Buckingham's Republic of Letters: Defining the Limits of Free Expression in British Calcutta, 1818-1832

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MA degree in History

University of Ottawa

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ABSTRACT

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The Marquis of Hastings's decision in 1818 to repeal the censorship of Calcutta's presses led many to believe the Governor General had inaugurated press freedom in Bengal, the political and intellectual centre of Britain's Eastern Empire. With the steady inflow of non-Company merchants to India following the Charter Act of 1813, the East India Company was faced with the challenge of defending its remaining privileges, while simultaneously consolidating its newly acquired territories and developing enduring structures of governance. Building upon the work of Peter Marshall and Christopher Bayly, this thesis concentrates on the press debates of the early 1820s in order to highlight the Company's role in preventing the emergence of an Anglo-Indian public sphere in Calcutta. Drawing on the experiences of Mirza Abu Taleb, James Silk Buckingham, and Rammohun Roy, this thesis also demonstrates the essentially transnational influences that informed these debates, while focusing on the interaction between Britons, Indians, and the Company's military officers in Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal*. It argues that despite the respective political ideologies of government officials, it was, in fact, primarily pragmatism that informed policy regarding free expression through print. In the wake of the Napoleonic and Revolutionary Wars, administrators worked to isolate and silence dissenting voices to prevent the outbreak of rebellion or independence movements, and the increasing engagement between Indians, Britons, and members of the Army proved too great a threat to Company-rule.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, who provided me with the funding required to fulfill my dream of completing a research project at the British Library. Needless to say, the time I spent in London was personally and intellectually enriching, and I benefitted greatly from direct access to the East India Company's prodigious records. Without that research trip I would have been unable to complete the project, so I must emphasize my appreciation for such generous patronage.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the staff of the British Library, particularly those responsible for maintaining the Asia, Pacific & Africa Collections. The librarians and archivists there helped to guide my research, but their knowledge and interest in my work also made it a very valuable and memorable experience. Similarly, the faculty members and administers of the University of Ottawa's Department of History deserve special mention. I would like to thank Eric Allina, Nicole St-Onge, and Brenda Macdougall. Each challenged me in different ways, and their criticisms and suggestions pushed my scholarship to greater heights. I will undoubtedly carry the insights and lessons they provided me with for a long time.

I must express my heartfelt appreciation for the love and support I received from friends and family over the past two years. I encountered a number of significant challenges throughout the project and the kind words and thoughtful gestures I received helped me to maintain perspective and to stay motivated. To begin, I would be remiss if I did not mention the steadfast companionship of Geordie Wills, my best friend and colleague, who helped me through so many hurdles with his characteristically measured, intelligent, and practical guidance and advice. I would also like to thank Mélanie Morin for indulging me in countless hours of banter and debate in the library; Cindy Macleod and Cassandra Dinel, my dear mother and sister, for cheering me on through every step of the process; and my wonderful friends, Anne Peters and Matt Molino, for enduring my endless complaints with such grace. Above all, I want to thank Dana Carly Andrews for, well, just about everything. Her patience, generosity, and attentiveness were instrumental to my success, and I find it next to impossible to imagine how I would have completed the project without her.

I also wish to thank the late Christopher Bayly. The invaluable academic contributions he made over the past three decades inspired and informed my research like no other. Finally, I want to extend a special thank you to my mentor and supervisor, Dr. Richard Connors. I met Dr. Connors immediately after I returned to Canada from my second trip to India, and his undergraduate courses on the East India Company and Early Modern Britain inspired me to pursue graduate studies at the University of Ottawa. His passion, kindness, sense of humour, and admittedly intimidating knowledge of British India encouraged me to devote two years of my life to this project, and for that I can only begin to express my gratitude.

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INTRODUCTION

COMPANY TRANSFORMED: CHALLENGES TO EAST INDIA COMPANY RULE FOLLOWING THE CHARTER ACT OF 1813

The seeing no direct necessity for those invidious shackles might have sufficed to make me break them…That Government which has nothing to disguise, wields the most powerful instrument that can appertain to Sovereign Rule."[1]

On a hot summer day in June of 1819, the English community of Madras stood united, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Marquis of Hastings, Governor General of India, to a ceremony in his honour. At first glance the event could easily be interpreted as yet another example of the pomp and splendour of the British Empire, an embodiment of the newly established supremacy of the tiny island nation in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. After all, accounts of the ceremony describe a scene of such refined pageantry as to suggest an image of stability and confidence in the far-flung Presidency.[2] The event was merely a presentation of an address to the Governor General, but it generated so much interest among the community that it was made into a state occasion. The Audience Hall was decorated with crimson silk and poppy petals, likely producing a stunning contrast against the alabaster marble and highly polished chunam. Indian servants were posted throughout the building, some fanning Calcutta's wealthy

[1] "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," 5 August 1819, IOR/H/538, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon (1819-1822), 7, British Library.

[2] In elegant prose, Ralph E. Turner recounts the details of the ceremony in his biography of the English radical and notorious editor of the *Calcutta Journal*, James Silk Buckingham. Buckingham will be a primary focus throughout this study due to the critical role he played in the free press debates of the 1820s. Ralph E. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham, 1786-1855, A Social Biography* (New York: House-McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1934), 127-128; For a full transcription of the speech, please see "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings," 5-7; This form of pageantry, designed to mimic Mughal and pre-Mughal Indian ceremonies, is reminiscent of the content of David Cannadine and Simon Price's analysis of elite rituals designed to maintain control and the image of strength in traditional societies. For more on this, please see David Cannadine and Simon Price, ed. *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

magnates, as others hurriedly organized the approximately two thousand attendees who had gathered to receive the guest of honour. Curiously, the crowd was comprised of a cross-section of the city's population: elite and common, wealthy merchants and English East India Company men, Englishmen and Indians. As a group, they were certainly representative of the cosmopolitan makeup of Britain's empire in the East.[3]

The unlikely crowd was gathered to praise Hastings for his recent abolition of censorship over the Anglo-Indian press in Calcutta. The significance of this occasion can be found not only in the decision itself, made in direct defiance of the opinion of many of his subordinates, but even more so in the famous speech he self-consciously delivered in response to the celebration.[4] For this was an unprecedented official acknowledgement, delivered by the senior most representative of the British Crown in India, of the right of English editors to publish their papers without first submitting them for thorough review by Company censors. In many respects, the decision appears to signify a moment of official confidence in the stability and security of the British Empire in India. But despite the fact that the Company had recently secured a number of stunning military victories over some notable Indian regional elites, with the Mughal Empire's dwindling hegemony the task of consolidating the British Indian Empire and developing a coherent, standardized system of administration posed an even greater challenge. In the famous words of

[3] Throughout the two hundred and fifty years the East India Company operated, contemporaries referred it to by a number of names. Originally styled the "Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies", the organization was often referred to simply as the "English East India Company" or, more concisely, the "EIC". This study will refer to it simply as "the Company". Also of note, the Company ruled through regional governments in the three presidencies. This study focuses on the largest presidency, Bengal, and will refer to the administrative body in the region as the "Bengal Government", or simply "The Government" where appropriate.

[4] "Relevant Papers and consequent Orders abolishing the Censorship," IOR/H/539, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon. (1791-1822), 451-459, British Library.

Eric Stokes, "the age of chivalry had gone; that of sophisters, economists, and calculators was to succeed."[5]

But even this offers a somewhat glossy view of the uncertainty and fear experienced by Company administrators as the 1820s approached. To make matters worse, the Company remained in a delicate military position, relying heavily on the continued loyalty of a large number of Indian sepoys to defend the increasing landmass it now administered.[6] While the above-mentioned military victories lent weight to the belief that the Company had now firmly entrenched itself in the political landscape of the subcontinent, they had also led to an unprecedented military build-up, which in turn generated its own set of challenges. Equally troubling, as the Company scrambled to generate the revenue required to compensate and provision this large standing army, it faced a progressively more threatening campaign against its monopoly privileges in Britain. Stripped of the majority of its monopoly rights in 1813, the Company operated in a rather ambiguous position, stuck somewhere between its initial purpose as a for-profit, joint-stock corporation, and its newly developed role as a highly militarized,

[5] In many respects, Stokes was slightly too generous to the Mughals with this statement. His reference to chivalry seems to hold more than a hint of irony as the Mughals were also a conquering, imperial power that ruled over a large majority Hindu population prior to the Company's consolidation of power. Moreover, Mysore's Tipu Sultan, the last true contestant of British power on the subcontinent was defeated by the turn of the nineteenth century, making it far more difficult to justify military interventions on the subcontinent by evoking notions of chivalry. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 13.

[6] Throughout this study the term "sepoy" denotes a soldier of Indian background employed by the English East India Company. During the Seven Years' War, British forces fought against the French in multiple locations around the world, and their imperial appendages in India came to employ increasing numbers of Indian troops. By the 1760s, the official French presence was gone from India, but the Company continued to use large numbers of Indian forces in its various theatres of conflict. Commanded by British officers, Indian sepoys became absolutely fundamental to the Company's ability to project force on the subcontinent, and they gradually developed into a distinct, hybrid military culture. Kaushik Roy, "The Hybrid Military Establishment of the East India Company in South Asia: 1750-1849," *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 199; For additional studies on the particular culture and history of Indian sepoys, please see Kaushik Roy, *The Army in British India: From Colonial Warfare to Total War, 1857-1947* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) and Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

administrative arm of the British Empire in India.[7] It was in this context that the Governor General made his infamous speech, and it led many in the audience to develop a set of expectations that became the focus of a protracted series of debates over the nature of free expression, the value of political information, and the limits of interaction between Indians and Britons in this peculiar colonial arrangement. These debates took place within the Bengal Government, but also among British residents, Company military officers, and the Indian subjects of Calcutta.

The focus of the address was for the various interest groups of Calcutta to express their gratitude for the abolition of censorship over the city's several English newspapers, but several attendees interpreted Hastings's speech as the official christening of a free press in British India.[8] Directly influenced by emergent strands of liberal thought emanating from Europe and North America following a series of politically transformative revolutions, the notion of a free press prompted the Bengal Government to become increasingly suspicious of the increasing engagement between private British residents in Calcutta, the Hindu and Muslim indigenous

[7] The Charter Act of 1813 represented a major alteration of the East India Company's commercial situation in British India. While this Act of Parliament extended the Company's tenure in India, provided funds for the promotion of education for Indian subjects within British controlled territories, and allowed a number of British missionaries to enter the country, it effectively removed the Company's monopoly privileges on all but the China tea trade. For a detailed discussion about the commercial and political motivations for the Act on behalf of the British Crown, please see Anthony Webster, "The political economy of trade liberalization: the East India Company Charter Act of 1813," *Economic History Review* 20, no. 3 (August 1990): 404-419; For an analysis of the Company's economic relationship to the British Crown in the years prior to and following the repeal of the Company's monopoly, please see Huw Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); For a detailed study of the debates between Crown and Company over the necessity of monopoly from the issuance of the original charter in 1600 until the military victories of the 1750s, please see Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600-1757* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[8] The speech as it was transcribed following the event was then cited in a number of publications in Calcutta. It significance to English editors appeared to be immediately apparent as editors including James Silk Buckingham began reprinting it as justification for a free press in British India. Margarita Barns, *The Indian Press. A History of the Growth of Public Opinion in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940), 92-93.

elite, and the Company's soldiery throughout the 1820s.[9] Crucially, the exercise of this apparent right to free expression through the press by British, Indian, and mixed-race authors became a key vehicle for the dissemination of reformist thought during this decade of transition, as the Company struggled to redefine its identity after 1813.[10] To complicate matters further, European colonial powers during the early decades of the nineteenth century were struggling to reassert their authority after the revolutionary waves spread through Europe and the Atlantic region, attacking well-established structures of governance and prompting a deeply conservative reaction.

By studying the series of conflicts between English and Indian editors and Company administrators in Calcutta in the years immediately following the abolishment of censorship in 1819, a number of crucial insights into the political and ideological dimensions of British rule in India become apparent. It has been argued that during the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the British Empire in India relied upon two crucial considerations for its continued survival: the ignorance of the Indian population, and the insulation of official acts from public scrutiny.[11] If this premise is to be accepted, it stands to reason that the challenges posed to the Company's government in Calcutta through the exercise of what some authors interpreted to be an unrestricted press demonstrate the delicate position the Company faced operating as a military

[9] Between the Seven Years' War and the first decade of the nineteenth century, a series of revolutions swept through the Atlantic region. The intersection of political turmoil and warfare, poor economic conditions in the imperial centres and colonial periphery alike, and the emergence of new strands of radical thought all contributed to significant change throughout the French and British imperial world. For more on the results of the Atlantic revolutions, please see the essays in David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ed., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c.1760-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[10] As mentioned, following the Charter Act of 1813, the Company was stripped of its originally chartered monopoly over the Indian trade. As a result, the Company underwent a period of transformation which required the fundamental alteration of both its business structure and, more broadly, its operating ethos or mentalité. Christopher Alan Bayly, "The first age of global imperialism, c. 1760-1830," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26, no. 2 (May 1998): 38-39; For a more detailed study of this period of transformation, please see Christopher Alan Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989).
[11] Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 118-19.

despotism in an age when the doctrines of free trade and the "rights of man" were taking hold in Europe and tremendous pressure was being exerted on governments to enact reform, both to domestic governance and the development of colonial policy.[12] Taking this one step further, the debates between the Company and the newspaper editors of Calcutta in the early 1820s also clearly demonstrates a period of prolonged, earnest engagement between English and Indian intellectuals. While this engagement was relatively limited, the content of the papers and the conspicuously global perspective adopted in publications such as the *Calcutta Journal*, lends strong support to the argument that this period featured the emergence of a global or trans-regional sphere of intellectual history.[13]

Turning to the Company's response to English and Indian editors in Calcutta in the early 1820s, it will be argued that the conflicting perspectives within the administration as to how the perceived abuse of the removal of censorship was to be addressed demonstrates the limits of how far liberal reform could be carried within this particular context. The extent to which Englishmen could exercise their perceived rights as Englishmen while living in a foreign land, alongside debates about what type of content could be shared with or printed by the Indian elites who actively participated in this emergent print culture provides a view into the anxiety and fear of the administration during a period of international ideological unrest and uncertainty. While the subject of the press in early nineteenth century British India has been addressed in a few notable studies, including the work of Margarita Barns and A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed, they often suggest

[12] For an excellent discussion about what influenced the Company to develop and justify this form of military despotism, see Christopher Alan Bayly, "Proconsular Despotisms: the British Empire, c. 1800-40," in *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 193-216.
[13] The concept of a trans-regional or trans-national sphere of intellectual history was developed in his final monograph. This thesis draws considerable influence from the work Christopher Bayly, one of the pre-eminent historians of British India, whose research covered a multitude of subjects, including economic, political, national, intellectual, and global history. Christopher Alan Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 42.

that the willingness of the Company to allow for public discussion through the press rested predominantly on the political and social attitudes of the Governor General of the day.[14] However, a reassessment of the battle for a free press in Calcutta during the 1820s demonstrates a more complex, nuanced picture.

More specifically, this study argues that the situation on the ground informed the Bengal Government's policies regarding public expression of radical thought and, more generally, the degree to which the emergence of a civil society could be permitted in these contexts, rather than the personal attitudes of the Governor General. That is, the combination of challenges perceived by Company administrators to their continued rule in Bengal, combined with the dominant ideological views they held towards Indian society and culture influenced the development of policy more than the mere political leanings of those in power. Despite the tendency on behalf of some historians to characterize this period as one of relative stability, a very different picture emerges upon closer inspection.[15] The combination of perpetual fiscal crises, rising fear on behalf of the Company's administrators that any small misstep in policy could incite rebellion, and the continued assaults in Britain against the Company's privileges, produced a climate of fear and intolerance among the administrators.

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[14] Barns refers to Hastings's "liberal turn of mind" as an explanation for his policies. Barns, *The Indian Press*, 89-90; More recently, Ahmed argues that "much depended on the personal attitude of the Governor-General", extending this argument from the inauguration of censorship laws under Wellesley through to the Bentinck administration. A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818-1835* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 53.

[15] In Stokes's account, the defeats of the Marathas provided the Company with the security in its position to turn inward and focus on the task of legislation and social policy. Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, 13; Webster describes this as a period of stability whereby the Indian empire "seemed secure at last." Anthony Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics, 1790-1860* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2009), 64; Cyril Henry Philips identifies 1813, the year when Hastings, then Lord Moira, became Governor General as a period in which the British had reached military supremacy in India. Regions under the Company's protection at this point included Oudh, Travancore, Mysore, and Hyderabad. The Ganges Valley with the exception of Oudh from the Jumna to the sea, and the entirety of the east coast and the majority of the west coast were properly British possessions. Cyril Henry Philips, *The East India Company, 1784-1834* (1940; repr., Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1961), 198.

Through careful analysis of the free press debates in Calcutta during the early 1820s, particularly in the repeated confrontations between James Silk Buckingham, radical editor of the infamous *Calcutta Journal*, Company soldiers, Indian authors, and Company administrators, this study aims to provide a rich, textured view of Anglo-Indian social interactions. Inspired by a recent essay by Linda Colley,[16] this thesis seeks to situate a number of specific individuals involved in the so-called "Buckingham Affair"[17] within a global political culture bound by the British imperial world in order to demonstrate the various ways reform could be conceived across cultural contexts. In focusing on the interstices of these unique perceptions of the nature and potentialities of reform, the study attempts to identify the intersections between these ideas, arguing that these figures can only be properly understood as participants in the global or trans-national sphere of debate and exchange of which they themselves felt they were participating.[18] In doing so, it will de-couple these individuals from their nationalist paradigms, while also demonstrating the various imperial categories historians have used to interpret their work. In

[16] While discussing recent historiographical developments, Colley says a number of disciplines have converged on topics which can rightfully be considered imperial history. She suggests that the insights of archaeologists, art historians, cartographers, feminist and area studies-focused historians, historians of medicine, intellectual historians, literary scholars, and post-colonialists can all be drawn upon to produce new insights into older, seemingly well-trodden ground. Linda Colley, "What is Imperial History Now?," in *What is History Now?,* ed. David Cannadine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 133.

[17] The "Buckingham Affair" is a short-hand referring to the repeated confrontations between the editor and various levels of Company administration. The event has been recounted in two recent monographs, with very different emphases. Partha Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 116; Bayly, *Recovering Liberties,* 73.

[18] Two essays by Christopher Bayly clearly articulate the essentially transnational influences that informed the scholarship and political positions of figures like Rammohun Roy and James Silk Buckingham. Despite their specific backgrounds, traditions, and reference points, these figures also focused on deep engagement with a variety of traditions and practices beyond their own culture, which contributed to their new, transnationally focused social and political ideas. Christopher Alan Bayly, "Rammohan Roy and the Advent of Constitutional Liberalism in India, 1800-30." *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (April 2007): 25-41 and Christopher Alan Bayly, "Ireland, India and the Empire: 1780–1914," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6, no. 10 (2000): 377-397; Focusing on the effect of the printing press in Muslim societies, Green also emphasizes the essentially hybrid environment that influenced knowledge production and the circulation of ideas. Nile Green, "Journeymen, Middlemen: Travel, Transculture, and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (2009): 203-224; For a detailed study of the extension of popular claim making and the relationship between colonialism, identity, and modernity, please see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge and history* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005).

order to accomplish this aim, the study concentrates on seemingly familiar ideas and experiences, reconceiving them in a broad global imperial context. Before proceeding with this analysis, however, a number of dominant themes and interpretations of this period must be reviewed in order to provide the necessary context for the political and ideological challenges faced by the Company during the early 1820s.

The emergence of early classical liberal thought in India coincides with a number of significant changes to the British position on the subcontinent. Set against the backdrop of international revolutions—sparked in large part by new, radical political ideas emanating from Europe in the wake of the French Revolution—and further constrained by the financial burden of continental warfare, the Company underwent a startling transformation during this period, as Company officials debated contesting visions for future rule.[19] From a once lucrative position as an exporter of consumer commodities and, simultaneously, a regional tax collector for the Mughal Emperor in Bengal, the Company, particularly under Governor General Richard Wellesley, developed into a formidable military power engaged in near constant warfare and military expansion across India. Both at home and in the three presidencies of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, the Company's mandate was a source of constant debate. Even after 1820, with military predominance clearly established, debates continued to unfold over the nature of British administration and the future of Company. Throughout this tangle of disparate views, between 1780 and 1835, however, one theme remains constant: the drive for extensive, wide reaching reform, both in Britain and abroad.[20] While historians have subsequently challenged the

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[19] Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.
[20] Britain and British India featured a rising reform movement during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Reformists sought a fundamental restructuring of society and governance, extending to political, cultural, social, religious reform, and, particularly in Britain, agitation often turned into violence. For a study of the reform movement and its effects on British society and governance, please see Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People? England 1782-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

effectiveness of these reforms,[21] the extent to which Company operations were affected, and indeed driven forward by developments on the Continent remains difficult to challenge.[22]

The history of the Company, from Clive until the onset of the Raj, is characterized by a relatively continuous relationship with reform. From the very confirmation of British power in Bengal following the Seven Years' War, the Company was thrown into a state of turmoil as British parliamentarians and Company administrators articulated conflicting views over the nature of business on the subcontinent, and the limits of British sovereignty in India.[23] While discussion of the Company's adventures had long been a feature of public life in London,[24] the specific role of Britons in India came under significant public scrutiny with the trial of Warren Hastings between 1773 and 1784.[25] Despite drawn out debates throughout the ten-year trial, significant change on the subcontinent did not occur until Britain lost its North American possessions, and, even more startling, a new ideological threat to British overseas began to reach India from Europe. [26] Philip Lawson characterized the 1780s and 1790s as a period of reform,

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[21] Andrew Sartori has recently challenged the effectiveness of reform in India during the early nineteenth century, suggesting that the conventional narrative of a "national awakening from mediaeval slumber, thanks to the individual courage of succeeding generations of brilliant men" has been replaced by a view that characterizes the outcome of reform as both fragile and superficial, limited to the opinions of a few elite individuals who were uninterested in any kind of broad movement and unable to exact any real, enduring change. Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in global concept history: culturalism in the age of capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 69.
[22] Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 3rd. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 62, and Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (New York Longman, 1993), 154.
[23] The Company remained a de jure subordinate to the Mughal Empire until 1858; however, the granting of the *diwan* confirmed the Company's position in Bengal and ensured its continued survival. As an official tax collector for the Mughals, the Company secured a regular revenue stream that allowed for it to increase its commercial base and status in the wealthy province of Bengal. Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 207-209.
[24] The Company was subject to multiple parliamentary inquiries into its conduct between 1765 and 1765, 1771 and 1773, and in multiple periods throughout the 1780s. Between 1767 and 1775, it experienced its first coordinated attack by a strong coalition which questioned its rights and argued for more regulation. Once again in 1772 while facing severe financial trouble, the Company came under investigation once again. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur, *The East India Company and the British Empire in the Far* East (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1945), 290-292.
[25] For the most informative and well known study of the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, please see Peter James Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).
[26] Christopher Bayly describes a historiographical shift in the treatment of this period which argues that the Company underwent a significant transformation during this period. It has been identified as the emergence of a "Second British Empire." Through a focus on issues of ideology, governmental apparatus, and international economic integration, historians have argued that Britain became more comfortable with the thought of a territorial empire at

and, specifically reacting to events on the Continent post-1789, the Company focused considerable energy on the garrisoning of India and the eastern trade.[27] Thus, the French Revolution presented not only a threat to British colonial possessions in the form of armed conflict but also, perhaps more threatening still, through the sweeping social reforms and radical political ideologies articulated through Continental political philosophers.[28]

The dramatic events of the 1790s, following the imperial realignment resulting from the loss of Britain's North American possessions, provide crucial context for the Company's dramatic military expansion in the last years of the eighteenth century. Lynn Hunt presents a somewhat longer view of this process, while equally emphasizing its effects. Starting in the 1760s, Hunt argues, new understandings of "individual autonomy" and "the inviolability of the body" began to take shape.[29] It was not until the French Revolution, however, that "the Rights of Man" became a circulated political ideal, posing a grave new challenge to European rulers and internationally heightening tension between European imperial powers. This set of ideas developed through the engagement between political thinkers and an emergent public in a transnational context and, crucially, they sparked an international dialogue on topics including the "Rights of Man" and political independence—both of which posed a significant threat to the

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this time, as opposed to a commercial, maritime empire referred to as the "First British Empire." Christopher Alan Bayly, "The Second British Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume V: Historiography*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), 63; While Bayly traces the emergence of these transformative processes to the 1780s, Peter Marshall argues that this transformation occurred even earlier, following the consolidation of empire after the Seven Years' War. Peter James Marshall, "The First British Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume V: Historiography*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), 52.

[27] Lawson, *The East India Company*, 127; Douglas M. Peers, *India Under Colonial Rule: 1700-1885 (*New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

[28] The end of the revolutionary period led to the rise of European military autocracies in various colonial locations. For a complete study of this reaction, please see Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, ed., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[29] Lynn Hunt, "The French Revolution in Global Context," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 31.

existing order in European colonial territories.[30] As a result of the spread of these revolutionary and anti-absolutist doctrines, European states were forced to respond through accommodative and coercive measures. Depending on the perceived threats to the state in either domestic or colonial contexts, the former could quickly give way to the latter, emphasizing the cogent power of ideas and the dangers perceived by authorities of the day of the spread of various forms of knowledge.

During this period, the temporal effects of newly emergent political ideas should not be understated. As Lynn Hunt argues, ideas matter and they can produce very real outcomes. They were not simply abstract musings of isolated elites, but, rather, "they are cultural constructs that call forth action." In this respect, she argues that ideas of innate rights and independence were not merely vacuous constructions; instead, they were "claims that grew out of actions and produced other actions in their wake."[31] In this case, the articulation of these new political ideals became deeply imbedded in revolutionary action, further developing notions of universality and a common global citizenship, and influencing audiences—often unpredictably so—to question the applicability of these ideas to their own situation. With the threat these radical doctrines posed to European imperial powers, European imperial powers reacted through a process of overt militarization. This response is illustrated quite clearly in the case of British India.

Recognition of this epochal shift in the nature of what Christopher Bayly described as popular "claim making" and political thought provides essential context to Company operations

[30] Revolutionary ideas threatened the established order in Europe, but also in the European colonial possessions of North America, South America, and the Caribbean. Ibid.; One particularly striking example of this appears in the success of the Haitian Revolution which took place between 1791 and 1804. For a complete view of the Haitian revolution, its influences, and its lasting effects, please see Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

[31] Hunt, "The French Revolution in Global Context," 31; A crucial caveat, while these processes were taking place on the Continent, eminent British statesmen rejected much of the radical platform as a threat to civil order. England, having experienced a terrible revolution during the mid-seventeenth century, could not afford to risk another similar conflagration, and so the notion of progressive, evolutionary reform was argued instead. The best example of this can be found in Edmund Burke's spirited response to the French Revolution. Edmund Burke, *Edmund Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France: A Critical Edition*, edited by Jonathan C. Clark (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

on the subcontinent from the final years of the eighteenth century through to the first decades of the nineteenth.[32] Indeed, the spread of ideas about popular rights, the abolition of slavery, and the universality of citizenship provoked a harsh response from British leaders of the day. Despite the fact that these ideas were being debated in British society, Bayly suggested that in the face of revolution and ideological rebellion, the British state responded by developing a distinctly more intrusive, highly militarized approach to colonial administration.[33] In Philip Lawson's view, the emphasis was slightly different. Instead, he suggested that the threat posed by new universal political doctrines was met primarily through an even greater emphasis on Company reform.[34] This is a crucial point; however, while reform certainly took on even greater significance in the minds of Company men, the most obvious response on behalf of the Company was this overt militarization of the subcontinent. This is perhaps most apparent in the ballooning size of Company's armies in India during the period. In 1763, for instance, the Company employed 18,000 men, while in 1805, that number had swollen to approximately 155,000.[35] Without question, this precipitous rise in the size and capabilities of the Company's armies in India demonstrates a clear departure from the Company's former strategy of minimizing expenditure while maximizing profit.

With the Napoleonic Wars raging on the Continent, Lawson argued that the Company shifted its mandate to one of defence warfare, kicking off a process of sweeping territorial

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[32] Bayly, "Afterward," 212-213.

[33] Ibid., 210; This militarization occurred domestically in Britain, but in the colonial regions as well. While the Company began to militarize from the Battle of Plassey in 1757 onwards, the early nineteenth century sees a marked increase in the size and power of the Company's military. Christopher Alan Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 79-105; furthermore, it should be noted that the British Government had been debating similar ideas and themes relating to reform from the 1760s through the 1780s. However, by 1780, with the crisis of the American War of Independence, people began to call for a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between parliament and the British public, and the term "reform" took on heightened significance in British society. Burns and Innes, ed. *Rethinking the Age of* Reform, 7.

[34] Lawson, *The East India Company*, 127.

[35] Ibid., 133.

acquisition that was most apparent during the administration of Governor General Wellesley.[36] With this astonishing military build-up, the ability of the Company to confidently assert control over its Indian army and to ensure its continued loyalty certainly would have raised concern.[37] Despite this increasingly more complex and dangerous situation, some historians, particularly "Indian nationalist" historians, have continually referred to this period as one of the "straight forward plunder of India's revenues."[38] While still acting as a de jure vassal of the Mughal Empire, in addition to its efforts to maintain pre-colonial structures, the Company developed into a militarily aggressive land power engaged in a process of self-perpetuating warfare during this period. As a result of this transformation, Company administrators suddenly came under considerable pressure to provide the English people with some kind of a justification as to why a joint-stock trading company was engaged in large-scale warfare in a foreign country.[39] At this point, the endeavours of British orientalists became crucial to maintaining the ideological justification for British rule in India.

In this context, the first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed one of the most dramatic ideological shifts regarding British rule in India. To this affect, the period of administration prior to 1813, particularly under Governor Generals Warren Hastings, Charles

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Complicating matters further, the company's military forces were comprised by a majority of sepoys. For a discussion of the significance of the Company's Army, the concept of "military fiscalism", and contemporary concerns over the threat the Army posed to the Company's continued operations, please see Douglas M. Peers, "Gunpowder Empires and the Garrison State: Modernity, Hybridity, and the Political Economy of Colonial India, circa 1750-1860," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 245-258; For an overview of the hybrid nature of the Company's Army and the potential challenges that resulted from it, please see Roy, "The Hybrid Military," 195-218.

[38] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 57; This view has been most recently articulated in Tirthankar Roy, *The East India Company: The World's Most Powerful Corporation* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2012), 155-187.

[39] Referring to the Orientalist approach to governance, Philip Lawson describes the justification Company representatives used for their continued presence in India. Having learned a great deal about Indian institutions, culture, and history through the Orientalist projects of the 1770s and 1780s, Company figures argued the purpose of Company rule was to ensure the continued survival of native culture. Edmund Burke and Governor Generals Cornwallis and Shore have been most often associated with this administrative approach. Lawson, *The East India Company,* 149; For a nuanced discussion of the Company's motivations for territorial expansion, please see the debate between Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Peter Marshall on the subject. Peter James Marshall, "Early Imperialism in India," *Past & Present* 106 (Feb. 1985): 164-169.

Cornwallis, and John Shore, has been described broadly as one of Orientalism. While not an explicitly defined notion, the basic premise of this view prioritized the maintenance of Indian institutions and culture.[40] It maintained that Indian civilization had tangible value to Europeans and could provide insights into the development of European civilization, particularly in the areas of philology, art, and architecture.[41] Therefore, despite this being a period of outright plunder and military aggression, it was not one of overt social intervention. And yet, the Company's attempt to preserve Indian institutions and cultural forms was not simply a form of benevolent imperialism. The views of Orientalists and Britons throughout the period indicate a rather varied set of beliefs. Complicating things further, the effects on Indian society of this approach to governance has developed into a highly contentious topic of debate amongst historians of British India.[42]

Without question, the figure most often associated with British Orientalism is the famed philologist, Sir William Jones, one of the earliest British orientalist scholars, and the founder of the Royal Asiatic Society. Given his high status, he is often evoked in debates over the personal and political intentions of this group of scholars and statesmen. There is certainly some consensus among historians regarding the notion that British orientalists, and William Jones in particular,

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[40] Lawson, *The East India Company*, 149.

[41] It is important to qualify this term, though. This initial definition differs in very significant ways from a more recent definition proposed by Edward Said, one which has spawned innumerable responses in a variety of disciplines. Put simply, Said defined Orientalism as a body of knowledge generated through the production of texts and institutional practices, particularly by French and British imperial powers. The result was the essentialization of non-Western society as a static, unchanging, and foreign entity always to be judged as inferior in comparison to the West. Drawing influence from the work of Michel Foucault, this view was fundamentally based on the relationship between power and knowledge production. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1-3.

[42] In a recent essay, Christopher Bayly suggested one of the reasons for the contested and sometimes violently contentious nature of Indian history is the fact that historians of South Asia have continually acted as public intellectuals. Furthermore, history in South Asia has remained an important reference point for the re-evaluation of state policy and the nature of civil society. Christopher Alan Bayly, *The C.A. Bayly Omnibus: The Local Roots of Indian Politics; Rural Conflict and the Roots of Indian Nationalism; Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars; Origins of Nationality in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), xx; Linda Colley has also made recent reference to this, suggesting that in part because there is such a proliferation of various types of writing about empire, imperial history in general has become incredibly controversial and overtly politicized. Colley, "What is Imperial History Now?," 133.

did not regard Indian civilization and culture to be inferior to European.[43] However, as Bose and Jalal have argued, Jones and the Asiatic Society were not studying the breath of Indian society and culture. Throughout the period, there was a definite bias towards the study of the high traditions of Hinduism and Islam, developed through the interaction of Hindu and Muslim elites.[44] This not only privileged the cultural practices of some, particularly Hindu elites, over others, but it also effectively ignored and omitted the vast majority of Indians and an incredibly broad and varied set of cultural practices. Given the seemingly endless complexity of Indian history and culture, one might forgive these omissions; however, this critique acknowledges that British Orientalists were still bound up in administrative processes and the collection of knowledge to bolster the delicate British position in India at the time.[45]

With this in mind, historical debate has also centred on the personal motivations of men like Jones, further complicating the notion that individuals employed by the Company had the best interests of Indians in mind. In his excellent study, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Thomas Metcalf presents a very different view of Jones and his work. In his view, the Company's reliance in large

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[43] Garland Cannon's work on William Jones and his orientalism is particularly important to understanding this sympathetic view of Indian society, as well as its use as a justification for rule. Cannon clearly demonstrated Jones's view that Indian society and culture was much more complex, multi-faceted, and generally impressive than others had previously acknowledged. Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 298-315, and Garland Cannon, *Sir William Jones: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V., 1979); As a British domestic counterpart, Edmund Burke's position, articulated at great length and vigour during the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, demonstrated a clear respect and appreciation for Indian civilization. While not expressly anti-imperialist, Burke combined universalist commitments to abstract categories such as "humanity" and "justice" alongside a nuanced view which recognized the value of Indian culture to stage his defense of Indian institutions and practices. Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 246.

[44] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 63; Robert Travers also highlights this negative outcome, claiming that while William Jones successfully broadened the intellectual interest in India, his work also led to a significant diminution of the former focus on Mughal India. Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 245; For a more detailed account of the work of British Orientalists, see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880,* trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

[45] For more on the collection of intelligence and indigenous knowledge for the purpose of consolidating and maintaining power, please see Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

part on Brahmins, the top ranking Hindu religious caste, and other Indian intermediaries not only led to dangerous consequences, but also emphasized the judgements British Orientalists brought upon Indian society. Accordingly, Jones and his counterparts, frustrated by what they perceived to be corrupt and evil Indian social practices, particularly in the realm of law, set out to learn Indian languages, such as Sanskrit and Indo-Persian, primarily to decrease Company dependence on Indian intermediaries.[46] However, this shift in emphasis fails to convey the complex disposition and inner contradictions of these figures. Despite his complicity in these processes of knowledge collection as a means of securing the Company's position, for example, interpretations of Jones's work cannot simply be reduced to a dichotomy of Indian sympathizer or imperialist collaborator. Given the predominantly Anglican views of the British, he certainly would have approached India with equal parts curiosity and concern in the face of seemingly alien social customs. And yet, his correspondence demonstrates a clear respect and even veneration for so many of the cultural practices of Indians, in addition to his keen interest in the subcontinent's ancient history.[47] And so, despite his complicity in the domination of the Indian subcontinent by British imperialists, men like Jones must be acknowledged to be operating within their particular cultural contexts.

While maintaining the rhetoric of the preservation of a declining Indian culture, the Orientalists did indeed seek to alter or slightly reorganize Indian society to some degree for the benefit of Company operations. Once again, the stated goal, particularly under Governor General Cornwallis, was to maintain Indian institutions, and yet Company administrators were still primarily focused on maximizing revenue while curbing expenses. As Lawson argued, at this time administrators attempted to keep India as a kind of "inviolate paradise into which no [aspect

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[46] Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 23.
[47] Michael J. Franklin, *'Orientalist Jones': Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

of] European culture, and especially the missionary variety, should be allowed to penetrate."[48] This goal was to be accomplished under Cornwallis through the development and application of far-reaching rule of law, in addition to the establishment of a professionalized Company bureaucracy. The latter was to be accomplished through the creation of a special college to train the Company bureaucracy in South Asian languages, laws, and customs.[49] Moreover, through the controversial Permanent Settlement of 1793, Cornwallis, acting in proper orientalist fashion, sought to empower a class of Indian *zamindars*[50] through land grants with fixed rates, hoping that they would improve the agricultural output of their charge. Despite the strong influence of British Whig theories of property and land ownership, even in reforming systems of law, education, and property ownership, there remained a continued emphasis on the continuation of Indian institutions.

In terms of motivation, however, it can be argued that the Company simply did not have the resources or the necessary military capacity to project its force into the communities and villages of the subcontinent, therefore restricting British control primarily to the three Presidencies. And so, for example, Cornwallis's accomplishments during this time have become yet another source of debate between historians of the subcontinent. While respectful of Indian institutions in speech, Metcalf once again questions the motivations behind these reforms, suggesting that the primary impetus was to set in place principles that British administrators could use to justify their rule over India.[51] Further still, Metcalf claims that the Company simply

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[48] Lawson, *The East India Company*, 129.
[49] Ibid., 129-130.
[50] The term *zamindar* refers to an Indian indigenous land-holder, typically of a hereditary caste, who acted as a regional tax collector for the Mughal emperor over peasants living within the allotted territory.
[51] Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj,* 17. Travers's study of imperial ideology in eighteenth century British India describes the attempts of the Company throughout the eighteenth century to justify their rule by evoking the principles of an ancient Mughal constitution to which they were adhering. He argues that even with the discursive break introduced through Cornwallis's "Bengal Code" the notion an appeal to an ancient Mughal constitution and the necessity of appeals to pre-existing Indian forms remained. Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 251.

wished to establish enduring structures to order their governance, claiming that by the end of Cornwallis's tenure, the British had constructed a fundamental set of principles to by which to govern. He argues that these principles were largely derived from their own society, and included the "security of private property, the rule of law, and the idea of 'improvement.'"[52] Highlighting not only the practical side of governance, Metcalf also claims that the development of rule of law stemmed largely from the anxiety of men like Hastings and Cornwallis who feared their own participation in a well-rooted stereotype of Asian despotism.[53] Speaking to this, Robert Travers has argued that the Company's attempts to establish a system of landed property to rule through Indian intermediaries in Bengal was driven primarily by the desire to build a new imperial structure that was distinct from the former mercantile sovereignty of the Company, in addition to what was deemed the Asiatic despotism of the Mughals.[54] Needless to say, the days of Governor Generals who struggled to balance these contradictory tendencies did not last long.

During the early nineteenth century, the ideological threat posed by the spread of early liberal thought, in addition to the military threat posed by the Napoleonic Wars, prompted a dramatic shift in the Company's approach to governance: from a position that held Indian civilization and culture in high regard, to one that sought to remodel the subcontinent in the image of Britain. The context for this shift in imperial focus was constituted by a variety of factors. The 1780s and 1790s witnessed a concerted revival of the anti-monopoly sentiment in Britain, inflamed by Adam Smith's philosophy of free trade published in his 1776 monograph, *The Wealth of Nations*.[55] Britain experienced prolonged economic crisis resulting from soaring

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[52] Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 17.
[53] Ibid., 18.
[54] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 236.
[55] Smith's work was the first focused, theoretically robust critique of monopoly to provide a clear, logical argument for how it actually hurt the interests of the Company, and the general economy as a whole. He argued that monopolies discourage the improvement of the land, inflate the market rate of interest to a level higher than it should be, and they slow the natural increase rents and the value of land that is sold. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the*

military costs on the Continent and Napoleon's trade blockade after 1805.[56] British agricultural production failed to respond to attempts to stimulate greater production. A distinctly racialized discourse emerged among British citizens in response to the wars against the Indian state of Mysore, embodied in plays and tracts levelled against the state's leader, Tipu Sultan[57]. The Haitian Revolution ended with the expulsion of the French in 1804 and represented the first significant victory against a colonial power.[58] And, finally, the British state found itself utterly unable to curtail Company military campaigns on the subcontinent.[59] To make matters worse, during this series of challenges, the Company found itself no longer capable of generating the required revenues to sustain itself.[60] It is at this point that historians have identified a clear shift towards a more authoritarian, conservative nationalism in what has been referred to as the Second British Empire.[61]

Just as the Company was stripped of the majority of its monopoly rights in 1813, this distinctly new ideological approach to governance emerged. From an approach rooted in the preservation of Indian culture, this new Anglicizing approach emphasized reform as a critical revitalizing principle, and it looked towards a time when India's social institutions and thought would be recast through the influence of the dual processes of westernization and

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Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776; repr., London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1887), 253-254; On anti-monopoly and anti-imperial sentiment during this period, please see Andrew Victor Gaiero, "Enlightened Dissent: The voices of anti-imperialism in eighteenth century Britain," (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2016), 296-375.

[56] For a description of the effects of the blockades on the English economy, as well as its short-comings, see Martin Robson, *Britain, Portugal and South America in the Napoleonic Wars: Alliances and Diplomacy in Economic Maritime Conflict* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2011), 1-5, 31-32.

[57] For an excellent treatment of this development see Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 85-109, and Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850 (*New York: Random House, 2002), 269-307.

[58] Dubois, *Haiti*, 18; Alongside these victories, revolutionary wars were fought throughout the South Atlantic as well. For more on this, please see Jeremy Adelman, "Iberian Passages: Continuity and Change in the South Atlantic," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 59-82 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[59] Lawson, *The East India Company*, 136-138.

[60] Ibid., 137.

[61] Marshall, "The First British Empire," 51.

modernization.[62] Historians of British India have claimed that through the introduction of free trade, the philosophy of Utilitarianism, and the arrival of Christian evangelicalism, Indian society was essentially reconfigured during this period.[63] This three-prong attack on the traditional institutions of Indian society proceeded as follows: free trade was said to have shaken the Indian economy out of its state of paralysis; Utilitarianism, influenced by the work of Jeremy Bentham, worked to abolish particular Indian practices that the British found distasteful through legal reform; and, finally, the spread of Christianity through missionary work has been said to have challenged the established Indian religions of Hinduism and Islam.[64] According to Bose and Jalal, however, these ideas have been more recently challenged. Instead, expectations went largely unfulfilled and the actual influence of these forces on Indian society was marginal.[65] Further still, they claim that aside from the brief period of reform under Bentinck, all the British succeeded in doing was "inven[ting] and consolidat[ing] the traditional India of peasant and Brahman."[66] While debates continue over the effectiveness of reform, particularly prior to Bentinck's administration in the 1820s, it is clear that, if in rhetoric alone, Company policies in India had shifted away from privileging Indian culture and civilization and were subsequently re-oriented to privilege elements of British society and culture.

The shift towards an Anglicizing approach to colonial policy post-1813 coincides with the introduction of liberal thought to British India. Drawn from the political thought of the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly the works of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, classical liberal thought came to play a significant role in British domestic and imperial politics, especially

[62] Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, 2nd ed (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2004), 101-102.
[63] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 62.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

between the mid- to late-nineteenth century.[67] But the influence of liberal thinkers on British society can be detected much earlier. For example, the legislative enactments culminating in the 1832 Reform Bill, the new Poor Law, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the development of the administrative state all demonstrate the clear influence of liberal thought in England during this period.[68] This loosely consolidated series of political ideas evolved throughout the preceding decades in the context and wake of revolution, eventually forming a distinct school of political thought. It is also important to note that the emergence of liberal ideologies developed in tandem with debates over the appropriateness and the limits of nineteenth century European imperialism.[69]

While the term "liberalism" defies a simple, coherent definition, to British liberals during this period, the fundamental basis of the doctrine was the belief that human nature was inherently the same everywhere in the world, and, as mentioned above, through the development of sound policies in the areas of law, education, trade, and missionary work, human nature could be fundamentally changed, *i.e.*, improved.[70] However, as historians have pointed out, by interpreting Indian institutions and society through this form of radical universalism, Indian society was judged to be inferior in areas ranging including religion, law, art, literature, and manufacturing.

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[67] Demonstrating the profound significance of liberalism in Britain and the West in general, Pierre Manent recently suggested that liberalism represents the principle current of modern politics and Europe and the West throughout the past three centuries. Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism,* Trans. Rebecca Balinski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), xv; For more on the impact of liberalism globally, see Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); For a detailed history of liberalism in Britain, please see Alan Sykes, *The Rise and Fall of British Liberalism, 1776-1988* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[68] Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj,* 28; For an analysis of the effects of liberal thought during the "Age of Reform" in England, see Michael J. Turner, *British Politics in An Age of Reform* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), and Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[69] Pitts suggests that figures like Burke and Smith would not have understood themselves to be participating in a liberal tradition, and yet their views certainly align with early liberal thought as it emerged in the following two decades. She continues, stating that the nature of British liberalism transformed over a sixty year period as the state developed a progressively more self-confident, triumphalist view of its central position in global geo-politics. Throughout this process, she suggests, liberal thinkers including John Stuart Mill gradually came to lose the "egalitarian and emancipatory posture toward empire." Pitts, *A Turn to Empire,* 8.

[70] Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 29.

This was articulated most explicitly in James Mill's infamous *History of British India,* published in 1818. After comparing the intellectual, legal, social, and cultural developments of Britain and India, he took a stance in near direct opposition to that of William Jones. According to Mill, India did not, and would never, possess a high state of civilization without significant intervention.[71] In the author's perspective, through his comparative analysis, civilization itself was embodied in the recent achievements of European culture, and despite how advanced India had been in past centuries, it was judged as inferior.

Mill's *History of British India* eventually passed through multiple editions and gained significant cultural importance in Britain over the course of the nineteenth century. Its popularity most likely surprised the author, but it lends strong support to an argument made by Uday Singh Mehta in *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. In this rather condemning critique of empire, Mehta suggests that the fundamental issue with early liberal thought is its assumption of paternalist authority over colonial subject. Mehta notes, "in its theoretical vision, liberalism, from the seventeenth century to the present, has prided itself on its universality and politically inclusionary character. And yet," he continues, "when viewed as a historical phenomenon, the period of liberal history is unmistakably marked by the systematic and sustained political exclusion of various groups and "types" of people."[72] While the study does feature a number of issues—chief among them, a somewhat jarring failure to properly historicize his subjects—it is useful in establishing the internal contradictions inherent in the

[71] Among a number of inflammatory generalizations made about the Hindu population of India, Mill summed up his view of the entirety of Indian civilization as follows: "If they have conceived the Hindus to be a people of high civilization, while they have in reality made but a few of the earliest steps in the progress to civilization, it is impossible that in many of the measures pursued for the government of that people, the mark aimed at should not have been wrong." Additionally, he directed a number of pages specifically to how Sir William Jones misunderstood the novelty and value of his findings. James Mill, *The History of British India*, Vol. 1 (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), 429-435.

[72] Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 46.

liberal mission. That is, when viewed through an historical lens, the universalizing principles of early nineteenth century liberalism in India enabled the adoption of an ideology that considered Indian civilization as simultaneously inferior and trapped in a perpetual state of stagnation.[73]

If India was considered to be without any high degree of civilization, Company administrators could take advantage of the opportunity, refashioning the country in its own image. And so, in a certain sense, India, particularly under the influence of the Benthamite Utilitarian reformers, was viewed as a tabula rasa for British experimentation. Interestingly, Company administrators conceived British India at this time as a sort of laboratory, to be used as an experimental ground in the development of the liberal administrative state. The end goal, aside from the successful administration of the subcontinent, according to Metcalf, could be the wholesale transfer of its elements, including state sponsored education, codified law, and a meritocratic bureaucracy, back to Britain.[74] If this was truly the motivation of liberal reformers in India, a number of issues become apparent. Foremost among them, is the very premise. For India did possess its own distinct blend of cultural and classical traditions, its own awareness of its place in history, and a clear understanding, in the eyes of some, of the position it faced as the Mughal empire waned.[75]

Recent historiographical trends have not only undermined long-standing myths regarding the spread of European colonialism, but they have also problematized the core-periphery model

[73] Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj,* 40-42; For a comprehensive study of liberalism and its effects on the British Empire, see Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[74] Ibid., 29.
[75] The topic of Indian historical awareness has taken on new significance with the work of Sanjay Subrahmanyam. Not only has he focused on the manner in which European thinkers, such as Hegel, reasoned that Indian civilization had yet to produce any achievements in the field of history, he has also studied the writing of history on the subcontinent prior to the infusion of British forms of knowledge production in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "On early modern historiography," in *The Cambridge World History, Volume 6: The Construction of a Global World, 1400-1800 CE, Part 2: Patterns of Change*, ed. Jerry J Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 443.

whereby modernity was claimed to emanate outward from Western European states to be received by colonial societies. Numerous authors have produced recent works to this effect, arguing that the development of concepts and ideas did not simply occur within a vacuum, that Indians, for example, were not simply passive receivers, but actively contributed their own interpretations, appropriating, reconstructing, or contesting them based in their particular intellectual and social contexts.[76] Robert Travers attributes this recognition to the resurgence of global history in the past two decades. These histories, he argues, "have underscored that modern forms of globalization were layered, diverse, and entangled with earlier patterns of connections."[77] In a similar vein, this study endorses the view that European thought throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century emerged in response to increased cross-border interaction and through increasing global integration.[78]

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[76] The list of works in this area is lengthy, but its origins can be traced to the emergence of Ranajit Guha's Subaltern Studies group, following the work of Michel Foucault and the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism.* In the process of attempting to "recover" the subaltern from dominant historical narratives that omitted non-elite historical actors, a number of related questions have emerged: Namely, how did these processes of marginalization operate? What ideologies were constructed to justify such marginalization? And, finally, how were dominant ideologies disseminated, received, and interpreted by subalterns? Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 193; This endeavor has since evolved into what some have identified as critical discourse theory, whereby the past is revisited in order to expose the conditions under which "knowledge" was produced and authorized by a dominant power. Furthermore, it analyzes the manner in which colonial subjects were represented and the how knowledge was used to exert dominance over them. David Washbrook, "Orients and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume V: Historiography*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 596-597; For examples of this work, see Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York, 1988); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?,"*Representations* 37 (1992), 1-26; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India* (Chicago: Harvard University Press, 1997); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Gyan Prakash, *Bonded Histories: Geneologies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[77] Robert Travers, "Imperial Revolutions and Global Repercussions: South Asia and the World, c. 1750-1850," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 164.

[78] Sebastien Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (October 2012): 999-1001.

This view can be argued effectively in the context of British India during the first half of the nineteenth century. In particular, the so-called "Bengal Renaissance"—a moniker referring to an intellectual and artistic movement of Bengali reformers during the first half of the nineteenth century—demonstrates a moment of prolonged engagement between Britons, Eurasians, and Bengalis. Similar to the supposed successful reform during this period, when considered from a broad, historical perspective, some have also challenged the extent to which these groups engaged in patterns of cultural exchange, arguing that the colonial relationship between Indians and Britons in Calcutta prevented the ability for this movement to take root and develop.[79] However, one thing the "Bengal Renaissance" does demonstrate is the fact that this was a brief period of deep intellectual and cultural engagement between Indians and a small number of Britons, indicating the emergence of new hybrid forms.[80] As a result, Indian intellectuals in Calcutta during the first decades of the nineteenth century formed into three loosely defined groups as a direct response to the introduction of Western education and culture.[81]

The Young Bengal group, led by Henry Derozio and centred at Hindu College; The Dharma Sabha, a conservative group formed in reaction to the Young Bengal group; and the Brahmo Samaj, led by Rammohun Roy, all adopted aspects of Western culture and blended them with Indian influences, forging new traditions that, particularly in the case of Rammohun Roy,

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[79] Andrew Sartori goes so far as to suggest the "so-called" Bengal Renaissance was a "story of failure". He argues that the principle of modern political and social consciousness adopted from Western influences by indigenous elite who led the movement, could not imbed itself in this colonial context of restricted development. Sartori, *Global Concept History*, 69; Sebastien Conrad employs this term in a reassessment of the impact and spread of European Enlightenment thought during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this respect, he argues that through the appropriation of Enlightenment claims in the context of transnational engagement, they were remade through the hybridization of ideas and practices. Conrad, "Enlightenment," 1013.

[80] The work of Robert Young is particularly useful for understanding the dimensions of hybridity, both as a process of "fusion and assimilation", as well as its more negative manifestation, that of "contrafusion and disjunction". Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 16.

[81] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 67.

were fundamentally rooted in Indian classical theology and philosophy.[82] Bayly produced excellent studies on this subject, emphasizing the role of print culture in facilitating engagement between Indians and intellectuals from Singapore to the newly established South American republics. Building on the work of Habermas, he suggested that newspapers were fundamental to the creation of a transnational "public sphere" that represented the common concerns of all humanity and highlighted both the idea of the separateness and sovereignty of peoples.[83] It should be mentioned that the present study takes this argument as a fundamental basis for analyzing the work of these figures. With this in mind, the emergence of a transnational forum and the active participation of Indian and mixed-race intellectuals within it further demonstrates the complex, layered blend of cultural and intellectual traditions that formed in Calcutta during the early eighteenth century. Moreover, it further challenges the suggestion that European thought was uniformly received by Indians. In fact, the opposite can be argued, as Indian elites not only refashioned and redeployed these ideas to suit their own purposes, they also were more familiar with a variety of concepts associated with early liberal thought through their own indigenous traditions.

The core-periphery model has been problematized further through histories that pay particular attention to Indian initiative and agency.[84] In fact, careful analysis of the writings of Indian intellectuals reveals a long history of engagement with European thought, extending back

[82] This thesis will use the spelling Rammohun Roy, rather than the variations including Rammohan Roy, Ram Mohun Roy, or Ram Mohan Roy. For biographical details, please see Dermot Killingley, "Roy, Rammohun (1772?–1833)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, eee o*nline ed., ed. David Cannadine, Oxford: OUP, 2004, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47673 (accessed February 18, 2017).
[83] Bayly, "Afterward," 216; Also see Bayly, "Rammohan Roy," 25-41 and Christopher Alan Bayly, "Empires and Indian Liberals," *In Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland, 74-93 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); For a more in depth analysis of the Indian response to liberal thought, see Christopher Alan Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[84]For a particularly good example of this, please see Mrinalini Sinha *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006).

before the emergence of Britain as a dominant power. Bose and Jalal have suggested that the ideologies of science and reason, for example, were received in Calcutta well before the arrival of Governor General Bentinck in the early 1830s. They go further, arguing that this understanding was largely the result of Indian initiative.[85] Supporting this further, the Hindu College, the first English-language higher educational facility was also established at the behest of Bengali intellectuals.[86] Furthermore, studies have also been produced that clearly demonstrate the Vedic foundations for the ideas of some Indian reformers. This is particularly clear in the case of attacks against *sati* in the years before the 1832 Reform Bill. Not only did figures like Rammohun Roy draw from the Vedas and other Indian scriptural sources to construct their arguments, but even the conservative opposition drew much of their influence from classical Indian texts.[87] This demonstrates the specific Indian context in which they wrote, as well as their ability to engage with and pragmatically appropriate certain aspects of European thought. If Indian thought was influenced substantially by the colonial encounter, it is clear that Indians drew their own conclusions in response to European thought, rather than simply building upon what they received.

Another crucial aspect related to reform between 1813 and 1832, and yet another source of considerable contention in Indian historiography, was the introduction of modern education to the Indian subjects of the Presidencies. Alongside the introduction of Christian missionaries following the Charter Act of 1813, Company administrators also focused on the introduction of English-style education for Bengalis. This process has been met with considerable debate, with

[85] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 66
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 67.

post-colonial scholars arguing firmly that they were a colonial imposition.[88] However, Robert Frykenberg suggests that the debates between Orientalists or Anglicists during the period over the introduction of modern forms of education reveals a complete lack of understanding. He points out the fact that German teachers had already begun to introduce modern forms of education to the subcontinent and, crucially, Indians had long demanded access to European education.[89] For example, from at least the 1780s, Indian notables were collecting tens of thousands of signatures for the introduction of widespread English education. [90]

Frykenberg is wise to point out that Bentinck's concerted effort to introduce British-style education, famously influenced by the liberal intellectual Thomas Babington Macauley in 1835, was more the result of Indian expectation, than a British imposition.[91] And so through an analysis of the myriad examples of Indian resistance to British colonialism, the multiple levels of hybridity and cultural exchange exhibited throughout the period, and the feverish debate within the Company over how to approach the administration of the Indian presidencies, the dichotomy of Orientalist and Anglicist approaches appears too simple. Similarly, the categories of Indian agency and collaboration, which posed such a significant challenge to Indian nationalist scholars have also been fleshed out to a considerable degree. And so, in paying particular attention to pre-existing Indian structures and intellectual traditions, one can recognize that historical interpretations in the field have reached new levels of nuance and sophistication.

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[88] For a detailed account of the debates over the reception of modern forms of education in India, see Robert 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, no. 1 (February 1986): 37-65, and Ian Duncanson, *Historiography, Empire and the Rule of Law: Imagined Constitutions, Remembered Legalities* (New York: Routledge, 2012); For an account of the German influence on the introduction of modern education, as well as the indigenous demand for its introduction, see Gerald and Natalie Robinson Sirkin, "The Battle of Indian Education: Macaulay's Opening Salvo Newly Discovered," *Victorian Studies*, 14 (1970-71): 407-28.

[89] Frykenberg, "India to 1858," 209.

[90] Tellingly, in Madras alone petitions received over 70,000 signatures. Ibid., 210.

[91] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute recorded in the General Department by Thomas Babington Macaulay, law member of the governor-general's council, dated 2 February 1835" in Lynn Zastoupil, and Martin Moir, eds. The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843 (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 161-188.

Moreover, during the past two decades, postcolonial and postmodernist scholarship has posed radical challenges to more conventional historical approaches, and nowhere is this debate more fierce than in the context of British Indian historiography. Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the question of who can write histories of colonial societies has been debated at length. Said's work, despite provoking the ire of many Western scholars, drew attention to the connection between European colonialism and the writing of history and other forms of knowledge production throughout the nineteenth century.[92] Moreover, the radically sceptical positions articulated by Ranajit Guha's Subaltern Studies group throughout the 1980s and 90s have raised issues with even the most fundamental epistemological positions.[93] By no means should these highly valuable studies be discounted because of their somewhat radical premises, but recent work has highlighted a series of issues with some of the most basic positions derived largely from Marxist historians and critical discourse theorists.

The primary concern with these postcolonial works, and a critique which has also been levelled at the once proliferating field of area studies, is these works tend to produce narrow histories which often give little acknowledgement to the work of previous historians.[94] For

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[92] For a discussion of the many challenges which have emerged in response to Said's text, see Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 2 (April 1990): 383-408; For a broader discussion on this topic, please see Andrew S. Thompson, ed., *Writing Imperial Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
[93] Nowhere does this appear more explicitly than in the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty. In a well-known essay, he calls for nothing short of a complete retooling of academic historical writing, one which will decouple Indian historiography from what he perceives to be a fundamentally Eurocentric discipline. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?," *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992): 1-26; Chakrabarty elaborated this thesis in a later monograph, in which he argued that as a result of the association of political modernity with European civilization, the non-western world has been defined explicitly against this. As a result, all modern forms of knowledge have been developed on a Euro-centric basis, and all knowledge produced can only be acknowledged if it complies with the dominant European-inspired institution of academia. His critique extends to the very notion of historicization, arguing that this process of analysis developed in a European context and should not be considered universal. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 4-5.
[94] This critique appears in response to the Area Studies produced throughout the 1960s and 1970s in response to the perceived end of empire globally. Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 50; For an example of histories that focus on topics such as gender, race, and sexuality, please see Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, ed., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

example, there appears to be a tendency among some Indian scholars, particularly those of Marxist backgrounds, to respond to orientalist writing by adopting a largely Indocentric perspective, despite the fact that their analysis in based in largely Eurocentric conceptual and theoretical frames of reference.[95] Additionally, drawing inspiration from the work of Antonio Gramsci, some subaltern historians have focused so heavily upon on the prevalence, in their eyes, of hegemonic structures and the resistance of those without power, as to produce histories which lack sufficient political and social contexts, and leave little in the way of useful interpretation. In contradiction to this tendency, however, the work of Bayly demonstrated the utter reliance of British imperial agents, even during periods of heightened confidence, on networks of Indian spies and informants.[96] In this nuanced telling, the limits of domination are clearly delineated without resorting to assertions of imperial collaboration. Reacting to this overt focus on marginalized colonial subjects, he later argued that throughout this process, the actual substance of the institutions, ideologies, and intentions of the British appear almost as parodies of reality.[97] While some of these approaches can be found wanting, they are useful as counterpoints to previously uncontested historical interpretations. In this view, the dialectical process between different methodological approaches drives forward a continually evolving historiography, leading to progressively more nuanced syntheses.[98]

Despite the prodigious historiography of British India, the convergence of multiple disciplines and methodological approaches has recently opened up exciting new prospects for

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[95] Frykenberg, "India to 1858," 212.
[96] Christopher Alan Bayly, *Empire & Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-9.
[97] Christopher Alan Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 277.
[98] Notably, the study of empire has most recently taken on a greater focus on the production and spread of knowledge, culture, and network-spanning practices stressing a move towards more global and transnational historical approaches. Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?" *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2012): 793.

future research. In a survey of recent developments in this field, Tony Ballantyne identifies three distinct analytical concerns: the crucial role of information and knowledge in the building of empire; the importance of recognizing cultural difference within imperial social structures; and the role played by imperial networks in facilitating cross-cultural exchange within empires.[99] With the resurgence of imperial history in the past two decades, the importance of the role of colonial knowledge in the development and maintenance of imperial power has also become apparent.[100] But more importantly, Ballantyne proceeds to argue that in order for historians to address to the challenges posed by radical, post-colonial histories, they must be cognizant of the significance of pre-colonial structures and mentalities and how they shaped the colonial, political and cultural domains.[101] All of these considerations emphasize the need to revisit certain aspects of imperial history in order to draw out the intersections of these ideas. As Linda Colley has argued, imperial history is about connections, and as the field has become increasingly more politicized, the need to produce balanced, nuanced analyses has become ever more pressing. And so despite the challenges posed by radically sceptical postcolonial historians, by continually striving to make sense of the complex web of cultural and political exchanges between and among Indians and Britons, the convergence of multiple methodological approaches can produce useful new syntheses—ones which transcend simple dichotomies of colonizer and colonized or, worse still, assume the straightforward shared vision of entire groups. [102]

Finally, having briefly surveyed the historiography of this period and the rich convergence of social, political, and ideological history which characterizes it, the following study aims to produce an analysis of the social and intellectual engagement between Britons,

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[99] Tony Ballantyne, "The Changing Shape," 429.
[100] Ibid., 437.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Colley, "What is Imperial History Now?," 133; Ballantyne, "The Changing Shape," 429; For a particularly good example of this, please see Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

Indians, and mixed-race participants in what can be identified as an emergent civil society developed through the influence of a global political culture. In focusing on the role of ideology, in addition to the challenging realities of the colonial administration on the ground, it will analyze debates over censorship and the fight, on behalf of Britons and Indians alike, for a free press, in order to emphasize the trans-regional contexts of a particular set of individuals. Because the period in question features a complex process of intellectual and social engagement between radically different societies and traditions, a focus on pre-colonial structures will be paramount. The study will also argue that these individuals are best understood as operating under the influences of their respective cultures, but that they were not bound to them. Precisely how these figures conceived of reform, as well as the arguments they made in support of their vision for British India problematize simple categories of resistance or support for imperial rule. As with the top-ranking Company agents, these figures operated in practical, pragmatic ways, keenly aware of the peculiar situation they found themselves in and, for some, determined to define the boundaries of these seemingly impermeable worlds.

ONE

A PRELUDE TO "THE BUCKINGHAM AFFAIR": ESTABLISHING THE LIMITS OF FREE EXPRESSION IN BRITISH BENGAL

"*In December 1823 Rawul Beiree Saul observed to Captain Stewart that a leaf could not move in Rajpootana without the leave of the British Government.*"[103]

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the context for the emergence of the Anglo-Indian press in British India following the abolition of censorship by the Marquis of Hastings in 1818. It focuses on the city of Calcutta, the social, political, and intellectual centre of the Eastern British Empire, but it will briefly refer to events occurring in the other presidencies of Madras and Bombay, as well as in London.[104] This is justified by the fact that key figures in the debates over the establishment of a free press in British India were at all times informed by the trans-national and trans-regional intellectual sphere within which they identified as participants. Between 1818 and 1823, the Anglo-Indian press operated in a relatively open manner, unencumbered by the demands of the Bengal Government to submit papers for review prior to publication.[105] During this brief period, independent British editors took advantage of the opportunity to publish criticisms of the Company, and to argue for their own vision of reform. But the papers also gave voice to a variety of other interested parties: disaffected British soldiers,

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[103] "Extracts from remarks by Lord Moira. Mr. Ainslie (Commissioner of Bundelcund). Rawul Beiree Saul and J. Smith (Acting Collector and Magistrate of Vizagapatam), relative to the influence of public opinion in connection with the maintenance of the British power in India," IOR/H/534, Restrictions on the Press in India. (1795-1834), 463. British Library.

[104] Speaking to the strategic importance of Calcutta as a centre of British trade in the eastern empire, Andrew Sartori describes it as being the centre of a "vibrant, if unstable, commercial society in the early nineteenth century." He further characterizes it a "local eddy in the vast structure of Britain's global empire," emphasizing its cosmopolitan, yet trade-focused makeup. Sartori, *Bengal in global concept history*, 74-75.

[105] In a letter written by John Adam, Chief Secretary to Government, to the Council Chamber on August 19th, 1818, he confirms the order and conditions issued by Governor General Hastings for the removal of censorship. "Relevant Papers and consequent Orders abolishing the Censorship," 455.

educators, concerned Indian subjects, and mixed-race residents all took advantage of the opportunity to articulate their respective views on reform.

While newspapers had been published in Calcutta since the 1790s, they remained limited in number and were almost entirely dedicated to the interests of the English-speaking Company servants.[106] With the subsequent and persistent threat of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and the emergence of rival Indian powers determined to push back the British presence, Governor General Richard Wellesley introduced the first piece of legislation regarding newspaper publication in Calcutta in 1799. He installed a restrictive censorship regime, removing any ambiguity in the Bengal Government's stance towards the press.[107] The policy remained in place until Hastings's intervention in 1818 when, as some have suggested, the conditions in British India seemed to permit a more liberal position on behalf of the Government towards free expression of ideas in print.[108] This chapter, however, will argue that Hastings's decision to abolish censorship did not simply stem from his apparent liberal demeanor, but, in fact, was motivated by a number of challenges which threatened the Company in the early 1820s as it struggled to redefine itself in the face of reinvigorated attacks by anti-monopolists, and its shift in focus towards consolidating and governing its newly acquired territories. These threats to the

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[106] In the first comprehensive, academic history of the Indian press to be published in the nineteenth century, Margarita Barns characterizes the early press in Calcutta as primarily devoted to the interests of British traders and soldiers, and as a forum to discuss the Company's administration by those who operated outside of the Company's elite circles. Barns, *The Indian Press*, 62; It is also important to note, however, that the interests of said Englishmen and their readers did not remain fixed on European matters alone. With the rising interest in the scholarly study of South Asian culture, language, and literature, the early press in Bengal also featured material to reflect this. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 53.

[107] For a detailed account of the proceedings related to the introduction of censorship in Calcutta in 1799, see "Imposition of the Censorship 1799," IOR/H/537, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon. (1791-1820), 339-50. British Library.

[108] By 1813, the Company was widely considered to be the predominant power in the subcontinent. By 1818, though, the outcome of the Maratha Wars had dissolved the challenger as a political entity, and all of the key states of India had been brought into agreement with the Company, further bolstering the British position. Philips, *The East India Company*, 218; It is worthy to note, however, that the presence of Pindari raiders in Northern and Central Indian remained a challenge to the Company, in addition to the new task of consolidating and administering new territorial gains. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 75.

Company included the persistent fear, on behalf of Government administrators, of mutinies initiated by either Indian and European soldiers, as well as the inability of the Bengal Government to develop coherent policy, due to contested views within the administration.[109] Indeed, contrary perspectives of how the Company was to administer in this now greatly extended territory were often based in political and ideological positions derived from European, and more specifically, British society.[110] Conflicting political ideologies during this period often manifested themselves in challenges to executive authority that, in turn, hindered the development of coherent policies towards governance in the presidencies.[111] Both reformist and considerably more conservative Tory-influenced views on governance and political economy appeared in various facets of the Bengal Government's administration, but they were most clearly evinced in the dichotomous views of the Governor General, the Board of Directors, and local elites over the question of whether a free press could be permitted in Calcutta during the period. Interestingly, it will be demonstrated that those who favoured as well as those who opposed the notion both framed their arguments around the predicted effect of a free press on the native population of India.[112]

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[109] This refers not only to the differences in opinion between Hastings and his immediate subordinates, John Adam and William Butterworth Bayley, but also between the Bengal Government and the high courts of Bengal. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 118; But the debates within the administration over whether or not an Orientalist or an Anglicist approach to governance also occurred during this period. Frykenberg, "India to 1858," 209.

[110] Peter Marshall describes the Government of Bengal as being highly representative of a confluence of ideas and interests derived from British and Bengali society. Its fundamental nature, he suggests, was one of "a hybrid of merchant and ruler, aiming at commercial profit, military security and various concepts of good government." Peter James Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead: Eastern India 1740-1828*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 104.

[111] Ralph E. James Turner, author of the only comprehensive study devoted to the life of James Silk Buckingham, characterizes the official hierarchy of Calcutta during the period as being deeply influenced by English Tory social and political ideology, particularly those in the highest ranking positions of the Board of Directors. The author points out how their unwillingness to embrace reform in most capacities led to them being labelled "the old Tories," and that their views frequently clashed with suggestions for more progressive policies from more liberal-minded Company administrators and independent British residents. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 118.

[112] As this thesis demonstrates, local contexts and circumstances were at all times crucial to the Bengal Government's decision making processes.

In a certain sense, these tensions also informed debates over the role Indian subjects were to play in administering the regions, and the degree to which Indians were to be allowed to participate in what can be considered an emergent proto-civil society in Calcutta.[113] The latter consideration is of paramount importance to this study, and the debates over censorship and the potential for a free press in British India clearly demonstrate the convergence of the ideologically and practically influenced motivations of Company representatives, independent Britons, and Indian intellectuals as they articulated their positions in print. While Calcutta featured a number of newspapers at this time, one editor, James Silk Buckingham, was most important and central to the free press debates of the period.

The Bengal Government's harsh response to his persistent attacks against the administration and his engagement with elite Indians, colloquially referred to as "The Buckingham Affair", offers an unparalleled view into the concerns of an increasingly defensive body of Government authorities, while demonstrating the limited ability of British-born citizens in India to exercise their legal rights in this imperial context.[114] The independent, radical editor, used his publication, the *Calcutta Journal*, to test the limits of government policy regarding the free expression of ideas in India, emanating from both European and Indian thinkers. He

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[113] In his classic monograph, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* Jürgen Habermas introduced the concept of the bourgeois public sphere as a group of private citizens who assemble for the specific purpose of discussing and debating matters of mutual concern. These discussions are primarily focused on perceived abuses of power by public authorities, and often manifest themselves as critiques of government. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1989; In this context, citizens of Calcutta, both Indian and British, coalesced through the press for the purpose of criticizing the Bengal Government and demanded reform in a variety of areas. This will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

[114] The phrase "The Buckingham Affair" has been used in two recent works to refer to the events surrounding Buckingham's frequent clashes and eventual deportation from India by the Board of Control and the Governor General. The circumstances surrounding his punishment and eventual deportation are frequently referred to in surveys of the early Anglo-Indian press, especially during the 1830s when Buckingham successfully petitioned British Parliament for restitution for his lost income. Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of* Empire, 116, and Joseph Hardwick, "Vestry politics and the emergence of a reform 'public' in Calcutta, 1813-36," *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (Feb. 2011): 94.

aggressively argued for the necessity of a free press to the establishment of a robust civil society.[115] But he also went so far as to challenge the limits of British and Indian social and intellectual interaction through his stated intent to establish an intellectual community in British India to engage with European and Indian thought, and to debate various theories for reform. Christopher Bayly recently argued that this period witnessed the first international flourishing of radical liberalism,[116] and it was precisely this intellectual context that compelled Buckingham to challenge the Bengal Government, and to encourage others—Indian, British, and mixed-race authors alike—to question the boundaries of Company sovereignty and to publish their suggestions for the future administration of British India.

TRANS-IMPERIAL CONNECTIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ANGLO-INDIAN PRESS

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Calcutta's fledgling newspaper trade was limited to the British and European inhabitants of Bengal, and yet the value of the medium as a vehicle for social change and education was already being recognized by the Indian subjects of the empire. Increased knowledge of British institutions certainly resulted from deepening economic ties between British and Indian merchants and financiers, but it was also a result of the increased movement of Indian travellers between Calcutta and London during the period.[117] Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, a Persian-speaking Indian poet and scholar, and his prolonged sojourn to Europe reflects this new development. The scholar began his long voyage from Calcutta to Britain on

[115] Of note, the only paper to raise controversy remotely akin to the *Calcutta Journal* was *The Hurkaru*. Despite descriptions of the two papers co-existing "cheek by jowl in controversy", the *Calcutta Journal* and Buckingham in particular drew considerably more negative attention from the Bengal Government, culminating in his eventual precedent setting deportation. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 156.

[116] Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 71.

[117] For a compelling study of Indian travellers in Britain and the imperial relationships developed throughout the Company's formative years, particularly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 103-241.

February 7th, 1799, with the aim of improving the Company's Persian language instruction.[118] With the encouragement of a close friend, Orientalist scholar Captain David Richardson, Taleb embarked for Europe with the goal of securing sufficient patronage to establish a Persian-language school in London. The East India Company-sponsored study of Indo-Persian—the administrative language of the still nominally ruling Mughal court—had proceeded in earnest for nearly three decades by this point.[119] And yet by Taleb's accounting, the Company's grasp of the language remained woefully unrefined and inadequate. After recognizing a number of errors in work produced by The Asiatic Society, a scholarly circle established and led by philologist and oriental scholar Sir William Jones, Taleb felt compelled to action.[120] The ultimate goal of the expedition, in Taleb's view, was to personally improve the state of Persian-language instruction in London and, by extension, to help foster greater communication between the Company's representatives and the Indian inhabitants of British-controlled territories on the subcontinent. To be clear, Taleb was not the first Indian intellectual to recognize the need for greater cross-cultural communication between the two societies; nor was he the first to travel to England and publish an

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[118] While the spelling of Abu Taleb's name varies between texts, this study will use "Taleb" for the sake of consistency. It should also be noted that "Mirza" and "Khan" are both Persian titles that denote social status. Accordingly, they will be omitted for brevity.

[119] Under the Mughals, Indo-Persian was the primary language of business, law, and government in India. As a result, colonial administrators placed great value in the study of the language as a means of bolstering their position on the subcontinent. For a discussion of early British orientalist efforts to master the language, see Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 2 (April 1990): 385-386.

[120] Taleb makes multiple references throughout his narrative to Company representatives possessing a faint grasp of the language. While providing lessons to a young Englishman, for example, he places particular emphasis on the fact that, in his view, British orientalist scholars failed to learn from Indian teachers, preferring instead to conduct their own research. As his student began to excel, Taleb exclaimed: "Thanks be to God, that my efforts were crowned with success! And that he, having escaped the instructions of *self-taught* masters, has acquired such a knowledge of the principles of that language, and so correct an idea of its idiom and pronunciation, that I have no doubt, after a few years' residence in India, he will attain to such a degree of excellence, as has not yet been acquired by any other Englishman!." Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa, and Europe, during the years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803,* trans. Charles Stewart, ed. Daniel O'Quinn (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2009), 200-201.

account of his observations.[121] He is significant, however, because his work was referred to in the emerging debates simply referred to as the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy, and due to his role as a strong proponent of the printing press.[122] But the scholar's observations of British society and culture in relation to his own, as well as the various locations he visited in transit, also grants readers a rare, illuminating view of how one Indian colonial subject apprehended his imperial sovereigns, in areas ranging from technological advancement to gender relations and the conditions of the poor. At a time when it was believed that Indian perceptions of British strength were crucial to the continued survival of the Company, Taleb's observations are emblematic of a series of shifting attitudes.[123]

Crucially, as war raged on the Continent, the Company dramatically expanded the scale and scope of its military operations in India, both to fortify its positions and to dominate the remaining rival princes—Indian elites who continued to challenge British and Mughal sovereignty.[124] Throughout this period, the importance of maintaining a clear image of British superiority became increasingly important in the eyes of Company administrators, particularly because of the fact that the Company's armies were largely comprised of Indian troops whose

[121] Indian travellers had travelled to Britain as seamen, servants, and slaves for the East India Company as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, the first Indian author to arrive and publish works about England has been identified as Dean Mahomed. Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism,* 22; for a full study of Dean Mahomed, see Michael H Fisher, *The First Indian Author in English: Dean Mahomed (1759-1851) in India, Ireland, and England. Delhi* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

[122] In an introductory essay to Taleb's work, Daniel O'Quinn argues that the East India Company, with the urging of orientalist scholar and translator Charles Stewart, published the text in a bid to prevent the forced Anglicization of Company servants in what has been dubbed the Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy. Abu Taleb, *Travels*, 16. Nile Green identifies Taleb as a founding figure in Muslim printing, emphasizing his ability to recognize beneficial aspects to society beyond the specific cultural sphere they were created in. Green, "Journeymen, Middlemen," 218.

[123] This argument is well developed through Linda Colley's work. She argues that as a result of the small British presence on the subcontinent, its limited ability to project military force, and a reliance on Indian capital for continued commerce, the Company derived its power largely from opinion and the imagined view of superiority generated from occasional bouts of pointed violence. In her words, "the British had to be seen to win in India, because—bluntly—they could not afford to be seen often to be losing." Colley, *Captives*, 274-75.

[124] Chief among them, the British faced a considerable challenge in Mysore's two powerful rulers, Haider Ali and his successor Tipu Sultan. For an excellent recounting of the threat posed by Tipu, particularly in his efforts to forge an alliance with Napoleonic France and to claim the title of Mughal Emperor, see Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 67-103.

continued loyalty, especially in the province of Bengal, was at times questioned.[125] Again, this is precisely why the writings of Taleb are so valuable. Travelling through North Africa and Ireland before reaching London, the scholar, a highly astute and observant individual, took advantage of the opportunity to conduct a detailed comparative analysis of the societies he encountered, eventually publishing his reflections in a series of essays which was compiled shortly thereafter into a single volume, translated and published in English.[126] The main focus of his writings was unquestionably England and English society in general, and some have even referred to it as the first ethnographic account of the country by a non-Western author, written at a time when travel accounts were becoming exceedingly popular among European audiences.[127] The account is striking and relatively controversial, owing both to its candor and its ambivalence towards various aspects of British imperial society during the period.[128] But throughout this sweeping survey, there was one enviable aspect of British society that the author could not deny, namely, the ubiquity of print.

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[125] Beyond the military threats, the Company also faced dire financial woes as a result of its extensive military campaigns at the turn of the century. To illustrate this, by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Company's claim that it was exercising its privileges cautiously and that its financial situation was stable were almost comical to spectators in London. Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, 52; One of the more constant themes throughout the decades preceding the events of 1857 was a continual concern over the perceived loyalty of sepoy troops. Colley, *Captives*, 317.

[126] Originally published in Persian script, Taleb's work was translated into English by Charles Stewart and published in 1810 under the title of *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa and Europe During the Years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802 and 1803.*

[127] During the late eighteenth century, the increased accessibility of transnational travel to Europeans sparked a thriving industry in travel accounts. The crucial point here was contrary to previously popular narratives which centred on exceptional individuals, these types of narratives now focused on exotic cultures and destinations. Curiously, then, Taleb modelled his work on these and yet he offered a view of English society, first to fellow Indians, and shortly thereafter to an English audience. Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 48-49.

[128] The account features an entire section on the moral and social failings of the English people. He includes generalized commentary on both commoner and elite, identifying failings in both individual groups and the nation as a whole: "The Author apologizes for the censure he is obliged to pass on the English character. He accuses the Common People of want of religion and honesty, and the Nation at large of a blind confidence in their good fortune, also of cupidity." Abu Taleb, *Travels*, 207; Also of interest, additional criticisms by Taleb characterize the English as being "too strongly prejudiced in favour of their own customs," and "…blind to their own imperfections." Ibid., 208.

Indeed, to the "Persian Prince," a nickname bestowed upon him by English socialites, the widespread proliferation of print media in England, and Europe generally, was an astonishing achievement.[129] But what surprised the author most was its sheer accessibility. Access to print at this time was certainly not limited to elites, but rather, he observed, it extended through much of the population.[130] In discussing a range of European scientific and technological innovations, Taleb expressed great enthusiasm for the medium, even going so far as to imply that his own society might not yet be capable of recognizing the potential benefits it offered. Emphasizing this, Taleb wrote: "Of the inventions of Europe, the utility of which may not appear at first sight to an Asiatic, the art of printing is the most admirable. By its aid, thousands of copies of any scientific, moral, or religious book, may be circulated among the people in a very short time."[131] As a scholar and a poet, it comes as no surprise that he expressed such eager appreciation for the widespread accessibility of the printed word in Europe. But it was England in particular where he recognized the importance of newspapers to the everyday lives of British citizens. In fact, he went so far as to suggest that if the citizens of the country were made to go without newspapers, "life [itself] would be irksome to them."[132]

Again, what fascinated Taleb most of all was not the novelty of the institution itself so much as how deeply it had penetrated English society. Newspapers, he observed, "are read by all ranks

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[129] For a detailed discussion of Abu Taleb's experience in London, see Amrit Sen, "'The Persian Prince in London": Autoethnography and Positionality in Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan," *Asiatic* 2, No. 1 (2008): 58-68.
[130] The Press in England during this period has been described as intensely political and fiercely outspoken in comparison to much of the rest of Europe. With a particular breadth and depth of coverage, England's press was relatively unique, particularly in its accessibility and wide reach. In fact, the frequent evocation of terms such as "the people" and "the public", it has been argued, helped bring English politics out of restricted, elite circles, engaging a much broader audience. Furthermore, it has been argued that periods of political unrest only further heightened the significance of the English Press, and the period of the Revolutionary Wars is emblematic of this trend. Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 93-96.
[131] Abu Taleb, *Travels*, 157.
[132] This section is compelling because the author so thoroughly attributes print culture to the English. This is crucial context for understanding Buckingham's apparent obsession with the development of a free press in British India as an absolutely central pillar to the successful administration of the region. Ibid.

of people, from the prince to the beggar. They are printed daily, and sent every morning to the houses of the rich; but those who cannot afford to subscribe for one, go and read them at the coffee-rooms or public-houses."[133] The notion that newspapers in Britain appeared to reach all layers of society encouraged Taleb to envision a future state where, at least in an urban context, his native India could benefit from a similar arrangement. For in the widespread dissemination of newspapers Taleb recognized the potential for improved literacy rates in India, and, similar to his goal of improving Persian language instruction, greater cross-cultural collaboration between the Company's government and the Indian population might also occur as a result. In considering Taleb's observations, it is interesting to consider the timing of his departure from India. Just as the traveller set sail from Calcutta, Richard Wellesley began his tenure as Governor General of Bengal, and as Taleb arrived in England, and enacted a policy of censorship over the Anglo-Indian press there—the first official attempt to rein in the burgeoning medium. And so just as some Indian subjects of the Empire were coming to realize the implications of a potential press in improving social and political engagement between Indians and the Company's commercial and military population, the Government was enacting measures to prevent anything which might pose a challenge to the view of a strong, unified European presence on the subcontinent.

COMPANY IN CRISIS: THE SUPPRESSION OF CALCUTTA'S JOURNALS

An understanding of the factors contributing to Governor General Wellesley's decision to restrict the Bengal press in 1799 provides crucial context for the state of the press between 1799 and 1818, but it also demonstrates the degree to which administrators were influenced by practical considerations and driven by the immediate circumstances on the ground in determining policy. It has been suggested that the Governor General's decision was motivated by the lack of a

[133] Ibid., 157.

proper legal mechanism beyond mere libel restrictions to monitor and control English publications; and that in this legally ambiguous situation, English authors took advantage of the opportunity to publish petty attacks on their fellow residents and the administration.[134] In fact, in his *History of British India*, published in 1817, James Mill asserted that the papers themselves served little value and that English editors had abused this relatively generous arrangement. In condemnatory language, he referred to the papers as being "…useless as vehicles of local information of any value," and "…filled with indecorous attacks upon the private life and ignorant censures of public measures."[135] This view is slightly over-simplified, however. While the publications certainly featured abusive commentary about fellow residents, they also provided information about European politics and the Company's position in India. This is demonstrated in an official recommendation from the Board of Control in 1801 to establish a Government-sponsored printing press.[136] With the motion, the vice-president hoped to counter any unlicensed discussion of political or military details with officially sanctioned communications: "The Gazette may be published on such days and contain such articles of public notification as the Governor General may think proper to direct," he wrote, "and [it] may be accompanied by a Newspaper containing articles of intelligence and private advertisement to be published under the

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[134] Philips, *The East India Company,* 223.

[135] James Mill, *History of British India*, ed. Horace-Hayman Wilson, 4th ed., vol. 8, (London: James Madden, 1846), 581.

[136] In order to provide a deeper understanding of how the Government of British India worked, it is worth describing its institutional structure. Company operations in India were guided by the senior-most civil servant and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Governor General. Appointed by the English Government, he possessed ultimate veto power over his counsellors, but was subject to recall by the Board of Directors of the East India Company in London. The Governor General was advised primarily by a Supreme Council, which assisted in the governance of the Company's presidencies. An additional check on the Governor General's power came in the form of the Supreme Court of Judicature, and representatives of this body were also selected by the Crown. In England, the Government was overseen by four bodies: The Board of Directors; the Commissioners for the Affairs of India, or, more commonly, the Board of Control; a Select Committee, which was elected by the Board of Directors; and, finally, the General Court of Proprietors of the Company, which oversaw the Board of Control and wielded the sovereignty of the English Parliament. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 122.

inspection and Control of the Chief Secretary."[137] In this proposal the Board sought to establish a Government-sponsored press to act as an official source of information for the English residents. This suggests that the Board recognized the potential value of the papers as channels of information, but it is also clear that the Government had begun to recognize a considerable threat in the form of an unmonitored press.

Owing to the Company's fragile position in India at the turn of the century, administrators adopted a defensive, reactionary position, and their concerns, particularly as they related to printed criticisms of the Government or the British inhabitants of Calcutta, appear to be primarily motivated by a concern for maintaining an image of confidence and authority in the eyes of British soldiers and, more importantly, the native inhabitants and sepoys. To illustrate the hard stance of the Government at the time, the vice-president referred to the increase in unlicensed, private printing presses as "an evil of the first magnitude in its consequences."[138] It is also noteworthy to mention that the editors in question were largely not servants of the Company, but, rather, independent Englishmen, of whom the administration had become increasingly wary. The vice-president described their papers as being "useless to literature and to the public, and dubiously profitable to the speculators," asserting that, "…they serve only to maintain in needy indolence a few European adventurers who are found unfit to engage in any creditable method of subsistence."[139]

To some, these authors were regarded as a destabilizing force in Calcutta, and the Government quickly identified what they considered to be a danger in permitting entirely

[137] "Imposition of the Censorship 1799," 342-343.
[138] Ibid., 343.
[139] Ibid., 342.

unrestrained independent commentary "to go forth among the jealous natives".[140] Whether this view was based in the threat of Indian revolt against the British or in the suggestion that Indian inhabitants might leverage information gained through the papers over their fellow inhabitants, the view provides essential context for Wellesley's decision, beyond that of simply attempting to stifle the libelous commentary of rogue Englishmen. Crucially, as Britain waged war in multiple theatres throughout the world, the Company's position in India had become increasingly threatened by foreign and Indian rivals. This placed increased pressure on the administration to enact strict controls over the publication of newspapers and to, in effect, tightly control the flow of information within India and, most importantly, what information could be accessed by Indian audiences.

With the persistent military threat of the Napoleon's armies and the rise of the independent state of Madras, the threat of revolutionary political doctrines emanating from the French Revolution provided additional impetus for Wellesley to establish strict control over the Anglo-Indian press. Having set sail for India two years earlier, just as Britain had lost Austria, its only remaining ally, to Napoleon's forces, Wellesley was determined to bolster the British position. Writing in 1798, Wellesley outlined a series of challenges to the British position in the East and his intention to establish a more stable situation. Among the challenges, he identified a considerable French influence in the region and felt that the destruction of the French subsidiary force at Hyderabad was a crucial first step in securing the Company's operations on the subcontinent.[141] To complicate matters further, Britain had also just narrowly escaped an invasion by French forces supported by Irish insurgents, instilling in Wellesley a strong desire to abolish

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[140] Alexander Andrews, *The history of British journalism: from the foundation of the newspaper press in England, to the repeal of the Stamp act in 1855*, Vol. 2 (London: R. Bentley, 1859), 152.
[141] *Memoirs of the Most Noble Richard Marquess Wellesley*, ed. Robert Rouiere Pearce, vol. 1, Second Edition (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), 140-141.

any lingering French military influence in India—a motivation undoubtedly driven by his openly expressed disdain for the political doctrines emerging in the wake of the French Revolution. [142] Given that journals in Calcutta had printed articles from alleged Jacobin sympathizers and reprinted Napoleon's letters regarding his plan to invade Egypt and to eventually join forces with independent Indian rulers, Wellesley's decision to restrict the press appears to in part have been motivated more by military and ideological considerations than the nuisance of rebellious English authors.[143]

As a result, on May 13th, 1799, the presses of Calcutta were officially suppressed to prevent the publication of anything deemed inappropriate by the Government.[144] Henceforth, all editors were to affix their name to the bottom of their paper, refrain from publishing on Sundays, and submit their latest issue to the Secretary to the Government for approval prior to publication. Ominously, the penalty for any significant deviation from this ordinance was the immediate deportation of the offending editor to Europe.[145] Shorn of any proper legal mechanism to deal with indiscretions of the press, the Government defaulted to its only potential recourse, a policy that was met with considerable disdain by independent Britons and Company men alike.

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[142] Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 45; Justifying Wellesley's decision in the wake of the Great Rebellion of 1857, Andrews argued that in order to maintain British predominance in India, the Indian population had to view the Company as a powerful force, unfettered by factional conflict: "In a country placed in such an anomalous position by the paucity of European inhabitants, and the fanaticism and prejudices of a vast native population of conflicting feelings and antagonistic religions," he asserted, "it would have been dangerous to allow the press its full latitude at once. Andrews, *The history of British journalism,* 151.

[143] Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 46; Margarita Barns suggests that given these circumstances, Wellesley viewed the press with great trepidation and he was primarily concerned with preventing any discourse that might weaken his influence there. Barns, *The Indian Press*, 74.

[144] While censorship had been introduced in Bombay, a more traditionally minded and conservatively administered presidency, in 1791, the adoption of a similar policy was influenced by the decision in Calcutta and implemented in Madras shortly thereafter. "Governor Mountstuart Elphinstone's Minute 22nd Dec. 1819 on the Press Regulations in Bengal," IOR/H/539, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon. (1791-1822), 449-450, British Library.

[145] "Relevant Papers and consequent Orders abolishing the Censorship," 451-42.

While the policy of press censorship operated relatively efficiently in Calcutta throughout the following two decades, it did face a number of small, yet significant, challenges, particularly as they related to the discussion of military operations on the subcontinent by wayward English editors.[146] The majority of clashes between the censor and editors mainly related to failures to follow the prescribed procedure, or the publication of inappropriate remarks directed at fellow inhabitants of the city. [147] Given the limited reach and audience of the early press and the relatively harmless nature of these indiscretions, however, reforms to the existing policy were minimal; and up to 1815 the subject was given only minor attention. The situation changed, though, when one English editor, Reverend Samuel James Bryce, challenged the ruling of the long-standing official censor, Chief Secretary John Adam. On two separate occasions in 1815, Bryce's paper, the *Asiatic Mirror*, included articles describing the Company's military operations in India: the first described the movements of the Company's army, and the second, more worrisome still, provided details on the establishment of a new sepoy regiment.[148] In response, Adam immediately adopted an aggressive stance, refusing to allow the publication of both issues

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[146] Recounting the history of the early press in India in broad strokes, Cyril Henry Philips characterized the system of censorship as efficient and successful in its purpose. Philips, *The East India Company,* 223.

[147] For a listing of conflicts between the Government and English editors during the period, see "Special Prohibitory Orders issued 1801 to 1808 to Editors and Printers of the Calcutta Gazette, Asiatic Mirror, Hircarrah, Star, India Gazette, Morning Post, Oriental Star, Telegraph, Orphan, and Mirror", IOR/H/537, Restrictions on the Press in India. Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon. (1791-1820), 365-433, British Library.

[148] "James Pattison (Chairman) and William Wigram (Deputy Chairman) to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn (President of the Board of Control) 17th Jan. 1823, History of the Press prior to the Censorship in India and necessity of Control," IOR/H/535, Restrictions on the Press in India. (1823-1834), 50, British Library.
For a comprehensive account of Bryce's feud with Adam, see *"Case of Rev. Dr. Samuel Bryce, Editor of the Asiatic Mirror, His complaint of the Censor's prohibition of a critique on a work by Lieut. Gavan Young, though the author himself had approved it 1817," IOR/H/537, Restrictions on the Press in India. Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon (1791-1820), 459-545, British Library.*

and condemning the author. Bryce responded in turn. Feeling the response to be both hostile and unfair, he appealed to the Governor General to overturn the ruling.[149]

Given Hastings's reputation as both a competent military leader and a rather liberal outlier, it would have been difficult to predict his response. Balancing the desire on behalf of Calcutta's English population for greater press freedom with legitimate security concerns in this relatively ambiguous legal and political arena would have been a challenge for anyone, and yet Hastings's particular personality added an additional layer of uncertainty. Appointed on October 4, 1813, and serving until his resignation in 1823, his tenure as the chief representative of British power in India has been regarded with equal parts ambivalence, celebration, and disdain. To some, his legacy has been regarded primarily as a stabilizing force in the eastern empire: with a cautious hand and a keen intellect, he successfully negotiated the final stages of the Maratha Wars, secured victory in the Gurkha War, and helped broker the purchase of the island of Singapore.[150] But for others, his liberal demeanor, sympathy for the Indian population, and ambitious vision for the future of British India drove him to implement wide ranging social reforms akin to those of Warren Hastings and Charles Cornwallis in the eighteenth century.[151]

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[149] Despite Bryce's firm conviction and well-argued case, Hastings eventually sided with John Adam. Barns, *The Indian Press*, 86.

[150] Further achievements of Hastings during this period are listed in gushing tones by Leicester Stanhope in a treatise on the importance of a free press to British India in 1823. According to Stanhope, he "conquered the enemies of the state, placed the empire in security, and established order and a system of police all over Central India." Additionally, he "treated the native princes with courtesy and justice, and reformed the abuses of the subsidiary states." Leicester Stanhope, *Sketch of the History and Influence of the Press in British India* (London: C. Chapple, Royal Library, 1823), 2; For a detailed history of Hastings's military victories between 1817 and 1819, see Henry Thoby Prinsep, *History of the Political and Military Transactions in India during the Administration of the Marquess of Hastings, 1813-1823*, Vol. 2 (Kingsbury, Parbury & Allen, 1825); For full biographical details, please see Roland Thorne, "Hastings, Francis Rawdon, first marquess of Hastings and second earl of Moira (1754–1826)," Thorne in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, eee,* ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), online ed., ed. David Cannadine, January 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12568 (accessed February 18, 2017).

[151] With considerable wealth flowing into the hands of local Indian agents and Company merchants operating in an unofficial capacity, both Hastings and Cornwallis introduced a number of reforms to establish a stable system of tax collection in Bengal. With economic reform in mind, Hastings attempted to crack down on the private, illegal, non-Company trade, while Cornwallis, with his Permanent Settlement of the Bengal revenues, attempted to create a

Examples of this include his patronizing of Indian education, and, perhaps most significantly, his endorsement of the value of the emergent print culture in Bengal, including both English and Indian newspapers. It is no coincidence, then, that scholars have traced the emergence of the so-called "Bengal Renaissance" to this period, suggesting that Hastings's lasting influence on the development of British India is most easily recognized in his social policy.[152] Further still, the era of Hastings has even been referred to as the "golden age of British Orientalism."[153] And yet, his influence in this regard was for some time largely unrecognized or viewed with disapproval, precisely, some have suggested, because of its association with reform, a highly contentious topic in Victorian England. [154] However, while historians have come to largely associate Hastings with his liberalizing and reformist policies, closer inspection reveals more pragmatic grounds for his treatment of the budding Anglo-Indian press.

In response to Bryce's appeal, Hastings stood by his Chief Secretary and rebuked the editor and the author of the offending articles, but the entire affair had revived questions of the effectiveness of Bengal's press rules. In, and of, itself the incident was not particularly threatening to the British position in India, but the matter took on additional significance as a result of a number of developments on the subcontinent. Most notably, the Charter Act of 1813 stripped the Company of its monopoly over the India trade, and as a result private British merchants began arriving in Calcutta. This made the job of the censor much more difficult as he

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flourishing agricultural through the creation of a hereditary landed aristocracy by elevating local zamindars to this role. Attempts were also made in Madras to stabilize rurual society and control conflicts between rural tax collectors and revenue-farmers. Bayly, *Indian Society*, 64-65, 67.

[152] Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 145.

[153] Ibid., 178.

[154] David Kopf, for instance, points out the discrepancy in the way Hastings is regarded in contemporary sources during the Orientalist period and later histories of the period. He attributes the foundation of Bengali journalism to Hastings, but suggests that poor treatment of Hastings in the decades after his death resulted from his being associated with England's age of reform in the early 1830s. Similar to James Silk Buckingham and Rammohun Roy, is it striking to see how this figures have been associated with particular political causes and, accordingly, lauded or severely criticized for their efforts. Ibid., 145.

struggled to contend with the increasing volume of printed material produced for this new readership.[155] But there was also a fear on the part of some administrators that by publishing papers authorized by a censor's review, the Bengal Government could be seen to be giving tacit endorsement to whatever was published.[156] Moreover, the Government's legal authority over the press was limited, leaving deportation of the offending European resident as the only applicable redress for repeated infringements.[157] This left the Government vulnerable as the existing policy was not applicable to the Indian or Eurasian residents—a loophole viewed with increasing alarm in the following two years as relationships between English and Indian merchants in the bustling commercial centre further solidified.[158] It was this vulnerability, in fact, that eventually proved to be the primary catalyst for significant reform to the existing policies, further demonstrating the degree to which policy was dictated more by perceived threats to the Company than by the ideological motivations of the ruling cadre.

Given the increased publication of newspapers throughout the period and the number of mixed-race individuals in Bengal, it is a wonder that this loophole was not exploited earlier, precipitating a thorough review of the censorship regime and forcing the administration to develop a more defined legal structure around newspaper publication. But a confrontation did occur shortly after the Bryce incident when, in April 1818, Jacob Heatley, as editor and sole proprietor of the *Morning Post*, ran afoul of the acting Chief Secretary, William Butterworth

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[155] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire,* 115-116.
[156] "James Pattison (Chairman) and William Wigram (Deputy Chairman) to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn (President of the Board of Control) 17th Jan. 1823, History of the Press prior to the Censorship in India and necessity of Control," IOR/H/535, Restrictions on the Press in India (1823-1834), 115-116, British Library.
[157] Officially, after 1813 all private British residents were to obtain a license to reside in India. Accordingly, any person who was seen o flout the rules and regulations in force could have their licenses withdrawn, resulting in their summary deportation back to Europe. "Cases of James Silk Buckingham and John Tosh, two Europeans who arrived at Bombay without the Company's licence - Buckingham returns to Mocha - Tosh promises to return to England at the earliest opportunity," IOR/F/4/503/12031, *Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, 1620-1859*, 1-2, British Library.
[158] Ibid., 7.

Bayley. Heatley was of mixed heritage, born to a British father and Indian mother, and was quite aware of the unique position he occupied. This is evinced in his response to Bayley after he was told to remove a few offending paragraphs from his latest issue. Without hesitation, though, the editor proceeded to publish the issue, publically demonstrating the censor's limited capabilities and setting a troublesome precedent for future cases.[159] Hastings was on a tour of Northern India at the time and he did not return until July; however, upon his return, the Governor General reviewed the matter of the press with an eye for overhauling the existing legislation.[160] Following what can only be considered an uncharacteristically speedy consultation and decision-making process Hastings offered his solution, and in so doing he signalled the single-most important moment in the history of the Anglo-Indian press: the repeal of explicit censorship with accompanying publishing guidelines.

A FREE PRESS FOR WHOM? REFORMING CALCUTTA'S PRESS REGULATIONS

And so on August 19th, 1818, Hastings rolled back Wellesley's censorship policy, alienating both the Board of Control and his Chief Secretary in the process, and unwittingly giving rise to the notion of a free press in "British Bengal". The new rules were presented to the council chamber on that day and while review by a censor prior to circulation was removed, clear instructions to editors were substituted in its place. Tellingly, editors were, by pain of deportation, to avoid publishing any of the following content:

1. Animadversions on the measures & proceedings of the Honorable Court of Directors or other Public Authorities in England connected with the Government of India, on disquisitions on Political Transactions of the Local Administration, or offensive remarks leveled at the Public conduct of the Members of the Council of the Judges of the Supreme Court, or of the Lord Bishop of Calcutta.

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[159] Barns, *The Indian Press*, 89.
[160] Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 55.

2. Discussions having a tendency to create alarm or suspicion among the Native Population, of any intended interference with their religious opinions or observances.
3. The republication from English, or other Newspapers, of passages coming under any of the above heads, or otherwise calculated to affect the British Power or reputation in India.
4. Private scandal and personal remarks on individuals tending to excite dissension in Society.[161]

Finally, Calcutta's editors were informed that they would be "held personally accountable for whatever they may publish in contravention of the rules now communicated, or which may be otherwise of variance with the general principles of British Law, as established in this Country, and will be proceeded against in each manner as the Governor General in Council may deem applicable to the nature of the offence, for any deviation from them."[162] And so in relatively broad terms, Calcutta's publishers and editors were essentially barred from commenting on the Company's operations on the subcontinent, extending to both the administrative and military matters, and a particular emphasis was placed on the avoidance of any criticism of specific individuals. The primary concern, however, appeared to be any kind of commentary that might offend the religious practices of the Indian population, or tarnish the reputation of the Company in India.[163] Speaking to the continued attempts during the period to administer the region without alienating the largely mixed Hindu and Muslim population, these rules demonstrate continued attempts at governing through an orientalist approach. But, once again, they also demonstrate a continued fixation on behalf of the Company with maintaining an image of British superiority over the Indian population. Given the Company's still delicate position as it transitioned from a period of war and territorial annexation to one of settled administration and political, fiscal, and

[161] *"Relevant Papers and consequent Orders abolishing the Censorship,"*453-455.

[162] Notably, the only punishment available to the Government remained the deportation of offending authors. Ibid., 455.

[163] Although chaplains served the local needs of the Company, English Parliament up to 1813 had repeatedly refused to modify the Company charter to allow missionary work in India. The primary reason for this was a persistent fear that Indians might feel their religion was threatened, which in turn could hurt the Company's commercial ventures and potentially precipitate insurrection. Gauri Viswanathan, "Currying Favor: The Politics of British Educational and Cultural Policy in India, 1813-1854," *Social Text* 19/20 (1988): 90-91.

social reform, the removal of censorship regulations by Hastings should be considered a largely pragmatic response to an ill-defined, outmoded, twenty year old policy. Without any legal recourse for offending Indian and mixed-race authors, the old policy simply could not remain in place, especially given the precedent set through the Heatley incident. And yet, Hastings's policy has so often been interpreted as an attempt to introduce classical liberal, or even proto-democratic, values to Calcutta, the political and intellectual centre of the Eastern Empire.[164]

The most apparent explanation for both the immediate and subsequent interpretations of Hastings's abolition of censorship in Calcutta appears in an often cited speech by the Governor General, given in response to a ceremony held to honour him for his momentous decision. But while the speech certainly emphasizes a strong commitment to freedom of expression, suggesting that a free press can act as an essentially positive force to society, it appears to have been motivated more by political calculation and the goal of engendering greater support among the English community than by genuine ideological commitment. Curiously, in his speech Hastings made no mention of the loophole in the previous policy; the dramatically increased number of publications and the inability of the censors to keep up with the volume; and, of course, the notion that in approving a publication post-review by the censor, it could be interpreted as adding official sanction to the paper's content. Instead, referring to his removal of censorship, he wrote: "I might easily have adopted that procedure without any length of cautious consideration, from my habit of regarding the freedom of publication as a natural right by my fellow subjects, to be

[164] A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed described Hastings at this time as cautious and vacillating. He argues that Hastings's unwillingness to take any extreme measures against the Press resulted from his fear of being perceived as infringing upon liberty of expression in Parliament. This being a core tenant of Whig belief and, more broadly, the perceived right of every Englishman, Hastings appears to have had an eye for his reputation at home. And yet his removal of censorship has been considered one of the most significant changes to the press regulations to date. The analysis does not acknowledge the challenges to the previous policies and the discrepancy highlights Hastings's varied motivations. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 53; It is also worth noting that a free press was a primary point of political philosophy for not only Whigs, but early liberals and radicals alike. The belief was that knowledge, if properly disseminated, would act as a cure-all for ignorance, which in turn could help to strengthen the moral principles of a society. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 75.

narrowed only by special and urgent cause assigned."[165] And asserting that he saw no "direct necessity for those invidious shackles," he went so far as to suggest that precisely because the Empire's power and longevity derived from its careful control of public opinion, sound governance and a free press could only serve to bolster British strength.[166]

Hastings was asserting that a government did not sacrifice any authority by opening itself up to public scrutiny, on the condition that it had operated in a responsible manner. But, rather, in doing so it acquires an "incalculable addition of force." Emphasizing his point further, he continued: "That Government which has nothing to disguise, wields the most powerful instrument that can appertain to Sovereign Rule. It carries with it the unified reliance and effort of the whole mass of the governed and let the triumph of our beloved Country in its awful contest with Tyrant-ridden France speak the value of a spirit to be found only in men accustomed to indulge and express their honest sentiments"[167] This passage, particularly in its evocation of French tyranny, demonstrates the purpose of the address quite clearly. Not only did Hastings publically attribute his decision to the radical notion of a free press as a force for sound governance, but he also explicitly associated it with the character of English society or Englishness writ large.[168] In doing so, he positioned the change as an ideologically-driven reform, implemented in opposition to the country's principle European rival, and motivated by a view for

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[165] "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," 5-8; While Hastings's speech has been reprinted in multiple monographs, a full transcription and analysis of the address appears in John Soldat Malcolm, *The Political History of India: From 1784 to 1823; in Two Volumes*, vol. 2 (Murray: William Clowes, 1826), 302.

[166] "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," 5-8.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Hannah Barker reflects on the connection between the ideology of a free press and a developing sense of Britishness at the time. She argues that the promotion of concepts such as liberty and the notion that Britons were free citizens living in a free state that granted them implicit access to political debates over the nation's future and this contributed to a general association among many citizens that a free press was somehow bound up in English identity. Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760*-1820, 94.

good governance and public transparency.[169] However, the disparity between his stated motivations and the aforementioned challenges to the existing legislation suggests that the Governor General was taking advantage of the opportunity to increase public trust by representing the decision as a liberalizing move.

This dichotomous position appears more explicitly in a response by the Board of Control to Hastings's decision. In writing to the Board to explain his reasoning for the policy change, Hastings maintained the position that in eliminating censorship editors would be held personally responsible for the content they published, thus removing any suggestion that this content held any official sanction.[170] It is important to note here that the new approach simply added more ambiguity to the enforcement of the press rules, and while the role of the censor was removed, the newly substituted rules still set out very clear boundaries as to what could and could not be published, particularly relating to what the Indian population could be exposed. This was made clear in a letter from the Board, which strongly condemned Hastings's policy and the motivation behind it. "It is clear from the tenour [sic] of these new Regulations, and from the nature and extent of the restrictions imposed by them, that you have not intended to liberate the Press of Calcutta from all control on the part of Government," it stated, referring directly to Hastings's infamous speech to the Madras delegation.[171]

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[169] Adding to James Mill's *History of India*, Horace-Hayman Wilson argued that Hastings's hope in abolishing censorship was to gain a better understanding of public opinion regarding the Government's policies. Further still, he hoped it would engender a will among the British public to cooperate more enthusiastically with the Government. Wilson, *History of British India*, 582.

[170] "Proposed Despatch to Bengal relative to abolition of the Censorship, sent to Board of Control 7th April 1820 and not returned," IOR/H/538, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon (1819-1822), 1-3, British Library.

[171] The letter was sent on April 7, 1820, which emphasizes the long distance and resultant length of time it took to exchange correspondence between the Home Government in Britain and the Bengal Government. Ibid.

The Board concluded by strongly expressing their belief that the new system would not benefit the Government, the public of Calcutta, or the editors."[172] To conclude, they argued that because Hastings had introduced the measure so hastily, with little consultation with the Company administration, it only invited danger, particularly because the other Presidencies of Madras and Bombay still retained their censorship rules.[173] This was a primary point of emphasis, and despite the fact that many have characterized the motivations of the Board as deeply conservative and reactionary, the tone and content of the letter offer a very different view.[174] Instead of dismissing the reforms in principle, the letter criticized the speed and extent of the changes, made without adequate correspondence with the Board, and it expressed their hope that a uniform policy could be introduced across the British held territories.[175] Despite the Board's disapproval and their request to rescind the policy until a more appropriate response to the matter could be agreed upon, however, Hastings's held firm and the illusion of a free press in Calcutta took hold among a large segment of the city's English population.

Therefore, the primary significance of Hastings's speech was to strongly suggest to both the Anglo-Indian community and to the native population that free expression of opinion was a natural good to society; and despite the fact that much of the city's population owed allegiance to the Company in some sense, this declaration encouraged some to see the speech as an approval of the birth of a proto-civil society in Calcutta.[176] Similar to the years prior to Wellesley's arrival,

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] The Board and the Chief Secretary throughout this period are often described as being unduly reactionary. Ahmed argued that Hastings's new policy simply "could not be effective owing to the unsympathetic and uncooperative attitude of the Court of Directors as well as of his own officials, and also to his somewhat vacillating attitude." Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 2; And yet, this view does not take into account the various challenges the Company faced at the time, in addition to the threat posed by the policy's loophole.
[175] "Proposed Despatch to Bengal relative to abolition of the Censorship, sent to Board of Control 7th April 1820 and not returned,"1-3.
[176] Peter Marshall emphasizes this point clearly, arguing that the British presence in India was constituted by three groups: the Company's merchants and civil servants, soldiers, and—particularly since 1813—private traders. This latter group, then, was the only segment of the population not directly employed by the Company. But as they lived

the removal of censorship may very well have led only to minor conflicts with local editors. And with only a handful of experiences to draw conclusions from, Hastings likely did not anticipate the arrival of a firebrand, young editor, who would devote his early career to challenging the limits of civil engagement in British Calcutta. Indeed, the course of events over the next five years was heavily influenced by the presence of a stalwart mariner and author, James Silk Buckingham, who took advantage of the Governor General's new policy to begin a career as a newspaper editor, political commentator, and social reform advocate.

AN ENGLISHMAN IN CALCUTTA: BUCKINGHAM'S *CALCUTTA JOURNAL*

In his time, James Silk Buckingham was a polarizing figure, and yet he was also highly representative of this period and of its rapidly shifting social and political attitudes.[177] While English radicalism did not emerge as a coherent doctrine until later in the decade, Buckingham's beliefs closely aligned with its core tenants, particularly as they were expressed in his articles.[178] Accordingly, he has been referred to most often in historical accounts as a free-trader, abolitionist, and early proponent of colonial self-government. This study, however, suggests that his attempts to establish an intellectually engaged community in British India, extending to both Britons and Indians alike, should be regarded as his most significant endeavour.[179] He had

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in India only on the sufferance of the Company and could be deported with little justification, in addition to there being no representative institutions to speak of, they remained entirely beholden to the Company. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead*, 104.

[177] Buckingham often appears in passing mention in histories of this period and is often described only for his ability to avoid punishment under the press regulations. Philips, *The East India Company*, 223; As this study shows, it was not so much that he avoided the rules insomuch as he interpreted them with vigour and was quick to point out inconsistencies.

[178] Radicalism has been identified as a specific ideology which emerged in England during the 1820s. The platform blends appeals to universal suffrage; the economic theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, with a particular emphasis on free trade; and secularism. J.C.D. Clark, "Religion and the Origins of Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*, ed. Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 241.

[179] For a full bibliographical entry for James Silk Buckingham, please see G. F. R. Barker, "Buckingham, James Silk (1786–1855)," rev. Felix Driver, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, eee*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian

initially set out for India with the stated goal of finding work to support his family in England, but almost immediately upon arrival he dedicated himself to social reform and the promotion of education and literacy in Calcutta. In September 1818, recognizing a clear opportunity to meet both of these goals, Buckingham opened the first daily newspaper in India, the *Calcutta Journal*. And therefore within a single month of the abolition of censorship, Buckingham clearly outlined an ambitious vision for the establishment of a literary and political community in British India.[180]

With the *Calcutta Journal*, Buckingham did have a profound encouraging influence on burgeoning Anglo-Indian press in British India, both as a vehicle for general education and reform, but also in his efforts to establish an internationally focused paper in Calcutta. Despite his clearly expressed political leanings, however, many of his actions in Calcutta between 1818 and 1824 appear to have been motivated, or at least augmented, by a set of experiences he had prior to arriving in Calcutta that informed his expectations. To begin, despite identifying himself as a proud Englishman, Buckingham maintained a strongly internationalist perspective. This is a crucial point of emphasis for understanding his intentions for the paper, and one which is reminiscent of the experiences and outlook of Abu Taleb. Similar to the Persian scholar, Buckingham spent a considerable amount of time travelling and immersing himself in other cultures and societies.[181] Like Taleb, he also compiled his observations and published them in an account titled *Travels in Palestine.*[182] Moreover, he also grew up in the bustling port town of

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Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. David Cannadine, January 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3855 (accessed February 18, 2017).

[180] Entitled "Prospectus of a new Paper to be Entitled *The Calcutta Journal, or Political, Commercial, and Literary* Gazette," Buckingham clearly outlined the direction of his new paper. James Silk Buckingham, *The Calcutta Government Gazette,* September 24, 1818. 1; Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 129.

[181] His biographer, Ralph E. Turner, clearly emphasizes this point from the outset. He describes him as a student of cultures whose career took him to England, India, Europe, America, and through Egyptian and Ottoman controlled territories. He suggests that in comparing these experiences, he became an ardent believer in the efficacy of social change. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 11.

[182] James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine, Through the Countries of Bashan and Gilead, East of the River Jordan* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1822).

Falmouth, known for its cosmopolitanism and religious diversity.[183] But he also very clearly recognized the potential of the printing press and the role it could play in British India. While a radical in practice, Buckingham's beliefs aligned closely with the primary tenants of early liberalism. For example, he was primarily concerned with the restraint of authority and the right of the citizen to engage in dialogue with the government. He argued aggressively for a governing system which would protect citizens, their beliefs, and property, in addition to his concern for the improvement of moral and material life in a society.[184] With his relentless curiosity, indefinable roots, and sometimes scandalous behaviour, Buckingham embodied the type of modern individual Benjamin Constant described with the titular character of his famous novel, *Adolphe.* Like many liberals and radicals during the period, Buckingham was devoted to the idea of progress through intellectual and technological development—endeavours that he felt would inevitably yield positive effects on any society. As a testament to this philosophy, prior to opening the *Calcutta Journal*, he even spent time in the court of the Egyptian Pasha, Muhammed Ali, primarily to discuss European advancements in commerce and agriculture, and argue for the introduction of Western science and technology to the region.[185]

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[183] In his autobiography, Buckingham spends a number of pages describing the bustling port city of Falmouth, England, where he grew up. The constant flow of travellers to and from the city would have undoubtedly have encouraged a more international perspective in the young mariner. James Silk Buckingham, *Autobiography of James Silk Buckingham; Including his Voyages, Travels, Adventures, Speculations, Successes and Failures,* Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 6; Falmouth is also described by Buckingham's biographer as the single most religiously diverse area of England at the time. Alongside the Anglican majority, the region is said to have featured Quaker, Independent, Baptist, and Methodist sects, in addition to Unitarians, Jews, and Roman Catholics. See Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 46.

[184] In a recent survey of the history of liberalism, Edmund Fawcett uses these examples to distinguish liberalism as a general doctrine from democracy. It is an important distinction to make in this case, as Buckingham was not advocating for democratic reforms insomuch as he sought political and economic reform to alleviate perceived Company abuses of the British and native population of British India. Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*, 20.

[185] As a navigator and Arabic speaker, Buckingham was apparently granted sole access to the Egyptian ruler. Buckingham argued for the introduction of Western science and practical technologies from Europe, and he suggested that envoys of young Egyptian men be sent to study shops, shipyards, and factories to master the technical arts. Notably, Buckingham also spoke ill of Western universities, viewing them as elite institutions reserved for aristocrats alone. Buckingham, *Autobiography*, 267-280.

Prior to this experience, Buckingham had sailed to Bombay to partake in the recently opened private Indian trade. Upon his arrival, though, he was apprehended by local authorities and lacking the appropriate license to reside in India he was forced to leave. However, interestingly, as the mariner argued his case and attempted to obtain a license to remain, he was identified by Company representatives as an affable character, who was, in addition to other talents, a particularly good writer.[186] In Buckingham's view, Europeans were bound to arrive in India without a license, given the proliferation of trade in the region and the lack of awareness for the requirement. Therefore, in addition to his own defense, he penned an appeal to the Company to amend the Act so it might acknowledge this reality.[187] This moment is telling: before Buckingham was granted official sanction to reside in India, he was already petitioning the Company and urging practical reforms to address impractical policies. This would become something of a recurring theme in the years to follow, but, more significantly, the episode instilled in Buckingham a certain critical eye towards the Company, particularly in relation to its despotic executive powers.[188] Following his first scuffle with Company representatives, Buckingham temporarily resumed his work as a merchant sailor, but worked in the meantime to acquire official sanction to return to India.[189]

Upon his return to India, Buckingham wasted little time before dedicating himself to his goal of establishing a proto-civil society in Calcutta to infuse British India with a trans-national

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[186] "Cases of James Silk Buckingham and John Tosh," 4-5.
[187] Ibid., 20, 23.
[188] For a discussion of the British "garrison state" and the governing approach that defined British India, please see Christopher Alan Bayly, "The British and Indigenous Peoples, 1760-1860: Power, Perception and Identity," in *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples 1600-1850*, ed., Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 19-41.
[189] As a merchant looking for a respectable income, one of Buckingham's primary arguments in exposing the absurdity of the licensing requirement for Britons in India was the fact that upon his departure from England, he had no intention of visiting India. Therefore, in his view, the requirement of a license issued in London seemed to discriminate against English merchants who worked from alternate destinations. Importantly, the foundation for many of Buckingham's arguments was his belief that he deserved the freedoms and liberties of a freeborn Briton, despite finding himself in Company administered territory. Buckingham, *Autobiography*, 373.

focus, and, more importantly, to act as a check on the perceived abuses of the Company. In December of 1815, he left Alexandria and made the overland passage to India via Baghdad and Persia where he encountered widespread illiteracy among the local population.[190] This experience appears to have further motivated Buckingham in his campaign to alleviate the plight of the common man through the spread of education, a dimension of his work which took on heightened significance in the following years. With encouragement and support from John Palmer, a local merchant of considerable wealth and influence, Buckingham established the *Calcutta Journal* with its debut issue appearing on Friday, October 2, 1818.[191] The mariner-turned-editor's goal of providing Europeans in India with a reliable, consistent source of information about international events is readily apparent from even a passing glance at any issue during the first year of publication.

Indeed, the contents of the paper initially centred on three related themes, namely, the need to provide European merchants and troops with news of world events; the value of newspapers as a vehicle for disseminating and receiving knowledge; and the perils, perceived by the editor, of Government-sponsored censorship. Articles regularly described events in Europe, with examples ranging from Spain, Naples, France, and St. Petersburg. But the *Journal* also included news from America, and, crucially, local areas, including like New South Wales, Java,

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[190] Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 89.

[191] This urging should be considered significant as John Palmer was easily one of the most important and influential English figures in Calcutta during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. As the head of a major agency house in Calcutta, he was referred to as the "Prince of Merchants" by no less than the Governor General himself. In his recent study, Anthony Webster suggests that in sponsoring the *Calcutta Journal*, Palmer contributed to his already poor standing with the Company's administration. Significantly, he also argues that Palmer was already viewed with considerable suspicion by the administration due to his deep ties with the Indian merchant community. Anthony Webster, *The Richest East India Merchant: The Life and Business of John Palmer of Calcutta, 1767-1836* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 5, 33; For a recently published study of the influence of the agency houses on the Company's administration and policy development during the early nineteenth- to mid-nineteenth century, please see Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics 1790-1860* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2009).

Madras, and Calcutta.[192] Without a doubt, Buckingham was deeply motivated by Hastings's policy change and even moreso by the speech the Governor General gave in response to the Madras ceremony. In fact, he went so far as to repeatedly reprint the speech and to reference it often in the paper.[193] For Buckingham, newspapers represented the single most important check on abuses by the Government, and in this fledgling British commercial hub the importance of this medium could not be overstated, nor could the "natural rights" of an Englishman be restricted. "England," he argued, "owes her superiority to other nations, chiefly to the freedom of her press, and the wide diffusion of information among her people; and never was the profound maxim that 'Knowledge is Strength' more fully verified than in the enviable distinction which she enjoys."[194] Moreover, Buckingham felt that those with the ability to write held a personal obligation to "demonstrate useful truths…and to direct the public opinion to the promotion of national prosperity."[195] In setting these lofty goals for the paper, Buckingham was clearly attempting to demonstrate the service his paper sought to offer to Calcutta, and to British India as a whole. As this study reveals, he sought to infuse Calcutta with an international perspective, and he even set out to establish a proto-civil society in Calcutta through the paper, which would take in grievances from the city's European population and act as a check on the Company's actions. Furthermore, albeit slightly later, Buckingham sought to include Indians in the making of this hybrid society, having made close connections with some of Calcutta's most influential Bengali

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[192] Speaking to the importance of receiving reliable, consistent information during this period, news was received directly from incoming private merchant and Company ships. Upon arriving in Calcutta, reporters and editors would rush to the docks to receive whatever intelligence was provided. *Calcutta Journal,* October 20, 1819, 1-2.
[193] *Calcutta Journal,* July 27, 1819, 357.
[194] Clearly articulating his wish to see the establishment of a civil society in Calcutta, Buckingham saw the papers as a vehicle for discussing potentially repressive policies by the Bengal Government, favouritism, or other forms of corruption. In highlighting inconsistent, arbitrary, or even despotic rule, he hoped to raise awareness, contributing to increased scrutiny on the Government and eventual reform as a result. *Calcutta Journal*, July 1, 1819, 1-2.
[195] Ibid.

merchants and intellectuals.[196] Curiously, he justified his actions as those of an Englishman with certain obligations to his country, and in many respects he was attempting to import the political perspectives he had learned in England and to test the limits of their deployment in this peculiar colonial circumstance. But, most importantly, Buckingham's controversial efforts also exposed a paradoxical dichotomy between the Bengal Government's rhetoric, in this case Hastings's pronouncements on freedom of the press, and freedom of the press in practice.

In many respects, the removal of censorship was a policy experiment, implemented to address a perceived threat to the Company's reputation through a long recognized loophole in the press regulations. However, it was presented to the public as a radically liberal reform, intended to foster greater collaboration between the Company's representatives and the English community of Calcutta. The discrepancy is emblematic of the tensions between various facets of the Company's administration, including the Governor General, his Chief Secretary, the Board of Control, and Parliament, inasmuch as it also demonstrates the practical challenges Company administrators faced in this somewhat unprecedented imperial arrangement. In a recent work, Robert Darnton has argued that censorship has generally been studied through two different approaches: stories of struggle for freedom of expression against repressive regimes, and accounts of the various ways in which communication can be inhibited.[197] In the case of Buckingham's struggle with the Bengal Government, the former approach is more applicable, and yet this is not a story of exalted victory against repressive forces.

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[196] Chief among them was a close friend of Buckingham, Rammohun Roy, a figure of great significance to the "Bengal Renaissance" and the emergence of vernacular newspapers in Bengal. Bayly, "Rammohan Roy," 6.
[197] Robert Darnton, *Censors at work: how states shaped literature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 17.

A crucial point of emphasis is that Darnton's work focuses on periods in which the state had a relatively, if not entirely, rigid control over the society it sought to administer.[198] In India during this period, however, the Company-state did not possess the clear legal and political structures to enable this degree of control, and the preceding incidents illustrate this clearly.[199] Despite the inherently despotic style of administration, the government of British India featured multiple levels of administration, separated by vast distance; ill-defined rules developed in particular contexts and often no longer reflective of the current situation; and non-state actors, including Buckingham, who worked tirelessly to test the boundaries of seemingly liberal policies, and in an age characterized by the emergence of liberalism in Britain and India.[200] In his study, Darnton also emphasized the point that speech acts, as they are interpreted by linguistic philosophers, are intended to produce tangible effects in their environment. [201] Whether uttered or written, these acts carry important ideas which effected real world change. To be sure, Buckingham was very aware of this fact, and accordingly he posed a considerable threat to the Company, given its delicate position.

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[198] Examples include eighteenth century France, Communist East Germany, and post-1857 India under the Raj.

[199] Chief Secretary William Butterworth Bayley described the lack of a legal mechanism sufficient to control the presses in a letter to the Board of Control in 1822. Publications that were issued within the Bengal Supreme Court's jurisdiction were subject only to British libel laws, which, of course, did not apply to the Indian population of the province. "Do. by John Fendall 8th Oct. 1822," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India (1815-1822), 746, British Library.

[200] Christopher Bayly has characterized the administration of British India as a military despotism. However, as argued above, the state was plagued by a number of challenges owing to the small population of Europeans, the distance from England, and the limited financial resources. Bayly, *Indian Society*, 84; In his final monograph, Bayly identified this period as the birth of Indian liberalism, despite emphasizing its premature decline during the 1830s and 1840s. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 26-41.

[201] Darnton, *Censors at work*, 19.

TWO

A CONDITIONALLY FREE PRESS: THE SUPPRESSION OF CALCUTTA'S EMERGENT, HYBRID CIVIL SOCIETY

"'It is Aquinas's fault,' said Mrs. Cadwallader. 'Why didn't he use his interest to get Ladislaw made an attaché or sent to India? That is how families get rid of troublesome sprigs.'"[202]

The amended press rules introduced to Bengal by the Marquis of Hastings in 1818 precipitated a series of pitched debates between Government administrators and a number of interest groups over the limits of free expression in Britain's Indian territories. In Calcutta's journals, British private merchants, free-trade lobbyists, British soldiers, and, notably, Indian elites and the mixed-race residents of Calcutta argued various positions in response to the notion of a free press in colonial Bengal. Accordingly, the following two chapters analyze the Bengal Government's response to the emergence of a proto-civil society[203] through Calcutta's early press between 1819 and 1824 in order to identify and contextualize the Bengal Government's primary areas of concern with regard to the development of colonial policy in the province.[204] Through a roughly chronological analysis of the events comprising the "Buckingham Affair"[205] these

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[202] George Eliot, (1871-2) 1994, *Middlemarch* (London: William Blackwood and Sons. Reprint, London: Penguin Classics, 1994), 380.

[203] Various authors have evoked Habermas to describe the formulation of a small, narrowly interested public which emerged in Calcutta during this period. While the following chapter will focus on the interaction between elite Indian and European intellectuals and the formation of an international public sphere, this chapter focuses on the emergence of "public opinion" through the free press debates. This public emerged as an anti-authoritarian cohort, determined to question the nature and extent of Company rule. Daniel E. White, *From Little London to Little Bengal: Religion, Print, and Modernity in Early British India, 1793-1835* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 22.

[204] Throughout this chapter, the use of monolithic political and religious categories will be avoided whenever possible in order to emphasize the essentially hybrid nature of the region. As White has argued, it is crucial not to equate terms such as "reformist" with "liberal" or "radical", or "orthodox" with "conservative". The reason for this is that during the early nineteenth century, these terms were often used quite loosely, as well as the fact that opposing religious and political categories could blend into one another or overlap depending on the circumstances or debate. White, *From Little London to Little Bengal*, 8.

[205] As mentioned, The *Calcutta Journal* was the single most influential and polarizing publication during the period, and will therefore constitute the primary focus of this study. While Calcutta featured a number of other publications

chapters argue that a hybrid civil society failed to materialize in the city largely because of the Government's efforts to separate key interest groups into discrete factions, in order to prevent the development of a coherent, unified front capable of contesting official policy. This was achieved through efforts to restrict or curtail the distribution of Buckingham's radical tracts to regions outside of Calcutta, but it is also evident in the Bengal Government's reactions to a number of specific controversies, resulting from articles printed in the *Calcutta Journal*. Some have characterized Buckingham as a particularly troublesome figure, largely attributing to him responsibility for the Government's decision to reintroduce censorship and drastically tighten control over Calcutta's presses due to the public criticism of the Bengal Government and its high ranking administrators.[206] A more accurate explanation for the bold policy shift, however, was the Governor General and Chief Secretary's concern over the editor's frank discussion of local politics, his focus on specifically Indian topics, and his efforts to expand the reach of his paper and to spread information to the more remote areas of the subcontinent—areas beyond the Bengal Government's control and influence.

Despite the relative peace during the period, this chapter also suggests that mutiny remained an overwhelming concern of Government policy makers during the period, a point made all too clear in the Government's campaign to reintroduce censorship. This is significant as it not only complicated early attempts to introduce liberal reforms in the Presidency, but it also

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during this period, none achieved the same degree of popularity or, perhaps directly related to this, sparked as much controversy with the Bengal Government. There was one exception, however; *The John Bull in the East*, a Tory paper considered to be the official mouthpiece of the Bengal Government, was established in 1821 and it rose to significant popularity with the city's more conservative readership. In an interesting twist, Reverend James Bryce, the paper's editor, also played a significant role in the press debates, eventually coming into direct conflict with John Adam. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 77.

[206] Buckingham is often described as launching "scathing attacks on the Company government and its leading individuals", and yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the true justification for Buckingham being deported was a far more strategic and practical solution, largely informed by the Government's concern over Buckingham's influence over Bengal's private merchants, the Company's Army, and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the local elite Indian community. Prason Sonwalker, "Indian Journalism in the Colonial Crucible: A Nineteenth Century Story of Political Protest," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 5 (October 2015): 626.

resulted in a new level of scrutiny on behalf of Government administrators regarding the European soldiery, a constituent element of Calcutta's fledgling print culture, and an eventual focus in debates over the appropriateness of a free press in British India.

Fear of large scale mutiny by the European or Indian soldiery characterized much of the Company's tenure on the subcontinent, but with the advent of this period of unprecedented administrative reform, palpable concern remained, undoubtedly worsened by the mounting tension of Britain's domestic reform movement.[207] Nevertheless, for this brief, five year period, Calcutta's Anglo-Indian presses operated in a relatively unrestrained manner, prompting the establishment of a number of English publications, in addition to the emergence of a selection of Indian-language papers.[208] Cumulatively, they amounted to an extraordinary volume of printed material, and, despite its limitations in scope and range, this thriving lettered community quickly entrenched itself in both Calcutta's local politics and the politics of empire as a whole.[209]

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[207] Culminating in the Representation of the People Act, 1832, the domestic reform movement in Britain throughout the opening decades of the nineteenth century marked a distinct change in the relationship between the English Crown and Parliament, and the citizenry. It was a compromise meant to address a myriad of issues raised by a disaffected population who argued fervently for greater representation and, accordingly, parliamentary reform. See Eric J. Evans, *The Great Reform Act of 1832* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1; Developing alongside, and directly related to this groundswell, several political pressure groups grew and took on greater significance in the cities of Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow during this period, all dedicated to the abolition of the East India Company monopolies and privileges. These were organized, sophisticated movements that maintained continual contact with one another as they lobbied Parliament for reform. Directly related to this movement, the period also witnessed the birth of a similar provincial network of commercial and industrial interests in cities of the east, including Calcutta, Bombay, Canton, Penang, and eventually Hong Kong. While the establishment of Chambers of Commerce in these cities evinces this rising reformist movement, the emergent public that developed through its participation in Calcutta's press stands as another clear example. On this subject, see Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, 9.

[208] Following the removal of censorship, several Indian publications emerged. Of note, Rammohun Roy's *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, or the *Mirror of News*, was first published on the 12th of April 1822. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change,* 91; The emergence of Indian-language newspapers and the Indian public will be the focus of the next chapter.

[209] To illustrate, the following list includes the English papers which were circulated through the post office from Calcutta by 1828, following the demise of *The Calcutta Journal*. Numbers indicate the number of weekly subscribers: *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 1,089; *John Bull*, 1, 432, *The India Gazette,* 561; *The Government Gazette*, 595; *Calcutta Chronicle*, 397; *Persian*, 26; Barns, *The Indian Press*, 181-182. Without a doubt, Calcutta with respect to frequency of publication by 1830 was second in importance only to London, and superior to ever other destination under British dominion. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change,* 69.

Undoubtedly, the catalyst for this period of strident civic interference in Company affairs was James Silk Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal*, and the series of public controversies that followed its debut. Born of the remnants of several failed, limited-run publications, the *Calcutta Journal* became overwhelmingly popular among the city's European residents almost immediately after its inaugural issue.[210] However, with its wide reach and novel focus, the paper drew immediate scorn from the Government's administration.[211] A politically savvy, outspoken, and thoroughly truculent individual, Buckingham became a source of contention in Bengal almost immediately after the *Journal* was established. With his ties to notable Indian elites and support from the free trade lobby, the editor riddled his publication with explicit discussion of local and international politics.[212] But more controversially, the stark manner in which Buckingham conveyed his radical platform, and his repeated emphasis of the ambiguities in Hastings's new press rules, reignited a broad discussion about the appropriateness of a colonial press in this uncertain environment.[213] As a result, the arrival of Buckingham and the establishment of his paper "raised a lightning rod"[214] in Calcutta, and in a mere few months, the publication had completely alienated the entire conservative element of the Government, posing a

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[210] By 1822, subscribers to the *Calcutta Journal* reached approximately 1,000, mainly civil servants, military officers, and private merchants. The estimated value of Buckingham's enterprise was approximately £40,000, including a new building to house his new Columbian press, which he imported from England with accompanying English, Greek, Hebraic, and Arabic fonts. Buckingham owned three fourths of the total stock, while one hundred purchasers owned £100 shares. Barns, *The Indian Press,* 95.
[211] See discussion in preceding chapter, 25.
[212] From the outset, Buckingham's identification with the free-trade cause and his ties to elite British merchants in the area were clear. John Palmer, arguably the most powerful merchant in Calcutta and a towering figure among the leaders of the city's private agency houses, was a friend of Buckingham and had a large part in the initial establishment of the editor's journal. This offers clear justification for Buckingham's decidedly international focus, particularly related to considerations of the Empire. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 128.
[213] Providing a retrospective explanation for his eventual deportation, Buckingham succinctly claimed that his plight resulted purely from his campaign to secure freedom of expression and to support the free trade lobby: "I was next banished from Calcutta, although then furnished with the Company's permission or licence to reside there, for having dared to attempt the advocacy of English laws in opposition to irresponsible power, and to plead for the freedom of commerce and the freedom of opinion combined. "Mr. Buckingham's Alleged Retainer from the EIC," OMF/IOL/3596, Explanatory report on the plan and object of Mr. Buckingham's Lectures on the Oriental World preceded by A sketch of his life, travels, and writings, and of the proceedings on the East India Monopoly During the Past Year, 1-2, British Library.
[214] White, "From Little London to Little Bengal," 24.

significant challenge to Hastings's new policy, and driving a broad discussion about the future course of Calcutta's emergent print industry.[215]

Similar to the debates that took place prior to, and during, the immediate stages of Richard Wellesley's administration, the repeal of explicit censorship prompted a broad conversation between representatives of the Bengal Government and Calcutta's elite about precisely what could be deemed safe for publication, and, intimately bound to this, who could take part in these discussions, particularly when related to matters of reform or Government policy, generally.[216] Both considerations speak directly to the Government's willingness, or lack thereof in this case, to entertain the notion of a proto-civil society in Calcutta, a group which could represent the social, political, and economic interests of Calcutta's European inhabitants or, more broadly, also represent the interests of Calcutta's Indians elites. But while similar debates were taking place in other areas of the Empire during the period,[217] British India embodied a

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[215] John Adam, former political secretary to the Marquis of Hastings, was nominated as acting Governor General following Hastings's resignation in January 1823. During this brief, seven month period prior to Lord Amherst taking command, Adam moved quickly to re-impose censorship as an interim measure. As the next chapter will discuss, while censorship was once again lifted with the advent of the Bentinck administration, the type of broad engagement, featuring both Indians and Britons as active participants, gave way to a more segregated paper culture. Furthermore, Bentinck's decision in 1835 to replace Persian with English as the official language of government and the higher courts had a significant impact on the Indian-language press. As a result of this change, Hindu literate castes also rapidly switched from Persian to English instruction in order to promote access to coveted civil service positions. Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 68.

[216] The period between the introduction of censorship by Wellesley through to Hastings's reformed rules of 1819 has recently taken on greater significance with the recognition that historians of the period have often failed to acknowledge the complex interplay of politics, economics, and ideology that shaped the relationship between the Company and the Mughal Empire, as well as the local inhabitants. Noted historian Christopher Bayly recently argued that neither of these considerations can be described as dominant or casually preceding another, an argument that begs for closer analysis of this key period of transition. Christopher Alan Bayly, "Writing World History," *History Today* 54, No. 2 (February 2004): 39.

[217] For example, similar debates took place in New South Wales, the Cape Colony, and even as far afield as Siam. The question of press freedom was determined by very different circumstances in each of these imperial arenas, and yet similar themes emerge: namely, the struggle between unofficial authors and the Government, the raising of important legal and constitutional issues through debates over what could be deemed appropriate for publication, and, as McKenzie argues, the emergence of a broad crisis of legal pluralism spreading throughout the Empire. Each of these informed the other to some degree, but given India's privileged position among Britain's imperial holdings, the Buckingham Affair represented a significant, precedent setting struggle between the Government and independent Britons. For a broader view of these debates, please see Kirsten McKenzie, "'The Laws of his Own Country': Defamation, Banishment and the Problem of Legal Pluralism in the 1820s Cape Colony," *The Journal of*

somewhat anomalous position within a growing British Empire, owing in large part to a number of factors: namely, the country's distant proximity to the metropole; its rich, readily visible cultural history and pre-existing social and political forms; and its overwhelming size, population, and vast economic potential.[218] These important factors indisputably affected policy decisions, strongly urging government actors to adopt a fiercely defensive and cautious approach to the dissemination of news and ideas in print.

Whether Britain's Indian possessions truly constituted a unique imperial arrangement does not matter as much as the fact that some Government administrators perceived it to be the case, and they framed their concerns and developed policy with this in mind. While historians have recently begun to focus on the conflicts, challenges, and ever present threats which characterized much of the British imperial story, there has been a continued tendency to write rise-and-fall narratives, which often tend to obliterate this important context, or, more indirectly, emphasize a sense of imperial glory and post-war decline.[219] And yet, dissent and resistance were absolutely fundamental to the shaping of the Empire, in the most broad, general sense, as well as in the specific moments and the immediate decisions imperial agents faced on the ground.[220] This study, therefore, necessarily focuses on the vicissitudes of empire, that is, the sudden, unexpected

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Imperial and Commonwealth History 43, no. 5 (March 2015): 787-806; Thanapol Limapichart, "The emergence of the Siamese public sphere: colonial modernity, print culture and the practice of criticism (1860s-1910s)" *South East Asia Research* 17, no. 3 (November 2009): 361-399; Hardwick, "Vestry politics," 87-108.

[218] Marshall echoes this sentiment, describing the peculiar nature of British India at the time, but he directs his focus squarely on Calcutta, arguing that late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Calcutta can be considered the first sustained encounter zone between Asian intellectuals and Western thinkers, yet another important consideration in studying the region, and an important consideration for the following chapter. PJ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2000): 307.

[219] Despite Burton's focus, dispute and discord within the Empire have, in fact, long been recognized by historians. The value of Burton's study is in the re-emphasis of this perspective. Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4; For similar studies, please see Colley, *Captives*; Jon Wilson, *The Chaos of Empire: The British Raj and the Conquest of India* (Philadelphia: PublicAffairs, 2016); Marshall, *Bengal*: *The British Bridgehead*; and Richard Gotts, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London: Verso, 2011).

[220] Ibid., 1.

twists and unforeseen challenges that so strongly complicated and informed policy decisions, in order to present a more nuanced assessment of the battle over press freedom in Bengal.

To the Bengal Government's inner administrative circle, the British Empire in India was one of reputation, status, and opinion in the eyes of Indians and Britons alike, and therefore merited special consideration.[221] As it related to free expression of ideas, extreme caution was advocated.[222] The concern was that any article deemed seditious, inflammatory, derisive, or even merely critical could upset the delicate stability of the Eastern Empire by encouraging further criticism of the Government, or awakening anti-Company sentiment in the territories, in either the local Indian population or the Indian and European soldiery. Yet, in addition to the spirited demands for the extension of English liberties demanded by British residents, the Government was simultaneously forced to pragmatically address very real calls for reform from Indians and Britons alike. As argued in the previous chapter, despite Hastings's attempt to frame his amended press rules as a politically inclusive, liberal reform, they were a far more practical compromise, made specifically to address loopholes in Wellesley's 1799 legislation.[223] Government administrators feared mutiny in 1818. Despite the newfound stability of the Presidencies, these fears stemmed in large part from the prodigious economic, political, and territorial changes following the Charter Act of 1813, coupled with the escalating tension of the domestic reform movement in Britain.[224] With this in mind, a critical consideration in analyzing the Bengal

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[221] Something that was clear to both the Company's administrators and politicians at home, the meagre British presence in India meant that its power rested less on the circulation of capital or brute force, but more so on opinion and reputation. The Company could not be seen to be vulnerable in the eyes of the subcontinent's inhabitants. As she succinctly puts it, "the British had to be seen to win in India, because—bluntly—they could not afford to be seen often to be losing." Colley, *Captives*, 274-75.

[222] The phrase "Empire of Opinion" was deployed often throughout these debates. In this particular instance Hastings used it in his initial chastisement of Buckingham. "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," 5-8.

[223] Please see previous chapter for full articulation of this argument.

[224] Linda Colley's important study of the challenges facing the British Empire as a whole includes a lengthy section on the various areas of concern in British India, arguing that fear of mutiny was a continual and pressing concern for

Government's response to the challenges posed by Calcutta's unrestrained press was not so much the intended audience of the papers, so much as the unintended audience.[225] And, as a result, questions of who had immediate access to the papers came directly to the fore.

THE STAMP QUESTION: ATTEMPTING TO EXTEND THE LIMITS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Histories of the Anglo-Indian press during this period have alternatively argued for essentially nationalistic or generally teleological interpretations that treat this episode as either a continuation of the development of Indian democracy through the establishment of independent presses, or as an episodic moment of what could have been, emphasizing this period of clear engagement between British and Indian liberals.[226] Buckingham's conflicts with members of the Bengal Government, particularly Chief Secretaries John Adam and William Butterworth Bayley, comprise the bulk of prior studies on the emergence of the Anglo-Indian press, and yet a critical dimension has often been omitted from the discussion. Contemporaries well understood these circumstances, and the majority of instances when Buckingham clashed with representatives of

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Company administrators throughout this period. She points out that by the 1820s, British dominion had so rapidly expanded as to encompass one fifth of the world's population. This rapid spread created a situation where individual servants of the empire can be described as "ubiquitous intruders" and "inherently and sometimes desperately vulnerable." Colley, *Captives*, 4, 5; For a full analysis of the challenges British imperial agents faced in India, please see Ibid., 241-266.

[225] In terms of audience, the question of how many Indian subjects were reading the papers was of considerable importance, but this also extended to lower level soldiers in the military and sepoy troops, as well.

[226] Emblematic of the former consideration, Margarita Barns's seminal study of the Anglo Indian press explicitly suggested a causal relationship between the emergence of the Anglo-Indian press and the eventual progression of Indian democracy following the post-Second World War partition. Barns, *The Indian Press;* As Cyril Henry Philips has argued, in taking a democratic standpoint, Barns appears outwardly dismissive of the Bengal Government's elite administrators for their autocratic tendencies. And yet a crucial point of distinction is the essentially autocratic nature of British India at the time. In a state where the government could only be removed through revolution, the circulation of ideas through print appeared as a serious threat to the status quo. Cyril Henry Philips, "Review of *The Indian Press*, by M. Barns," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 3 (1940): 820; Similarly, Partha Chatterjee has criticized Christopher Bayly for failing to stress how Rammohun Roy's role in the emergence of constitutional liberalism in India, while significant, did not end up leading to any particular outcome, as a result of the Bengal Government's harsh crackdown on early attempts at liberal reform during the period of the Great Rebellion. Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 155; Bayly, "Rammohan Roy," 25-41; However, during the same year, in an almost pre-emptive response to this, Bayly included an entire chapter of his final monograph to describe this significant break in the development of Indian liberalism. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 104-131.

the Bengal Government fell under two themes: perceived slights on Calcutta's British elites, including general insults and allegations of favouritism in the nomination of key positions by the Bengal Government;[227] and discussion of anything that fell under the broad title of "military matters".[228] A lesser known dimension of Buckingham's campaign to establish a lettered, intellectual community in British India through his publication, however, involved facilitating greater accessibility to newspapers beyond Calcutta's city limits, and, more specifically, improving the transmission of papers to remote areas by reducing the leveeing of postage by the Government's postal agents.[229]

Buckingham's attempts to reform the postal system demonstrate more than a keen interest in extending the reach of his paper or in establishing an intellectual community in British India; to be sure, the stamp question also demonstrates the Bengal Government's clear disdain for the editor, and palpable concern for the continued existence of his paper. To the editor, reforming the Government's postage system was crucial for two reasons. In his campaign to spread knowledge

[227] Among the prominent figures Buckingham criticized in his paper, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Governor of Madras, and Governor General Hastings stand out. However, the figure he criticized which resulted in the most virulent reaction was that of the Lord Bishop of Calcutta on July 10, 1821; this instance, however, will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter. Barns, *The Indian Press,* 97; Examples of Buckingham's editorial criticisms in this respect can be found in multiple issues of the *Calcutta Journal*. See *Calcutta Journal*, 26 May 1819; 6 Nov 1820; 10 July 1821; 17 May 1822; 20 May 1822; and 21 May 1822; It is crucial to note the significant role the introduction of stamp duties and the taxation of printed materials had in the development of the American Revolutionary War. For more on this, please see Peter David Garner Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) and more recently Zachary McLeod Hutchins, ed., *Community without Consent: New Perspectives on the Stamp Act* (Hanover, New Hamp: Dartmouth College Press, 2016).

[228] Christopher Bayly recently described the Bengal Government's disfavor with Buckingham as the result of his continual upsetting of the "Tory" opinion in Calcutta's population. Examples include his repeated publishing on Sundays and multiple instances in which he openly insulted various members of Calcutta's ruling elite, acts interpreted as challenging the authority and reputation of the Government. While Buckingham certainly clashed with the Government over these topics, it is more likely that his continued emphasis of the discrepancies in the Government's policies regarding the press, his engagement with a number of writers from the Company's Armies, and his frequent contact with elite Indian intellectuals encouraged the Bengal Government to take drastic action to silence him. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 77.

[229] In her landmark study, Margarita Barns chose to specifically omit discussion of the stamp issue for the sake of brevity. However, Buckingham's campaign to extend the reach of his paper and to address the cohort of remote, isolated merchants and Company servants merits discussion, both to contextualize Buckingham's intention, but also to emphasize the varied audience of the Anglo-Indian press. Barns, *The Indian Press,* 68.

and encourage the discussion of what he referred to as "Indian matters",[230] Buckingham saw particular importance in the non-urban residents of British India being granted timely, regular access to Calcutta's publications at an affordable cost. And while he made references to papers generally, he most certainly intended to maximize the reach of the *Calcutta Journal*. Moreover, he argued, fair postage rules and reliable service could also grant the British soldiery greater access to publications, extending the reach of the *Journal* into the country's hinterland, and ensuring the engagement of what Buckingham considered to be a critical audience.

A recurring concern that brought the editor into conflict with the Government on multiple occasions, Buckingham's brief campaign to reform Bengal's postal system embodied his previously stated intention of developing an engaged, intellectual and cultural literate community among Europeans in the region, and, more grandly, to establish a greater level of dialogue between Indians and Europeans in general.[231] Despite the articulation of these ideas in the opening address of his paper, correspondence exchanged between Buckingham and the Government on the topic provides insight into how he would accomplish this ambitious goal. Beginning in August 1819, Buckingham began to write what would develop into a protracted series of letters to Governor General Hastings and Chief Secretary William Butterworth Bayley

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[230] In numerous instances, Buckingham decried the lack of focus on "Indian Matters", a phrase he used to describe social, cultural, political, and economic considerations pertaining directly to the native population. In one particularly dismissive passage, for example, he chastised James Mill's *The History of British India* for omitting any serious discussion of these native considerations. Referring directly to Burke's ardent defense of Indian institutions in his speeches during the Hastings trial, Buckingham wrote: "This silence respecting Indian affairs, interrupted only by flashes of panegyric, will appear still more strange, when contrasted with the incessant calls made on the attention of the nation, thirty and forty years ago, by the greatest orators and statesmen of the day." Evidently, according to Buckingham, the proper administration of India relied on a respect and appreciation for Indian culture and history, and judging from Mill's work, this was not the case. *Calcutta Journal,* 15 July, 1819; in another issue, Buckingham responded to a number of criticisms of his paper, first and foremost of which was the dedication of the paper "too much to Asiatic information…" *Calcutta Journal*, 11 Dec, 1819.

[231] Throughout his papers and his myriad speeches and writings, Buckingham often stressed his intention to "effect a beneficial intercourse between England and India," a consideration which undoubtedly made the Bengal Government somewhat nervous, given the arbitrary nature of the press ordinances at this time. "Mr. Buckingham's Alleged Retainer from the EIC," OMF/IOL/3596, Explanatory report on the plan and object of Mr. Buckingham's Lectures on the Oriental World preceded by A sketch of his life, travels, and writings, and of the proceedings on the East India Monopoly During the Past Year, 1-2, British Library.

to address what he considered to be a restrictive and inefficient postage system and one which was alienating the non-urban European population. Surprisingly, in his initial appeal to Hastings, he was successful in securing an arrangement for a consistent, pre-paid postage system to distribute papers to the interior, but what was perhaps most interesting about the arrangement was not the appeal itself, but his justification for it, which he articulated clearly and repeatedly throughout the address. In his characteristically direct prose, Buckingham noted:

> Under a conviction that your Lordship in Council is disposed to remove as far as may be consistent with sound policy, every restriction that can either fetter the expression of public opinion through the press, or impede the wide and unshackled circulation of its labours, I take the liberty to demand for a moment your Lordship's attention to the great barrier which the heavy expense of Postage on Newspapers now opposes to this latter consideration.[232]

Even in this initial address, Buckingham displayed a tactic he would later employ throughout his lengthy, increasingly tense correspondence with Government representatives. Appealing directly to Hastings's liberal demeanor, the editor intended to capitalize on this brief, seemingly progressive, period of administration, and he hoped to extend the reach of the press beyond the city of Calcutta by addressing what he saw to be the chief obstacle to this, that is, prohibitively expensive duties levied on the delivery of papers to the hinterland.[233] Thus, even as the editor championed the widespread dissemination of papers within Calcutta, he was already focused on extending them to the country's most remote and secluded individuals.

Buckingham's proposal to extend the geographic distribution of his publication by reducing or eliminating the levying of postage fees to the Indian interior was further justified by a

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[232] "Arrangement between the Bengal Government and the Editor of the Calcutta Journal, James Silk Buckingham, for securing the circulation of the paper in the out-stations free of postage," IOR/F/4/635/17284, India Office Records and Private Papers, 13-14, British Library.

[233] Buckingham argued that the cost of postage often tripled the regular price for newspapers, rendering them relatively inaccessible, given the meagre salaries of many in the interior. Ibid., 15.

number of key arguments, each of which related directly to perceived barriers to the widespread dissemination of papers and the ability of non-urban residents to access Calcutta's news sheets. Chief among them was the fact that Company servants and independent traders in the interior were unable to access regular, reliable news, both concerning India, or Britain and, more generally, the rest of the world.[234] Buckingham described this as a deeply concerning situation, and, according to him, British residents of the interior suffered due of their lack of access to consistent, timely news, causing, he suggested, considerable isolation and anxiety.[235] Emphasizing the potential distress caused by sparse conversation, infrequent correspondence, and the still difficult prospect of procuring books, Buckingham recognized in newspapers a perfect solution to alleviate the plight of more isolated individuals.[236] Notably, his primary argument was drawn specifically from his experience in England, whereby stamp duties were paid prior to newspapers being transmitted throughout the country, therefore establishing a consistent price, regardless of one's proximity to urban centers.[237] With this approach in mind, he argued that through consistent pricing, India's British residents would generally benefit from informed opinion, thereby contributing to the overall strength of the polity and alleviating the plight of the isolated individual, both Company agents and private merchants alike.

The editor was essentially petitioning the Government to establish a regular, universal price for the transmission of papers to the hinterland, a goal so important to Buckingham, he even offered to personally cover the initial sum required to offset any potential lost revenue.[238] His

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[234] As Colley argues, even if soldiers were granted access to publications, they were carefully selected by the Company for the express purpose of controlling precisely what the soldiery was exposed to. Colley, *Captives*, 345.
[235] "Arrangement between the Bengal Government and the Editor of the Calcutta Journal, James Silk Buckingham, for securing the circulation of the paper in the out-stations free of postage," 14-15.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., 16.
[238] Buckingham's motivation and proposed plan for the offsetting of postage fees was conveyed clearly through his correspondence with Hastings: "I beg leave to propose to your Lordship (and this I do more from zeal in the cause of

justification for this was simple: in extending access to publications to even the lowliest residents of the interior, they might become "acquainted with the affairs of the times," and, as a result, contribute to the "general strength of the nations and the good of his fellow creatures."[239] The goal here, Buckingham suggested, was to stress the benefits the Bengal Government would experience, if it were to support his proposal. But he also employed a more subtle strategy in this initial address. Implicitly referencing the Governor General's celebrated Madras address,[240] Buckingham appealed directly to Hastings's newly established reputation as a progressive leader, emphasizing the liberal nature of his previous reforms and suggesting that the amended postage rules would simply act as a continuation of these. With a decidedly flattering tone, Buckingham wrote:

> And at the present moment, when by your Lordship's splendid career of Administration, the Revenues of the Country have been brought to such an unprecedented state of prosperity by the acquisition of new territories and the improved resources of the old, it would be doing injustice to the magnanimity of your enlarged and liberal views to believe that you would oppose as an obstacle to this, the trifling consideration of the Revenue arising from the Post office Department being diminished thereby.[241]

Cautiously omitting any mention of the staggering cost of the Company's continued military operations on the subcontinent,[242] Buckingham argued that the timing was ideal to introduce such

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public utility than from any hope of gain) an offer on my part to secure to the Post Office, the punctual payment of the actual sum it now receives for the Postage of the Calcutta Journal, for a period of twelve Months, finding sufficient securities for the due performance of the contract, on condition of the Paper being allowed to circulate throughout India free of nominal Postage or charge to the persons to whom it is addressed." Ibid., 19-20; Postage was estimated to be ten rupees per month, totally 120 rupees to cover the cost for the year. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 149.

[239] Ibid., 16-17.

[240] "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," 47-49.

[241] Notably, the passage also included a brief editorial comment, presumably written by a company scribe upon later review. In the margins, the phrase "Flattery is the Nurse of Crime" is written, suggesting that Buckingham was not well liked among the Government's administration. "Arrangement between the Bengal Government and the Editor of the Calcutta Journal, James Silk Buckingham, for securing the circulation of the paper in the out-stations free of postage," 17-18.

[242] To give a general sense of the Company's economic woes throughout the early nineteenth century, at the beginning of 1793, the Company's total debts amounted to £9,000,000. By 1802, during a period of full scale war,

an arrangement; and given the recent string of Company military victories, he suggested that the postage revenues—a paltry sum—would not be missed, especially given the potential advantages borne of a well-informed citizenry. This line of argument is notable because while the Bengal Government may have easily absorbed this lost revenue, the alternative, if they chose to deny Buckingham's scheme, suggested the continued growth of an ill-informed, largely ignorant interior population, a prospect that could easily evoke notions of popular disaffection or embitterment. Unfortunately, with the added postage fees, residents of the interior were paying upwards of three times the standard price for journal subscriptions, rendering them relatively inaccessible to some.[243] In Buckingham's view, precisely as a result of their isolation, ready access to newssheets was even more imperative for residents of the interior, and yet the opposite was the case.

Buckingham argued that the fees were being applied to the very audience that could benefit most from regular access, and, accordingly, this gesture could serve to improve the general happiness of the residents of the interior, preventing discontent and ensuring continued support for Company operations. With an implicit nod to the introduction of Stamp Duties in the thirteen colonies that came to play such an integral part in the outbreak of the American Revolution,[244] Buckingham argued, "the enormous charge of Postage on Newspapers, presses

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the debt doubled to £18,000,000, and by 1808, it sat at a staggering £32,000,000. Throughout this period of expansion and warfare, the complete failure to extract revenue enough to maintain solvency forced the Company to borrow £4,000,000 from the British government. Webster, *Twilight of the East India Company*, 41-42.

[243] "Arrangement between the Bengal Government and the Editor of the Calcutta Journal, James Silk Buckingham, for securing the circulation of the paper in the out-stations free of postage," 15.

[244] For an in-depth analysis of the events leading up to and immediately following the introduction of the Stamp Act to the Thirteen Colonies, particularly for its emphasis of the alienation felt by literate, educated colonists and the resultant consequences, please see Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (London, University of North Carolina Press, 1953); for a more recent contribution, focusing on the manner in which pamphlets, newspapers, and journals facilitated, or in some cases precipitated, revolutions across the Atlantic and Europe, please see Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders.* As Polasky contends, "the rhetoric of freedom traveled on folded sheaves, often small enough to hide in a pocket," a consideration which certainly would

most heavily on the very Class of persons to whom they are most necessary."[245] This theme resurfaced repeatedly throughout Buckingham's clashes with the Government of Bengal, but in this first articulation, however subtle the reference may have been, the underlying logic was clear: by levying a restrictive tax on the transmission of newspapers to the interior, the Bengal Government risked alienating a particularly isolated cohort of literate, well-educated, and, most importantly, loyal residents.[246] It can be argued that Buckingham recognized this clearly, and as a result leveraged this veiled threat to support his position further, playing on latent concerns among administrators about the fear of disaffected residents and the potential threat that could pose.

It is worth noting that the stamp question also acted as a rather inauspicious introduction of Buckingham to the Government's top representatives. While this was not his first altercation with the Bengal Government,[247] Buckingham's critique and proposed amendment to the postage system marked the beginning of a shift in the relationship between the editor and the Governor General, from one of flattery, respect, and cordiality to a more tense and quarrelsome tone. While

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have remained present in the mind of Government figures in British India. Ibid., 17; more recent work, please see Hutchins, ed., *Community without Consent.*

[245] "Arrangement between the Bengal Government and the Editor of the Calcutta Journal, James Silk Buckingham, for securing the circulation of the paper in the out-stations free of postage," 15; While occurring in a slightly later period as the press was debated under Bentinck's administration, direct references to the American Revolution are made, with one author, attempting to carry on Buckingham's work, referred to himself as the "East Indian Franklin", conspicuously comparing himself to Benjamin Franklin for his efforts to spread literate opinion throughout the region. "Extracts from remarks by Lord Moira. Mr. Ainslie (Commissioner of Bundelcund). Rawul Beiree Saul and J. Smith (Acting Collector and Magistrate of Vizagapatam), relative to the influence of public opinion in connection with the maintenance of the British power in India," 543-562.

[246] Notably, this was precisely the group the Bengal Government relied on to maintain the image of stability and British superiority in Bengal. On a related note, in terms of the access the European soldiery and private merchants of the interior had to various publications, the period in question is critical. By the 1830s, the British Government finally began to supply annual grants to subsidize carefully selected books and newspapers for the improvement of the Army's minds and to mitigate "licentious propensities." This was a direct response to a general sense that the material they had access to previously was considered lacking or simply inappropriate. An important caveat, however, the ordinary troops did have widespread access to religious tracts produced by the newly established missionary presses, in addition to texts on geography, natural history, and, of course, English history. Colley, *Captives*, 345.

[247] See previous chapter for discussion of Buckingham's first conflict with the Company. "Cases of James Silk Buckingham and John Tosh, two Europeans who arrived at Bombay without the Company's licence - Buckingham returns to Mocha - Tosh promises to return to England at the earliest opportunity," 4-5.

the Governor General acquiesced to the editor's proposal, under the condition that Buckingham provide the money to cover the lost revenue of the stamp tax for one year, the implementation of this new system led shortly thereafter to a more tense confrontation between the two. The strained personal relationship between Buckingham and various members of the administration is significant, specifically because it contributed to the primary concern maintained by key Government representatives over the question of the freedom of the press. To them, the notion itself could be entertained in theory, given the Governor General's tacit approval for this arrangement, and yet Buckingham himself quickly came to embody their greatest concern. By continually challenging the boundaries of what was considered acceptable and unacceptable content in his paper, Buckingham often forced a very public dissection of the current regime, the rules it had established, and precisely where the ambiguities and inconsistencies lay in both.

THE STAMP QUESTION RESOLVED: RESTRICTING THE AUDIENCE

On the 12th of January, 1820, Buckingham boldly printed a brief editorial in the *Calcutta Journal*, laying a charge against the Madras Government for taking steps, in his view, to impede the distribution of his papers. Within a single afternoon, the passage was forwarded directly to the Chief Secretary's Office for review, having drawn concern from the Government immediately.[248] Hugh Elliot, Governor of Madras, was outraged, and insisted the Calcutta authorities punish the editor.[249] While the article criticized the Madras Government openly, the correspondence it provoked also clearly demonstrated Buckingham's belief that Hastings had superseded his amendments to the press rules through the content of his well-known Madras address, suggesting that the press did indeed exist in a state of quasi freedom. Accordingly, the article, entitled "To the Subscribers under the Madras Presidency", was immediately deemed "so highly improper as

[248] *Calcutta Journal*. January 11, 1820.
[249] Barns, *The Indian Press,* 95.

to call for immediate notice from this Government."[250] In it, Buckingham argued that the Madras Government at Fort St. George had taken inappropriate and deliberate steps to impede the circulation of the *Calcutta Journal* in the area by failing to implement the agreed upon postage arrangement Buckingham had secured with the Governor General during the preceding months.

The issue itself was fairly straightforward: the annual postage fees Buckingham volunteered to pay were to be calculated according to the amount of the entire postage owed on papers transmitted between Calcutta and their ultimate destination. After which, they were to be stamped "Full Post Paid" to ensure that no additional fees would be charged at the rural stations.[251] Once again, Buckingham's goal was to establish "an equalization of price and a uniformity of system for the transmission of the Journal all over India,"[252] and for a period of one month following the initial agreement, the papers were allowed to pass free of additional charge to Madras. Shortly thereafter, however, residents of the interior began being charged additional postage for delivery beyond Madras.[253] As Chief Secretary Bayley argued, this was largely the result of improper communication between Mr. Hall, the Post Master General, and the Government, and he laid the blame squarely on Mr. Hall's failure to "attend to the spirit of the instructions issued for his guidance."[254] According to him, postage charged on letters and packets destined to Madras had always been applicable as far as the district of Ganjam only—something Mr. Hall apparently should have known about and communicated to Buckingham.

And yet, despite Bayley's confident assertion that all papers were charged additional postage beyond the Madras Presidency, this was not the case. Unsurprisingly, other papers and

[250] "31st July 1820, Charge against the Madras Government of obstructing the circulation of the Calcutta Journal," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India (1815-1822), 101, British Library.
[251] Ibid., 113.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid., 116.
[254] Ibid., 140.

letters marked in the exact same manner as the *Calcutta Journal* were transmitted free of charge between Calcutta and Madras, as well as from additional stations under the Madras Presidency back to Calcutta.[255] The discrepancy was clear and it inspired Buckingham to openly suggest that the motive behind it was the fact that he had repeatedly published Hastings's Madras address, exalting the Governor General's liberal and generous policy, and extolling the virtues and grand, potential benefits of a free press.[256] Within one month of the arrangement, the papers were marked "free to Ganjam only"; and in order to transmit these papers to the rest of the Madras stations, Buckingham was required to pay an additional 5,000 rupees. While he maintained a strong concern for his inland readership to access his paper, "the far greater evil", he suggested, was to be found in the "breaking up and destroying entirely a system of uniformity from which [he] had counted on."[257] In the end, Buckingham acquiesced to the payment, but not before publishing a strident critique of the Hastings administration for the injustice of the postage debate.

The Bengal Government's central concern about Buckingham was his flagrant and thoroughly public disregard of the prescribed press rules, particularly found in the scathing tone he took in speaking of the Madras Government following the stamp incident. The response from Bayley was a general appeal to reason: if editors were to be relieved of the task of submitting papers for review, they should observe the general spirit of the rules and be thankful, rather than attempting to foment any resistance. If editors were unreasonable, however, "it might raise a question as to the expediency of the liberal measures sanctioned by Government with regard to

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[255] Ibid., 120.
[256] "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," ; For a particularly stirring assessment of the potential benefits of a free press based in Hastings's Madras address, please see *Calcutta Journal*, July 24, 1819.
[257] "31st July 1820, Charge against the Madras Government of obstructing the circulation of the Calcutta Journal," 124.

the Press, and to lead to the revival of those restrictions which common prudence on the part of the Editors would render altogether unnecessary."[258] The threat was clear. If editors abused these generous, new press regulations, they would quite simply be revoked, returning Calcutta's press to its censored state. In response to the offending article, William Butterworth Bayley demanded Buckingham submit an apology to the Chief Secretary's Office within three days of receiving the request.[259]

In reply, Buckingham argued that he, among others, took the Madras address to signal a distinct shift in the Bengal Government's policy regarding the press. He claimed to have enthusiastically complied with the new regulations immediately after they were circulated among editors, but following the Madras address, he took Hastings at his word:

> I heard with pleasure the explanation which His Lordship then offered to the world for the removal of the restrictions from the Indian Press, and as this was an avowal of the motives by which an act of His Lordship in Council had been guided as it emanated from the Illustrious Head of the Government itself…I conceived by this solemn and public declaration, the letter of those restrictions was virtually abrogated, as it appeared to my erring judgment in common with many others that the sentiments there expressed, and the prohibitions which were formerly in force were wholly incompatible, and could not simultaneously exist.[260]

Speaking in unrestrained and blunt prose, Buckingham emphasized the contradictory relationship between the regulations, as they were provided for editors in August 1818, and the content of

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[258] Ibid., 147. Further still, Bayley retorted that Buckingham knew full well the limits on the postage agreement. He was told that on November 26th Secretary Lushington wrote a letter to inform Buckingham that his agreement with the post office did not apply beyond the limits being discussed. Furthermore, he was cautioned to watch his tone in speaking with the Governor General and his administration, and given a warning should he incur the displeasure of the Government again. Ibid., 102-103

[259] Ibid., 104. Of course, this presented Buckingham with yet another opportunity to stress his intention to establish a community of sorts, to argue for its utility yet again, and to play innocent with regards to his challenging of the Government: "In saying that I was willing to incur a further voluntary sacrifice or to give the paper gratis to the Subscribers under the Madras Presidency for their patronage of free discussion, acted only in conformity with the principles by which I have been constantly guided in my public labours, and in saying I hoped to see that free discussion made subservient to the great end of public good for which alone it was granted to us. I think that I can have said nothing which this Government could ever wish me to retract." Ibid., 127-128.

[260] Ibid., 107.

Hastings's subsequent address. This would have been hardly an issue had the new regulations taken force of law by this point. But, as Buckingham would point out, they had yet to be approved by the Government's legislative branch, and therefore merely acted as guidelines for publishers.[261] Therefore, in this legally ambiguous moment and context, the issue of the press took on heightened significance, and the Bengal Government's ability to control the flow of information and the spread of ideas became even more crucial.

Quoting liberally from Hastings's Madras speech, Buckingham justified his actions based on the notion that a free press should maintain a degree of scrutiny over the Government,[262] and, with this premise in mind, he had eagerly published editorials on various Government measures extending to civil, military, and marine considerations. Directly quoting Hastings, he referred to a crucial line of his speech: "Governments which had nothing to disguise wielding the most powerful instrument that can appertain to Sovereign rule, and carrying with them the united reliance, and effort of the whole mass of the Governed".[263] Buckingham argued that this maxim was "never more fully evinced than in the general sense and feeling of the whole community of India, on those parts of His Lordship's administration thus made the subject of that public scrutiny which he had so magnanimously invited."[264] According to the editor, his opinion closely

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[261] Yet another significant aspect of the Press Debates of the period, Hastings's new regulations were unilaterally introduced as pragmatic response to address a known loop hole. Unfortunately, however, the Supreme Court blocked the legal formalization of these regulations because the Governor General, it was argued, could not introduce laws applicable to English subjects which were contrary to the laws of England, something Buckingham was acutely aware of. And so, while the Bengal Government may have maintained a more coherent position than has previously been argued, the debates over the abolishment of censorship and the new press regulations opened a clear fracture between the Governor General and the legislative branch in Calcutta. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 80-81.
[262] *Calcutta Journal,* July 15, 1819, 198.
[263] Once again, direct references were made to Hastings's Madras address continuously throughout this debate. "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply 5th Aug. 1819," 5.
[264] Ibid., 108-109.

mirrored the thoughts of Britons in the interior of India, as well as public writers in England. Word of Hastings's new policy, it seemed, had reached the metropole to considerable fanfare.[265]

Crucially, Buckingham emphasized that it was not only he who had interpreted the Madras address to signal the inauguration of a free press in Bengal, but that many others, in India and Britain alike, felt this way, all of whom assumed the Indian press was "subject only to those laws which regulate it in England, and that it was amenable only to the local authority in-as-much as that was the executive of the British laws in India.[266] This is an important point of distinction: with the Company's limited sovereignty in Bengal, the enactment of policies and regulations by the Government was difficult not only because they often lacked accompanying legislation, but also because of the added challenge of British residents who sought to claim the rights and prerogatives of their home country. But, most importantly, Buckingham emphatically declared that he was acting only with the best interests of the people in mind; and to justify this, he asserted that he had consciously refrained from speaking as an Englishman would at home, specifically to shield the Government from any undue criticism.[267] His most immediate concern, however, was in the repeated attacks on his character, launched by government figures such as William Butterworth Bayley and John Adam.

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[265] The timing of these events is crucial. Following the massacre at Peterloo in August 1819, demands for reform reached new levels of violence. Crucially, however, demands for reform were becoming varied, separating into radical and reformist discourses. Figures like Burke argued two decades earlier that revolution could ensue if reform was not approached methodically. The mainstream British reform public demanded this type of gradual reform as opposed to a small subset of radicals. For a general discussion of reform and its discontents, please see Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?*, 195-353) and Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government*.

[266] Given Buckingham's repeated publishing of the speech, his argument appears somewhat compromised at first. And yet, he proceeded to explain how the speech was also reprinted by the *Gazette*, the official Government newssheet. Ibid., 110.

[267] Ibid.

LITTLE CALCUTTA: PERSONAL ENMITY IN “WHITE TOWN”

Given the small scale of Calcutta’s European community,[268] personal enmity between individuals played a significant role in the development of policy in British Bengal, and nothing illustrates this better than Buckingham’s experiences. Throughout the period, he repeatedly clashed with senior government officials. He had become a troublesome figure in their eyes, as evinced through a combination of the arbitrary levying of additional fees to transmit his paper, and the open and flagrant manner in which government figures specifically referred to the editor in print and conversation alike. As a result, Buckingham claimed that his ability to speak and publish freely, even with the integrity and best interests of the region in mind, had been severely compromised by virtue of “aggravated misrepresentations” and mere difference of opinion.[269] But in the end, Bayley and Hastings returned to the same refrain: with the revocation of outright censorship, editors were to conform to the “spirit of the rules”, a vague and arbitrary phrase that was repeatedly alluded to throughout their heated correspondence.[270]

Furthermore, between Buckingham’s lobbying for a reformed stamp fee system and the eventual conflict which followed, the editor found himself embroiled in a series of controversies, all of which directly resulted from his editorials and “anonymous letters” in the *Calcutta Journal*. In response to an article published on June 25th 1819, Hastings filed an official Minute to the Board of Control in order to ascertain, alongside the Advocate General, whether or not legal

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[268] Beyond the Company’s bureaucracy and officers stationed at Old Fort William, the number of private traders between 1815 and 1828 grew by a mere 515. Given that the total English population sat at approximately 3,000, this was certainly still a meagre number, particularly when compared to the Indian population. Marshall, “White Town of Calcutta,” 32.

[269] Buckingham wrote the Government a number of letters in response to this incident, whereby he argued that “the aggravated misrepresentations…” respecting his offence and the Government’s efforts to spread them amongst his enemies, “…have already produced an effect from which [he] may not easily recover.” Ibid., 132.

[270] Bayley, ignoring all of Buckingham’s arguments, responded with terse finality. Regardless of Buckingham’s justifications, he responded simply: “Those remarks would still be an obvious violation of the spirit of the rules issued in August 1818 for the guidance of the Editors of Newspapers, which rules as you must be well aware have not been rescinded or modified.” Ibid., 144-145.

proceedings should be initiated against the editor for publishing a supposedly "wanton attack upon the Governor of Fort St. George, in which his continuance in office was represented as a public calamity, and his conduct in administration, asserted to be governed by despotic principles and influenced by unworthy motives."[271] Within mere months of introducing his new regulations, Hastings now faced the decision of whether or not he should lay the first libel case against one of Calcutta's editors. A guilty verdict meant the immediate revocation of Buckingham's license to reside in India, and, once again, immediate deportation back to England. Removal from India would have left him utterly destitute; however, the Government was more concerned about appearing too harsh in their reprisal than with Buckingham's prosperity.

Interestingly, the administration readily agreed to avoid using their extreme powers of government on the editor, but this was once again motivated by pragmatism. Despite the concerns Buckingham roused by criticizing a prominent government official in such a public forum, the Governor General and the Advocate General opted for leniency, solely because they feared appearing too outwardly despotic with their decision. The official recorded response articulated this clearly: "the exertion of such an unusual degree of rigor upon the first transgression which occurred after the previous censorship had been relinquished would have appeared an act of unprecedented severity, and might have been considered a departure from the spirit of the terms announced to the Editor."[272] By convicting and deporting Buckingham, the administration worried they would not only draw close attention to the still ambiguous state of the press in Calcutta, but they also worried they would mitigate the benefits had resulted from

[271] "Bengal to Court 5th Aug. 1819, Attack on Governor Hugh Elliott in the Calcutta Journal," IOR/H/538, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon (1819-1822), 10, British Library.
[272] Ibid.

Hastings's new policy, namely, the general perception among Calcutta's literate community that they had been afforded a modicum of free expression through print.

In the end, Buckingham was severely reprimanded, warned of his future conduct, and made to apologize publically, all of which he accepted, hoping to mitigate the already declining relationship between himself and the Government of Bengal.[273] Despite the fact that British India at this period was run in a despotic manner, the perception of this had to be minimized in the eyes of Calcutta's European community, it seems; and even more threatening still, the Government had to maintain a delicate balance between enforcing the regulations with a degree of leniency or risk the negative response of imposing them too harshly, a prospect made ever more real by Buckingham's continued emphasis of the despotic nature of the regime.[274] The crucial consideration at all times throughout the above mentioned debates was the question of audience, and, more specifically, who had access to Calcutta's newly unrestrained news sheets and what potential consequences might result in response to the content found there.

THE PRESS AND THE LIMITS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: SCHOLARLY SOLDIERS

Given Buckingham's intention to encourage the growth of an intellectual, lettered community in British India, the subscribers to the *Calcutta Journal* also doubled as active participants in the paper's production. This posed a problem for Government administrators, who

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[273] Ibid.

[274] Bayly carefully stresses the fact that colonial reform in British India between 1780 and 1830 led to an essentially autocratic style of governance. Despite efforts to alleviate the political and social concerns of the citizens, particularly during the 1820s, the Government remained militaristic and monopolistic in nature, very like the continental neo-absolutisms emerging out of the Napoleonic Wars. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 162; By the 1770s, perceptions of Company misrule prevailed among metropolitan London public. Pitt's India Act in 1784 and the Charter Act of 1813 are two clear examples of attempts by the British Government to clearly demonstrate that the Company operated at the behest of Crown and Parliament. Accordingly, Company administrators focused on maintaining and consolidating Company gains through firm rule in order to preserve its standing with the Crown and British public. Peter James Marshall, *Problems of Empire: Britain and India, 1757-1813*, ed. Patrick J. N. Tuck (London: Routledge, 1968), 60.

feared both the publication of anything that might harm the credibility of the Bengal Government, but also because of the challenge it presented to controlling the flow of information. Because the *Calcutta Journal* regularly featured editorials and letters from various subscribers in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Bengal's interior, the paper appealed to a broad audience. The subscribers themselves fell into three broad categories: British India's merchant community, both Company-sponsored and independent traders; European officers; and the Indian and mixed-race citizens in or near Calcutta. It is important to emphasize that while the European component was comprised of a rather small set of individuals,[275] their numbers during the first half of the nineteenth century significantly increased.[276] This is an important consideration because, as Peter Marshall has argued, despite the small number of Europeans residing in Calcutta, the privately funded ventures they pursued made significantly greater contributions to Indian awareness and understanding of Britain and the West than any policies the Bengal Government introduced.[277]

The repeal of outright censorship took place during a critical and uncertain period of Calcutta's history and a number of factors contributed to this unprecedented situation. European private traders continued to arrive in steady numbers, causing the Company considerable anxiety. Moreover, Indian elites, inspired by the English press, began to publish the first Indian-language papers. The size of the Company's armies also inflated to unprecedented numbers throughout the course of the Napoleonic Wars, adding to long-standing concerns over the ability of the Company

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[275] The white population of Calcutta, for example, can be compared in terms of size to a village or small town within Calcutta. 3,317 "English" were recorded in the 1837 census, compared with later numbers of 7.534 "Europeans" in 1850, or 11,224 with a much more rigorous 1866 census. Further to this, Marshall argues that among this meagre British population, only a tiny minority actually sought genuine intellectual contact with Indians. Marshall, "White Town of Calcutta," 308, 309.

[276] Importantly, while the influx of private traders was not quite as significant as has been emphasized in previous studies of the period, Europeans did begin to arrive in earnest during this period. For example, European shops began to emerge, including at least 27 wine shops in 1844, and a host of craftsmen arrived, including watchmakers, cabinet makers, carvers, gilders, and tailors. All of this was in addition to the series of Europeans that arrived in the employ of Calcutta's great houses. Ibid., 310.

[277] Ibid., 308.

State to control the military.[278] Finally, from 1813 onwards, the Government of Bengal was mandated to being developing a more systematic program of Indian education.[279] Speaking to the latter consideration, however, the Company unfortunately remained locked in a series of conflicts throughout the decade, and this prevented significant progress on this front. Waging war against the Nepalese, Pindaris, and Marathas resulted in the Company's continued failure to achieve an annual surplus of Indian revenues, which effectively prevented the enforcement of the 1813 Parliamentary enactment to increase the scope and degree of British education for Bengal's Indian subjects.[280] While the Indian-language press will be addressed in the following chapter, the education debate merits brief mention here if only to introduce the alternative, non-

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[278] The Company's troops on the ground expanded dramatically throughout the second half of the 18th century and early 19th century. To illustrate, in 1744, the Company employed 2,500 European soldiers to defend the three presidencies. By 1765, there were a full 17,000 troops in Bengal alone, while by 1778, British army and Company forces on the subcontinent rose to 67,000 men. However, by 1815, the Company's military wing employed approximately 250,000. Coupled with the immense distance from Britain, the geographical expanse of the subcontinent, and the massive local population, threats and concerns amongst the Company's generals would have clearly endured even throughout this period of ascendancy. But the challenges persisted beyond this. Not only was it difficult to maintain a constant supply of new recruits, the challenge of transporting troops from Britain was profoundly complicated by an abysmal mortality rate, comparable to that of the transatlantic slave passages of the period. Colley, *Captives*, 257, 258; despite its slightly earlier focus, for an in depth study of the relationship between disease, medicine, and warfare in the British Navy, please see George Wills, "Not in Glorious Battle Slain': Disease and Death in the Royal Navy's Western Squadron during the Seven Years' War" (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 2016); Erica Charters, *Disease, War, and the Imperial State: The Welfare of the British Armed Forces During the Seven Years' War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); and David Boyd Haycock, and Sally L. Archer, ed., *Health & Medicine at Sea, 1700-1900* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2009.

[279] As mentioned, as the Company became the paramount power in India, both its home and Indian governments began to focus on the question of administration, particularly the development of an education policy. To this effect, the Charter Act of 1813 directed that out of the annual surplus revenue of British India, a sum of at least one lakh rupees should be set aside and applied to "revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories of India." Philips, *The East India Company,* 245-246; Referring to this peculiar period, the Company's administration met the challenges with a mixture of paranoid and pride. In Bayly's landmark study on flows of information throughout British India, he argued that despite the capability of the Company to gather information, on numerous occasions, the sources of this information ran dry, producing a climate of fear, doubt, and uncertainty in place of the imperial arrogance that characterizes much of the dispatches between the Board of Control and the Board of Directors during this period. Bayly, *Empire & Information*.

[280] Philip Lawson succinctly summarizes the implications of militaristic policy in the subcontinent in Philips, *The East India Company,* 132-13, 246; while a considerable sum, to be sure, to provide context, the Indian land revenues transferred through the Company by 1818 amounted to £22,000,000 annually. Of course, the period in question was characterized by continued economic instability. The financial woes that plagued the Company and eventually drove it to pursue its path of aggressive conquest during the late eighteenth century, coupled with insecure extended frontiers and a desire to find new revenue sources, all combined to consume much of the Company's stunning revenues. Bayly, *Indian Society*, 116.

governmental groups which emerged during this period because of the Bengal Government's lack of action, and the influence they had during the debates over a free press.

The topic of Indian education and the propagation of "useful knowledge" generally was spearheaded by two distinct groups who emerged in Bengal between the 1813 Charter Act and introduction of Buckingham's paper in 1818; both of which encouraged active engagement with Indian students and scholars alike. Despite Hastings's appointment of a Committee of Public Instruction to oversee the disbursement of Government educational funds in 1823, the newly established missionary movement and an accompanying group of progressive, proto-liberal free-thinkers in Calcutta focused on the subject throughout the preceding decade.[281] While both actively contributed to Calcutta's newspapers, the latter group embodied Buckingham's image of an intellectually engaged community in British India.

Comprised of figures such as David Hare, and the renowned Indian author, scholar, and political activist, Rammohun Roy, they focused on disseminating western knowledge and language, instead of maintaining a focus on Indian subjects, which had been the dominant approach of education in the area up to that point.[282] These figures participated in discussions through the press with regularity and vigor, but the ability for some constituent elements of this group to participate in this civic forum was eventually compromised by their specific relationship to the Government. Naturally, according to the Bengal Government, Company bureaucrats and soldiers, who were drawing their incomes directly from the Company's purse, could not

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[281] The missionary movement in Serampore has been often referred to as the forefather of print in British India. It is crucial to note that while the movement was imbued with a zest for spreading Christian doctrines, it also took great steps to disseminate secular knowledge in both the English and vernacular papers. Philips, *The East India Company,* 246.

[282] This period is often referred to as the transition between the Orientalist and Anglicist approach to administration, a topic which appeared most explicitly in the question of Indian education, but extended down throughout various aspects of colonial policy in India. Ibid. This subject will be discussed further in the next chapter.

constitute any kind of civil society. The removal of censorship, however, provided the catalyst for a more explicit articulation of this idea, and once again the articles contained in Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal* precipitated this discussion.

Undoubtedly, the largest and most vocal element of this group, and one which drew particularly concern from the Bengal Government, was found in the European soldiery.[283] With a constant garrison of two to three hundred Europeans at Old Fort William[284] and additional soldiers in the field, the soldiery outnumbered the Company servants and private traders by a considerable margin. While these soldiers have often been characterized as a motley band of uneducated, unrefined brigands, this stereotype obscures the fact that a distinct subset was highly educated and well versed in politics, history, and philology.[285] In fact, recent research has demonstrated the important role figures in the British Indian army played in determining both the political and economic focus of the colonial state as a whole, in addition to making considerable contributions to the shaping of social relations between the British and Indian population.[286] With this in mind, the Company Army, particularly the officers and surgeons, produced a disproportionate number of early orientalists, historians, and commentators on domestic Indian subjects.[287] This highly literate class was heavily entwined with Indian politics and, perhaps obviously, maintained near constant contact with Indians, regardless of the degree to which they engaged in any outright cultural or intellectual exchange. As Douglas Peers has recently argued,

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[283] Marshall, "White Town of Calcutta," 309.
[284] Originally built under the orders of Robert Clive, Old Fort William, located in Calcutta along the River Hooghly, was the center of the Bengal Army.
[285] Douglas Peers has humorously described the common stereotype of the European soldiery in India as a group of "pig-sticking, cheroot smoking, sports-mad officer[s] who preferred billiards to books." Douglas M. Peers, "Colonial Knowledge and the Military in India, 1780-1860," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33 (May 2005): 158.
[286] Ibid.; For more on the structural, ideological, and economic aspects of the Company's armed forces during the nineteenth-century, please see Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in 19th-century India* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).
[287] Peers, "Colonial Knowledge," 157.

the combination of opportunity, boredom, and professional incentives made intellectual activity among the European soldiery more common than in most British imperial enclaves.[288]

However, this observation is not meant to obscure the reality that alongside the increasing professionalization of the military throughout this period, new vehicles for expression emerged as a result. In many respects, this contributed to the segregation of European and Indian soldiers into two distinct military subcultures,[289] and, related to this, the production of colonial knowledge by these European soldiers using these new forums has been said to have naturalized the experience of domination and conquest, largely through the heavy influence of European romanticism and orientalism.[290] However, officers of this sort represented a varied lot, informed by different ideologies, values, and ambitions. Consequently, disagreements within this cohort attest to just how fractured and varied forms of colonial knowledge were during this time.[291] But one does not need to look too deeply to discover this reality; the editorial section of Buckingham's journal demonstrates a variety of perspectives quite clearly, particularly with regard to the relationship

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[288] Douglas Peers also points out that the dominant role enjoyed by military officers as oriental scholars. He argues that this traces back to the late eighteenth century when they possessed a near monopoly of the academic scholarship being produced. These early Indologists, including Alexander Dow, William Davy, Jonathon Scott, and Alexander Hamilton we all officers and surgeons in the employ of the Company's Army. Ibid., 159; The degree to which the professionalization of the military facilitated close relationships or collaboration between British officers and their Indian servicemen has been a source of historical debate. For more on this topic, please see Kaushik Roy, "The Hybrid Military Establishment of the East India Company in South Asia: 1750-1849," *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 195-218; and Kaushik Roy, *The Army in British India: From Colonial Warfare to Total War, 1857-1947* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

[289] Douglas M. Peers, "Sepoys, soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820-50," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 23, no. 2 (1995): 213; While the Company's sepoy troops embodied a particular set of concerns on their own, largely owing to their overwhelming numbers, the European troops were at all times the source of greatest anxiety during this period. This is understandable, however, given the fact that throughout the 1820s and 1830s, white troops deserted on average eleven times more often than Company sepoys. Colley, *Captives*, 319, 334; of course, this was compared to sepoy mutinies which, for example, took place with some regularity. To illustrate, the Bengal Army was known to be particularly challenging, with recorded mutinies in Java in 1815, Gwalior in 1834, and a near mutiny during the Afghan campaign of 1839-42. Bayly, *Indian Society*, 172; For more on the professionalization of the military, please see Kaushik Roy, "The Armed Expansion of the English East India Company: 1740s-1849," in *A Military History of India and South Asia: From the East India Company to the Nuclear Era*, ed. Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram, 1-15 (London: Praeger, 2007).

[290] Peers, "Colonial Knowledge," 175.

[291] Ibid, 176.

between the Europeans and Indian soldiers.[292] Accordingly, given the large amount of influence the Bengal Army had in guiding policy decisions on the ground, in determining the relationship between the Company and the surrounding Indian populations, and through its considerable contributions to the study of South Asian history and language, it is clear that the prospect of the soldiery participating in Bengal's emergent press culture raised serious concern within the Government.

Despite this tendency to diminish the Army's overall contributions to the intellectual and cultural accomplishments of the period and the development of alternative forums for engagement, the Bengal Army still participated actively in Calcutta's early print industry.[293] Particularly well educated soldiers wrote prodigiously for a number of publications in both Britain and in India. For example, the *British Indian Military Repository (1822-27)* featured a minimum of 52 articles written by soldiers in India over its six year course. Similarly, the more wide-ranging *East Indian United Service Journal* published over 350 articles written by servicemen between 1833 and 1839; and officers stationed in India also regularly contributed to

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[292] The pages of the paper featured an interesting and varied mixture of perspectives when discussing the relationship between Indians and Europeans. Everything from small hints of mutiny to lauding discussions of sepoy loyalty appeared there, demonstrating a myriad of views. In one case, a small group of sepoy troops armed with sticks, were allegedly witnessed launching a coordinated attack against a sailor: "…each Sepoy was furnished with a stick so exactly similar in shape and size, that it is impossible to attribute the occurrence to mere accident." *Calcutta Journal,* July 17, 1819; on a completely different note, in response to an article decrying the avarice and unreliability of the sepoy, an adjunct of the Bengal Army wrote in a lengthy, impassioned defense of the Bengali troops. "A Sepoy," he wrote, "will never prove false to his trust, will never betray his Officer, or do any thing [sic] in the shape of falsehood, except what I have mentioned; and my opinion of a Native lie is, that it is far from being so criminal as a European one, which is in general artful and well managed, evincing thereby an uncommon degree of depravity in the person guilty of it." *Calcutta Journal*, 6 Nov, 1819.

[293] Peers, "Colonial Knowledge," 159; A distinction should also be made between scholarly knowledge and strategic knowledge here. In many instances, the Company's British officers focused their efforts on procuring strategic knowledge to improve their success in the field. However, while the Army was often effective at collecting strategic knowledge, as Matthew Edney points out, the information was not necessarily complete, which sometimes led to military crises as a result. Matthew H. Edney, *The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 35.

professional military journals in England.[294] But equally pertinent is the fact that the Bengal Army also contributed extensively to the literary and scientific societies of Britain and India, in addition to the primary "orientalist" publications in Calcutta, including the *Asiatic Journal, Oriental Herald, Journal of the Asiatic Society*. Finally, British officers also regularly contributed to Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal,* supporting the editor's burgeoning public. During this brief period, in which Calcutta's papers operated with relative freedom, contributions by the European soldiery were a constant feature, and this fact that produced the greatest concern from the Government.

Among the primary concerns of the Bengal Government, excessive contact between Europeans and Indians was significant, particularly in the context of the military, where European officers and soldiers worked along Indian sepoys at common purpose.[295] Indeed, concerns of offending the religious or cultural sensibilities of the area's Indian inhabitants was clearly laid out in the new press rules, but there was even more palpable concern about military officers contributing to this fledgling public sphere generally due to two additional considerations: the fear of mutinous words or ideas flowing down through the ranks of either component of the army, and the alteration of the current military situation through the publication

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[294] Over seven hundred articles have been identified in Colburn's United Service Magazine, later named Colburn's United Service Journal, and later United Service Journal, between 1829 and 1875. Ibid., 160

[295] Roy, "The Hybrid Military," 202-207; For more on the relationship between Britons and Europeans in the Bengal Army, please see Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); To reiterate, the press rules laid out a very specific set of forbidden acts, particularly as they related to Anglo-Indian relations. Above all, the rules demonstrate the Company's deep concern with infringing upon Indian cultural and religious institutions, despite the rapidly shifting focus to a triumphant Anglicizing tone: "First, Animadversions on the measures and proceedings of the Honourable Court of Directors, or other public authorities in England connected with the government of India…*Second, Discussions having a tendency to create alarm or suspicion among the native population, of any intended interference with their religious opinions or observances*; Third, the republication, from English or other newspapers, of passages coming under any of the above heads, or otherwise calculated to affect the British power or reputation in India; Fourth, private scandal, and personal remarks on individuals, tending to excite dissention in society." Note: Italics added. "Proceedings before His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in relation to the appeal by James Silk Buckingham against certain regulations of the Bengal Government on the subject of the Press. London, 1825," IOR/V/27/960/7, India Office Records and Private Papers, 23-24, British Library.

of secret details, such as the size, position, and movements of the Company's forces. While the latter consideration was rooted in genuine concern for military strategy, the former embodies the general sense of anxiety felt by the Government during the period.

These observations readily appear in both the Bengal Government's strong condemnation whenever Buckingham published anything military-related—or as Buckingham would say, "Military Matters"—as well as the hard stance of the Government's inner circle took following the publication of an editorial written by an officer of the Army. Entitled "Military Monopoly" and signed simply, "A Young Officer", Buckingham printed the article in the *Calcutta Journal* on the 2nd November, 1820.[296] In it, an anonymous soldier, later revealed by Buckingham to be Lieutenant Edward Fell of the 2nd Battalion, 10th regiment, Native Infantry in Benares, pointed out a number of concerns with the organization and operation of the Bengal Army.[297] However, it was not so much the content of the letter but the significance of the author and the audience which raised the ire of the Government. This is clear in the tenor of the letters exchanged between Chief Secretary Bayley and Buckingham, and the clear and immediate reproach that was levelled against the editor and author.[298]

The letter itself displayed open disaffection with the Army's command structure, and the mere threat of disaffection spreading through the ranks or the suggestion that British military power was perhaps not as robust as it seemed was simply too great for the Government to bear. As a result, Buckingham was told to submit the name of the soldier immediately or face severe consequences, and the letter and correspondence was ordered to be sent to the Military

[296] "Attack on the Government in a letter signed 'A Young Officer in the Calcutta Journal, 1820'," IOR/H/538, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon (1819-1822), 165, British Library.
[297] It is crucial to note that Buckingham initially refused to offer the name of the officer until he first received express permission from the gentleman himself. Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

Department immediately.[299] After submitting the author's name, Buckingham escaped yet another threat of deportation, but once again the notion of "the empire of opinion" coursed through the Government's response: given the Company's fragile position in India and the centrality of the Army to the understanding of British imperial legitimacy in India, the image of Anglo-Indian officials ruling by the sword was to be maintained at all costs. If explicit military strength could not actually be mustered, the impression of it had to be maintained at all times.[300] Anything that might challenge this perception, particularly in the eyes of the Indian sepoys and citizens, was met with an immediate and severe response. However, officers and soldiers alike still represented a class of men adrift in a foreign land. To be clear, India was not a colony, and therefore soldiers, unlike white settler colonists elsewhere, were not to find any particular comfort or familiarity in their surroundings.[301] This, of course, extended to official discouragement of permanent settlement and, more pressing still, the active discouragement of marriage.

By the 1830s, for example, white soldiers in Bombay were more than twice as likely to die as soldiers based in Britain. In Madras, the death rate was even higher, at over three times the rate of mortality. Greater still, in Bengal statistics indicate the death rate was five times higher than their counterparts back home. Not only did the soldiers face grave uncertainty and constant threat, they were also actively discouraged from residing permanently, marrying Indian women, or contributing to the various public institutions of Bengal. Interestingly, however, this situation changed considerably over the following decade, with the emergence of an active re-envisioning of the soldiery by the Company. Beginning in 1830, a more active concern emerged for the

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[299] " Attack on the Government in a letter signed 'A Young Officer in the Calcutta Journal, 1820'," 165.
[300] Douglas Peers, "Soldiers, Scholars, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Militarism in Early Nineteenth-Century India," *The International History Review* 16, No. 3 (1994): 460.
[301] For a survey of white settler colonialism, see Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2016).

spiritual and physical welfare of the soldiery, and accordingly a growing number of services were provided by the Company to alleviate concerns of poor treatment which might lead to mutiny. Schools for the soldiers' children, garrison hospitals, regimental libraries, recreational facilities, and army chapels were all introduced, and by 1840 the mortality rate among British soldiers serving in tropical locations fell substantially.[302] Thus, with this large contingent of independent men stationed far afield and very little in the way of support structures to provide for their wellbeing, concerns of mutiny or even general disruption were paramount.[303] While this was not the first military-focused incident Buckingham experienced with the Government, it stands as a clear example of the way these conflicts unfolded.[304]

But concern that this type of critical engagement between Company servants and the Government was taking place can perhaps be demonstrated most clearly in formal statements by top government representatives. In an official Minute, registered by John Adam on November 12th, 1821, the mere suggestion of European soldiers participating in this forum was summarily dismissed. Open discussion through the press between private citizens and the military was deemed unacceptable, and, more pressing still, that characteristic brand of English, anti-absolutist political thought had absolutely no place in British India at this time, primarily due to the effects

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[302] Colley, *Captives*, 344.
[303] Peers has argued that the fragility or complete lack of civil institutions for soldiers in India encouraged a distinct brand of Anglo-Indian militarism, a curious side effect. Peers, "Soldiers, Scholars," 453; Company concerns over mutiny culminated in the Great Rebellion of 1858, which was immediately followed by the White Mutiny of 1859-61. This was the largest rebellion the Company experienced, following the transfer of direct control to the British Crown, and in many respects it vindicated members of the Company's administration for their prior concerns. For more on the White Mutiny, see Peter Stanley, *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); For a general overview of British military culture in India, see Peter Stanley, *Die in Battle, Do Not Despair: The Indians on Gallipoli, 1915* (Solihull, England: Helion, 2015).
[304] The Robinson incident, which involved the publication of yet another anonymous letter written by a military correspondent, will be discussed in the following chapter, as it focuses entirely on the relationship between the Indian component of the army and the European soldiery. Barns, *The Indian Press,* 99; For an entire recounting of the Robinson incident, see "19th July 1822, Article in Calcutta Journal, signed "A Military Friend" (Lieut.-Col. W. Robison, of H.M.'s 24th Regiment of Foot)," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India (1815-1822), 369, British Library.

it might engender in the Army's younger soldiers.[305] Critically, this was also a period of upheaval following the Napoleonic Wars, as demands for reform in British society resulted in the disastrous outcome of Peterloo in 1819.[306] Accordingly, member of the Supreme Council and soon to be acting Governor General, John Adam emphasized this concern clearly: "The mischief that must result from the extension of such a spirit throughout the service and especially its baneful influence on the minds of the young and inconsiderate who are most likely to be misled by it are too manifest to be insisted on."[307] Blind deference to authority on behalf of the Company's soldiers was to be practiced, without question, he argued, and even men living in the area under the Company's license and protection should not for a moment act in "declared and systematic defiance of its authority."[308] In such a peculiarly constituted imperial arrangement, any challenge to the Bengal Government was considered an act of outright aggression or even treason. Calcutta was not Falmouth, after all, and this was not to be forgotten.[309] In the press Adam recognized the potential for the direst outcome—once again, an allusion to wholesale mutiny—and as a result, he opted for the harshest possible punishment. Buckingham would be tried for libel, and escape immediate deportation once again, simply because "his removal from the country at this time would be too sure to be misrepresented and misunderstood," and, "...besides that it would operate as an obstruction to the course of justice."[310]

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[305] This became abundantly clear after June 8, 1822, where the submission by officers of anonymous letters to Calcutta's newspapers was expressly forbidden, under penalty of suspension from duties and pay while the Honourable Court decided whether to remove the author from service or not. "James Pattison (Chairman) and William Wigram (Deputy Chairman) to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn (President of the Board of Control) 17th Jan. 1823, History of the Press prior to the Censorship in India and necessity of Control," IOR/H/535, Restrictions on the Press in India. (1823-1834), 239-241, British Library.

[306] Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?*, 164, 252.

[307] "1st Jan. 1822, Articles in the Calcutta Journal calculated to obstruct Justice," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India (1815-1822), 337, British Library.

[308] Ibid., 339.

[309] Falmouth refers to the birthplace of James Silk Buckingham. Buckingham, *Autobiography*, 6

[310] "1st Jan. 1822, Articles in the Calcutta Journal calculated to obstruct Justice," 341.

As Buckingham awaited trial in 1822, immediate punishment would be avoided, in favour of a more measured response, and one that would have the required force of law to ensure he could not simply return to his business. By his very nature, Buckingham—a self-professed radical proponent of the free trade lobby and the continued erosion of Company prerogatives—represented a direct threat to the Bengal Government simply by virtue of his social standing and his propensity for critical, rational analysis. As a proud Englishman, he sought to hold the Government to their word, often testing the limits of official policy to identify existing ambiguities, but more importantly, he was fighting for the maintenance of English rights to English citizens. Crucially, as will be seen in the next chapter, Buckingham also sought to include the native population in his budding, transnational intellectual sphere.[311] Given the Government's harsh response to the emergence of a cohort of soldiers interested in participating in an emergent public sphere, and persistent fears of mutiny or revolt, the question of Indian engagement was paramount. According to Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras after 1820, at this stage, British tenure in India was based on the denial of liberty. Therefore, the circulation of ideas in print without an explicit censorship mechanism could only lead to violence and rebellion, rather than civic improvement.[312] Echoing Mill's appraisal of Indian civilization, freedom was a state to be worked towards, and as a result India was not yet ready for this degree of civil intercourse.[313]

In conclusion, it must be noted, the significance of these debates was not limited to India's northeastern shores. In fact, the subject was one of particular import given the particular

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[311] Once again, this study draws on Bayly's concept of an emergent trans-national sphere of political discourse during this period. He is careful, however, to qualify the term, pointing out the fact that the concept of the "nation" was still in its infancy at the time. And yet, he identifies a distinctly transnational constitutional liberal moment in which intellectuals in Britain, India, and various other locations, worked together at common purpose. Buckingham and Rammohun Roy are both emblematic of this brief intellectual movement. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 95.
[312] Peers, "Soldiers, Scholars," 458.
[313] Mill, *The History of British India*, 429-435.

nature of Calcutta, that is, its significance as a center of trade, commerce, and engagement between Company representatives, private Britons, and various Indian interests, but, crucially, the influence it held over the other presidencies of Madras and Bombay. In this respect, the policy discussions and debates over the appropriateness of a free press in British India held in Calcutta influenced policy development beyond the city's immediate boundaries, and the challenges posed to the Bengal Government by Buckingham's radical publication also set alarming precedents in British India, eventually sparking debates in London and tapping into a broader reform movement in the metropole.[314] Accordingly, the confluence of these events constitutes a distinct moment in British Indian history, a period meriting its own analysis, decoupled from teleological narratives emphasizing the apparent progress of democracy or liberalism in India, or the import and reception of European political forms by Indian elites.

[314] A thorough overview of the contesting ideologies, political debates, and rising calls for reform during the 1810s and 1820s, please see Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?,* 195-308.

THREE

CHALLENGING THE "EMPIRE OF OPINION": PREVENTING INDIAN PARTICIPATION IN CALCUTTA'S PUBLIC SPHERE

"Is it British justice, for the faults imputed to one man to punish millions?"[315]

The Indian-language press emerged in Calcutta as a direct response to the amended regulations of 1818, adding a new and significant dimension to the already mounting controversy over the issue of press freedom in British India.[316] As this thesis has argued, the Bengal Government's stance on the issue was motivated by perceived risk directly related to the content of the papers, and the potential reaction a more repressive policy might provoke among the city's politically-minded inhabitants. While Hastings recognized the threat Calcutta's proto-civil sphere posed to the stability of the region, he had taken a measured approach in response to the press question; that is, the Governor General saw more conflict resulting from the exercise of his essentially despotic power to deport unsavoury figures than from the potentially destabilizing effects of a free press. Despite claims by such scholars as Margarita Barns and A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed that the difficulty the Bengal Government faced developing a coherent policy to address the press question resulted from the clash between Hastings's liberal-minded vision and the opposing view of a conservative, reactionary administration, this chapter argues that the emergence of critical Indian opinion influenced significant policy change during this period,

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[315] Sandford Arnot. *A sketch of the history of the Indian press, during the last ten years, with a biographical account of Mr. James Silk Buckingham.*

[316] Henceforth, the Indian-language press will be referred to simply as the "Indian press", referring to papers produced in Calcutta in Persian, Bengali, Urdu, and Hindi during the 1820s.

rather than the ideological positions of individual figures within the Government.[317] With the steady arrival of non-Company Europeans to Bengal after 1813, the destabilizing effects of British missionaries, and acts of subversion in the Company's military, the Bengal Government could no longer effectively govern through *ad hoc* policies in such a hybrid legal world.[318] This became fact became too apparent to be ignored by the Government as mixed-race and Indian authors began contributing to the city's budding print culture.

Heavily influenced by Calcutta's journals, primarily James Silk Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal*, a small number of literate, well-educated Indian elites—most notably, the well-known social reformer, teacher, and author, Rammohun Roy—took advantage of the relaxed press rules to establish their own papers.[319] Through the Indian-language press and Calcutta's English-language papers, Indian intellectuals attempted to gain entry into the city's burgeoning public sphere by publishing open discussion of various aspects of the Bengal administration, and

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[317] Historians in the past have characterized the press debates as the result of a schism between a liberal, reformist Hastings and a conservative administration. Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, 118; Despite more modern interpretations that acknowledge the more complex reality on the ground, additional emphasis must be placed on the multiple challenges administrators faced in developing colonial policy during this time. Moreover, the subjective opinion of Governor Generals in setting policy obscures the numerous contextual motivations for the policy shifts. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change,* 68.

[318] With regards to the press, the Bengal Government still lacked any clear legal mechanism beyond that of English libel laws to control what was published. Even Wellesley's censorship laws had no sound legal footing. An anonymous petitioner to Parliament writing in 1824 confirmed this: "from the first establishment of the Parliamentary-Government-General, and of an independent Council, and independent King's Court, in 1773, the Press in India was actually, as well as legally, free: that is, responsible only to the English libel law and a jury." However, from the Cornwallis administration onwards, the Government controlled the press through increased threats and intimidation, leading directly up to Hastings's assumption of power. *A letter to Sir Charles Forbes, Bart. M.P. on the Suppression of the Public Discussion in India, Banishment, Without Trial of Two British Editors from that Country by the Acting Governor-General, Mr. Adam. By a Proprietor of India Stock* (London: J.M. Richardson, 1824), 13-14; While one might easily presume by the tenor and argument of the letter that the author was Buckingham himself; however, Buckingham, in reprinting and analyzing the letter, outright identified the author as a "Civil Servant" with some knowledge of the country and the Bengal Government. *Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* 10, 223; for a detailed analysis of the challenges posed to the British Government by questions of jurisdiction and sovereignty, please see essays by Philip J. Stern, Paul D. Halliday, and Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper in Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross, ed., *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 21-48, 261-278, 279-295.

[319] While some authors chose to write in Bengali, the majority chose to publish in the more widely accessible Persian. Rammohun Roy represents a rare example of an individual who was quite comfortable to publish in either English, Bengali, or Indo-Persian, and as a result of his language skills he was able to translate and exchange articles between the different papers. Among the prominent Indian authors of the day, Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore stand as the most well-known examples. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 63.

through general discussion of political and religious subjects.[320] While the latter was a primary focus of Indian authors, many of whom wrote polemical tracts to curb the influence of the thoroughly vocal missionary presses, the Bengal Government's concern centered primarily on the engagement between Indian, mixed-race, and European writers.[321] More specifically, this chapter suggests that the Bengal Government viewed the potential entry of Calcutta's Indian elites into the city's emergent public sphere as an immediate threat, one which not only prompted the reintroduction of press censorship, but also resulted in the deportation of Buckingham and the termination of the very notion of an Anglo-Indian public sphere.[322] Notably, the Indian press posed a considerable challenge to the Bengal Government's ability to control flows of information and to prevent the circulation of potentially harmful ideas. This anxiety was largely rooted in the difficulty the Government had determining the number of Indians who were engaging with printed materials and how the ideas influenced them.

More specifically, even though there were most likely no more than one hundred Indians in Calcutta who could read and understand the English press, by 1825 the Indian press had approximately 800-1,000 subscribers to the six Indian-language newspapers. However, estimates have suggested that approximately five people read each paper, not to mention the considerable

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[320] Rammohun Roy's Persian-language paper, *Mirat al-Akhbar,* for example, regularly published editorial content, discussing a variety of topics including theology, culture, and local politics. Both of his journals were devoted to the cause of reform and societal improvement. Among Roy's more controversial publications, for example, he penned a spirited attack against the practice of *sati* or widow burning in 1821; but his journals also discussed other political topics such as caste restrictions and wasteful Government expenditures. Lynn Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy and the Making of Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 99.

[321] The missionary presses were once again the harbingers of the press to British India. In April 1818, the Baptist missionaries of Serampore started the first monthly magazine in Bengali, the *Dig-Dursan*. While a monthly periodical followed shortly thereafter. Barns, *The Indian Press*, 88.

[322] This will be discussed further below, but the establishment of the Indian press also had important implications for the Orientalist/Anglicist debates over education, which had been building momentum since the introduction of the 1813 Charter Act. Notably, the shift from an orientalist-focused approach to a more interventionary, paternalist Anglicist style of rule has largely been attributed to a changing view of the Empire's responsibility to the societies it oversaw. The reform movements of the 1820s and 1830s are often identified as a key cause for this. With the three-pronged attack of evangelicalism, utilitarianism, and radical thought on British Indian society, the Government shifted its approach. Significantly, the Indian press emerged largely to respond to the challenge of the missionary presses. Lawson, *The East India Company*, 150.

exchange of material between the English and Indian presses. Complicating matters further for the Government, newspapers were copied by Indian scribes, and shared widely at the city's bazaars and, curiously, by Indian newsreaders, who read papers aloud door-to-door. Bayly, Recovering Liberties, 79; Bayly points out that while Indian newspapers weren't produced in numbers until the 1820s, and nowhere west of Banaras until the 1830s, previously established networks of bazaars transmitted political information from expatriate journals with speed and consistency, thus increasing the potential concern the Bengal Government faced in ascertaining the paper's reach.[323] Lacking this critical information pushed the Government into a defensive position, and, as the previous two chapters have argued, the fear of mutiny or revolt remained a key concern for the administration. Once again, the oft-cited notion of the "Empire of Opinion" reflected both the Government's concern with maintaining an image of British superiority, as well as a desire to monitor and control the circulation of ideas in British controlled territories. The stability of the Eastern Empire, it was argued, depended on it.[324]

With the emergence of the Indian-language press, the Bengal Government was forced to reconsider several important questions, namely, to what degree should Indians be allowed to participate in civil discourse in Calcutta? More broadly, given that Indian society had apparently not progressed through the same social and political evolution as Britain, could Indians participate meaningfully in this forum?[325] And, at the most basic level, could an Indian public

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[323] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 214.
[324] The term "Empire of Opinion" was regularly used by members of the Bengal Government, including Hastings and Adam. "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply 5th Aug. 1819," 5-8.
[325] The administration regularly fell back on an argument made most clearly and vocally by William Butterworth Bayley during the final year of Hastings's administration. In an appeal to the Board of Control, he argued that it was not the policy in British India to "adapt our laws to the state of society," and, he continued, the Government should "not prematurely…introduce the institutions of a highly civilized [society], among a less enlightened people." "Minutes by John Adam, 7th and 15th Oct. 1822, on the State of the Press in India," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India (1815-1822), 756, British Library; This argument appears to have been heavily influenced by variations on the "four stages theory", a product of multiple Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. This body of

even be said to exist at all? Moreover, as demonstrated by the focus of the new press regulations and the types of articles which were most quickly suppressed, the Bengal Government became increasingly focused on, and threatened by, the strengthening of Anglo-Indian relations during this time. While the number of private Europeans arriving in Calcutta after 1813 has been previously inflated, the degree to which Calcutta's private merchants forged close ties to Indian elites was still significant.[326] In several areas, ranging from commerce, education, to religious instruction, Indians and Europeans began at this point to work alongside one another more than ever—much of which occurred beyond the Government's control.[327]

SUPPRESSING DISSENT: BUCKINGHAM'S DEPARTURE AND THE DECLINE OF THE *CALCUTTA JOURNAL*

As this thesis has shown, a conditionally free press had proven unsustainable in Calcutta, largely owing to the ambiguity between the actual reformed regulations and the liberal values Hastings had extolled in his much-cited address.[328] In many respects, Buckingham's pugnacity as he worked to establish wide-reaching, intellectually engaged public drew the question of press freedom in Bengal into the centre of administrative concerns. Thus, the rise and fall of

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theoretical work suggested that societies experienced a linear progression to greater degrees of moral and economic complexity. For more on this, please see Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, ed., *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 29-30.

[326] Despite recently amended estimates of the number of private Europeans arriving in India after 1814, commercial activity between Indians and non-Company figures did increase dramatically during this period. Many merchants immediately worked their way into the thriving indigo trade and, since private Europeans could not hold lands in their own names now, they tended to operate through Indian brokers. Calcutta's agency houses furnished considerable amounts of capital to these figures, and close, mutually beneficial, commercial partnerships were forged as a result. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 7.

[327] Especially economically, Indians and Britons became increasingly entwined during this period. To start, following the Charter Act of 1813, independent British traders were permitted to hire their own vessels and trade freely. Indian firms were also now free to engage in speculative commercial ventures with Britain, thus increasing interaction and potential opportunities for exchange. It is also important to acknowledge the crucial role Indian capital played in several revenue streams. Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, 65; For a thorough discussion of the "Bengal Renaissance" and its legacy, please see Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal*; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; and Subrata Dasgupta, *The Bengal Renaissance: Identity and Creativity from Rammohun Roy to Rabindranath Tagore* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007).

[328] "Proposed Despatch to Bengal relative to abolition of the Censorship, sent to Board of Control 7th April 1820 and not returned," 1-3.

Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal* provides a clear view into the development of Bengal's colonial policy in response to the question of press freedom. This is especially relevant because it not only informed similar discussions in the other Presidencies, but scholars have argued this was the period that witnessed the advent of early liberalism in India and the genesis of the "Bengal Renaissance".[329] While compelling arguments have been made to support both positions, Buckingham's experiences with the Company certainly had long lasting and far-reaching implications. In the minds of contemporaries it also lent considerable support to the burgeoning reform movement in British India, but it also increased the desire for parliamentary and constitutional reform back in Britain.[330] In this rare instance, debates over the press and, more broadly, the appropriateness of a civil society in British India made their way back to the metropole and informed debates at the highest level.[331] While this chapter focuses primarily on this period of tumultuous change in Bengal, it briefly considers the effects these debates had in London in order to demonstrate how this series of "Indian" events managed to travel back and inform important decisions in the imperial centre. As a direct result of Buckingham's frequent

[329] The "Bengal Renaissance", it should be noted, has fallen out of favour in much of recent historiography. To illustrate, Peter Marshall has argued that the movement was severely limited in terms of significance because it was primarily comprised of a small group of elite Indians that failed to extend inspire a broader movement. Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta," 307; Furthermore, Andrew Sartori describes the movement as one of abject failure, highlighting its short lived nature and inability to develop into a broader, sustained movement. Sartori, *Global Concept History*, 69.

[330] Buckingham's aggressive campaign against the Company, following his expulsion from India, and Joseph Hume's petitioning of Parliament during the 1820s stand as clear examples of the push for reform in India and Britain resulting from the press debates. The efforts of both figures informed the reforms of the following decade. For an analysis of this, please see Miles Taylor, "Empire and parliamentary reform: The 1832 Reform Act revisited," in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, 295-311 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Miles Taylor, "Joseph Hume and the reformation of India, 1819-1833," in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*, ed. Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, 285-308 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[331] An important outcome of the "Buckingham Affair" which will be discussed in greater detail below, the Adam administration's aggressive use of executive power as a direct response to the editor's actions prompted spirited demand for reform of the Indian government in both England and Britain. This rare moment when colonial debates in British India became the focus of political debates in Britain encouraged critics of the Company to demand liberal reforms in Bengal. Further still, after 1823, enemies of the Company united to demand the restoration of a free press in India, the revocation of the Company's stamp duty on published documents, and the dissolution of the Company's remaining commercial monopoly on the China trade. Hardwick, "Vestry politics," 89.

conflicts with the Bengal Government, particularly as they came to a head over the issue of the participation of the European soldiery, private Britons, and India's indigenous elite, the editor was summarily deported almost immediately after the Marquis of Hastings resigned as Governor General. With the departure of Hastings, his private and personal secretary, John Adam—a long standing antagonist in the press debate—assumed the position of acting Governor General; without a doubt, this was the worst change in leadership imaginable for champions of a free press such as James Silk Buckingham and Rammohun Roy.[332]

The short period between the ascension of Adam and Buckingham's deportation has been identified as a watershed in British Indian history, and it coincided with a dramatic shift in governmental policy between 1823 and 1824.[333] This shift was a direct response to a series of legal complications that were highlighted during the "Buckingham Affair". [334] To the Bengal Government's dismay, Buckingham's deportation raised a series of important questions—ones that they had failed to adequately address. While Calcutta featured an independent judiciary, several difficult questions persisted in the minds of citizens and the administrators alike when it came to defining its precise legal boundaries. Among the most perplexing questions, two stand out: specifically, what rights did Englishmen possess in India, and, tied to this, by what means

[332] Because of his deep interest in Rammohun Roy's newspapers, some contemporary critics assumed Buckingham was a mentor to him. Slightly later, people speculated that the two were in fact journalistic partners with Buckingham moonlighting as an editor for one of Rammohun Roy's Indian papers. Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy,* 98.
[333] Lord Hastings's tenure as Governor General expired with the end of 1823. He was to be succeeded by George Canning, but in a strange turn of events he was given the post of Foreign Secretary of England following the death of Castlereagh. Thus, John Adam was nominated for the role. Barns, *The Indian Press,* 107. In fact, Buckingham's deportation has been regularly identified as the crucial catalyst for the politicization of the European community in India. Hardwick, "Vestry Politics," 88.
[334] In several cases the very foundation of British power in Bengal rested on relatively ambiguous footing, and despite the basic legal structures that had been developed since 1765, the Bengal Government still ruled through a patchwork of legal and political institutions. Furthermore, the Bengal Government developed legal mechanisms in a particularly reactive manner, especially following the dramatic shift in policy and rapid accumulation of power that characterized the Wellesley administration. Notably, with the abolishment of the Company's monopoly in 1813, the specific role and prerogatives of the Company-state became increasingly questioned and undermined. The press debates took place during this crucial phase of experimentation and debate over the future role of the Company in British India. Lawson, *The East India Company*, 144-145, 149-156.

should British residents be judged in India? Both posed a considerable challenge to the Government, especially as the private European and Indian community developed closer relationships and, more pressing still, as the mixed-race citizens of Calcutta began to play a more active role in local politics.[335]

To illustrate how challenging it was to establish effective legal structures in Calcutta, a few considerations come to mind, most of which stem from the city's small European population. First, the appointment of judges who could act independent of the Company proved difficult and, given this complication, establishing appropriate checks on the presidency's government was especially challenging. Furthermore, trial by an impartial jury proved problematic. With such a small population to draw from, jurors were difficult to select, and because so many residents maintained such close business links within the community, their ability to maintain any pretence of neutrality was largely compromised, in addition to concerns of the potential for favouritism further complicating matters.[336] These considerations were clearly evident throughout the final stages of Buckingham's experiences in India, but an even more challenging question emerged during the press freedom controversy, namely, could a "participatory public" be said to exist in Madras, Bombay, or Calcutta, and, if that was the case, could mixed-race residents be part of such a political community?[337]

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[335] Jacob Heatley stands as a clear example of this, but other key Eurasian figures entered public life during this period, including Henry Derozio and John Sandys. There was a tendency for them to act as intermediaries between European radicals and Indian elites and intellectuals during this period. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties,* 65.
[336] The selection of impartial judges was significantly complicated by the web of deep connections between residents and the Company. To date, there had also been considerable challenge selecting impartial jurors for the very same reason. Ibid., 62.
[337] Simply put, contemporaries often discussed the question of whether a "public" existed in India. Regardless of the specific definition of the term, at the core of the matter Government figures worried that residents might come to consider themselves as participants in a group united in political discussion and critique of the Bengal Government. Taylor, "Joseph Hume," 214.

Undoubtedly, questions pertaining to the specific rights of British, mixed-race, and Indian individuals came to the fore largely because of Calcutta's brief flirtation with a nominally free press, and this posed a challenge to the Government which had, throughout the 1810s and 1820s, actively tried to avoid addressing these questions.[338] Unfortunately for Calcutta's liberal-minded citizens, the Government worked quickly to suppress any discussion on the matter. With Adam as Governor General, the Government was keenly aware of the legal challenges they faced, and a more defensive approach was quickly adopted.[339] Of course, there was no better test of Adam's resolve than yet another conflict with the notorious editor of the *Calcutta Journal*. Hastings's former secretary assumed his rank at the end of January 1823, and within one week Buckingham published another inflammatory article.[340] Very different from the reckless publication of military intelligence or the flagrant criticism of the Administration that had provoked his past condemnations, in this instance Buckingham's sarcastic tone alongside a clear insinuation of Government favouritism was enough for Adam to terminate the editor's residency license. It appears that in this fraught climate, the new Governor General was not willing to entertain any public challenges to government authority however subtle they may have been.

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[338] As the first chapter demonstrates, in this period of transition administrators often avoided making significant changes as to avoid complicating things further or risking unanticipated consequences. For instance, following the Heatley incident, Hastings's response was to merely amend the rules, with hopes that the perception of his generosity would solve the problem. However, as noted, his approach proved ineffectual.

[339] Speaking to both the Government's despotic nature and the ineffectual legal mechanisms in British Bengal, Adam could pass the new rules into law specifically because at that point only one figure sat in judgement of the entire region. Notably, Chief Justice Macnaghten, a figure with a personal distaste for Buckingham, was the sole arbiter of the press question now, and by his hand alone Adam's new by-law was put into effect. *A Letter to Sir Charles Forbes,* 16.

[340] Notably, both John Adam and William Butterworth Bayley, who had provided considerable council to Hastings throughout the press debates, eventually rose to the position of Governor General. Buckingham published a thoroughly dismissive article denouncing the Bengal Government's decision to elect Revered James Bryce, former editor of the *John Bull*, to the position of Clerk of the Committee of Stationary. Despite his prior experience in the publishing industry, Buckingham suggested that he was entirely unqualified for the position, therefore implying the Government was electing figures to top positions based entirely on favouritism. *Calcutta Journal,* 8 Feb 1823. For additional context, see Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change,* 61-62.

Buckingham, however, did not leave Calcutta without enacting the first stages of a plan designed to preserve some of the victories he had secured during his tempestuous four-year career. By April 1823, just prior to his deportation, the editor transferred chief control of the *Calcutta Journal* to Francis Sandys and selected Sandfort Arnot as the assistant editor**.**[341] Facing his imminent deportation, he penned a detailed report of his conflicts with the Bengal Government. Incensed by his treatment at the hands of the Government, Buckingham prepared a summary of his entire experience while agitating for press freedom, and he included in it all the correspondence he shared with Chief Secretary to Government, William Butterworth Bayley, as well as the Government's official justification for his harsh treatment. In taking things even further, the polemic also specifically argued that the actions of the Bengal Government were tyrannical.[342] While British India was certainly run in the style of a military despotism, explicit reference to this fact was problematic for the Government, especially in the eyes of its private British residents, who perceived themselves to be subject to, and protected by, the laws of England.[343] If Buckingham was to be deported, it seemed, he finally abandoned the modicum of restraint he had previously exercised.

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[341] Ibid., 62.

[342] Entitled *A few brief Remarks on the recent act of Transportation without Trial with Copies of Official Correspondence between W. B. Bayley (Chief Secretary to Government) and Mr. Buckingham, the late Editor of the Calcutta Journal, printed for the Private Information of Mr. Buckingham's Friends, but neither Published nor Sold, 24th Feb. 1823*, the tract was not published for a popular audience, but Buckingham, as the title suggests, wrote it specifically for his friends and supporters in Bengal and back in England. Not only was he attempting to vindicate his character in the face of this defamatory assault once again, but he was also shrewd enough to use it as a basis for his future legal case against the Bengal Government. "A few brief Remarks on the recent act of Transportation without Trial with Copies of Official Correspondence between W. H. Bayley (Chief Secretary to Government) and Mr. Buckingham, the late Editor of the Calcutta Journal, printed for the Private Information of Mr. Buckingham's Friends, but neither Published nor Sold, 24th Feb. 1823," IOR/H/533, "Restrictions on the Press in India, 1823-1830," 153-213, British Library.

[343] The importance of masking the essentially despotic nature of the regime was clear to at least some of the key members of the Administration. This was the basis for one of Hastings's primary arguments in support of maintaining the slackened press rules as late as October 1823. "It's excellent to have a giant's strength," he wrote, "but it is tyrannous to use it like a Giant." Once again, Hastings maintained his argument that the reintroduction of censorship or the exercise of the Government's power to deport dissenting voices would only incite more rebellious

But Buckingham also made sure to present a clear vision for the future of the *Calcutta Journal* to safeguard the small victories he had secured, and to ensure the survival of this liberal voice in the east. In a detailed memorandum, he set out a series of directives for the new editor. Sandys and Arnot's roles were clearly outlined, and one James Sutherland was identified as the primary reporter for the journal. The *Calcutta Journal*, he explained, was to be run in a perfectly democratic manner, with all decision-making split between the editor, the vice-editor, and the chief reporter. The paper also sought to uphold the same degree of intense investigative scrutiny for which it had developed its high standing among Calcutta's intelligentsia.[344] But, tied to this latter point, the most interesting section clearly demonstrates the rapidly shifting political climate in Bengal now that Adam had taken control. Buckingham, with clear foresight, told the three main proprietors of the paper to be cautious with what they chose to publish. While he commanded them not to add anything to the letters or intelligence they received, he strongly urged them, for their and their subscribers' sake, to avoid conflicting with the Adam administration. Concluding his letter, Buckingham wrote the following:

> And as the great mass of the Supporters of the Journal are men of high minds and noble principles, as well as persons of weight and rank in the community, I shall thus be as well assured as I could desire, that nothing calculated to inflict an unnecessary pain on any class, will be permitted to be published. The firm tone and independent spirit of the Journal may, of course, be maintained by all: but to prevent anything escaping that may be likely to do injury rather than good, I particularly desire that this power of Censorship be permitted to be equally exercised by Mr. Sandys, Mr. Arnot, and Mr. Sutherland, and that nothing be published which is not sanctioned and approved by each of them.[345]

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acts in Calcutta. "C. Lushington (Chief Secretary) to Buckingham 5th Sept. 1822, A last warning," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India, 1815-1822, 741, British Library.

[344] James Silk Buckingham, *Rules for the office of the Journal: Memorandum of what I desire to be attended to principally in my absence*, *Hume Tracts*, 1823, UCL Library Services, Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/60213093, accessed: 15-06-2016 02:46 UTC, 1-5.

[345] Ibid., 8.

In a sense, Buckingham was advocating a form of rational self-censorship to avoid a repeat of his fate—a somewhat ironic twist given his long-standing protests of censorship. While nothing was to be added to the papers, they were also instructed to remove any potentially inflammatory sections. Finally, to prevent the immediate closure of the *Calcutta Journal* following his departure, Buckingham carefully chose his successor. Notably, Francis Sandys was of mixed heritage, the son of an English father and an Indian mother.[346] Reminiscent of Jacob Heatley, the key catalyst for Hastings's repeal of censorship, the deportation clause Adam had just exercised did not apply to Sandys, thereby, once again emphasizing the Government's lack of an effective legal mechanism in such situations. While Buckingham was doing his best to ensure the survival of this progressive, anti-absolutist voice in the eastern Empire, his actions provoked the harshest of reprisals. To Adam, Buckingham's chicanery was dangerous and, therefore, completely intolerable, and Adam focused on finally enshrining in law his disdain for the press.

SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL UNDER THE ADAM ADMINISTRATION

By using his "extreme power of government", Adam immediately began to safeguard against the public acrimony that Hastings had predicted earlier that year.[347] Adam moved swiftly and, evoking some of his previously developed arguments against the press, secured official support to annul Hastings's policy. In its place, the new guidelines contained within Regulation III of 1823 were formally introduced on April 5th, 1823, and the press was henceforth to be tightly controlled.[348] Moreover, all residents of Calcutta were to observe a strict series of rules devised to prevent the dissemination of any ideas or statements that could be deemed threatening or challenging to the Bengal Government's authority or specific policy decisions. A compulsory

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[346] Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 62.
[347] "1st Jan. 1822, Articles in the Calcutta Journal calculated to obstruct Justice," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India, 1815-1822, 345-346, British Library.
[348] Ibid., 241-244.

licensing system was put into place for editors with clear guidelines on the publication of what the Government deemed appropriate articles, and penalties that noted that two infractions would result in the revocation of the offenders' license. The stipulations were strict and precise, and they effectively placed both the English and Indian-language press under a state of complete domination.[349] While the deportation clause was removed, the new mechanism was considerably more effective at controlling the flow of information, primarily because of its detailed structure and the clear intention on behalf of the Government to prevent anything like the "Buckingham Affair" from occurring again.[350]

The new provisions present a clear view of exactly what Adam and the Government were most interested in: the complete suppression of any criticism of the Administration, and securing total control over the flow of information in the region. The new rules applied strictly to Calcutta's newspapers and, more specifically, publications that featured editorials. Advertisements, shipping intelligence, commodity listings, and other economic reports or "intelligence solely of a commercial nature" were excluded from government regulation as they did not pose any immediate threat according to the Government's rationale.[351] Furthermore, "any book-seller or proprietor or keeper of any reading-room, library, shop, or place of public resort," who was proven to be selling, distributing, or lending any newspapers deemed inappropriate by

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[349] Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 63.
[350] Interestingly, a tract was also circulated in response to Buckingham's *A few brief Remarks on the recent act of Transportation without Trial*. The piece, entitled *Statement of Facts Relative to the Removal from India of Mr. Buckingham, late Editor of the Calcutta Journal*, was published in April 1823 and has largely been attributed directly to Adam. It presents similar details, but contravenes Buckingham's argument, urging readers instead to sympathize with the perspective of the Bengal Government. Ibid., 62.
[351] During this time, a free-trade mentality became dominant. It was believed that increasing British control over India's external trade, a kind of financial revolution would take place, reversing the economic woes of the Company that characterized the 1770s and 1780s. Despite its ultimate failure to do so, the press regulations reflect this view among contemporaries in India. Bayly, *Indian Society*, 117.

the Government, would also be held accountable and risk investigation or charges.[352] The provisions were also clear in terms of jurisdiction. The rules applied to the Presidency of Fort William and all the territories immediately subordinate to it. Thereafter, all printing in British Bengal was to be monitored and reviewed, specifically to prevent another rogue editor from challenging Company rule.[353] To avoid any confusion, Adam decided the new policy was to be printed and circulated in all of Calcutta's newspapers, and it was even displayed prominently in a conspicuous part of India House in London the following December.[354] Finally, as a clear testament to Adam's conviction, the magistrate and joint magistrates were authorized and directed to report all unlicensed printing presses, and if, "on credible evidence, or circumstances of strong presumption," they suspected that any unlicensed printing presses were operating in the area, they were instructed to issue a warrant directing police officers to search the dwelling and confiscate all presses, types, and any related materials.[355] Buckingham's vexatious behaviour following the removal of censorship, it seems, left an indelible mark on Adam, prompting the acting Governor General to leave no doubt about his swift and forceful reaction. Hastings's apparently liberal press reform had ceased to exist, and the contents of his acclaimed speech now rang hollow.

Through a surprisingly pragmatic response, however, some concerned British residents of Calcutta boldly rejected Adam's new regulations, arguing that these repressive rules would lead directly to civil unrest and, above all, the restoration of censorship would negatively affect the Indian population. Curiously, both the Adam Government and this group of concerned citizens centered their argument on the potential effects a free press would have on the Indian subjects of

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[352] "Proceedings before His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in relation to the appeal by James Silk Buckingham against certain regulations of the Bengal Government on the subject of the Press. London, 1825," 4-5.
[353] Ibid., 6.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid., 7.

the region, attesting to both the delicate situation of the Bengal Government and the perception of the Indian population as a primary point of concern.[356] In a formal petition to the Court of Directors in London, for example, Thomas Denman and John Williams, writing as private citizens of Calcutta, argued that censorship would inevitably lead to further conflict as British subjects came to recognize the abrogation of their perceived rights. "Your petitioner," they wrote, "humbly submits that the said rules, ordinances, and regulations, are likely to produce discontent amongst your Majesty's British subjects resident in India, and amongst the natives of that country, being subversive of property, and calculated to established arbitrary power, and to deprive of redress any person who may be injured by an improper and illegal use of power in that country."[357] In clear, direct language, the petitioners denounced the reintroduction of censorship, suggesting that the new regulations might infringe upon property rights; excessively punish residents resulting in financial ruin, as was the case with Buckingham; and set a precedent for the further exercise of arbitrary and authoritative governance. In this respect, Partha Chatterjee's argument that an anti-absolutist public sphere emerged in Bengal during this period is apt.[358] Most significantly, however, the petition entreated the Government to repeal the censorship regulations not only to avoid inciting dissent among the European citizenry, but also to prevent

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[356] As this chapter demonstrates, appeals to the Government in Bengal and back in London repeatedly emphasized the potential danger a repressive press policy could have on the Indian population. This confirms an argument recently made by Christopher Bayly. In his last monograph, Bayly suggested that Adam and, shortly thereafter, Lord Amherst, relied on a classic authoritarian argument that freedom of the press would destabilize public order by agitating the Indian population. He attributed this response to the rapid emergence of critical, highly articulate Indian opinion during this period. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 79; Attesting to this, William Butterworth Bayley, in his repeated entreaties to the Board of Control argued that it was specifically the Indian press that posed the greatest threat to the continued British presence in India. In an alarmist fashion, he referred to the Indian press in 1822, arguing that it could easily be converted into "an Engine of the most serious mischief…" "C. Lushington (Chief Secretary) to Buckingham 5th Sept. 1822, A last warning," 742.
[357] "Proceedings before His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in relation to the appeal by James Silk Buckingham against certain regulations of the Bengal Government on the subject of the Press. London, 1825," 10.
[358] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 157.

discord with the Indian population, or ensure their continued "improvement" through British tutelage.[359]

Focusing on the petition's emphasis on the Indian population, the petitioners criticized Adam's policy because whether unintentionally or not, they felt censorship would keep Indians in a state of ignorance.[360] In summarizing a series of sub-arguments against the regulations, the petitioners noted the following statement as a chief concern: "The said rules, orders, and regulations are likely to produce discontent in the province of Bengal, by depriving the inhabitants of all means of cultivating their minds and improving their condition."[361] This was an especially relevant criticism as the debates over the form and style of public education for the Indian population had entered popular discussion in the Presidencies.[362]

With the advent of Hastings's 1818 press regulations, the question of precisely how the British residents of Bengal were to be governed came to the fore in an immediate and explicit manner, and in a particularly public forum, at that. The issue of press freedom was a sensitive one at home during this time, the question of free expression became tied up in the developing reformist notions of British liberty.[363] For this reason, made all the more pressing because of the rising radical and reformist movements in Britain, the question of press freedom was a sensitive

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[359] As the liberal turn in Government began to take hold in Bengal, the notion of "improvement" began to be evoked with greater frequency. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 28.
[360] The core argument of the petition read as follows: "The said rules, orders, and regulations are likely to produce discontent in the province of Bengal, by depriving the inhabitants of all means of cultivating their minds and improving their condition." "Proceedings before His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in relation to the appeal by James Silk Buckingham against certain regulations of the Bengal Government on the subject of the Press. London, 1825," 11.
[361] Ibid., 10.
[362] Also of note, the education debates were also highly informed by the emergence of literary and cultural centres. Examples include the establishment in 1817 and 1818 of the Hindu college, the School Book Society, a branch of the Church Missionary Society and Female Juvenile Society. Hardwick, "Vestry Politics," 90.
[363] The aftermath of the Napoleonic wars sparked a period of intense controversy in the history of the British press. In 1817 alone there were twenty-six trials related to improper publication, and by 1819 the events of Peterloo in Manchester produced a burst of radical journalism and more high-profile prosecutions. Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy,* 99.

one, and extending this discussion to the colonial periphery at this time seemed dangerous.[364] However, in repealing press censorship at a time when British residents of Bengal considered themselves to be subject to the law of England, the move drew conspicuous recognition of this legally ambiguous environment. Now, with the restoration of censorship, the discussion was revivified, and opponents of the Company's monopoly seized the moment to argue their case.[365]

But since it concerned the Indian population, this was the first time regulations were being specifically imposed on them, because Wellesley's formal censorship laws had never been applicable to Indians. Referring specifically to this point, the petitioners argued:

> all sources of information or of improvement, to either his Majesty's British subjects or the natives, may be closed at the will of the Governor General in Council, as no printed or written work of any description can be published or circulated, or be let out, or lent for perusal, unless licensed by the Government, without rendering the parties so infringing the regulation liable to a severe punishment, out of all proportion to the nature of the offence.[366]

Developing arguments based on the so-called "improvement of Indians" was a crucial point of emphasis here. While it begs several questions—particularly related to how appropriate it was for the Bengal Government to decide whether the Indian population required this type of paternal guidance, or specifically how it was to be done—it fed directly into the developing discourse

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[364] With a rising reformist movement and popular protest, a tense political climate tempered Parliament's will to engage in such controversial debates. For more on the political challenges and transformations of the 1820s and 1830s, please see Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People? England 1782-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 309-436; moreover, following the events of Peterloo, questions regarding free expression and print took on heightened significance. For a comprehensive study of the English radical movement, see John Belchem, *"Orator Hunt": Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (New York: Clarendon, 1985).

[365] Joseph Hume is often cited as a clear example of the anti-monopolist figures in London who began to openly criticize the Bengal Government's policies during this time. But there were critics in India and London alike. For example, the anonymous East India Company stockholder whom Buckingham identified as a British Indian civil servant petitioned MP Charles Forbes to agitate for press freedom. The author suggested that the powers of deportation were initially born of the Company's desire to maintain its monopoly by preventing interlopers who might pose a challenge to it: "The Government having the power of sending any British born subject to England a prisoner, without reason assigned, it is evident this terrible engine, though created for purposes of monopoly…" Beyond 1813, however, the monopoly had been significantly curtailed and as a result, he argued, the deportation clause served no purpose beyond simple intimidation. *A letter to Sir Charles Forbes*, 14.

[366] "Proceedings before His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in relation to the appeal by James Silk Buckingham against certain regulations of the Bengal Government on the subject of the Press. London, 1825," 10.

over the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining an orientalist approach to public education in the Presidency. The petitioners also clearly pointed out the apparent dissonance between the publication of an inflammatory article and the accompanying punishment levied by the Government. The suggestion of tyranny was once again clear; however, there was an even more troubling consideration within the petition. In having editors and publishers formally declare their intention to print only appropriate material, the Government was effectively calling for Indians to swear an oath: a practice that was doctrinally abhorrent to many Hindus and, therefore, alienating to a large potential audience.[367] Particularly as it related to religious considerations, the imposition of these new rules, risked the potential of breaching some of the core guiding principles of British dominion in India. Moreover, this degree of explicit control over the Indian population was unprecedented to date, and therefore the introduction of the new regulations meant that Adam was setting clear and alarming precedents and claims of authority over all people within the Bengal Presidency.

While Adam's decision can be traced to a few motivations, he appears to have been compelled primarily by the perceived risk that, he argued, resulted from the potential mobilization of a critical Indian public. While Hastings had recognized the danger of what he termed a "perverse Confederacy" in Calcutta, referring specifically to Buckingham and his supporters, he argued that there was no effective means to destroy it and therefore he avoided any strong executive intervention. Writing in 1822, Hastings suggested that if no mechanism was available to the Government, "caution must be used in counteracting [the faction's] efforts, lest

[367] This consideration was clearly identified by the petitioners, who suggested that, "The forms prescribed in the said regulation for obtaining a license are said, on good authority, to be in direct opposition to the religious prejudices of the natives of India; the taking of oaths being abhorrent to their feelings, and derogatory to their reputation among their countrymen." Ibid.

we should be betrayed into playing its Games."[368] Despite this agreement between Hastings and Adam, the new Governor General remained steadfast in his desire to overturn Hastings policy. Considering how actively he had participated in the press debate up to that point, it seems that Adam held a personal stake in the outcome, having argued fervently against the repeal of censorship on numerous occasions.[369] Accordingly, he might have easily assumed authority, hoping to receive some vindication after his arguments in favour of censorship had been summarily dismissed by Hastings on the grounds of being too repressive or authoritarian. More likely, however, he perceived the potential risk of a developing Indian public as a more threatening outcome than the potential repercussions Hastings had identified, both regarding Buckingham's deportation and to the reintroduction of censorship.[370] Despite his understanding of the potential repercussions, Adam saw sufficient reason to reintroduce censorship, and in doing so, he was undermining a core ideological justification for British rule in India.

The period between the two Indian reform bills of 1813 and 1832 was marked by considerably change and uncertainty for the Government of Bengal, and the new direction of Adam's temporary administration stands as a clear testament to this. While Adam's tenure lasted

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[368] "Minutes by John Adam, 7th and 15th Oct. 1822, on the State of the Press in India," 725.

[369] In multiple instances, Adam appealed to the Board of Control to intervene with Hastings to prevent the press question from leading to further dissent. He repeatedly emphasized a single argument: the soldiery, Company merchants, and other residents of Calcutta had absolutely no grounds to stand in judgement of the Government, given the fact that they were employed by, and living in the area solely because of the Company. "Lieut.-Col. W. Robison to Chief Secretary 9th June 1822 with Papers relative to his trial by Court Martial for his Article signed 'A Military Friend'," IOR/H/532, Restrictions on the Press in India (1815-1822), 538-547, British Library.

[370] John Adam's motivations in reintroducing censorship appear to have been largely influenced by Sir John Malcolm, whose 1822 memorandum to Hastings argued that a free press would lead inevitably to insubordination and potential rebellion. He recognized the mixed-race residents of Calcutta as the primary concern, but he also connected the defiance of Calcutta's press to the independent judiciary in Bengal. Taylor, "Joseph Hume," 294; Similarly, Sir Thomas Munro as Governor of Madras argued in a similarly authoritarian vein: "A Free Press and the dominion of Strangers," he wrote, "are things which are quite incompatible, and which cannot long exist together, for what is the first duty of a Free Press, it is to deliver the Country from a foreign yoke, to sacrifice to this one great object every measure, and consideration and if we make the Press really free to the Natives, as well as to Europeans, it must inevitably lead to this result." "Minute by Sir Thomas Munro 12th April 1822," IOR/H/539, Restrictions on the Press in India, Appendix to Letter from Court to Board 17th Jan. 1823 on libels in Indian Newspapers and restrictions consequent thereon. (1791-1822), 299-300, British Library; Taking this further, he explicitly argued that British sovereignty in India should be maintained for as long as possible, and only when the native population was fully prepared to finally partake of the gift of a free expression should they restore Indian sovereignty. Ibid., 301.

only seven months before Lord Amherst took control, he set the administrative direction for the remainder of the decade, one that disobeyed the hopes of the Government in England. Upon his arrival, Amherst was instructed to establish good relations between the Company and its Indian allies and vassal states. Most importantly, he was instructed by the government in London to follow three core ruling principles: he was not to exacerbate the financial distress of any Indian state; provide explicit advice to local Indian rulers, as all measures were to be introduced in the name of said rulers; and, finally, as chief of the British Indian Government, he was to "preserve as completely as possible to all our allies the degree of independence which they now enjoy."[371] While these rules were articulated slightly later, they did closely reflect the approach taken to date, and this is why Adam's new policies were so dangerous: after all, even casual observers recognized that his approach directly infringed upon the existing rights of Bengal's Indian population.[372] Importantly, the Indian population already had a long history of exchanging ideas through text, and as a result Adam's attempt to completely stifle dissent displayed a degree of intervention that had not been seen to date. Once again, the inability of the citizens of Calcutta to form a cohesive public sphere during this period can be largely attributed to the Company's efforts to prevent such an outcome, particularly when the potential of Indian entry into this forum became apparent.

INDIAN "IMPROVEMENT": A FREE PRESS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE INDIAN POPULATION

As in 1799 and 1818, the Bengal Government became increasingly concerned with the papers' audience. The fears of mutiny, rebellion, or even basic challenges to the perception of

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[371] Philips, *The East India Company,* 241.

[372] For example, both the anonymous petitioner and MP Charles Forbes recognized that censorship over the Indian population was counter to the status quo to date, and therefore a cause to be challenged. According to the author, Forbes had gone as far as to publicly declare his support for free discussion among the Indian population in Parliament as a response to Adam's new regulations. *A letter to Sir Charles Forbes*, 1.

British supremacy on the subcontinent were especially threatening to government officials, and the press facilitated a broader audience for critical opinion. This emphasized the importance of the Government's ability to effectively control the flow of information, and it appears that the question of Indians contributing to civil discourse posed a significant challenge to this.[373] Because Adam's notion of the "Empire of Opinion" appeared to apply most explicitly to the Indian population, the Indian-language press became a source of immediate contention, both in its encouragement of civil discourse among Indians, but also because it put additional strain on the Government's resources. Unfortunately, introducing more scrutiny required more staff to scour through Calcutta's papers to ensure proper conduct, and so the Indian press presented an even greater challenge as regular, rapid translation became necessary to make sure Indian writers were not failing to observe the rules.

Incidentally, this period has also been characterized by two important considerations: the free trade movement successfully broke the Company's monopoly, leading to a period of unprecedented commercial activity that further entwined the lives and careers of Indians and private merchants; and, directly related to the emergence of the Indian press, this period witnessed the birth of the socio-cultural and intellectual movement often described as the "Bengal Renaissance".[374] Speaking to the former point, as mentioned previously, this was a period of unprecedented engagement between Indians, Europeans, and mixed-race residents in Calcutta. This suggests that there was considerable exchange of information and ideas between these groups, a consideration that strongly implied an immediate challenge to the Company's carefully

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[373] While no accurate census existed in India at that time, contemporaries estimated the population of Calcutta and its immediate suburbs to be approximately 600,000 people. Given the miniscule number of Europeans residing in the area, Indians comprised the bulk of this number. Therefore, it is clear why the question of audience was so crucial to administrators. Ibid., 10.

[374] Ahmed also notes the rising missionary activity in the region after 1813 led to the development of a more explicit climate of opinion, one that encouraged both reform and reaction. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change*, 169; on the subject of the "Bengal Renaissance", please see Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance.*

curated image of innate British superiority. Similarly, whether the Renaissance was as significant as has been suggested, it still featured the entry of a coherent body of Indian authors and artists into Calcutta's public, who drew upon and appropriated European philosophy, political and artistic theories.

Further elaborating on this, while the degree to which Indians were influenced by, rejected, or appropriated European intellectual and social forms is relatively contentious, it is clear a key point of emphasis in this debate is the essentially trans-national nature of these engagements. In fact, figures like Mirza Abu Taleb, James Buckingham Silk, Henry Derozio and Rammohun Roy are excellent examples of authors who developed their ideas precisely through a variety of European and Asian influences. In this case, an argument made by Sebastien Conrad is apt: In considering the appropriation of concepts and ideas in this kind of environment, it is crucial to situate these figures in a broad context of what he identifies as "transnational entanglements", to emphasize the multi-directional flow of ideas and de-emphasize the over-simplified notion of a direct transfer of European thought to the subcontinent. In fact, these intellectual currents are far more likely the result of essential hybrid environment from which they were born.[375]

While the very notion of the Bengal Renaissance indicates the entry of elite Indians into Calcutta's cultural scene, the question of whether or not a well-informed, educated Indian public existed at this time was debated by the city's European residents. Interestingly, in his correspondence to the Board of Control, John Adam refused to acknowledge the apparent existence of an Indian public. Instead, he omitted any discussion of the Indian population because the British crown was ruling them, and he went to considerable lengths, once again, to demonstrate how a European public could not be said to exist either, specifically because the

[375] Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (October 2012): 1013.

clear majority of residents were directly or indirectly under the Company's employ.[376] It is clear, however, that a body of engaged, highly literate Indians did emerge during this period and they participated actively in both the Indian and English papers; and yet this was not enough to convince certain European observers of the ability or capacity of Indians to meaningfully contribute to public affairs, having not benefited from the centuries of political evolution attributed to British society.[377] A key figure in the unfolding press controversy following Adam's arrival, Leister Stanhope penned his own history of the Anglo-Indian press in 1823. It was significant not least for its detailed account of the developing controversy and its distribution back in Britain, but also because one of its central arguments was that an Indian public could not be said to exist; the fact that this suggestion was coming from outside of the Bengal Government was also significant as most claims to this effect in the past came directly from the administration itself.[378] Interestingly, Stanhope argued that an Indian public had been an important part of the so-called ancient Indian constitution, but it had dissolved through the political upheavals of the eighteenth century.[379]

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[376] "Restrictions on the Press in India, 1815-1822," 538-547; For Bayly, the basis for an Indian public emerged concurrent to the beginning of early Indian liberalism. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties,* 39-60.

[377] An important caveat, despite a tendency to discuss Bengal's Indian population as it related to the press question as a singular or unified group, this simply was not the case. Particularly as the press debates polarized Calcutta's population through frank discussion of a variety of political matters, the numerous Indian interest groups emerged more visibly as they argued various positions during this time. In his important study, Ahmed identified three broad categories within this group of elite Indians: Conservatives, Reformers, and Radicals represented three distinct intellectual currents in Bengali Hindu thought during this period, and this spectrum of political and social thought ensured rich and lively debate in both the English and Indian papers. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal*, 27.

[378] Hardwick, "Vestry Politics," 95.

[379] Ibid; From the Cornwallis administration on, as Robert Travers has demonstrated, appeals to the ancient Indian or Mughal constitution formed the basis of several arguments used by the Company until this point. For more, please see Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 224; For a sustained analysis of how the ancient Mughal Constitution was deployed to justify British imperial policies during the Cornwallis administration and in the decades shortly thereafter, see Ibid., 207-249.

Despite clear evidence to the contrary, however, Stanhope's argument requires slightly more context.[380] This was the period of British Indian history where the question of how best to educate the Indian residents of British-held territories was debated most heavily, and Stanhope's piece contributed directly to an expanding pro-Anglicist discourse that reached its apogee in Macaulay's infamous Minute on Education in 1835.[381] It seems that while Stanhope was quick to extoll the potential benefits of a free press on the Indian population, the central argument of his book was as follows: through the introduction of a thoroughly English education, Indians would gradually develop "virtue", a term he defined as a "more enlarged and cultivated reason," which would enable them to eventually participate in something akin to a public sphere.[382] With Stanhope, it becomes apparent that even commentators outside of Government fed into an evolving paternalist discourse on Indian education and "improvement," whether they argued for or against a free press. But this is not to say that all commentators took this stance. In fact, some of the most significant arguments that a free press could be a benefit to the Indian population approached the question from a fundamentally different perspective.

As the Bengal Government and British residents debated the question from this paternalist perspective, the most effective arguments for a free press first questioned the logic of conducting

[380] For instance, according to Hardwick, from the late-eighteen tens onwards, contemporary liberal writers in both India and Britain recognized the emergence of a "native opinion", which was attributed primarily to the emergence of the Indian press because of Hastings's new press rules. Both Buckingham and Joseph Hume are said to have argued that the nominally free press had almost immediately fundamentally altered the nature of British rule in India as Enlightenment principles began to be disseminated widely. Hardwick, "Vestry Politics," 93.
[381] Macaulay, "Minute recorded in the General Department by Thomas Babington Macaulay," 161-188; For a detailed, insightful appraisal of the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, see "Origins of the Controversy," Ibid., 1-72.
[382] Liberally quoting Sir Francis Bacon, Stanhope was articulating a classic Anglicist position. Leicester Stanhope, *Sketch of the history and influence of the press in British India: containing remarks on the effects of a free press on subsidiary alliances; on the delays of office; on superstition; on the administration of justice; on flogging; and on agriculture* (London: C. Chapple, 1823), 19; Taking this further, Stanhope concluded his work by arguing that the combination of English education and a free press would lead to the advancement of Indian society: "By the operation of education and free discussion, the Hindoos will be enlightened. As a sure, however, slowly progressive, result, morals will be improved, superstition and castes destroyed, women enfranchised, and religion purified; the laws will be ameliorated, justice better administered, and cruelties prevented; slavery will be abolished." Ibid., 193-194.

these discussions without a clear acknowledgement of prior modes of Indian communication and civil discourse.[383] A testament to the Government's concerns and unwillingness to entertain the Indian perspective throughout this ordeal, the basic question of how a small group of white Europeans was to independently develop, implement, and monitor a logical, effective policy to govern the vast bulk of the population did not appear often throughout the press debates.[384] While plainly apparent from a distance, it seems that only few possessed the confidence or willingness to point it out. In an 1824 petition to MP Sir Charles Forbes, an anonymous civil servant writing positioned his critique with this specifically in mind: "The natives compose the infinite mass and majority of the governed in [India]; but they are too commonly left out of view by the English debaters of the Press-question, who seem to treat it chiefly with reference to its bearings on commercial and political parties, or on family connexions, and matters of patronage."[385] However, the fact that the Government routinely failed to include Bengal's Indians in discussions over their fate, the petitioner argued, was simply further evidence that the Government was ignoring a crucial consideration and, in the process, inviting future conflict.

The key argument in the lengthy, detailed letter centered on the need for sound governance with a focus on the "good of the Natives", and the potential harm that might come to the Government if it failed to acknowledge this. Referring to Bengal's Indian and mixed-race residents, the author argued that the Company's "distant and doubly-delegated rule" could not succeed without the establishment of a local check on government, or more specifically, the

[383] For a detailed overview of the Indian information order as it had been established historically under the Mughal Empire and continued to operate beyond the Company's reach, please see Bayly, "The Indian ecumene: an indigenous public sphere," in *Empire and Information*, 180-211.
[384] Instead, in the bulk of correspondence between petitioners and members of the Bengal Government the Indian population was evoked as a problem to be attended to, rather than a body of citizens under British rule.
[385] *A Letter to Sir Charles Forbes*, 1.

practice of "public scrutiny through the Press."[386] Speaking in terms any British citizen could easily relate to, he went so far as to point out the complete lack of redress Indian residents possessed in the Presidencies, implicitly suggesting that this state of affairs might eventually lead to feelings of embitterment or, taken further, general upheaval or even rebellion:

> the unfortunate natives in the provinces of Bengal have no channels of judicial form through which to appeal against the more sweeping new law of prohibition and confiscation, to which their intercommunication of thought and opinion is subjected. They have no right to assemble or petition collectively, and individuals are afraid to offend power, unprotected as they are by any institutions, or even by any tribunals essentially independent of a Government which pays, appoints, and remove at pleasure.[387]

The author boldly highlighted the complete lack of collective agency Indians possessed in the face of new regulations that significantly altered and confined the manner in which they exchanged information.[388] Without a doubt, the fact that Adam's new approach infringed upon the Indian population in a new and unprecedented way was clearly visible; however, what made this move even more threatening to the status quo in British Bengal was the fact the Indian population in Bengal, and India generally, already possessed a long-standing, complex system of information exchange notable for both its speed, efficiency, and broad reach.[389] Despite the rigor and logic of the petitioner's argument, the Government remained entrenched in its position, at least until the Home Government intervened with the reforms of 1832. This rare opportunity for a

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[386] Ibid., 2.
[387] Ibid., 9.
[388] Curiously, this criticism of the Government echoes a very similar argument made by Chief Secretary Bayley the year prior. Specifically, because the country's some eighty million inhabitants possessed no representation in any form, having been administered by an essentially despotic Mughal Empire, he argued that it would be very dangerous to provide any outlet for disaffected residents. Despite the same argument being deployed on either side, however, the fact that Adam's new rules had altered previous Indian modes of communication remained. "Restrictions on the Press in India, 1815-1822," 752-753.
[389] For an overview of the pre-existing Indian information order, please see Christopher Alan Bayly, "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (February 1993): 3-43; Bayly, *Empire and Information*; Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); furthermore, for an analysis of Indian chronicles, and the work of Indian historians prior to European contact, please see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "On early modern historiography," 425-445.

unified Anglo-Indian civil sphere to emerge failed, however, and with the arrival of Bentinck during the early 1830s the notion was problematized further.[390]

BUILDING ON THE INDIAN ECUMENE

The combination of a pre-existing, highly effective and wide-reaching Indian information and intelligence gathering order and the emergence of a critical Indian public, visible through Calcutta's presses during the early to mid-1820s, further supports the argument that the failure of a coherent public sphere to emerge in Calcutta during this period was primarily due to the Government's repressive censorship policy. Significantly, the policy was developed in direct response to the relentless press debates and rooted in the ever-present fear that British reputation in India might be diminished, or, worse still, the belief among some administrators that Indians might stage a large scale revolt. Central to this argument and running parallel to the Company's information and intelligence gathering order, the beleaguered Mughal Empire maintained a robust, multi-faceted system of information gathering and exchange that pre-dated European arrival to the subcontinent and specialized in the procurement of political intelligence. In his ground-breaking study on the British information order in north India and its failure to predict much less avert the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Christopher Bayly referred to this pre-existing structure as the "Indian ecumene", which he defined as the pre-existing forms of cultural and political debate in north Indian prior to the birth of the English and Indian press and the formation of public associations.[391]

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[390] With the complete repeal of the Company's monopoly, the nature of the Company-state shifted significantly once again. For an analysis of the transformations the Company experienced following the Charter Act of 1813, please see Lawson, *The East India Company*, 127-144 and Bowen, *The Company State,* 211.

[391] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 182; In many respects, the introduction of the printing press to Bengal, per Bayly, represented the final constituent element in the development of an Indian civil society. It facilitated the scale and speed of debate like never before, and as a direct result of the arrival of Christian missionaries after 1813, Indian writers were drawn into this budding print culture by a perceived obligation to produce rational, written refutations

While Bayly emphasized the continuation and evolution of the ecumene as it incorporated the press and other forms of public engagement well into the early twentieth century, he also crucially highlighted the fact that the Indian ecumene differed from a European public in the sense that its leaders were unable to successfully monitor and critique the government and society.[392] However, Bayly's work also includes a number of important observations that demonstrate the fact that a critical Indian public emerged during this period, and that the Government was so concerned about the Indian entry into Calcutta's emergent public sphere through participation in the press because of their pre-existing indigenous information order.[393]

While the Indian population remained largely illiterate during this period, this hardly precluded large cross-sections of the population from participating in political discourse. First, as Bayly and others have demonstrated, Mughal society relied heavily on scribes and the transmission of information orally, with newspapers, folk tales, and various often forms of written communication often being read aloud to large groups in markets and bazaars or by newsreaders who travelled from residence to residence.[394] Referring to the manner in which elite and non-elite Indians devised creative and complex ways to support and augment oral culture and debate through the use of printed media, Bayly convincingly argued that despite India's abysmal

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as counter-polemics. For Indians, it seems, religion was the central basis for the emergence of a reform public. Ibid., 191, 192; For more on the debates over the causes of the 1857 Rebellion, please see the essays contained in Biswamoy Pati, *The 1857 Rebellion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[392] Ibid.

[393] Bayly, "Knowing the Country," 5-10.

[394] As mentioned above, markets and bazaars facilitated considerable information exchange in Indian society. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 79; for a more detailed study on the interplay between literature in "oral" cultures, or the connection between technology, literacy rates, and how they vary between countries, please see Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in Technology of Communication* (Milton Keynes: Callender Press, 2014), 37-106; 137-194; It has been effectively argued that the Mughal administration of India was far more efficient and powerful than British statesmen of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries recognized. This is a crucial consideration which also highlights the fact that India's majority Hindu population was subjected to imperial rule prior to British incursions on the subcontinent. For more on the nature of governance, surveillance, finance, and control of the population in the Mughal empire, please see John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; John F. Richards, *Power, Administration, and Finance in Mughal India* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

literacy rates this was certainly, in his words, a “literacy-aware society”.[395] So, despite it being impossible to gauge how many Indians read the content, it was clear that the potential for ideas to reach a vast audience as a result of the Indian ecumene was most certainly recognized by the Bengal and London Governments. Further to this, a critical aspect of the Indo-Muslim conception of government likely stoked the Government’s concerns further, especially the threat of it being mobilized through the press. More specifically, Mughal society featured a long standing practice, among both elites and non-elites, of critiquing rulers based on their perceived merits and whether they ruled justly or through *zulum*, or “oppression.[396] These critiques often appeared in the form of poetic satire, handbills, speeches, and visual displays at popular festivals, suggesting that the Indian population, and whether it was explicitly acknowledged by the Government or not the potential for Indians to translate this practice into printed form through Calcutta’s presses, especially given the strident critiques of government and the Company that Buckingham had launched throughout the early part of the decade, the threat was clear.[397]

Speaking directly to the intense concern the Government displayed as a result of the increased engagement between Indians and Britons in this colonial crucible, the striking entry of one figure in particular, Rammohun Roy, into Calcutta’s proto-civil sphere contributed to the rapid retreat from an open press and the notion of Indian participation.[398] Rammohun Roy stands

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[395] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 180.
[396] Ibid., 184.
[397] While the Government did not make any frequent mention of this concern, contemporaries clearly recognized it. An anonymous petitioner referred specifically to this practice, arguing that, “…the Natives, the Mahomedans particularly: and these Ukhbars (as they are called) have always contained political rumours and intelligence, often mixed up with satirical and personal remarks.” *A Letter to Sir Charles Forbes*, 9; this same author emphasized the potential for this kind of political satire to enter into the Indian press. In his petition, he argued the following: “The Press is, therefore, much more dangerous, if it be dangerous that men should intercommunicate thoughts, and much more beneficial, if intercommunication be beneficial, than any other mode of spreading opinions; it is also more susceptible of restraint from those who have the wish and the power to restrain intercommunication, by reason of its machinery.” 6
[398] Prasun Sonwalkar, “Indian Journalism in the Colonial Crucible: A Nineteenth Century Story of Political Protest.” *Journalism Studies* 16, No. 5 (October 2015): 624-636.

as quite possibly the most famous Indian intellectual and author during this period and despite the voluminous literature he has inspired, he remains a focus in contemporary scholarship largely due to his contributions to the development of early Indian liberalism, Indian nationalism, and the large role he played in the birth of the Bengal Renaissance.[399] But in this context Rammohun Roy is significant because of his ability to marry the style and substance of the British press with previously existing Indian forms of political and religious debate and discussion in both his contributions to the English press and his own Indian publication.[400] Further still, Rammohun Roy also became a celebrated figure in India and Britain, known far and wide for his commentary on international affairs, but also for his active engagement in and encouragement of a budding civil sphere in Calcutta.[401] As a result of his celebrity status, Rammohun Roys's publications received considerable attention in India and Britain alike, a fact that propelled the challenge of the Indian press to the forefront of the Government's concerns.

And so during this distinct period of transition as the Company struggled to redefine its fundamental purpose in the face of an increasingly successful pro-free trade, anti-monopolist onslaught, as it simultaneously wrestled with the task of developing a coherent, effective method

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[399] Indeed, mainstream Indian nationalist historiography has often boasted of Rammohun Roy as the "father of Indian modernity, liberal constitutional government, and, by extension, the emergence of Indian nationalism. Chatterjee, " The Curious Career of Liberalism in India," 693; However, in response to this suggestion, Christopher Bayly has argued that because Rammohun did not advocate for direct local political representation or the early separation of India from the British empire, it is problematic to refer to him as the first Indian Nationalist figure. Instead, he proposes the title of "colonial patriot," that is, a figure who clearly conceived of India as an autonomous cultural and geographical unit." Bayly, "Rammohan Roy," 31.

[400] Rammohun Roy's emergence into Calcutta's print culture was largely encouraged by his friend and sometimes literary collaborator, James Silk Buckingham. Not only did Rammohun Roy garner considerable influence from Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal*, but he also contributed to the paper regularly. For a full account of Rammohun Roy's participation in Calcutta's newspapers during the 1820s, please see Lynn Zastoupil, "Liberty of the Press," in *Rammohun Roy and the Making of Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 97-109; additionally, contemporaries listed four weekly Indian-language newspapers in 1823, two in Bengali and two in Indo-Persian. As the press debates were unfolding, additional applications were being submitted. Rammohun Roy's paper, *Miartool Akhbar* or "the Mirror of News" was very popular among Indians and given his close connections to Buckingham, the Government paid close attention to his work. "Restrictions on the Press in India, 1815-1822," 761-762.

[401] Attesting to this, Bayly went as far as to identify Rammohun Roy as India's first indigenous "public man". Bayly, "Rammohan Roy," 25-41.

of administering the Presidencies following a series of territorial wars, the bold entry of James Silk Buckingham and Rammohun Roy into the centre of Calcutta's public life through the city's temporarily free press undoubtedly highlighted the myriad inconsistencies and challenges faced by the Bengal Government. An often-cited example that illustrates this theme appears in the form of a meeting which took place Calcutta in 1822. While debates over the administration of one of Calcutta's Anglican churches has recently been identified as the catalyst for the emergence of a British public and the harbinger of the British Indian reform movement of the 1820s, Rammohun Roy played a fundamental role in the development of a multi-ethnic, reform public in Calcutta.[402] Following this controversial episode, the city's liberal-minded residents gathered to celebrate the Cadiz and Lisbon constitutions of 1812 and 1822.

Early liberals celebrated Spanish and Portuguese republican independence through print in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras; however, numerous public meetings were held in Calcutta to analyze the events further, several of which were hosted by Rammohun Roy himself. Significantly, like the Hastings address in Madras in 1818, a broad cross-section of the citizenry attended these meetings. Topics including Greek independence from Ottoman rule, the Italian Carbonari, and, of course, freedom of the Anglo-Indian press were discussed at length and support for these causes was actively encouraged there.[403] Bearing this in mind, Rammohun can in certain respects be identified as an embodiment of the challenge posed to Government by a multi-ethnic, reformist public, emerging during a period of uncertainty and upheaval.

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[402] Because of the vestry debate, a meeting comprised of 400 Europeans in Calcutta in 1819, Hardwick argues, represents the first time a British public can be said to have emerged to demand their rights as middle class metropolitan citizens. Hardwick, "Vestry Politics," 98; However, despite the clear potential challenge an engaged citizenry may have proven to the Government, the development of a multi-ethnic public came to represent a clearer and pressing danger.

[403] Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 43; a testament to Rammohun Roy's influence at an international level, upon reissuing the original Cadiz constitution in 1820, Spanish liberals went as far as to include an explicit dedication to the munshi, thanking him for his continued support. Extending this further, Rammohun Roy was also celebrated in publications as far afield as the United States. Ibid., 47.

ON INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY: BUCKINGHAM'S LEGACY

Despite the spirited efforts of individual authors and the small, politically engaged group that emerged to champion freedom of the press in British Bengal, the forces of reaction won the day, resulting in the suppression of Calcutta's civil emergent society and the failure of a creole nationalism to emerge. Historians Christopher Bayly and Peter Marshall attributed these failures to a combination of factors. For Bayly, the small number of expatriates residing in the area, the over dependence on Crown and Company, and the divisions between Eurasian and Indian society by racial exclusiveness prevented the development of a public sphere capable of enduring the challenges posed to it by the Government.[404] Similarly, for Marshall, the fact that only a tiny minority of British residents sought intellectual contact with Indian people throughout this period was crucial. In addition to this, he also argued that the vast majority of Europeans were too isolated and too career-focused to entertain the risk of angering the Government.[405]

Both perspectives offer clear explanations for why a public sphere failed to materialize, and yet they do not fully acknowledge the active efforts on behalf of the Government to suppress political discussion and, more specifically, to prevent each of the constituent elements of Buckingham's proposed intellectual community—the Army, the expatriate community, and Indian and mixed-race residents—from joining together in joint cause. While the commencement of Adam's administration put an end to the potential emergence of a critical public, comprised of a broad cross-section of Bengal's population, the battle for freedom of the press in the 1820s entered its death throes. By 1825, the Bengal Government forbade editors from publishing any

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[404] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 212.
[405] Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta," 308-309.

details regarding the mutiny at Barrackpore led by the 47th Native Regiment.[406] With Amherst's arrival as Governor General in 1823, the Company's brief period of peace ceased and war began anew, further cementing the administration's distrust of the press. While a small reformist public emerged to reject the introduction of a new Stamp Act in 1827, it was unfortunately unable to maintain the momentum required to effect real change.[407]

The true legacy of Buckingham's spirited campaign against the Company, however, can be found in the fact that the details of the press controversy did manage to travel back to Britain and inform debates over the necessity and extent of reform required in India. Following his deportation, Buckingham returned to Britain and began a lecture campaign throughout England and Scotland. While framed as a campaign to teach Britons more about their far-flung counterparts in India, Buckingham used the podium to launch a sustained attack on the Company's remaining monopoly on the China tea trade and the injustices wrought upon him in Bengal.[408] Joseph Hume's often cited agitation against the Company's charter renewal represents another clear example of the effects the freedom of the press debates had back in London.[409] Within a few years, the free-trade movement had succeeded in its efforts and with the passage of the Charter Act of 1833 all of the Company's monopoly rights were stripped away.[410] This

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[406] In December 1824, the regiment was being marched to war in Burma and after making a treacherous 1,000-mile trek, they finally refused to continue. 140 were shot dead on the site, while an additional 160 were executed while fleeing. Taylor, "Joseph Hume," 296.
[407] Ibid., 298-299.
[408] Following the Charter Act of 1813, the Company's monopoly on the India trade was abolished; however, the Company still possessed exclusive rights over the China tea trade that lasted until the Charter Act of 1833. In the lead-up to this momentous blow to the Company, Buckingham lectured across Britain in favour of free trade and repealing the Company's remaining rights. For a complete transcript of Buckingham's initial lectures, please see "Explanatory report on the plan and object of Mr. Buckingham's Lectures on the Oriental World," and "A sketch of his life, travels, and writings, and of the proceedings on the East India Monopoly during the Past Year," Microfilm, OMF/IOL.3596, British Library.
[409] Taylor, "Joseph Hume," 299; Furthermore, attempts at reform in the colonial periphery have recently been argued to have played a significant role in England in the lead up to the 1832 Reform Act. Taylor. "Empire and parliamentary reform," 295-311.
[410] Bowen, *The Company State,* 209; Lawson, *The East India Company*, 155-157.

effectively opened the eastern trade to whomever was brave—and rich—enough to test their fate, but it also marked the end of the East India Company's initially chartered purpose, extending back to 1600 under Elizabeth I.[411] Moreover, as Bayly observed, the introduction of print to British India failed to create an information revolution. However, it did fundamentally transform the old ecumene; former leaders took on roles akin to a modern public, while men of influence learned the benefits of co-opting tame editors to launch printed assaults on their rivals.[412] Finally, with the dawn of the Bentinck administration, the free press was once again restored. However, with the increased flow of Europeans to the Presidencies, the failure of the agency houses and banks in Bengal during the 1830s and 1840s, and increasing racial segregation, the once prime opportunity for the development of a cross-representational public sphere in Calcutta faded.[413]

Nevertheless, as this study has attempted to demonstrate, it also must be remembered that actual social change was often precipitated not by Government policy, but by the actions of individual Indians and Europeans. For this reason, figures like Mirza Abu Talib, James Silk Buckingham, Rammohun Roy, and Joseph Hume must be recognized for the very real risks they took in the face of a beleaguered and defensive Government. While Mirza Abu Talib was unsuccessful in his exhortation to the Mughal emperor to adopt the printing press, he did pave the way for the emergence of the Indian press following the repeal of censorship. As debates over the press, the management of Calcutta's Anglican churches, and Indian education unfolded in the city during the 1820s, the efforts of private residents, both European and Indian, led to the establishment of long standing institutions, such as the Hindu College.[414] Finally, the reformers who emerged and attempted to establish a civil society during this period inspired the later

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[411] Lawson, *The East India Company*, 156,159.
[412] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 243.
[413] Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta," 38-39.
[414] Marshall, *Bengal Bridgehead*, 174.

movements of figures like Henry Derozio, adding to the already multi-layered, hybrid mixture of cultural, intellectual, and political forms that characterized the period of Company administration prior to the 1857 Rebellion and the Raj thereafter.

CONCLUSION

Beyond key points of formal and commercial contact, Bengal's British and Indian inhabitants were, prior to the resurgence of the English press in Calcutta in 1818, largely isolated from one another by an uncomfortable sense of racial exclusivity. Representative of this tension, the city's mixed-race residents were often ostracized or regarded with scorn and derision by Britons and Indians alike as they struggled to find their place in this peculiar colonial context.[415] However, Calcutta's mixed-race inhabitants also embodied the shared experiences and challenges the city's residents faced while living under Company rule.[416] Some of these challenges were brought into the centre of civic discussion after 1813 as a steady inflow of non-Company British merchants to Bengal began to raise important questions about what the Government's specific powers were and what rights British citizens could claim while living in India. As the Company attempted to maintain a ruling ethos that minimized interactions with and impositions upon the Indian population, non-Company, British-born residents simultaneously demanded the rights of "free-born Englishmen".[417] Up to this point, British residents were tried according to English law; and yet, the press debates of the early 1820s revealed the inadequacy of this arrangement, especially when Indians became involved in the fledgling print industry.

Even though Hastings's pragmatic response in repealing press censorship prompted the birth of a thriving, albeit short-lived, print culture in Calcutta, scholars have nevertheless argued that a public sphere failed to emerge in Bengal.[418] Despite racial segregation and enmity between Indians and Britons, and the fact that the fortunes of so many of Calcutta's resident were tied

[415] Marshall, "White Town," 328-29; Bayly includes an interesting discussion of British India's mixed-race residents and how they affected the development reform movement in Bengal in Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 64.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Philips, *The East India Company,* 241.
[418] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 212; Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta," 308-309.

directly to the Company, the small-scale collaboration between Indian and British writers through Calcutta's emergent print culture signalled the potential establishment of an informed, critical public.[419] Therefore, the failure of a "Habermasian" public sphere to emerge during this time can be attributed directly to the Bengal Government's efforts to prevent exactly that outcome. Given the Company's new challenge of consolidating the Eastern Empire and developing new, enduring structures to administer Britain's Indian territories, the importance of maintaining an image of British confidence and strength was more important than ever.[420] Furthermore, against a backdrop of fear and uncertainty, fueled by the constant threat of mutiny and the rising reform movement in Britain, both the Marquis of Hastings and John Adam approached the problem of the press cautiously, hoping to minimize potential conflict while they reinforced Company rule. Both leading officials referred to the territory they administered as an "Empire of Opinion", and, as a result, the Bengal Government was simply not willing to take chances with anything that might threaten the image of superiority.

As this thesis has demonstrated, Hastings and Adam were motivated more by practical considerations on the ground than by their respective political ideologies. Moreover, in trying to manipulate and censor the press, the Bengal Government inadvertently created a set of false expectations among the citizens of Calcutta, and while Hastings's liberal rhetoric may have roused greater support among the British and Indian inhabitants of the three Presidencies, the conditions in British India during the early 1820s were apparently not conducive to permit a free press. Emboldened by Hastings's famous speech and the ensuing declarations of James Silk Buckingham in his radical paper, a "Notorious Faction" stepped forward in Calcutta in 1819 to criticize the Bengal Government and its decisions in this extremely public forum. This was not

[419] "Mr. Buckingham's Alleged Retainer from the EIC," 1-2.
[420] Peers, "Soldiers, Scholars," 460.

the first time the press had challenged the Government, but in many respects Buckingham and his counterparts were somewhat justified in their attempts to simulate British political culture by discussing matters of state through the press.[421] After all, Hastings had implicitly invited such criticism in his Madras address of 1818, and the savvy among Calcutta's population were well aware of the lack of a clear legal mechanism to prevent people from publishing this kind of content.[422]

Consequently, the Bengal Government attempted to exert control and maintain its authority however possible; at first it enacted cautious measures to prevent further indiscretions, but eventually the Government resorted to exercising its arbitrary, despotic power to crush dissent. Lacking effective legal recourse over Calcutta's Indian and mixed-race subjects prior to 1823, the Government imposed its will through threats, fear, and intimidation. Without the ability to review papers prior to publication, it closely monitored everything that was published, particularly as it related to indecorous discussions of government policy, or criticisms of Indian culture and religion. Buckingham was threatened on multiple occasions with deportation, escaping this fate only as a result of Hastings's fears that such a harsh reprisal might invite further rebellion.[423] Instead, he was forced to issue numerous public apologies. Britons as a whole were reminded that they lived in British India by sufferance of the Company alone; British officers who submitted articles to Calcutta's newspapers were severely punished or court marshalled.[424]

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[421] Indeed, as Wellesley's rapid decision to introduce censorship demonstrated, an unrestricted press posed a challenge to the Bengal Government from the very outset. "Imposition of the Censorship 1799," 339-350.
[422] "Extract of Address to Marquis Hastings by Inhabitants of Madras 24th July 1819 on his removal of the Censorship, Hastings' reply," 5-7.
[423] "Bengal to Court 5th Aug. 1819, Attack on Governor Hugh Elliott in the Calcutta Journal," 10.
[424] "C. Lushington (Chief Secretary) to Buckingham 5th Sept. 1822, A last warning," 742.

However, between 1818 and 1823, the emergence of the Indian-language press and the participation of elite Indians in the Calcutta's English papers clearly demonstrated the Government's limited sovereignty and inability to maintain complete control over the flow of information in Bengal. With Hastings's departure, the Government switched to an aggressive, reactionary policy. John Adam successfully secured official support to introduce strict press rules—this time backed by the Supreme Court in Calcutta—and the Government imposed a new, unprecedented degree of control over the Indian population. This set the tone and approach for the remainder of the decade, and despite the decidedly liberal reforms introduced by Governor General Bentinck during the early 1830s, the opportunity for a hybrid, public sphere to emerge in Calcutta had dissipated, giving way to further segregation, competition, and distrust instead.

Despite Buckingham's failure to accomplish his goal of establishing a wide-reaching, well-informed and politically engaged civil society to act as a balance against the Company's essentially despotic power, however, the events surrounding "The Buckingham Affair" highlight the agency and accomplishments of several noteworthy individuals. Each of these figures transcended simple, singular allegiance to their respective sovereigns, and in doing so demonstrated a particularly trans-national view that focused bridging the social, religious, and political differences between Indians and Britons. While they largely failed to accomplish their goals, they did manage to influence critical debates over the future administration of British India and, in some cases, effect recognizable change in both Calcutta and London.

Following his extensive sojourn to Britain, Mirza Abu Taleb produced what amounts to a comprehensive ethnographic account of British society. While the Persian poet was not altogether impressed by English culture and society, he clearly identified Britain's widespread print culture as an impressive social and technological feat, and he subsequently returned to India inspired to

introduce its potential benefits to the waning Mughal Empire.[425] Given the robust information order already employed by the Mughals, print has been identified as the crucial missing component in the development of an Indian public sphere. And yet, with the reticence of the Mughal Emperor to consider the petition, and the simultaneous arrival of Wellesley to British Bengal, Taleb's hopes were quashed, and the emergence of a critical Indian opinion, under either Mughal or British rule, failed to materialize.

Buckingham's experiences with the Bengal Government, and the British Crown shortly thereafter, were fraught with considerably more controversy and discord. Like Taleb, he hoped to improve Indian society and encourage better governance through the establishment of a lively, engaged print culture. But, as a result of his efforts, he became the focal point of a drawn out, divisive debate over the limits of free expression through print in British India. The editor actively encouraged the publication of Indian poetry and various other aspects of Indian society and culture, but he also successfully demonstrated the discord between Hastings's political rhetoric and his actual regulations.[426] Furthermore, Buckingham actively collaborated with Indian authors and editors and he participated in the establishment of the Indian-language press through his work with Rammohun Roy, but he made his most significant contribution acting as a kind of Socratic figure, challenging the inconsistencies and oftentimes arbitrary nature of the Bengal Government. Upon returning to Britain, the editor notoriously publicized the events of the "Buckingham Affair" through a vigorous Parliamentary appeal process seeking vindication for

[425] Abu Taleb, *Travels*, 157.
[426] *Calcutta Journal*, 11 Dec, 1819.

his wrongful deportation, as well as his strident critiques of the Company delivered during his nation-wide lecture tour.[427]

Rammohun Roy similarly championed the early press in Calcutta, and left an indelible mark on Bengal society during the early 1820s. Prior to the Adam administration, the prolific author, political commentator, and public figure launched two Indian-language papers, contributed regularly to Calcutta's English papers, and encouraged the establishment of a hybrid, Anglo-Indian public in Bengal. His internationalist worldview encouraged active participation in revolutionary independence movements in South America and Europe, and he, like Buckingham, was particularly effective at questioning government policy.[428] For example, following Adam's introduction of his amended press regulations, Rammohun Roy boldly appealed to the courts to deny the Governor General's request, indicating his willingness to challenge what he considered to be destructive and arbitrary government rule.[429] Like Taleb, he travelled to Britain, but rather than acting as a passive observer, he actively argued for various reforms in Britain and in India during the immediate lead up to the 1832 Reform Act, and he even inspired a small following on both sides of the globe.[430]

In focusing on the interaction between Britons and Indians through Calcutta's press debates between 1818 and 1832, it is important to emphasize the fact that figures like Mirza Abu

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[427] In addition to influencing Joseph Hume, Buckingham successfully petitioned Parliament to acknowledge the Company's inappropriate behaviour in deporting him. By 1832, he vindicated and awarded a retainer from the Company. Having established two English papers by this point, he was also elected as a Member of Parliament for the district of Sheffield. For more on his campaign to Parliament, please see "Mr. Buckingham's Alleged Retainer from the EIC," 1-2, and for an extended survey of Buckingham's life and accomplishments, see Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*.

[428] Among a variety of critiques Rammohun Roy levelled at the Bengal Government, he was particularly concerned with the separation of powers in the Government, and he articulated his arguments, at all times, with a view towards the future independence of India, or at least the end of direct rule. Bayly, "Rammohan Roy," 32.

[429] Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy*, 101-102.

[430] In both India and during his tenure in Britain, Rammohun Roy became a focal point for radical, dissenting groups. His charisma, talent, and intelligence made him a natural leader. His ability to inspire and motivate reformist groups was apparent in the respect and praise he received from a variety of dissenting groups, including the Bristol Unitarians. Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy*, 220.

Taleb, James Silk Buckingham, and Rammohun Roy can only be properly understood in the context of which they wrote. More specifically, they can only be understood as early nineteenth-century writers who saw themselves as participants in a larger, hybrid, intellectual world. While their frames of reference were specific, they were also infused with an essentially transnational focus. In many respects, this speaks to the difficulty of affixing figures like Mirza Abu Taleb, James Silk Buckingham, and Rammohun Roy in the history of modern India. Rammohun Roy, for example, has repeatedly been placed at the beginning of a linear narrative of the achievement of Indian nationalist or democratic modernity, [431] but closer analysis demonstrates that he saw himself as a participant in a transnational intellectual world bound by the British Empire. Buckingham and Taleb, while equally talented and outspoken, have received far less attention for their roles in the history of Anglo-Indian relations prior to the Raj. This was acknowledged by Buckingham's contemporaries in his obituary in 1855. The author of the piece ended with a simple, yet poignant, articulation of this fact: "[Buckingham's] manifold struggles," he wrote, "led to unprofitable results and he never reached a position commensurate with his worth and reputation." [432] Yet, despite the fact that they ultimately failed in their endeavours, these individuals made significant contributions to the history of British India, and their audacity and, in many respects, reckless actions as they worked to accomplish their respective goal of bridging Indian and British society clearly demonstrates the conviction they maintained, throughout their lives, to develop a more inclusive, less segregated, world of shared ideas and experiences within the existing structures of the British Empire.

[431] Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*, 153.
[432] Printed in *The Ill;London News*, July 7th, 1855. Mss Eur C249.

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