

# The Eickstedt Archive: German Anthropology in Colonial India

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<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/ihr>**Katja Mueller<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

The Eickstedt archive is an inventory of a German anthropologist's perception of India of the 1920s through photographs and written accounts. His understanding forms the leitmotif of this reading of the archive, which as such is a reading along the grain. This article attempts to locate the archive's rationale, which vacillates between expectations of the 'primitive other' and a rising racial anthropology. Exploring the relationship between the archive's content and the context allows one to trace the intentions and preoccupations that influenced the archive, without neglecting the agency of the photographic subjects. Juxtaposing the archive and the published accounts as well as the related artefact collection further substantiates that the archive is constituted by the multiple influences of German anthropology of the 1920s, a conventional nationalism, and European orientalism.

## Keywords

Eickstedt, German anthropology, photo archive, colonialism, Indian photography

An archive is a system of expectations. It is an argument that the creators and users of archival documents construct on the basis of their preoccupations and biases. Through the supposed knowledge embedded within, archives can become hegemonic instruments and are thus a means to exercise power and control. Control through archives becomes effective when the material is structured according to preconceptions. This dimension of the archive has been prominently elaborated on in order to understand colonialism and colonial archives in particular.<sup>2</sup> Governing thoughts and knowledge serves as the core of controlling citizens and influencing dominant discourses on subjects of the state. The subjection of people by the state, as outlined by Foucault,<sup>3</sup> and colonial suppression in its global dimension resemble each other in many aspects.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Cohn, *Colonialism and knowledge*; Dirks, *Castes of mind*.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and punish*.

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## Corresponding author:

Katja Mueller, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany.

E-mail: [katja.mueller@zirs.uni-halle.de](mailto:katja.mueller@zirs.uni-halle.de)

Creating memory and forgetting, sorting, ordering and subordinating people are central elements of archives that influence members of colonising states as well as those of colonised countries. As archives are a way of creating memory, there is, as Derrida and Prenowitz<sup>4</sup> state, no way to evade this authority. However, these accounts of the past can be diligently researched and reread in a number of ways, allowing a thorough understanding of the expectations and the constructed arguments, and hence make space for a more nuanced plurality of voices, which may then speak through the archive. One can locate hidden or silenced knowledge through a reassessment of archives when taking the entrenchments associated with them into consideration. This reading of the archives against the grain has been a common strategy for archival researchers for the last few decades.<sup>5</sup> It requires work both within and outside the archive, as unheard voices can be hidden between the lines as well as in oral accounts or media reports.<sup>6</sup> Another way to consider the archive is to read it along the grain, as Stoler suggests,<sup>7</sup> which will not so much construct a counter-narrative to the archive, but treat it as a process rather than as given content. Stoler's interpretation of colonial archives considers the power relations entrenched in the archive, which effectively determine what memories are preserved and what stories are told through the archive. Considering the life of the archive in general, and the context of its creation in particular, discloses biases that informed its peculiar construction. According to Stoler, tracing the marks that the creators left in the archive leads to an understanding of it as a performed system. The archive needs to be considered as form and context.

This applies to written documents as well as photographs within archives. The photographic archive is a frame for visual documents 'establish[ing] a relation of abstract visual equivalence between pictures'.<sup>8</sup> Yet, this abstract visual equivalence is again marked by power relations intrinsic to archives. Additionally, the photographer and his conjunction with the camera play an eminent role, since she/he uses technical equipment that 'objectively' captures a given place and time, but also selects and frames that moment and hence assesses on a subjective basis. As Krauss argues, to dismantle the archive of the archivists', editors' or curators' organisational practice in order to trace the photographer's systematisation might not always be expedient or coherent.<sup>9</sup> Yet if we consider the strong relation between photography and anthropology<sup>10</sup> and understand photographing culture—similar to writing culture, but informed by a less strict syntax—to be an interpretative process, readings of photographic archives need to consider both the images' content and the archive as a framing context interlinked with them.

The reading of the particular archive that the following pages offer is the result of my research on the Eickstedt archive, that I did while working in a museum and as

<sup>4</sup> Derrida and Prenowitz, 'Archive Fever', pp. 9–63.

<sup>5</sup> Stoler, *Along the archival grain*, p. 32f.

<sup>6</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness*.

<sup>7</sup> Stoler, *Along the archival grain*.

<sup>8</sup> Sekula, 'Reading an Archive', p. 445.

<sup>9</sup> Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces', pp. 311–19.

<sup>10</sup> See Pinney, *Photography and anthropology*; Edwards, *Anthropology and photography*.

an anthropological researcher in India and Germany.<sup>11</sup> The analysis is informed by Stoler's approach as well as Sekula's reflections on photographic archives. It takes an archive's creation as the leitmotif and looks at the photographs and the accompanying written records at the time the archive was formed. Yet, this reading considers the lines between the archive's content and the context of its accumulation to be rather blurred. Instead of focusing on the archival form and the conditions of its construction, this analysis of an archival convolute oscillates between the archive's subject matter and its environment. This can be criticised as methodologically less accurate, but the method offers a means to ponder the relationship between the seen and documented on the one side, and the person(s) in charge of it on the other. It allows one to trace intentions and preoccupations, but takes the agency of objects more seriously when the limits of constructing a coherent archive are identified. As the archive in question is a mixed media archive consisting of photographs and written text, it is especially the images' mediation between reality and construction that prohibits an unambitious translation of anthropological theory into archival documents.

Furthermore, the following analysis of an archival convolute differs from readings of colonial archives situating them in close relation to the ambitions of the ruling state.<sup>12</sup> The archive in question was created between the two world wars, by a German anthropologist who made an expedition to South Asia. Hence, the archive's context has its own peculiarity as it vacillates between European orientalism and a rising German racial anthropology tending towards eugenics. European orientalism was a phenomenon that Said attributed mainly to the British and French (Germany having no long tradition of orientalism).<sup>13</sup> In accordance with this, most postcolonial scholars exclude Germany to a large extent from the orientalism debate and from discussions of European colonialism.<sup>14</sup> Yet, Germany has a colonial history and ideas of orientalism were prevailing, but led in their particularity to a German Sonderweg, where German anthropology developed from a rather liberal humanism to racial theories with a nationalist vision.<sup>15</sup> This Sonderweg of German anthropology was influenced by certain cornerstones, but misses a straight progress: there was no single leading personality or school that determined the discipline after 1900.<sup>16</sup> Neither can a single date be termed as the turning point for the shift of attitude from liberal to nationalist. Yet, among the cornerstones are the changing political agenda regarding colonies in the late nineteenth century, and the subsequent loss of colonies in 1918, which left anthropologists in the interwar period as 'colonialists without colonies'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I worked for nearly three years in the Leipzig ethnographic museum, where one of my tasks was to examine the recently acquired Eickstedt archive. During that time, I had access to the photographs and the diaries of the Eickstedt archive. This led to a more profound analysis of the south Indian section of the archive, for which I conducted fieldwork in Kerala, with visual returns of some 100 reprints, between 2008 and 2012. This research culminated in my book *Die Eickstedt-Sammlung aus Südindien*.

<sup>12</sup> Stoler, *op. cit.*, Dirks, 'Colonial histories', pp. 279–313.

<sup>13</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Penny and Bunzl, *Worldly provincialism*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Penny and Bunzl, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Streck (ed.), *Ethnologie und Nationalsozialismus*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Furthermore, numerous authors argue that reasons for the shift can also be traced in cultural expressions such as literature, museum exhibitions and Völkerschauen,<sup>18</sup> and in the prisoner-of-war camps of the First World War.<sup>19</sup> While all these factors contributed to the changes of public and professional attitudes, it was especially the prisoner-of-war camps that fostered the rise of archived anthropological data with a particular agenda. Photographs, measure sheets and voice recordings were collected as the basis for racial anthropological theories, which German anthropology ultimately connected to those of the national socialists.

The archive in question neither conforms completely to the political control European powers anticipated, nor to the inhuman concepts of de-subjectivation. The archive shows tendencies of both contexts, predominant in the late 1920s, but leaves in its complexity and breadth enough room for representations of personal encounters and respectful contacts. To make the archive align with the anthropological theoretical concept that preceded its creation, it needed the publishing of only parts of the archive. Another mechanism to use the archive in accordance with a more nationalist agenda was the simultaneous collection of material artefacts, which reflect a stereotype image of the Other.

Juxtaposing the archive and the published accounts or the artefact collection, respectively, is an additional way for this article to correlate the archive's content and its context. It traces what was allowed to be said overtly as well as what remained unsaid and hidden away in the cabinets.<sup>20</sup>

## Eickstedt Constructing the Archive

The archive in question is a photographic archive and associated set of seven diaries created by Egon von Eickstedt,<sup>21</sup> consisting of about 12,000 photographs mainly from 1920s India<sup>22</sup> (Figure 1). At the same time, Eickstedt gathered approximately 2,000 artefacts, which form the closely connected Eickstedt collection of the Leipzig ethnographic museum.<sup>23</sup> Egon von Eickstedt was a German researcher, who, before

<sup>18</sup> On literature see for example Kontje, *German orientalism*; on Völkerschauen see Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde*.

<sup>19</sup> See Evans, 'Anthropology at War', pp. 198–229.

<sup>20</sup> The archive is one of those archives remaining less accessible. It bears traces of numerous encounters with indigenous Indians and an Indian intellectual elite, yet is the majority not digitally available. The Dresden ethnographic museum allows only limited access to the archive. A first instance of access is the analog publication of the photographs relating to Northern Malabar (Müller, *Die Eickstedt-Sammlung aus Südindien*), the Sora in Gumla (Mallebrein, 'Die Soras', pp. 327–70) and the Andaman Islands (Icke-Schwalbe, 'Indien-Expedition auf den Andamanen-Inseln', pp. 279–326), which also reproduce parts of Eickstedt's journal entries. A more effective approach to the voiced demands of access (see Rycroft and Müller, 'The Future of Anthropology's Archival Knowledge', pp. 221–26) is in progress through the digitizing project 'Weltsichten' (<http://www.deutschefotothek.de/cms/weltsichten.xml>).

<sup>21</sup> Another five diaries concern a second expedition to South, South-East and East Asia between 1935 and 1937.

<sup>22</sup> A few thousand photographs are from the 1935–37 expedition.

<sup>23</sup> Both the Dresden ethnographic museum (Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden) and the Leipzig ethnographic Museum (Grassi Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig) are today part of the Saxonian art collections (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden) and as such closely linked.



**Figure 1.** Drawer of the Eickstedt Archive.

**Source:** Photograph by the author.

leaving for the two-year expedition from Germany to India in 1926, tried to establish himself as a physical anthropologist. During and after the First World War, he studied prisoners-of-war in the camps in Wünsdorf, Germany and Romania, and published his dissertation on the imprisoned Sikhs and their ‘race’ in 1921.<sup>24</sup> The following years were marked for Eickstedt by multiple short-term contracts in various institutes and museums. He was employed as an assistant for at the oceanographic museum, the ethnographic museum and the geographic institute in Berlin, the anatomic institute in Freiburg, the museum of natural history in Vienna and the anthropological institute in Munich. During these years, Eickstedt met Otto Reche, who put him in contact with Karl Weule, the head of the ethnographic institute and museum in Leipzig. With his expertise and continuing interest in the racial anthropology of Indians, Eickstedt brought forward and successfully negotiated and organised an expedition to the Indian subcontinent. The Leipzig ethnographic institute and museum, as well as the German council for emergencies,<sup>25</sup> funded the expedition substantially. The Leipzig institute and museum commissioned Eickstedt to ‘undertake an ethnographic/anthropological research expedition to investigate anthropologically

<sup>24</sup> ‘Rassenelemente der Sikh’ (Racial elements of the Sikh), see Eickstedt, ‘Rassenelemente der Sikh’, pp. 317–94.

<sup>25</sup> Deutsche Notgemeinschaft, the later German research council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).

and ethnographically the tribes of India'.<sup>26</sup> He departed on a steam ship in late 1926 for what was planned as a one year journey, but turned out to last more than twenty-six months, in which Eickstedt—until March 1928 together with his wife—covered more than 30,000 km, visited about fifty different Indian communities, measured approximately 3,700 individuals, created a photographic archive of more than 12,000 photographs and collected 2,000 artefacts.<sup>27</sup>

Eickstedt and his wife travelled via London and the Netherlands to Colombo. They met members of the Tagore family on board, a contact that would be fruitful further down the line when deciding to visit Kolkata and Shantiniketan. Eickstedt managed to photograph members of the family and sketched a genealogy. Landing in Colombo in December 1926, the Eickstedts took four months to photograph and measure inmates of Colombo prison, and the Veddah further inland and in the east of Ceylon. Eickstedt commented on positive and negative encounters with the indigenous population, naming the Veddah of Bingoda actors that move from their dwellings into caves in order to create an impression of primitivism.<sup>28</sup> The wet climate prevented him from creating moving pictures, as he originally intended to, and a lot of his equipment was damaged.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, the Eickstedts moved on to Madras and then Gumla, where they collected and photographed the Sora. The remarks on the population here were rather depreciatory. Since they were not willing to be photographed or measured, but rather ran away screaming, it was only through the 'resolute intervention of the Paikos, i.e., the servants of the district superintendent, to get the distrustful and stubborn Sora to be measured and photographed and to give away some ethnographic artefacts'.<sup>30</sup> As he had done in Ceylon, Eickstedt worked together with the colonial government which supported him in most of his research. Only in Andaman—after a visit of the Shan in Burma the fourth sub-expedition—the government was rather reluctant, which required him to organise the transport to the Onge, Jarawa and the Great Andamanese himself. He complained about a loss of material, transportation difficulties and health implications.<sup>31</sup> Still, he managed to collect 147 artefacts, talked about positive encounters and took 750 pictures. From January until March 1928, the couple rested in Kolkata and Shantiniketan, visiting the Santal and the Tagore family. Contrary to their original plan, they moved due to the climatic conditions to South

<sup>26</sup> 'Das Forschungsinstitut beauftragt Dr. v. Eickstedt mit der Durchführung einer anthropologisch-ethnographischen Forschungsexpedition zur anthropologisch-ethnographischen Untersuchung der alten Primitivschichten und zum Studium der höheren farbigen Kulturen (Dravida u. a.) in Britisch-Indien'. Grassi Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, *Aktenstück Eickstedt 1926–30* (archival record). This and all following translations from the diaries, the museum's *Aktenstück*, the *Akte Institut* and from Eickstedt's publications are the author's translations.

<sup>27</sup> Numbers according to Eickstedt's statement of accounts (Rechenschaftsbericht) (Universität Leipzig, Institut für Ethnologie (1926–29), *Akte Institut*, File number FI E/Indien.).

<sup>28</sup> Müller and Krebs, 'Ins Innere Indiens', p. 323.

<sup>29</sup> Eickstedt, *Tagebuch XIII*.

<sup>30</sup> 'dank des energischen Eingreifens der Paikos, d. h. der Knechte des Bezirksvorstehers, [...] die mißtrauischen und störrischen Soras zum Messen und Photographieren und zur Herausgabe einiger ethnographischer Gegenstände zu bewegen', Eickstedt, 'Zweiter Ethnographischer Bericht', p. 377.

<sup>31</sup> Eickstedt, 'Vierter Ethnographischer Bericht', pp. 77–90.

India to visit the Kurumba, Paniya, Toda and Kadar.<sup>32</sup> In Malabar, Eickstedt met with Ananthakrishna Iyer and documented Brahmin and Jewish inhabitants, too. His wife fell ill and returned to Europe, while Eickstedt in the sixth and seventh sub-expedition travelled to Chhota Nagpur and related areas, visiting the Gond, Khond and other communities, as well as the Bhil, Korku and Rajputs in western India. At the beginning of 1929, Eickstedt returned by land route to Europe, taking up a post as head of the anthropological institute in Breslau.

Eickstedt described the motivation for the expedition as trying to provide an anthropological theory about the settlement of the Indian subcontinent. He said, ‘Connected to the expedition is my wish for solving a complex problem practically being unanswered, and since we are out now we both would certainly rather eat roots than return having worked out only half of it’.<sup>33</sup> He later published his ‘Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit’,<sup>34</sup> where he listed and described different ‘races’ and types, classified human population and explained their distribution worldwide. In parts, his theory refers to the data collected during the India expedition. Eickstedt also published a few photographs from the archive here. Further publications from the archive—written accounts as rephrased entries from the diaries and visual accounts as selected photographs—are reports in journals<sup>35</sup> and magazines of popular science. Eickstedt’s general anthropological work, as it expressed itself in ‘Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit’ and further published works, remains contested to this day. Members of the anthropological institute in Mainz, where Eickstedt taught as a professor after 1945, especially his assistant Ilse Schwidetzky,<sup>36</sup> perceive his work throughout his career positively. She saw no objectionable racist attitude in his works.<sup>37</sup> The research community of his time came to a similar conclusion, making Eickstedt the head of the German anthropological society from 1948 until 1952. Since that time, however, Eickstedt and his works have been analysed more critically. Lüddecke<sup>38</sup> and AG gegen Rassenkunde<sup>39</sup> rate his works as motivated by racism and scientifically untenable. Preuß<sup>40</sup> understands Eickstedt’s work as that of an opportunist working in accordance with the understanding of the time. Eickstedt seems to be the

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed analysis of the North Malabar collection and expedition, see Müller, ‘Eickstedt in Südindien’, pp. 227–36 and Müller, *Die Eickstedt-Sammlung aus Südindien*.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Mit der Expedition verbinde ich ja den Wunsch der Loesung eines bestimmten so gut wie noch offenstehenden anthropologischen Problemkomplexes, und wo wir einmal draussen sind, wuerden wir beide gewiss lieber Wurzeln essen, als halbverrichteter Sache zurueckzukehren.’, *Aktenstück*, Eickstedt to Krause 2.9.1927.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Theory and history of race of mankind’, published in three volumes between 1934 and 1963.

<sup>35</sup> The longest ones with the most photographs got published in *Ethnologischer Anzeiger und Anthropologischer Anzeiger* between 1927 and 1932.

<sup>36</sup> Schwidetzky worked with Eickstedt in Breslau in the 1930s and 1940s and in Mainz after 1945. After his retirement, she became head of the Mainz institute.

<sup>37</sup> See Schwidetzky, ‘Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt’, pp. 317–24; Schwidetzky, ‘Eickstedt 10.4.1892 – 20.12.1965’, pp. 197–200.

<sup>38</sup> Lüddecke, *Rassen, Schädel und Gelehrte*.

<sup>39</sup> AG gegen Rassenkunde, *Deine Knochen, deine Wirklichkeit*.

<sup>40</sup> Preuß, *Anthropologe und Forschungsreisender*.

only well-known German anthropologist to sign the 1952 UNESCO Statement on Race and was regarded—supported by a notification on his denazification—as one of the least criticised German anthropologists of the Nazi era. Yet, his published works draw a diverse picture. In his 1921 work, ‘Rassenelemente der Sikh’ Eickstedt was talking of impressions.

I found him [the Sikh in general] to be friendly, talkative, funny, and clever; but compared to the Gurkhas also often sensitive, irascible, pedantic, and contentious. A thorough amount of laziness needs to be recognized, too – but that might be Rajput heritage.<sup>41</sup>

In his 1934 book ‘Die rassistischen Grundlagen des deutschen Volkes’ (‘The racial foundations of German people’), he stated that race is inevitably associated with psychological conditions.<sup>42</sup> In accordance with eugenics he concluded, ‘Whoever is healthy and belongs to a healthy bloodline is obliged to the people to raise full-value descendants’.<sup>43</sup> In ‘Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit’, he qualified the interdependence of race and character.

Only the union of a larger amount of characteristics creates this typical image, the phenotype, which cannot be confused. Mental characteristics correlate with it more or less. Unfortunately the objective and precise methods to determine these are still missing to a large extent, so that the undeniable fact as for now cannot be included in the definition of the term race.<sup>44</sup>

On the following pages, he talked of a ‘criminal type’ clearly distinguishable in terms of his character and appearance.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, he stated ‘infantile-primitive’ types of human beings and a ‘thermomorph primitivism’ which ‘distantly, but in the direction unmistakably, resembles the animal-like stage of human predecessors’.<sup>46</sup> To illustrate this idea of thermomorph primitivism, he placed a picture of a Paniya (from the archive), of an indigenous Australian and of a gorilla next to each other.<sup>47</sup> In the second volume of his main work, published in 1944, Eickstedt talked of posture, facial expression, walk and movement as racial characteristics which are not alone due to custom and reproduction.<sup>48</sup> And in his publications after 1945, there are certain remarks where Eickstedt talked of a connection between race and character,<sup>49</sup> even though he was more reluctant to state a clear interrelatedness.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Ich fand ihn [den Sikh allgemein] freundlich, mitteilend, lustig und anständig, im Vergleich zu den Gurkhas allerdings oft auch empfindlich, reizbar, kleinlich und streitsüchtig. Ein tüchtiges Maß an Faulheit ist ihm auch nicht abzusprechen – aber das ist vielleicht Rajputenerbe.’, Eickstedt, ‘Rassenelemente der Sikh’, p. 327.

<sup>42</sup> Eickstedt, *Die rassistischen Grundlagen*.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Wer gesund ist und gesundem Erbstock angehört, hat gegenüber seinem Volk also die Pflicht, vollwertige Nachkommen aufzuziehen.’, *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>44</sup> Eickstedt, *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit*, p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>46</sup> ‘wenn auch entfernt, so doch in ihrer Richtung ganz eindeutig an tierhafte Vorfahrenstufen des Menschen erinnern’, *ibid.*, p. 17ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> Eickstedt, *Forschung am Menschen. Teil 2*.

<sup>49</sup> For example, Eickstedt, ‘Die Menschen Afrikas’, p. 366.

While his publications before 1945 were reviewed positively, stating a few imprecisions but a good view for the greater whole, his publications after 1945 received hardly any recognition whatsoever.<sup>50</sup> Especially his ideas regarding a holistic anthropology including a linkage between anthropology and elements of quantum physics seemed disconcerting, whereas mainstream physical anthropology had turned towards genetic research by that time. Regardless of his general theoretical approach, Eickstedt continued in the third volume of ‘Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit’ to talk of mental characteristics and attitudes of will in races,<sup>51</sup> so that the stated breach with the Nazi system and the ideologies and theories developed at that time seems not consequent; the signing of the Statement on Race rather like lip service, as Lüddecke<sup>52</sup> states in his conclusion of the analysis of Eickstedt’s works. Furthermore, Preuß mentions that Eickstedt and his assistant corrected his personal data sheet, erasing his application for the NSDAP and ‘Die rassischen Grundlagen des deutschen Volkes’.<sup>53</sup> The analysis of Eickstedt’s work leads to the impression that his research was motivated or influenced by racist ideas, as racist arguments and eugenic thoughts appeared to varying degrees in his writings before the Nazi’s seizure of power and continued after 1945. Since Eickstedt refrained from the standard terminology of racial anthropology in the Nazi era and was not a leading figure in the eugenic discourse, his work was judged and justified differently, either as that of an opportunist or of a convinced racist. Whether opportunist or racist, his notions of anthropology, setting the context for the formation of the archive, must have been influenced by the German conception of anthropology as a discipline in the 1920s.

### German Anthropology in the 1920s as the Archive’s Context

Akin to Eickstedt’s career, in the beginning of the 1920s, German anthropology saw no distinct line of development. A rapid growth of the discipline leads to a heterogeneity in German social and racial anthropological research, within which a number of schools became influential without dominating the whole. Father Wilhelm Schmidt and the missionaries of the Societas Verbi Divini were representatives of the ‘Kulturkreislehre’ (culture areas theory) and operated from Vienna, as was Leo Frobenius who worked in Frankfurt. Diffusionist schools were quite strong in the first decades of the twentieth century, while at the same time, ideas of a physical and racial anthropology grew stronger.<sup>54</sup> Ideas of eugenics became increasingly influential and were prominently discussed by Eugen Fischer and Otto Reche.<sup>55</sup> Eickstedt knew both of them through his work as assistant at the different institutions, and after Weule’s death in 1926, Reche became head of the Leipzig institute. In that position, Eickstedt had to report to him during the expedition and Reche can be regarded as one of the influencing characters for Eickstedt’s work as well as for German anthropology. Another significant person for

<sup>50</sup> Preuß, *Anthropologe und Forschungsreisender*, p. 160.

<sup>51</sup> Eickstedt, *Forschung am Menschen. Teil 3*, pp. 2238ff.

<sup>52</sup> Lüddecke, *Rassen, Schädel und Gelehrte*, p. 97.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139ff.

<sup>54</sup> See Rössler, ‘Die deutschsprachige Ethnologie’, Streck, ‘Deutsche Völkerkunde’, pp. 267–79.

<sup>55</sup> For a critical account of Reche’s work, see Geisenhainer, *Rasse ist Schicksal*.

Eickstedt's academic work was Felix von Luschan, under whom he studied. Luschan was, like Frobenius, one of the few German anthropologists to recognise the cultural achievements of Africa to be on par with European ones. Luschan and Reche, both influencing Eickstedt's research, represent a more liberal and a more conservative form of nationalism in German anthropology. Methodologically, almost all German anthropologists, liberal or conservative nationalist, made use of imperial and colonial structures for anthropological work in the field. Travels into colonial departments, whenever possible, were a popular research method, as were studies on prisoners-of-war. Only very few scholars disapproved of colonialism or turned a blind eye to it, whereas most took it for granted or supported it openly.<sup>56</sup> The loss of German colonies after World War I made field trips more complicated in terms of permits, but did not hinder using colonial structures as a means to conduct anthropological fieldwork. Thematically, Eickstedt himself observed in the 1920s a shift of emphasis in anthropology towards anatomic and physiological fundamental questions as well as towards blood group research and eugenics,<sup>57</sup> while prior to this mainly Darwin's theories and craniology were deemed essential for German anthropology. The question of racial form differences of the human being had been the central concern since the turn of the century. Combined with the fear of losing the 'objects of study' and a salvage ideology, Eickstedt's expedition with its explicit research agenda fit well into general trends that were still marked by liberal and conservative nationalism. As time passed, it was fundamentalist forms of nationalism and the racial ideology associated with it that became dominant first in the public discourse on anthropology and later in academic establishment as well.<sup>58</sup> As mentioned before, the German Sonderweg, developing from a liberal to a nationalistic anthropology, can neither be fixed to a particular date nor has it a single cause. The 1920s were for German anthropology a time of transition that exposed tendencies, but not yet a definite destination.

### Glimpses into the Archive

A limited number of records serve here to show how much the archive reflects the anthropological agenda of 1920s Germany and of Eickstedt in particular. This exemplary analysis draws mainly on the documents from the fifth sub-expedition to Northern Malabar, as well as on records from Gumla and Andaman.<sup>59</sup> Eickstedt's focus on anthropological research, instead of social or cultural ethnography, shows in the photographic record. Two-thirds of it are type photographs with white background and profile, front and three-quarter profile portraits, while only one-third is labelled ethnographic photography, showing landscapes, activities or objects in use (Figures 2 and 3). Eickstedt's accounts in his diaries reflect that focus too, describing many physiognomic characteristics. But they also include his thoughts and descriptions of the encounters, his impressions, general description of the journey and observations. Striking in his diaries is the range of

<sup>56</sup> Haller, *Die Suche nach dem Fremden*, p. 40ff.

<sup>57</sup> Eickstedt, *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit*, p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Krautwurst, 'The Joy of Looking', pp. 55–79.

<sup>59</sup> A thorough analysis of the complete material is not yet possible due to accessibility.



**Figure 2.** Type Photograph Showing Two Men in South India, 1928.

**Source:** T4469, Eickstedt archive, copyright: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden.



**Figure 3.** Ethnographic Photograph showing a Landscape in Thallasery, South India, 1928.

**Source:** E1496, Eickstedt archive, copyright: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden.

judgements on the Indian population, which he divided according to 'race'. Meeting the Sora in Gumla during the second sub-expedition, Eickstedt drew a very negative picture of them. Talking of a young Sora chief he said,

He is young and very stupid, his mouth stays open all of the time. It's often like that with the Sora—they are indeed stupid. What an international correlation. A large mind has never a fleeting chin and open mouth! [...] The psychic condition of the Sora is very simple, very coarse.<sup>60</sup>

There are numerous accounts where Eickstedt talks of the Soras' general fatuity and their subjugation due to that. Eickstedt did not seem to feel for them, he rather accepted the conditions and tried to study and collect as much data as he could. Acknowledging the fact that they were not willing to sell items or be measured, he described one of his ways of working:

I could bargain for an axe: the boy gave it for 2 rupees with tears in his eyes, there was a lot of talking along with it, the rough translation for me: 'it was mine, now it is yours.' The women had to be taken with force again, they were in general very young, obviously the women with the kids stayed in the village.<sup>61</sup>

Eickstedt and his wife stayed for approximately two months in Gumla district visiting numerous villages. Yet his remarks do not show that he made close friends with the Sora. He tried to complete his sets of measurements and images and was busy with eliciting ethnographic information, being dependent on the Paikos and their rude methods of dragging potential 'objects' to Eickstedt. Neither did Eickstedt seem to have found a large number of Indians outside the Sora communities to look up to, as the diary includes a few lengthy paragraphs on the general condition of the Indian psyche and mind.

As intelligent as native Indians are on the one hand, as much they are missing endurance and daring on the other hand. They are totally missing the energy and initiative of the northerner. And what all are missing, the average Indians, is every inch of idealism. That is the reason why the whole culture as such, the whole people too, is not reaching any further heights in its political standing. Only money and advantage are relevant, and you can be sure that an Indian is only polite or nice, yes even leaving his lethargy, if he wants something from you.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> 'Er ist jung und sehr dumm, immerzu steht das Maul offen. So ist es ja meist bei den Sora – sie sind auch wirklich dumm. Was liegt da wieder für eine internationale Korrelation vor? Eine Geistesgröße hat nie fliehendes Kinn u. offenen Mund! [...] Das psych. Gefüge der S. ist ganz einfach, ganz grob.', Eickstedt, *Tagebuch XIV*, 10.6.1927.

<sup>61</sup> 'Eine Axt konnte ich erhandeln: mit Tränen in den Augen gab sie der Bursche für 2 R. her, es gab allerhand Reden dabei, deren Sinn mir übersetzt wurde: „sie war lange mein, jetzt ist sie dein.“ Die Weiber mussten wieder mit Gewalt geholt werden, sie waren meist ganz jung, ersichtlich waren die Frauen mit Kindern im Dorf geblieben.', *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> 'So intelligent eingeborene Inder auf der einen Seite sind, so sehr fehlt ihnen auf der anderen Seite Ausdauer und Wagemut. Gar die stete Energie und Initiative des Nordländers fehlt völlig. Und was allen fehlt, dem Durchschnittsinder, jeglicher Idealismus. Das ist auch der eigentliche Grund, warum die gesamte Kultur als solche, warum auch das ganze Volk in seiner politischen Stellung kein höheres Niveau erreichte. Nur Geld und Vorteil interessieren, man kann sicher sein, dass ein Inder nur höflich oder nett ist, ja überhaupt seine Lethargie verlässt, wenn er etwas von einem will.', *ibid.*, 17.6.1927.

A few months later in south India, he complained in a similar way. His racist attitude becomes clearly distinguishable as he wrote, 'The Indians, in their entity, are human beings of a second grade, without sense or ability for the greater in Europe'.<sup>63</sup> He continued to describe the 'Indian psyche' as determined by laziness, egoism, treason, etc. A fit of rage would be an appropriate reaction to Indian mistakes or shortfalls. While these accounts might not appear in all diaries and certainly in their drastic formulation did not get published in Eickstedt's written accounts, they tend to reappear with frequency. Hence, it is difficult to term them a single emotional release; they rather seem to indicate a general attitude.

The counterparts to 'human beings of a second grade' were, according to Eickstedt, Europeans. He attributed a graceful and gracile behaviour as European and met a few Indians who he compared to 'the greater' of European culture. The British, Eickstedt proclaimed, were correct in trying to squeeze out of India as much as they could. They were in general his first contact point in a new area. But as an assiduous, ambitious scholar, Eickstedt did not fancy the receptions and social commitments at all, but was obliged to attend gatherings at clubs and private houses. While the British officials were in general helpful and supportive, he found himself in the Andaman Islands confronted with logistic problems due to a neglect of British support, but still managed to complete the expedition.

The British contacts also did not prevent him from forming friendly relationships with individuals from the Indian elite.<sup>64</sup> He commented positively on a number of scholars or helpful administrators that he met throughout the journey. What is more, despite his general negative attitude towards the 'Indian psyche', Eickstedt reported on his friendly encounters, as he, staying for a few days or weeks, became friends with some of the Veddah, the Ongi or the Toda.<sup>65</sup> He complained mainly about mainstream Indian culture, which he also saw in the indigenous population's 'proletarianisation'. He despised 'primitives' dressed in rags and an adaptation to Western clothing.<sup>66</sup> He further criticised the acceptance of Hindu rituals and clothes, and even worse the inter-marriage and 'mixture of races'. The main problem with it was the fact that he as a researcher would have problems finding good 'objects' for his studies and his theories. Thus, he praised the 'wonderful primitive type' he encountered from time to time, but less in terms of being in favour of it—although there were some tendencies of a romanticised picture of the unspoilt, savage people living in the jungle—but in order to have material to support his argument. He furthermore became explicit in regards of the ambitions of Swaraj, of self-rule, that more and more Indians demanded in the 1920s.

<sup>63</sup> 'Die Inder, in Gesamtheit, sind Menschen zweiter Klasse, ohne Sinn u. Fähigkeit für das Grössere an Europa.', Eickstedt, *Tagebuch XVI*, 5.5.1928.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Sarat Chandra Roy, or the mentioned Tagore family, and Ananthakrishna Iyer.

<sup>65</sup> He writes about the Toda, 'The people here seem more human than other Indians, seem unindian, are open and friendly.' ('Die Leute wirken auch menschlicher als andere Inder, wirken unindisch, sind offen, freundlich [...]'), Eickstedt, *Tagebuch XVII*, 19.5.1928.

<sup>66</sup> During his journey through south India, it is noticeable that Eickstedt used the term 'primitive' quite often, which correlates with his focus on documenting and theorizing on indigenous people. Again, he did not use the term without being judgmental, but talks of 'the women [of the Paniyan] being sometimes ridiculously primitive.' ('[d]ie Frauen [der Paniya] waren z. T. lächerlich primitiv', Eickstedt, *Tagebuch XVI*, 20.4.1928.) The Paniyan, he declared, were incredibly primitive, but good cattle herders. 'The Paniyan is stupid, so he has to pay, as the Sora do!' ('Der P[aniya] ist dumm, also muss er zahlen, wie bei den Sora!'), *ibid.*, 28.4.1928.)

Eickstedt stated that this wish might be understandable, but ‘the wish of the Indian masses to be free is beyond their psychologic capability’, it is ‘fatuous, senseless, and suicidal’.<sup>67</sup> That is all ‘absurd political babble that must lead them to national ruin’.<sup>68</sup>

The archive’s photographs likewise reflect Eickstedt’s conceptualisation of the Indian contrasted with the European. His view manifests in the photographic archive through sorting, arranging, framing and cutting. Especially the type photography supports his racial anthropological agenda. As with many of the early anthropological photographs, they served as an index of veritable reality,<sup>69</sup> as an objective—because technically produced—image of something real. Yet, the portraits do not only depict what was there at a particular time and space, but reflect the relationship between the photographer and photographed as well. They document the hierarchical structure underlying the photograph taking. Even though the photographer is not depicted, his behaviour and attitude can be traced, since anthropometric photographs from colonial contexts can be read as signs of subjugation and unequal power relations.<sup>70</sup> This reading is, in the case of Eickstedt’s photographs, supported when his research modus is considered, which included the named measuring and photographing in prisons or facilitated by physical force. A number of photographs suggest resentment by the photographed Indians in the form of cautious, dismissive or preoccupied facial expressions, indicating an unwillingness to be photographed, discomfort or even forced posing. Refusing to be photographed at all was also at times possible (as Eickstedt described with the Sora running away, and in the Nilgiris people fled, too). It is hard to determine whether a rejection of being photographed results from the camera per se, from notions of photography as soul robbery,<sup>71</sup> from different ways of understanding visual representations,<sup>72</sup> or from Eickstedt’s attitude. But it is a clear indicator of an unequal relationship between the photographer and the photographed. Still, with the variety of photographs, it does not make sense to talk of a general de-subjectivation of the probands. The portraits reflect a diversity of friendly as well as distressed subjects, some showing discomfort and a forced arrangement to sit still, while others portray self-esteem and dignity.

Another expression of the anthropologist’s theoretical point of view is the way Eickstedt framed and cut ethnographic photographs, and how these photographs relate to the artefacts he chose for the museum collection. The ethnographic photographs oscillate between depicting reality and being a physical expression of the photographer’s subjective view. They seem ‘authentic’, since Eickstedt was not a professional photographer but a physical anthropologist. Hence, the photographs sometimes depict bodies with feet and arms cut off due to the framing, are under- and overexposed, and sometimes not in focus. That distances these photographs from studio and posed photography and brings them closer to being ‘objective’, emphasising the mechanical

<sup>67</sup> ‘[D]ie indische Masse [will] frei sein, was über ihren psychischen Fähigkeiten liegt.’, *ibid.*, 5.5.1928.

<sup>68</sup> ‘lächerliches politisches Geschwätz, das [die Inder] national zum Ruin führen muss’, Eickstedt, *Tagebuch XVII*, 10.6.1928.

<sup>69</sup> Edwards, ‘Tracing photography’, pp. 159–89.

<sup>70</sup> Wiener, *Ikonographie des Wilden*; Theye, *Der geraubte Schatten*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Wendl, ‘Warum sie nicht sehen’, pp. 169–81.

process of photographing. Yet they simultaneously bear traces of Eickstedt as the constructor. He chose, cut and fixed a scene. He decided what should be documented and what not. His decisions were determined by his sponsoring museum, the likely perceivers of the photographs and the written theories that might be supported by the photographs. In terms of social anthropology, Eickstedt's notion of an unspoiled India, to be documented before it vanishes, is predominant. It becomes materialised in photography and artefacts through representing a 'primitive', 'unspoiled' India. Thus, for the museum he collected objects mainly of natural material as wood, palm leave or clay, and tried to likewise photographically document this 'authentic' India. But, while the 2,000 artefacts are able to construct such an image, the photographs in their sheer amount are not able to conform to representing an 'unspoiled' India. Being a medium situated between objective depiction and construction, there are numerous instances where Eickstedt inevitably documented the material traces of cultural change. The photographic archive contains pictures showing men in jackets and with English umbrellas, cars, churches, aluminium pots and porcelain. While being able to keep the illusion of a 'primitive', unchanging and pristine India alive through the artefact collection, the reality of cultural change materialising in everyday artefacts appears in the photographic accounts (Figure 4).

Eickstedt's written and visual accounts as they can be found in the archive are altogether very diverse. They comprise traces of friendly relationships as well as drastic, arrogant judgements. The photographic material covers type photographs that



**Figure 4.** Street in Pattiur, South India, 1928.

**Source:** E 1569, Eickstedt archive, copyright: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden.

can support his theories of ‘races’ and types, yet bears traces that the clear distinctions he tries to establish are far from functioning, and that cultures and human beings are far from stable entities that allow themselves to be categorised and fixed. Eickstedt emerges in his written accounts as a person with a clear hierarchical idea of distinguishable categories of mankind, an idea that he tries, but fails, to consistently transfer into the photographic archive.

### The Archive Made Public and the Archive’s Power

The archive Eickstedt produced is not a coherent taxonomy, but rather a created pile of information used by him as a data base to produce classifications.<sup>73</sup> The collected and photographed accounts are part of a research expedition and subsequently archived within a museum. Hence, they acquire probative force and evidentiary value. The records feature a particular order defined by the museum’s regulations, but the content remains a piecemeal work before treated as contributing to a discourse or practical knowledge production. One way to actively feed the debate and to construct an image of the people caught in the archive was through publishing articles and books with, and without, illustrations from the archive. According to his main task ‘to try to bring some clarity into the locally very chaotic anthropological settings’,<sup>74</sup> Eickstedt published his conclusions not in the drastic terms of a general description of Indians, but as the mentioned interrelation of character and physiognomic appearance. In *Anthropologischer Anzeiger*, Eickstedt wrote of the intelligence, the bravery, and the ‘nervous waspishness’ of the Muslim Keralites that led ‘until very recently to bloody outbreaks of religious fanaticism’.<sup>75</sup> He further stated a ‘criminal type’ among the Indians whom he met in the prisons and whom he could identify through their squinty faces.<sup>76</sup> Publishing adjunct photographs is, similar to publishing written accounts, a controlled way of preparing archival material for the audience. Photographs as archival documents and diary entries are a less filtered way of showing what the anthropologists perceived, but the theoretical framework comes to the fore when arranging the material for publication. Frameworks influenced the archive’s construction, but they determine the context of the published material even more. Eickstedt avoided all too harsh phrases in the published accounts. But the context of 1920s’ public and academic discourse in and about anthropology still allowed racist tendencies, which grew even stronger in the publications after 1930. Eickstedt published what could be said at that time, and what was deemed appropriate and rewarding in accordance to his theoretical agenda and possible career. The instances of cultural change, which can be traced in the diaries and the photographic accounts, were kept within the archive. Eickstedt also did not consider the Indian adaptation to European standards or the political queries appropriate for a public debate at that time. He aimed at constructing a coherent theory of racial

<sup>73</sup> Thereby supporting Krauss’ argument of not every photo archive being a system of (coherent) ideas, but rather being a functional catalogue.

<sup>74</sup> ‘in die hier besonders verworrenen anthropologischen Verhältnisse einige Klarheit zu bringen’, Eickstedt, ‘Fünfter Ethnographischer Bericht’, p. 133.

<sup>75</sup> ‘bis in die allerneuste Zeit hinein in blutigen Ausbrüchen von Religionsfanatismus’, Eickstedt, ‘Vierter Ethnographischer Bericht’, p. 66.

<sup>76</sup> For example, Eickstedt, *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit*, p. 105.

development based on research among indigenous people. A questioning of the data was disadvantageous. Hence, he constructed out of the archive the image of an unspoiled, authentic India which needed to be salvaged, but not questioned. The archive—being furthermore almost unnoticed by the British administration and academics alike—was enhancing the political discourse in Germany only as much as its publication tended towards eugenics and racist hierarchies of human beings. It contributed to the German idea of Indians as Others, and as such fell in line with both the discourses on European orientalism and German anthropology. While the archive as a large collection of photographs and diaries shows frictions and ruptures to that reading, its selected publication filtered these out, and thus used the archive as a reliable means for an ordering of the knowledge produced with the archive.

Many archival records created in colonial India were used to directly exercise political power by using the collected data and created knowledge as an instrument of control.<sup>77</sup> The Eickstedt archive is different in that regard. The archive and the expedition were not initiated by the British rulers, but largely grew out of Eickstedt's personal interest and expertise. While the consent of the British was needed, there was no direct discernible benefit for the British state as the ruling institution. The knowledge produced through the expedition had as such no direct link to the state as the controlling force in colonial territory. Therefore, Eickstedt's work was not part of colonial common sense that perceived knowledge creation as a means to better exercise a direct territorial control. Still, it regarded colonies as a pool for anthropological information and fed on ideas of orientalism, which were also based on a hierarchical ordering of human beings. The archive clearly reflects these ideas and contributes to them as a convolute, without being exploited directly in political control in India. The archive's public accounts that Eickstedt created serve the orientalist agenda as well. He constructed them in dependence to his own anthropological agenda, which in turn reflected the German anthropological agenda of that time. The public accounts exercise their power as they create knowledge in form of racial theories. They thus serve a trend and provide a basis for a more far-reaching concept of political control and power. The archive, its creation and the public distribution indicate the nationalist agenda that German politicians, with the help of anthropologists, were to construct and exercise in the following years. The archive itself is marked by Eickstedt's vision, yet bears a number of frictions drawing a more ambiguous picture of India and its people. It is not before a neat editing process that it could be used as a controlling device in knowledge production. The content was channelled and refined and thus unfolded its full potential according to Eickstedt's aim as the gathering and publishing anthropologist.

The archive remains an inventory of Eickstedt's perception of India of the 1920s. Reading the archive with this leitmotif shows that it is constituted by German anthropology of the 1920s, a conventional nationalism, and European orientalism. It exercised its power as it created knowledge determined by these coordinates. Still, the archive remains open for numerous further readings, both along and against the grain. It is a unique convolute of photographs and written documents oscillating between images documented with the objective lens of the camera and the constructing character that accompanies writing and picturing culture.

<sup>77</sup> See Dirks, *Castes of mind*, Cohn, *Colonialism and knowledge*.

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