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Discourses of Empowerment: Missionary Orientalism in the Development of Dravidian Nationalism

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The mental eyes of everyone must be opened not only to see that the present miserable condition of their life has been due to the spell cast on them by Brahmin witchcraft, but also to realise the great truth common to all great religions, that is: all are the children of one Heavenly Father.

—Maraimalai Adigal (1925)

Edward Said's *Orientalism* continues to have a profound influence on recent conceptions of and scholarship on Asia and Africa. His thesis that European orientalism was more a discourse of European power over the Orient than a "veridic discourse about the Orient" (1978, 6) has gained many noted adherents (e.g., Viswanathan 1989; Inden 1990; Dirks 1987; Chatterjee 1986; Prakash 1990). While the work inspired by Said has yielded fresh insights, it has also tended to encourage a rather simplistic understanding of the European colonial encounter and the scholarly undertaking known as orientalism. In its crudest form, this analysis presents both the encounter and orientalism as nearly total hegemonic projects in which all classes of the colonized lost not only their self-determination but also, more importantly, their power to construct their own "true" identities or imagine their own "real" histories and nations, resulting in "errant" identities and "derivative" nationalisms (see Chatterjee 1986; also Nandy 1983). By foregrounding the interests and imperatives of the colonizers in the production of orientalist knowledge, this perspective serves to mask the

interests and complicity of local power groups, the earlier histories of their dominance, and their discourses of power in the production of that knowledge. Thus, such scholarship unwittingly, and perhaps ironically, paints a view of colonized regions as culturally and socially homogeneous, with little internal cultural or class struggles and contradictions, at least until the advent of European hegemony.

Recent revisionist scholarship has noted that this approach affords little agency to the colonized and, more importantly, fails to take into account the collusion between orientalist knowledge and power that existed within the "Orient" long before European colonialism (see especially Pollock 1993; Irschick 1994). This essay contributes to this revisionist interrogation of the Saidian perspective by analyzing the role that missionary orientalism played in the development of Dravidian nationalism in South India. Through its efforts to subvert the dominant school of orientalism in Hindu India, missionary orientalism affords a particularly illuminating lens through which to observe the dynamics of orientalist knowledge production on India. Far from being a hegemonic "colonialist imposition" upon a passive "Orient," European orientalism was dependent upon and responsive to the discourses of locally dominant groups and reflected many of their visions and interests. Similarly, far from being passive victims of orientalism, dominant groups in the colonies actively participated in the construction, maintenance, and propagation of orientalist knowledge (see also Schmitthenner 1991; Trautmann 1997). "Local" power dynamics and struggles, and not only colonial imperatives, must be taken seriously when looking at the production of cultural knowledge, whether that knowledge be European orientalism, "pre-British Orientalism" (Pollock 1993), or even postcolonial scholarship. This chapter contends that European orientalism must be viewed as a more complex, multifaceted, and contradictory set of discourses than the Saidian perspective has acknowledged.

Discovering "Dravidian"

Dravidian nationalism¹ began gaining momentum in South India at the beginning of the twentieth century in opposition to the dominant discourse of Indian nationalism. Its emergence affords a significant example not only of the complicity of missionary orientalism in the process of identity construction and nationalism in South India but, more importantly, of its role in empowering subordinate groups or communities there. Ideologically, Dravidian nationalism posited a parallel but counter discourse to the dominant "orientalist" construction of India as Aryan and Sanskritic. Its ideological origins can be traced not only to the historical tensions that existed between Sanskritic and

local vernacular cultures in South India but to the modern reconfigured articulation of these tensions inspired by missionary orientalism (Ravindiran 1996). The missionaries were impelled in this project by their belief that Brahmanism and the caste system posed the greatest obstacles to Christian conversion in South India. They drew both their inspiration and their justification for this project from earlier resistance to Brahmanical culture found in ancient and medieval Tamil literary works.

Missionary orientalism embraced and supported local vernacular languages and cultures of South India in opposition to those of Sanskrit, inspiring a significant body of scholarship that proposed the existence of an ancient and once "pure" Dravidian culture free from Brahmanism that needed to be recovered and reclaimed. Alleging that the Aryan/Sanskritic² culture of the Brahmans had corrupted this Dravidian culture, they called for the recovery of the latter. Many elements that now constitute Dravidian nationalist ideology derived from this anti-Brahman missionary orientalism.

There were at least two key "moments" in the evolution of Dravidian nationalist ideology. The first consisted of the efforts to present Tamil and other South Indian languages and speakers as having a genealogy distinct from those of the Indo-Aryan linguistic family and its speakers in India. It is exemplified in the pioneering philological work of Rev. Robert Caldwell (1814–91), *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* ([1856] 1974). Caldwell not only coined the word *Dravidian* to describe the languages and peoples of South India, but he also constructed, with the aid of the modern disciplines of philology, archaeology, and history, a genealogy for Dravidian languages, culture, and people marked by their opposition to their Aryan/Brahman counterparts. His work provided a significant "scientific" bulwark against the privileging of a Brahmanical vision of India prevalent in his time. It also provided the rising classes of non-Brahmans in South India with a significant ideological weapon against Brahman sociocultural and intellectual hegemony.³ His use of the term *Dravidian* came to have an enormous appeal for these people by providing a single category under which all the linguistically disparate non-Brahman caste groups in South India could unite (Sivathamby 1993, 28).

Caldwell's work had a phenomenal impact, for aside from laying the ideological foundation for Dravidian nationalism it opened up a whole field of scholarly inquiry into things "Dravidian." After Caldwell's achievement, others launched a search for a distinctly "Dravidian" religion and culture. This was the beginning of the second key moment in the evolution of Dravidian ideology. European scholar-administrators and missionaries were again in the forefront in raising the issue of a distinctly Dravidian religion in the orientalist scholar-

ship of the time. Although Caldwell had dismissed the religion of the Dravidians as “demonolatry” overlain with a thin veneer of Brahmanism, other European Christian missionaries and scholar-administrators searched for and found in the ancient Tamil and other vernacular religious and literary works evidence of an ethical and religious system that was in their eyes more compatible with the Christian tradition (Gover [1871] 1959).

The major impulse in much of the missionary support for a distinctly Dravidian religion, again, was their antipathy toward Brahmanism and what was considered to be its latest manifestation, neo-Vedantism. Neo-Vedantism by the late nineteenth century in South India had come to be considered by many Christian missionaries and Dravidian ideologues as the new liberal face of a resurgent Brahmanism in India. Working against the ascendancy of neo-Vedantism among English-educated Hindus that had been in part promoted by orientalist scholarship, some Christian missionary scholars working in South India sought to promote what they considered to be a distinctly Dravidian religious tradition.

This second key moment involved the identification and resurrection of a Dravidian religion, which came to be identified as Saiva Siddhanta.⁴ It is best exemplified in the writings of pioneer revivalists who forged an “inviolable” link between Saivite and Dravidian identity. In the writings of advocates such as the Protestant missionary George Pope, pioneer Tamil ideologues such as P. Sundaram Pillai, J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, and Maraimalai Adigal, Saiva Siddhanta became the original and “true” religion of the Dravidians. In fact, the Dravidian ideology derived much of its indigenous impetus and resonance from its association with a Saivite identity. As most of the early indigenous intellectuals in South India who embraced the Dravidian ideology were Tamil Saivites, the Dravidian movement began largely as an integral part of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement. These ideologues utilized the Christian missionary vision of a unique Dravidian language, culture, and religion to present Saiva Siddhanta as a distinctly Dravidian religion. In so doing, they clearly disrupted an earlier vision of a less racially defined or caste-bound Saiva Siddhanta tradition.

The First Key Moment: The Separation of Brahmans and Non-Brahmans

Although Caldwell was the first to give systematic articulation to Dravidian ideology, elements can be traced to an earlier missionary orientalism in South India, notably to the writings of European scholar-administrators associated with the “Madras school.”⁵ Early South Indian missionaries such as Abbé

Dubois (1816) had legitimized their staunch anti-Brahmanism by referring to evidence of anti-Brahmanism in the vernacular literary traditions of South India.⁶ Dubois had once observed: “The Hindoos may be divided into two classes—the imposters and the dupes. The latter include the bulk of the population of India; and the former is composed of the whole tribe of Brahmins” (cited in Hough 1824, 2). Scholar-administrators associated with the Madras school of orientalism such as Francis Whyte Ellis (d. 1819) and C. P. Brown (1798–1894) also laid much of the groundwork for Caldwell.⁷ In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that South Indian missionaries and European scholar-administrators associated with the Madras school played a significant role in the modern renaissance of South Indian vernacular languages and their associated cultural nationalisms in general.⁸

Robert Caldwell was one of the most dedicated scholar-missionaries of nineteenth-century South India (Stock 1899, 319). Hailing from a Scottish Presbyterian family of fairly modest means, he joined the London Missionary Society (LMS) at the age of nineteen. After obtaining his B.A. from the University of Glasgow, he sailed for Madras in 1837 as a missionary for the LMS. From 1837 until his death in 1891 he toiled as a missionary in South India, working among lower-caste Hindus. In 1841, he left the LMS and joined the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). It was also in that year that he moved to the southerly Tamil district of Tinnevely and began working amongst a caste known as the Shanars, a people whose traditional occupation as climbers of the palmyra tree gave them fairly low status in the caste hierarchy.

Aside from his regular duties as a missionary, Caldwell spent a great deal of time and effort as a scholar. In fact, much of his missionary zeal seems to have been directed into his research.⁹ Although there are hints of a Dravidian ideology in Caldwell’s earlier work on the Tinnevely Shanars (1850), it was through his *Comparative Grammar* that he systematically laid the foundation of Dravidian ideology. A painstaking and brilliant work, it reflects both Caldwell’s knowledge of a vast number of languages and his wide knowledge of history, archaeology, and ethnology. It was not so much the philological findings in the work that had such a profound impact as the way Caldwell interpreted and expressed them in the lengthy introduction and appendix. He not only managed to erect a racial, linguistic, and religio-cultural divide between the minority Brahman and majority non-Brahman (Dravidian) population of South India, but also proposed a systematic project for reclaiming and recovering an ancient and “pure” Dravidian language and culture.

Caldwell’s work was timely. Keenly aware of the “state of knowledge” about India at the time and sensitive to the great lacuna in that knowledge with

regard to South India, he sought to fill this gap in a way that was acutely sensitive and responsive to the deep fissures and contradictions in South Indian society and culture. His theory of a separate and independent racial, linguistic, and cultural origin for the non-Brahman South Indians, whom he had styled the Dravidian people, served to defend and celebrate Dravidian languages, peoples, and cultures at a time when the Aryan/Brahman language, people, and culture held center stage as the sole custodians of Indian culture.

Caldwell justified coining the word *Dravidian* to denote both the South Indian languages and the non-Brahman peoples as follows:

The word I have chosen is "Dravidian," a word which has already been used as a generic appellation of this family of tongues by the Sanskrit geographers. Properly speaking, the term "Dravida" denotes the Tamil country alone. . . . A Dravida is defined in the Sanskrit lexicons to be "a man of an outcaste tribe." . . . This name was doubtless applied by the Brahminical inhabitants of Northern India to the aborigines of the extreme South and is evidence of the low estimation in which they were originally held. ([1856] 1974, 26-27)

In coining the word *Dravidian*, Caldwell posed it in opposition to a northern Brahman identity and in the process highlighted the word's subaltern association, "a man of an outcaste tribe." By this very definition, Caldwell not only deftly established a divide between the Brahmins and the non-Brahman peoples of South India but also gave the term a subversive potential. He thus created the conceptual basis for a "Dravidian" cultural/religious identity with an accompanying history—and even for a Dravidian nation.

Caldwell's central argument was that Dravidian languages, peoples, and cultures had a genealogy independent of those of the Brahmins. This independence and difference followed, he argued, from the fact that the Dravidians were of a completely different racial stock, what he called a Scythian stock. Utilizing largely philological evidence, Caldwell asserted that the Dravidians were descendants of an ancient Scythian race from central and high Asia who had come to India long before the coming of the Indo-Aryans. This radical distinction underpinned Caldwell's celebration of Dravidian "identity." Like many of his contemporaries, he believed that the supposedly superior racial and intellectual ability of the Indo-Aryans made them responsible for the higher civilization of India. Nevertheless, in his view Dravidian languages and civilization were not as poor as previously considered by Western orientalist and Brahmins. Although the Dravidians may have obtained elements of their higher civilization from Brahman colonists, those benefits were far out-

weighed by the evil customs the Brahmins had brought with them. Writing of Dravidian civilization prior to the arrival of the Brahmins, Caldwell notes that the Dravidians "in many things were centuries behind the Brahmins whom they revered as instructors and obeyed as overseers: but if they had been left altogether to themselves, it is open to dispute whether they would not now be in a much better condition at least in point of morals than they are." He continues:

The mental culture and the higher civilization which they derived from the Brahmins, have, I fear, been more than counterbalanced by the fossilising caste rules, the unpractical pantheistic philosophy, and the cumbersome routine of inane ceremonies, which were introduced amongst them by the guides of their new social state. ([1856] 1974, 79)

As we shall see later, Caldwell's attribution to the Brahmins of the evils of the caste system, together with the pantheistic and ritualistic aspects of Hinduism, were avidly taken up by later Dravidian ideologues.

Caldwell contended that Dravidians did have elements of civilization that, though simple, were free of many of the evils of Brahmanism. The religion of the ancient Dravidians, he argued, was demonolatry or a type of shamanism much like the religious practices associated with the ancient Scythians. It was a practice that he believed was later integrated into Brahmanism with the arrival of the Brahmins in South India:

It is the peculiar policy of the Brahmins to render all the religious systems of India subservient to their purpose by making friends of them all. . . . Thus Brahminism yields and conquers, and hence, though the demon worship of Tinnevely is as far as possible repugnant to the genius of orthodox Hinduism . . . yet even it has received a place in the cunningly devised mosaic of the Brahmins, and the devils have got themselves regarded as abnormal developments of the gods. (1857, 41)

This kind of missionary critique of Brahmanical Hinduism later became popular with many Dravidian ideologues.

Although the ostensible aim of the *Comparative Grammar* was to present Caldwell's philological research on South Indian languages, he also utilized the work to comment on Dravidian origins, literature, history, peoples, religions, and even physical types. When asserting the independence and purity of Tamil, he made use of the opportunity to introduce the idea that Brahmanism was alien to the Dravidians:

Tamil can readily dispense with the greater part or the whole of its Sanskrit, and by dispensing with it rises to a purer and more refined style. . . . Of the entire number of words which are contained in this formula there is only one which could not be expressed with faultless propriety . . . in equivalent of pure Dravidian origin: that word is "graven image" or "idol!" Both word and thing are foreign to primitive Tamil usages and habits of thought; and were introduced into the Tamil country by the Brahmins, with the Puranic system of religion and the worship of idols. ([1856] 1974, 32–33)

Caldwell colored his construction of Dravidian civilization with anti-Brahman sentiments. He argued that "few Brahmins have written anything worthy of preservation" in Tamil. "The language has been cultivated and developed with immense zeal and success by native Tamilian Sudras; and the highest rank in Tamil literature which has been reached by a Brahmin is that of a commentator" ([1856] 1974, 31–33). Caldwell chose to foreground what appeared to be an insulting *varna* designation given to the powerful non-Brahman Sudra castes of South India by the classical Brahmanical legal texts:

The application of the term "Sudra," to the ancient Dravidian chieftains, soldiers, and cultivators may prove that the Brahmins, whilst pretending to do them an honour, treated them with contempt. . . . The Brahmins who came in peaceably, and obtained the kingdom by flatteries, may probably have persuaded the Dravidians, that in calling them Sudras, they were conferring upon them a title of honour. If so, their policy was perfectly successful. ([1856] 1974, 77)

Caldwell's writings on the "Dravidian physical type" indicate his sensitivity to the aspirations of the rising non-Brahman, English-educated classes of South India as well as his desire to appeal to their sensitivities. Caldwell started his section on the Dravidian physical type by quoting at length the description of Dravidian physical features by B. H. Hodgson: "A practised eye will distinguish at a glance between the Arian and Tamulian style of features and form." According to Hodgson: "In the Arian form there is height, symmetry, lightness and flexibility. . . . In the Tamulian form, on the contrary, there is less height, less symmetry, more dumpiness and flesh" (Caldwell [1856] 1974, 506–7). After arguing against this sort of unflattering description of Dravidian physical features, Caldwell asserted:

When we compare the physical type of cultivated, high caste Dravidians with that of the Brahmins, no essential difference . . . can be observed. In many instances the features of the high-caste Dravidian women are more delicately formed and more regular than those of Brahmin women themselves, whilst their complexions are at least equally fair. . . . The Dravidian type of head will even bear directly to be compared with the European. (510–11)

Caldwell further used both philological and ethnological arguments for considering even the lowest-ranked groups of South India such as the Paraiyars to be of the same category as the Dravidians since they were the descendants of the same original race. Only the Brahmins were excepted (490–501).

Caldwell's National History

Caldwell's lengthy introduction to the *Comparative Grammar* reads like a national history of the non-Brahman peoples of South India. In subchapters with titles such as "Pre-Aryan Civilization of the Dravidians," "Political and Social Relations of the Primitive Dravidians to the Pre-Aryan Inhabitants of Northern India," and "Relative Antiquity of Dravidian Literature," Caldwell repeatedly conveyed his underlying message that the ancient Dravidian culture and literary works were more "pure" when compared with the contemporary state of Tamil language, literature, and culture, which had been "corrupted" by Brahmanical culture. Caldwell was essentially proposing a mandate for the "Dravidians" to reclaim their languages and culture from the "pernicious" influences of Sanskrit and Brahmanism.

Caldwell even used the word *nationalism* to describe earlier periods in the Tamil region. In a section entitled "Priority of the Literary Cultivation of Tamil," he privileged the "Shen Tamil," or high Tamil, of ancient times over contemporary colloquial Tamil. Describing "Shen Tamil," he observed: "High Tamil contains less Sanskrit, not more, than the colloquial dialect. It affects purism and national independence; and its refinements are all *ab intra*" ([1856] 1974, 54). Caldwell throughout the work exalted earlier Tamil eras, such as the Jaina period, as times free of Sanskrit and Brahmanism when "nationalistic" currents were ascendent:

The period of the pre-dominance of the Jainas (a predominance in intellect and learning—rarely a predominance in political power) was the Augustan-age of Tamil literature, the period when the Madura College, a

celebrated literary association, flourished, and when the *Cural*, the *Chintamani*, and the classical vocabularies and grammars were written. Through the intense Tamilic nationalism of the adherents of this school, and their jealousy of Brahminical influence, the Sanskrit derivatives which are employed in their writings are very considerably altered. (56)

Caldwell's purpose in citing such examples was to convey an anti-Brahman "Tamilic nationalism." Caldwell credited "the Jainas of the old Pandiya country" with "a national and anti-Brahmanical feeling of peculiar strength; and it is chiefly to them that Tamil is indebted for its higher culture and its comparative independence from Sanskrit" (84). His practice of utilizing earlier Tamil history to justify a Dravidian revival that was anti-Brahman became the model followed by later Dravidian ideologues. This strategy became increasingly effective and popular as more and more ancient Tamil literary works were rediscovered and published in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Caldwell ended with a hopeful message for the Dravidians, which sounds much like a call to arms:

Now that native education has commenced to make real progress, and the advantages of European knowledge . . . are becoming known . . . it may be expected that the Dravidian mind will ere long be roused from its lethargy, and stimulated to enter upon a brighter career. If the national mind and heart were stirred to so great a degree a thousand years ago by the diffusion of Jainism . . . it is reasonable to expect still more important results from the propagation of the grand and soul-stirring truths of Christianity. . . . The hitherto uncultivated minds of the lower and far more numerous classes of the Hindu community, are now for the first time in history brought within the range of humanising and elevating influences. A virgin soil is now for the first time being ploughed . . . and in process of time we may reasonably expect to reap a rich crop of intellectual and moral results. (90)

The use of such terms as the *Dravidian mind* and the *national mind* and the references to the education of the "lower and far more numerous classes" suggest that Caldwell was writing with a certain expectant mandate for the "Dravidians."

Caldwell in his magnum opus thus managed to construct a genealogy for the non-Brahman peoples of South India that presented them as having an origin and identity different from those of the Brahmans. Moreover, he proposed to the Dravidians a mandate to recover their culture from the supposedly per-

nicious influence of Brahmans, Brahmanism, and Sanskritic culture—a people and culture that had been part of South Indian history and culture for at least a millennium. Caldwell's legacy to the rising non-Brahman, English-educated classes of South India was an orientalist foundation for their emerging identity as a nation.

The Second Key Moment: Linking Dravidian Ideology with Saiva Siddhanta

Caldwell's philological work had a tremendous impact on orientalist scholarship on South India. In the preface to the second edition of the *Comparative Grammar*, published in 1875, Caldwell provided a four-page list of books and articles "bearing directly or indirectly" on Dravidian philology that had appeared since the first edition ([1856] 1974, xxxvi–xl), evidence that a spate of ancient Tamil literary and religious works in translation were appearing in his wake. These rediscovered works were often presented in glowing terms and compared favorably with Sanskrit works and the best classical and religious writings in other languages. Many of the earliest endeavors were undertaken by missionaries and colonial officials (Gundert 1869; Gover [1871] 1959; Pope 1886, [1893] 1984). Most of these European exponents, apart from praising such works, also foregrounded them as the unique products of the Dravidian mind and civilization. Thus, by the late nineteenth century a solid scholarly foundation for a Tamil/Dravidian literary and cultural renaissance was firmly in place.

One of the earliest Tamil intellectuals to embrace and "indigenize" Dravidian ideology was P. Sundaram Pillai, who belonged to the higher non-Brahman Tamil/Saivite Vellalar caste. It was he, along with his missionary supporters and Saivite followers, who effected the second moment in the evolution of Dravidian ideology by forging an "inviolable link" between a Dravidian and a Saivite/Tamil identity. Their work played a crucial role in presenting Saivite religion—a religion strongly associated with the Tamils since at least the medieval period—as a uniquely Dravidian religion. But before we look at this indigenization of Dravidian ideology led by non-Brahman Tamils it would be instructive to look at the writings of a missionary orientalist who not only advocated Saiva Siddhanta as a Dravidian religion but played a significant role in entrenching and elaborating the Dravidian ideology proposed by Caldwell.

George Uglow Pope (1820–1907), also from Scotland, was one of the most prolific and influential missionary exponents of Tamil religious and literary works. He came to Madras as a Wesleyan missionary in 1839. Like Caldwell, Pope joined the SPG in 1841 and was assigned to work in the southerly rural Tamil district of Sawyerpuram. Pope, too, was a scholar-missionary who

quickly mastered the Tamil language. He was in South India around the same time as Caldwell and at least on one occasion in the 1840s cooperated with Caldwell in opposition to the anti-Christian activities of a Hindu revivalist organization (Stock 1899, 319). Caldwell in turn acknowledged the valuable help of Pope in the *Comparative Grammar* (Caldwell [1856] 1974, xiv).

Pope left India in 1882 and from 1885 held the post of professor of Tamil and Telugu at Oxford University. It was after his move to England that he began to undertake in earnest the work of popularizing and disseminating Tamil religious and literary works through translation, in particular those that strongly endorsed and espoused a Dravidian ideology. The intellectual roots of Pope's espousal of the Dravidian ideology can be traced to his edited translation of the French missionary Abbé Dubois's pioneering critical study of Hinduism, first published in 1816. Pope published his own version of Dubois's famous work in 1879 under the title *A Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India*. Dubois at the end of a long and largely fruitless career as a missionary had concluded that the prospect of converting the Hindus was bleak. He was particularly pessimistic regarding the conversion of higher castes and saw the conversion of the lowest or outcastes as the only prospect for Christianity. The resistance of the higher castes he blamed on resurgent intellectual Hinduism, which he termed "Brahminical prejudice" (Beauchamp 1906, xxv-xxvi).

Pope's edition of Dubois's work ends with a chapter entitled "On the Sect of the Jains and the Principal Differences between Them and the Brahmins." In this text, Dubois foregrounds the oppositional relationship between the Jaina religion and Brahmanism:

In the progress of time, the true religion [Jainism] was gradually abused in different essential points; and abominations, corruptions and superstitions of every kind have usurped its place. The Brahmins who gained the ascendant, swerved from all the old religious maxims . . . substituting in their place a monstrous combination in which there cannot be seen a trace of the primitive doctrine. ([1879] 1989, 394)

Dubois's description of Jainism and its corruption by Brahmanism reads much like the explanations offered by later Protestant missionaries and Dravidian ideologues regarding the corruption of the "Dravidian" languages and religion by Brahmins. It confirms that missionaries such as Caldwell and Pope were following an earlier tradition of critical missionary scholarship on Hinduism. The Jains had opposed the Brahminical innovations and so "preserved in purity the pristine religion of the country" (Pope 1879, 395). Dubois's writings on Jainism

and its anti-Brahmanism resembled Pope's own later advocacy of Saiva Siddhanta and the Tamil language in opposition to Brahmanism and Sanskrit.

In his preface to Dubois's work, one can see Pope's awareness of the complex developments within Hinduism. He was willing to consider certain schools within Hinduism as either similar to Christianity or having had an original Christian inspiration. His awareness of such complex developments itself anticipates and explains the kind of intervention he hoped to make within Hinduism. It explains his later active support for Saiva Siddhanta in opposition to Brahmanism and neo-Vedānta as the "real" religion of the Tamils. He also emphasized dialogue with the Hindus, arguing that it was the lack of real knowledge and intercourse with the Hindus that had prevented Christianity from making a greater impact:

I am not indeed disposed to consider the Hindus to be the apathetic, unchanging people they have often been represented to be. The career of Chaitanya in Bengal and of Nanak in Punjab . . . shew that the Hindus are not . . . by any means slow to take in new ideas and to attach themselves to new systems. We have found them apathetic, for we have not striven to interest and arouse them, and have not, in many cases, studied them or their books with sufficient care, to enable us to talk with them mind to mind. Between them and us there has been a great gulf fixed. How shall it be bridged over? (1879, xxiii)

Pope's reference to the reformist figures Chaitanya and Nanak reveals his admiration and support for this strand within Hinduism. Both had led movements that were anti-Brahminical and to some extent anticaste. Pope's later encouragement of Saiyite Bhakti literature and Saiva Siddhanta is understandable when seen in this light. Thus, as early as 1879 Pope believed that Christianity could make an impact through a deeper exploration and perhaps selective encouragement of certain strands within Hinduism. Pope ends his preface to Dubois's work with an earnest appeal, one that reveals not only his mission but his approach to reforming Tamil society:

To revive a decaying civilization is confessedly difficult; yet with all the resources of Western science, all the means and appliances of British wealth, power and influence and, above all, with a religion which breathes into all who receive it in sincerity . . . we ought to—we certainly must—effect [this revival] among the races of whose manners and customs this work gives so true and lively a picture. (1879, xxi)

Pope's first major intellectual and cultural intervention in the Tamil religio-cultural world was through the English translation of a popular Tamil ethical treatise, *The "Sacred" Kurral of Tiruvalluva-Nayanar*, first published in 1886. He began his introduction by observing that the fame of Tiruvalluvar, "the weaver of Mayilapur," "belongs to South India alone and to only one great race there. He is the venerated sage and lawgiver of the Tamil people," thereby linking the great *Kurral* to the "one great race," the Tamils. He also noted that "that which above all is wonderful about the *Kurral* is the fact that its author addresses himself, without regard to caste, peoples or beliefs, to the whole community of mankind; the fact that he formulates sovereign morality and absolute reason" (Pope 1886, i). Pope thus attributed the *Kurral's* broad appeal to all Tamils and its affinity with the ethical teachings of Christianity to its absence of caste ideology. With the same kind of logic, Pope proposed a nationalistic mandate for Tamils:

The Tamil race preserves many of its old virtues, and has the promise of a noble future. Their English friends, in teaching them all that the West has to impart, will find little to unteach in the moral lessons of the *Kurral* rightly understood. . . . So far, then, we may call this Tamil poet Christian. (xxi)

For Pope, the friends of the Tamils were the English, and it was the task of these English friends to guide the "Tamil race":

To understand [the] Tamil, to free him from mistaken glosses, to teach his works, to correct their teachings where it is misleading, and to supplement where it is defective, would seem to be the duty of all who are friends of the race that glories in the possession of this poetical masterpiece. (xxi)

Pope called on the English to support Dravidian civilization for what he regarded as its Christian elements and its difference from Brahmanical ideology. As he wrote in the introduction to the *Kurral*, "The truth seems to be that the Madura school of Tamil literature, now too full of Sanskrit influences, was supreme till the advent of the St. Thome poet" (iv). Sanskrit culture is thus the Other of Tamil literature, and Christianity is its ally. In this study, Pope also utilized the *Kurral* to promote the writing of "Pure Tamil," which meant ridding the language of Sanskrit words that had accreted over the years. The *Kurral*, he claimed, is "a well of Tamil undefiled" (xv-xvi).

Pope's next major work, published in 1893, was a translation with com-

mentary of a popular ancient Tamil classic, the *Naladi-Nannuru* (Four Hundred Quatrains). He declared that the work "reflects the thoughts and ideas of a great mass of the Tamil people, and indeed of the yeomanry of India . . . and is often called the *Vellalar-Vetham*," that is, the "Veda of the Cultivators of the Soil" (Pope [1893] 1984, viii). The Vellalars were the most powerful non-Brahman landholding caste of the Tamil region and were the first to embrace the Dravidian ideology. By choosing a work that was popular with them, Pope aimed to have an impact on these powerful non-Brahman castes. In his introduction, he drew a parallel between the work of the Christian missionaries for the Tamil language and that of the Jains. He also identified the Saivite tradition as the most recent guardian and repository of the Tamil language:

These verses, mainly but not, I think, exclusively of Jain origin, were doubtless expurgated by the Caivas [Saivites], under whose chief guardianship Tamil literature has since remained. . . . Perhaps the Jains fostered the vernaculars partly out of opposition to the Brahmins. Reformers and missionaries who generally address themselves to the intelligent middle classes, have often been the most assiduous students and promoters of the vulgar tongues. Quatrain 243 of the *Naladi* shows the feeling of hostility that existed between the North and the South: between Hindus and Jains. The great antiquity of Tamil which is the one worthy rival of Sanskrit, is abundantly plain. (x)

Here Pope carried the ideas of Dubois much further by identifying the Saivites as the "chief guardian(s)" of Tamil literature after the Jains. Indeed, Pope is best remembered for his vigorous support of Saiva Siddhanta as a uniquely Dravidian religion. He seems to have supported Saiva Siddhanta for the same reasons that he championed the Tamil ethical treatise, the *Tirukkural*. He saw in both an alternative religious philosophy to Brahmanism that had, in his mind at least, some earlier Christian inspiration.

Pope's most monumental undertaking was a translation of an important Saiva Siddhanta text, *The Tiruvacagam* (1900), in which he boldly asserted that Saiva Siddhanta was an exclusively Tamil religion:

The Caiva Siddhantha system is the most elaborate, influential, and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India. It is peculiarly the South-Indian, and Tamil, religion. . . . Caivism is the old prehistoric religion of South India, essentially existing from pre-Aryan times, and holds sway over the hearts of the Tamil people. . . . Its texts

books (probably its sources) exist in Tamil only. . . . (Classical Tamil is very little studied, yet this key alone can unlock the hearts of probably ten millions of the most intelligent and progressive of the Hindu races). (lxxiv)

Here Pope coupled his ardent endorsement of Saiva Siddhanta with his assertion that it was a "peculiarly South-Indian, and Tamil, religion." Interestingly, Pope shifted his earlier view, expressed in the preface to Dubois, that neo-Vedantism was the most influential religion in the Tamil region (Pope 1879, xxvii). Instead, he now endorsed Saiva Siddhanta, despite his knowledge that its revival had effectively curtailed the advance of Christianity in the neighboring Tamil region of Jaffna in present-day Sri Lanka.¹⁰

The ideological thrust of Pope's work on the *Tiruvacagam* becomes even more apparent in his call for a Tamil revival in what was essentially a religious work:

The speech of a dying people may, perhaps be allowed to die; but this cannot be said of the Tamil race. Heaven Forbid. Dead languages have great uses . . . yet, in many ways, the living tongues are better! One cannot tell what flowers may yet bloom, what fruits may yet ripen, on the hardy old trees. Let Tamilians cease to be ashamed of their vernacular! (1900, xii-xiii)

Pope's endorsement of Saiva Siddhanta as "a peculiarly Tamil religion" was implicated with his belief that the modern revival of the Tamil language and literature had much Christian inspiration and support. He provided a genealogy of this modern Tamil efflorescence in the introduction to *Tiruvacagam*:

There exists now much of what is called Christian Tamil, a dialect created by the Danish missionaries of Tranquebar, enriched by generations of Tanjore, German, and other missionaries; modified, purified, and refrigerated by the Swiss Rhenius and the very composite Tinnevely school; expanded and harmonized by Englishmen . . . and finally waiting now for the touch of some heaven-born genius among the Tamil community to make it as sweet and effective as any language on earth, living or dead. (xii-xiii)

He credited this renaissance to "that unique genius Beschi," de Nobilibus, and more recently "Ellis and Stokes,—with a multitude of others, such as Drew, Caldwell, and Percival, who advanced Tamil culture, [of whom] space forbids

me here to speak" (xii). In Pope's view, therefore, the Tamil revival was largely stimulated by the work of missionaries. At the end of his genealogy, he named "two recent works which seem to me to give promise of a veritable re-descent in more modern attire of the Tamil Saraswati [goddess of learning]," P. Sundaram Pillai's dramatic work *Manonmaniam*, and V. G. Suryanarayana Sastri's *Tani-pacura-togai* (Anthology of Solitary Songs). Both authors were English-educated Tamils whose writings reflected the spirit and impact of missionary writers such as Caldwell and Pope. A friend of Pope's, Sundaram Pillai, as we shall see next, was the first Tamil intellectual to embrace and expound much of Caldwell and Pope's Dravidian ideology. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870-1903), affectionately called "Dravidian Sastri," was the head Tamil pandit at Madras Christian College and a close friend of the great evangelist and principal of the college, Rev. William Miller. Sastri was an ardent Tamil revivalist and perhaps the first Tamil to initiate the practice of writing "pure Tamil" in the modern period.

The Indigenization of Dravidian Ideology

The men who came forward to embrace and "indigenize" Dravidian ideology were drawn predominantly from an English-educated, higher non-Brahman, caste of Tamil/Saivites of southern India. They became the spokesmen of the Saivite revival movement, which was beginning to gather momentum in Tamil Nadu by the latter part of the nineteenth century. Ironically, the Tamil/Saivite revival had begun in neighboring Sri Lanka as a response to Christian missionary proselytization. Led by the numerically strong and dominant non-Brahman Vellalar caste in Sri Lanka, it soon stimulated a similar revival among the higher non-Brahman castes in Tamil Nadu. Unlike the case in Tamil Sri Lanka, where the main contender to Saivism was an aggressive Christianity, the non-Brahman Saivites in South India faced the additional threat of the ascendancy of neo-Vedantism and Vaishnavism, which reinforced Brahman hegemony in South India. Their adoption of an anti-Brahman ideology therefore served not only to reclaim their sociopolitical power and position but to undermine the power and appeal of the predominantly Brahman advocates of neo-Vedanta and Vaishnavism in South India.

Prior to this modern Saivite revival, Tamil elites, both Brahmans and non-Brahmans, were intimately involved in the propagation and maintenance of Saiva Siddhanta. Saivites and their traditional religious institutions, the Saivite mutts, as the missionaries recognized, had served as the chief repositories of the Tamil language and literature from at least the medieval period. In addition to the Saivite Brahmans, the higher non-Brahman Tamils had a history of invest-

ment and participation in the Saiva Siddhanta school, which had begun with the Vellalar saint Meikanda Deva in the thirteenth century. The fact that there had been at least three powerful Saiva Siddhanta mutts in the Tamil region led exclusively by higher non-Brahman Tamil castes since the late-sixteenth century also attests to the elite Tamil involvement and investment in Saiva Siddhanta. These powerful centers of Saivite orthodoxy had earlier histories of contestations with the all-India Brahmanical dharmic norms—norms that were generally inimical to the “Sudra” leadership of Hindu religious life (Koppedrayar 1991). These contestations had not, however, sought to overturn Brahmanical norms (as the missionaries sought) as much as to justify the leadership of *sat sudra* or “clean Sudra” castes in Hindu religious institutions.

In addition, attempts had been made since the early medieval period to “Tamilize” the Saiva Siddhanta school of thought (Prentiss 1996), originally an all-India school (Davis 1991), by fusing its philosophy and practice with the earlier Bhakti traditions and histories of the Tamils, perhaps through the active participation of Tamils of the higher castes. Thus, the Saivite tradition had come to express a uniquely Tamil sense of culture and identity prior to the modern period, and it was this sense that revivalists of the late nineteenth century hoped to resurrect, with the help of missionary orientalism, to counter the rising hegemony of the Aryan/Brahmans in both the religio-cultural and the social spheres. Inspired by the Dravidian ideology of the missionaries, many non-Brahman Saiva Siddhanta revivalists claimed this tradition as a unique product of Dravidian civilization and denied the role that Brahmins and Sanskrit culture had played in its evolution. In the process, they were clearly disrupting not only an earlier vision and practice of a less “racially” or caste-defined Saiva Siddhanta tradition but also a Tamil tradition.

P. Sundaram Pillai

P. Sundaram Pillai (1855–97) was one of the earliest non-Brahman Tamil intellectuals to creatively embrace and extend Dravidian ideology. He, like many of the pioneer ideologues, belonged to the higher Tamil Vellalar caste. Born and raised in the region of Trivandrum, Sundaram Pillai received an excellent English education. He held both B.A. and M.A. degrees and taught history and philosophy at Maharaja’s College, Trivandrum (K. K. Pillai 1957). Although disregarded by most current scholarship on the Dravidian movement, Sundaram Pillai’s work needs to be located against the broader background of a Vellalar-led Saivite/Tamil revival originating in Sri Lanka, which was beginning to have

an impact on Tamil Nadu by the latter part of the century. Sundaram Pillai was an English-educated spokesman for this revivalism in Tamil Nadu.¹¹

One of the most influential of Sundaram Pillai’s writings was a research article first published in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* entitled “The Age of Tirujnana-Sambhanda” (1891–92).¹² The article presented in a subtle and scholarly way Sundaram Pillai’s adoption and translation of Dravidian ideology in the service of Tamil/Saivite nationalism. In the article, he established a close connection between Saivite religion and Tamil identity, subsuming both under a Dravidian identity. Although the essay ostensibly sought to assign greater antiquity to an important Tamil Saivite saint, Tirujnana-sambhanda, Sundaram Pillai had a much wider mandate, as he made explicit in the conclusion of the article, where he listed the “main purposes subserved by the paper”:

It gives a birds-eye view of the sacred Tamil literature of the Saivas. It controverts the opinion of Dr. Burnell with regard to the antiquity and value of Tamil literature. It proves the utterly unfounded nature of the hypothesis advocated by Dr. Caldwell and Mr. Nelson with regard to the age of Sambandha. An attempt is made to trace the religious history of South India. . . . Facts are deduced to prove with the help of the latest archeological researches that Sambhanda could not have lived in any period later than the early years of the seventh century. (1909, 60–61)

In short, Sundaram Pillai was attempting to write a brief history of the Tamil people and their Saivite religion from a Dravidian perspective. To this end, he expanded with a much greater sense of authority on the conclusions first offered by Caldwell on the antiquity and greatness of Dravidian civilization and culture. In presenting a bird’s-eye view of Tamil Saivite literature, Sundaram Pillai cleverly linked the Saivite and Dravidian identities:

By the Saiva community, I mean the Hindus that regard Siva as the head of the Hindu trinity. Saivas, in this sense, form the bulk of the population . . . in short, where ever Tamil is the prevailing tongue. . . . For all the Saivas, and particularly for the non-Brahmanical Tamil Saivas, Tirujnana-sambandha is the highest authority. . . . The Tamil Saivas have their own system of sacred literature, compiled and arranged so as to match the Vedas, Puranas, and Sastras in Sanskrit. (1–2)

Although not expressed in the openly anti-Brahman manner characteristic of later ideologues, he repeatedly emphasizes the Dravidian identity of the Tamils.

Thus, the saint Tirujnanasambhanda is depicted as a "Dravida child" (47). Noting that the saint's hymns were originally set to "Dravidian" music, Sundaram Pillai regrets the loss of the original tunes and, much in the style of Caldwell, credits this loss to the introduction of music brought "by the Aryan musicians of the north. Some of the old names are still retained; but it is difficult to believe that they denote, in the new system, the same old Dravidian melodies" (5).

The strength of Sundaram Pillai's arguments rests on the use he made of ancient Tamil literary sources. As one of the earliest and most effective indigenous pioneers of Tamil literary history, he argued against the prevailing scholarly consensus that there could have been any significant Tamil literary production before the ninth century and that Dravidian literature was but a poor imitation of the Aryan literature. On some issues in this regard, he parted company with the orientalis. Besides demonstrating some of the "erroneous deductions" that Caldwell had made regarding the age of Sambhanda, he criticized the views of orientalis that Tamil literature was a poor source of history (1909, 27–29). Rejecting Caldwell's view "that these literary records are devoid of historical implications," he argued that they did provide "most reliable data for reconstructing extinct societies and social conditions" (27–29). Not unlike Caldwell, however, Sundaram Pillai maintained that exclusive reliance on Sanskrit sources to the neglect of Tamil led to a distorted view of Indian history and civilization. In particular, the Dravidian contribution to Indian history and civilization was belittled. Noting that "South Indian chronology has yet to begin its existence," he decried the fact that scholars did not yet have "a single important date in the ancient history of the Dravidians ascertained" (9). Sundaram Pillai's mission was to stimulate and encourage research in the realm of Tamil studies in order to lend substance to their claims of a distinctive national identity.

Sundaram Pillai did not live to articulate more forcefully or in a more elaborate fashion the ideas that he formulated regarding Dravidian civilization and culture. However, there is ample evidence that he was the major indigenous source and inspiration for later Dravidian ideologues. Sundaram Pillai's letters toward the end of his life to one of these, Nallaswami Pillai, as well as the testaments of some of his associates, position Sundaram Pillai as the foremost "brain child" in the indigenization of a Dravidian ideology. In one of the letters, Sundaram Pillai wrote:

I regret I have not yet been able to formulate my theory for popular conviction; but am doing what I can to prepare the minds of gentleman like you from Ceylon to Bangalore for the full recognition of the truth when publicly announced. The Vellalas who form the flower of the Dravidian

race, have now so far forgotten their nationality as to habitually think and speak of themselves as Sudras. . . . In fact, to tell them that they are no more Sudras than Frenchmen and that the Aryan polity of castes was the cunningly forged fetters by which their earliest enemies—the Aryans of the North—bound their souls, which is worse than binding hands and feet, might sound too revolutionary a theory, though historically but a bare fact. I have converted privately several to this opinion among the leaders of the community here and there: and I must go on with the work, sometime more in the same noiseless fashion before I can trust myself to print.

He added, borrowing the ideas if not some of the very words of missionaries such as Caldwell and Pope, that "most of which is ignorantly called Aryan philosophy, Aryan civilization, is literally Dravidian or Tamilian at bottom." Similarly, "most of the great thinkers and great philosophers and even poets who pass for Aryan, are our men, as Europeans are now beginning to find out. Let the idea work in you and you will find enough of proof yourself. What a lamentable history is ours! It crushes my heart to think of it" (Subramania Mudaliar 1909, 2). Sundaram Pillai also claimed "the Saiva system of thought and worship" to be

peculiarly our own. With our usual complaisance we have surrendered our right to it, no less than to the temples which, you know, were originally constructed by us and administered entirely by our *Kurrukal* [non-Brahmin priests] and which it is now a pollution for them to enter and worship. . . . "Karayan Purredukup Pambu Kudiyirukum" [when the white ants make a nest the snake moves in and takes over] is a significant proverb applicable in many ways to the history of the Dravidian race. (3)

His closing comment on Dravidian failings reminds us that while Sundaram Pillai indigenized and extended ideas originally articulated by Caldwell and Pope, he chose to render their nuanced praise of Tamil/Dravidian civilization in a more celebratory, nationalist manner. He also dropped Caldwell's vision of the Dravidian religion as "Demonolatry overlain by a thin veneer of Brahminism," proposing in its place the Saivite religion as the original and quintessential religion of the Dravidians.

J. M. Nallaswami Pillai

The most important Tamil contributor to the Dravidian movement after Sundaram Pillai was J. M. Nallaswami Pillai (1864–1920). Like Sundaram Pillai, Nal-

laswami Pillai also hailed from a Tamil Vellalar family and received an excellent English education. After completing his B.A., he obtained a law degree and for much of the remainder of his life worked as a district judge. Nallaswami Pillai's central concern was the revival of Saiva Siddhanta, and his success in this endeavor has earned him credit as one of the greatest pioneer Saiva Siddhanta revivalists of the modern period. Perhaps more than Sundaram Pillai, Nallaswami Pillai was intimately associated with many of the traditional Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta institutions and figures in the Tamil region. Like Maraimalai Adigal after him, he was a staunch disciple of the fiery but "traditional" revivalist Somasundara Nayakar (1846–1901). Nayakar belonged to the Vanniar caste, which is significantly lower than the Vellalar, but he played a powerful role in influencing the nature of the Saiva Siddhanta revival in Tamil Nadu.

Nallaswami Pillai's revival of Saiva Siddhanta went hand in hand with his efforts to recover and revive the Tamil language and literary works. Though Nallaswami Pillai did not embrace Dravidian ideology as entirely or thoroughly as Sundaram Pillai, his work nevertheless served to link the revival of Tamil with the revival of Saiva Siddhanta, an achievement that contributed immensely to the strength and appeal of Dravidian ideology. Nallaswami Pillai's writings not only illustrate the pioneer nature of the Saiva Siddhanta revivalist project but also show how much the revival of Saiva Siddhanta was aided by Christian missionary writings.

Nallaswami Pillai made his reliance on orientalist scholarship explicit in the first issue of the journal he founded in 1887, in which he regrets as shameful "that we should be coached in our Veda and Vedanta by German Professors on the banks of the Rhine and the Ouse and that an American from a far off country should be the first translator of the foremost work in Tamil philosophy and that an old Oxford Professor should sit poring over the Tamil 'word' and render it into English verse." These men were "noble examples," but a grander project was in sight. His aim, he declared, was "no less than to transplant on Indian soil some of those activities in the field of Indian Religion, literature and history which are carried on in far off countries by Western savants and to stimulate indigenous talent to work and achieve a moderate share of success in these departments" (*Siddhanta Deepika*, June 1897, 14–15).

His first major work was an English translation with commentary of the central text of the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta school, *Sivajnana Botham*, in 1895. A previous translation by the Rev. H. R. Hoisington (1801–58), an American missionary attached to the Vattukottai seminary in Jaffna, had been published a half century earlier in 1854. Nallaswami Pillai's introduction to his own translation revealed the pioneering nature of his project as well as his debt to earlier missionary writings:

Very few Pandits could be found in South India who are able to expound the text [*Sivajnana Botham*] properly even now. . . . When I had fairly begun my translation, I learnt from a note in Trubner's *Sarva Darsana Sangraha* that a previous translation of this work existed and hunting out for this book, I chanced upon an old catalogue of Bishop Caldwell's books and I subsequently traced out the possession of Bishop Caldwell's book to Rev. J. Lazarus, B.A. of Madras who very courteously lent me the use of the book and to whom my best thanks are due. I have used the book to see that I do not go wrong in essential points and in the language of translation. (1895, vii–viii)

In the same preface, Nallaswami Pillai also registered his awareness of working in an intellectual climate that European missionaries had made more conducive to the study of Tamil religious writings, for he mentioned having come across recent publications by Pope, Rev. G. M. Cobban, and Sundaram Pillai.

In the introduction to his English translation of another important Saiva Siddhanta work, *Sivajana Siddhiyar* (1913), Nallaswami Pillai took the time to reflect more generally on the genealogy of his revivalist efforts, which he referred to as "personal details":

The original translation of *Sivajnana Botham* and *Siva Prakasam* by Rev. Hoisington and that of *Sivajnana Siddhiyar* by Dr. Graul was published more than forty or fifty years ago, but they did not seem to have attracted the attention of European and Indian scholars. About the time I commenced my work Rev. G. M. Cobban was familiarizing the Madras readers with his translations from *Saints Pattinattar*. . . . Dr. Pope's long promised *Tiruvacagam* only appeared in April 1900. And since then, the subject has received considerable attention at the hands of Christian missionaries like Rev. Mr. Goudie, Rev. Mr. Goodwill and Rev. Mr. Schomerus and their contributions appeared in the *Christian College Magazine*, *Harvest Field*, *Gospel Witness*, etc. (1913, ii–iii)

This testimony indicates that if pre-Caldwellian attempts to introduce Saiva Siddhanta in South India in the mid-nineteenth century had largely failed to arouse much interest among both "European and Indian scholars," it was toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, after the publication of Caldwell's magnum opus, that the revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil began to gain momentum in South India.

Nallaswami Pillai was a great friend and admirer of Pope. Pope had been a regular contributor to Nallaswami Pillai's Saiva Siddhanta revivalist journal

Siddhanta Deepika (Light of Truth) through which the latter attempted to attract greater attention to Pope's contributions, going so far as to serialize his life and work (Pope 1910, 1). Nallaswami Pillai announced Pope's death in his journal as "the passing away of this great Tamil scholar, missionary and Saint. . . . The loss to the Tamil land and literature is immense. He loved the Tamil people and their literature. He was the greatest living scholar, among the living or the dead. . . . If he was born in the old days," Nallaswami Pillai insisted, "he would have been catalogued with the 63 [Saivite] Saints. His service to the Saivite religion and Siddhanta Philosophy are incalculable as he was the first to bring its importance to the light of the English speaking world. May his soul rest in Sivam!" (Pope 1973, xx–xxiii).

Most of Nallaswami Pillai's writings first appeared in *Siddhanta Deepika*. Though the journal aimed principally at promoting the revival of Saiva Siddhanta, the project inevitably foregrounded many ancient Tamil religious and literary works. Nallaswami Pillai sought to highlight what he felt was the southern Hindu religious tradition, which had been overlooked by an exclusive reliance on North Indian sources:

The wonder however is why in spite of the Antiquity of Religion and Philosophy, and the vastness of its literature in Tamil and Sanskrit, it [Saiva Siddhanta] has attracted the attention of so few Oriental scholars. The reason is not far to seek. Most of the European scholars from Sir William Jones lived in northern India, and the school of philosophy that was brought to their notice was that of Sri Sankara and that of Saktism. . . . However the views of these Oriental scholars mainly influenced those in Europe so much so that in the course of time, Hinduism has been identified with the Vedanta of Sankara, in the European mind; and with the revival of learning in India itself, this has also acted on the Hindu mind. (1913, iv–vii)

Here, Nallaswami Pillai, apart from explaining how Saiva Siddhanta had come to be neglected, revealed his awareness that orientalist scholarship had "acted on the Hindu mind." Indian intellectuals appear to have had a kind of Foucauldian awareness of the power of orientalist writings to shape Indian perceptions of their own traditions and *Siddhanta Deepika* was launched in order to correct this one-sided and "erroneous" representation of Hinduism by paying greater attention to "the Languages and history of South India and the Dravidian Philosophy and religion," thereby supplying "a real and absolutely important want" (*Siddhanta Deepika*, June 1897). Prominent English-educated South Indian intellectuals wrote for the journal, as did Europeans, particularly Chris-

tian missionaries. Its contributors and contents reflected Nallaswami Pillai's own cultural hybridity and the complex genealogy of his Tamil Saiva Siddhanta revivalist efforts.¹³

Maraimalai Adigal

The missionary genealogy of the revivalist movement is most clear in the writings of Maraimalai Adigal (1876–1950), the man most popularly associated with Dravidian ideology. In his work the ideas that had been generated and shaped by figures such as Caldwell, Pope, Sundaram Pillai, and Nallaswami Pillai finally found expression in and for the Tamil intellectual and cultural milieu. Perhaps it is for this reason as well as for the boldness of his advocacy that Adigal is regarded as the central ideologue of the Dravidian movement. Unlike his predecessors, who wrote mainly for an English-reading or bilingual audience, Adigal wrote primarily in Tamil for a Tamil-reading audience.

Adigal's formal English education was more limited than that of Sundaram Pillai's or Nallaswami Pillai's. He completed only the fourth form at the Wesleyan Mission High School in his hometown of Nagapatinam. From a young age, however, he cultivated a sound knowledge of ancient Tamil literary, grammatical, and religious works from a local Tamil teacher. Many of his early patrons and friends were non-Brahman Saivites or Saiva Siddhanta revivalists. He also came under the powerful influence of his Saiva Siddhanta guru, Somasundara Nayakar, from an early age.¹⁴ Adigal's interest in Tamil literary and religious works and Dravidian ideology, and his opposition to the claims of the neo-Vedantic Hindu revival, were inspired first and foremost by his early exposure to and interest in Saiva Siddhanta.

Adigal's writings and lectures first appeared in *Janacagaram* (Ocean of Wisdom), the Tamil monthly journal he founded in 1902. The journal was one of the earliest to systematically propagate Saiva Siddhanta and Dravidian ideology. In the first issue, Adigal betrays his intellectual debt to Caldwell in an article entitled "Tamil Vadamoliyil Iruntu Pirantatama" (Is Tamil Derived from Sanskrit?). The article reads as both an introduction to the basic principles of comparative philology and a systematic argument for looking at Tamil and Sanskrit as languages having independent origins. Nowhere are the debts to philology, Caldwell, or the orientalist debates directly acknowledged. Furthermore, the classical or archaic Tamil prose style that Adigal employs in his writings served to mask how much he relied upon and utilized the methodologies and conclusions derived from European scholarship, giving one the impression of reading the work of a "traditional" Tamil pandit rather than the research and conclusions of an intellectually and culturally hybridized Tamil intellectual.

This talent for selectively and covertly borrowing from European scholarship while conveying his message in a language and idiom suitable for the Tamil literary world of the time gave Adigal's writing its unusual power and appeal.

What also distinguished Adigal's writings from those of his predecessors was a more forthright, aggressive, and less nuanced advocacy of Dravidian ideology. Writing mostly for a Tamil reading public seems to have freed Adigal from much of the critical and sober constraints of scholarship directed primarily toward an English reading public. In the preface to his Tamil work *Sinthanaik katturaikal* (Reflective Essays, [1908] 1980), Adigal was particularly frank:

Before the immigration of northern Brahmins . . . the Tamil people studied much, for their monarchs encouraged its learning in every way. . . . [There is an] entire absence from old Tamil literature of all mythical, romantic, libidinous, and indecent accounts about gods and sages which constitute an essential feature of Sanskrit works. . . . But from this sense of truth came a fall, the moment the Aryan Brahmins came from the north. . . . Since these Brahmins were very selfish, greedy and cunning, they did their best to keep the people in ignorance and illiteracy. . . . The people were forbidden to learn anything in general and Sanskrit in particular. (1980, 16)

Aside from the blatant condemnation of Brahmanical "imports" into Tamil culture, this passage also underlines Adigal's more far-reaching critique of Brahmanism, to which he attributed the "ignorance and illiteracy" of contemporary Tamil society. He warned in brazen terms:

If the limited number of Hindu people who call themselves Brahmins . . . go on most unreasonably claiming all high privileges exclusively to themselves, to the detriment of the teeming millions . . . certain it is as night follows day, that this comparatively insignificant number of people would be wiped out of existence in a few centuries. (1980, 19–20)

This kind of strong critique of Brahmanical civilization, which had its seeds in missionary orientalism, would be taken to new heights under the later Dravidian ideologue E. V. Ramaswami and the Rationalist Movement beginning in the 1930s.

In 1916, Adigal formally launched the "Pure Tamil" movement, which was aimed at eliminating Sanskrit from the Tamil language. Here again the debt to missionary inspiration is clear. In a passage dealing with this subject, Adigal

cited Caldwell and his assertion that Tamil can stand alone without the aid of Sanskrit. He then wrote:

This impartial and candid, comprehensive yet discriminating view of the Tamilian languages and their relative merit put forth long ago by a great European [Caldwell] ought to open—if it had not already opened the eyes of the misled Tamils to see the youthful glory, richness, and virility of their mother tongue and advance its culture on quite independent lines. (38–39)

Adigal also boldly articulated the vision of a Dravidian nation implicit in the work of Caldwell:

The Tamil, the Telugu, the Canarese, and the Malayalam people and other Dravidians living in the remotest parts of India, being the descendants of a single highly civilized ancestral race related to each other by the closest ties of blood and speech, should once more knit themselves together by eschewing the company of the Aryan intruder who harbours no goodwill towards them and should work harmoniously for promoting the common welfare of their several communities that live scattered all over India (39).

Adigal ended this passage with an almost Christian ethical maxim, that until the Aryan "treads the path of righteousness, until he learns to treat others with a kind and human heart, until he realizes the great benefit of living on a footing of equality with others and represses the feelings of selfishness, vanity, pride, and greediness, the company of an Aryan should be studiously avoided but not be hated" (39–40).

Like Pope and Sundaram Pillai, Adigal maintained that Saiva Siddhanta was a uniquely Dravidian religion. As he observed in one of his few English works, entitled *Saiva Siddhanta as a Form of Practical Knowledge*, "the religion and philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta, as has been pointed out by Dr. G. U. Pope, are, 'peculiarly South-Indian' and the Tamils who are the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, are alone the sole and strict adherents of this system from times immemorial" (Maraimalai Adigal 1940, 13). In the same work, Adigal wrote of the difficult problem of recovering this Saivite religion of the Dravidians, which later accretions of "Aryan falsehood" had "corrupted":

The modern Mayavada Vedanta and Vaishnavism which came to spread here after the eighth century A.D. achieved what their predecessors could not achieve, simply by fabricating fictitious, obscene and licentious

Puranic stories and thus catching the fancy of the Tamil people. This influx of the Aryan falsehood into Tamil led to the formation of a class of literature which is notorious for the most degraded type of Puranic religion. (1940, 6)

Writing of his efforts to recover the Saivite religion, he called for Tamils "to sift this mongrel mixture and disentangle the golden truths of Saiva religion. The task is no easier one and it cannot be further appreciated even by the Saivites whose mind is dyed deep in the Aryan myths" (Maraimalai Adigal 1957a, vii-viii).

Like many of his predecessors, Adigal blamed the Brahmans and the dominant school of orientalism for the neglect of Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta. "For this grievous ignorance of Tamil literature and the Saiva Siddhanta," he wrote, "it is the early contact of the western scholars with the Brahmins that is responsible" (1940, 47). However, what is especially interesting is his account of the process of reclamation and recovery of "Dravidian" culture, since it not only implicates the role of missionary orientalism but also his own unique role in that project:

The knowledge of Tamil and Tamil classics had to lie concealed, or rather unrecognized for centuries, even from the searching eye of the European intellect, until a few learned and very painstaking Christian missionaries such as Dr. Caldwell and Dr. G. U. Pope ventured to turn their serious attention to Tamil classics and devote their whole life time to a deep study and correct representation of their nature and contents. . . . I consider my Tamil works to be more important than the work I intend to do in English. For my Tamil brethren are mostly illiterate and even the very few who are literate are unenlightened. . . . Therefore, I had to apply myself most strenuously for more than forty years to the hard labour of bringing enlightenment to my country men. (Maraimalai Adigal 1940, 49-50)

By implicating both missionary orientalism and his own unique role in the project of reclaiming Dravidian civilization, Adigal was able to represent that project as moving beyond its orientalist foundations into an indigenous form.

Concluding Remarks

This reconstruction of the role of missionary orientalism in the creation of Dravidian nationalist ideology enables us to make a few observations regard-

ing the nature and role of orientalism in India, particularly as it pertained to South India. With reference to the work of Caldwell, one can observe that European orientalism played a powerful role in reconfiguring and rearticulating earlier tensions and contradictions within South Indian society in quite transformative ways. The ideas of figures such as Caldwell acquired their power and appeal not so much through radical transformations of the meanings of earlier categories but through strategic shifts in the meanings of key categories that appealed to emerging, potentially powerful groups. Figures like Caldwell and Pope were clearly cognizant of the internal dynamics and contradictions of South Indian society and culture and were sensitive to their emerging forces. Their work had the potential to disrupt and reorder previous sociocultural hierarchies and hegemonies in the South Indian "Hindu" order. This is particularly borne out by Dravidian nationalism's moderate success in disrupting the close alliance and cultural nexus between Brahmans and dominant non-Brahman groups such as the Vellalars, Nayars, and Reddis in southern India. It needs to be underlined, however, that this transformation was not accomplished by missionary orientalist through their "hegemonic" orientalism but rather by the dominant non-Brahmans who utilized the missionaries' ideas according to their own purposes and mandates. Yet by helping to empower local vernacular languages, religions, and cultures in South India the missionary orientalist laid the ideological basis for one of the most powerful critiques of the Hindu social order, its cultural practices, and its cosmology to appear in India in the modern period, leading to the anti-Brahmanical Rationalist Movement with its "Dravidian" preoccupations with Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.

Far from being passive victims of an orientalist discourse, local figures and communities played a decisive role in the construction, maintenance, and propagation of orientalist knowledge. And they did so for a nationalist purpose that, as Benedict Anderson (1991) has observed, both drew from and superseded earlier identities and senses of community based on religion, caste, and language. Just as Indian nationalism drew from a transformed Brahmanical vision of India, Dravidian nationalism derived its peculiar resonance by invoking non-Brahman identities and histories. And just as missionary orientalism was dependent for its success on the participation and support of dominant non-Brahman groups in South India, so too a similar dependence and dialectic existed between the dominant school of orientalism and elite Hindu castes and classes in North India. Seen from this perspective, the Saidian thesis masks an altogether different and long forgotten "local" intellectual conquest, explaining perhaps why Said's thesis continues to be so attractive to many of the scholarly in Asia and the West.

NOTES

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1. The term *Dravidian nationalism* is used here to include the anti-Brahman, anti-Aryan, anti-Sanskrit movement that began gaining momentum early in the twentieth century in South India, especially in the Tamil region. It led to the establishment of the various Dravidian political parties that have been in power in the state of Tamil Nadu since the 1960s. For a time, there were even calls for a separate Dravidian state.

2. For the sake of brevity, the term *Brahmanical ideology* is used herein instead of the more cumbersome *Aryan/Brahmanical/Sanskritic ideology* to describe the dominant neo-Hindu ideology that undergirds Indian nationalism and against which Dravidian nationalism was constructed.

3. South India, and more particularly the Tamil region, was an especially suitable site for such a religio-cultural intervention, for not only was the Brahman population fairly small but Brahmanism and Sanskritic culture had experienced substantial resistance in earlier times. The structural configuration of the system of social stratification in South India, with its unusual anomaly in the ranking of castes, was also favorable for such an intervention. The powerful landholding castes that were next in rank only to the Brahmans were assigned the fairly low and demeaning *varna* category of Sudra. Unlike the situation in North India, where the Hindu population had a fair distribution of the four *varna* groupings of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra, South India had only two categories, Brahman and Sudra. The dharma, or duty, of a Sudra according to the classical Sanskritic legal texts was one of menial work and service to the three higher *varnas*.

4. The Saiva Siddhanta tradition in the Tamil region can be traced at least to the medieval period, when the Saiva Siddhanta school of thought was consciously fused with an earlier Saivite Tamil Bhakti tradition. In contemporary Tamil usage, Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta have come to mean the same thing and thus are used in this essay interchangeably.

5. The Madras school was founded in the early decades of the nineteenth century in imitation of the dominant center of orientalist researchers in Calcutta. Its scholars were primarily associated with the College of Fort St. George in the city of Madras. The Madras scholars, more in tune with missionary orientalism, claimed and asserted a superior knowledge of South India in relation to the Calcutta school, which conformed to the dominant pre-British Hindu traditions and ideologies that privileged a Brahmanical vision of India (Pollock 1993). Trautmann (1997) notes that the Calcutta school eclipsed the older missionary orientalism that had reigned before.

6. Dubois in his *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* (Pope 1879), while speaking of the heterodox and anti-Brahman Telugu poet Vemana, distinguishes the literary tradition of the Brahmans from the non-Brahmans in South India:

Amongst the few Hindu works which are written in a free philosophical vein, and in which the Hindu religion and its customs are openly criticized, not one that I know of has been written by a Brahmin. All the works of this kind that I have seen

have emanated from authors who were not of this caste. Tiruvalluvar was a Pariah, Pattanattupillai and Agastya were both of the Vellala caste and their poems are written in Tamil. . . . One of the most famous is Vemana . . . of the Reddy caste. . . . It is to be noticed that the authors of all these satirical and revolutionary works belong to recent times. If in earlier days any enlightened writer published similar works, the Brahmans have taken care that not a trace of them shall remain. Nowadays they rage against the authors we have mentioned, and speak of their works with contempt. They cannot of course, succeed in destroying them, but they do everything in their power to prevent the reading of them.

7. Ellis was the first to demonstrate, in 1816, that the South Indian languages belonged to a family entirely different from the Indo-Aryan. C. P. Brown, son of a senior chaplain of the East India Company, played a key role in shaping the ideology of the modern Telugu renaissance and nationalism through his tireless efforts to restore a less Sanskritized Telugu. Brown was one of the first Europeans from Madras whom Caldwell met on his first voyage to India, and they remained life-long friends. Brown had a Christian antipathy toward Brahmanism and encouraged the non-Brahman elements of Telugu literature and culture (Schmitthenner 1991, 90).

8. The contributions of orientalist such as Rev. H. Gundert for Malayalam, C. P. Brown for Telugu, and Rev. F. Kittel for Kannada are striking examples.

9. Caldwell's most notable publications aside from his magnum opus on Dravidian grammar include *The Tinnevely Shanars* (1849), *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely* (1881), and *Records of the Early History of the Tinnevely Missions* (1881). He also played a key role in the revision of the Tamil Prayer Book and the Tamil Bible.

10. Pope referred to the antimissionary Saivite of Jaffna, Arumuga Navalar, in the same work as "a zealous reviver of modern times of the Caiva system." After giving Navalar's account of a story in a Tamil work, he opined: "Of course recognizing the spirit of this teaching, it may be allowed us to doubt whether such explanations would ever have been dreamt of but for Western teachings; and whether myths like these are the appropriate means for imparting this instruction." Pope added a footnote to the last comment: "I write quite unreservedly, knowing full well the courtesy and candour of my Caiva friends, who will not question my love for them, and unfeigned respect for their cherished convictions" (1900, lxiii-lxiv).

11. A notice of an early Saiva Siddhanta revivalist association in Tamil Nadu, the Saiva Siddhanta Sabha of Trichirappally, named Sundaram Pillai as its patron, indicating his involvement in the emerging Saivite revivalism (*Siddhanta Deepika*, June 1897, 95-96). The editor of the most important English journal devoted to the propagation of Saiva Siddhanta also acknowledged that it was founded "after a good deal of consultation with him" (*Siddhanta Deepika*, June 1897, 22).

12. It was republished later as "Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or the Age of Tirujnanasambhanda."

13. The complex genealogy of Nallaswami Pillai's revivalist efforts is captured in a passage he wrote a few years after founding his journal:

The nature of our work and its scope and latitude may be summed up in the brief epigram, "Siddhantam matter in the Siddhantham manner for the Siddhantins." . . . If this feverish wish of ours be realized, and our journal be instrumental in doing ever so little to rouse the dormant minds to their sense of duty and make them feel the benevolent duty of Saivism in the Universe, and the dethroning of the devil (Pasa) by the love of God (Patignana) then and not till then we will boldly be able to assert that we have in a measure achieved that task we originally imposed on ourselves through our desire to serve, aye, if need be, to be crucified for Saivism, Amen! (Balasubramaniam 1965, 38–39)

14. Although Nayakar played a central role in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in South India, he has received little scholarly attention. For an extended treatment of Nayakar's role see Ravindiran Vaitheespara 1999.

Decentering the "Middle Kingdom": The Problem of China in Korean Nationalist Thought, 1895–1910

Andre Schmid

In the fifteen years between the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) and the annexation of Korea into the Japanese empire (1910), the pace of Korea's integration into the world system accelerated dramatically. Much research has focused on how Korean elites, both inside and outside the state, sought to negotiate the terms of the nation's incorporation into this system. Concentrating largely on the various nationalist reform efforts, these works have shown how elites sought to strengthen and enrich the nation by reproducing the supposedly universal criteria of "civilization and enlightenment"—whether legal reform or the cutting of topknots, changes in political and military institutions, the installation of urban sewage systems, or the building of new schools.

These desiderata of "civilization" were not the only universal features of the nation, however. Though not so overtly heralded by nationalist reformers, so, too, was national particularity. For in the nationalist discourse of a world system populated by nations the very act of possessing uniqueness was universalized: every nation was to have a unique character. Korea's coerced incorporation into the world system stimulated various groups not only to pursue the new criteria of "civilization" but also to articulate within the universal form of the nation just what it was that made this particular nation Korean. Issues of identity were just as much a part of the same historical process of globalization as was the growing role of international trade in the domestic economy.

As part of this impulse to identify the nation, representations of China played a significant function. This in itself was nothing new. Throughout the more than five hundred years of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), the *yangban*