



The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge

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The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge

A dissertation presented

by

Joshua Ehrlich

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Abstract

The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge

This study shows that debate over the relations among companies, states, and knowledge is not new, but rather was integral to the politics of the British East India Company. Reconstructing such debate among Company officials and critics from the 1770s to the 1830s, the study makes several further interventions. It argues against what has been perhaps the dominant narrative about Company and British-imperial ideology in this period, a narrative of reorientation from “Orientalist” to “Anglicist” cultural attitudes. It shows instead how the Company shifted from a commercial idiom of sovereignty, concerned with conciliating elites through scholarly patronage, to a territorial idiom, concerned with cultivating popular affection through state-sponsored education. Whereas the field of the history of knowledge has largely developed as a history *of structures* of knowledge, meanwhile, this study argues for a history *of ideas* of knowledge. Such an approach is needed to elucidate the category of knowledge and its discursive uses past and present.

Contents

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

Introduction

Chapter 1, “Warren Hastings, Knowledge, and the Company State”

Chapter 2, “The Age of William Jones and Charles Cornwallis”

Chapter 3, “Richard Wellesley and the Politics of Fort William College”

Chapter 4, “Scholar-Administrators and the Company in the Early Nineteenth Century”

Chapter 5, “Education and the Ends of the Company State”

Bibliography

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Abbreviations

<i>AJ</i>	<i>Asiatic Journal</i>
BL	British Library
<i>BPP</i>	<i>Bengal Past and Present</i>
<i>CSSH</i>	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
<i>CPC</i>	<i>Calendar of Persian Correspondence</i> , 11 vols. (Calcutta and Delhi, 1911-69)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>FWIH</i>	<i>Fort William – India House Correspondence</i> , 21 vols. (Delhi, 1949-85)
GCPI	General Committee of Public Instruction
<i>GIED</i>	Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir, eds., <i>The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843</i> (Richmond, UK, 1999)
HC/HL Deb	House of Commons/Lords Debate (in <i>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates</i> unless otherwise stated)
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</i>
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
MSA	Maharashtra State Archives
NAI	National Archives of India
NLS	National Library of Scotland
PCFW	Proceedings of the College of Fort William, National Archives of India
PP	Parliamentary Papers
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
TNSA	Tamil Nadu State Archives

WBSA

West Bengal State Archives

Introduction

In the preface to his Bengali-English dictionary of 1834, the Calcutta entrepreneur and litterateur Ramkamal Sen related the following anecdote. In the seventeenth century, an English East India Company ship proceeded from the Bay of Bengal up the Hooghly River, before anchoring near the future site of the city of Calcutta. The vessel's commander sent ashore to the leading local businessmen, and requested the assistance of a "*dubash*." This word, in the environs of the Company's southern entrepot of Madras, referred to a mediator, often a power-broker (literally, "one with two languages"). In riverine Bengal, however, where the Company was still a newcomer, the utterance more readily called to mind a *dhoba*, or washerman. Thus, the local magnates appointed such a man to tender his services to the foreign merchants. The *dhoba* timidly approached the Indiaman in a dinghy, bearing the customary gifts of "plantains, pumplemusses and sugarcandy," or the like. To his pleasant bewilderment, he was received on deck with a salute, and presented not with bags of soiled laundry, but "with bags of gold and other precious articles." Thenceforth, the *dhoba* was employed as "one of the principal native servants of the Company." And over time, he acquired the learning and status he had been assumed to possess already. For Ramkamal, "He may be considered the first English scholar among the natives of Calcutta."¹

Ramkamal's account, however apocryphal, was percipient. Almost since its founding in 1600, the East India Company had sponsored learning in connection with its activities.

¹ Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, 2 vols. (Serampore, 1834), 1:16-17.

It had encouraged Indians and Europeans in the study not only of languages, but of fields ranging from astronomy to zoology. Yet by the time Ramkamal was writing, the Company had concluded a massive transformation. Once a mercantile corporation for which territory was a mere auxiliary to trade, it had emerged in recent decades as an expansive territorial state, conducting little and finally no trade at all. The evident purpose of Ramkamal's anecdote, in the context of his preface, was to illustrate ruefully how the Company's engagement with knowledge had changed with its character. Whereas the *dhoba-dubash* had richly profited from his presumptive learning and status, Ramkamal could hope so to profit only by casting his dictionary as a primer for Indian schools.² This discrepancy pointed to the Company's evolving efforts to legitimize its sovereignty. From an early date, and especially from the 1770s, the Company used ideas about scholarly patronage to negotiate a commercial sovereignty with British and Indian political classes. By the 1830s, it instead used ideas about mass instruction to consolidate a territorial sovereignty over Indian society at large. In the decades around 1800, ideas about knowledge both reflected and inflected the reconceptualization of the Company state.

In this period, Company officials and commentators developed a rich body of thought on relations among companies, states, and knowledge. The tortuous path from scholarly patronage to mass instruction wended through the major political and ideological thickets that beset the Company. To trace this path is to trace the emergence of the British empire in India. In a broader sense still, it is to trace the emergence of the modern state

² See *ibid.*, 1:3-8.

from an early modern matrix of commerce and association. This latter trajectory is likely the more instructive at present. Casual invocations of “American Empire” or “neo-colonialism” notwithstanding, it is not the resurgence of empires, but of companies—indeed multinational corporations—that poses an imminent threat to the world order of states.³ Knowledge, meanwhile, has become profoundly implicated in the prospect. As coinages like “knowledge economy” attest, the resources for which companies and states have competed, among themselves and with each other, have increasingly appeared more intellectual than material. Fifty years ago, the management theorist Peter Drucker’s contention that knowledge was becoming commercialized and politicized was calculated to shock; it is unlikely to do so anymore.⁴ Nonetheless, normative debates over the respective roles of companies and states in knowledge arenas like scientific research and higher education remain impoverished by a lack of historical perspective. It is too often imagined that the questions faced today are unprecedented, and thus that history provides scant resources for addressing them. As the following chapters show, debate over the relations among companies, states, and knowledge is far from a new phenomenon. “The politics of knowledge,” Drucker’s term for such debate, was integral to the politics of the Company some two-hundred years ago.⁵

³ On this theme, see e.g. Peter Dicken, “Transnational Corporations and Nation-States,” *International Social Science Journal* 49 (1997).

⁴ See Peter F. Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), x, 349-71; and recently Fernando Domínguez Rubio and Patrick Baert, eds., *The Politics of Knowledge* (Abingdon, UK, 2012).

⁵ Drucker’s phrase has been frequently, if loosely, employed by social scientists. It has also appeared in recent histories of knowledge. Due to the methodological commitments of the field (discussed below), however, these studies have treated the subject only superficially.

Of the histories of companies, states, and knowledge, the first two have been most often linked. And in recent years, the link has been most often drawn by early modernists. These scholars have shown that in both South Asia and Europe, from about the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, politics and trade blurred into each other, fostering plural and negotiated forms of sovereignty. In the resulting institutional ecology, companies and states not only interacted, but intersected. They shared actors, languages, and practices in common, making it difficult to draw any absolute distinction between the two. Histories of the early East India Company have contributed to many of these insights. In emphasizing the early origins of the Company's sovereign character, however, they have tended to obscure the late endurance of its mercantile one. Histories of the later Company have also displayed this tendency, dwelling fruitfully on political thought, but neglecting its myriad ties to the world of commerce. It thus remains to be explained how the Company sustained its dual character in the face of new challenges from the mid-eighteenth century forward.

In the historiography of early modern South Asia, a turn to local and regional levels of analysis has drawn attention to the interpenetration of politics and trade, and relatedly, to the "shared and layered" nature of contemporary sovereignty.⁶ Even at the height of Mughal power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, according to the new consensus, the imperial center functioned more as a "coordinating agency" than a commanding

⁶ Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 25.

authority.⁷ An early hypothesis argued for the Mughal state's reliance on indigenous banking firms; subsequent studies have emphasized instead its reliance on provincial magnates, who were themselves deeply involved in trade and finance.⁸ According to one recent formulation, the Mughal political system entailed an expanding market in "shares' in sovereignty," which successively integrated local landholders and local corporate bodies of merchants.⁹ The twin eighteenth-century phenomena of commercialization and decentralization thus reflected the quickening of processes already in train, as increasingly assertive provincial rulers offered traders and bankers a greater stake in the political order.¹⁰ The same demand for capital and credit that prompted such associations likewise created openings for Europeans and ultimately furnished the conditions for Company rule.¹¹

Nowhere were these developments more pronounced than in Bengal. Commercialization there "probably proceeded further than in any other part of the Mughal

⁷ Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48* (Delhi, 1986), 14. Much of the theoretical ground for this view was laid by Burton Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered: Part One" and Frank Perlin, "State Formation Reconsidered: Part Two," *MAS* 19 (1985).

⁸ Karen Leonard, "Banking Firms in Nineteenth-Century Hyderabad Politics," *MAS* 15 (1981); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, intro. to Alam and Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State, 1526-1750* (Delhi, 1998), 53-5.

⁹ Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572-1730* (Cambridge, 2004), 126.

¹⁰ The classic account is C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983).

¹¹ P. J. Marshall, intro. to Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Revolution or Evolution?* (Delhi, 2003), 22; see Bayly, *Rulers*; Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1988), 45-78; Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25 (1988), 420-23; D. A. Washbrook, "Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History c. 1720-1860," *MAS* 22 (1988); Marshall, "The British in Asia: Trade to Dominion, 1700-1765," in Marshall and Alain Low, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998).

empire,” linking town and country, prince and peasant in ramifying networks of exchange.¹² From the early eighteenth century, *nawabs* (governors) of Bengal combined the formerly distinct powers of *nizam* (over civil administration) and *diwan* (over revenue administration). This union of offices portended not only looser relations with Delhi, but more fluid political arrangements within the province itself.¹³ Government and the economy were increasingly braided together, as *nawabs* and high-ranking officials recognized opportunities to profit from merchants as well as a duty to protect them.¹⁴ Meanwhile, European intervention gave rise to a new class of *banyans*, or men of business, who moved routinely between court and bazaar in their dealings as intermediaries.¹⁵ Notably, the evolving symbiosis of politics and trade was coming to shape ideas about the state. A pioneering study has shown that, by the later eighteenth century, *nawabi* administrators tended to depict government as a flexible system of customs and rules, rather than one fixed upon the person of the ruler as before.¹⁶ For these administrators

¹² John R. McLane, *Land and Local Kingship in Eighteenth-Century Bengal* (Cambridge, 1993), 6; see also Rajat Datta, *Society, Economy, and the Market: Commercialization in Rural Bengal, c. 1760-1800* (Delhi, 2000).

¹³ See Philip B. Calkins, “The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, 1700-1740,” *JAS* 29 (1970).

¹⁴ David Leith Curley, “Rulers and Merchants in Late Eighteenth-Century Bengal” (PhD, University of Chicago, 1980); Kumkum Chatterjee, *Merchants, Politics and Society in Early Modern India: Bihar, 1733-1820* (Leiden, 1996); Tilottama Mukherjee, *Political Culture and Economy in Eighteenth-Century Bengal* (New Delhi, 2013).

¹⁵ See P. J. Marshall, “Masters and Banians in Eighteenth-Century Calcutta,” in *Trade and Conquest: Studies on the Rise of British Dominance in India* (Aldershot, 1993).

¹⁶ Kumkum Chatterjee, “History as Self-Representation: The Recasting of a Political Tradition in Late Eighteenth-Century Eastern India,” *MAS* 32 (1998); see also Chatterjee, *The Cultures of History in Early Modern India: Persianization and Mughal Culture in Bengal* (New Delhi, 2009), 155-82. The shift was one of emphasis rather than kind: the classic Mughal state has been characterized as “patrimonial-bureaucratic.” Stephen P. Blake, “The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals,” *JAS* 39 (1979); see also J. F. Richards,

economic decline was the leading symptom of misgovernment under the ascendant East India Company. Their claim to possess the understanding and expertise necessary to reverse this decline constituted an assertion both of their own importance to the regional politico-economic system and of that system's importance to the interests of the Company.

The Company itself epitomized similarly close relations between politics and trade at the British metropole. Until recently, historians were inclined to see the Company, like the classic Mughal state, as a highly centralized organization.¹⁷ Recent studies, however, mirroring the revisionist school of Mughal history, have attributed the Company's longevity to its *decentralization*.¹⁸ Other works have shown how the Company both reproduced and "formed part of the loosely connected network of institutions and influence which made up the British State."¹⁹ "Companies" in early modern Britain were not strictly commercial entities, but rather associational nodes among the tangled and indistinct webs of market, state, and society.²⁰ "Corporations," a legacy of Roman law, ranged from educational and ecclesiastical establishments to municipal and national

"Norms of Comportment among Imperial Mughal Officers," in Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley, 1984).

¹⁷ J. F. Richards, "Mughal State and Finance in the Premodern World Economy," *CSSH* 23 (1981), 303-4.

¹⁸ Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600-1757* (Princeton, 2014).

¹⁹ John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), 136; see Rupali Mishra, *A Business of State: Commerce, Politics, and the Birth of the East India Company* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018); see generally Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000).

²⁰ Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), 127-37, 159-94; Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (London, 2010), 102-33.

governments and even to the Crown itself.²¹ There was as yet no discrete field of economics: “political economy” was a qualitative discipline that “provided the means to describe and explain the relationships among the Three Kingdoms” of England, Ireland, and Scotland in the context of wider circuits of interaction.²²

Recent “connected and comparative” histories have reconstructed many of these circuits, linking politico-economic languages and practices across the early modern world, including, most prominently, between maritime regions of Europe and South Asia.²³ One study of the western Indian Ocean up to 1750 has concluded that *imarat* (government) and *tijarat* (trade) were “adjunct and at times overlapping spheres,” no less for Europeans than for South Asians.²⁴ “British and more broadly European forms of statecraft,” according to another survey, “closely resembled the styles of rule that occurred in the subcontinent ... blurring the boundaries between politics and trade, and acknowledging the existence of multiple points of political authority.”²⁵ Concepts like “composite monarchy” and “negotiated” rule, describing the construction of sovereignty among multiple interests at

²¹ See recently William A. Pettigrew et al., forum on “Corporate Constitutionalism and the Dialogue between the Global and Local in Seventeenth-Century English History,” *Itinerario* 39 (2015); Henry S. Turner, *The Corporate Commonwealth: Pluralism and Political Fictions in England, 1516-1651* (Chicago, 2016).

²² David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 148; see Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution, 1700-1850* (New Haven, 2009), esp. 63-78; Keith Tribe, *The Economy of the Word: Language, History, and Economics* (Oxford, 2015).

²³ For this approach, see esp. C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History*, 2 vols. (New Delhi, 2005).

²⁴ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Of *Imârat* and *Tijârat*: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400 to 1750,” *CSSH* 37 (1995), 750, see also 775-6.

²⁵ Jon E. Wilson, “Early Colonial India Beyond Empire,” *Historical Journal* 50 (2007), 958; see also Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780-1835* (Basingstoke, 2008), 19-44.

various levels, have accordingly been transposed from Atlantic to Indian Ocean contexts.²⁶ There would also seem to be an unexplored parallel, at the level of political thought, in the gradual and grudging accommodation of old concepts of landed virtue to the new conditions of global commerce.²⁷ All of this is to say that a merchant-sovereign like the East India Company was far from anomalous, whether by European or South Asian standards. In fact, as a recent study has put it, such an entity was typical across “an early modern world filled with a variety of corporate bodies politic and hyphenated, hybrid, overlapping, and composite forms of sovereignty.”²⁸ The question that demands further investigation is how this world changed, and how the Company evolved or refused to evolve with it.

By the mid-eighteenth century, when the Company first acquired extensive territory, politics and trade were becoming ever more entangled in India, while showing signs of separating, at least discursively, in Britain. It is important to recognize, however, that this latter trend had not proceeded very far. Although William Blackstone’s unitary view of sovereignty was influential, it was also controversial, like those of Thomas Hobbes and Jean Bodin.²⁹ Although Adam Smith challenged mercantilist orthodoxy, he did not seek to render “the economy” independent of the polity, or “economics” independent of

²⁶ On “composite monarchy” in the Indian context, see Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford, 2011), 9. On “negotiated” rule in the Indian context, see P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Cambridge, 2005).

²⁷ See suggestively J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985); Philip Stern, “Corporate Virtue: The Languages of Empire in Early Modern British Asia,” *Renaissance Studies* 26 (2012).

²⁸ Stern, *Company-State*, 3.

²⁹ Alison L. LaCroix, *The Ideological Origins of American Federalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010), 15-20.

politics.³⁰ Furthermore, Smith's description of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) as an assault on Britain's "whole commercial system" suggested the scale of opposition even to his more limited aims.³¹ Smith was representative of a growing tendency among Anglophone critics to trace the Company's ills to its hybrid constitution.³² Among Smith's coevals, for instance, the private trader William Bolts exhorted Parliament to "separate the Merchant from the Sovereign, for the preservation of both."³³ Nonetheless, for every commentator who insisted that "the greatest evil arises when traders become princes," there was another ready to point out, "is not our own legislature composed principally of merchants and of mercantile men? And are not the mercantile concerns of this, and of most countries now-a-days, so intimately connected with their prosperity and well-being, that the great concern of governments is to put them on a right and respectable footing?"³⁴ This was the view that long prevailed in Britain, as in India, and long preserved the Company as a merchant-sovereign.

³⁰ See Keith Tribe, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse* (London, 1978); Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge, 1996); Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

³¹ Adam Smith to Andreas Holt, 26 Oct. 1780, in *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, ed. Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1987), 251.

³² Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols. (London, 1776), 2:251-5.

³³ William Bolts, *Considerations on India Affairs*, 3 vols. (London, 1772-5), 1:222; see similarly Philip Francis, *Letter from Mr. Francis to Lord North* [17 Sept. 1777] (London, 1793), 6-7.

³⁴ Archibald Keir, *Thoughts on the Affairs of Bengal* (London, 1772), 5; Thomas Pownall, *The Right, Interest, and Duty, of the State, as Concerned in the Affairs of the East Indies* (London, 1773), 43-4.

It was significant that Parliament did not follow the logic of Bolts and Francis through to its conclusion, even in the landmark acts of 1773 and 1784. The Company retained a largely independent sovereignty, subject merely to limited, discretionary supervision by the British government. The MP Charles James Fox, arguing for more radical legislation in 1783, denied “that a trust to a company of merchants stands upon the solemn and sanctified ground by which a trust is committed to a monarch.”³⁵ Yet it was precisely because the Company’s trade and its government were mutually indivisible that he insisted on the necessity of curbing both. Displaying the commercial spirit of the age, meanwhile, Fox’s ally Edmund Burke saw nothing inherently wrong with placing “extensive political powers in the hands of a company of merchants.” As he told the Commons, “I have known merchants with the sentiments and the abilities of great statesmen; and I have seen persons in the rank of statesmen, with the conceptions and character of pedlars.”³⁶ Some near misses notwithstanding, it would be another fifty years until the British political establishment mustered the will to end the Company’s trade and render it a straightforwardly territorial state. Right up until the fateful Charter Act of 1833, defenders of the Company had always insisted that its functions as a merchant and as a sovereign were bound up together.³⁷ Even the principal framer of the Act acknowledged that the

³⁵ Charles James Fox, speech (1 Dec. 1783), in *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox, in the House of Commons*, 6 vols. (London, 1815), 2:239.

³⁶ Edmund Burke, “Speech on Fox’s India Bill,” 1 Dec. 1783, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, gen. ed. Paul Langford, 9 vols. (Oxford, 1981-2015), 5:386-7.

³⁷ See P. J. Marshall, *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757-1813* (London, 1968), 41-2, 225-6.

Company's "mercantile and political transactions" had long been "entangled together in inextricable complication."³⁸

Yet for all the recent attention to the ideas that generated this arrangement in the seventeenth century, there has been scant attention to those that sustained it from the mid-eighteenth century forward. A wealth of historiography has elaborated the ideological foundations and false starts of the Raj, but it has overwhelmingly treated the Company qua state to the neglect of the Company qua company.³⁹ The common, if disparately woven, thread to this historiography has been a focus on how the Company legitimized its rule over territory, particularly territory acquired by conquest. What remains to be investigated is how this effort linked up with that to legitimize the Company's hybrid constitution. How did the Company defend its longstanding mercantile idiom of sovereignty when British and Indian political classes increasingly viewed it as a territorial state? This study discovers one important answer: that Company leaders and advocates turned to ideas about knowledge.

If knowledge is power, as the aphorism goes, then it would seem to follow that knowledge is political. Yet, just as political scientists and theorists have not contributed much to

³⁸ Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Government of India" (10 Jul. 1833), in *The Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, 8 vols. (London, 1866), 8:115.

³⁹ Prominent examples include Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1995); Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007); Wilson, *Domination of Strangers*; Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, 2012). For a helpful distinction between piecemeal "state-building" and the long trajectory of "state-formation," see Sebastian Meurer, "Approaches to State-Building in Eighteenth Century British Bengal," in Antje Flüchter and Susan Fichter, eds., *Structures on the Move: Technologies of Governance in Transcultural Encounter* (Heidelberg, 2012).

“knowledge studies,” nor have historians of political thought contributed much to the “history of knowledge.”⁴⁰ This field has developed thus far as a history *of structures* of knowledge, resisting what the present study attempts: a history *of ideas* of knowledge. Meanwhile, South Asian and British-imperial historiography has also resisted such an approach, tending to subsume its concerns into those of cultural history. The many existing studies of “attitudes” or “representations” reveal the drawbacks of this tendency, however, and they suggest what can be gained from greater sensitivity to knowledge as an actors’ category.

While the present study is intended as a contribution to the history of knowledge, it departs from the methods and concerns hitherto associated with that field.⁴¹ As an outgrowth largely of social history and the history of science, the history of knowledge has inherited their structural emphasis. Major contributions to the emerging field have chronicled the rise and fall of institutions or systems, “from Alexandria to the Internet,” for instance, or “from Gutenberg to Google.”⁴² At the same time, such works have eschewed the characteristic concern of intellectual history with the “languages,” including political languages, deployed by historical actors. Thus, Peter Burke’s already-classic *A Social History of Knowledge* (2000-2012) has taken as its subject “intellectual environments rather than intellectual problems,” including the dynamics of political culture but not the

⁴⁰ For the first observation, see Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge, 2016), 13.

⁴¹ For overviews of the field, see *ibid.*; Johan Östling et al., intro. to Östling et al., eds., *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge* (Lund, 2018), 9-17.

⁴² Ian F. McNeely with Lisa Wolverton, *Reinventing Knowledge: From Alexandria to the Internet* (New York, 2008). Peter Burke has proposed “From Gutenberg to Google” as the subtitle for a revised version of his *A Social History of Knowledge*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2000-2012), see 2:1.

contents of political discourse.⁴³ This may be a defensible approach for projects that seek to identify and analyze past knowledge “revolutions,” “systems,” or “economies” by analogy with those of today.⁴⁴ If, however, as Burke and others have suggested, a larger aim of the field is to inform current (political) debates over knowledge, then part of the enterprise must be the recovery of earlier such debates in the languages in which they were undertaken. What is needed, in other words, is a history of ideas of knowledge, which might lend clarity to the elusive category of knowledge and to its discursive uses past and present.

The Company offers a fitting subject for this kind of history, not least because other kinds have failed to fulfill its mandate. While historians of the Company, and especially of Company rule in India, have long probed the intersection of knowledge and politics, they have tended to locate it on the terrain not of ideas, but of culture. The origins of this tendency can be traced to the 1960s, when the growth of area studies was reshaping American academia, and historians in many parts of the world were directing attention to social and cultural change. The fruits of the new research agenda, which somewhat anticipated “the cultural turn,” included a host of studies of “British attitudes towards India.”⁴⁵ Adumbrating a transition from sympathy to antipathy in the decades around 1800, these followed the outlines of two earlier works: Percival Spear’s *The Nabobs* (1932), which

⁴³ Burke, *Social History of Knowledge*, 1:4.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; Joel Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton, N.J., 2002); Margaret C. Jacob, *The First Knowledge Economy: Human Capital and the European Economy, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 2014); Clifford Siskin, *System: The Shaping of Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016).

⁴⁵ George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes towards India, 1784-1858* (Oxford, 1961); Garland Cannon, *Oriental Jones: A Biography of Sir William Jones (1746-1794)* (Bombay, 1964); Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, N.J., 1967); S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India* (Cambridge, 1968).

received a new edition, and Raymond Schwab's *Renaissance Orientale* (1950), which was eventually translated into English.⁴⁶

The fullest and most influential expression of this thesis was David Kopf's *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (1969).⁴⁷ In this impressive work of cultural history, Kopf combined intensive research in Indian archives with fashionable theories of acculturation and modernization. In so doing, he made two significant interventions. First, he identified the Company's involvement with knowledge from the 1770s to the 1830s as a key site of ideological change. Second, he characterized the change as one from "Orientalist" (eastward-facing) to "Anglicist" (westward-facing) cultural attitudes. The present study is, at one level, an attempt to rescue the first argument from the second.

It is hard to overstate the influence of what might be termed the Orientalist-Anglicist thesis: that of a shift in Company ideology from the one cultural stance to the other. Until Kopf, orientalism meant the study of eastern languages and antiquities, while "Anglicism" was not invoked often enough to have a fixed meaning. The two terms had rarely been used together, and when they were, it was almost solely in reference to a debate on education in Calcutta in the 1830s. Since Kopf, however, "Orientalism" and "Anglicism" have been cemented as Manichean opposites in an ideological struggle that supposedly

⁴⁶ Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in 18th Century India*, rev. ed. (London, 1963); Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East 1680-1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York, 1984), esp. 33-47.

⁴⁷ David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969).

gripped India affairs “for at least six decades.”⁴⁸ One sign of the staying power of Kopf’s categories has been the appearance of a host of minor variations. His account of the shift in British perceptions of India has been reprised as one from “similarity” to “difference”; “reflection” to “refraction”; “Indomania” to “Indophobia.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, strong echoes of the Orientalist-Anglicist thesis can be detected in studies tracing the British and European embrace of imperial conquest, over the same period, to a shift from tolerance to intolerance of cultural difference.⁵⁰

Even Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), which rendered essentially all Western scholarship on the East “Orientalist” in a new sense, did surprisingly little to diminish the currency of Kopf’s framing.⁵¹ Although Said was less charitable about the impulse behind such scholarship, he shared with Kopf the ontological premise that culture precedes politics. In fact, the influence of Kopf filtered through Said accounts for some of the major trends in South Asian and British-imperial historiography. Studies of “colonial knowledge,” which have populated both fields since the 1980s, have often rehashed Kopfian turning

⁴⁸ William A. Green and John P. Deasy, Jr., “Unifying Themes in the History of British India, 1757-1857: An Historiographical Analysis,” *Albion* 17 (1985), 27; see also *GIED*.

⁴⁹ Metcalf, *Ideologies*; Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, 1997); Nicholas Hoover Wilson, “From Reflection to Refraction: State Administration in British India, circa 1770-1855,” *American Journal of Sociology* 116 (2011). For a telling acknowledgement of these similarities, see David Kopf, review of Trautmann, *Aryans*, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998).

⁵⁰ Esp. Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, N.J., 2006).

⁵¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). For an attempt to mediate between these two “Orientalisms,” however, cf. Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture: India, 1770-1870* (Basingstoke, 2007), 1-17. To avoid confusion, the present study will refer to Western scholarship on the East as orientalism without quotation marks; Kopf’s category as “Orientalism” with quotation marks; and Said’s category only in conjunction with his name.

points as stages in a continuous “cultural project of control.”⁵² Such studies may have shifted focus from “attitudes” to “representations,” and erected an elaborate superstructure upon “knowledge” as an analytical category.⁵³ But they have continued to reduce knowledge and politics alike to expressions of culture, and to recount the history of their interrelation as a fundamentally cultural one.

The Orientalist-Anglicist thesis has been subject to other challenges and alternatives; these point up the potential for an alternative thesis grounded in a history of ideas of knowledge. One historiographical development in recent decades has been the proliferation of studies of “scholar-administrators” tied to the Company.⁵⁴ Many of these studies have focused on a single individual.⁵⁵ Others have treated multiple members of a single field or discipline.⁵⁶ Increasingly, the term has not been confined to Europeans: after

⁵² Nicholas B. Dirks, foreword to B. S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), ix; e.g. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York, 1989).

⁵³ For an overview, see Tony Ballantyne, “Colonial Knowledge,” in Sarah Stockwell, ed., *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Malden, Mass., 2008).

⁵⁴ Thomas Trautmann has been chiefly responsible for popularizing the term, beginning with his *Aryans and British India*. For an important reminder that military officers and surgeons—not only civil servants—numbered among the European scholars employed by the Company, see Douglas M. Peers, “Colonial Knowledge and the Military in India, 1780-1860,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33 (2005). This study will use the term “scholar-administrator” somewhat loosely to include “scholar-officers,” “scholar-surgeons,” and the like.

⁵⁵ See recently Jack Harrington, *Sir John Malcolm and the Creation of British India* (Basingstoke, 2010); Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (Oxford, 2011); Rosane Rocher and Ludo Rocher, *The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company* (Abingdon, UK, 2012); Tobias Wolffhardt, *Unearthing the Past to Forge the Future: Colin Mackenzie, the Early Colonial State and the Comprehensive Survey of India*, trans. Jane Rafferty (New York, 2018).

⁵⁶ See recently Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago, 1997); Trautmann, *Aryans*; Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley, 2006); Rama Sundari Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880* (Basingstoke, 2012); Joydeep Sen, *Astronomy in India, 1784-1876* (London, 2014).

all, Indian “scholar-administrators” had been favored by the Mughals and many local rulers, and they sought to retain their prominence under the Company.⁵⁷ Though few if any recent studies have repudiated the Orientalist-Anglicist thesis outright, they have quietly, perhaps unwittingly, built up a case against it. With a tendentious selection of quotes, it would seem, nearly any British official might be assigned either to the “Anglicist” or the “Orientalist” camp. Furthermore, intellectual curiosity turns out to have been no guarantee of an affinity for India or Indians. Kopf’s categories have proved too reductive and too detached from ideational context to carry much meaning. Indeed, careful histories of political thought have found them unhelpful, not only for the later eighteenth century, which Kopf treated somewhat superficially, but even for the 1830s, which formed the climax in his narrative.⁵⁸ Such discontents suggest how a focus on cultural attitudes (or representations) has blurred what one commentator has described as “the intricate dialectics between the pursuit of knowledge and governmental pursuits.”⁵⁹ As yet, however, there has been no comprehensive attempt to remap the ideological terrain of *British Orientalism* and its heirs.

⁵⁷ See esp. Chatterjee, “History as Self-Representation.” For the Mughal ideal of the scholar-administrator, see Rajeev Kinra, “The Learned Ideal of the Mughal *Wazir*: The Life and Intellectual World of Prime Minister Afzal Khan Shirazi (d. 1639),” in Paul M. Dover, ed., *Secretaries and Statecraft in the Early Modern World* (Edinburgh, 2016).

⁵⁸ John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal Imperialist, 1774-1839* (Berkeley, 1974), 208-25; Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 15-16. For a sketch of the intervening decades, implying certain departures from the Orientalist-Anglicist thesis, see P. J. Marshall, “British-Indian Connections c.1780 to c.1830: The Empire of the Officials,” in Michael J. Franklin, ed., *Romantic Representations of British India* (Abingdon, UK, 2005).

⁵⁹ Rosane Rocher, “British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government,” in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia, 1993).

The most generative work of recent decades on knowledge in connection with the Company has been C. A. Bayly's *Empire and Information* (1996).⁶⁰ Like the studies it has helped inspire on topics such as print, circulation, and communication, Bayly's tour de force treated "knowledge" as an analytical lens, a technology of rule nearly synonymous with "intelligence" or "information."⁶¹ For the historical actors in his study and in the present study, however, the "knowledge" of a scholar was distinct from the "intelligence" of a spy or the "information" of a pamphleteer. While Bayly's approach avoids some of the pitfalls of cultural history, it succumbs to those of the history of structures of knowledge. Such an approach might yield insights into how knowledge was produced and transmitted, but it can reveal little about how knowledge was conceptualized, or about how the resulting concepts were mobilized in political contexts.

It has been observed here that, from the mid-eighteenth century, the Company's new need to legitimize extensive territory merged with a longstanding need to legitimize its dual character as company and state. It has also been observed that a history of *ideas* of knowledge might remedy the problems that have attended existing structural and cultural

⁶⁰ C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996); see also Bayly, "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India," *MAS* 27 (1993).

⁶¹ Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago, 2007); Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (Basingstoke, 2007); Bhavani Raman, *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India* (Chicago, 2012); Nitin Sinha, *Communication and Colonialism in Eastern India: Bihar, 1760s-1880s* (London, 2012).

alternatives. It remains now to link these observations; to preview how the Company's changing legitimacy needs led it to deploy and redeploy ideas about knowledge.

A point of departure can be found in a doctoral dissertation completed a decade after *British Orientalism* and neglected in the decades since.⁶² While treating almost the same period and milieu as Kopf, the author, Ruth Gabriel, refocused attention from the cultural to the political context of interactions among European and Indian scholar-administrators. Her principal argument was that the Company state used the support of knowledge to consolidate local authority over new territory. She suggested that, as the state's territorial footprint expanded, it shifted from patronizing traditional scholarly elites to educating a range of new "intermediaries of legitimacy." Gabriel's findings were tentative, perhaps raising more questions than they answered. Moreover, her scope was strictly limited in key respects: to north India, to the politics of Indology and Indologists, to the period before the eventful 1830s, to the methods of historical anthropology, and to a view of the Company as a territorial state. Yet in linking the Company's engagements with knowledge to its need for legitimation, Gabriel avoided the traps of cultural history and laid the groundwork for an alternative to the Orientalist-Anglicist thesis.

This study picks up where Gabriel left off to propose just such an alternative. It adopts a transmarine perspective on the Company's activities, including metropolitan Britain and the Indian subcontinent, as well as a "Greater India" spanning regions as far-flung as the Red Sea, Tibet, and the Strait of Malacca. It also treats the full array of what

⁶² Ruth Gabriel, "Learned Communities and British Educational Experiments in North India: 1780-1830" (PhD, University of Virginia, 1979).

contemporaries described as scholarly “knowledge,” and does not presume any neat divide between Eastern and Western, useful and ornamental, or humanistic and scientific branches. It considers a wide range of actors, centering on the “medium” thinkers who tended to shape Company policy: governors-general, based in Calcutta, and Indian and European scholar-administrators.⁶³ Leading from the 1770s to the 1830s, it covers the period in which the Company transitioned from mercantile to territorial sovereignty, and from patronizing scholar-administrators to promoting mass education. This history *of ideas* of knowledge rebuts structural explanations for such developments as agentless outcomes of bureaucratic or institutional growth. Finally, it recognizes the Company state as both company *and* state. This entails considering the Company’s ongoing commercial character as indispensable to its political thought.

It will be seen in all of this that Ramkamal was on to something. The politics of knowledge—the debate over relations among companies, states, and knowledge—was a fixture in the politics of the East India Company.

⁶³ For the term, see Emma Rothschild, “Language and Empire, c.1800,” *Historical Research* 78 (2005), 210.

Chapter 1

Warren Hastings, Knowledge, and the Company State

“It is new,” wrote Samuel Johnson to Warren Hastings, “for a Governour of Bengal to patronise learning.”⁶⁴ Nor have later commentators disagreed. Imperial Britons looked back, often from weighty historical junctures, to recall Hastings as “the Maecenas” of the British East India Company, perhaps its sole representative “who took an interest in literature, scholarship and arts.”⁶⁵ Strictly speaking, to ask why knowledge was a preoccupation for Hastings is to undertake a search not for origins, but for catalysts. The Company, like other mercantile corporations, had long patronized learning for practical reasons and to burnish its image.⁶⁶ As governor (1772-4) and then as governor-general (1774-85), however, Hastings patronized learning on a palpably greater scale. He funded Hindu and Islamic legal digests and seminaries. He commissioned two of the earliest European investigations of Tibet. He sponsored dozens of projects proposed by Indian and British scholar-administrators. No prior Company official had done any of these things, and it has long been asked why Hastings did.

⁶⁴ Johnson to Hastings, 29 Jan. 1781, in *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Bruce Redford, 5 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1992-4), 3:324.

⁶⁵ [G. Smith,] “India and Comparative Philology,” *Calcutta Review* 29 (1857), 251; Marquis Curzon, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses*, 2 vols. (London, 1925), 2:155; see also Penderel Moon, *Warren Hastings and British India* (London, 1947), esp. 348-54.

⁶⁶ Anna Winterbottom, *Hybrid Knowledge in the Early East India Company World* (Basingstoke, 2016); see Ted Binnema, “Enlightened Zeal”: *The Hudson’s Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto, 2014).

In recent decades various explanations have been given. One is that the Company's territorial acquisitions from the 1750s, to quote a contemporary, "laid open the East to the researches of the curious."⁶⁷ Hastings was undoubtedly stirred by scholarly curiosity, and by a gentlemanly sense of duty to encourage it.⁶⁸ Another answer is that many such researches had practical utility: administering the Company's new territories in eastern India required understanding their past and present conditions.⁶⁹ Yet few readers of Hastings would be satisfied with these explanations alone. One of the ablest such readers has detected in Hastings' patronage "a deeper and more systematic design" to forge bonds of affection between India and Britain.⁷⁰ Others have gone further, interpreting Hastings' learned ventures as the foundation of an "Orientalist" political regime.⁷¹ According to a recent commentator, Hastings was the architect of an "Orientalist despotism," an Indophilic analogue to enlightened monarchies in Europe.⁷² Any appearance in Hastings of cultural relativism *avant la lettre*, however, must be weighed alongside his declared conviction that "the great and rapid progress which the Sciences have made in Europe,

⁶⁷ Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, 2 vols. (London, 1768), dedication.

⁶⁸ P. J. Marshall, "Warren Hastings as Scholar and Patron," in Anne Whiteman, J. S. Bromley, and P. G. M. Dickson, eds., *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History Presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland* (Oxford, 1973), 254-6.

⁶⁹ J. S. Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India: The Assessments of British Historians* (Calcutta, 1970), 23-42.

⁷⁰ Marshall, "Hastings as Scholar and Patron," 256; see also J. L. Brockington, "Warren Hastings and Orientalism," in Geoffrey Carnall and Colin Nicholson, eds., *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings: Papers from a Bicentenary Commemoration* (Edinburgh, 1989).

⁷¹ David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969), 13-21; *GIED*; Michael J. Franklin, "'The Hastings Circle': Writers and Writing in Calcutta in the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century," in Emma J. Clery, Caroline Franklin, and Peter D. Garside, eds., *Authorship, Commerce and the Public: Scenes of Writing, 1750-1850* (Basingstoke, 2002).

⁷² Franklin, "'Hastings Circle,'" 186.

leave[s] little room to expect any useful acquisitions from ... the Learning of the rest of the world.”⁷³ Most importantly, Hastings lacked the time and luxury to indulge in grand projects: he was prone perhaps to using inflated rhetoric, but not to being carried away by it. Urgency and precariousness were abiding themes of his administration. To find a place on Hastings’ agenda, and a central one at that, knowledge would have had to serve vital and immediate interests—as indeed it did.

The fundamental ideological challenge of Hastings’ administration was how to legitimize the Company’s territorial acquisitions within the enduringly mercantile idiom of its sovereignty. This was no mere abstract concern. In the 1770s-80s, the Company faced existential threats on two fronts: from the British political establishment, which threatened to divide or dissolve it; and from Indian rulers and elites, who threatened to drive it out or withhold vital support. The Company’s territorial acquisitions had stirred up arguments among both sides that a mercantile corporation should not be entrusted to govern a state. Hastings sympathized with such arguments, but was duty-bound to oppose them. In ideas about knowledge, he located a valuable resource with which to do so. Among both British and Indian political classes, Hastings recognized, he could tap into other, positive associations between commercial sovereignty and the flourishing of knowledge. Patronizing the scholarship of Company servants, Hastings argued, would “conciliate” opinion in Britain, while patronizing the scholarship of influential natives would have the same effect in India. Hastings’ language of “conciliation,” and attendant patronage of

⁷³ [Warren Hastings,] *A Proposal for Establishing a Professorship of the Persian Language in the University of Oxford* [1766].

British and Indian scholar-administrators, would prove central to his administration and legacy.

Hastings and the Company State

Hastings has enjoyed a longstanding reputation as the founder of British India: the first representative of the Company to act like a sovereign rather than a merchant. Even recent studies, while distinguishing Hastings from his successors, have treated his regime as a decisive break with the Company's mercantile roots. Hastings himself did much to cultivate this reputation in office, articulating an ideal of concentrated and unmercantile sovereignty. The reality on the ground, however, was rather different. He was largely forced by circumstances to accept a close connection between politics and trade, and to negotiate for authority in both Britain and India. This necessity explains why Hastings turned to the language of "conciliation," and why he took recourse, under that heading, to ideas about knowledge.

For at least a decade before "standing forth" as governor, Hastings had resisted any conflation of sovereignty and commerce in the Company's affairs. As a member of the governing council of Bengal in the early 1760s, he urged submission to the "lawful authority" of the *nawab* Mir Qasim. "Instead of erecting themselves into lords and oppressors of the country," Hastings argued, the British ought to "confine themselves to an honest and fair trade."⁷⁴ This logic was already tenuous after the Battle of Plassey in 1757; it

⁷⁴ Hastings, 1 Mar. 1763, in Henry Vansittart, *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal*, 3 vols. (London, 1766), 2:355.

became untenable after the Company's assumption of the *diwani* (financial administration) in 1765. As Hastings observed shortly before his appointment to the governorship, "the Co[mpany]'s System has within these few years undergone a total change. From a merely Commercial Body they are grown up into a Military & Territorial Power, to w[hi]ch their Commerce is but a Secondary concern."⁷⁵ The Company's constitution, Hastings wrote the Court of Directors in 1773, had been "framed for the jurisdiction of your trading settlements, the sales of your exports, and the provision of your annual investment. I need not observe how incompetent these must prove for the government of a great kingdom ..."⁷⁶ On another occasion in 1775, Hastings argued that "sufficient distinction" must be drawn between the Company's "mercantile concerns" and its newer responsibilities. "Every duty ... connected with the commercial interest of the Company" should devolve to the board of trade at Calcutta; for "the details of commerce are not fit objects of attention to the supreme administration of a state."⁷⁷ Apart from such declarations, Hastings took up several positions that appeared to depart from the Company's mercantile lineage. First, he repeatedly lobbied to subject conciliar decision-making, a legacy of the early "factory" system, to an executive veto. Second, he seems at times to have flirted with ideas of replacing the rule of the Company with that of the Crown.⁷⁸ Finally, he sought to centralize

⁷⁵ Hastings to [Lord Shelburne], 16 Jul. 1771, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29126, 74v.

⁷⁶ Hastings to Directors, 11 Nov. 1773, in G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings*, 3 vols. (London, 1841), 1:368; see similarly Hastings, "Thoughts on the Advantageous Situation of Bengal for Commerce, Security, &c." (undated), Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29210, 73r.

⁷⁷ Hastings to Lord North, 2 Apr. 1775, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 1:534, 1:539.

⁷⁸ Neil Sen, "Warren Hastings and British Sovereign Authority in Bengal, 1774-80," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25 (1997).

administrative authority in Calcutta, ostensibly on the model of the classic Mughal state.⁷⁹ Any one of these instances might be taken to support Hastings' sometime reputation as farsighted architect of the Raj.⁸⁰

There is a distinction to be observed in Hastings' thinking, however, between the projections of an ideal system and the practicalities of the one in which he worked. The rhetoric of an uncommercial politics after 1765 was no more grounded in reality than that of an unpolitical commerce formerly. Distinguishing trade from other public functions and declaring it beneath the dignity of the leadership meant little when most officials were trading on private accounts and many had at some point been employed within the compass of "merchant" activity.⁸¹ Both things were true of Hastings himself. Moreover, official policies remained calibrated, as one report put it, to keep "in motion the great machine of the Company's commerce ... The accession of the Company to the Government of the Country did not change these principles ..." ⁸² Indeed, the Company used new land revenues to purchase commodities, and new political power to lower their price. Officials in Bengal continued to transfer between the board of trade and other departments, and the

⁷⁹ Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. 100-140.

⁸⁰ On this reputation, see P. J. Marshall, "The Making of an Imperial Icon: The Case of Warren Hastings," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27 (1999).

⁸¹ For the expansive contemporary understanding of "merchant" activity, see P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1976), 12.

⁸² Report (6 Aug. 1789), cited in Rajat Datta, "The Commercial Economy of Eastern India under Early British Rule," in H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke, and John G. Reid, eds. *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850* (Oxford, 2012), 343.

directors continued to hold Hastings accountable for the board's decisions.⁸³ In Britain, the home administration retained its corporate structure, with few if any major alterations.⁸⁴ Demarcations between statesmanship and commerce were aspirational more than effectual, pointing to their continued entanglement in the Company's affairs.

Furthermore, while the assumption of the *diwani* shifted the principal source of the Company's profits, it did not diminish their primacy. For "the British were in Bengal as traders and all the functions which they had acquired as rulers of Bengal since 1765 were built around the absolute priority given to the collection of revenue."⁸⁵ Hastings' commission from the directors to "stand forth as *diwan*" represented, more than anything, an acknowledgement that profitability required the exercise of sovereignty. Hitherto, the Company's governors had played a minimal role in the administration of Bengal, devolving most administrative functions to the *naib nazim* (*nawab* or *nazim*'s deputy), Muhammad Reza Khan. They had obtained an "absolute Power," as Hastings put it, but "by delegating it nominally to others contrived to enjoy all the Emoluments of it with[ou]t Responsibility."⁸⁶ British commentators increasingly saw this "double government" as the reason for disappointing tax collections in the *diwani* lands. Alongside inflexible assessments and private speculation, meanwhile, they blamed it for the famine that

⁸³ Warren Hastings, *Memoirs Relative to the State of India* (1786), in *Selections from the State Papers of the Governors-General of India: Warren Hastings*, ed. G. W. Forrest, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1910), 2:80-89.

⁸⁴ H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), 182-9.

⁸⁵ P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead: Eastern India 1740-1828* (Cambridge, 1987), 133, see also 115-16.

⁸⁶ Hastings to [Shelburne], 16 Jul. 1771, 74v.

devastated swathes of eastern India in 1769-70. “In a Countrey void of civil Polity,” the surveyor James Rennell observed, “these Accidents are not easily remedied.”⁸⁷ For Hastings, too, Bengal’s “Losses” by the famine and “incessant Drains of Money” implicated its government.⁸⁸ “The decay of its trade, and the diminution of its currency” required “a better regulated government ... to repair them.”⁸⁹ Not only Hastings’ internal reforms, but also his external relations prioritized the Company’s relentless revenue demands. In what would later become a central issue in his impeachment, Hastings met these via gifts, payments for military protection, and other “casual and extraordinary resources.”⁹⁰ The Company’s voracious appetite for profits was what Anglophone critics tended to mean when they ascribed to it “mercantile” attitudes. As Hastings himself lamented, “we have not been able ... to change our ideas with our situation.”⁹¹ In a broader sense, the world of commercial exchange that had shaped the Company’s institutions and ideology since its founding could not be discarded at an instant for the world of territorial government. The interdependence of these worlds made them easy to cross between and hard to cordon off.

Hastings resented this interdependence, but the auspices and constraints of his position committed him to supporting it, however hopelessly. He aspired to a concentrated sovereignty, underpinned by the Mughal constitution or the Crown, and uncompromised

⁸⁷ Rennell to Gilbert Burrington, 1 Sept. 1770, BL IOR H/765, 208.

⁸⁸ Hastings to Francis Sykes, 2 Feb. 1771, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29126, 55r.

⁸⁹ Hastings to Josias du Pre, 6 Jan. 1773, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 1:274.

⁹⁰ *FWIH*, 8:421; see Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720-1801* (Berkeley, 1980), 90-95, 142-59, 205-12; Michael H. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals* (New Delhi, 1987), 81-5.

⁹¹ Hastings, *State of India*, 2:85.

by the imperative to remit revenues. But he was forced to admit “the impossibility of obtaining a perfect system.”⁹² The government he inherited was “literally devoid of all power and authority beyond the narrow limits of the town of Calcutta,” leaving “all trust, power and profit ... in the hands of its deputies.”⁹³ Attempting even modest reforms, Hastings often found himself “curbed, and prevented from carrying my ... designs into execution.”⁹⁴ For most of his tenure at the head of government, he received little support from the authorities in Britain and was ill-served by his friends and agents there.⁹⁵ On the one hand, the Regulating Act of 1773 made Hastings “governor-general,” with theoretical powers over the other presidencies. On the other hand, it drastically curbed his authority by means of a new Supreme Court and Supreme Council at Calcutta. Hastings’ proposals would henceforth be caught up in bitter wrangling with the council majority. As Philip Francis, the majority leader, remarked, “We debate and examine, but rarely decide... In these unfavourable Circumstances, an extraordinary Trust and Duty devolves upon the Councils subordinate to ours.”⁹⁶ Hastings was compelled to share power, exchange favors, and delegate responsibility—in short, to work within “the parameters of the Company’s

⁹² Hastings to Richard Barwell, 22 Jul. 1772, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 1:316.

⁹³ Hastings to [John] Purling, 22 Mar. 1772, in M. E. Monckton Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal, 1772-4* (Oxford, 1918), 146.

⁹⁴ Hastings, cited in Keith Feiling, *Warren Hastings* (London, 1954), 100.

⁹⁵ See Lucy S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, corr. ed. (Oxford, 1962), 270-71, 291-317; H. V. Bowen, *Revenue and Reform: The Indian Problem in British Politics 1757-1773* (Cambridge, 1991), 115-16.

⁹⁶ Francis to William Harwood, 10 May 1775, Harwood Papers, BL Mss Eur D566, 11v. On Francis, see esp. Sophia Weitzman, *Warren Hastings and Philip Francis* (Manchester, 1929).

long-established forms of government.”⁹⁷ Whatever the dictates of policy or conscience, moreover, he was accountable to the Company and duty-bound to uphold its interests. This included defending the rights of the Company as against those of the Crown.⁹⁸ It also included putting the Company’s profits before the welfare of its subjects. It was thus in vain, according to Francis, that Hastings should pretend “to reconcile regularity and justice” in his “administration, with injustice in its fundamental principle—I mean that of uniting the character of Sovereign and merchant, and exercising the power of the first for the benefit of the second.”⁹⁹ Nor did Hastings entirely disagree. He himself perceived in the Company state a “radical and incurable” contradiction between the “primary exigencies” of a mercantile corporation and “those which in all States ought to take [the] place of every other concern, the interests of the people.” His conclusion was revealing: “All that the wisest institutions can effect in such a system can only be to improve the advantages of a temporary possession, and to protract that decay, which sooner or later must end it.”¹⁰⁰ In his own sober estimation, Hastings was less the architect of a sturdy edifice than the carpenter of one ultimately beyond repair.

⁹⁷ P. J. Marshall, “The Shaping of the New Colonial Regime in Bengal,” in Mahmudul Huque, ed., *Bangladesh: History, Politics, Economy, Society and Culture* (Dhaka, 2016), 26.

⁹⁸ In 1771, for instance, Hastings protested against a Crown commission whose “purpose was apparently to invade the Rights of the Co[mpany,] to ... arraign the Conducts of their Serv[an]ts & ... to annihilate the Powers of this Gov[ernmen]t.” As he put it elsewhere, “though I have read the History of England more t[ha]n once I do not remember such an Invasion of ... a great Commercial body.” Hastings to Randolph Marriott, 26 Mar. 1771, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29126, 62r; Hastings to [Shelburne], 16 Jul. 1771, 76v.

⁹⁹ Philip Francis, *Letter from Mr. Francis to Lord North* [17 Sept. 1777] (London, 1793), 13.

¹⁰⁰ Hastings to Alexander Elliot, 10 Feb. 1777, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 2:149-50; see also Hastings, *State of India*, 2:94.

The “discordant” constitution of the Company state, containing “the seeds of death in it,” demanded a far more negotiated—indeed, commercial—style of rule than Hastings’ leviathanic conceits would suggest.¹⁰¹ Part of the answer for this discrepancy must lie in the distinction between aspirational and transactional registers in Hastings’ political thought. Another part must lie in the potential of languages ostensibly articulated in the one register to resonate in the other as well.¹⁰² It has recently been argued, for instance, that “despotism” in the context of debates over early Company rule was not merely a crude polemical device, but a capacious designation extendable even to libertarian notions of consultation and consent.¹⁰³ Similarly, the “ancient constitution” of the Mughals, which Hastings sometimes conjured in support of a unitary ideal of sovereignty, was for his *nawabi* interlocutors more apt to evoke a bygone system of flexible accommodation.¹⁰⁴ Among the most prominent such languages deployed by Hastings was that of “conciliation.” As Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* (1755) indicated, “conciliation” carried a double meaning, referring either to “the act of gaining” or to the act of “reconciling.”¹⁰⁵ The term might thus describe the sovereign art of “condescension” or the merchant art of concession; it might connote dominance or deference. Combining these in speech, moreover, it could lend itself to combining them in

¹⁰¹ Hastings to Laurence Sullivan, 18 Apr. 1779, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 2:275.

¹⁰² See here the concept of “heteroglossia” developed in M. M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Holquist (Austin, 1981).

¹⁰³ Robert Travers, “Contested Despotism: Problems of Liberty in British India,” in Jack P. Greene, ed., *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2010), 195-200.

¹⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, 209-10. Restoring the ancient constitution of the Mughals might thus go hand-in-hand with preserving what Hastings sometimes described as the “ancient Constitution of the Company.” E.g. Hastings to Laurence Sullivan, 3 Oct. 1770, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29126, 42v.

¹⁰⁵ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1755).

policy. In a celebrated parliamentary address of 1775, Hastings' future impeacher Edmund Burke urged "conciliation" with the restive American colonies. "All government," Burke reasoned, "is founded on compromise and barter," especially governments of large empires, where "despotism itself is forced to truck and huckster."¹⁰⁶ Burke's argument adapted the language and logic of trade to the management of a transmarine political community understood as composite rather than unitary.¹⁰⁷ Conciliation was not egalitarian: the aim, after all, was to retain the colonies "in a profitable and subordinate connexion with us."¹⁰⁸ Yet Burke's usage embodied the idea that even a subordinate connection could and should be a reciprocal one.

The political communities with whom Hastings needed to negotiate authority sat at either end of the Company's operations. In Britain, he observed a pervasive hostility towards all levels of the Company, and towards the Indian polity over which it had obtained power. In India, he recognized a growing resistance, led by elites of the old regime, to the Company's incursions and exactions. Hastings desperately needed support from the political classes of both countries. He sought to "conciliate" these classes by means of scholarly patronage.

¹⁰⁶ Edmund Burke, "Speech on Conciliation with America" (22 Mar. 1775), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, gen. ed. Paul Langford, 9 vols. (Oxford, 1981-2015), 3:125, 3:157.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, N.J., 2015), 476-87; see generally J. G. A. Pocock, "Empire, State and Confederation: The War of American Independence as a Crisis in Multiple Monarchy," in John Robertson, ed., *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ Burke, "Speech on Conciliation," 3:118.

Conciliating Britain

Metropolitan British opinion during Hastings' tenure in office was ill-disposed towards the Company's leaders, servants, and subjects alike. The main design in much of his scholarly patronage was accordingly to "conciliate" the political classes at home. Depicting such patronage as part of the Company's business, Hastings played to lofty associations between material and intellectual commerce, while at the same time emphasizing practical utility. This approach was on display in two of his most ambitious scholarly ventures: to compile Indian laws and to gather knowledge about Tibet. Yet even as such ventures presented opportunities for conciliating Britain, they were also apt to point up the distinct challenge of conciliating India.

Hastings' definitive statement on conciliation, in a British context, came in the preface to Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (1785):

Every accumulation of knowledge, and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state ... it attracts and conciliates distant affections ... [Indian writings] will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.¹⁰⁹

This passage exposed a number of tensions in Hastings' thought via a series of rhetorical pairings: conquest and communication; actuality and futurity; power and impermanence; the hard-nosed and the high-flown. What held these opposing forces in symmetry was Hastings' underlying principle of conciliation. The preface was addressed to the chairman of the Company's directors, but also, through him, to other shapers of policy at the

¹⁰⁹ Hastings to Nathaniel Smith, 4 Oct. 1784, preface to Charles Wilkins, trans., *The Bhāgavat Gītā* (London, 1785), 13.

metropole. It was these political classes whose “distant affections” were to be conciliated.

As Hastings wrote his London agent, John Scott, in December 1784,

My Motive in this Address is threefold: first, the Gratification of my own Taste which I indulge with a Degree of Enthusiasm; Secondly, the natural Desire in the last Moments of my political Existence to make my Peace with my Makers & their Creatures by reconciling the Co[mpany] & the People of England to the Natives of India under their Subjection; & Thirdly, the Hope of reconciling them also to their fellow Countrymen, the Servants of the Co[mpany] in Bengal, whose Characters have been most grossly falsified even in those Places where they ought to have had the strictest Measure of Justice dealt to them.

Of the first motive Hastings found it necessary to offer a defense. He anticipated being criticized in Britain for “lavishing my Time on these Levities, as they may be termed by many, to the Neglect of Business.” But apart from the fact that undertakings like the preface “are my Relaxations, and I presume that they are not such as I should be ashamed of,” Hastings insisted that they were “also Business.” Not only was the text “written in the Center of Every Employment”; it was “part of a System” for conciliating British opinion towards the Company state.¹¹⁰ In the preface, Hastings praised the Company’s subjects as gatekeepers to “a wide and unexplored field of fruitful knowledge,” its servants as “men of cultivated talents ... and liberal knowledge.” He advertised his own “encouragement of every species of useful diligence.” And he suggested that, by patronizing works like the *Gita*, the directors might imbue “the first commercial body, not only of the present age, but of all the known generations of mankind” with a commensurate reputation for enlightenment.¹¹¹ The overall effect of Hastings’ preface, then, was to emphasize the

¹¹⁰ Hastings to Scott, 2–9 Dec. 1784, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29129, 270r, 275r.

¹¹¹ Hastings, preface to *Bhāgavat Gēētā*, 5, 12, 13.

contributions of the Company state—of its leaders, servants, and subjects—to the world of letters.

Hastings wrote the preface and the accompanying letter to Scott in late 1784, shortly before his retirement to England. The origins of his system of conciliation, however, evidently lay further back. Not only did Hastings inform Scott that he had “long since laid down, & supported” this system; in referring to the characters of the Company’s servants having “been most grossly falsified,” he pointed to a context established even before his administration: the so-called “nabob controversy.”¹¹² From the 1750s, the “revolutions” that brought the Company to power in Bengal—and, to a lesser extent, in the Carnatic—also enabled its servants to make rapid fortunes from plunder, loans, bribes, and other dubious enterprises. As servants returned home and converted their wealth into honors, estates, and influence, the “nabob” (from *nawab*) became a stock character in public discourse, appearing everywhere from pamphlets to plays to parliamentary speeches. Modeled in large part on Robert Clive, victor of Plassey and first governor of Bengal, the nabob was an *arriviste* who threatened to subvert the established order. He reflected old anxieties about luxury and social climbing, as well as new ones about the moral and political implications of an empire of conquest. His avarice and not least his philistinism played into the common charge that merchants made unfit sovereigns. To the extent that the nabob had picked up

¹¹² Hastings to Scott, 9 Dec. 1784, 275r. For the nabob controversy as discussed here, see James M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England: A Study of the Returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785* (New York, 1926); Bruce Lenman and Philip Lawson, “Robert Clive, the ‘Black Jagir,’ and British Politics,” *Historical Journal* 26 (1983); Lawson and Jim Phillips, “‘Our Execrable Banditti’: Perceptions of Nabobs in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain,” *Albion* 16 (1984); James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford, 1992); Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2010).

any knowledge in Asia, it was suspected to be knowledge of a debased sort bearing harmful consequences, especially in the realm of politics. As the Earl of Chatham put it in 1770, “The riches of Asia have been poured in upon us, and brought with them not only Asiatic luxury, but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government.”¹¹³ Such aspersions reached Hastings almost continuously: he fulminated against them on the eve of assuming power and on the eve of relinquishing it.¹¹⁴ “The English World and the Indian World,” he reflected at one point, “were two very distinct Characters, and ... the former received with distrust & suspicion every thing that related to the other.”¹¹⁵ It was an essential feature of nabobery that it tarnished not only the Company’s servants, but the entire “Indian World” they were taken to represent. Hence Hastings’ concern in the *Gita* preface to collectively rehabilitate these servants, native Indians, the directors, and himself.

The Enlightened commercial imagination furnished powerful resources for such an undertaking.¹¹⁶ In eighteenth-century Europe, criticism of merchants had been mitigated by the notion that trade and learning flourished together. For Montesquieu, whom Hastings evidently read, “Commerce cures destructive prejudices ... [It] has spread knowledge of the mores of all nations everywhere; they have been compared to each other,

¹¹³ Chatham, 22 Jan. 1770, cited in William Stanhope Taylor and John Henry Pringle, eds., *Correspondence of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, 4 vols. (London, 1838-40), 3:405 n.

¹¹⁴ Hastings to Purling, 22 Mar. 1772, 147; Hastings to John Scott, 26 Dec. 1784, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29129, 286r-288r.

¹¹⁵ Hastings to John Scott, 15 Apr. 1782, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29129, 41r.

¹¹⁶ For the senses of “Enlightened” and “Enlightenment” employed here, see those developed at length for the British context in J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1999-2015).

and good things have resulted from this.”¹¹⁷ As early as 1766, advocating the creation of a professorship of Persian at Oxford, Hastings wrote similarly “of the advantages which might be derived to every branch of knowledge, from an acquaintance with the manners, customs, and practice of the most remote nations.”¹¹⁸ Such thinking could also inspire more ambitious projects. During a residence in London in the early 1780s, Jacques-Pierre Brissot conceived of a global network of literary societies that would exchange knowledge via arteries of trade. In this way,

commerce may be rendered subservient to the promotion of Science, and the same ship that carries the East-India Company’s orders to Calcutta, may likewise carry the new instruments or the new work, and may bring back the Indian book for the Student of Gottingen, or the professor of oriental Languages at Paris.¹¹⁹

Less *grand philosophe* than Grub Street hack, Brissot was echoing ideas coming both from across the channel and from the literary milieu of the metropolis.¹²⁰ The Abbé Raynal’s *Histoire des Deux Indes*, which went through numerous French and English editions in the 1770s-80s, combined excoriation of the Company with excitement at the intellectual possibilities opened by its trade.¹²¹ William Jones’s preface to *A Grammar of the Persian*

¹¹⁷ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), ed. and trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge, 1989), 338. For evidence that Hastings read Montesquieu, see Hastings to John Purling, 22 Feb. 1772, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29126, 128r.

¹¹⁸ [Hastings,] *Professorship*, 5.

¹¹⁹ Jacques-Pierre Brissot, *London Literary Lyceum; or, an Assembly and Correspondence Established at London* [London, 1783], 9.

¹²⁰ See Robert Darnton, “The Grub Street Style of Revolution: J.-P. Brissot, Police Spy,” *Journal of Modern History* 40 (1968).

¹²¹ For the first edition, see [Guillaume Thomas Raynal, ed.,] *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Établissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes*, 6 vols. (Amsterdam, 1770). For the first English translation, see [Raynal, ed.,] *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, trans. J. Justamond, 4 vols. (London, 1776).

Language (1771) envisioned that thanks to “the flourishing state of our commerce” with India,

The languages of Asia will now, perhaps, be studied with uncommon ardour; they are known to be useful, and will soon be found instructive and entertaining; the valuable manuscripts that enrich our publick libraries will be in a few years elegantly printed; the manners and sentiments of the eastern nations will be perfectly known; and the limits of our knowledge will be no less extended than the bounds of our empire.¹²²

Forwarding a copy of Jones’s work in 1774, Samuel Johnson put the matter directly to Hastings, whose acquaintance he had made in London in the late 1760s. With Hastings’ attention, he urged, those regions which “supply the rest of the world with almost all that pride desires and luxury enjoys” might also supply insights into “many subjects of which the European world either thinks not at all, or thinks with deficient intelligence and uncertain conjecture.” These ranged from Asian “arts and opinions” to “Traditions and Histories” to “experimental knowledge and natural history.”¹²³ There was more than a passing resemblance between the learned entreaties of Johnson and Jones and Hastings’ own language in the *Gita* preface, or his claim to the Supreme Council that such works “may open a new and most extensive Range for the human mind beyond the present limited and beaten field of its operations.”¹²⁴

As governor and later governor-general, Hastings would have encountered Enlightened thinking on commerce not only in occasional packets from Britain, but in regular conversation and correspondence with British officials in India. Prominent sources

¹²² William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771), in *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 vols. (London, 1807), 5:173-4.

¹²³ Johnson to Hastings, 30 Mar. 1774, in *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Redford, 2:136.

¹²⁴ Hastings, Minute (9 Dec. 1783), BL IOR H/207, 172.

would have included John Macpherson, a kinsman and collaborator of James “Ossian” Macpherson and an old India hand; Robert Chambers, an intimate of Johnson and a Calcutta Supreme Court judge; and George Macartney, governor of Madras from 1781-5.¹²⁵ Such thinking was also to be found among rank-and-file servants of the Company exercised by metropolitan attacks on nabobery. As one Company servant commented, upon reading Raynal, “When private Emolument forms the only Code of the Individual that pernicious & destructive Code must equally pervade the Gov[ernmen]t ... This is now the only theme instilled in us.”¹²⁶ If a recent attribution is correct, this servant was Richard Johnson, who succeeded to some extent in mitigating his reputation for corruption with his wide-ranging studies and his patronage of Indian arts and poetry.¹²⁷ Inspired by an awareness of their personal and professional disrepute, Company servants like Johnson fashioned themselves as representatives of a new breed of scholar-administrator, aspiring not only to riches but to literary renown.

In 1772, David Anderson, a favorite of Hastings, impressed his old Edinburgh schoolmaster by forwarding an astrolabe and a description of the arts and sciences of Asia.¹²⁸ This scholarly turn, wrote the schoolmaster, “surprises and pleases me not a Little,

¹²⁵ For their relations with Hastings, see respectively *Warren Hastings’ Letters to Sir John Macpherson*, ed. Henry Dodwell (London, 1927) and A. P. Dasgupta, “A Peep into the Macartney Papers in the Historical Museum, Satara,” in *Studies in the History of the British in India* (Calcutta, 1942); Thomas M. Curley, *Sir Robert Chambers: Law, Literature, and Empire in the Age of Johnson* (Madison, 1998); *The Private Correspondence of Lord Macartney*, ed. C. Collin Davies (London, 1950), 108-48.

¹²⁶ [Richard Johnson,] Journal, Ames Library Manuscripts, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Mss B 114, no. 6.

¹²⁷ Anna Clark and Aaron Windel, “The Early Roots of Liberal Imperialism: ‘The Science of a Legislator’ in Eighteenth-Century India,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14 (2013).

¹²⁸ Anderson to Alexander Mackenzie, 11 Sept. 1772, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45438, 70r-73v.

as those who go to that Continent with the auri sacra fames [greed for gold] upon them, do generally apply there Time and Talents to allay and satisfy that Craveing desire.” Anderson’s “greater Thirst after knowledge and Wisdom than after the Golden Calf” might spare him from “the Reproachfull Epithet of Nabob” upon his return.¹²⁹ He might even render an important service to British letters by clearing up a controversy in “natural, or if you please, unnatural philosophy.” As the schoolmaster explained,

Lord Monboddo relates and believes that a swede named Koeping Lieutenant aboard of a dutch East India Ship of force, saw on the Island Nicobar in the Gulf of Bengal a race of men with Tails like those of Catts which they moved in the same manner [and] That they were Canniballs, for says the swede they devoured five of the Crew ... Now as a tradition of these human Cats ... may yet Remain in the memory of some old inhabitant on the Coast of that Gulf, it would not be pains or Labour Lost to Enquire into the truth of ... an ugly Tail with which his Lordship is disgracefully painted in this Island.¹³⁰

Whether or not Anderson ever looked into Monboddo’s “ugly Tail,” this exchange suggested the possibilities available in the Enlightened commercial imagination for upending the idea of the nabob and the political views it supported.

While Hastings entertained lofty views, he also emphasized practical ones. Notwithstanding his defense of the rarefied *Gita*, it was important that projects like this be seen not as mere indulgences or window dressing, but as part and parcel of the Company’s affairs. Like Hastings’ preface, they must appear not as “levities,” but as “business” emanating from “the Center of Every Employment.” The enlightened disposition they bespoke must extend equally to mundane matters. It was high praise, therefore, when

¹²⁹ Alexander Mackenzie to Anderson, 5 Jun. 1773, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45430, 282v-283r.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 284r-284v; see Lord Monboddo, *Orangutans and the Origins of Human Nature*, ed. Aaron Garrett (Bristol, 2000). An assistant surgeon in the Company’s service later concluded, on a visit to the Nicobar Islands, that “this supposed tail, may have been the stripe of cloth hanging down from their [the human inhabitants’] posteriors.” Nicolas Fontana, “On the Nicobar Isles and the Fruit of the Mellori,” *Asiatick Researches* 3 (Calcutta, 1792), 151-2 n. †.

Hastings addressed Nathaniel Halhed as “the only Man living who with a Genius adapted equally to the first Compositions of Judgment and Imagination, could descend to unravel the Intricacies of a Salt Account, or instruct the Gomasta [agent] of an Aurung [factory] ... or ... study the Reports of a Com[mitt]ee of the H[ous]e of Commons.”¹³¹ Company servants like Halhed had long had utilitarian incentives for scholarly pursuits.¹³² One contemporary described the Bengal administration as a sort of intellectual marketplace, where, “as the many Employments under them [the Company] vary widely in their nature, so there are few Arts or Sciences of which a man in their Service cannot make his Knowledge turn out to his advantage.”¹³³ Ability in the Persian language, in particular, was seen as crucial for official preferment and success in private trade.¹³⁴ As Company critics like Alexander Dow and William Bolts began to stake their credibility on such local knowledge, however, it became additionally necessary for those who would defend the Company to outdo them in it. Thus, in *A Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778), Halhed doubted Bolts’s proficiency in Bengali, claiming that “he has egregiously failed in executing” a set of types in the language. By contrast, Halhed credited his collaborator Wilkins, under “the advice and even sollicitation of the Governor General,” with succeeding in the task beyond “every

¹³¹ Hastings to Halhed, 2 Nov. 1783, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29129, 194v.

¹³² On Halhed’s incentives in particular, see Rosane Rocher, *Orientalism, Poetry, and the Millennium: The Checkered Life of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, 1751-1830* (Delhi, 1983), 37-47.

¹³³ Anderson to William Collow, 19 Nov. 1770, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45438, 17v-18r.

¹³⁴ E.g. William Davy to Joseph White, 24 Sept. 1779, in White, *A Specimen of the Civil and Military Institutes of Timour, or Tamerlane* (Oxford, 1780), 28-39.

expectation.”¹³⁵ In similar fashion, David Anderson dismissed critics of the Company as men of “confined and defective” knowledge, while he highlighted his own superior qualifications.¹³⁶ As these instances show, even “practical” learning could hold political significance. This was certainly true of Hastings’ most ambitious scholarly projects.

Two such projects stood out as mainsprings of Hastings’ system for conciliating Britain. The first was his scheme to compile and translate Hindu and Islamic laws. At a practical level, Hastings sought to assist British judges in India with their decisions. Yet, by publishing translations of the laws in Britain, he also sought to conciliate metropolitan opinion towards what we have elsewhere seen him call the “Indian World”: that is, the world of native Indians, the directors, their servants, and himself. In one letter, he wrote of freeing Indians “from the reproach of ignorance and barbarism.”¹³⁷ In another, he avowed a zealous regard for “the credit and interest of my employers.”¹³⁸ On numerous occasions, he praised the servants involved in translating the laws.¹³⁹ Finally, despite disclaiming with

¹³⁵ Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, *A Grammar of the Bengal Language* (Hoog[h]ly, 1778), xxiii. On Bolts’s facility in Bengali, see N. L. Hallward, *William Bolts: A Dutch Adventurer under John Company* (Cambridge, 1920), 5; Willem G. J. Kuiters, *The British in Bengal, 1756-1773: A Society in Transition Seen through the Biography of a Rebel: William Bolts (1739-1808)* (Paris, 2002), 98. On his inexperience with the script, however, see Fiona G. E. Ross, *The Printed Bengali Character and its Evolution* (London, 1999), 78-82.

¹³⁶ Anderson to Claud Russell, 16 Jan. 1772, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45438, 46r.

¹³⁷ Hastings to Johnson, 7 Aug. 1775, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 2:18; see similarly Hastings to Lord Mansfield, 21 Mar. 1774, at 1:402.

¹³⁸ Hastings to Directors, 21 Feb. 1784, 3:160.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:158; Hastings to Johnson, 7 Aug. 1775, 2:18; Hastings to Mansfield, 20 Jan. 1776, at 2:23-4; Hastings, preface to *Bhāgvat Gēētā*, 14.

conventional modesty that he sought “public credit” for himself, he admitted that such a result was “of very great importance” to his future prospects.¹⁴⁰

Hastings’ support yielded several published volumes on legal subjects, of which he invariably featured as the dedicatee and often as the prefacer.¹⁴¹ One metropolitan observer who responded to these works in the manner Hastings had intended was the Company’s historiographer, Robert Orme. In 1775, after reading the manuscript of Halhed’s *Code of Gentoo Laws* (1776), Orme wrote Hastings,

The educated world have received with the greatest satisfaction the portion you have sent of the laws of Bengal, and earnestly wish the continuation and accomplishment of a work, which does you so much honour. I always thought that such a work must be the basis of any reasonable government exercised by us; but always despaired of its execution, knowing to what other views and objects the abilities of Europeans have hitherto been directed in Indostan. The silent step of philosophy is gaining ground every day; and your name will not be forgot amongst the foremost of her disciples, for the valuable present you are making to learning and reason.¹⁴²

In December 1784, shortly before leaving office, Hastings dispatched to Britain ten copies of another such work, the second volume of Francis Gladwin’s translation of the *Ain-i Akbari* (the emperor Akbar’s “constitution”).¹⁴³ Upon arriving in Britain, these volumes, like others Hastings had patronized, would become armaments in the war of words now raging over his late administration. One laudatory notice of the *Ain-i Akbari* in the press served Hastings’ conciliatory purposes so directly as to raise the possibility of his own

¹⁴⁰ Hastings to Lord Mansfield, 20 Jan. 1776, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 2:22; see similarly Hastings to Directors, 21 Feb. 1784, at 3:159-60.

¹⁴¹ Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, trans., *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (London, 1776); Francis Gladwin, trans., *Ayeen Akbery: Or, the Institutes of the Emperor Akber*, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1783-6); Charles Hamilton, trans., *The Hedaya, or Guide; A Commentary on the Mussulman Laws*, 4 vols. (London, 1791).

¹⁴² Orme to Hastings, 14 Jan. 1775, in “Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Author,” in Orme, *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire* (London, 1805), xxxvi.

¹⁴³ Hastings, “List of the Packet Sent by the Surprize” (12 Dec. 1784), Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29129, 269v.

involvement. According to the reviewer, “We are obliged to the zeal of an Hastings, an Halhed, a Wilkins, and a Gladwin, who, with the powerful assistance of the East-India Company, have, at least in part, removed the veil, which concealed the literature of the Brahmins from European eyes.” Apart from benefiting “the cause of literature,” the reviewer remarked, such knowledge about “Hindostan and its inhabitants, must, in a commercial and political view, be a matter of considerable national importance.”¹⁴⁴ A similar message was imparted by James Rennell’s map of *Hindoostan* (1782), to which Hastings had contributed support and even certain geographical details. Between marginal depictions of war and trade, the map’s cartouche pictured “Brittannia receiving into her Protection, the sacred Books of the Hindoos, presented by the Pundits or Learned Bramins.”¹⁴⁵ This tableau alluded specifically to the recovery of Indian laws. But in a larger sense, it set controversial military and commercial episodes to one side, and directed the observer to the Company’s role in spreading knowledge. This was an emphasis of which the governor-general could only have approved.

Hastings’ other enduring scholarly enterprise was connected with a series of overtures to Bhutan and Tibet. In 1774, and again in 1783, he dispatched Company servants to these secluded countries northeast of Bengal. One purpose of these missions was political: to establish diplomatic relations with local authorities. Another was commercial: to evaluate trading prospects, including a land route to China. But another purpose still,

¹⁴⁴ [John Rotheram,] review of Gladwin, trans., *Ayeen Akbery*, in *Monthly Review* 79 (London, 1788), 625-6. For similar statements by Hastings, see *FWIH*, 9:442, 9:606.

¹⁴⁵ James Rennell, *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan* (London, 1783), frontispiece, xii.

and one that recent studies have highlighted, was philosophical.¹⁴⁶ Hastings instructed his first envoy, George Bogle, to correspond regularly on the “government, revenue, and manners” of the places he traversed, as well as any other observations “whether of useful knowledge or curiosity.”¹⁴⁷ Bogle must keep a diary, inserting information on “the people, the country, the climate, or the road, their manners, customs, buildings, cookery &c.” He must also obtain specimens of local coinage; yaks, Tibetan antelope, and other “useful” or “remarkably curious” animals; walnuts, ginseng, rhubarb, and “other curious or valuable seeds or plants”; and, in general, “any curiosities, whether natural productions, manufactures, paintings, or what else may be acceptable to persons of taste in England.”¹⁴⁸ Hastings expected that “we should both acquire reputation” by the mission’s success. But even a failure might be compensated by accessions to European knowledge. “Do not return,” he wrote Bogle, “without something to show where you have been, though it be but a contraband walnut, a pilfered slip of sweet briar, or the seeds of a bulte or turnip, taken in payment for the potatoes you have given them gratis.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Kate Teltscher, *The High Road to China: George Bogle, the Panchen Lama and the First British Expedition to Tibet* (London, 2006); Gordon T. Stewart, *Journeys to Empire: Enlightenment, Imperialism, and the British Encounter with Tibet, 1774-1904* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹⁴⁷ Hastings to Bogle, 13 May 1774, in Clements R. Markham, ed., *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa* (London, 1876), 7. Elsewhere, Hastings added a plea to inquire into “the history, government, and religion of Tibet” as well as “its climate or topographical and physical characters.” Hastings, Memorandum (1774), at 55. He also tasked Bogle’s companion Alexander Hamilton with investigating local medical practices. See Hamilton to Bogle, 6 Nov. 1775, in Alistair Lamb, ed., *Bhutan and Tibet: The Travels of George Bogle and Alexander Hamilton, 1774-1777*, vol. 1 (Hertingfordbury, UK, 2002), 388-9.

¹⁴⁸ Hastings to Bogle, 16 May 1774, in Markham, ed., *Narratives*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁹ Hastings to Bogle, 10 Aug. 1774, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 1:415.

It was the philosophical component of the mission, Hastings suggested, that would contribute most towards conciliating Britain:

I feel myself more interested in the success of your mission than in reason perhaps I ought to be; but there are thousands of men in England whose good-will is worth seeking, and who will listen to the story of such enterprises in search of knowledge with ten times more avidity than they would read accounts that brought crores to the national credit, or descriptions of victories that slaughtered thousands of the national enemies.¹⁵⁰

Upon Bogle's return to Calcutta in 1775, Hastings proposed to have his bulging journal edited and published with the assistance of Samuel Johnson.¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, according to Bogle's brother, "the Doctor died before it came home."¹⁵² In 1777, however, Hastings had his agent John Stewart draw up an account of the young envoy's discoveries for the proceedings of the Royal Society. In Stewart's account, the figure of Hastings loomed large: the mission was credited to his regard for both the "glory of this nation" and "the advancement of natural knowledge."¹⁵³ Like Stewart's account, Tilly Kettle's painting of the first meeting between Bogle and the Panchen Lama seems to have been conceived as part of the governor-general's campaign for political favor in London; at some point, it was presented to George III.¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, after plans for a second embassy were suspended, Bogle continued to send across the border for botanical specimens at Hastings' behest. Putting in an order for some Bhutanese cinnamon in March 1780, Hastings foreshadowed

¹⁵⁰ Hastings to Bogle, 8 Sept. 1774, in *ibid.*, 1:415-16.

¹⁵¹ Hastings to Johnson, 7 Aug. 1775, 2:19-20; see [Hastings,] Memorandum [c. 1775], Bogle Papers, BL Mss Eur E226/55.

¹⁵² Robert Bogle to Henry Dundas, 23 Aug. 1799, East India Company Manuscript Collection, Cleveland Public Library, 091.92 B634L.

¹⁵³ John Stewart, "An Account of the Kingdom of Thibet," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 47 (1777), 469.

¹⁵⁴ Teltscher, *High Road*, 176.

his later comments on the *Gita* preface: “You w[oul]d wonder that I could write to you on such Trifles, if you knew what weighty concerns pressed upon my Mind. But I do not think this altogether a Trifle ...”¹⁵⁵ When a second embassy did materialize three years later, Hastings renewed his old instructions, this time to Samuel Turner in place of the now-deceased Bogle: “It is scarcely necessary to recommend to you to extend your enquiries to every subject which a scene so new may afford ... for at least it will be no Discredit to you to have added to the store of Knowledge acquired by our national Researches ...”¹⁵⁶ He expected “no great things from Turner’s Embassy,” but was confident that it would “at least gratify Curiosity.”¹⁵⁷

Hastings was sanguine enough to imagine that his plans for greater intercourse would at length be embraced at the courts of Bhutan and Tibet. Yet his envoys continually found themselves under suspicion. Bogle learned that the Gurkha *shah*, whose territory bordered Tibet, sought to prohibit the Company from importing scientific curiosities like telescopes and clocks. Might he be wary of British firearms surreptitiously entering the country, or of his relative influence fading at Lhasa?¹⁵⁸ On another occasion, the Panchen Lama proffered Bogle “a map of Tibet from Ladakh to the frontier of China,” including details missing from European maps. Tempted as he was by this “splendid object,” which

¹⁵⁵ Hastings to Bogle, 1 Mar. 1780, Bogle Papers, Glasgow City Archives, TD1681/74.

¹⁵⁶ Bengal Public Consultations (13 Mar. 1783), NAI, no. 10, 6-7.

¹⁵⁷ Hastings to John Macpherson, [Apr.-May 1783,] in *Letters to ... Macpherson*, ed. Dodwell, 189. On Turner’s mission, see Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama, in Tibet* (London, 1800).

¹⁵⁸ Bogle, Journal [Jan. 1775], Bogle Papers, BL Mss Eur E226/50.

“would reflect much lustre on my commission,” Bogle was forced to turn it down, lest he increase “that jealousy, which had hitherto so cruelly thwarted me in all my negotiations.” Such incidents, it appeared, were imputable to the growing notoriety of the Company. In November 1774, Bogle heard that the *vakil* (ambassador) of Chait Singh, ruler of Benares, had “described the English as a people designing and ambitious; who, insinuating themselves into a country on pretence of trade, became acquainted with its situation and inhabitants, and afterwards endeavoured to become masters of it.” The *vakil* denied the charge, implicating instead the local agent of a Benares magnate. But the source of these remarks was almost beside the point: as the Panchen Lama informed Bogle, “many people” had warned him against dealing with the Company, which was said to be “like a great king, and fond of war and conquest.”¹⁵⁹ On the one hand, Hastings had little to lose should the embassies to Bhutan and Tibet prove unfruitful. On the other hand, it did not bode well that grievances against the Company were spreading across the subcontinent, scaling even this remote aerie. In the long run, suspicion of British designs on Tibet would profoundly shape the Company’s relations with Qing authorities in China.¹⁶⁰ More immediately, in 1781, Chait Singh mounted a rebellion that drew support from across eastern India and nearly cost Hastings his life.¹⁶¹ Had this occurred, Hastings and others believed, the

¹⁵⁹ Bogle, Journal, in Markham, ed., *Narratives*, 137-40, 156.

¹⁶⁰ Mathew Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford, 2013).

¹⁶¹ One actual casualty of the rebellion was Adam Hotchkis, whom Hastings had deputed on a mineralogical survey, but who was murdered en route to the Nagarjuni rock-cut temples in Bihar. Andrew Grout, “Geology and India, 1770-1851: A Study in the Methods and Motivations of a Colonial Science” (PhD, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, 1995), 159.

Company might have been permanently defeated. To conciliate Britain was one matter; to conciliate India was another.

Conciliating India

Indian opinion was as much a concern for Hastings as its metropolitan counterpart. For the Company's grip on Bengal appeared tenuous and the recruitment of allies essential. Hastings' sources made clear that Indian political classes expected a "commerce" with their sovereigns, and that they considered the display and reward of learning a key channel for such intercourse. Hastings thus grounded his attempt to "conciliate" India in the enlistment of influential indigenous scholar-administrators. Rulers and elites in eastern India posed the greatest immediate threat, so it was their support that Hastings sought most. At times, nonetheless, he contemplated more popular forms of conciliation that might arise from some of his scholarly ventures.

Writing some months after Hastings' retirement in 1785, the "Eurasian cosmopolitan" Haji Mustapha enjoined the British to treat Indians with "a more watchful eye ... a more winning deportment, and a more caressing hand." Among those under the Company's sway, he warned, there existed "a subterraneous vein of national resentment," which, before Chait Singh's rebellion, had been known perhaps only to "eight or ten" Bengal administrators.¹⁶² Hastings would have been one of these. Indeed, Hastings had long

¹⁶² Nota Manus [Haji Mustapha], translator's preface (2 Nov. 1786) to Seid-Gholam-Hosseini-Khan [Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai], *A Translation of the Seir Mutaqharin; or, View of Modern Times*, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1789), 1:22, 1:27, 1:31. For the characterization, see Robert Travers, "The Connected Worlds of Haji Mustapha (c. 1730-91): A Eurasian Cosmopolitan in Eighteenth-Century Bengal," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 52 (2015). For assertions of an "old patriotism" or "community of sentiment" in India predating nationalism, see C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the*

acknowledged the necessity of “conciliating” India.¹⁶³ He remarked at one point that “this government subsists more by influence of public opinion than by its real power or resources”; at another, that “opinion ... in every region of the world has considerable influence on public affairs, and in none so much as in this.”¹⁶⁴ If the Company state could not be said to be accountable to an Indian “public” along the lines emerging in Britain, Hastings understood that it could neither afford to ignore Indian opinion entirely.¹⁶⁵ The absence, in hindsight, of any serious threat to the Company’s hold on Bengal after 1765 has often obscured the sense of danger and precariousness officials continued to express. Invocations of despotic authority may have masked deep anxieties.¹⁶⁶ They certainly belied an ongoing reliance on indigenous agents and allies. A small and inexperienced corps of European civil servants depended on Indian administrators throughout the justice, revenue, and commercial departments. The army, too, consisted predominantly of native recruits. The Company gathered intelligence through networks of local informants, and brokered authority through *zamindars* (landholders) and other intermediaries.¹⁶⁷ The security of the Company’s territories was increasingly seen to require maintaining a

Making of Modern India (Delhi, 1998); Rajat Kanta Ray, *The Felt Community: Commonalty and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi, 2003).

¹⁶³ *FWIH*, 6:427, 7:527.

¹⁶⁴ Hastings to Laurence Sullivan, 27 Aug. 1780, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 2:311-12; Hastings to the Earl of Shelburne, 12 Dec. 1782, at 3:23.

¹⁶⁵ See P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Cambridge, 2005), 256-70.

¹⁶⁶ Jon E. Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain’s Raj and the Chaos of Empire* (London, 2016).

¹⁶⁷ See respectively C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996); Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi, 1982).

regional balance of power, often through diplomatic “agents” or “residents” embedded in Asian courts.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, British officials interacted with Indians no less in private than in public affairs: with *banyans* or *dubashes* in business, with *munshis* in study, with *bibis* in conjugal relationships, and with retinues of attendants almost everywhere.¹⁶⁹ It was evident from the Company’s limited numbers and resources that it could not maintain peace or profits through military domination alone.

Indigenous opinion, real or imagined, thus contributed an important layer to debates surrounding the legitimacy of the Company state. Would Indians accept the sovereignty of a mercantile corporation? Many Anglophone critics assumed not. “Brought up under regal government,” wrote a London newspaper correspondent, “the Indians place a confidence in the promises of princes, which they never bestow upon commercial bodies, founded upon avarice and interested principles.”¹⁷⁰ According to one political pamphleteer, “Mahometan princes” were “humiliated and galled with the thought of being under the sway of a company of merchants.”¹⁷¹ Such arguments projected British ideas onto Indian

¹⁶⁸ See Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System 1764-1857* (Delhi, 1998); James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford, 2007); G. J. Bryant, *The Emergence of British Power in India, 1600-1784: A Grand Strategic Interpretation* (Woodbridge, UK, 2013).

¹⁶⁹ See respectively P. J. Marshall, “Masters and Banians in Eighteenth-Century Calcutta,” in *Trade and Conquest: Studies on the Rise of British Dominance in India* (Aldershot, 1993) and Susan Neild-Basu, “The Dubashes of Madras,” *MAS* 18 (1984); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Making of a Munshi,” in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York, 2011); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006); Nitin Sinha and Nitin Varma, “Domestic Servants in Colonial South Asia” (Research Project, European Research Council, 2015-18).

¹⁷⁰ Creon [pseud.], “The State of Asiatic Affairs, as Represented by a Writer Well Acquainted with the Concerns of Government,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 39 (Aug. 1769), 375.

¹⁷¹ *Thoughts on Improving the Government of the British Territorial Possessions in the East Indies* (London, 1780), 15.

minds. Nonetheless, there was reason to think that some indigenous elites were aware of these ideas and receptive to them. As one India hand advised the MP Charles James Fox, “Newspapers are as much read in Asia as in London,” and Indians “will quote Mr. Jackall’s [Fox’s] speeches against the Company, in as many modes and ways, as you could and have done yourself.”¹⁷² Furthermore, metropolitan critiques of mercantile sovereignty found echoes in late-Mughal norms of good government. A common grievance among the old guard in eastern India was that the Company had monopolized branches of commerce formerly kept open.¹⁷³ The beggared officeholder Karam Ali censured the British for behaving like greedy businessmen.¹⁷⁴

Yet if the Company had until recently been dismissed, according to one *nawabi* commentator, as “a few traders, who have not yet learnt to wash their bottoms,” this was not to say that a mercantile body was constitutionally incapable of good government.¹⁷⁵ Upstarts may have been frowned upon in Indian politics, but they were nothing new, as evidenced by the Hindustani proverb, “the father a merchant, the son a *nawab*” (*baap banya aur puut nawab*).¹⁷⁶ Most panegyrists of the *ancien régime* sought not to delegitimize their new rulers, but to counsel them (and assert the indispensability of such counsel). This was

¹⁷² Joseph Price, *A Short Commercial and Political Letter from Mr. Joseph Price to the Right Honourable Charles James Fox* (London, 1783), 15, 16. On this “Indian ecumene,” see Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 180–211.

¹⁷³ Rajat Kanta Ray, “Colonial Penetration and the Initial Resistance: The Mughal Ruling Class, the English East India Company and the Struggle for Bengal 1756–1800,” *Indian Historical Review* 12 (1988), 98–102.

¹⁷⁴ Karam Ali, *Muzaffarnama*, trans. Shayesta Khan, as *Bihar and Bengal in the 18th Century: A Critical Edition and Translation of Muzaffarnama, a Contemporary History* (Patna, 1992), 32–3, 42–3.

¹⁷⁵ Karam Ali, *Muzaffarnama*, trans. Jadu Nath Sarkar, in *Bengal Nawabs*, repr. ed. (Calcutta, 1985), 63.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Roebuck, *A Collection of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases, in the Persian and Hindoostanee Languages* (Calcutta, 1824), Part Two, 27.

certainly the intention of Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai in his *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin* (c. 1781). Writing a quarter-century after Plassey, the Mughal aristocrat saw “nothing strange in those Merchants having found the means of becoming masters of this country.” In his understanding, merchants in general and the Company in particular had already acquired a political power in Britain to rival that of Parliament or the Crown. While the Company might behave in arrogant and exclusive ways, it had emerged from a system much like the Mughal one, in which sovereignty was parcellated and negotiated. It was by restoring such a pattern of reciprocal political relations in India that the Company could become a virtuous sovereign. Indeed, Enlightened European notions of commercial sociability found a close analogue in Ghulam Husain’s ideal of “mutual commerce” and open “gates of communication and intercourse” between rulers and ruled.¹⁷⁷ Such views seem to have been shared by a range of contemporaries.¹⁷⁸ In Mustapha’s English translation of the *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin* (1789), social and economic interactions (*zamn*, *manafi'*) were suggestively embraced by the same term: “commerce.”¹⁷⁹ It was not by eliminating the commercial tendencies of Company rule, but by extending them, that Hastings might hope to conciliate India.

¹⁷⁷ [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 2:544, 2:545, 2:598, see 3:331-2.

¹⁷⁸ For similar views on British politics from coeval Indian commentators, see Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West During the Eighteenth Century* (Karachi, 1998), 54, 332-63; Kaveh Yazdani, *India, Modernity and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujarat (17th to 19th C.)* (Leiden, 2017), 79-84. For similar views on social commerce in a work by the *naib nazim*, see Muhammad Reza Khan, Memorandum (Jan. 1775), Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 12565, esp. 2v-3r; and in Indo-Persian *akhlaqi* (ethical) literature generally, Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, c. 1200-1800 (Chicago, 2004), 54-61.

¹⁷⁹ [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 2:598; Ghulam Husain, *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1833), 1:415.

In this political arena, no less than in the British, ideas about knowledge would take a central place. Among the most ideologically significant forms of “commerce” between Indian rulers and their subjects was the patronage of learned individuals and institutions. Along with political and economic control, such patronage was shifting in the eighteenth century from the Mughal center to the provinces. If one symptom of this process was the composition of mournful poetry (*shahr-i asob*) by uprooted Delhi litterateurs, another was the emergence of Lucknow and other provincial courts as new hubs of creative and intellectual energy.¹⁸⁰ As these courts, in turn, fell under the sway of the Company, Europeans “became the new centres around which the indigenous literary bazaar began to reconfigure itself.”¹⁸¹ Company officials like Jonathan Scott and Richard Johnson, as well as continental adventurers like Antoine Polier and Claude Martin, cropped up as major patrons of art and literature. With a fortune acquired as a commercial agent for the British in the 1750s-60s, the protean Mustapha likewise amassed a collection of “Persian and Indian books, miniatures, and curiosities,” of which he planned at one point to produce translations and a catalogue.¹⁸² He also established himself as a connoisseur of the Indian “medical marketplace,” often advising European friends on local treatments and

¹⁸⁰ Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* (1913-c. 1920), ed. and trans. E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (London, 1975); H. Goetz, *The Crisis of Indian Civilisation in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Calcutta, 1938); George D. Bearce, “Intellectual and Cultural Characteristics of India in a Changing Era, 1740-1800,” *JAS* 25 (1965); Fritz Lehmann, “Urdu Literature and Mughal Decline,” *Mahfil* 6 (1970); Ishrat Haque, *Glimpses of Mughal Society and Culture: A Study Based on Urdu Literature, in the 2nd Half of the 18th Century* (New Delhi, 1992).

¹⁸¹ Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi, intro. to Alam and Alavi, eds., *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I‘jāz-i Arsalānī (Persian Letters, 1773-1779) of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier* (New Delhi, 2001), 36.

¹⁸² [Mustapha,] translator’s preface, 1:17 n, see 1:17.

remedies.¹⁸³ The *Siyar al-Muta'akhhirin*, which Mustapha rendered in English, upheld the conventional Mughal view that support of such undertakings was a duty incumbent upon grandees and governors.¹⁸⁴ Ghulam Husain's history praised earlier *nawabs* of Bengal for gathering learned men at court and showering them with honors and rewards; and it censured their successors for not doing the same.¹⁸⁵ In footnotes to the text, Mustapha informed his British readers that "learning is the sure road to honour and promotion" in India, and "men of eminent learning are treated as equals by the Princes of the country."¹⁸⁶ The Company critic Alexander Dow had made much the same point in the preface to his influential *History of Hindostan* (1768-72). "No princes in the world," he averred, "patronised men of letters with more generosity and respect, than the Mahommedan Emperors of Hindostan." Scholars stood in such high credit, he continued, that "literary genius was not only the certain means to acquire a degree of wealth ... but an infallible road for rising to the first offices of the state."¹⁸⁷ Dow's message, echoed by Ghulam Husain, Mustapha, and other interpreters of the Mughal legacy, was that this policy must be continued by the new rulers if they were to maintain the standing and success of the old.

¹⁸³ Travers, "Mustapha," 312-13; see Pratik Chakrabarti, "Medical Marketplaces beyond the West: Bazaar Medicine, Trade and the English Establishment in Eighteenth-Century India," in Mark S. R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis, eds., *Medicine and the Market in England and its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850* (Basingstoke, 2007).

¹⁸⁴ For another near-coeval articulation of this view, see [Salim Allah,] *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal*, trans. Francis Gladwin (Calcutta, 1788), 24, 115-18.

¹⁸⁵ [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 1:20-21, 1:685-716, 2:197-9, 2:462-3, 2:536.

¹⁸⁶ [Mustapha,] in *ibid.*, 1:265 n. 211, see also 2:305 n. 141.

¹⁸⁷ Dow, *Hindostan*, 1:x.

Such expectations help explain the crisis of conciliation that Hastings encountered shortly after assuming the governorship of Bengal. In April 1772, he received a letter from the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors ordering the arrest of Muhammad Reza Khan. The *naib nazim* in name, Reza Khan was far more in fact. Hastings described him as “in real authority more than the Nazim”; Edmund Burke would later compare his office to one uniting “the character of First Lord of the Treasury, the character of chief Justice, the character of Lord High Chancellor and the character of Archbishop of Canterbury.”¹⁸⁸ While the assorted charges against Reza Khan owed largely to the machinations of his enemies, Hastings dutifully pressed them, hoping to turn the great man’s undoing to the purposes of economy and reform.¹⁸⁹ Four months later, however, he complained that Reza Khan’s “Influence still prevailed generally throughout the Country.”¹⁹⁰ More than simply a canny operator, Reza Khan embodied the late-Mughal ideal of the learned bureaucrat. He was of high origin, born to a Persian family of physicians that emigrated to Delhi and thence to Murshidabad. According to the judge Robert Chambers,

He has a very good Understanding, improved first by Education, and afterwards by long Practice in publick Affairs. His Learning ... is ... greater than can often be found in Bengal, even among professed Scholars. He seems to have an extensive Acquaintance not only with Persian but Arabian Authours, has obtained, from Arabick Translations of Greek Books, some Knowledge of the Philosophy and even of the Politicks of ancient Greece, and has been thereby, as I conceive, enabled to understand so well as he does what he has heard among English Gentlemen of our Constitution and Government.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Hastings to Secret Committee of Directors, 1 Sept. 1772, in *Fifth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, Appointed to Enquire into the Causes of the War in the Carnatic* (London, 1782), Appendix 4; Burke, “Speech on Sixth Article: Presents” (21 Apr. 1789), in *Writings and Speeches*, 7:45.

¹⁸⁹ Abdul Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal, 1756-1775: A Study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan* (Cambridge, 1969), 294-349.

¹⁹⁰ Hastings to Secret Committee, 1 Sept. 1772.

¹⁹¹ Chambers to Charles Jenkinson, 25 Mar. 1778, Liverpool Papers, BL Add. MS 38401, 94r-94v.

Even such a critic as Ghulam Husain could not fault Reza Khan's intellect, but only his estimation of others'.¹⁹² Indeed, for opponents as well as supporters of the Khan, the ruination of such a "learned person," seemingly over "a few lakhs of rupees," played into larger critiques of the Company.¹⁹³ The *nawabi* employee Hari Charan Das likely had this episode in mind when he remarked that the British "manage to obtain money by their wisdom and adroitness, and even by force if necessary."¹⁹⁴ Meanwhile, Hastings' reduction of the *nawab* Mubarak ud-Daula's stipend within weeks of the arrest, while it cut costs and weakened allies of the Khan, only reinforced such criticism.¹⁹⁵ Apart from the *nawab* and his dependents, the stipend supported "a number of deserving persons"—many of them scholar-administrators—"to whom attention had always been paid by former Nazems."¹⁹⁶ As Hastings regretfully acknowledged, it represented the only provision for hundreds "of the ancient nobility of the Country, excluded under our government from almost all employments."¹⁹⁷ If he anticipated a backlash, however, its potential scale may only have become apparent with the exoneration of Reza Khan in 1774. Not only was the influential

¹⁹² [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 2:539.

¹⁹³ Karam Ali, *Muzaffarnama*, trans. Khan, 25, 43.

¹⁹⁴ Hari Charan Das, *Chahar Gulzar Shuja 'i*, trans. in H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, eds., *The History of India, as Told by its Own Historians*, 8 vols. (London, 1867-77), 8:229.

¹⁹⁵ Karam Ali, *Muzaffarnama*, trans. Khan, 42-3; Khan, *Transition*, 327-9.

¹⁹⁶ [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 2:426.

¹⁹⁷ Secret Letter from Bengal, 10 Nov. 1772, in Monckton Jones, *Hastings in Bengal*, 191. Another Company servant who witnessed the retrenchment at Murshidabad remarked at "so many great families sinking into indigence, and proud Musselman Lords excluded from honours, profits and employments." (John Stewart.) "A Letter from John Stewart, Secretary and Judge Advocate of Bengal, 1773," ed. L. S. Sutherland, *The Indian Archives* 10 (1956), 6.

Khan now free to oppose the Company state; no other Indian “of consequence,” he warned, would cooperate with it either.¹⁹⁸ These were troubling prospects for a new regime still dependent in large part on the structures and symbols of the old.

Hastings’ project of conciliating India thus took shape around the imperative to forge alliances with consequential native scholar-administrators. Reza Khan would now be difficult to bring around; such hopes lay more plausibly with the council majority. But Hastings’ administrative and political agendas furnished other opportunities. The retrieval and translation of Indian laws was intended at one level to conciliate metropolitan opinion towards the “Indian World.” At another level, it opened to numbers of *maulvis* and *pandits* (elite Muslim and Hindu scholars) an avenue of honorable employment. After refusing work at the supreme court, apparently on religious grounds, the *pandit* Radhakanta Tarkavagisa nonetheless fulfilled Hastings’ commission for a digest of the Puranas, and received a valuable piece of land in return.¹⁹⁹ Scholarly elites willing to take up the labors of collating and translating manuscripts tended to be of relatively minor standing. Even so, they were not without political value. Panegyrics to Hastings featured in the prefaces to legal works compiled under his patronage.²⁰⁰ And as news of these works circulated, so would his good reputation—at least, so he imagined.

¹⁹⁸ Charles Goring to Philip Francis, Dec. 1774, cited in Khan, *Transition*, 346.

¹⁹⁹ Rosane Rocher, “The Career of Rādhākānta Tarkavāgīśa, an Eighteenth-Century Pandit in British Employ,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109 (1989), 628.

²⁰⁰ E.g. Ghulam Yahya, translator’s preface to *Hidaya-i Farsi*, BL OMS Add. 5543, trans. as “Introductory Address,” in Hamilton, trans., *Hedaya*, 1:ix-xii; Zuravar Singh, translator’s preface to *Puranartha-prakasha*, BL OMS Add. 5655.

In March 1777, Hastings was irritated to discover the name of one of his *maulvis* on the signatory lists of two *mahzarnamas* (memorials) ascribed to the plotting of Reza Khan and “intended to vilify my character”:

Of the little weight that Gratitude bears in the Scale of Indian Policy, both Lists afford a remarkable Instance in Golam Yahyah Cawn whose name appears in both. He was without Employment and little known, but as a Man of Learning I employed him to translate the Mahomedan Laws from the Arabic into the Persian Language with other Molavies to assist him, with monthly salaries which they have received through him during three years to an Amount which I am ashamed to mention. He was afterwards appointed by me to the Cauzy ul Cazaut or head Cauzee of the Province, which Office he since holds under Mahomed Reza Cawn. He has been taxed with having been privy to this Affair and has solemnly denied it.

Hastings acknowledged to his London agents that the memorials might prove spurious. In any case, their accusations were too “flimsy” to do him much harm.²⁰¹ Nonetheless, his frustration with Ghulam Yahya suggested his rationale for patronizing Indian scholar-administrators as well as its potential flaws. In public forums, Hastings tended to portray the *maulvis* and *pandits* in his employ as pure thinkers offering their services out of disinterested esteem for his administration.²⁰² But his hefty remuneration of Ghulam Yahya and expectation of “gratitude” in return hinted at the ulterior considerations involved. Hastings needed prominent native support. From his perspective, one worrying implication of this affair was that loyalty could not always be bought, that displaced *nawabi* potentates like Reza Khan might still control a greater share than he in the commerce of affection. An alternative implication, perhaps equally worrying, was that Reza Khan still

²⁰¹ Hastings to John Graham and Lauchlin Maclean, 5 Mar. 1777, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29128, 44r-46v. On these *mahzarnamas*, one of which was ascribed to another disaffected *maulvi*, see also Hastings to George Vansittart, 5-28 Mar. 1777, Vansittart Papers, BL Add. MS 48370, 47r-54v. On such documents generally, see Nandini Chatterjee, “*Mahzar-namas* in the Mughal and British Empires: The Uses of an Indo-Islamic Legal Form,” *CSSH* 58 (2016).

²⁰² Hastings to Directors, 21 Feb. 1784, 3:158; Hastings, preface to *Bhāgvāt Gēētā*, 15.

looked like a winning horse. In 1775, the council majority had restored the Khan to the office of *naib nazim*, from which Hastings would be able to oust him only temporarily in 1778-80. Ghulam Yahya's response to the latter event suggested that he may well have had flexible or divided loyalties. Some months after praising Hastings fulsomely in the law tract *Hidaya-i Farsi* and renewing his translation agreement, the *maulvi* resigned the office Hastings had procured him as *qazi-ul-quzat* (chief judge), reportedly in solidarity with the dismissed Khan.²⁰³ When he died in 1784, having resumed this position, a new contest began over his successor, with Reza Khan's choice prevailing.²⁰⁴

Hastings fared much better with another jurist, the Mughal aristocrat Ali Ibrahim Khan. Distinguished equally as a poet and historian, and favored in turn by Mir Qasim and Reza Khan, Ali Ibrahim had been known to Hastings since his early days in India. Upon assuming the governorship of Bengal in 1772, Hastings began actively cultivating Ali Ibrahim, and on various occasions employed him as an intermediary with Reza Khan.²⁰⁵ His real opportunity came several years later, however, when a dispute between the two Khans resulted in Ali Ibrahim's dismissal from the court of the *nawab*. Reduced to living "at his own house in obscurity and retirement," the nobleman gladly accepted an invitation from Hastings to accompany him on a tour upcountry. Not only did this overture earn approval from the likes of Ghulam Husain, who dubbed Hastings "a connoisseur of the first

²⁰³ *CPC*, 5:120, 5:194-5, 5:197.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 6:368, 6:372, 6:393.

²⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, 4:1, 4:130, 4:137; Karam Ali, *Muzaffarnama*, trans. Khan, 41; [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 2:466.

rate”; it proved decisive in forging an alliance with Ali Ibrahim.²⁰⁶ It was during the visit of the governor-general’s suite to Benares in August 1781 that tensions with Chait Singh came to a head and northern India erupted in rebellion.²⁰⁷ Presenting himself as a victim of extortion and aggrandizement, Chait Singh sought to draw rulers and grandees across the region to his standard. Ali Ibrahim, however, steeped as he was in the establishmentarian politics of the Mughal court, saw the “*raja*” as did Hastings: as an upstart *zamindar* who had forgotten his place. According to some observers, the triumph of this latter view among the regional aristocracy was what prevented the rebellion from spreading.²⁰⁸ Here, Hastings’ alliance with Ali Ibrahim seems to have come into play. While the governor-general framed a justification of his actions towards Chait Singh in English, the jurist, avowing himself a “well-wisher of the Company,” drew up a complementary narrative in Persian.²⁰⁹ That autumn, with the uprising quelled and Benares annexed to the Company’s dominion, Hastings repaid Ali Ibrahim’s loyalty by appointing him chief magistrate, the highest office in the reorganized administration of the province. “It is chiefly from the

²⁰⁶ [Ghulam Husain,] *Seir*, 3:330, see 2:469-73.

²⁰⁷ For contrasting accounts of these events, see C. Collin Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh* (Oxford, 1939), 110-54; Suprakash Sanyal, *Benares and the English East India Company, 1764-1795* (Calcutta, 1979), 83-122.

²⁰⁸ E.g. G. F. Grand, *The Narrative of the Life of a Gentleman Long Resident in India* (1814), ed. Walter K. Firminger (Calcutta, 1910), 110.

²⁰⁹ Ali Ibrahim Khan, *Tarikh-i Chait Singh*, BL Or. 1865, 36r-40v; Warren Hastings, *A Narrative of the Insurrection which Happened in the Zemeedary of Banaris* (Calcutta, 1782); Shayesta Khan, *A Biography of Ali Ibrahim Khan (circa 1740-1793): A Mughal Noble in the Administrative Service of the British East India Company* (Patna, 1992), 155-9; Nandini Chatterjee, “Hindu City and Just Empire: Banaras and India in Ali Ibrahim Khan’s Legal Imagination,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 15 (2014). Hastings also reportedly commissioned a panegyric on the Company’s victory from the poet Zain-ud-Din ‘Ishqi. See Zain-ud-Din to John Macpherson, 1785, trans. in *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1970), 2:673-4.

reliance which I have in him personally,” Hastings wrote, “that I have ventured to delegate a degree of authority to him, which it would perhaps be unsafe to vest in a person of a less established character.”²¹⁰ This judgment would prove well-founded, for Ali Ibrahim deftly maintained the esteem of the city’s leading men and the Company’s officials over the next decade.

Hastings also had notable success enlisting Indian scholar-administrators as diplomatic intermediaries. Diplomacy, unlike jurisprudence, was a field in which the Company had long employed local talent. Believing that his administration now acted “in the eyes of all India,” Hastings had good reason to expand the practice.²¹¹ One early recruit was the skillful Gobind Ram, who, after befriending David Anderson and Antoine Polier, was warmly received by Hastings in 1773. Henceforth, in addition to serving as a *vakil* to Indian notables, he was apparently engaged by Hastings on a number of occasions, and acquired a reputation as a Company ally.²¹² An even greater prize was the remarkable Tafazzul Husain Khan. Born to a prominent family of Mughal administrators in Sialkot, Tafazzul studied rational sciences in the Greco-Arabic tradition in Delhi and Lucknow, before serving as tutor to the second son of the *nawab* of Awadh. On the wrong side of a dynastic struggle in 1776, Tafazzul was forced to flee the court and, during a period of exile, was drawn into the orbit of the Company. He established friendly relations with the

²¹⁰ Hastings to Supreme Council, 1 Nov. 1781, in Hastings, *Insurrection*, Appendix, 22.

²¹¹ Hastings, cited and discussed in Marshall, *Making and Unmaking*, 255, 263.

²¹² (Gobind Ram,) “Seeking Employment in the British Empire: Three Letters from Rajah Gobind Ram Bahadur,” ed. and trans. Alan M. Guenther, *Fontanus* 12 (2010); see also (Ali Ibrahim Khan,) *The Holy City of Benares as Administered by a Muslim Noble: Social, Religious, Cultural and Political Conditions, 1781-1793*, ed. and trans. Shayesta Khan (Patna, 1993), 7.

Lucknow resident William Palmer and with Anderson, and was appointed by Hastings to assist the one in negotiating with the *rana* of Gohud, and the other in concluding a peace treaty with the *maharaja* of Gwalior. By this time, Hastings was evidently on personal terms with Tafazzul and appreciated the political applications of his formidable intellect and learning. Upon dispatching Palmer to Gohud in 1781, he assured him that “Tofuzzal Hussein Cawn is already fully informed of all my views ... I have much reliance on his abilities.”²¹³ Meanwhile, having arrived before Palmer, Tafazzul apprised the governor-general that “I am diligently employed in enquiring into every particular of the State of this Quarter.” Within days, he had succeeded in making the *rana* “truly & Sincerely attached to him [Hastings],” and with help from “the learned Men of this District” had mapped three military routes between Gohud and Gujarat. On his own initiative, he had even laid the ground for friendly relations with “Several Men of Distinction & Rajahs.”²¹⁴ Palmer would soon confirm Tafazzul’s achievements, writing to Hastings, “He is the most able & faithful adherent which you could have given me & his services have been inestimable.”²¹⁵ In Anderson’s recollection, Tafazzul was no less a boon to the negotiations at Gwalior the following year. “As he wrote the Persian language with uncommon elegance,” for instance, it was Tafazzul who penned Anderson’s letters of introduction to the *maharaja* and other Maratha officials. In the negotiations, meanwhile, Tafazzul far outshone his opponent. “In all my intercourse with the natives of India,” Anderson summarized, “I never knew any man

²¹³ Hastings to Palmer, undated, Philipps Collection, John Rylands Library, GB 1313 Eng MS 173, no. 24.

²¹⁴ Tafazzul to brother, 13-23 Feb. [1781], trans., Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29123, 103r, 106r, 108r.

²¹⁵ Palmer to Hastings, 21 Mar. 1781, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29148, 151r.

who combined, in so eminent a degree, great talents for public business, profound learning, and the liberal ideas and manners of a gentleman.”²¹⁶ When not posting Tafazzul on diplomatic missions, Hastings sometimes tasked him with procuring manuscripts, including an Arabic version of a Greek tract on pyrotechnics, and two Persian translations the emperor Akbar had commissioned of Sanskrit works.²¹⁷ At the time of Hastings’ departure, Tafazzul had not yet begun the project for which he would be most remembered: an Arabic translation of Newton’s *Principia*. But Hastings did lend early support to his collaborator, the astronomer Reuben Burrow. The eclectic investigations of Burrow, and soon Tafazzul, by establishing genealogical links between eastern and western science, pointed to much wider vistas of conciliation than those espied in the selective patronage of scholar-administrators.²¹⁸

If Hastings’ system of conciliating India was grounded in the cultivation of individuals, there were moments nonetheless when it grasped at broader modes of political engagement. “In the Month of September 1780,” Hastings would recall, “a Petition was presented to me by a considerable Number of Mussulmen of Credit and Learning,” asking him to establish a *madrassa* in Calcutta. According to Hastings, their plea reflected “the Belief which generally prevailed that Men so accomplished usually met with a distinguished

²¹⁶ Anderson, cited in “An Account of the Life and Character of Tofuzzel Hussein Khan,” *Asiatic Annual Register* [5] (1804), “Characters,” 2, 4.

²¹⁷ *CPC*, 6:296, 6:397.

²¹⁸ On these activities, see esp. Simon Schaffer, “The Asiatic Enlightenments of British Astronomy,” in Schaffer et al., eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820* (Sagamore Beach, Mass., 2009).

Reception from myself.”²¹⁹ That the continuance of this reputation was at stake in Hastings’ response was implied by his minute of 1781 and by the original petition, which stated that the governor-general would “earn a good name” if he fulfilled the petitioners’ request.²²⁰ In a sense, the Calcutta Madrasa represented another instance of personal patronage: the main channel for Hastings’ involvement would be its learned superintendent, Majd-ud-Din, who had recently arrived from upper India. In familiar fashion, this *maulvi* appears to have become a political ally of the governor-general.²²¹ But in founding a new institution, to be supported at government expense, Hastings was attempting conciliation on an altogether grander scale. He was bidding for the affection not only of Majd-ud-Din, but of the distinguished petitioners, of the students who would pass through the institution, and indeed, of an entire class of Indian society. Since the Company’s assumption of the *diwani*, Hastings noted, the Muslim revenue administrators favored by the *nawabi* regime had been largely replaced by Europeans and Hindus. “In consequence of this change the Mahometan families have lost those sources of private emolument which could enable them to bestow much expence on the education of their children, and are deprived of that power which they formerly possessed of patronizing public seminaries of learning.” By providing an education in Islamic jurisprudence and the Persian and Arabic languages, the Calcutta Madrasa was intended to revive a “species of erudition ... much on the decline.” It would

²¹⁹ Hastings, Minute (17 Apr. 1781), in *GIED*, 73, 74.

²²⁰ *CPC*, 6:89.

²²¹ See *ibid.*, 6:368; Hastings to John Shore, 19 Feb. 1787, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 3:323; *The Letters of Warren Hastings to His Wife*, ed. Sydney C. Grier (London, 1905), 419.

thereby qualify “the sons of the once respectable, but now decayed and impoverished Mahometan families” for official positions—if no longer in the revenue, then in the judicial administration.²²² Notably, the effects of the institution were not imagined as confined to Bengal. Adverting to Calcutta’s status as “the Seat of a great Empire,” Hastings envisioned that the madrasa would promote “the Growth and Extension of liberal Knowledge” across swathes of India where “the Decline of Learning ... accompanied that of the Mogul Empire.” He remarked with satisfaction that, in its early months, still operating on a limited basis, the institution already boasted students from Kashmir, Gujarat, and the Carnatic.²²³ By 1784, Hastings could affirm to the directors that the Calcutta Madrasa “has contributed to extend the credit of the Company’s name, and to soften the prejudices excited by the rapid growth of the British dominions.”²²⁴

The madrasa was one of several ventures which suggested that Hastings’ understanding of conciliation, in the Indian context, extended beyond the co-optation of a few elites. Shortly before his departure, Hastings reportedly approved plans to found a Hindu seminary at Benares.²²⁵ His attentions to that center of Hindu learning, which included looking after its “colleges” and funding a new *naubat-khana* (music house), were meant “for conciliating a great People to a Dominion which they see with envy and bear

²²² Warren Hastings, Minute [1784], in S. C. Sanial, “History of the Calcutta Madrassa,” *BPP* 8 (1914), 109, 110.

²²³ Hastings, Minute (17 Apr. 1781), 74; see also *FWIH*, 8:540.

²²⁴ Hastings to Directors, 21 Feb. 1784, 3:159.

²²⁵ See *ibid.*, 3:158; Kasinath, Petition (1801), trans. in Surendranath Sen and Umesha Mishra, intro. to Sen and Mishra, eds., *Sanskrit Documents: Being Sanskrit Letters and Other Documents Preserved in the Oriental Collection at the National Archives of India* (Allahabad, 1951), 58.

with reluctance.”²²⁶ Engaging Hindus and Muslims alike, meanwhile, the restoration of native laws and institutions had always been pregnant with hopes of broader-based support for the Company state. Hastings’ most grandiose vision for conciliating India, however, was recorded on a stone monument erected at Bhagalpur in 1784. This epitaph honored the late collector of the district, Augustus Cleveland,

Who, without bloodshed or the terrors of authority,
Employing only the means of conciliation, confidence, and benevolence,
Attempted and accomplished
The entire subjection of the lawless and savage inhabitants of the jungleterry of *Rájamahall*,
Who had long infested the neighbouring lands by their predatory incursions,
Inspired them with a taste for the arts of civilized life,
And attached them to the *British* Government by a conquest over their minds;
The most permanent, as the most rational, mode of dominion.²²⁷

There was nothing “Orientalist” about these lines. Indeed, it might be tempting to read them as evidence of a *mission civilisatrice*. Yet Hastings seldom made policy in the heroic mood. As we have seen, he seldom got the chance. Among the British in India, funeral monuments had long provided an outlet for blustery paeans to conquest.²²⁸ This was a rhetorical style that jostled with others in Hastings’ writings and rarely came to the fore. Nonetheless, Hastings found much to admire in Cleveland’s own “system of conciliation,”

²²⁶ Hastings, cited in Feiling, *Hastings*, 236; Supreme Council to Governor-General, 3 Dec. 1781, in George W. Forrest, ed., *Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and Other State Papers Preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 1772-1785*, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1899), 3:38. On the *naubat-khana*, see Ali Ibrahim Khan to Hastings, 30 Nov. 1785 to Sept. 1786, trans., Hastings Papers, Add. MS 29202, 85r-86r; Testimonials, trans. in Sen and Mishra, eds., *Sanskrit Documents*, 66-79.

²²⁷ Cited in Thomas Shaw, “On the Inhabitants of the Hills Near *Rájamahall*,” *Asiatic Researches* 4 (Calcutta, 1795), 106. See also the derivative epitaph at Cleveland’s gravesite in Calcutta, transcribed in [John Hawkesworth,] *Asiaticus: In Two Parts* (Calcutta, 1803), Part Two, 19.

²²⁸ Rebecca M. Brown, “Inscribing Colonial Monumentality: A Case Study of the 1763 Patna Massacre Memorial,” *JAS* 65 (2006); Robert Travers, “Death and the Nabob: Imperialism and Commemoration in Eighteenth-Century India,” *Past and Present* 196 (2007).

and had favored it with “public support and private encouragement.”²²⁹ Cleveland’s accomplishment was to have persuaded the hill tribes of the district, who subsisted by raiding the lowlands, to lay down their arms and take up the plow. To this end, he had offered material incentives, and recruited a local militia to provide security. He had established bazaars, introduced basic husbandry and manufactures, and even laid the foundations of a school.²³⁰ These measures comprised a very different program, adapted to a very different situation, than those of Hastings in lower Bengal or in India at large. But the governor-general evidently saw a kindred spirit at work in the effort to make a foreign people “warmly attached to us.”²³¹

Hastings would have composed his inscription for Cleveland around the same time as the *Gita* preface, and he imbued it with many of the same tensions. A later visitor to the monument remarked upon the irony that a man who evinced such paternal sentiments “should have undertaken to depose Cheyte Sing, rob the Begums of Oude, and ravage the fair province of Rohilcund.”²³² These were accusations that would feature at Hastings’ impeachment, the groundwork for which was already being laid in the early 1780s. As Hastings put quill to paper in the interest of winning minds in India, he was also

²²⁹ Hastings, *State of India*, 2:79. This led Cleveland’s predecessor to grumble that more credit had not attached to himself. See James Browne, *India Tracts* (London, 1788), i-ii.

²³⁰ On these schemes, see Thompson Papers, BL Mss Eur D1083/10; William Hodges, *Travels in India* (London, 1783), 86-90; Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*, 2 vols. (London, 1828), 1:196, 1:205-10; “Rajmahal, Its Railway, and Historical Associations,” *Calcutta Review* 36 (1861), 129-40; F. B. Bradley-Birt, *The Story of an Indian Upland* (London, 1905), 78-112; L. S. S. O’Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas* (Calcutta, 1910), 37-44.

²³¹ Hastings, *State of India*, 2:80.

²³² Bholanauth Chunder, *The Travels of a Hindoo to Various Parts of Bengal and Upper India*, 2 vols. (London, 1869), 1:101.

undoubtedly looking ahead to the challenge of winning minds in Britain. “I fear I am losing my Credit and Reputation here,” he confided to a correspondent, “and doubt whether I shall retrieve either in England.”²³³

Connections and Transitions

On the return voyage in 1785, Hastings set about penning a record of his administration. The initial intent, he claimed, had been merely to collect in one place the transactions of his last months in office; but “in the course of this review, I was imperceptibly led to take in a larger scope.” These words mirrored the account Hastings would proceed to give of the Company, which had gradually, perhaps unwittingly, transformed from a body of merchants into a state. It was now, he wrote, “impossible to retrace the perilous and wonderful paths by which they have attained their present elevation, and to re-descend to the humble and undreaded character of trading adventurers.”²³⁴ Yet Hastings knew all too well how incomplete this transformation remained. No doubt he wished it otherwise: his *Memoirs Relative to the State of India* (1786) reiterated earlier appeals to invest the governor-general with a robust, unmercantile sovereignty. But this was not a position Hastings had enjoyed. His authority had been circumscribed by forces at both ends of the Company’s empire. And he had often, perforce, embraced a commercial idiom of politics, based on negotiation rather than dictation. He had accordingly devised strategies to “conciliate” British and Indian political communities. The British strategy centered on

²³³ Hastings to Macpherson, [Jun. 1782,] in *Letters to ... Macpherson*, ed. Dodwell, 129.

²³⁴ Hastings, *State of India*, 2:ix, 2:60.

rehabilitating the nabob and the “Indian World” this figure had come to symbolize. The Indian strategy centered on recruiting elite scholar-administrators who could wield influence among their countrymen. In both cases, however, Hastings relied on scholarly patronage to pacify the Company state’s discontents, paper over its contradictions, and protract its tenuous existence. On many occasions, the two strategies coincided, as measures framed in one context implicated the other. The investigation of Hindu and Islamic laws, for instance, was intended in part to win over opinion in Britain, but it also furnished honorable employments and a platform for wider support in India. Growing metropolitan scrutiny in the 1780s may have spurred Hastings to articulate more expansive visions of conciliation, like those of the *Gita* preface and Cleveland’s epitaph. Nonetheless, lines of continuity could be traced in his projection of scholarly activities onto a transmarine political framework.

If Hastings’ program for knowledge spanned oceans, meanwhile, so could the countermeasures of his adversaries. The apparent defection of the *maulvi* Ghulam Yahya to Reza Khan’s camp threatened Hastings not only in India, but in Britain, where the councilor John Clavering was rumored to have sent the original *mahzarnamas* bearing his signature.²³⁵ It was certainly true that the council majority sought to cultivate Reza Khan and to leverage his standing against Hastings wherever possible.²³⁶ In letters to the statesman Charles Jenkinson, the majority ally Chambers indicated how this reputation might be used to undercut Hastings’ metropolitan support. Praising the Khan’s extensive

²³⁵ Hastings to Graham and Macleane, 5 Mar. 1777, 44v-45v.

²³⁶ Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 156-63.

learning and abilities, Chambers wrote that his dismissal by Hastings in 1778 ought to “rouse Indignation.” Furthermore, it ought to be taken as a worrying sign of the regime’s disregard for learning. “Among the Mahommedans in this Country,” Chambers alleged, “the Study of Law and of every other Kind of Learning is neglected *because it is no longer honourable*.” Knowledge was “closely allied” to civility; it was supposed to introduce its “Possessour to the Society of his Superiours.” But in the Company’s territories, “the Knowledge of a conquered People” had lost its “Rank and Importance”: “it neither excites the Curiosity nor ministers to the Passions of the Conquerour.” According to Chambers, “the Colleges and Schools of Mahommedan Learning throughout Bengal are reduced to Decay by the Oppressions of the English Government,” while “the rapid Declension of Science among the Hindoos” proceeded unchecked.²³⁷ Far from being a new breed of enlightened governor, Hastings was a guardian of “the Old Indian System,” whose “main object is to enrich the company’s servants, by [] deceiving the people of England ... by defrauding the company ... above all by oppressing the poor natives.”²³⁸ Chambers’ view of Hastings would soften in later years, partly in recognition of his intellectual bent.²³⁹ In the interim, however, it is possible that arguments circulated by Chambers and likeminded critics in Britain reached Hastings in Bengal, and that this metropolitan context informed measures like the founding of the Calcutta Madrasa. Of course it remained to be seen how such arguments would play out upon Hastings’ return.

²³⁷ Chambers to Jenkinson, 25 Mar. 1778, Liverpool Papers, BL Add. MS 38401, 96r-97r.

²³⁸ Chambers to Jenkinson, 29 Dec. 1779, Liverpool Papers, BL Add. MS 38403, 315v-316r.

²³⁹ Curley, *Chambers*, 401-40.

It also remained to be seen whether Hastings' system of conciliation would survive in his absence. The directors, for their part, had always played a dual role in this system, as a body that must simultaneously be defended and persuaded. Would they carry forward Hastings' ideas? On the one hand, they had recently appointed an official historiographer (Robert Orme), encouraged their servants to learn Asian languages, and acceded to a number of requests for literary and scientific patronage. On the other hand, it was uncertain whether they shared Hastings' novel political vision. Hastings doubted, for instance, whether his project for Tibet was "generally known at the India House, or if it is, whether it is not regarded as a project of mere whim or Curiosity."²⁴⁰ Moreover, the directors had not always acceded to Hastings' requests to fund scholarly works.²⁴¹ The cartographer Rennell, for whom Hastings had tried to secure a pension, reported from London in 1778 that "any sum you had fixed would be *beat down* here by men accustomed to drive Bargains."²⁴² After initially reducing Hastings' award, however, the directors restored it a few years later.²⁴³ And in public anyway Rennell changed his tune. "Whatever charges may be imputable to the Managers for the Company," he wrote in the second edition of his *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan* (1785), "the neglect of useful Science ... is not among the number." If the directors' sporadic encouragement of geographers, surveyors, and astronomers suggested "a spirit somewhat above the mere consideration of Gain," their

²⁴⁰ Hastings to Lord Thurlow, 1 Feb. 1786, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29129, 303r.

²⁴¹ Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago, 2007), 225.

²⁴² Rennell to Hastings, 1 May 1778, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29140, 343r.

²⁴³ Clements R. Markham, *Major James Rennell and the Rise of Modern English Geography* (London, 1895), 61.

appointment of an official hydrographer (Alexander Dalrymple) reflected “the highest honour on their administration.” Strikingly, Rennell ascribed the Company’s scholarly commitments not to its emergence as a territorial state, but to the endurance of its corporate origins. These commitments were proof that “a body of subjects may accomplish, what the [British] State itself despairs even to attempt.”²⁴⁴ Hastings might be loath to draw such a conclusion, but he himself had done much to support it.

Conclusion

Later commentators accorded Hastings fame and infamy, in varying measures, for his stewardship of the transitional Company state. Yet even Thomas Babington Macaulay, perhaps the harshest critic among his countrymen, could acknowledge that Hastings had “patronised learning with the judicious liberality of Cosmo.”²⁴⁵ This reference to the founder of the Medici dynasty was probably meant, in part, to insinuate corruption. Nonetheless, it also invoked the history of relations between companies, states, and knowledge, in which Hastings, like that banker, politician, and patron of learning, had played a part.²⁴⁶ In retirement, Hastings continued to advocate for many of the engagements with knowledge that he had sponsored as governor and governor-general.

²⁴⁴ James Rennell, *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan*, 2nd ed. (London, 1785), iv-v n. For the claim that Rennell saw the Company’s Indian activities as subject to Mughal authority, see Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago, 1997), 11-13.

²⁴⁵ Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Warren Hastings” (1841), in *The Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, 8 vols. (London, 1866), 6:644.

²⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Macaulay cited this acumen explicitly. Macaulay, “Government of India” (10 Jul. 1833), in *ibid.*, 8:115.

His views on companies and states, however, fluctuated. In truth, they had never been settled. The language of “conciliation” that Hastings developed out of a particular figuration of these relations remained influential as long as he lived. The question for his successors was how to adapt this language to the changing political circumstances of the Company state.

Chapter 2

The Age of William Jones and Charles Cornwallis

There is a puzzle to be solved in this chapter. The 1780s-90s witnessed a golden age of British oriental scholarship, led by William Jones and other India officials. This period also witnessed the greatest scandal in the East India Company's history—the impeachment of former governor-general Warren Hastings—and efforts led by his permanent successor, Charles Cornwallis, to reform the Company state. While historians have long highlighted the period's intellectual efflorescence and political upheaval, they have largely treated these as separate phenomena. Recent historiography has heightened the disjuncture by employing two contrasting sets of cultural terms. On the one hand, the scholarship of Jones supposedly constituted the high-water mark of “Orientalism.” On the other hand, the politics of Cornwallis allegedly demonstrated the rising tide of “Anglicism.” Narratives tracing a shift in Company ideology from the one position to the other have found their apparent cohabitation difficult to explain. If Jones and Cornwallis were ideological opponents, why should each have praised the other? How could both have seemed to contemporaries to embody the moment? Historians, when they have not evaded such questions, have been forced to construe the scholarship of Jones as somehow removed from politics, or else the politics of Cornwallis as somehow removed from scholarship.¹ This is a false choice. In fact, the scholarship of the one complemented the politics of the other.

¹ According to a representative account, Jones “resisted any political aspects of scholarship,” while “Cornwallis was not a scholar or literary man” and so did not bring such concerns to politics. Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge, 1990), xv, 326.

Politics and scholarship at the end of the eighteenth century remained yoked together by the language of “conciliation.” As governor-general, Hastings had patronized influential British and Indian scholar-administrators to “conciliate” the political classes that sustained the Company state. Just as this language had featured in Hastings’ administration, so it featured in his defense at trial. Now, however, it faced two challenges. The speeches of the MP Edmund Burke and the intrigues of acting governor-general John Macpherson tended to identify conciliation with corruption. As such, both cast new doubt on the ability of a mercantile corporation to govern extensive territory. In the interest of consolidating the state designed largely by Hastings, Cornwallis tempered the language of conciliation with one of propriety. His scholarly patronage must be more distant and disinterested than that of Hastings or Macpherson. And here he found a particular ally in Jones. Not only was the polymathic judge himself above suspicion of corruption, but his Asiatic Society reset relations between scholar-administrators and the Company state on a more detached footing aligned with Cornwallis’s reforms. In the 1790s, Company leaders returned to Hastings’ personal model of conciliation in response to easing metropolitan pressure. By the end of the decade, however, the arrival of Richard Wellesley, a governor-general intent on separating government from commerce, raised the prospect of a new politics of knowledge altogether.

Knowledge and the Hastings Trial

Warren Hastings' parliamentary impeachment from 1788-95 has received its fair share of historiographical attention, ranging from minute investigations of the charges against the former governor-general to broad homilies on the sins of imperialism.² The role of knowledge in the trial, however, has remained essentially unstudied, though at least one modern commentator has noticed Hastings' question to his accusers, "Whether I have shown a disregard to science; or whether I have not, on the contrary, by public endowments, by personal attentions, and by the selection of men for appointments suited to their talents, given effectual encouragement to it."³ Since ideas about knowledge featured centrally in Hastings' administration, it stood to reason that they should have featured likewise in its defense. Moreover, since the trial had enormous political stakes, serving, as one observer put it, "to define the political situation of this Country with respect to India," deployments of ideas about knowledge by Hastings and his adversaries reverberated far beyond the walls of Parliament.⁴ In particular, they shaped the uses and prospects of "conciliation," that knowledge-centric political language Hastings had developed to preserve the Company state. He upheld this language in defense of his administration, adducing the support of Indian and European scholar-administrators as key evidence. Conflating conciliation with corruption, however, his prosecutor Burke created new difficulties for those who would follow the governor-general's lead.

² See respectively P. J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Oxford, 1965); Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006).

³ Hastings to John Shore, 19 Feb. 1787, in G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings*, 3 vols. (London, 1841), 3:322-3; Richard Drayton, "Knowledge and Empire," in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), 248.

⁴ *The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings* (London, 1796), 2.

In making his case before Parliament and the British public, Hastings sought not only to avoid prosecution, but to vindicate his administration, and “to shew in what manner we ought to govern our Indian subjects.”⁵ To make this last point, in particular, he introduced as evidence numerous *razinamas*: “testimonials of the native inhabitants of the provinces ... not only disavowing the complaints made on their behalf, but professing the contrary sentiments of applause and thankfulness.”⁶ The aforementioned “disregard to science” was one of several propositions that Hastings told his Bengal agent, George Thompson, he wanted these documents to contest.⁷ Nor would he be disappointed. According to one *razinama* bearing the signatures of two hundred and eighty-eight “Pundits and Bramins” from Nadia and Shantipur, “the whole body of the learned” sang in Hastings’ praise. Another such text, graced by the seals of the *nawab* of Bengal, his family, and courtiers, presented Hastings’ case for conciliation more directly still:

He respected the learned and wise Men; and in order for the Propagation of Learning, he built a College [the Calcutta Madrasa], and endowed it with a Provision for the Maintenance of the Students, insomuch that Thousands, reaping the Benefits thereof, offer up their Prayers for the Prosperity of the King of England, and for the Success of the Company.

Near-identical statements issued from “the Persons of Family and Rank” in Murshidabad and their counterparts in Hooghly. Two addresses from “the great and principal People” of Calcutta testified that Hastings had spent his time in office encouraging “Men of Merit and Learning” and “conciliating the Hearts of Princes.” These claims also received support from

⁵ Hastings to David Anderson, 11 Jul. 1798, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45418, 91r.

⁶ Warren Hastings, preface to Hastings, ed., *Debates of the House of Lords, on the Evidence Delivered in the Trial of Warren Hastings* (London, 1797), iv.

⁷ Hastings to Thompson, 19 Feb. 1787, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 3:326.

Hastings' countrymen in India. A departing address from "the British Inhabitants of Calcutta," which was republished alongside the Indian testimonials, affirmed that "Arts have been uniformly patronised. The Channels of Communication between ourselves and the Natives have, by your liberal Encouragements, been opened ..." ⁸ Scholarly patronage was not the only species of good deed to feature in the *razinamas*, but it was among the most prominent, affirming Hastings' close association of such patronage with conciliation.

As important as the message were the messengers. Printed editions of the *razinamas* and accompanying correspondence furnished Parliament and the public with an index of the relations Hastings had forged with India's intellectual and political elite. Many of the *razinamas* highlighted the status of their signatories as "Men of Learning and Wisdom" or "of Family and Rank," sometimes even distinguishing between particular groups, such as *pandits*, *qazis*, and *muftis* (Islamic jurists). The official minutes of evidence listed every one of these signatories. Yet in Hastings' plans for the *razinamas*, Indian scholar-administrators played a role not only as passive witnesses but as active framers and facilitators. Discussing these plans in 1787, Hastings instructed his agent Thompson to enlist the aid of native scholar-administrators whom he had patronized as governor-general, including the *maulvi* Majd-ud-Din, the magistrate Ali Ibrahim Khan, and the mathematician Tafazzul Husain Khan. ⁹ With the last two Hastings had kept up a warm correspondence from England, full of reciprocal pledges of loyalty. Ali Ibrahim, who in 1785 had traveled to Calcutta to wish

⁸ [John Scott, ed.,] *Copies of the Several Testimonials Transmitted from Bengal* (London, 1789), 29, 33, 136, 142, 145, 167, 183, see also 117, 151. The *razinamas* were also printed in *Minutes of Evidence Taken at the Trial of Warren Hastings*, 11 vols. (London, 1788-95), 5:2333-2432, 6:2433-74; Hastings, ed., *Debates*, 517-818.

⁹ Hastings to Shore, 19 Feb. 1787, 3:323.

Hastings farewell, even accompanying him a ways downriver, now coordinated the composition, signing, and dispatch of testimonials from Benares, while Tafazzul did the same from Lucknow.¹⁰ Hastings acknowledged that he was “much indebted” to both learned grandees for their assistance; “You will not meet with Characters of more Faith or worth,” he wrote to a friend.¹¹ Among the “Men of Learning and Wisdom” listed on the Patna *razinama*, Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai, who had dedicated his *Siyar al-Muta’akhhirin* (c. 1781) to Hastings, was conspicuous for his absence. Another section, however, contained the signature of his agent, along with a note affirming that “my constituent with a thousand Tongues bestows Praises on the Government of Mr. Hastings.” According to the agent, Ghulam Husain was now residing at his country estate (*altamgha*), but “were he here, his Seal would be affixed to this Paper.”¹² More revealing was the abstention of Muhammad Reza Khan, the formidable *naib nazim* of Bengal, with whom Hastings had sparred as governor-general. Thompson reported that he had felt obliged to mention the Murshidabad *razinamas* to the Khan’s agent, but “was careful to avoid every expression which might be construed into a solicitation of the suffrage of his master.” When the Khan sent word that he would consider the matter, Thompson declined to respond:

¹⁰ For the earlier episode, see (Ali Ibrahim Khan,) *The Holy City of Benares as Administered by a Muslim Noble: Social, Religious, Cultural and Political Conditions, 1781-1793*, ed. and trans. Shayesta Khan (Patna, 1993), 1, 38.

¹¹ Hastings to David Anderson, 15 Jul. 1788, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45418, 21r; Hastings to Anderson, 1 Oct. 1790, at 39r.

¹² [Scott, ed.,] *Copies of the Several Testimonials*, 106, see 80-110. This observation owes to Robert Travers. In 1787, the adventurer Mustapha tried to publish his English translation of the *Siyar al-Muta’akhhirin* in London and thus “afford some timely assistance” to Hastings. This edition failed to materialize, however, when the “eminent historian” to whom he had entrusted the work “proved to be deaf, and upon his death-bed.” Nota Manus [Haji Mustapha], “Proposals for Publishing,” in Seid-Gholam-Hosseini-Khan [Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai], *A Translation of the Seir Mutaqharin*, trans. Mustapha, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1789), 1:3-4; see W. C. Macpherson, ed., *Soldiering in India, 1764-1787* (Edinburgh, 1928), 351.

In truth I knew how far he had committed himself in conjunction with [Philip] Francis, and was not sorry that he did not seek to sign the address for he is certainly a double dealer, and would probably in extenuation of his apparent apostasy have written to Francis that he did it either from fear or favour and have thus furnished that viper with an increase of poison.¹³

Thompson's fear of inadvertently aiding an enemy like Francis indicated how Hastings' relations with scholar-administrators threatened to become liabilities rather than assets at his trial.

The threat was at least as great when the scholar-administrators in question were Europeans. Conciliation, as addressed to Britain's political classes, had involved patronizing the researches of Company servants, and so proving that they were not the unlettered "nabobs" of popular repute. Instruments of this policy, including Francis Gladwin, Charles Hamilton, and David Anderson, numbered among "the British inhabitants of Calcutta" who had eulogized the departing governor-general in 1785.¹⁴ From some of these men Hastings enlisted more considerable support. Nathaniel Halhed emerged as a key member of the "Bengal Squad" that advocated Hastings' cause in and out of Parliament. He helped prepare his defense, testified on his behalf, and denounced his accusers in the pamphlet press.¹⁵ Charles Wilkins and Jonathan Scott lent assistance by translating Sanskrit and Persian *razinamas*, respectively, and by verifying their authenticity in the process.¹⁶ Yet other erstwhile friends and clients were disinclined to preserve their

¹³ Thompson to Hastings, 12 Feb. 1788, in "The Nesbitt-Thompson Papers," *BPP* 8-23 (1914-21), 18:183.

¹⁴ *Minutes of Evidence*, 6:2452-3.

¹⁵ Rosane Rocher, *Orientalism, Poetry, and the Millennium: The Checkered Life of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, 1751-1830* (Delhi, 1983), 131-55.

¹⁶ See Hastings to David Anderson, 5 Aug. 1788, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45418, 24r; [Scott, ed.,] *Copies of the Several Testimonials*, 177.

association with Hastings. When Ali Ibrahim asked Jonathan Duncan, the resident at Benares, to forward local *razinamas* to the Calcutta government, Duncan refused on the grounds that they had “no Connection with the Business of the Company.”¹⁷ This response seems to have surprised Hastings, though Thompson assured him, “I know that he [Duncan] greatly respects your character, and am convinced that his caution on this occasion has been dictated by a sense though certainly an erroneous one, of his duty.”¹⁸ Indeed, Duncan continually praised Hastings in letters to his family.¹⁹ He had not only benefited from the former governor-general’s policy of conciliation through scholarly patronage, but had replicated this policy at Benares. It was personal and ideological proximity to Hastings, rather than distance, that evidently compelled Duncan to refuse him aid. Nor was this the only sign that Company servants now considered links to the former governor-general as disadvantageous. Hastings’ longtime agent and military secretary William Palmer wrote him from Calcutta that, apart from Tafazzul, “all my old acquaintances regard me as a proscribed man & shun me as contagious. Not one except the Person last mentioned has shewn the smallest gratitude or attachment to you by any kindness or attention to me.”²⁰ Such reports no doubt informed Hastings’ expectation that he would be denied the support “I have a right to” from his countrymen in India.²¹ Nor were

¹⁷ Duncan to Ali Ibrahim, trans. in [Scott, ed.,] *Copies of the Several Testimonials*, 11.

¹⁸ Thompson to Hastings, 12 Feb. 1788, 18:182; see Hastings to Anderson, 15 Jul. 1788, 21r.

¹⁹ V. A. Narain, *Jonathan Duncan and Varanasi* (Calcutta, 1959), 16-17.

²⁰ Palmer to Hastings, 18 Feb. 1787, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29170, 383r.

²¹ Hastings to Anderson, 15 Jul. 1788, 21v.

his countrymen at home able to supply the deficit. Hastings' situation without Parliament mirrored that within, where he struggled "to attract members of sufficient standing to impress the House with their disinterestedness."²² Aspersions as to who supported Hastings and why troubled not only his defense, but also the language of conciliation at its heart.

In his speeches for the prosecution Burke identified venal motives in practically all of Hastings' personal transactions, including scholarly patronage, and thereby tended to conflate conciliation with corruption. The parliamentarian and political philosopher opposed neither conciliation nor mercantile sovereignty in principle. He maintained, however, that Company officials like Hastings had perverted a virtuous commercial politics through rapacity and conquest.²³ This interpretation brought Burke into general agreement with Adam Smith that the Company was a bad trader as well as a bad sovereign, and that the one defect compounded the other. Burke made much of the rumor that Hastings had once been a "fraudulent Bullock Contractor," and accused him of infecting government with "the base, sordid and mercenary habits" of that occupation. According to Burke, therefore, the scholarly patronage that Hastings put forth by way of exculpation was meretricious:

We find and trace him through the whole of his conduct, following a great variety of mercantile employments, and when he comes to you, you would imagine that he had been bred in the sublime sciences, who never knew any act any further than as it made a part in the business of the sublime matters he was engaged in, that he had been engaged in writing a poem, an Iliad, or sometime to

²² Marshall, *Impeachment*, 59.

²³ See Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, N.J., 2015), 647-56, 827-30, 840-46.

revive fallen literature. And yet you find this man dealing in accounts contriving to make up a good account for himself ...²⁴

Hastings' claims to a benevolent support of knowledge became, in Burke's telling, flimsy cloaks of venality. The project of compiling and translating Hindu and Islamic laws, for instance, Burke portrayed as a simple vehicle for graft:

I find it is very probable that the Books were never read by him which were dedicated to him, and your Lordships have it in proof that he did not pay for them, but ... obtained a false credit with the Public for an Act of liberality which he did not perform ... And this swindling Mecaenas has, among other things, affected the honour and glory of a Patron ...²⁵

Bribery was the central charge against Hastings, and, on two occasions, Burke leveled it in connection with the Calcutta Madrasa. After quoting Hastings' founding minute on the madrasa almost in full, Burke alleged a series of events by which the institution had begun "in fraud, injury and peculation and ended in making a Seminary for Robbers and House breakers."²⁶ On another occasion, he dwelt on the figure of Majd-ud-Din, whom Hastings had placed in charge of the madrasa, but who had been accused of fiscal improprieties and eventually removed. Burke contended that Hastings had known of and profited by such behavior from the start. Thus, far from mitigating the governor-general's "cheating and swindling," the madrasa represented another outlet for it.²⁷ Given Burke's contention that Hastings' patronage of scholar-administrators was thoroughly corrupt, it was no wonder that he should have rejected their testimony in the *razinamas*. He discounted this "flood-

²⁴ Burke, Speech (14 Jun. 1794), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, gen. ed. Paul Langford, 9 vols. (Oxford, 1981-2015), 7:620-21.

²⁵ Burke, Speech (30 May 1794), in *ibid.*, 7:285.

²⁶ Burke, Speech (14 Jun. 1794), 7:652, see 7:650-52.

²⁷ Burke, Speech (16 Jun. 1794), in *ibid.*, 7:666-7.

tide of panegyric,” somewhat inconsistently, on at least three grounds. First, he alleged that the signatures had been coerced from “hands which have been in torture, which are yet warm with the thumbscrews upon them.” Second, he claimed that the prose was clearly that of Hastings or his associates, “first written in English, then translated into Persian, and then retranslated into English.” Finally, he maintained that in not furnishing evidence against particular charges, the *razinamas* proved “the impossibility of obtaining it.”²⁸ Hastings brandished the documents as vindications offered up by the learned and respectable classes of India. Burke dismissed them as “oriental rhetoric, penned at ease at Calcutta by the dirty Moonshys.”²⁹ Rather than illustrate the virtues of conciliation, for Burke these documents merely attested the depths of Hastings’ corruption.

Burke’s summary rejection of Hastings’ political case for scholarly patronage might seem to suggest a missed connection between the two Enlightened statesmen. It begins to make sense, however, when situated alongside Burke’s coeval preoccupations. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke cited as a prelude to the storming of the Bastille the rise of a class of “political Men of Letters.”³⁰ The typical member of this alleged class was a skeptic and a republican; but underneath these superficial commitments, he was an opportunistic ally of the “monied interest” against the landed aristocracy. His use of knowledge for political purposes, while couched in terms of the

²⁸ Burke, Speech (21 Apr. 1789), in E. A. Bond, ed., *Speeches of the Managers and Counsel in the Trial of Warren Hastings*, 3 vols. (London, 1860), 2:5-7; see also Burke, Speech (3 Jun. 1794), in *Writings and Speeches*, 7:379-80.

²⁹ Burke, Speech (3 Jun. 1794), 7:379.

³⁰ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1790), 165.

general good, was directed entirely towards self-aggrandizement.³¹ If the parallel in Burke's thought between "nabobs" like Hastings and "political Men of Letters" was not clear enough already, he would later make it explicit by describing "Indianism and Jacobinism" as twin threats to the British constitution.³² The scholarly pretensions of both groups, according to Burke, were not to be credited, much less emulated. The lesson here for Hastings' successors was that his policy of conciliation via scholarly patronage, if continued, must be carefully managed to avoid the appearance of corruption.

John Macpherson and the Commerce of Knowledge

Burke's critique of conciliation drew additional force from the example of Hastings' successor, John Macpherson. Although it has often been passed over in histories of India or the Company, Macpherson's nineteen-month administration is crucial for explaining what followed. Accused by contemporaries of "mean jobbing and peculation, ... duplicity and low intrigues," Macpherson has scarcely fared better in the eyes of posterity.³³ When, in 1927, the editor of a volume of Macpherson's letters suggested that his subject had "been somewhat hardly dealt with by the historians," a colleague accused him of "yielding rather

³¹ Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 2004), 42-53.

³² Burke to Lord Loughborough, [c. 17 Mar. 1796], in *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas Copeland, 10 vols. (Chicago, 1958-78), 8:432.

³³ Earl Cornwallis to Henry Dundas, 8 Aug. 1789, in *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis of Cornwallis*, ed. Charles Ross, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London, 1859), 1:430. At the close of Macpherson's administration, John Shore wrote that "I have not heard one person speak of his public conduct without contempt and indignation." Shore to W. Bensley, 13 Nov. 1786, in Lord Teignmouth, *Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth*, 2 vols. (London, 1843), 1:128. But cf. recently Stephen Foster, *A Private Empire* (Millers Point, N.S.W., 2010), 81-94.

to his kindness of heart than to his critical judgment.”³⁴ Certainly, there is ample evidence of the governor-general’s penchant for machination. To cite just one example: eyeing a return to power after 1786, he reportedly created a scandal for his successor Charles Cornwallis, putting it about in the London papers that this man “of forty nine, forgetting ... his grey hairs and rheumatism, had married a girl of sixteen.”³⁵ According to Cornwallis, “the foolish congratulations that I received from various quarters on this supposed event, did not a little ruffle my temper.”³⁶ Had Macpherson enjoyed power for longer, he might have presented Burke with a more viable epitome of nabobery than Hastings. Yet as with his kinsman and frequent collaborator James “Ossian” Macpherson, there was another side to the governor-general. Steeped in the commercial and intellectual milieux of his native Scotland, Macpherson espoused an Enlightened vision of politics that eschewed violent conquest for the pacific exchange of goods and ideas. That such a vision coexisted with corruption and disorder, however, did much to tarnish its luster for critics and reformers of the Company. Seeking to amplify Hastings’ language of conciliation, Macpherson endangered it instead.

Whereas for Hastings “conciliation” denoted a flexible political language, for Macpherson it amounted to a kind of personal habitus, albeit one similarly allied with scholarship. A pamphlet defense of Macpherson’s administration, prepared ostensibly by

³⁴ H. Dodwell, “Hastings in India: A New Batch of Letters,” *The Times* (London, 22 Sept. 1927), 15; P. E. Roberts to ed., *The Times* (London, 24 Sept. 1927), 6.

³⁵ Cornwallis to Henry Dundas, 1 Nov. 1788, in *Correspondence of... Cornwallis*, ed. Ross, 1:384.

³⁶ Cornwallis to Henry Dundas, 1 Nov. 1789, in *ibid.*, 1:455.

friends, but likely by the governor-general himself, deployed the concept nearly a dozen times in connection with his character and behavior.³⁷ Whether treating with the Marathas or the Madras government, it would seem, Macpherson conciliated at every turn. That disposition underpinned what he described as “my two great Principles of action” in India: forging alliances and establishing public credit.³⁸

The principle, or talent, of forging alliances originated in Macpherson’s youth and evolved through his financial, political, and literary engagements. What Macpherson valued in his early education can be gleaned from his later suggestions for an “Inverness Academy.” “The great advantages of such an institution,” he wrote, “are to qualify gentlemen’s sons who have no property to earn their bread by embarking in the world.”³⁹ This had been Macpherson’s own situation, and the polite studies he proposed for the academy—such as writing, drawing, and French—had helped him make profitable connections in Britain and India alike. At the University of Edinburgh in the 1760s, Macpherson became close with his tutor Adam Ferguson, who would serve as his lifelong entrée to intellectual circles. In a short time Macpherson cultivated other Edinburgh literati including Hugh Blair, John Home, Adam Smith, Alexander Carlyle, and William Robertson. Before deciding to seek a fortune in India, he considered using these connections to obtain a chair at the university. As it was, they may have helped him engage a prominent publisher

³⁷ *The Case of Sir John Macpherson* (London, 1808).

³⁸ Macpherson to unknown, 6 May 1800, Ferguson Papers, Edinburgh University Library, Dc.1.77, no. 64B.

³⁹ Macpherson to Provost Mackintosh, 23 Mar. 1789, in Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, ed., *Letters of Two Centuries, Chiefly Connected with Inverness and the Highlands, from 1616 to 1815* (Inverness, 1890), 314.

for an edition of his father's antiquarian papers.⁴⁰ Long after Macpherson's departure, members of this illustrious group would write him with updates, remarking on one such occasion that "though we have lost you for a while, this will find you acting in a much wider and more purposeful sphere ... [W]hen we meet, your health is drunk, and much conversation carried on about all that you are to do in India."⁴¹ Macpherson's first voyage east, as the purser on a ship, landed him at Madras in 1767. Here, he quickly put his learning to use, showing the *nawab* of Arcot "some Electrical experiments and the phenomena of the Magick Lanthorn" as a pretense for obtaining an audience.⁴² Macpherson seems to have planned this ruse far in advance, since he would have had to purchase the apparatus before leaving England. After returning thence with an ambiguous commission as the *nawab's* *vakil*, Macpherson made further use of his scholarly talents, composing a flattering account of his new employer. He prevailed upon Alexander Dow to insert this in the second edition of his *History of Hindostan*, then sent the extract to ministers and puffed it in the press.⁴³ On subsequent political assignments with the Company or the *nawab*, Macpherson continued to leverage his intellectual charms. One seducee was the governor-general, Hastings, on whose council he served from 1781.

⁴⁰ See James Noel Mackenzie Maclean, "The Early Political Careers of James 'Fingal' Macpherson (1736-1796) and Sir John Macpherson, Bart. (1744-1821)" (PhD, University of Edinburgh, 1967), 104-12.

⁴¹ Blair to Macpherson, 28 Nov. 1781, Macpherson Collection, BL Mss Eur F291/83.

⁴² Robert Harland to Earl of Rochford, 10 Sept. 1772, in Maclean, "Early Political Careers," 114.

⁴³ George McElroy, "Ossianic Imagination and the History of India: James and John Macpherson as Propagandists and Intriguers," in Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock, eds., *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1987), 365; see Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London, 1770-72), 2:396-8.

When it came to serving as governor-general himself, Macpherson took much from Hastings' example, including the use of scholarly patronage as an instrument of conciliation. It was through attentions to scholars, he would later write, that "men in high situations make themselves great."⁴⁴ Some of Macpherson's scholarly attentions smacked of jobbery or other corruption, as when he offered the superintendence of the new Calcutta Botanic Garden to the free merchant Archibald Keir. While doubting his own qualifications for the position, Keir expressed an interest "if the thing were made worth my while."⁴⁵ At the same time, Macpherson displayed considerable finesse in resolving a dispute at the Calcutta Madrasa. Early in his tenure, students at the institution submitted a petition claiming that the head *maulvi* Majd-ud-Din was withholding their allowances. What was more, tenants of the madrasa's endowed lands claimed that the *maulvi* was demanding excessive rent. Majd-ud-Din implored Macpherson not to "give ear to the unjust complaints which are raised against him."⁴⁶ But an entry in Macpherson's notebook revealed his own conclusion: "The Mulovie of the Mudrussa seems to be going mad with avarice & ignorance & if a remedy is not speedily applied, this Honourable, useful, & Benevolent Institution will soon go to ruin altogether." The problem with simply removing Majd-ud-Din was that he wielded no small degree of social influence. It was on his behalf that prominent local Muslims had petitioned Hastings to found the madrasa in the first place; and Hastings had

⁴⁴ Macpherson to Alexander Carlyle, 24 Feb. 1794, Carlyle Papers, Edinburgh University Library, Dc.4.41, no. 39.

⁴⁵ Keir to Allan Macpherson, 10 Jul. 1786, Macpherson Papers, Cambridge South Asian Archive, B/11/1809.

⁴⁶ Majd-ud-Din to Macpherson, trans., *ibid.*, C/7/2607.

complied at least partly in order to cultivate the *maulvi* as an ally. Macpherson's solution was

to appoint a respectable man as an ameen [revenue assessor] to Superintend the Collections, see the Mulovie, and the Scholars regularly paid, and to lay a certain sum for the repairs, & improvements of the Mudrussa, and as this [i]nstitution, is under the immediate protection of the Gov[erno]r Gen[era]l, a monthly account of the Receipts & issues should be given to his Persian Interpreter to be a[l]ways ready for ... Inspection.⁴⁷

Replying to the students, Macpherson declared that he had taken their complaints seriously and that Majd-ud-Din would be brought under his supervision.⁴⁸ Replying to the *maulvi*, he dismissed these same complaints as interested fabrications and, new regulations notwithstanding, expressed undiminished confidence in his leadership.⁴⁹ In a further letter, Macpherson assured the *maulvi* that the new *amin*, Persian interpreter to the supreme court William Chambers, was “a sensible man fit for the business, and also learned and well informed in the principles of the Mussleman faith.”⁵⁰ This would not be the end of the madrasa's problems, which stemmed fundamentally from its confused relations with the state.⁵¹ Still, Macpherson's delicate, not to say duplicitous, handling of the institution's first crisis drew admiration from no less than William Jones, who supported the selection of Chambers as *amin* (and may have proposed it in the first place).⁵² Nor was this Jones's

⁴⁷ Macpherson, Note, *ibid.*, C/7/2647-8.

⁴⁸ Macpherson, Remark, trans., *ibid.*, A/1/5.

⁴⁹ Macpherson to [Majd-ud-Din], 1785, trans., *ibid.*, B/7/1282.

⁵⁰ Macpherson to [Majd-ud-Din], trans., *ibid.*, C/7/2813; see also Macpherson, *sanad* (edict), trans., at 2814-15.

⁵¹ Ruth Gabriel, “Learned Communities and British Educational Experiments in North India: 1780-1830” (PhD, University of Virginia, 1979), 111-14.

⁵² Jones to Macpherson, 17 and 26 May 1785, in *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1970), 2:673, 2:675-6; *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, 4 vols. (Calcutta, 1980-2000), 1:54.

only basis for warm relations with the new governor-general. Macpherson facilitated a correspondence with Ferguson, shared an affection for the naturalist Johann Gerhard Koenig, and, at Jones's request, granted an audience to the poet Zain-ud-Din 'Ishqi.⁵³ Jones, in turn, flattered the governor-general that "your mind can grasp the whole field of literature and criticism, as well as that of politics ... [Y]ou unite the character of the statesman and the scholar."⁵⁴ Macpherson and his supporters would often trot out this endorsement; indeed, it even appeared on his epitaph.⁵⁵

Macpherson's evident desire to warrant Jones's endorsement hinted at a political program surpassing Hastings' in Enlightened commercial idealism. In the early 1780s, differences had emerged between the two councilmates over financial administration and policy in the Carnatic.⁵⁶ The ideological dimensions of the rift, however, came into focus only after Macpherson's succession. The new governor-general not only lamented conquest but renounced it, not only accepted mercantile sovereignty but fully embraced it. Whereas Macpherson's first "great principle" of alliance-building had been foreshadowed in his early career, his second, of public credit, apparently marked a late apostasy. Macpherson had once described India, in terms reminiscent of his tutor at Edinburgh, as a field "too great

⁵³ Jones to Macpherson, May 1785 and Nov. 1786, in *Letters of ... Jones*, ed. Cannon, 2:673-5, 2:726-7; Jones to Patrick Russell, 28 Sept. 1786, at 2:707; Jones to Allan Macpherson, 6 Jan. 1786, in W. C. Macpherson, ed., *Soldiering*, 345.

⁵⁴ Jones to Macpherson, 17 May 1785, in *Letters of ... Jones*, ed. Cannon, 2:672.

⁵⁵ See *Case of Sir John Macpherson*, 99 n *; William Essington Hughes, ed., *Monumental Inscriptions and Extracts from Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, at St. Anne's Church, Soho* (London, 1905), 17.

⁵⁶ Henry Dodwell, intro. to *Warren Hastings' Letters to Sir John Macpherson*, ed. Dodwell (London, 1927), xxx-xxxii.

for the narrow and interested Politics of a commercial society.”⁵⁷ Yet, as he would later put it, “Judge what a Disciple of Ferguson ... must have learned when he sat on the Throne of Timur, without a rupee in his Treasury, with an immense army a year in arrears, & when Bills on England could not raise a shilling.”⁵⁸ These conditions induced Macpherson to adopt a policy of public credit and, more broadly, a mercantile idiom of sovereignty. In addition to issuing bonds, he abolished customs duties and permitted officials to remit large quantities of goods on Company ships. These encouragements to trade marked only the first steps in a much greater undertaking to remodel the entire Company state. Macpherson’s principle, as he put it to the directors, was that “a solid foundation for the Power of the Company ... can alone rest, on a Commercial connection.”⁵⁹ He wrote in similar terms to the prime minister in London, to various native rulers across India, and even to the French administration in Pondicherry.⁶⁰ Macpherson’s furthest-reaching statements on the benefits of peaceful commerce, however, were reserved for men of letters in Britain. To Ferguson he voiced an ambition to foster “the happy communications of all the inhabitants of the globe from the sources of the Mississippi to those of the Ganges, and from west to east, till the east and the west are united.” He boasted that Calcutta now

⁵⁷ Macpherson (1769), cited in McElroy, “Ossianic Imagination,” 367. For Ferguson’s critique of modern commercial states, see Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe’s Future* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013).

⁵⁸ Macpherson to Alexander Carlyle, 12 Jan. 1797, Carlyle Papers, Edinburgh University Library, Dc.4.41, no. 40.

⁵⁹ Macpherson to Court of Directors, 11 Jan. 1786, Chatham Papers, TNA PRO 30/8/362, 116v.

⁶⁰ Macpherson to William Pitt, 12 Jul. 1786, *ibid.*, 136r-136v; *CPC*, 7:135-6; Macpherson to Vicomte de Souillac, 26 Jan. 1786, Liverpool Papers, BL Add. MS 38409, 47v.

entertained embassies from across Asia, and that, “as Manilla is opening her trade, I hope to hear direct from Lima before I leave India, and to make the Incas of Peru acquainted with the Brahmin Rajas on the banks of the Ganges.” Having manifested a concern with “commerce” in its sociable as well as material senses, Macpherson pivoted finally to suggest the role of a commercial government in spreading knowledge: “Curious are, besides, the treasures in literature and the oblivious history of nations that are drawing upon us from the researches of Sir William Jones and others.” As trade brought more “useful and elegant information” into the hands of scholar-administrators, so their studies would yield greater treasures still.⁶¹ In the Enlightened tradition of Montesquieu, and indeed of Jones, Macpherson envisioned commerce as the handmaid of a global exchange of ideas that would reconcile differences and stimulate progress.

Years later, removed from office and no longer ambitious to return, Macpherson still waxed philosophical about his old designs for “opening Calcutta as the Emporium of the Eastern trade.” As he apprised the historian Edward Gibbon in 1791, “I too have long been forming general ideas upon the probable consequences, which letters modern finance Egoism and commerce are likely to introduce among nations. I amuse myself with believing that ... the fruits of *knowledge*, which were *originally* so *poisonous* will mellow into useful Ripeness.”⁶² Macpherson hoped to draw Gibbon’s own “eye to the *Indian Scene*,” and

⁶¹ Macpherson to Ferguson, 12 Jan. 1786, in *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, ed. Vincenzo Merolle, 2 vols. (London, 1995), 2:315-16.

⁶² Macpherson to Gibbon, 1 Nov. 1791, Gibbon Papers, BL Add. MS 34886, 229r-229v, 231v-232r.

commended William Robertson's *Historical Disquisition* (1791) as a model.⁶³ In that work, the minister-historian lauded earlier rulers of India Alexander and Akbar for founding their empires on commerce, both intellectual and material. What was more, he situated Hastings in this tradition of commercial sovereignty.⁶⁴ The father of two Company servants, Robertson abstained from commenting on Hastings' trial or the current administration. In a letter carried by one of these sons, along with a copy of the *Historical Disquisition*, he assured Cornwallis that "my researches are confined to the transactions of very remote periods."⁶⁵ Nonetheless, in an appendix to the work, Robertson did attempt one intervention in contemporary India affairs: he urged the Company to appoint "some person, capable, by his talents and liberality of sentiment, of investigating and explaining the more abstruse parts of Indian philosophy, to devote his whole time to that important object."⁶⁶ Macpherson would surely have taken this bait; his replacement as surely did not.

Cornwallis, Jones, and Distant Conciliation

Historians have long contrasted the administration of Hastings with that of Cornwallis. In recent decades, the distinction has typically been framed in cultural terms. Unlike the

⁶³ Ibid., 227v; see Macpherson to Gibbon, 4 Dec. 1792, at 319r.

⁶⁴ See William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients Had of India* (London, 1791), 12-13, 22-5, 272-5, 336, 347-9; see also Geoffrey Carnall, "Robertson and Contemporary Images of India," in Stewart J. Brown, ed., *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire* (Cambridge, 1997); Brown, "William Robertson, Early Orientalism and the *Historical Disquisition* on India of 1791," *Scottish Historical Review* 88 (2009), esp. 300-304.

⁶⁵ Robertson to Cornwallis, 17 Dec. 1791, Cornwallis Papers, TNA PRO 30/11/270, 70v.

⁶⁶ Robertson, *Historical Disquisition*, 311.

supposedly “Orientalist” Hastings, Cornwallis has been seen as a pioneering “Anglicist.”⁶⁷ Yet such a framing mischaracterizes the latter as well as the former governor-general. It is true that Cornwallis’s political sensibilities owed much to British, and especially British military, norms. He was distrustful (and largely ignorant) of Indian institutions, and assumed that the British ones with which he was familiar would remedy their defects.⁶⁸ But such thinking hardly amounted, in negative terms, to the wholesale contempt for India and Indians perceived by many historians.⁶⁹ Nor did it bear much resemblance, in positive terms, to the so-called “Anglicism” of officials involved in the education debates of the 1830s. As he made clear in correspondence, Cornwallis saw little hope or advantage in teaching the Company’s Indian subjects the English language or Christian precepts.⁷⁰ This is not to say that he stood apart from contemporary debates over the Company’s administration. It is to say that, instead of an opposition between “Orientalism” and “Anglicism,” these debates centered on what has recently been described as a “tension

⁶⁷ See David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969), 17, 238-9; and recently Claude Markovits, “On the Political History of Britishness in India: Lord Cornwallis and the Early Demise of Creole India,” in Ezra Rashkow, Sanjukta Ghosh, and Upal Chakrabarti, eds., *Memory, Identity and the Colonial Encounter in India: Essays in Honour of Peter Robb* (Abingdon, UK, 2018).

⁶⁸ For a similar argument about British rulers in India generally, see Ainslie Embree, *Imagining India: Essays on Indian History*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Delhi, 1989), 109.

⁶⁹ E.g. Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1947* (Oxford, 1965), 89. Cornwallis often reserved his harshest criticism for Europeans. While he lauded the Company’s sepoys, for instance, he “did not think Britain could have furnished such a set of wretched objects” as its European troops. Cornwallis to Henry Dundas, 16 Nov. 1787, Melville Papers, NLS MS 3385, 95.

⁷⁰ Cornwallis to Bishop of Salisbury, 27 Dec. 1788, in *Correspondence of ... Cornwallis*, ed. Ross, 1:397-8; see also the alternative draft in Cornwallis Papers, TNA PRO 30/11/187, 3r-3v.

between patronage politics and regulating governance.”⁷¹ That Cornwallis resolutely avowed the latter idiom explains his response to the language of conciliation developed by Hastings, condemned by Burke, and carried to its Enlightened extreme by Macpherson. From Hastings’ perspective, this response may have appeared deficient. According to his agent William Palmer, Cornwallis’s “communications in Business & his connection in society are too circumscribed & distant to conciliate general attachment.”⁷² Yet Cornwallis did not repudiate conciliation outright; rather, he fettered it in what he saw as the interest of rectitude.

Cornwallis’s use of scholarly patronage as an instrument of conciliation was in keeping with his larger effort to consolidate Hastings’ system of government. The so-called “Cornwallis Code” imposed rigid standards where Company leaders had previously followed flexible norms. Its components included limiting aggrieved Indian rulers to formal channels of redress; barring Company officials from accepting presents or engaging in private trade; and fixing property rights in the *zamindari* (landowning) class in Bengal.⁷³ In policing Indo-European relations, such measures undoubtedly widened the social distance between the two groups. It is untrue, however, that the “contact that Englishmen and Indians had enjoyed during Hastings’ administration vanished with Cornwallis.”⁷⁴ For one

⁷¹ Anna Clark and Aaron Windel, “The Early Roots of Liberal Imperialism: ‘The Science of a Legislator’ in Eighteenth-Century India,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14 (2013).

⁷² Palmer to Hastings, 18 Feb. 1787, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29170, 381r.

⁷³ For overviews of these reforms, see A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal* (Manchester, 1931); Franklin Wickwire and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The Imperial Years* (Chapel Hill, 1980).

⁷⁴ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York, 1989), 31.

thing, the replacement of Indian with European administrators, on which such claims have been founded, began not under Cornwallis but under his predecessor Macpherson.⁷⁵ For another thing, Cornwallis retained Hastings' policy of employing influential Indian scholar-administrators. He did not in fact abandon Hastings' language of conciliation, but instead sought to straiten it along these lines.

A few examples will serve to illustrate how Cornwallis implemented this straitened language of conciliation. In 1789, the Prince of Wales wrote the governor-general on behalf of one Mr. Treves, a protégé in the Company's service. Having heard that Europeans were now to be preferred for high office over indigenes, the prince asked whether Treves might "be appointed to the Adaulet [court] of Benares, w[hic]h is now held by a Black named Alii Cann."⁷⁶ The "Black" he meant was Ali Ibrahim Khan, whom Hastings had appointed as magistrate of the city and recommended to Cornwallis in that capacity.⁷⁷ To the prince Cornwallis responded that, not only did Benares fall outside the Company's regular judicial administration, but "the great and truly respectable character of that magistrate, would have rendered it a very difficult and unpopular measure for any Governor-General to have removed him."⁷⁸ To his brother Cornwallis added that he was duty-bound to refuse such an "infamous and unjustifiable job."⁷⁹ Thus, principles of conciliation and propriety

⁷⁵ P. J. Marshall, "Indian Officials under the East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Bengal," in *Trade and Conquest: Studies on the Rise of British Dominance in India* (Aldershot, 1993).

⁷⁶ Prince of Wales to Cornwallis, 30 May 1789, in *Correspondence of... Cornwallis*, ed. Ross, 2:29.

⁷⁷ For the recommendation, see [Hastings to Cornwallis, Mar. 1786,] Cornwallis Papers, PRO 30/11/197, 16v-17r.

⁷⁸ Cornwallis to Prince of Wales, 14 Aug. 1790, in *Correspondence of... Cornwallis*, ed. Ross, 2:35.

⁷⁹ Cornwallis to Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, 16 Nov. 1790, in *ibid.*, 2:52.

conspired to preserve the highborn jurist in his situation. Nor was Ali Ibrahim the exception to a rule of antipathy towards Indian scholar-administrators. Cornwallis's longtime patronage of the tax-collector and travel memoirist Abu Taleb Khan, a recent commentator has noted, belies this historiographical reputation.⁸⁰ While Cornwallis resisted scholarly patronage in the form of "jobbery" or other "corruption," he welcomed it in the form of "honest" employment. Tafazzul Husain Khan, for one, seems to have understood the distinction, forgoing customary emoluments for a regular salary in his various roles mediating between the Company and Indian rulers.⁸¹ Writing to Hastings, Tafazzul indicated that many fellow scholarly elites were struggling to find patronage under the new regime.⁸² Writing to Hastings' friend David Anderson, however, he reported that "Lord Cornwallis treats me with favour and I am sincerely obliged by his kindness." Such was the "good opinion" Cornwallis entertained of Tafazzul, residing in Calcutta from 1788 as the *nawab* of Awadh's *vakil*, that he proposed to appoint him resident at Hyderabad.⁸³ For the governor-general, evidently, there was nothing improper about absorbing the reputation and talents of such an individual into the Company's diplomatic arsenal. Likewise, when William Jones proposed to hire the august *pandit* Jagannatha Tarkapanchanan to help compile Hindu laws, the governor-general enthused that "his

⁸⁰ Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857* (New Delhi, 2004), 108 n. 14.

⁸¹ See Lord Teignmouth to ed., cited in "An Account of the Life and Character of Tofuzzel Hussein Khan," *Asiatic Annual Register* [5] (1804), "Characters," 8.

⁸² [Tafazzul to Hastings], undated, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29195, 85r.

⁸³ Tafazzul to Anderson, cited in "Life and Character of Tofuzzel," 5, see 6. Tafazzul turned down this appointment.

Opinion, Learning and Abilities are held in the highest Veneration, and ... the Work will Derive infinite Credit and Authority both, from the Annexation of his Name as a Compiler & from his Assistance.”⁸⁴ This was exactly the sort of conciliatory rationale Hastings might have given, and it indicated that Cornwallis sought to use scholarly patronage similarly to mobilize elite indigenous support for the Company state.

Nowhere were the continuities between Hastings and Cornwallis clearer in this regard than at the Benares Sanskrit College. The institution’s first rector, the *pandit* Kasinath, claimed to have planned its foundation as early as the 1770s, and to have garnered Hastings’ tentative approval before his departure.⁸⁵ Perhaps Hastings was hoping to fulfill another promise he had made of “some public endowments” for *brahmanical* learning.⁸⁶ In any case, it was only in 1791 that the college materialized, under the auspices of the resident Jonathan Duncan. That Cornwallis in turn would sanction such a financial and political commitment was by no means assured. Given the troubled history of the Calcutta Madrasa, he might have foreseen the disputes and irregularities that were likewise to plague its upcountry counterpart. Duncan had earned the governor-general’s confidence, however, as a man of integrity: “the first Resident who has done any thing but plunder the Country.”⁸⁷ Moreover, he made a compelling argument that the college would not only furnish officers

⁸⁴ Cornwallis, Minute (22 Aug. 1788), in *Letters of... Jones*, ed. Cannon, 2:803 n. 1.

⁸⁵ Kasinath, Petition (1801), trans. in Surendranath Sen and Umesha Mishra, intro. to Sen and Mishra, eds., *Sanskrit Documents: Being Sanskrit Letters and Other Documents Preserved in the Oriental Collection at the National Archives of India* (Allahabad, 1951), 58.

⁸⁶ Hastings to Directors, 21 Feb. 1784, in Gleig, *Memoirs*, 3:158.

⁸⁷ Cornwallis to John Shore, 6 Nov. 1789, Cornwallis Papers, TNA PRO 30/11/165, 72r; see Narain, *Duncan*, 19-20.

for the courts, but endear “our Government to the native Hindus by our exceeding ... the care ever shown by their own native princes.”⁸⁸ The governor-general in council reprised this appeal to the Court of Directors, now explicitly using the language of conciliation. Like Hastings in his grander moments, Cornwallis envisioned the Company state’s sponsorship of knowledge conciliating people “of all ranks and casts from every part of India.”⁸⁹ Yet, like Hastings also, he conceived of such mass political engagement in abstract terms, while directly and concretely engaging elites. Strong preferences for *brahmans* and their learning were built into the rules and curriculum of the Sanskrit college, and all of the initial professorships apparently went to *pandits* of this caste.⁹⁰ On his inaugural visit to the institution in November 1791, Duncan honored the principal and each of the eight professors with a *khil’at*, the traditional ceremony of investiture in which an Indian ruler recognized a member of the nobility. In customary fashion, each *pandit* saluted the resident in Sanskrit verse before receiving a splendid robe, which conferral of status was then proclaimed in the square outside.⁹¹ From the beginning then, the Sanskrit college was meant to shore up the political authority of the Company and the social authority of

⁸⁸ Duncan to Cornwallis, 1791, cited in George Nicholls, *Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Benares Patshalla or Sanskrit College* (Allahabad, 1907), 1. For Cornwallis’s concurrence, see Governor-General in Council to Duncan, 13 Jan. 1792, in H. Sharp, ed., *Selections from Educational Records, Part I: 1781-1839* (Calcutta, 1920), 12.

⁸⁹ Revenue Letter from Bengal, 10 Mar. 1792, cited in Narain, *Duncan*, 173.

⁹⁰ Nicholls, *Sketch*, 2-4; see Sen and Mishra, intro., 53-4.

⁹¹ “Extract of a Letter from Benares, dated 17th November 1791,” in *Selections from the Calcutta Gazettes*, 5 vols. (Calcutta, 1864-8), 2:310-11; see generally Stewart Gordon, ed., *Robes of Honour: Khil’at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India* (New Delhi, 2003).

pandits—indeed, to bind the one to the other.⁹² In this sense, it played to Cornwallis's greater intention to restore the region's landed aristocracy. For to ensure their dynastic survival, he maintained, *grandeess* must "give a liberal education to their children"; and this would presumably come from *pandits* like those trained at the college.⁹³ In essence, therefore, Cornwallis followed the logic Hastings had given for founding the Calcutta Madrasa. He sought to resuscitate the Hindu upper classes by patronizing *pandits*, just as Hastings had sought to resuscitate the Muslim upper classes by patronizing *maulvis*.

Ironically, these efforts by Hastings and Cornwallis were similarly undermined by the imperative to generate revenues. By breaking up the great *zamindari* estates, Cornwallis's land policies replicated the erosion of courtly learning that Hastings' retrenchments and demands had hastened at Mughal towns like Murshidabad. In addition, attempts by both men to cut back *inam* (rent-free land) holdings depleted a key source of income for *maulvis* and *pandits* alike.⁹⁴ Continuities can thus be traced not only in the conciliatory policies of Hastings and Cornwallis, but in the contradictions that beset them.

Cornwallis's notions of conciliation, like Hastings', were directed in large part towards European scholar-administrators, and aimed at a metropolitan political context. Cornwallis diligently followed instructions from the directors to support the new Calcutta Botanic Garden, which had been founded by the secretary and amateur botanist Robert

⁹² See Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture: India, 1770-1870* (Basingstoke, 2007), 41-60.

⁹³ Cornwallis to Court of Directors, 2 Aug. 1788, in *Correspondence of... Cornwallis*, ed. Ross, 1:554.

⁹⁴ Gabriel, "Learned Communities," 165-8; For a later example of the same phenomenon in the south, see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley, 2006), 146-50.

Kyd, and justified as, among other things, a demonstration of “enlightened government attractive to the political classes in Britain.”⁹⁵ After Kyd was denied permission to visit China for specimens of tea, silkworm, and mulberry, he grumbled to Hastings about Cornwallis’s “Ignorance (I further apprehend a contempt) of every thing relating to the Institution.”⁹⁶ Yet various considerations of policy and probity would seem to have argued against permitting an official to leave his station unattended, much less barge into a delicate diplomatic scene. Kyd was not the only European scholar-administrator to complain to Hastings about Cornwallis. “Under your patronage,” wrote Francis Gladwin, “oriental Learning was cultivated with success, but his Lordship, despising every branch of Science, there is now not the smallest encouragement for publication, so that my literary labours have also ceased to be of any value.”⁹⁷ While this account has been credited as evidence of Cornwallis’s disdain for Indian knowledge, it is better understood as evidence of his principled stance on patronage.⁹⁸ Before writing the above to Hastings in 1790, Gladwin had addressed Cornwallis repeatedly with increasing desperation. To pay off debts, he had solicited the governor-general’s sponsorship of a history of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and, failing that, an appointment upcountry.⁹⁹ Cornwallis agreed to

⁹⁵ Richard Drayton, *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the ‘Improvement’ of the World* (New Haven, 2000), 117; see Adrian P. Thomas, “The Establishment of the Calcutta Botanic Garden: Plant Transfer, Science and the East India Company, 1786-1806,” *JRAS* s3 16 (2006).

⁹⁶ Kyd to Hastings, 20 Jul. 1789, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29171, 332r.

⁹⁷ Gladwin to Hastings, 15 Feb. 1790, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29172, 47v.

⁹⁸ Cf. Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (Oxford, 2011), 309-10.

⁹⁹ Gladwin to Cornwallis, 9 Aug. and [Sept.] 1787, Cornwallis Papers, TNA PRO 30/11/18, 82r-82v; PRO 30/11/19, 98r-99v.

subscribe to the publication, consulting his chief councilor Shore on how many copies “would be right.”¹⁰⁰ Beyond this, however, all he was apparently willing to do was advise Gladwin to declare bankruptcy, leading the Persianist to accuse his Lordship of heartlessness as well as philistinism.¹⁰¹ Cornwallis may have been especially wary of scholar-administrators, like Kyd and Gladwin, who were closely tied to Hastings. Duncan might not have earned Cornwallis’s trust had he not distanced himself from his former patron. Hastings’ agent Thompson reported of Cornwallis that, “Though he speaks highly of your merits ... he yet stands aloof from the men who were most honored by your patronage and confidence.”¹⁰² The suspicions of some contemporaries notwithstanding, Cornwallis did not seek simply to replace one set of friends and clients with another.¹⁰³ Rather, he sought to impart fairness and system to government in place of personal connections. If the scholarship of Company servants was to be politically useful in Britain, it must be extricated from the web of interests and attachments that had sullied the two previous administrations. In curbing private trade while raising official salaries, Cornwallis afforded Company servants means and leisure to pursue their studies independently.¹⁰⁴ His preferred scholar-administrator was not an adventurer who mixed letters with business,

¹⁰⁰ Cornwallis to Shore, 29 Aug. 1787, *ibid.*, PRO 30/11/28, 18v.

¹⁰¹ Gladwin to Cornwallis, 19 May 1789, *ibid.*, PRO 30/11/30, 96r-96v; Gladwin to Hastings, 15 Feb. 1790, 47r; see Reginald Craufurd Sterndale, *An Historical Account of “The Calcutta Collectorate”*, 2nd ed. (Alipore, 1958), 23-4.

¹⁰² Thompson to Hastings, 14 Nov. 1786, in “Nesbitt-Thompson Papers,” 17:92.

¹⁰³ E.g. William Francklin to John Bruce, 20 Dec. 1795, BL IOR H/456e, 210.

¹⁰⁴ Holden Furber, *John Company at Work: A Study of European Expansion in India in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), 340.

but a professional who pursued them as an honorable recreation. He was, in a word, William Jones.

Not only was Jones himself widely known for merit and integrity, but his Asiatic Society reset relations between scholar-administrators and the Company state on a detached footing aligned with Cornwallis's reforms. Jones arrived in Calcutta in September 1783 with an established reputation as a scholar and a lucrative posting as a supreme court judge. Whatever suspicions of radical or republican sympathies had once attached to him were dispelled by his Crown appointment and knighthood. All this afforded Jones a matchless independence among India officials, as Hastings seems to have recognized in urging on him the presidency of the Asiatic Society. This was a reversal of sorts, since Jones, the Society's main founder, had initially offered the presidency to Hastings. While Hastings demurred on grounds of insufficient leisure and ability, he also likely sought to shield the institution from the tribulations he knew awaited him in retirement. Perhaps this was the implication of his remark that he feared becoming an "incumbrance" on Jones and the other members.¹⁰⁵ In the event, with Jones at its head and the governor-general merely its "Patron"—an arrangement continued by Cornwallis—the Asiatic Society sat close enough to the Company state to call upon its resources, yet distant enough to appear independent of its control. The society and its president weathered the storms of Hastings' impeachment and Macpherson's administration unscathed. It seems likely, in fact, that Jones took from these episodes much the same lessons as Cornwallis. In 1787, Jones could declare that, "In

¹⁰⁵ Hastings to Jones et al., 30 Jan. 1784, in "The Introduction," *Asiatick Researches* 1 (Calcutta, 1788), vii.

my opinion this country was never so justly and so mildly governed as it now is by Lord Cornwallis and Mr. Shore ... I live in perfect friendship with both, but in as perfect independence of them; never asking patronage even for those whom I wish to serve ...”¹⁰⁶ Jones’s relationship with Cornwallis has latterly been described as guarded or awkward, but his own words suggest that any reserve was by mutual, happy design. A brief remark in a report of Cornwallis’s table talk some years later, to the effect that he had sought to contain Jones’s ambition, cannot be much credited.¹⁰⁷

The only time that Jones solicited considerable patronage from Cornwallis, he took care to frame the project as an exercise in distant conciliation. The project in question was to compile a digest of Hindu and Islamic laws, something that Hastings had pursued years earlier. Jones argued that the digest would curb judicial corruption by enabling judges to spot falsehoods and irregularities. Furthermore, he disclaimed any “personal interest” in the project, denying himself a salary and even the choice of which *maulvis* and *pandits* to employ. Jones thus implied a distinction from Hastings’ earlier patronage of legal works, the personal aspects of which were to provide fodder for Burke at trial.¹⁰⁸ This carefully-tailored proposal received Cornwallis’s full approval within the day. Not only that, but Cornwallis showed his confidence in Jones by allowing him to choose the compilers after all. His comment on the occasion, that “the accomplishment of the Digest ... would reflect

¹⁰⁶ Jones to the Second Earl Spencer, 1-11 Sept. 1787, in *Letters of... Jones*, ed. Cannon, 2:764.

¹⁰⁷ William Wilberforce, Diary (24 May 1802), in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, 5 vols. (London, 1838), 3:49.

¹⁰⁸ Jones to Cornwallis, 19 Mar. 1788, in *Letters of... Jones*, ed. Cannon, 2:794-800.

the greatest Honour upon our Administration,” fell somewhat short of the grandest statements of Hastings, much less of Macpherson.¹⁰⁹ But it was not out of keeping with their spirit.

Historians have so often contrasted the regimes of Hastings and Cornwallis that they have tended to lose sight of the overarching continuities between them. In essence, Cornwallis sought to preserve the state Hastings had built from the dangers he perceived in Burke and Macpherson. Rather than “Anglicist” attitudes, it was this imperative that determined Cornwallis’s approach to scholarly patronage: one that was cautious and yet continuous with Hastings’ language of conciliation. By the end of Cornwallis’s administration, threats to the Company state did not loom so large. And it became a question for the home authorities, as well as for the new governor-general, Shore, whether this language ought now to be re-expanded.

Conciliation after Cornwallis

The 1790s saw metropolitan pressure on the Company state relax, and, with it, some of the constraints on Hastings’ language of conciliation. British politics registered the great sea change of opinion from reform in the wake of American Independence to reaction in the wake of the French Revolution.¹¹⁰ Against this backdrop, outrage at Company servants’ alleged avarice and corruption was giving way to pride at their alleged integrity and

¹⁰⁹ Governor-General in Council to Jones, 19 Mar. 1788, in *ibid.*, 2:801 n. 3.

¹¹⁰ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), esp. 100-132.

compassion.¹¹¹ Burke and his parliamentary allies, who had enjoyed surprising gains early in the Hastings trial, now found themselves struggling to avert an increasingly assured defeat.¹¹² Most consequential of all, the Charter Act of 1793 renewed the Company's rights for twenty years with little debate and few exactions. Until recently, such a victory for the Company had been almost unthinkable. Not only had the Regulating Act of 1773 and Pitt's India Act of 1784 generated expectations of growing oversight, but Fox's India Bill of 1783, drafted by Burke, had threatened to deprive the Company of its sovereign functions altogether. Within a decade, however, the political will in Britain had swung decisively from Burkean overhaul to Cornwallisian consolidation. The Company would retain its dual character as merchant-sovereign for at least the near future. And the language of conciliation that Hastings had developed to reinforce this arrangement would be restored to much of its former amplitude.

In Britain, the changing complexion of India affairs spurred leaders and advocates of the Company to more roundly embrace Hastings' ideas. One venue for such ideas was the office of historiographer to the Company. The Court of Directors had employed Robert Orme in this capacity since 1769, but Orme had abandoned his annals of the Company a decade later, disillusioned by the corruption and mismanagement he beheld in its

¹¹¹ P. J. Marshall, "'Cornwallis Triumphant': War in India and the British Public in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Trade and Conquest*; Marshall, "'A Free Though Conquering People': Britain and Asia in the Eighteenth Century," in *"A Free Though Conquering People": Eighteenth-Century Britain and Its Empire* (Aldershot, 2003).

¹¹² P. J. Marshall, intro. to Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 7.

acquisition and administration of territory.¹¹³ Orme's retirement in 1793, which coincided with negotiations over the charter, provided both opportunity and stimulus to render the office more advantageous to the Company. Henry Dundas, president of the Board of Control, the supervisory body created by Pitt's India Act, found a pliant instrument for the task in the Edinburgh professor John Bruce. In his *Historical View of Plans, for the Government of British India, and Regulation of Trade to the East Indies* (1793), Bruce sought to show Parliament and the public, in his patron's words, "that an extensive empire can be administered by a commercial association."¹¹⁴ He would do this by favorably narrating the Company's history, but also by instantiating the Company's enlightened support of knowledge. If the renewal of the charter did something to attest the conciliatory value of scholarly patronage, the reversal of Hastings' fortunes at trial likely did more. Hastings used the occasion of his acquittal, in 1795, to burnish his literary reputation, devoting considerable energy to publishing and distributing a compilation of documents from the trial. The printed volume included all the earlier *razinamas* as well as a new congratulatory address headed by Tafazzul Husain Khan, which praised Hastings in familiar terms for "establishing colleges" and "promoting science."¹¹⁵ Inspired at least partly by the governor-general's example, the directors were beginning to seek greater political benefit from their

¹¹³ Asoka SinhaRaja Tammita-Delgoda, "'Nabob, Historian and Orientalist.' Robert Orme: The Life and Career of an East India Company Servant (1728-1801)" (PhD, King's College London, [1991]).

¹¹⁴ Olivera Jokic, "Commanding Correspondence: Letters and the 'Evidence of Experience' in the Letterbook of John Bruce, the East India Company Historiographer," *The Eighteenth Century* 52 (2011), Dundas quote at 113; see [John Bruce,] *Historical View of Plans, for the Government of British India, and Regulation of Trade to the East Indies* (London, 1793), esp. v-vii.

¹¹⁵ Hastings, ed., *Debates*, 820. On Hastings' efforts regarding the work, see Hastings to David Anderson, 23 Nov. 1796 to 22 Jan. 1799, Anderson Papers, BL Add. MS 45418, 74r-95v.

own attentions to knowledge. In 1792, they posited that a “system” of intellectual inquiry pervaded all the Company’s branches, embracing “the literature and science of the ancient and modern inhabitants of the East but likewise their arts, manufactures and commerce.”¹¹⁶ Even recipients of the directors’ scholarly patronage, which typically took the form of a limited subscription, were apt to question whether their rhetoric matched reality.¹¹⁷ In 1798, however, the directors sought to demonstrate their “disposition for the encouragement of Indian literature” by establishing an “Oriental Repository” at East India House, where manuscripts collected by Company servants “could be safely preserved and become useful to the public.”¹¹⁸ This promise to render the Company’s headquarters a metropolitan beacon of conciliation was welcomed by Hastings. It would also have been welcomed by his latest successor as governor-general, who was engaged in a parallel set of projects in India.

Shore brought to the office of governor-general, from 1793-8, a conviction that “the grand Object of our Government in this Country should be to conciliate the Minds of the Natives.”¹¹⁹ Such, at least, was the principle he had announced in 1785 and affirmed in 1790. A historiographical focus on cultural attitudes has distorted Shore’s politics. If Cornwallis has been seen as the founding father of “Anglicism,” Shore has been seen as a somewhat

¹¹⁶ Cited in H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), 176-7.

¹¹⁷ E.g. Jonathan Scott, translator’s preface to Einaiut Oolah, *Bahar-Danush; or, Garden of Knowledge. An Oriental Romance*, 3 vols. (Shrewsbury, 1799), 1:xii-xv.

¹¹⁸ Public Despatch to Bengal (25 May 1798), in *Selections from the Calcutta Gazettes*, 5 vols. (Calcutta, 1864-8), 4:25-6.

¹¹⁹ *Minutes of Evidence*, 3:1277, see 3:1276.

“ambivalent” fellow traveler, whose “Orientalist” inclinations were “stunted and deformed by his evangelical convictions.”¹²⁰ Yet until leaving India for good, Shore expressed his piety rather in a private than in a public capacity, doing little to further the prospects of conversion. Nor did his alternate praises and criticisms of Indian scholars and scholarship betray some distinctive internal conflict: a similar tangle of impressions can be found in the papers of Jones and other European contemporaries.¹²¹ Similarities between the administrations of Cornwallis and Shore reflected, above all, the latter’s mandate from the Court of Directors to advance the former’s reforms. To the extent that Shore strayed from his predecessor’s example, meanwhile, this mainly reflected the strengthening of the Company’s position in Britain, which he would have observed in person during a period of intended retirement in 1790-92. As a member of Cornwallis’s council, Shore had concurred on the need to break with Hastings and his connections.¹²² Now, however, the changed outlook of the impeachment and of British politics generally gave him license to follow Hastings’ lead, sometimes even to overtake it. Whereas both Hastings and Cornwallis had maintained a strategic distance from Jones and the Asiatic Society, Shore became close with the polymath and accepted the presidency of the society after his death in 1794.¹²³ Shore

¹²⁰ Kopf, *British Orientalism*, 68; Michael J. Franklin, “‘Harmonious’ Jones and ‘Honest John’ Shore: Contrasting Responses of Garden Reach Neighbors to the Experience of India,” *European Romantic Review* 27 (2016), 119.

¹²¹ See Rosane Rocher, “Weaving Knowledge: Sir William Jones and Indian Pandits,” in Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine, eds., *Objects of Enquiry: The Life, Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones (1746-1794)* (New York, 1995), 69.

¹²² See George Thompson to Hastings, 30 Nov. 1786, in “Nesbitt-Thompson Papers,” 17:95; Shore to Cornwallis, 3 Sept. 1787, Cornwallis Papers, TNA PRO 30/11/122, 14v.

¹²³ See O. P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India’s Past* (Delhi, 1988), 93.

eulogized his late friend in a minute to the supreme council, in an address to the society, and, eventually, in a published memoir.¹²⁴ To enlist Jones on the side of Protestant religion was doubtless one of Shore's aims in managing his legacy, but no less a worldly politician than Macpherson could likewise expect that the memoir would "have an useful and progressive Influence in extending Knowledge."¹²⁵ Nor were Shore's scholarly attentions restricted to Europeans. He kept a personal *pandit* and commissioned copies of Persian and Sanskrit manuscripts, turning such activities to diplomatic purposes with the likes of the king of Ava and the *vakil* of the *nizam* of Hyderabad.¹²⁶

For all this, Shore's personal scholarly patronage was a mixed blessing for Indians, whose ability to negotiate its terms declined with the Company's political ascent. No doubt the Benares *pandit* Kanhardas, whose failing vision had interrupted his Sanskrit studies, was grateful to Shore for sending relief.¹²⁷ It is difficult to imagine Cornwallis bestowing such a kindness. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine Cornwallis imposing on Tafazzul Husain Khan as Shore did in 1797-8. Shore had known Tafazzul for some years and, like other commentators, praised his mind and manners. Nonetheless, when it came to appointing a minister for the indebted *nawab* of Awadh, he did not scruple to overcome

¹²⁴ Shore, Minute, NAI Bengal Public Proceedings (2 May 1794), 1951-5; Shore, *The Literary History of the Late Sir William Jones, in a Discourse* (London, 1795); Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence, of Sir William Jones* (London, 1804). Shore was created Lord Teignmouth in 1798.

¹²⁵ Macpherson to Teignmouth, 25 Jul. 1804, Lord Teignmouth's Letter Book, CUL BSA/F3/Shore, no. 116.

¹²⁶ See Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava* (London, 1800), 353, 488; Wladimir Ivanow, *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Collection of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1924), 696, 704; Rosane Rocher, "The Career of Rādhākānta Tarkavāgīśa, an Eighteenth-Century Pandit in British Employ," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109 (1989), 628-9; Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West During the Eighteenth Century* (Karachi, 1998), 226-7.

¹²⁷ Kanhardas, Petitions, trans. in Sen and Mishra, eds., *Sanskrit Documents*, 81-8.

Tafazzul's resistance using "influence and solicitations."¹²⁸ Ostensibly an honor, the appointment was closer to a death sentence; for the *nawab* Asaf-ud-Daula was ill-disposed towards the Company and inclined to regard Tafazzul as its stooge. "I tremble for the peace & Reputation of my Friend," wrote Hastings' agent Palmer, predicting that if Tafazzul survived, he would be forced to flee to England upon Shore's retirement.¹²⁹ In the event, Tafazzul was spared by fate, for the *nawab* soon died, allowing him to resign. But subsequent developments confirmed the danger he had been in. Wazir Ali Khan lasted mere months as *nawab* before the Company replaced him with his uncle. The following year, upon receiving orders to retreat into more distant exile, he and his followers slaughtered the resident and four other associates of the Company in what became known as the "Massacre of Benares." Tafazzul would have observed this sanguinary act from the safety of Calcutta, where he was employed for a second time as the *nawab's* *vakil*. He died of illness in 1800. Had Tafazzul lived on and maintained connections with the Company, he must have done so on changing terms. Wazir Ali Khan's brief insurrection marked the last resistance the *nawabi* dynasty would offer to the Company's creeping domination of Awadh. Shore's successor, Richard Wellesley, prized away almost half of the province in 1801, in between conquering huge swathes of the Mysore and Maratha empires. The future that such territorial expansion augured for scholarly elites like Tafazzul was not as powerful intermediaries, but as impotent relics of the old order. The Company's support for knowledge had never floated free of interest or power. Yet Hastings had patronized

¹²⁸ Shore, cited in an unpublished paper by Arif Abid, which also contains the fullest account of this episode.

¹²⁹ Palmer to Hastings, 15 Apr. 1797, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29175, 88r, see 86r-88r.

scholarship from an insecure position; Cornwallis, from a detached and principled one. Shore's return to a personal form of patronage at a time when the Company was politically ascendant threatened to unleash its coercive potential. It threatened to transpose the language of conciliation to an autocratic register, if not obviate that language altogether.

Conclusion

Above all, the survival of the language of conciliation attested the survival of the Company's mercantile sovereignty. Here the disposition of Cornwallis seems to have proved decisive. In 1790, Dundas, president of the Board of Control, asked Cornwallis's opinion on a plan to transfer the Company's political functions to the Crown. Cornwallis granted that the plan had appeal, but maintained that it would bankrupt the Company, discredit the Crown, and cede control of the India trade to European rivals.¹³⁰ It was this verdict, apparently, that changed Dundas's mind and produced a Charter Act favorable to the Company.¹³¹ The legislation of 1793 was a victory for the Court of Directors in particular. Yet the fact that the directors had needed the support of the board and governor-general illustrated the tripartite balance of power that now structured the Company state. Within a decade, the imperious designs of Wellesley would upset this balance and threaten to unmake this state. Ideas about knowledge would figure centrally in the attempt. Jones had once described the Asiatic Society's researches as befitting "an imperial, but, which is a character of equal

¹³⁰ Cornwallis to Dundas, 4 Apr. 1790, in *Correspondence of ... Cornwallis*, ed. Ross, 2:13-20.

¹³¹ Holden Furber, *Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville, 1742-1811: Political Manager of Scotland, Statesman, Administrator of British India* (Oxford, 1931), 130-31.

dignity, a commercial, people.”¹³² For Wellesley, by no means were these characters of equal dignity, and he founded the College of Fort William to sustain a new, kingly and uncommercial, idiom of sovereignty.

¹³² William Jones, “The Second Anniversary Discourse” (1788), in *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 vols. (London, 1807), 3:13-14.

Chapter 3

Richard Wellesley and the Politics of Fort William College

“The College must stand or the Empire must fall.”¹ So declared Richard Wellesley about the College of Fort William. After taking up the governor-generalship of Bengal in 1798, Wellesley clashed repeatedly with the East India Company’s Court of Directors. The subjects of controversy ranged widely among commerce, diplomacy, and administration. Yet it was that seminary for Company servants in Calcutta to which Wellesley vowed to devote the rest of his political career, and upon which he would look back as his proudest achievement in office.² What prompted the above declaration were orders from the directors to abolish the college, one sally in a conflict that lasted from Wellesley’s founding of the institution in 1800 until after his departure in 1805. While this series of events has been related often enough, it has yet to be satisfactorily explained. Modern commentators have seldom understood the nature of the dispute, and they have never appreciated its magnitude. In older narratives, the directors opposed Wellesley’s college for financial and personal reasons. In newer accounts, they did so to oppose the spread of “Orientalist” attitudes. Upon examination, however, neither version holds up to scrutiny. Had Wellesley founded the college merely to train civil servants, even in a particular cultural mold, he

¹ Richard Wellesley to David Scott, 12 Aug. 1802, in *Memoirs and Correspondence of the Most Noble Richard Marquess Wellesley*, ed. Robert Rouiere Pearce, 3 vols. (London, 1846-7), 2:212.

² Wellesley to Earl of Dartmouth, 5 Aug. 1802, in *ibid.*, 2:214; Wellesley to Charles Metcalfe, Aug. 1839, in *The Wellesley Papers*, [ed. L. S. Benjamin,] 2 vols. (London, 1914), 2:350; Wellesley to W. B. Bayley, 21 Mar. 1841, in John William Kaye, *Lives of Indian Officers*, 2 vols. (London, 1867), 1:488.

should have encountered little resistance. Yet there were high political stakes to his high political rhetoric. The battle over the college was a crisis for the Company state.

According to an influential thesis, the rise of an autocratic France in Europe around 1800 spurred a parallel tendency in Britain's empire.³ As generative for scholarship as this story of rival empires has been, it has obscured another story that might be told about rival sovereignties. The Company's mercantile sovereignty survived the later eighteenth century intact, but by the turn of the nineteenth century, it was challenged anew by a kingly sovereignty taking shape in Calcutta. Wellesley sought to jettison the Company's commercial functions and trappings. Ignoring orders from the directors, meanwhile, he vastly expanded the Company's territory. While recent historians of empire have cast Wellesley as a "viceroy," according to his contemporaries there was nothing "vice-" about him. In the words of one observer, which could stand in for those of countless others, Wellesley was "regal in his state, regal in his liberalities, regal even in his diminutive person, and unbounded in the authority of a name which filled all India."⁴ Wellesley's assumption of a kingly sovereignty, and attempt to bend the Company to its mold, underpinned his plans for the College of Fort William. The college threatened the directors' authority in several ways, but most of all by marshaling ideas about knowledge to repudiate the Company's hybrid constitution.

Interests, Attitudes, Authority

³ Esp. C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989).

⁴ [Charles Marsh,] "Society in India," *The New Monthly Magazine* 22-3 (1828), 22:234.

While a number of factors have been seen at work in the college dispute, by far the most important was that Wellesley's institution threatened the directors' authority—and hence, they alleged, the survival of the Company.

The reason most often cited for the dispute had to do with the college's expense. This was also the objection Wellesley most anticipated in his plans for the college of 1800. Without enumerating the costs of the institution, his founding "Notes" cited various funding sources and assured the directors that they would not be subjected to any outlay.⁵ Despite this, the directors responded with orders to abolish the college, emphasizing its large and uncertain cost and the troubled state of the Company's finances.⁶ According to David Scott, Wellesley's embattled ally among the directors, "the great distress for cash and the reduction in the investment gave the Court such a weapon as Mr. Addington [the prime minister] thought he could not at present resist."⁷ Yet this weapon might easily be turned against its brandishers. First, the cost argument played into familiar criticism of the directors as narrowly profit-minded. Second, it would seem to oppose some of their counterproposals, such as founding a seminary at home and at each presidency. Finally, it presented by itself only a temporary obstacle. This last flaw was exploited by the Board of Control. Through modifications, such as inserting the phrase "at present" in several places,

⁵ Wellesley, "The Governor-General's Notes with Respect to the Foundation of a College at Fort William," 10 Jul. 1800, in *The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, K. G., During His Administration in India*, ed. [Robert] Montgomery Martin, 5 vols. (London, 1836-7), 2:350-51.

⁶ Public Despatch to Bengal (27 Jan. 1802), in Richard Wellesley, *Letters of the Marquis Wellesley Respecting the College of Fort William* (London, 1812), 58-63.

⁷ Scott to Wellesley, 3 Feb. 1802, in *The Correspondence of David Scott*, ed. C. H. Philips, 2 vols. (London, 1951), 2:384.

the board made the directors' orders appear provisional.⁸ Under better financial circumstances, according to language added to the despatch, the college would deserve "the most serious consideration."⁹ As the Earl of Dartmouth (president of the board, 1801-2) put it, now that the basis for the college had been admitted, "a superstructure may hereafter, by degrees and in more favourable times, be raised upon it more conformable to his Lordship's views."¹⁰ It would not be a long wait. Wellesley's next letter stayed the abolition order on the grounds that the Company's finances had markedly improved.¹¹ Hitherto the directors had found the cost argument expedient: it had convinced the controlling authorities to at least scale back the college, while avoiding a potentially losing fight over other issues. Once the authorities backed Wellesley's rejoinder, however, this line of attack was greatly diminished. Now the directors suggested, in correspondence with the board, that they had only privileged the Company's financial situation "out of delicacy to the Governor General"; it "never has been absolutely material to the great questions which properly belong to the present Subject."¹² What, then, were these questions?

If financial considerations did not cement the directors' opposition to the college, it has been suggested that personal grievances did. In this account, Wellesley's support for British free merchants infuriated a faction of the court and tipped the balance against his

⁸ Prakash Chandra, "The Establishment of the Fort William College," *Calcutta Review* 51 (1934), 165.

⁹ Public Despatch to Bengal [showing changes by the board] (27 Jan. 1802), BL IOR E/4/652, 86.

¹⁰ Dartmouth to Scott, 15 Dec. 1801, in *Correspondence of David Scott*, ed. Philips, 2:377.

¹¹ Wellesley to Chairman of Directors, 5 Aug. 1802, in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 2:660. Wellesley also put forward an additional source of funding from a bequest by Claude Martin. 2:645-6.

¹² William Ramsay to William Brodrick, 1 Jul. 1803, BL IOR H/487, 399; Ramsay to Brodrick, 19 Jul. 1803, at 445.

institution. According to Dartmouth, “the plan for the Private Trade has blown up the College”; at least one director agreed that Wellesley thus “furnished the means” of his own defeat.¹³ Before concluding that the directors were simply settling scores, however, it is worth assessing the implications of Wellesley’s stance on trade. His most incendiary proposal was to let British free merchants buy and convey any Indian goods the Company’s means could not embrace. This proposal, which arrived during deliberations over the college in 1801, seemed to directly threaten the Company’s trade.¹⁴ Moreover, since the Company’s characters as merchant and sovereign were interlinked, the proposal seemed to threaten its government as well. According to a unanimous resolution of the directors, the proposal would encourage European “colonization” (settlement) in the Company’s territories and ultimately hazard their independence.¹⁵ Historians have seen Wellesley’s plans for trade and the college as connected only by temporal coincidence. But not only did both invite criticism of the Company’s merchant character; they combined to threaten a repeat of Britain’s loss of America. According to a prevalent theory, it was colonization and the foundation of colleges that had led Americans to assert their independence. For,

¹³ Dartmouth to Wellesley, 2 Feb. 1802, Dartmouth Papers, Staffordshire County Record Office, D(W)1778/1/ii/1589; Charles Grant, cited in Henry Morris, *The Life of Charles Grant: Sometime Member of Parliament for Inverness-Shire and Director of the East India Company* (London, 1904), 243; see similarly David Scott to Wellesley, 23 Apr. 1802, in *Correspondence of David Scott*, ed. Philips, 2:394-5.

¹⁴ For the context, see James R. Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010), 174-6. For the timing, see John Bowen, “The East India Company’s Education of Its Own Servants,” *JRAS* (1955), 108-11.

¹⁵ “Minutes of the Court of Directors” (4 Feb. 1801), *Asiatic Annual Register* 3 (1802), “State Papers,” 40; see similarly Charles Grant to Jonathan Duncan, 8 Jan. 1802, in Morris, *Grant*, 249. It was a measure of the directors’ vehemence that even Scott was compelled to endorse the resolution. See Scott to Special Committee, 17 Jan. 1801, in *Further Papers Respecting the Trade Between India and Europe* (London, 1802), Appendix, 6.

as one proprietor explained, “it is well known that every man finds his mind endeared to the place of his education.” If anything, according to the proprietor, this train of events would proceed more quickly in India, due to its large native population.¹⁶ Unfounded as such worries may appear in hindsight, they were anticipated by Wellesley and countenanced by his friends and foes alike.¹⁷ In opposing Wellesley’s college, some directors may well have indulged peevish animosities. The court’s overriding concern, however, was to preserve its authority as a necessary safeguard of the Company.

Nor was a tendency towards colonization the only threatening feature of Wellesley’s college. Most immediately, it challenged the political functions of the directors. Wellesley’s incursions have often been downplayed as slights, the court’s interdictions as mere fits of pique. In this telling, the founding of the college without prior permission supposedly wounded the directors’ pride, stirring up “a sort of personal animus against Wellesley which blinded them to all reason.”¹⁸ Yet far from a singular affront, this was part of a pattern of defiance. Other instances included the invasion of Mysore in 1799 and the support of the private trade. There was thus a ready context for Wellesley’s action which furnished grounds for the court’s reaction. The directors considered the unsanctioned founding of the college to be “a departure from our established system”; “the tendency of all such

¹⁶ “Proceedings at the India House” (28 May 1801), *Asiatic Annual Register* 3 (1802), “State Papers,” 163.

¹⁷ For Wellesley’s anticipations, see Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:354; Wellesley to Directors, 30 Sept. 1800, 2:390. For perceived links between “colonization” and the college, see David Anderson, “On the College” [1801], Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 45158, 111r-112v; James Mackintosh to Henry Addington [1802], Addington Papers, Devon Heritage Centre, 152M/C/1802/OC/1/18; William Fraser to Edward Fraser, 7 Oct. 1802, Fraser Papers, Reelig House, vol. 28, 152; Henry Dundas to David Scott, 26 Aug. 1803, in *Correspondence of David Scott*, ed. Philips, 2:428-9.

¹⁸ Akshoy Kumar Ghosal, *Civil Service in India under the East India Company* (Calcutta, 1944), 264.

deviations is to weaken the authority which is constitutionally placed in this country.”¹⁹ As they would note on a later occasion, “the precipitate Establishment of the College had too much the appearance of an intention to supercede the previous deliberation of the Court.”²⁰

Equally objectionable to the directors, meanwhile, was Wellesley’s encroachment on their patronage.²¹ In an early memorandum to Dundas, Wellesley had proposed transferring “the whole of the Company’s patronage in India” from the directors to the governor-general.²² This tendency in the college scheme did not escape the notice of Warren Hastings. Reviewing Wellesley’s “Notes” at the directors’ behest, Hastings observed that they would invest the governor-general with an “extraordinary” privilege: the assignment of civil servants to one or another of the presidencies.²³ There was more at stake here than mere custom. The edifice of the Company state was structured by ties of patronage, and redirecting these would give it a very different shape. Wellesley’s proposal, according to Hastings, would have a result “to be avoided in every delegation of a remote authority, that of transferring the sense of individual ... fidelity, from the Company to the

¹⁹ Public Despatch to Bengal (27 Jan. 1802), in *Letters ... Respecting the College*, 59.

²⁰ Draft Public Despatch to Bengal (26 Mar. 1805), BL IOR H/486, 54-5.

²¹ On the patronage issue, see Charles Grant, in “Debate at the East-India House” (5 Mar. 1817), *AJ* 4 (1817), 273; Holt Mackenzie, *Minute* (2 Apr. 1825), PCFW, vol. 568, 114; B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company 1773-1834* (Manchester, 1959), 391; Ainslie Thomas Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (London, 1962), 191-2; Anthony Farrington, intro. to Farrington, ed., *The Records of the East India College Haileybury & Other Institutions* (London, 1976), 6.

²² “An Unpublished Paper of Wellesley on the Government of India” [c. 1799-1800], ed. W. H. Hutton. *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* 35 7 (1899), 296.

²³ “A Letter of Warren Hastings on the Civil Service of the East India Company” [19 Jul. 1801], ed. W. H. Hutton, *English Historical Review* 44 (1929), 638; see Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:354-5. The claim that Hastings’ comments were “written in entire agreement with the scheme” is misleading. Hutton, *The Marquess Wellesley* (Oxford, 1893), 123.

person of the Governor General.”²⁴ Civil servants would look not to the directors, but to Wellesley as the repository of sovereign authority. Hastings’ comments, one of the directors informed him, “have materially assisted us in our Deliberations,” and would surely justify their position to anyone unconvinced.²⁵ Indeed, in a second attempt to abolish the college in 1803 the directors echoed the retired statesman, remarking that Wellesley’s proposed alteration “excited our astonishment, and ... seems more calculated to enhance the power and patronage of the Governor General than to promote the good of the service.”²⁶ They also extended this line of criticism to the idea that collegiate honors, awarded by officials under the governor-general’s sway, should be used to determine the initial rank and posting of civil servants.²⁷ Of the numerous sources of opposition to the college, its evident designs on the power and standing of the court had emerged as by far the most significant. At issue, according to the directors, was “not only the credit of the present Government at home and abroad, but in fact, the foundations of ... authority” in the Company’s dominion, which they were loath to transfer to “any Individual, be his rank or character, what it may.”²⁸ It was only to be expected when, by refusing to sanction the abolition of the college, the board “produced a hurricane at the India House.”²⁹

²⁴ Hastings [to Charles Mills], 18 Oct. 1801, BL IOR H/487, 226.

²⁵ Charles Mills to Hastings, 15 Oct. 1801, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29178, 8iv.

²⁶ Draft Public Despatch to Bengal (19 Jul. 1803), BL IOR H/487, 509; see similarly Ramsay to Brodrick, 1 Jul. 1803, 413.

²⁷ Draft Public Despatch to Bengal (19 Jul. 1803), 506-9; see Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:355.

²⁸ Ramsay to Brodrick, 1 Jul. 1803, 392, 416.

²⁹ Castlereagh to Henry Dundas, 1 Aug. 1803, Castlereagh Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D3030/L/8.

The ensuing battle between the court and board has often been seen as a sideshow to that between the court and Wellesley; on the contrary, it was animated by the same fundamental concerns with authority. Lord Castlereagh (president of the board, 1802-6) concurred with the directors that “the general System of India[n] Government” had become “deeply involved” in the matter of the college.³⁰ He was troubled less by Wellesley’s usurpations, however, than by theirs. Forwarding a draft despatch abolishing the college in July 1803, the directors declared that, as a matter of law, “they consider the Authority of the Board to be confined to an absolute or partial negative.”³¹ According to Castlereagh, they were now “aiming at the extension of their authority” far beyond the limits Pitt’s India Act had imposed two decades earlier. If allowed to stand, the court’s interpretation, “by excluding the Board of Controul (that is, the State) from all effectual direction in matters of Government, would soon encourage & prepare the Court for more intrusive attempts at undue authority.”³² The directors’ boldness reflected an emerging sense that the balance of power in Indian politics had shifted dangerously and that a revanchist strategy was needed to restore it. Like most governors-general to come Wellesley was a nobleman, not a Company man, and owed his position to the board, of which he had also been a member from 1793-7. But if Wellesley had shown that a governor-general supported by the board could largely chart his own course, the directors’ challenge to that body suggested that

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ramsay to Brodrick, 19 Jul. 1803, 451.

³² Castlereagh to Henry Dundas, 4 Aug. 1803, Castlereagh Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D3030/L/9; see also Dundas to Castlereagh, 11 Oct. 1803, D3030/L/11.

relations among the home authorities were no less regulated by custom or fraught with ambiguity.³³ Both sides now took legal counsel. While the lawyers tended to favor the court's construction, the likelihood that the board would seek a declaratory judgment from Parliament apparently compelled the directors to back down.³⁴ In the meantime, however, they had won a valuable concession: limiting the college's instruction to writers appointed to the Bengal presidency.³⁵ In the next few years, the directors would further scale back Wellesley's institution. Founding the East India College (soon "Haileybury") in Hertfordshire, they confined the College of Fort William to oriental subjects and reduced staff, prizes, and other expenses.³⁶ As before, various considerations were adduced in support of these measures, but underlying them was the imperative to uphold the directors' authority.

Throughout the college dispute Wellesley tried to walk a careful line, urging the directors to embrace the Company's sovereign obligations while denying any designs on their position. As he claimed to Lord Grenville, the directors "suppose me to be a friend ... to the extension of the general executive power of the [ruler] over these possessions," but "in their suspicions, they happen to be erroneous."³⁷ Confirmation of such suspicions could

³³ See Prakash Chandra, "The Relations between the Court of Directors and the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, 1784-1816" (PhD, London School of Economics, 1932), esp. 208-50.

³⁴ P. E. Roberts, *India Under Wellesley* (London, 1929), 155, 161-2.

³⁵ Public Despatch to Bengal (2 Sept. 1803), BL IOR E/4/654, 651-4.

³⁶ Public Despatch to Bengal (21 May 1806), BL IOR E/4/659, 1019-30; Public Despatch to Bengal (23 Jul. 1806), BL IOR E/4/660, 151-5.

³⁷ Wellesley to Lord Grenville, 22 May 1805, in *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*, 9 vols. (London, 1892-1915), 7:271-2.

be found easily enough, however, in Wellesley's private correspondence, some of which reached the directors through leaks by the French and presumably other sources. Shortly after his arrival in 1798, Wellesley wrote Dundas that "the governor-general in council ought to be the centre of all authority within the British possessions in India."³⁸ Reiterating this suggestion in 1800, he hastened to add that the governor-general's actions would remain "open to the most severe scrutiny of the authorities ... in England."³⁹ As Dundas perceived, however, "almost all" of Wellesley's proposed alterations would diminish "the importance of the East India Co[mpany]."⁴⁰ In his letters to Dundas, Wellesley repeatedly advocated making the governor-general the representative of the crown in India, analogous to the lord-lieutenant of Ireland. Yet he had proven no more amenable to the king's interference than to the court's. When the former initiated a direct correspondence with the Maratha *peshwa* (prime minister), Wellesley had gone so far as to urge that Dundas "check his Royal Highness":

I leave it to you to judge what might be the effect on our influence in India, of letters from the Crown, delivered with extraordinary pomp and uncommunicated to the governor-general, the legitimate channel of war, peace, and negotiation. Such letters might effectually frustrate every operation of the Indian government... [Indian rulers'] respect should never be distracted by the interference of the Crown ...⁴¹

³⁸ Wellesley to Dundas, 1 Oct. 1798, in *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley, 1798-1801*, ed. Edward Ingram (Bath, 1969), 81; see also Wellesley to Dundas, 25 Jan. 1800, at 217.

³⁹ Wellesley to Dundas, 8 Aug. 1800, in *ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁰ Dundas to Wellesley, 6 Sept. 1800, in *ibid.*, 295.

⁴¹ Wellesley to Dundas, 27 Jan. 1800, in *ibid.*, 223.

It was no wonder that the king, too, grew irritated with Wellesley.⁴² Set against such a record of aggrandizement, Wellesley's protestations of innocence when it came to the college were difficult to credit. Capacity for dissimulation, however, should not be taken as evidence of an ambition devoid of ideology.

Cultural Attitudes

To the extent that modern commentators have ascribed ideological significance to the college dispute, it has been as a clash of cultural attitudes. Wellesley allegedly founded the institution as the centerpiece of an "Orientalist" agenda, while the directors opposed it and founded their own in service of an "Anglicist" one.⁴³ While this interpretation has been influential, it proceeds from a misreading of both sides. Wellesley's original curriculum included not only eastern languages, but

Mahomedan law, Hindoo law, ethics, civil jurisprudence, and the law of nations; English law; the regulations and laws enacted ... for the civil government of the British territories in India; political economy ... geography and mathematics; modern languages of Europe; Greek, Latin, and English classics; general history, antient and modern; the history and antiquities of Hindoostan and the Deccan; natural history; botany, chemistry, and astronomy.⁴⁴

As befitted an education for offices "involving the combined principles of Asiatic and European policy and government," the combined professorship of jurisprudence was

⁴² Edward Ingram, *In Defence of British India: Great Britain in the Middle East, 1775-1842* (London, 1984), 94.

⁴³ See esp. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969), esp. 46-7, 95-6, 104-6, 131-5; see also Keith Tribe, "Professors Malthus and Jones: Political Economy at the East India College 1806-1858," *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 2 (1995), 332-3; Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, 1997), 113-17; Tristram Hunt, *Ten Cities that Made an Empire* (London, 2014), 212-19.

⁴⁴ "Regulation for the Foundation of a College at Fort William," in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 2:359; see Sisir Kumar Das, *Sahibs and Munshis: An Account of the College of Fort William*, repr. ed. (Calcutta, 2001), 22.

initially projected as “the most important of all the professorships.”⁴⁵ For this subject, Wellesley proposed to appoint James Mackintosh; for geography, James Rennell; for Indian history, Thomas Maurice; and for political economy, Charles Grant (the younger).⁴⁶ These men all resided in Britain; only Rennell had lived in Asia as an adult. Mackintosh was a famous name in letters and the law. Maurice was a minister and armchair antiquarian. Grant’s father, the director, would have a large hand in deciding the College’s fate. For all the apparent political calculation behind these choices, knowledge or affinity for Asia or Asians does not seem to have weighed heavily. Nor is it easy to discern these qualities in the governor-general himself. He cannot, at least, be said to have systematically developed or consistently articulated them. Wellesley’s “Orientalism,” such as it was, comprised mainly a loose and instrumental notion that different rules applied in the East. It typically arose when he sought to justify his actions to authorities in Britain. Thus he sometimes defended his penchant for pomp and parade by reference to “the temper and disposition” of the Company’s Asian subjects.⁴⁷ Yet the extensive manifest of “stores, carriages, and baggage” on Wellesley’s eastbound frigate revealed that “he had already fully made up his mind to fill a rôle” before encountering them.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, far from encouraging “acculturation” among civil servants, Wellesley proposed to instill habits of discipline that

⁴⁵ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:340; Wellesley to Dundas, 18 Aug. 1800, in *Two Views*, ed. Ingram, 282-3; see Governor-General in Council to Directors, 9 Jul. 1800, 2:323.

⁴⁶ Wellesley to Dundas, 18 Aug. 1800.

⁴⁷ Wellesley to Dundas, 1 Oct. 1798, 84; see also Wellesley to Grenville, 22 May 1805, 7:272.

⁴⁸ George Nathaniel Curzon, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses*, 2 vols. (London, 1925), 1:208.

would insulate them from “the peculiar depravity of the people of India.”⁴⁹ If the college featured a professoriate of locally-recruited orientalist and, after the first few years, an almost exclusively oriental curriculum, this had less to do with Wellesley’s inclinations than with the directors’ reductions.

These reductions, in turn, owed little to “Anglicist” attitudes on the part of the directors. Arguments to the contrary have invariably centered on the figure of Charles Grant (the senior). A prominent evangelical as well as director, Grant is now remembered largely for his *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great-Britain* (1797). His call upon the Company to impart “light, knowledge, and improvement” to a supposedly benighted India has been read into the directors’ opposition to the College of Fort William. To interpret Grant’s work only as an entreaty to Christianize and civilize, however, is to miss its more basic entreaty to govern: to renounce the “contracted” and “ungenerous ends” of a merchant and fulfill the duties of a sovereign. Hence the opening and abiding refrain: “we ought to study the happiness of the vast body of subjects which we have acquired.”⁵⁰ Viewed from this angle, Grant’s program resembles Wellesley’s, except, crucially, in lodging the Company’s sovereign authority with the directors instead of with the governor-general. The reduction of the College of Fort William and the founding of Haileybury were directed far more towards upholding this arrangement than

⁴⁹ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:330; cf. Kopf, *British Orientalism*, 134.

⁵⁰ Charles Grant, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great-Britain* (London, 1797), 1, 222.

towards any scheme of “cultural inoculation.”⁵¹ Fears of civil servants becoming “Indianized” were mainly on political rather than cultural grounds, and they were closely related to concerns about colonization.⁵² After all, the directors’ college, like Wellesley’s, was intended to provide instruction in both eastern and western branches of knowledge.

It is notable, meanwhile, that the reduction of the College of Fort William was a source of friction between Grant and other evangelicals. This was a group whose support Wellesley had assiduously cultivated from the beginning. He appointed the ministers David Brown and Claudius Buchanan provost and vice-provost of the college, and in its founding days was said to consult them exclusively.⁵³ Buchanan reportedly framed its regulations; he told a friend in England that “the whole direction of the college lies with me; every paper is drawn up by me; and every thing that is printed is revised by me.”⁵⁴ The Baptist missionaries residing upriver, at the Danish settlement of Serampore, likewise “contrived to identify themselves in great measure with the College,” becoming involved in its teaching, translating, and printing activities.⁵⁵ The attempt has been made to square this ostensible circle by claiming that the missionaries became “Orientalized,” moderating, if

⁵¹ Cf. Trautmann, *Aryans*, 115.

⁵² See Dundas to Scott, 26 Aug. 1803, 2:428-9; Embree, *Grant*, 190; cf. Kopf, *British Orientalism*, 134-5.

⁵³ Buchanan to Charles Grant, Jun. 1800, cited in Hugh Pearson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1817), 1:193; James Dinwiddie, Journal (11 Aug. 1800), Dinwiddie Fonds, Dalhousie University Archives, B60. Brown and Buchanan owed their situations in India to Grant, with whom they kept an active correspondence. This connection undoubtedly informed Wellesley’s decision to appoint them to the college. See Embree, *Grant*, 189.

⁵⁴ Buchanan [1801], cited in Pearson, *Buchanan*, 1:219-20; see Dinwiddie, Journal (12 Aug. 1800), B60.

⁵⁵ John Leyden to Colin Mackenzie, undated, Records of the East India Company Library, BL Mss Eur F303/442.

not abandoning, their zeal for conversion.⁵⁶ In truth, however, oriental and evangelical pursuits often reinforced each other, as in the missionaries' project to translate the scriptures into Asian languages. As one Serampore pamphlet of 1806 put it,

Our hope of success in this great undertaking depends chiefly on the patronage of the College of Fort William. To that Institution we are much indebted for the progress we have already made ... The plan of these translations was sanctioned, at an early period, by The Most Noble the Marquis Wellesley, that great Patron of useful learning.⁵⁷

Indeed, according to the missionaries' leader William Carey, the association with the college was responsible for improving relations with the government in Calcutta. The turning point was a speech Carey gave at the college in 1804 flattering Wellesley in Sanskrit.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, it was the reduction and threatened abolition of the college that threw the missionaries' prospects into doubt. As Brown pleaded with Grant in 1805, its preservation was essential for "giving the light of the Gospel to this land of darkness."⁵⁹ The evangelical MP William Wilberforce concurred: the college "must be elevated high, it must be rendered brilliant and dazzling ... I greatly deplore its having been so shorn of its beams, and wish it restored to its primeval splendour."⁶⁰ Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, suspected that the directors' reasoning must be "founded either on commercial avarice ...

⁵⁶ Kopf, *British Orientalism*, 51, see 51-6, 71-80, 89-94.

⁵⁷ W. Carey et al., *Proposals for a Subscription for Translating the Holy Scriptures* (Serampore, 1806), 7.

⁵⁸ William Carey, Speech (20 Sept. 1804), in *Primitiae Orientalis*, vols. 2-3 (Calcutta, 1803-4), 3:119; Carey to William Cuninghame, 31 Jan. to 7 Aug. 1805, Letters of Baptist Missionaries, NLS Acc. 4505, 25-34.

⁵⁹ Brown to Grant, 15 Jan. 1805, in Kaye, *Lives of Indian Officers*, 1:480; see also Brown, Aug. 1805, in Charles Simeon, *Memorial Sketches of the Rev. David Brown* (London, 1816), 304.

⁶⁰ Wilberforce to Archdeacon Wrangham, 23 Nov. 1807, in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, 5 vols. (London, 1838), 3:352-3.

or in religious indifference.”⁶¹ Buchanan put the matter directly to the Archbishop of Canterbury: “Our hope of evangelizing Asia was once founded on the college of Fort William. But a rude hand hath already touched it ...”⁶² As late as the debates over the renewal of the Company’s charter in 1813, the fortunes of the college and of proselytism in the East could be seen as intertwined. On this occasion, Wellesley himself advocated “combining religion with learning” by linking the ecclesiastical and collegiate establishments at Calcutta. Through the intercourse between dignitaries of the church and “learned natives” of the college, Christianity might be gradually diffused. Wellesley noted, however, that his support for the missionaries had been limited: he had allowed them to translate scripture at the college, but not to disseminate the translations.⁶³ Nor, following a petition from Muslim inhabitants in 1804, had he allowed students to debate this policy at the college’s annual disputations.⁶⁴ True to form, Wellesley viewed religion as desirable to the extent that it strengthened authority and undesirable to the extent that it subverted it. “Anglicist” provides no better a description of the governor-general than “Orientalist.” For it was not cultural attitudes, any more than petty interests, that animated his dispute with the directors.

⁶¹ Watson to Duke of Grafton, 10 Dec. 1807, in Richard Watson, *Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson* (London, 1817), 373.

⁶² Buchanan to Canterbury, [Nov.] 1805, in Pearson, *Buchanan*, 1:367.

⁶³ HL Deb 25 (9 Apr. 1813), 697, see 696-8; see Penelope Carson, “The British Raj and the Awakening of the Evangelical Conscience: The Ambiguities of Religious Establishment and Toleration, 1698-1833,” in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2001), 45-7; Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858* (Woodbridge, UK, 2012), 134.

⁶⁴ Secret Letter from Bengal (7 Dec. 1807), in PP (1812-13), vol. 142, 75-6.

By heightening the danger of the private trade, bypassing the court, and encroaching on its patronage, Wellesley's plans for the College of Fort William endangered the directors' authority. Wellesley denied this, but to no one's satisfaction. In fact, as the college dispute dragged on, the directors and other observers perceived that Wellesley, none too subtly, had been fitting himself for the crown all along. The Company's territories, he had argued in his early "Notes," now comprised "an extensive and populous empire." They could no longer be managed "as a temporary ... acquisition" by "a commercial concern," but must be ruled as "a permanent possession" by "a powerful sovereign." Not only was "commercial or mercantile knowledge" unnecessary to this kind of government; it was inimical.⁶⁵ If these remarks had ostensibly applied to the Company's civil servants, it was not hard to see how they might apply to the directors themselves. Indeed, a number of commentators cited Wellesley's rhetoric as the reason for the court's opposition to the college. A composition on the subject, preserved in his brother Henry's papers and apparently intended for circulation in Britain, wondered "how any Men could bring themselves to decide a question of such Political Magnitude on considerations purely Mercantile."⁶⁶ Of course, the directors had all but invited this charge with their early argument over costs. In the climactic volley of correspondence with the board in 1803, they felt the need to disclaim being "governed in this matter by the narrow views of commercial habits." This was "a stale and unjust imputation." Had they not "distinguished the literary talents of Individuals" and

⁶⁵ Wellesley, "Notes," 2:327, 2:329, 2:339.

⁶⁶ "Copy of a Letter from a Gentleman in Calcutta to His Friend in England" (14 Jul. 1802), Henry Wellesley Papers, BL Mss Eur E176, 196.

“encouraged the literary spirit in general?” Nonetheless, the directors argued, a college of such “grandeur and magnificence” was not “suitable to the constitution of British India, which is partly Commercial, partly Political.” Wellesley’s institution, the directors had come to see clearly, was a vehicle to “degrade the Court” and supplant a “mixt constitution” with a kingly form of sovereignty.⁶⁷

The Political Frontiers of Fort William College

Recognizing the College dispute as one primarily over authority rather than petty interests or cultural attitudes discloses Wellesley’s uptake of a body of political language linking scholarly patronage to kingly sovereignty. In taking up this language, Wellesley had other audiences in mind besides the directors.

At one level, the college was intended to bolster the governor-general’s standing in the eyes of his “subjects,” European and Indian alike. Soon upon his arrival in 1798, Wellesley complained that the unassuming style of his predecessor had degraded “the person, dignity and authority of the Governor-General.”⁶⁸ Not only had the subordinate governments at Bombay and especially Madras become decidedly insubordinate; so far had John Shore let the reins of power slip from his hands that, instead of governing, he had been “governed” by his council.⁶⁹ According to Wellesley, councilors now refused to pay the “respect due to the person invested with the supreme power,” lending the government

⁶⁷ Ramsay to Brodrick, 1 Jul. 1803, 402-16.

⁶⁸ Wellesley to Lord Grenville, 18 Nov. 1798, in *Dropmore*, 4:383.

⁶⁹ Wellesley to Dundas, 1 Oct. 1798, 68.

the character less “of a monarchy” than “of an aristocratic republic”—or, he might have written, of a mercantile corporation.⁷⁰ Throughout the civil service Wellesley found deference in short supply. Without “a thorough reform in private manners,” he augured, “the time is not distant when the Europeans settled at Calcutta will control the government, if they do not overturn it.”⁷¹ The College of Fort William, with its relentless emphasis on order and discipline, was to be the principal means of effecting this reform. Through personal superintendence of the students, and a sort of intern program known as the “Governor-General’s Office,” Wellesley would groom a loyal coterie for the upper ranks of the service.⁷² As a father advised one student, since the college originated with Wellesley and was akin to his “first born” child, academic success there would “ensure his Patronage.”⁷³ No wonder, then, that an early memorandum apprehended “much danger to the collegiate Institution” from writers already employed at the presidency, “many of whom, have good salaries, know little of the languages, & despise the studies & purpose of the College.”⁷⁴ The provost Brown would later confirm these fears in a letter to Grant:

While politics were crushing the College at home, slander was undermining its foundations here ... The old servants, almost universally, abhorred the College, and, while they pretended to favour it, wrote against it ... They saw that the younger branches of the service would be raised to degrees of distinction which they could never attain ...⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Wellesley to Dundas, 25 Jan. 1800, 216.

⁷¹ Wellesley to Grenville, 18 Nov. 1798, 4:384.

⁷² Neil Benjamin Edmonstone, Autobiography (15 Jan. 1840), Broughton Papers, BL Add. MS 36471, 37v-39r.

⁷³ Charles Dumbleton to Henry Dumbleton, 21 Apr. [1801], Dumbleton Papers, BL Mss Eur B177.

⁷⁴ “Observations on the Proposed Regulation Concerning Examinations” [c. 1801], Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13860, 129v.

⁷⁵ Brown to Grant, 15 Jan. 1805, 1:481.

What was worse, from Wellesley's perspective, local grievances about the college were reaching the directors and receiving their encouragement. Evidence of this emerged in 1804, when the French government published letters found aboard a captured East Indiaman.⁷⁶ Students at the college described a paranoid atmosphere in which political intelligence was closely guarded and informants had an ear out for expressions of disaffection.⁷⁷ For Wellesley, the problem of establishing authority in Calcutta was directly connected with that of establishing it in London: these were different fronts in the same battle.

Nor was the problem limited to Europeans. What was ultimately at stake in bringing the civil service to heel, Wellesley maintained, was "the obedience and respect of the people."⁷⁸ The college served this imperative in further ways connected with the logic of conciliation. Wellesley's "Notes" recounted that, with the gradual decline of Mughal power across India, "all the public institutions calculated to promote education and good morals were neglected, and at length entirely discontinued." For the learned and scribal classes sidelined by Company rule, the college offered a partial return to positions of honor and emolument. According to Wellesley, moreover, it might give a stimulus to other institutions like the Calcutta Madrasa and Benares Sanskrit College by involving them in the study of Indian laws and languages. "These arrangements respecting the native

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*; *Intercepted Letters: Letters Intercepted on Board the Admiral Aplin, Captured by the French* (London, 1804), esp. 69, 74-5, 77-80.

⁷⁷ Letters from William Fraser, 1802-4, Fraser Papers, Reelig House, bundle 75, *passim*.

⁷⁸ Wellesley to Dundas, 25 Jan. 1800, 216.

Colleges,” he envisioned, “while they contribute to the happiness of our native subjects, will qualify them to form a more just estimate of the mild and benevolent spirit of the British Government.”⁷⁹ At least one *‘ulama* (Muslim scholar) beseeched Wellesley to create further *madrasas*, so that learned men might “decorate their orations and compositions with his auspicious titles” and avow the preservation of his “kingdom.”⁸⁰ Meanwhile, a similar case could be made for the college’s literary patronage. As John Gilchrist, professor of Hindustani, put it, “nothing will tend so effectually to conciliate the minds of the people of India to a foreign Government as the liberality of its measures to protect and cherish Oriental literature among them.”⁸¹ For all its intended embodiment of mildness, benevolence, and liberality, however, the college was also meant to instill awe and obedience: the “dignity of the institution” must be upheld.⁸² Wellesley’s original plans reportedly called for an imposing walled complex of sixteen-hundred feet per side, including a domed great building, a chapel, and an observatory.⁸³ It was difficult to find a large enough site in the desired vicinity of Garden Reach, and eventually several

⁷⁹ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:351, 2:352; see “Memorandum on the Proposed Collegiate Institution at Fort William” [c. 1800], Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13862, 72v-73r; W. M. Torrens, *The Marquess Wellesley: Architect of Empire* (London, 1880), 241.

⁸⁰ Mawlana Khair-ud-Din Muhammad, *Tazkirat-ul-Ulama* (1801), ed. and trans. Muhammad Sana Ullah (Calcutta, 1934), 71.

⁸¹ Gilchrist to Charles Rothman, 19 Aug. 1803, PCFW, vol. 559, 272.

⁸² “On the Comparative Advantages of a College in Calcutta & in Its Vicinity” [c. 1801], Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13862, 42r.

⁸³ Claudius Buchanan to Charles Grant, 23 Aug. 1800, in Pearson, *Buchanan*, 1:205; Dinwiddie, *Journal* (23 and 29 Sept. 1800), B61; S. Davis, *Minute* (8 Aug. 1814), BL IOR H/488, 610.

neighboring plots were acquired and joined together.⁸⁴ Compensation was doled out among the former proprietors, though not always satisfactorily: one Kandu Shah Fakir petitioned government on this account.⁸⁵ On another occasion,

L[or]d W[ellesle]y was met by a number of poor people who will be turned out of their Huts by the plan of the new college. As usual they threw themselves on the road before the carriage. He ordered them to be seized by his guards and sent to the police who have confined them to hard labour for one month.

This episode was recorded by James Dinwiddie, mathematics and natural philosophy teacher at the college. He noted that the punishment was considered harsh, as the poor “have no other redress and are accustomed to this mode of application.” The former governor-general Charles Cornwallis had once been halted in a similar manner and had taken no such action.⁸⁶ But Wellesley would brook no interference with the dignity of his institution. Even the brickworks across the river from the intended site was purportedly to be removed, lest it mar the view.⁸⁷

Not all blots on the horizon were so easily expunged. The French menace, embodied in the rising figure of Napoleon, posed far-reaching challenges to which the college would likewise constitute a response. Wellesley’s “Notes” argued in favor of the institution that it would inculcate sound “principles of religion and government,” dislodging those of the French Revolution.⁸⁸ It should not be concluded, however, that “Wellesley’s main mission”

⁸⁴ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:350; Dinwiddie, *Journal* (29 Sept. 1800), B61; William Hickey, *Memoirs of William Hickey*, ed. Alfred Spencer, 5th ed., 4 vols. (London, 1950), 4:237-8.

⁸⁵ William Wilson Hunter, *Bengal MS Records*, 4 vols. (London, 1894), 3:289, 3:313.

⁸⁶ Dinwiddie, *Journal* (5 Feb. 1801), B63.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* (19 Nov. 1800), B62.

⁸⁸ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:346.

in founding the college was “to counter pernicious Gallic egalitarian ideas.”⁸⁹ First, while Wellesley complained of recalcitrance among the civil service, he tended to attribute this to past failings of discipline and leadership rather than the leveling influence of Jacobinism. Second, had he been so deeply worried about that ideology making inroads, Wellesley would surely have picked a safer bet for the college’s “most important” professorship than Mackintosh, whose fame rested on *Vindiciae Gallicae: A Defence of the French Revolution and its English Admirers* (1791).⁹⁰ Mackintosh’s literary renown clearly mattered more than his political views. Finally, it is indicative of Wellesley’s priorities that he dropped the anti-Jacobin argument in subsequent correspondence on the college. Perhaps he feared it was a double-edged sword; it was not in any case an abiding spur.⁹¹

More than the ideology of the revolution, it was the celebrity of Napoleon that seems to have exercised Wellesley. Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition of 1798-1801, stoking fears of an invasion of India, brought spirits of competition and emulation to a head.⁹² Though it was his brother, the future Duke of Wellington, who would have the glory of victory at

⁸⁹ Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (Basingstoke, 2007), 147, 148.

⁹⁰ Mackintosh had since recanted—as Wellesley noted in correspondence—but not to every critic’s satisfaction. Edmund Burke suspected that “this conversion is none at all,” and “with regard to France and many other Countries He remains as franc a Jacobin as ever.” Burke to French Laurence, 25 Dec. 1796, in *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, gen. ed. Thomas W. Copeland, 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1958-78), 9:204; Wellesley to Dundas, 18 Aug. 1800, 283.

⁹¹ Responding to Wellesley’s initial letter on the college, Dundas cited as a “principal objection ... the probability that such an assemblage of literary and philosophical men would indulge themselves in political speculations and thus degenerate into a school of jacobinism.” Dundas to Wellesley, 9 Sept. 1800, cited in Holden Furber, *Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville, 1742-1811* (1931), 138-9.

⁹² It has been argued that the threat was trumped up by Wellesley as a pretext for expansionist policies, but this case is largely speculative. See Edward Ingram, *Britain’s Persian Connection, 1798-1828: Prelude to the Great Game in Asia* (Oxford, 1992), 23-51.

Waterloo, Wellesley played a role in expelling the French army from the eastern Mediterranean, organizing an expedition up the Red Sea. Egypt and India were connected not only in military strategy, but in the classical imaginary—a powerful influence on Wellesley, who had excelled as a student in the classics. William Jones had spawned a raft of philological and mythological associations between the two ancient civilizations.⁹³ But if Jones’s Asiatic Society had drawn European curiosity to British researches in India, Napoleon’s Commission of Science and Arts threatened to refocus it on French researches in Egypt. The exploits of this corps of over a hundred and fifty savants, ranging from the antiquarian to the zoological, would have been familiar to Wellesley: detailed in a number of French publications, by 1799 they were famous enough in Britain to inspire three James Gillray cartoons.⁹⁴ Apart from the scale of its operations—the first edition of the resulting *Description de l’Égypte* (1809-18) filled twenty-three volumes—the commission was novel in its close identification with the state, and with Napoleon in particular. Not for nothing did it mark the founding moment of “Orientalism” for Edward Said. “The British,” it was evident, “had done nothing of the sort in India.”⁹⁵ Napoleon had thus thrown down a gauntlet, and with the College of Fort William Wellesley intended to take it up. An early memorandum anticipated that the institution would impress “the learned world in

⁹³ Despite some notable skeptics, including the Sanskritist Alexander Hamilton, these associations would only be widely discredited following Jean-François Champollion’s decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Rosane Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton, 1762-1824: A Chapter in the Early History of Sanskrit Philology* (New Haven, 1968), 22, 27; Trautmann, *Aryans*, 93.

⁹⁴ See Andrew Bednarski, *Holding Egypt: Tracing the Reception of the Description de l’Égypte in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2005), 16-20.

⁹⁵ Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Years* (Princeton, N.J., 2004), 599, see 557-60.

Europe”; in coming years its continental reputation would inspire a frequent vein of gasconade.⁹⁶ The Egyptian expedition has been seen as the catalyst of a decades-long rivalry between France and Britain over arts, science, and their attendant political capital.⁹⁷ Setting the college in this context, however, highlights Wellesley’s ambition to fight under his own banner: not merely as a representative of authorities in Britain, but as a sovereign in his own right.

This claim was also meant to resonate in the East. The French invasion of Egypt, after all, had regional implications, drawing attention to the unstable frontiers of British India and prompting new engagements with neighboring polities.⁹⁸ Wellesley envisioned that the College of Fort William would play a major role in this emergent diplomatic theater, elevating the governor-general’s standing among the rulers of Asia. From the outset, the college was symbolically yoked to the projection of regional influence. Wellesley announced the institution as “the most becoming public monument which the East India Company could raise to commemorate the conquest of Mysore,” dating its establishment to 4 May 1800, the first anniversary of the decisive fall of Seringapatam.⁹⁹ On the one hand, the governor-general was trumpeting his apparent preemption of the French and

⁹⁶ “Comparative Advantages,” 45r; see Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:351; Thomas Roebuck, *Annals of the College of Fort William* (Calcutta, 1819), vii.

⁹⁷ Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850* (New York, 2005); Holger Hock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London, 2010).

⁹⁸ G. S. Misra, “Napoleon’s Egyptian Expedition and its Repercussions on Wellesley’s Policy,” *Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical Society* ns 3 (1955); Edward Ingram, “The Geopolitics of the First British Expedition to Egypt,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 30-31 (1994-5); see also Amita Das and Aditya Das, *Defending British India Against Napoleon: The Foreign Policy of Governor-General Lord Minto, 1807-13* (Woodbridge, UK, 2016).

⁹⁹ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:351.

achievement of supremacy in southern India to critics at home. On the other, however, he was legitimizing the act of conquest by the performance of enlightened rule, a demonstration intended at least as much for an Asian as for a European audience. Correspondence found in the breached palace of Tipu Sultan revealed that, in addition to the French, the late “Tiger of Mysore” had invited rulers from across India, Nepal, Afghanistan, the Arabian states, and the Persian and Ottoman empires to make common cause against the British. Conducting a preliminary survey of the documents, Colonel William Kirkpatrick thus urged Wellesley to have incriminating selections compiled and presented “to the world.”¹⁰⁰ The governor-general wanted Tipu’s fate to “serve as a salutary lesson to the native Princes” not to violate “public engagements” or prosecute “schemes of ambition and hatred against the British power.”¹⁰¹ But there was also a complementary message to be imparted, regarding the “liberality and attention to Science” by which Tipu’s vanquishers had preserved his library, and the genius by which they had penetrated its secrets—down to the contents of the sultan’s dreams.¹⁰² The published edition of the Seringapatam letters, prepared on Wellesley’s orders by Neil Benjamin Edmonstone, blended “political” and “literary” considerations, sketching a “history not only of Tippoo’s Gov[ernmen]t but of his *mind*.”¹⁰³ The contrast invoked in this and other official narratives

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Beatson, *A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultaun* (London, 1800), 195.

¹⁰¹ Wellesley to Directors, 11 May 1799, in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 1:578.

¹⁰² Charles Stewart, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan of Mysore* (Cambridge, 1809), i; see “Tippoo Sultaun’s Dreams in His Own Handwriting,” BL IO Islamic 3563; Beatson, *View*, 196–7.

¹⁰³ Edmonstone to William Edmonstone, 5 Aug. 1799, Edmonstone Papers, CUL Add. 7616/1/84; see Colin Mackenzie to William Kirkpatrick, 12 Jul. 1801, Mackenzie Papers, BL Mss Eur F228/19, 4r–5v. For the

between the philistinism of Mysore's former sovereign and the enlightenment of the British played at once into patriotic "Tipu mania" at home and into Wellesley's expansionist views in Asia.¹⁰⁴

The College of Fort William entered these views most directly in training a diplomatic corps. Here the linguistic curriculum was particularly relevant, not least because this was a field in which the French were seen to have gained an advantage. As a committee of the directors reported in 1804, France boasted numerous officials whose "knowledge of Eastern Languages ... enables them to carry on the most important Negotiations at Asiatic Courts without the intervention of an Interpreter."¹⁰⁵ The college would provide instruction in some languages, like Marathi, with an eye almost exclusively to their diplomatic utility.¹⁰⁶ Yet for Wellesley, as ever, the functional went hand-in-hand with the ornamental. In 1801, as part of the Red Sea expedition, the governor-general dispatched an embassy laden with gifts and Arabic-language addresses to the states along the Arabian coast.¹⁰⁷ "The Eastern nations," he advised the mission's naval commander, "are so much influenced by exterior forms, that the greatest attention is requisite to points of

publication, see Edmonstone, ed., *Official Documents, Relative to the Negotiations Carried on by Tippoo Sultaun* (Calcutta, 1799).

¹⁰⁴ For the phrase, see Anne Buddle, "The Tipu Mania: Narrative Sketches of the Conquest of Mysore," *Marg* 40 (1989). The *raja* of Tanjore, a state long buffeted between British and Mysorean ambitions, seems to have been one receptive reader of such narratives. See Serfoji II to unknown, 25 Jan. 1806, Raja of Tanjore Sirfoji Papers, BL Mss Eur C887; P. Perumal, *A Catalogue of Serfoji's Personal Collection and Other Rare Books* (Thanjavur, 1989), 52, 84.

¹⁰⁵ "Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Plan for Forming an Establishment at Home" (26 Oct. 1804), in Farrington, ed., *Records*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ See J. Webbe to N. B. Edmonstone, 19 Jun. 1802, in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 5:193-4.

¹⁰⁷ Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13708, 93r-103v; Add. MS 13717, 63r-65r; *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 2:471-3.

ceremony and appearance. Any concessions in points of that nature on the part of an Ambassador to an Eastern court, tend to degrade his consequence and to impede the progress of his negotiation.”¹⁰⁸ In such settings, learning itself was to be considered as an ornament imparting prestige to the wearer. Wellesley favored Edmonstone among diplomatic officials for his “profound knowledge of the Eastern languages, laws, manners and customs, and of the state and disposition and interests of the several native Courts.”¹⁰⁹ Equally important, however, was his gentlemanly display of this knowledge, the product of studied politesse as well as an aristocratic upbringing. Wellesley’s regional ambitions demanded a greater supply of residents, political agents, and other diplomatic personnel. Yet, as Edmonstone wrote his father in March 1800, the governor-general believed it would be difficult to find candidates combining the requisite abilities with “that controul and dignity of station” which enabled one “to stand as the representative of the Head of the Gov[ernmen]t.”¹¹⁰ As it happened, a solution to the problem was already in Wellesley’s contemplation. The day before, he had written Dundas announcing his intention to found an institution at Calcutta where writers would improve both their education and comportment.¹¹¹ In a few months, Edmonstone would find himself busily framing lectures in preparation for his new situation as joint professor of Persian at the College of Fort

¹⁰⁸ Wellesley to Home Popham, 16 Oct. 1801, in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 5:155.

¹⁰⁹ [Robert] Montgomery Martin, preface to *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 3:xii n. On Edmonstone’s relations with Wellesley, see Marla Karen Chancey, “In the Company’s Secret Service: Neil Benjamin Edmonstone and the First Indian Imperialists, 1780-1820” (PhD, Florida State University, 2003), 105-82.

¹¹⁰ Edmonstone to Archibald Edmonstone, 6 Mar. 1800, Edmonstone Papers, CUL Add. 7616/2/21.

¹¹¹ Wellesley to Robert Dundas, 5 Mar. 1800, in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 2:232.

William, a situation that would enable him to direct Wellesley's attention to promising diplomatic candidates.¹¹²

In a speech of 1803, Wellesley defended the college on grounds including its qualifying officials to maintain "in honour and respect" the government's "external relations." But the scholarly activities of the college, he suggested, would likewise have an influence not "confined to the limits of this Institution, or of this Empire."¹¹³ Libraries had long featured in both European and South Asian practices of kingship and diplomacy.¹¹⁴ The development of the college library into one of the most illustrious in the region was thus as much a political as a literary enterprise. And it was one Wellesley would pursue intently beginning with the appropriation of Tipu's collection. Francis Buchanan's survey of southern India, commissioned by Wellesley after the conquest of Mysore, furnished "ancient inscriptions and valuable manuscripts" in Kannada, Telugu, and other languages.¹¹⁵ Embassies to Persia and Arabia embraced a similar remit, sparing "neither trouble nor expense to procure whatever was rare or valuable" for the college library.¹¹⁶ From 1804, the college council, urged sometimes by Wellesley himself, would sponsor

¹¹² Edmonstone to Charles Edmonstone, 8 Sept. 1800, Edmonstone Papers, CUL Add. 7616/2/23.

¹¹³ Wellesley, Speech (30 Mar. 1803), in Roebuck, *Annals*, 35, 41.

¹¹⁴ For affinities and connections between these practices, see C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996), 149-50, 198-9; Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (Chicago, 2013), 133.

¹¹⁵ *Asiatic Annual Register* 8 (London, 1809), "Chronicle," 29; see Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, 3 vols. (London, 1807).

¹¹⁶ Stewart, *Catalogue*, 190, see 185-90.

manuscript expeditions to Mysore, Travancore, Ceylon, and elsewhere.¹¹⁷ And by 1818, the library could boast over two-thousand print volumes in addition to its manuscript holdings.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, apart from preserving works the college was publishing them, on the order of a hundred original volumes in its first four years.¹¹⁹ These included grammars, dictionaries, letters, dialogues, fables, prayer-books, and ethical treatises in Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindustani, and Marathi.¹²⁰ Copies of many of these works were intended for eastern libraries. Mir Sher Ali Afsus could boast of his *Bagh-i Urdu* (1802), for instance, that “five hundred copies were struck off, and reached distant places.”¹²¹ From the spread of such productions, according to the Hindustani professor Gilchrist, “the Nations of India” would henceforth applaud Wellesley as “Reviver and Patron of Oriental Literature.”¹²²

Gilchrist also noted that Wellesley’s patronage had attracted “literati” from across the region: to teach the students, compose and translate works, and manage the library.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia: With Notices of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages* (Cambridge, 1811), 91; Kopf, *British Orientalism*, 67, 188.

¹¹⁸ *Catalogue of the Books in the Library of the College of Fort William* [Calcutta, 1818].

¹¹⁹ [Claudius Buchanan, ed.,] *The College of Fort William in Bengal* (London, 1805), 156. As Matthew Lumsden, professor of Persian and Arabic, recalled, Buchanan was at this time “exceedingly eager to swell the annual Catalogue of books printed by Members of our Institution and very little solicitous about the expence that might be sustained by Government on that account.” Lumsden to William Hunter, 2 May 1810, PCFW, vol. 561, 239.

¹²⁰ See Roebuck, appendix to *Annals*, 21-45.

¹²¹ Mir Sher Ali Afsus, *The Araish-i-Mahfil; or, Ornament of the Assembly*, trans. Henry Court (Allahabad, 1871), 3.

¹²² John Gilchrist, dedication (with Mir Sher Ali Afsus) and intro. to Afsus, trans., *Bagh-i Urdu* (Calcutta, 1802), iii, vii.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, vii.

These scholars hailed from as far west as Peshawar and as far south as Tanjore.¹²⁴ At least as early as 1805, it seems, “a learned Malay of the rank of Rajah” came expressly from Sumatra.¹²⁵ In that year, the provost Buchanan also sought to hire as professor of Chinese one Joseph Lassar, an Armenian born at Macao and visiting Bengal on trade, though this plan was scotched by the directors’ reductions.¹²⁶ Many of the fifty-odd scholars were recruited by European or Asian faculty through Company or kinship networks.¹²⁷ Others had seen a proclamation from Wellesley, widely distributed in late 1800, inviting “men of learning and knowledge” to Calcutta to qualify for positions at the new institution.¹²⁸ It was one measure of their disparate provenance that, among the chief *pandits*, reportedly, “there are few (not being of the same district) who will give the same account of their faith, or refer to the same sacred books.”¹²⁹ Nor could they have been assembled, according to Buchanan, “but by the influence of the supreme government, as exerted by the Marquis Wellesley.”¹³⁰ Indeed, this was a circumstance Wellesley would make much of in his 1802

¹²⁴ Lord Minto, Speech (27 Feb. 1808), in Roebuck, *Annals*, 160; Indira Viswanathan Peterson, “The Schools of Serfoji II of Tanjore: Education and Princely Modernity in Early Nineteenth-Century India,” in Michael S. Dodson and Brian A. Hatcher, eds., *Trans-Colonial Modernities in South Asia* (London, 2012), 31.

¹²⁵ Buchanan, *Christian Researches*, 80. An account of the college’s “Native Establishment” in 1805 lists a *munshi* of the Malay language. [Buchanan, ed.,] *College of Fort William*, 239-40.

¹²⁶ Buchanan, *Christian Researches*, 9-11. Instead, Buchanan paid Lassar from his own pocket to translate scripture into Chinese and instruct some of the Serampore missionaries in the language.

¹²⁷ Ruth Gabriel, “Learned Communities and British Educational Experiments in North India: 1780-1830” (PhD, University of Virginia, 1979), 175-81; see e.g. Nadim Sitapuri, *Allama Sitapuri*, ed. and trans. Hamid Afaq Qureshi, in Qureshi, *Sources on Awadh from 1722 A.D. to 1856 A.D.* (Lucknow, 2004), 154-8.

¹²⁸ Pearson, *Buchanan*, 1:212; see e.g. Meer Ummun, *The Tale of the Four Durwesh*, trans. Lewis Ferdinand Smith (Calcutta, 1845), vii, vii n 2.

¹²⁹ Claudius Buchanan, *Memoir of the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India* (London, 1805), 26.

¹³⁰ Buchanan, *Christian Researches*, 3.

letter rebutting the directors' orders to abolish the college. "Many learned natives," he warned, "are now attached to the institution who have been invited to Fort William, by my especial authority, from distant parts of Asia." To suddenly rescind their employment would "be an act of the most flagrant impolicy." For it would not, surely,

be consistent either with the interest or honour of the Company in India, that a numerous body of learned natives, after having been expressly invited ... should be driven forth to the extremities of Asia, to report in their respective countries, that the British Government was unable to support ... learning and virtue ...¹³¹

As conduits to rulers and elites in the region, Wellesley was suggesting, these scholars were arbiters of the Company's reputation. Notably, college officials seem to have tracked currents of patronage at major courts like Delhi and Awadh, wooing the most fashionable literati.¹³² The recruitment of the college's Asian staff was thus a means of cultivating regional influence, a complement to more forceful methods of diplomacy.¹³³ As if to confirm the success of this strategy, the chief *pandits* of the college credited Wellesley, in a departing address, with securing the Company's position not only by arms, but by "science, and the ... high regard of the learned."¹³⁴ It seems they knew how to flatter their patron: a

¹³¹ Wellesley to Directors, 5 Aug. 1802, 2:663.

¹³² For instance, College officials turned down the services of the poet Mir Muhammad Taqi, who was old and out of favor at Lucknow, but courted the up-and-comer Mir Sher Ali Afsus. See Ram Babu Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature* (1927; New Delhi, 1990), 244-5; C. M. Naim, "Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry: A Comparison," in *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C. M. Naim* (Delhi, 2004), 159-64; see also Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 260-70.

¹³³ For the fostering of social ties as a strategy of territorial expansion, see Paul K. Macdonald, *Networks of Domination: The Social Foundations of Peripheral Conquest in International Politics* (Oxford, 2014), esp. 78-114.

¹³⁴ "Address from the Pundits of the College" (31 Jul. 1805), in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 4:627-9; see also "Address from the Moonshes of the Hindoostanee Department" (10 Aug. 1805), at 4:629-30.

translation of the document would later be included among the governor-general's published papers.

The various audiences and messages of Wellesley's college mingled in the grandiose spectacle of its "Public Disputations in the Oriental Languages." The vice-provost Buchanan anticipated that the annual event at Government House would attract "all Calcutta": European society as well as "natives of rank and learning, rajahs, pundits, moulvies, and moonshees."¹³⁵ A later observer would affirm that "all the college and private moonshis were present, with all the native and foreign eastern merchants who pretend to any learning, and crowds of Europeans."¹³⁶ In 1804, an envoy from the *pasha* of Baghdad joined in the pageantry as part of a mission to shore up the good relations recently forged in opposition to Napoleon.¹³⁷ He presented a large illuminated address lauding the institution and its founder in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish verse.¹³⁸ Nor was the audience limited to attendees at Government House: reports of the disputations were printed in the official gazette and reprinted in local and metropolitan journals. As the missionary-professor Carey put it, "thousands of the learned in distant nations will exult in this triumph of Literature."¹³⁹ At the center of proceedings was the governor-general

¹³⁵ Buchanan to W. P. Elliott, 17 Nov. 1800, in Pearson, *Buchanan*, 1:209. The first disputations of 1802 were held in the Writers' Buildings, as Government House had not yet been completed.

¹³⁶ Maria Graham, *Journal of a Residence in India* (Edinburgh, 1812), 138.

¹³⁷ For the mission and its context, see *Correspondence, Despatches, and Other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh*, ed. Charles William Vane, 12 vols. (London, 1848-53), 5:192-4; *Descriptive List of Persian Correspondence*, 5 vols. (New Delhi, 1974-2014), 4:70; M. E. Yapp, "The Establishment of the East India Company Residency at Baghdad, 1798-1806," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 30 (1967).

¹³⁸ Suleiman Aga, Address (20 Oct. 1804), CUL Oriental MSS Add. 286.

¹³⁹ Carey, Speech (20 Sept. 1804), 3:115.

himself. The following description dates from 1819, but continuities with earlier accounts suggest that most of the forms and observances originated with Wellesley:

In a state chair, covered with crimson velvet and richly gilt, with a group of aid-de-camps and secretaries standing behind him, sat the Marquis of Hastings [governor-general, 1813-23]. Two servants with state punka[h]s of crimson silk were fanning him, and behind them again were several native servants bearing silver staffs. Next him, on either side, were seated the examiners, and below them again, the most distinguished ladies of the presidency. Next, in an open space, were two small rostrums for the disputants, and chairs for the professors; the room behind these, and fronting the marquis, was quite filled with company, and in the rear of all, the body guard was drawn up in full uniforms of scarlet with naked sabres.¹⁴⁰

After presiding over the disputations, the governor-general bestowed gold medals on the top students and delivered a speech extolling the founding ideals and recent achievements of the college.¹⁴¹ A grand dinner was held in the evening.

Whether judged by Asian or European standards, there was an unmistakable kingliness to all of this. The disputations have drawn comparison with the learned debates hosted by the emperor Akbar at the *Ibadat Khana* of Fatehpur Sikri.¹⁴² For a Malay scribe visiting Bengal in 1810, meanwhile, they were consonant with the ritual life of a *raja*'s palace. Unable to understand English or the other languages spoken at the disputations, the scribe,

¹⁴⁰ [Moyle Sherer,] *Sketches of India: Written by an Officer for Fire-Side Travellers at-Home* (London, 1821), 119-20. William Fraser, a participant in the 1803 disputations, described Wellesley sitting "on a Golden chair ... with crimson velvet cushion ... surrounded with Aides-de-camp innumerable." William Fraser to Edward Fraser, 30 Mar. 1803, Fraser Papers, Reelig House, bundle 75, 24v. The arrangement of attendees is generally confirmed by "A Colored Plan of a Hall for Public Exercises for the College of Fort William," Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13901C. See also the comparative lists of Wellesley's and the Marquess of Hastings' establishments at Government House in Marquess of Hastings Papers, Mount Stuart, HA/21/19.

¹⁴¹ The medals bore an image of sunlight illuminating an eastern scene and the Latin motto *Redit a nobis Aurora diemque reducit*: "dawn returns from us, and brings back the day" (Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.249). For the design of the College medals, see Robert P. Puddester, *Medals of British India with Rarity and Valuations: Volume One: Commemorative and Historical Medals from 1750 to 1947* (London, 2002), 16-18. See similarly the frontispiece to *Essays by the Students of the College of Fort William* (Calcutta, 1802).

¹⁴² Iris Butler, *The Eldest Brother: The Marquess Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington's Eldest Brother* (London, 1973), 239; see also John Clark Marshman, *The History of India, from the Earliest Period to the Close of Lord Dalhousie's Administration*, 3 vols. (London, 1863-7), 2:124. For a contemporary comparison of Wellesley to Akbar on account of the college, see "Address from the Pundits," 4:628.

Ibrahim, relied largely on visual means to interpret “the manners and customs of the great Rajah of the English.” He remarked at length on the plenitude of the “palace,” “the splendour of the throne,” the displays of rank among “the great men of the Rajah’s court,” and even the beauty of the *raja*’s many “wives” (European ladies).¹⁴³ The envoy from Baghdad, too, described the governor-general in terms befitting a monarch: “Kings approach his threshold with offerings of respect.”¹⁴⁴ Nor were the trappings of sovereignty at the disputations intelligible only according to eastern models. “The college Speech is the King’s speech in Parliament,” opined Buchanan.¹⁴⁵ A participant in the 1803 disputations referred, albeit wryly, to “King Dick ... seated in all his glory.”¹⁴⁶ As with ceremonies involving Company residents at Asian courts, the disputations were probably choreographed in collaboration with ritualist *munshis*.¹⁴⁷ No mere “replica of Kedleston Hall,” as it has sometimes been described, Government House itself featured a hodgepodge of Asian and European decoration, commissioned by Wellesley.¹⁴⁸ Rather than impart a

¹⁴³ “An Account of Bengal, and of a Visit to the Government House, by Ibrahim, the Son of Candu the Merchant,” trans. John Leyden, in Graham, *Journal*, 201-7. Ibrahim’s brother, Ahmad Rijaluddin, also journeyed to Bengal in 1810 and adopted a similar framing to describe Government House and the governor-general. See *Ahmad Rijaluddin’s Hikayat Perintah Negeri Benggala*, ed. and trans. Cyril Skinner (The Hague, 1982).

¹⁴⁴ Suleiman, Address.

¹⁴⁵ Claudius Buchanan to Wellesley, 6 Mar. 1806, Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 37284, 35v.

¹⁴⁶ William Fraser to Edward Fraser, 30 Mar. 1803, 25r; see William Fraser to Edward Fraser, 10 Feb. 1803, Fraser Papers, Reelig House, vol. 28, 169.

¹⁴⁷ See Michael H. Fisher, “The Resident in Court Ritual, 1764-1858,” *MAS* 24 (1990).

¹⁴⁸ E. V. Lucas, *Roving East and Roving West* (London, 1921), 51. For examples of Wellesley’s supervision, see Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13796, 220r-224v; Add. MS 13799, 65r-65v. For an architectural comparison of Kedleston Hall and Government House, see Swati Chattopadhyay, “Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of ‘White Town’ in Colonial Calcutta,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (2000), 166-70.

unitary vision of authority, such hybrid forms were designed to accommodate a range of interpretations and symbolic attachments.¹⁴⁹

What was meant to bind these motley impressions into a coherent language of rule was a collective sense of awe at the majesty of the ruler. Ibrahim described his arrival on the scene of the disputations as an ascent into “heaven”: “I was no longer in the world I had left,” and it was only “fortunate that I was not yet overcome with surprise, and that I lived to see the wonders that were within.”¹⁵⁰ Maria Graham, reading Ibrahim’s account, found it “almost like a caricature on travellers’ representations of new countries and customs.”¹⁵¹ Yet similar terms had been employed by European visitors to this and other public events at Wellesley’s Government House. For one such visitor, in 1803, the sight could not “be conveyed by words: the eye, not the ear, must be the medium of communication.” The marble great hall, where the disputations were held, “brought to my mind some of the enchanted castles described in the Arabian tales; and indeed I could scarcely persuade myself that I was not treading on magic ground all the time I was wandering through it.”¹⁵² The directors, for their part, were said to be amazed at reports of the disputations transmitted home.¹⁵³ Most, no doubt, concurred with a retired official that they were “a

¹⁴⁹ Cf. the claim of “incompleteness and contradiction” in Company ceremonies of this era. Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1987), 641.

¹⁵⁰ “Visit to the Government House,” trans. Leyden, 202.

¹⁵¹ Graham, *Journal*, 138-9.

¹⁵² J. Johnson, *The Oriental Voyager; or, Descriptive Sketches and Cursory Remarks, on a Voyage to India and China* (London, 1807), 100; see similarly Charles Whalley to William Morgan Whalley, 2 Aug. 1807, Bowley Papers, Gloucestershire Archives, D4582/5/3.

¹⁵³ Claudius Buchanan to Wellesley, 6 Mar. 1806, 38v.

very vain miserable piece of Business,” “of no consequence to the Company’s Service nor to the advancement of literature.”¹⁵⁴ It was Wellesley’s ally Scott who best appreciated his counterargument and, indeed, his political rationale for the college as a whole. By maintaining the ascendancy of “our provincial rulers ... in the eyes of other men,” Scott conceived, the college might sustain “the charm by which that immense eastern empire could alone be held.”¹⁵⁵ “Charm” was an apt word, for there was something talismanic in Wellesley’s idea of sovereignty, as if the constituent elements mattered less than the awesome magnificence of their arrangement. Knowledge held pride of place among these elements, but in the final disposition its provenance was almost beside the point. The disputations and the style of rule they underpinned may suggest an instance of the “invention of tradition.”¹⁵⁶ They do not suggest an episode in the “Anglicist-Orientalist controversy.”

Aftershocks

In the summer of 1805, Wellesley vacated his gilt chair and departed for England. His war-making against the Marathas for the past two years had finally upset the alliance with the controlling authorities and led to his effective recall. Reviewing the outgoing administration in a draft despatch later rejected by the board, the directors beheld

such a series of ... assumptions of new authority by the Governor General himself, that the character of our Indian Government has in his hands undergone an essential change. It has in fact been turned

¹⁵⁴ Edward Strachey, Minute (Jul. 1814), BL IOR H/488, 600, 602.

¹⁵⁵ Scott to Wellesley, 8 Sept. 1803, in *Correspondence of David Scott*, ed. Philips, 2:431.

¹⁵⁶ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

into a pure and simple despotism ... [T]he authority of the Court of Directors has, in many instances, been disregarded and in some astonishingly insulted ...¹⁵⁷

Wellesley's policies, the court reiterated in correspondence with the board, "went to establish a new species of Government and of Power," substituting "discretion" on the spot for "subjection and obedience to the authority at home."¹⁵⁸ The return of the trusty, if infirm, Cornwallis as Wellesley's replacement marked an attempt to repair some of this damage. Upon Cornwallis's death, under three months in, a narrative of his administration was dispatched to Grant, now chairman of the court, assuring him that a spirit of deference and accountability had been restored at Government House. Cornwallis had thoroughly read up on the college, the narrative stated, and had framed measures scaling it back in accordance with the directors' wishes. He believed that patronage and trade should remain in their hands, and that "any approaches towards Colonization" must be intercepted. There was nothing he "would have deprecated more than the idea of trenching upon any of the Powers or Authority of the Court of Directors."¹⁵⁹ Cornwallis's acting replacement, George Barlow, followed much the same policy of appeasement.¹⁶⁰ It was a testament to the college's potent symbolism, however, that it continued to rankle the directors even after it had been reduced and largely replaced.

¹⁵⁷ Draft Public Despatch to Bengal (26 Mar. 1805), 7-9.

¹⁵⁸ Directors to Board, 6 Nov. 1805, Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13467, 50r, 57r, see also 41v-43r, 57v-58r, 69v.

¹⁵⁹ "Narrative of Marquis Cornwallis's Proceedings in India" (Sept. 1805), Cornwallis Papers, TNA PRO 30/11/210, 20v, 22r.

¹⁶⁰ See Barlow, Speech (3 Mar. 1806), in Roebuck, *Annals*, 105-15; Barlow to Charles Grant, 22 Mar. and 30 Nov. 1806, Barlow Papers, BL Mss Eur F176/29, 55-7, 100-104.

One lingering irritation was the Institution for Promoting the Natural History of India at Barrackpore, upriver from Calcutta. The institution had its origins in “a collection of birds and quadrupeds” started by Wellesley as a component of the college in 1800. Its continuation from 1804 as a separate establishment, superintended by Francis Buchanan, marked an obvious attempt to circumvent the directors’ retrenchment orders. Perhaps more galling still, Wellesley’s solicitation of specimens and information “from every part of India,” including Malacca, Bencoolen, and Ceylon, threatened to make the establishment a center of calculation to rival the directors’ new India Museum in London.¹⁶¹ Hence the court’s annoyance, in a despatch of June 1805, that its own repository was languishing from want of materials, due in part to “the indifference it has experienced from our Bengal Government.”¹⁶² Profound ideological differences were embedded in the two institutions. As a later memorandum put it, the “primary object of the East India Company for [endowing a] museum at the India House, was, to bring toge[ther] ... the varied natural productions and manufactures of India as ... a means for opening new Channels in Commerce and Manufacture.”¹⁶³ Hastings, in a memorable phrase, beheld “a new system for ingrafting the knowledge of India on the commercial pursuits of the Company.”¹⁶⁴ By

¹⁶¹ Wellesley, Minute (26 Jul. 1804), in *Despatches*, ed. Martin, 4:674-6. On “centers of calculation,” see Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1988).

¹⁶² Public Despatch to Bengal (5 Jun. 1805), cited in Ray Desmond, *The India Museum, 1801-1879* (London, 1982), 19.

¹⁶³ Memorandum [c. 1838-58], Records of the East India Company Library, BL Mss Eur F303/54; see Jessica Ratcliff, “The East India Company, the Company’s Museum, and the Political Economy of Natural History in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Isis* 107 (2016), 500.

¹⁶⁴ Hastings to Charles Wilkins, 1799, cited in Desmond, *India Museum*, 10, see 11-13. The “system” was not entirely new: as early as the seventeenth century, the Company had maintained a collection of specimens at its London headquarters. Thus, the museum’s earliest accessions included books and “articles of curiosity”

contrast, Wellesley envisioned the natural history establishment, like the college, as fulfilling “a duty imposed on the British Government in India by its present exalted situation” as imperial sovereign.¹⁶⁵ At one point, it was projected to form part of a constellation of scientific enterprises at Barrackpore, including also the Calcutta Botanical Garden and an experimental farm for improving agriculture. Located or relocated in proximity to the governor-general’s new country seat, these enterprises would be brought under his supervision and hence redound to his credit.¹⁶⁶ In the years following Wellesley’s departure, the natural history establishment was wound down under orders and budgetary constraints imposed by the directors. Funds for the collection and illustration of specimens were discontinued in 1807, though the aviary and menagerie survived for some time as places of public amusement.¹⁶⁷

The fortunes of Tipu’s library reveal similar dynamics of institutional duplication and competition resolving eventually in the directors’ favor. As we have seen, the appropriation of the library served important ideological functions in justifying Wellesley’s conquests and ennobling the College of Fort William. The original determination of the army’s prize committee, however, had been to disperse the collection, allocating the

gathered from East India House and the Company’s warehouses. See William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London, 1924), 149; Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England* (Cambridge, 1981), 74.

¹⁶⁵ Wellesley, Minute (26 Jul. 1804), 4:675.

¹⁶⁶ See Wellesley Papers, BL Add. MS 13797, 61r-62v; Add. MS 13828, 379r-388v; Add. MS 13833, 2r-29r.

¹⁶⁷ Bengal Public Proceedings (30 Apr. 1807), NAI, no. 1, 185-90; Mildred Archer, “India and Natural History: The Rôle of the East India Company, 1785-1858,” *History Today* 9 (1959), 738. On the fortunes of the park and gardens at Barrackpore, see Eugenia W. Herbert, *Flora’s Empire: British Gardens in India* (Philadelphia, 2011), 83-96.

choicest selections to the “Oriental Library” attached to the directors’ museum.¹⁶⁸ Upon founding the college Wellesley put a halt to these plans. “It is obvious,” he informed the court, “that much more public advantage can be derived” from lodging the manuscripts at the college, perhaps excepting those “merely valuable as curiosities.”¹⁶⁹ In their canceled despatch of July 1803, the directors voiced apprehension that their own library should be “superceded by the interception of contributions intended for it.” They acceded to Wellesley’s request for the present, however, on the condition that a catalogue “shall be formed & transmitted to us, and reserving to ourselves the power of sending for copies of any rare and curious Books it may contain.”¹⁷⁰ In June 1805, the directors returned to the subject of the collection, “which the captors destined for this House, and which we have always intended should be preserved in the Company’s Library.” They again demanded a catalogue, as well as copies of books lately published at Calcutta, and a number of “Kurans, Shahnamahs and other works” reportedly taken at Seringapatam and “remarkable for the fineness and variety of writing and the splendour of their Illuminations.”¹⁷¹ Of the twelve trunks of books and manuscripts sent by the college in response, however, only one was designated for the directors’ library. The rest were addressed to a relation of the vice-provost Buchanan “for the purpose of being presented, in the name of the College of Fort William, to several of the Universities, Public Schools, & Learned Societies in the United

¹⁶⁸ Bengal Public Proceedings (11 Sept. 1800), NAI, no. 47, 2599-601; Tipu Sultan Papers, BL Mss Eur E196, 49r-56v; David Price, *Memoirs of the Early Life and Service of a Field Officer* (London, 1839), 445.

¹⁶⁹ Wellesley, “Notes,” 2:353.

¹⁷⁰ Draft Public Despatch to Bengal (19 Jul. 1803), 526.

¹⁷¹ Public Despatch to Bengal (15 Jun. 1805), BL IOR E/4/658, 32, 33, see 29-40.

Kingdom.” At this “unprecedented & disrespectful” act, the directors issued a blistering rebuke: “Hitherto no Department subordinate to our authority had ever presumed to dispose of the Company’s Property without our consent, much less make Presents ... in its own name, as if it were an Establishment independent of our Control.”¹⁷² Two members of the college council offered to resign, though the error apparently lay with Buchanan.¹⁷³ The new governor-general, Lord Minto, sought to make amends, directing the college to send the directors all works originally allotted them by the prize committee, along with any duplicates of those intended for other repositories.¹⁷⁴ As late as 1810, however, the directors still had not quit the battlefield, objecting now to the physical condition of the books and manuscripts transmitted by the college.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

Disputes over the natural history establishment and Tipu’s library pointed to the most obdurate legacy of Wellesley’s college: a body of political language associating the support of knowledge with the performance of territorial sovereignty. After Wellesley’s departure, however, this mode of sovereignty would lose its regal valence. The governor-general

¹⁷² Public Despatch to Bengal (28 Feb. 1806), BL IOR E/4/659, 569-71, see 568-78.

¹⁷³ G. S. A. Ranking, “History of the College of Fort William from Its First Foundation,” *Bengal Past and Present* 7-24 (1911-22), 21:182-3; Rosane Rocher and Ludo Rocher, *The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company* (Abingdon, UK, 2012), 66-7. For the directors’ later acceptance of this explanation, see Public Despatch to Bengal (6 Sept. 1809), BL IOR E/4/667, 231-3.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Brown to College Council, 27 Nov. 1806, Tipu Sultan Papers, BL Mss Eur E196, 82v-83r.

¹⁷⁵ Public Despatch to Bengal, 10 Oct. 1810, BL IOR E/4/669, 435-46. For the response, see PCFW, vol. 562, 11-16.

tended to answer his critics with hauteur: “I am a dreadful tyrant; arbitrary, jealous of power, sovereign lord and master, and impatient of all control in India ... If you do not like me so, pray recall me.”¹⁷⁶ Yet behind such taunts lay an acknowledgement that he could not, in essential respects, be king. He could not rule indefinitely or found a dynasty. Excepting the remote hazards of colonization and independence, the directors’ greatest worry, should Wellesley’s example take hold, was that their role in the administration of India would be reduced to nominating and recalling governors.¹⁷⁷ It was significant that these ultimate prerogatives were not endangered: the transience of governors-general set limits to their authority. Wellesley had upheld the college as a guarantor of British permanence in India. But his recall, not to mention his ensuing impeachment, underlined the impermanence of the regal idiom he had devised.¹⁷⁸ While the College of Fort William has been seen as a landmark of institutionalized knowledge, this elides the extent to which the college was bound up with the governor-generalship.¹⁷⁹ No impersonal machine, it relied by design on the person of Wellesley. John Shore, now Lord Teignmouth, observed that the college’s success “must evidently depend ... on the invariable attention of the Governor-General.”¹⁸⁰ His correspondent, Charles Grant, repeated this point elsewhere: the

¹⁷⁶ Wellesley, cited in *Two Views*, ed. Ingram, vii.

¹⁷⁷ Directors to Board, 6 Nov. 1805, 42r-42v.

¹⁷⁸ For references to the College of Fort William in these ultimately unsuccessful proceedings, see HC Deb 6 (22 Apr. 1806), 856; HC Deb 6 (28 Apr. 1806), 938.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Kopf, *British Orientalism*, esp. 6, 67-80; Trautmann, *Aryans*, 114; Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 140, 152.

¹⁸⁰ Teignmouth to Grant, 30 Mar. 1801, cited in Lord Teignmouth, *Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth*, 2 vols. (London, 1843), 2:31.

college “would need to be superintended by a like spirit to that which has convened it.”¹⁸¹

He was determined, of course, not to let that happen. Wellesley had broken with the Company’s mercantile tradition, but he had failed to fix a regal one in its place. Patrimonial kingship was not to be a durable model for the government of British India. Yet in founding their own college, along much the same lines as Wellesley’s, had the directors not partly conceded his point?

¹⁸¹ Grant to Brown, 19 Jun. 1801, cited in Morris, *Grant*, 242.

Chapter 4

Scholar-Administrators and the Company in the Early Nineteenth Century

Upon landing at Madras in August 1803, the assistant surgeon John Leyden took quick stock of his surroundings. Fellow Britons here, he perceived,

fell naturally into two divisions. The Mercantile Party consisting of men of old standing versed in trade and inspired with a spirit in no respect superior to that of the most pettifogging pedlar, nor in their views a whit more enlarged. In short men whose sole consideration is to make money ... [T]his is the party that stands highest in credit with the E[ast] I[ndia] Company. Their is another party for whom I am more at a loss to find an epithet ... [T]hey have discovered that we are not merely merchants in India but legislators and governors and they assert that our conduct there ought to be calculated for stability and security and equally marked by a wise internal administration of justice, financial and political oeconomy, and by a vigilant firm and steady system of external politics. This class is represented by the first as ... tending to embroil us every where in India... I fancy this division applies as much to Bombay and Bengal as to Madras.

For Leyden, the choice between these two divisions had to some extent been made already.

Newly appointed to the East India Company's service, he would not encounter trade in the course of his public duties. Nor were servants of the Company any longer permitted to trade privately. Still, if Leyden could not become a merchant, he supposed that he could behave like one. He could focus on making money, and perhaps "collect a few thousand pounds in the course of 20 years" before retiring. For a gifted scholar who had already tasted literary success in Britain, however, there seemed to be another path. He could, "by superior knowledge of India, its laws, relations, politics and languages ... claim a situation somewhat more respectable" among those "men of the first abilities" who formed the other

division of his countrymen. It was this path that Leyden decided to follow, to become, as he put it, “a furious orientalist.”¹

The twinning of scholarly ambition and statist ideology was a defining trait among Leyden’s generation of Company scholar-administrators. While modern studies have alternately played up this generation’s Romanticism, Utilitarianism, and Evangelicalism—with the hoary polestars of “Anglicism” and “Orientalism” lurking never far behind—the Company’s arrival as a territorial power made a far stronger impression on contemporary minds.² If the conquest of Mysore in 1799 laid low one rival empire, the Maratha war of 1803-5 all but laid low another. What was more, the Battle of Delhi during the latter conflict rendered the once-formidable Mughal sovereign an effective vassal of the Company. “What a revolution,” as one student at the College of Fort William put it: “The Emperor of Hindoostan” and “representative of the famous house of Tymoor obliged to crave the protection of ... a mercantile association.”³ These developments suggested the possibility of a revolution not least in the scope and profile of the Company state. As governor-general from 1798-1805, Richard Wellesley had seen in territorial expansion the makings of a kingly sovereignty, and in his college at Calcutta the means of its legitimation. Although the Court of Directors in London succeeded in recalling Wellesley and reducing his signature

¹ Leyden to [James] Ballantyne, 24 Oct. 1805, Leyden and Erskine Papers, BL Add. MS 26561, 124v-125r. Leyden was assuredly not an “Orientalist” in the sense of a lover as well as scholar of the East, making him a vexing subject for those modern commentators who would identify the one with the other.

² E.g. respectively Michael J. Franklin, ed., *Romantic Representations of British India* (London, 2006); Ainslie Thomas Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (London, 1962); Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959).

³ William Fraser to father, 3 Apr. 1804, Fraser Papers, Reelig House, bundle 76, 4r.

institution, challenges to the Company's mercantile sovereignty were only to grow in coming years. Meanwhile, ideas about knowledge would continue to figure prominently in such challenges. The Charter Act of 1813, which curtailed the Company's monopoly, also committed it to patronizing knowledge from its land revenues. Scholar-administrators, Indian and European, framed increasingly ambitious intellectual projects with the aim to consolidate the territorial state. This commitment and these projects encouraged broader engagement between the Company and Indian society, and, in turn, a move towards thinking about native education. Neither the prodding of the Charter Act nor the pleading of scholar-administrators inspired much action from leaders in London or Calcutta, caught between commercial and territorial visions of empire. Yet by 1820, neither the territorial ascendancy of the Company nor the attendant political possibilities for native education could be ignored any longer.

Knowledge and the Charter Act of 1813

In the annals of the Company's concerns with knowledge, few documents loom as large as the Charter Act of 1813, section forty-three of which provides that,

it shall be lawful for the Governor General in Council to direct, that, out of any surplus which may remain of the rents, revenues, and profits arising from ... territorial acquisitions ... a sum of not less than one lack [one hundred thousand] of rupees in each year, shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India ...⁴

⁴ 53 Geo. III, c. 155, s. 43.

The interpretation of this clause was to form a point of contention during the “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy” of the 1830s, as one set of Calcutta officials construed support for European, and the other for Asian, learning and languages. Modern historians have variously adjudicated between these claims, often inferring a compromise at work in the statute’s original framing.⁵ Yet by embracing—not to mention distorting—the terms of a debate held two decades after the fact, these historians have neglected the concerns of the statute’s original framers. Despite its latter-day appellation as “the education clause,” section forty-three was initially directed more towards patronage than education. The shift in focus from the one to the other in official discussions of the clause tracked a larger shift in the ideological foundations of the Company state. For as the Company’s commercial empire evolved into a territorial one in the early decades of the nineteenth century, so its legitimacy came to rely on new modes of political engagement with knowledge.

Some of the historiographical confusion surrounding section forty-three can be traced to a simple case of mistaken identity. Historians have often attributed its lines to an evangelical party led within and without Parliament by William Wilberforce. This party is known to have introduced language elsewhere in the bill asserting the Company’s duty to foster the spread of “useful knowledge” among its subjects.⁶ Here such language carried religious overtones: it was part of a proposal, known then and since as the “pious clause,” to obtain for Christian missions freer access to the Company’s territories. Having failed to get this clause approved in 1793, however, Wilberforce sought to build a coalition that

⁵ E.g. *GCPI*, 6-7.

⁶ 53 Geo. III, c. 155, s. 33.

would include “friends of humanity who may not agree with us in religious sentiments.”⁷ Accordingly, he represented the clause to Richard Wellesley as a continuation of the former governor-general’s efforts to diffuse “useful knowledge *of all sorts* among the natives of India.”⁸ Nor was this merely a tactical ploy. Missionaries and their metropolitan supporters had long developed the argument that cultivating eastern and western knowledge together served Christianity by stimulating translations and favorable comparisons.⁹ In his remarks before the Commons, Wilberforce dwelt upon the missionaries at Serampore, whose converts had been few, but whose scholarly achievements entitled them “to our highest respect and admiration.” After all, he explained, “from education and instruction, from the diffusion of knowledge, from the progress of science, more especially from all these combined with the circulation of the Holy Scriptures in the native languages, I ultimately expect even more than from the direct labours of missionaries.”¹⁰ Insofar as section forty-three reinforced such para-evangelical activities, it would have been welcomed by Wilberforce and his allies.¹¹ The director Charles Grant, for one, approved of the clause’s

⁷ Cited in Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858* (Woodbridge, UK, 2012), 136, see generally 130-50.

⁸ Wilberforce to Wellesley, 6 Apr. 1813, in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, 5 vols. (London, 1838), 4:111 (emphasis added).

⁹ See Sujit Sivasundaram, “A Christian Benares’: Orientalism, Science and the Serampore Mission of Bengal,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44 (2007); Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (Oxford, 2015), 43-65.

¹⁰ HC Deb (22 Jun. 1813), 832, 870; see also HC Deb (12 Jul. 1813), 1195-6.

¹¹ Some evangelicals even claimed it as the work of their own party. E.g. “Report of the Committee,” in [Henry Ryder,] *A Sermon ... before the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East* (London, 1814), 270-71, 328-9.

“encouragement of literature and science.”¹² His own *Observations on the State of Society* (1797), which was reprinted and circulated in 1813, portrayed education as the surest route to conversion. Neither Grant nor Wilberforce nor any of their co-partisans, however, was responsible for drafting section forty-three.

According to parliamentary reports, the true author of the clause was the MP Robert Percy “Bobus” Smith, a member of the select committee recently appointed to inquire into the Company’s affairs.¹³ While Smith’s intellectual biography is patchy, it divulges some of the affinities and commitments behind section forty-three. After distinguishing himself as a Latinist at Eton and Cambridge, Smith used his wife’s connections to obtain a lucrative post as advocate general of Bengal. Serving in that capacity from 1803-11, he was popular with other scholar-administrators employed by the Company. John Leyden came out on the same ship and would recall enjoying “the society of the excellent R. Smith, whose profound comprehensive & versatile mind with equal ease fathomed the Abysses, unravelled the subtilties & amused itself with the playthings of literature & science.”¹⁴ By the following year, taking up a legal appointment in Bombay, James Mackintosh could report that “I have heard a great deal of Bobus. His fame is greater than that of any pundit since the time of Menu [Manu].”¹⁵ Henry Thomas Colebrooke, supreme council member

¹² HC Deb 26 (2 Jul. 1813), 1099.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 1098-9. Some fifty years later, an old India hand recalled Smith’s authorship of the clause, which he thought had not been recorded. This suggests that an independent memory of the fact lingered in Anglo-Indian circles. See John Clark Marshman, “The First Native Newspaper,” *Friend of India* (23 Jul. 1868), 851.

¹⁴ Leyden to William Erskine, 15 Sept. 1804, Leyden Papers, NLS MS 3383, 147r.

¹⁵ Mackintosh to Richard Sharp, 29 Jun. 1804, cited in *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, ed. Robert James Mackintosh, 2 vols. (London, 1835), 1:208.

and president of the Asiatic Society, met his wife through a mutual friendship with the clever judge.¹⁶ Both at home and abroad, it would seem, Smith was a consummate literary socialite. He contributed to *The Microcosm* magazine at Eton, founded the King of Clubs in London, and frequented the Asiatic Society in Calcutta.¹⁷ He later attended literary salons on the continent with the likes of Madame de Staël, who remarked that “due to his personality he comes in contact with everyone.”¹⁸ Smith would be remembered in limited circles as “a well of old poetry and ingenious philosophy,” and perhaps the greatest mind to adorn the Calcutta bar since William Jones.¹⁹ A Madras barrister visiting Calcutta found that “he was universally admired and beloved” as “the best-hearted, the most highly-gifted, the most pleasant and facetious of created beings.”²⁰ No less than Thomas Babington Macaulay would declare him “a great authority on Indian matters.”²¹ It is ironic, given the evident extent of Smith’s talents and connections, that he should remain something of a cipher. While ready to join his polymathic Calcutta friends in raising a tribute to Edward Jenner or adjudging translations at the Asiatic Society, Smith seems to have limited his own

¹⁶ T. E. Colebrooke, *The Life of H. T. Colebrooke* (London, 1873), 292.

¹⁷ *The Clubs of London; with Anecdotes of their Members, Sketches of Character, and Conversations*, 2 vols. (London, 1828), 2:159; *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, 4 vols. (Calcutta, 1980-2000), 2:31. For Smith’s likely membership of London’s Oriental Club, see Stephen Wheeler, ed., *Annals of the Oriental Club, 1824-1858* (London, 1925), 152.

¹⁸ Germaine de Staël to Lord and Lady Lansdowne, 24 Jan. 1816, in de Staël, *Correspondance Générale*, 9 vols. (Paris, 1960-2017), 9:390.

¹⁹ Lord Holland to Thomas Grenville, 6 Sept. 1832, Grenville Papers, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, D 56/7/25; see “The Bar in India,” *AJ* ns 15 (1834), 172; *Anglo-India: Social, Moral, and Political*, 3 vols. (London, 1838), 1:99.

²⁰ [Charles Marsh,] “Society in India,” *The New Monthly Magazine* 22-3 (1828), 22:233.

²¹ Macaulay to Hannah Macaulay, 21 Dec. 1833, in *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, ed. Thomas Pinney, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1974-81), 2:365.

scholarship to legal reports and the odd scrap of verse.²² He left little correspondence, to the consternation of biographers of his brother Sydney, the celebrated wit and preacher. Nor, despite early political ambitions, did he cut much of a figure in Parliament.²³ While Smith was clearly not a standard-bearer for any movement or ideology, however, his official duties forced him to grapple with “the Company’s political ascendancy” and the impracticability of treating it as “a mere Commercial establishment.”²⁴ Indeed, his extant letters reveal an enthusiasm for Richard Wellesley’s imperial vision, tempered slightly by a classicist’s wariness of ostentation and overextension.²⁵ Wellesley’s permanent replacement, Lord Minto, Smith believed made “a good quiet sensible Governor G[enera]l,” and the two were evidently on social terms.²⁶

Smith’s association with Minto underpins another, more plausible theory about the origins and meaning of section forty-three. In 1811, Minto proposed to remodel the Benares Sanskrit College and establish several other institutions “with a view to the restoration of

²² *Selections from the Calcutta Gazettes*, 5 vols. (Calcutta, 1864-8), 4:163; *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, 2:356.

²³ Thomas de Quincey, “Dr. Parr and His Contemporaries” (1831), in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. Frederick Burnwick, 21 vols. (London, 2000), 8:7-9; M. H. Port and R. G. Thorne, “Smith, Robert Percy (1770-1845),” in Thorne, ed., *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, 5 vols. (London, 1986), 5:201-3.

²⁴ T. Parr to George Dowdeswell, 18 Mar. 1807, Robert Percy Smith Papers, BL Mss Eur D1189, 43; see Smith to Dowdeswell, 19 Oct. 1807, at 54-6.

²⁵ Smith to James Mackintosh, 2 Aug. 1804, Mackintosh Papers, BL Add. MS 78764, 1v-2r; Smith to Lord Holland, 18 Aug. 1805 and 22 Sept. 1807, Holland House Papers, BL Add. MS 51801, 50r-50v, 55r; Smith to Lord Lansdowne, 5 Oct. 1805, Bowood Papers, BL Add. MS 88906/10/20; see Robert Percy Smith, *Early Writings of Robert Percy Smith*, ed. R. V. S. (Chiswick, 1850), 41-52.

²⁶ Smith to James Mackintosh, 14 Feb. 1808, Mackintosh Papers, BL Add. MS 78764, 8v; see Gilbert Elliot to family, Apr. 1808, in *Lord Minto in India: Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1807 to 1814*, ed. Countess of Minto (London, 1880), 88.

learning and the more general diffusion of knowledge” in India.²⁷ At least several later officials would see this proposal reflected in the Charter Act of 1813, and the notion has remained attractive for imaginers of an “Orientalist” tradition of Company rule.²⁸ Yet while Smith reportedly voted against the pious clause, he described its provision for “the diffusion of knowledge in India” not as anathema but merely as inadequate.²⁹ Indeed, he was far from hostile to the introduction of European knowledge. His parliamentary remarks called not only “for the promotion of native literature in the East,” but “for the encouragement of sciences among the natives,” apparently referring to European sciences.³⁰ According to the chairman of the directors Robert Thornton, it was the latter provision that received greater emphasis in the discussion of the Commons, and there is no indication that Smith objected.³¹ This is not to say, however, that Smith was at odds with Minto, who made clear that the knowledge he himself proposed to diffuse in India included “the light of European science.”³² And while the chairman suggested that the similarities between Minto’s minute

²⁷ Lord Minto, Minute (6 Mar. 1811), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 485. This proposal itself resembles a memorial submitted to Minto’s predecessor but preserved in his own papers. See “Memorial Delivered to Sir G. Barlow in 1806,” Minto Papers, NLS MS 11726, 1r-7v.

²⁸ See *GIED*, 91-2 n 1.

²⁹ HC Deb (2 Jul. 1813), in *Parliamentary Register* 3 (1813), 344. According to this source, Smith was also responsible for a grant to archdeacons at the three Indian presidencies. For his vote on the pious clause, see HC Deb (12 Jul. 1813), in *Morning Chronicle* (17 Jul. 1813).

³⁰ HC Deb 26 (2 Jul. 1813), 1099; see H. Verney Lovett, “Education and Missions to 1858,” in H. H. Dodwell, ed., *The Indian Empire*, vol. 6 of *The Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge, 1932), 103.

³¹ Thornton to Marquess of Hastings, 5 Sept. 1813, Marquess of Hastings Papers, Mount Stuart, HA/9/28; see HC Deb 26 (2 Jul. 1813), 1099. Thornton was a witness to this discussion, though as a supporter of the “pious clause,” perhaps not an impartial one. See HC Deb 26 (3 and 23 Jun. 1813), 548-9, 873.

³² Minto, Speech (18 Feb. 1809), in Thomas Roebuck, *Annals of the College of Fort William* (Calcutta, 1819), 214.

and Smith's resolution were coincidental, the timing of the two allows for the possibility that he was mistaken.³³ What is more, the same influence could have taken another form. The restoration and diffusion of knowledge were themes Minto touched on frequently, for instance, in his speeches at the annual disputations of the College of Fort William, which Smith would have attended in his capacity as a "law officer" of the institution.

Whether or not section forty-three can be linked to Minto's minute, what we know about Smith suggests taking a wider view of his influences. As a clubbable and cultivated European in Bengal, Smith's milieu was that of Company scholar-administrators who sought to leverage their positions for knowledge and their knowledge for positions. Though this is less well documented, the advocate general would also have interacted frequently with highborn Indians who worked as *munshis*, *maulvis*, and *pandits* in the courts. These two sets of connections, European and Indian, could not but have informed his political thinking. According to a report of the Commons session of 2 July 1813, Smith introduced his resolution as one "to lay aside a *modicum* for founding schools for the literature of the natives, wherein they should be themselves the teachers; and for communicating the sciences to them through the medium of Europeans." Later in the same session, he described the resolution in similar terms as an "appropriation of a sum of money for the promotion of native literature in the East, for the encouragement of sciences among the natives, and for the establishment of a native college or colleges."³⁴ "Education clause," it

³³ Thornton to Marquess of Hastings, 5 Sept. 1813; see Michael Hancher, "Reading and Writing the Law: Macaulay in India," in Michael Freeman and Fiona Smith, eds., *Law and Language: Current Legal Issues* (Oxford, 2013), 195-6.

³⁴ HC Deb 26 (2 Jul. 1813), 1098-9.

appears from these remarks, is something of a misnomer. “Patronage clause” would be more apt, since Smith evidently sought less to institute a new system for spreading learning than to invigorate an old system for supporting the learned. The main beneficiaries of a “*modicum*” spent on science and on “a native college or colleges” would surely be the rarefied set of scholar-administrators, Indian and European, with whom Smith was acquainted and to whom the Company had generally dispensed favors in the past.

The home authorities explicitly recommended patronizing scholar-administrators in their instructions regarding section forty-three. “Having necessarily transferred all power and pre-eminence from native to European agency,” they wrote, it was necessary for the Company, not least “from motives of policy ... to consult the feelings ... of the natives.” And in this “political point of view, considerable advantages might ... flow from the measure” if it were properly implemented. On the one hand, little advantage could be expected from “public colleges,” since their principles of “subordination and discipline” would repulse those “natives of caste and of reputation” whom it was most desirable to attract. On the other hand, great advantage could be expected from encouraging such individuals “in the exercise and cultivation of their talents, by the stimulus of honorary marks of distinction, and in some instances by grants of pecuniary assistance.” Attentions in this vein to the *pandits* of Benares, for instance, might prove a “powerful instrument of connexion and conciliation,” especially with the formidable Marathas, who maintained close ties to the city’s *deshastha* (Maratha *brahman*) families. Encouraging Company servants to study Sanskrit treatises on law, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics might likewise forge “links of communication between the natives and the gentlemen in our

service.” And finally, extending support to village teachers might be advantageous since, “humble as their situation may appear ... those village teachers are held in great veneration throughout India.” In short, the authors of the despatch envisioned section forty-three as “the means, by an improved intercourse of the Europeans with the natives, to produce those reciprocal feelings of regard and respect which are essential to the permanent interests of the British Empire in India.”³⁵

With its emphasis on conciliating learned elites, this despatch of 1814 recalled policies developed by the former governor-general Warren Hastings. Indeed, this was no coincidence. While the document’s authorship went unrecorded and has remained a point of speculation, extant correspondence reveals that its substance and most of its language derived from comments by Hastings and his old friend Charles Wilkins, which had been solicited by the Board of Control.³⁶ Wilkins, by then the librarian at East India House, had been contacted first with instructions to record his thoughts on implementing section forty-three. The plan he returned comprised largely a taxonomy of *pandit* subcastes gleaned from his Sanskrit researches decades earlier in Benares, along with notes on their past and potential relations with state and society. In addition to the village teachers mentioned in the despatch, Wilkins listed “Grammarians,” “Rhetoricians,” “Poets,” “Philosophers,” “Physicians,” “Professors of Divinity,” “Professors of Morals and Jurisprudence,” “Professors

³⁵ Extract Public Despatch to Bengal (3 Jun. 1814), in *GIED*, 94-6. On links between the Marathas and Benares *deshasthas*, see Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in Early Modern India,” *MAS* 44 (2010).

³⁶ John Sullivan to Warren Hastings, 29 Sept. 1813, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29234, 203v; Hastings to Sullivan, 7 Oct. 1813, at 216r. Wilkins’—but not Hastings’—contribution has been noted by Simon Schaffer, “The Asiatic Enlightenments of British Astronomy,” in Schaffer et al., eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820* (Sagamore Beach, Mass., 2009), 79.

of heroic poetry and ancient history,” and “Professors of the Science of the Hindu Symphony and instrumental music and dancing.” He emphasized that this catalogue was incomplete and recommended inquiries to “determine what classes of learned men ought, in good policy, to be the chief objects of encouragement.” His larger point, however, was that these scholarly elites in all their diverse roles acted as guardians of the social order, or, as he termed it, “the Hindu Hierarchy.” Maintaining this hierarchy, he argued, was essential for maintaining political stability:

If unhappily any measures should be pursued to ... break up these political distinctions and gradations in society we call *casts*, and the whole male population of India be left free to follow any occupation they like, even that of a soldier ... there is danger, that they will soon be united and embodied as an armed nation, after the example of the Sikhs, and become too formidable for their rulers.

For Wilkins, these negative considerations were paramount, and he declared himself “one of those who think the clause in question cannot be acted upon with too much circumspection. Politically, I would no more interfere with the education of the natives, and their pursuit of literature and science, than with their religious opinions and practises.” Lest it be thought that this reasoning precluded the “introduction” or “improvement” of knowledge as directed by the statute, however, Wilkins went on to suggest how European sciences could be imparted via the privileged medium of Sanskrit. There was no necessary opposition between the “ancient” learning of Indians and the “modern” learning of Europeans. On the contrary, and as the home authorities would reiterate, the “reciprocal communication of knowledge” between *pandits* and Company servants could facilitate

political alliances.³⁷ Yet it was on this question of reciprocal communication that Wilkins' friend and former patron grounded his dissent.

That the board should have consulted Hastings reflected both his abiding scholarly reputation and his recent political rehabilitation, which had culminated in testimony on the charter negotiations before both full houses of Parliament. For one old schoolmate, it was as if "the world has just found out that Mr. Hastings, now 84, is a great man."³⁸ Another acquaintance noted that

Throughout the whole investigation the most marked attention has been paid, both to his person and his opinions... Being the person who was first examined in both houses, he was in some measure a guide and pioneer to his followers, showing and clearing the way, not merely for those who were to answer the questions, but for those who were to ask them.³⁹

The path Hastings delineated in Parliament led backwards in time, repudiating much of Wellesley's imperial legacy as well as current proposals to end the Company's monopoly and afford freer ingress to missionaries and other Europeans.⁴⁰ Like Wilkins, he worried most about disturbing India's social order. Indeed, for that reason, he found much to praise in the Sanskritist's plan and on a first reading was inclined to give it his "almost entire acquiescence." Yet Hastings' concerns ultimately ran even deeper than those of his friend. If "no Bramin of any reputation would submit to 'the subordination and discipline of a college,'" Hastings demurred, "much less would he be disposed to acknowledge any ...

³⁷ Wilkins to John Sullivan, 25 Aug. 1813, *ibid.*, 204r-211v, 243r-243v.

³⁸ William Vincent to William Francklin, 10 Jul. 1813, Vincent-Francklin Letters, National Library of India, R 19/14.

³⁹ [George Nesbitt] Thompson to John D'Oyley, 17 May 1813, in G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings*, 3 vols. (London, 1841), 3:462.

⁴⁰ See HC Deb (30 Mar. 1813), 415-29; HL Deb (5 Apr. 1813), 553-63.

scholastic superior in a man of no cast at all.” As for section forty-three, therefore, “No specific plan can be devised for its operation. If the Braminical establishment has any wants let the professors of it represent them. Let them be even invited to represent them.”⁴¹ This objection did not, seemingly, preclude instructing *pandits* in European knowledge, but it suggested that such instruction would have to occur on their terms. Hastings’ comments, to a greater extent even than Wilkins’, had a negative thrust, amounting to a rearguard action against policies of social levelling and social interference generally. Harkening back to an earlier age, however, they gave the home authorities little guidance for meeting the political challenges of the present. With its limp proposal to implement section forty-three “in the course of time” and orders not to “adopt any arrangement” without approval, the despatch of 1814 was a nonstarter.⁴²

It could hardly have been otherwise, perhaps, given the uncertainties bound up in the Charter Act as a whole. For contemporaries the act was liable to appear momentous in two respects. First, by opening the door to missionaries, it opened the door to an evangelical interest that had been gaining in strength but never before received such official sanction. Second, by terminating the India monopoly, it threatened the balance between sovereignty and trade whose preservation had so often dominated in the Company’s political calculus. Still, neither provision effected a transformation in the Company state. For one thing, there would be no triumph of evangelical ideology. Not only did the

⁴¹ Hastings, “My Observations on Mr. Wilkins’s Plan” (7 Oct. 1813), Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29234, 212r-215v.

⁴² Extract Public Despatch to Bengal (3 Jun. 1814), 96.

negotiated language of the “pious clause” preserve the ultimate right of the Company to curb missionary activity; it also enshrined the ultimate right of Indians to “the free exercise of their religion.”⁴³ As this outcome demonstrated, the home government was a ponderous machine and evangelicals controlled few of the levers. Their *de facto* leader Charles Grant commanded only a minority on the Court of Directors, which was wracked by internal divisions and by enmity with the Board of Control.⁴⁴ Nor was Grant always willing to privilege religious considerations: he sometimes appeared less concerned with saving souls than with saving the Company. Meanwhile, there would be no clean break with mercantile tradition. The Company was still trading and still retained a monopoly on the profitable China route for at least another twenty years. It was also becoming something of an umbrella organization for private commercial concerns.⁴⁵ Even as fewer Company servants themselves partook in trade, they often had kin who did, thus sustaining “the nexus between state office and business activity.”⁴⁶ Nor were there merely pragmatic considerations in favor of the status quo. Despite the recent gains of free-trade liberals, a potent strain of British economic discourse upheld the defense of mercantile sovereignty.⁴⁷ In the view of many home officials, finally, Wellesley’s administration had cast a long

⁴³ See Carson, *Company and Religion*, 147-8.

⁴⁴ C. H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784-1834*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1961), 152-209; H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), 132-3.

⁴⁵ Anthony Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics, 1790-1860* (Woodbridge, UK, 2009).

⁴⁶ D. A. Washbrook, “India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism,” in Andrew Porter, ed., *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3 of *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1999), 412.

⁴⁷ Anna Gambles, *Protection and Politics: Conservative Economic Discourse, 1815-1852* (Woodbridge, UK, 1999), 158-65.

shadow over the alternative prospect of a concentrated, *unmercantile* sovereignty. For all of these reasons, the Charter Act introduced merely new political possibilities rather than a new understanding of the Company state.

Section forty-three did appear to some British commentators to present a vehicle for realizing such possibilities. Already on the eve of the charter negotiations, there were hints, if only hints, that the outgoing governor-general had begun to theorize a new and expansive political role for knowledge. In his minute of 1811, Minto entertained the radical prospect of a “more general diffusion of knowledge among the great body of the people.” Widespread ignorance, he alleged, encouraged crimes such as “perjury and forgery,” and impeded efforts towards “better government.” It was thus in the interest of the state to provide a “proper education” to “the different classes of society.”⁴⁸ As a later advocate of mass education in India would complain, Minto only “abstractedly considered” these ideas, without proposing any specific measures “*as regards ‘the great body of the people.’*”⁴⁹ He seems to have approved of a passing remark by James Mackintosh that “Knowledge should be imparted to the Natives through colleges,” writing in the margin, “Native Colledges like that founded at Benares but on more liberal principles.”⁵⁰ In addition, he proposed to make Sanskrit works more widely available through print and public libraries, couching these

⁴⁸ Minto, Minute (6 Mar. 1811), 484.

⁴⁹ [Alexander Duff,] “The Early or Exclusively Oriental Period of Government Education in Bengal,” *Calcutta Review* 3 (1845), 259-60.

⁵⁰ J[ames] M[ackintosh], “Extract of a Letter to a Gentleman in England” (6 Mar. 1808), Minto Papers, NLS MS 11733, 62v.

measures in terms of “the general diffusion of knowledge.”⁵¹ It was unclear, however, how the benefits of such measures would extend beyond the learned few who could read Sanskrit. What, then, distinguished Minto’s views from those of previous governors-general? According to the scholar-administrator Horace Hayman Wilson, the answer was not much. Minto patronized “natives of talent” and “influence,” he surmised, to compensate “for that neglect to which the decay and extinction of native patrons of rank had subjected them, and ... to identify their interests with those of a foreign and intrusive race.”⁵² In other words, Minto followed the policy of conciliation developed by Hastings.

The remarks Robert Percy Smith gave in Parliament, centering as they did on scholarly patronage, hewed closer to this policy than to Minto’s inchoate plans to educate “the different classes of society.” At the same time, Smith hinted at broader possibilities. According to one hitherto unnoticed account of the relevant Commons session, Smith declared that his resolution “would be but just, as we extract[] from this people 17 millions yearly.” The “people” in question comprised not India’s intellectual elites but its laboring masses, from whom the Company extracted most of its revenues. And then there was Smith’s suggestion of “colleges, lectures, or schools,” which, even if limited by funding to a single institution, might presumably open the door to further such undertakings.⁵³ This suggestion survived in the statutory language penned by the Board of Control. It also drew

⁵¹ Minto, Speech (18 Feb. 1809), 212; see Minto, Minute (6 Mar. 1811), 485.

⁵² Horace Hayman Wilson, *The History of British India, from 1805 to 1835*, 3 vols. (London, 1845-8), 1:483. Wilson had arrived in Bengal in 1808.

⁵³ HC Deb (2 Jul. 1813), in *Parliamentary Register* 3 (1813), 344.

comment from the two officials whom the board consulted thereafter. Wilkins, like his respondents, disapproved of “public colleges” as being unconciliatory. But he endorsed “public lectures” in connection with

those wonderful Poems, denominated Purans. At Benares, in particular, these ancient works are read and explained in public halls to the people for a trifling gratuity. When I myself was a student there, I often attended these readings, and from the instruction and amusement I received, and the effect they produced upon the rest of the audience, I think they ought to be encouraged, and made the channel of moral instruction to the mass of the people.⁵⁴

Neither Hastings nor the home authorities took up this novel and striking idea. Perhaps “moral instruction” smacked too strongly of the kind of unsolicited social interference Hastings argued should be avoided.

Another of Wilkins’ ideas, to extend state support to village teachers, generated greater enthusiasm. These provincial *brahmans*, said to “form a part of the established constitution of every Village Community throughout India,” had come to enjoy a certain celebrity at the metropole.⁵⁵ Their “monitorial” methods, as practiced around Madras, had been adapted and publicized by the Company chaplain Andrew Bell from 1789 and garnered further attention in the 1800s from the complementary experiments of the London schoolmaster Joseph Lancaster. Influential on the missionary schools movement, the “Bell-Lancaster system” also informed early concepts of “national education” in Britain.⁵⁶ What made village teachers effective pedagogues, meanwhile, made them attractive as agents of the Company state. Situated atop the social structures of their

⁵⁴ Wilkins to Sullivan, 25 Aug. 1813, 207r.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 207v.

⁵⁶ See Jana Tschurennev, “Imperial Experiments in Education: Monitorial Schooling in India, 1789-1835” (PhD, Humboldt University of Berlin, 2009).

respective localities, village teachers were elites who mixed with lower classes and earned their respect. In the eyes of Company officials, therefore, they suggested a potentially valuable link between the state and the vast body of its subjects. As Wilkins put it to the board, “These useful drudges should be registered and receive ample support and encouragement from Government.”⁵⁷ Hastings differed on this score only when it came to “the contemptuous appellation of ‘drudges,’” preferring, for his part, “the denomination of servants of the state, and objects of its administrative authority.”⁵⁸ Drawing heavily on the remarks of both former officials, the home government’s despatch held up village teachers as efficient “public servants” and their traditional maintenance by endowments as a “distinguished feature of internal polity.” It instructed the government in Calcutta to undertake inquiries into their present state and wants, and, in the meantime, to guarantee “their just rights and immunities.”⁵⁹ At one level, village teachers presented an avenue for the well-worn strategy of conciliating elites. At another level, however, they presented an instrument for expanding the Company state’s indigenous base of support beyond this established constituency. Anxiety about upsetting India’s social hierarchy and, in turn, the Company’s political stability was compatible with an awareness that new challenges demanded new responses. Indeed, incorporating village teachers into the machinery of administration promised not only to advance “native agency,” but to extend the state’s influence downward from the upper classes and inward from the maritime presidencies.

⁵⁷ Wilkins to Sullivan, 25 Aug. 1813, 207r-207v.

⁵⁸ Hastings, “Observations,” 212v.

⁵⁹ Extract Public Despatch to Bengal (3 Jun. 1814), 95-6.

And this might be only the beginning. Hastings noted that his ideas respecting the village teachers “may be repeated of the village Bramins officiating in the common exercise of their religious worship.”⁶⁰ Wilkins went further, remarking that, “Though I would not interfere with the religion of the natives, I see no objection why Government should not ... exercise a controul over its ministers, whom I consider servants of the state.”⁶¹ What Hastings and Wilkins were driving at was an alliance between the central government and local “clergy” analogous to that which had shaped post-Roman European state formation. The idea was pregnant with radical implications, including not only curbing the influence of Christianity but rendering Hinduism akin to the state religion. Yet neither Hastings nor Wilkins pursued this line of thinking far enough to countenance such possibilities. Pushing at the boundaries of conciliation, they would not—perhaps could not—devise a political language to replace it. For all the enthusiasm of the Board of Control, meanwhile, the practicalities of coordinating and officializing village teachers would not be seriously weighed until the 1820s, when a new generation of Company officials gravitated towards schemes of mass education. In the interim, any such designs fell to private individuals and voluntary societies. Despite carrying on an extensive correspondence with Moira, Hastings himself never recurred to the subject.

Moira’s own response to section forty-three was not shaped by the despatch of 1814 alone. In the first year of his governor-generalship, he received plans from no fewer than three Europeans based in Calcutta. While the judge John Herbert Harington echoed

⁶⁰ Hastings, “Observations,” 212v.

⁶¹ Wilkins to Sullivan, 25 Aug. 1813, 243r.

Minto's proposal to restore certain venerable native colleges, men of the cloth William Carey and Thomas Thomason called for extensive networks of predominately elementary schools.⁶² Noncommittal as to these various locally-devised schemes, Moira had greater reason to listen to the powerful director Charles Grant. He may have inferred Grant's opposition to the despatch of 1814 even before having it confirmed in personal correspondence. The grounds of this opposition, however, were subtler than the chairman's letter or other secondhand reports might have suggested. Grant had never been a monolithic evangelical. Moral invocation mingled characteristically with political calculation in the missives of the long-serving Company man. Furthermore, while Grant had fought hard to preserve the Company's trading privileges and to curb the expansionist tendencies of its governors-general, his own conception of sovereignty broke partially from mercantile tradition to emphasize the territorial responsibilities of the state.⁶³ Thus, in one letter to Moira, he cited the Company's initial "acquisition of territorial dominion in India" as a watershed, which had ushered in principles "of preservation & of progressive refinement." It was in accordance with these principles that he exhorted Moira to found schools for Indian children. For "as the Minds of that people are enlarg'd by greater knowledge in things compatible with their superstition, they may be expected to become more readily susceptible of encreas'd influence from our superior lights & principles."⁶⁴

⁶² J. Sargent, *The Life of the Rev. T. T. Thomason* (London, 1833), 236; David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969), 149-51.

⁶³ See Embree, *Grant*, 209-81.

⁶⁴ Grant to Marquess of Hastings, Apr. 1817, Marquess of Hastings Papers, Mount Stuart, HA/9/35. In 1816, Moira became the Marquess of Hastings.

This was an evangelical and providentialist outlook, but it was also a statist one. The “preservation” Grant alluded to was that of the Company state.

A similar concern with preservation marked the lobbying efforts of Hastings. Yet even ostensibly subtle interventions in Indian society of the kind proposed by Grant gave him cause for alarm. Upon Moira’s appointment in 1812, Hastings asked a common friend to extend his congratulations and a dinner invitation.⁶⁵ At the start of the long correspondence that followed, he acknowledged a certain

diffidence, arising from the changes which a lapse of twenty seven years has produced in the system of government ... in its foreign policy and relations, its vast extension of territory, its regulations of law, finance, and even rights of property ... I fear[] I shall have to add commercial competitions. Many of these are wholly new to me, and some of which I have no knowledge.

Hastings was wary of most of these changes, even some that he had once sanctioned in theory, like the opening of trade, or in practice, like the expansion of territory. Diffidence notwithstanding, he enjoined Moira to follow the policy of conciliation that he had developed for an earlier age, when the Company’s trade was more and its dominion less conspicuous. Communicating with Indians, upholding “their relative ranks in society,” patronizing influential elites: these were the watchwords of Hastings’ still-commercial idiom of sovereignty.⁶⁶ Once foisted on him by necessity, this was an idiom he now assumed by choice. As ever, meanwhile, he envisioned a prominent role for knowledge, embracing some of his earlier initiatives. Although the Chinese now excluded Europeans from Bhutan and Tibet, for instance, Hastings detected “among our native subjects men

⁶⁵ Hastings to Charles Hastings, 13 Nov. 1812, Hastings Manuscripts, Huntington Library, HA 6194.

⁶⁶ Hastings to Moira, 12 Nov. 1812, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29234, 2v, 5r-5v.

amply qualified” to follow in the footsteps of George Bogle and Samuel Turner. Particularly fit for the task, he suggested, were high-caste, well-connected *gosains*. Any accomplishments in the political sphere were likely to be modest. Still, Hastings wrote, “I cannot help wishing that your L[ordshi]p should maintain the existence of this connection... It opens a new, and almost untried field of knowledge ... and who can set bounds to its discoveries?” The ultimate discoveries of a land route to China and access to its emperor still beckoned, however remotely. And their vast implications for “our commercial factories at Canton” made the attempt well worthwhile.⁶⁷ Commercial opportunity was also the rationale Hastings cited in urging Moira to sponsor researches in Nepal:

Your own discovery of an article of so little ostensible value as the transportation of wooden bowls from the remote province of Kemâoon to the Empire of China might lead to a more rational as well as profitable subject of speculation than the successful enquiry after one of the lost tribes of Israel among the mountains of Caubool.⁶⁸

Apart from Hastings’ abiding mercantile orientation, these comments disclosed his abiding interest in the publications of Company servants, including, it would seem, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (1815) by Mountstuart Elphinstone and, reputedly, Francis Irvine. The nabob controversy may have died out a generation ago, but Hastings still saw political value in the researches of European as well as Indian scholar-administrators. Patronizing these researches would benefit the Company’s metropolitan reputation and, he suggested

⁶⁷ Hastings to Moira, 24 Dec. 1812, *ibid.*, 24r-25r.

⁶⁸ Hastings to Marquess of Hastings, 3 Jan. 1817, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29130, 111r-111v.

elsewhere, curb precipitous calls to interfere in Indian society.⁶⁹ If Hastings' letters to Moira thus hewed closely to the old logic of conciliation, they nonetheless revealed certain concessions to the changing times. Following the general decline of Muslim dynasties and the loss of influence among *'ulama* in the region, Hastings had refocused almost exclusively on conciliating learned Hindus.⁷⁰ Moreover, as his verdict on Wilkins' plan showed, he had moved towards the position that this required not only accommodating such elites to state power but insulating them from it. After rendering this opinion to the Board of Control, Hastings wrote Moira privately, reiterating the case "simply to abstain from all interference in the religious or scholastic discipline of the Pundits, but such as they themselves shall solicit for their protection and authority."⁷¹ This admonition was of a piece with Hastings' larger concern: that the Company state was ramifying beyond safe limits, social as well as spatial.

Grant and Hastings presented Moira with alternative visions of the Company state, both tentative, neither fully articulated, but each grounded in a particular mode of political engagement with knowledge. Grant advocated founding schools as a means of deepening the state's involvement in Indian society. Hastings advocated propping up scholarly elites as a means of keeping state and society at arm's length. The choice, in other words, was between social intervention via education and social preservation via patronage. Moira

⁶⁹ Ibid., 111r. Hastings argued that by placing *brahmanical* learning "before the eyes of the Public" in Britain, Company servants would improve political opinion towards that class. Hastings, "Wilkins's Plan," 212v.

⁷⁰ In testimony before the House of Lords, Hastings reckoned that Indian Muslim elites "have now scarcely any existence." HL Deb (5 Apr. 1813), 560.

⁷¹ Hastings to Moira, 14 Sept. 1814, Marquess of Hastings Papers, Mount Stuart, HA/9/28.

delayed responding to the home government's despatch, and hence having to adjudicate between these visions, until after an extensive tour of the northern provinces in 1814-15. Among the stops on this tour was Benares, the focus of so much interest among the various interpreters of section forty-three. Expectations duly heightened, Moira was "particularly curious to assure myself of the state of learning" at the Sanskrit college founded by the Company two decades earlier.⁷² He came away disappointed, convinced by what he had seen and heard that "the instruction communicated at this college was wretchedly superficial in every line."⁷³ The initial impulse Moira recorded in his journal would have pleased Hastings: with the active "co-operation of some of the principal natives," he planned to render the institution "effective for its professed ends."⁷⁴ In a formal despatch to the home authorities a year later, however, Moira departed from this conciliatory line, describing the support of existing native colleges as "a project altogether delusive" due to the extent of their decay. Funds made available under section forty-three, he now held, should go towards establishing experimental district schools and furnishing village teachers with compilations of universal morals. Underpinning this turn towards bottom-up educational reform was a sense that the Company state had reached a climacteric. Whereas earlier administrations had been constrained by "the necessities of self-defense," according to Moira, half a century of expansion and integration had cleared the way for "a

⁷² Lord Moira, Minute (2 Oct. 1815), in PP (1819-20), vol. 533, 161.

⁷³ Marquess of Hastings, *The Private Journal of the Marquess of Hastings*, ed. Marchioness of Hastings, 2 vols. (London, 1858), 1:128. This was not simply "Anglicist" chauvinism: Moira's impression of the nineteenth-century Sanskrit curriculum as insular and perfunctory has recently been echoed in a provocative essay by a prominent scholar of the language. See Sheldon Pollock, "The Death of Sanskrit," *CSSH* 43 (2001), esp. 412-14.

⁷⁴ Marquess of Hastings, *Private Journal*, 1:128.

more enlarged and liberal policy”: that of obtaining “credit” with the people at large by cultivating their “intellect” and “moral duties.” Moira still anticipated that his plan was “most likely to succeed” with the cooperation of “natives of birth and education.” This was also the thrust of a lengthy analysis of the Company’s judicial administration in the same minute. But would reconceiving the state as he suggested not entail reconfiguring social relations among its subjects? Moira left open as a matter for deliberation “the nature as well as the extent” of future interference by the state, but he hinted that it might diffuse knowledge “to places and persons now out of its reach.”⁷⁵ Endorsing both conciliation and education, albeit with the latter ultimately in mind, Moira supplied a coda to the first career of section forty-three and a preview of the second.

Although Grant would have found more to praise than Hastings, neither could have been wholly satisfied with Moira’s conclusions. Not only did these split the difference between education and conciliation in uncertain terms; they were predicated on a Wellesleyan territorial expansion that ran up against the Company’s longstanding mercantile sovereignty. Grant would later withhold support from a motion of the directors to award Moira a large sum in recognition of his services. While Grant applauded the governor-general’s interest in education, he objected to his “system of foreign policy, that is of extension by conquest.”⁷⁶ Nor, perhaps, was the one separable from the other. For Moira, education was a corollary to conquest. This explains why, after announcing his plans

⁷⁵ Moira, Minute (2 Oct. 1815), 160-62.

⁷⁶ Cited in Henry Morris, *The Life of Charles Grant: Sometime Member of Parliament for Inverness-Shire and Director of the East India Company* (London, 1904), 357-8.

for section forty-three in 1815, Moira put them on hold while he extended the Company's dominion across India in successive wars with the Gurkhas, Pindaris, and Marathas. In these years, private individuals and associations took up the slack left by the state. Education societies composed of missionaries, other Europeans, and Indian literati began to proliferate, especially in the environs of the Bengali capital. One of these, the Calcutta School Book Society, secured Moira as its patron and projected great things on this basis:

The rise, extension, and multiplication of voluntary Societies ... forms an era in the moral history of the race: another will commence when civil governments practically discern the duty and the advantages of furnishing them pecuniary and other aid ... If by their patronage of learning, *mere learning*, Princes have cheaply purchased renown, how just, how bright, and how lasting will prove the fame of those possessors of high station and influence who, in leading the way in this new line of political wisdom, shall stand in a relation to the general march of Mind, and inscribe their names in its annals!⁷⁷

Moira was asked to exchange the conventional “patronage of learning” for a “new line of political wisdom” compassing “the general march of Mind.” This would mean forgoing the conciliation of scholarly elites for the cultivation of civil society. It would also mean involving the state in education to a novel degree, measured by either European or Indian standards. Moira seems to have warmed gradually to both propositions. His outward actions were modest and came more often in a personal than in an official capacity: donating to a school founded by his wife at Barrackpore, for instance, and to a fund for village schools in Rajputana. Nonetheless, these small gestures prompted grand musings about the basis of Company rule in India. “How is it,” Moira reflected in his journal, “that

⁷⁷ “Proceedings Prior to the Final Establishment of the Society, &c.” (1817), in *The Second Report of the Calcutta School Book Society's Proceedings* (Calcutta, 1819), 68. On the society, see N. L. Basak, “Origin and Role of the Calcutta School Book Society in Promoting the Cause of Education in India, Especially Vernacular Education in Bengal,” *BPP* 77 (1959); Abhijit Gupta, “The Calcutta School-Book Society and the Production of Knowledge,” *English Studies in Africa* 57 (2014).

we maintain sovereignty over this immense mass?” His answer was “equity,” but equity in turn required education. By this means, the lower classes would learn to appreciate their rights and, perhaps most importantly, to thank government for them. By this means, also, the upper classes would unwittingly relinquish some of their privileges, as Moira observed happening among *brahmans* at the Barrackpore school.⁷⁸ Such alterations in Indian society might be in the ultimate interests of Christianity—though this could not be forced—but they were also in the proximate interests of the state. In a speech at the College of Fort William in 1817, Moira characterized the “expansion of intellect” as an instrument of social tranquility and, hence, of state authority. And he urged young Company officials to turn their minds to “facilitating and encouraging the education of a rising generation.”⁷⁹ The final defeat of the Marathas and achievement of British “paramountcy” the following year created the political opening for many to do so.

1818 marked the end of an era in Company politics and ideology. Mercantile sovereignty had survived the Charter Act of 1813, but could not long survive the consummation of “British India.” Nor, probably, could it weather the loss of its major proponents, Grant and Hastings, to retirement and death respectively. For reasons related and unrelated, 1818 was also the fulcrum on which Moira’s decade-long governor-generalship turned. If his early years in office were distinguished by ambitious social projects and military victories, his later ones were marred by physical decline, financial

⁷⁸ Marquess of Hastings, *Private Journal*, 2:149, see 2:150, 2:156-9, 2:333, 2:346-7.

⁷⁹ Marquess of Hastings, Speech (30 Jun. 1817), in Roebuck, *Annals*, 542-3.

troubles, and quarrels with the home authorities.⁸⁰ Moira was perhaps the first British statesman to use the phrase “public education” in connection with policies for Indians.⁸¹ Yet he was forced to admit, in a defense of his administration in 1824, that his efforts to give substance to that phrase had been “nothing in Measurement, by the standard of those ... of others, whence visible and increasing Impression has been widely made in the Country.”⁸² Public deficits as well as private woes contributed to Moira’s inaction. The *lakh* of rupees mentioned in section forty-three was supposed to come from surplus territorial revenues, but in fact the Company’s territorial account was consistently indebted to its commercial one.⁸³

The distinction drawn between these accounts in the Charter Act of 1813 was prognostic, pointing towards the full separation of commerce from government in the sequel legislation of 1833. That section forty-three was to be financed by territorial and not commercial revenues, moreover, powerfully linked the sponsorship of learning to the sovereign activity of taxing land. This nexus between knowledge and territory could be observed not only in the ruminations of Company leaders, but in a swelling current of opinion among Company servants and their Indian contacts. Thus officials at Madras wrote in 1815, “we have no doubt that the sum to be placed at the disposal of this Government [by

⁸⁰ Richard John Bingle, “The Decline of the Marquess of Hastings,” in Donovan Williams and E. Daniel Potts, eds., *Essays in Indian History in Honour of Cuthbert Collin Davies* (New York, 1973).

⁸¹ Moira, Minute (2 Oct. 1815), 159.

⁸² Marquess of Hastings, *Summary of the Administration of the Indian Government, from October 1813, to January 1823* (London, 1824), 33.

⁸³ Philips, *East India Company*, 303 n 1.

section forty-three] will be proportioned to the extent of these territories and to their general importance.”⁸⁴ Not until 1823 would any of the promised *lakh* of rupees materialize. In the meantime, the Company’s changing situation presented both challenges and opportunities for scholar-administrators. Since the Hastings era, such individuals, Indian and European, had tailored their rationale for patronage to the commercial logic of conciliation. The strengthening of Hastings’ own commitment notwithstanding, however, this logic was attenuated by the Company’s rise as a territorial power. One emerging alternative to conciliation was native education, which Grant and Moira were coming to see as a means to consolidate rule over territories and populations. But if the turn towards education did not necessarily preclude a role for scholarly patronage, it did threaten to diminish it. For scholar-administrators with an eye to wealth or reputation, there was little of either to be hoped from teaching pupils or translating textbooks. So they sought to chart a different course.

Scholar-Administrators, Institutions, and the Company

The story of section forty-three’s piecemeal transformation from patronage clause into “education clause” captures something of the Company’s changing character and changing relations with knowledge in the early nineteenth century. But education was not the only political avenue for knowledge opened up by the nascent territorialization of the Company state. In these years, civil and military servants of the Company embarked on a range of

⁸⁴ Board for the College of Fort St. George to Governor of Madras in Council, 23 Feb. 1814, BL IOR F/4/525/12538, 135.

ambitious scholarly projects, whose political import they invariably stressed in bids for patronage and preferment. Recent attention to this sphere of activity has tended to privilege either cartography or linguistics. On the one hand, mapping and surveying have been seen as instrumental in extending the Company's authority over land.⁸⁵ On the other hand, mastery of local languages has been seen as instrumental in extending its authority over people.⁸⁶ As another, broader line of study has shown, however, modern (or post-early-modern) conceptions of territorial sovereignty emphasized authority over land *and* people—not to mention the economy, the natural world, and other resources.⁸⁷ Atlases and grammars could be understood as instruments for unifying and legitimizing the Company's territorial possessions, but so could travel journals, genealogies, and natural history collections. Furthermore, these less often represented discrete than complementary and overlapping projects, which emerged through processes of collaboration. The proliferation of learned institutions, including literary societies, botanical gardens, and scientific expeditions, multiplied the collaborative possibilities for European scholar-administrators in India. Their reliance on indigenous labor and expertise, meanwhile, only increased with

⁸⁵ Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago, 1997); Ian J. Barrow, *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, c.1756-1905* (New Delhi, 2003); Bernardo A. Michael, *Statemaking and Territory in South Asia: Lessons from the Anglo-Gorkha War (1814-1816)* (London, 2012).

⁸⁶ Bernard S. Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command," in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, N.J., 1996); Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, 1997); Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley, 2006).

⁸⁷ Jean Gottmann, *The Significance of Territory* (Charlottesville, Va., 1973); Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge, 1986); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, ed. Michel Sennellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke, 2007); Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago, 2013); Charles S. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Wealth, Power, and Belonging since 1500* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016).

the scale of their undertakings. Whereas forebears like William Jones and Charles Wilkins had employed individuals or small units, members of the new generation like Horace Hayman Wilson and Francis Buchanan assembled large teams of *maulvis* and *pandits*.⁸⁸ In addition, they increasingly recruited Indian scholar-administrators from social groups that had not typically furnished them. Beyond simply rendering services to Europeans, a number of native intellectual entrepreneurs sought official support or reward for grand designs of their own. Yet, for all the scholarly ferment of the post-Wellesley era, little impact was felt at the level of political discourse. Complaints about scant interest or support from higher authorities were the rule among both European and Indian scholar-administrators in these years.

Not every Company servant in the East identified scholarly with statist commitments. Charles Metcalfe left the College of Fort William early, declaring that, “To a Man ambitious of distinguishing himself ... there are two paths, in this country, open; the one leads to literary, and the other to political fame. It is my intention to travel in the last ...”⁸⁹ Yet for many of Metcalfe’s countrymen in similar situations, these paths appeared to merge rather than divide. Despite the reduction of its functions and the recall of its founder, the College of Fort William continued to reward academic distinction and to impart something of Wellesley’s imperial vision. Despite objections from the directors, it

⁸⁸ Ruth Gabriel, “Learned Communities and British Educational Experiments in North India: 1780-1830” (PhD, University of Virginia, 1979), 185-90; see also Thomas R. Trautmann, intro. to Trautmann, ed., *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India* (New Delhi, 2009), 11.

⁸⁹ Metcalfe to Joseph Goodall, 16 Aug. 1803, Metcalfe Papers, BL Mss Eur B233.

also continued to dispense considerable literary patronage into the 1820s.⁹⁰ In an artful bit of bookkeeping, Wellesley had established a separate fund for this purpose in 1805, evading the budgetary constraints imposed on the institution.⁹¹ The College of Fort St. George, established in 1812, oversaw a similar, if smaller fund for the Madras presidency. Through both centripetal and centrifugal processes—drawing in literati from across the region, for instance, while sending out teams of scholarly collectors—these institutions forged links between the state’s administrative nuclei and its expanding hinterlands and frontiers. A similar dynamic centered on the botanical gardens of Calcutta and Madras, which took on ever-greater functions in the early nineteenth century, attaching a library and a natural history museum respectively. Nathaniel Wallich boasted in 1819 that, under his superintendence, the Calcutta establishment’s

connections have been extended to countries hitherto unexplored, and the accessions ... have derived from every variety of soil and climate, from the tropical regions of the continent of India and its Islands, to the limits of perpetual snow on the frozen range of Himalaya, and to the plains of Tartary, thus combining within our Indian possessions and consequently within the immediate objects of this Garden the peculiar vegetations of every climate of the globe.⁹²

As microcosms of the territorial state and the terrestrial sphere alike, botanical gardens brought the great concerns of government and science within the scope of individual exertion. Just as no college for civil servants was founded under the auspices of the contracted presidency of Bombay, so neither was any botanical garden. In the surrounding

⁹⁰ Kopf, *British Orientalism*, 220. For a defense of such expenditure, see Thomas Roebuck, Report (8 Nov. 1815), PCFW, vol. 563, 473-7.

⁹¹ Rosane Rocher and Ludo Rocher, *The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company* (Abingdon, UK, 2012), 65-6.

⁹² Nathaniel Wallich to Governor-General in Council, 23 Dec. 1819, NAI Bengal Public Proceedings (7 Jan. 1820), no. 55, 64-5. For the range of undertakings entrusted to the museum at Madras, see “Heads of Instruction to Mr. Heyne” (19 Jun. 1802), BL IOR F/4/152/2601, 13-22.

region as elsewhere, however, military and diplomatic missions yielded other opportunities. John Malcolm, William Erskine, and Mountstuart Elphinstone directed their literary efforts towards the northwest frontier in order to advance their careers, promote imperial expansion, and furnish resources for “philosophical” history.⁹³ For many likeminded officials, the most enticing prospect of all was an appointment to one of the surveys carried out on a new scale from 1799. Commissioned by Wellesley as a vehicle for “establishing and conducting our government,” the Mysore Survey transcended “mere military or Geographical” concerns to embrace natural history, political economy, and every conceivable species of inquiry into native society.⁹⁴ This and its sister efforts comprised not only an ambitious agenda for cartographic science, but, together with the Company’s colleges, botanical gardens, and other scholarly institutions, a foundation for still grander intellectual projects.

A number of Company officials embarked on sweeping investigations of India and outlying regions in the early nineteenth century. In one way or another, they all sought to digest a bewildering array of knowledge and render it intelligible to leaders and litterateurs alike. While some of these attempts have received modern attention, a synoptic view is needed to bring their political implications and impediments into focus. The origin of this line of research can be traced to July 1805, when James Mackintosh wrote Wellesley from

⁹³ See P. Hardy, intro. to William Erskine, *A History of India Under the Two First Sovereigns of the House of Taimur, Baber and Humayun* (repr., 2 vols., Karachi, 1974); Jane Rendall, “Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill,” *Historical Journal* 25 (1982); Martha McLaren, *British India and British Scotland, 1780-1830: Career Building, Empire Building, and a Scottish School of Thought on Indian Governance* (Akron, 2001); Jack Harrington, *Sir John Malcolm and the Creation of British India* (Basingstoke, 2010), esp. 71-98.

⁹⁴ Wellesley, Minute (4 Sept. 1799), in R. H. Phillimore, *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, 5 vols. (Dehra Dun, 1945-68), 2:91.

Bombay with plans for a comprehensive work to be titled “The History and Present State of the British Dominions in India.” Among other benefits, according to Mackintosh, this work “would correct many unfavourable notions of our national policy in the East,” and furnish “new conclusions of political science” and “rules for the conduct of statesmen.” It could not proceed, however, “without great assistance from Government.” He thus proposed that Calcutta send orders

to all the subordinate governments, and to all the civil and military servants, to transmit answers to me to such list of queries as I should send ... By this means I might hope to accumulate valuable materials of various sorts, especially statistical, which ... would furnish the means of applying principles of political economy to the condition of this country.⁹⁵

Mackintosh’s scheme to set scholarship of the East on a statistical footing reached Wellesley only after he had relinquished the governor-generalship. But he forwarded it to his successor and promised to take it up with the directors in person.⁹⁶ Despite Wellesley’s adverse relations with that body, his lobbying bore fruit in a despatch of April 1806 instructing Company servants to comply with Mackintosh’s requests.⁹⁷ In the meantime, “desirous to make a trial of this mode of collecting information,” Mackintosh had drawn up a narrower though still ambitious *Plan of a Comparative Vocabulary of Indian Languages* (1806).⁹⁸ He circulated the plan to the governments of the Indian presidencies and Ceylon, and, when this effort proved unavailing, sought assistance from the new governor-general,

⁹⁵ Mackintosh to Wellesley, 16 Jul. 1805, in *Memoirs and Correspondence of the Most Noble Richard Marquess Wellesley*, ed. Robert Rouiere Pearce, 3 vols. (London, 1846-7), 2:380-83.

⁹⁶ Wellesley to Mackintosh, 20 Nov. 1805, Mackintosh Papers, BL Add. MS 78765, 52r-53v.

⁹⁷ Extract from Public Despatch (9 Apr. 1806), Minto Papers, NLS MS 11726, 30r-30v.

⁹⁸ Mackintosh to Lord Minto, 31 Jul. 1807, *ibid.*, 11v.

Lord Minto.⁹⁹ Between Mackintosh's inquiries and the reference Minto now made to the council of the College of Fort William, the idea of a comparative vocabulary attracted the interest of other scholar-administrators, often, in like manner, as part or prelude of larger investigations. In a minute to the college council of August 1807, Henry Thomas Colebrooke advocated expanding Mackintosh's scheme into "a very grand undertaking, which, if executed ... will reflect credit on the nation."¹⁰⁰ Whereas Mackintosh had proposed to collect specimens of Indian languages, Colebrooke proposed to compile whole vocabularies. As early as the spring of 1806, meanwhile, John Leyden had circulated a prospectus for an even loftier undertaking: a comparative analysis of the structure and genealogy of languages across southern Asia.¹⁰¹ Although the college council backed its member Colebrooke's plan to the detriment of Mackintosh's, this put an end neither to Leyden's plan nor to others in the same vein. At Serampore and Calcutta, the missionary-professor William Carey was soon discussing "A Universal Dictionary of the Oriental Languages Derived from Sanskrit."¹⁰² Nearby, the officer Francis Irvine was drawing up "a physical survey and philosophical statement of the characters of the tribes of this vast country."¹⁰³ At Madras, the civil servant Francis Whyte Ellis was producing a catholic series

⁹⁹ Jane Rendall, "The Political Ideas and Activities of Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832): A Study in Whiggism Between 1789 and 1832" (PhD, University of London, 1972), 203-5.

¹⁰⁰ Colebrooke to father, 14 Sept. 1807, in T. E. Colebrooke, *Colebrooke*, 228; see Colebrooke, Minute (15 Aug. 1807), Minto Papers, NLS MS 11726, 32v-34v; Rocher and Rocher, *Colebrooke*, 72.

¹⁰¹ Leyden to George Barlow, 2 Jan. 1807, Leyden and Erskine Papers, BL Add. MS 26566, 3r-4v; see Trautmann, *Dravidian Proof*, 91-5.

¹⁰² M. Siddiq Khan, "William Carey and the Serampore Books (1800-1834)," *Libri* 11 (1961), 235-6.

¹⁰³ James Mackintosh to John Whishaw, 13 Aug. 1811, in *The "Pope" of Holland House: Selections from the Correspondence of John Whishaw and His Friends, 1813-1840*, ed. Lady Seymour (London, 1906), 287. According to Irvine himself, these studies "embrace a great variety nor is there any term in use by scientific men which

of dissertations on southern Indian languages and history.¹⁰⁴ And in the field, the surveyor Colin Mackenzie was amassing “Literary,” “Historical,” and “Statistical” materials for a magnum opus intended to forever “preserve the Memory ... of the British Empire in India.”¹⁰⁵ Along with certain sources and methods, these projectors shared a scholarly and professional ambition, catalyzed by what Leyden described as “the acquisition of British India and the necessity of regulating accurately its interior and exterior relations.”¹⁰⁶ Their collective case for patronage and preferment was grounded in the notion that assimilating the Company’s territories politically required assimilating them intellectually. Among authorities who had imbibed Wellesley’s expansionist views, often at the College of Fort William, this was a compelling rationale. Among those who were concerned with the Company’s finances and hesitant to embrace territorial sovereignty, however, such a rationale could make little headway.

That this latter group of authorities enjoyed the greater share of power was evident from the steady erosion of scholarly institutions following Wellesley’s departure. Modern studies of the Company’s early-nineteenth-century surveys have remarked at their “chaotic,

can alone designate them. The nearest would perhaps be the History of Man; but I am inclined to employ a new term vizt Mixed Morals.” Francis Irvine, “Substance of a Letter to be Addressed to Government” (1812), Minto Papers, NLS MS 11727, 4r.

¹⁰⁴ Trautmann, *Dravidian Proof*, 108-15.

¹⁰⁵ Mackenzie to C. M. Ricketts, 15 Jun. 1815, Marquess of Hastings Papers, Mount Stuart, HA/9/32; see Mackenzie to Alexander Johnson, 1 Feb. 1817, in “Biographical Sketch of the Literary Career of the Late Colonel Colin Mackenzie,” *JRAS* 1 (1834), 334-43.

¹⁰⁶ John Leyden, “Plan for Investigating the Languages, Literature, Antiquities, & History of the Dekkan,” Leyden and Erskine Papers, BL Add. MS 26600, 109v. Carey’s views differed somewhat in centering on evangelism, but they favored imperial expansion and consolidation as conducive to that process.

if not anarchic, character” in the absence of consistent sponsorship.¹⁰⁷ In fact, such a description can be applied to nearly all scholarly institutions connected with the Company in this period. At the College of Fort William, retrenchments by the directors and Wellesley’s successors often forced European instructors to take on other work or leave India. The first lecturer in natural philosophy at the college, sidelined by the government’s cutbacks and angered by its refusal to compensate his teaching expenses, returned to England in 1806.¹⁰⁸ The second, failing to secure a steady income and sinking ever further into debt, was reported to have “run off to America and Cheated every body” in 1809.¹⁰⁹ Even instructors who taught indispensable subjects and could draw on the college’s still-ample literary fund were apt to complain. According to Matthew Lumsden, professor of Persian and Arabic, “the utility of the College has never yet been fully acknowledged by the authorities at home and its permanence has been always [a] matter of doubt... [T]hough the College may exist under the sufferance of its natural patrons it can flourish only by means of their decided approbation and support.”¹¹⁰ A letter from the college council to the directors in 1812 requesting an “assurance of their decided support to the Institution” did

¹⁰⁷ Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 162, see 157-64. Colin Mackenzie succeeded in keeping the Mysore Survey alive, but he could never persuade the Court of Directors to fully commit to it or to its program of territorial sovereignty. Thus he confided in 1809, “I feel very little obliged by them [the directors], & if they & their System go to pot, I am not bound to bewail either their Justice or their Indulgence.” Mackenzie to John Leyden, 13 Nov. 1809, Leyden Papers, NLS MS 3380, 117r.

¹⁰⁸ William Jardine Proudfoot, *Biographical Memoir of James Dinwiddie* (Liverpool, 1868), 119-20.

¹⁰⁹ David Hare to James Dinwiddie, 16 Jan. 1810, Dinwiddie Fonds, Dalhousie University Archives, A51; see John Lathrop, “A Course of Lectures on Natural Philosophy,” *Polyanthos*, ns 1-4 (1812-14).

¹¹⁰ Lumsden to Abraham Lockett, 11 Nov. 1812, PCFW, vol. 562, 268-9.

not produce the desired response.¹¹¹ Nor was the College of Fort William the only one of the Company's scholarly institutions open to charges of neglect. In 1808, the governor of Madras abolished the position of official botanist at the presidency, leaving the botanical garden and its museum rudderless. To the outgoing botanist's remonstrance that "the usefulness of natural History is generally admitted and encouraged by the greatest Politicians," the governor replied only that he was "not at Liberty under existing circumstances to continue the Appointment."¹¹² Although the Calcutta Botanic Garden retained the office of superintendent, the directors sought to limit its activities to ones with commercial value.¹¹³ Astronomy, meanwhile, suffered from lackluster support at all three presidencies. Proposals to found observatories at Calcutta and Bombay were repeatedly put off or rejected by higher authorities, and the existing observatory at Madras was deprived of an astronomer for some years.¹¹⁴ In the last case, despite pleas from several officials noting the institution's importance for navigation and surveying, the most Minto would do was refer the matter to the Court of Directors.¹¹⁵

More vexing for scholar-administrators even than the decay of institutions was the waning of personal patronage. In fact, the former was in some sense merely a symptom of

¹¹¹ College Council to Court of Directors, 29 Dec. 1812, *ibid.*, 299.

¹¹² Benjamin Heyne to Governor, 25 May 1808, TNSA Madras Public Consultations (3 Jun. 1808), 3837; G. G. Keble to Heyne, 4 Jun. 1808, at 3856.

¹¹³ Mark Harrison, "The Calcutta Botanic Garden and the Wider World, 1817-46," in Uma Das Gupta, ed., *Science and Modern India: An Institutional History, c.1784-1947* (Delhi, 2011), 237.

¹¹⁴ Joydeep Sen, *Astronomy in India, 1784-1876* (London, 2014), 37-74.

¹¹⁵ William Petrie, Memorandum (1808), Minto Papers, NLS MS 11726, 36r-42r; Andrew Scott to Petrie, 9 Sept. 1808, at 44r-47r.

the latter, since the Company state—no Weberian bureaucracy—remained structured by ties of “interest.” Scholar-administrators unable to leverage such ties in the present age of scarcity found that they had little recourse. This was the situation of the army officer and Persianist John Briggs in 1815. Briggs had long been at work on a general “History of the Mohamedan Conquests,” accumulating some eleven folio volumes of notes and translations from sources across western India and the Deccan. But with the departure of his advocates Mark Wilks and John Malcolm, Briggs reported, “I was deprived of almost all the literary patronage I could have once secured in India.” His remote situation in the Deccan, meanwhile, “completely prevented my acquiring either interest or acquaintance among the people in power in Madras.” Nor did he expect any aid from the College of Fort William, having written to ask about its holdings two years earlier “without ever having received an answer.” He might have added that neither the Asiatic Society in Calcutta nor the decade-old Literary Society of Bombay—nor, from 1817, the Madras Literary Society—could offer much in the way of funding. In 1817, Briggs finally abandoned the project altogether after the Maratha *peshwa* sacked the Poona residency, scattering or destroying his library and other possessions.¹¹⁶ Not all of Briggs’ contemporaries were quite so unfortunate. Minto was sometimes willing to stick his neck out, especially, it was said, for a fellow Scotsman.¹¹⁷ The surveyor Francis Buchanan, whose first stint in India had ended abruptly with the recall of his patron Wellesley, saw his fortunes lift in 1806 after a meeting

¹¹⁶ John Briggs to Colin Mackenzie, 17 Sept. 1815, Records of the East India Company Library, BL Mss Eur F303/442; see Briggs, preface to Firishtha, *Tarikh-i Firishtha*, trans. Briggs, as *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India, till the Year A.D. 1612*, 4 vols. (London, 1829), 1:viii.

¹¹⁷ See William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero* (London, 1848), 28.

with Minto yielded an invitation to go out again.¹¹⁸ By the following year, an acquaintance could observe the “powerful assistance” Buchanan’s survey of Bengal was receiving from the government at Calcutta.¹¹⁹ Another, particular favorite of Minto was John Leyden, a fellow Scots Borderer who had grown up near his family estate and counted literary friends the likes of Walter Scott in common. Minto boosted the ambitious linguist with a series of lucrative appointments to Calcutta’s courts, college, and mint, and, upon the invasion of Java in 1811, to the office of chief translator. Leyden’s intimacy with the governor-general put him in demand as a go-between for other scholar-administrators and for the Serampore missionaries, and seems to have made him an object of envy.¹²⁰ One apparent rival was Francis Irvine, who wrote his father in 1810, “I do not form any expectations from government ... Lord Minto’s distribution of patronage is confessed to be more self-willed & unfair than that of any of his predecessors for a long time back.”¹²¹ He revised this assessment two years later, however, when Minto granted him a monthly salary to work up his tracts on “political, Moral, and Statistical Economy applied to the condition of this

¹¹⁸ Buchanan to John Hamilton, 17 Jul. 1806, Buchanan Papers, National Records of Scotland, GD161/18/8.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Hardwicke to James Edward Smith, 4 Nov. 1807, Smith Correspondence, Linnean Society of London, GB-110/JES/COR/22/82.

¹²⁰ I. M. Brown, “John Leyden (1775-1811): His Life and Works” (PhD, University of Edinburgh, 1955), 468, 483, 510-11; John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, 2 vols. (London, 1859), 1:321-2, 1:389-90, 1:425, 1:449-51.

¹²¹ Irvine to father, 5 Aug. 1810, Irvine Papers, NLS Acc.13147. Irvine complained to Minto himself that, “While I write representations of my case, and sketches of my views, while I attend levees, and look up to the great, I nearly stop the progress of my proper labours.” Irvine to Minto, 28 Jan. 1812, Minto Papers, NLS MS 11727, 2v.

country.”¹²² Irvine now joined Buchanan and Leyden in the small circle of well-connected scholars who benefited from Minto’s patronage.

Even so, none of these three enjoyed a happy fate in the Company’s service. Buchanan’s optimism upon his return to the East gave way to bitterness at being overworked and underpaid—not to mention insulted by Minto’s successor, Moira.¹²³ In a similar vein, Leyden complained of being tasked with the work of four officials:

1. Professor of Hindustani in the College of Calcutta. 2. Assist[ant] Prof[essor] and Examiner. 3. Magistrate of Zillah 24 Pergunnahs. 4. Assist[ant] Magistrate of Zillah 24 Pergunnahs. So important were each of these tasks reckoned in the days of yore that both Magistrate & Professor were generally accustomed to have two assistants, whereas I have been hitherto left alone with my own personal self to do the duty of all, a duty which ... has constantly occupied me 12 or 14 hours a day to the great detriment of my literary pursuits ...¹²⁴

Such overexertion, which continued during Leyden’s travels in the Malay Archipelago, likely contributed to the affliction that killed him in 1811.¹²⁵ Unlike Buchanan or Leyden, Irvine enjoyed the luxury of receiving a salary for his philosophical work without the distraction of other duties. A year into this arrangement, however, a letter from Minto’s private secretary related that, having paid him by “an application of the public funds not ... strictly warranted” under budgetary constraints, the governor-general was “anxious to take with him to England some report of the progress of that work.”¹²⁶ Perhaps Minto was

¹²² C. M. Ricketts to Irvine, 25 Sept. 1812, Irvine Papers, NLS MS Acc.13147; see Irvine to father, 18 Sept. 1812, same vol.

¹²³ Marika Vicziany, “Imperialism, Botany and Statistics in Early Nineteenth-Century India: The Surveys of Francis Buchanan (1762-1829),” *MAS* 20 (1986), 654-8.

¹²⁴ Leyden to Oliva Raffles, 10 May 1808, Leyden Papers, NLS MS 971, 53v.

¹²⁵ See John Bastin, “John Leyden and the Publication of the *Malay Annals* (1821),” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 75 (2002), 108.

¹²⁶ N. B. Edmonstone to Irvine, 18 Nov. 1813, Minto Papers, NLS MS 11727, 90r.

unhappy with Irvine's response, for he did not recommend him to Moira. When Irvine's contract ended, Moira's secretary informed him that

Government cannot on any account grant you any further pecuniary assistance in your undertaking. You are requested at the same time to report the progress which you have made in the work, in order that the necessary communication on the subject may be made to the Hon[ora]ble the Court of Directors.¹²⁷

Despairing increasingly of his prospects in India, Irvine emigrated with his Eurasian wife and children to Australia and thence to Scotland, never to complete his great treatise.¹²⁸ Having earlier blamed his woes on one governor-general, Irvine might have held his successor similarly at fault. Neither Minto nor Moira, it was true, took the same interest in scholarship as had Hastings or Wellesley. Yet the present lack of support for scholar-administrators' projects, great and small, owed most of all to the directors' unwillingness to commit, financially or ideologically, to a territorial conception of the state.

Such unwillingness was particularly evident at the Company's metropolitan scholarly institutions, once conceived as counterweights to the College of Fort William, but now largely neglected. The directors' authority still demanded, perhaps, that these institutions should loom larger than analogues in India, but it was less economical to feed the one than to starve the other. On occasion, ink flowed and tempers flared over the training of European civil servants at Haileybury.¹²⁹ Apart from the college's principal

¹²⁷ M. Ricketts to Irvine, 7 Apr. 1814, *ibid.*, 97r; see Irvine to Minto, 6 Dec. 1813, at 95r.; Irvine to sister and father, 1 Feb. [1817], Irvine Papers, NLS Acc.13147.

¹²⁸ Irvine Papers, NLS Acc.13147, *passim*; see also the genealogy compiled by Dennis Wright, "Descendants of Capt Francis Irvine, 1786-1855" (2014).

¹²⁹ Callie Wilkinson, "The East India College Debate and the Fashioning of Imperial Officials, 1806-1858," *Historical Journal* 60 (2017).

founder Charles Grant and his son Robert, however, the directors were focused on guarding their control over civil service appointments from the depredations of the British government. “The neglect of the Directors is scandalous,” one student thus wrote his father in 1806, upon finding that the shelves of the college library were empty.¹³⁰ A year later, Charles Stewart, professor of Persian, marveled that “many of the writers attached to this College ... have never yet seen an Arabic or Persian Manuscript.”¹³¹ Part of the problem, at first, was that Asian-language textbooks were unavailable and had to be ordered from India. Rather than exculpate the directors, however, this state of affairs attested their tardiness in getting new books printed and, with the major exception of Grant, their general inattention to the needs of the college.¹³² As late as 1828, a professor could grumble at “the miserable state of our supply of Hindustani books ... now scrawled on & blotted to such a degree that very few are in a fit state to be put into the hands of a student.”¹³³ Nor were textbooks the only source of complaint among the former scholar-administrators who taught at the college. Jonathan Scott, once Persian secretary to Warren Hastings, resigned his professorship before it had commenced due to what he considered insufficient respect or remuneration from the directors. As “my professional Services cannot be valued” properly, he informed them, “I have resolved on retirement tho’ not without much regret and severe

¹³⁰ Alexander Fraser to father, 6 Aug. 1806, Fraser Papers, Reelig House, vol. 32, 224; see also Fraser to father, 20 Oct. 1807, at 326-9.

¹³¹ Stewart to Charles Wilkins, 30 Sept. 1807, BL IOR J/1/23/410.

¹³² See Alexander Hamilton to Charles Grant, 24 Dec. 1808, in Rosane Rocher, “Sanskrit for Civil Servants 1806-1818,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122 (2002), 384-5.

¹³³ James Michael to College Committee, 12 Dec. 1828, BL IOR J/2/7/276.

disappointment.”¹³⁴ Scott’s immediate replacement, John Gilchrist, lasted only a few months and enjoyed a similarly acrimonious relationship with the directors long thereafter.¹³⁵ Such cases notwithstanding, many students and faculty seem to have found Haileybury unobjectionable. The political economist Thomas Robert Malthus spent a long career at the institution and defended it—though not always the directors—in print.¹³⁶ Significantly, however, rather than any academic merits, it was the instilment of *esprit de corps* that Haileybury’s champions most often cited in its favor.¹³⁷ This was a decidedly humbler mission for a university than that announced by Wellesley in India or, initially, by the directors in England.

The Court of Proprietors offered motley resistance to the directors’ educational views in periodic debates at East India House, using comparisons between the colleges of Fort William and Haileybury to argue over the character of the Company state. One strand of opinion held that Haileybury’s founders had erred by emulating Wellesley in the first place. For Randle Jackson, it was as if the governor-general’s “*mania*” had reached home; and he doubted whether

¹³⁴ Scott to Directors, 3 Dec. 1805, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29190, 30v; see Scott to Charles Grant, Jun. 1805, at 29r-29v; Scott to Hastings, 20 Jan. 1806, Hastings Papers, BL Add. MS 29181, 32r-33r.

¹³⁵ John Gilchrist and Jonathan Scott, Pamphlet in Hume Tracts, University College, London [1806]; [Gilchrist,] *A Succinct Narrative of Dr. Gilchrist’s Services from 1782 to 1821* [London, 1821], 5-6; Robert Chambers, ed., *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, rev. ed. Thomas Thomson, 3 vols. (London, 1870), 2:106-7; Richard Steadman-Jones, *Colonialism and Grammatical Representation: John Gilchrist and the Analysis of the “Hindustani” Language in the Late Eighteenth and the Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 2007), 84-91.

¹³⁶ Timothy L. Alborn, “Boys to Men: Moral Restraint at Haileybury College,” in Brian Dolan, ed., *Malthus, Medicine, and Morality: “Malthusianism” after 1798* (Amsterdam, 2000).

¹³⁷ Bernard S. Cohn, “Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India, 1600-1800,” in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1987), 537-45.

young gentlemen would descend from the *rostrum*,—where they had been displaying their acquirements in ... high branches of human knowledge,—to count bales and to measure muslins... Instead of sending out writers qualified for the purposes of commerce, they [the directors] prepared to pervade India with an army of young *Grotiuses* and *Puffendorfs* ... whose minds could not descend to the drudgery of the counting-house ...¹³⁸

Proprietors holding such opinions were likely in the minority: Malthus and Grant pointed out that fewer than one-sixth of the Company's civil servants now held any connection with trade, most being employed in the revenue, judicial, and political departments.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, Jackson's invocation of commercial knowledge—which drew chants of "*Hear! Hear!*" from the chamber—pointed to an enduring tension between the Company's mercantile history and its emergent territoriality.¹⁴⁰ Other proprietors inverted Jackson's position. "It were to be wished," according to Douglas Kinnaird, that in largely supplanting

lord Wellesley's college at Calcutta, some attention had been paid to the objects which the noble lord had in view ... not confined merely to the education of the Company's civil servants, as was the case here ... [T]he most effectual mode of governing sixty millions of people, was to scatter the seeds of learning and of science amongst them ... to establish a source from whence the fountain of science might diffuse its waters over the whole territory of India.¹⁴¹

As interventions in debates of the 1810s, such comments revealed less about either college's founding considerations than about their present political valences. Not mercantile enough for some critics, not territorial enough for others, official thinking on Haileybury was caught up in the larger uncertainty that beset official thinking on the Company state.

While the India Museum generated less public controversy than Haileybury, it played host to a parallel set of conflicts. The institution at East India House had both

¹³⁸ Randle Jackson, in East India House Debate (18 Dec. 1816), *AJ* 3 (1817), 156.

¹³⁹ T. R. Malthus, *Statements Respecting the East-India College* (London, 1817), 90-92; Charles Grant, in East India House Debate (6 Feb. 1817), *AJ* 3 (1817), 373.

¹⁴⁰ Jackson, in East India House Debate (18 Dec. 1816), 156.

¹⁴¹ Douglas Kinnaird, in East India House Debate (20 Feb. 1817), *AJ* 4 (1817), 47-8.

proximate and primordial origins in commerce, having been established largely with that view and in the tradition of earlier such collections. Almost immediately, however, it became a monument to the Company's burgeoning territoriality, accumulating spoils from military victories, and specimens from the surveys carried out in their wake. Most popular among visitors were the trophies seized from Tipu Sultan's palace at Seringapatam, in particular his life-sized wooden automaton of a tiger mauling a British officer. Wellesley had tried to have "Tipu's tiger" installed in the Tower of London, likely seeking, as with Tipu's library, to avoid aggrandizing the inimical directors.¹⁴² Yet in furnishing their own headquarters with such trappings of kingship and conquest, the directors thwarted Wellesley at the peril of their mercantile sovereignty. A delicate balancing act could thus be observed in the receptions given at East India House to foreign dignitaries, perhaps especially those from countries like Egypt and Persia where the Company sought a foothold in trade and politics alike. When the Egyptian Mamluk leader Elfi Bey paid a visit in 1803, the directors first gave him a tour of their chambers and nearby warehouses, spaces redolent of the Company's trading origins. Next, relics of Tipu were displayed in the Correspondence Room, while the tiger automaton affirmed the Company's triumph over that sovereign and loyalty to its own, with performances of "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King." The visit culminated in a trip to the India Museum, where Elfi Bey took pleasure "in viewing the various curiosities," all the while, according to the *Times*, exhibiting "a solemnity of demeanor suited to the idea he must entertain of the first Corporate Body in

¹⁴² He later succeeded in having the Mysore ruler's golden footstool and crimson carpet transferred from the directors to the king. Ray Desmond, *The India Museum, 1801-1879* (London, 1982), 22.

the world.”¹⁴³ A more elaborate ceremony was held six years later for Mirza Abu’l Hasan Khan, comprising “several of the Company directors ... a large group of gentlemen and distinguished English merchants, with about 1,000 soldiers.” Charles Grant welcomed the Persian envoy and, “after the formal exchange of compliments,” led him to the museum library, “a high-ceilinged room with cases built to hold books ... beautifully painted in gold and azure.” Among the “neatly ranged books in Arabic and Persian,” the envoy was “thrilled” to discover a *diwan* (anthology) of the *shah*’s poetry. “Truly,” he recorded in his journal, “Mr. Grant expressed so much esteem for me on behalf of the Company that I was highly gratified.”¹⁴⁴ Thus it was with evident success that the directors integrated the museum and its collections into their diplomatic arsenal, wielding them alternately as accessories to trade or government or both.

A success for diplomacy was not necessarily a success for scholarship. Although the first publication based on research at the India Museum praised its founders’ “liberality towards men of letters,” it was already a question whether the directors meant the institution for serious study.¹⁴⁵ From the outset, they had refused to “go into any considerable expense in procuring a collection of eastern books.”¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, their requisitions from the College of Fort William of texts “remarkable for the fineness and

¹⁴³ “Elfi Bey,” *Times* (London, 9 Dec. 1803).

¹⁴⁴ *A Persian at the Court of King George 1809-10: The Journal of Mirza Abul Hassan Khan*, ed. and trans. Margaret Morris Cloake (London, 1988), 74-5; see also “The Persian Ambassador,” *Morning Post* (London, 30 Dec. 1809).

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Hager, *A Dissertation on the Newly Discovered Babylonian Inscriptions* (London, 1801), xi.

¹⁴⁶ Public Despatch to Bengal (25 May 1798), in *Selections from the Calcutta Gazettes*, 4:26.

variety of writing and the splendour of their Illuminations” suggested an emphasis on amusing the layman over assisting the scholar.¹⁴⁷ Wheeling out Tipu’s tiger or cataloguing certain “curious” accessions—such as a desiccated pigeon from a Croydon chimney or two balls of hair from a goat’s stomach—Charles Wilkins might have wondered at the fate of his original design for the museum.¹⁴⁸ Applying to serve as its curator in 1799, Wilkins had pledged to render the institution “useful, as well as ornamental,” “a Monument of the Taste, as well as of the Munificence of its Founders.” To these ends, he drew up a prospectus for a learned body modeled on the Asiatic Society of Bengal. “Under the patronage of the Court of Directors,” this body would hold meetings and conduct research in the museum library, and publish its transactions on a printing press to be acquired for the purpose. Wilkins anticipated little difficulty finding suitable members: several leading lights of the Asiatic Society now resided in England, while “the names of many other celebrated Oriental scholars occur with the first thought of such an institution.”¹⁴⁹ His program for the museum, along with the weak market for oriental manuscripts in Europe, may have been what at first convinced so many returned Company servants to freely or cheaply grant it their collections. In 1809, Warren Hastings expressed disappointment at the directors’ offer for his Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit manuscripts, especially given the inclusion of several mathematical texts “beautifully written and drawn” by his old friend Tafazzul Husain Khan. Yet he admitted to Wilkins, “I had made up my mind to present them to the Company, if

¹⁴⁷ See ch. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Desmond, *India Museum*, 26.

¹⁴⁹ Wilkins, cited in *ibid.*, 6, 10.

the Chairman made any demur about the purchase.”¹⁵⁰ In this way, the repository soon amassed significant holdings of art, manuscripts, and natural history specimens, drawing notice from London guidebooks. While researchers were typically granted access to the museum, however, at least one complained that there was “no preparation made or accommodation provided.” During a two-month period in 1835, reportedly, there were seldom “more than two persons” in the reading room, which was poorly furnished and frequently disrupted by casual visitors. In addition, catalogues and staff were wanting or in disarray, such that “no person knows what treasures it [the museum] contains.”¹⁵¹ Whether or not the directors fully merited such accusations, it seems clear that their priorities lay elsewhere. Demonstrably, they did not include sponsoring a learned society of the kind Wilkins had proposed.

At times, the directors appeared not only inattentive but positively antagonistic towards would-be benefactors and beneficiaries of their India Museum, particularly current or former scholar-administrators in their employ. Colin Mackenzie, who had encountered the grasping hand of the court once before, complained to the Calcutta government of a new outrage in 1815.¹⁵² The surveyor acknowledged that his manuscripts and other “Literary & Historical materials” belonged in “some Public Establishment of my Country,” and that “the India Company had fair pretensions to expect them lodged in their Museum.” It

¹⁵⁰ Hastings to Wilkins, 7 Apr. 1809, cited in Peter Gordon, *The Oriental Repository at the India House* [London, 1835], 3.

¹⁵¹ Gordon, *Oriental Repository*, 10-11.

¹⁵² On the earlier incident, which rendered Mackenzie “indignant beyond all expression,” see John Leyden to Lord Minto, 18 Jul. 1810, Minto Papers, NLS MS 11320, 45r-45v; Phillimore, *Survey of India*, 2:291.

appeared from a recent despatch, however, that the directors sought to manage and perhaps disperse this collection before he was finished with it.¹⁵³ Mackenzie received assurances from Calcutta that there had been some misunderstanding and that he enjoyed the full support of the governor-general.¹⁵⁴ Still, this response left certain matters unresolved, such as the directors' earlier promise to reimburse his expenses in acquiring the collection. Well-founded or not, meanwhile, Mackenzie's suspicions were indicative of the directors' reputation among the present generation of scholar-administrators. "I sincerely hope you will be able to dispose of your valuable collection to advantage, to the East India Company," William Francklin wrote his friend in 1818; "I am sorry to say that they have discarded me & mine long since, & never sent me even thanks for the offer."¹⁵⁵ In the event, it was the Bengal government that bought Mackenzie's collection from his widow several years later for a sum the directors decried as exorbitant.¹⁵⁶ Coincidentally, this windfall equaled exactly the *lakh* of rupees that the Charter Act had proffered, if not delivered, as annual patronage to scholar-administrators. Seldom did European members of this class receive such official largesse and never did their Indian counterparts. Rather than dampen accusations of ingratitude, the directors' actions involving the India Museum tended to inflame them.

¹⁵³ Mackenzie to Ricketts, 15 Jun. 1815; see Extract Public Despatch to Bengal (3 Jun. 1814), appended.

¹⁵⁴ C. M. Ricketts to Mackenzie, 11 Jul. 1815, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Francklin to Mackenzie, 22 Oct. 1818, Records of the East India Company Library, BL Mss Eur F303/442.

¹⁵⁶ David M. Blake, "Colin Mackenzie: Collector Extraordinary," *British Library Journal* 17 (1991), 141.

The court's dealings with another polymathic surveyor provide a further case in point. In offering the India Museum his vast collection of specimens and manuscripts in 1815, Francis Buchanan had been accused by Lord Moira of making a gift to the Company of its own property.¹⁵⁷ After being treated “with so little regard” in Calcutta, Buchanan hoped to fare better with the directors in London, but they too gave him a “very cold” reception.¹⁵⁸ As he informed a botanical friend, they “received my collection with such contempt and arrogance that I would neither ask nor receive any favour from so scoundrelly a body.”¹⁵⁹ For a time, Buchanan even had difficulty obtaining access to the materials and considered abandoning plans to publish from them.¹⁶⁰ Though he did see several works into print, arrangements with the museum remained unsettled until 1820, when he managed to wrest his collections from the India Museum and carry them back to Scotland.¹⁶¹ In his ill treatment at the hands of the directors, Buchanan saw ideological as well as personal forces at play. For one thing, those who alleged that “the Company's affairs ... require concealment” might be disinclined to let him access or publish his reports. Yet not only did Buchanan offer to submit to pre-publication censorship; he doubted whether

¹⁵⁷ D. Prain, *A Sketch of the Life of Francis Hamilton (Once Buchanan)* (Calcutta, 1905), xxiii-xxiv; Ray Desmond, *The European Discovery of the Indian Flora* (Oxford, 1992), 78-9.

¹⁵⁸ Buchanan to James Cobb, 1815, Buchanan Papers, National Records of Scotland, GD161/19/2/24; A. Allan to [Benjamin Sydenham], 14 Feb. 1816, at GD161/19/2/21; see Cobb to Buchanan, 1 Feb. 1816, at GD161/19/2/23.

¹⁵⁹ Buchanan to Nathaniel Wallich, 4 Feb. 1817, Buchanan Manuscripts, Natural History Museum, MSS BUC, 149.

¹⁶⁰ Buchanan to Nathaniel Wallich, 17 Jul. 1816, *ibid.*, 147; Buchanan to James Edward Smith, 24 Nov. 1816, Smith Correspondence, Linnean Society of London, GB-110/JES/COR/2/138.

¹⁶¹ See Mark F. Watson and Henry J. Noltie, “Career, Collections, Reports and Publications of Dr Francis Buchanan (Later Hamilton), 1762–1829: Natural History Studies in Nepal, Burma (Myanmar), Bangladesh and India (Part 2)” *Annals of Science* (in press).

there would be much need. And here lay the larger issue: “in investigating the appearance and productions of the country, in describing its antiquities and the manners of its inhabitants, and in investigating their history,” most of his research could “in no manner interest the Court of Directors, farther than that this body may obtain credit ... for having employed a person to investigate such subjects, and for having allowed him to publish the result of his inquiries.” This constituted a remarkable statement from someone who, at the Company’s behest, had spent decades probing the expanding reaches of its dominion. According to Buchanan, the directors valued such efforts not as an asset to their sovereignty, but as an alibi for their “mean jealousy.”¹⁶² Ascribing to these “Cheese monger Emperors” a commercialism at odds with good government, Buchanan echoed not only the language but the larger indictment of his old patron Wellesley.¹⁶³ This likeness was brought home by Wellesley’s onetime private secretary, who told Buchanan that the directors’ “foolish” and “ungrateful” conduct had been “that which they observe towards every body of talents or independence.”¹⁶⁴ Presumably he included the former governor-general in this description.

As criticism of the India Museum mounted, its star fell in the scholarly firmament of the metropole. Most of this criticism circulated privately among individuals who still sought consideration of one kind or another from the Company. But the pamphleteer Peter

¹⁶² Buchanan to Benjamin Sydenham, 4 Mar. 1816, Buchanan Papers, National Records of Scotland, GD161/19/2/17-18.

¹⁶³ Buchanan to Wallich, 4 Feb. 1817, 149.

¹⁶⁴ Benjamin Sydenham to Buchanan, 13 Feb. 1816, Buchanan Papers, National Records of Scotland, GD161/19/2/22; Sydenham to Buchanan, 23 May 1816, at GD161/19/2/16.

Gordon, after having his access to the museum revoked in 1835, launched a scathing attack in the open. Gordon's portrayal of the directors as "the 24 men who are the most inimical to knowledge" might have been dismissed as hyperbole. Nonetheless, there was something in his observation that William Marsden, Wilkins' son-in-law and an old servant of the Company, had presented his oriental collections not to the India Museum but to the British Museum and King's College, London.¹⁶⁵ Nor were these the only other institutions to which a metropolitan orientalist might now turn. After being rebuffed by the directors, William Francklin adopted the increasingly popular course of donating his manuscripts and antiquities to the Royal Asiatic Society.¹⁶⁶ With the founding of this learned body in 1823, Wilkins' vision of a London counterpart to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta had finally been realized—under the auspices not of the Company but of the Crown. The Royal Asiatic Society not only maintained a library and museum, but held meetings, printed a journal, and offered support to scholars: everything, in other words, that Wilkins had sought in vain from the directors. While the society's prospectus did not cite a particular source of inspiration, it expressed "surprise" that such a body had not been established sooner.¹⁶⁷ Any implied rebuke to the directors here could only have been reinforced by this founding document's omission to mention them or the Company. If this were not enough, the society counted two sometime adversaries of the court, Wellesley and Moira, as its vice-patrons,

¹⁶⁵ Gordon, *Oriental Repository*, 11, see 12.

¹⁶⁶ For Francklin's initial donations, see "Donations to the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland," *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1827), 626-8.

¹⁶⁷ "Asiatic Society of London: Prospectus," *AJ* 15 (1823), 264.

and another, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, as its de facto head. The society did request the directors' "countenance and support," but only as an afterthought when it was already up and functioning.¹⁶⁸ Nor did the directors appear eager to comply: it took three years and a pointed reminder by Colebrooke to obtain from them a small annual grant.¹⁶⁹ Inevitably, the society maintained links with formal and informal networks of Company personnel. Yet even here, it set an independent course, establishing its own Committee of Correspondence to serve as "a medium through which persons in Asia may obtain from Europe, and persons in Europe may obtain from Asia, such information relative to the East as they cannot otherwise obtain with the same degree of facility."¹⁷⁰ The Company's channels of communication, such language implied, were inadequate to the needs of scholarship. The advent of the Royal Asiatic Society thus both signaled and speeded the movement of scholarly activity away from the directors' political orbit.

In a sense, the career of James Mill at East India House marked the strange apotheosis of this trajectory. For its severities towards Hindu civilization, Mill's *History of British India* (1817) has latterly been seen as a seminal text of "Anglicism," or, at least, of "anti-Orientalism." The alternative conclusion, that this work was first and foremost a radical attack on *British* society, for which India served as a kind of proxy, is more

¹⁶⁸ Minute of Council (15 Mar. 1823), cited in C. F. Beckingham, "A History of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1823-1973," in Stuart Simmonds and Simon Digby, eds., *The Royal Asiatic Society: Its History and Treasures* (Leiden, 1979), 27.

¹⁶⁹ Rocher and Rocher, *Colebrooke*, 166.

¹⁷⁰ "Third Report of the Committee of Correspondence," *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 3 (1835), Appendix no. 1, i; see Minute (18 Feb. 1826), Royal Asiatic Society Archives, Minutes of Council, vol. 1, 119.

convincing.¹⁷¹ Yet there remains an important question: Why should the directors have employed one of the Company's most prominent philosophical critics? Rather than concession or cooptation, the decision bespoke indifference. From his appointment to the Committee of Correspondence in 1819 until almost his death in 1836, Mill used his position to advocate what he saw as the interests of good government against those of "Old Corruption" and Tory reaction. But these views evidently had little to do with his selection or subsequent elevation. Rather, it seems, Mill possessed friends on the Court of Directors and an aptitude for secretarial work.¹⁷² In his erudition the directors showed little interest. Just two years before hiring Mill, they had abolished the office of Company historiographer and transferred its functions to one Peter Pratt, "a literary Hack" known hitherto for a cheap edition of a chess manual. A corporation that employed Charles Lamb in its accounting department need not have looked far for a writer of more conspicuous talents. Yet according to the ousted historiographer, John Bruce, the court's only concern was "to save my Salary."¹⁷³ More telling still, the court declined to take up the justifications for reducing scholarly patronage that Mill himself made available. In the tendentious preface to his *History*, Mill characterized the knowledge reaped by generations of Company scholar-administrators as biased and unsystematic. He cast especial doubt on the grand philosophical projects now underway in India, arguing that men on the spot could only

¹⁷¹ Duncan Forbes, "James Mill and India," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 5 (1951); Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford, 1992).

¹⁷² William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London, 1924), 195-209.

¹⁷³ John Bruce to Hugh Inglis, 30 Jun. 1817, BL IOR H/456e, 362-3; see A. J. Arberry, *The Library of the India Office: A Historical Sketch* (London, 1938), 40-41.

gather rough facts, the parsing and judging of which required physical and critical distance.¹⁷⁴ In emphasizing the necessity of metropolitan scrutiny, Mill's claim to authority in Indian scholarship mirrored that of the directors in Indian politics. Indeed, had he made the same argument a decade and a half earlier, they might have eagerly turned it to political purposes against Wellesley and the College of Fort William. But the need had dissipated, and, with it, the appetite. Over the next decade and a half, true to the strictures of his preface, Mill facilitated additional cuts to scholarly patronage in his work drafting despatches to India. This is not to say, however, that he saw no role for knowledge in the Company's affairs. On the contrary, like other officials, he now argued for native education as an aid to good government. Ironically, this idea had emerged largely from collaborations among the very scholar-administrators, Indian and European, whom Mill so disparaged.

Scholar-Administrators, Indian Society, and Education

Changes in the scope and character of intellectual contacts between Company officials and Indian society in the 1810s spurred the development of education policy in the 1820s-30s. Modern studies of Indian scholar-administrators employed by the Company have tended to focus on traditional elites, including, in this period, the *niyogi brahmans* who staffed Mackenzie's Survey of Mysore.¹⁷⁵ It has been argued that, by recruiting specific high-status

¹⁷⁴ See James Mill, *The History of British India*, 3 vols. (London, 1817), 1:vii-xxvii.

¹⁷⁵ See Phillip B. Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," *CSSH* 45 (2003); Velcheru Narayana Rao, "Print and Prose: Pundits, *Karanams*, and the East India Company in the Making of Modern Telugu," in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia, eds., *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi, 2004); Rama Sundari Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880* (Basingstoke, 2012), 95-122; Tobias Wolffhardt, *Unearthing the*

groups of this kind, the Company shored up caste and other hierarchies and closed off former avenues of mobility.¹⁷⁶ With aims to consolidate territorial sovereignty on the part of many officials, however, came attempts at greater social reach and, increasingly, social change. Among the most obvious manifestations of this impulse was the growing shift in curricula and scholarship at Company institutions from the “classical” languages of Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit to Indian vernaculars. As one manual expressed the new thinking, “How often do we see our first scholars at a loss, when accidentally placed in situations where it is necessary to understand the manners, the habits, and the familiar language of the lower orders.” The author recommended “visiting the houses of merchants” and the “shops of tradesmen and mechanics, and chatting with them.”¹⁷⁷ Although officials with a scholarly bent might have sought assistance elsewhere than at the local bazaar, territorial expansion pushed them, too, to establish a wider range of Indian contacts. For one thing, such expansion appeared to be discouraging many native rulers and elites from their former openness to intellectual exchange. European accusations of *brahman* obfuscation and fabrication were not new, though they reached a new pitch in 1805, when the Benares antiquarian Francis Wilford admitted that he had been duped by his head *pandit* for over a decade.¹⁷⁸ Anecdotes about willfully-ignorant *brahmans* smashing microscopes and the

Past to Forge the Future: Colin Mackenzie, the Early Colonial State and the Comprehensive Survey of India, trans. Jane Rafferty (New York, 2018), 187-97.

¹⁷⁶ See generally Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, 1999), 80-148.

¹⁷⁷ Alexander Fraser Tytler, *Considerations on the Resent [sic] Political State of India*, 2 vols. (London, 1815), 1:77, 1:77n.

¹⁷⁸ On the Wilford affair, see C. A. Bayly, “Orientalists, Informants and Critics in Benares, 1790-1860,” in Jamal Malik, ed., *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History, 1760-1860* (Leiden, 2000), 103-11; Nigel

like, meanwhile, cannot be much credited, especially when they served obvious evangelical purposes.¹⁷⁹ All the same, anecdotal evidence suggests that Indian rulers and elites had become more reticent to share knowledge with Europeans. Inquiring into mineral resources in the Carnatic around 1800, the Company naturalist Benjamin Heyne discovered “the mandate of the Rajah [the *nawab* of Arcot] to conceal every thing, as far as possible, from the prying eyes of an European.”¹⁸⁰ Collecting manuscripts for the College of Fort William in 1806, Claudius Buchanan obtained a local catalogue from the *raja* of Travancore only over the protests of the palace *brahmans*.¹⁸¹ The same year, an official at the Poona Residency ventured an explanation for such behavior in a letter to James Mackintosh:

I have not been inattentive to your wishes respecting a Catalogue Raison[n]é of the Peshwa[']s Shanscrit MSS, but I am very sorry to tell you that I have reason to fear the accomplishment of them will be impracticable. When one asks a native of rank for any information respecting any thing belonging to him, his family, his occupations, his connections, his possessions of whatever kind they may be, he invariably thinks that there is something sinister in your motive, and takes alarm. No persons are allowed to look at the Peshwa[']s books, but two or three of his favorite Pundits.¹⁸²

Suspensions of this kind may explain why the College of Fort William struggled to procure manuscripts through the Company's residents at Basra, Delhi, Lucknow, and Hyderabad.¹⁸³ The locations of all these episodes may not have been incidental, falling outside the

Leask, “Francis Wilford and the Colonial Construction of Hindu Geography, 1799-1822,” in Amanda Gilroy, ed., *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775-1844* (Manchester, 2000), 214-19.

¹⁷⁹ James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, 4 vols. (London, 1813), 2:468-71; extracted in “The Brahmin and Microscope,” *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 23 (1815), 365.

¹⁸⁰ Benjamin Heyne, *Tracts, Historical and Statistical, on India* (London, 1814), 112.

¹⁸¹ Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia: With Notices of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages* (Cambridge, 1811), 93.

¹⁸² E. S. Frissell to Mackintosh, 13 Jun. 1806, Mackintosh Papers, BL Add. MS 78765, 73r.

¹⁸³ See Matthew Lumsden to William Hunter, 18 Sept. 1810, PCFW, vol. 561, 325.

Company's formal dominion but within the plausible sphere of its ambition. Staunch allies or dependents were more apt to render assistance.¹⁸⁴ Yet it was the unstable periphery that most interested Company officials in an age of expansion. And they turned to new collaborators to pursue this interest.

Although the Company's territorial expansion seems to have deprived European officials of scholarly aid from many traditional elites, it also brought new and non-elites into their orbit. Expansion in the South, in particular, put Indians who had not previously been favored as scholar-administrators in greater supply and greater demand. Some were Jesuit-educated Christians, like Appu Muttusami Pillai of Pondicherry, who was hired by the College of Fort St. George as librarian and, later, Tamil master.¹⁸⁵ Others were literary entrepreneurs, like the *komati* trader Mamadi Venkayya of Masulipatam, who compiled Telugu and Sanskrit dictionaries for Company patrons despite alleged attempts by *brahmans* to stop him, including, twice, by tearing down his house.¹⁸⁶ When the Company officer and historian Mark Wilks had tried to study Sanskrit some years earlier, reportedly,

¹⁸⁴ At the resident Alexander Walker's prompting, Anand Rao Gaekwad, the *maharaja* of Baroda, sent over five-hundred Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and Hindustani works to England for the use of Haileybury students. Anand Rao Gaekwad to East India Company, [Jan. 1809], BL IO Islamic 4253; Fateh Singh Rao Gaekwad to East India Company, [Jan. 1809], BL IO Islamic 4254; Walker to Jonathan Duncan, 11 Jan. 1809, Walker of Bowland Papers, NLS MS 13922, 1r-2v. Purniya, the *diwan* of Mysore, assembled "the best informed natives of the country who were known to possess family manuscripts or historical pieces" and directed the preparation of a "historical memoir" based on these sources for the Company officer and historian Mark Wilks. Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India, in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysoor*, 3 vols. (London, 1817), 1:x.

¹⁸⁵ Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* (Leiden, 1992), 158-9. Whether or not by design, many Tamil instructors at the college were non-*brahmans*. A. R. Venkatachalapathy, "Grammar, the Frame of Language: Tamil Pandits at the College of Fort St. George," in Trautmann, ed., *Madras School*, 120-24.

¹⁸⁶ Trautmann, *Dravidian Proof*, 146-50.

“the Dubashes then all powerful at Madras, threatened loss of cast and absolute destruction to any Bramin” who would teach him.¹⁸⁷ The Sanskrit text *Sarvadevavilasa*, composed in the 1810s, portrayed the leading families of this class as *still* all-powerful: great patrons of learning and upholders of “traditional” kingship, solicited by Company officials rather than solicitous of them.¹⁸⁸ Yet the *dubashes*, whose ascendance in the first place had owed to European commercial activity, were increasingly sidelined as the Company assumed the mantle of a territorial state. By 1820, the scholar-administrator John McKerrell could remark that these “middle men” were “disappearing.”¹⁸⁹ The individuals who rose to prominence in their wake included polyglot *deshasthas* like Vennelacuntty Soob Row, whom McKerrell employed in 1808-10 to teach him Telugu, help compile a Kannada grammar, and conduct a revenue survey in Mysore.¹⁹⁰ Born to a family of high caste but moderate circumstances in Ongole, Soob Row relied on administrative talents and literary capital to find patrons and ascend through the native ranks of government, eventually becoming head Marathi translator at the *sadr adalat* (high court).¹⁹¹ The successes of *brahmans* from modest backgrounds like Soob Row, and of non-*brahmans* like those

¹⁸⁷ John Leyden to William Erskine, 27 Nov. 1804, Leyden and Erskine Papers, BL Add. MS 26561, 56v.

¹⁸⁸ *Sarvadevavilasa*, ed. V. Raghavan, as *The Sarva-Deva-Vilāsa* (Madras, 1958); see Kanakalatha Mukund, *The View from Below: Indigenous Society, Temples and the Early Colonial State in Tamilnadu 1700-1835* (New Delhi, 2005), 166, 176; Indira Viswanathan Peterson, “Mapping Madras in *Sarvadevavilāsa*: Urban Space, Patronage, and Power in a Nineteenth Century Sanskrit Text,” in Kannan M. and Jennifer Clare, eds., *Passages: Relationships between Tamil and Sanskrit* (Pondicherry, 2009), 345-8.

¹⁸⁹ John McKerrell, *A Grammar of the Carnataca Language* (Madras, 1820), ii; see generally Susan Neild-Basu, “The Dubashes of Madras,” *MAS* 18 (1984).

¹⁹⁰ Vennelacuntty Soob Row, *The Life of Vennelacuntty Soob Row*, ed. Vennelacuntty Venkata Gopal Row (Madras, 1873), 13-18.

¹⁹¹ See Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford, 2008), 310-13.

mentioned above, attested the social promotion sometimes attainable by Indian scholar-administrators in British employ. The Company's displacement of indigenous dynasties, while it may have created a "crisis of patronage" for learned elites, created opportunities for some of their social subordinates.¹⁹²

Nor was this phenomenon limited to the eastern side of the peninsula. While serving in Malabar at the turn of the century, the Company officer and diplomat Alexander Walker befriended a set of Calicut natives who aspired to greater wealth and status. During subsequent postings over the next decade, Walker relied on these contacts for political intelligence and for materials to aid his eclectic researches: on one occasion, pepper and cardamom plants; on another, advice from a *shastri* (Sanskrit scholar) on Hindu religious practices. In return, Walker's collaborators received payment and help securing permanent work in the Company's revenue and judicial administrations. One thanked him with the present of a sandalwood writing desk bound in silver. Although the correspondence ranged widely, it revolved around one subject in particular: a Malayalam history called the *Keralolpathi*, the translation of which Walker had entrusted to one "Joseph," a sometime post office employee and, judging by his name, a Syriac Christian.¹⁹³ Anticipating the modern view of this text as "a charter of validation for status groups in society," Walker noted the existence of numerous versions, tailored "to suit the views of particular families"

¹⁹² For the former claim, see Lisa Mitchell, "Literary Production at the Edge of Empire: The Crisis of Patronage in Southern India under Colonial Rule," in Elizabeth Kolsky and Sameetah Agha, eds., *Fringes of Empire* (New Delhi, 2009).

¹⁹³ "Native Letters: Malabar," some trans., Walker of Bowland Papers, NLS MS 13718, 1r-42v.

or “the prejudices of particular casts.”¹⁹⁴ One means he took to control for discrepancies was to compare his translation with another “made under the eye and inspection of Mr. [Jonathan] Duncan the late Governor of Bombay.”¹⁹⁵ A further means may have been to hire as translator a subaltern Christian like Joseph, rather than a highborn *pandit*, as might have been expected for a venerable literary text ostensibly derived from Sanskrit. The reports of intermediaries indicate that relations between the two men were often strained. Walker would later write, somewhat ruefully, that “almost every European Servant has a favourite native, and it is astonishing what power and ascendancy he soon obtains. These native favourites are generally men of low origin, tho of great shrewdness, without much education but possess[ed] of ... strong natural endowments.”¹⁹⁶ Among Company officials, it was becoming a question how such upward mobility, if widely stimulated, might impact Indian society and its relations with the state.

Some officials welcomed the prospect of social change resulting from new forms of scholarly patronage and inquiry. It was often a short leap from studying to questioning India’s social order. Investigating the histories of Rajput princes, the army and political officer James Tod countered the *brahmanical* view of Indian society that dominated in

¹⁹⁴ Alexander Walker, “An Account of the Kerool-ood-Patty,” Walker of Bowland Papers, NLS MS 13797, 2-3; Kesavan Veluthat, “The Kēraḷōlpatti as History,” in *The Early Medieval in South India* (New Delhi, 2009), 142.

¹⁹⁵ Walker, “Kerool-ood-Patty,” 4; see Jonathan Duncan, “Historical Remarks on the Coast of Malabar, with some Description of the Manners of Its Inhabitants,” *Asiatick Researches* 5 (Calcutta, 1798), 1.

¹⁹⁶ Cited in Neil Rabinoy, “System v. Expediency: The Reality of Land Revenue Administration in the Bombay Presidency, 1812-1820,” *MAS* 9 (1975), 543.

Company circles.¹⁹⁷ As he put it in a published account of his two decades of research, “I applied myself ... with a view to throwing some light upon a people scarcely yet known in Europe, and whose political connexion with England appeared to me to be capable of undergoing a material change, with benefit to both parties.”¹⁹⁸ Whereas Tod was a feudal-romantic who exchanged one elite vantage for another, Colin Mackenzie displayed more popular inclinations, advancing broad notions of state-led social “improvement.”¹⁹⁹ Although his most prominent indigenous collaborators were *niyogi brahmans*, Mackenzie also employed Muslims, Jains, Christians, and other Hindus, and took an interest in groups little known to Europeans at the time.²⁰⁰ He drew up an important account of the Jains, and had his primary assistant Kavali Venkata Borayya research the Boya tribe.²⁰¹ While Mackenzie may simply have wanted to supplement or historicize the *brahmanical* orientation of a Jones or a Wilkins, his fellow surveyor Francis Buchanan was positively hostile to it. In an early essay, “On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas” (1799), Buchanan contrasted the salutary equality he had observed among Burmese Buddhists with the oppressive hierarchy he saw in *brahmanism*.²⁰² His reportage from Mysore, according

¹⁹⁷ Jason Freitag, *Serving Empire, Serving Nation: James Tod and the Rajputs of Rajasthan* (Leiden, 2009), 110-12; see also Florence D’Souza, *Knowledge, Mediation and Empire: James Tod’s Journeys among the Rajputs* (Manchester, 2015), 41-63.

¹⁹⁸ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, 2 vols. (London, 1829-32), 1:xiv.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Robb, “Completing ‘Our Stock of Geography’, or an Object ‘Still More Sublime’: Colin Mackenzie’s Survey of Mysore, 1799-1810,” *JRAS* s3 8 (1998), 198-201; Wolffhardt, *Mackenzie*, 197-202.

²⁰⁰ Wolffhardt, *Mackenzie*, 190.

²⁰¹ Leslie C. Orr, “Orientalists, Missionaries, and Jains: The South Indian Story,” in Trautmann, ed., *Madras School*; Mantena, *Modern Historiography*, 100, 103.

²⁰² Francis Buchanan, “On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas,” *Asiatick Researches* 6 (Calcutta, 1799); Vicziany, “Buchanan,” 632.

to William Erskine, avoided the errors into which many European writers on India had fallen by “confining their enquiries to men of learning, & of the upper classes, both of whom are singularly incurious & indifferent regarding the society & manners of the most numerous classes.”²⁰³ Indeed, in this and other surveys, Buchanan made a point of investigating non-*brahmanical* ideologies and institutions.²⁰⁴ His *Genealogies of the Hindus* (1819), based in large part on *kshatriya* lineages, attempted to demystify *brahmanical* authority and establish caste as a late innovation. Most suggestively, by defining “brahman” as “now the sacred cast, but originally merely a civilized or intelligent person,” Buchanan delinked intellect from pedigree, making an implicit case for non-elite education.²⁰⁵ Modern historians have often assigned European defenses of caste to “Orientalist” attitudes and attacks on it to their “Anglicist” opposites.²⁰⁶ Once again, however, these categories are unhelpful. Francis Whyte Ellis, who has recently been upheld as “a nearly perfect embodiment of Orientalism as colonial policy,” nonetheless shared the rather imperfect “Orientalist” John Leyden’s interest in curbing caste privileges by democratizing Sanskrit learning.²⁰⁷ Leyden reportedly admired Malay society for its absence of caste and freedom of intercourse, which rendered it amenable to “intellectual improvement.”²⁰⁸ His circle of

²⁰³ Erskine Diary (24 Feb. 1811), BL Add. MS 39945, 4r.

²⁰⁴ William R. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Berkeley, 1996), 150-54.

²⁰⁵ Francis Hamilton [Buchanan], *Genealogies of the Hindus, Extracted from Their Sacred Writings* (Edinburgh, 1819), 57, see esp. 4, 14, 28.

²⁰⁶ E.g. Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J., 2001).

²⁰⁷ Trautmann, *Dravidian Proof*, 79, see Ellis quote at 205-6; see Leyden to [Robert] Knox, undated, Leyden and Erskine Papers, BL Add. MS 26561, 54r.

²⁰⁸ Thomas Stamford Raffles, intro. to John Leyden, trans., *Malay Annals* (London, 1821), xiii, xvi.

Malay scribes included the likes of “Ibrahim, the son of Candu, the poor merchant of Keddah.”²⁰⁹ From such instances of scholarly patronage as an agent of social promotion officials were working up to a vision of education as an agent of social change. Nor was this new vision a purely European one.

Extant records of the College of Fort William and other Company institutions of the period abound with petitions from non-Europeans for scholarly patronage, some of them very grand indeed. One such document was addressed to the college in 1814 by Nathaniel Sabat (or Jawad bin Sabat), an Arab of dubious qualifications who claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Sabat’s Calcutta sojourn formed the middle act in a perambulatory saga of conversions and recantations, literary feuds, and other colorful transactions, whose denouement some years later saw him bundled into a sack by pirates and drowned off the coast of Sumatra.²¹⁰ His proposed Arabic textbook would have encompassed “Grammar, letter writing, Rhetoric, Orthometry, Prose, Verse, Logic, Arithmetic, Algebra, Mensuration, Geometry, Astronomy and Geography, Natural Philosophy, Metaphysics, Medicine and Scholastic Disputation.”²¹¹ Professor of Arabic Matthew Lumsden recommended the work—or, at least, “those parts of the Work which I

²⁰⁹ “An Account of Bengal, and of a Visit to the Government House, by Ibrahim, the Son of Candu the Merchant,” trans. Leyden, in Maria Graham, *Journal of a Residence in India* (Edinburgh, 1812), 201.

²¹⁰ Maulavi Abdul Wali, *Life and Work of Jawad Sabat, An Arab Traveller, Writer and Apologist* (Calcutta, 1925); Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, UK, 1993), 95-6.

²¹¹ Nathaniel Sabat, Petition [1814], PCFW, vol. 563, 255.

understand.”²¹² But nothing came of it, for the following year Sabat fled Calcutta and Christianity alike in a cloud of scandal.

In 1817, Ramkamal Sen laid before the college council another major proposal: a translation of Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* into Bengali. The first comprehensive work of its kind, comprising some sixty-thousand words rendered in both languages, the dictionary would eventually see its way into print, but only after seventeen years of losses and setbacks for its author. Ramkamal’s travails illustrated the antinomies of the age. In his rise from poverty to prominence, and in his seemingly boundless energy for civic projects, Ramkamal personified the glittering aspirations of Calcutta’s *bhadralok* class.²¹³ Yet like his European counterparts, if not to an even greater extent, he struggled to secure “that patronage and liberality,” which, he reminded the college council, the Company had once “bestowed upon almost every oriental publication.”²¹⁴ In the preface to his long-delayed dictionary, Ramkamal pivoted from disappointment about patronage to optimism about education:

For the encouragement given me by Government, I feel grateful, as being more than has been granted to a Hindoo for a work of this nature; yet it will not exempt me from loss in printing, nor will it repay me the expense I have incurred in employing writers, pundits, &c. If however my labours prove generally useful, and beneficial to the cause of native education ... I shall consider myself well rewarded.

Ramkamal had undertaken the work in the first place on behalf of two initiatives: the Hindu College and the Calcutta School Book Society.²¹⁵ While the Hindu College was an elite if

²¹² Lumsden to Thomas Roebuck [1814], *ibid.*, 257.

²¹³ Pradyot Kumar Ray, *Dewan Ramcomul Sen and His Times* (Calcutta, 1990); see S. N. Mukherjee, “Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38,” in Edmund Leach and Mukherjee, eds., *Elites in South Asia* (Cambridge, 1970).

²¹⁴ Ramcomul Sen to College Council, 22 Feb. 1817, PCFW, vol. 564, 344.

²¹⁵ Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, 2 vols. (Serampore, 1834), 1:8.

non-traditional institution, the School Book Society avowed as its object “the general march of mind.” Its offshoot, the Calcutta School Society, called for “enlightening the mass of the people.”²¹⁶

By 1820, such mass-educational associations, made up of indigenes and Europeans alike, existed at the seats of all three Indian presidencies. Unsurprisingly, given their stated aims, they counted a number of social risers like Ramkamal as leading members. Upon accepting a nomination to the Madras School Book Society, Vennelacunty Soob Row drew up a detailed memorandum on the state and prospects of education in the surrounding region.²¹⁷ A report of the Bombay Education Society noted that most of the students attending its native schools were Parsis, “and the Society is much indebted to Mulla Firuz, the learned editor of the *Desatir*, who has taken considerable pains in explaining to his countrymen the views of the Society, and encouraging them to send their children to the school[s].”²¹⁸ More even than counterparts like Ramkamal or Soob Row, Mulla Firuz exemplified how the Company’s nascent territorialization was inspiring grand scholarly projects, while, at the same time, redirecting political energies from such projects into native education.

Bombay was the last of the three Indian presidencies to permanently acquire a hinterland, in the Maratha cessions of 1803-5. Yet here, as at Calcutta and Madras, the

²¹⁶ “Calcutta School Society,” in *The First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society* (Calcutta, 1818), 28.

²¹⁷ Soob Row, *Life*, 64-75.

²¹⁸ “Extract from the Fourth Annual Report (1819) of the Bombay Education Society,” in R. V. Parulekar, *Selections from Educational Records (Bombay)*, 3 vols. (Bombay, 1953-7), 2:18.

transition to a territorial understanding of sovereignty was a lengthier process, at first little stimulated from London.²¹⁹ Here, too, there were indications by the later 1810s that the makings of the future political order lay in education. Unlike other Indian gentries and middle classes drawn to the schools of voluntary associations, Bombay's Parsi community was neither new nor newly ascendant. It was, however, similarly in flux. The early nineteenth century witnessed a shift in Parsi communal authority from an older generation, committed to traditional priestly hierarchy and ties with Persia, to a newer generation, committed to greater social mobility and ties with the British.²²⁰ Straddling this divide was the Zoroastrian high priest and panegyrist of the Company, Mulla Firuz. Having collaborated with European scholars since at least the turn of the century, the Mulla cemented his reputation among them in 1818 with an edition of the *Dasatir-i Asmani*, a long-lost and sought-after Persian text. As he wrote in the preface, however, "The few years of his life that may yet remain to him he intends to devote to the completion of an Epic poem on the Conquest of India by the British, on which he has for many years been employed, and which he has nearly brought to a close."²²¹ The work in question was the *Georgenama*, named after George III and modeled on Firdawsī's classic *Shahnama* or "Book

²¹⁹ See Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784-1806* (Cambridge, 1970); Neil Rabinoy, "Sovereignty, Profits, and Social Change: The Development of British Administration in Western India, 1800-1820" (PhD, University of Pennsylvania, 1972).

²²⁰ See Susan Stiles Maneck, *The Death of Ahriman: Culture, Identity and Theological Change Among the Parsis of India* (Mumbai, 1997), 160-252; Monica M. Ringer, *Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastrianism in India and Iran* (Syracuse, N.Y., 2011), 30-46; Daniel Sheffield, "Iran, the Mark of Paradise or the Land of Ruin? Historical Approaches to Reading Two Parsi Zoroastrian Travelogues," in Roberta Micallef and Sunil Sharma, eds., *On the Wonders of Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013).

²²¹ Mulla Firuz Bin Kaus, preface to Mulla Firuz, ed., *The Desatir or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets*, 2 vols. (Bombay, 1818), 2:ix.

of Kings.” Begun as early as 1805 at the suggestion of Jonathan Duncan, the governor of Bombay, Mulla Firuz’s magnum opus was a document of its age.²²² On the one hand, it mobilized Parsi-Mughal conceptions of mercantile sovereignty to legitimize the rule of a trading company.²²³ On the other hand, it narrated the Company’s progressive assumption of territorial control up to 1817, or, as Mulla Firuz’s nephew and literary executor put it, the events by which “the Europeans in Hindustan ... from the condition of merchants were raised to that of governors; and ... by the subjugation of their enemies, attained to absolute dominion.”²²⁴ Just as this transformation entered a new and uncertain phase, we have seen, so did the political conditions for scholarship. From the outset, Mulla Firuz cultivated Company benefactors, including John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone as well as Duncan. But his efforts to secure the greater largesse of Moira came to little, despite Malcolm’s endorsement of the *Georgenama* as “calculated to diffuse high & salutary impressions of our Power.”²²⁵ Malcolm’s observation that Mulla Firuz was impecunious, and perforce dependent on the Company’s patronage, was echoed by Elphinstone and

²²² According to his nephew and literary executor, Mulla Firuz pursued the work for twenty-five years until his death in 1830. Moolla Rustom Bin Kaikobad, “Prospectus,” in *Contents of the George Nameh* (Bombay, 1836), 5.

²²³ This argument draws on an unpublished paper by Daniel Sheffield.

²²⁴ Mulla Rustom, Announcement, trans. in “Curious Oriental Literature,” *Literary Gazette; and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, and Sciences, &c.* (18 Nov. 1837), 738.

²²⁵ Malcolm to Marquess Hastings, 20 May 1819, in Marquess of Hastings Papers, Mount Stuart, HA/9/35. Presumably in a bid for patronage, Mulla Firuz penned an encomium to Moira. See Edward Rehatsek, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Arabic, Hindostani, Persian, and Turkish MSS. in the Mulla Firuz Library* (Bombay, 1873), 159–60.

others.²²⁶ By the period of the Mulla's death in 1830, however, the only hope of obtaining such patronage for the *Georgenama* lay in proffering it as an educational work for "all classes of people," to be stocked in public libraries and schools.²²⁷ As a condition for underwriting a three-volume lithograph of the work, the Bombay government fixed its price at sixty rupees, "the lowest that could have been conjectured."²²⁸ Yet this was still a sizeable figure. Moreover, an epic poem of some two-thousand pages in erudite Persian might be read by the old guard of Indian elites, but was ill-suited as an elementary textbook. If Ramkamal's cheaper and more utilitarian dictionary was unprofitable, how much worse must the *Georgenama* have fared? The Mulla's epic proved an apt synecdoche for the great mass of Company scholarship in the early nineteenth century, caught between the decline of one politics of knowledge and the rise of another.

Conclusion

Why was native education beginning to engage the attention of Company authorities in a way that even the most ambitious scholarly projects of recent years had not? Cultural attitudes might appear to provide the answer. In a debate at East India House in 1817, on the subject of Haileybury college, Robert Grant recalled the negotiations that had preceded the Charter Act of 1813:

²²⁶ Malcolm to Marquess Hastings, 20 May 1819; Elphinstone, Minute (1825), MSA Bombay Public Proceedings, vol. 14/98, 427-9.

²²⁷ Mulla Rustom, Announcement, 738.

²²⁸ Moolla Rustom, "Prospectus," 5. For the publication, see Mulla' Feruz Bin Ka'wus, *The George-Námah*, ed. Mulla' Rustam Bin Kaikoba'd, 3 vols. (Bombay, 1837).

[W]e professedly stood before parliament and before the nation, on this specific ground—that we desired the privileges we demanded, not on account of the benefits they would produce to us, but on account of the benefits they would enable us to bestow on others ... On the principle, that we regarded our Indian possessions, not as a mine from whence we were to draw the treasures of the East, but as a field on which we were to diffuse the nobler treasures of western light and knowledge and refinement.²²⁹

Modern historians have read this kind of language as evidence of an Anglicizing mission. Grant's references to cardinal directions here, not to mention his evangelical commitments, do nothing to resist the conclusion. Yet discussions of section forty-three of the Charter Act among Company officials, including Grant's father, Charles, turned not on attitudes about the East but on ideas about the state. This context suggests a rather different interpretation of the quotation above. By claiming that the Company had renounced the extraction of wealth for the implantation of knowledge, Grant sought above all to show that it had embraced the responsibilities of territorial sovereignty. His revisionist account of the Charter Act, in which the Company sacrificed its own enrichment for the sake of its subjects' enlightenment, prefigured justifications of the sequel act of 1833, which would end the Company's trade and cement its makeover as a territorial state. Grant's remarks, like Moira's near-coeval ones about nurturing a "rising generation," showed how older debates over the education of European civil servants were blurring into new ones over the education of Indian subjects. That political possibilities for native education were emerging from collaborations between European and Indian scholar-administrators would prove ironic. For both groups were to lose out from a policy of funding schools and textbooks over scholarly endeavor. Charles Edward Trevelyan, the major architect of this policy,

²²⁹ Robert Grant, in East India House Debate (20 Feb. 1817), *AJ* 3 (1817), 600.

portrayed Company orientalists and their elite Indian counterparts as selfishly unconcerned with the welfare of the people. Patronizing such individuals might have been appropriate for a mercantile corporation, Trevelyan implied, but not for a territorial state. Such thinking explains why the fortunes of scholar-administrators declined still further as the Company state entered its final phase of transformation in the 1820s. The German philologist Augustus Schlegel may have exaggerated when he declared, in 1819, that “literary or scientific zeal appears to be unknown to the English in India, and the spirit once called into animation by Sir William Jones seems to have now become extinct.”²³⁰ Some officials, Indian and European, continued to engage in learned pursuits. They did so, however, under conditions of diminished patronage and political consequence. A director voiced the now-reigning view among his colleagues in 1843: “we do not require for our service deep theologians, profound lawyers, erudite physicians or metaphysicians, or subtle political economists”; India, after all, would not be “retained by the force of erudition.”²³¹ By this time, the nexus of politics and knowledge represented by the scholar-administrator had been decisively severed.

²³⁰ Cited in “Asiatic Society,” *AJ* 14 (1822), 40.

²³¹ Henry St. George Tucker, “The Education of the Civil Service” (1843), in *Memorials of Indian Government*, ed. John William Kaye (London, 1853), 431.

Chapter 5

Education and the Ends of the Company State

In 1854, officials on the Board of Control observed that for the past few decades there was “no Indian question upon which more had been written” than native education.¹ The despatch they were engaged in preparing followed on the heels of what would prove to be the final renewal of the East India Company’s charter. It comprised, in the words of the governor-general, “a scheme of education for all India, far wider and more comprehensive than the Local or the Supreme Government could ever have ventured to suggest.”² In fact, however, the preceding generation of India administrators had broached many of the same concerns, breaking from a pattern of elite scholarly patronage to avow “mass” or “popular” education as the highest duty of the state. That these administrators left a record of ideas rather than results is difficult to argue: no more than a few thousand Indians from a population of over a hundred million were enrolled in government institutions at any point during Company rule. Yet such ideas mattered politically and ideologically, contributing to a bold reformulation of the Company’s sovereignty. State education was still a novel concept in Europe, aligned with the cutting edge of social reform. At the metropole, therefore, proposals to educate a great number and diversity of Indian subjects were intended to evince the Company’s good government at a time when its trade was drawing

¹ Cited in Nancy Gardner Cassels, *Social Legislation of the East India Company: Public Justice versus Public Instruction* (New Delhi, 2010), 339.

² Cited in J. A. Richey, *Selections from Educational Records, Part II: 1840-1859* (Calcutta, 1922), 364.

to a close and the public was demanding liberal reforms. In India, where officials were preoccupied with consolidating territory, and rising social groups were themselves claiming the mantle of a “public,” such proposals were intended to widen the base of indigenous support for Company rule beyond its core of traditional elites. Far more than a venue for cultural conflict, education policy was a vehicle for nation-building.

The Origins of British-Indian Education Policy

While education has long held a prominent place in Indian historiography, considerations of culture and language have overshadowed all others relating to the subject.³ Such considerations, after all, supposedly animated the “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy” of the 1830s. The broadsides of the supreme council member and later historian of England Thomas Babington Macaulay in favor of European knowledge and the English language have come down to posterity not only as the winning arguments in that episode, but as “the decisive and final piece ... in the formation of British educational policy in India.”⁴ This consensus has been subject to numerous qualifications over the years. Many commentators have noted the extent to which the supposedly inimical “Anglicists” and “Orientalists” were actually in agreement. Both parties in the supreme government assumed that Indians

³ For recent overviews, see Clive Whitehead, “The Historiography of British Imperial Education Policy, Part I: India,” *History of Education* 34 (2005); Tim Allender, “How the State Made and Unmade Education in the Raj, 1800-1919,” in Kim Tolley, ed., *Transformations in Schooling: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2007).

⁴ Elmer H. Cutts, “The Background of Macaulay’s Minute,” *American Historical Review* 58 (1953), 824; see also Percival Spear, “Bentinck and Education,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 6 (1938). Unpublished until 1853, the minute took on its iconic status soon thereafter. See Charles Hay Cameron, *An Address to Parliament on the Duties of Great Britain to India* (London, 1853), 64-80; Arthur Howell, *Education in British India, Prior to 1854, and in 1870-71* (Calcutta, 1872), 25-6.

would ultimately be instructed in their own vernaculars: the question was what “was to be the classical language in the meantime, and from what source the vernacular languages were to be enriched.”⁵ Moreover, both parties asserted the general superiority of European knowledge and the ultimate desirability of introducing it in India. Their disagreement was “more with regard to the means than to the end”: one side urged radical measures, which included making English the language of higher instruction; the other urged caution and the continued support of Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic.⁶ Other commentators have pointed out that what was ostensibly an all-India debate was largely confined to the Bengal presidency. There was no “Anglicist-Orientalist controversy” at Bombay, where the only comparable episode occurred a decade after Macaulay’s minute and pitted vernacular against English instruction.⁷ Nor, in the words of a later administrative manual, “has this controversy ever affected to any extent the Madras Presidency.”⁸ Even with reference to Bengal, meanwhile, it has been suggested that the positions of the “protagonists were often much more blurred than has been properly realized.”⁹ Some of these protagonists

⁵ Charles Edward Trevelyan, Testimony (21 Jun. 1853), in PP (1852-3), vol. 627-I, 147. On the triumph of the vernaculars, see John D. Windhausen, “The Vernaculars, 1835-1839: A Third Medium for Indian Education,” *Sociology of Education* 37 (1964); D. P. Sinha, *Some Aspects of British Social and Administrative Policy in India during the Administration of Lord Auckland* (Calcutta, 1969), 65-6.

⁶ A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818-35*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta, 1976), 137-8.

⁷ “The Annals of Native Education,” *Bombay Quarterly Review* 2 (1855), 143-4.

⁸ C. D. Maclean, *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, 3 vols. (Madras, 1885), 1:564 n; see also Robert E. Frykenberg, “The Myth of English as a ‘Colonialist’ Imposition upon India: A Reappraisal with Special Reference to South India,” *JRAS* (1988), 312-15.

⁹ Frykenberg, “Myth of English,” 314. The fullest account of the various and shifting axes of official opinion during the controversy is John Featherston Hilliker, “British Education Policy in Bengal, 1833-1854” (PhD, University of London, 1968), 55-134.

“hesitated or changed their minds.” The governor-general William Bentinck, according to his modern biographer, endorsed Macaulay’s minute for reasons of the moment, while continuing to favor a more moderate approach.¹⁰ Finally, if the controversy once appeared restricted to British officials, alongside perhaps a few leading Bengalis, subsequent accounts have highlighted the impact of popular opinion.¹¹ Attention to wider political forums has entailed a shift in emphasis from the positions of individual administrators to the collective demands of social groups and the coordinated responses of government. It might even suggest turning altogether from official thought to that of the incipient “public,” as has been the tendency of major recent studies.¹² Yet even this latter approach has not contested the established view of the “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy” so much as taken it for granted. The controversy’s remarkable persistence as a historiographical landmark is a testament in large part to the absence of alternative narratives.

What has been overlooked, above all, is that British-Indian education policy developed in response to the evolving legitimacy needs of the state. Macaulay’s minute—or more properly Bentinck’s pursuant resolution—has typically been seen as important for breaking from a tradition of “Orientalist” government. As previous chapters have shown, however, the case for such a tradition has been greatly overstated. Why the East India

¹⁰ John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal Imperialist, 1774-1839* (Berkeley, 1974), 220-21.

¹¹ Ahmed, *Social Ideas*, 129-68; *GIED*; cf. Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, *A History of Education in India (During the British Period)*, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1951), 84.

¹² Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago, 2008), esp. 68-108; C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge, 2012); Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, N.J., 2012), esp. 124-58.

Company should have become increasingly involved in education in the 1820s-30s, meanwhile, has scarcely been addressed. More politically consequential in this period than any shift in the Company's cultural orientation was a shift in its basic character and functions. While the Company's trade steadily shrank under increased competition and parliamentary regulation, its administration in India steadily grew to meet the demands of an expanding empire. Terminating the former while strengthening the latter, the Charter Act of 1833 capped what one senior official described as the transformation of "a company of merchants" into "a company of sovereigns."¹³ This transformation provides the essential context for understanding the "Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy." Since the administration of Warren Hastings, Company officials had patronized learned elites with the aim of "conciliating" political classes in Britain and India. But the Company's emergence as a territorial state, alongside changes in the composition and demands of these political classes, brought education onto its agenda.

Although the Company had long sponsored institutions and initiatives for educating non-Europeans, it cannot be said to have articulated a distinct policy on such education until the 1820s.¹⁴ With reference to its original purpose, we have seen, the statute of 1813 now known as the "education clause" would be better called the "patronage clause." And while Lord Moira entertained broader plans for its implementation, these were delayed by wars, constrained by finances, and hobbled by personal woes. Alongside any negative

¹³ Charles Metcalfe, Minute (11 Oct. 1829), in *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck*, ed. C. H. Philips, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1977), 1:309.

¹⁴ On this early sponsorship, see Narendra Nath Law, *Promotion of Learning in India by Early European Settlers* (London, 1915).

reasons why the Company did not organize a state system of education in the 1810s (or earlier), meanwhile, we ought to consider the positive reasons why it did in the 1820s. The conclusion in 1819 of a series of wars with the Gurkhas, Pindaris, and Marathas heralded more than simply a return to peacetime administrative priorities. In particular, the Company's final subjugation of the Maratha Confederacy, its most tenacious rival on the subcontinent, produced a sea change in imperial strategy. The achievement of regional "paramountcy" demanded rethinking not only external relations with Asian and European powers, but also internal relations among the presidencies, dependent territories, and native states.¹⁵ Even such an aggressive expansionist as John Malcolm now pivoted from the problem of creating "British India" to that of securing it.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the dramatic ascent of the Company's territorial power coincided with the equally dramatic decline of its trade, such that by 1830, "the Company might be regarded as no longer connected with India by commercial relations."¹⁷ Most immediately, this meant that the growing challenge of stitching together a large and diverse polity would have to be met from a shrinking pool of revenue. Experience had largely shown the folly of expecting to curb a powerful military establishment or to reap a windfall in taxes from new acquisitions.¹⁸ In this predicament lay one rationale for a state system of education: to qualify Indians for the lower and middle

¹⁵ See Mohan Sinha Mehta, *Lord Hastings and the Indian States* (Bombay, 1930); Edward Thompson, *The Making of the Indian Princes* (London, 1943), 283-7; M. E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798-1850* (Oxford, 1980).

¹⁶ Jack Harrington, *Sir John Malcolm and the Creation of British India* (Basingstoke, 2010).

¹⁷ Horace Hayman Wilson, *The History of British India, from 1805 to 1835*, 3 vols. (London, 1845-8), 3:477.

¹⁸ For the first point, see Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in 19th-Century India* (London, 1995).

ranks of the civil service on cheaper salaries than Europeans.¹⁹ Yet the emergence of the Company *qua* state from the shadow of the Company *qua* merchant generated more profound exigencies than fiscal retrenchment. The old need to pacify a displaced elite was giving way to a new need to marshal popular affection, or, at least, contain popular disaffection.

The arrival of Company education policy owed not only to the consummation of “British India,” but to its coincidence with two phenomena of the Age of Reform: the growth of the state and the growth of the public. The early nineteenth century in Britain was particularly fertile for “the development of the machinery of government” and for debates over the proper role of the state.²⁰ Hand-in-hand with this new thinking about government and the state went new thinking about civil society and the public.²¹ The social reformer Robert Owen’s vision of a “national system of education” was contentious even among advocates of “mass” or “popular” education.²² Yet insofar as ideas of state and public were co-constitutive, it was difficult to invoke the one without in some way implicating the other. The expansion of the franchise and of political participation in general was thus

¹⁹ For an account privileging this factor, see Aparna Basu, “The Origins and Operations of the Indian Education System, 1757-1947,” in *Essays in the History of Indian Education* (New Delhi, 1982).

²⁰ Gillian Sutherland, intro. to Sutherland, ed., *Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Government* (London, 1972), 2; see recently Joanna Innes, “Forms of ‘Government Growth,’ 1780-1830,” in David Feldman and Jon Lawrence, eds., *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011).

²¹ On “civil society,” see Jose Harris, ed., *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford, 2003). On the “public” and “public opinion,” see J. A. W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property: The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Kingston, Ontario, 1983), 260-315; Peter Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform: The Duke of Wellington’s Administration, 1828-30* (Basingstoke, 1998), 330-439.

²² Harold Silver, *The Concept of Popular Education: A Study of Ideas and Social Movements in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1965), 101-5.

intimately connected with the advent of a state role in education. It was telling that the measures of the first Reformed Parliament included, in 1833, the first government grant for schools. While historians of Britain and British India alike have come to see “intelligence” or “information” as a major area of state growth and buttress of state power in this period, they have focused on the collection rather than the diffusion thereof.²³ There remains a story to be told about the political currency of concepts like “useful knowledge” and “the march of intellect.”²⁴ In the empire as well as at the metropole, British officials found recourse to such concepts in the attempt to consolidate authority among new, politically aspirant social formations. The rise of an entrepreneurial upper-middle class in Britain found echoes in that of the “new *ashraf*” and its Hindu counterparts in northern India, the *bhadralok* in eastern India, and the “new *brahmans*” in the south and west of the subcontinent.²⁵ These urban-dwelling, commercially-oriented gentries were composed of social climbers, but also members of elite or once-elite families willing to jettison old status claims for new ones. They emerged along different timelines and exhibited different local

²³ David Eastwood, “‘Amplifying the Province of the Legislature’: The Flow of Information and the English State in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Historical Research* 62 (1989); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996); Edward Higgs, *The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information on Citizens since 1500* (Basingstoke, 2004), esp. 64-98.

²⁴ On the deployment of these concepts in literature of the period, see Alan Rauch, *Useful Knowledge: The Victorians, Morality, and the March of Intellect* (Durham, N.C., 2001); Alice Jenkins, *Space and the ‘March of Mind’: Literature and the Physical Sciences in Britain, 1815-1850* (Oxford, 2007).

²⁵ See respectively Margrit Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth-Century Delhi* (New Delhi, 2013); S. N. Mukherjee, “Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38,” in Edmund Leach and Mukherjee, eds., *Elites in South Asia* (Cambridge, 1970); C. J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan, *Tamil Brahmins: The Making of a Middle-Class Caste* (Chicago, 2014), esp. 61-88; Ravinder Kumar, “The New Brahmins of Maharashtra,” in D. A. Low, ed., *Soundings in Modern South Asian History* (Berkeley, 1968); see generally B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (Delhi, 1960).

complexions. Still, in the long and variegated history of European impact on Indian society, the early decades of the nineteenth century marked something of a general watershed.

More than simply a changing of the guard, the period saw a broadening of political activity. A critical feature of the rising classes, in Calcutta especially, was their claim to speak for a “public,” and their participation alongside European reformers in the kinds of associational life—meetings, societies, newspapers—with which “public opinion” was identified in Britain. Company officials might deny or delimit Indian “public opinion,” but they also mustered it selectively to make and justify policy. Moreover, they shared their metropolitan counterparts’ concern with how such opinion, once unleashed, could be properly channeled.²⁶ Education, with its potential to inculcate favorable attitudes and to advance men so inculcated, was coming to be seen as the answer. Education was “the prime mover of the 19th century social revolutions” in India because it facilitated the state’s alliance with emergent social groups against less pliable, increasingly dispensable traditional elites.²⁷ That such education would be largely European in content and English and vernacular in language was inevitable yet incidental, just as conciliation had of necessity privileged the Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit learning of the old guard. What fundamentally mattered to advocates of each policy were the political interests at stake. True “mass” or “popular” education might have appeared a distant prospect in 1835—or for that matter in 1935—when a mere fraction of the population received instruction from state

²⁶ For the metropolitan case, see Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, 298-9.

²⁷ Shanti S. Tangri, “Intellectuals and Society in Nineteenth-Century India,” *CSSH* 3 (1961), 368; see Bruce Tiebout McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York, 1940), 176-237.

institutions. In the growth of this ideal, however, and in its infusion in these institutions, lay the makings of a new political settlement. Embedded in Company education policy, according to its main architect, was a promise to end the “monopoly of knowledge” by *pandits* and *maulvis*, and to bestow a growing share of power on a “new set of men” drawn from “the great body” of Indian society.²⁸

As all of this suggests, tracing the role of education policy in the reconstitution of the Company state requires taking a step back from Macaulay’s minute and the “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy.” The overwhelming historiographical focus on Calcutta in the 1830s has been defended on the grounds that this was where, and implicitly when, “general policy was made.”²⁹ But this was not quite the case. The “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy” cannot be understood in isolation from discussions at the other presidencies and over the preceding decade. Taking a synoptic view of developments in Bengal, Madras, Bombay, and the Strait of Malacca from the 1820s leads to three main conclusions. First, Company officials increasingly sought to organize education along systematic lines, deploying techniques of surveying, examination, and certification. Second, they increasingly understood education as part of a “national” project, which they pursued not only by coordinating between presidencies, but by blurring distinctions among subjects and, in certain respects, between subjects and rulers. Finally, Company officials increasingly recognized the education of the “people,” variously understood, as a proper province of the

²⁸ Charles E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London, 1838), 136-42.

²⁹ Kenneth Ballhatchet, “The Importance of Macaulay,” *JRAS* (1990), 94.

state, which not only took precedence over the conciliation of traditional learned elites, but might be employed as a salutary curb on their influence.

From Elite Conciliation to Mass Education

In Bengal, by the 1820s, the first sparks of a state education policy could be described in the reformation of two old seminaries and the projection of a new one. The supreme government had hitherto exercised little direct control in the management of the Benares Sanskrit College or Calcutta Madrasa. To meddle unduly, it was felt, would undermine the conciliatory value of these institutions as dispensers of patronage to *maulvis* and *pandits*.³⁰

In a minute on the Benares college of 1820, however, the governor-general in council reached a momentous conclusion:

whatever effect the establishment of the institution may have had in conciliating the attachment of the people, it has hitherto proved entirely useless as a seminary of learning and it must be feared that the discredit attaching to such a failure has gone far to destroy the influence which the liberality of endowment would otherwise have had.³¹

The report of the college committee on which this pronouncement was based contained little that was new. As early as 1804, members had noted the decline and “disrepute” of the college, which, “instead of being looked up to by the natives with respect and veneration, is an object of their ridicule ... a band of pensioners supported by the charity of government.”³² In finally heeding such criticism, however, the Bengal government signaled

³⁰ See e.g. G. Dowdeswell to College Council, 16 Mar. 1812, PCFW, vol. 562, 141.

³¹ Cited in George Nicholls, *Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Benares Patshalla or Sanskrit College* (Allahabad, 1907), 38.

³² T. Brooke, Minute (1 Jan. 1804), in *ibid.*, 9.

an important shift in priorities. Suggesting that the political consequences of elite favor were outweighed by those of popular *disfavor*, the resolution chafed against the paradigm of conciliation in which it was framed. The supreme government in Calcutta now sought to access and influence not only the traditional learned classes, but a broader swathe of society alert to their patronage and alarmed at its misuse. Meanwhile, after years of half measures designed not to upset relations with *‘ulama* or venerable Muslim families, the same criticism was making inroads at the Calcutta Madrasa. At each institution government imposed similar reforms, which included appointing officials in supervisory roles, requiring public examinations, and acceding to demands for European learning.³³ Such measures were designed to render the college and madrasa vehicles of a more popular vision of politics, capable of addressing a constituency of non-elites as well as elites.

The new emphasis on popular reception could be observed even in the scholar-administrator Horace Hayman Wilson’s proposal for what would become the Calcutta Sanskrit College. In a minute of July 1822, addressing dormant plans to reestablish two ancient seminaries for *pandits* upcountry, Wilson argued that his alternative proposal would render “much more credit to the Government, and much more advantage to the people.” The location of the one ancient seminary at Nadia, he recounted, had been connected with the “political importance” of that district before the Muslim conquests; the other, in Tirhut, with the memory of the primordial kings of Mithila. But these places were now too remote from the loci of state power to be fit “for the situation of Public Colleges.”

³³ J. Kerr, *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency, from 1835 to 1851*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1853), 2:66-75, 2:142-5.

Wilson cited for contrast the aptly-situated Benares college. There official superintendence of the *pandits* had forged “a connecting link which brings them more in contact with the Government of the Country” as well as with the wider populace. Forging such a link at Calcutta, “the capital of British India” and a city of popular resort and renown, would be all the more advantageous.³⁴ Wilson has often been portrayed as the standard-bearer of an “Orientalist” cultural outlook in the 1820s-30s.³⁵ And it is certainly true that he enjoined the Company to replicate patterns of patronage established by earlier Indian rulers. Yet aspects of Wilson’s career, like his decade-long stewardship of the neoteric Hindu College, suggested that his support of the traditional learned classes did not bind him inflexibly to traditional learning.³⁶ Furthermore, in conceiving the Sanskrit institution as responsible to the state and responsive to the people, he moved with the new currents in Company ideology. Government intervention in Indian society, long a dubious prospect, was becoming a desideratum in thinking on education.

Translating this thinking into systematic practice was to be a difficult undertaking. The administration of acting governor-general John Adam in 1823 was notable for two measures: the formation of a General Committee of Public Instruction and the suppression

³⁴ H. H. Wilson to Holt Mackenzie, 17 Jul. 1821, BL IOR F/4/709/19202, 469-87.

³⁵ E.g. David Kopf, “The Wonder that was Orientalism: In Defense of H. H. Wilson’s Defense of Hinduism,” in Joseph T. O’Connell, ed., *Bengal Vaisnavism, Orientalism, Society and the Arts* (East Lansing, Mich., 1985), 76.

³⁶ On this stewardship, see Jogesh C. Bagal, “The Hindu College, Predecessor of the Presidency College,” *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1955), 232-4, 461-7; Anita Coomer, “H. H. Wilson and the Hindu College (1823-1832),” *Calcutta Historical Journal* 6 (1981). For a strident claim that Wilson’s apparent flexibility was an elaborate “Orientalist” deception, see Gerald Sirkin and Natalie Robinson Sirkin, “The Battle of Indian Education: Macaulay’s Opening Salvo Newly Discovered,” *Victorian Studies* 14 (1971), 411-15, 428; Sirkin and Sirkin, “John Stuart Mill and Disutilitarianism in Indian Education,” *Journal of General Education* 24 (1973), 232-4.

of the press on the grounds that there was no “public” in India to instruct. The apparent contradiction here pointed to mixed reactions to the mounting pressure for reform. The immediate inspiration for the committee was a minute by the administrator Holt Mackenzie laying the groundwork for “a systematic course of proceeding in regard to public Education,” which, he noted, government was “desirous of pursuing.” Mackenzie’s proposal was modest in its initial recommendations, focused on rearing teachers and translators from among “the educated and influential Classes.” But it was far-reaching in its ultimate ambition, to give “the people of India” all that “tends to make men wiser and better and happier.”³⁷ Mackenzie was a meticulous planner, less prone to sweeping prescriptions than some rivals alleged.³⁸ Like other India officials of his generation, however, he was acutely aware of the massive logistical and ideological challenges wrought by the expansion of the Company state and the contraction of Company trade. These dwarfed in significance any attendant shift in cultural attitudes. While Mackenzie was rather more sanguine than Wilson about the prospects of European knowledge and the English language, the difference was one of degree rather than kind. Moreover, like Wilson, Mackenzie broached these issues as constituent parts of a larger whole. The main problem recognized by both administrators was how and on what terms to make education a province of the state. This involved questions such as whether to prioritize schools or colleges; fund existing institutions or new ones; focus on training teachers or printing books; cater to the learned, the wealthy, or the general community. The initial task of the committee, Mackenzie

³⁷ Holt Mackenzie, Minute (17 Jul. 1823), in *GIED*, 99, 100.

³⁸ Percival Spear, “Holt Mackenzie—Forgotten Man of Bengal,” *BPP* 86 (1967), 25-6, 32-3.

conceived, would be to frame a “well digested scheme, embracing all the different institutions, supported or encouraged by Government” and rendering their activities useful “to the public Service.” But the committee must also consider “how far our other institutions are suited to the state of things, which the diffusion of knowledge may be expected ultimately to produce.”³⁹ It was thus clear from the beginning that Mackenzie, Wilson, and their eight colleagues on the general committee would be more than mere functionaries. Their commission was to navigate the rocky gulf between vague ideals and workable policies.

The early measures of the general committee were piecemeal and exploratory, motivated more by the tentative expansion of government control than by decided linguistic or curricular agendas. The body had been tasked with “ascertaining the state of public education in this part of India.”⁴⁰ Accordingly, its first action was to circulate a questionnaire along these lines to local agents throughout Bengal and its dependencies. The main thrust of the instrument was to determine the apposite scope and means of state intervention. A representative question asked how much the existing “schools, colleges or other establishments seem to merit the aid and encouragement of Government, and in what manner could it be best afforded.”⁴¹ Responses to the circular inspired a raft of new projects and a hierarchy of local and institutional committees to manage them. Existing

³⁹ Mackenzie, Minute (17 Jul. 1823), 102-3.

⁴⁰ Bengal Revenue Consultations (17 Jul. 1823), in *GIED*, 108.

⁴¹ H. H. Wilson to Local Agents, [5] Sept. 1823, in H. Sharp, ed., *Selections from Educational Records, Part I: 1781-1839* (Calcutta, 1920), 69.

seminaries such as the Calcutta Hindu College were notified that the price of greater state support would be greater state supervision, like that imposed earlier on the Benares college and Calcutta Madrasa.⁴² Collaboration between institutions, especially in the environs of the capital, was projected in the form of shared materials, classes, and facilities.⁴³ The general committee also exchanged information and coordinated efforts with the other presidencies. Drawing explicitly on the example of Madras, it sought to institute preferences for Indian judicial candidates “possessing a certificate of qualification from the superintendent of a college supported by Government, or from a committee of examination appointed by Government.”⁴⁴ The ensuing debate centered on whether enlarging the remit of the state in this manner would have a partisan or a popular tendency. A majority on the supreme court argued that it would transform the general committee from organizers of “a system of general education” into interested “disposers of patronage.”⁴⁵ Mackenzie’s rejoinder on behalf of the committee was that, on the contrary, certification would raise “superior education & talent” above influence as the basis of official employment.⁴⁶ Showing characteristic deference, the governor-general in council sided with the committee. Complacent by disposition, preoccupied with the Burma War of 1824-6, and chastened by its disastrous fiscal consequences, Lord Amherst played a minor role in

⁴² Kerr, *Review of Public Instruction*, 2:3-10.

⁴³ D. P. Sinha, *Educational Policy of the East India Company in Bengal to 1854* (Calcutta, 1964), 57-9, 74-8.

⁴⁴ Bengal Resolution XI of 1826, in Thomas Fisher, *Memoir* (1827-32), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 444.

⁴⁵ Cited in Extract Bengal Judicial Proceedings (22 Sept. 1825), WBSA GCPI Proceedings, vol. 3, part 2, 473.

⁴⁶ Holt Mackenzie, Marginal Note (22 Sept. 1825), WBSA GCPI Proceedings, vol. 3, part 2, 486.

formulating the new system of education. Still, he was ready enough to join his council in endorsing it. In London, “the enlightened and liberal views of Lord Amherst with respect to education” were becoming one of the few bright spots of his administration.⁴⁷ Even before the arrival of Bentinck in 1828, the highest authority in the government of British India was imagining the diffusion of “useful learning ... among our native subjects” as the basis of a “great national reform.”⁴⁸ For all the activity of the general committee, however, the outlines of this reform remained hazy. As even Amherst’s sympathetic Victorian biographers were to acknowledge, the domestic scene of his government was marked less by concrete achievements than by “the stirring of tendencies destined to grow before long into great measures.”⁴⁹

Two major challenges to the general committee have been identified in its early phase: one from Rammohan, the prominent Bengali reformer; the other from James Mill, then assistant examiner of Indian correspondence at East India House. While these have typically been characterized as “Anglicist”—or at least “anti-Orientalist”—in their motivations, they are better understood as advocating a sharper turn from elite conciliation to mass education than the committee had hitherto followed. In a letter to Amherst of 1823, Rammohan took issue with the projected Calcutta Sanskrit College and the larger system of education it seemed to portend. Avowing himself a spokesman for “the native

⁴⁷ John Gilchrist, in “Debate at the East-India House” (21 Jun. 1826), *AJ* 22 (1826), 112.

⁴⁸ Public Letter from Bengal (27 Jan. 1826), cited in Sinha, *Educational Policy*, 77.

⁴⁹ Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Richardson Evans, *Lord Amherst and the British Advance Eastwards to Burma* (Oxford, 1894), 25.

population,” he argued for privileging the “useful sciences” over Sanskrit learning, which “is well known to have been for ages a lamentable check on the diffusion of knowledge.”⁵⁰ Thus urging government, at least implicitly, to bypass the *pandits* and promote knowledge that would be useful to Indian society at large, Rammohan was staking a claim on popular grounds. This claim soon found support in paragraphs of an official despatch commonly attributed to Mill. Picking up the criticism levied against the Benares college in 1820 and extending it to the Calcutta Madrasa, Mill faulted the committee’s “slight reforms” in the interim, demanding a more radical rebalance of conciliation and utility.⁵¹ In responding to the two challenges, the committee embraced their terms but rejected their conclusions. It dismissed Rammohan on the basis that, while claiming to speak “in the name of the natives of India,” he was merely “one individual alone, whose opinions are well known to be hostile to those entertained by almost all his countrymen.”⁵² It rebutted Mill and the home authorities, in complementary fashion, by reference to “the actual state of public feeling” in India. In both instances, the committee agreed that Indian interests should be consulted, but disputed whether they were known or even knowable. Not only were Indians in general resistant to “interference with their education”; they were still inaccessible except via “members of the literary classes.”⁵³ As a later official put it, the committee’s principal aim at this time was to gain “over the influential and learned classes, the Pundits and

⁵⁰ Rammohan to Governor-General in Council, 11 Dec. 1823, in *GIED*, 111-13.

⁵¹ Revenue Despatch to Bengal (18 Feb. 1824), in *GIED*, 116.

⁵² J. Harrington, Minute (14 Jan. 1824), in *The Correspondence of Raja Rammohun Roy*, ed. Dilip Kumar Biswas, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1992-4), 1:200.

⁵³ GCPI to Governor-General in Council, 18 Aug. 1824, in *GIED*, 120, 121. As a later member of the committee

Mowluvees who, it was hoped would act with the best effect on the rest of their Countrymen.”⁵⁴ Until the emergence of a broader public, the committee was suggesting, the state must continue to employ these elite intermediaries.

On the evidence above, not only was the committee in the 1820s more conservative than the leading Bengali reformer; it was more conservative than the home authorities. Yet neither body was monolithic. Nor were they at such consistent odds as has often been supposed. The next paragraphs from London on the subject of education, some three years later, applauded the committee’s recent measures on behalf of the “vast population” under its care.⁵⁵ Even before receiving the earlier despatch the committee had announced a markedly egalitarian vision for the new Agra College: while “the existing government institutions are exclusive in their character; each being confined to studies belonging to a peculiar class ... the Agra college shall be equally available to all classes of the native population ... as they are all unquestionably, equally the objects of the solicitude of the government.”⁵⁶ To the extent that there was a tension between such views and those expressed elsewhere by the committee, this mainly reflected the push and pull of ideas and influence among its members. No doubt the body registered external opinion, but not until the Bentinck era would it be steered by an executive intent on sweeping reform.

⁵⁴ J. R. Colvin, Note (1839), extracted in Sharp, ed., *Educational Records, Part I*, 171.

⁵⁵ Public Despatch to Bengal (5 Sept. 1827), BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 99, see 99-107.

⁵⁶ “Extract of a Letter from the Committee of Public Instruction, Dated the 24th October, 1823,” *AJ* 19 (1825), 204.

A review of developments at the other presidencies shows that the Bengal government's concern with mass education did not emerge early or in isolation, but rather as part of a wider makeover of the British-Indian polity. By 1822, an official in Madras could confidently report that "the disposition of the European society to diffuse knowledge ... is ... encreasing, and many natives profess a desire to learn English, and to acquire such other useful instruction as they can, from us."⁵⁷ While coordinating such impulses had hitherto been the work mainly of private individuals and voluntary societies, government was soon to take the lead. A year before his counterpart in Calcutta, the governor of Madras, Thomas Munro, drew up a circular letter inquiring into the conditions and prospects of education in the districts under his authority. The British "power in this Country," he wrote, now made it possible to assess "the mental cultivation of the people" as previous surveys had assessed their numbers and resources.⁵⁸ Like its derivative at Bengal, the Madras questionnaire focused more on the social condition of pupils and institutions than on the content of their studies. Its purpose was likewise to determine how government should intervene. After receiving the district collectors' reports, Munro now followed the example of the supreme presidency in appointing a "Committee of Public Instruction" to oversee "the general improvement of the education of the people."⁵⁹ Whereas Mackenzie's committee pursued a gradually tilting balance between elite conciliation and mass

⁵⁷ James Munro to Fanny Burrows, 1 Oct. 1822, Munro Family Papers, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC/1063/82.

⁵⁸ Thomas Munro, Minute (25 Jun. 1822), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 350. The home authorities gave Munro credit "for having originated the idea of this inquiry." Extract Revenue Despatch to Fort St. George (18 May 1825), at 357.

⁵⁹ J. M. Macleod to H. J. Graeme et al., 10 Mar. 1826, TNSA Madras Public Sundries, vol. 144, 7r.

instruction, however, Munro's favored the latter from the start. The education system at Madras would develop as an outgrowth of the governor's *ryotwari* mode of land tenure, which, in explicit contrast with the Permanent Settlement, aimed to cut back hereditary and caste privileges and establish a direct relationship with the *ryot* (peasant).⁶⁰ Munro's preoccupation with upholding the "traditional" village community has tended to mark him out as a conservative, at odds with reformist officials in Calcutta and London. His appeals against rash innovation in native schooling have only reinforced this impression. Yet Munro and the Madras committee would likewise settle on an eclectic curriculum emphasizing "useful knowledge."⁶¹ Moreover, a *ryotwari* education policy had radical implications for state and society. Not only did Munro propose that the state should implement the first significant changes to education in the region in perhaps a century; he proposed that it should do so predominately among the lower gentry, spending on local *tahsildari* schools nearly twice as much as on a teachers' college at Madras and nearly five times as much as on higher seminaries at the district collectorates. "Whatever expense Government may incur in the education of the people," Munro reasoned, "will be amply repaid by the improvement of the country; for the general diffusion of knowledge is inseparably followed by more orderly habits, by increasing industry, by a taste for the

⁶⁰ On Munro and *ryotwari*, see Nilmani Mukherjee, *The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827* (Calcutta, 1962); T. H. Beaglehole, *Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras 1792-1818: The Origins of "the Munro System"* (Cambridge, 1966); Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire* (Delhi, 1989). For a suggestive analysis, see David Washbrook, "South India 1770-1840: The Colonial Transition," *MAS* 38 (2004), 505.

⁶¹ See H. Harkness, Minute (18 Sept. 1826), TNSA Madras Public Sundries, vol. 145, 19r-19v; E. Bannerman to Board for the College of Fort St. George and for Public Instruction, 16 Feb. 1827, BL IOR F/4/965/27375, 479-80. This may have been partly at the home authorities' instigation. See Extract Revenue Despatch to Fort St. George (18 May 1825), 357.

comforts of life, by exertions to acquire them, and by the growing prosperity of the people.”⁶² Like his contemporaries Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone, Munro was steeped in Enlightened Scottish theories of the emergence and progress of civil society.⁶³ A key function of his proposed education system was to qualify greater numbers of Indians as civil servants, and thus open a channel for their participation in government.⁶⁴ There was as yet no “public” in India, he conceived, but the state would justify its claim to rule by ushering one into existence, even if this meant gradually ceding power to representative institutions.⁶⁵ While stipulating that Indian self-government was a distant prospect, Munro exceeded Mackenzie, and anticipated Macaulay, in yoking the promise of its eventual realization to the legitimacy of the Company state.

Among subsequent commentators and historians, Munro’s village scheme of education has often been seen as a dead end or, at best, a road not taken. And it is true that, after his death in 1827, the Madras government’s attention and resources would increasingly shift from lower to higher instruction, in keeping with the preference at London and Calcutta.⁶⁶ Yet not only would Munro’s ideas be frequently invoked by later

⁶² Thomas Munro, Minute (10 Mar. 1826), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 359.

⁶³ Martha McLaren, *British India & British Scotland, 1780-1830: Career Building, Empire Building, and a Scottish School of Thought on Indian Governance* (Akron, 2001). For a survey of this body of thought, see Fania Oz-Salzberger, “Civil Society in the Scottish Enlightenment,” in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, eds., *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁶⁴ Thomas Munro, Minute (31 Dec. 1824), in *Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, Bart., K.C.B., Governor of Madras: Selections from His Minutes and Other Official Writings*, ed. Alexander J. Arbuthnot, 2 vols. (London, 1881), 2:319-27; see Robert Eric Frykenberg, “Modern Education in South India, 1784-1854: Its Roots and Its Role as a Vehicle of Integration under Company Raj,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986).

⁶⁵ See esp. Thomas Munro, Minute (12 Apr. 1822), in *Munro ... Selections*, ed. Arbuthnot, 2:287-95.

⁶⁶ See Alexander J. Arbuthnot, ed., *Papers Relating to Public Instruction* (Madras, 1855), 10-34. As one despatch from London urged, “By raising the standard of instruction among these [higher] classes, you would

officials; at Madras, they also produced more immediate changes in the character and structure of the state. Insofar as the Committee of Public Instruction and the Board for the College of Fort St. George were established to oversee the training of Indian and European civil servants, respectively, the two bodies were “so much akin” that they were merged in 1826.⁶⁷ This reorganization also entailed a reconceptualization of the college: its literary patronage, hitherto an instrument of elite conciliation, now had to serve a broader agenda. In 1827, the governor in council instructed the combined board that, while it was authorized to purchase some of Charles Phillip Brown’s Telugu manuscripts and patronize his treatise on Telugu prosody, “such talents as Mr. Brown’s might be more advantageously employed in placing European works of Science and literature within the reach of the Natives.”⁶⁸ The philologist-administrator Brown responded in basic agreement, apparently recognizing the need to strike a popular note that belied his interdependent relations with *pandits*.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, there were other changes afoot at the college. After government purchased a larger building for the institution, it determined not only to rehouse the combined board and its associated book depositories under the same roof, but also to throw open some of the rooms for “public purposes.” Space would be provided for the library and

eventually produce a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community than you can hope to produce by acting directly on the more numerous class.” Public Despatch to Fort St. George (29 Sept. 1830), in *GIED*, 126.

⁶⁷ D. Hill, Minute (3 Nov. 1826), TNSA Madras Public Sundries, vol. 144, 25v. The union was dissolved in 1836.

⁶⁸ E. Bannerman to Board for the College of Fort St. George and for Public Instruction, 7 Aug. 1827, TNSA Madras Public Sundries, vol. 144, 99v.

⁶⁹ Charles Phillip Brown to Board for the College of Fort St. George and for Public Instruction, 23 Aug. 1827, TNSA Madras Public Sundries, vol. 144, 103v; see Peter L. Schmitthenner, *Telugu Resurgence: C. P. Brown and Cultural Consolidation in Nineteenth-Century South India* (New Delhi, 2001).

museum of the Madras Literary Society, for meetings of this and other learned bodies, and even for “public assemblies” and “public entertainments.” On the one hand, the managers of the premises sought to enforce a spatial hierarchy between the European rulers and the Indian ruled: “natives” were only grudgingly admitted to the upper rooms and were barred from using the grand staircase. On the other hand, the managers upheld “the convenience of the community” at large as a principal aim, dubbing the edifice “the Public Hall” in order to “obviate the idea of exclusive appropriation.”⁷⁰ Most importantly, the integration of social and scholastic activities under official auspices actualized the late Munro’s philosophy that the state had a duty to facilitate civic participation and foster civil society. Sanctioning these arrangements some months later, the home authorities hastened to add that “we do not consider it incumbent upon us to provide accommodation either for the Literary Society or for public meetings.” Even so, they continued, “it is a source of satisfaction to us, that by approving your purchase we have the power of contributing to the convenience of the public at Madras.”⁷¹ This cautious embrace of broad-based state intervention, long characteristic of the home authorities’ remarks on education, had become the consensus at Fort St. George.

At Bombay, meanwhile, such intervention received its most ardent challenge as well as its most ardent defense. At one point in 1825, Governor Elphinstone would remark that over the past year he and a divided council had spilt more ink on the subject “than both

⁷⁰ Committee in Charge of the Public Hall to Governor in Council, 1827, BL IOR F/4/1169/30572, 66-76.

⁷¹ Extract Public Letter to Fort St. George, 3 Sept. 1828, in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 624.

the other Presidencies have on all subjects.”⁷² This was not a contest that many could have predicted. From the recent acquisition of most of its territory and the inheritance of a strong tradition of elite patronage in the form of the *dakshina*—a regular grant from the *peshwa* to learned *brahmans*—the Bombay government might have been expected to hew cautiously to established notions of conciliation. In many respects, however, Elphinstone was a disciple of Munro, and he shared with the elder official a belief in the power of education to nurture a public and shore up “the slippery foundation of our Government.”⁷³ This entailed, in part, turning old institutions of learning to new purposes.⁷⁴ After taking office in 1819, Elphinstone advocated retaining the *dakshina* but reducing it “as much as possible, when it does not contribute to the promotion of learning.”⁷⁵ To be sure, some “conciliation” of *brahmans* would be necessary due to their “numbers and influence.” But in the awarding of grants a preference should be “given to the more useful branches of Hindu learning, and this might be gradually increased.”⁷⁶ Moreover, sums from the *dakshina* fund might be diverted to broader educational schemes. In the early 1820s, Elphinstone backed plans for a college at Bombay that was to educate European officials and Indians, and for a Hindu seminary at Poona with an Islamic analogue perhaps to follow. Only the Poona Hindu College would be established before the judgment of the home

⁷² Mountstuart Elphinstone, Minute (23 Aug. 1825), MSA Bombay Public Proceedings, vol. 8/92, 625.

⁷³ Mountstuart Elphinstone, Minute [13 Dec. 1823], in *Selections from the Minutes and Other Official Writings of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay*, ed. George W. Forrest (London, 1884), 101.

⁷⁴ See Ravinder Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century: A Study in the Social History of Maharashtra* (London, 1968), 44–56.

⁷⁵ Extract Public Letter from Bombay (29 Aug. 1821), BL IOR F/4/1172/30648, 4.

⁷⁶ Elphinstone, Minute [13 Dec. 1823], 96–7, 109.

authorities came in against these plans, repeating much of the logic and language of Mill's censorious paragraphs to Bengal.⁷⁷ Elphinstone, however, had already turned his mind to larger views. In a series of minutes beginning in 1823, he advanced a comprehensive new education system designed to qualify Indians for positions in government at present and for possession of government in future.⁷⁸ Whereas the sister presidencies had prioritized lower and higher education respectively, Bombay would do it all, extending "the same means of instruction to the lower orders ... as at Madras, and the same encouragement ... to the higher branches of learning as in Bengal."⁷⁹ Though it would call upon the resources of individuals and voluntary societies to this end, Elphinstone's maximalist approach required "an organized system, and a greater degree of regularity and permanence" that only government could provide.⁸⁰

It was this unprecedented degree of government involvement that made Elphinstone's plans controversial. His early efforts to carve out a role for the state in education had raised sporadic doubts among his councilors.⁸¹ But from 1823, he would face

⁷⁷ Extract Public Despatch to Bombay (11 Jun. 1823), BL IOR F/4/1172/30648, 9-37.

⁷⁸ See T. E. Colebrooke, *Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone*, 2 vols. (London, 1884), 2:157-62.

⁷⁹ Mountstuart Elphinstone, Minute [1826], cited in Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India 1817-1830* (Oxford, 1957), 274. Elphinstone's caution about educating "the lowest orders" has been much misunderstood. This was not an elitist but a populist position, for according to Elphinstone, these classes made up "not only the most despised, but among the least numerous of the great divisions of society." He worried that "if our system of education first took root among them, it would never spread further ... Such a state would be desirable if we were contented to rest our [favour] ... on the attachment of a part of the population; but inconsistent with every attempt to found it on a more extended basis." Elphinstone, Minute [13 Dec. 1823], 105.

⁸⁰ Elphinstone, Minute [13 Dec. 1823], 80.

⁸¹ Ballhatchet, *Social Policy*, 258-60.

a sustained campaign of opposition from one in particular. Responding to the governor's ambitious minute of that year, Francis Warden objected that "education, as a Government concern, will be expensive without being beneficial," due to its discouragement of "individual exertions." Instead, "it ought to be our policy to excite the zeal of individuals," by partially funding an English college at Bombay and by preferring educated candidates for official employment. The urban upper classes would contribute to the institution as well as send their children there, and entrepreneurial schoolmasters would arise from the student ranks. The Bombay Native School Society would handle most of the details. Donations and school fees would provide most of the funding. Warden was adamant, however, that "Government should not be too forward in taking the education of the natives on itself, nor interfere too much in the institutions that exist in the country." As compared with other advocates of conciliation, Warden worried less about backlash and more about backlog: "we run the danger of attempting too much at once"; of trying "to accomplish in a day what must be the work of a century."⁸² But he shared with such advocates an aversion to social intervention and a preference for acting through elite intermediaries. Elphinstone, for his part, was no less convinced that having "assumed the Government," the Company must take ultimate responsibility for education, and that "if we are to do anything we must do it through our own Agents."⁸³ He followed the other presidencies in circulating a questionnaire among district collectors and adduced the

⁸² Francis Warden, Minute (29 Dec. 1823), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 519-20; Warden, Minute (24 Mar. 1828), at 524.

⁸³ Mountstuart Elphinstone, Minute [1824], MSA Bombay Public Proceedings, vol. 8/63, 226; Elphinstone, Minute (1 Mar. 1824), at 298.

responses as further evidence for his case.⁸⁴ But despite “almost constant discussions on the subject since 1823,” the governor was unable to unite his council; nor were the directors willing to come down on one side or the other.⁸⁵ Upon Elphinstone’s retirement in 1827, a similar “confusion of motives and interests” marked the official professorships endowed by wealthy Indians in his honor: it would be nearly a decade until the first “Elphinstone Professors” commenced their lectures.⁸⁶ The new governor, Malcolm, sought both to preserve conciliatory institutions like the Poona college and to fulfill his predecessor’s intention of spreading “useful knowledge among all classes.”⁸⁷ In the latter attempt, however, he too would be stalled by the opposition of Warden and the equivocation of the home authorities.⁸⁸ Thus the Bombay government remained at an impasse.

The Company’s settlements in and around the Strait of Malacca have seldom featured in histories of “Indian” education policy. Yet measures there were framed in conversation with the mainland presidencies and underscore the connection between the rise of popular education and the reconstitution of the Company state—albeit by providing

⁸⁴ “Letter to Collectors” (1824), MSA Bombay Public Proceedings, vol. 8/63, 325-32; A. L. Covernton, “The Educational Policy of Mountstuart Elphinstone,” *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* ns 1 (1925), 65-6.

⁸⁵ Mountstuart Elphinstone, Minute (Sept. 1826), cited in R. V. Parulekar, *Selections from Educational Records (Bombay)*, 3 vols. (Bombay, 1953-7), 2:xviii; see R. D. Choksey, *Mountstuart Elphinstone: The Indian Years 1796-1827* (Bombay, 1971), 394-6.

⁸⁶ Naheed F. Ahmad, “The Elphinstone College, Bombay, 1827-1890: A Case Study in 19th Century English Education,” in Mushirul Hasan, ed., *Knowledge, Power and Politics: Educational Institutions in India* (New Delhi, 1998), 392; see also Kenneth Ballhatchet, “The Elphinstone Professors and Elphinstone College, 1827-1840,” in C. H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright, eds., *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation, c. 1830-1850* (London, 1976).

⁸⁷ John Malcolm, Minute (1828), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 526; see Malcolm, Minute (30 Jul. 1828), cited in Fisher, *Memoir*, 472.

⁸⁸ See the correspondence in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 525-48.

a negative case. The aspirations of certain individuals notwithstanding, the Company's priority in the region was "not territory but trade."⁸⁹ These were the words Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, used in 1819 to describe his object in founding a settlement at Singapore. He reiterated them several months later in proposing the establishment of a college on the island. In peninsular India, Raffles noted, "no sooner was the sword of conquest sheathed" than the Company set about collecting and disseminating knowledge, and thereby "augmented the power and ... resources of the state" as well as the "happiness of the people." In the countries across the Bay of Bengal, however, where British interests lay in "the reciprocal advantages of commerce, and commerce alone," the politics of knowledge must be figured accordingly: "while with one hand we carry to their shores the capital of our merchants, the other should be stretched forth to offer them the means of intellectual improvement." Singapore's commanding position "in the very centre of this Archipelago, the life and soul of its extensive commerce" made it the logical seat of such efforts. Raffles proceeded to outline a vision of conciliation in which educating "the higher orders," particularly the sons of chiefs from across the region, would "attach them more closely to us."⁹⁰ He was not ignorant of the latest educational theories: at Bencoolen, he

⁸⁹ Stamford Raffles to Colonel Addenbrooke, 10 Jun. 1819, in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London, 1830), 379. Settlements east of India, Raffles argued elsewhere, should be conducted on "purely commercial principles," and "not as governments intended for the rule and detailed management of a dominion." Raffles, "On the Administration of the Eastern Islands in 1819," at Appendix, 12, 13.

⁹⁰ [Thomas Stamford Raffles,] *On the Advantage of Affording the Means of Education to the Inhabitants of the Further East* (Serampore, 1819), repr. as *The First Printing of Sir Stamford Raffles's Minute on the Establishment of a Malay College at Singapore* (Eastbourne, 1999). The Malay *munshi* Abdullah would later recall a conference at which Raffles solicited donations for the institution from the local sultan and *temunggung* (governor), along with declarations that they would enroll their children there. Abdullah,

had patronized schools on the Bell-Lancaster model. Moreover, like counterparts in India, he intended that the benefits of higher education should filter down, in the case of the Singapore college, to “a population of not less than thirty millions, and ... eventually ... over ten times that number.”⁹¹ Unlike these officials, however, Raffles understood education in essentially commercial terms, as a sort of commodity to be bartered for security, goodwill, and other advantages. His basic motivation was not to consolidate territorial sovereignty, but to facilitate regional trade. Raffles’ views were certainly ambitious, but the ambitions they bespoke dated back to the previous century, not least in the context of Company politics.⁹² It was to be a question whether there was still an audience for such views in the 1820s.

Subsequent events would provide an answer in the negative. “From political and other circumstances,” including the possibility that Singapore would be ceded to the Dutch, the college scheme was delayed until 1823.⁹³ Its prospects revived that year with plans for a union with the Anglo-Chinese College, hitherto under missionary auspices at Malacca.⁹⁴ Without awaiting approval from the supreme government at Calcutta, Raffles endowed lands, procured subscriptions, and commissioned a grand edifice for the new

Hikayat Abdullah (1849), trans. A. H. Hill, as “The Hikayat Abdullah,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28 (1955), 160.

⁹¹ Raffles to William Wilberforce, Sept. 1819, in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 408.

⁹² See generally G. G. Hough, “Notes on the Educational Policy of Sir Stamford Raffles,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 42 (1969).

⁹³ Meeting (1 Apr. 1823), in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix, 74.

⁹⁴ On these plans and their collapse, see R. L. O’Sullivan, “The Anglo-Chinese College and the Early ‘Singapore Institution,’” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 61 (1988), 48–52.

“Singapore Institution.” But the project quickly unraveled. Entrusted to the settlement’s novice engineer, the construction was poorly planned and executed; at one point, reportedly, the scaffolding gave way and three Chinese workmen fell to their deaths.⁹⁵ By the time funding ran out, all that had been accomplished was “a mass of Brick Work,” which soon fell into ruin and became a “shelter for thieves, a class of beings whom the benevolent founders of the Institution never contemplated should be supported on its foundation.”⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the enthusiasm of the college’s trustees was waning, and relief from government or private subscribers was not forthcoming.⁹⁷ Thus, at the time of Raffles’ death in 1826, the Singapore Institution appeared nearly as moribund as its founder. According to a report that year by the Company’s resident, John Crawford, the problems at the institution ran deeper than hasty planning or inadequate funds. The far-flung royalty Raffles had expected to attract had never materialized, and the need among Singapore’s own inhabitants was for an elementary school or two rather than for a research college.⁹⁸ While the failure of Raffles’ institution could have been ascribed to unpredictable misfortune, Company officials saw it as fatally flawed from conception: such a project was suited to a territorial capital, perhaps, but not to an island outpost. As a letter from the

⁹⁵ Philip Jackson to J. A. Maxwell, 14 Jul. [1824], Raffles Institution Records, Raffles Archives and Museum; “Education in Eastern Asia,” *Malacca Observer*, repr. in *AJ* 28 (Jul. 1829), 106; Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*, 161.

⁹⁶ Extract General Letter from Singapore (20 May 1828), BL IOR F/4/1043/28683, 10r; Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, 2 vols. (Singapore, 1902), 1:127; see Singapore Resident’s Diary (5 Jan. 1827), Singapore National Archives, N1, 20–21.

⁹⁷ E. Wijesinha, *The Eagle Breeds a Gryphon: The Story of the Raffles Institution 1823–1985* (Singapore, 1989), 33–42.

⁹⁸ John Crawford to Charles Lushington, 7 Feb. 1826, BL IOR F/4/1043/28683, 77r–77v. Raffles’ plan had included but not prioritized elementary education.

Singapore government to the Court of Directors put it, the grandiose “objects of the Institution ... were not at all adapted to the circumstances of this infant colony.”⁹⁹ The government’s territorial disposition, echoed by the authorities in London and Calcutta, was evident in a Malay-language address drawn up in early 1827. “As Singapore has been purchased by the Company, and its affairs have been permanently arranged,” the address stated, “it is the wish of the Company to extend to the inhabitants ... the advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of other parts of their Dominions.” From a desire “to cherish their subjects as a father cherishes his Children,” the Company would allocate monthly funds for elementary education.¹⁰⁰ Raffles’ vision of a great intellectual entrepot had been replaced with a scaled-down version of the mass education model currently gaining ground at the Indian presidencies. Later developments only served to underscore the contrast. In 1828, in an apparent concession to government, the Singapore Institution’s trustees proposed to convert the dormant property into a “Town Hall and Reading Room.” This would have comprised a markedly different establishment from what Raffles had intended, resembling more the Public Hall recently built in Madras.¹⁰¹ When the Singapore Institution was finally refounded in 1835, it took the modest form of a local boys’ school, similar to ones already in operation at Malacca and Penang.

The early history of education policy in British India presents a record of catholic experiment and unresolved debate that resists interpretation along Anglicist-Orientalist

⁹⁹ Extract General Letter from Singapore (20 May 1828), 10v.

¹⁰⁰ Address, trans. in Singapore Resident’s Diary (25 Jan. 1827), Singapore National Archives, N1, 67-70.

¹⁰¹ See Robert Morrison to A. L. Johnston, Nov. 1828, Raffles Institution Records, Raffles Archives and Museum.

lines. While the three Indian governments grappled with similar issues, they charted somewhat different courses: Bengal focused on advanced seminaries, Madras on village schools, and Bombay on both. Their administrative dynamics ranged from fertile deliberation to passive consensus to intractable opposition. Opinion fundamentally divided or aligned, however, upon the balance to be struck between elite conciliation and mass education. The progress of the latter ideal and of official concern with education in general, however fitful, testified to the growing ascendancy of the Company's political over its commercial functions, and to the demands this placed on concepts of sovereignty and society. Education in itself may not have been the first priority of government at this moment, but Elphinstone, for one, saw it as the key to everything else.¹⁰² He, Munro, Mackenzie, and other leading officials across India envisioned a territorial state shorn of mercantile associations, deriving authority not from the conciliation of learned elites but from the cultivation of civil society. This vision was sometimes couched in the language of altruism and moral duty, but it owed at least as much to political calculus. The legitimacy challenges that had attended the Company's transformation, and that education policy had sought to address, were only to grow in coming years.

The "Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy" Revisited

Upon reaching the 1830s, most surveys of Indian education have concerned themselves with explaining how the supposedly long-simmering battle between "Anglicists" and

¹⁰² Elphinstone, Minute [13 Dec. 1823], 101; Ballhatchet, *Social Policy*, 252.

“Orientalists” boiled over, resulting in victory for the former. The trajectory followed above suggests a rather different question: how did an evolving and overlapping series of debates centered on the choice between elite conciliation and mass education develop into the “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy?” Why did language, hitherto subordinate to considerations of state and society, momentarily loom so large? The answer is to be found, paradoxically, in the intensification of these considerations, which allowed an idiosyncratic civil servant to raise the stakes of English-language instruction—at least for a time.

The origins of the controversy can be properly dated to 1827. In that year, Charles Edward Trevelyan was appointed assistant to the resident at Delhi and, by his own account, began “labouring in the cause” that he would carry to apparent triumph eight years later.¹⁰³ In Trevelyan, it has been written, “the Utilitarian and Evangelical approaches to the educational problem were combined.”¹⁰⁴ Yet as studies of his subsequent roles in Irish famine relief and British civil service reform have shown, Trevelyan’s zeal was eclectic, his motivations “‘abnormal,’” even “‘incalculable.’”¹⁰⁵ “To be widely different from others” was the motto of his satirical doppelganger in Anthony Trollope’s *The Three Clerks* (1858).¹⁰⁶ Trevelyan brought to education policy an unusual obsession—shared by few Utilitarians or

¹⁰³ Trevelyan to William Bentinck, 30 Apr. 1834, in *Correspondence of ... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1261; see Trevelyan, *Testimony* (21 Jun. 1853), 147. For the fullest study to date of Trevelyan’s role in education policy, see J. F. Hilliker, “Charles Edward Trevelyan as an Educational Reformer in India 1827-1838,” *Canadian Journal of History* 9 (1974).

¹⁰⁴ K. A. Ballhatchet, “The Home Government and Bentinck’s Educational Policy,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10 (1951), 228; see similarly Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), 46.

¹⁰⁵ See Kevin Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall* (Basingstoke, 1999), 12-40, quotes at 14, 15; Robin Haines, *Charles Trevelyan and the Great Irish Famine* (Dublin, 2004); see also Jenifer Hart, “Sir Charles Trevelyan at the Treasury,” *English Historical Review* 75 (1960), esp. 93.

¹⁰⁶ Anthony Trollope, *The Three Clerks: A Novel*, 3 vols. (London, 1858), 1:107.

evangelicals—with what he called the “influence of language on national habits of thinking.”¹⁰⁷ From 1828, as a member of the Delhi College Committee, he developed from this obsession the tenets of the “Anglicist” position. Four years earlier, the Eurasian administrator John Henry Taylor had advised the general committee that a state-led approach to education was required at the Mughal capital. Like counterparts elsewhere, however, he proposed institutions and incentives that would strike a balance between elite conciliation and mass education.¹⁰⁸ The guiding hand of Trevelyan was evident in the very different policy sketched by the Delhi committee in 1829, which not only fully embraced mass education but fully identified it with the English language.¹⁰⁹ From the premise that its remit was to improve society at large, the committee argued that this could only be done through English and English-inflected vernaculars. To maintain support for Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic was “to throw the people into the hands of intermediate Agents” and reinforce the “barrier between them and their Rulers.” These intermediate agents—“literary

¹⁰⁷ C. E. Trevelyan, *A Treatise on the Means of Communicating the Learning and Civilization of Europe to India* (Calcutta, 1834), 14. Trevelyan had distinguished himself in Hindi and Persian during a brief stint at the College of Fort William: according to his student record, “it is difficult to speak in terms sufficiently commendatory of his talents, and industry, which had they been exerted for a short time longer, would have entitled him to the highest rewards, & placed him in the first rank of the most distinguished scholars of the College of Fort William.” Report (1827), PCFW, vol. 569, 18. For his related obsession with script, see Javed Majeed, “Modernity’s Script and a Tom Thumb Performance: English Linguistic Modernity and Persian/Urdu Lexicography in Nineteenth-Century India,” in Michael S. Dodson and Brian A. Hatcher, eds., *Trans-Colonial Modernities in South Asia* (London, 2012).

¹⁰⁸ Taylor to H. H. Wilson, 17 Jan. 1824, BL IOR F/4/909/25694, esp. 550, 557-8. On Taylor, see M. Ikram Chaghtai, “Dr Aloys Sprenger and the Delhi College,” in Margrit Pernau, ed., *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857* (New Delhi, 2006), 107-8.

¹⁰⁹ One mark of Trevelyan’s principal authorship is the recurrence of phrases and arguments from Delhi committee minutes in his own writings. See esp. [Trevelyan,] Draft Minute [c. 1833-4], Trevelyan Papers, Newcastle University Library, CET 102; Trevelyan, *Treatise*; see also J. F. Hilliker, “Trevelyan and the Reform of Indian Education,” *Indo-British Review* 6 (1974), 71, 74 n 4.

Mahomedans” and presumably *pandits*—were too attached to the old regime to be the instruments of the new one. Patronizing such men, the committee argued, only nourished their feelings of resentment and independence. By contrast, “the bulk of the people both Mohamedan and Hindoo are entirely uneducated and attached to no previous system, while they are very ready to adopt our own Literature.”¹¹⁰ The committee expanded on these ideas several months later, laying out a comprehensive system of lower and higher instruction grounded in the study of English. Such a system would have two main benefits. First, it would “tend rapidly to diminish ... distinctions, and to amalgamate all classes into one great and united whole.” Second, it would “for centuries form a bond of union between ourselves and them, which can never be entirely dissolved.” The combined effect of attaching the people to each other and to their rulers would be to forge “a sort of national character, which may be denominated anglo Indian.”¹¹¹ Thus the Delhi committee proposed the most radical break with elite conciliation and the most ambitious vision of mass education yet, compassing the consolidation of the British-Indian polity. The committee’s signal innovation was to bring issues of language to the fore. Up to this point, the political significance of English had been uncertain. Its keenest advocate in Company circles had been the anti-populist and anti-interventionist Francis Warden. The twinning of English and mass education, however, was to prove far more influential. Indeed, a clear line ran from Trevelyan’s thinking in 1829 to Macaulay’s in 1835.

¹¹⁰ Delhi College Committee to H. H. Wilson, 12 Feb. 1829, BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 313-39.

¹¹¹ Delhi College Committee to H. H. Wilson, 14 Apr. 1829, BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 372-4, see 358-61.

Official reactions to the Delhi scheme reveal much about what had changed in the past few years and what was still to change in the few years hence. Predictably enough, the general committee in Calcutta resorted to its abiding themes of caution and conciliation. Trevelyan and his colleagues had proposed to realize their vision through a network of schools and colleges, apparently intending in the local instance to divert funds from the Delhi College. According to the general committee, however, defunding that conciliatory institution, built in 1825 on the foundations of a *madrasa*, would “retard if it did not ultimately prevent the introduction of English into the District.” For “all the most influential Mahomedans, and particularly the men of learning would have the strongest interest in opposing a change that was to deprive them of all credit and subsistence.” Moreover, the general committee doubted whether students and teachers for the new institutions could be found. An elite social formation capable of providing these might be observed at Calcutta, especially in connection with the Hindu College managed by Horace Hayman Wilson; but elsewhere such expectations were “premature.” Upcountry, certainly, it was best to follow the existing policy of introducing English in a piecemeal and peaceable fashion. To this end, the general committee had already planned “English Colleges” on a limited footing at Delhi, Agra, and Benares.¹¹² With such a reply, the committee sidestepped the novel claims made for English by its Delhi subsidiary, instead largely reiterating the arguments addressed five years earlier to Rammohan and the home authorities. In acknowledging that an Anglophone Indian community was already taking

¹¹² GCPI to Governor-General in Council, 2 Jun. 1829, BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 342-4.

shape in Calcutta, however, the committee furnished grounds on which these arguments could be challenged anew.¹¹³ Mackenzie, indeed, took the unusual step of recording a partial dissent. Claims of a general demand for English, he held, ought to be investigated rather than dismissed. In the interest of further stimulating such demand, moreover, English ought to be gradually made the language of public business.¹¹⁴ Echoed by the governor-general, Mackenzie's support for the Delhi officials signaled a new turn in the politics not only of the committee but of the country.

In Bentinck the conception of mass education as a vehicle for state and public formation, which had been percolating around British India for a decade, found its first champion at the head of government. Arriving in Calcutta in 1828, some twenty years after resigning the governorship of Madras, Bentinck, like other observers, beheld in the Company's territories a paramount and permanent empire. The imperative to assume "all the attributes of sovereign power" conducted him likewise to the relations between state and society now bound up in education policy.¹¹⁵ By the late 1820s these relations pressed more urgently than ever. Across Britain's empire, an emboldened "public opinion" was demanding new rights and the reform of institutions including those of the Company, whose twenty-year charter was up for renewal in early 1834. At the seats of the Indian presidencies, Calcutta especially, the "Indian public" so often conjured in the abstract

¹¹³ Wilson himself had recently lauded the efforts of a new "Calcutta Indigenous Literary Club" to translate English works into Bengali as the most desirable "consequence of the Education of the natives in English & the means of extending knowledge most universally." H. H. Wilson, Comment (16 Sept. 1828), WBSA GCPI Literary Proceedings, vol. 1, part 2, 617.

¹¹⁴ Mackenzie, Note (3 Jun. 1829), BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 350-52.

¹¹⁵ Bentinck to Charles Metcalfe, 16 Sept. 1829, in *Correspondence of ... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 1:288.

began to take on solid dimensions as a participant in political debate. Bentinck, for his part, showed an early receptiveness to this budding reform community, allowing an essentially free press and inviting suggestions for improvement from “all Native Gentlemen, Landholders, Merchants and others.”¹¹⁶ Such attempts to promote “native agency” and social intercourse were part of a larger, if still inchoate, project to unite the disparate components of the British-Indian polity under the banner of “nationality.”¹¹⁷ It was this great ambition that shaped Bentinck’s response to the minutes of the general committee and of its Delhi subsidiary in 1829. Like Mackenzie, Bentinck acquiesced to the former, largely on financial grounds, but evinced greater enthusiasm for the latter. Above all, he approved of “giving to our Institutions for Native education, a firmer hold on the feelings and interests of the people and, generally, a more popular character.”¹¹⁸ Accordingly, he declared with his council that reports of a widespread desire to learn English would form “the basis of our proceedings” on education.¹¹⁹ He reserved an even more telling conclusion for private correspondence: “encouraging the acquisition of the British language,” he now believed, was “the key to all improvement.”¹²⁰ If not fully converted, therefore, Bentinck had at least proven highly receptive to the view from Delhi.

¹¹⁶ Cited in Ahmed, *Social Ideas*, 3 n 2; see Margarita Barns, *The Indian Press: A History of the Growth of Public Opinion in India* (London, 1940), 191-8.

¹¹⁷ See Rosselli, *Bentinck*, 180-89.

¹¹⁸ A. Stirling to GCPI, 26 Jun. 1829, BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 385-92.

¹¹⁹ Public Letter from Bengal, 21 Aug. 1829, BL IOR F/4/1170/30639, 60.

¹²⁰ Bentinck to Metcalfe, 16 Sept. 1829, 1:288.

There is much besides Trevelyan's word to support an account of the "Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy" as the progress and (partial) fulfillment of that view. It was not until mid-1833, however, that battle lines were drawn in the general committee, and it requires explanation how matters came to this head. Trevelyan's early influence with Bentinck could only have benefited from the case he made in 1829 to remove Edward Colebrooke as Delhi resident. Trevelyan had accused the senior official of corruption, but the ensuing inquiry stirred up larger, intertwined questions of social and linguistic policy. Whereas Colebrooke had forged ties with the city's Persianate aristocracy, Trevelyan took up the cause of its middle classes, even bestowing his own name and funds on a suburb designed for their residence.¹²¹ The reversal of fortunes between the two men and their respective administrative generations may have doomed the highborn poet Ghalib's efforts to garner a state pension.¹²² The ambient sense of social upheaval in northern India was not lost on Reginald Heber, the perambulatory Bishop of Calcutta, who concurred with a district collector in observing "a new order rising from the middling classes," poised to overtake those "ancient families ... gone to decay."¹²³ It was in this context of a turning tide against the old guard, Indian *and* British, that the Delhi English College began operations in 1828. Trevelyan, its main founder, noted "the scoffs of the learned natives, and the

¹²¹ Katherine Prior, Lance Brennan, and Robin Haines, "Bad Language: The Role of English, Persian and other Esoteric Tongues in the Dismissal of Sir Edward Colebrooke as Resident of Delhi in 1829," *MAS* 35 (2001); see also Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: Studies in Late Mughul Delhi* (1951; repr. New Delhi, 1991), 167-81; Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*, 89-96.

¹²² P. Hardy, "Ghalib and the British," in Ralph Russell, ed., *Ghalib: The Poet and His Age* (London, 1972), 56-63.

¹²³ Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*, 2 vols. (London, 1828), 1:314.

prudential objections of ... European residents.”¹²⁴ Shahamat Ali recalled that, no sooner had the institution commenced, than the local *maulvis* shunned him and the other Muslim students, causing several to unenroll. “Jealousy,” he suggested, was a likely motive.¹²⁵ Of the six students who remained, the social origins of one are better documented than the rest and reveal something of the emerging Indian market for English education. Mohan Lal had been born “Ram Nath” to a Kashmiri *pandit* family of the Zutshi community, known proverbially for scholarship and office-seeking. The alias, which obscured these origins, marked but one in a series of attempts by members of the family to adapt to changing circumstances and reestablish on new terms the status they had once enjoyed under Mughal patrons. Like his father, grandfather, and great-uncle before him, Mohan Lal turned to the British, at the cost, in his case, of excommunication from *brahman* society.¹²⁶ To his early and abiding advocate, Trevelyan, however, Mohan Lal exemplified the new society being forged at the Delhi English College. Here,

Christian, Mohammedan, and Hindu boys, of every shade of colour and variety of descent may be seen standing side by side in the same class ... This is a great point gained. The artificial institution of caste cannot long survive the period when the youth of India ... disregard it... Habits of friendly communication will thus be established between all classes, they will insensibly become one people, and the process of enlightening our subjects will proceed simultaneously with that of uniting them among themselves.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ C. E. Trevelyan, “Memoir,” in Mohan Lal, *Journal of a Tour through the Panjab, Afghanistan, Turkistan, Khorasan, and Part of Persia* (Calcutta, 1834), ix.

¹²⁵ Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and Afghans* (London, 1847), viii-ix.

¹²⁶ On Mohan Lal, see Hari Ram Gupta, *Life and Work of Mohan Lal Kashmiri, 1812-1877* (Lahore, 1943), esp. 1-10; Henny Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India* (Delhi, 1988), 81-91; Michael H. Fisher, “Mohan Lal Kashmiri (1812-77): An Initial Student of Delhi English College,” in Pernau, ed., *Delhi College*. The great-uncle, Basti Ram, had struggled to make a living as a poet in Calcutta. See Basti Ram, *Calcuttanama* (Mumbai, 2014).

¹²⁷ Trevelyan, *Education of the People*, 20.

Trevelyan wrote these words in 1838. Already in 1830, however, he apprehended the possibility of a natural alliance with “the large and intelligent classes of Kaiths [*kayasths*] and Cashmerians, who compose in the Upper Provinces, the greater portion of the persons who are employed in the service of the Government ... as Secretaries, Scribes, &c.”¹²⁸ In raising up this middling order, Trevelyan predicted, the Delhi English College would form “the nucleus of a system ... destined to change ... the whole of Upper India.”¹²⁹

Nor were Trevelyan’s ambitions limited to that quarter. It was after his transfer to Calcutta in 1831 that observers there began to write of a bloc of officials bent on introducing English-language policies. Macaulay would later arrive to find Trevelyan “quite at the head of that active party among the younger servants of the company who take the side of improvement,” and in particular, “the soul of every scheme for diffusing education among the natives.”¹³⁰ Trevelyan’s ascent has been attributed to his success, on the one hand, in courting officials, especially Bentinck, and on the other, in courting public opinion through pamphlets, leaks of internal documents, and letters to Calcutta newspapers under the pseudonym “Indophilus.”¹³¹ In fact, these efforts worked in tandem: Trevelyan was at greatest pains to convince Bentinck that his views on education were shared by the people

¹²⁸ Trevelyan, *Treatise*, 19–20. He dated this section to 21 May, 1830.

¹²⁹ Trevelyan, “Memoir,” ix.

¹³⁰ T. B. Macaulay to Mrs. Edward Cropper, 7 Dec. 1834, in *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, ed. Thomas Pinney, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1974–81), 3:100; see also H. T. Prinsep, *Autobiography* (1865), cited in Sharp, ed., *Educational Records, Part I*, 132–3.

¹³¹ A. D. Webb, “Charles Edward Trevelyan in India: A Study of the Channels of Influence Employed by a Covenanted Civil Servant in the Translation of Personal Ideas into Official Policy,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* ns 6 (1983).

at large and required only government assistance to gain the ascendancy.¹³² Trevelyan was still the loudest advocate of English instruction in the early 1830s, but he was increasingly joined by other voices. Indian pupils flocked to the new English-medium school of the missionary Alexander Duff, and appeals for government-funded seminaries on its model began to appear in native newspapers.¹³³ The general committee not only expanded the use of English in existing institutions, but projected further ones upcountry “in which the teaching of the English language should form a prominent part” of the curriculum.¹³⁴ Under Horace Hayman Wilson’s leadership, however, the committee not only avowed the education of “the respectable in preference to the indigent classes,” but insisted upon “the inadequacy of any means to the education of a whole people.”¹³⁵ This was the state of affairs in March 1833, when Trevelyan wrote Bentinck, “I long to see established under your Lordship’s auspices a system of education ... interwoven with the constitution of the state” and embracing “the whole body of the people.” If, by offering his “services” in this letter, Trevelyan meant to forward his candidacy for the general committee, he seems to have been successful, for an appointment followed in April.¹³⁶ The beginning of the “Anglicist-

¹³² See Trevelyan to Bentinck, 18 Mar. 183[3], in *Correspondence of... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:777. For the correct date of this letter, see the original in Bentinck Papers, University of Nottingham, PwJf 2103.

¹³³ On Duff’s activities, see George Smith, *The Life of Alexander Duff*, 2 vols. (London, 1879), 1:104-270; M. A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1837* (Oxford, 1972), 207-13. For examples of such appeals, see *Reformer* (Calcutta; 18 Mar. 1833); “Native Education,” *Gyananneshun* (25 Jul. 1833), repr. in Suresh Chandra Moitra, ed., *Selections from Jnanannesan* (Calcutta, 1979), 73.

¹³⁴ GCPI to Vice-President in Council, 28 May 1832, NAI Bengal Public Consultations (14 Aug. 1832), no. 39, 4; Sinha, *Educational Policy*, 121-47.

¹³⁵ *Report on the Colleges and Schools for Native Education, under the Superintendence of the General Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal*. 1831. (Calcutta, 1832), BL IOR V/24/946, 47, see also 49.

¹³⁶ Trevelyan to Bentinck, 18 Mar. 183[3], 2:776-7.

Orientalist Controversy” has often been dated to the moment in late 1834 when the committee reached a deadlock. As early as a month after Trevelyan’s admission, however, it was clear to at least one member that “we have ... arrived at a crisis in the annals of the Education Committee and the question has become ‘whether the natives of India are to remain orientalists or to be made English in their language and literature.’”¹³⁷

The essential point about the controversy as it played out over the next two years is that, for all of its rhetorical sprawl, it turned substantially on the same choice between elite conciliation and mass education that had occupied officials for over a decade. This was evident from summary arguments of each side, which the general committee’s secretary presented to Bentinck for adjudication in January 1835. Whereas the faction now led by Henry Thoby Prinsep declared as its “first great principle” that of patronizing “the enlightened and influential Classes,” Trevelyan’s faction underscored the obligation of the state to “*all* classes.”¹³⁸ Since the Delhi committee’s coup of 1829, social considerations had been tangled up with linguistic ones. Trevelyan characterized the divide on the general committee as between an “English” and “popular” party, on the one hand, and an “oriental” and “anti-popular” party on the other.¹³⁹ Nor did his opponents attempt much to shift these terms of debate: at the heart of their case was still, in the words of one report, the necessity of “consulting the feelings and conciliating the confidence of ... the influential and learned

¹³⁷ James Prinsep, Minute (20 May 1833), WBSA GCPI Proceedings, vol. 4, 252. For an early and characteristic example of Trevelyan’s contribution to the committee, see Trevelyan, Minute (13 Jun. 1833), at 271-6.

¹³⁸ J. C. C. Sutherland to H. T. Prinsep, 21-2 Jan. 1835, in *GIED*, 137, 154 (emphasis added).

¹³⁹ Trevelyan to Bentinck, 9 Apr. 1834, in *Correspondence of ... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1238-9.

classes, those who are by birthright or profession teachers and expounders of Literature, Law and Religion.”¹⁴⁰ After departing for an Oxford professorship in mid-1833, Wilson, the leading author of such appeals over the years, lamented that “the Education Committee seem to be English-mad” and risked losing the support of “valuable men, both Pundits and Moulvis.”¹⁴¹ Officials like Wilson and Prinsep, chiefly of an older generation, were willing to accommodate English as a “peaceful and insensible innovation.”¹⁴² But Trevelyan would be satisfied with nothing less than “radical” change: “our object,” he wrote, “is to instruct the people of India by the united means of English and of the popular languages,” not to encourage “the learned few” in “the study of Sanscrit and Arabic.”¹⁴³ This logic ultimately prevailed on Bentinck, for whom the failure to adequately countenance popular education had always been a serious shortcoming in the other side. In February 1835, Bentinck finally resolved the standoff in the committee by endorsing Macaulay’s polemical minute, having apparently promised weeks earlier to so “declare himself.”¹⁴⁴ Macaulay had undoubtedly boosted Trevelyan’s influence, assimilating and promulgating his future brother-in-law’s ideas on education since arriving in India the previous summer.¹⁴⁵ Assuming, however, that

¹⁴⁰ *Report on the Colleges and Schools ... 1831*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Wilson to Ramkamal Sen, 21 Dec. 1833, in Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen* (Calcutta, 1880), 14.

¹⁴² J. Prinsep, Minute (2 Jan. 1834), in C. E. Trevelyan et al., *The Application of the Roman Alphabet to All the Oriental Languages* (Serampore, 1834), 35.

¹⁴³ C. E. Trevelyan, Minute (Jan. 1834), in *ibid.*, 4, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Macaulay to Cropper, 7 Dec. 1834, 3:102.

¹⁴⁵ For suggestions that Macaulay took his views on education from Trevelyan, and was understood by contemporaries to have done so, see *ibid.*, 3:102-3; Trevelyan to Macaulay, 30 Sept. 1834, Trevelyan Papers, Newcastle University Library, CET 19/3; W. H. Macnaghten to Bentinck, 7 May 1835, Bentinck Papers,

Bentinck was unlikely to have been swayed by personal charisma alone, the reasons for his decision have remained unclear. As we shall see, these followed from the profound changes wrought by the Charter Act of 1833.

By ending the Company's trade and continuing its government, the Charter Act resolved the dialectic that had animated British-Indian political thought for the better part of a century. Stripping away the old mercantile trappings, moreover, it remodeled the Company state as "an enlightened and paternal despotism."¹⁴⁶ Modern attention has focused on the commercial provisions of the act, which owed largely to the rise of free trade and the influence of British merchant and manufacturing interests. But not only were the framers on the Board of Control concerned that the Company should focus on "well-governing India, undistracted by ... commercial speculation"; they seized the opportunity "to effect some most valuable improvements" in its constitution.¹⁴⁷ Macaulay, at this time secretary to the board, took a leading role in drawing up the legislation and defending it in Parliament in the summer of 1833. His chief advisor was Mackenzie, who, since returning to Britain two years earlier, had demonstrated his expertise in matters including education before a select committee on the Company's affairs.¹⁴⁸ Through this and other channels,

University of Nottingham, PwJf 1340; B. H. Hodgson, *Preeminence of the Vernaculars; or the Anglicists Answered* (Serampore, 1837), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Government of India" (10 Jul. 1833), in *The Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, 8 vols. (London, 1866), 8:139. On the Charter Act as discussed here and below, see Joshua Ehrlich, "The Crisis of Liberal Reform in India: Public Opinion, Pyrotechnics, and the Charter Act of 1833," *MAS* (in press).

¹⁴⁷ Macaulay to Mrs. Edward Cropper, 17 Jul. 1833, in *Letters of ... Macaulay*, ed. Pinney, 2:272; Wilson, *British India*, 3:560, see also 3:525.

¹⁴⁸ See Holt Mackenzie, Testimony (2 Mar. 1832), in PP (1831-2), vol. 735-I, 83-6.

Macaulay would have been exposed to the views of Trevelyan even before arriving in India. In the minutes of the select committee, moreover, he had ready access to the proposals for mass education of Elphinstone and Munro, both of whom he cited with approval in a climactic speech on the bill before the Commons. Although the Charter Act made no explicit provision for education, in a sense its entire logic depended on it. In the peroration of the Commons speech, Macaulay rested his case for prolonging and, indeed, strengthening the Company's government on the grounds of cultivating civil society. Though the time was not yet ripe for representative institutions, he declared,

It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions.

He closed with the patriotic prospect of a self-governed India subject nonetheless to "the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws."¹⁴⁹ In correspondence, Macaulay made the by-now-customary observation that, in Britain, "all classes of people, members of parliament, reporters, and the public" were indifferent to Indian affairs.¹⁵⁰ But he also noted that his speech had drawn "such compliments as ... you never heard" from his fellow MPs.¹⁵¹ Indeed, the speech cemented Macaulay's reputation as an orator and undoubtedly aided his appointment as the inaugural legislative member on the supreme council. Among his new admirers was Bentinck, who informed the bishop of Calcutta, "I cannot tell you how much I am delighted with Macaulay's appointment. I think

¹⁴⁹ Macaulay, "Government of India," 8:142.

¹⁵⁰ Macaulay to Cropper, 17 Jul. 1833, 2:272.

¹⁵¹ Macaulay to Hannah Macaulay, 11 Jul. 1833, in *Letters of... Macaulay*, 2:268.

he has more power of doing good to India than any man, governor-general or other, who ever came to India.”¹⁵² Macaulay had provided a spur to the cause of mass education; he had also handed Bentinck the reins.

For Bentinck, not only did the Charter Act rectify the longstanding inconsistency between “Merchant and Sovereign”; it settled him in an authoritarian style of nation-building that he had hitherto lacked the standing or conviction to embrace.¹⁵³ Bentinck had long favored Trevelyan’s synthesis of English and popular education, but had hesitated to lend it his full support. For one thing, he was under strict retrenchment orders from the home authorities and felt compelled to consult them on important decisions.¹⁵⁴ On this issue in particular he also recognized a danger of alienating Prinsep and likeminded officials; hence playing “his cards unusually close to his chest” in council.¹⁵⁵ Most importantly, Bentinck was doubtful about the extent of popular demand for English and, according to Trevelyan, was delaying “the great question of national education until the public mind should become better prepared.”¹⁵⁶ The Charter Act altered all of these calculations, issuing Bentinck a mandate from above to enact sweeping reforms with or without popular support. He was henceforth to be “Governor-General of *India*,” not just of

¹⁵² Bentinck to Daniel Wilson, 1 May 1834, in *Correspondence of... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1264.

¹⁵³ Bentinck, Minute (20 Jan. 1834), BL IOR F/4/1551/62250, 83.

¹⁵⁴ For an argument privileging this factor, see Geoffrey Seed, “Lord William Bentinck and the Reform of Education,” *JRAS* (1952). On Bentinck’s orders to retrench, see Albert H. Imlah, *Lord Ellenborough: A Biography of Edward Law, Earl of Ellenborough, Governor-General of India* (Cambridge, 1939), 44 n. 65; C. H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784-1834*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1961), 262.

¹⁵⁵ Rosselli, *Bentinck*, 220.

¹⁵⁶ Trevelyan to Bentinck, 9 Apr. 1834, 2:1238.

Bengal, and was empowered to overrule his council, the subordinate governors, and the supreme courts—a situation of which predecessors the likes of Warren Hastings or Richard Wellesley could only have dreamed. Along with the new title and powers, meanwhile, came new expectations, among which education was no less conspicuous for its absence in the bill than for its omnipresence in Macaulay's speech. Perhaps it was the framers' understanding that something would be done about education that Macaulay impressed upon Bentinck in late 1834. By this time, Bentinck may not have needed impressing, aware that with his health declining and his days in India numbered, he was unlikely to find a better opportunity. Already, some months earlier, he had concluded that "the great want of this eastern world ... may be comprehended in the single word 'knowledge'" and, therefore, that "general education is my panacea for the regeneration of India."¹⁵⁷ He endorsed Macaulay's minute of February 1835 in uncharacteristic fashion, without consulting the home authorities and even despite recent admonitions from them on the subject.¹⁵⁸ Nor did he show any compunction about excluding Prinsep's rebuttal from the council minutes, an action sure to offend the irascible administrator and his co-partisans.¹⁵⁹ Finally, Bentinck avowed with new confidence that "Public Opinion" was "wholly

¹⁵⁷ Bentinck to G. Norton, 11 Apr. 1834, in James Barber, *A Letter to the Right Hon. Sir John Cam Hobhouse* (London, 1837), 43-4; Bentinck to unknown, 1 Jun. 1834, in *Correspondence of... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1287; see similarly Bentinck, "Lord William Bentinck's Reply to the Society's Address" (8 Apr. 1835), *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India* 2 (1836), 211.

¹⁵⁸ On the home authorities' lukewarm reply to Bentinck's latest request for support of English education, see Hilliker, "British Education Policy," 65-6. For a furious draft response to Bentinck's eventual decision, see [John Stuart Mill,] Previous Communication (1836), in *GIED*, 225-43.

¹⁵⁹ See H. T. Prinsep, Minute (20 May 1835), in Sharp, ed., *Educational Records, Part I*, 137-9.

inoperative” on a government “we have won, and must keep by the Sword.”¹⁶⁰ This post-Charter-Act disposition was reflected in the summary arguments of Trevelyan’s faction in the general committee (apparently drawn up to reinforce a decision Bentinck had already taken). The Trevelyanists still claimed that “the feelings of the people” inclined towards English. However, they now asserted as “the duty of all Governments” not merely to follow such feelings but to direct them to “enlightened ends.” Even if many Indians preferred oriental learning, they maintained, there was no “inherent *right* in a people to demand” an “erroneous education at the expense of the state.”¹⁶¹ While Macaulay, in his minute of the following month, noted the demand for English as opposed to oriental publications, this was less to buttress his own case than to refute that of his opponents: he likewise disapproved of consulting the masses’ “intellectual taste at the expense of their intellectual health.”¹⁶² This pivot away from an earlier concern with public opinion reflected a major legacy of the Charter Act: the wane of the “Indian public” as an effective political formation. The new government of the Company was imagined as a tutelary despotism, accountable to a public of the future rather than of the present. Such a government would take assistance from the people, but never direction. Its authority was to rest on an ideal of education that was decidedly popular in one sense and unpopular in another.

¹⁶⁰ Bentinck, Minute (20 Jan. 1834), 78, 81; see also Bentinck to Charles Metcalfe, 4 Feb. 1834, in *Correspondence of... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1200-201.

¹⁶¹ Sutherland to Prinsep, 21-2 Jan. 1835, 136-8.

¹⁶² Thomas Babington Macaulay, Minute (2 Feb. 1835), in *GIED*, 168.

Although the resolution of the controversy appeared as a resounding victory for English, it proved a more lasting victory for mass education, in theory if not in practice. That this outcome has been obscured owes much to distortions by and of Macaulay. Not only did his minute jumble the arguments on the general committee; as “an occasional piece, written for a particular purpose,” it was far from his final word on the subject of education.¹⁶³ Trevelyan would later downplay it as merely “one of the papers recorded during the discussions which preceded the resolution” of the governor-general.¹⁶⁴ In subsequent years, the author’s misleading has been compounded by the historian’s misreading. Macaulay’s comment that he shared with his opponents a focus on higher instruction, in particular, has often been taken to mean that he shared a favoritism towards traditional elites. On the contrary, while limited funds dictated a present emphasis on advanced seminaries, Macaulay, no less than Trevelyan, was intent on opening these to a mixture of castes and classes. Moreover, he envisioned a system that would form students of heterogeneous social origins into a new intermediate class capable of “conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.”¹⁶⁵ As ever, it was this popular, nation-building logic that appealed most to Bentinck. Two weeks earlier, in the interests of establishing “education upon the largest and most useful basis,” Bentinck had sponsored the Unitarian reformer William Adam’s plan to survey indigenous practices and

¹⁶³ John Clive, *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* (New York, 1974), 376-7; see Rosselli, *Bentinck*, 185, 216.

¹⁶⁴ Trevelyan, *Education of the People*, 43 n.

¹⁶⁵ Macaulay, Minute (2 Feb. 1835), 171; see also Macaulay, Minute (30 Dec. 1837), in *Macaulay’s Minutes on Education in India*, ed. H. Woodrow (Calcutta, 1862), 51.

institutions throughout the province. Whatever the various questions under discussion in the general committee, among which “the particular languages to be cultivated” currently loomed large, Bentinck stressed that his ultimate concern was to establish a “general system.”¹⁶⁶

Perhaps it was Bentinck’s reiteration of this message as much as his endorsement of Macaulay’s that set the other party on a path of compromise. In responding to Macaulay, Prinsep subtly but significantly shifted tack, elevating the cause of “the mass of the people” above that of the *pandits* and *maulvis* he had hitherto championed. While still finding use for such learned men as “the teachers of many pupils,” he now acknowledged that “we must endeavour to carry the people with us.”¹⁶⁷ This argument broadened the case for conciliation, but at the cost of weakening it. Prinsep and his allies conceded the basic principle of mass education, attempting merely to salvage a supporting role for traditional elites. Thus wrote Wilson in a letter to the *Asiatic Journal*,

As long as the learned classes of India are not enlisted in the cause of diffusing sound knowledge, little real progress will be made... [O]ne able pundit or maulavi, who should ... advocate the adoption of European knowledge and principles, would work a greater revolution in the minds of his unlettered countrymen than would result from their own proficiency in English alone.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Bentinck, Minute (20 Jan. 1835), in *Correspondence of ... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1395-6; see also Adam to Bentinck, 2 Jan. 1835, in *Adam’s Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar, Submitted to Government in 1835, 1836 and 1838*, ed. J. Long (Calcutta, 1868), 1-9. Extant correspondence shows that Macaulay and Trevelyan also supported the plan. Macaulay to Bentinck, undated, Bentinck Papers, University of Nottingham, Pwjf 1327; Trevelyan to Bentinck, 5 Jan. 1835, in *Correspondence of ... Bentinck*, ed. Philips, 2:1393.

¹⁶⁷ H. T. Prinsep, Note (15 Feb. 1835), in *GIED*, 175, 181, 185.

¹⁶⁸ H. H. Wilson to ed., 5 Dec. 1835, *AJ*, repr. in *GIED*, 216; see also William Macnaghten, Minute (24 Mar. 1835), NAI Bengal Public Consultations (22 Apr. 1835), no. 10A, 186-7.

Even such diminished claims as these might have fallen on deaf ears were it not for the well-timed appearance, in February 1835, of a petition against the rumored abolition of the Calcutta Madrasa bearing over eight thousand native signatures.¹⁶⁹ In demonstrating popular backing for ostensibly elite interests, the petitioners undercut the founding premises of Trevelyan's movement. No wonder that Macaulay's first response was to accuse Prinsep of engineering the affair.¹⁷⁰ In the wake of the Charter Act, Bentinck was willing to proceed with the designs of Trevelyan and Macaulay despite the uncertainty of popular support and the near certainty of elite opposition. As a practical matter, however, this required elite as well as popular acquiescence, if not approbation. In March 1835, on the eve of his departure, Bentinck announced a compromise: the government would not "abolish any College or School of Native learning, while the Native Population shall appear to be inclined to avail themselves of the advantages which it affords."¹⁷¹ While new measures must serve the ultimate purpose of mass education, old conciliatory institutions would be allowed to remain. This pact was to ground future settlements, including Lord Auckland's minute four years later and Charles Wood's despatch fifteen years after that.¹⁷² The general committee's major, unfinished project in these decades was to establish English- and

¹⁶⁹ Petition (21 Feb. 1835), trans. in *AJ*, repr. in *GIED*, 189-96; see Horace Hayman Wilson to Ramkamal Sen, 25 Sept. 1835, in Mittra, *Ramcomul Sen*, 19.

¹⁷⁰ Prinsep, *Autobiography*, 134.

¹⁷¹ Bentinck, Resolution (7 Mar. 1835), in *GIED*, 195.

¹⁷² See Auckland, Minute (24 Nov. 1839), in *GIED*, esp. 309-10, 315; Despatch to Bengal (19 Jul. 1854), in Richey, *Educational Records, Part II*, esp. 366-7, 376, 392.

vernacular-medium schools at all of the district headquarters in Bengal. The idea was that these should form the basis of an eventual “mass” or “popular” education system.¹⁷³

Conclusion

The principal legacy of Company education debates in the 1820s-30s was summed up, decades later, in the remark of an old India hand that “the education of the people is now considered as much a duty of the state as the maintenance of the police.”¹⁷⁴ This legacy endured through the later nineteenth century, even as the spring tide of liberalism receded and the Company relinquished its dominion to the Crown. Trevelyan had desecrated the final ideological bulwarks of the Company state: “We have nothing to give to the Natives but our superior knowledge. Every thing else we take from them.”¹⁷⁵ Wilson concluded his *History of British India* (1845-8) with the similar declaration that, while India had suffered under foreign rule, it might be “compensated” by “the progressive introduction of the arts and sciences, the intelligence and civilisation of Europe.”¹⁷⁶ That the principal antagonists of the “Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy” could unite around such sentiments discloses something both of the real outcome of that episode and of its frequent service as a red herring. Later officials shared little of Trevelyan’s preoccupation with a national language.

¹⁷³ Herbert Alice Stark, *Vernacular Education in Bengal from 1813 to 1912* (Calcutta, 1916), 22-3; see McCully, *English Education*, 74-85.

¹⁷⁴ John Clark Marshman, *The History of India, from the Earliest Period to the Close of Lord Dalhousie’s Administration*, 3 vols. (London, 1863-7), 2:51.

¹⁷⁵ Trevelyan, *Treatise*, 61. Trevelyan dated this section to 8 Aug. 1832.

¹⁷⁶ Wilson, *British India*, 3:567.

What they inherited was his recourse to national education as a political language. If the Company state never fully made good on the promise to translate this language into practice, this was largely because, while it had “conciliated” from a position of weakness, it now “educated” from a position of strength. The currents of British politics had drifted from the East and only rarely brought the Company’s affairs before parliamentary or public scrutiny. The rising classes in India, meanwhile, possessed weaker leverage than had their princely predecessors. Not until the later nineteenth century would an Indian nationalist politics coalesce around opposition to British rule. This development signified, in no small part, the rejection of one vision of national education for another.

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