

A Bibliography on Ancient Indian Slavery

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The following is a first attempt to provide an up-to-date and fairly comprehensive listing of the available secondary works on Ancient Indian Slavery. I am afraid, however, that I can lay little claim to any special expertise in the topic of the study of slavery. My own field of interest is the study of Buddhism, particularly that of Ancient (that is, pre-Muslim) India. Nevertheless, while conducting research on slavery and Buddhism in Ancient India, I came to realize that the general topic of slavery in Ancient India, much less the problem of the relations between the institutions of slavery and the Buddhist Church, has not been subject to any reliable, historically and sociologically sensitive, study. The present short work is not meant to fill this void, especially since I am separately preparing my study of the latter topic. But it does have two other main purposes.

First, I have noticed that even specialists in the study of comparative slavery tend to rely on only one or two of the same works on India again and again. I will not enter here into the qualms I feel, as an Indologist, about the reliability of some of these works. I would like to stress, however, through this bibliography, that a fair amount of other material *is* available. It would certainly behoove the interested specialist to seek out this material, rather than relying, as is often done, simply on the works of Chanana and Bongert, however helpful these may be. Secondly, I would hope that this bibliography might spur some interest in the study of ancient Indian slavery, either by specialists in slavery or by Indologists. I might simply mention here that my own research on slavery and Buddhism indicates that slavery was seen, even from within religious movements moderns like to think of as socially "progressive," as a totally normal part of life in Ancient India, and it met no opposition from the Buddhist Church. This may not surprise those familiar with, for example, the history of slavery and the Christian Church in the Classical world and elsewhere, but those who concern themselves primarily with Buddhism find this result shocking. (Part of the problem here, if not the entire problem, is caused, of course, by the same prejudices pointed out with regard to Western traditions by the late Sir Moses Finley.) Another area in which detailed research remains to be undertaken is the study of South Indian slavery. Especially given the huge amount of epigraphical material available from the southern parts of the sub-continent, this should prove a most fruitful study.

I had not originally intended to compile a bibliography, and so I merely collected notes for my own research. When I realized, however, that no adequate biblio-

graphy existed, I decided to compile my own notes and produce one. This has, I am afraid, meant that I have probably missed not only the obscure, but some things I actually saw but which I decided were of no value to me and thus did not take note of. I have, moreover, intended to limit this bibliography in several ways. First of all it concerns itself almost exclusively with pre-Muslim India, India in this case meaning the Indian sub-continent, but generally excluding Ceylon. This has been done for the simple reason that my own interests are in pre-Muslim India, and in my own research, for various reasons, I decided to omit any consideration of Ceylon. To include entries on Ceylon then would have necessitated undertaking another full search of the literature. (It should be noted, however, that there seems to be much material available on Ceylonese slavery, and especially its relations with the monastic institutions of the Buddhist Church.) My ignorance of Russian and other eastern European languages has meant that what I expect is a considerable corpus of material in those languages has not been taken into account. (It may be that much of this, like the vast corpus of material in Chinese on Chinese slavery, deals not with what we might consider slavery proper but rather with attempts to establish the Marxist position that a "Slave Society" existed at a certain point. The utility for slavery studies of listing such research seems to me dubious. However, see the addendum to this bibliography.) I have also been unable to take into account material written in modern Indian languages. A few references to works in these categories, otherwise excluded, have been included when I have run across them. Many general surveys of Indian history also include some comments on slavery, but these are virtually always highly derivative and, being of little or no independent value, they have not been taken into account.

The most common Sanskrit word for slave is *dāsa*, feminine *dāsī*. In recent years interest in the study of the *devadāsī* traditions of India has increased. Literally *devadāsī* means "slave woman of the gods", but in usage the term refers rather to temple prostitutes. References to this topic are omitted here since I believe that, despite the literal meaning of the term, there is nothing to connect this institution sociologically or historically with slavery proper. I have, however, included references to *viṣṭi* or forced labor (*corvée*) which, at least sociologically speaking, seems closer to the main topic.

I am quite conscious of the limitations of this bibliography, and I welcome corrections, suggestions and further references from interested readers.

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Addendum

When he sent me the proofs for the present bibliography, the editor, Professor Wezler, kindly included a list of suggested additions he had received from Dr. Maria Schetelich, "Ergänzung zur Bibliographie 'Sklaverei im alten Indien,'" containing mostly Russian titles. I reproduce these below as is, although I am unable to evaluate their relevance or importance. As Dr. Wezler observed in his letter to me, it may be that some of these studies are significant only in "throwing light on the ideological fetters of Soviet, and East European, Indology." Dr. Schetelich's list also contained reference to several works in English and German on *sūdras*; I have omitted these since I believe the study of the latter to be a separate problem from that of slavery, although of course the two are in some ways related. Three valuable works on slavery noted by Dr. Schetelich were overlooked by me initially, though I have taken the liberty of adding them to the bibliography above, namely Breloer 1928 and 1929, and Meyer 1929; I have been able to see only the latter two. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Schetelich for her generosity, and herewith list the Russian titles she has adduced:

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A. PARPOLA. "The Coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the Cultural and Ethnic Identity of the Dāsas." *Studia Orientalia* (Finnish Oriental Society 64) 1988: 195-302 Not on slavery

TASAKI KUNHIKO 田崎國彦, 「似」仏教教団に
おける「財産」所有の問題 - 土地・
金銭類・奴隷 - 東洋大学大学院
紀要 27 (199_); 156-137 (1-20)

K. Chattopādhyāya "Dāsā and dāsya in the R̥gveda-Samihitā" *Atti del XV Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti* (Roma; Tipografia del Senato, 1938): 305-11.

Author's Copy

**Studien
zur
Indologie und Iranistik**

herausgegeben von
Georg Buddruss, Oskar von Hinüber
Hanns-Peter Schmidt, Albrecht Wezler
und Michael Witzel

Band 16/17

Dr. Inge Wezler
Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen
Reinbek 1992

Die STUDIEN ZUR INDOLOGIE UND IRANISTIK (StII) erscheinen jährlich in mindestens einem Heft. Sie werden herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Georg Buddruss (Neuindisch), Seminar für Indologie, Postfach 3980, D-6500 Mainz; Prof. Dr. Oskar von Hinüber (Mittelindisch), Orientalisches Seminar, Abt. Indologie, Universität Freiburg, Humboldtstr. 5, D-7800 Freiburg; Prof. Dr. Hanns-Peter Schmidt (Iranistik), University of California, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Los Angeles, CAL. 90024, USA; Prof. Dr. Michael Witzel, Harvard University, Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies; Grays Hall 1, Cambridge, MASS. 02138, USA.

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ISSN 0341-4191

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Druck & Kopie, Hamburg

Contents

VIDYUT AKLUJKAR: The Self-reflective Rhetoric of Ram Ganesh Gadkari (1885-1919)	1
HEIDRUN BRÜCKNER / NARASIMHA POTI: "Dhūmāvati Bhūta": An oral Tuḷu-text collected in the 19th cent. Edition, Translation, and Analysis.	13
GEORG BUDDRUSS: Waigali-Sprichwörter	65
GERHARD EHLERS: Zum Jyotiṣṭoma Ritual des Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa	81
DAVID P. JACKSON: A Recent Translation of Sa-skya Paṇḍita's Thub pa'i dgongs gsal	93
BERNHARD KÖLVER: Das Symbol <i>evam</i>	101
LEONARD W. J. VAN DER KUIJP: Notes Apropos of the Transmission of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet	109
MICHAEL MARTINEC: Anmerkungen zur Katalogisierung indischer Handschriften in Deutschland	127
M. A. MEHENDALE: Avestan <i>garad-</i> and <i>garazdi-</i>	147
MAREK MEJOR: Some Problems of the Sanskrit Lexicography (Review Article)	149
THOMAS OBERLIES: Verschiedene neu-entdeckte Texte des Cāndravyākaraṇa und ihre Verfasser (Studien zum Cāndravyākaraṇa II)	161
CLAUS OETKE: Pragmatic Implicatures and Text-Interpretation (the Alleged Logical Error of the Negation of the Antecedent in the Mūlamadhya-makārikās)	185
SREERAMULA RAJESWARA SARMA: Astronomical Instruments in Mughal Miniatures	235
JONATHAN A. SILK: A Bibliography on Ancient Indian Slavery	277
ALBRECHT WEZLER: Paralipomena zum Sarvasarvātmakatvavāda II: On the Sarvasarvātmakatvavāda and its Relation to the Vṛkṣāyurveda	287
Publications Received	317
Contributors	319