

**Caste as Maratha: Social Categories, Colonial Policy and
Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Maharashtra**

**Submitted to Indian Economic and Social History Review
September 2003**

Prachi Deshpande
Department of History
Colorado State University
prachi.deshpande@colostate.edu

Abstract

In light of recent scholarship emphasising the historicity of caste, this paper tracks this transformation of the category 'Maratha' from its pre-colonial register as a military ethos to that of a caste in the early twentieth century. Surveying the category's genealogy in non-Brahman literature and colonial ethnographic writings and policy, it argues that this caste-based register of 'Maratha' was shaped through a complex, interactive process both by colonial and Indian discourses. In doing so, the paper attempts to historicise 'Maratha' and emphasises the importance of locating the modern history of caste and its encounter with colonialism in regional/local contexts.

One of the striking features of the colonial encounter in western India and the transformation in vocabularies of community and political identity was a change in the understanding and usage of the category 'Maratha'. The term recalls a pre-colonial warrior heritage, embodied most strikingly in the figure of the equestrian – and now ubiquitous – Shivaji, and continues to signal, in popular parlance as well as scholarly literature, the historical polity that resisted Mughal expansion into the Deccan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its more dominant usage in modern Maharashtra, especially in the twentieth century, however, has been as the marker not of an entire polity, but of a specific social group: the Marathas (often referred to as 'Maratha-Kunbis' as well), who are today the politically dominant, upper caste group in the state. This dominance of the Maratha caste in postcolonial Maharashtra and its expression in terms of land control, political alliances and rural networks of power has been well documented by political scientists.¹ Although detailed historical studies of the non-Brahman movement have pointed to multiple imaginings of what and whom 'Maratha' represented over the colonial period, scholarship on the postcolonial period has often tended to project the category's current avatar unproblematically into the colonial and pre-colonial past. The historiographical implications of the transformation of a broad, historical category to a narrow, specific caste group have attracted less attention.

The changing meanings of 'Maratha', however, may be seen as an example of the historicity of social categories, especially caste categories, in modern South Asia. Recent interventions in the study of caste, despite various ideological differences of emphasis, have highlighted and documented its historicity and the impact of the colonial encounter in producing the practice and politics of caste identities as we know them today.² In particular, scholars have shown an increasing interest in exploring the influence of colonial enumeration and classification

practices from the later nineteenth century and the colonial representative framework (which relied heavily on such practices) on caste politics and identity. Perhaps the most valuable outcome of this shift from the ‘immutability’ of caste to its ‘modernity’ is the rejection of an over-generalised, uniform approach to caste based on its normative aspects and the acknowledgement of messy contradictions and geographical variations in the development and practice of caste identities.

In light of these recent interventions, this article tracks the transformation of the category ‘Maratha’ from its dominant pre-colonial register as a historical, military ethos to the bounded marker of a caste group. The principal focus here is on the discursive contestations that marked the content and meaning of this category in the early twentieth century and its growing importance in structures of colonial policy. The central argument the article makes is that the caste based register of ‘Maratha’ that came to dominate by the late colonial period was shaped through a complex, interactive process both by colonial policies of classification and representation, as well as Maharashtrian attempts to engage with new vocabularies of identity. It not only surveys the many changes the category underwent in the discourse of the non-Brahman movement but also tracks the category’s genealogy through a series of colonial ethnographic writings and official policy, thus pointing to the interpenetration of both discourses. In doing so, the article attempts to historicise the category Maratha and emphasises more broadly the importance of locating the modern history of caste and its encounter with colonialism in regional/local contexts.

1. ‘Maratha’ in pre-colonial and early colonial contexts

Details of the origins of the term ‘Maratha’ are still relatively unknown, but it has been argued that these lie in the long period of Muslim rule in the Deccan between the fourteenth and

seventeenth centuries, especially the states of Ahmednagar and Bijapur. 'Marathas' were initially Marathi-speaking units in the armies of these states and gradually came to identify, by Shivaji's time in the seventeenth century, the many local lineages and elites who had found avenues for social mobility through civil and military employment in these states. Many of these chieftains, who claimed Rajput ancestry and descent from a set of elite ninety-six Kshatriya families, called themselves 'Marathas', but the vast numbers of Kunbi cultivators of western India who served under them also belonged to 'Maratha' armies.³

Early British commentators such as James Grant Duff or John Malcolm used the term 'Mahratta' to encompass the entire polity that held sway over western and central India in the eighteenth century.⁴ Thomas Broughton's entertaining, if somewhat acerbic, 1813 *Letters from a Mahratta Camp* described at length the 'Mahratta legend of fear' and repeatedly referred to the Marathas as a 'race' and 'tribe' full of rather regrettable military practices and values: they were, according to him, 'deceitful, treacherous, narrow-minded, rapacious [sic] and notorious liars'.⁵ He understood them as being Hindus and found their riotous participation in Mohurrum ceremonies 'curious', but at another point also described Baboo Khan, a Muslim, as 'a Mahratta chief of some rank and consideration'.⁶ Broughton did recognise a general hierarchy among the Marathas, describing 'two grand classes' of Brahmans and 'all the inferior *castes* of the Hindoos, but composed chiefly of *Aheers* or shepherds, and *Koormees* or tillers of the earth.... The various *castes* of the second class are freer from religious prejudice, as to eating, than say any other Hindoos'.⁷

Richard Jenkins, Resident at the court of Nagpur and author of the 1827 *Report on the Territories of the Raja of Nagpore*, however, was more aware that 'Maratha' itself might be flexibly applied:

The term Mahratta, though applied by the other tribes to the inhabitants of Maharashtra in general, seems among the Mahrattas themselves to be limited to a few distinct classes only. The Jhari and Mahratta Kunbis are considered the genuine Mahrattas by all the other classes: besides these the term is more particularly applied to the numerous tribes and families from whom the most celebrated Mahratta leaders have sprung. The number of these families is...ninety-six.⁸

Jenkins' comment aside, we do not have substantial contemporary evidence to indicate just how central this social category was, the different spheres in which it might have been most strongly invoked, or the degree to which it corresponded with jati divisions in the pre-colonial period. We do have some evidence that it was relatively flexible and open to appropriation by humbler, but enterprising families through military service, marital alliance opportunities and negotiations with chiefs and rulers.⁹ The most celebrated example of the Maratha claim to Kshatriya status was, of course, Shivaji himself, whose Vedic coronation in 1674 took place in the face of local Brahman protests about his uncertain jati origins. Sumit Guha's richly detailed and thorough discussion of the opportunities for upward mobility (including, in some cases, Rajput status) afforded to groups such as the Kolis and Mavlis through military service and engagement with successive regimes in Western India attests to the fact that this was a widespread phenomenon.¹⁰ Recently, Philip Constable has also shown how Mahar soldiers participated in the pre-colonial military labour market through this open-ended, inclusive Maratha category signifying military *naukari*.¹¹

Some eighteenth century sources, however, suggest that this register of 'genuine' or 'most celebrated Mahrattas', with its attendant Kshatriya and Rajput ancestry claims might well have been part of the broader military Maratha ethos itself. Numerous Marathi *bakhars*

(chronicles) narrating important battles and family sagas were composed in this period; elsewhere I have argued that these texts not only commemorate important Maratha battles and warriors, but also articulate a code of honour and military-cultural values specific to Maratha warriors, often through an admixture of defiance and admiration for Rajput fighting skills and valour.¹² ‘Rajput’ and ‘Maratha’ in these narratives certainly appear as elite categories, but not as specific jati groups; instead, they are attributional terms embodying specific military values, with the former frequently serving as a category for emulation. As several works on the military labour market in medieval and early modern India have argued, Rajput/Kshatriya connections looked good on military resumés, something the Marathas were not unaware of;¹³ the repeated references in the *bakhar* narratives to correct behaviour, prestige, valour and Kshatriya dharma also underscored the fighting qualities and a code of honour for the top brass among the Maratha chiefs to celebrate and emulate, but not specifically a Maratha Kshatriya jati. For example, in the famous *Bhauasahebanchi bakhar*, one of the most riveting late eighteenth century accounts of events leading up to the Maratha defeat at Panipat in 1761, the chieftain Jayappa Shinde describes a skirmish between his forces and those of the Rajput chief Bijesing:

These are Marwadi Rajputs, incredibly valorous; their bodies dance around even if they are beheaded...they also have a lot of firepower. Our people are faint of heart to begin with, with steel weapons, tied to a tree they will uproot it to try and flee.... [The] courage [of the Marwari Hara Rajputs] was not surprising. But the Marathas did put up a brave show.... many Marathas were killed, but even so, they must be feel that blessed were the Rajput mothers that bore such sons.¹⁴

Of course, this military, flexible register of ‘Maratha’ sits uneasily with the increased Brahmanisation of the Maratha state under the Peshwas in the eighteenth century. As is well

known, the Peshwas vigorously sought to enforce jati boundaries and rules of jati discipline, especially relating to intermarriage, interdining and, most importantly, varna status claims.¹⁵ Condemning the Peshwas' relegation of all non-Brahman groups, from high-ranking officials to ordinary people, to a low Shudra ritual status was also a prominent feature of non-Brahman polemic in the colonial period. Kshatriya claims by Maratha families after the Peshwa debacle, thus, are often seen as proof of this policy during Peshwa rule itself, but we really know very little about how this Brahmanisation impacted the 'Maratha' category itself. It is remarkable that secondary works on the subject point to an overwhelming number of cases involving numerous Brahman jatis and ritual rules governing their mutual interaction and hierarchy, and an urgency to prevent groups such as the Prabhus and the Daivadnya Sonars (a goldsmith caste) from claiming higher varna status (Kayastha and Brahman respectively) and Vedic ritual.¹⁶ The one Maratha / Kshatriya case that appears is the successful insistence of Jijabai, queen of Kolhapur and the Shankaracharya of Karveer, on Vedic death rites for her husband Sambhaji, much to the Shankaracharya's irritation.¹⁷

Examining the Peshwas' jati policy in detail is beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth noting the ways in which further research could qualify the rather general picture of this Brahmanisation we currently have and reveal a more subtle understanding of the 'Maratha' label under the Peshwas. As Susan Bayly has argued, Brahmanisation across various successor states in the eighteenth century did not just mean a greater numbers of Brahmans in the administration, but also an urge and ability among various scribal and commercial groups to exploit opportunities in competing states through varna claims to Brahman, Kayastha or Vaishya status.¹⁸ Viewed in the context of the Peshwas' penchant for their own Chitpavan jati-fellows in political appointments as well as commercial linkages, it is worth exploring in greater detail

whether such trends encouraged the regime to apply jati laws as much towards monitoring Brahman groups and preventing claims to similar qualities and qualifications by scribal competitors such as the Prabhus, as towards keeping lower castes and those considered untouchable in their place in the varna hierarchy. Moreover, it is crucial to investigate further the success of these attempts in actually enforcing jati discipline and varna claims as well as the degree to which these were able to control both influential Maratha chiefs, as well as ordinary Maratha or Kunbi soliders and peasants. It is arguable that while such rules greatly increased the monitoring and exploitation of ordinary lower caste folk, those considered untouchable, as well as the Brahman groups (especially Brahman women, as Uma Chakravarti has shown),¹⁹ the military context and opportunities across the Maratha dominions in western and central India, especially outside the Peshwa's direct control, made the enforcing of Shudra status for Marathas, particularly the more influential ones, more difficult, thus keeping it open to appropriation and inclusion. A fascinating observation by Grant Duff in the opening pages of his work hints at how Peshwa concerns over jati might have had to do much more with emphasizing Brahman exclusivity within the broader 'Maratha' military fold than demarcating a Maratha Shudra jati:

...the name Mahratta is applicable in some degree to all [the inhabitants of Maharashtra], when spoken of in contradistinction to men of other countries, but amongst themselves a Mahratta Bramin will carefully distinguish himself from a Mahratta. That term, though extended to the Koonbees, or cultivators, is, in strictness, confined to the military families of the country, many of whom claim a doubtful, but not improbable descent from the Rajpoots.²⁰

To be a 'Maratha' in the pre-colonial period, then, was not to be part of an enumerable and bounded jati; depending on the context, the category could signify certain military values,

the fierce armies that struck terror in people's hearts, a political force in the subcontinent, or the elite of a broad military-cultural group. Broughton's account of the Maratha chiefs' celebrations and activities in the camps, Mohurrum and Holi, also suggests that expressing Hindu religious and caste difference in daily life was not central to being a Maratha, especially in a military environment.

In 1818, the British installed Pratapsinh, a descendant of Shivaji, as the nominal ruler at Satara to offset the recently deposed Peshwa and Brahman power in Pune. Company rule drastically reduced the military avenues for social mobility within western Indian society, and brought the Peshwai's attempts at policing jati discipline to an end. Both developments were to have profound consequences on the composition and understanding of the category 'Maratha'. The first couple of decades witnessed many such claims from various groups to higher varna status, both Kshatriya and Brahman, with rearguard action from Brahmans in Pune.²¹ The most famous of these, of course, was Pratapsinh's successful use of the changed power configurations to claim Kshatriya and Vedic ritual status for his family, the Bhosales, and those of other Maratha chiefs in 1830, following a decade-long conflict with Brahman opinion in Pune.

As Rosalind O'Hanlon has argued, the public debate that finally secured Kshatriya status for Pratapsinh, however, brought to the fore and legitimised as acceptable ritual and dining practices that were rather loosely defined and widely practiced in rural society (two of these mentioned are meat eating and eating out of a common plate); these criteria thus enabled not just influential landed chiefs but also many modest Kunbi families to put forward Kshatriya claims, despite Pratapsinh's attempts to limit them to a small, elite circle.²² From the mid-nineteenth century, contemporary Marathi observers commented on the increased tendency among upwardly mobile Kunbi groups, some newly urbanised, but also those benefiting from the recent

commercialisation of agriculture, to take up the sacred thread and the appellation of ‘Maratha’.²³ As we shall see below, colonial officials also began recording these ongoing changes from the 1870s onwards. It was, thus, in this assertion of higher jati status and ritual claims that the early colonial period witnessed attempts at social mobility; combined with the decline of military opportunities, these activities were significant in shifting the dominant martial register of ‘Maratha’ to that of a more bounded and exclusive community over the nineteenth century.

2. Early Non-Brahman Protest

The rise of low-caste protest against Brahman dominance in the later nineteenth century gave these activities a sharp political twist. The overwhelming dominance of Brahman groups in the new colonial order in Maharashtra and the preponderance of Brahmans in the nationalist middle classes have been well documented.²⁴ Another striking feature of the colonial encounter in this region was the strident presence in political and social discourses of narratives from the past, from the period that came to be known as ‘Maratha history’. Themes and symbols from this past served as a prime cultural resource for different social groups not only to express both identity and difference, but also to imagine a modern, Maharashtrian regional identity.²⁵ B.G. Tilak’s well-known invocation of Shivaji as a nationalist hero in the 1890s was one among many such uses of this history made by Brahman nationalists; in this narrative, the Maratha conflict with the Mughals and others was a patriotic one where all Marathi-speaking social groups worked together as Marathas. Despite disagreements within the broad Brahman nationalist position, these historical invocations were shot through with the idea of a natural caste hierarchy that placed Brahmans at the helm: the Brahman Peshwai served as the perfect example for the natural social leadership of Brahmans in Maharashtrian society.²⁶

The low-caste critique spearheaded by activists like Jotirao Phule focused, of course, on the overwhelming presence of Brahmans in every walk of life and the re-inscription of Brahman social and ritual power under the new colonial order through privileged access to western education and employment in the colonial government. Writers and activists from various non-Brahman groups, however, also invoked the Maratha past in their protests against Brahman dominance, laying bare the tacit assumptions of Brahman leadership in many nationalist narratives. They sought to root the political position of ‘non-Brahman’ in regional history and culture and put forward their own versions of Maharashtra’s history and traditions. In doing so they made the Maratha past a prime site for the articulation of caste conflict and identity. Shivaji’s own conflict with local Brahmans in the seventeenth century over his right to a Vedic coronation gave this protest a potent symbolic resource. In particular, the Peshwai’s attempts at enforcing jati difference came to neatly represent the worst of Brahman dominance. As O’Hanlon has shown, the attempts to give the category ‘Maratha’ a new meaning were central to these processes. Non-Brahman activists disagreed sharply among themselves over the content and meaning of the category, but were successful in constructing it as an explicitly political expression of non-Brahman protest and a social category that specifically excluded Brahmans. James Grant Duff, for instance, came under criticism for giving his monumental historical work the misleading title *History of the Mahrattas*, when it contained information about many groups like Brahmans who were not really Marathas.²⁷

One of the earliest such attempts to exclude Brahmans from the ‘Marathas’ category was by Narayan Meghaji Lokhande.²⁸ In an article titled ‘Are the Brahmans Marathas?’ in the *Din Bandhu* of 17 January 1886, Lokhande criticised the Governor of Bombay, Lord Harris for using ‘Maratha’ to denote all Marathi-speakers.²⁹

Maratha means those of the Kshatriya *varna*. In this Kshatriya *varna*, there are ninety six families, and many sub-families within these. The people who were born into these families are the true Marathas (Kshatriyas). Those who hold surnames from among these families can become Marathas; other people can never do so.... If, in this country of Maharashtra, the Brahmans can become Marathas, then even the Muslims and other people could call themselves Marathas. There is not to be found amongst those who call themselves Brahmans the similarity in manners and customs, deities and religion, and in families and lineage, which there is amongst all the Maratha people... We can never ever allow the Brahmans to take the liberty of calling themselves Marathas.³⁰

As is apparent from the above quotation, he acknowledged the elite nature of the Maratha category with its ninety-six families, but allowed for its extension to include families of other castes who had the same surnames and could, thereby, 'become' Marathas. The fact that many such surnames were common across rural caste groups made this a significant extension. He attempted, like Phule, to yoke the ongoing Sanskritising tendencies within rural society to a radical edge, but it is important to note that he did not clearly specify that all of rural society could belong to his Maratha community. Equally importantly, he made it clear that the Muslims had no place in it. Despite its affirmation of a core Maratha elite of ninety-six families, however, Lokhande's understanding of the category Maratha remained one of the most radical within non-Brahman ideology. In 1887, he formed the Maratha Aikyecchu Sabha (Society for Maratha Unity) to ensure that the demands of education made for Marathas was suitably broad based.³¹ Adroitly, he avoided mentioning specific caste groups and focused instead on wresting the legacy of Shivaji from Brahmans.

Other non-Brahmans were more explicit than Lokhande. For the Deccan Maratha Education Association (DMEA), one of the many non-Brahman organisations in the late nineteenth century, Maratha meant the cluster of elite Marathas and humbler Kunbi families linked through kinship; it excluded other agricultural castes like the Malis, who were very active in non-Brahman politics. The DMEA sought to claim the historical heritage of the Maratha struggle for this cluster, arguing that

the Maratha and Kunbi population form the muscle and bone of native society. Their helplessness and ignorance is a national disgrace... This condition of things is by no means an inevitable evil. At one time, not very distant in the past, they numbered among them some of the renowned leaders of the Maharashtrian armies, and many filled its ranks. In fact, these classes were the mainstay of the Maratha power in its palmy [sic] days.³²

Another organisation called ‘the Society for the Maratha caste for putting forward the Dharma of Kshatriyas and for the raising of funds for that Dharma’ invoked a military past to claim the category for an even more limited group of families:

The name Maratha has really only ever been given to those who were Kshatriyas. All other people were happy to accept the name of their trade as their caste-name; but the name of Maratha has come to be given permanently to all those who have kept their mastery of their own land and who take pride in putting their lives at stake to protect it. Our habit of using Maratha for our caste name is really a matter of great joy: it means that our very name proclaims that we are the people of this land of our birth.³³

O’Hanlon has argued, quite rightly, that it was precisely to avoid such Sanskritising tendencies and the resultant cleavages between various low-caste groups that the most creative

and farsighted of non-Brahman thinkers, Jotirao Phule, consciously avoided the category 'Maratha' in his imagination of a rural, non-Brahman solidarity. Phule used 'Shudra' as well as 'Kshatriya' (derived from *kshetra* or land, to denote aboriginal inhabitants of the land) to evoke this solidarity as well as a generalised sense of pride and bravery.³⁴ It is important to note, however, that Phule's ingenious interpretation of 'Kshatriya' too remained iconoclastic, even within the non-Brahman movement. As we shall see, successive polemicists preferred and advanced more conventional varna connotations of the term, which increasingly covered only a small, elite section of non-Brahmans.

3. 'Maratha' in the Early Twentieth Century

In this period, the non-Brahman movement took the contestation of historical narratives from the relatively sedate sphere of newspapers into the streets and the public arenas of the Ganpati and Shivaji festivals. Dressed up like Maratha soldiers in the *Chhatrapati mela*, non-Brahman youth penned ballads and songs that claimed 'Maratha' as a source of non-Brahman pride and heaped scorn on the Peshwas by holding them responsible for losing Maratha sovereignty to the British. Through strong, colourful language, these songs depicted Brahman attempts to be a part of the Maratha past as illegitimate:

Awaken O Marathas, this is a time of freedom, awaken to your glory!

Shiva-ba, who protected our faith is called Shudra by the beggar priests

And yet we stand silent with our heads bowed!...

Having fanned these flames the priesthood watches the fun

Here is a traitor and you feel nothing?

The beggar priests robbed you of freedom...

And brought the glory of Satara to dust

Shivaji is our source of joy and spirit
Come and prove to the world your grit
Remember Shiva-ba and embrace your courage
Sing for your freedom, Har Har Mahadev³⁵

At its peak in the early twentieth century, the non-Brahman movement came under the patronage of Chhatrapati Shahu, ruler of the princely state of Kolhapur and descendant of Shivaji, and underwent significant changes from the earlier days of Phule and Lokhande, in both discourse and social participation. Shahu, who began supporting the cause after a bitter clash in the 1890s with Tilak and conservative Brahman opinion over the issue of Vedic rituals for his family, provided much-needed financial as well as symbolic support. In the later years of his reign, he also campaigned actively for the removal of untouchability, opening hostels and schools, and providing jobs for non-Brahmans.³⁶

Shahu's position on caste was ambiguous: he championed an array of non-Brahman causes, which had their defiance of Brahman authority as the common denominator. His campaign against untouchability and support for Ambedkar, for instance, was matched with a strident insistence on Vedic Kshatriya rights for the elite Marathas, including the establishment of a Kshatriya priesthood for Marathas to do away with Brahmins altogether in ritual life. Despite generous financial support to the Satyashodhak Samaj, he refused to become a member, choosing the less radical and Vedas-friendly Arya Samaj instead.

Several scholars have noted that in his personal attitudes and approach to caste divisions, Shahu became increasingly radical with time and often annoyed some of his close elite Maratha associates.³⁷ Shahu's leadership did serve to bring diverse discontents against Brahman authority under one cause, but another broad consequence of his championing of the Vedokta cause and

other policies was that many newly urbanised and respectable Kunbi families were attracted to the non-Brahman movement.³⁸ Gail Omvedt is right in arguing that Shahu himself, especially in his later years, sought a gradualist, liberal middle ground between the conservative and radical extremes of the non-Brahman movement, but the overall effect of his policies was to ensure a predominance of elite Marathas, or well-off Kunbis seeking Maratha status, within non-Brahman politics. Benefiting from the cash crop boom in the early twentieth century, such upwardly mobile agricultural groups organised under the label 'Maratha' in a spate of Maratha caste conferences eagerly patronised by Kolhapur and other Maratha princely states like Gwalior and Baroda. In Vidarbha in particular, the non-Brahman leadership was characterised by the participation of large landed Deshmukhs, who were economically powerful, but were not generally accepted as being part of the older elite Maratha families entrenched in the Deccan; many of these strongly supported the elite Kshatriya classification of Marathas and lent support to such conferences. Several Patil Conferences, bringing together village headmen who were usually Marathas of some standing, were also held under the non-Brahman umbrella in the 1920s.³⁹

Non-Brahmans also entered the formal political arenas of legal councils, cooperative credit societies, local boards and municipal councils in the early twentieth century. Given the severely restricted property and education franchise for elections to any government body in both Bombay and the Central Provinces at this time (roughly only a meager nine and eight percent of the population in the provinces respectively),⁴⁰ both candidates and electors were drawn overwhelmingly from the richer peasantry.⁴¹ As Omvedt has shown in considerable detail, this increasingly elite dimension to the caste conferences in this period as well as in rural institutional power structures, therefore, heralded the dominance of well off, upwardly mobile Maratha-

Kunbis – increasingly organizing only as Marathas and claiming Kshatriya varna status – in the non-Brahman movement.⁴²

This changing face of the movement, in its approach to ‘Maratha’ but also in composition, served to blunt the radical edge Phule, Lokhande and Satyashodhak ideology had given non-Brahman protest, and resulted in an increased ambivalence towards questions of untouchability and lower-caste unity. Contestations between radical and conservative activists over the definition and appropriation of ‘Maratha’, however, continued. Activists from other caste groups, such as the radical Pune-based writer and editor Mukundrao Patil, continued to take the Satyashodhak line.⁴³ He bitterly criticised what he saw as an obsession with Kshatriya status, warning that it would one day bring to dust all the good work done by Phule’s Satyashodhak Samaj.⁴⁴ In his writings, he emphasised an inclusive ‘Maratha’ category. At the other, conservative, end was the Amravati-based prolific writer K.B. Deshmukh, who was only concerned with claiming ritual Kshatriya status for the Marathas and uninterested in its application to the wider non-Brahman community. Deshmukh’s immensely popular books on the history of the Marathas (*A History of the Maratha Kshatriyas*, *A New Sacred Thread for the Kshatriyas* and *The Kshatriyas and Vaishyas Face Off with the Brahmans*) focused on the upper-caste status, genealogies and surname lists of ‘legitimate’ Kshatriya families and analyses of Puranic texts for proof of this Kshatriya heritage. The rhetoric in such narratives was often indistinguishable from those of Brahman conservatives and Hindu nationalists in their defence of Vedic traditions and statements of upper-caste difference against lower caste groups and untouchables.⁴⁵

These conflicts and contradictions in non-Brahman discourse and the ambiguities underlying Maratha were often papered over in the eagerness, especially on the part of young

radicals in the 1920s such as Keshavrao Jedhe and the firebrand, short-lived Dinkarrao Javalkar to put up a united non-Brahman front against conservative Brahman ideologues.⁴⁶ Jedhe was a fervent supporter of temple entry struggles for those considered untouchable, especially of Ambedkar's famous 1927 Satyagraha at the village water tank at Mahad. At the same time, he also participated in the Maratha claim for Kshatriya status led by Chhatrapati Shahu and the latter's Kshatriya priesthood. Like many other young activists, he participated in all these activities under the broad ambit of 'non-Brahmanism', ignoring the implications of such contradictions for the inequalities within non-Brahman society itself. In doing so, he ended up ratifying the growing idea that 'Maratha' was not an all-inclusive marker for all of rural society, but the term for the peasant upper caste elite now dominant in the non-Brahman movement. Despite Jedhe's support to Ambedkar's satyagraha, therefore, the Mahad Satyagraha drew strong protest meetings from the local Marathas who considered readmission of their caste fellows 'polluted' by participating in the Satyagraha. Remarkably, Jedhe is reported as being present at this meeting as well.⁴⁷

Non-Brahman newspapers of the early twentieth century, such as Shripatrao Shinde's *Vijayi Maratha* and Bhagwantrao Palekar's *Jagruti*, also provide clues to the growing preponderance of an elite Maratha peasant group in non-Brahman discourse.⁴⁸ Recurrent advertisements and announcements in these newspapers suggest that it was primarily well off and educated Maratha and Maratha-Kunbi readers who patronised them. Matrimonial advertisements, for instance, were invariably from 'Maratha famil[ies] of high birth, seeking contacts with similar families'.⁴⁹ It is rarely that we see families from other lower caste groups advertising in these papers, or a readiness among Maratha families to make contact with them. Also prominent are advertisements for a wide range of religious and pamphlet literature

pertaining to Kshatriya ancestry – surname lists that one could consult to confirm such ancestry, guides to appropriate Vedic rituals, special Kshatriya almanacs for discerning Maratha families and so on. One such advertisement for an almanac, published by the Shree Shivaji Kshatriya Vedic School, announced that it was attractive not only because all the major non-Brahman leaders had certified it, but also because it had beautiful pictures of Shivaji and Shahu on the cover.⁵⁰ Histories of elite Maratha families were also prominent.

4. Colonial sociology and representation

Let us now consider the development and impact of colonial sociological practices on the transformation of the category ‘Maratha’. From the mid-nineteenth century, the development of the colonial state into a full-fledged bureaucratic apparatus heralded the construction of a much more varied and detailed body of official information about native society, history and culture through massive projects such as the census, gazetteers and land surveys. These were comprehensive compilations of information on regional social groups, customs and rituals, religious beliefs, and theories of their origins and history. This body of information was important not only because of its detailed treatment of caste and ritual practice, but also because it laid claim to a much higher standard of scientific accuracy and finality.

Caste became, in this bureaucratic project, a much-valued index of patterns of behaviour, an idea that was fueled not only by the colonial state’s desire to predict and anticipate its subject population’s actions, but also by the overwhelming influence of the theories of race and ethnology.⁵¹ Bureaucratic information of all kinds, therefore, provided break-ups of statistics by caste with some information about the caste itself. For example, Dr. H.V. Carter wrote enthusiastically in a report on leprosy in the Bombay presidency in the early 1870s:

The subject of caste is full of instruction to the antiquary and the ethnologist: it is a mine as yet unworked, but which holds information sufficient, by analysis of details, to explain many curious anomalies in the opinions and condition of the existing native races, if not to throw light on their proclivities.⁵²

Early colonial writings had had much to say about the military proclivities of the Marathas and the category remained a favourite subject of the colonial sociological pronouncements that multiplied in the late nineteenth century. For instance, the second edition of the *Imperial Gazetteer*, published in 1885, stated:

The Marathas have a distinct national individuality. They are an active, energetic race liable to religious enthusiasm and full of military ardour...the chief caste or tribe among them is the agricultural Kunbi... Shivaji himself belonged to this fighting class of the Kunbi peasantry... Altogether the Marathas acknowledge upwards of two hundred castes, including thirty-four septs [sic] of Brahmans.⁵³

Although the *Imperial Gazetteer* retained the earlier idea of the Marathas as a polity with common religious and martial attributes, the provincial gazetteers published throughout the 1880s told a different story. Concerned as they were with recording in painstaking detail the practice of custom and ritual, particularly those relating to social status and marriage, these gazetteers focused a great deal of attention on the idea of 'Maratha' as a marker of social/*jati* status. All of them also recorded the flexibility of the distinction between Marathas and Kunbis.

The Kolhapur volume recorded that

the martial classes among the Marathi-speaking middle classes called themselves Marathas. Some families have perhaps an unusually large strain of Northern or Rajput

blood, but as a class Marathas cannot be distinguished from Marathi-speaking Deccan Kunbis, with whom all eat and the poorer intermarry.⁵⁴

Other volumes for the districts of Poona, Satara, Ratnagiri, Berar and Nagpur also recorded the eagerness with which Kunbi families were taking to the sacred thread, and the connection that some families claimed with Rajput and Kshatriya ancestry.

As the results of field surveys and research, the analysis that the gazetteers summed up about the Marathas was shaped by the changing patterns of ritual and status claims that were taking place in the late nineteenth century. In these writings, Maratha emerged not as a term to be stretched to the entire Marathi-speaking population, but the marker of a specific caste group. When the new edition of the *Imperial Gazetteer* was published in 1908, it abandoned its earlier 'national' description of the Marathas and wrote that 'of the total population of the Deccan districts, thirty percent are Marathas, between whom intermarriage is permissible'.⁵⁵

This tension between the historical antecedents of the Marathas as a polity or a tribe and their contemporary avatar as a caste group remained a central feature of colonial sociological writings well into the twentieth century. This debate was influenced not only by the need to identify large numerical majorities in different regions for administrative reasons, but also by the larger ethnological debate on the Aryan racial presence in the subcontinent and its expression in different caste groups. H.H. Risley, the leading proponent of the racial view of caste origins, was convinced, on the basis of anthropometric measurements of people from the Deccan, that the Marathas were of Scythian origin. To him,

The physical type of the people of this region accords...well with this theory [of Scythian origin] while the arguments derived from language and religion do not seem to conflict with it...on this view the wide-ranging forays of the Marathas, their guerilla methods of

warfare, their unscrupulous dealings with friend and foe, their genius for intrigue and their consequent failure to build up an enduring dominion, might well be regarded as inherited from their Scythian ancestors.⁵⁶

In commenting on the 'character' of the Marathas, however, Risley was not referring to the Marathas as a caste; he was referring to the Marathi-speaking population as a whole.

R. E. Enthoven, the Superintendent of Ethnography for the Bombay presidency and the author of the *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, disagreed strongly with Risley's conclusion, on the grounds that it clashed strongly with the contemporary evidence of social hierarchy prevailing in the Deccan. The fact that a Chitpavan Brahman and a member of the untouchable Mahar caste could have the same cephalic index measurements was to Enthoven 'at least disconcerting' and he added that 'the Mahar would not be expected in such strange company'.⁵⁷ To Enthoven, the Marathas were possibly the descendants of an aboriginal tribe, which might then have mingled with some influences from the north. He wrote at length about the village guardian deities or *devaks* that were important to the Maratha caste rituals, concluding that these totems were evidence of a 'pre-Aryan element in the Marathas'. Kunbi itself, he argued, was an occupational term, and derived from the Sanskrit word for husbandman, *kutumbika*. As such, then, Marathas and Kunbis could not exactly be termed a tribe, but a group with mixed origins that developed into a caste. In explaining this development, Enthoven turned to history.

There is probably no substantial difference in origin between the landholding and warrior section, i.e. Marathas Proper, the cultivators, i.e. Maratha Kunbis and the numerous local occupational castes....the rise of the Maratha power in the 17th century induced the fighting classes...to claim for themselves Kshatriya rank and to discourage widow remarriage. It is chiefly on this ground that they claim to be superior to the Kunbis. But

by descent the Maratha appears to be one with the Maratha Kunbis and certain other occupational castes in the Deccan.⁵⁸

R.V. Russell, who supervised the compilation of the *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, also wrote at length about the Marathas' origins. According to him, the present incarnations of caste groups in Indian society were the result of its organisation into village communities. This was definitely the case with the Kunbis, who as a tribe might have settled fresh areas and slowly developed into a caste.⁵⁹ As for the Marathas, they were a caste 'of purely military origin constituted from the various castes of Maharashtra who adopted military service [under Shivaji], although some of the leading families may have had Rajputs for their ancestors.'⁶⁰

Various census reports published from the 1890s to the 1930s also grappled with the question of the Marathas' origins. *The Central Provinces Census Report* for 1891, expressing a great deal of frustration at the lack of any uniformity in answers to questions about caste groupings, finally decided to get rid of local divisions and classed the Marathas as a whole as a 'military tribe' under the section of Dominant Agricultural and Military Castes.⁶¹ The Bombay Census of 1901 referred to the Marathas as the 'descendants of Shivaji's warriors', a tribe who were then 'split asunder by virtue of social inequalities'.⁶² It classed them as a caste of a 'national' type, on the basis that they were of a lower degree of racial purity than tribal castes; their racial admixture was of a comparatively recent origin and the basis for their unity political and not racial.⁶³ Census reports for both these provinces followed the occupational classification of caste laid out by leading ethnographers such as John Nesfield and William Crooke as opposed to the racial formula of Herbert Risley. Racial origins, however, continued to haunt census

officials and their approach to caste, as suggested by a comment in the Central Provinces Census Report of 1931:

Caste is so mixed up with race that for ethnological purposes a continuous record is essential. To treat in a single class the Maratha Brahman and the Maria of Chanda, the Rajput and the Saonr of Saugor...or the Bairagi and Chamar of Chhatisgarh would be openly to flout science. ⁶⁴

The confusion among colonial ethnographers about the exact nature of 'Maratha' was clearly linked to the ongoing processes of status claims within rural society since the mid-nineteenth century. The claims of many Maratha families to Kshatriya and Rajput status brought to the fore the issue of so-called Aryan origins, which ethnographers like Enthoven and Russell, arguing from the perspective of village communities, totem deities and the like, were not willing to endorse. The appearance of pamphlets claiming to provide proof of these Rajput and Kshatriya origins through Puranic origin myths, surname lists and so on in the early twentieth century – K.B. Deshmukh's works discussed above are an excellent example – forced ethnographers to take note of these claims and their possible veracity. Enthoven gave considerable space to these narratives in his work, trying in vain to analyze them scientifically and logically. Despite his insistence on the non-Aryan origins of the caste group he finally concluded that at present fifty-four Maratha families (whose names he provided) could logically said to have legitimate Kshatriya and Rajput ancestry!⁶⁵

Colonial sociological materials, thus, differed widely over the meaning of 'Maratha', with extensive debate about its classification and nature as a tribe rooted in history or a caste group characterised by common practice. In both cases, it is necessary to reiterate, broader intellectual influences of race and ethnology were important in shaping colonial lines of enquiry,

but the debates and practices officials encountered on the ground, as it were, within Maharashtrian society, considerably muddled the end result of their investigations. On the one hand, the consistent invocation of Shivaji and his history in writings about the Marathas, particularly at the height of the non-Brahman movement, made it impossible to ignore a sense of tribal – or racial – unity that fit in neatly with the late nineteenth century understanding of political entities in racialised terms. On the other hand, changing ritual practices within Maratha-Kunbi groups, the foregrounding of Brahman exploitation in Non-Brahman discourse and the communitarian debates over who really belonged in the category Maratha made it imperative to take note of it in caste terms, in addition to the classificatory value that caste itself had gained in the process of ‘knowing’ Indian society.

Maharashtrian writers, both Brahman and non-Brahman, also creatively refashioned colonial points of view in putting forward their own social and political claims.⁶⁶ The pioneering nationalist historian V.K. Rajwade’s writings are a good example of Brahman statements of social leadership couched in scientific, historicist language.⁶⁷ Rajwade was clearly influenced, like many others of his generation, by the ongoing debates over caste and race in colonial ethnography and used the broad framework of Aryan settlement from the north into the Deccan to discuss the ancient social history of Maharashtra.⁶⁸ His application of the theory, however, posited the Brahmans as the only true preservers of the Aryan tradition. The Marathas appeared as the mixed products of contacts between inferior Kshatriya peoples who had tired of Buddhist ideas in the Gangetic plain and settled further south, and the aboriginal Naga peoples of the Deccan. These people were, he wrote, ‘totally dependent on the priesthood’, incapable of government and were conquered successively by various Kshatriya peoples of the north: the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Yadavas, etc. Some of these Kshatriya influences permeated into a few

elite families, among them Shivaji's Bhosale lineage, but the bulk of the Maratha people remained quite uncultured. 'With no proper deities, no definite religion, no alphabet or sense of history, these people were responsible for the downfall of kings and the godly Brahmins.'⁶⁹ Grant Duff had concluded that the lack of any architectural achievements by the Marathas was testimony to their cultural weakness as a nation. Rajwade, otherwise bitterly critical of Duff, used precisely this argument to criticise the Marathas, but as a caste. Underlying this criticism, of course, was his own agenda of refuting non-Brahman claims to being the genuine shapers and inheritors of Maharashtra's history and culture.

In refuting arguments such as those of Rajwade, non-Brahman writings also used sections of colonial discourses in putting forward their own interpretations of Maratha history or the Maratha caste group. Jotirao Phule's skillful use of the Aryan race debates to delegitimise Brahman leadership over Hindu society by depicting them as outsiders oppressing aboriginal peoples is well known. Other polemicists such as K.S. 'Prabodhankar' Thackeray, also a severe critic of James Grant Duff, nevertheless selectively borrowed from his *History of the Mahrattas* to highlight the picture of Brahmins as crafty and untrustworthy.⁷⁰ Wasudeo Lingoji Birze, librarian to the prince of Baroda and author of two popular books called *Who are the Marathas?* and *The Life of Kshatriyas* leaned heavily on Grant Duff, James Tod and Harry Acworth, the compiler of Marathi ballads, to bolster his claim of an ancient, upper caste Kshatriya genealogy for the Marathas and to contest Brahman arguments that no Kshatriyas remained in the Kaliyuga or the present time.⁷¹

Non-Brahman campaigners encouraged prosperous peasants to drop the Kunbi tag during local elections as well, as the case of the prosperous Tirole Kunbis-turned-Marathas of Khandesh demonstrates.⁷² There were also concerted efforts to influence the production of colonial

discourse on the Marathas, through campaigning before census operations. Many Maratha organisations within the non-Brahman movement attempted, through conferences and articles in various newspapers just before the census surveys in 1921 and 1931, to persuade the broader Kunbi population to return itself not as Kunbi but only as Maratha:

All literate Maratha people know that in the census times many illiterate villagers call their caste 'kulvadi' or 'kunbi' rather than 'Maratha'. Except for Leva Kunbis in Khandesh, all those who call themselves 'Kunbis' or 'kulvadis' in Maharashtra, Konkan, Berar etc. are of 'Maratha' caste. Only out of ignorance do people not call themselves 'Marathas'. Educated Marathas should clearly inform any ignorant Maratha... The days of the rule of wealth have gone and the day of the rule of numbers has come: we hope our educated Maratha society will remember this.⁷³

A couple of the census officers also remarked on the urgency of these attempts, which it appears, did pay off. The numbers of Kunbis all across the Marathi-speaking areas dropped significantly in the 1921 and 1931 Censuses, with notable increases in the numbers of people who now called themselves simply 'Maratha'.⁷⁴

Two important policies of the colonial state served to further consolidate the attempts of the elite non-Brahman sections to claim 'Maratha' as the marker of an upper-caste Kshatriya status. The first was the creation of political categories of representation through the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms put in place in 1921. Non-Brahman leaders demanded separate electorates for a series of non-Brahman castes, but the reforms granted instead seven reserved seats for a single category 'Marathas and Allied Castes'. Although O'Hanlon has pointed out that this umbrella category served as an official recognition of the common non-Brahman cause and the terminology *Marathe ani Itar* (Marathas and Others) that activists themselves applied, it is

important to note that this official category also highlighted, simultaneously, the very real and perceived differences that existed between non-Brahman castes and growing dominance of Marathas and Maratha-Kunbis within the non-Brahman fold.⁷⁵ Official comments on this dominance in progress reports on the reforms were matched by protests from representatives of the 'Allied castes' throughout the 1930s against Maratha control of these piecemeal constitutional and electoral benefits allotted by the colonial government.⁷⁶

The second important colonial policy was the delineation of 'Maratha' for purposes of recruitment into the army. The Maratha military past was clearly important in the identification of the Marathas as a 'martial race' and the reiteration of the martial overtones of this history in colonial sociological materials about the Marathas as a caste no doubt played a crucial role in earmarking them as fit for recruitment. Constable also points out that the Eden Commission's emphasis on localised recruitment, combined with the move towards greater social homogenisation of companies and battalions, increased the Bombay Army's reliance on local Marathas from the 1880s, but was matched by growing dissatisfaction with the fighting qualities of these recruits and doubts about their true martial attributes.⁷⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that the 1908 recruitment handbook issued by the army insisted on restricting recruitment only to 'genuine Marathas' and painstakingly detailed the 'pure' groups, the ones 'attempting to pass' and the means to detect any such 'deceit'.⁷⁸ The book also provided a list of ninety-six family names as a reliable guide to determine whether the person was a genuine Maratha and emphasised the benefits of cooks and water-carriers available to them as befitted their high-caste Hindu status.

A recruit on enlistment is asked his caste by the recruiter and again by the Recruiting Staff Officer. In the Konkan, a recruit when asked if he is a Maratha will say 'yes'. He

should then be asked whether he is a 'Rao' or a 'Naik'. If he says he is neither or tries to explain what he is, it may be assumed he is not a pure Maratha and he should be rejected. In the Dekhan, a man may say he is a Kunbi, a Maratha or both; he can be accepted. Those who claim to be only Marathas and not Kunbis are probably of better birth. If a man tries to explain he is neither by some other class of Maratha, he is not a Maratha at all and should be rejected.⁷⁹

Maratha recruitment was stepped up after World War I, after a series of commendable performances by the Maratha Light Infantry coincided with non-Brahman efforts to step up recruitment of young non-Brahman men into government jobs, political office and the army. The favourite grounds for recruitment were the strongholds of elite Maratha power, Satara and Kolhapur. The handbook's guidelines testified to the elasticity of the category but attempted to fix it as a narrow upper caste; actual recruitment practice once again, therefore, served the interests of elite Marathas and upwardly mobile Maratha-Kunbis. Various Maratha associations and non-Brahman newspapers throughout the early twentieth century promoted enthusiastically the attractions of the army, but according to Constable, Maratha military officers also showed an increased intolerance towards lower-caste and Dalit recruits in their ranks.⁸⁰ The All India Maratha Conference's statement, published in the *Jagruti* issue of 1 March 1919 was directed as much at the Maratha community as to the colonial government:

The Conference of course expresses its loyal support [to the government] and expresses delight about the victory in the recent war. In battlefields across the world, brave Maratha heroes displayed their dazzling Kshatriya qualities in this war. Along with this report, therefore, we put forward a request that the Marathas be allowed to play a greater role in

the army and display their military qualities, and that some educational institutions, especially a college be established to allow them to further develop these qualities.⁸¹

Constable has argued that the colonial martial race ideology and its insistence on a high-caste Maratha pedigree for recruitment was ‘less a hegemonic colonial strategy invented by the British colonial establishment for British social and military control of India, than colonial “accommodation” for strategic purposes of higher-caste Maratha claims to social exclusivity as kshatriyas.’⁸² Indeed, we do witness here the impact of non-Brahman debates over ‘Maratha’ on colonial ethnography and policy in general, but we also see the need for colonial discourse to develop a fixed formula that would transcend these bewildering claims. Moreover, the colonial state’s search for, and ability to fix, such formulas regarding caste in structures of recruitment and representation were instrumental in deciding which claims got consolidated and which ones lost out. In identifying the Maratha as a high-caste Kshatriya category that was different from other rural caste groups, the army recruitment policy as well as the reserved seats category ‘Marathas and others’ ended up consolidating the elite and exclusivist strand within non-Brahman discourse. By the 1930s, the radical, inclusive interpretations that had made ‘Maratha’ a new vision of community and a site for articulating a more popular alternative to Brahman nationalism had all but dissipated. In the formal political arena as well as in the public sphere, the idea that the Marathas were upper-caste Hindus, a Kshatriya caste group with a glorious military tradition, became dominant. Those who benefited the most from the crystallisation of this view in the formal political apparatus were rural elites best placed to successfully establish this pedigree.

In the 1930s, younger non-Brahmans, increasingly unhappy with the Non-Brahman party’s loyalism and influenced by socialist ideas, established links with Gandhian Congressmen

and entered nationalist politics.⁸³ Jedhe's efforts in particular led Congress membership to soar from 45,915 members in 1936 to 1,56,894 the next year.⁸⁴ Rural participation was certainly higher during Civil Disobedience and the Quit India movements than in the non-cooperation struggles of the 1920s; official daily and weekly reports from across Maharashtra suggest that this move of non-Brahmans towards nationalism was certainly crucial to the Congress' success in rural mobilisation.⁸⁵ The Congress tapped into the rural networks built by the non-Brahman movement in the 1920s: following Jedhe's move, to cite just one example, the party was able to capture an unprecedented 10 out of 11 district local boards in Bombay in 1935.⁸⁶

Y.B. Chavan records in his memoirs that the Congress' entry into these institutions through the nomination and election of non-Brahman Congressmen was crucial to the party's rural base; importantly, it paved the way for Maratha rural leaders to gradually displace older, Brahman Congressmen.⁸⁷ The non-Brahman movement, despite all its caste and economic differentiation, had always shown a greater inclination towards voicing rural issues and grievances than the urban, Brahman Congress; its pro-peasant rhetoric in this mass phase went a long way in giving the Congress party itself a rural face, and the Marathas an edge in the new nationalist politics. It was this new nationalist rural Maratha leadership and its networks built through non-Brahman activism that spearheaded the parallel government of Satara during the 1942 Quit India movement. The movement thrived on underground networks and overwhelming popular support from the local peasantry, with one of the largest concentration of Marathas.⁸⁸ It also propelled younger Maratha leaders such as Nana Patil and Chavan himself, with their experience of grassroots political activity, into prominence in the Congress party in the 1940s; this experience and contact with rural networks was crucial to the Maratha predominance in electoral politics following Independence.

5. Conclusions

In her analysis of the use of 'Maratha' by non-Brahman activists in the 1890s, Rosalind O'Hanlon has rightly remarked that this ambiguity over the category's content and meaning was a source of both strength and weakness. While it allowed non-Brahmans to exclusively claim the regional history and heritage of pride and struggle of the pre-colonial past and delegitimise Brahman claims to social leadership, its elite inflections made it difficult for *all* non-Brahman groups to lay equal claim to it.⁸⁹ Activists in the twentieth century such as Mukundrao Patil struggled to keep alive this radical edge to the category by using it to refer to all non-Brahman caste groups in their rhetoric, but with increasing difficulty. The Kshatriya claims within non-Brahman discourse together with the growing dominance of Maratha-Kunbis within the movement and in rural networks of power ensured that the radical possibilities the category had been invested with during the late nineteenth century lost out to exclusivist, upper-caste claims. Finally, the imperatives of colonial ethnography and its crystallisation in policies of enumeration and representation consolidated this emerging elite 'Maratha' dominance over rural society.

I have attempted in this article to track one example of the multiple ways in which social categories were formulated and debated in the colonial period. This overview of the discourses and policies surrounding the definition of the category 'Maratha' emphasises the importance of keeping regional histories and contexts in play when plotting the modern history of caste and caste identity. Recent scholarship on caste has been invaluable in historicising caste, but has resulted in a rather polarised debate over the degree of blame to be attached to colonialism for the central role that caste occupies in Indian social and political life today. An analysis of colonial discourse and official policy regarding 'Maratha' indicates that colonial sociology was not homogeneous, and that colonial attempts to understand the 'Maratha' category in all its

sociological, political and historical implications had a much more complex relationship with the ongoing debates within Maharashtrian society, both spheres influencing and significantly borrowing from each other. To both colonial observers as well as Maharashtrian writers, the specific pre-colonial history of Maharashtra, be it Shivaji's military adventures or the Peshwai's rigid Brahmanical strictures, played a crucial role in determining how the Marathas were to be understood, organised and represented: this underscores the importance of viewing these debates and policies in their appropriate regional setting.

Recognizing this two-way borrowing between colonial and Indian discourses is not to reduce the colonial state's tremendous power in setting the terms of the debate or in influencing the larger political and social environment within which Indian writers and activists themselves functioned. Indeed, as we have seen, colonial policies regarding electoral categories and military recruitment played a crucial role in consolidating changes taking place within Non-Brahman discourse. Instead, it is to highlight the complex interactive process through which caste categories were constructed, the selective and skillful use of colonial discourses by different groups of Indians to advance different social and political claims, the many ways in which these claims themselves influenced colonial categories of representation, and the need to consider regional particularities in locating this agency.

Notes and References

¹See, for instance, Anthony T. Carter, *Elite Politics in Rural India: Political Stratification and Political Alliances in Western Maharashtra*, London, New York, 1974; V. M. Sirsikar, *The Rural Elite in a Developing Society; a Study in Political Sociology*, New Delhi, 1970; Jayant Lele, *Elite Pluralism and Class Rule : Political Development in Maharashtra, India*, Toronto, Buffalo, 1981; Mary C. Carras, *The Dynamics of Indian Political Factions, a Study of District*

Councils in the State of Maharashtra, Cambridge Eng., 1972; Livi Rodrigues, *Rural Political Protest in Western India*, Delhi, New York, 1998. Rodrigues' work, in particular, focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but treats the 'Maratha-Kunbi' category as practically fixed.

² The most important works in this regard are Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi, 1987; Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, New York, 1999, and Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton, 2001.

³ Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas, 1600-1818*, Cambridge / New York, 1993, pp. 182-208.

⁴ J. P. Guha, ed. *James Grant Duff, History of the Mahrattas*, Two Volume Edition, New Delhi, 1971; Sir John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, 3rd ed, London, 1832.

⁵ Thomas Duer Broughton, *Letters Written in a Mahratta Camp During the Year 1809. Descriptive of the Characters, Manners, Domestic Habits, and Religious Ceremonies, of the Mahrattas*, London, 1977 [1813], p. 72.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71. Emphasis in original.

⁸ Richard Jenkins, *Report on the Territories of the Raja of Nagpore*, Nagpur, 1923, p. 19. I owe this reference to Sumit Guha.

⁹ Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India*, Cambridge / New York, 1985, pp. 15-23. An oft-quoted Marathi proverb captures this feature of upward mobility in rural society perfectly: *kunbi mazla, maratha zhala*, meaning, 'When a Kunbi prospers, he becomes a Maratha'. The anthropologist Iravati Karve's characterisation of the Maratha-Kunbi caste groups as a 'cluster'

of castes attempts to indicate precisely this mobility between groups that had different ritual and social practices, but displayed nevertheless a certain unity of customs, ties and linkages. See Iravati Karve, *Hindu Society: An Interpretation*, Pune, 1968.

¹⁰ Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991*, New York, 1999, pp. 85-107.

¹¹ Constable argues that this inclusiveness was gradually eroded in favour of an increasing Kshatriya exclusivity over the eighteenth century, especially under the Brahminical policies of the Peshwas, but unfortunately fails to discuss contemporary sources that demonstrate such a turn towards Kshatriya *jati* exclusivity. Philip Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Martial Race in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Western India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 60 (2), May 2001, pp. 439-478.

¹² Prachi Deshpande, *Narratives of Pride: History and Regional Identity in Maharashtra, c1870-1960*, unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, Tufts University, 2002, Ch. 2.

¹³ The most widely cited is D.H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: the Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, Cambridgeshire, 1990, but see also Stewart Gordon, 'Zones of Military Entrepreneurship in India, 1500-1700', in *Marathas, Marauders and State Formation in Eighteenth Century India*, New York, 1994; Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India*, pp. 83-107, and Philip Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Race'.

¹⁴ M.S. Kanade, ed. *Bhauasahebanchi Bakhar*, Pune 1975, p.84-91. Also, see an excellent English translation of this *bakhar* in Ian Raeside, *Marathi Historical Papers and Chronicles: The Decade of Panipat (1751-61)*, Bombay 1984, pp. 1-101.

¹⁵ The most oft-cited work in this regard is Hiroshi Fukazawa, 'State and Caste System (Jati) in the Eighteenth Century Maratha Kingdom.' *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, Vol. 9 (1), 1968, pp. 32-44.

¹⁶ See Fukazawa, 'State and Caste System', p. 42; P. E. Gavali, *Society and Social Disabilities Under the Peshwas*, Delhi, 1988, pp. 105-113; Sudha Desai, *Social Life in Maharashtra under the Peshwas*, Bombay, 1980, pp. 30-42.

¹⁷ P.E. Gavali, *Society and Social Disabilities*, p. 110.

¹⁸ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India*, p. 70.

¹⁹ Uma Chakravarti, 'Gender, Caste and the State in Eighteenth century Maharashtra', in *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 3-42.

²⁰ Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, p. 8.

²¹ See N.K. Wagle, 'A Dispute between the Pancal Devajna Sonars and the Brahmanas of Pune Regarding Social Rank and Ritual Privileges: A Case of the British Administration of Jati Laws in Maharashtra, 1822-1825', in N.K. Wagle, ed. *Images of Maharashtra: A Regional Profile of India*, London, 1980, pp. 129-59.

²² O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, pp. 24-49.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-45.

²⁴ Gordon Johnson, 'Chitpavan Brahmins and Politics in Western India', in E.R. Leach and S. N. Mukherjee, eds, *Elites in South Asia*, Cambridge, 1970; Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873 to 1930*, Bombay, 1976, pp. 76-78; Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*, New Delhi, 2001; Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History*, pp. 43-106.

²⁵ Deshpande, 'Narratives of Pride'.

²⁶ This claim of Brahman indispensability to the Maratha project was demonstrated most clearly in the elevation of the Brahman poet and contemporary of Shivaji, Samarth Ramdas, as the chief moral force and spiritual guide behind the establishment of Maratha freedom in the writings of

many Brahman nationalists. Pamphlets, novels and poetry on Ramdas as Shivaji's guru flooded the printed sphere in the early twentieth century and were certainly a response to non-Brahman critiques of Brahman narratives on the Maratha past. *Ibid.*, Ch. 4.

²⁷ O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, pp. 290-302.

²⁸ Lokhande (1848-1907) was a contemporary of Phule's, and like him, belonged to the Mali *jati*. He was active in the Satyashodhak Samaj not only as the editor of the *Din Bandhu* newspaper, but also as one of the earliest organisers of labour in the Bombay cotton mills. See Manohar Kadam, *Bharatiya Kamgar Chalvaliche Janak Narayan Meghaji Lokhande* (The Father of India's Labour Struggle Narayan Meghaji Lokhande), Pune, 1995.

²⁹ *Din Bandhu*, 17 January 1886, *Report on Native Newspapers*, week ending 23 January 1886.

³⁰ *Din Bandhu*, 21 October 1904, quoted in O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, p. 291

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 292. This statement was made by a speaker at a meeting of the society, which was founded in August 1882 in Bombay by Tukaramji Haraji Patil Salunkhe.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-163.

³⁵ Keshavrao Jedhe, *Chhatrapati Mela Sangraha* (Songs of the Chhatrapati Mela), Pune, 1928, p. 19. For a good, general survey of non-Brahman politics and personalities in the early twentieth century, see Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Acts of Appropriation: Non-Brahman Radicals and the Congress in Early Twentieth Century Maharashtra', in Mike Shepperdson and Colin Simmons, eds, *The Indian National Congress and the Political Economy of India, 1885-1985*, Brookfield, 1988, pp. 102-146.

³⁶ For an early account of Kolhapur politics and Shahu's interaction with the British government in enforcing policies favourable to non-Brahmans, see Ian Copland, 'The Maharaja of Kolhapur and the Non-Brahmin Movement, 1902-10', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 7 (2), 1973, pp. 209-255, but a more comprehensive study in English is Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society*, pp. 124-136. An excellent study in Marathi is Y. D. Phadke, *Shahu Chhatrapati ani Lokamanya* (Shahu Chhatrapati and the Lokamanya), Pune, 1986.

³⁷ An official reported in 1919, for instance, that his tea party with Mahars in Nashik had 'a disturbing effect in the neighbourhood and may have caused a rupture among the Marathas of the Maharajah's own caste, as the well-to-do Maratha of the rural area does not move easily with the times and cannot be expected to receive the Mahars with open arms at such short notice'. Maharashtra State Archives (hereafter MSA) Mumbai, Home (Spl) Files, No. 363, 1919, 'Brahmans vs. Non-Brahmans'.

³⁸ In 1894, Brahmins occupied a total of 104 jobs in Shahu's government, while Non-Brahmins occupied 18. No untouchable occupied any government post at this time. By 1922, Brahmins occupied 69 of these jobs, Non-Brahmins 168, and one untouchable had been appointed. Similarly, the number of Brahmin students in the Kolhapur schools in 1894 was 2,522, with 8,088 Non-Brahmin students and 264 untouchables. By 1922, however, while the number of Brahmin students had increased only to 2,722, the number of Non-Brahmin students had shot up to 21,027, and that of untouchable students to 2,162. Although these figures do not give us a caste breakdown of Marathas and others in the Non-Brahmin category, it is worth postulating that the proportion of Marathas was higher, because of the many special educational privileges like hostels, scholarships, etc., that they got, both as part of Shahu's promotion and the numerous

Maratha caste organisations. Y.D. Phadke, *Visavya Shatakatila Maharashtra* (Maharashtra in the Twentieth Century), 5 Vols., Vol. 1, Pune, 1989, p. 216.

³⁹ MSA Mumbai, Home (Special) Files, No. 363, 'Brahmans vs. Non-Brahmans', B.V. Jadhav to A.L. Robertson, 16 May 1915.

⁴⁰ Oriental and India Office Collections, (hereafter OIOC), British Library, London, Files of the Indian Franchise Committee, Q/IFC/71 (Bombay) and Q/IFC/30 (CP-Berar).

⁴¹ A. R. Bhosale, History of the Freedom Movement in Satara District, 1885-1947, unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Shivaji University, 1978, pp. 195-6.

⁴² For a detailed description of caste conferences and the politics of local boards and representative politics in this period as part of non-Brahman organisation, see Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society*, pp. 171-206.

⁴³ Mukundrao Patil (1886-1953), a Mali, was the son of one of Phule's associates Krishnarao Bhalekar, but was adopted by a relative Ganpatrao Patil and grew up in relative comfort in Ahmednagar. He not only authored popular non-Brahman polemical tracts such as *Hindu ani Brahman* (Hindus and the Brahman), and *Kulkarni Lilamrut* (The Kulkarni Saga), but also diligently edited the longest running non-Brahman newspaper *Din Mitra* from 1910-1946.

⁴⁴ Y. D. Phadke, *Keshavarao Jedhe*, Pune, 1982, p. 24.

⁴⁵ Biographical information about Deshmukh has been difficult to trace, but we do know he was a wealthy landed deshmukh in Amravati and financed the publication and advertisement of his books on his own steam. In a 1921 tract, he argued that Brahmans were actually Muslim immigrants from Egypt and the progeny of prostitutes and servants and had subsequently tampered with Vedic texts to place themselves in a position of power. He also added that the comparing the Marathas to Shudra castes such as Mahars, Mangs, Gonds and Dhors was

atmaghaataki, or a blow to the Kshatriya Marathas' very soul. K. B. Deshmukh, *Kshatriya Vaishyancha Brahmananshi Samana* (the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas Face Off with the Brahmins), Amravati, 1921, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Jedhe (1896-1959), in fact, represents this growing Maratha / Maratha-Kunbi presence in the movement. His family, urbanised and upwardly mobile in Pune, claimed descent from the Jedhe deshmukh contemporaries of Shivaji, and provided considerable support and leadership to the movement in Pune. Jedhe went on to be an important Congressman in the 1940s and 50s, briefly joining the Peasants and Workers Party in the 1950s. Y.D. Phadke's political biography provides an excellent overview of his politics and ideological approach. Phadke, *Keshavrao Jedhe*.

Javalkar (1898-1932) was also a Maratha-Kunbi, but with humbler origins. His fierce anti-Brahman polemic was featured in controversial tracts such as *Deshache Dushman* (Enemies of the Country). Following a trip to England in 1929-30, he became dissatisfied with non-Brahman caste rhetoric and became increasingly Communist in his orientation, advocating peasant issues before his untimely death in 1932. His writings can be found in Y. D. Phadke, ed. *Dinkarrao Javalkar Samagra Vangmaya* (The Collected Writings of Dinkarrao Javalkar), Pune 1984.

⁴⁷ MSA Mumbai, Home (Spl) 355 (64) II, 'Mahad Satyagraha', CID Report, 31 January 1928.

⁴⁸ Shripatrao Shinde, also a Maratha-Kunbi, was the son of a merchant from Kolhapur. A protégé of Shahu, he combined his work as a Satyashodhak activist with a job as a colonial policeman, but quit the latter job to move to Pune in 1918 and edit the newspaper *Viyaji Maratha* as a non-Brahman alternative to the hugely popular *Kesari*, mouthpiece of nationalist brahmins such as Tilak. Bhagwantrao Palekar (1882-1973) also came from a Maratha-Kunbi family that was not well off but had Satyashodhak connections; they moved in search of financial opportunities from Nasik to Baroda, where Palekar had some schooling. He worked in several newspaper offices

and printing presses in Bombay and Baroda before starting the non-Brahman newspaper *Jagruti*, which he edited from 1917-1949. His editorials and autobiography are available in Sadanand More, ed. *Jagrutikar Palekar* (Marathi), Pune, 1996.

⁴⁹ See *Jagruti*, 15 February 1919; *Vijayi Maratha*, 6 January 1930 for examples.

⁵⁰ *Vijayi Maratha*, 7 April, 1930. See also the advertisement 'Excellent Histories of the Kshatriyas' for a series of books by K.B. Deshmukh of Amravati in *Maratha Navjeevan*, 7 April 1936, p. 9.

⁵¹ Rashmi Pant, 'The Cognitive Status of Caste in Colonial Ethnography: A Review of the Literature on the Northwest Provinces and Awadh' *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 24 (2), 1987, p. 148.

⁵² Quoted in 'Castes of the Bombay Presidency', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 2, 1873, p. 154.

⁵³ W. W. Hunter, ed, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 2 ed, 9 Vols., Vol. 3, London, 1885, pp. 50-51.

⁵⁴ *The Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Kolhapur District*, Vol. 24, Bombay, 1886, p. 65.

⁵⁵ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 3 ed, Calcutta, 1908, p. 302.

⁵⁶ H.H. Risley, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Calcutta 1885, quoted in R. V. Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, London, 1916, p. 201.

⁵⁷ R. E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Bombay, 1920, pp. xv.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xviii.

⁵⁹ Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, p. 43.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁶¹ *Census of India, Central Provinces*, Vol. 12, Calcutta, 1891, p. 165.

⁶² *Census of India, Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 8, Calcutta, 1901, p. 184.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶⁴ *Census of India, Central Provinces*, Vol. 12, Delhi, 1931, p. 352.

⁶⁵ Enthoven uses extensively a Marathi pamphlet *Kshairavanshsagar* (Ocean of Kshatriya Families) 'published by a Maratha of high birth' called Mr. Patankar. Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vol. III, p. 23. I have been unable to locate this tract itself, but it appears to be quite similar to the kind of literature being produced in the 1920s and 30s by conservative Marathas like K.B. Deshmukh.

⁶⁶ cf. Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, New Delhi, 1997. Sarkar argues persuasively that it is important to recognise that this skillful borrowing of colonial discourses reflects not simply the agency of the colonised, but also elite attempts to perpetuate the very real inequalities that existed within Indian society along lines of caste and gender.

⁶⁷ V.K. Rajwade (1863-1926) was the pioneer of a modern, nationalist historiography of the Marathas. Between 1898 and 1920, he collected and published, at great personal expense, twenty volumes of original sources from the Maratha administrative record *Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane* (Sources of Maratha History). He wrote extensively on history and language, but it was his pronouncements on Brahman social leadership and superiority in Maratha history that became the most controversial. Rajwade's collected works are now available in *Itihasacarya V. K. Rajwade Samagra Sahitya* (The Collected Works of V.K. Rajwade), 13 Vols, 1995-1998.

⁶⁸ See in particular the articles 'The skin-colour of Aryans in India', 'Our Puranas and the new discoveries in Assyria', 'Then who are the Brahmans?' and 'The Inclusion of non-Hindus in Hindu society' included in L. S. Joshi, ed., *Rajwade Lekhasangraha*, (Selected Writings of Rajwade), 4 ed, New Delhi, 1992.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁷⁰ K. S. Thackeray, *Gramanyacha Sadyanta Itihasa, Arthat, Nokarashahiche Banda* (a Comprehensive History of Rebellion), Mumbai, 1919, pp. 32-33. Playwright, journalist and father of the current Shiv Sena chief, Thackeray is better known as 'Prabodhankar' in Maharashtra because of the popular non-Brahman weekly *Prabodhan* he edited for many years. Although not a Satyashodhak, he spearheaded the non-Brahman critique of Brahman historiography and is famous for his sarcastic and biting language. His collected works are now available in *Prabodhanakar Thackeray Samagra Vangmaya* (Collected Works of Prabodhankar Thackeray), Mumbai, 1998.

⁷¹ Wasudeo Lingoji Birze, *Who are the Marathas?*, Bombay, 1896 and *Kshatriya Ani Tyanche Astitva* (the Life of Kshatriyas), 2 ed, Bombay, 1912.

⁷² Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society*, p. 133.

⁷³ This was an appeal by the Kshatrajagadguru, the Maratha priestly head instituted by Shahu, published in the *Satyavadi* newspaper in February 1931. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁷⁴ *Census of India, Central Provinces*, Calcutta, 1921, p. 147, see also *Census of India, Central Provinces*, Calcutta, 1931, p. 368.

⁷⁵ Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Acts of Appropriation', pp. 111-112.

⁷⁶ OIOC, British Library, London, Files of the Indian Delimitation Committee, Q/IDC/7, Report of the Delimitation Committee in Bombay and Sind, 1935; N.C. Surve, Deposition to the Delimitation Committee, 9 September 1935.

⁷⁷ Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Race', p. 455.

⁷⁸ R. M. Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Musalmans: Compiled under the Orders of the Government of India*, Calcutta, 1908, p. 49.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁸⁰ Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Race', p. 459.

⁸¹ 'The All India Maratha Conference', *Jagruti*, 1 March 1919.

⁸² Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Race', p. 459.

⁸³ O'Hanlon, 'Acts of Appropriation', pp. 126-146.

⁸⁴ MSA Mumbai, Home (Spl), 922 (2), Extract from the Bombay Presidency Weekly Letter No. 47, 27 November 1937, p. 31.

⁸⁵ MSA Mumbai, Home (Spl), 143-E-I, 'Non-Brahman Party', CID Weekly Report, Satara District, 31 May 1930; 800 (74) 21, Weekly Reports, Ratnagiri District (1932-34) 28 January 1932; 800 (106) -D (4) Weekly Reports, Ahmednagar District, 26 February 1937; 800 (74) (11) Confidential Report No. 75/1932, Dhule District; MSA Nagpur, CP Political & Military Files, Case # 12, Akola District, 1941.

⁸⁶ Phadke, *Keshavrao Jedhe*, p. 164. The Gandhian Congress was also able, remarkably, to win the elections to the Pune municipality at this time, and storm the stronghold of Tilakite conservative Brahmans.

⁸⁷ Y. B. Chavan, *Krishnakath: Atmcharitra* (on the Banks of the Krishna, an Autobiography), Vol. 1, Pune, 1984, pp. 172, 176, 229. Chavan, of humble Maratha-Kunbi origin, joined rural politics in Satara district as a young recruit in the later 1920s and rose to prominence in the 1942 Satara struggle. He led the Bombay Congress in 1956 and became the first chief minister of the bilingual Bombay state in 1956 and also of United Maharashtra in 1960. His diplomatic skills were instrumental in negotiating a successful settlement with the Central Government over the demands for the new Maharashtra state and he went on to serve as Minister for the Home, Defence and Finance portfolios in the 1960s.

⁸⁸ A. B. Shinde, *The Parallel Government of Satara: A Phase of the Quit India Movement*, New Delhi, 1990; Gail Omvedt, 'The Satara Prati Sarkar (the Parallel Government of Satara)', in Gyanendra Pandey, ed. *The Indian Nation in 1942*, Calcutta, 1988.

⁸⁹ O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, pp. 275-77.

List of Proper Nouns used in the article:

James Grant Duff

Sir John Malcolm

Thomas Broughton

Richard Jenkins

Jayappa Shinde

Shivaji

Sumit Guha

Philip Constable

Susan Bayly

Jijabai of Kolhapur

Shankaracharya of Karveer

Pratapsinh

Pune

Nagpur

O'Hanlon

Omvedt

B.G. Tilak

Jotirao Phule

Narayan Meghaji Lokhande

Chhatrapati Shahu

Deccan

Vidarbha

Mukundrao Patil

K. B. Deshmukh

R. V. Russell

H.H. Risley

R. E. Enthoven

Shripatrao Shinde

Bhagwantrao Palekar

V.K. Rajwade

Wasudeo Lingoji Birze

K.S. 'Prabodhankar' Thackeray

Keshavrao Jedhe

Dinkarrao Javalkar