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Positioning Identity in (Post-)Colonial Germany Across East Africa, India, and Europe – The Case of Ranga Reinhardt Kaundinya

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Abstract

This article illuminates the variety and diversity of mechanisms and strategies of (European) identification that were used by Ranga Reinhardt Kaundinya. The Indo-German was born into a German Indian (Brahmin) family in service of the Protestant Basel Mission from Switzerland. Having spent his youth in India, Germany, and Switzerland, he later became a planter in India before managing a cotton plantation in German East Africa (GEA). Producing his identity in a visual source and two German publications released during WWI, the examination of Kaundinya's sources offers a perspective on how an individual developed an (European) identity in colonial frameworks and dynamics of power across three continents and two empires. In the field of tension between race, class, gender, and religion, he drew on the image of a virile, *white* colonial hunter and on the self-image of an experienced colonial planter. He further attempted to distance himself from his Brahmin descent and to exploit the Christian part of his family history instead. Moreover, he criticized British colonial rule of India. He even envisioned his own European identity and a vague Indo-German alliance. Amalgamating major ideas of Orientalism, racist thought, and geopolitical theories prominent at the *fin du siècle*, he called this alliance 'Indo-Germania.'

Keywords: Kaundinya; German East Africa; Identity; Indo-Germania; Europeanness

Introduction

The photograph, which was taken at an undetermined date between 1907 and 1914, depicts a typical scene of colonial imagery: at the centre, an apparently European man in tropical hunting gear proudly presents his hunted down booty – a large bird of prey – spreading its wings to display their big span. His friendly face reveals a simultaneously happy and proud smile that shows the satisfaction and joy of his hunting adventure. In the background, parts of a house are visible. On the veranda, a person of African descent observes the scene. His face is barely visible, but his long white dress suggests that he worked as a personal servant for the pictured hunter.¹ The servant's 'facelessness' and the proud presentation of the

¹ Michael Rösser, "Of Mule and Men. An Engineer, Beast of Burden and Personal Servants at the Construction Sites of the Central Railway in German East Africa," *German History*, 43:4 (2025), 519–32. Robbie Aitken, "Forgotten Histories: Recovering the precarious lives of African servants in imperial Germany," in *Locating African European Studies. Interventions, Intersections, Conversations*, ed. Felipe Espinoza Garrido et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 139–50.

hunting booty nurtured ideas of European domination over the people and nature of Africa. Accordingly, both had to be tamed and thus civilised through the colonisers' intrusion.²

The hunting 'sporting code' was crucial to identify not only the ruling race, but also class belonging and corresponding upbringing. In a colonial setting, hunting, as former privilege of Europe's nobility, became an activity pursued and cherished by many colonisers not only of upper-class descent but also with middle- and working-class backgrounds. Taking up the nobility's leisure activity in the colonies thus contributed to the colonisers' self-image of being legitimate rulers over beast and man. Hunting thus resembled and enacted colonial dominance at the same time. Especially the big game hunt contributed to boost a coloniser's identity into that of a virile colonial ruler. Autobiographic hunting stories therefore addressed the readers' expectation that colonial rule would tame African wildlife and thus civilize vast territories.³ If accompanied by photography "possessing a picture of oneself killing something else might also be seen as a very powerful subject position. [...] [T]he hunter becomes the active subject, embodying a manly colonial ideal."⁴ Haschemi Yekani's general observation regarding the interrelationship between the colonial hunt and photography is certainly applicable to Figure 1. Examining the biography of the supposedly European hunter more closely, however, illuminates the variety and diversity of mechanisms and strategies of European identification that were mobilised for private, commercial, and political aims to access resources and influence in different geographical and temporal contexts. For the hunter in Figure 1, these contexts spanned from German East Africa (GEA), via India to (post)colonial Germany. His name was Ranga Reinhardt Kaundinya and he became a citizen of the German Kingdom of Württemberg in 1911.

Ranga was born into an Indo-German missionary family in 1863. His father Herrmann Anandrao was the son of a Brahmin family and later became a Christian missionary in India. On behalf of the Basel Mission and alongside his wife, a southwest German, he became the first – and, for a long time, the only – Christian missionary of Indian descent. Besides having close friends among his fellow European missionaries, Herrmann Anandrao also met with reservations as other members of the Basel Mission wanted to exclude him from missionary education in Switzerland, for example.⁵ In his autobiography, published in 1854 in the tradition of Revivalist Literature, Herrmann Kaundinya certainly attempted to comply with the traditions of the Protestant faith to gain acceptance as devout Christian.⁶ His first-born son, Ananda (1861–1914), also worked most of his life in India after spending some of his childhood in Europe. In the British colony, he unsuccessfully attempted to become a civil servant for the British colonial authorities that did not employ so-called 'Eurasians'.⁷ Second born, Ranga Kaundinya (1863–1920), spent his formative years in Basel,

Michael Rösser, *Prisms of Work. Labour, Recruitment and Command in German East Africa* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2024), 320–30.

² Elahe Haschemi Yekani, *The Privilege of Crisis. Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Photography and Film* (Frankfurt o.M.: Campus 2011), 87–98.

³ Rösser, *Prisms*, 90–100, 275–80. Jan Diebold, *Hochadel und Kolonialismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Die imperiale Biographie des 'Afrika Herzogs' Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg* (Vienna: Böhlau 2019). John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature. Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: MUP 1998).

⁴ Yekani, *Privilege*, 88.

⁵ Judith Becker, *Conversio im Wandel. Basler Missionare zwischen Europa und Südindien und die Ausbildung einer Kontaktreligiosität, 1834–1860* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2015), 29, 32, 162, 669–70, 657. Albrecht Frenz, *Freiheit hat Gesicht. Anandapur – eine Begegnung zwischen Kodagu und Baden-Württemberg* (Stuttgart: Staatsanzeiger 2003), 41–56. Rösser, *Prisms*, 225–31.

⁶ Herrmann Anandrao Kaundinya, *Lebensgeschichte des H. Anandraja Kaundinya eines ehemaligen Braminen, nunmehrigen Predigers an der deutsch-evangelischen Gemeinde und zweiten Lehrers an der Katechistenschule zu Mangalur, Provinz Canara, Westküste von Ostindien* (Basel: evangelische Missionsgesellschaft 1854).

⁷ Maß, Sandra, "Constructing global missionary Families: Absence, memory and belonging before WWI," *Journal of Modern European History (JMEH)*, 19:3 (2021), 341.



Figure 1. Ranga Kaundinya Presenting a Bird of Prey as Hunting Booty in GEA ca. 1910. Source: Stadtmuseum Wendlingen (Neckar). Diashow Kilossa 1907–1916.

Switzerland, and in southwest Germany. He later moved close to his parents' place in southwest India where he farmed several cash crop plantations for over twenty years. In 1907, he became manager of a cotton plantation in GEA run by the Swabian textile company *Otto*, whose owners had known Ranga Kaundinya since his youth in Germany.⁸ As the manager of *Otto's* plantation in Kilossa, he faced discrimination from both the German colonial administration, who regarded him as an incompetent "half-caste man,"⁹ and his own European subordinate plantation personnel because he had "Indian blood in his veins."¹⁰ Confronted with these identifications of others in his daily life and working routine, Ranga Kaundinya

⁸ Rösser, *Prisms*, 225–31. Maß, "Constructing," 340–61.

⁹ "Governor Rechenberg to the Colonial Department Berlin, J. Nr. 16891/10 [...] Daressalaam, den 1.10.1910." Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam (hereafter TNA). G8/894, 111. Rösser, *Prisms*, 228.

¹⁰ TNA. G8/894, 119. Rösser, *Prisms*, 230.

pursued several strategies to position his identity in Germany, its colony in East Africa, and British colonial India.

Kaundinya's self-identification resulted from the complex interplay of race, class, gender as well as religion and was acted out in social practice. Besides Ranga's visual performance as virile colonial hunter as revealed in [Figure 1](#), the article investigates how Kaundinya produced his identity in two German publications released during WWI. The examination of his texts offers a perspective on how an individual developed an (European) identity in colonial frameworks and dynamics of power across three continents and two empires. Framing the social circumstances of late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonising societies, I first link the concept of 'passing for white' to the historiography on German colonialism. It gives an idea about what individuals like Ranga Kaundinya could or could not hope to achieve in his given social situations. Secondly, I outline his individual strategies to pass as European in both colonial East Africa and (post) WWI Germany. Thirdly, this article reveals the interconnections between Kaundinya's self-image as an experienced German colonial planter and his Pietist backgrounds. Fourthly, I show that Kaundinya used his Indian background to foster his identity as an experienced middle-class coloniser in GEA and beyond. Finally, this article elaborates on how the Indo-German fused the facets of his identity into his vague concept of 'Indo-Germania' that both integrated Kaundinya's religion and transgressed the borders of the colonising empires Britain and Germany.

Passing for White

German colonial discourses about race and identity generally revolved around two aspects. It was either about the trope of being *white* or not, or around the questions of national identity and belonging. Regarding *whiteness*, research on North American history describes the strategies of racial ambiguous people to be read as *white* instead of *black* as 'passing for white.' Individuals of a mixed-race ancestry, having a comparatively white skin colour, straight hair, and even blue eyes, crossed the 'colour line' from *black* to *white* to evade racist discrimination set and enacted by US-American law and societal conventions.¹¹ As *whiteness* generally featured being Christian and having a middle or upper class lifestyle, *blackness* was associated with a supposedly 'heathen' religion and poverty. Thus, in addition to Christianity, a certain degree of wealth was necessary in order to pass as *white*. Consequently, those who attempted to cross the 'colour line' attached particular importance on corresponding public appearance such as clothing or the display of manners and other practices that fitted the *white* ideal.¹² Although most research about passing for *white* has been done on US-American history, there are also some cases in German history.

Tristan Oestermann has explored how the Afro-Caribbean family of Pagenstecher, for example, had become a respected entrepreneurial family in the circles of Hamburg by the late nineteenth century. At this point, the company of *L. Pagenstecher* was even the largest trading business in the German colony of Kamerun in West Africa. Consequently, they had an important say in the colonial policies in Kamerun and back home in Hamburg. This was despite the fact that some of the family's ancestors had been enslaved Africans at sugar plantations in Haiti, while others originated from Patrician families from (North-)West-Germany, and the Haitian upper-class. Although the family maintained lively correspondence with their Haitian relatives in the private sphere, they were anxiously on guard to

¹¹ Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile. A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard UP 2014), 1–27. Marcia A. Dawkins, *Clearly Invisible: Racial Passing and the Color of Cultural Identity* (Waco: Baylor UP 2023), 153–8. Elaine K. Ginsberg, "Introduction: The Politics of Passing," in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg (Durham: Duke UP 1996), 1–18.

¹² Hobbs, *Exile*, 1–27. Dawkins, *Invisible*, 153–8. Ginsberg, "Introduction," 1–18.

cultivate those features needed to uphold their *white* identity in Germany.¹³ Especially in public, they pursued three strategies. First, they relied on their wealth, networked with important families and manipulated their biographies.¹⁴ Through their wealth, they easily accomplished the public appearance of an upper-class German business family. Second, choosing the right spouses for their children to enlarge the circles of their international business ranging from the Caribbean to the USA, Mexico, and India, as well as Germany and its colonies. Thirdly, they achieved the manipulations of their biographies by constantly veiling their Afro-Caribbean descent in public. Moreover, L. Pagenstecher especially used his influential position to not only foster his rubber business in the German colonies, though he also legitimised German expansionism by articulating corresponding views in German public. Pagenstecher's business declined significantly after WWI, as the German Empire had to abandon its colonies according to the Treaties of Versailles. While their wealth decreased, the constant and recurring denial of their Afro-Caribbean ancestry remained a successful strategy to pass as *white*. When the Nazi Regime persecuted many German population groups for racist and political reasons, the Pagenstechers claimed to be solely of 'Aryan' descent. In the end, their constant denial of their Afro-Caribbean background apparently saved their lives.¹⁵

Passing for European?

In contrast to the Pagenstecher family, the Kaundinyas had significantly less resources to pass as *white*. Undoubtedly, via the global networks of the Protestant Basel Mission, the Christian faith of the Kaundinya's helped them to pass as *white* occasionally. Moreover, like his father Herrmann Anandrao, Ranga Reinhardt had married a German woman to strengthen his ties to this Central European nation. His marriage to Thekla Faisst, who came from a good German family near Stuttgart, certainly helped to underpin Ranga's standing in German society. Moreover, he had received decent schooling through the networks of the Basel Mission and had lived his formative years in Switzerland and Germany. As almost all children of any mission, little Ranga left India for school education in Europe while his parents continued their missionary work on the subcontinent. After school, Kaundinya joined a tree nursery in southwest Germany where he learned the fundamentals of the agricultural business. The latter provided him with the necessary skills to establish some plantations in India in his adult life. The family's strong affiliation to the global network of the Basel Mission was certainly important for the lives of the family members, both materially and immaterially. Moreover, their shared Pietist faith opened doors to a career at times. It was one of the reasons why Ranga Kaundinya later became manager of the *Otto* plantation in GEA, as the owner Heinrich Otto was a devout Christian himself.¹⁶

Whereas the marriages to German women and the global networks of the Basel Mission certainly enhanced the opportunities to pass as *white*, in contrast to the Pagenstecher family, the Kaundinyas had fewer financial resources to display a *white* habitus. Ranga Kaundinya's parents hardly ever had enough money to travel from India to Germany to visit their eleven children. Similarly, although Ranga Kaundinya veils the reasons in his autobiography why he left his coffee and rice plantations in India after twenty three years,

¹³ Tristan Oestermann, "L. Pagenstecher: Ein afrokaribisch-deutsches Familienunternehmen zwischen Westfalen, Haiti und Kamerun, 1800–1914," in *Koloniale Welten in Westfalen*, ed. Sebastian Bischoff et al. (Leiden: Brill 2021), 117–31.

¹⁴ Oestermann, "Pagenstecher," 128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 117–31.

¹⁶ Maß, "Constructing," 340–361. Rösser, *Prisms*, 219–35.

it is most plausible that he had turned bankrupt in India by the time he was hired by Otto.¹⁷ With limited resources to pass as *white*, Kaundinya thus adjusted his strategies to cope with the racist realities of German colonial society in East Africa. One was to present himself as a European.

Colonial societies, law, and governance discriminated between European and the indigenous population or people of non-European descent for racist reasons. At the same time, it functioned as legitimization of power. In the African colonies, Africans faced the most severe discrimination and violence, of course. Yet, white subalterns like people from Southern Europe and even destitute Central Europeans unable to pursue a middle-class way of life faced discrimination by their fellow German settlers and the German colonial administration alike in GEA. In colonial India, too, poor whites and people of a mixed European Indian origin faced similar exclusion.¹⁸ In both colonies, the Indo-German Kaundinya family experienced corresponding deferral. Despite his naturalisation as a citizen by the German Kingdom of Württemberg in 1911,¹⁹ Ranga Kaundinya was one of them. He thus positioned himself as European while living and working in GEA between 1907 and 1914. This is most remarkable, as contemporaries would seldom describe themselves as 'European.' Generally, the tropes about identity in (German) colonial sources featured claims of a decidedly German identity or of being *white* in distinction to the local populations.

Apologetic about the practices of forced labour at his own and other plantations in the German colonies, Kaundinya argued in his autobiography that "egoism alone must compel us – (apart from the sense of justice inherent in every decent fellow Central European) – to treat our workers well and fairly in our own interest [...]." At the same time, however, Kaundinya makes no secret about his racist convictions, claiming, "the first impression that almost every normal European gets of the coastal Negro is a repulsive, downright disgusting one." This mind-set was also the reason why Kaundinya – despite his Indo-German background – naturally positioned himself into the European sphere in the society of GEA. When first arriving near the grounds of his future plantation in Kilossa, he reported: "In the first weeks, we Europeans [sic] lived in a small cottage near the *boma* [here: colonial fortress]."²⁰ Although not uncontested by the resident population(s), all colonial powers attempted to structure any of their settlements in accordance with their racist beliefs. They planned to assign each population group their own residential area. Regardless of their size, colonial working environments like the Otto plantation as well as major colonial cities like Dar es Salaam were intended to allocate the most prestigious quarter to *white* and/ or European people. They allotted the next best dwellings to Indians or Arabs, and the least privileged areas to the people of African descent. *White* quarters were either the most central or the highest position of a settlement close to the buildings of the colonial executive. They further featured those dwellings built of the best building materials, ideally stone. With the Indian and Arab quarters obtaining the next best position in the direct neighbourhood of the European quarter and with houses of fair quality, the African population should live on the outskirts of any colonial settlement, close to their actual workplaces. There, they lived in simple huts made from mud and with roofs of grass.²¹

¹⁷ Rösser, *Prisms*, 225–231. Maß, "Constructing," 340–61. Ranga Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen aus meinen Pflanzern Jahren* (Leipzig: Haberland 1918), 20–7.

¹⁸ Rösser, *Prisms*, 113–121. Harald Fischer Tiné, 'Low and Liscentious Europeans.' *Race, Class and 'White Subalternity' in Colonial India* (New Dehli: Orient Black Swan 2009).

¹⁹ Maß, "Constructing," 350.

²⁰ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 142, 30, 65. Rösser, *Prisms*, 265–80.

²¹ Patrick. C. Hege, *Dividing DAR. Race, Space, and Colonial Construction in German Occupied Daressalam, 1850–1920*, (Berlin: De Gruyter 2025). Michael Stoyke, "Suche nach einem Europa en miniature: Chinas Städte in den Augen europäischer Reisender um 1900," in *Welt-Räume. Geschichte, Geographie und Globalisierung seit 1900*, eds. Iris Schröder and Sabine Höhler. (Frankfurt o.M. Campus, 2005), 147–74. Sofie Boonen and Johan Lagate, "A City Constructd by

In addition, Kaundinya intertwines the trope of ‘going native’ with the *topos* of Europeaness at the expense of Germanness or *whiteness*. One central element of the colonisers’ fear of degeneration in overseas territories was climate. Bearing such reservations regarding potential settlements in mind, Kaundinya judged various parts of GEA as suitable places for European settlers, namely “the extensive highlands around the mountains [...] [in the north]. Furthermore, considerable parts of the areas bordering the lakes in the west, as well as [...] lands situated on the [...] mountains, which run through the middle of [GEA] in a north-south direction.”²² In contrast to popular discourses, Kaundinya disputed the idea that the tropical climate, which was favourable to cash crop cultures like cotton, generally had degenerative effects on Europeans.²³ To Kaundinya, to adapt “completely to tropical conditions,” Central Europeans needed “to spend as much time as possible day and night in [...] fresh air with efficient exercise and muscular exertion, and to arrange their way of life according to nature, avoiding as much as possible the consumption of meat, irritating food, alcohol, nicotine, narcotics and medicines, and with strictly regulated moderation in everything.”²⁴ His advice was to take moderate sunbaths, as well as ‘air baths,’ i.e. to sleep naked, and to go to bed early every day. Moreover, his Pietist upbringing also inspired Kaundinya’s recommendations. Within the tradition of the Protestant moral reform movement,²⁵ he urged for moderation also in sex: “any excess, especially in sexual intercourse, is avenged much more quickly there than in a temperate climate, precisely because of the more invigorating and more crisis-provoking effect of the tropical sun.”²⁶ It is obvious from the passages that the plantation manager not only tried to pass as European by portraying the supposedly proper European way of life in a German colony. Publishing in 1918, Kaundinya also sought to comply with the so-called ‘reformed’ colonial policies of Colonial State Secretary Bernhard Dernburg after the anti-colonial Maji Maji War (ca. 1905–1908) had devastated the German colony and claimed the lives of ca. 180,000 people²⁷ – mostly civilians. From ca. 1907 onwards, Dernburg issued various pieces of legislations that urged the abandonment of colonial excesses of violence and atrocities as well as colonial policies of destruction. Instead, he wanted a rational colonialism that sought to ‘preserve’ the local African population. Although corresponding legislation was introduced, practices of the colonisers, e.g. in working environments, hardly changed. Apart from the fact that German colonial policies really sought to prevent the outbreak of another war, the most important

‘des gens d’ailleurs.’ Urban Development and Migration Policies in Colonial Lubumbashi, 1910–1930,” *From Railway Junctionure to Portal of Globalization: Making Globalization Work in African and South Asian Railway Towns*, ed. Geert Castrick, *Comparativ*, 25:3 (2015), 51–69. Rösser, *Prisms*, 174–9, 264–70, 315–20. Annika Seifert and Karen Moon (Eds), *Dar Es Salaam. A History of Urban Space and Architecture*. (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota 2017), 27–75. For the significance of class in urban segregation see J.M. Lusugga Kironde, “Race, Class, And Housing in Dar es Salaam: The Colonial Impact on land use structure, 1891–1961,” in *Dar Es Salaam. Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*, eds. James R. Brennan et al. (Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota 2007), 97–117. James R. Brennan, “Between Segregation and Gentrification: Africans, Indians, and the Struggle for Housing in Dar es Salaam 1920–1950,” in *Dar Es Salaam. Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*, eds. James R. Brennan et al. (Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota 2007), 118–35.

²² Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 14.

²³ Sebastian Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* (Munich: Beck 2012), 75–9. Bill Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge 2013), “Going Native.”

²⁴ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 96–8.

²⁵ Judith Große et al., “Einleitung: Sittlichkeitsreform, Biopolitik und Globalisierung,” in *Biopolitik und Sittlichkeitsreform. Kampagnen gegen Alkohol, Drogen und Prostitution 1880–1950*, eds. Judith Große et al. (Frankfurt o.M.: Campus 2014), 7–48.

²⁶ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 96–8.

²⁷ Ludger Wimmelbucker, “Verbrannte Erde. Zu den Bevölkerungsverlusten als Folge des Maji Maji Krieges,” in *Der Maji Maji Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905–1907*, eds. Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez, (Berlin: Links 2005), 87–99.

change was rhetorical. This change in discourse is certainly revealed by Kaundinya's urge to moderation and his rejection of colonial excesses.²⁸

Although discourses could slightly change and some nuances could differ from colony to colony, the general advice for any European coloniser was to preserve his *whiteness* and/or nationhood. Even though realities in colonial societies differed significantly from these discourses,²⁹ the imaginations of a colony functioned as a canvas on which colonialists sketched the idealised twin image of their motherland. For German settlers this idealised new German land was devoid of the political, economic, and social divisions of the modern era. Their ideal revolved around an agricultural society solely inhabited by middle class people aligned to patriarchal (family) ideals. This imagined uniform and conflict-free middle class was not divided by religion (Catholic vs. Protestant) and homogenous in nationality and race. Furthermore, the imagined *terra nullius* of any colonial territory additionally promised a life in harmonious coexistence with nature. Although the cultivation of this 'wilderness' entailed deprivation and laborious work, popular discourse regarded particularly such a lifestyle as the perfect means to refresh the character of the colonisers from the vices and degeneration of the industrial, urban societies. German tropes about proper colonisation especially fused this frontier mentality with the German work ethos. Accordingly, Germans were willing to wring only sparse profits from recently cultivated small-scale farms before they could expect larger profits. This frugal lifestyle, the corresponding tough manners and hard work sustained the German self-image of being altruistic colonisers, who did not work solely for their own profits, but for the progress and sake of all civilised, i.e. European, humanity.³⁰ In line with such claims to colonial superiority, Kaundinya addressed his German-speaking audience in his books about GEA and India. In these publications released during WWI, he identified himself not only as a European, but also as an experienced German colonial planter. Equally, he criticised the British for their colonial policies to India and made implicit references to his Pietist background.

German Colonial Expertise and Pietism

Besides evoking his European identity, Kaundinya also served and used the ideologies characteristic of a *white* coloniser. One central strategy to pass as *white* in German colonial East Africa was the abovementioned (big game) hunt. Hunting features repeatedly in his written accounts published in 1918 and in several visual sources.³¹ Living and working in East Africa, the prestigious big game hunt was literally round the corner and Kaundinya was convinced that "every European must possess weapons in Africa."³² However, he does not present

²⁸ Michael Pesek, "Die Auferstehung des Kriegshelden aus dem Bett des Offiziers. Die Konstruktion kolonialer Maskulinität im Ersten Weltkrieg. Beitrag zum Themenschwerpunkt 'Europäische Geschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte,'" in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2009), URL: <https://www.europa.clilo-online.de/2009/Article=398>. [08/09/2025]. Rösser, *Prisms*, 58–64. Juhani Koponen, *Development for Exploitation. German Colonial Policies to Mainland Tanzania 1884–1914*, (Helsinki: Finish Historical Soc. 1994). John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule: 1905–1912*, (Cambridge: CUP 1969). For the Maji Maji War see James Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds.), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War*, (Leiden: Brill 2010).

²⁹ Heike I. Schmidt, "Colonial Intimacy: the Rechenberg Scandal and Homosexuality in German East Africa," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 17:1 (2008), 25–59. Philippa Söldenwagner, *Spaces of Negotiation. European Settlement and Settlers in German East Africa 1900–1914*, (Munich: Meidenbauer 2006), 53–84, 171–252.

³⁰ Daniel J. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia* (Athens: Ohio UP 2002), 28–46. Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Munich: Beck 2006), 254–78. Felix Axter, "Arbeit an der 'Erziehung zur Arbeit' oder: Die Figur des guten deutschen Kolonisators," in "Deutsche Arbeit." *Kritische Perspektiven auf ein ideologisches Selbstbild*, Eds. Felix Axter und Nikolas Lelle (Göttingen: Wallstein 2018), 226–52.

³¹ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 15, 77–85.

³² *Ibid.*, 25.

himself as a ruthless hunter who shot down anything what came in front of his rifle; rather, he presents himself as a man who knows to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ when shooting animals: “Hunting antelopes that look so innocent, [...] has never given me pleasure. Only hunting predators could become a justified passion. I virtually hate these beasts. [It is] a real passion [...] to persecute and exterminate them in any way possible.”³³ The distinction between ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty’ African wildlife further fostered Kaundinya’s self-image of an experienced colonial expert also in the (big game) hunt. Equally, chasing dangerous animals contributed to display the martial prowess of a colonial hyper-masculine identity. Big men were to shoot big cats and not minor animals, of course. It is further no coincidence that especially the colonial military regarded hunting as the perfect sport to train their soldiers for warfare not only in East Africa but also in especially India.³⁴

In addition, Kaundinya’s differentiation in a supposedly ‘good’ and ‘evil’ hunt rooted in part certainly in his Pietistic background and his strong ties to southwestern Germany. From the 1830s onwards, it was influential Pietists from *Württemberg* indeed, who were central figures in the foundation of the very first German societies for the protection of animals (*Tierschutzvereine*). Especially at the turn to the twentieth century, Pietists from this region like Immanuel Kammerer (1857–1927) were simultaneously involved in the Basel Mission and it is plausible that Kaundinya had processed their ideas since his youth. As Pietistic thought regarded beasts as fellow creatures (*Mitgeschöpflichkeit*), it considered an animal’s individuality and its emotions.³⁵ Fusing his self-image of a virile, white colonial hunter with central elements of his Protestant identity, Kaundinya analogically named an antelope (*Buschbock*), whom he saw repeatedly around the plantation, his “special friend” whose shooting he would have considered “murder.”³⁶ Furthermore, Kaundinya ponders in his autobiography what elephants must have thought when visiting his emerging plantation in Kilossa repeatedly. He further suggested the creation of national parks to protect elephants. Although he admitted that such measurements would on the one hand “impede [the elephants’] freedom,” they would preserve them as a species on the other hand and “educate” them to become “pets, friends and workmates” of the colonisers in Africa.³⁷

With respect to national parks, the plantation manager’s thoughts on colonial hunting expressed contemporary reservations towards excessive hunting *safaris* to Africa, too. Similar considerations were also part of the ‘reformed’ colonial policies after ca. 1907. Indeed, the big game hunt threatened certain species like elephants with extinction. Counter-measures such as the introduction of nature conservation areas or national parks as well as hunting control legislations around the world were strategies to tackle the problem also on the African continent. Of course, animal and nature protection policies were also labelled as benevolent to the local African populations. Yet such measurements often served the colonisers’ interests. They dispossessed the land of the local populations and forced them to live in reserves instead of their homelands, now declared as conservation area, for instance. Moreover, the colonisers further excluded them from hunting in these newly established areas as they judged local techniques of hunting like trapping as

³³ Ibid., 48–9.

³⁴ MacKenzie, *Empire*, 120–66.

³⁵ Wolfram Schlenker, *Tierschutz und Tierrechte im Königreich Württemberg. Die erste deutsche Tierschutz- und Tierrechtsbewegung 1837, die drei württembergischen Tierschutzvereine und ihre Tiere* (Wiesbaden: Springer 2022), 1–30, 100 FN, 234, 279–80, 320–4,

³⁶ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 78–81.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 80.

illegitimate and not fitting the ‘sporting code.’ The latter applied exclusively to the usage of (fire) arms when killing animals and thus to the colonisers’ way of hunting.³⁸

The plantation manager’s recurring explanations which animals could be killed for a sound reason and which creatures were deemed the right to live appear to have been further rooted in the tradition of German Romantic Natural History. This rather practical branch of natural history combined science with economics and differentiated between ‘useful’ and ‘harmful’ species.³⁹ As Kaundinya only shot antelopes to supply his ‘people’ – probably his workers – with the necessary amount of meat, he attributes especially big cats the status of vermin. Characterising especially man-eating big cats as vermin, they were hunted down ruthlessly. The cats of prey obtained the same low status as boars or baboons, which were equally regarded as pests.⁴⁰ To Kaundinya, such discourses about wildlife also came in handy to link his thoughts on hunting with tropes of racism. In his circa seven-year stay in GEA, he boasted in his autobiography that he had shot almost “one thousand”⁴¹ baboons as they showed both the allegedly brutal habits of a big cat and were cunning and sneaky especially when they plundered the *shambas*⁴² of the local populations or the fields of the plantation in Kilossa. In this respect, these animals reminded Kaundinya of “a thieving pack of gypsies”⁴³ directing the reader to another central element of Kaundinya’s writing: his racist beliefs and the corresponding conviction for the utmost necessity of German colonial rule.

On many occasions, Kaundinya took a decidedly pro-German view regarding colonialism and expansionism in his memoirs. Written and published during WWI and addressing a German readership, Kaundinya repeatedly praised German colonialism especially in East Africa. Furthermore, he describes his own involvement in Kilossa as a “patriotic duty” and speaks about “our [i.e. German] colonies” on several occasions. To his mind, these colonies had been illegitimately occupied by competing European Empires during WWI.⁴⁴ He further believed that ‘educat[ing] the local populations to work,’ which was one of the central ideologies perpetrated in the colonisation of African territories, was best done “through German influence[.]”⁴⁵ Consequently, he criticised competing imperial powers repeatedly. Besides France, he directed his major attacks towards Britain. Echoing the tropes on the reasons for WWI’s outbreak prominent in German discourse at the time, Kaundinya accused the Anglo-Saxons of controlling global trade flows and supply chains. Omitting the hegemonic strivings of other imperial nations, including Germany, Kaundinya claimed that the British envy of the German (economic) rise of the nineteenth century was the main reason for the war.⁴⁶ Giving such statements constantly in his autobiography, Kaundinya generally

³⁸ Bernhard Gißibl, *The Nature of German Imperialism. Conservation and the Politics of Wildlife in Colonial East Africa* (New York: Berghahn 2016), 109–200, 299–316. Lars Kreye, “Deutscher Wald” in Afrika. Koloniale Konflikte um regenerative Ressourcen, Tansania 1892–1916 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht 2021), 60–172, 411–56. MacKenzie, *Empire*, 147–99.

³⁹ Torsten Meyer and Michael Farrenkopf, “Naturschutz vor 1945,” in *Gras Drüber...Bergbau und Umwelt im Deutschen Vergleich*, ed. Michael Farrenkopf und Regina Göschl, (Berlin: De Gruyter 2022), 167–80.

⁴⁰ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 49. MacKenzie, *Empire*, S. 176–96.

⁴¹ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 83.

⁴² Swahili = “fields”.

⁴³ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 114.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 19, 7, 9, 13, 119–20, 137, 145–7, 151.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 147. Felix Axster and Nikolas Lelle, “Deutsche Arbeit. Kritische Perspektiven auf ein ideologisches Selbstbild – Zur Einführung,” in *Deutsche Arbeit. Kritische Perspektiven auf ein ideologisches Selbstbild*, Eds. Felix Axster and Nikolas Lelle (Göttingen: Wallstein 2018), 7–36. Axster, “Arbeit,” 226–51. Conrad, *Globalisierung*, 74–123.

⁴⁶ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 9, 11, 18, 124, 149–53. Rösser, *Prisms*, 206–19. Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Vintage), 2014, ix–28. Cf. Michael Rösser, “Von Afrika nach Eurasien? Deutsche Unternehmen zwischen kolonialem Eisenbahnbau und geopolitischer Planungsphantasie während des Ersten Weltkrieges,” in *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 110: 2 (2023), 183–204.

conceals the fact that he had lived in the British Empire for a long time and had obtained German citizenship only after 1911.⁴⁷ Moreover, he is seldom explicit about his Indian family history. Yet, especially when trying to sketch the self-image of being a competent and experienced colonial planter, Kaundinya refers to this very part of his identity.

Kaundinya's Indian Dimensions of Identity

Ranga Kaundinya's autobiography about his time as plantation manager in GEA does not explicitly refer to his Indo-German ancestry. If at all, he addresses this part of his biography when trying to portray himself as a competent plantation manager. In this respect, his Indian descent and his twenty-three-year-experience as a planter in India comes in handy. Moreover, in his book, his Indian experience serves both as a blueprint for his life in GEA and for his employment at the cotton plantation in Kilossa. By fulfilling his 'patriotic duty' and becoming the manager of the *Otto* cotton plantation, Kaundinya claimed to have left his thriving plantations in India behind, where he had worked and lived for a long time. Stressing the difficulties when starting business in Kilossa, he compared his work in the British Empire to his new occupation in GEA: "The most important and valuable realisation was that despite twenty-three years of experience as a tropical planter, I had to completely retrain in many respects in Africa, because these conditions could not be compared with India."⁴⁸ Following this insight, Kaundinya repeatedly compared the performance of the East African workers, the German colonial economy in East Africa, the colonial administration's policies and the entire social and environmental realities to India.

Illustrating again the importance of the big game hunt for the imagery of colonial rule, this applies first to the opportunities for successful hunting. Praising East Africa for its abundance of venison in comparison to the subcontinent, he admitted that in "India," he had "once shot a few lovebirds for expected guests in the absence of other meat."⁴⁹ Regarding cotton cultivation, too, the plantation manager felt that the crops grown in coastal Sadaani were "quite luxuriant compared to the state and appearance of cotton [he] was used to in India [.]"⁵⁰ Equally, the cultivation of vast palm tree plantations allegedly "had a bright future" in GEA and Kaundinya claimed to be able to judge the vast areas of the German colony's climate at least as suitable for planting palm trees as that of southern India.⁵¹

Despite the promising conditions to grow cash crops such as cotton, Kaundinya struggled to recruit and keep sufficient plantation workers at Kilossa. These difficulties were partially rooted in the general refusal of most Africans to take up plantation labour to evade low colonial wages, general (physical) abuse at the workplace, and insufficient medical treatment and food supply. Another reason was that the *Otto* Company – in line with the call to the rational 'reformed' colonial policies after 1907 – had planned to save large amounts of labour costs by introducing modern machinery. This plan failed miserably due to serious misjudgements of the machinery's advantages in GEA, however. To keep the steam engines running, the ploughs needed constant supplies of water and firewood, which required a great amount of African labour. Moreover, the ploughs were very heavy, sinking into the soaked grounds during the rainy season. In addition, the machines turned the soil up too deeply, unearthing layers that were hardly fertile for any cotton crop. Despite the favourable climate and environment in Kilossa, Kaundinya soon realised that he would

⁴⁷ Maß, "Constructing," 360.

⁴⁸ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

remain decisively dependent on Africans qualified to take up the hard work of cotton cultivation.⁵²

Evaluating the work performance of his staff, Kaundinya compared the output of African to Indian plantation workers. When confronting his Greek overseer with the insufficient work results done by his cohort of East African workers, Kaundinya stressed that he was used to better results in India. Countering the criticism of his boss, the European employee replied: “But Sir, Mr Manager, in India you have human beings, very intelligent human beings, but these here, they are apes, they are beasts [...]”⁵³ The Indo-German plantation manager attributed the significantly lower output of the African workers to their allegedly lower level of civilisation and their shorter habituation to colonial labour. Recalling that Kaundinya was himself discriminated as ‘half oriental’ because of his Indo-German background, it is crucial to note that similar discourses targeted also Southeast Europeans living in GEA, Greeks in particular. Kaundinya’s conversation with his Greek plantation assistant thus highlights how different layers of discrimination and identification intersected and how ‘passing for whiteness’ came to the fore in colonial contexts. Research on colonial railway building has revealed how South (East) Europeans obtained a conflict laden intermediate position between *black* and *white* in the German colony. In fact, they were indispensable as railway sub-contractors for the construction of the Central Railway in the colony. As labour recruiters, they were also significant for the functioning of the entire colonial labour market. In fact, the German colonisers did not acknowledge their superior work performance, because the *shenzi ulaya* (‘white negro’) trope rated them below German Central Europeans. Yet, despite their own discrimination, South (East) Europeans in GEA treated Africans as violently as Central Europeans especially in contexts of work. They physically abused the African workforce by beatings or deprived them of their wages or of sufficient food and medical supplies or decent housing. They also looked down on the African population for racist reasons and regarded themselves as superior in turn.⁵⁴

This was also typical for most Indians living in German and British colonies. As Imperial subjects of the British Empire and as a significant middlemen minority in the (African) territories, Indians working as clerks and especially in financial services, as well as in trading, resented racist discrimination on behalf of the *white* colonisers. Yet, they regarded people of African descent as inferior at the same time. Indian white-collar workers further distanced themselves from indentured labourers from the subcontinent in colonial Africa and stressed their belonging to a higher class.⁵⁵ Analogically, Kaundinya presented himself as an experienced colonial planter, who had – despite his Indian family background – nothing in common with the working classes, neither those originating in the subcontinent, nor those from Africa. Similarly, when arriving in Dar es Salaam for the first time, the plantation manager reported his first tour through the colony’s capital. As in most colonial settlements, the colonisers planned to align each population group in its own quarter. Attempting to

⁵² Rösser, *Prisms*, 235–80. Thaddeus Sunseri, *Vilimani. Labor Migration and Rural Change in Early Colonial Tanzania* (Portsmouth: Heinemann 2002), 1–25, 51–75, 136–92.

⁵³ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 72.

⁵⁴ Rösser, *Prisms*, 113–23, 132–52, 235–42. Michael Rösser, “‘Shenzi Ulaya’ – Deutsch griechische Verflechtungsgeschichte von der Bagdadbahn zum kolonialen Deutsch-Ostafrika,” in *Online-Compendium der deutsch-griechischen Verflechtungen*, Eds. Zentrum Modernes Griechenland der Freien Universität Berlin. 02 March 2022, URL: <https://comdeg.eu/compendium/essay/109893/> (20/11/23).

⁵⁵ Saima, Nasar, “The Indian Voice: Connecting Self-Representation and Identity Formulation in Diaspora,” in *History of Africa*, 40:1 (2013), 99–124. J.S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa c. 1886 to 1949* (Oxford: OUP 1969), 63–131. Robert G. Gregory, *South Asians in East Africa. An Economic and Social History, 1890–1980* (Boulder: Westview 1993). Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 32, 73, 80, 95. The term ‘Indian’ is not adequate to reflect the subcontinent’s diverse population groups but further investigation is beyond the scope of this paper. The Goan experience is a telling example. Margret Frenz, *Community, Memory, and Migration in a Globalizing World: The Goan Experience c. 1809–1980* (Oxford: OUP 2014), 47–133.

meet racist ideologies, also GEA's capital had a quarter designed for Europeans only, one designed exclusively for Indians and Arabs, and one for the African population.⁵⁶ Although resident populations often influenced colonial policies of urban planning,⁵⁷ European visitors to Dar es Salaam generally described the different quarters of the city in accordance with colonial planning ideals. In this respect, Kaundinya was no exception, yet with one profound difference: he omitted the Indian quarter from his tour: "The Indian, Arab and Negro quarters [...] are of particular interest to the foreigner. The Negro quarter seemed particularly peculiar to me. I knew enough Indians and Arabs from India." Despite his recurring claim to a European identity and his general emphasis on German colonial discourses, his Indian background obviously also influenced his perception of cities like Dar es Salaam. At the same time, this Indian facet of his identity intermingled with both the plantation manager's class identity and his Pietistic background: when visiting Dar es Salaam's African quarter, he ranks the local African inhabitants explicitly below the "working classes" of the subcontinent whom he had encountered during his year-long stay in India. Labelling these Indian workers as "pariahs" further intersects class with race and even caste, as the term 'pariah' also describe(d) people of no caste, generally also referred to as 'dalits' or 'untouchables' in India. From the 1890s onwards, especially Protestant missionaries addressed their living and working conditions in the colonial society of the subcontinent.⁵⁸ Despite his own distancing from the working classes and the casteless, Kaundinya's awareness towards the 'pariah problem' reveals his upbringing in the Protestant missionary environment of the Pietist Basel Mission to India once again.

Regarding the Indian influence on his identity, one passage in his autobiography is most striking. On one occasion, Kaundinya calls India his *Heimat*.⁵⁹ The German term has many connotations, translating into one's home, origin, or homeland. *Heimat* simultaneously implies ideas about specific German culture, manners, society, or even collective character. Using the term *Heimat* thus entails Kaundinya's profound affection to one of his homelands indeed. In fact, he attempted to exploit his Indian background not only when reporting about his life as a planter in GEA. He also made use of his Indo-German identity when addressing the German audience about fundamental questions regarding WWI and sketched his individual Indo-German identity that spanned across empires and incorporated his religion.

Indo-German Identity Across Empires

In addition to his autobiography, Ranga Kaundinya published a sixty-page long pamphlet under the pen name Ganga-rao Brahmputr. He elaborated on India's role in the geopolitics of WWI, its role during and after the war, and its relationship to the British Empire and the German *Reich*. According to his own accounts, close friends encouraged him to share his expertise with the public. After a favourably received lecture on the subject, Kaundinya chose to publish on the issue to "promote the understanding of Indian life in Germany."⁶⁰ In his pamphlet, Kaundinya explains why the once proud nation of India had fallen victim to British imperialism and had not yet been able to escape the yoke of colonial rule.

⁵⁶ Stoyke, "Suche," 147–74. Boonen and Lagate, "A City," 51–69. Seifert and Moon (Eds), *Dar Es Salaam*, 27–75. Rösser, *Prisms*, 174–9, 264–70, 315–20.

⁵⁷ Hege, *Dividing DAR*.

⁵⁸ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 30–1. Rupah Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem. Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India* (New York: Columbia UP 2014).

⁵⁹ Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, 23. Rösser, *Prisms*, 256–60.

⁶⁰ Ganga-rao Brahmputr, *Indien. Seine Stellung zum Weltkrieg und zu seiner Zukunft. Ein Beitrag zur Aufklärung über indische Verhältnisse der Jetztzeit: Indiens Stellung zum Weltkrieg, zum 'Heiligen Kireg' aller Mohamedaner und zur Frage seiner Befreiung* (Tübingen: Kloeres 1916), 3.

In his view, the reasons were manifold and intertwined. First, the Indian populations did not possess any arms to fight against British rule. Secondly and in line with the Romantic German image of India,⁶¹ they were generally of a peaceful character. Thirdly, Indian society was divided between Hindu and Muslims and between different castes. Without unity, joint action against colonial rule was allegedly impossible and the British could easily divide and rule by exerting decisive influence on few Maharajas with competing interests. Finally, the omnipresent multilingualism literally prevented mutual understanding while the English-language press acted as the voice of the British rulers.⁶²

Kaundinya presented himself as an expert with the ability to explain German, British, and Indian politics especially because of his Indo-German background. As the son of an ancient Brahmin family and his father's education in Europe and his conversion to Christianity, Kaundinya "had many an opportunity to make observations and gain an insight into internal Indian conditions that other Europeans [did] not have."⁶³ Besides the significance of his parents, Kaundinya also used his own upbringing in Europe and India to qualify himself as an expert on international relations. Of course, he also referred to his professional life as a planter in Asia and East Africa:

After I had enjoyed my education in Switzerland and Germany, I worked for almost 25 years in various parts of India and made [...] frequent journeys on which I was able to establish relationships with high-ranking Indians [especially Brahmins] [...]. [...] I often took part in discussions about India's [...] interests and was made privy to many a situation that remains closed to other Europeans.⁶⁴

Such insights into Indian society intermingled smoothly with Kaundinya's experience in GEA. He thus established an analogy between the gradients of the colonial society there and the caste system in India. He particularly compared the seclusion of the Brahmin caste to the colonial strivings to keep *black* and *white* apart from one another. Kaundinya explained that there was no "Indian race" as such, but numerous races that peopled the Indian sub-continent without any closer interaction or "blood mixture[.]"⁶⁵ The major reason for the genesis of castes in India had ensued from the higher castes' avoidance of degeneration, i.e. their refusal to intermarry with allegedly lower castes especially from the darker skinned peoples living on the Indian subcontinent. Kaundinya claims: "[...] [O]ne explanation, generally accepted among Brahmins [...], seems most plausible, namely that the primary purpose of caste was to preserve the purity of blood, mainly as a protection for the light-coloured and culturally superior Aryans against intermarriage with the dark-coloured, culturally inferior aborigines."⁶⁶ In fact, the genesis of caste in India has been a historical process that evolved over hundreds of years and intertwined various religious, legal, and socio-economic currents. Especially in periods of socio-political instability and profound change, caste fostered the identity of society's social groups. Likewise, especially new rulers like the British from the eighteenth century onwards used caste to not only structure their view on the unfamiliar Indian society; they also used it as a tool for colonial rule. Certainly, caste had been important for social stratification of pre-colonial India, but British rulers first codified caste into a form of European law to sustain British imperial

⁶¹ Tobias Delfs, "Devasena auf Reisen. Der Kieler Philosoph Paul Deussen, die Briten und der 'Orient,'" in *Mit Forscherdrang und Abenteuerlust. Expeditionen und Forschungsreisen Kieler Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler*, eds. Oliver Auge and Martin Göllnitz (Frankfurt o.M: Peter Lang 2017), 127–9.

⁶² Brahmputr, *Indien*, 13–43.

⁶³ Brahmputr, *Indien*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25–6, 29.

dominance over the subcontinent. For instance, they preferably incorporated adherents of a perceived warlike caste into the colonial military especially after the Great Rebellion in 1857. Although concepts of caste were contested even among the colonisers, the British intertwined caste increasingly with European race theories that became the dominant worldview especially towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

Likewise, Kaundinya analogised German colonial law making and corresponding jurisdiction regarding mixed-race marriages similar to the perception of caste in the colonial era. He added to his passage about the alleged Aryan rejection to marry people of 'lower' castes: "One is involuntarily reminded of the analogous problem that has been so much in the news in the German colonies in recent years: the problem of mixed marriages [*Mischehen*] between white and black and their legal validity."⁶⁸ Yet, he largely ignored the complexity and longevity of caste in India, devoid of contemporary racist thought. His equation of German colonial law with caste in India was rather an illustration of the author's strategy to position himself in the society of his target audience. Living in a territory predominantly peopled by Africans, the colonisers established legal and societal barriers to separate *black* from *white* artificially. Besides social norms aimed to prevent any community with the colonised population, the abovementioned laws to prevent, annul or complicate mixed-race marriages were certainly the most important tool. Besides the fact that sexualised violence and rape exerted by European men over African women were common in the colonial context, Kaundinya's warnings of sexual debaucheries quoted above certainly also alludes to interracial sexuality primarily through prostitution in the colonies and legislation against mixed marriages from ca. 1905 onwards that were hotly debated in the German parliament, especially in 1912.⁶⁹

Besides, Kaundinya was surely aware of topical debates and discourses about interracial marriages in the German colonies, when referring on the so-called *Mischehen* ('mixed-marriages') in the German colonies. As the child of an Indian father and a German mother and married to a German woman himself, there is no doubt that manoeuvring around such controversial debates must have been the prerequisite to pass either as European or as *white* in the German (colonial) context. Without his decided positioning as *white*, German and European, he would have certainly risked the accusation of having a mixed-race marriage himself. Born and raised in the colonising and colonised societies of Germany and Britain between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Ranga Kaundinya thus regarded any societies he had experienced through the lens of biological racism prevalent at the time. Especially so, as he and his entire family had been targets of similar discourses not only in Central Europe (Germany and Switzerland), but also in GEA and in India.⁷⁰

The ideas of Kaundinya's pamphlet certainly drew their origins from various sources. The Indo-German appears to have gathered them through selective reading. Although it is hardly possible to reconstruct the genesis of Kaundinya's mind-set in detail, it certainly derived from widespread discourses in Europe about India since the late eighteenth century. They further intersected with nineteenth century racism and geopolitics. With the beginnings of East Indian Company (EIC) rule in India, various European scholars in the Service of the EIC had explored the interconnections between India and Europe. Orientalists

⁶⁷ Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: CUP 2001), 1–24, 64–143.

⁶⁸ Brahmputr, *Indien*, 25–6, 29.

⁶⁹ Walther, *Creating*, 28–46. Conrad, *Globalisierung*, 254–78. Daniel J. Walther, *Sex and Control. Venereal Disease, colonial physicians, and indigenous agency in German Colonialism, 1884–1914* (New York: Berghahn 2015), 35–52, 75–90, 121–31. Rösler, *Prisms*, 199–205. Pesek, "Auferstehung." Birthe Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten. Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Cologne: Böhlau 2003), 219–94.

⁷⁰ Daniel, *Sex*, 13–52. Rösler, *Prisms*, 225–60.

such as William Jones (1746-1794) and the German Max Müller (1823-1900) researched the interconnections between ancient Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. They proved the linguistic relationships and thus provided for the evidence of the existence of the Indo Germanic language family. Consequently, the “German-speaking region in particular became embroiled in a literal ‘Indomania,’ which became part of German nation-building processes, above all through [...] the relationship of German to Sanskrit.”⁷¹

However, this linguistic and national relationship was open to various interpretations. Whereas Müller, who was not only a linguist, but also a religious scholar, advocated a friendly Indo-British relationship deriving from the linguistic connection, the analysis of the history of the Aryans also inspired racist legitimization of colonial rule not only throughout the British Empire, but also in other colonizing nations. Analogically, Kaundinya’s pamphlet contains implicit references to other popular paradigms of contemporary racist thought. They feature repeatedly in Kaundinya’s publications. For instance, he analogises the caste system and the seclusion of the Brahmins from other castes to the homogeneity of the European nobility and the feudal hierarchy of the Estates Society (*Ständegesellschaft*):

It appears beyond doubt that caste [...] already existed in the original homeland of the Aryans [...] as a distinction of status, which all Indo-European peoples observed from the earliest times, and which is still partly preserved in the European peoples today, [...] between the nobility, the clergy, the military class (warriors), the middle classes and the serfs (formerly peasants).⁷²

Here, Kaundinya’s ideas certainly derived from major assumptions of Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882). Gobineau – diplomat, writer and race theorist – had developed his ideas about race and nobility especially with respect to France. One major idea of his thinking was that European nobility had preserved racial purity. As one of the most fundamental thinkers of European racist thought, Gobineau’s ideas quickly spread through Europe’s *fin de siècle* and it appears that also Kaundinya had incorporated Gobineau’s major ideas to his writing. While Gobineau’s claims were very influential throughout the ‘long nineteenth century,’ it was especially Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who processed them further, additionally fused orientalist’s research to his own agenda, and added Anti-Semitism to Gobineau’s views. Especially Chamberlain’s bestseller *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (*Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* 1899) popularised racist and anti-Semitic ideology throughout Europe, but especially in Germany.⁷³ Furthermore, Chamberlain, who was in close contact to Philosophers and Indologists like the German Paul Deussen (1845-1919), relocated the alleged Aryan heartland from Asia to Central Europe, i.e. to Germany.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Delfs, “Devasena,” 109. See also Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism. Ancient India’s Rebirth in Modern Germany*, (Madison: Farleigh 2009).

⁷² Brahmputr, *Indien*, 26.

⁷³ Arthur de Gobineau, “Versuch über die Ungleichheit der Menschenrassen,” in *Rassedenken in der Sprach und Textreflexion. Kommentierte Grundlagentexte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Phillipp Krämer et al. (Paderborn: Fink 2015), 167-88. Markus Messling, “Von der Adelsranküne zur Rassentheorie: Gobineaus Sprach- und Kulturanthropologie,” in *Rassedenken in der Sprach und Textreflexion. Kommentierte Grundlagentexte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Phillipp Krämer et al. (Paderborn: Fink 2015), 188-210. Hans Fenske, “Politisches Denken im 20. Jahrhundert,” in *Politische Theorien von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Hans-Joachim Lieber (Bonn: BpB 1993), 657-880. Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race. New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge 2010), 46-60.

⁷⁴ Delfs, “Devasema,” 123-7. Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race. Aryanism in the British Empire*, (London: Palgrave 2006), 4-17, 26-55. John R. Davis and Angus Nicholls, “Friedrich Max Müller: The Career and Intellectual Trajectory of a German Philologist in Victorian Britain,” in *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, LXXXV: 2-3 (2016), 67-97. Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, race, and scholarship* (Cambridge: CUP 2009), xviii-xxiii, 292-321, 333-58. Stolberg-Wernigerode, Otto Graf zu, “Chamberlain, Houston Stewart,”

Like many of his contemporaries, Chamberlain was therefore “decided on the ideologically charged search for the original homeland of the Indo-Arya,”⁷⁵ which highlighted the importance of Germany in history and its significance for India’s future in particular.

Ranga Kaundinya had certainly processed the works or at least the major ideas of Gobineau, Chamberlain, and Deussen and reached similar conclusions. Rather than insinuating a special relationship between Britain and India, he took a decidedly German colonial view. Instead of Britain, Germany had or rather should develop a special relationship to India. In line with his Protestant-Brahmin background, he thus first criticized pre-colonial Brahmin rule in India and analogised it to the deficiencies of British colonialism. Although having preserved the alleged racial pureness for many hundred years, Brahmin dominance in India had failed to elevate the lower castes of India by means of education. To Kaundinya’s mind, Christian missionaries involved in the European colonial endeavour had acted better than the old established Indian ruling caste. The Brahmins, he argued, “are guilty of not doing anything at all for the elevation of the lowly population; on the contrary, they detested them and only drove them further [...] into their filth and oppression and left them to their own devices.” Neither did the British, he added, claiming that only the Christian missions had been working towards “the elevation of these poorest of all people [...]”⁷⁶ Here, Kaundinya fuses his Brahmin background with the Christian identity of his family. By praising the missionaries’ work in India, which was not uncontested at the time,⁷⁷ Kaundinya implicitly claimed his legitimate belonging to colonising societies at the expense of his Brahmin descent. Through the clear criticism of English colonial rule to India, he further directs his readership to his vision for Indian German relations after WWI.

Rejecting the idea to replace British simply with German colonial rule in India, the Indo-German proposes a profound informal alliance between the German and the Indian intelligentsia (i.e. Brahmins) instead. Germany and India should develop stronger political and economic ties at eye level. The resulting alliance would oust British global dominance and serve Germany and India alike:

Recently, one likes to speak of an alliance for the preservation of world peace for the future, a protective strip from the North Sea over the Balkans to the Persian Gulf. Why stop there? [...] Why should it not be possible in the not too distant future to create a newly revised Indo-Germania, leaving out the disloyal Latin peoples, to which, according to Dr Karl Peters, Britain also belongs?⁷⁸

Generally, Kaundinya’s idea about Indo-Germania remained hazy, as he did not elaborate on this idea in detail. Yet especially his reference to “the protective strip from the North Sea over the Balkans to the Persian Gulf” suggests that Kaundinya alluded to geopolitical theories. Geopolitics gained profound popularity during WWI and became one of the most famous ideas to explain human history, global politics and economy especially during Weimar Germany. Geopolitical thought further attempted to equip states and empires with strategies for their security policies to sustain, regain or enhance their power. The discipline borrowed central ideas from political geography. Foundational thinkers like the Germanophile Swede Rudolf Kjellén regarded (nation-)states as living organisms. As organisms, states could thus either grow or diminish. That means, they either could choose to

in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 3 (1957), 187–90, URL: <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118675508.html#ndbcontent> (23/11/23). Kaundinya’s reference to Jihad in India was certainly inspired by German Orientalists thinking but beyond the scope of this article. Marchand, *Orientalism*, 436–46. Brahmputr, *Indien*, 3, 46–7.

⁷⁵ Delfs, “Devasema,” 111.

⁷⁶ Brahmputr, *Indien*, 29–30.

⁷⁷ Delfs, “Devasema,” 139.

⁷⁸ Brahmputr, *Indien*, 63.

expand to live or were doomed at the expense of a competitor. During WWI and the Weimar Republic and beyond, demands for geopolitical dominance over vast areas were widespread in Germany. They had many origins: German science, alongside German companies, literary authors, and the public hotly debated how Germany could – after or through the victory of WWI – succeed in creating an as autarkic as possible *Reich*. Through a big variety of geopolitical measurements ranging from political alliances, via large-scale infrastructure building to economic and financial investments, the long-term goal of abundant raw material supplies, sales markets for industrial products and spaces for German settlers ought to secure the global dominance or rather the actual survival of the *Reich*. Moreover, one central idea was the creation of a sort of a protective spatial shield around Germany. That meant the erection of corridors next to the German borders, inhabited by either German settlers or Germanophile people; they would defend the *Reich*'s heartland acting as a buffer against competing neighbours.⁷⁹ In this respect, Ranga Kaundinya's reference to 'the protective strip' from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf all the way to India was most likely an amalgamation of contemporary strands of geopolitical thought with comparatively old-established ideas originating from Orientalism to racist thought.

Kaundinya's reference to Carl Peters is furthermore remarkable. Peters had been one of the German colonial 'pioneers,' having scammed local rulers in East Africa for territories at the very beginning of formal German colonialism in Africa in the 1880s. However, Peters had fallen in disgrace by the turn of the century. His excesses of violence had caused public outcry even among the pro-colonial German public of the 1890s. After WWI, especially the pro-colonial propaganda of the Nazi Regime rehabilitated Carl Peters as one of the most important German colonial heroes. As Peters had always envied the British Empire and sought for German colonial equality,⁸⁰ Kaundinya's reference is further striking. Having lived in the British Empire for a long time, the Indo-German criticised British colonial rule in India harshly, nevertheless. He thus opted for a new 'Indo-Germania' that united the *Reich* and the subcontinent at the expense of Great Britain. He further shared Peters' claim that Britons had no special relationship to the ancient Aryans of the Indian subcontinent. As allegedly Latin people, Kaundinya echoed old-established Orientalist views and judged the British as non-Aryan. Consequently, he declared them as unfit colonial rulers to India implicitly. Instead, the real Aryans, i.e. the Germans, should develop strong, yet just ties to the subcontinent. To Kaundinya's mind, this connection would revive the alleged original Aryan connection between Europe and the sub-continent. It thus appears that his fantasy of an Indo-German alliance at eye level acted as another strategy to position his identity not only across the colonising empires Britain and Germany, but also between his German and Indian homelands as well as his Christian-missionary and Brahmin-Indian backgrounds.

Conclusion

The Indo-German Ranga Reinhardt Kaundinya grew up in his family's missionary environment in southern India. As a youth, he lived in the educational environment of the Protestant Basel Mission in Europe and later returned to India as a colonial planter. After almost twenty-five years of work on the sub-continent, his Pietist ties to the German textile company *Otto* enabled him to work as a colonial cotton planter in GEA from 1907 onwards.

⁷⁹ Rösser, "Afrika." Andy Hahnemann, "Suggestive Kartographie für die Massen. Populäre Literatur und Geopolitik in der Zwischenkriegszeit," in *Weimar und die Welt. Globale Verflechtungen der ersten deutschen Republik*, ed. Christoph Corneließen and Dirk van Laak (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht 2020), 133–58. David T. Murphy, *The Heroic Earth. Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918–1933* (Kent: The Kent State UP 1997).

⁸⁰ Sandra Maß: *Weisse Helden, schwarze Krieger. Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918–1964* (Vienna: Böhlau 2006), 242–8. Karin Bruns, "Peters, Carl" in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 20 (2001), 239–40, URL: <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118790536.html#ndbcontent> (26/09/23).

When on holiday to Germany in 1914, the outbreak of WWI prevented him from returning to East Africa. Now devoid of a job, he wrote about his life and work in India, Germany and especially GEA and gave corresponding lectures. In both a visual source and in his two publications, he produced his self-image and drew on several strategies of identification that were mobilised for private, commercial, and political aims to access resources and influence in different geographical and societal contexts that spanned from GEA, via India to (post)colonial Germany.

Kaundinya's self-identification were certainly a reaction towards the identification of others. Vilified as 'half-oriental' by his contemporaries, core ideas of his publications certainly had economic and defensive motives. Written and published during WWI and only recently naturalised as a citizen of Württemberg in 1911, Ranga Kaundinya undoubtedly attempted to be regarded as German (enough) in the atmosphere of the war. He was certainly aware of the fact that individuals of a mixed descent often faced internment as POWs as every war party generally doubted the national reliability of people with diverse backgrounds. He thus evaded potential identifications of others as a British enemy. Stranded in Germany as the war prevented him from returning to GEA to his job as plantation manager, his accounts may also be read as a public 'letter of application' for potential future jobs in the plantation business. Although focussing primarily on German employers, his occasional claim to European identity seems to go beyond the German target audience. It is very likely that Kaundinya, who had not only worked as a planter in East Africa but also in southern India, would have readily taken a job at a similar enterprise in the colony of an imperial power other than Germany, although he certainly preferred a Central European employer.

Kaundinya's practices of self-identification were further located in changing societal environment(s) and between race, class, gender and religion. When he came to East Africa in 1907, German military rule was increasingly replaced by 'reformed' policies that demanded rational colonialism. Accordingly, Kaundinya sketched his identity of being an experienced and reflected, yet virile, *white* coloniser when reporting his past in GEA. To distance himself from the allegedly uncivilised African environment, he further portrayed himself as an expert in the (big) game hunt, who included the latest ideas of Natural History, nature conversation measurements, and (religiously justified) animal protection rights. Besides race and gender as dimensions of self-identification, he displayed his competence as a middle-class planter. Especially in this regard, he also drew on his previous experience as a plantation manager in India but distanced himself simultaneously from the working classes, i.e. indentured labourers, and casteless from the subcontinent. At the same time aware of his family's and his own discrimination as Indo-Germans, Kaundinya used several strategies to distance himself from the competing colonising nations of Germany.

The Indo-German sought special distance from Britain, although he and his family had lived in the major colony of the Empire for a long time. Instead, he praised German colonialism particularly in East Africa and criticized British colonial policies in India. He declared British rule to India as inadequate as the precolonial rule of the Brahmins over the subcontinent. Only Christian missionaries had done their part for the improvement of Indian society. In this regard, Kaundinya especially distanced himself from his Brahmin family background and highlighted the Christian (missionary) history of himself and his closest relatives. Drawing further on prominent claims of Orientalism, racism, and geopolitics, Kaundinya further sketched a special relationship between the ancient Aryan Indian tradition and evolving ideas of the supposedly Aryan descent of the German people. His vague vision of a future Indo-Germania was the most prominent expression of this idea. This vision presented the British as non-Aryans and thus as illegitimate colonial rulers to India. In turn, Germany should replace the British Empire in India, albeit with the big difference that Kaundinya imagined this Indo-German relationship at eye level. Certainly, an equal

connection between the *Reich* and the sub-continent would have provided Kaundinya with a society where his Indo-German background would cease to be a matter of discrimination and foster the integration of both of his family strands instead.

In his texts, his repeated claim to a European identity is most striking. Such claims are generally absent from similar sources issued in this period. Despite economic motives and the possible integration of his family history, it appears that Ranga Kaundinya's claim to Europeanness was also a strategy to manoeuvre around the borders prevailing before and tightening during the war. His call to Europeanness was also an attempt to fend off rising hostilities between the two colonial powers during WWI. For Ranga Reinhardt Kaundinya, his self-identifications were partly successful. Although he faced discrimination in both Germany and Britain, because of the Indian part of his background, he nevertheless managed to access resources and influence in different geographical and temporal contexts. They ranged from GEA, via India to (southwest) Germany until his unexpected death in 1920. Kaundinya's vague idea of Indo-Germania finally appears as an envisioned realm of self-identification that he had developed through his experience across the colonising empires Britain and Germany as well as through his German-Christian-missionary and Brahmin-Indian backgrounds.

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