

A Brief History of Incivility in Rural Postcolonial India: Caste, Religion, and Anthropology

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As recently as 1982, V. R. Bhattacharaya introduced his *New Face of Rural India* with the Gandhian-inspired words, “To an Indian, a village means more than its synonym. On its definition stands the political shape of the country, on its interpretation depends the economic progress of the nation. The description of an Indian village means the narration of the face of the country. An Indian village is the mirror of India—past and present. On its future steps depends the future of the nation” (1982: 1). Two decades later, Dipankar Gupta, the renowned sociologist of rural India, put it thus: “...the country side has witnessed a kind of cultural implosion that has shaken many of the verities of the past. With the abolition of landlordism and the introduction of adult franchise (the two must necessarily go hand in hand), old social relations that dominated the country side are today in a highly emaciated form, when not actually dead” (2005: 752). Gupta concludes, “Agriculture is an economic residue that generously accommodates non-

achievers resigned to a life of sad satisfaction. The villager is as bloodless as the rural economy is lifeless. From rich to poor, the trend is to leave..." (ibid.: 757).

It is seventy years since India gained independence from the British, almost a lifetime ago. Universal suffrage was introduced in 1950 and, as a consequence, the plight of the countryside suddenly became a political and metropolitan concern. Elsewhere, in the scramble to understand and influence the postcolonial and postwar world, Western governments invested in area studies programs and research overseas. At the confluence of these developments, a large number of anthropological studies of Indian villages were published in the 1950s and 1960s. Together, these publications form a unique record of what rural life was like in the early years of India's independence.

This archive takes us below the big events of history and into the everyday lives of villagers in India. Over the decades, the process of social change and the infiltration of new ideas, at least on a day-by-day basis, have been gradual and almost imperceptible, receiving a jolt only on the arrival of dramatic news, a persuasive idea, or a particularly forceful sermonizer. Yet when we juxtapose detailed accounts of village life in the 1950s with similar accounts of life in the same villages today, then difference (if not change) appears in dramatic form. This approach generates contrast rather than strict chronology, and to the historian it might seem a crude technique. However, we believe the contrast it reveals is instructive and can be mapped onto the general drift of scholarship about rural India over the same period. This approach has also shown us that villages are no longer "agricultural communities," since villagers have grown busier, livelihoods have diversified, mobility has increased, and villagers are more deeply integrated into national and international economies than previously. In what follows, we focus specifically on the ways

in which the language and practices of social differentiation have altered alongside these other significant trends.

Since independence, various government initiatives focused on redressing profound deprivation and discrimination have gained traction. Gandhi had championed the people he termed Harijan (his term for Untouchables), Article 17 of the 1950 Constitution “abolished” untouchability, and “The Untouchability Offences Act” of 1955 made the practice punishable. Legal nomenclature began to change. Untouchables (now generally called “Dalits”) became Scheduled Castes,[WE AVOID ACRONYMS WHEN WE CAN] whilst Adivasis, or indigenous peoples, became Scheduled Tribes. Over the years, affirmative action policies stipulating employment and educational quotas or “reservations” for these and other disadvantaged groups (such as those classified as Other Backward Class) have created new kinds of cultural and regional politics. Counteracting these tendencies for fission along caste lines has been Hindu nationalism, a phenomenon that predates India’s independence and has now attained political supremacy. Its pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim stance is central for several organizations, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has ruled at the center as well as in several Indian states at various times in the recent period. We will elaborate on the significance of these countervailing forces and their interactions.

F. G. Bailey (1996) used the term “incivility” for forms of collective hostility and discrimination: the means through which lines are most readily drawn and sides quickly taken. As Sudhir Kakar (1996) and Stanley Tambiah (1996) both influentially argued, incivility in the Indian context can be distinctly rooted in both self and collective identities. Bailey himself saw particular kinds of conflict emerging for the first time during his initial fieldwork in India in the 1950s, as organized and collective public antagonism suddenly became possible in an otherwise

peaceful village[←WE LIKE TO AVOID TELEGRAPHING]. In the wake of independence, electoral politics, legislative initiatives, and cash impinged on highland Orissa in eastern India. Bailey suggests that the ensuing struggles for power and control over meaning generated a new kind of uncivil frontier between caste Hindus and the former Untouchables, a demarcation perpetuated by everyday language, social avoidance, and ritual separation.

Scholars have explored the mechanisms and causes of the increased levels of violence in India since 1947 (influentially, Brass 2003; Tambiah 1996; and Wilkinson 2005). Most studies have been urban in focus, charting the fragmentation of the working class (Breman 2004) and associational life (Varshney 2002), or highlighting globalization and the rise of Hindu nationalism (Hansen 1999). In urban areas, “communal” violence conducted in the name of religion has largely supplanted caste- and class-based violence.

In parts of the country, assertive Dalit politics, indigenous movements, and Naxalites are important, but less so in our materials. Caste has not gone away, but is usually overshadowed by the bold language and logic of everyday religious nationalism. In anticipation of our argument, incivility appears in its most elaborate and rehearsed forms in the public realm between Hindus and Muslims and Hindus and Christians. In this light, Peter Gottschalk (2011) has seen the village in Bihar as a “hermeneutic lens” through which to interpret the nation. The linguistic and moral frames of Hindu nationalism and the possibilities for incivility and violence along those lines have entered village life. We also draw inspiration from excellent studies by Angana Chatterji (2009) on Odisha and Peggy Froerer (2007) on Chhattisgarh, who depict ethnographically the techniques, practices, and idioms that herald and accompany the organized arrival of postcolonial and rustic nationalism.

In contrast to Froerer and Chatterji, our focus is less on the process and rather more on the dramatic nature of the shift in the complexion of everyday incivility and new possibilities for action and understanding that it offers more generally. To demonstrate these changes, we structure our method, evidence, and the paper itself on two comparative axes and the empirical and methodological interchange between them. First, we draw on long-term fieldwork conducted by David F. Pocock in the village of Sundarana in Bombay State (now Gujarat), Adrian C. Mayer in Jamgod in Madhya Bharat (now Madhya Pradesh), and F. G. Bailey in Bisipara in Orissa (now Bispada in Odisha) at approximately the same time in the 1950s.¹ All three were social anthropologists trained by the strongest British departments of the period (Oxford, London School of Economics, and Manchester, respectively).

The second axis draws on recent ethnographic research (2011–2013) in the same villages: by Alice Tilche in Gujarat, Tommaso Sbriccoli in Madhya Pradesh, and Tina Otten in Odisha. All three returned to regions they knew well from earlier doctoral research. Like their forbears, they were drawn to villagers' efforts to create and maintain differences between themselves. They found that while the incivility of caste remains strong, the language and logic of distinction based on religious allegiances have moved to the fore.

Finally, we consider various implications that empirical change on the ground and the changing methodologies and gazes of the fieldworkers might have for our conclusions. We conclude that the shift from caste to religion as a locus of incivility is better explained by empirical change than by shifts in anthropology's gaze, sensibilities, or theories, though we do not entirely discount such methodological and epistemological concerns.

To be clear, we do not argue that villages in India are more or less peaceful than they were, but rather that the language and lines of primary public incivility have shifted in the postcolonial

period. Nor do we suggest that the three villages we discuss here represent the whole of India, or even the middle part of the country, although the story we tell may have wider relevance.

In the 1950s, Indian villages were riven with profound inequalities and routinized coercion that were generated primarily (but not only) by caste and land. Villages were dispute-ridden places where domestic, addiction, and debt-related violence were commonplace. Bailey's "peaceful" village—as his own fieldnotes frequently record—was a site of regular and routinized violence between individuals, especially in the domestic sphere, but these incidents never escalated to involve the entire village or other forms of collective identity. Violence had become collective elsewhere in the country, most frequently in Bombay, but not in the locations we have studied. Bailey might also have been suggesting that the imposition of secular and democratic values through new legislation gave the former Untouchables the legitimacy to challenge the hierarchical caste and agrarian order overtly for the first time. Put differently, the "peace" anthropologists reported in former times had a strong relationship to the oppression and discriminatory practices of the hierarchical caste order, and their own relegation of domestic violence and quarrelling to something unworthy of analysis.

In 2009, Adrian Mayer proposed the restudy of Jamgod in Madhya Pradesh. Following Mayer's initial input, the selection of the three villages was determined less by the location and profile of the villages than by the expectations and norms of UK funding council peer review processes: the latter required a neat research design, research questions that reviewers could comfortably imagine answers to, and manageable and carefully explained comparative frameworks. Precedence was given to the nationality of the original anthropologists, the contemporaneity of their fieldwork, and their contribution to the disciplinary corpus. Thus it was that Bailey, who had worked alongside Mayer in London during the 1950s, enthusiastically

joined the project. Both generously shared their primary research materials. David Pocock, another British social anthropologist and contemporary of Mayer and Bailey, posed a different methodological challenge, having burned his research materials when he retired from the University of Sussex. He died in 2007, but we already knew something of his intellectual biography (see Parry and Simpson 2010[←NOT LISTED IN REFERENCES]) and his closer alignment with the French anthropologist Louis Dumont offered a theoretical contrast.

In the 1950s, these anthropologists searched for fieldsites that had been less influenced by the ways of the city yet had not stagnated in the deep hinterlands. Consequently, the villages they chose were agricultural in orientation, multi-caste, near roads, and on the cusp of change. We inherited their choices. If, in sociological terms, these villages represent something greater, it is because they are ordinary places, typifying regional forms of life that are neither close to nor far from those of a rapidly modernizing and urbanizing country. Though the three villages are in many ways quite different from one another, in the terms of an active political imaginary they are now connected to the nation and to one another. This is our point.

PART I: “VILLAGE INDIA” IN THE 1950S

The historian Clive Dewey wryly notes: “Prior to the postwar anthropological boom, the village community was the plaything of historians and administrators” (1972: 291). Independence, democracy, and a strong modernization agenda received additional uplift in the 1950s from the increased interest of Western governments in understanding change in the new world order. In India, new responsibilities for knowledge and governance were passed to universities, and in the Constitution of 1950 villages became key mechanisms for democracy. In America, the Ford, Carnegie and National Science foundations funded research programs and institutions. In the UK, the Scarborough Commission (Brown 2016) and Treasury Fellowships and increased

university funding led to the expansion and transformation of South Asian Studies. Fieldwork became long-term and immersive and was often conducted in local languages. As M. N. Srinivas (1955b) put it at the time, “field view” replaced “book view” (Jodhka 1998). During the same period the “village” replaced the “tribe” as the unit of analysis. In many ways, the modern form of anthropological village studies is an incongruous legacy of soft diplomacy and international posturing.

In hindsight, it was not quite as simple as the field *replacing* the book. W. Norman Brown (co-founder of the influential American Institute for Indian Studies at Deccan College in Poona) and the French anthropologist Louis Dumont both advocated linking India’s textual traditions with the field. According to Nicholas Dirks, Brown’s “views both established their authority on the weight of colonialist and Indological knowledge and worked further to establish, within the context of postwar/Cold War American liberalism, a whole set of fundamental “truths” about the essential nature of religious identity and ontology in the Indian subcontinent” (2004: 347). Put more bluntly, Brown saw India as the expression of Hindu civilization, the development of which was disrupted by successive Muslim powers (Lardinois 2013: 299). Dumont and Pocock also saw the merits of bringing text and life together under the slogan “India is one.” “A sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology” (1957a: 7). In some regards, this approach [←IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN BY “THIS”?] was a reflection on the civilizational unity of India as a plural society (Uberoi, Sundar, and Deshpande 2010), but the result was to position Muslims as adjuncts to the deeper truths of Indian civilization.

For India’s developmental state, the village became a key conduit for introducing new ideas, institutions, and conspicuous social change (Gupta 1998). A national Community Development Programme was established with American influence (Sinha 2008). Perhaps partially taken by

the optimistic spirit of modernization at that time, anthropologists rebelled against older ideas of villages as isolated communities or “little republics” (an idea traced[←TRACED BY WHO? OR DO YOU MEAN “ORIGINATED BY”? AND DO YOU MEAN THE OLDER IDEA CAN BE TRACED TO METCALFE, OR THE IDEA OF REBELLING AGAINST IT?] to Sir C. T. Metcalfe but given vitality by others; see Dewey 1972; Dumont 1965). They also wrote against naturalism and social evolutionism, which were derived from nineteenth-century social theory but were regaining popularity in development economics (reflected in Rostow 1960). They showed that villages were dynamic and connected societies (Lewis 1958: 9–10). This early work is well represented by *Village India* (Marriott 1955a) and *India’s Villages* (Srinivas 1955a). Over the next two decades hundreds of village studies were carried out (see Madan 2002 for highlights; Mines and Yazgi 2011 for discussion).

In his influential contribution to *Village India*, Marriott (1955b) explored what, if anything, a village study can contribute to understanding a greater tradition. Following Redfield (1955), he showed that villages have both “parochial” and “universal” relationships with the “Great Tradition” (glossed as “indigenous civilization”). Marriott’s own study village in Uttar Pradesh was not isolated in terms of economy, kinship, or the social organization of religion and politics, and he viewed the village as a “stage,” “nexus of activity” and “focal point for individual prestige and identification” (1955b: 178). Indian village features, including caste, kinship terminology, and village layouts, are often historical reactions to state policies, and therefore villages cannot be conceived as things in themselves. Marriott’s prescient observations introduced two enduring questions for the field: What is a village? What is the relationship between the part and the whole?

In contrast, Bailey and Mayer operated against textual Orientalism, which Bailey (1959)

dismissed as “culturology.” For both men Hindu caste was the preeminent theme. Their data were grounded in the exchange mechanisms of marriage and agriculture and the talk of everyday life. Structural functionalism supported their reasoning. Relationships between caste Hindus and the former Untouchables were key to the logic of hierarchy, an interest guided by the new legislation against untouchability[←DO YOU MEAN THEY BECAME INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC BECAUSE OF THE NEW LEGISLATION?]. Theoretically, they calculated all lesser and relative distinctions of hierarchy within the caste order through the prism of an absolute distinction between “purity” and “pollution.”

Unity in Diversity: The Black and White Anthropology of Three Villages

In preparation for new fieldwork, we researched the intellectual conditions in which Pocock, Mayer and Bailey worked. We compared their published texts with original fieldnotes. We attempted to see as they had seen, rather than presupposing an evaluation of the rights and wrongs of their conclusions and methods. We learned how they put their ideas together, how theory and their supervisors influenced them, what interested and motivated them, and conversely, what they may have wittingly and unwittingly disregarded or overlooked.[YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL US THROUGHOUT THE PAPER THAT THIS THING OR THAT IS “SIGNIFICANT.” THAT IS OBVIOUSLY THE CASE IN MOST EVERY INSTANCE.] We discussed these issues at length with both Mayer and Bailey as we proceeded, and they provided depth and context to words typed on yellowing paper, and names to faces in black and white photographs.

This project differs from other anthropological “restudies” (Marshall 1993; Lewis 1951; Redfield 1930) due to our close collaboration with Mayer and Bailey, working intergenerationally as opposed to a single researcher engaged in a long-term field work [←IS

THIS WHAT YOU MEANT?]) (Gough 1989; Gupta 1998; Wadley 2001; see also Himanshu, Jha, and Rodgers 2016). We are also influenced by Anand Pandian's empathetic approach (2009) to reconstructing Louis Dumont's fieldwork in the 1940s. Our project prioritized understanding the changing conditions in the three villages, while working with methodological empathy, interweaving biography, oral history, and the changing national and anthropological scenes.

Between 1953 and 1956, David Pocock (1928–2007) spent around eighteen months in Sundarana (Central Gujarat), and from this work he later produced two monographs: *Kanbi and Patidar* (1972) and *Mind, Body and Wealth* (1973). The first is about caste, kinship, and marriage. For Pocock, the dominant social process in the village emerged from how the Patidar functioned as a caste in relation to both one another and to non-Patidar. The second book addresses popular Hinduism, and predicts that the importance of congregational Hinduism will rise and that of caste will decline. In both works, the key organizational distinction is between what happens within the Patidar caste and what happens between the Patidar and other castes.

Adrian Mayer (b. 1922) studied a village he initially called "Ramkheri" (properly known as Jamgod; population 912 in 1955) in Madhya Pradesh for fifteen months between 1954 and 1956. The village was dominated by Hindu Rajput and Khati castes, but there were also several other castes and Muslim Pinjaras. The village was shaped politically by its agricultural economy—cash was insignificant and only a few people had regular government employment. Mayer's *Caste and Kinship in Central India* (1960) focuses on how caste is ordered and given structure by the cyclical demands of agriculture and labor, with some castes providing services to farmers and rulers in exchange for a share of the crop. Mayer explained his choice of topic: "...caste membership is still pivotal in the actions of Indian villagers; its concomitants are so pervasive that their consideration encompasses a discussion of all major group activities.... Caste, then, is

the most important focus for an anthropological study of this peasant society” (ibid.: 3).

Traditionally, Pinjaras were “cotton carders” and, as Mayer noted, they were not considered “proper” Muslims either by themselves or by others. They were regarded as half-hearted converts from Hinduism. This was itself a highly politicized idea, but quite in keeping with the then-prevailing ideas of “indigenous civilization.” Pinjaras maintained older religious and social practices such as following Hindu prohibitions on marriages between people whose grandparents shared lineage membership (the “four-lineage rule”) and worshipping their own lineage gods and goddesses. Such practices were thought to make them “improper” Muslims because Islam is well-known (especially, it seems, among many non-Muslims) to permit first-cousin marriage and prohibit reference to gods other than Allah.

The absence of incivility or even political back-biting between Hindus and Muslims in Jamgod in the 1950s was striking. As Mayer makes so clear, Muslims were seen as bystanders to what was *really* happening because the lines of local politics were primarily based on caste and not religion. Muslims were incorporated into a unitary logic of inequality. Thus, despite their numbers, Pinjaras were subservient and marginal to the interests and concerns of the dominant politics in Jamgod. Mayer’s attention to hierarchy and inter-caste relations and his relative neglect of the Pinjaras reflected a reality present in, and greater than, the village as he saw it.

F. G. Bailey (born in 1924) conducted fieldwork in Bisipara (now Bisipada, population seven hundred then) and in smaller “Baderi” (properly Boida) in the highlands of Orissa between 1952 and 1955, and in 1959. His research generated *Caste and the Economic Frontier* (1957), *Tribe, Caste, and Nation* (1960), and *Politics and Social Change* (1963). This trilogy analyzed the winds of change brought to the village, caste, and regional politics by independence. In essence, his problem was: “In the village the hierarchy of caste-groups is no longer a complete

reflection of economic realities, nor an adequate means of ordering political relations. Under the pressure of economic change, the political functions of caste are beginning to be taken over, as one might expect, by the ultimate political authority, the Government of India” (1957: 275).

Bailey’s Bisipara research generated three retrospective monographs, sublime and gloomy accounts that establish the philosophical underpinnings of life. *A Witch-Hunt* (1994) examines the social mechanisms of truth and meaning. *The Civility of Indifference* (1996), the inspiration for the title of this article, asks why hostility between castes and Untouchables did not escalate to violence. *The Need for Enemies* (1998) re-examines the modes and expressions of democratic politics.

In retirement, Bailey was shocked by the violence in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. For the first time, he realized that the people of Bisipara had not been “genocidal enthusiasts.” Influenced by Max Gluckman and Elizabeth Colson (his supervisors), Bailey’s question, “Why no violence?” was an exemplary Manchester one. In *The Civility of Indifference* (1996), he arranged his analysis around disputes over temples and outlined the subliminal collective consciousness and unspoken rules that commit villages to self-restraint. He argued that the cost of violence was simply too high since it would damage the “village moral community” to which all villagers belonged.

In 1948, the government of the region passed “The Orissa Temple Entry Authorisation Act,” which made it an offence to bar Untouchables from temples. The Act implied that Untouchables were in no essential way different from other people, and Bailey contends that in places like Bisipara that was a radical idea. Bisipada’s Untouchables (Dalits now) were then known as “Pano.” In protest against customary discrimination, they attempted to enforce the Act in the village during a major festival probably celebrating the deity’s birthday. The Pano arrived all

together as usual, attended by musicians, and demanded to be allowed to enter. The caste Hindus mounted a guard armed with battleaxes around the temple. But the Pano, demonstrating foresight and organized planning, had informed the local authorities. The result was the unhurried arrival of a sub-inspector and two police constables on bicycles. The Hindus did not directly dispute the authority of the new law, and instead claimed to be merely trustees of the temple, not its owners. They said that they themselves would permit the Pano to enter, but they could not do so in good conscience without first consulting all the other Hindus. As everyone knew, the temple belonged to the region, not to Bisipara village.²

The battleaxes were not used, and the Pano beat nothing but drums. They stood down and staged no more confrontations. Over the months that followed they built a temple in their own street, thereby further undermining the old village order. The caste Hindus punished this display of Pano assertiveness by withdrawing their privilege of making music on festive occasions, symbolically signifying that the Hindu castes no longer considered the Pano a legitimate part of the “village moral community.” Bailey reasoned that the temple incident did not escalate because everyone concerned was accustomed to counting the costs that would result, a habit of mind that inhibits moral fervor. Resolute pragmatism, together with a pervasive suspicion that opportunism is everywhere, make it hard to be a “true believer,” for whatever cause.³

Bailey thought he had witnessed the start of a revolution in which the village moral community started to disintegrate as the old orders and locally sanctioned privileges of power were beginning to be swept away. In the 1950s, these shifts were very much in Bisipara’s public domain and Bailey’s fieldnotes frequently refer to the changing political scene in the village. He saw villagers as calculators and pragmatists, firmly habituated to assessing the consequences of their actions in advance of making them. The political theatre of the power struggle between

Untouchables and caste Hindus was carefully staged and insulated in order to avert damaging fallout on a style of life so internalized in the village. Yet, according to Bailey, this was the first dip towards incivility. Later we will examine others that followed.

PART II: VILLAGES IN INDIA THE 2010S

The second set of studies in these villages was conducted between 2011 and 2013. We started with the broad conclusions of the first studies and conducted household surveys to generate the same kinds of baseline data that informed the original analyses, although we elected to not simply repeat the same questions. Our main method was participant observation. We also made films, and used the original ethnographies as a critical resource for developing new relations in the field. In Gujarat and Odisha the legacies of recent communal violence hung in the air, and echoes of it were felt in Madhya Pradesh. The influence of our educations in post-structuralism, the agency of subjects, Subaltern Studies, and self-reflexivity added mirk and depth to our understandings of what we encountered.

Sundarana Today

In the period since David Pocock's fieldwork in Sundarana the political scene in Gujarat has become increasingly saturated with the language and organizations of Hindu nationalism. Narendra Modi became Gujarat's chief minister in 2001 representing the BJP, the result of decades of grassroots work. The mass violence of 2002 has always been discussed as a conflict between Hindus and Muslims in the region itself[←DO YOU MEAN AS FOCUSED IN THIS PARTICULAR REGION, RATHER THAN AS A NATIONAL PHENOMENON?]. Modi was regarded as being somewhere between supine and complicit in the bloodshed. Anti-Christian sentiments and atrocities have also become widespread. As the Hindu nationalist agenda has

become entrenched in government structures, various anti-conversion acts have sought to codify Christianity and Islam as religions distinct from each other and especially from “Hinduism,” which includes everyone else (Buddhists, Jains, Adivasis, and all forms of Hinduism).

By the time Alice Tilche arrived in 2012, Sundarana was a relatively wealthy place, somewhat down at heel for Central Gujarat, but prosperous in the national register. Agriculture remains fairly remunerative, although it has lost the high cultural status described by Pocock. Many of the descendants of Patidars central to his original ethnography are now well-educated, and national and international migration plays an important role in their wealth and life-cycles. There were never very many Muslims in Sundarana, and there are even fewer now, but they are prominent in the construction of the village community[←IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN? OR DO YOU MEAN THERE PRESCENCE IS A PROMINENT *ISSUE* WITHIN THAT CONSTRUCTION?]], if we can indeed talk of such a thing.

Pocock employed a Muslim research assistant in this Hindu-dominated region. Neither Momad, the research assistant, nor Pocock thought this arrangement particularly noteworthy at the time. Pocock was a convert Christian and paid regular visits to the Christian mission in the nearby town where he also resided for two months. He mentions only in passing the local Catholic converts [←IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN?]and the split in the Vankar (Dalit) community between Hindus and Christians (1972: 40).

Momad left Sundarana in 1953, when Pocock did, to become a primary school teacher in a village 50 kilometers away, but he retained his family’s land in the village and returns there periodically. In 2012, at eighty years of age, Momad (also now answering to the name Mohamed) was preparing for pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. He wanted to see these places and submit to Allah’s will before he died, quite possibly a reflection of the general strengthening

of Islamic practice and identity in the region. In much of rural Gujarat it is now common to encounter proselytizing missionaries from the great Islamic seminaries of northern India. Muslim identities have become more pronounced in part because of the aggressive Hindu nationalist rhetoric, although Muslim organizations have also invested in this process. [←WHAT PROCESS DO YOU MEAN? MAKING THEIR IDENTITIES MORE PRONOUNCED? CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC? OTHERWISE IT JUST SOUNDS VAGUE OR OBVIOUS.]

Momad was well-educated by village standards, and spoke English, which was then unusual. He recalled how his family had maintained close relations with some of the most influential Patidars of Sundarana. Pocock himself observed that Momad called his patron's wife the affectionate Gujarati name for mother's sister. Momad also ate with the family (but washed his own utensils afterwards) and participated in singing devotional Hindu songs in the village (1973: 133). Indeed, Momad played a starring role in some of Pocock's most celebrated ethnographic studies of the evil eye and popular Hinduism.

In 2012, Momad was still close to the Hindu family that watched over his land. But the same configurations of patron and client and anthropologist and research assistant that Pocock described would be unthinkable today. The membrane separating Hindus and Muslims is severely inflamed and raw. The communities are much more sharply distinguished now than what Pocock described from the mid-1950s in the brief glimpses of hierarchy he provides.

The contemporary fieldwork in rural Gujarat reveals the depth of nationalist feeling in people's daily lives. The narratives are endless, ubiquitous, and nasty. Otherwise level-headed persons become weak-minded when they evaluate negative traits ascribed to Muslims. Arguments about Muslims are evoked at every turn, and they play the apical role in people's construction of hate. The idea of Hindu unity, required for political and cultural nationalism, is

produced through collective anger and resentment. The “hyperbolic vegetarianism” (following Ghassem-Fachandi 2012) of much of Hindu Gujarat renders the meat-eating Muslim disgusting, and disgust makes argument or persuasion superfluous because relations with Muslims are formed only from corporal rage. Hindus externalize elements of themselves onto the politically manufactured Muslim[←PEOPLE WILL READ THE OTHER WORDING, WHICH ECHOES THE STYLE OF COLONIAL DESCRIPTORS, AS STEREOTYPING AND SEXIST (THOUGH I KNOW THAT WASN’T YOUR INTENT)] and display of religious bigotry becomes a sign of the proper or true Hindu. Hating and killing Muslims is made to appear acceptable or even necessary.

In Sundarana, such anti-Muslim sentiments are as pervasive and naturalized as talk about the weather might be elsewhere. Yet, actual differences between different people are not a central part of daily life because Muslim and Christian communities have been mostly expelled from the village. The minaret of the mosque in Sundarana was demolished during the troubled times of 2002 and has not been rebuilt. Muslim houses were also wrecked and Muslims fled to the relative safety of nearby towns, where they have often established new colonies. Some of those who owned land later quietly returned. The Muslims in Sundarana today are among its poorest residents and they have few options to improve their situation. Some live in rags and tatters, and one family lives in a ditch. Muslims are nearly, but not quite, invisible, and their faint presence is a daily reminder of what a strong Hindu community can do.

“I went to ask the leader of the village council about our right to a house,” a woman from the poorest Malek Muslim community explained. She lived in a neighborhood where all the other families had received new houses as part of a government scheme. “The leader told me “*orku nahi*—I never saw you before, I did not know you were from the village.” This is our

condition: people do not even want to know that we exist. They have changed the name of our neighborhood.”[ARE THESE TRANSLATIONS? YOU NEED A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS SOMEWHERE] The drama of this arrangement is striking. There is unity in the manufactured exclusivity of the village. In one neighboring village a common brag was that there were no Muslims left. When [WHO WAS ASKED AND SO RESPONDED?]asked why there was no call to prayer from the mosque, the pragmatic answer was: “Muslims here are quiet, they are scared. They have poison inside them.”

The fate of village Christians is similar, although constructed from a different logic. Christians have been present in Gujarat since at least the nineteenth century. In Sundarana, the first modern mission was established in 1937 by a Spanish Roman Catholic priest. It was mostly Vankars, among the Untouchable, now Dalit, castes who adopted Christianity (see Lobo 1991). Vankars previously labored for Patidars on a crop-share basis (Pocock 1972: 40). After 1947, many left the village to take up reserved quotas of government employment and to escape their subordination. Christian Dalits could benefit from the education provided by the church and could become schoolteachers and clerks in nearby towns (rather than factory workers, laborers, or cleaners, the typical jobs in other Dalit communities).

In the 1980s, the local Catholic mission, with support from local converts, built a church in the Vankar area of Sundarana. It still stands and no one reported violence against Christians to us. Priests, however, face increasing opposition and are no longer allowed to enter the village to take Sunday Mass. Since the events of 2002, Christians have been threatened that if they are not quiet they will meet the same fate as the Muslims. In Gujarat, prior permission for conversion and baptism must now be obtained from the district magistrate or collector, and such restrictions have brought the Church’s activities under scrutiny. Vankars lament that this also threatens their

community's economic mobility: "They see that we are doing well, and they want to keep us poor."

The Hindu village community, though united against others, remains deeply divided within. As Pocock predicted, sectarian movements, in particular the Swami Narayan sect, have rapidly gained in popularity. For the Patidar, membership [IN THAT SECT? OR THEIR CASTE?] became a crucial new mode of social differentiation and status calculation that now plays out in marriage arrangements. Caste differences remain central in determining relations of work, marriage, and social mobility and in the geographical arrangement of space. Indeed, in some ways, caste may be more visible now than in the 1950s. Associations and trusts publically advertise their caste and sub-caste provenances. As elsewhere, caste-based reservations have politicized rights and privileges, and they are discussed openly and often.

Residential clustering in Sundarana reflects caste divisions, which are themselves broadly in line with class. Oddly, and for reasons we never discovered, at the entrance to the Dalit (Harijan) residential neighborhoods were large, bright blue letters painted on a white wall spelling: HARIJANS. Sundarana's most lowly Dalits, the Vaghri are ghettoized in a flyblown corner of the village, living in shacks, brewing illegal liquor, fishing in the village sewage pond. By contrast, only Brahmins and Patidars live in the new three-story houses built alongside the road with remittance money.

Moreover, whilst caste is once-removed from public discourse and ritual spaces, it survives in daily social interactions, often in unspoken forms (see Mosse 2012). Its overt invisibility is governed by rules relating to anti-discrimination laws. Dalits know that they are now entitled to access temples that previously were forbidden to them. They participate in electoral politics with upper castes and publicly sit together with them in the village square during electioneering. In

private, however, Dalits will acknowledge that Patidars talk openly among themselves about Dalits using terms and expressions everyone knows have been outlawed, and that there is in fact no equality. Caste discrimination continues to affect their access to resources and opportunities and to shape socioeconomic mobility and migration. Patidars complain that lower castes such as the Vankars have taken advantage of Christianity and caste-based reservations to steal their jobs, yet at the time of research only one family of Vankars had been able to migrate overseas and Patidars still enjoy greater opportunities for social, economic, and international mobility.

The ways in which caste is made invisible in Sundarana are of a different order from the treatment of religion. While the first follows a discourse of rights, the second is about near erasure: marking “them” off from the village, region, and nation, but not to the point where “they” disappear completely, for that would imply the successful completion of the Hindu nationalist project (and therefore its end). Caste and religion come together in confused ways in relation to Sundarana’s Christian Dalits. The assorted broken buildings, rags, and tatters on Sundarana’s margins signify the different conditions from which the Muslim community was fashioned.

Jamgod Today

Jamgod’s population has grown from nine hundred to 3,400. In the 1950s, nearby Dewas had twenty-seven thousand residents, but today it has nearly three hundred thousand, and 250 factories. When Mayer first visited Dewas it was three hours away by bullock cart: “About three-quarters of a mile from the village the traveller leaves the motor road, and continues along a track which in the wet weather becomes a stream. This runs between six-foot banks, and hides the village until it is almost reached” (1960: 14–15). That track is now an all-season concrete and cement road connected to a four-lane highway into Dewas. In the 1990s, houses began appearing

on the far side of the highway as the village continually expanded and moved closer to the tarmac. The route into the village is today lined with houses, shops, and other businesses, forming the “New Settlement.”

Jamgod remains agricultural in orientation and ethos, but most households depend on other income. The system of inter-caste interdependences, which Mayer documented so meticulously, has almost disappeared. Wage labor, whether in Jamgod or Dewas, has become the main source of income for the poor and landless. Many villagers now have jobs in state-owned and private factories. Since independence, the increasing penetration of the capitalist economy, the new road and attendant ideas of petro-mobility, and the expansion of Jamgod into new kinds of settlement have transformed the fundamental logic of social relations. Strangers have moved to Jamgod, while villagers have moved to town. Party politics are entrenched at the local level, partly due to revolutions in communication and mobility, but also because of various legislative and constitutional measures that have placed (and continue to place) the idea of the village at the center of the democratic set-up. The state has developed village-shaped parts within its apparatus.

Jamgod is still a multi-caste village, but Muslim Pinjaras are now the largest group, with some 110 households, followed by Hindu Khatis (ninety-two households) and Rajputs (fifty-nine). In recent decades many Pinjaras have prospered through business. Mayer only partly foresaw the Pinjaras’ rise, yet it is key to understanding Jamgod’s postcolonial history and the changing patterns of contest and meaning taking place on its streets. Some Pinjaras invested in land, although many rely on daily wage-labor in Dewas. The community is regarded as up-and-coming and clever. Many Pinjaras enjoy positions of respect and power within district-level politics. Some are “big men,” from whom people seek help or advice on controversial matters.

They have also invested in a tidier Muslim identity and act according to what they understand as Islamic prescription. Younger men publicly deny older forms of marriage and are embarrassed by their association with local and lineage gods. That said, our village census recorded no Pinjara marriages that breached the four-lineage rule. Older Pinjara men continue to participate in regular village rituals, and more significant numbers take part in certain public processions and perform acts of devotion to the local smallpox deity.

In the past, Jamgod's layout tended to segregate lower castes and allowed members of the same caste, or of similar caste status, to reside within the same ward (see Mayer's village maps, 1960: 53–54). Mayer's discussion of wards and sitting-places (*ibid.*: 132–36) highlights the informal cooperation between neighbors at important rites, but nowadays the situation is more muddled. As 1980s and 1990s liberalization policies began freeing up land, the village expanded and the council allotted housing-plots according to patron-client relationships and opportunistic profiteering rather than an idealized caste hierarchy. Residential arrangements now defy any meaningful aggregation. Inter-caste and interreligious neighborhoods have become common in ways that were morally, and literally, unthinkable six decades earlier (as illustrated by the maps of Bronger 1990; and recently by Sbriccoli). The village priest, for instance, now lives adjacent to an impoverished Dalit family.

Cooperation practices have also changed. Many villagers regard neighborhoods as preeminent social units, within which friendly relationships should be maintained by a flow of invitations, food, and other kinds of ritualized gifts. Villagers generally regard neighborly solidarity and collaboration as necessary for physical wellbeing and general auspiciousness. The dwelling patterns that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s allowed for new, strong relationships between formerly hierarchically ordered Hindu castes and between Pinjara and Hindu

communities, a mixing that was accompanied by a decline in the older agricultural hierarchies.

At the familial level, some Hindus now maintain strong relations with Pinjaras.

Others, however, actively and deliberately avoid all interaction with Pinjaras. Likely encouraged by the success and prosperity of some Pinjaras, the general level of suspicion and covert hostility between religious communities has increased markedly and in some quarters of Jamgod there is a palpable sense of hostility and suspicion toward them as Muslims. Hindu nationalist organizations are particularly active in Jamgod and they have helped to advance anti-Muslim discourses and campaigns. The BJP has a large following there, especially among higher-caste voters. Muslims have been investing in new religious buildings, with financial support from overseas.

Together, these factors have generated increasing opposition between Hindus and Muslims. Both sides are alike in their tendency to be acutely aware of their distinctiveness, which is routinely rehearsed in daily conversations. Disagreements on seemingly petty matters are often reframed as fundamental religious difference, not with the same ferocity as in Sundarana but with the same underlying logic of constructing an absolute “other.” In Jamgod today, a new and reactionary trend is becoming visible in another rearrangement of village residential patterns, a post-liberalization rebellion, as it were: a new wave of voluntary aggregation and segregation. Hindus are selling property in neighborhoods where Muslims predominate and buying new houses in Hindu-majority areas, and Muslims tend to buy new plots adjacent to other Muslim homes. New interreligious tensions and fear are important motivations for such moves. Public spaces in gaps between houses and neighborhoods are crucial for these latest rearrangements. People discuss the village space in terms of religion, and on the whole, this now matters far more than caste. Through seemingly-mundane activities such as building-projects, wedding

processions, and everyday talk, the whole village becomes complicit in dramatizing religious distinctions and the hierarchies involved, both in the Hindu nationalist vision of a community united in fear, and in the Muslim enclave.

The language of religious differentiation has become almost ubiquitous and its political articulation provides more insight into how it operates. BJP activists in the village, and with more intensity members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or National Volunteer Organization), adopt conversational double standards that reflect ideas of inclusion and exclusion. High castes in their discourses present both Dalits and Muslims as marginal—Dalits as second-class Hindus (who, nonetheless, have a role to play in the nationalist project) and Muslims as corrupt and evil enemies. Following a decade of BJP rule in Madhya Pradesh and much longer in the district, Muslims complained about being increasingly excluded from state services and resources. For example, they believed the local administration's efficiency in issuing permits, certificates, and payments depended on the petitioner's religious identity. At the same time, however, the BJP had been adeptly creating posts within the cadre for Muslims and Dalits alike. In the State elections of 2013, some Muslims joined the BJP campaign. The effect was twofold: some Muslims found a partial escape from exclusion while the BJP expanded with an expendable client-base.

Political affiliation is strikingly more influential in Jamgod than it was in Mayer's day, when democracy was still finding its way into the countryside. The pervasiveness and immanence of the political party in village life is remarkable, and the BJP's overbearing presence and spirit dominates village organization. By joining the BJP, Dalits and some Muslims recognize and enact their own subaltern positions. The new axis of incivility reflects and creates a profound division between Hindus and Muslims. In some respects, older practices of dependence and

clientelism have been reproduced within a new ideological framework. The exclusion of most Muslims from the body-politic, the partial inclusion of some, and increasing attempts to involve Dalits, all show how the socio-political devices of nationalism operate within a multi-caste village in which Muslims are not a cowering minority.[←IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN?]

Bisipada Today

Bisipada is populated by Hindus, but is not isolated from the contested Hindu-Christian politics that have come to dominate the public sphere in the region. Incivility in the village is latent, but tangible. Reservation policies are key to identity politics. Mass violence in Odisha in 1986, 1994, 2007, and 2008 did not reach Bisipada, largely, it seems, because the village has no Christian converts from the Scheduled Castes, the major fault line of conflict and incivility in the state. Nevertheless, the language of conflict, stories of burning priests and Christians, and popular nationalism have entered the village.

Patterns of social polarization in the name of religion that have come to the fore elsewhere in Odisha are in Bisipada echoed in the name of caste. There are four main groups in the village: caste Hindus led by the Sudha (now classified as Other Backward Class, who number around 320); the Kandha Kumbhar (who shifted from being an Other Backward Class to a Scheduled Caste in 2014, about 130 people); the Kandha (a Scheduled Tribe, around 60) and the Pano (Scheduled Caste, the second largest group, with more than 230 members).

In Bisipada, unlike in Sundarana and Jamgod, the politics of reservations dominate the landscape, as a classificatory war wages over resources and status. The caste Hindus are derelict gentry, whose influence has waned in the village. Their strong nostalgia for the past is accompanied by resentment. There is just one Christian family, who were deployed as a symbolic resource when villagers discussed incivility.

The conflict between Sudha and Pano castes in Bisipada, which had so fascinated Bailey, reached an apotheosis in 1984 when a member of the Pano community successfully claimed the right to conduct rituals at the same temple that featured in the dispute we outlined earlier, and previous ritual specialist stepped down. The conflict that Bailey thought marked the first dip towards incivility has morphed into other forms of dispute as new battle-lines have been drawn. Partly because of large-scale communal incidents, the renewed possibility of intercommunity violence has become part of social and political life Bisipada itself. Public viciousness is now relatively commonplace. The language and dynamics of such conflict have become part of public culture, and a resource with which difference can be expressed and performed.

In this region, the focus of aggression has been on those who have attempted to “leave” Hinduism or a lowly caste position by converting (or by being converted) to Christianity. Many converts are from the community Bailey called “Pano,” who are now designated as a Scheduled Caste (Mahapatra and Bhattacharya 1996[←NOT IN REFERENCES]). The “Pano” label is still widely used, but carries extremely derogatory connotations. Many former “Pano” prefer to be addressed by Gandhi’s term “Harijan,” but some do not because communities of even lower status than their own are also counted as “Harijan.” In Bisipada, as elsewhere, the “Pano” were clients of the Kandha and interacted on the basis of unequal status. The Kandha regard themselves as the high status “people of the earth” (Hardenberg 2005) and their clients as people who serve the Kandha and mediate between them and the “rest of the world.” Patron-client relationships between these two groups remain tangible and many Kandha would hesitate to go to a market to sell the products of their agricultural labor without a “Pano/Harijan” middleman. These relationships, however, now have an edge of uncertainty, because violence elsewhere has been used to change this particular ordering of the social world.

At its heart, mass incivility in Odisha is a struggle along ethnic lines over access to scarce resources, accompanied by a strong anti-Christian, anti-missionary, and anti-conversion discourse that is often led by Hindu nationalist organizations. Conversion introduces destabilizing uncertainty to local conceptions of hierarchy and status between communities (Chatterji 2009; Wankhede 2009). Christians become a conspicuous minority. Having “left” their caste symbolically, they can be blamed for undermining the stable hierarchical order. Alongside this, many Kandhas regard themselves as victims who need to fight those who traditionally were subordinate to them. Moreover, the state and neo-liberal economic policies have facilitated rapacious extraction industries that (so the argument goes) have fomented communal unrest in the region through divide-and-rule strategies implemented via corporate social responsibility managers (also see Editorial 2008). Across the region, mass hostility between Kandha and Pano is inflected by the specter of conversion. In Bisipada, it manifests itself in language, nods, and winks. The latent conflicts between the Kandha and Pano castes are readily discussed in communal terms, often in hushed voices or behind closed doors.

PART III: CONTOURS OF POSTCOLONIAL RURAL CHANGE

Since the 1950s, the materials of village life have transformed, as have the speed and intensity of connections through technology and infrastructure. Villagers are subject to policies hatched in Delhi, Washington, D.C., and Manila, and debt, capital, and insurance markets influence their fortunes. Village life is shaped by the ideas of states, development organizations, and the marketing and sales divisions of multi-national enterprises. Constellations of agents enter and leave through satellite dishes, seeds, bullock carts, and other forms of vibrant matter. In liberalizing India, such influences play directly into how villagers understand and relate to one another. Clearly, rural life has changed a great deal, but such change, particularly the decline in

the significance of agriculture, goes hand in hand with our larger story.

To recap, the 1950s ethnographies describe villages ordered by the cycles and demands of an agricultural way of life and by caste hierarchy, often with a “dominant caste.” When we examine fieldnotes or texts, even reading between the lines, we find no incivility conducted in the name of religion. There is a palpable sense that the villages were on the cusp of change due to the arrival of democracy, government, and legislation. There is little methodological nostalgia; that is, these anthropologists did not portray themselves as witnessing a loss of a more authentic Golden Age. All three provided historical accounts showing that the villages and villagers of that time differed from the past.

New fieldwork in these locations revealed that the crucial divisions now are reservations, caste, and religion. Hierarchy persists, but the key lines of publicly articulated incivility are between religious rather than caste groupings. In all three locations, less so Bisipada than Jamgod and Sundarana, the significance of landholding and agricultural production has declined, while political parties and religious sects play major roles in the production of difference. Cash wealth usually trumps land in terms of status acquisition. In villages today religious difference is the most audible, since vernacular sociological language has grafted Hindu nationalist frames onto the language of difference. We cannot show whether villages are more or less civil today than they were; rather, we suggest that the *kinds* of incivility and difference most noticeable to anthropologists in the 1950s have been overshadowed by the language of politicized religion. The evidence strongly suggests that the orientation of public civility has shifted away from caste and toward religion.

This conclusion requires two intertwined clarifications, one methodological and the other empirical. Methodologically, how sure can we be that religious incivility was indeed absent in

the 1950s? Might the ethnographers working in the new secular and democratic country have been uninterested to religion? If their structural-functionalism blinded them to the domination on which caste inequalities relied, did they also discount the significance of religion? Empirically, if this change has occurred, how did it happen? What occurred in the intervening decades to promote religious distinctions above those of caste?

Methods and Seeing

Today, “village studies” are unfashionable. Research in villages is still undertaken but is generally presented in other topical terms, such as agrarian capital (Gidwani 2008), sexuality (Ramberg 2014), and striving (Singh 2015). For Ron Inden (1990: 157–61), “village studies” perpetuated colonial thinking, particularly a presumption of structure, villagers’ lack of agency, and the essentialism of the category. He identifies key dichotomies in the genre: pre-determinism/economic rationality (alternatively tradition/modernity or custom/cash), with India’s cellular rural society falsely split between inner and outer forms and the village/state division reflecting an ill-conceived separation of the social and the political. More recently, critics such as Mathur (2000) represent the 1950s work as an un-reflexive contribution to a modernist developmental agenda.

Yet, these criticisms are difficult to sustain across the range of village studies of the period. For a start, Mayer and Bailey had quite different approaches and styles, although they thought they were on the same side, but their differences pale when put beside the civilizational approach of Brown, Dumont, and Pocock, who considered texts, villages, and the nation to be united. Moreover, working alongside Mayer and Bailey has made us realize how profound but also how problematic these critiques are, for they portray past scholarship negatively according to the unproblematic values of a later *Zeitgeist*. In the 1950s, not to have some relationship with the

colonial categories with which the ethnographers had themselves grown up would have been nothing less than remarkable. In any case, colonial language, categories, and revenue regimes, however fragmentary and partial, had deeply penetrated the fabric of rural life, as they still do.

Those writing in the 1950s were not simpletons interested in perpetuating the British Empire; quite the contrary. On occasion, when discussing these criticisms with both Mayer and Bailey, we encountered sadness and a sense that the world had moved beyond them. As exceptionally old men, they were out of time. Their anthropology remained, preserved in books and papers, but it was no longer understood or read. The time and conditions in which it was produced have gone. The villages they described are now unbelievable. Their past was another country, against which there is active sniping from postcolonial scholars. As Mines and Yazgi (2011) have pointed out, many of the accusations levelled at earlier generations of anthropologists simply do not ring true if you read the original works.

In other ways, though, Inden's critique exposes the conceptual foundations of the structural-functional village (see also Uberoi, Sundar, and Deshpande 2010). Pocock, Mayer, and Bailey worked mainly with landed elites and described village life from their perspectives. They saw this as loyalty to the ethnographic reality. They conducted land surveys the results of which directed subsequent investigation. They also intended their research to be "holistic," an aim that is easy to criticize in the abstract. Given the sizes of the villages in the 1950s, though, that might have seemed an ethnographically influenced reality, albeit with elite inflection. Their holistic ambitions make it all the more significant that in their fieldnotes they did not refer to incivility conducted in the name of religion.

Mayer (1957) and Pocock (1957) contributed to debates on factions and factionalism, both hot topics at the time. Also in the 1950s, Oscar Lewis (1958) saw that land, irrigation, housing,

adoption, sexual offences, and inter-caste rivalries were the main causes of incivility in Rampur (in Delhi State), and he adopted the term “quarrel” as an organizing category. Irawati Karve and Yashwant Damle (1963) combined “faction” and “quarrel” in their analysis of villages in Maharashtra. Gerald Berreman (1972) and Owen Lynch (1969), writing about Himalayan and urban contexts, respectively, recorded rebellion and activism against the established orders. In other words, the study of conflict in rural India was an established theme of research, not something to ignore or dismiss.

Furthermore, Bailey and Mayer both recorded incivility frequently in their fieldnotes. Bailey, for instance, employed several “diary-keepers” who chronicled village events. The documents they produced refer endlessly to fights between individuals, thefts, and slanging matches for which complex explanations are often provided. There is a shocking repetition of domestic violence.⁴ In a personal register, Bailey was attuned to conflict from his active service at the end of the Second World War, and violence was also a cornerstone of his Manchester anthropology. Mayer had been on the streets in Calcutta in 1946 during a well-known incidence of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims.

Zooming out from these observations, the absence of *religious* incivility in their accounts is notable and intriguing. Historians have discussed the formation of communal (in this case Hindu-Muslim) identities both before (Bayly 1985) and during the colonial period (Pandey 1990). Pocock, Mayer, and Bailey worked in regions where there had been violent events that we would now describe as “communal.” Western India had seen “riots” and the rise of communal discourse in the late nineteenth century, at least in urban areas (Krishnaswamy 1966).

To make matters more puzzling still, they conducted their fieldwork just a few years after the violence of Partition in 1947. Whilst Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa were not at the

epicenter of the bloodshed or population movement, high-level politics had been rehearsing differences between Hindus and Muslims for decades before independence. The main political parties of the period were at loggerheads and also internally divided throughout the 1930s and 1940s over the future of a single or divided country. Political personalities had become synonymous with religious communities and the call for a distinct Muslim territory had deeply divided public opinion long before Partition. Why are these senses of religious and political distinction absent from the notes the anthropologists diligently typed up at the time?

News of Partition must have been fragmented, partial, and disassembled. Neither Mayer nor Bailey recalled any conversations on the topic at the time. It is possible that, as anthropologists, they considered the topic to belong to political science. The political history (Talbot and Singh 2009), subaltern (Pandey 2001), and alternative or revisionist (Nair 2011) accounts marking the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of Partition string events together into a single narrative in ways that were simply unimagined back then in these villages. Voices of victims and perpetrators were rediscovered or uncovered for the first time. An event has been made, helped along by the sequencing of media and film. One might be forgiven now for casually believing that the entire subcontinent was overrun by the lunacy involved in making new nations overnight. That even the fieldnotes did not reference Partition persuades us that things then were not as we now imagine.

The Missing Decades

In the 1950s, the seeds, sprays, and debt of the agricultural revolution were some years off. Since then, Nehru's protective socialism, influenced by postcolonial and Cold War politics, has given way to the forces of (neo)liberalization and globalization (see Corbridge and Harriss 2000 for a review). Land reforms (Mendelsohn 1993) and new technologies and markets have transformed

social relationships in agricultural, rural societies to relations grounded in cash transactions (see Breman 1974). André Béteille (1965) described the effects of mobility on village life as social relations have overflowed the boundaries of villages: villagers move to cities; strangers move to villages; social class enters the political scene; and particular groups no longer monopolize education—the village is transformed. At the same time, public health programs enhanced survival rates, albeit inequitably, and between the two periods of fieldwork India's population grew threefold, to around 1.3 billion.

As Untouchability legislation and affirmative action policies began coming into force, Bailey foresaw that those subject to reservations would move closer to the state and the rest to a market-led economy (a central theme of Bailey 1957), an assertion repeated in recent literature (Higham and Shah 2013). In the 1980s, following the Mandal Commission, “reserved” positions in central government and public undertakings were extended to nearly half[NEARLY HALF OF WHAT? THE POPULATION?]. Other legislation changed the language of discrimination law, including what can and cannot be said. More recently, gendered reservations have been implemented. In most of the country, and in none of the regions that we focused on in this study, reservations specifically for religious minorities have not been introduced (although some members of religious minorities may obtain entitlements if those minorities are also an Other Backward Class, a Scheduled Caste, or a Scheduled Tribe).

Likewise, in all three study villages, wage labor, commerce, and migration grew in significance, eroding the previous divisions of labor. The state brought new resources, opportunities, and employment, and the villages became still more deeply embedded in global systems of agriculture and commerce. The key accompaniment to such trends, which comes through in the ethnography of today, has been the domestication of Hindu nationalist thought in

rural India, which has softened the boundaries between Hindu castes, smudged the boundaries between those with and without reservations, and partitioned religious minorities from the new “village community.”

In the postcolonial period, India’s political and sociological language has been significantly reformulated. Central to this has been the rise of Hindu nationalist politics, led nowadays by the BJP. The party has held uninterrupted power in Gujarat since 1998 and Madhya Pradesh since 2003, and has held national power intermittently, including since 2014 under the leadership of Narendra Modi, Gujarat’s erstwhile Chief Minister. In March of 2017, the BJP won the state election in the most populous state of Uttar Pradesh and made the saffron robed Yogi Adityanath the Chief Minister. That same month a bill was passed in Gujarat permitting life sentences for those who slaughter cows or transport beef.

From the vantage of Gujarat, Modi’s national success and more recent victory in Uttar Pradesh were not accidents, but rather results of a Hindu nationalist agenda actively promoted over many decades. The BJP’s experiment in Gujarat entailed conservative social policies, free markets, foreign policy driven by a nationalist agenda, and strong national defense, and they advocate this program as a template for the entire nation. The BJP’s platform is to the right of India’s political spectrum, especially in comparison with its main traditional rival, the Indian National Congress (commonly known as “the Congress” or “Congress”). Congress emerged in the campaign against British colonialism and was the dominant party for decades after independence, but it has lost much of its earlier influence, partly due to poor organization (especially at the grassroots), partly because people believe the family dynasty of Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi, her son Rajiv, his widow Sonia, and her son Rahul has grown wealthy while the country stagnated.

The cultural ideas legitimating the BJP's political agendas predate its formation as a modern political party. Many important civil society organizations in India are inspired by religious and nationalistic ideals. Among them, the Sangh Parivar (Family of the "Sangh") is a collection of organizations linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or National Volunteer Organization) that arose during the anticolonial struggle in the first half of the twentieth century. The RSS visualizes the nation as one in which the principles of Indian civilization (as the RSS sees them) should form the basis of individual subjectivity, collective identity, and political life. Hindus are the authentic and natural inhabitants of India, while Muslims, Christians, and obstinate colonial ideas, such as secularism, are seen as alien and unfitting. The RSS aims to instill suitable moral values in the population and to produce leaders for reascent Hindu India. RSS members are trained to be strong-willed and disciplined, and to run camps and campaign on various social and cultural issues. The RSS organizes a vast network of schools and offices throughout rural India, with divisions for youth and women, and it trained many of the BJP's current leaders. Today, its influence and messages run deep as it has moved toward, and been accepted within, the formal governmental structures at state and national levels.

A related organization is Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, or World Hindu Council), a cultural society founded in 1964 to campaign for the revival of the ancient signs of Hindu might and amity across India. Like the RSS, the VHP promulgates the ideas of a Hindu race and a natural unit of territory known as Bharat (India), a land of former glories weakened by past invaders. The VHP has previously campaigned for the removal of legislation and commissions that protect minorities, including separate personal laws for Muslims and others, and in favor of a uniform civil code. They want Sanskrit to be a compulsory language taught in schools, while Urdu, a language associated with Muslims and Pakistan but commonly spoken in North India, would be

dropped as an official language. They argue that activities associated with Hindu worship and temple construction should be exempt from taxes. They want non-vegetarianism and the consumption of alcohol to be “discouraged” by the state, abattoirs closed, and a ban placed on meat exports. They say prominent Hindu festivals should be national holidays and place-names should revert to those purportedly used before invaders altered or mispronounced them.

In the drive to homogenize Hindu society, united with votes and against minority Muslims and Christians[←I PUT IN NOTE 5], the organizations of the Sangh Parivar have both rejected “casteism” and supported the structures of caste.⁵ They have drawn on nationalist philosophers such as M. S. Golwalkar (1952) and Deendayal Upadhyaya (1965), who argued that caste was a scientific social structure replicating the different limbs of the social body. They stressed the importance of keeping this idea alive to prevent complementary castes from becoming the source of distorting conflict; that is, the need to keep the “body” whole.

In all three regions looked at here,[←IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN?] the RSS has developed links with rural farming associations, labor unions, and women’s groups. The organization also campaigns to integrate Dalits and Adivasis into mainstream Hindu life and sees this as a means to both create a stronger society and prevent the persecuted and excluded from undertaking religious conversion in search of a better life. Dalits and Adivasis have been on the frontlines of the incivility promoted by organized nationalism (see Chatterji on Odisha, 2009; Baviskar on Madhya Pradesh, 2005; and Varadarajan 2002 on Gujarat). In the case of Dalits, the RSS mainstreams Dalit concerns using statues and commemorations of the Dalit symbolic leader B. R. Ambedkar. Anti-conversion acts, called Freedom of Religion acts, passed in Gujarat (in 2003 and 2008), Orissa (1967) and Madhya Pradesh (1968), have visited critical attentions and violence on Christian missions that have historically found great success among Dalits and

tribals.

Accompanying the “saffron wave” (to use Hansen’s apt phrase, 1999), although perhaps not the sole cause of it, has been the growth and transformation of violence in India. Ghanshyam Shah and the late Ashgar Ali Engineer chronicled decades of violence in western India in the pages of *Economic and Political Weekly*. They showed how there was an intensification of conflict and a dual shift from caste to religion and from urban to related urban and rural conflict, [← I DON’T UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANS. “URBAN TO RELATED URBAN AND RURAL”; CAN YOU CLARIFY?] especially in Gujarat (see Simpson 2011). As Tambiah (1996) observed, the phase of nation-building in the decades after independence was radically tested by the spread of violent ethnic conflict from the 1960s onward. In subsequent decades, religious nationalism and violence became dominant themes in the vast South Asian literature. Paul Brass (2003) and Peter van der Veer (1994) discussed the design and execution of communalism and violence in northern India and the political manufacture of religious difference. Others have demonstrated how the thoughts and words of pre-independence Hindu nationalist ideologues, who were often engaged in battles against colonial rule, entered public discourse through organized strategies (Jaffrelot 1996).

Collectively, these literatures rightly draw together the languages of politics, culture, and religion as a mode (usually with a materialist girdle) [DO YOU MEAN “WITHIN A MATERIALIST FRAMEWORK”?] through which to explain the upsurge in violence. Violent incidents have terrible and lingering local effects, and they have an afterlife in that they change the possibilities and parameters of action. Violence also rebounds and travels and has consequences in other, often otherwise peaceful places. This is why the frameworks through which violence can be understood and interpreted in India are so important, and why the

literature focuses so firmly on “constructions.” Such frameworks have been constructed all over the country. Violence hardens such frameworks and gives them more certain form. In the postcolonial period a new violence-laden public language has emerged.

Major incidents of religious violence occurred in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh in 1961, and Ahmedabad in Gujarat in 1969. In the east of the country, riots with religious undercurrents took place where Hindu refugees from East Pakistan had settled, notably Rourkela (1964) and Jamshedpur (1965). These critical and tragic events have become part of a national narrative. Today, given a boost by mass communication technologies, images of burning, stabbing, and beating are circulated widely and serve as an extra or meta-language for the language of Hindu nationalism and fear. In recent years, religious violence has been provoked in advance of both national and regional elections to frame political campaigns.

In the villages we studied, the language of Hindu nationalism is embedded and sophisticated, and draws on revisionist, selective history. Difference is constructed between communities historically, ethically, and morally, and the message is transmitted through education, media and speeches, pamphleteering, and camps. Since the early 2000s, anti-Muslim rhetoric in India has gained new sources of legitimacy and imagery in the fall of the twin towers, an international “war on terror,” and the Mumbai gun attacks of 2008. In sum, big events matter in villages today and Hindu nationalist frameworks for understanding caste and religion have become integral to village life.

CONCLUSION

Anthropologists were actively interested in rural conflict in India in the 1950s. Incivility and violence feature in the notes of Mayer and Bailey. As we have implied, the legitimacy of non-Hindus as research subjects and citizens at the time was often handled in an ambiguous register,

especially, it seems, in the elite sphere of which the academy was part. Muslims in Sundarana and Jamgod and Christians in Bisipara were well-known to all three of the anthropologists we have looked at here, yet they never brought incivility and religion together as today's ethnography does so prominently.

Since the 1950s, the intertwined forces of government and Hindu nationalism have left new imprints on village life. The key categories of the state and the boundary-work of the nationalists coincide, but they do not seek the same ends[←IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN?]. Moreover, the actual effects of their interventions seldom match their intentions, for they are highly dependent on the make-up of particular villages. On a general level, however, Untouchables and Adivasis became Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Legislation created categorical blocs of entitlement that brought reserved groups closer to the state, but also into continuing conflict with non-reserved groups, among whom the BJP and the private sector are most at home. Meanwhile, Hindu nationalists aim to blur these boundaries and incorporate the reserved groups into their greater project.

Caste remains central for understanding many villages, and neither democracy nor secular governance have swept it away. Caste has, however, been muted, substantialized, and de-systematized in the face of Hindu nationalism and the new economy. C. J. Fuller (1996), for instance, argued that the growing public repudiation of notions of in-born purity and pollution as the structuring principles of caste hierarchy has been accompanied by insistence that Hindu castes are distinguished by culture. Muslims and Christians, once encompassed or incorporated by village hierarchies, have been transformed into distinct and absolute others.

Hindu organizations have worked systematically to claim India's history and create a national political space in their own terms. Rural Muslims, too, have become part of

transnational networks of knowledge and finance, and have embraced ideas of reform and purity. Christians are implicated in narratives emanating from the contentious debates over conversion, rights, and legislation. In the process, religion has come to appear as the key to modern rural incivility, not simply as false consciousness superimposed on village life to disguise other inequalities, but as moral and absolute differentiation. The frames of Partition arrived in postcolonial villages long after those tragic events occurred. In villages across India, the rules of the game have changed since the time when things were reproduced in black and white: now the bright colors and indifference of a new Hindu nationalist polity have taken root. [←I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR (MIXED) METAPHORS HERE. I'M AFRAID THEY ARE TOO OPAQUE. CAN YOU SAY WHAT YOU MEAN IN A STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY?]

The temple dispute in Bisipada might be seen as a triumph of the levelling effects of democracy, an opening up of democratic space for debate and contestation. The former Untouchable castes overthrew dominant caste hegemony to gain a legitimate place within the moral community of the village. The language of distinction within the village indicates, however, that earlier sentiments have not simply evaporated, but have instead become the cause of latent, yet deep, resentment. Violence has become a political resource and is regularly ignited throughout Odisha. The everyday incivility of village life carries with it the knowledge and possibility of violence. If we follow Bailey's original argument, the people for whom violence is a possibility no longer calculate the costs of it. Or perhaps more accurately, they calculate that the rules of the game have changed: they are no longer playing for the village moral community, for which violence was too high a price to pay, but rather for a new sense of community formed by the sentiments and connections of Hindu nationalism.

Mayer described Jamgod as a hierarchical caste order. What the nation looks like depends,

of course, on whether you are included and, if so, whether you are most influenced by the state, the party, or the association. In Jamgod, the gap between these views is closing as distinctions between the nationalist association, political party, and the state are being eroded. Today, Jamgod is divided by an inflamed schism between Hindus and Muslims. The message of religious differentiation is louder and more ubiquitous than any other, and is dominated by the party, work, and language of the BJP. Hindu nationalism has promoted the message of “India is one,” a “Great Tradition,” echoing the older sociology of Dumont and Pocock (1957[←IS THIS 1957a or 1957b?]) and Marriott (1955a). The “Great Tradition” has become, like the village, an ethnographic artefact. It is no longer found only in the literate religious tradition (as Marriott believed), but in the lives, words, and imaginations of India’s villagers. Villages have opened up: the events, personalities, and tragedies of the nation have acquired meaning in the sociological contours of village life. In line with the gradual hardening of religious identities we have described for Madhya Pradesh, the RSS is planning to move its headquarters to the region in the belief that the organization has much to gain there.

For Pocock in the 1950s, a dominant caste, the Patidar, was central to what went on in Sundarana. This remains true today, but how the other communities of the village are arranged and understood has shifted. Once at the subordinate center of village life, Muslims are now on the very margins. Since 2014, the Patidars have been leading a newsworthy agitation for the caste to be recognized as an Other Backward Class. While there are marginalized Patidars in the region, to convey such a right on this caste, the region’s major land-holders, would make a mockery of the rationale for reservations. But this is presumably the point: to mark the return to caste, Upadhyaya’s “limbs of a unified body” (1965), religion having done its job in uniting an electorate.[YOU DON’T NEED TO TELL US WHO HE IS AGAIN SINCE YOU TOLD US

THIS JUST SIX PAGES AGO. YOU HAD HIS NAME SPELLED TWO DIFFERENT WAYS, AND NOW ALL ARE “Upadhyaya” (WITH AN “a” AT THE END)]

People in Jamgod would understand the poverty of those marginalized in Gujarat. Someone from Sundarana would recognize the conflict between reserved and non-reserved castes in Bisipara (though the caste *names* would mean nothing to them). They could take sides, believing they understood the essence of the incivility that now has a standard format in the national register. News of the Gujarat violence in 2002 travelled the country and was readily understood by those without first-hand knowledge of the state. In Sundarana, Jamgod’s new mosque would certainly be seen as both a Muslim conspiracy to harm India and an attempt to build a stronger community and wider networks. Stories inspired by the cleavages of Partition, the grassroots activism of the Hindu nationalists, and the national political leaders who have been implicated in communal violence have all contributed to creating new rural publics, who see their interests mirrored in the incivilities of other rural folk.

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This is the accepted version of a forthcoming article accepted for publication in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* published by Cambridge University Press: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/comparative-studies-in-society-and-history/all-issues>

Accepted version downloaded from SOAS Research Online: <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/24377/>

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Abstract: Anthropological studies of Indian villages conducted in the 1950s and 1960s form a valuable archive of rural life soon after India's independence. We compare sections of that archive with recent fieldwork in the same villages in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. If we trust the ethnography of the 1950s, domestic and caste spheres were the locations of village incivility. It is noteworthy that there is no reference in the early work to the Partition of the sub-continent which had occurred just a few years earlier. Neither is there mention of discrimination or violence conducted in the name of religion in these locations. New fieldwork reveals a different story about the rise of wholesale religious incivility in the public sphere. Caste has not vanished, but inter-caste relations have taken on new forms. We suggest that the intersection of affirmative action policies, political parties, and the systematic penetration of Hindu nationalist organizations has been crucial in the remaking of rural India.

Key Words: India, postcolonial, village studies, anthropology, violence, Hindu nationalism, Partition, social change

Acknowledgments: Research was funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ES/I02123X/1). We are grateful to Maddalena Chiellini, Lucia Michelutti, Chris Fuller, Anne Gold, Pinakin Patel, David Mosse, Johnny Parry, Sunny Suna, Mohamed Vohra, and Susan Wadley. The anonymous *CSSH* reviewers gave us much to consider and curtailed some shortcomings. Our greatest debts are to Adrian Mayer and F. G. Bailey for opening their archives and lives.

¹ We use the different names of villages and states to distinguish then from now.

² This seems to have been a widespread response. See "Orissa Temple Entry Bill Obstruction to be Punished" (*Times of India*, 22 Feb. 1948: 7): "...the Government found themselves in a helpless position when a trustee took up a recalcitrant attitude and refused to follow the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the worshippers of the temple."

³ The "true believer" is found repeatedly in Bailey's work, helping him to understand why some people and not others are attracted to fundamentalisms and bigotry.

⁴ Without going into detail, Bailey's digitized fieldnotes can be found in an online archive hosted by the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The interested reader's attention is drawn to volume 4, in particular. [CAN YOU GIVE A WEB LINK?]

⁵ On politics and strategy in the twentieth century, see Jaffrelot 1996.[←DO YOU MEAN THE POLITICS AND STRATEGY OF THIS PARTICULAR PARTY? CLARIFY.]