Introduction[1]

This book focuses on colonial South India, a field of research that has been neglected in the past. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it centres on the interrelated concepts of 'ritual', 'caste', and 'religion', which had a deep impact on cultural and religious change in colonial South Indian society. These concepts were embedded in wider-ranging discourses, often mirroring social conflicts and challenging political and religious authority. They provided, thus, dynamic resources for the negotiation of social, cultural and religious identities within colonial society. There is a particular focus on the analysis of printed media, which became established as a form of communication at the time, in English and in South Indian vernacular languages, and how they contributed to the transformation of identities.

This volume is divided into two parts. The first deals with studies of Tamil sources, the second with those of Telugu. It should be kept in mind, however, that there was an extensive discursive interaction across language borders, which can be seen in the caste-related articles, and that the Tamil and Telugu contexts both came under the same colonial administrative structure of the Madras Presidency. Andreas Nehring's article, on performance and performativity in the colonial discourse in South India, opens the Tamil section and, due to its span of theoretical reflections, provides a helpful introduction to the book as a whole. His reflections connect with the history of Saiva Siddhanta, which serves to introduce a section of articles related to this topic. Nehring begins with thoughts on culture, cultural turn, and postcolonial studies. He presents theoretical deliberations on representation and performance, which he illustrates and contextualizes with regard to the encounter between Saiva Siddhanta leaders and protestant missionaries in the first decade of the twentieth century. Nehring interprets the ritualized quotations of Bible

[1] This book project has its origin in a conference on "Ritual, Caste, and Colonial Discourse in South India", hosted by two research projects financed by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft – DFG): The SFB 619 A6, "The Discourse of Non-Brahmanical Rituals and Their Transformation Within the South Indian History of Religions Since the 18th Century", and the DFG-Project "Religion, Caste, and Nation: Discourses of Identity and Power in Telugu Journals of the Late 19th and Early 20th Century". The Symposium took place in Heidelberg in September 2008. We thank all those involved for making this conference possible and for the success it turned out to be.

verses in Saiva Siddhanta writings as a 'performance' that subverts hegemonic discourse.

Michael Bergunder follows with a contribution on J. M. Nallasvami Pillai, the most influential voice of Saiva Siddhanta in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He traces Nallasvami's particular way of argumentation, with an examination of one of his programmatic essays, and locates his views within the debates on Hinduism in colonial India of the time. Bergunder argues that framing the South Indian Saiva Siddhanta revival within the perspective of the later emerging Tamil nationalism has ignored its aspect of religious universalism, and he relates this argument to reflections on agency and the appropriation of Indian traditions within the colonial discourse.

Maraimalai Adigal, one of the key figures of the Tamil Saivite revivalist movement, stands in the centre of the article by Ravi Vaitheespara. Inspired and influenced by certain strands of European and missionary orientalist discourses, Maraimalai reimagined and renegotiated the notion of caste and caste hierarchy by authoring a counter narrative, which reclaimed caste as a Tamil creation. Vaitheespara sketches the political and socio-cultural developments of Maraimalai's time. He argues that Maraimalai's understanding and deployment of Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta signals a new understanding of Saiva practices as 'religion', and that the major thrust of his writings on caste was to fight and argue against its actual discriminatory practice in the contemporary Tamil context.

Peter Schalk analyses the thoughts and actions of Arumuga Navalar, one of the leading figures of Saiva Siddhanta among the Vellalars in nineteenth-century Jaffna, who connected concepts of Saiva Siddhanta with those of class, caste and ethnicity. Schalk takes a critical look at the different historiographical representations of Arumuga in the literature. He argues, against the established narrative, that Arumuga was trying to defend and sustain a continuous tradition of Saivism, based on the Agamas, against the attacks of Christians and against the rise of alternative elites among Tamil speakers, which he did by employing ritual formalism and traditionalism as indicators of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

Though almost every article in this book deals, in some measure, with ritual and caste, there are contributions that are more explicit in their engagement with these themes. For this reason, within the Tamil section, there are parts that come under the heading 'ritual' and 'caste', though this is, to some extent, an arbitrary arrangement, as these themes are closely interrelated. The section on rituals begins with the impact of the Anglican Mission in South India. Robert Caldwell's book on 'The Tinnevelly Shanars', written in 1849, is the theme around which Ulrike

Schröder's reflections revolve. By elaborating on the various contexts of this often misunderstood or ignored work, its contents, the local (Tamil) circumstances which led to its emergence, the ideological missionary frames, and, not least, the global colonial settings and processes, the author identifies the discourses in which Caldwell's work participates. Through this, Schröder interprets the missionary agency at the time and the impact it had on the identity formation of the Nadars / Shanars, as well as on the comparative study of religion in the nineteenth century.

Through the writings of Grace Stephens, the Anglo-Indian superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Zenana Mission from 1886–1919, Mary Hancock takes a look at the key topics of domesticity and femininity, associated with discourses on the zenana, in Methodist writing during the period between 1870 and 1920. She focuses on the material aspects of Christian subject formation and suggests that conversion be considered a process comprising material exchanges and embodied performances. These rely on, reproduce and rework codes of gender, race and class – this offers an important supplement to scholarship on the linguistic dimensions of conversion.

Torsten Tschacher writes about the changing ways of representing and imagining ritual among Tamil-speaking Muslims settled throughout Southeast Asia. His main sources of study are newspapers – he says that normative texts did not vanish, but they were complemented by a new vision of ritual, one that seems partly to be connected to this new type of media. Through poetry, participation in rituals was imagined, and individuals started playing a more important role in statements about them. The creation of public spheres probably also contributed to the representation of ritual, which witnessed a certain standardization of the parameters of ritual.

The section on caste begins with new material on a well-known topos. The agraharam, traditionally the exclusive living space of Brahmans in rural areas, is the theme of Chris Fuller's and Haripriya Narasimhan's article. They reflect on the transformation of social space and Brahman status in the Tamil context during colonial times and thereafter, and connect their insights with fieldwork carried out in Tippirajapuram, an agraharam close to the town of Kumbakonam.

By means of a close reading of the *Tamiḻaṉ*, a Tamil newspaper from the Madras area, Gnanasigamony Aloysius describes the vicissitudes of subaltern self-identification during the first third of the twentieth century. The contents of the journal reveal how subaltern groups in Tamilnadu tried to re-identify themselves both conceptually and concretely, in order to bring about a minimal congruence between power and the culture they represented, as Aloysius states. The targets of their efforts were, naturally

enough, the Brahmans, who represented the other pole of an imagined power scale. Aloysius draws a detailed picture of the successes and dilemmas of this process of identification, connecting it with various historical developments and political discourses.

In the article 'More Kshatriya than Thou', A. R. Venkatachalapathy traces and discusses an ideological conflict between two castes in early twentieth-century Tamilnadu. The Nadars and Vanniyars, though not physical neighbors, began to dispute each other's status in the emerging public sphere of the early twentieth century, with the help of the print media. Venkatachalapathy's main sources are journals, published at that time, especially *Vaṉṉikula mittiraṉ* and *Kṣattiriya mittiraṉ* from the Madras region. Relating this debate to various colonial contexts, the paper interprets it as closely connected to the extensive organization of systematic knowledge about the colonized by the British.

Caste, identity and journalism build a bridge to the Telugu part of this volume. Three divergent yet related articles shed light on the northern part of the Madras Presidency; they recall accounts about identities and social reform in colonial Andhra, and trace discourses of power in the contexts of the sources used. Heiko Frese describes a Telugu-English journal from the nineteenth century and takes a closer look at statements of identity given therein. *Satya saṃvardhani* was a bilingual monthly, published over a period of ten years in Rajahmundry during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Inspired and guided by Kandukuri Viresalingam, one of the leading intellectuals in the northern Madras Presidency of the late nineteenth century, it offered advice in religious and social matters. In this journal, written by Brahmans for Brahmans, clearly identifiable as pro-social reform, Brahman identities were challenged and negotiated in a new way, made possible by reform movements. Frese, who embeds his concept of identity in the philosophy of Laclau and Mouffe, attempts to reconstruct concepts of caste based on a study of its indigenous historical representation.

An anthology of essays by Kasibhatta Brahmayya Sastri (1863–1940), an orthodox Brahman scholar from coastal Andhra Pradesh, is the main source of Vakulabharanam Rajagopal's article on anti-reform discourse in Andhra. In this collection, *Upanyāsa payōnidhi*, Sastri gives his opinion on a number of topics concerning social reform, social reform movements and religion, positioning himself firmly among the traditionalists. Rajagopal arranges and classifies Sastri's views and ideas under a number of headings, reflecting on the cultural setting which influenced and was influenced by Sastri's work, and then connects this with a discussion on several aspects of nationalism.

It is the 'career' of a text in its cultural contexts that Velcheru Narayana Rao traces in his article about the *Sumati śatakamu*. Analysing its inner structures, its historical origins and its colonial reinterpretation, Narayana Rao shows how a guide to success in worldly life for upper-caste men became a general moral treatise, due to epistemological shifts in the colonial discourse. Using the *Sumati śatakamu* as an example, he demonstrates the effects of these epistemological shifts in the concepts of texts and authors in South India. In his concluding remarks, he suggests that legends about authors and texts cannot be dismissed as unhistorical, but that – in contrast to colonial practice and thinking – they are valuable sources in understanding the nature of an indigenous text-culture. This last chapter closes the book but, to the extent that Rao points beyond the self-imposed topical borders of this volume, it opens up possible new areas of concern and study. A variety of footholds then appears, from whence one could start another scholarly endeavour.

Note on transliteration

For ease of reading, in most cases where a word or term in a South Asian language is well-known in English – for example, Brahman – diacritical marks have not been used. Some words, less well-known in English and variously constructed in different South Asian languages, have also been transcribed without diacritics. When first mentioned, however, the ways of transcribing these words with diacritics in the different South Asian languages are provided. In order to facilitate reading, italics are not used. There remain in a few places, though, words that are rendered from the outset with diacritical marks and these are mostly italicised.