at least in English,<sup>2</sup> a new genre of writing.<sup>3</sup> Although Lord, like Nobili, begins from a recognition of the plurality of Indian religious adherence, and bases his account on his observations of a specific religious groups of particular regional importance, we also find in his work the first steps toward the construction of a more general category.

The term 'Banian', the primary category for the first of the sects or religions with which Lord's book is concerned, had been used by English writers such as Richard Hakluyt to mean simply 'one of the Indians inhabiting the countrey of Cambaia', that is, Gujarat.<sup>4</sup> However, the term

<sup>1</sup> The full title of Lord's work is *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies viz: The Sect of the Banians the Ancient Natiues of India and the Sect of the Persees the Ancient Inhabitants of Persia together with the Religion and Manners of each Sect. Collected into two Bookes by Henry Lord, sometimes resident in East India and preacher to the Honourable Company of Merchants trading thether*. It is divided into two parts, separately paginated but bound together in the 1630 edition. The first part is entitled 'A Discoverie of the Sect of the Banians' (although the running head of this part in the 1630 edition refers to 'the Banian Religion' rather than the 'Sect of the Banians'), and the second 'The Religion of the Persees'. Hereafter Lord's work and its constituent parts will be referred to as the *Display*, the *Discovery*, and *The Religion of the Persees*, respectively. Page references are to my edition of the text (Lord 1999).

<sup>2</sup> The works, in Portuguese and Latin, of Fernandes and Nobili also took Indian religions as their object of study, but their works served more overtly theological purposes. Jacobo Fenicio's *Livro da Seita dos Indios Orientais* (Fenicio 1933) is more directly comparable to Lord's *Display*, but like the works of Fernandes and Nobili, it was not published until the twentieth century.

<sup>3</sup> Murr suggests that Abraham Roger's work inaugurates 'a new genre on the theme of the customs and the religion of the Indians ... which we may call proto-ethnology, that is to say an archaic discourse on a culture other than ours'. She gives no reason for excluding from such a genre Lord's work which, like Roger's, is 'founded on direct observations combined with the testimony of informants belonging to that culture itself.' ('un nouveau genre sur le thème des coutumes et de la religion des Indiens ... que nous pourrions appeler la proto-ethnologie, c'est-à-dire un discours archaïque sur une culture autre que la nôtre, fondé sur des observations directes conjuguées avec les témoignages d'informateurs appartenant à cette culture même'. Murr 1987, II: 73.)

<sup>4</sup> The account of the 'Baniane' in Hakluyt is at third hand, being taken from an English merchant's report of a conversation he had with a Jewish merchant while travelling from Cyprus to Venice. The Jewish merchant had met a 'Baniane' at Ormus and had asked him

also had a wider application, being used by other early writers to refer 'to all Hindoos in Western India'.<sup>5</sup> Two senses are also apparent in Lord's work. In a broad sense, the Banians are the 'ancient natives of India', whom Lord describes as a 'people' or 'sect'.<sup>6</sup> However Lord also refers to a more specific group, 'those that are most properly called Banians'.<sup>7</sup> While the *Discovery* purports to be an account of the religion of the Banians in the wider sense, and was so treated by its first audience, it will be argued that Lord's primary sources were in fact members of this latter group, and that this group are to be identified as members of the *sampradāya* of Vallabhācārya. The ambiguity in Lord's use of the term 'Banian' allows him to present his account of 'the Banian religion, such as it is'<sup>8</sup> (i. e. his observations of the religion of a specific contemporary *sampradāya*) as the religion of 'the ancient natives of India'. Thus although Lord describes only the religion of a specific, albeit important, regional group, his work embodies a claim to a more comprehensive account of Indian religion. How Lord constructs this religion will be shown through an examination of the different categories he uses ('Banian', 'those that are most properly called Banians', 'Bramanes', 'more special Bramanes', 'Verteas', 'Gentiles').

### *Lord's life and Indian career*

Little is known of Lord's career beyond what can be drawn from the *Display* itself and from the several brief comments concerning him in the Court Minutes of the East India Company. The *Dictionary of National Biography* identifies the author of the *Display* as a Henry Lord born in 1563, and educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford; this identification has been accepted by recent authors on Lord.<sup>9</sup> However, it was pointed out as long ago as 1937 that it is extremely unlikely that this is the same Henry Lord, as this would mean that he reached the age of sixty-one in the first year of his appointment to India. H. N. Randle calculates an average age of

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'what he thought of God. He made answer, that they held no other god but the sun.' (Hakluyt 1599–1600, II: 310).

<sup>5</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), s. v. 'Banian'. The term subsequently came to denote a broker. It is used in this sense in 1672 by the Abbé Carré, to describe the Hindu traders who offered him their services in Chaul, south of Bombay (Carré 1947–1948, I: 187).

<sup>6</sup> Lord 1999: 9–10, 7. The 'Persees' are likewise identified in the title as 'the ancient inhabitants of Persia'.

<sup>7</sup> Lord 1999: 79.

<sup>8</sup> Lord 1999: 93.

<sup>9</sup> Lach and Van Kley 1993: 645; Firby 1988: 98.

thirty, on first appointment, for six preachers sent to India by the Company between the years of 1607 and 1621.<sup>10</sup>

The Court Minutes of the East India Company for the 7th of January 1624 record Lord offering himself to the Company as a chaplain:

Messrs. Lord, Benson and Morehouse present their services as preachers into the Indies, the Court having particular recommendation of Mr. Lord from Dean White, under whom he served as a curate, and from Mr. Shute, and others; entertained him at £60 per annum for five years; he is to give bond not to exercise any private trade, and appointed to preach on Sunday sennight at Great St Helen's, and to take for his text. "Have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but rather prove them."<sup>11</sup>

Nine days later the minutes record the decision for Lord 'having given testimony of his sufficiency by a sermon preached at St. Helen's, to have him £20 to buy him books'.<sup>12</sup> Lord was initially appointed chaplain to the Company fleet under Weddell, with which he sailed in 1624. On arrival in India, Lord records, 'It happened that I was transferred from my charge aboard the ship, to reside in their prime factory in Gujarat, in a place called Surat.'<sup>13</sup>

Lord came close to resigning in the following year, as a result of 'some petty differences' between himself and the members of the Council of the factory. It seems that the disagreement arose over the way in which the factors at Surat dealt with one of their number, John Benthall, in the matter of his private trade. The President at Surat, Thomas Kerridge, 'refused Lord permission to go, saying "hee would not have it reported that a padre should forsake India for such slight matters"'.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear whether Lord had strong feelings about the issue of the factors' private

<sup>10</sup> Randle 1937: 278. Randle (296) also cites the opinions of two Superintendents of Records at the India Office, W. T. Ottewill and Sir William Foster, that the Henry Lord born in 1563 was not the author of the *Display*. This Henry Lord (or Lorde) had probably been at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1578 before going to Oxford. Either he, or perhaps another Henry Lord who was at Jesus College in 1546, was vicar of Great Steeping in Lincolnshire from 1591, dying there in 1618. See Venn 1974–1978. Nora Firby defends the *DNB's* identification, arguing that in view of the difficulties the Company had experienced with the behaviour of its chaplains it may well have preferred an older man. (Firby, personal communication).

<sup>11</sup> Sainsbury 1878: 229 (§ 384). Francis White, Dean of Carlisle 1622–26, afterwards successively Bishop of Carlisle, Norwich and Ely. 'Mr. Shute' is likely to have been Josiah Shute, Rector of St Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street 1611–1643, himself a chaplain to the EIC from 1632, although it could have been Nathaniel Shute, Rector of St Mildred, Poultry 1618–1638.

<sup>12</sup> Sainsbury 1878: 232 (§ 390). There is one further mention of Lord, concerning his request that 'he be allowed a boy to attend him the voyage'. Sainsbury 1878: 240 (§ 398).

<sup>13</sup> Lord, Introduction. This was a typical pattern; the first regular chaplain at Surat was appointed in 1658. See Rawlinson 1920: 123.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Joseph Hopkinson at Ahmedabad to John Bangham at Lahore, 23 December, 1625 (O. C. 1214) in Foster 1909: 114.

trade, which was anything but a 'slight matter' in the eyes of the Company, or whether he simply took a principled stand on the Company's dealings with its employee.<sup>15</sup> Kerridge was, however, able to reconcile Lord with the other members of the Council, and Lord remained at Surat for the full length of his five-year appointment. We have no further record of Lord, or of his return to England.<sup>16</sup> However Lord's wish, expressed in the second of the letters of dedication, that the *Discovery* would have 'crossed the Æquinoctiall [equator] and tropics happily to come to your hands, amongst other news from the foreign parts of India' suggests that he remained in India after 1629, sending the manuscript back to London. By the time it was published in 1630, he appears to have returned to England,<sup>17</sup> as the engraved title page describes him as 'sometimes resident in East India.'<sup>18</sup>

### *The Banians*

The term 'Banian' refers to the Vāṇiā mercantile caste, the Gujarati *vāṇiyo* being derived from the Sanskrit *vaṇij*, meaning merchant. The first European writer to use the term was the Portuguese Duarte Barbosa, who in 1516 distinguishes three races or classes of 'heathens': '*Resbutos* [Rājputs] ... the knights and wardens of the land ... *Baneanes*, who are great merchants and traders ... [and] *Bramenes*, who are priests among them and persons who manage and rule their houses of prayer and idol-worship.'<sup>19</sup> As noted, Richard Hakluyt first used the term in English in 1599, to mean 'one of the Indians inhabiting the countrey of Cambaia'.

The Vāṇiās were brokers, shopkeepers, money-changers and bankers, and members of this caste were active in ports all around the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The caste had both Hindu and Jain members and A. M. Shah notes nineteenth-century evidence that there was no 'restriction on inter-marriage between them, so that frequently husband and wife had different religious affiliations'.<sup>20</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> The Company's factors repeatedly complained about the failure of the Directors to understand their difficulties in the east. See Keay 1991: 122.

<sup>16</sup> Randle notes that this is because of the loss of the Court Minutes for July 1629 to July 1632 and of the Surat *Consultations* and *Letters* from 1628 to 1635. Randle 1937: 279.

<sup>17</sup> Although the Court Minutes for the year beginning July 1629 are no longer extant, it is known from other sources that two fleets from Surat reached London in 1630. Lord would probably have travelled with one of these. See Foster 1910: v, vii.

<sup>18</sup> Thus it is clear that Lord could not, as the introduction to the French translation of his work states, have based his work on eighteen years' experience in India.

<sup>19</sup> Barbosa 1918–1921, I: 110–111, 114–115.

<sup>20</sup> Shah and Desai 1988: 37.

Vāṇiās were one of the most numerous of the social groups in Surat and were divided into a number of sub-castes based on region of origin. The 1901 *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* reports that the 'great Vāṇiā community of Gujarat', forming 5.53 % of the Hindu population, was divided into twenty-three such sub-castes, ('classes' in the terminology of the *Gazetteer*). Each of these twenty-three sub-castes was divided into a 'Brahmanic' and a 'Shravak', i. e. Jain, section, although the line of separation was rigid only in south Gujarat. In general 'the Brahmanic and Shravak sections of the Vania community are knit together by social ties', and in north Gujarat, Kutch and Kathiavad, 'they generally eat together and sometimes intermarry.'<sup>21</sup> Of the Vāṇiās, more than 60 % are Jains, the remainder being Vaiṣṇavite Hindus. However, the Jains are concentrated in four of the twenty-three 'classes', the Porvads, the Shrimalis, the Ummads and the Osvals, the last two being 'wholly Shravaks.'<sup>22</sup> Among the other sub-castes, the Nāgar Vāṇiās are said to be 'Vallabhacharya Vaisnavs.'<sup>23</sup> Some of their number were very wealthy and the Vāṇiās were well known for substantial contributions to religious endowments. Jain inscriptions from the seventeenth century refer to Vāṇiā patronage of shrines built in Surat and elsewhere at this time.<sup>24</sup> By far the best-known member of the caste is M. K. Gandhi, who came from a Modh Vāṇiā caste in Saurashtra, whose life and thought illustrate the close connection between the Jain and Hindu sections of the Vāṇiā community.

#### A Discoverie of the Sect of the Banians: *structure*

The *Discovery* is nominally structured by the scheme of the four *yugas*. However, Lord devotes six chapters to the first, seven to the second, and only one each to the third and fourth. The first chapter deals with the creation, Lord's account of which is probably drawn, via an interpreter, from one of the Purāṇas.<sup>25</sup> The next four chapters describe how the four sons of Puruṣa and Prakṛti find wives appropriate to their natures. The names of the four (Brammon, Cuttery, Shuddery, Wyse, i. e. Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Śūdra, Vaiṣya) indicate that Lord is drawing on some version of the myth of the origin of the four *varṇas*.<sup>26</sup> However, the accounts of the 'travails' of the four appear to be mainly Lord's own work, and show

<sup>21</sup> Campbell 1901: 69.

<sup>22</sup> Campbell 1901: 70.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell 1901: 73.

<sup>24</sup> Gokhale 1979: 135.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Skandha III.

<sup>26</sup> There is some confusion in Lord's account of the *varṇas*, as suggested by the appearance of the Śūdras as the third caste, and the Vaiṣyas as the fourth. The reasons for this will be discussed below, p.78f.

evidence of a romantic imagination at work upon what may be local traditions.<sup>27</sup> Although the description in the sixth chapter of the moral decline and consummation of 'the first age of the world' in a great flood is superficially similar to the biblical account of the first judgement of humankind, Lord is not merely reading the biblical story into the Banians' tradition. It is clear from the inclusion of such details as 'the souls were lodged in the bosom of the Almighty' during the dissolution and reconstitution of the universe that Lord is attempting to be faithful to what he was told, even if he presents it in terms that would be more familiar to his readers than to his sources. Moreover, with the exception of his suggestion that the Banians' opinions concerning transmigration were 'derived from the philosopher Pythagoras, who in turn had received it from the Egyptians',<sup>28</sup> Lord does not indulge in the sort of speculation about the diffusion and corruption of religious truth that we find in other seventeenth-century accounts of religious diversity.<sup>29</sup> Rather, Lord presents the Banians as 'coining religion according to the mint of their own tradition'.<sup>30</sup> He rejects Guillaume Postel's genealogy of descent from Abraham and Keturah, and the explanation of 'Bramane' as an abbreviation of 'Abrahmanes', on the grounds that the Brahmans have never 'heard of Abraham, but affirm they receive this name of Bramanes from Brammon, which was the first that ever exercised their priestly function, as they find by record; or else from Bremaw'.<sup>31</sup>

The second group of seven chapters, which purport to describe 'the second age of the world', represent Lord's greatest contribution to European knowledge of Indian religions. Although Lord is aware that the Banians 'suppose time to be running on the fourth age of the world'<sup>32</sup> his comments here appear to be largely based on his own observations of the contemporary religious observances of the Banians. So although these are presented in chapter seven as being prescribed in the 'Shaster' (scripture) delivered to 'Bremaw', the Almighty's agent of creation in the second age, Lord warns his readers that 'I shall somewhat digress from their injunctions, which for the most part present things less pertinent to be known, to a more particular display of their manners'.<sup>33</sup>

Chapters eight and nine, which deal with the Banians' 'moral' and 'ceremonial' law respectively, are the heart of the *Discovery* and are substantially longer than any of the other chapters. Lord's remark that

<sup>27</sup> Prasad suggests that Lord's authorities are mainly local or regional. Prasad 1980: 316.

<sup>28</sup> Lord 1999: 10, 54.

<sup>29</sup> See Harrison 1990: 106–112.

<sup>30</sup> Lord 1999: 5.

<sup>31</sup> Lord 1999: 70.

<sup>32</sup> Lord 1999: 91.

<sup>33</sup> Lord 1999: 70.

'the priest and the merchant man ... hold the greatest agreement in their worship, and ... the ruler and the handicrafts man, do most correspond in theirs' has its basis in the links which exist between the Brahman and Vāṇiā, and between the Rājput and Kolī castes.<sup>34</sup> Lord finds 'nothing prodigious to opinion' in 'the principal part of their law'. He does, however, take exception to the first commandment (not to kill 'any living creature whatsoever it be') and to part of the second (the prohibition on consuming wine or meat). Lord observes that the first commandment is based upon the belief that all living creatures have the same kind of soul. This he denies on the authority of the ancients' distinction between vegetant, sentient and rational souls. His real target, however, is the idea of transmigration, which he takes to be the rationale for the prohibition on eating meat.<sup>35</sup> Much of the rest of the chapter is taken up with a discussion of transmigration, and a refutation of the doctrine. It is notable that, with the exception of the introductory and concluding sections, this is the only part of the *Discovery* where Lord engages in a serious critique of what he describes.

In the ninth chapter Lord gives an extended description of Banian ritual observances, noticing seven elements in particular: ritual bathing in rivers, marking the forehead, tendering of prayers and offerings, temple worship, the sacred nature of the Ganges and other rivers, the special status of the cow, and what he calls the 'invocation of saints' i. e. the worship of Hanumān, Gaṇeśa and other gods.<sup>36</sup> Lord also describes Banian ceremonies at 'their baptizings or naming of their children' noting the use of astrology, and gives full descriptions of the marriage and funeral ceremonies he witnessed while in India. He mentions *satī*, 'which to this day is observed in some places and for some persons of greater worth, though the examples be more rare now, than in former times', and notes that the custom is not prescribed in the 'Shaster', but has sprung up amongst them 'since these laws and injunctions'.<sup>37</sup>

The remaining four chapters concerning the second age describe the various groups among the Banians. In chapter ten Lord discusses the different divisions of the Brahmans. He mentions also the 'more special Bramane', by which he clearly intends the Jains, and distinguishes five of the Jain *gacchas* (sects). In connection with his discussion of the

<sup>34</sup> See Shah and Desai 1988: 7,15.

<sup>35</sup> Although he later describes the care taken by the Jains to preserve animal life, Lord does not seem to have realized the importance of *ahimsā*, non-violence, in Indian thought. On transmigration in seventeenth-century English texts see Teltscher 2000: 161–165.

<sup>36</sup> Although Lord describes the Banians as having 'brains intoxicate with the fumes of error and polytheism' (94) his informants did not explain to him the *pañcāyatana pūjā*, the worship of five gods, which is perhaps the element of modern Hinduism most accurately described as polytheistic.

<sup>37</sup> Lord 1999: 66.

'Cutteryes' (chapter eleven) he provides some historical details about the invasion of Gujarat in the time of the Delhi Sultanate drawn from traditions current in Gujarat.<sup>38</sup> Although brief, chapters twelve and thirteen, which contain descriptions of the Banian merchants and the lowest castes, are crucial for an understanding of Lord's presentation of the Banian religion. They will be discussed in detail below.

The two final, and much shorter, chapters report the Banians' account of the third and fourth ages of the world respectively. Their only real purpose is to fill out the scheme of the four *yugas* which Lord here identifies as 'the first, *Curtain* [*Kṛta*]; the second, *Dvauper* [*Dvāpara*]; the third, *Tetraioo* [*Tretā*]; the fourth *Kolee* [*Kali*'].<sup>39</sup> He mistakes their order (the *Tretā* precedes the *Dvāpara yuga*) and also wrongly states that the last age is the longest. Otherwise the chapters contain little besides the introduction for the first time in Lord's account of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, which confirms the suggestion that his authorities were Vaiṣṇavas.

#### A Discoverie of the Sect of the Banians: *sources*

The title page of the *Discovery* claims the authority of three different sources of information for Lord's work. The work is declared to be 'Gathered from their Bramanes, teachers of that sect: As the particulars were comprized in the book of their law, called the Shaster: Together with a display of their manners, both in times past, and at this present'. Determining the identity of Lord's sources is the first step in understanding his construction of 'the Banian religion'. The sources of authority claimed are personal (the 'Bramanes'), textual ('the Shaster') and observational ('their manners ... at this present'). The claim to the authority of each of these sources is elaborated in the Introduction. The claim to the authority of direct observation is apparent in Lord's first description of the Banians: 'a people presented themselves to mine eyes ... Truth to say, mine eyes unacquainted with such objects, took up their wonder and gazed'.<sup>40</sup>

The claim to textual authority is elaborated in Lord's statement that he 'essayed to fetch materials for [his work] out of their manuscripts', and 'with the help of interpreters, made my collections out of a book of theirs called the Shaster, which is to them as their Bible, containing the grounds of their religion in a written word.'<sup>41</sup> Although Lord describes this text as

<sup>38</sup> For an assessment of the historical value of this account, and suggestions for its sources, see Lord 1999: 74–78.

<sup>39</sup> Lord 1999: 92.

<sup>40</sup> Lord 1999: 9.

<sup>41</sup> Lord 1999: 10.



divided into 'three tracts', containing the moral, ceremonial, and caste law respectively, and devotes a chapter to the contents of each, it is probable that there is no specific text identifiable as Lord's 'Shaster'.<sup>42</sup> It is not likely that Lord knew any Indian language well enough to have read any significant text, even if he had been granted access to one.<sup>43</sup> As he states, he relied on interpreters, who would probably have drawn on more than one text.<sup>44</sup> Any attempt to identify a specific text would in any case be rendered difficult by Lord's habit of mixing those elements in his account which are supposed to be drawn from the 'Shaster' with his own direct observations and with that which is 'by the Banians delivered', i. e. information received directly from his interlocutors.

In substantiating his claim to Brahmanic authority Lord mentions that Thomas Kerridge, the President of the English factory at Surat, 'to give this undertaking the better promotion, interested himself in the work, by mediating my acquaintance with the Bramanes.'<sup>45</sup> Despite this claim, it will be shown below that even if some of his information came from conversations with Brahmans, Vāṇiā merchants were a more significant source.

### *The 'Bramanes', the 'Banians' and Lord's Discoverie*

The ambiguity in Lord's use of 'Banian', combined with his tendency to integrate what he learnt from different sources, makes it difficult to identify Lord's personal authorities. Earlier writers on Lord have noted that much of his information appears to have come from Nāgar Brahmans

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<sup>42</sup> The term *śāstra* may refer to 'any book or treatise, especially any religious or scientific treatise, any sacred book or composition of divine authority', and even to the Veda. Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1872; Oxford: Clarendon, 1899) s. v. 'śāstra'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) cites Lord's as the first recorded use of the term in English (s. v. 'Shastra'). Randle suggests that the three tracts of the Shaster may 'reflect an enumeration of the Vedas as three (omitting the *Artharva-veda*)' (Randle 1937: 286).

<sup>43</sup> No evidence is offered for the claim, made in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and repeated by other authors, that Lord 'acquired some knowledge of Hindustani and Persian'. Lord himself makes no claim to understand Indian languages, and the idea that he could appear to be based solely on the fact that he described his work as taken from the 'Shaster and 'the book delivered to Zertoost'. Rawlinson comments: 'Only a few exceptional men, like Kerridge, Methwold, and Oxinden ever acquired proficiency as "linguists" or interpreters.' (Rawlinson 1920: 122). In the introductions to each section of his book Lord mentions that he used interpreters.

<sup>44</sup> See below, p.78 for suggestions of particular texts underlying sections of Lord's work.

<sup>45</sup> Lord 1999: 10.

and Jain merchants,<sup>46</sup> and elements of his account are plainly suggestive of such influence. The most significant evidence is in the tenth chapter, where Lord discusses the division of the people into 'four tribes or casts' and the 'kinds' of 'the first of those tribes, called the Bramanes'. Here Lord relates that, according to the tradition of the Banians, they are bound by the third tract of 'the Shaster':

to have Bramanes to instruct the people in matters of religion; to have Cutteryes that should sway the sceptre, and keep men in obedience; to have merchant men that should use traffic and trade as did Shuddery; to have servile and manufactory men, that should serve the uses of the world in the handicrafts, as did Wyse.<sup>47</sup>

The 'Bramanes', being 'such as discharge the priestly office amongst the people ...' are of two sorts, 'the more common Bramanes, of which there are a greater number in India', and 'the more special, of which there be fewer, and these be called by the Banians, Verteas, by the Moors, Sevrahs'. Regarding the more common 'Bramanes', Lord writes:

The more common Bramane has eighty-two casts or tribes, assuming to themselves the names of that tribe, which were so many wise men or scholars famed for their learning amongst them, called augurs or soothsayers, of such a place of dwelling. Thus the prime of them was called Visalnagranauger that is, the augur of Visalnagra, the second Vulnagranauger, that is, the augur of Vulnagra, a town so called. And so of the rest according to these eighty-two casts to be distinguished, being Bramanes, of the discipline of such an augur.<sup>48</sup>

Lord's 'Visalnagra' and 'Vulnagra' are Visalnagar (or Visnagar) and Vaḍnagar, the two chief centres or places of origin of Nāgar Brahmans. Lord later refers to Visaladeva<sup>49</sup>, the founder of Visalnagar, which confirms the impression that members of a caste originating from this town were among his informants. However, this evidence alone does not show that Lord's informants were Brahmans, merely that they were probably Nāgars. Like Nāgar Brahmans, Nāgar Vāṇiās 'claim Vaḍnagar as their original seat ... their family priests are Nāgar Brahmans.'<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Randle suggests that while Lord's informants were Nāgar Brahmans, 'his "Banian", although to some extent a composite picture, represents on the whole a Jain merchant' (Randle 1937: 280, 287). 'To learn about the "Banians", Lord consulted Brahmans, probably Nāgar Brahmans.' (Lach and Van Kley 1993: 645).

<sup>47</sup> Lord 1999: 69. Note that Lord refers to neither 'Shudderyes' nor 'Banians', but rather to 'merchant men'.

<sup>48</sup> Lord 1999: 71. Randle suggests that Lord derives 'augur' by dropping the initial 'N' from Nāgar and equating the term with the Latin *augur*. Given the description of those called augurs as 'wise men or scholars, famed for their learning' it seems equally likely that his usage is derived from *ācārya*.

<sup>49</sup> Visaladeva Vāghela (reigned 1243–1261). For a detailed discussion of the historical figures mentioned in Lord's account of the invasion of Gujarat by the forces of Alā-ud-din, see Lord 1999: 74–78.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell 1901: 73.

The 'more special Bramanes' are Jains, who are known as 'Verteas' in sixteenth-century Portuguese works.<sup>51</sup> As 'Shevras', they are among the castes, together with the 'Banias', discussed in the *Mir'āt-i-Ahmadi*, a Persian history of Gujarat written c.1761 by Mirzā 'Alī Muhammad Khān, a *diwān* of Gujarat under the successors of Aurangzeb.<sup>52</sup> Lord's description of these 'Bramanes' reads as follows:

Now for the more special Bramane, by them called the Vertea, he is some man of the cast of the Shudderyes, or merchant men, who for devotion takes this condition on him. He is one that for his habit wears a woollen garment of white, descended to the middle of his thigh, leaving the lower parts naked. His head is always uncovered, as a witness of his perpetual reverence of God above. They do not shave, but pluck off all the hair on their heads, save some small remainder on the crown, the like they do from their chin also. Of this sort of Bramane there be several casts likewise. One is called the Soncaes, and these go not to Church, but perform divine rites at home. Another is of the Tuppaes, these go to Church to pray. A third is of the Curthurs, and these pray by themselves, without society. A fourth called the Onkeleaus, and these endure not images. A fifth called the Pushaleaus, the most strict of them all. These kind of Bramanes have a festival called Putcheson, which is kept once every month, by five days solemnization, but between each day of the five they keep a fast. This feast is kept at the ablest men's houses, and commonly at those times a pension is given, to restrain the death of cattle, or other living creatures. More strict they seem to be in many things than the common Bramanes, for the other are not forbidden marriage, these are; more abstinent they are in diet, for out of the former feasts they eat nothing, but what is given them, and reserve nothing for another meal. More cautelous they are for the preservation of things animate, for they will drink no water but boiled, that so the vapour which they suppose the life of the water, may go out. They disperse their very dung and ordure with a beasome, least it should generate worms that be subject to destruction, and they keep an hospital of lame and maimed flying fowl, redeemed by a price, which they seek to restore. They have all things in common, but place no faith in outward washings, but rather embrace a careless and sordid nastiness. And this is sufficient to note concerning this kind of Bramane.<sup>53</sup>

This is evidently an account of Śvetāmbara Jains.<sup>54</sup> What is noticeable is that Lord explicitly identifies these 'Bramanes', as 'of the cast of the

<sup>51</sup> Two suggested etymologies and a summary of other references are given in Lach 1965: 459–60.

<sup>52</sup> See Desai 1981: 55.

<sup>53</sup> Lord 1999: 72–73.

<sup>54</sup> Jain *gacchas* proliferated among the Śvetāmbaras from the eleventh century. Two of those Lord mentions, the Tapa and Kharatara ('Tuppaes', 'Curthurs') *gacchas*, are still important. The 'Onkeleaus' may be the Loṅkāgaccha, founded by Loṅkāśāha at the end of the fourteenth century, who sought to rid Jainism of image-worship. The foundation of this *gaccha*, which reached the height of its influence in the sixteenth century, may have been influenced by the presence of Islam in India. Lord's 'Soncaes' and 'Pushaleaus' are not readily identifiable, although the latter may be the 'Bṛhat (extensive)- or Laghu

Shudderyes, or merchant men'. He has clearly observed that the professional religious among the Jains are outside of Brahmanical orthodoxy. This may also indicate that Lord knew 'merchant men' among the 'Verteas', i. e. members of the Vāṇiā caste.

The evidence suffices to show that Lord's account of 'the Banian religion' includes elements drawn from his observations of, or conversations with, both Jains and members of a caste which claimed origin from Viśalnagar and Vaḍnagar. However, there are good reasons for thinking that Lord's account of the religion of 'the Banians' in the wider sense, i. e. of Hindus and Jains in general, is mainly derived from those he says are 'most properly called Banians', i. e. members of the Vāṇiā mercantile caste, and that these in turn may be identified as Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya*.

Despite his claim to have had access to the Brahmans through the mediation of Kerridge, Lord, like other European writers, found that the Brahmans 'will scarce admit a stranger conversation'. The Company existed to trade, and, given that on Lord's account, 'nothing is bought but by the mediation of these, who are called Banians', it is clear that it is with the Banians (in the narrow sense) that the factors would have most to do. Pietro Della Valle, who travelled in India between 1614 and 1626 describes the difficulties of obtaining information on religious subjects: 'the Indians who talkt with us, either in the Portugal or the Persian-tongue, being all Factors or Merchants, and consequently unlearned, could not give us any account of these things; besides they speak these languages ill, and are not intelligible save in buying and selling.'<sup>55</sup> Lord uses the term 'Banian' thirty-one times in the body of his work.<sup>56</sup> Of

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(small)- *pośāla* (monastery)'. These *gacchas*, associated with *pośālas*, are attested in Jain inscriptions, and may have appeared to Lord to be the strictest of the Jain orders. *Paryuṣaṇa* 'abiding', the most important event in the ritual calendar of the Śvetāmbaras, takes place once a year, during the monsoon. However, Lord's identification of it with a monthly fast is not as inaccurate as it may seem at first sight: 'Broadly speaking, *Paryuṣaṇa* refers to the entire rain retreat ... the full season of the rain retreat is four months ... More specifically, *Paryuṣaṇa-parva* is the "fast" that ends the year, occupying a specific time-frame within the whole rain retreat. It lasts eight to ten days, or longer ... Von Glasenapp describes this fast as modeled on the *pośadha* fast; alternately, one can say that a "special edition" of the *pośadha* fast is used in the *Paryuṣaṇa-parva*. The *pośadha* is a special fast performed on four special days (*parva*) in each month.' (Folkert 1993: 172–173). Jain payments to preserve the lives of animals, and the *pīñjrapol*, a sanctuary for wounded or aged animals, were frequently mentioned in travellers' accounts of western India, e. g. Linschoten 1885, I: 253–4; Della Valle 1892, I: 72; Ovington 1929: 177.

<sup>55</sup> Della Valle 1892, I: 72.

<sup>56</sup> On occasion Lord also uses the term 'Shuddery' or 'merchant man' where he might have used 'Banian' as this is clearly what he has in mind. See, for example, chapter VIII. 'Banian' appears also in the title ('the Sect of the Banians') and the running head ('A Discoverie of the Banian Religion') of the first part of the Display.

these uses, ten appear in locutions which express Lord's claim to have derived his information from the Banians themselves.<sup>57</sup> Although Lord uses the term 'Bramane' almost twice as often, the term is used in the vast majority of cases in reference to the Brahmans' priestly role and, with the exception of the claim in the title of the *Discovery* that the work on the Banians is 'gathered from their Bramanes, teachers of that sect', the term never appears in any direct claim to have derived information from the Brahmans.<sup>58</sup> Thus, despite the title and Lord's claim in his introduction to have had access to the Brahmans, in fact he consistently presents his sources as 'Banians', rather than 'Bramanes'. If Lord's informants were Banians, this would also explain his decision to use 'Banian' as a generic term despite being aware that it 'most properly' referred only to one particular group.

Lord's account of 'the Banian religion' is consistent with the suggestion that his primary informants were Vāṇiās. Although the Vāṇiā caste, as noted above, would have included some Jains, many of the Vāṇiā merchants of Gujarat in the sixteenth century belonged to the *bhakti sampradāya* of Vallabhācārya.<sup>59</sup> The 1901 *Gazetteer of the Bombay*

<sup>57</sup> 'as it is by the Banians delivered', 'say the Banians', 'according to the Banians' tradition' (Chapter I); 'according to the tradition of the Banians' (Chapter VI); 'says the Banian', 'say the Banians', 'as it is unfolded by the tradition of the Banians' (Chapter VII); 'the Banians deliver' (Chapter VIII); 'called by the Banians' (Chapter X); 'the Banians' opinion' (Chapter XV). Of the remainder, four are adjectival, referring to the Banian 'writings', 'law', 'injunction', and 'religion'. In the epistles dedicatory, and the introduction, the term is used four times to refer to the Banians *tout court*, ('the Banian'; 'this sect of the Banians'; 'Banians, a people foreign to the knowledge of the Christian world', 'the said Banians'). The term is also once used thus in chapter VIII ('the Banians seem to halt in their philosophy'). 'Banian' is used five times in Chapter XII, discussing the meaning of the term ('the meaning of the name Banian', 'those that are most properly called Banians', 'concerning the name Banian', 'the name of Banians', 'these, who are called Banians'). Three uses, in the chapter on the Rājputs, refer to 'the Banian state'. Finally, the term is used four times to conjoin or to contrast the Banians with other groups; the phrase 'the Bramanes and the Banians' appears twice, and the phrase 'these Bramanes or Banians' once, in chapter VIII where Lord is discussing the links between these groups, which 'hold the greatest agreement in their worship' in contrast to 'Cuttery and Wyse, the ruler and the handicrafts man' who 'most correspond in theirs.' These 'purer Gentiles' are said to observe 'the diet of the Banians, abstaining from flesh or wine' (Chapter XIII).

<sup>58</sup> Lord uses the term 'Bramane' sixty-one times in the *Discovery*. Almost two-thirds of these occur in just two chapters, namely those on 'their ceremonial law, in their washings, anointings, offerings under green trees, prayers, pilgrimages, invocations, adorations, together with the forms of their baptizings, marriages, and burials, customary amongst them' (Chapter IX) and on 'the Bramanes; the derivation of the name, their kinds, the number of their casts, their ministerial discharge, studies, and school discipline' (Chapter X).

<sup>59</sup> Vallabhācārya quickly gained a sizeable following across northern India, following the tours he and his successor (his second son Viṭṭhalanātha) made through the region. Viṭṭhalanātha is reported to have visited Gujarat at least six times (Majmudar 1965: 214).

*Presidency* states that 'as a class Gujarat Vanias are staunch adherents of the Vallabhacharya sect to which they are said to have been converted about four hundred years ago.' The same source reports not only that 'Vanias, other than Jains, are mostly Vallabhacharis', but that the converse is also true: 'The large majority of the Vallabhacharis are Vanis [sic] of all castes throughout Gujarat.'<sup>60</sup> Lord's description of the worship of the Banians, while not detailed enough to allow unambiguous identification of those involved as devotees of Vallabha, is at least compatible with the present practice of the *saṃpradāya*. Given that many, or even most, Vallabhācāris were Vāṇiās, a comparison of what is known of this group with Lord's description of the Banian religion may serve further to substantiate the suggestion that his primary sources were Vāṇiā merchants.

Although many of the practices which Lord describes would have been common to other Hindus whom he observed, and his description of the worship that he observed will to some extent reflect that of more than one group,<sup>61</sup> nevertheless the ritual practices of Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya* are recognizable in his account. Lord remarks that the worship he observed:

may hold some resemblance with common service, were it purged of superstitious ceremony. The sum of which devotion, is the repetition of certain names of God, dilated and explained, where also they use processions, with singing, and loud

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Before his death in 1586, Viṭṭhalanātha divided the leadership of the *saṃpradāya* among his seven sons, distributing the nine primary *svarūpas* of Kṛṣṇa between them. The sites of these remain the primary religious centres of the *saṃpradāya*; Viṭṭhalanātha's sixth son, Yadunātha was given the *svarūpa* Śrī Bālakṛṣṇajī which is today in Surat (although there is a rival claimant to the *svarūpa* of Yadunātha in Vārāṇasi). The fact that vows of *sannyāsa* were not required of members would have made the *saṃpradāya* attractive to the wealthy merchant classes, and the movement gained many followers among them. The *saṃpradāya* remains influential among the commercial castes of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Bombay, including of course the Vāṇiā caste. N. A. Thoothi reports that the 1891 census found that of the Hindus in Gujarat '2 % were Jains, 8 % were Shaivites, mostly Brahmins, 15 % were animists, and rest were Vaishnavites'. The few Kṣatriyas were also Śaivites (Thoothi 1935: 351). A century later, the situation had hardly changed: 'In Gujarat, the Hindus are divided between the followers of Vishnu and those of Shiva ... The Brahmins, except a few who belong to the Swaminarayan sect are the followers of Lord Shiva. The Banias, the merchant class, as a rule are devotees of Vallabhachari and the Rajputs show great attachment to Shiva.' (Rajguru 1994: 67). There are therefore good reasons for thinking that the merchant community of Surat in Lord's time would have included among its numbers many followers of Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya*.

<sup>60</sup> Campbell 1901: 89, 530–531.

<sup>61</sup> Lord does not, for example, discuss the significance of the different colours and styles of marking the forehead, which suggests that he did not differentiate between one group and another unlike, for example, Wolllebrandt Geleynssen De Jongh, a Dutch factor who was in Gujarat in the 1620s, who distinguishes Vaiṣṇavas and Smārtas among the Banians. See Gokhale 1979: 35.

tinkling of bells, which chanting is of their commandments, with offerings to images, and such like impertinent services.<sup>62</sup>

This is reminiscent of the *sevā* (service) to Kṛṣṇa in Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya*, which typically includes *kīrtana*, 'the singing aloud of the names and virtues and the events in the *līlās* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa'<sup>63</sup> and offerings to the *svatūpa* (image) of Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, certain sections of Lord's account of Banian religion appear to be based on texts which were important for the *saṃpradāya*. Lord's version of the Banians' beliefs concerning the creation follows the account in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the text of final resort for the *saṃpradāya*. Although broadly similar accounts occur in other texts, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is important for other Hindu religious groups, again what we read of the creation in Lord is at least compatible with his informants having been followers of the *puṣṭimārga* of Vallabhācārya.<sup>64</sup> If they were, the likelihood is that they were also Vāṇiās. However, the suggestion that some, at least, of Lord's informants, were followers of Vallabhācārya does not exclude the possibility of the influence of the Nāgar Brahmans or the Jains, evidence of which has been discussed above. There were also Nāgar Brahmans among the followers of Vallabhācārya,<sup>65</sup> and in general, 'the Banias were much influenced by the Jainistic modes in diet and devotion to the welfare of birds and animals'.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious and serious error in Lord's work, and the most significant problem for the identification of his sources as Vāṇiā merchants, is his identification of 'those that are most properly called Banians' as 'Shudderyes'.<sup>67</sup> The confusion may have arisen from the lack of exact correlation between the theory of the four *varṇas* as explained in various Hindu texts, and the complex actual patterns of *jāti* (birth-group) among Hindus. We have already noted that in the group of chapters in which this error occurs, Lord mixes his own observations with what he was able to discern, through interpreters, of the 'Shaster', and the error may result from his attempt to fit the former to the pattern laid out in the

<sup>62</sup> Lord 1999: 61.

<sup>63</sup> Barz 1976: 83.

<sup>64</sup> Bhatt's account of creation in the Śūddhādvaita system of Vallabhācārya is still closer to that attributed by Lord to the Banians. See Bhatt 1953: 352.

<sup>65</sup> A nineteenth-century work describes the Nāgar Brahmans as divided between Smārtas and the followers of Vallabhācārya and Swami Narayana (Wilson 1877: 61). Kirparam states that the Vaṅnagar Vāṇiās are 'Vallabhacarya Vaisnavas' and that 'their family priests are Nāgar Brahmans' (Campbell 1901: 73).

<sup>66</sup> Gokhale 1979: 37. M. R. Majmudar remarks of Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya* that 'some look upon this new Vaiṣṇavism as Jainism tacked on to the old worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa ... Vaiṣṇavism took up Ahimsā as it had never done before' (Majmudar 1965: 219–220).

<sup>67</sup> Lord 1999: 81.

latter, in his own words to show 'what the third tract [of the 'Shaster'] imported, and how it is confirmed by their present manners and customs'.<sup>68</sup> He was not the first, and would not be the last European to make an error of this sort;<sup>69</sup> nevertheless, it is so fundamental as to remain surprising from someone with Lord's experience, and the more so if his informants were Vāṇiās.

Ram Chandra Prasad suggests that some of the blame for the inadequacies in Lord's account of the Banians' religion may lie with the Banians themselves:

The Baniās whom [Lord] consulted do not seem to have possessed an adequate knowledge of [the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, and Purāṇas] except for a few terms and minor details that lend a touch of authenticity to what they imported to Henry Lord. It is indeed unfortunate that Lord in most cases relied upon oral authority, and on the conversational information of ignorant and ill-instructed individuals.<sup>70</sup>

Although this would confirm the impression that Lord's sources were ordinary Banians rather than educated Brahmans,<sup>71</sup> as Prasad himself notes, no Banian would have described himself as a Śūdra.<sup>72</sup>

Lord's understanding of caste was limited; for example, he nowhere adverts to the distinction between the twice-born and other castes and he discusses *upanayana* only in relation to the Brahmans. He does connect the ritual of *upanayana* with 'the purity of that [i. e. the Brahman] caste',<sup>73</sup> and there is some further evidence that Lord was aware of the rules of purity governing commensality and marriage.<sup>74</sup> However, he seems to have identified the most important line of demarcation as that running between the Brahmans and other castes, rather than between the twice-born and others. This may help to explain his error in placing the Vāṇiās in the Śūdra caste. Although Lord did not appreciate the importance of the twice-born, given that he was aware of the Brahman concern for purity, it may be that the willingness of the Banians to interact with

<sup>68</sup> Lord 1999: 68.

<sup>69</sup> Barbosa fails to distinguish Vaiśyas from Śūdras, identifying only 'Baneanes' in addition to Rājputs and Brahmans.

<sup>70</sup> Prasad 1980: 319.

<sup>71</sup> Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya states that there are few Sanskrit scholars among the Nāgar Brahmans of Gujarat (Bhattacharya 1973: 61). John Ovington also noted that 'few of the learned *Bramins* live near *Surat*' (Ovington 1929: 148).

<sup>72</sup> Prasad 1980: 319.

<sup>73</sup> Lord 1999: 69.

<sup>74</sup> In the case of the tribe of Wyse, 'at this present most ordinarily called by the name of Gentiles', Lord distinguishes between 'the purer Gentile, such as lives observant of the diet of the Banians, abstaining from flesh and wine, or using both very seldom' and 'the impure or unclean Gentile, which takes a greater liberty in diet' (Lord 1999: 81–2). Lord notes the injunctions 'that every tribe do marry such as are of his own cast' (62) and in general that they are 'bound to keep their own peculiar tribe or cast, and to observe what was proper to the faculties of each' (67).



the Europeans, in contrast to 'the Bramanes, who will scarce admit a stranger conversation', led him to think they must be of a lower caste.

Lord's account of 'the fourth cast called the Wyse' may also help to explain his identification of the Banians as Śūdras. Lord explains that the 'name Wyse implies as much as one that is servile or instrumentary ... as was Wyse, and those descended from him ... these people are at this present most ordinarily called by the name of Gentiles.' This is the only place where Lord uses the term which, in the form of 'Gentoo', was to become in the work of English writers such as Holwell a common term for the non-Muslim population of India. Lord distinguishes 'the purer Gentile, such as lives observant of the diet of the Banians' from 'the impure or unclean Gentile' who are 'the husbandmen or inferior sort of people, called the Coulees.'<sup>75</sup> Randle suggests that Lord 'makes Wyse the representative of the "Mechanicke or handy-crafts man"', because he was not thinking of the *Vaiśya-varṇa* at all, but of the Vaish or carpenter sub-caste of Gujarat'.<sup>76</sup> The Vaish are the highest ranking of the six subdivisions of the Suthār caste of carpenters. They do not eat food prepared by the other divisions of the caste, they wear the Brahmanic thread, invested 'with full Brahmanic rites', and they do not allow their widows to remarry. Many of the caste were prosperous and most abstained from alcohol and eating meat. The marriage and funeral customs of the Suthārs 'do not differ from those of the Vāṇiās and Kaṇbis'.<sup>77</sup> The most significant evidence for thinking that Lord did confuse the *Vaiśya varṇa* and the Vaish caste is his identification of 'Wyse', the ancestor of 'the cast of the Wyse', with Viśvakarman, the 'all-accomplishing' architect of the universe, from whom four of the Suthār subdivisions, including the Vaish, claim descent.<sup>78</sup> Having thus assigned the *Vaiśya varṇa* to the 'manufactory men' only the 'tribe or cast of the Shudderyes' (the Śūdra *varṇa*) remained for the Banians. As Lord did not appreciate the distinction between the twice-born and the other castes, he was able to identify the Banians as Śūdras.

The most plausible explanation, however, for Lord's erroneous identification of the Banians as Śūdras, lies in the practice of Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya*. Like other *bhaktas*, Vallabhācārya and his successors 'initiated persons from Muslim, untouchable, and Shudra backgrounds ... as well as from the Aryan *varṇas*'.<sup>79</sup> Richard Barz notes that at the present time, 'most members of Vallabhācārya's *saṃpradāya* are born into the

<sup>75</sup> Kolis or Kulis, an aboriginal tribe of Gujarat.

<sup>76</sup> Randle 1937: 283.

<sup>77</sup> Campbell 1901: 202, 206.

<sup>78</sup> See Campbell 1901: 202, Lord 1999: 33.

<sup>79</sup> Barz 1976: 47.

sect rather than converted in adulthood'.<sup>80</sup> For both these reasons, members of the *sampradāya* receive a sectarian initiation rather than *upanayana*. As a result, '[i]nstead of a sacred thread both men and women [of the *sampradāya*] wear a basil thread *kanthi* necklace round their neck.'<sup>81</sup> This is in contrast to the general practice of the Vāṇiā caste,<sup>82</sup> and to that of the Vaish, whom Lord identifies as Vaiśyas. Not only does this explain Lord's error, but it confirms the identification of Lord's informants as Vallabhi Vāṇiās.

### *An assessment of A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*

The *Display* was not reprinted in Lord's lifetime which suggests that it made relatively little immediate impact. However its later diffusion and influence were considerable.<sup>83</sup> A French translation of the *Display* by Pierre Briot was published in 1667 and a partial version of the *Discovery* appeared in the French edition of Bernard Picart's *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples du Monde*.<sup>84</sup> The English text was reprinted in several collections of 'Voyages': Churchill's *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1704–1752), Pinkerton's *General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all parts of the World* (1808–1814) and in the English translation of Picart, where it was described as 'writ with great depth of judgement and majesty of stile', the editor adding 'it is now grown scarce and sells at a dear rate.'<sup>85</sup> The book was also used by later European writers on Indian religions. Terry owed at least some of the extra information in the second, expanded, edition of his voyage<sup>86</sup> to his reading of Lord. In the first edition of his travels, Thomas Herbert referred readers interested in the religion of the 'Bannyans' to 'the description of their Religion to a Booke late written by Master Lord a Preacher to the Merchants in Surat.'<sup>87</sup> In the second edition Herbert included many details taken from both parts of Lord's work,

<sup>80</sup> Barz 1976: 20. Cf. Wilhelm Halbfass's comment that 'The commitment to the hereditary caste system may be less rigid in the sects than in mainstream "orthodoxy" ... The chosen membership in the religious or soteriological community can be more significant than the hereditary caste membership.' (Halbfass 1988: 193).

<sup>81</sup> Campbell 1901: 89.

<sup>82</sup> Russell and Lal 1916, II: 114.

<sup>83</sup> The English translator of the Jesuit *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, John Lockman, knew Lord's work, and gave a 'faithful epitome' of his 'most authentic account' of the Parsis. (Lockman 1743, I: 12–17). Lockman also notes that John Milton seems to have read Lord (I: 253–54). Prasad (1980: 342–3) makes the same observation.

<sup>84</sup> Picart 1723: 1–15.

<sup>85</sup> Picart 1731: x.

<sup>86</sup> Terry 1655. On this question see Firby 1988: 108–110.

<sup>87</sup> Herbert 1634: 36.

acknowledging his source only in respect of the Parsis.<sup>88</sup> François Bernier declared that he was 'not lesse obliged to Monsieur *Henry Lor*, and to Monsieur *Abraham Roger*, then [*sic*] to the Reverend Fathers *Kircher* and *Roa*.'<sup>89</sup> Sections of Lord's work were reprinted in other early works on Indian religions.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps the greatest compliment Lord's work received was that paid by William Jones in his Third Anniversary Discourse to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1786, when he stated: 'The inhabitants of this extensive tract [Bharat] are described by Mr. Lord with great exactness, and with a picturesque elegance peculiar to our ancient language.'<sup>91</sup> More recently, Randle has said of the *Discovery* that excepting the 'Christian Purana' of Thomas Stevens (an English Jesuit who was in India from 1579 to his death in 1619), 'there seems to be no printed book dating from before Lord's time which gives so much information' although, he notes, 'there were certainly Portuguese ... who knew more than Lord ever learned.'<sup>92</sup> Comparing Lord's account of the Parsis with the works of Terry, who was in India just before Lord (1616–1619)<sup>93</sup>, Nora Firby concludes that '[a]s a contributor to Zoroastrian studies, Lord is much the better scholar.'<sup>94</sup> However, to assess the value and significance of Lord's work, it is necessary to consider both the various literary genres in which it might be placed, and the different purposes which might be thought to have motivated its production.

A detailed study of Surat as Lord would have known it is given in Balkrishna Govind Gokhale's *Surat in the Seventeenth Century* (1979). Much of this account is drawn from the works of European travellers and traders of the period. These do not, however, include Lord, for the simple reason that there is very little to be learnt from his works in this respect. Indeed, something of the nature of Lord's books can be understood from the almost complete absence within them of any physical description of Surat or Gujarat. Apart from a brief discussion of the 'estate' of the 'Cutteryes' (Rājputs) and an even shorter account of their forms of

<sup>88</sup> Herbert 1638. The account of the 'Bannyans' and the 'Persaes' occupies pages 40–54. Herbert acknowledges 'Master *Lord*, a worthy Minister' on page 48.

<sup>89</sup> Bernier 1711: 145 and 1672: 157.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, the introduction to the English translation of Gründler and Ziegenbalg 1719: v–ix.

<sup>91</sup> Jones 1807, III: 30.

<sup>92</sup> Randle 1937: 294. Thomas Stevens, *Doutrina cristã em língua concani* Lisbon: Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca, Agência General das Colónias, 1945 (Facsimile reprint of the second edition published at Goa in 1622). Lach and Van Kley suggest it is 'the first printed summary of Hindu doctrines and practices to appear in Europe' (Lach and Van Kley 1993: 646).

<sup>93</sup> A short version of Terry's voyage was first published in Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus* (1625); a longer version (which may owe something to Lord's work, published in 1630) appeared on its own in 1655.

<sup>94</sup> Firby 1988: 110.

contract, his description of the Banians is focused entirely upon their religious beliefs and practices. The historical material in his account of the 'Persees' includes only that which is required to explain the early growth of Zoroastrianism and how they came to be in India. In this respect there are no published precedents to Lord's work. Earlier and contemporary works mention religious beliefs and practices as part of the general description of a region. So in works such as Christopher Farewell's *An East-India Colation* (1633) and even in those by clergymen, such as Terry's *Voyage to East India* (1655), reports of Indian religions are found among extensive descriptions of the cities and the countryside surrounding them, the numbers of foreign merchants, types of wheat and rice produced, the sorts of animals found, pastimes of the inhabitants, etc.; in short, descriptions of the land and all 'the most remarkable things of nature and art therein'.<sup>95</sup> In contrast, Lord does not even mention the Gopi *talao* (tank) described by virtually every other seventeenth-century writer who visited Surat.<sup>96</sup> We cannot therefore agree with Jyotsna Singh that Lord 'reinforces the generic expectations of the standard travel record, namely the discovery of marvels and curiosities'.<sup>97</sup> Lord's work is not then to be placed in the genre of travel literature, except in its very widest sense. Perhaps the best way of indicating how different Lord's work is from that of contemporary travel writing is by comparing it with the account of the Banians we find in Farewell's *An East-India Colation*, published three years after Lord's work:

Our first journey or place of rest from *Surat*, was *Baroch* ... From hence within a day or two wee set forth, and by slow journies (as before) came to *Brodera*, a dryer place (by a great River) but the greater Citie, and all a plaine and pleasant Country (*Baroch* especially) for Orchards, Tankes or Pondes, verie spacious, and artificially made, (in forme, for worke and workemanshippe not unlike our Bathes) for generall use and uses; Tombes, and Piramides many in open Fields (and private Gardens) about which are to be seene certaine Penitentiaries, or votaries (they say) but Lunatickes and men (I thinke) really possess with Devils, as in the Gospell is mentioned; theyr bodies naked, cut, and lanced with knives, or stones, staring and stalking, to and fro, no lesse wofull than dreadfull to behold; as was also the sight of a Pagot, or a Cell of devotion descending into a Vault under ground, where (being desirous of discoveries) wee saw an ugly Idoll against a

<sup>95</sup> Edward Terry, *A Relation of a Voyage to the Easterne India*. In Purchas 1905, IX: 13.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, Della Valle 1892, I: 34; Roe 1899: 78, 112; Fryer 1909, I: 261. Further references are given in Gokhale 1979: 18–19.

<sup>97</sup> Singh 1996: 21. Regarding the 'curiosities' described by European travellers, it should be remembered that for Europeans of the seventeenth-century 'the word "curious" had little of the sense of merely attention-arousing or prying associated with the word in twentieth-century usage. Rather, the word was used in a sense closer to the Latin adjective *curiosus* which referred to painstaking accuracy, attention to detail and skillful enquiry.' Mungello 1985: 13–14.

wall, representing (it seemes) theyr God, or theyr feare, but a plaine Devill as wee call it, in like forme paynted or graven, whom a certaine Sect of *Banians* doe worship, whereof there are many Sects, but of this no more.<sup>98</sup>

Lord's account of Indian *religions* further contradicts Stietenron's claim that European writers were trapped by the 'preconceived notion that it was *one* religion they were dealing with'.<sup>99</sup> He states that 'although the term "Hinduism" came into common use as late as the nineteenth century, the underlying concept of a unity of Indian religion was already in existence in the West before that religion was actually encountered by European missionaries and traders'.<sup>100</sup> While the 'concept of a unity of Indian religion' certainly predated the use of the term 'Hinduism', such a concept can be found in the works of those who 'actually encountered' Indian religion, as well as in other works. It is true that after Lord, writers such as Alexander Ross continue to divide the world into three or four different religions on the basis of a preconceived notion of 'Heathenism'. This, however, should alert us to the fact that we should not neglect to distinguish between compilers of vast collections, like Ross, and those, like Lord, who wrote about the religions on the basis of their own experience. For far from treating the religions of India as a single monolithic religion, Lord distinguishes different religions and groups within religions at every level. Most obviously we have the separation of 'the religion of the Banians' and 'the religion of the Persees'. Lord also mentions other types of religion; for example, he notes that before Zoroaster appeared, the Persians had 'a peculiar kind of worship. But the religion that is the subject of this book,<sup>101</sup> is a religion that was received in the reign of Gustasph, the son of Lorasph, their sixteenth king in succession, concerning the worship of fire'.<sup>102</sup> He further distinguishes the Jains as 'the more special Bramane', and identifies different groups among them. A close reading of Lord and subsequent works on Indian religions by European authors will show that the concepts which they used to refer to the different Indian religions did not simply emerge from 'preconceived notions' about religion and remain fixed, but rather were continuously refined on the basis of a growing knowledge of the Indian religions. Although he was aware of divisions among the Banians, Lord's understanding was not as far advanced as that of his Dutch contemporar-

<sup>98</sup> Farewell 1633: 25–27.

<sup>99</sup> Stietenron 1997: 37.

<sup>100</sup> Stietenron 1995: 72. It should be noted that Lord was neither a missionary, nor a trader, but rather a chaplain.

<sup>101</sup> The 'book' in question is *The Religion of the Persees*, not the *Display* as a whole. The religion that is the subject of the book is therefore Parsi religion, not 'Indian heathenism'.

<sup>102</sup> Lord 1999: 113.

ies Wollebrandt Geleynssen De Jongh (1594–1674) and especially Abraham Roger, who distinguishes sectarian Vaiṣṇavite, Śāivite, Śākta and Pāśupata groups from orthodox Smārtas and *nāstika* Cārvākas.

Peter Marshall argues that early British writers on Hinduism 'wrote with contemporary European controversies and their own religious preoccupations very much in mind. As Europeans have always tended to do, they created Hinduism in their own image.'<sup>103</sup> This is true of different writers only to different degrees. Lord does express his hope that the *Display* might 'beget in good Christians the greater detestation of these heresies'.<sup>104</sup> However, Firby notes that while Terry wrote in order to 'make this Nation ashamed of so many carriages of the Heathens'<sup>105</sup> and therefore 'ignored or mentioned only briefly those aspects [of the religions he described] which, by arousing contempt, might have lessened the impact of his criticisms of Christians',<sup>106</sup> one of the reasons that 'Lord is much the better scholar',<sup>107</sup> is that he did not edit his account in this way. Moreover, it is by no means self-evident that we should take expressions of 'detestation of these heresies' such as we find in Lord at face value. It may be that such claims appear in Lord and other writers because there was a need to justify devoting time and effort to the description of 'heathen' religion.<sup>108</sup> That such works required justification is evident from the reason given by August Hermann Francke for not publishing Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg's *Genealogie der Malabarischen Götter*. Francke wrote that publication was not to be thought of because the Missionaries were sent out to stamp out heathenism, not to spread heathenish nonsense in Europe.<sup>109</sup>

In Lord's work Firby detects paganopapism, a strategy that was to become much more widespread in the later seventeenth century: 'He was looking in non-Christian religions for analogies with Roman Catholic Christianity to denigrate the latter – to form a "rod" for the Papist's

<sup>103</sup> Marshall 1970: 43.

<sup>104</sup> Lord 1999: 147.

<sup>105</sup> Terry 1655: 452–455, cited in Firby 1988: 111.

<sup>106</sup> Firby 1988: 111.

<sup>107</sup> Firby 1988: 110.

<sup>108</sup> Similar claims appear in other early works on non-Christian religions. Alexander Ross justifies his *Pansebeia, or, A View of All Religions in the World* (1653) by stating that while truth may be 'comely in itself', it is 'yet more lovely, when compared to falsehood'. (Preface A3). Adrian Reland states that his intention in writing an account of Islam is that 'we may be able to attack it with sure Blows' and 'valid Reasonings' (Adrian Reland, *Of the Mahometan Religion* (London, 1712), cited in Pailin 1984: 6).

<sup>109</sup> 'A. H. Francke schrieb nach Trankebar zurück, einen Druck der Genealogie der Malabarischen Götter könne gar nicht gedacht werden, die Missionare seien ausgesandt das Heidenthum in Indien auszurotten, nicht aber den heidnischen Unsinn in Europa zu verbreiten.' (Germann 1867: vii).

back.<sup>110</sup> The conclusion to *The Religion of the Persees* does draw attention to some alleged parallels in the practices of the Parsis and 'the Papists'<sup>111</sup> and Lord may well have shared the anti-Papist views of Francis White, if indeed he was White's curate. But Lord's work is not written to a paganopapist thesis, or surely he would have made many more such comments.<sup>112</sup>

Likewise Firby's comment that Lord wrote in order to hold up 'both Hinduism and Zoroastrianism for condemnation',<sup>113</sup> can scarcely be said to give a balanced impression of his work. For while Lord does make some comments in his introductory and concluding sections which offer a justification of his work as apologetic, it is notable that, with the exception of some comments on the Banian law concerning their proscription of consumption of meat and wine, Lord elsewhere entirely refrains from criticism of each religion, preferring to 'leave it to the censure of them that read, what to think of it'.<sup>114</sup> Where he does offer criticism, Lord's strongest words are reserved for those elements of Banian and Parsi religion that seem to him to be contrary to reason.<sup>115</sup> Even in his 'conclusion to the reader', where Lord sums up Banian religion as 'not void of vain superstitions, and composed forgery', he shows a certain reluctance to indulge in the sort of denunciation of Hindu belief and practice that was to characterize some works that would be written on the subject in the next two and a half centuries:

I might leave the particulars to your censure, as well as to your reading, but since I have detected such gross opinions in this sect, I cannot let them pass without a rod thrust at their backs, as a deserved penance for their crime.<sup>116</sup>

Lord's policy of presenting 'the Banian religion, such as it is' and leaving censure to the reader, results in a book very different from those of some

<sup>110</sup> Firby 1988: 111. On paganopapism see Harrison 1990: 144–146.

<sup>111</sup> Lord 1999: 147.

<sup>112</sup> Firby suggests that the environment into which Lord was born, encouraged his anti-papist attitudes: 'Lord, born in 1570, only a few years after the death of Queen Mary ended the Marian persecution of Protestants, was educated and ordained in an age when national feeling, as well as religious, encouraged national sentiments.' (Firby, 1988: 111). The date 1570 is an error; Firby elsewhere accepts the date of 1563, in part because Lord's language seems somewhat antiquated, especially in comparison with Terry's (Firby, personal communication). There are, as we have seen, reasons for thinking that Lord was born much later than 1563. If Lord was close to the average age for chaplains on first appointment this would place his birth about thirty years later, in the 1590s, close to that of Terry and in a time in which anti-papist feeling was somewhat less strident.

<sup>113</sup> Firby 1988: 111.

<sup>114</sup> Lord 1999: 147. Thus we cannot agree with the judgement of Lach and Van Kley that Lord's work is 'polemical in intent and tone' (Lach and Van Kley 1993: 646).

<sup>115</sup> Raymond Schwab notes that in Lord's comments we find 'the common sense of an enlightened time – as if the age of Voltaire had already dawned' (Schwab 1984: 137–8).

<sup>116</sup> Lord 1999: 93.

of his contemporaries. This is perhaps most noticeable in the second edition of Thomas Herbert's voyage. Herbert's account of 'the Bannians' was drawn mostly from Lord, with a few of his own observations added. The most significant additions are critical comments:

In this place drawing your judgement to a remembrance of what is already related: wherein, we may perceive the delusion Sathan charmes them with, whose custome it has ever been to erect to himselfe worship and Idolatry in some things (to make 'em more authentically) cohering with the Story of our Bible, and in imitation of the Jewes: and that this *Cabala* or *Shaster* of the Bannians is a depraved Story of the Bible, either obtain'd by some Jewes, such time as *Solomon* traded to *Ophyr* (neere these parts) or from the father of lyes, who peradventure did dictate it to his servants.<sup>117</sup>

His observations on their rituals have a very different character from those we find in Lord. So Herbert writes:

above all, their horrid Idolatry to Pagods (or Images of deformed devils) is most observable: Placed in Chappels most commonly built under the Bannian Trees (or that which *Linschot* call'd *Arbor de Rays* or tree of roots, Sir *Wal. Ral.* improperly *Ficus Indicus*) a tree of such repute amongst 'em, that they hold it impiety to abuse it, either in breaking a branch or otherwise, but contrarily adorne it with Streamers of silk and ribbons of all colours. The Pagods are of sundry sorts and resemblances, in such shapes as Satan visibly appears unto them: ugly faced, long black haire, gogl'd eyes, wide mouth, a forked beard, hornes and stradling, mishapen and horrible, after the old filthy form of *Pan* and *Priapus*.<sup>118</sup>

Thus Lord's work should not be subsumed under the category of intra- or extra-Christian polemic, any more than under that of travel writing. Nor does Lord's work represent some form of proto-Orientalism. For while Lord mentions the interest and encouragement of Kerridge, and can therefore be said, like many later writers on Indian religion, to have benefited from the patronage of the East India Company, the Company had no territorial ambitions in India at the time Lord wrote, and his work cannot be said to have been produced in pursuit of such aims.<sup>119</sup> If any material purposes can be said to have motivated the work, it was Lord's personal ambitions, within either the Company or the Church, as is suggested by the letters of dedication and Lord's admission: 'The truth was, I was willing to earnest [Kerridge's] love to me by this injunction

<sup>117</sup> Herbert 1638: 43. Although Lord states that 'Satan leads those that are out of the pale of the Church, a round, in the maze of error and Gentilism' (Lord 1999: 93), here and elsewhere he makes it clear that he believes the Banians' religion to be 'a figment of their own devising' rather than an imitation of Judaism.

<sup>118</sup> Herbert 1638: 44.

<sup>119</sup> In his report to the Company in 1616 Thomas Roe advised: 'Lett this bee received as a rule that, if you will Profit, seek it at Sea, and in quiet trade; for without controversy it is an error to affect Garrisons and Land wars in India' (Roe 1899: 344).



[to write on the Banians]'.<sup>120</sup> While Lord's work inevitably bears the impress of its origin as the work of a seventeenth-century Christian chaplain to a European trading company, it nevertheless represents also the inauguration, at least in English, of a new genre of works whose primary purpose is the dissemination of information about Indian religions. Whatever other purposes it served, this should not be overlooked. Its contribution in this regard is two-fold, both as an account of a particular religious group, and as a step in the construction of 'Hinduism'. In Lord's work, 'the Banians, the ancient natives of India' are conflated with 'those that are most properly called Banians'. It has been argued that this latter group is most likely to be Vallabhi Nāgar Vāṇiās. The 'Bramanes', subdivided into 'the more common' and 'the more special' are treated as the priestly caste of this group. Lord's spurious claim to the authority of the 'Bramanes' for his work allows him to exploit the link between the Brahmanes and the 'Brachmans' (whom Europe knew, even if the Banians did not, to be the ancient Indians) to legitimize his conflation of the two senses of 'Banian'. The true value of the descriptive elements of Lord's work becomes apparent if we consider it as an account of the Vallabhi Nāgar Vāṇiās of Surat in the 1620s, rather than as an early attempt to give an account of 'Hinduism' more generally. While Lord did not have the concept of 'Hinduism' in any developed form, his discussion of particular Indian religions (rather than the 'heathenism of the Indies') nevertheless represents a crucial first step in the process which led to the construction of 'Hinduism' as a pan-Indian religion. The importance of the recognition of a plurality of Indian religions in writers such as Lord and Nobili *prior* to the construction of Hinduism as a pan-Indian religion has not been acknowledged in recent works on the history of the study of Indian religions,<sup>121</sup> which locate the appearance of a fully-fledged, preconceived idea of Hinduism as a pan-Indian religion in the late eighteenth century, and see nothing before this period except an equally preconceived idea, namely, 'heathenism'.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Lord 1999: 10.

<sup>121</sup> An exception is the work of Gita Dharampal-Frick, who has argued that 'by referring to the historical period prior to the establishment of British rule (i. e. pre-1757) a differently oriented representation of Indian reality may be gained.' Dharampal-Frick 1995: 85.

<sup>122</sup> See Stietencron 1997: 37, discussed above. Likewise Richard King writes that "'Hindu" in fact only came into provenance amongst Westerners in the eighteenth century. Previously, the predominant Christian perspective amongst Europeans classified Indian religion under the all-inclusive rubric of Heathenism.' (King 1999: 99). Not only does King's account fail to do justice to the complexity of early European accounts of Indian religions, but Hindu was in use by Europeans as a marker of religious identity as early as the sixteenth century (Lorenzen 1999: 640).