

**THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE: RELATIONS  
BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND THE INDIAN STATES  
1870-1909**

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the manner in which British officials attempted to impose ideas of 'good government' upon the Indian states and the effect of such ideas upon the ruling princes of those states. The work studies the crucial period of transition from traditional to modern rule which occurred for the first generation of westernised princes during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. It is intended to test the hypothesis that, although virtually no aspect of palace life was left untouched by the paramount power, having instigated fundamental changes in princely practice during minority rule the British paid insufficient attention to the political development of their adult royal protégés. In many cases traditional royal practice and authority were deemed expendable in the urgency to instigate efficient and accountable methods of administration in states. The five sections following the introduction examine the life cycle of an Indian prince and the role of British officials at each stage of the cycle. The first section examines the position of the British in determining disputed successions to the Indian princely thrones. The second section deals with the first generation of Indian rulers to be exposed to a western education, either under an English tutor attached to a court or at one of the new princely colleges. The third section looks at marriages of Indian rulers and the extent to which royal women were empowered by British indirect rule. The fourth section tackles the administration of princely states and the relative success of political officers in turning Indian princes from traditional rulers into westernised administrators. The final section looks at British efforts to alter court hierarchy and ritual to conform to strict British bureaucratic guidelines and ideas of accountability. In analysing this critical phase of princely development the thesis makes a major contribution to the understanding of the progression of indirect rule under the Raj.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

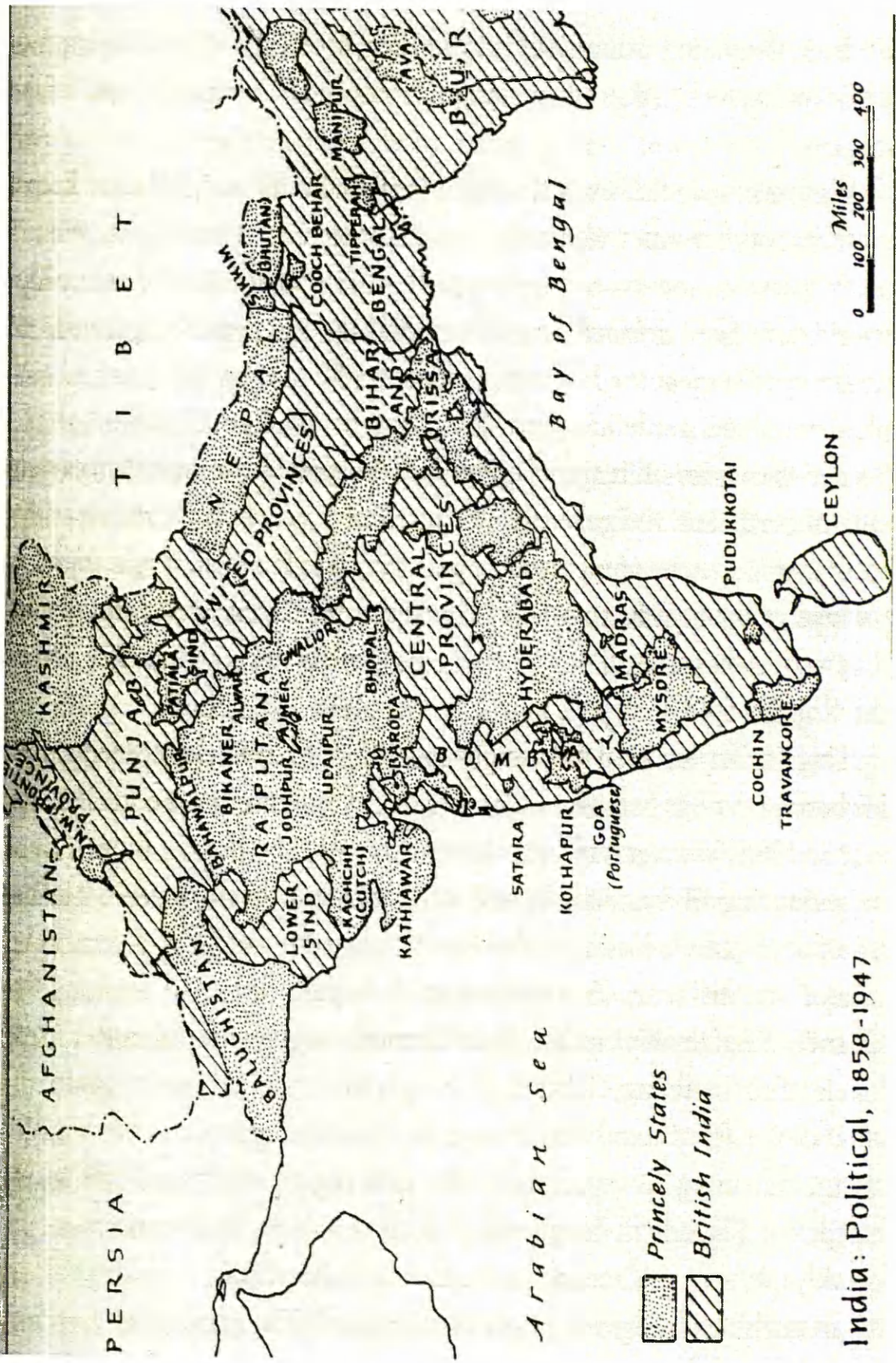
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<i>ABBREVIATIONS</i>	4
<i>MAP</i>	5
<i>INDIAN PRINCES AND DEWANS</i>	6
<b>PREFACE</b>	8
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	16
<b>THE PRINCELY LIFE CYCLE</b>	
<b>I SUCCESSION</b>	44
<b>II EDUCATION</b>	71
<b>III MARRIAGE AND ROYAL WOMEN</b>	133
<b>IV ADMINISTRATION</b>	181
<b>V HIERARCHY AND RITUAL</b>	240
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	294
<i>GLOSSARY</i>	304
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	306

**ABBREVIATIONS**

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AGG	Agent to the Governor-General
CI	Central India
FD	Foreign Department
GoI	Government of India
IOL	India Office Library
NWP	North West Provinces
PCI	Political Correspondence with India (IOL)
Pol.	Political
PP	Parliamentary Papers (IOL)
PSCI	Political and Secret Correspondence with India (IOL)
R/1 and R/2	Crown Representative Records (IOL)
Res.	Resident
SoS	Secretary of State (for India)



India: Political, 1858-1947

## INDIAN PRINCES AND DEWANS

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Dates refer to reigns or terms in office

### **Baroda**

Malharrao, Gaekwar	1870-1875
Sayajirao III, Gaekwar	1875-1939
Madhava Rao, Dewan	1875-1881

### **Bhopal**

Shahjehan, Begam	1868-1901
Sultan Jahan, Begam	1901-1926

### **Bikaner**

Ganga Singh Rathor, Maharajah	1887-1943
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### **Gwalior**

Madhav Rao Scindia, Maharajah	1886-1925
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### **Hyderabad**

Mahbub Ali Khan, Nizam	1884-1911
Salar Jung I, Diwan	1853-1883
Salar Jung, II, Diwan	1884-1887

### **Indore**

Shivaji Rao Holkar, Maharajah	1886-1903
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### **Jind**

Bhupinder Singh, Rajah	1900-1938
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**Jodhpur**

Jaswant Singh II, Maharajah	1873-1895
Sardar Singh, Maharajah	1895-1911

**Kashmir**

Ranbir Singh, Maharajah	1857-1885
Sir Pratab Singh Bahadur, Maharajah	1885-1925

**Mewar (Udaipur)**

Fateh Singh, Maharana	1884-1930
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**Mysore**

Chamarajendra IX Wadiar, Maharajah	1881-1894
Krishnaraja IV Wadiar, Maharajah	1894-1918

**Pudukkottai**

Ramachandra Tondaiman, Rajah	1839-1886
Martanda Bhairava Tondaiman, Rajah	1886-abdicated 1920
A. Sashiah Sastri, Dewan	1878-1894

**Travancore**

Mulam Tirunal, Maharajah	1885-1924
T. Madhava Rao, Dewan	1860-1872
A. Sashiah Sastri, Dewan	1873-1877



## PREFACE

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The years following the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to the beginning of the twentieth century are regarded by modern historians as a period in which the British cooperated with the Indian princes within a deliberate policy to build up the states as part of a network of alliances formed by Britain among influential Indians. Thomas Metcalf, for example, refers to the last decades of the nineteenth century as a 'golden age' for the princes<sup>1</sup>, and Francis Hutchins stresses the continuing support of native rulers during this period.<sup>2</sup> In the light of the evidence provided in this thesis these views need to be re-evaluated. British support of its princely allies was by no means as effective as it might have been. Ian Copland has described the devotion to progress which lay behind the 'mission civilisatrice' of many young British political officers as they embarked on their career as trusted advisors to the rulers.<sup>3</sup> However these officers were frequently accused of incompetent meddling in states' administrations by their superiors and given little support in the impossible task of coordinating the different factions participating in state government, and in particular ensuring that Indian rulers played a significant role in their administrations. Such a negative approach by no means produced a 'golden age' for the princes. The continuing British efforts throughout the period to 'support' its adult princely allies in fact frequently consisted of little more than spasmodic efforts by residents and political agents to act as referees between various parties within a state.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1964), p. 323

<sup>2</sup> Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967), p. 171

<sup>3</sup> Ian Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes: Paramourty in Western India, 1857-1930* (Bombay, 1982), p. 130.

In every area of Indian royal rule emphasis was placed by the paramount power above all else upon the virtues of accountability and efficiency. No stone was left unturned in the efforts to turn palace life into a model of openness, rules and regulations. The huge emphasis placed by the British upon exposure of young heirs to the throne to a western education was undoubtedly intended to further their espousal of such an exemplary life style. At the same time bureaucracies constructed on the British Indian model were introduced and fostered by the British in the interests of 'good government'. However in the urgency to introduce visible and sound methods of administration into states there appeared to be too little emphasis on ensuring that an adult ruler in the first generation of westernised princes was given sufficient time and encouragement to abandon age-old ideas of largesse and autocracy to become a model frugal administrator operating above all in the interests of his subjects. There is evidence that, following significant British commitment to areas such as royal education and minority rule, political officers often neglected adult rulers in the maelstrom of state politics and the pursuit of well-regulated government, resulting in the loss of the traditional princely power base. British efforts at reform tended to be focused upon the minutiae of administrative procedure rather than the more challenging task of adapting an Indian prince to late nineteenth century requirements. At the same time royal status and influence were lost through deliberate attempts on the part of the British to sanitise palace practice and to adapt displays of ceremony and largesse to western standards.

Princes were often bound by treaty to rule according to British advice, making the post of resident one of considerable responsibility yet, since residents were often divided in the priorities of, on the one hand, the progress of their royal charge and raising the moral tone of the royal household, and, on the other, the demands of

setting up an efficient system of government, it was not surprising that many princes resorted to 'palace favorites and parallel administrations which they could control and which could often outflank the official bureaucracy'.<sup>4</sup> As Robin Jeffrey has pointed out, much 'misrule' and princely 'excess' were the products of the impossible situation in which a prince was placed, and the dichotomy he faced in attempting to reconcile western and oriental cultures.<sup>5</sup> For a political officer a similar tension was created by the clash of a western upbringing with an alien Indian culture, and the degree to which he was influenced by the widely held Victorian construction of India as 'backward and uncivilized', associating the subcontinent with such depravities as 'oriental corruption', 'female incarceration' and 'male effeminacy'.

During the period the Political Department patently lacked the backing of the Government of India to enable it to guide an Indian ruler from the cultural onslaught of an English education into his new role as head of a sophisticated bureaucratic machine. As will be considered in the introduction, the Department by repute consisted of men of a somewhat mediocre education and conservative instincts, despite their enthusiasm. However a lack of intellectual calibre cannot be held entirely responsible for the failure of political officers to intervene to ensure that the Indian princes played a significant role in their administrations. With the exception of Curzon's viceroyalty such officers were given no official encouragement beyond a prince's minority period to indulge in anything but the most minimal intervention in state government, such as maintaining the equilibrium between ruler, ministers and bureaucracy. As the century progressed, they were increasingly outmanoeuvred by intellectually superior *dewans* and powerful bureaucratic bodies, whose methods of

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<sup>4</sup> Robin Jeffrey, Introduction, *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (Delhi, 1978), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

accountability the British inevitably admired as a welcome contrast to previous *darbar* practice.

This study sets out neither totally to condemn nor to condone British imperial practice in the Indian states. There were undoubtedly negative consequences for Indian rulers under British rule during the period, yet British motives for establishing sound administrative practice in the interests of states' subjects undeniably had a certain merit. Moreover in their efforts to set up 'good government' the British by no means always held the upper hand. To some extent the work takes issue with the stance of *Orientalism*, in which Edward Said emphasises the unyielding nature of imperialist rule. Said states that 'philosophies of British rule in the East stressed the rational importance of a strong executive armed with various legal and penal codes, a system of doctrines on such matters as frontiers and land rents, and everywhere an irreducible supervisory imperial authority',<sup>6</sup> implying that there was little room for negotiation or resistance to imperial rule. However the inflexibility of such rigid control on the part of the paramount power was not an option in the princely states during the period, due to the post-Mutiny requirement to retain the loyalty of Indian rulers, and the paucity of British resources, both in terms of manpower and finances, allotted to princely India. States' administrations would have ground to a halt without a significant amount of negotiation between British political officers and Indian rulers and politicians, during the course of which resistance to colonial rule inevitably occurred.

Said's claim that Orientalism is a 'discourse' giving rise to a dialogue between coloniser and colonised in which the single political ideological intention of the coloniser is reinforced does not ring true in the Indian states during the period. The

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, 1994), p. 215.

colonial message was to a certain degree open to arbitration to secure Indian cooperation under indirect rule. Moreover the interface between British political officers and Indian ministers and bureaucracies, transformed by their English education and administrative training into an elite, involved a certain amount of loss of control for the British coloniser. If it was on the one hand reassuring for the British that Indians became in certain respects 'English', on the other hand the adoption of English practices by Indian bureaucrats produced the 'inevitable processes of counter-domination produced by the miming of the very operation of domination',<sup>7</sup> with the result that the identities of coloniser and colonised became less distinct.

Such a blurring of identities undoubtedly occurred in British India, however in the princely states where government was in an earlier stage of development the relative positions of the British and states' administrators were even less cut and dried. In contrast to a view of Britain's unswerving adherence to a position of dominance throughout the subcontinent this thesis provides a narrative in which the princes and their advisors appear as 'people whose plans were often formulated on the run, or in the dark because of lack of knowledge ... struggling valiantly to "muddle through"'.<sup>8</sup> It is noticeable that correspondence at the highest level, for example between Viceroy and Secretary of State for India, tends to be of a significantly more pronounced 'Orientalist' tone in its preconceptions of the East than the correspondence of the men on the ground in the states as they 'muddled through'.

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, 1990), p. 148. See also 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, 1994), pp. 85-92.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 14.

It has been necessary to make a choice in the method of presentation. Much of the material in this study is by its nature personal and could be used to present a series of short biographies of the more prominent individual rulers and their circles. However there is also a good deal of information of a more disconnected type, relating to rulers on whom a complete biography could not be attempted. Therefore it was felt that a better, perhaps more informative, result would be achieved by adopting the thematic construction of a princely life-cycle, using the situation of one ruler or another as an extended illustration of various stages of the life-cycle, not only because that particular case was better documented than the rest but also because it proved to be a more interesting and revealing example of the workings of indirect rule during the period. Inevitably the major states tend to feature most frequently in that they attracted the greatest British attention.

The analysis of a princely life cycle is a new approach to looking at material on the Indian states. There has been remarkably little work on areas of palace life such as successions, education and royal women during the period, and, apart from material by Cohn and Cannadine, little coverage of rank and hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> Princely administration in the nineteenth century has been touched upon in Jeffrey's collection of studies of individual states centred upon the twentieth century<sup>10</sup> and Stephen Ashton's general study of British policy towards the states from 1905 to 1939,<sup>11</sup> however with the exception of Travancore<sup>12</sup> and the Bombay states<sup>13</sup> the intricate

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<sup>9</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 165-209. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* (London, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes*.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen R. Ashton, *British Policy towards the Indian States 1905-1939* (London, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey, 'The Politics of Indirect Rule: Types of Relationship among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a Native State', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* XIII, 3 (November 1975), pp. 261-81.

<sup>13</sup> Copland, *British Raj*.

relationships between political officer, ruler, minister and bureaucracy during the period have not been explored.

The primary sources for the thesis are mainly to be found in the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library. These include viceregal correspondence and other private collections dealing with the period, records of the Political and Secret Department, and Proceedings files. However for this study the most important sources of original material in India Office files are the Crown Representative Records, a particularly rich source of material on the workings of indirect rule in India into which there has been virtually no research to date to cover the period. File sequence R1 consists of secret files on Indian state matters selected from Political Department records in India concerning paramountcy, the affairs of particular states and rulers, honours and political service questions. These files contain correspondence with rulers, with residents and political agents in the states and with the India Office. File sequence R2 consists of records from the offices of residents and political agents, including correspondence with states' authorities, with the Political Department and with provincial governments. Without the use of Crown Representative Records it would be impossible to create a sufficiently detailed picture of the critical stage of princely development in question to assess the area and degree of involvement of British officials with Indian rulers. Secondary material has also been used in the form of articles and general works.

The thesis is intended above all to demonstrate that in the latter part of the nineteenth century the role of a Indian prince was greatly diminished as a result of British indirect rule, and in particular as a result of imperial efforts to enforce regulation and accountability. The work will provide a unique picture of the interaction between

western and oriental cultural and political ideas in the states during the period, filling a significant gap in what has been a somewhat tired and limited portrait of princely India under the British empire at that time.



## INTRODUCTION

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### THE STATES

Before 1947, two-fifths of the Indian subcontinent was not British territory and two ninths of its inhabitants were not British subjects. This territory was divided into over 600 individual states which were governed by hereditary princes of varying rank, owing allegiance to the British Crown. The states displayed a great diversity in terms of size, population and revenue. Collectively they covered an area of nearly 600,000 square miles with a population of just over 80 million. Individually they ranged from Hyderabad, the principal state, with an area of 82,698 square miles and a population of over 14 million, to the tiny Kathiawar state of Veja-no-ness with an area of about three-tenths of a square mile and a population of 184.<sup>14</sup> In general, however, statistics indicate the 'insignificance of the overwhelming majority of states' and only twenty-eight had a population of over 500,000.<sup>15</sup>

There was a great diversity also in the irregular geographical distribution of the states. In Rajputana, for example, the states were few and of a comparatively large size, while in central and western India, they were small and very numerous. The explanation of these irregularities lies partly in the policies pursued by the British at various times and partly in a course of events over which they had exerted no control. In some areas of India a stronger power had destroyed newcomers and petty ancient dynasties before the arrival of the British. During the second half of the eighteenth century the ground had been

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<sup>14</sup> Descriptive note on the Indian States, 1931, quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 1.

cleared in the south of India by the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nawab of the Carnatic and Tipu Sultan, the Muslim usurper of Mysore. When the Carnatic fell under British control and Tipu Sultan was finally overthrown in 1799, large united territories had to be disposed of either by annexation or, as in the case of Mysore, by restitution to a former dynasty.<sup>16</sup> The situation was different in central and western India. This was an area under Maratha control, a loose confederacy of five military units under the nominal leadership of the Peshwa who controlled western India from his capital at Poona. The other four units were led by the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur, the Maharajah of Gwalior and the Maharajah of Indore. In his study of the Indian states Stephen Ashton points out that by the close of the eighteenth century, the five chiefs of the confederacy 'thought only in terms of personal aggrandizement' and regarded each other as rivals in a struggle for supremacy.<sup>17</sup> As a result territories in central and western India were constantly changing hands until 1818 when the Maratha chiefs were brought to heel by the British. The numerous petty states in that area stood in marked contrast to the situation in Rajputana where, despite Maratha intrusions, seventeen states preserved their separate political existence. The chief of these were Udaipur (Mewar), Jodhpur (Marwar), Jaipur and Bikaner.<sup>18</sup>

The physical characteristics of the states displayed the same diversity. Much of Rajputana was desert, while in the deep south Travancore possessed tropical vegetation. Hyderabad and Mysore were rich in mineral resources, contrasting in their wealth with the poverty of the hill states of the Punjab in northwestern India and the agriculturalists of Kathiawar in the west. Equally diverse were the varieties of population and religion. The primitive and mostly animistic tribes of the Assam states and Manipur on the

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<sup>16</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *British Policy*, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* For an account of British relations with the Indian states at the beginning of the nineteenth century, see Edward Thompson, *The Making of the Indian Princes* (London, 1943). Ian Copland discusses the diversity of the states in the twentieth century in *Princes of India*, pp. 8-11.

Burmese frontier contrasted with the wealthy Muslim nobles of Hyderabad and the proud chieftains of Rajputana. In Kashmir in the far north the prince was Hindu and the population largely Muslim. In Hyderabad the reverse was the case.<sup>19</sup> Many of the states exhibited feudal conditions. Land was divided into two categories: *khalsa* and non-*khalsa*. In the *khalsa* areas the land revenue and various administrative departments were centrally administered. The non-*khalsa* areas consisted of numerous estates or *jagirs*, the incumbents of which were known as *jagirdars*, who exercised considerable authority in judicial and police administration.<sup>20</sup> In central India numerous minor Rajput chiefs, known as *thakurs*, existed as feudatories of the great Maratha princes, Scindia of Gwalior and Holkar of Indore. The *thakurs* were often descendants of nobles who ruled the territory before the arrival of the invading Marathas and their relations with their new overlords were frequently a bitter source of discontent.<sup>21</sup> A different situation existed in Rajputana where the states were traditionally regarded as the property of a territorial nobility, not the individual prince who was only *primus inter pares*. In Udaipur twenty-eight principal nobles commanded the subsidiary allegiance of nearly one third of the population and their estates comprised just over half of the area of the entire state.<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of the eighteenth century over much of the subcontinent's huge landmass from Kashmir in the north to the upland plateau of the Deccan in the south, the Mogul dynasty at Delhi fought to maintain a hegemony which had been consolidated in the second half of the sixteenth century by Emperor Akbar. Thereafter the decline of imperial power quickened. Provincial governors in Awadh, Bengal and the Deccan consolidated their own regional bases of power in the aftermath of the Persian and, later, the Afghan invasions of 1759-61. In 1757 the British seized control of the rich province

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<sup>19</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> See Sir Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It: 1885-1925* (London, 1925), pp. 151-155.

<sup>22</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, pp. 2-3.

of Bengal and after a brief rearguard action in defence of the core area of Delhi the Mogul emperor submitted in 1784 to the 'protection' of the Maratha war chief, Scindia. With the defeat of the Marathas in 1803 Delhi was occupied by the British, and the Mogul emperor was reduced in European eyes to the status of a 'tinsel sovereign'.<sup>23</sup>

## THE ASCENT OF THE RESIDENT

The successor states of the Mogul empire were often in conflict with each other, fighting for cash revenues and for the still limited pool of agricultural labour. The English East India Company was 'the great beneficiary of this age of war, flux and opportunity'.<sup>24</sup> The Company was able to play off one state against another and offer its formidable military services for sale. At the same time its own interests in the textile trade encouraged the Company to support Indian mercantile interests in their periodic conflicts with military entrepreneurs and revenue farmers. The flexibility and sophistication of these networks for making money inexorably drew the Company and its servants into politics.<sup>25</sup>

The British first established their contact with India in 1600 when Elizabeth I gave the East India Company its charter. This commercial organisation controlled British affairs in India for just over 250 years, when it was superseded by the Government of India in the form of a colonial government responsible to a Minister in London. During its existence the East India Company in fact ruled, although its rule developed slowly and its commercial activities took preference for some considerable time. A

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<sup>23</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

charter of Charles II of 1661 gave the Company power to make peace or war 'with any Prince not Christian' and from this charter the practice grew of making treaties of peace and defensive alliances, the first being anti-piracy treaties with the western Indian maritime states of Savantwadi (1730) and Janjira (1733).<sup>26</sup> This treaty making power was exercised by delegation through the Company's representatives in India until 1773, when Parliament decreed that, unless an emergency existed, approval had to be obtained from London. Directed at first by a President, later known as Governor-General, the organisation in India (consisting of a small Council of traders who eventually became civil servants) was based in Calcutta and controlled by the Court of Directors in London.<sup>27</sup>

The British adopted and perfected the mechanism of the subsidiary alliance. In return for a tribute or 'subsidy', or the lease of productive territories, the Company engaged to support a ruler against his enemies and to maintain their own troops in his lands as garrisons. For example by 1763 British naval and financial superiority had virtually banished French power from the coast and helped Mahomed Ali Wallajah to consolidate his position as Nawab of Arcot in the Carnatic. Powerful bonds of dependency were tied which were ultimately to strangle Arcot and draw the British into direct administrative control of the Tamil country. In the north the Nawab of Awadh agreed to a subsidiary treaty in 1765.<sup>28</sup> These types of schemes were to be adopted many times over the whole subcontinent in the next half century as a mode of securing a stable frontier for British commercial interests and payment for Company troops. In practice, however, alliances put 'intolerable strains' on fragile Indian states whose rulers were never certain of the amount of their revenue from month to month. Shortfalls in subsidiary payments faced

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<sup>26</sup> Terence Creagh-Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London, 1971), p. 7. The Muslim state of Janjira was an oddity, founded by Abyssinian pirates.

<sup>27</sup> Creagh-Coen, *Indian Political Service*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, p. 58.

the British with mutinies among their own unpaid troops and led to piecemeal annexation in order to stabilise the financial situation. Christopher Bayly considers it 'ironic that the subsidiary alliance system, designed to set bounds to British territorial intervention, in fact pointed to its unlimited extension'.<sup>29</sup>

The Mogul empire had its own diplomatic conventions and regulations to which the Company had to conform, at least in part. A Mogul official was expected to send a personal agent, a *vakil*, to represent him before the Emperor in the official's absence. Mogul officials also posted *vakils* to each other, particularly to other regional courts, in order to look after their interests.<sup>30</sup> The title of 'resident' given to a Company representative in a state was particularly appropriate in the light of the Company's peculiar role as far as the British and Mogul sovereigns were concerned. As a chartered company it could not appoint full ambassadors or deal with sovereigns on the basis of *de jure* equality.<sup>31</sup> Moreover the Company's position within the Mogul empire could never be regularised within the practice of international law of the day. From 1772 the Company formally acknowledged Mogul sovereignty and at the same time acknowledged the sovereignty of the British crown, although the Council of the Governor-General agreed that to make the latter recognition public in India would create anti-Company feeling. Appointing a 'resident' instead of an 'ambassador' had advantages to the Company not only of lower cost, but also of raising fewer questions of ceremony and precedence.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Vakils* were normally recruited from the Islamicised service elite of scholars and administrators who traditionally served in such positions across India.

<sup>31</sup> Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858* (New Delhi, 1991), p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Michael Fisher makes it clear that the issue of sovereignty remained unsolved throughout the entire history of relations between Indian rulers, the Company and the British crown. On the one hand formal treaties with each major state specified the respective rights of the ruler and the British. On the other 'rapidly shifting conditions prevalent on the ground, as the Resident and ruler jostled for power in individual states, often led to ad hoc procedures not always in accord with formal treaties'.<sup>33</sup> British officials often acted with little regard for precedents, responding rather to political expediency or some 'overarching' British principle. When the Company began political intercourse with rulers in the late eighteenth century it was presumed that not only the Mogul emperor but also other regional rulers held sovereignty. As the Company gained military ascendancy over successive regions, its views on the sovereignty of Indian rulers changed and treaties with rulers often transferred to the Company various rights normally held by the local sovereign. While no treaty explicitly revoked the sovereignty of a ruler, a growing number of treaties did specify that rulers were subordinate to the British.<sup>34</sup>

Although official policy called for intervention in external, not internal, affairs of states, in fact residents followed Company interests above all and on occasions engaged in deep intervention in domestic matters. After the ruling Gaekwar's death in 1800 a long succession struggle in Baroda ensued. One faction enlisted the military support of the Company for which the new ruler was forced to guarantee valuable territories as security and on his failure to meet the arrears upon his debt was forced to give up the territories permanently to the Company.<sup>35</sup> In Hyderabad an arrangement worked out in 1809 and sustained until 1843 gave the British the right to influence the choice of successor to the

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<sup>33</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 441.

<sup>34</sup> *Indirect Rule*, pp. 442-4.

<sup>35</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 209.

Diwanship. Resident and Governor-General discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each possible candidate and the Resident then attempted to channel all business of state through the Diwan.<sup>36</sup> Following the last Mysore war of 1799 the Company re-established the Travancore residency and between 1811 and 1814 the Resident played a major role in the state administration, thereafter operating under an imposed Chief Minister who simply carried out British instructions in what Robin Jeffrey calls a 'Dominant Resident' relationship between Resident and ruler.<sup>37</sup> However when it suited Company policy internal intervention was minimal. In the first half of the nineteenth century requests from the rulers of Awadh and Gwalior for Company assistance in the form of British troops and revenue officials to reform the administration were refused on the grounds that the Company could offer no more than the advice of the Resident.<sup>38</sup>

While, during this period, the Company and a number of rulers came to blows, the British remained committed to supporting rulers either within their states or as dependants of the Company. There remained the underlying assumption that there was a legitimacy attached to the princes as a whole, even if such legitimacy was overridden by the circumstances of the day. On most occasions the British attempted to preserve a local ruler under indirect rule. Where they deposed an incumbent they continued to accord him titles, dignity and what they considered to be an appropriate pension even in exile.<sup>39</sup> Following the fourth and final war with Mysore and two wars with the Marathas, in addition to a number of minor armed conflicts, the Company frequently restored most of the defeated rulers to the throne. Where it deposed a particular ruler, he was usually replaced with a relative, as with the Nawab of Arcot in

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<sup>36</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 211.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey, 'Politics of Indirect Rule', pp. 263-68.

<sup>38</sup> *Indirect Rule*, pp. 222-24.

<sup>39</sup> *Indirect Rule*, pp. 191-3.



1799. In Mysore in 1799 the British carefully drafted a treaty stipulating that the Company was giving the state to a scion of the ousted Hindu dynasty and reserved the right to interfere in the administration should the annual subsidy owed to the Company be threatened by misrule.<sup>40</sup> Fisher points out that the case of Mysore illustrates the contradictions of the situation. On the one hand the British tended towards indirect rule with a respect for India's hereditary rulers and the low investment of manpower and money implied therein. On the other hand the British felt an obligation to provide 'moral' and efficient administration for the people of India. In Mysore, more conspicuously than in most other states, the conflict between the two resulted in 'a condition between direct and indirect rule'.<sup>41</sup> The hereditary ruler remained nominally on the throne and absorbed significant amounts of state revenue. At the same time the British carried out the administration of the state directly.<sup>42</sup>

The Company attempted to isolate states from each other by inserting residents as an exclusive medium for political communication. Residents negotiated treaties binding most rulers to communicate officially with each other only through residencies, and British surveillance over rulers and courts established an enforced monopoly on interstate political communication. Starting in 1792 the Company induced some fifty-five states individually to agree by treaty to channel all foreign policy contacts through their residents.<sup>43</sup> A typical treaty stipulated that the ruler in question abjured any 'negotiation or political correspondence with any European or native power without the consent of the said Company'.<sup>44</sup> While the Company did not literally forbid rulers from maintaining a foreign policy it did insist that all communications passed through its hands and met with its approval. By 1840 some thirty-one rulers had handed over their

<sup>40</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 407.

<sup>41</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 414.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 276.

<sup>44</sup> William Lee- Warner, *The Native States of India* (London, 1910), p. 220.

official political interaction to their residents. Among the first were Awadh, Mysore, Hyderabad, Gwalior and Cochin, followed by others in Rajputana and central and western India.<sup>45</sup>

Fisher stresses that behind a resident's advice to a ruler lay the 'practically invincible military power of the Company'.<sup>46</sup> In a crucial move to shift the financial burden of this power onto the princes the Company established subsidiary forces in several states. As well as reducing expenditure this action placed disciplined troops under the immediate control of the resident and, since the troops largely replaced the ruler's own armies, the resident commanded the most potent military force in the state. In exchange for organising and disbursing funds for subsidiary forces the Company acquired substantial resources from states. In some cases a ruler paid subsidies in cash as a 'tribute', but in most cases land revenue from territory would be assigned in order to pay the subsidy. Hyderabad, for example, ceded the Northern Circars in 1766 in exchange for the use of Company troops and in 1814 the Company established the 'Russell Contingent' in the same state (after the then Resident, Henry Russell) and took the rich territory of Berar to pay for it.<sup>47</sup> Many of the Company's choicest territories came from such arrangements, as when Awadh ceded half of its lands in 1801. By controlling the military forces within a state and building a constituency of courtiers, administrators, landholders and members of the general populace, residents were able to accomplish many of the purposes of the Company.<sup>48</sup>

Rulers quickly recognised the danger to their authority that the establishment of a residency tended to entail. Into the early nineteenth century more powerful rulers

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<sup>45</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 277.

<sup>46</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 230.

<sup>47</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 195.

<sup>48</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 196.

retained the capacity to block or terminate a residency when it suited their policies. A few rulers entirely refused the residency system. In the eighteenth century Haydar Ali and Tipu Sultan were particularly anxious to avoid having a resident at the Mysore court and, after conflicts over the role of the British in their particular states, the Nawab of Awadh and the Raja of Travancore succeeded in obtaining the temporary abolition of their residencies.<sup>49</sup> In some cases rulers or supporters resorted to extreme tactics to remove the resident, attacking the residency with force of arms. In the early nineteenth century political agents were attacked or killed in Banaras, Travancore, Nagpur, Poona, Jaipur and Sind, and several residencies, most prominently Delhi and Lucknow, were destroyed or besieged in 1857.<sup>50</sup>

Strategies and tactics employed by various rulers and officials did much to shape indirect rule. The variety among treaties suggests how each state was able to affect its individual relationship with the British. While many of the same phrases occur in a number of treaties concluded before the Mutiny, there are striking differences as well, as one or another ruler objected to or insisted upon a certain provision. Local practices varied also, reflecting the peculiar relationship between ruler and resident. The strategy of a ruler or official would be matched by Company strategy and different tactics resulted in a range of outcomes, leading to the acquisition of new powers or lands at the hand of Britain or to loss of territory, rights or even throne.<sup>51</sup> In his study of British policy towards the states, Stephen Ashton points out that from the outset the British maintained that it was impossible to achieve a precise definition of the paramountcy they exercised over the Indian states. The treaties which had been concluded could never be regarded as definitive simply because 'no such agreement could survive indefinitely in its original

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<sup>49</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 282.

<sup>50</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 283.

<sup>51</sup> *Indirect Rule*, pp. 307-8.

form'.<sup>52</sup> Sir William Lee-Warner, a leading authority on paramountcy at the end of the nineteenth century, wrote that 'Even if the whole body of Indian treaties, engagements and *sanads* were carefully compiled, with a view to extracting from them a catalogue of the obligations or duties that might be held to be common to all, the list would be incomplete'.<sup>53</sup> In order to deal with changing needs and circumstances a body of political practice or usage was gradually built up. Ashton suggests that such usage was employed primarily to promote imperial interests and to supply imperial needs, as in the case of laws relating to the construction of roads and railways and the development of commercial policy, and that frequently new principles established in relations with one state were subsequently taken to apply to all states.<sup>54</sup> In practice, therefore, the operation of paramountcy meant that 'the full extent of British interference in the Home Departments of the states has never and never can be defined'.<sup>55</sup>

## THE BRITISH DEBATE

Unlike their Mogul predecessors, who through informal treaties and matrimonial relations established close links with rulers such as the princes of Rajputana, the religious and social mores of the British precluded them from any form of partnership with the indigenous community. Suspicion and mistrust became normal as the British adopted a policy of keeping the princes at arm's length from the government and isolated from each other. Under the British system of tutelage the rulers had no hope of achieving either fame or distinction. Confined to their own territories and with no prospect of advancement, they began to lose the compulsion to maintain decent and

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<sup>52</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Lee-Warner, *Native States*, p. 201.

<sup>54</sup> *British Policy*, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> *Native States*, p. 201.

orderly standards of administration. Instead they became increasingly dependent upon British guarantees. Under British protection the princes were not only secure from foreign or domestic enemies, but also 'free to govern in an arbitrary manner, defying the wishes of their subjects with impunity'.<sup>56</sup> One of the most forthright critics of the subsidiary system was Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras between 1820 and 1827. Munro respected indigenous customs and institutions and wished to preserve them in order to conciliate all sections of Indian society. Britain's role in India, he believed, should be confined to the provision of sound and efficient government. In 1817 he expressed his view to the Governor-General, Lord Hastings:

There are many weighty objections to the employment of a subsidiary force. It has a natural tendency to render the government of every country in which it exists weak and oppressive; to extinguish all honourable spirit among the higher classes of society and to degrade and impoverish the whole people.<sup>57</sup>

The misgivings of Munro were shared by the liberal reformers of the early Victorian era. From the end of the eighteenth century until the Mutiny in 1857, the position of the Indian privileged classes was consistently criticised by supporters of Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism. James Mill, the most fervent of Bentham's lieutenants and a major figure in Indian policy making, demanded a revolution in Indian society carried through by the operation of 'good government', 'just laws' and a 'scientific' system of taxation. 'Clearness, certainty, promptitude, cheapness' in British administration would, he believed, provide 'a complete deliverance' for the individual from the tyranny of priests and aristocrats, so that India would be placed on the path of 'improvement'.<sup>58</sup> The Utilitarian argument would have borne much less weight had it not been able to utilize Evangelical contempt for the personal conduct and character of the classes it opposed on

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<sup>56</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Extract from Munro to Lord Hastings, 12 August 1817, quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> James Mill, *British India*, Vol. II, p. 47, Vol. V, pp. 474, 521, quoted E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 56, 146.

political and economic grounds. Convinced that western civilisation was superior and inspired by the belief that Britain had a 'moral obligation' to change Indian society, the reformers were appalled to learn that British policy encouraged princely misgovernment. They found themselves converted, despite their pacifist and anti-imperial sentiments, into apostles of annexation.<sup>59</sup> Mill, Examiner in the Company's home government, was among the first to demand that Britain put an end to princely rule. Not to enhance Britain's imperial glory, he told a House of Commons Committee in 1832, but to secure the happiness of the people, the Indian states should be taken over:

Unless you take the collection of the revenue into your hands, and appoint your own collectors, with your own people to supervise those collectors, you may be perfectly sure the people will be plundered. In like manner, there will be no justice unless you administer it.<sup>60</sup>

The views of the annexationists, however, were by no means universally endorsed. Mountstuart Elphinstone and Sir John Malcolm were prominent among those who disagreed with the criticism of the subsidiary system and who strenuously opposed the idea of bringing princely rule to an end. Elphinstone, with experience as Resident at Poona and Governor of Bombay, believed that such decay and stagnation as existed in the states was due, not to the subsidiary system, but to what he described as the 'ephemeral character of Asiatic governments'.<sup>61</sup> Elphinstone also warned any would-be annexationists that the stability of Britain's existing possessions in India was to a large extent dependent upon the maintenance of princely territories which afforded 'a refuge to all those whose habits of war, intrigue, or deprecation make them incapable of

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<sup>59</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Evidence to House of Commons Committee, 16 February 1832, quoted Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> Elphinstone to T. H. Villiers, 5 August 1832, quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 13

keeping quiet in ours'.<sup>62</sup> In this respect he was supported by Malcolm, who succeeded him as Governor of Bombay and in 1832 declared that he was

decidedly of the opinion that the tranquillity, not to say the security of our vast Oriental possessions is involved in the preservation of the native principalities which are dependent upon us for protection ... their coexistence with our rule is of itself a source of political strength the value of which will never be known until it is lost.<sup>63</sup>

Malcolm recognised that territorial expansion and the introduction of western reforms were probably inevitable but warned of serious repercussions if they were not accompanied by restraint. He stressed that 'We must try to march slow time if we cannot halt and to support, at least for a period, what is left of native rank and power. Its dissolution, to be safe, must be gradual, and we must make, before that crisis comes, a change in some sort of our principles of administration'.<sup>64</sup>

An examination of the twenty-five years preceding the Mutiny reveals that little heed was paid to the warnings of Elphinstone and Malcolm. However it has been argued that even during this period the British were not fully committed to a policy of annexing the states. The Board of Control and the Court of Directors in London were basically opposed to any further territorial expansion other than that dictated by political or military necessity. Successive Governors-General at the start of their administrations were also opposed to expansion, but 'local circumstances, together with the urge to check abuses as and when they occurred, frequently led them to abandon their earlier views'.<sup>65</sup> Lord Bentinck, Governor-General between 1828 and 1835 was at first a non-interventionist as far as the states were concerned. He believed that there was already too much 'petty interference', particularly in the private lives of the princes, and

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Malcolm to T. H. Villiers, 26 March 1832, quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> John William Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major General Sir John Malcolm* (London, 1854), Vol. 2, p. 324.

<sup>65</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 14.

even advocated the removal of political officers from all states except those in which subsidiary troops were stationed.<sup>66</sup> However Bentinck soon found himself threatening the errant ruler of Awadh that he would have to forfeit his throne unless he mended his ways. Furthermore, he placed Mysore under British administration following a rebellion in 1831, and annexed the state of Coorg in 1834 on the grounds of misgovernment.<sup>67</sup>

It was not, however, until the time of Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General between 1848 and 1856, that annexation became a salient feature of British policy. Convinced of the superiority of British rule and the degeneracy of the Indian states, Dalhousie stated his views at the start of his administration in August 1848:

I cannot conceive it possible for anyone to dispute the policy of taking advantage of every just opportunity which presents itself for consolidating the territories which already belong to us, by taking possession of States that may lapse in the midst of them; for thus getting rid of those petty intervening principalities, which may be made a means of annoyance, but which can never, I venture to think, be a source of strength, for adding to the resources of the public treasury, and for extending the uniform application of our system of government to those whose best interests, we sincerely believe, will be promoted thereby.<sup>68</sup>

The device which Dalhousie used to gain possession of seven states in seven years was the 'doctrine of lapse', giving the Government the right to take over a state if a prince died without heirs, a situation which is discussed in further depth in the chapter on succession. As Thomas Metcalf indicates, Dalhousie specifically limited the application of this right to dependent states created by the British Government or owing their existence to it. However the Governor-General wielded the doctrine of lapse so extensively as to arouse suspicion even among the most ancient Hindu princes. He was restrained by the Home Government from taking over the small semi-independent

<sup>66</sup> Minute by Lord William Bentinck on Oude, 30 July 1831 quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>68</sup> Dalhousie's minute, 30 August 1848, PP 1849, Vol. XXXIX, p. 83.



Rajput state of Kerauli, but, of the seven states he did annex, Satara, Jhansi and Nagpur were Maratha principalities of the first rank.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the doctrine of lapse, Dalhousie's administration also abolished the pensions and titles of ex-ruling families. Even Bahadur Shah II, the last of the Mogul emperors, was informed that the imperial title would lapse upon his death.<sup>70</sup> The climax of the 'expansionist' phase came in 1856 with the annexation of Awadh upon the grounds of misrule. Awadh was in drastic need of reform, yet the Resident, W. H. Sleeman, did not believe that it should be annexed outright and warned the Governor-General of the possible consequences of annexing states:

If we succeed in sweeping them all away or absorbing them, we shall be at the mercy of our native army, and they shall see it, and accidents may possibly occur to unite them, or a great proportion of them, in some desperate act ... the best provision against it seems to me to be the maintenance of native rulers, whose confidence and affection can be engaged, and administration improved under judicious management.<sup>71</sup>

However, the Governor-General's Council and the government in London feared that civil war might ensue in Awadh. The subsequent annexation of the state in February 1856 coincided with the end of Dalhousie's administration and, as an example of current British policy towards the rulers, contributed largely to the unrest from which the Indian Mutiny emerged the following year.

The loyalty of the reigning princes during the revolt clearly demonstrated the potential of the Indian states as a political force in support of British rule. Dalhousie's successor, Lord Canning, was urged by the Home Government to spare no effort in rewarding the princes who had given active assistance. In a despatch to Sir Charles Wood, who had

<sup>69</sup> Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt*, p. 36.

<sup>70</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Sleeman to Dalhousie, 1848, quoted Creagh-Coen, *Indian Political Service*, pp. 17-18.

become Secretary of State for India in June 1859, the Governor-General agreed that the 'safety of our rule is increased not diminished by the maintenance of Native Chiefs well affected to us'.<sup>72</sup> During the Mutiny 'patches of native government' like Gwalior, Hyderabad, Patiala, Rampur and Rewa had, according to Canning, 'served as breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us'.<sup>73</sup> He believed that 'should the day come when India shall be threatened by an external enemy, or when the interests of England elsewhere may require that her Eastern Empire shall incur more than ordinary risks, one of our best mainstays will be found in these Native States'.<sup>74</sup> The policy of annexation could no longer be continued. For the first time under British rule it appeared that the princes were to be given a permanent position as part of the British empire.

In his study of the representation of authority in Victorian India, Bernard Cohn suggests that the British, who had started their rule as 'outsiders', became 'insiders' by vesting in their monarch the sovereignty of India through an amnesty document, the Government of India Act.<sup>75</sup> This new relationship between the British monarch, her Indian subjects and the native princes was published in all principal centres of British rule on the 1st of November 1858. In the proclamation Queen Victoria assured the Indian princes that 'their rights, dignity and honour', as well as their control over their territorial possessions, would be respected and that the Queen 'was bound to the natives of Our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which binds us to all our other subjects'.<sup>76</sup> All her Indian subjects were to be secure in the practice of their religions. They were to enjoy 'the equal and impartial protection of the law' and 'due regard would

<sup>72</sup> GoI FD to SoS, No. 43A, 30 April 1860, PCI, Vol. 85.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Cohn, 'Representing Authority', p. 165.

<sup>76</sup> Queen Victoria's Proclamation, 1 November 1858, in C. H. Philips (ed.) *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents* (London, 1962), pp. 10-11.

be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India'. Works of 'public utility and improvement' were to be promoted and they 'should enjoy that social advancement which can only be secured by internal peace and good government'.<sup>77</sup>

It is clear that the policy to cease annexation was to a great extent one of expediency under current conditions. As Canning was aware, while India now seemed fairly secure, at least in a military sense, there was no room for complacency. Hatred of Europeans had if anything increased as a result of the Mutiny and another European war, as in 1854, might find India denuded of British troops.<sup>78</sup> Economically a policy of detente with loyal princes and landlords made good sense. The campaigns of 1857-8, following hard on an expensive programme of public works under Dalhousie, had saddled the Raj with a legacy of debt. In 1858-9 the budget deficit was 14 million lakhs, in 1859-60 nine million.<sup>79</sup> At least in the foreseeable future the government was incapable of taking on new administrative burdens, 'Our officers', explained Canning, 'are too few for the work which they have on their hands. Accession of territory will not make it easier to discharge our already existing duties in the administration of justice, the prosecution of public works, and in many other ways'.<sup>80</sup> Most importantly, Canning regarded the princes as the natural leaders of Indian society, with 'a hold over the feelings and hearts of the common herd which they cannot bequeath to us'.<sup>81</sup>

To show British generosity to the rulers overall 'an act of general and substantial grace' was needed. The specific measure that Canning proposed was to give 'an assurance to every Chief above the rank of *Jagheerदार*, who now governs his own territory, ... that on

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Canning to Wood, 13 June 1860, quoted in S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> *The Annual Register*, 100 (1858), p. 250, quoted Copland, *British Raj*, p. 95.

<sup>80</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 43A, 30 April 1860, PCI, 1792-1864, Vol. 85 quoted R. J. Moore, *Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, 1858-1866* (Manchester, 1966), p. 164.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

failure of natural heirs his adoption of a successor ... will be recognised'.<sup>82</sup> No other innovation, he assured Wood, would capture the confidence of the princes so successfully and 'give a character of immovability to the policy which it initiates'.<sup>83</sup> Both at home and from his Council Canning's proposal evoked a favourable response. Sir Henry Bartle Frere described the effects of the measure in glowing terms and told Canning that it would 'do more for tranquillity and good government in India than years of legislation and successful campaigns'.<sup>84</sup> No avid reformer, Frere felt few pangs of conscience at the thought of millions left under Indian rule, 'Every real advantage to the people which can be expected from our rule can be secured through a Native ruler, with the aid of an English Political Agent of average ability, more surely, easily, and cheaply than by any form of direct administration with which I am acquainted'.<sup>85</sup> Sir Charles Wood was less optimistic over the future of the states, but he recognised the value of attaching to Britain those 'influential classes' which would deprive 'the active and stirring elements' in India of any possible leaders.<sup>86</sup> In a dispatch of July 1860 he authorised the issue of adoption *sanads* to all sovereign chiefs under British protection, 'It is not by the extension of our Empire that its permanence is to be secured, but by the character of British rule in the territories already committed to our care, and by practically demonstrating that we are as willing to respect the rights of others as we are capable of maintaining our own'.<sup>87</sup>

The measure was well received by some sections of the Indian people for different reasons. As Metcalf points out, 'the states were islands of self-government in a sea of

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Minute from Frere to Canning, 19 June 1860, enclosure Canning to Wood, 26 June 1860, Wood Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Wood to Canning, 26 July 1860, Wood Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>87</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 59, 26 July 1860, PCI, 1792-1864, Vol. 440.

alien rule'.<sup>88</sup> They provided an outlet for political ambition denied in British India and an example of the ability of Indians to rule themselves.<sup>89</sup> As early as August 1858 the *Hindoo Patriot* had advocated recognition of the right of adoption and went on to recommend that the princes be freed from the surveillance of British residents. India, the newspaper suggested, should be organised on a federal basis, with the various states and provinces left free to manage their own internal affairs.<sup>90</sup> With considerably more vehemence the vernacular Bengali press deplored British interference in the princely states and one newspaper asserted in 1863 that despite adoption 'there is no independence allowed to Native Rajahs'.<sup>91</sup>

However Bhupen Qanungo states that not only in government correspondence but also in public addresses to rulers at *darbars*, Canning justified any such 'interference' by stressing that the British Government had a duty to the people of the native states, as much as to the rulers and their families. The Government would always consider it a right of the paramount power to intervene in the affairs of the native states to ensure elementary good government according to the principles of British rule in the country.<sup>92</sup> Indeed the recognition of adoption was by no means to prevent the British Government from interfering in princely affairs. Canning made it plain in April 1860 that, with annexation repudiated, intervention was a necessary deterrent to the opportunities now available for gross misrule. In explaining the adoption procedure to Wood, the Viceroy declared, 'The proposed measure will not debar the Government of India from stepping in to set right such serious abuses in a native Government as may threaten any part of the

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<sup>88</sup> Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt*, p. 225.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> *Hindoo Patriot*, 26 August 1858, quoted Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt*, p. 226.

<sup>91</sup> *Soma Prakesh*, 21 September 1863, quoted Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt*, p. 226.

<sup>92</sup> B. Qanungo, 'A Study of British Relations with the Native States of India, 1858-62', *Journal of Asian Studies* 26 (February 1967), p. 265.

country with anarchy or disturbance, nor from assuming temporary change of a Native State when there shall be sufficient reason to do so'.<sup>93</sup>

The issue of *sanads* of adoption has often been represented as indicative of a determination to put an end to Britain's career of annexation in India, however during the 1860s the tide of post-Mutiny reaction began to ebb. Lord Elgin, Viceroy from 1862 to 1863, was to some extent in agreement with his departmental heads, such as Sir Henry Durand, that Canning's assessment of imperial priorities had been warped by the trauma of 1857. Writing to Wood in September 1862, he wondered whether the direction which British policy had taken under Canning was 'altogether correct' and whether 'that portion of it which was a policy of circumstance should not have been distinguished from that which was a policy of principle'.<sup>94</sup> Elgin was sure that his predecessor had 'never intended to let the chiefs get the bit into their mouths' and that 'his policy of deference to the authority of native chiefs was only a means to an end, that end being the establishment of the British Raj in India'.<sup>95</sup> The Viceroy concluded, 'It may perhaps turn out that a time of peace is better fitted to one of revolution for the discovery of the true theory according to which our relations with native states ought to be conducted'.<sup>96</sup>

### THE MAN ON THE SPOT

Those men best equipped to discover the 'true theory' of governing states were undoubtedly the members of the Company branch, the political line. This line, having evolved over the years, consisted of residents, when there was only one state

<sup>93</sup> GoI to SoS. No. 43A, 30 April 1860, PCI, 1792-1864, Vol. 85.

<sup>94</sup> Elgin to Wood, 9 Sept 1862, quoted T. Walrond, ed. *Letters and Journals of James, 8th Earl of Elgin* (London, 1872), pp. 419-20.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

involved, and political agents, who usually each had a group of minor states in their charge, under the control of the Agent to the Governor-General at the local Political Agency. During periods of the greatest British expansion in the early nineteenth century the post of political officer had attracted the most ambitious of Company servants. Philip Mason says that of the 'three main lines', political, judicial and revenue ... there could be no question that the political was much the most attractive'.<sup>97</sup> However following 1858 much of the appeal of the political line faded when routine replaced dynamism and glamour, as a result of the new British policy of stabilising relations with Indian states, and by the 1870s increased administrative importance had been placed upon political officers.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, by the very nature of his duties, the political agent often found himself isolated for long periods from the company of Europeans in conditions which even by the standards of British India were primitive and uncomfortable.

After the Mutiny politicals were overwhelmingly military men recruited from the Staff Corps of the Indian Army.<sup>99</sup> In stark contrast to the other main branches of government, revenue and justice, civilians comprised only a small part of the service. The main reason behind the post-Mutiny preference for military rather than civilian personnel in political posts was one of economy. Man for man, Staff Corps officers cost less than civilians, 'perhaps as much as Rs. 1,000 a month less for men of equal standing'.<sup>100</sup> Moreover salary scales in the two services were calculated differently. In the Indian Civil Service a man's pay was determined by his length of service; in the Political

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<sup>97</sup> Philip Mason, *The Men Who Ruled India* (London, 1953), Vol. I, pp. 204-5.

<sup>98</sup> Fisher, *Indirect Rule*, p. 31.

<sup>99</sup> Created by Royal warrant in 1861 as a means of remedying the evils of the previous system whereby military officers were withdrawn for unlimited periods from the regiments to meet the expanding needs of the public services.

<sup>100</sup> Copland, *British Raj*, p. 73.

Service<sup>101</sup> by the importance of his appointment. A satisfactory time-scale system was not introduced until the second decade of the twentieth century and, owing to the shortage of command posts, promotional opportunities for most officers were extremely limited. In 1873 the Governor of Bombay noted that the 'prizes of the Political Department are so few that the majority of Political officers can expect to rise to no higher pay than Rs. 1,200' [monthly], roughly equivalent to £120.<sup>102</sup> The financial prospects of the Political Service declined still further during the last decades of the century as a consequence of inflation. The cost of living in India, particularly for Europeans, increased sharply from the 1880s. Despite meagre increases in civil salaries, the real wages of Indian public servants were lower in 1900 than they had been at any time since the Mutiny.<sup>103</sup> Embittered by long standing grievances over pay and promotion, the rank and file of the Political Service retained little faith in the good intentions of the Secretariat. In a sense this was unfair, since 'the fault lay not with the Political Department as such, but with the Finance Department which controlled the purse strings and with the politicians at Whitehall who made the rules'.<sup>104</sup>

The most important part of the application form for the Political Service was the section devoted to comments from the candidate's commanding officer. High on the list of information solicited were queries about the applicant's popularity, horsemanship and sporting ability. Significantly, referees, whether commanding

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<sup>101</sup> The term Political Service, or Indian Political Service, is used throughout, following the examples of Creagh- Coen and Copland, however it was not coined until 1937, after the 1935 Government of India Act had removed all matters relating to the Indian states from the Foreign and Political Department of the GoI to the Crown Representative, reporting directly to the British Government. In fact the Viceroy also held the office of Crown Representative and no major changes occurred.

<sup>102</sup> Resolution of the Govt. of Bombay No. 5605 of 10 September 1873 quoted Ian Copland, 'The Other Guardians: Ideology and Performance in the Indian Political Service' in Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes*, p.288.

<sup>103</sup> 'Other Guardians', p.292.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



officers or senior men in the government, almost never mentioned the mental ability of their protégés. Admittedly applicants had to have passed all their Army examinations plus a test in Hindustani, but in view of the departmental prejudice against civilians it seems likely that book learning and related skills were not highly thought of by the men who administered the selection process.<sup>105</sup> Even William Lee-Warner, who was one of the most intellectual of nineteenth century Indian Civilians, when asked by the Adjutant-General to draw up a list of desirable qualifications for political employees, settled for the social factor, 'A Pol. Officer has to deal with ruling chiefs and nobles in his capacity as representative of the British Govt.; it therefore follows that he should be a gentleman'.<sup>106</sup>

Copland considers that intellectually the Political Service fell far short of the standard of the Indian Civil Service, which was itself 'no byword for brilliance'.<sup>107</sup> On the other hand there was probably something to be said for the government's argument that political work required more than just intellectual agility. Most of the *darbars* in the mid-nineteenth century were still run on basically paternal lines by high caste officials 'skilled in the byways of courtly intrigue'.<sup>108</sup> In this relatively unbureaucratic world, a political officer who surrounded himself with files was unlikely to make headway. To win the confidence of the rulers personal contact was essential. The men who succeeded most at this task were invariably 'those with the most magnetic personalities: extroverts and sporting types, sensitive to the cultural milieu of the courts but strong-willed enough to resist the temptations inherent in the environment'.<sup>109</sup> Although few politicals qualified as intellectuals in the narrow sense of the term, they tended to be, especially the younger men, imbued with a strong sense of purpose and a vague but powerful vision of

<sup>105</sup> *British Raj*, p. 78.

<sup>106</sup> Memo by Lee-Warner, 8 July 1892, quoted Copland, *British Raj*, p. 78.

<sup>107</sup> *British Raj*, p. 85

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

where they were headed. Most politicals came from middle-class English families and, as such, shared in the devotion to progress which was perhaps 'the main article of the Victorian middle-class creed'.<sup>110</sup>

Except for civilians who worked for three years in the 'revenue line' before joining the service, political officers received no special administrative or judicial training. Armed only with manuals, grammars and legal texts, they were dispatched into the field to learn their trade by experience. Copland makes it clear that 'influence', that 'magical but largely immeasurable quality' which all political recruits desired, depended on the individual coming to terms with his social environment.<sup>111</sup> Months or even years might be spent in building up the right contacts, mastering a new vernacular if a Political Agent came from a different region, and becoming familiar with the customs and prejudices of the people. Length of tenure could have an important bearing on a Political Agent's performance.<sup>112</sup> It was surprising, therefore, that the transfer of political officers tended to become increasingly more frequent. In 1877 political appointments in Bombay averaged over four years' duration; by 1901 the average had fallen by half to just over two years. The reason for this apparent paradox was the government's fear, confirmed by costly experience, that 'too long an exposure to the problems and personalities of one state or region might encourage an unhealthy spirit of partisanship' among the officers concerned.<sup>113</sup>

A Political Agent posted to a large agency comprising many small states had on the whole a much tougher assignment than one appointed to a single state agency or residency. Not only were there more *durbars* to be won over but also there were the

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<sup>110</sup> *British Raj*, p. 130.

<sup>111</sup> 'Other Guardians', p. 279.

<sup>112</sup> 'Other Guardians', p. 280.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

sheer physical problems of getting around such a large area, especially in the type of terrain commonly encountered in central India and Orissa where many of the small states were located. The annual winter tour, which was supposed to put political officers in continuous touch with their agency, was 'too brief to be good for anything but showing the flag'.<sup>114</sup> Moreover by the late nineteenth century the *darbars* were often sufficiently cognisant of the workings of the political system to make sure that for the duration of his stay, the Political Agent failed to unearth information which might reflect unfavorably on the ruling regime. Some Political Agents may have been able to surmount these obstacles, but 'judging from the paucity and naivety of much of the information contained in the periodic summaries which were filed with the Secretariat, they were probably in the minority'.<sup>115</sup> By the twentieth century there was a groundswell of dissatisfaction with existing procedures of training and recruitment. Even by its own standards the Political Service had failed to attract enough men of a sufficiently high calibre from the Indian Civil Service and, more importantly, from the Staff Corps of the Indian Army, which was naturally reluctant to release its best young regimental officers for civil employment.<sup>116</sup>

Secretariat officials were frequently criticised for being out of touch with their political officers on the ground. In the nineteenth century the Government of India saw no incongruity in appointing men to the Political Secretariat without benefit of a practical apprenticeship in the states. Charles Gonne, Political Secretary in the Bombay Government for a record term of twenty years (1864-1884), never set foot in a 'native' state in an official capacity during his entire Indian career.<sup>117</sup> His celebrated successor, William Lee-Warner, served only eighteen months in Kolhapur

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<sup>114</sup> 'Other Guardians', p. 281.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> 'Other Guardians', pp. 286-7.

<sup>117</sup> 'Other Guardians', p. 293.

prior to taking over as Political Secretary.<sup>118</sup> The Secretariat was a closed shop to the vast majority of members of the Political Service, who were destined to spend their careers exclusively in subordinate stations. Feelings of hostility and frustration towards the Secretariat were exacerbated by what the subordinate men saw as 'a gradual and deliberate erosion of their power and authority'.<sup>119</sup>

The late nineteenth century was a period of dramatic improvement in communications. Prior to 1870 not many states were linked to headquarters by the telegraph, and almost none by the railway. As a result, the man on the spot was frequently compelled to take the initiative in committing government to a particular course of action. During the 1870s, and still more in the 1880s and 1890s, a network of railways and telegraph lines was constructed across the country, some financed by the states themselves, with the result that the political officer became more and more a mere channel of communication between the British government and the ruler. Although still an important link in the chain of command, he could no longer maintain a regular influence on the course of imperial policy and was increasingly stifled by bureaucracy.<sup>120</sup> Crown Representative records display a marked change in tone over the last thirty years of the century: the intimate, paternalistic approach of Resident to ruler alters to a less more fractious, less patient tone as the officer concerned is beset by an increasingly sophisticated administration on one hand and the scrutiny of his superiors on the other. This study will explore the manner in which, despite the low morale and apparent limitations of the Political Service, its officers set about the task of 'civilising' Indian rulers and modernising state administrations and their success or failure in accomplishing these tasks.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Copland, 'Other Guardians', p. 295

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

## SUCCESSION

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The East India Company took an early step in asserting a degree of interference in the internal affairs of Indian states through its interest in the succession of rulers. To some extent the Company was assuming the mantle of the significant powers, the principal *sanad*-holders<sup>121</sup>, of the Mogul empire who entered a succession dispute to support the legitimacy of one candidate for a princely throne and, if the candidate were successful, to exact a tribute. This strategy was used dozens of times in the eighteenth century with a wide variety of groups as the outside power. Dost Mohammed Khan of Bhopal used it against the Rajput houses of Western Malwa and in the Bhopal succession of 1728 it was ultimately the *sanad*-grantor, the Nizam of Hyderabad, who decided which of Dost Mohammed's two eligible sons was to succeed him. The subordinate treaties made by the French and English with Indian states towards the end of the century were 'simply European terms for a very common indigenous phenomenon'.<sup>122</sup>

As was the case for the major *sanad*-holders under Mogul rule, the potential scope for intervention by a Resident in a succession remained broad partly because of political conditions within many states. The line of inheritance for most Indian dynasties followed no absolute or clear rule. Male rulers customarily engaged in sexual relations with a variety of types of wives and concubines, the offspring of whom

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<sup>121</sup> Under the Mogul empire, virtually every political authority from rajah down to village headman 'held from' some larger authority. What most held was a written, dated document, known as a *sanad* in Mogul-influenced areas, which stated the holder's name, rights and recompense, duties and length of tenure. Such a document was signed and sealed by the appropriate Mogul official. Stewart Gordon, 'Legitimacy and Loyalty in some Successor States', in J. F. Richards (ed.) *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1998) p. 330.

<sup>122</sup> Gordon, 'Legitimacy and Loyalty', p. 335.

made claims to their common father's estate. Robbins Burling, having examined successions in several principal Maratha houses, concluded that:

Sons had a greater claim than brothers, elder brothers had precedence over younger brothers, and natural sons had a stronger claim than adopted sons. Except for the exclusive rights of the male line, however, none of these priorities were absolute.<sup>123</sup>

Residents, acting as an independent force, often proved to hold the balance of power among the 'disparate pretenders' to the throne, each of whom might hold the loyalty of only a small faction in the court or army as his basis of support within the state.<sup>124</sup> Upon the death of a ruler, therefore, the Resident, and the Company's political and military force which he represented could often prove 'the arbiter of succession, to the political or financial advantage of the Company'.<sup>125</sup> Even before its first appointment of Residents in 1764 the Company involved itself in the succession of Indian dynasties in both the Carnatic and Bengal.<sup>126</sup> The sanction of successions within states provided an admirable opportunity for the tightening of British control. A ruler who owed his accession to the tacit or active approval of the Company incurred an obligation which affected his relationship with the Resident. Moreover, since the nomination of a successor depended on the blessing of the Company, potential heirs saw the Resident as an 'assessor, whose good reports might prove vital to their future prospects'.<sup>127</sup>

The level of the Company's interference in succession reached its peak with the 'doctrine of lapse', already briefly discussed in the introduction. Although it did not originate with Lord Dalhousie, this measure was exercised by him most frequently and extensively. British recognition was given as a matter of course to heirs in the direct line

<sup>123</sup> Robbins Burling, *The Passage of Power: Studies in Political Successions* (New York, 1974), p. 58, quoted Gordon, 'Legitimacy and Loyalty', p. 334..

<sup>124</sup> Fisher, *Indirect Rule*, p. 140.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 141.

<sup>127</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 265.

of succession, but when a prince died without heirs the Government had the right to take over his state. Ordinarily a prince was able to avert this fate by adopting a son who succeeded to the throne as if he were the legal heir. Dalhousie's innovation lay in consistently refusing to sanction such adoptions, stating that on all occasions 'where heirs natural shall fail, the territory should be made to lapse and adoption should not be permitted, excepting in those cases in which some strong political reason may render it necessary to depart from the general rule'.<sup>128</sup>

A heated debate in Britain and among the British in India was engendered over whether such action was justified on the basis of the interpretation of Hindu, Muslim, British or international law.<sup>129</sup> The details of the application of the doctrine varied considerably. The Rajahs of Satara and Jhansi had both adopted sons prior to their deaths (in 1847 and 1853 respectively). Despite these formal adoptions, the Company refused to acknowledge the adopted sons as heirs and, in the case of Satara, the Governor-General further justified annexation on the grounds that the Company had created the state and, when it served the Company's convenience, it could be annexed as 'a practical, administrative consolidation'.<sup>130</sup> In the case of Nagpur, the ruler had no son, natural or adopted, and the Company annexed the state on the Rajah's death in 1853. The Company also annexed a number of smaller states under the doctrine, awaiting the death of the incumbent ruler as a convenient point to take over his state, 'when justified by its own administrative purposes'.<sup>131</sup>

The Company even asserted its right to determine the succession to the Mogul imperial dynasty. To the Company the reigning Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, represented a vestige

<sup>128</sup> Dalhousie's minute, 30 August 1848, PP 1849, Vol. XXXIX, p. 83.

<sup>129</sup> Bisheshwar Prasad, *Paramountcy under Dalhousie* (New Delhi, 1964).

<sup>130</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 258.

<sup>131</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 259.

of the old political order. While the Company wished to eliminate the Emperor's remaining political authority, it was unwilling to do so abruptly. As a result, the Resident at Delhi reached an agreement in 1852 with the heir apparent that the Company would recognise his claim against those of his brothers in return for a 'diminished political status'.<sup>132</sup> In exchange for the support of the Company, he agreed 'to accept a reduced title (from Padshah, 'Emperor', to Shahzada, 'King's son'), meet the Governor-General in ceremonies symbolizing equality, and transfer the imperial palace (the Red Fort) to the Company, taking residence elsewhere'.<sup>133</sup> In 1856, however, the Company obtained the opportunity to further 'degrade' the Mogul dynasty when the heir apparent predeceased his father. The Company refused to recognise the Emperor's choice of another son as heir. Indeed, the Company determined to abolish the dynasty altogether on the death of Bahadur Shah. This proposed 'blatant interference' in the imperial succession did much to raise public hostility to the Company in 1857, when the Emperor proved a major focal point for the uprising against the British.<sup>134</sup>

After 1857 the British crown took over the government of India from the Company and to all intents and purposes returned to a policy of indirect rule. In order to safeguard the dynasties of the princes the Viceroy, Lord Canning, dispensed with the doctrine of lapse and, as stated in the introduction, in 1862 bestowed adoption *sanads* upon rulers above the rank of *jagirdar* who guaranteed to maintain the loyalty expressed in their treaties. Although less than two hundred *sanads* were issued, the four or five hundred states which did not receive such a written guarantee from the British Government were all given to understand by the tone of official utterances on the subject that the paramount power wished 'to perpetuate all loyal states' and to acknowledge adopted successors to

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 260.



their *gadis* on the failure of natural heirs.<sup>135</sup> Thereafter there was no dispute about the right to adopt. But often, when a prince died leaving an adopted son, 'collaterals would weigh in with petitions drafted by the most eminent lawyers in India alleging a flaw here or there in the adoption and pressing their own claims'.<sup>136</sup> If there had been no adoption, the case was further complicated. It required some legal ability and good knowledge of local conditions and personalities to advise on such cases which, if the state were of importance, were not finally decided by the Viceroy but went on to the Secretary of State for India.<sup>137</sup>

In larger and more powerful states, lost opportunities to regulate successions were much regretted by the British. In 1875 at the time of the selection of a successor to the late Maharajah of Alwar in Rajputana, dismay was expressed by the India Office that, by omitting to regrant the state on a formal basis by an adoption *sanad* or otherwise, a chance had been lost of 'placing the relations between the British Government and Ulwur State on a footing less anomalous and unsuited to the present condition than is possible under existing treaties with that State'.<sup>138</sup> Under similar circumstances, it was suggested, the British Government should not only recognise a succession on general grounds, but should attach conditions which would give the paramount power 'a fair equivalent' for the external protection and internal support which it provided.<sup>139</sup> Although the confiscation of a state was ruled out following the Mutiny, the British could exercise much power in applying such conditions, and it

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. The terms of the adoption sanad granted to the Gaekwar of Baroda can be found in Philips (ed.), *Evolution of India and Pakistan*, p. 416.

<sup>136</sup> Creagh-Coen, *Indian Political Service*, p. 68.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 24, 9 September 1875, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 1.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

was stressed that the Indian rulers should be taught to look upon the restoration of native rule as 'a favour, not a right'.<sup>140</sup>

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Government of India never relinquished its right to sanction royal successions, and in the cause of instigating 'good government' took advantage of every available opportunity to install candidates of its choice. There was a concerted effort on the part of political officers during the period to settle the matter of succession prior to a ruler's death and, of those successions which were disputed, the vast majority was resolved with none of the infighting and bloodletting which had occurred as a matter of course between various branches of royal families before British rule. Wars of succession such as those in Bhopal in 1742 and in Jaipur in 1743 simply ceased to occur. No doubt the lack of conflict was largely due to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British guarantees to princes to fulfil both their internal and external defence requirements, thereby ensuring that the usurper of a legitimate heir to a *gadi* would feel the full force of British military power. The granting of adoption sanads to some princes was another significant factor. By making the succession process more cut and dried, the cases of disputed inheritance were much reduced. However the absence of bloodshed is also indicative of the fact that royal rulers and their families were remarkably quiescent in accepting without challenge the ruling of the paramount power when it came to successions. Through lack of opposition the British were enabled, principally through the enthronement of young, responsive candidates, to take a leading role as early as possible in the princely life cycle, a position which was maintained with great determination through the control of royal education and marriage, as subsequent chapters show.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



## THE LEGAL POSITION

In 1886 in a paper on various principles applying to political relations with Indian states, Sir William Lee-Warner, whose views on paramountcy were discussed in the introduction, clarified the policy which had arisen during the decades following the granting of adoption *sanads*. Theoretically in the event of a ruler dying without natural heirs and without exercising the powers of adoption conferred upon him, the doctrine of lapse might legally operate. Under these circumstances the declared policy of the Queen's Proclamation protected the integrity of the state, however 'the rights of the reigning dynasty' were no longer secured by formal agreement. 'The perpetuation of Native rule is wider than the perpetuation of the houses of Native rulers, and it is based on grounds of general policy, not on an exclusive regard for individual claims'.<sup>141</sup> It is 'a policy and not a pledge', to be 'administered subject to conditions' and 'of course capable of exceptions under the pressure of adequate exigency'.<sup>142</sup>

In Lee-Warner's view there was a 'wide and fundamental difference between escheat and confiscation' and the attachment of conditions to the restoration of native rule in states such as Mysore or Baroda after the deposition of their respective rulers. In adoptions or successions guaranteed by *sanad* the minimum of interference was exercised, but in the 'selection' of a successor a wider play was allowed to the Government of India. The distinction between adoption and 'selection' was of great importance. The Government of India was bound by Canning's *sanads* to recognise an adoption made by a ruler in accordance with Hindi law and the 'customs of the house'. Where there was no valid adoption as, for example, in the case of the heir to a deposed

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<sup>141</sup> Lee-Warner, Lee-Warner Collection, F92, quoted Philips (ed.) *Evolution of India and Pakistan*, pp. 421-2.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

ruler, the Government could either recognise an invalid adoption, or exercise its own selection. In all cases the sanction of the British Government was necessary before any succession could be proclaimed, therefore 'every endeavour should be made to induce a ruler to settle the succession in his lifetime by making an adoption, or choosing a successor in accordance with his *Sanads*'.<sup>143</sup>

Where there was the possibility of a British 'selection' of a successor, as in the case of Mysore, British policy was under great scrutiny. The transfer of Mysore back from British to princely rule had been under consideration since 1861 when Krishnaraja Wadiar, the former Maharajah deposed in 1831 upon grounds of misgovernment, petitioned Lord Canning for the restoration of his powers.<sup>144</sup> Both Canning and his successor, Lord Lawrence, played for time in the hope that Mysore could be incorporated into British India upon the Maharajah's death. However in 1865 the Maharajah adopted an heir. The British were under no obligation to recognise the adoption, for Mysore had not been under princely rule when Canning bestowed adoption *sanads* upon the princes. Both the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, were prepared to withhold recognition but Wood retired from office in 1866 and the Liberal government of which he had been a member was defeated in the same year. In 1867 Lord Cranbourne, the Conservative Secretary of State whose respect for the Indian princes was 'a frequent source of irritation to Lawrence', pledged that the state

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Following the defeat of the Muslim ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan, in 1799 the Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, rejected the restoration of a relative of the ruler on the grounds of Muslim 'racial characteristics' and family traditions of hostility to the British and Francophilia. Selected instead was a member of the ancient family of Hindu rulers of Mysore whom the Company had recently liberated from prison. However under his personal direction of the administration the state went into debt. In Mysore, with dire consequences for the prince, the Company encountered the conflict in cultural values that it met in many other states and which occurs with frequency throughout this study. Indian rulers, even when installed on the throne by the British, attempted to live up to their own notions of royal behaviour. The British, while they occasionally appreciated the pomp and ceremony of a court, derided what they considered to be 'empty pageant' and abhorred the vast cost. Rulers, while they accepted British military and political power, 'bridled at any degradation of their dignity'. See Fisher, *Indirect Rule*, p. 410.

would be restored to native rule.<sup>145</sup>

In 1879, when considering how best to effect the transfer to the Maharajah's successor, Chamarajendra Wadiar, the Government of India prepared a draft Instrument of Transfer, including detailed restrictions upon the power of the adopted prince, and expressed the wish that they might serve as a precedent to be adopted in all cases of states emerging from minority periods.<sup>146</sup> These restrictions came into force in Mysore in 1881 upon the young ruler's investiture, but a more general application of them was disallowed by the Secretary of State, Lord Cranbrook, who considered that they would be interpreted as an unwarranted revision of the treaties with the states. Mysore was used as a showcase for British policy towards the states in the late nineteenth century, helped to a great extent by the existing strong British presence in the administration. British politicians both in England and India were well aware of the importance placed by Indians upon the future of the young adopted heir and the question mark hanging over the restoration, a subject which is tackled in greater depth in the chapter on princely administration.

Conscious of the highly sensitive nature of post-Mutiny princely successions, of which Mysore was an example, the Government of India made it patently clear that it wished to be thoroughly briefed in any case of disputed succession and that such matters were not to be concluded locally without further consultation. In 1885 the Bombay Government reported that a decision had been arrived at in the case of the death of the Nawab of Savanur and the succession of his cousin, Abdul Tabriz Khan. There were several claimants to the *gadi* and the local government had been guided by the opinion of their legal officer, submitting no information as to whether or not the succession was in

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<sup>145</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>146</sup> Mysore Instrument of Transfer, Philips (ed.) *Evolution of India and Pakistan*, pp. 418-421.

accordance with the wishes of the late Nawab's choice. William Lee-Warner stressed that 'We have generally held that in recognising a distant succession the customs of the family, the wishes of the deceased or his widow, and the qualifications of the selected successor, are the main factors in a decision', particularly where an adoption *sanad* had been given, as in the case of Savanur.<sup>147</sup> Lee-Warner hoped that it would be possible for the Government of India to support the local government's decision, but no action should have been taken which might 'compromise the free selection of the Government of India'. In his opinion, 'If there was time to refer to the legal advisers there was time to refer to the Government of India'.<sup>148</sup> Whereas in Hindu law there were separate rules which regulated successions to 'Principalities and Kingdoms', works on Muslim law did not contain such rules. Therefore claims by contending parties needed to be decided upon after consultation with a 'competent' law officer.<sup>149</sup> The Viceroy eventually accepted the succession of Abdul Tabriz Khan, but the point had been made.<sup>150</sup>

The Government of India, despite its ostensible adherence to the rule of law, fought hard to maintain its right to act as adjudicator in cases such as that of Savanur. A memorandum to the Marquis of Hartington, Secretary of State for India, from the Viceroy's Council in 1880 frankly set out the objections of the Council to the referral to the High Courts of 'disputed questions of laws or fact' that might arise in Political cases.<sup>151</sup> In the opinion of the Government of India points of native law and local and family custom arose in many cases and it was hard to see how it would be possible to 'define or circumscribe' cases in which reference was made to the High Courts. In central India and Rajputana constant questions were arising of succession, tribute and

<sup>147</sup> Note by W. Lee-Warner, 11 February 1885 to Sec. GoI, FD R/1/1/703.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> H. M. Durand to Chief Sec. Govt. of Bombay, 19 June 1885, R/1/1/703.

<sup>151</sup> Political memorandum to the Marquis of Hartington, SoS for India, from the Viceroy's Council, 28 September 1880, L/PS/7/388. Ironically, in the light of the Council's somewhat cavalier attitude towards the use of judicial procedure in this matter, the Viceroy at the time was the Liberal, Lord Ripon.

boundary, and it was likely that as far as each question was concerned the defeated party would urge that justice was denied him until the claim was fairly argued out before a Court of Law. Discontented parties frequently sent agents to Calcutta to consult lawyers, English or native, in order to argue the client's case before Agents to the Governor-General. If legislation were enacted allowing accessibility to the High Courts in disputed questions, professional advisers would concentrate their whole efforts upon obtaining submission of their case to the Presidency Courts and demand papers and correspondence (including records in state archives) to be produced in court, a request which could rarely be refused. Therefore the proposed enactment would materially affect not only the jurisdiction of rulers, but also the influence exercised by political officers and the Government of India in upholding the authority and responsibility of rulers and in dealing with disputes which might otherwise lead to disorder.<sup>152</sup>

The Council appreciated that it might be argued that the practice of referring all disputed questions of law to a Court of Justice would introduce stability and uniformity into the 'fluctuating and irregular mass of usages and traditional precedents' involved in the regulation of succession disputes.<sup>153</sup> However stereotyping laws that governed successions to states and the various jurisdictions that a ruler exercised in his territory could also radically change the relations between a state and the Government of India. The effect of moulding constitutional laws would lead to a tendency of states to subside gradually into 'proprietary sovereignties'.<sup>154</sup> It would not only curtail the discretion of the Government of India in the free exercise of its influence to choose 'fit and qualified' rulers, but would also diminish the share now held by the leading men of the principal states in the determination of such questions, of which they were normally the best

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

judges. Whereas the point of law was now usually a subordinate element in the determination of cases of high importance to the constitution of a state, this element would acquire predominance. A decision in a succession case which followed the 'wishes and votes' of leading *sirdars* and others was often arbitrary and independent of fixed rules.<sup>155</sup> This kind of consideration would be likely to fall into disrepute or neglect if matters were to be decided, as the High Court would decide them, by the same principle governing the devolution of property. Moreover when a case of this kind was referred to a Court of Law it was inevitably followed by litigation. Two hostile parties would face each other and frequently those parties would be the Government and 'its own feudatories', which would be extremely damaging to the influence of political officers and the existing good feeling between such officers and the rulers to whom they were attached.<sup>156</sup>

However, despite the heed which the above memorandum suggested should be paid to the 'wishes and votes' of leading *sirdars*, such wishes and votes were not intended to challenge the power of the Government of India. It was pointed out in 1885 when the Maharawut of Pratapgarh died without an heir that the custom prevailed in some

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. In her study of the South Indian district of Ramnad, Pamela Price makes it clear that the referral of disputed *zamindari* successions to British Indian law courts was far from satisfactory. In the absence of *darbar* assemblies for the negotiation of the parties concerned, the Anglo-Indian legal system quickly became important in providing officially recognised, formal arenas for representation, ranking and competition. The use of the colonial courts appealed to men and women of considerable wealth and local authority, due to traditions of 'looking to superior lords for confirmation of ruling status and access to domain privileges'. However the winner of a suit was not selected because the imperial government wanted a weaker or stronger ruler on the throne, or because he represented a powerful faction which needed to be appeased. Winners of litigation were picked, against local practice, on the basis of 'criteria which served the wider needs of government from a British imperial vision: the need for a standardised law to ensure, theoretically, that justice would be given fairly to all on an equal basis'. Pamela Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 40, 52. J. Duncan M. Derrett also stresses that the concept of law and litigation did not agree with that existing before British rule. The native ruler as the 'fountain of justice' had been supplanted by law courts used as a means of obtaining an advantage over an opponent. Legal administration with its artificialities and technicalities, the limitation of actions, the rule that plaintiffs must pay court fees and, finally, the law of evidence, affronted the traditional notions of obtaining justice. J. Duncan M. Derrett, 'Tradition and Law in India' in R. J. Moore ed. *Tradition and Politics in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1979), p. 45.



Rajput states of electing a successor before Government orders had been received. Sirdars and officials sometimes carried out a ceremony of investiture in order that the *gadi* was not left empty for a single day and there was no break in the 'direction of general business or trade'.<sup>157</sup> The Government of India considered that ceremonies of this kind ought to be discouraged, since they conferred no right and tended to 'keep alive mistaken ideas as to the source from which Native States derive their authority', producing 'much practical embarrassment' for the Government.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, in view of the fact that there was a requirement in Rajputana to settle a succession as quickly as possible, if a highly competent political officer were present it was accepted that he could confer with the royal women and principal nobles rather than referring the matter to the Government of India. In the case of the somewhat unclear Mewar succession in 1884, the Resident, Colonel C. K. M. Walters, described how the maharanis summoned all the principal *sirdars* and officials to the door of the *zenana*,<sup>159</sup> where a unanimous decision was announced in favour of Fateh Singh to be Maharana.<sup>160</sup> The Government of India praised the 'care and forethought' of Colonel Walters in dealing with the question, recognising that 'An officer of less experience might have been at a loss how to act or advise under such circumstances'.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Col. Sir Edward Bradford to Col. C. K. M. Walter, Res. Mewar, 5 May 1885, R2/179/343.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> The impressive power of the women of the *zenana* is discussed at greater length in the chapters of education and royal marriage.

<sup>160</sup> Col. C. K. M. Walters, Res. Mewar, to Col. E. R. C. Bradford, AGG Rajputana, 26 December 1884, R/1/1/690.

<sup>161</sup> Offg. Sec. GoI to AGG Rajputana, 27 January 1885, R/1/1/690.

## MINORITIES

There were obvious advantages to the choice of an heir who was as young as possible. In Baroda, for example, the deposition of the Gaekwar, Malharrao,<sup>162</sup> in 1875 provided an ideal opportunity for British sanction of the adoption of a minor to give more lengthy British control over a major state. Northbrook admitted that there would be

a distinct advantage to the Baroda state in a minority, for the sink of iniquity surrounding the old Court can be thoroughly purged, and we must be content to bear the further attack of having set up a doubtful claim for the purpose of being able virtually to direct the administration of Baroda during a long minority.<sup>163</sup>

Malharrao was replaced by a twelve-year-old boy, Sayajirao, son of a village headman from an obscure lineage of the Gaekwar family living in Maharashtra. Despite his immediate inability to rule due to his age it was stressed in British official documents that extensive enquiries had been carried out into claims to the succession made by various members of the ruling family, and copper plates and family documents had indisputably proved Sayajirao to be the most desirable candidate.<sup>164</sup> British reluctance to abdicate its newly found power in the state was illustrated by the fact that, even after the Gaekwar had been installed for nearly two years, there was a strong recommendation from the Government of India that no alteration should be made in the constitution of the Baroda Agency for at least a further two years. This recommendation was in agreement with Northbrook's minute of March 1876, stating that 'Baroda State should remain under the control of the Governor-General in Council .... This conclusion is founded on considerations affecting the State and its administration; and also on grounds of general policy'.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Malharrao's deposition is discussed more fully in the chapter on administration.

<sup>163</sup> Northbrook to Salisbury, 20 May 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12.

<sup>164</sup> Memorandum by T. Madhava Rao, Minister Baroda, 13 May 1875, R/2/539/321.

<sup>165</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 110, 31 August 1883, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box III.

In the case of Hyderabad, a state of even greater importance in princely ranking than Baroda, British policy towards a succession was carefully worked out in advance. In an official despatch of 1877 the Secretary of State expressed his agreement with the Government of India that, because the Nizam was a minor, the paramount power acting on his behalf might 'justly' make the selection of a successor upon the failure of lineal heirs. It was considered that the Mohamedan civil law of inheritance furnished 'scanty materials for a conclusion as to the succession to a regality', moreover the terms used by Lord Canning in his *sanad* did not 'possess that precision which would constitute a guide under all circumstances'.<sup>166</sup> By these terms much was left to the decision of the paramount power upon each case as it occurred, and the Secretary of State was not of the opinion that it was desirable 'to supply the blank which Lord Canning has left, by the establishment of a new rule, or the creation of a precedent binding the future action of the Government'.<sup>167</sup>

A political advantage might be derived by recognising in the reigning Nizam a right of selection, which the Government of India would practically exercise, but this convenience would be purchased at the cost of vesting in a future Nizam a new prerogative which might not be exercised with discretion. To retain as much British power as possible within Hyderabad it was considered wiser to recognise the most suitable candidate 'as an act of favour – but carefully avoiding the admission of any right'.<sup>168</sup> It was emphatically not the intention of the Secretary of State to give a decision which would be taken as a precedent for other Moslem states under similar

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<sup>166</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 21, 8 March 1877, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 3.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

circumstances; each case which presented serious difficulty should be reported for separate consideration.<sup>169</sup>

The desirability of gaining increased control in a state, albeit one considerably smaller than Hyderabad, was apparent in the case of Pudukkottai in south India, where the British were prepared to challenge the local establishment by bending the rules of succession to suit their needs. In 1877 recognition was given to the adoption by the Rajah of Pudukkottai of his daughter's son as heir, in supercession of the claims of the son of the Rajah's deceased brother. The contention had been made by officials of the state that there had been no failure of natural heirs to allow such an adoption, and this action was therefore 'opposed to the customs of the Rajah's family'.<sup>170</sup> However the result of the proposed adoption would be a prolonged minority, during which the State would be under British management, whereas on the Rajah's fairly imminent death, the nephew would still be 'a young man with (probably) no training, save what he has got from priests, courtiers and dancing girls'.<sup>171</sup> It was therefore agreed that the Government of India should comply with the Rajah's request and 'Recognition should be based not on strict interpretation of the *sunmud*, but consideration of general policy'.<sup>172</sup>

The Pudukkottai succession was not an isolated example of Government enthusiasm to introduce 'good government' through the education of young princes in British hands. Following the death of Sidi Ibrahim Khan, the Nawab of Janjira, in 1879, the leading

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. Minorities were not always seen as the most desirable route to increased British power in a state. When the Nizam appeared to be dying in 1876 the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, suggested that a puppet ruler in Hyderabad could solve British problems, 'might it not be good policy for the British Government to step in boldly and insist on deciding the succession itself, as the Paramount Power? Select not a minor, nor an octogenarian, but a man of sufficient mental and physical vigour to assert his independence'. Lytton to Salisbury, 3 September 1876, Lytton Correspondence Vol. 18.

<sup>170</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 117, 22 November 1877, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 3.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. The chapters on education and hierarchy make it clear that in the case of the adopted grandson, Martanda Tondaiman, an English 'training' did not invariably produce a model ruler.

*sirdars* of the state elected the ruler's illegitimate son to the vacant *gadi*, 'no doubt as a fresh assertion of right of control over the administration of the state'.<sup>173</sup> However on the grounds that the education of Ahmed Khan, the only legitimate son of Sidi Ibrahim, had been expressly provided for in an agreement of 1870, the Government of India turned down the *sirdars'* request. The young prince would not be allowed to assume the administration until he was twenty-one and had finished his education at Rajkumar College.<sup>174</sup> The choice as successor of a young, malleable prince who could be transformed into an effective ruler and an active prop to the British Government was seen to be ample justification for sanctioning a succession which ignored local feeling.

Minority rule was also the goal in the state of Idar in western India. In 1901, following the death of the Maharajah without male issue one of his widows, the Chavhan Rani, claimed to be two months' pregnant. The Political Agent was aware of the fact that if the pregnancy were true and resulted in the birth of a male heir, the succession would be in direct line. If not, the next course of action would be the recognition of the nearest collateral, Jagatsinghji of Sawar, a distant relative of the late Maharajah, a man of between fifty five and sixty years old and 'neither by training nor by education a desirable successor to the *gadi* of as important a state as Idar'.<sup>175</sup>

The Government of Bombay recognised the advantage of using the precedent of the Baroda succession, in which sanction was granted to the widow of the late ruler to adopt, 'within certain limitations', irrespective of any collateral's claim. If this policy were adopted in Idar, the senior Maharani would probably be willing to adopt

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<sup>173</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 104, 25 September 1879, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 5.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. Rajkumar College is discussed in detail in the chapter on education.

<sup>175</sup> Political Agent, Mahi Kantha to Sec. to Govt. Bombay, Political Dept., 24 February 1901, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXXV.

Jagatsinghi's son in favour of his father. The financial position of the state was so dire that the longer the period of 'nursing' under British control the better. Under Jagatsinghi the administration would be likely to deteriorate and security for the heavy debts due to the Government would be 'appreciably decreased'.<sup>176</sup> In the circumstances it would be most desirable to have a long minority, either if the Maharani's pregnancy resulted in a male heir or if there was an adopted son, in order that from the start a scheme could be drawn up for reforming the administration and setting the finances of the state upon a sound basis. However it was admitted that imperial levies on states would not help such measures. In the event of a collateral or an adopted son succeeding, the state would be liable for a further payment of about Rs. 400,000 for *nazar* which, on top of a loan contracted during the famine, would bring Idar's debt to the Government of India to ten *lakhs* of rupees.<sup>177</sup>

Finally it was decided that the government of Idar would be better handed over to a proven administrator rather than a minority council. The Rathors of Jodhpur were closely related to the rulers of Idar and, while the other claimants were trying to make good their claims with the Viceroy, Sir Pratap Singh, the third son of the ruler of Jodhpur, appealed direct to Queen Victoria, sending her a cable saying simply 'Idar is mine'.<sup>178</sup> Despite the loss of an opportunity for minority rule, the Government of India conceded that Sir Pratap Singh was able to claim 'a substantial share of credit for the prosperity, self development and good government in Marwar' and fulfilled the requirements of the official maxim

that, where there are no direct or lineal heirs to a Chiefship, and when no real and valid adoption has been made, the succession must be determined by selection, the principal considerations being the personal fitness of the nominee and the general

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. See also R/2/157/178.

<sup>178</sup> Charles Allen, *Lives of the Indian Princes* (London, 1984), p. 95.

interests of the State.<sup>179</sup>

The British desire for room to manoeuvre in the 'general interests' of princely subjects was in some cases helped by the particular conditions of inheritance existing in some states. Successions in Travancore (and Cochin) on the south west coast of India differed from other states in that they followed Marumakatayam law, by which descent was matrilineal and only female children of the family were able to carry on the succession. In 1899 the Travancore royal family consisted of four members, the Rani, aged fifty-one, the Maharajah, aged forty-two, the Elaya Rajah, aged thirty-two and his brother, aged twenty-eight. It was clear that the family would become extinct unless there was an adoption and the choice fell on two girls, aged three and four, whose mothers were daughters of the sister of the Rani, therefore blood relations.<sup>180</sup>

The Elaya Rajah saw no need to adopt until the lifetime of the last remaining male and considered that the children were too young, however in the eyes of the Government of India this was not an ordinary case of succession to family property but an Act of State and a 'political necessity', needing official sanction before the proposed adoption could take place. It was also an opportunity to put an undisputed succession in place before the last surviving prince was on his deathbed. The youth of the girls was a consideration which would soon cease to be problematic and there was no reason why the girls should not live to be mothers of numerous offspring, moreover the princes were not in

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<sup>179</sup> H. S. Barnes, Sec. GoI, FD to J. L. Jenkins, Offg. Sec. Govt. Bombay, Political Dept., 18 July 1901, R/1/1/270. Sir Pratap Singh abdicated nine years later to take over as Regent of Jodhpur to support his nephew, the young Maharajah, as discussed in the chapter on education. The personification of the Rajput warrior, at the age of seventy he accompanied his troops into the trenches of France and later into Palestine. Allen, *Lives of Indian Princes*, p. 94. Sir Pratap was described by the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, as 'The best pig-sticker in India ... of Spartan simplicity ... truly a white man among Indians'. Hardinge, *My Indian Years, 1910-1916* (London, 1948), p. 48.

<sup>180</sup> G. T. Mackenzie, Res. Travancore and Cochin, to Chief Sec. Govt. Madras, 18 December 1899, R/2/892/278.

particularly good health.<sup>181</sup> Following a legal opinion given by V. Bhashyam Iyengar, the Advocate-General, recommending that the adoption was valid according to Hindu law and custom, the Resident was informed to advise the Travancore *darbar* that the adoption would be recognised.<sup>182</sup> Travancore was yet another case where, by sanctioning the succession of the son of one of two extraordinarily young girls, a substantial British presence to oversee minority arrangements would be deemed acceptable in the state for a significant time.

Successions such as those in Idar and Travancore were not always resolved with the same ease and relative harmony. The following section of this chapter studies cases of less amicable family inheritance and the manner in which British officials could on occasions take advantage of the situation to install the candidate most likely to further their goal of 'good government'.

## ROYAL FAMILY DISPUTES

The British took care to guard the interests of rightful heirs to Indian thrones whenever there was a whiff of intrigue in royal circles. Such a case occurred in Bhopal in 1891 when there was speculation that the ruling Begam was attempting to break the chain of female rulers in 1891. From its establishment in 1709, the state had produced prominent female figures who were active in public and political life. Women's political influence in Bhopal was carried a stage further in 1819 when the Nawab died suddenly, leaving his eighteen year old widow, Qudsia Begam, to be invested with the supreme authority of

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Opinion by V. Bhashyam Iyengar, 12 February 1900, GoI FD to Res. Travancore and Cochin, 30 April 1900, R/2/892/279. As one of the royal adoptees, later the Senior Maharani of Travancore, revealed 'The idea was that whoever between the two of us got the first child, he would be the next Maharajah'. Allen, *Lives of Indian Princes*, p. 14.



the state. Appointed regent by the British Political Agent until her daughter, Sikander, came of age and married, Qudsia emerged from behind the veil, hired a tutor to teach her the 'necessary skills of riding and the arts of war', then proceeded to introduce wide ranging reforms.<sup>183</sup> Sikander Begam followed in this tradition, forcibly claiming the throne from her husband and proving herself to be a highly competent ruler. She distinguished herself, in particular, for her loyalty to the British during the Mutiny and for large-scale administrative reforms. As a result the British withdrew their proviso that the husband of the Begam would become Nawab, naming her only daughter, Shahjehan Begam, as sovereign in her own right upon the death of Sikander in 1867. When Shahjehan Begam also failed to bear a son, the dynasty of female rule in Bhopal was confirmed.<sup>184</sup>

However under the influence of her second husband, Sadiq Hassan, Shahjehan was estranged from her daughter, Sultan Jahan. The Political Agent in Bhopal reported in 1891 that the Begam was determined to set aside the succession of Sultan Jahan in favour of her half-nephew, Miah Alamgir Muhammed Khan. Rumours circulated in the *Hindu Patriot* and the *Lucknow Advocate* of the ruler's intention to disinherit her daughter. Alamgir was 'in every sense base', as his father was a child of a liaison between the Begam's father and a common bazaar woman and the Minister of Bhopal was most emphatic that the question of a change in succession should not be countenanced.<sup>185</sup> Sultan Jahan was heir-apparent by right of her descent through her mother and Sikander Begam, her grandmother. The Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, R. J. Crosthwaite, agreed that action should be taken to deflect a communication from the Begam to the Viceroy, since she would inevitably receive 'the

<sup>183</sup> Siobhan Lambert Hurley, 'Contesting Seclusion: The Political Emergence of Muslim Women in Bhopal, 1901-1930', Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 1998, p. 10.

<sup>184</sup> Lambert Hurley, 'Contesting Seclusion', pp. 10-11.

<sup>185</sup> M. J. Meade, Pol. Agent, Bhopal, to R. J. Crosthwaite, AGG CI, 23 June 1893, R/1/1/158.

ignominy of a refusal'. In any case he was of the opinion that the rumours contained little substance and a challenge to the succession was unlikely to develop.<sup>186</sup>

In situations where a succession was not as clear-cut as that in Bhopal, the British were not above using family disputes as an excuse to call into play the 'right' to overrule the personal wishes of the ruler and install their own choice of candidate. One such case was that of the Nawab of Bahawalpur in the Punjab, who banished his son and heir, Mobarak Khan, to a prison fort in the desert in the hope that the Government would recognise Haji Khan, the adopted son of a low caste woman whom he subsequently married.<sup>187</sup> In 1897 the British felt bound to interfere in the interests of Mobarak Khan as, even if the life of the heir was not endangered, it was certain that several years in Kila Dherewar Fort would render him unfit for rule. The Punjab Government requested that the young prince be sent to Aitchison College in Lahore, despite the Nawab's insistence that his son was being taught Urdu, Persian, and arithmetic, as well as instruction in the Koran, by a tutor. However, despite its apparent support of Mobarak Khan, the Government of India doubted his capabilities as ruler and insisted that it had no reason to depart from its usual custom of refusing to make, during the Nawab's lifetime, a specific declaration as to whom it would recognise as heir on his death. The Foreign Secretary, W. J. Cuningham, repeated the Government line that the 'principle of primogeniture determines the succession of Mohammedan states, but the successor must be fit to rule'.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. See also R/1/1/1179. Other than in Bhopal women were subject to rigid rules of succession. A woman could rule as a wife (or widow) or as a mother (and regent), but never as a daughter or sister of a former ruler. In practice this meant that a woman ruler had to operate in the milieu of her in-laws. Once she married into a royal house, she was cut off from her own kinsmen.

<sup>187</sup> Nawab Sadik Mohammed Khan of Bahawalpur to L. W. Dane, Chief Sec. Govt. Punjab, 4 June 1897.

<sup>188</sup> W. J. Cuningham, Sec. GoI, FD to Chief Sec. Govt. Punjab, 25 October 1897, R/1/1/199. See also R/1/1/207.

Such deliberate procrastination on the part of the Government of India in order to achieve the most advantageous position at the time of succession was also apparent in another Punjab state when the Mir of Khairpur requested permission in 1899 to set aside his eldest son, Imam Bukhsh, in favour of his brother, Ahmed Ali, who was of 'inferior birth'. In the eyes of the British Imam Bukhsh was of a 'weak and incapable character', while Ahmed Ali's succession was 'out of the question'.<sup>189</sup> However Imam Bukhsh had three sons, all 'bright and promising boys', the eldest of whom was doing well at Aitchison College, and it was possible that the Mir might well survive until they were older.<sup>190</sup> Following the death of the Mir ten years later it was agreed that Imam Bukhsh should succeed to the *gadi*, however as he had been regarded by the deceased ruler as 'unfitted mentally' to take over the administration he was instructed to act in all matters under the advice of his *vizier*, referring matters to the Political Agent where there were irreconcilable differences.<sup>191</sup>

A family rift between the Maharajah of Kashmir, Sir Pratab Singh, and his brother, Sir Amar Singh, gave rise to a similar situation in 1906. The Maharajah asked the Viceroy for permission to adopt the son of his cousin, the Raja of Poonch, rather than his brother's son, Hari Singh, ostensibly on religious grounds since Hari Singh was the only male child in the family and the Dharma Sastra declared that such a son was under an obligation to undertake the funeral rites for his own father to the exclusion of others. The Maharajah pleaded that 'for a pious Hindu it is the most important religious obligation to leave a son behind for the peace and salvation of his soul, and in the Hindu *Shastras* it is considered a great sin to die childless', however it emerged that the real reason behind the request was the ill feeling between the Maharajah and his brother, Sir

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<sup>189</sup> H. S. Barnes, Offg. Sec. GoI, FD, to Sec. Govt. Bombay, Political Dept., 13 May 1899, R/1/1/222.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> A. Younghusband, Commissioner Sind, to Sir George Sydenham Clarke, Gov. Bombay, 6 March 1909, R/1/1/372.

Amar Singh, that had existed since their father considered supplanting the elder by the younger.<sup>192</sup> Sir Louis Dane, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was of the opinion that there was little doubt that, as demonstrated by Rajput practice, the adoption of a brother or even a brother's son, even if the only son, was perfectly valid and recognised by the *Shastras*. If the Maharajah had already adopted the boy, as was suspected, it would be necessary to take further steps to ensure that neither of the 'unfortunate children' was killed. The best action would be to call upon the Maharajah to formally adopt either Amar Singh or his son to put a stop to the uncertainty. If he refused he would be informed that no other adopted son would be recognised as heir and that it might also be necessary to place restrictions on his powers.<sup>193</sup>

Sir Francis Younghusband, Resident in Kashmir, made it clear to Pratab Singh that the Government of India would have great difficulty in sanctioning any adoption which would involve superceding Amar Singh and his son. The sanad of adoption granted to the Maharajah was in fact only a guarantee on the part of the Government that the state would not be resumed upon the failure of natural heirs. The ruler had two, his brother and his nephew, and in the interests of the state it was necessary that one of the two should succeed.<sup>194</sup> However Younghusband was firmly reprimanded by Sir Louis for misleading the Maharajah by suggesting that his brother or nephew would succeed even if he produced a son, which at his advanced age was highly unlikely. Should a legitimate and fully recognised son be born the question would have to be reconsidered. Indeed the actual succession would, in accordance with the general policy of the Government, be settled only when the vacancy to the *gadi* occurred. The Resident had advised the ruler that the orders of the Government fixed the succession upon a

<sup>192</sup> Maharajah of Kashmir to Lord Minto, 4 July 1906, R/1/1/341.

<sup>193</sup> Note by Sir Louis Dane, Sec. GoI, FD, 15 June 1906, R/2/1074/200.

<sup>194</sup> Francis Younghusband, Res. Kashmir, to Sec. GoI, FD, 31 October 1906, R/1/1/341.

particular member of the family during the lifetime of a prince, rather than stressing the ultimate power of the Government to arrive at a decision after a ruler's death.<sup>195</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Following the Proclamation of 1858 by Queen Victoria guaranteeing the tenure of the Indian dynasties, the problem of the sovereignty of the Indian rulers was reduced but not resolved. The incongruity of Indian sovereigns as subordinate to a body such as the East India Company lessened somewhat as they were now directly subordinate to a sovereign power. However, despite much debate, no consensus ever emerged as to the precise legal status of the rulers. Since over the years each state negotiated its own series of treaties with the British, legal scholars could find no strict uniformity of principle with respect to the princely states as a whole. As this chapter has made clear, questions of succession were, like other issues traditionally settled by individual princely authority, open to a certain amount of liberal interpretation on the part of the British.

Bhupen Qanungo, in his study of Indian princely history during this period, states that, although the adoption *sanads* bound the states as never before in 'ties of good faith and goodwill' to the British Government, in no way did they diminish the position of power which the British had assumed in the days of the doctrine of lapse.<sup>196</sup> The paramount power was still the ultimate arbiter in cases of a native ruler dying without a natural heir. No treaties between equal powers, only *sanads* or grants, 'and these explicitly

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<sup>195</sup> Dane to Younghusband, 15 June 1907, R/2/1074/200. The Maharajah of Kashmir may have been wise in opposing the succession of either Amar Singh or his son. Younghusband managed to prevent Hari Singh from being poisoned, but in the 1920s the gullible prince became the victim of a blackmail plot 'which contained all the ingredients of a good scandal'. Patrick French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (London, 1994), p. 270.

<sup>196</sup> Qanungo, 'Study of British Relations', p. 264

conditional and revocable', contained the assurance of the British Government regarding succession by adoptions. Qanungo contends that:

In accepting Canning's adoption *sanads*, the Native Rulers were accepting, by clear implication, the hitherto disputed claim of the Government that, as Paramount Power, it had the right to decide the validity of a succession to a *gadi*, to sanction a succession, and to intervene in a Native State to settle a disputed succession.<sup>197</sup>

Thus the total legal effect of such *sanads* was to emphasize the power of the Government of India 'in matters relating to life and death' of every state.<sup>198</sup> Writing in January 1875 the Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, summed up the situation in his advice to the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook:

It should be impressed on the minds of the feudatories that their privileges under the Proclamation and the Sunnud are contingent on their good behaviour and that misconduct releases the Paramount Power from special obligation, and will not merely involve the supersession of the offender. If their misconduct took the form of rebellion, it would probably involve annexation; and in a lesser degree it involves the adjustment of the succession, not according to their customs, but according to the discretion of the Paramount Power.<sup>199</sup>

Nevertheless it was anticipated that in most cases an 'adjustment of the succession' to deal with princely misconduct could be avoided by routine Government sanction of successions to tighten British control, in the hope that the desired 'good behaviour' would result. Wherever possible a minor was selected, giving the young heir as much time as possible for the purposes of education and administrative training. As is the case in other sections of the princely life cycle, in the latter part of the nineteenth century the British goal in the Indian states was the instigation of salubrious and accountable practice both in royal private life and government. Even after accession, if a young ruler was not performing well, the British could lay down stringent conditions of rule.

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Salisbury to Northbrook, January 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12.

However if the Government of India wished to limit the personal power of a prince later in his reign, the terms of many treaties raised serious obstacles to major British intervention at that stage. It was therefore of the greatest importance that, in the case of an adult succeeding to a *gadi*, the candidate had to be deemed 'fit to rule' by the Government of India. This phrase could cover a wide spectrum of conditions and Government decisions were absolute.

It is true that the process of succession was not cut and dried in India before British rule. Succession was often in doubt in the successor states to the Mogul empire. Due to the fluidity of inheritance laws Muslim rulers tended to emerge from a large body of favourites connected with a dead ruler's harem and concubines, and even in Hindu royal families an eldest son might not succeed if he proved to be incapable of fulfilling the strenuous demands of leadership. A prince had the prerogative of choosing among his sons for his heir and the rules of descent could be and were manipulated in the face of contingency. Moreover in the case of a disputed succession a successful candidate frequently required the support of an outside power with the inevitable strings attached. However under Mogul rule there was a great variety of such outside powers, large and small, with different agendas to fulfil. In contrast in the last decades of the nineteenth century the British were, given the opportunity, able to manipulate the rules of descent with the single-minded, unconditional purpose of arriving at their desired form of westernised government in the Indian states. To this same goal the education of young rulers was placed under particularly close scrutiny, as demonstrated in the following chapter.

## EDUCATION

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Stemming primarily from Evangelical and Utilitarian ideas, the pre-Mutiny British determination to reconcile Indians to European concepts by education or force gave way to a more balanced view in the second half of the nineteenth century. The British now discovered virtues in the traditional organisation of the society over which they ruled, as ideas emerged of ways in which that society could be turned to good use. In their new role as 'loyal feudatories' and a link between the paramount power and the Indian peasantry it would be necessary to transform the Indian princes into good natural leaders. On the one hand the young chiefs needed to be taught the guidelines of good government, based upon European liberal principles, and on the other there was a need to maintain the cultural differences which bound them to their subjects. Efforts were made from 1870 onwards both by formal education, either through tutors and special schools and colleges, or by the influence of political officers at courts, to produce a new multi-faceted breed of ruler, although few princes were given the opportunity to put such an education to good use after they reached their majority. This part of the princely life cycle is divided into two sections: the first looks at the individual education of young princes within their own states and the second deals with the princely colleges which were opened in the second half of the nineteenth century as boarding schools for royalty and the aristocracy.



## PALACE EDUCATION

### TUTORIAL CREDENTIALS

In large and powerful principalities such as Baroda, Hyderabad and Mysore it was deemed desirable for training programmes for young princes to be carefully supervised by British tutors. Although some candidates from the Staff Corps were selected for the job, many tutors were selected from the Indian Civil Service. The Gaekwar of Baroda, for example, was educated by Frederick Elliott of the Bombay Civil Service and the Maharajahs of Kolhapur and Bhavnagar were put under the tuition of Stuart Fraser, also of the Bombay Civil Service, who then became tutor to the minor Maharajah of Mysore. Brian Egerton, District Superintendent of Police in Ajmer, was tutor to both the Maharajah of Bikaner and the Nizam of Hyderabad, and J. W. D. Johnstone of the Education Department of the Government of India was tutor to Scindia, Maharajah of Gwalior.

In the first half of the nineteenth century candidates for the Indian Civil Service were instructed at Haileybury College before assuming their duties in India. It has been suggested by Bernard Cohn that the educational background of members of the Service was in many cases not particularly rigorous, despite the presence of luminaries such as T. R. Malthus as lecturer in history and political economy at the Haileybury.<sup>200</sup> The College faculty was said to be in a difficult position maintaining academic standards and discipline. By carrying out its duties it could come into conflict with the Court of Directors which, through its patronage, appointed students. If a

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<sup>200</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, 'Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India 1600-1860' in Ralph Braibanti (ed.) *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition* (Durham NC, 1966), p. 136.

student failed for academic inadequacies or was dismissed for misbehaviour the appointing director lost out as well, as 'each student represented a valuable appointment'.<sup>201</sup> Moreover it was frequently the restricted possibilities of a career in England rather than the attractiveness of an Indian career which determined candidacy.<sup>202</sup>

Haileybury was closed in December 1857, owing to the introduction of a new scheme under which members of the Civil Service were appointed by competitive examination. Initially under the scheme there were difficulties in recruiting men from the desired background. A substantial number of candidates did not hold degrees from Oxbridge, as was originally desired, and a surprising proportion had not attended any university, a phenomenon that became increasingly evident in later competitions. Among the total number of competitors, the percentage of Oxbridge candidates declined from a high of 62% in 1858 to a low of 8.2% in 1874.<sup>203</sup> Bradford Spangenberg in his study of the Indian Civil Service in the late nineteenth century suggests that many thrifty, pragmatic middle class people questioned the merit of spending a great deal of money on their son's university education when a shorter, less expensive, course at a cramming institution proved sufficient to succeed at the examination.<sup>204</sup> Nevertheless it should be pointed out that, despite Spangenberg's somewhat negative assessment of the Service candidacy, a number of high performing individuals continued to be turned out on a regular basis.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. The district officer John Beames recalled that his father had informed him of his nomination to Haileybury with regret as he had anticipated a successful career at the Bar for his son. John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, p. 60.

<sup>203</sup> B. Spangenberg, *British Bureaucracy in India: Status, Policy and the ICS in the late Nineteenth Century* (Columbia, 1976), p. 21.

<sup>204</sup> *British Bureaucracy*, p. 25.

For political officers from the Staff Corps with a purely military background the academic requirements were even less demanding than those at Haileybury. Addiscombe, the East India Company's Military Seminary, was founded in 1809 to provide up to two years general and technical education for boys between fourteen and eighteen years who had been nominated for officer cadetship in Company forces. The Seminary was initially intended for students destined for engineering or artillery regiments, and later opened to guards and infantry cadets.<sup>205</sup> Academic prowess appeared to be low in the scale of priorities of both teachers and taught. It would appear unlikely, therefore, that the educational grounding for both Indian Civil Service and Staff Corps recruits for the supervision of young Indian rulers was on the whole sufficiently demanding in quality or quantity to generate particularly high academic aspirations as far as their princely charges were concerned. However it is questionable whether the first wave of princely charges exposed to western ideas would have been able in any case to cope with a particularly demanding curriculum, especially as there was still considerable resistance in *durbars* to the dissemination of such ideas. Such resistance is apparent in the following section of this chapter.

#### EXTRACTION FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE ZENANA

During Mayo's viceroyalty, due to the sensitivity of the impending restoration of Mysore to native rule<sup>206</sup> much official correspondence centred upon the young adopted prince, Chamarajendra Wadiar Bahadur, in whom it was hoped to instil the qualities of good leadership. A letter from the Maharajah's tutor, Colonel G. Malleon, in September 1869 emphasised the problems involved in extricating the prince from the claustrophobic

<sup>205</sup> Martin Moir, *A General Guide to the India Office Records* (London, 1988), p. 38.

<sup>206</sup> Discussed in the previous chapter.

atmosphere of the *zenana*, a challenge which repeats itself throughout this chapter as in state after state there is relentless opposition by palace women to princely education in British hands.<sup>207</sup> In Mysore it was hoped that with 'prudence, firmness and kindness' sufficient influence could be exerted over the ruler to 'counteract the wretched atmosphere in which a young Native chief must live'.<sup>208</sup> Criticism was made of the fact that for the Maharajah 'Every whim is gratified, every wish forestalled'.<sup>209</sup> It was felt essential for the boy to be taught outside the palace walls and by a tutor independent of the palace, a move vigorously opposed by the royal females who declared that to leave the palace would remove some of the young ruler's dignity. They pointed out that 'the late Maharajah was not taught, why should this one be?' and only agreed finally to the prince's tuition under the threat of being reported to the Viceroy for failing to stand by the conditions imposed by the British Government.<sup>210</sup>

With his customary idealism Mayo saw the education of the young rulers and nobles as the cure for the secret ills of native India. The implanting of Western liberal ideas would transform the states. He firmly believed that Mysore had been saved from 'much that would have given great trouble thereafter' and that British influence in guiding the young prince and his family 'has worked a great cure and all intrigue and underhand work is I hope thoroughly choked'.<sup>211</sup> To widen his horizons, the young Maharajah was to be made familiar with objects of interest in his own country and allowed 'free personal intercourse' with those from whom he might acquire information. Association

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<sup>207</sup> The considerable power wielded by royal women in matters other than education is discussed at length in the following chapter.

<sup>208</sup> Letter from Col. G. Malleon to Mayo, 29 August 1869 enclosed Mayo to Argyll, 9 September 1869, Argyll Collection, Vol. II.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 25 January 1871, Argyll Collection, IOR Neg. 4236.

with other young noblemen 'of good disposition and promising intelligence' would give the young prince confidence and encouragement.<sup>212</sup>

One of the main reasons for propping up what in many cases was an enfeebled ruling class was the contemporary widely held view that this class still held the loyalty and adulation of the people of India. Therefore care was to be taken that Western indoctrination was confined to the English language and the details of government. Instruction in Indian culture and religion, insofar as barbarous practices were not involved, was to continue as before. An official despatch from the Secretary of State in 1871 stressed the fact that the Maharajah of Mysore would have to rule, when he came of age, over 'a Hindoo people peculiarly jealous of, and attached to, the faith of their ancestors ... any measure which might alienate from him their sympathies should be carefully guarded against'.<sup>213</sup> It was recognised that there was great difficulty in training an Indian prince for the future government of his state, using principles recognised by European statesmen, without 'offending the prejudices or affecting the interests of many who would fain see him reared in accordance with the old oriental model' and only a moderate success rate was anticipated in introducing European ideas via the ruler.<sup>214</sup> While 'truthfulness and sound morality' should be inculcated, 'no interference should be exercised with his religion in his forms of worship'. His views should be 'constantly directed to the discharge of the regal and administrative functions which his high office will one day demand'.<sup>215</sup>

Despite the need to continue the association of the rulers with their cultural roots, it was deemed undesirable that a native should undertake the vital role of tutor to the

<sup>212</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 133, 3 October 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.

<sup>213</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 104, 22 May 1871, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 14.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> W. S. Seton-Karr, Sec. GoI, to L. B. Bowring, Commissioner Mysore, 12 December 1868, R/2/44/408.

Maharajah of Mysore. Colonel Malleison was of the opinion that the ideal candidate should be

a gentleman fresh from one of the English universities ... of high character and attainments, totally unconnected with India. A greater mistake could not be committed than to appoint to that office any one directly connected with an Indian family, and still less any one now in India. No candid mind can deny that the tendency of Indian life is to bring the mind into a groove, from which, even under other climes, it rarely emerges. What is required for the Maharajah is the influence of an unfettered, unprejudiced English intellect, of a mind that has thought out problems for itself, and which takes nothing on trust.<sup>216</sup>

However the Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, disagreed. Writing to the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, in 1875 he declared that, if there were no object other than to bestow on the young ruler 'Philosophical and Literary Knowledge', Malleison's suggestion would be feasible, but literary proficiency was not in this case the principal goal. The Maharajah was soon to be invested with powers and charged with duties which would leave little time for the 'pursuits of a student life'.<sup>217</sup> It was vital that he should be instructed in the principles of government and 'the warnings or encouragement furnished by the history of other Princes of his own race'.<sup>218</sup> To communicate this knowledge, an officer with some familiarity with Indian administration was required and such a person could be found more easily in India than Britain. Mysore would be much in the public eye when it was returned to native rule and the post of tutor was crucial since the 'future form and permanency of Native rule in India will be largely influenced by the career of the Prince whose education you are preparing to complete'.<sup>219</sup>

Since it was deemed by the British that there was no 'royal road to learning', a school with three classes was formed in the Mysore palace, modelled on the system at

<sup>216</sup> Col. G. Malleison to Sec. GoI, FD, 1 January 1875.

<sup>217</sup> Salisbury to Northbrook, 17 June 1875, R/2/44/403.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

Winchester.<sup>220</sup> The Maharajah was joined by various sons of noblemen and officials of the court of about the same age. At first about forty, then later fifty, came to the school, including the Maharajah's two brothers. At the beginning the Maharajah was seen as attending a class 'without really belonging to it', due to 'prejudice' and a 'supposed loss of dignity' perceived by the women of the palace.<sup>221</sup> The occupants of the *zenana* ostensibly 'threw many obstacles' in the way of the prince's education and had to be told forcibly that further interference would result in his being removed from the palace altogether at the age of seven, when separation from his female relatives was generally considered to be highly undesirable.<sup>222</sup> The headmaster of the royal school, Jayaram Rao, was a Brahmin who remained with the Maharajah until he was fifteen. The appointment of a native thoroughly acquainted with English was considered preferable to the selection of an Englishman in the post. Ootacamund was selected as the 'sanitarium' for the summer season and the Maharajah, with a few of his classmates, was taken there by his tutor and guardian, J. D. Gordon (later Sir James Gordon, Chief Commissioner and Resident in Mysore), where 'free from the turmoil of palace life' his education was seen to progress considerably.<sup>223</sup> The Government's assumption about the correct form of education was the same as the view held in England at the time. The public school emphasis on games as a training in character was confidently adapted to the training of Indian princes. It was agreed that the Maharajah should be taught to ride, swim, play cricket and handle firearms, and generally encouraged to participate in 'those

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<sup>220</sup> Retrospective Note on the Education of the Maharajah of Mysore, 8 September 1892, R/1/1/164.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. A similar school modelled on English lines was opened in 1875 for the young Gaekwar of Baroda and the sons of sirdars of the state. Baroda's Minister, Sir Madhava Rao, was convinced of the virtues of such an education, believing that 'England repudiates ignorance as a basis of strength or stability ... and bids Princes and people alike to be enlightened and happy'. Thomas Henry Thornton, *General Sir Richard Meade and the Feudatory States of Central and Southern India* (London, 1898), p. 240. T. Madhava Rao was the first Indian to be appointed Acting Principal of the Madras High School, a Fellow of Madras University and Dewan Regent of Baroda during the Gaekwar's minority from 1875 to 1881. Vikram Menon, 'Popular Princes: Kingship and Social Change in Travancore and Cochin 1870-1930', Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1998, p. 263.

physical and strengthening exercises which are suited to his country, position and age'.<sup>224</sup>

Later the Maharajah's education was entrusted to W. A. Porter, a veteran educationalist who had made Kumbakonum College, 'the Cambridge of Southern India'.<sup>225</sup> During the latter period of his studies he received instruction in the principles of British administration and for wider experience went on tour in the province and mixed in English society. It was the intention of the British Government to see the Maharajah married to 'an educated and enlightened lady'.<sup>226</sup> With this object in mind Gordon set up a girls' school within the palace for the education of the girls belonging to the royal family, together with several daughters of high Brahmin officials of the palace.<sup>227</sup> A report made to the Government of India by Gordon in 1880 declared that

the progress made since Mr. Porter's arrival, in developing His Highness's general intelligence and giving him a proper mental training, has been marked and very satisfactory. He is now able to read and understand for himself ordinary books and newspapers and he composes fairly and writes his letters without assistance. His power of observation is keen and his judgment of persons and things remarkably sound.<sup>228</sup>

However the treatment of the Maharajh's successor, Krishnaraja Wadiar, reveals the extent to which ideas about princely education changed over the second half of the nineteenth century, influenced by the emergence of the princely colleges designed for the purpose of training young rulers and aristocrats. As in his father's youth, a school was formed at the palace at Mysore for the young Maharajah and boys of the same age

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<sup>224</sup> Seton-Karr to Bowring, 12 December 1868, R/2/44/408.

<sup>225</sup> Dewans Madhava Rao and A. Sashiah Sastri, who appears in the chapters on education and royal women, were both educated at Kumbakonum.

<sup>226</sup> A. Vadivelu, *Some Mysore Worthies* (Madras, 1900), p. 15.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.* This scheme never came to fruition. As will be seen in the chapter on marriage, the Maharajah eventually agreed to a marriage with the elder daughter of the Rana of Vana, a Rajput 'connected with other ruling Chiefs' in Kathiawar.

<sup>228</sup> Quoted Vadivelu, *Mysore Worthies*, p. 17.



selected from the principal families of the state. A European tutor, J. J. Whiteley, was appointed instead of a native headmaster. The education followed the same lines as that at the major princely colleges, Mayo and Rajkumar (considered later in this chapter), but the students did not reside in the school premises. A special class was formed and several of the best Hindu and Muslim students from various institutions in Mysore were invited to participate 'in order to infuse a spirit of wholesome rivalry in the mind of the Rajah'.<sup>229</sup>

On visiting the palace school in 1896 Mr. Cook, Principal of the Central College, Bangalore, and Educational Adviser to the Government of Mysore, remarked euphorically that the 'general knowledge of the boys is superior to that of other schools' and he 'had no idea the system was so perfect'.<sup>230</sup> Stuart Fraser of the Bombay Civil Service, appointed by the Government of India as personal tutor and guardian to the young prince,<sup>231</sup> reported with equal enthusiasm, 'The education that he has been receiving is not mere cramming nor the learning of a book-worm but is diversified, inasmuch as it embraces every art and science which will help to make him a wise, sagacious, and highly cultured ruler'.<sup>232</sup> Certainly with historical studies of other rulers as diverse as Clive, Warren Hastings, the Marquis of Wellesley and, somewhat surprisingly, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan,<sup>233</sup> the Maharajah had a colourful range of political views from which to choose.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, in addition to his class studies,

<sup>229</sup> Vadivelu, *Mysore Worthies*, p. 63.

<sup>230</sup> Report on education of Wadiar Bahadur for January 1896 by J. J. Whiteley, R/2/33/314. See also R/2/32/300.

<sup>231</sup> Fraser, was appointed in 1896 at a salary of Rs. 1,600 rising to Rs. 2,500 a month, plus travelling expenses and a free house, under the strict conditions that he would stay until the Maharajah came of age, not applying for long leave unless sick during that period. W. Mackworth Young, Res. Mysore, to K. Sheshadri Iyer, Dewan, 9 April 1896, R/2/29/267. Later Sir Stuart Fraser, KCSI, CIE, he became an officer of great distinction who died a few weeks short of 100 years old after serving as Resident in Kashmir, Mysore and Hyderabad.

<sup>232</sup> Quoted Vadivelu, *Mysore Worthies*, p. 63.

<sup>233</sup> Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan were the Muslim conquerors of Mysore, defeated by the British and replaced by the young Maharajah's Hindu Wadiar family in 1799.

<sup>234</sup> Fraser to J. A. Crawford, Res. Mysore, 16 November 1901, R/2/8/64.

Wadiar Bahadur devoted two hours a day to special subjects such as international law and Indian political law, the principles of legislation, the history of the land revenue system, civil and criminal justice in Mysore, the Inam Settlement,<sup>235</sup> forests, famine relief, excise and assessed taxes.<sup>236</sup>

However Whiteley expressed a certain unease as far as the young Maharajah's moral environment was concerned and the difficulties involved in his exposure to the less desirable aspects of religious ritual and *darbars*. It was impossible to change religious ceremonies and the only available course of action would be to let his mother, the Maharani, know how necessary it was for such ceremonies to be conducted in a manner as 'innocuous' as possible.<sup>237</sup> *Nautches* (court dances) could not be stopped, but could be made 'more formal and less suggestive', however this would be a particularly delicate matter for any Mysore official to tackle. In addition Whiteley saw the need for Krishnaraja Wadiar to be given separate living and sleeping apartments in the palace to which the tutor would have access at all hours, since he was constantly met by 'zenana difficulty' when he ought to be able to go in and out of the young ruler's rooms at will, except when prevented from doing so by caste and religious ceremonies, such as eating and praying.<sup>238</sup> No social visits should be paid, except to relations, and no guests should be able to associate with the Maharajah without the permission of the tutor as the representative of the Government of India. In Whiteley's view, the Maharani should be made fully aware of the importance of the 'innocence of youth', and its significance in British eyes.<sup>239</sup> Nevertheless the Maharajah's existence was by no means dull and outside the palace he participated in a surprisingly eclectic mix of social appointments.

<sup>235</sup> The Inam Settlement is discussed in detail in the chapter on hierarchy and ritual.

<sup>236</sup> Fraser to J. A. Crawford, Res. Mysore, 16 November 1901, R/2/8/64. See also R/2/8/64.

<sup>237</sup> J. J. Whiteley to W. Lee-Warner, 26 May 1895, R/2/33/314. The Maharani, Vanivilas Sannidhana, features strongly in the chapter on marriage and royal women.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

While at Bangalore during 1895/6 his schedule included visits to the races and a polo tournament, the afternoon 'At Home' at the Residency, a vegetable show and a visit from the Papal Delegate.<sup>240</sup>

As in Mysore, official efforts were made in Hyderabad to distance the young ruler from the unwholesome atmosphere of palace quarters. Captain John Clerk, equerry to the Duke of Edinburgh, was employed as guardian and tutor to the young Nizam, Mahbub Ali Khan, in 1874, however the appointment was hardly productive. Sir Richard Meade, Resident in Hyderabad, reported in 1876 that the access of the tutor was so restricted that 'it was impossible for him to educate in the narrowest sense, much less exert any moral influence over his charge'.<sup>241</sup> Moreover Meade referred to medical reports declaring that the Nizam was 'disgracefully fed and clothed, and the sanitary condition of his rooms dreadful'. He was exposed to 'dissipated proceedings in the *zenana*' and the procurement of liquor via certain 'delinquents'.<sup>242</sup> The Viceroy, Lord Lytton, was in no doubt that the object of the Diwan, Salar Jung I, was to reduce the Nizam to a 'cipher', in order that the power of the State might remain concentrated in his own hands,

for this purpose he keeps the boy secluded, almost a prisoner in the palace, where, I am told, he is waited upon by 25 young women trained to debauch him. Salar Jung visits him daily, but everyone else seems to be zealously excluded from his presence, and he is rarely allowed to leave the palace. Thus withdrawn from healthful external influences, it cannot be said that the development of his mind or body have fair play, nor that the objects on which the Government of India laid so much stress in constituting the Regency are being loyally carried out.<sup>243</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Whiteley, Reports on Education of Maharajah of Mysore, August 1895 and January 1896, R/2/32/300.

<sup>241</sup> Thomas Henry Thornton, *General Sir Richard Meade and the Feudatory States of Central and Southern India* (London, 1898), p. 286. See also V. K. Bawa, *Hyderabad under Salar Jang I* (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 108-9.

<sup>242</sup> Memo by Sir Richard Meade, Res. Hyderabad, 24 March 1881, attached to No. 461, GoI to Res., 25 May 1881, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box I.

<sup>243</sup> Lytton to Salisbury, 24 September 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19. Salar Jung's somewhat autocratic stance appears with regularity throughout this thesis. However British efforts were not entirely in vain; the Reverend H. Fitzpatrick wrote in 1881 to Major F. A. Wilson, Superintendent of the Nizam's education, that he was 'particularly struck with the clear way in which the first Parliament

In 1894 the Resident suggested to the Nizam that, like Clerk, an English gentleman should be appointed to superintend the education of his own son, the Sahibzada Mir Ali Khan, in his case from the age of eight or nine. The superintendent would not take a share in the teaching but would oversee the entire tutorial and household staff. The year would be divided into three or four terms with a suitable proportion of vacation and the pupil could live during the term time in the same house as his superintendent. All vacations would be spent at home but during the term it would be best to restrict the visits to the palace to special occasions.<sup>244</sup> Such an arrangement, it was hoped, would break the ever-present 'continuity of *zenana* influence' and at the same time prevent the boy from becoming 'over-Europeanised' and alienated from his own people.<sup>245</sup>

Ideally five or six young native gentlemen of appropriate age and rank would be educated with the Nizam's son and subject to the same rules and discipline. For the first few years the staff would be native Muslims, but at least one of the masters would be selected from the Education Department for his knowledge of English and Urdu, and for his special ability to teach. The aim was to turn the Sahibzada into an 'educated Mohammedan of the highest type', yet able also to read, write and speak English to a high standard. After two to three years the boy could be placed under an English tutor.<sup>246</sup> The course of studies was to be approved by the Nizam and not altered without his sanction, however it was stressed that 'Ample time should be left for recreation and for outdoor games and exercises'.<sup>247</sup>

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assembled in the reign of Edward I was described by the young ruler, with 'ingeniously phonetic' spelling'. Letter dated 4 November 1881 attached to No. 16, 6 February 1882, GoI to SoS, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box II.

<sup>244</sup> Trevor Chichele Plowden, Res. Hyderabad, to Nizam, 6 September 1894, R/1/1/164.

<sup>245</sup> Chichele Plowden to W. J. Cuningham, Sec. GoI, FD, 5 May 1894, R/2/67/19.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Chichele Plowden to Nizam, 6 September 1894, R/1/1/164. At the Foreign Office Sir Henry Durand recognized the problems inherent in attempting to control the education of the son of such a

There was reluctance on the part of the Nizam to agree wholeheartedly to such rigid demands. The Resident reported six months later that the ruler had assigned a separate house to his son within the precincts of the palace in which he was supposed to pass the day. At night he returned to the *zenana*, as it was contended that its inhabitants would not agree to 'more complete separation'.<sup>248</sup> The Nizam had appointed four elderly nobles, each of whom was to have charge of the boy in turn and be responsible for his conduct. In the opinion of the Resident 'Nothing but harm can ... come of this arrangement. Elderly men are not suitable companions for boys of nine and I should imagine that this unfortunate lad will be perplexed by the varying counsels and prohibitions which these worthies are likely to impose on him'.<sup>249</sup> Nothing as yet had been done to find a teacher. The Minister, Nawab Vikar-al-Umra, generally agreed with the views of the Resident and felt that little would be achieved until the boy had an English governor to look after him, 'No native will ever stand up against palace influences. The governor ought not only to be European, he ought also to be a government servant especially selected whose personal character, age and experience would carry weight'.<sup>250</sup>

In 1898 the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, wrote that the Nizam was 'entirely neglecting' his son, a 'poor boy who is growing up in the worst surroundings', surrounded by 'scoundrels who have the Nizam's ear, to keep his son a poor ignorant creature that they may use him in his turn'.<sup>251</sup> There might still be a hope of saving him if an English tutor or guardian were introduced into the palace, but it was clearly impossible to ask an

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prominent ruler, suggesting 'I would interfere as little as possible. Better a spoilt and uneducated heir-apparent than a discontented Nizam'. Extract from memorandum by Sir H. M. Durand, 20 April 1894, R/1/1/164.

<sup>248</sup> Chichele Plowden to Cuningham, 19 March 1895, R/1/1/164.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid. See also R/2/67/21.

<sup>251</sup> Extract from private letter from Lord Elgin 3 February 1898, attached to No. 275, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXV.

Englishman to accept conditions such as those proposed by the Nizam, as he must have a position 'which the Palace crew cannot pretend to control'.<sup>252</sup> The Government of India was in a difficult position as it was not responsible for Sahibzada in the way that it had been responsible for his father, who was a minor orphan when he succeeded to his inheritance.

However in 1898 the Nizam agreed to give Brian Egerton, discussed below in his role as tutor to the Maharajah of Bikaner, 'a fair trial' by appointing him on probation for two years. The Nizam set out the following conditions,

He shall be considered strictly as a private servant of my household, and as such he shall be subject to the restrictions which custom and my own habit have necessarily imposed on that service. He shall in no way meddle with the political and administrative affairs of my State. Nor should he, without my permission, visit or receive any official or nobleman whoever he may be. Breach of such conditions will entail immediate dismissal at my discretion.<sup>253</sup>

As far as the Government of India was concerned, the requirements were that the candidate should be 'a gentleman of the highest class. One who would keep entirely aloof from faction, be incapable of intrigue, able to assert control over teachers and the household, and at the same time keep in view imperial interests'.<sup>254</sup>

Under Egerton and living away from the palace the Sahibzada was seen by British officials to flourish with a 'freedom hitherto unknown'.<sup>255</sup> Egerton was said to be 'most patient and long suffering' and the boy, although 'dull and very backward' was of a

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Nizam to Res. Hyderabad, 15 January 1898, R/1/1/201. Other candidates for the job of tutor to the Sahibzada were: Capt. J. R. C. Colvin of the Political Dept., tutor to the Nawab of Rampur; J. W. D. Johnstone of the Education Dept., tutor to Scindia, Maharajah of Gwalior; and Theodore Morison of Aligarh College. R/2/67/27. It is perhaps surprising that the Nizam failed to choose a man with Muslim connections over and above Egerton, who had served exclusively in Rajputana.

<sup>254</sup> Cuningham to Chichele Plowden, 10 August 1897, and Viceroy to SoS, 16 February 1897, R/1/1/201.

<sup>255</sup> Sir David Barr, Res. Hyderabad, to Walter Lawrence, 8 July 1900, R/2/68/38.

good disposition and anxious to learn. It was believed that the Nizam had been personally anxious to separate his son from palace life some years before, but had experienced great difficulty in 'overcoming the prejudices of his inordinately extensive *zenana*'.<sup>256</sup> However in 1903 it was apparent that the royal women and palace officials still wielded a considerable influence as far as the progress of the Sahibzada was concerned. After 'consultation with the principal nobles' the Nizam announced that his son was too old to go to Mayo College. Marriage had become 'an imperative necessity in order to safeguard him from mental and moral temptations peculiar to his present age' and, rather than venturing further afield, he would benefit from visiting different parts of his own country and becoming acquainted with the administration.<sup>257</sup>

The *zenana* was not in all cases the main hindrance to the establishment of a salubrious atmosphere in which a princely education could be effectively accomplished. Sir Pratap Singh, discussed in the chapter on succession in his role as Maharajah of Idar, was for a long time in charge of his nephew, the young heir to the Jodhpur *gadi*, but in 1895 in the interests of both it was suggested that he should have a British officer to assist him as companion and tutor to the boy. Sir Pratap had failed in allowing the Maharajah to be in the constant and almost exclusive society of people who were not deemed suitable companions for the future ruler of a state. The late Maharajah had objected to this state of affairs and it had become both 'irksome and distasteful to the young Maharajah', while the rest of the community naturally resented the arrangement.<sup>258</sup> Under such circumstances the presence of a qualified British tutor would enable the ruler to acquire more general knowledge and enlarge his 'mental vision', and if he were to live in separate accommodation with the officer he would be severed from his present social

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Nizam to Barr, 6 November 1903, R/1/1/299.

<sup>258</sup> Resident, Western Rajputana, to 1<sup>st</sup> Asst. to AGG Rajputana, 14 December 1895, R/2/182/360.

environment.<sup>259</sup>

However the Government of India considered that, in view of the satisfactory way in which the administration of Jodhpur had been conducted during the minority, there should be as few changes as were 'compatible with good government'.<sup>260</sup> The Viceroy preferred that the Maharajah should remain under the care of Sir Pratap Singh, aided by the Resident, rather than under a young British officer appointed as guardian or tutor. Sir Pratap would no doubt find opportunities to instruct the ruler in state administration and he should be told that the Viceroy was especially anxious that the Maharajah should avoid dubious company and have his attention directed towards more serious duties.<sup>261</sup> The Resident, A. Martindale, reported in 1898 that to give him an insight into the working of courts, the ruler was personally trying judicial cases and submitting his reports to the Residency. To train him in economy and accounts he had been allowed to supervise and control branches of the administration within budget limits and he was also used to attending meetings of the State Council.<sup>262</sup>

The removal of a young prince from the influence of unscrupulous court personnel was also a goal in the state of Jind in the Punjab. In 1897 a despatch declared that 'His Highness's personal character is so entirely unformed that it would be imprudent to entrust him with ruling powers in the near future'.<sup>263</sup> Sir Louis Dane, later Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, observed that if the treatment of minor rulers was left entirely to state authorities, the princes concerned would at eighteen be 'turned out on old native lines with some sense of dignity, some regard for tradition and, for the old State families,

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. Sir Pratap Singh's association with undesirable companions places him in a rather less rosy light than that suggested in the chapter on succession.

<sup>260</sup> Cuningham to AGG Rajputana, 27 January 1896, R/2/182/360.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> A. Martindale, Res. Western States Rajputana to 1<sup>st</sup> Asst. to AGG Rajputana, 24 December 1897, attached to No. 77, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXVI.

<sup>263</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 165, 16 December 1897, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXIV.



some interest in their State, and some prospect of carrying on in the old grooves the processes of administration'.<sup>264</sup> However the 'march of ideas' even in the states had been so rapid that it was almost impossible to equip the rulers with the 'necessary qualities for keeping straight'. Moreover self-interest was so strong and intrigue so prevalent among hereditary officials, that they were the worst people to educate the princes. Dane appreciated that in Jind there was no family with a sufficiently 'wholesome atmosphere' within which the young ruler could be disciplined and trained by tutors under the head of the family.<sup>265</sup> Since a prince was unlikely to find a 'disinterested and capable guardian', the Government should make him its ward. There was always a danger in separating a minor prince from his family and the influences of the court to such a degree that he was alienated from the state and disinclined to accept his responsibilities. Therefore the Government should be careful to impress upon a potential tutor that the ruler should be kept in touch with hereditary officials and the people of the state, and should remain receptive to their ideas.<sup>266</sup>

In response to a request from the other Phulkian states that the education of the Jind ruler be placed in the hands of three officials, one from each state, Dane was adamant that such interference was not warranted.<sup>267</sup> Moreover the proposal was entirely opposed to one of the fundamental principles of the policy of the paramount power, namely that no native state be permitted to interfere in the internal affairs of another. A list of the tasks which the three officials intended to undertake in training the prince hardly suggested that he would be reared according to western ideas:

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<sup>264</sup> Sir Louis Dane to Foreign Secretary GoI, attached to No. 165, 16 December 1897, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXIV

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Dane to Patiala and Nabha, and President of Jind Council, No. 870, 23 September 1897, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXIV.

Their duties will be to look to his diet, the protection of his health, and his companions, to teach him the laws of religion and state matters, to arrange for the appointment of Aid de Camps [sic] and household servants jointly, to effect economy in his personal expenses, and to keep the two Chiefs informed of all important matters so that they may make proper arrangements in consultation with the State Council.<sup>268</sup>

As Dane pointed out to the English tutor, Captain F. E. Bradshaw, who was appointed to superintend the young ruler's education, his job would not be easy. The prince of Jind was almost eighteen and 'in dealing with a Native Chief of such an age the exercise of both tact and temper on your part is essential, and you will doubtless endeavour to influence him more by example and precept than by actual exercise of authority in the last resort'.<sup>269</sup> It was felt unlikely that much could be accomplished by 'mere book learning', but the prince was to be encouraged to keep up his studies and the selection of reading matter would form an important part of the tutor's duties. The instruction of the prince in the duties of state administration was in itself a somewhat delicate matter, as the tutor had to superintend such instruction without being able to intervene himself in the administration, channelling all orders through the Council.<sup>270</sup> However the tutor was to have complete control over the person and the surroundings of the ruler and expenditure of his privy purse, as soon as the amount of this had been determined in consultation with the Council and sanctioned by Government.<sup>271</sup>

The diligent efforts on the part of the British to ensure that a young male ruler achieved as much administrative wisdom as possible were not, to her regret, available to the only female ruler of India, the Begam of Bhopal, as the next section reveals.

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<sup>268</sup> Rajah of Nabha to Lt. Gov. of Punjab 13 August 1897 attached to No. 165, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXIV.

<sup>269</sup> Dane to Capt. F. E. Bradshaw, 23 September 1897, attached to No. 165, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXIV.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. As suspected, the young Rajah of Jind was by no means a compliant charge. As discussed in the following chapter, in 1900 he entered into a suspicious secret marriage with a European woman. Proof, in Lord Curzon's view, that the Government of the Punjab had failed miserably in disciplining the rulers under its aegis. See the first section of the chapter on administration

## THE EDUCATION OF A PRINCESS

In Bhopal Sultan Jahan Begam received her early education at the hands of court officials of the day. Mohammed Jamal-ud-din, the first Minister of the State, taught the princess Arabic and Persian and the Private Secretary, Munshi Husein Khan, taught her English.<sup>272</sup> After she was five a regular course of study was prescribed, including the study of the Koran, handwriting, Arithmetic, Pashtu and fencing. Whenever the Political Agent, or any other English official, came to Bhopal, he would be asked to examine Sultan Jahan in English by her grandmother, Sikander Begam, a great believer in the merits of education.<sup>273</sup>

However Sikander Begam's daughter, Shahjehan Begam, whose attempts to disinherit her own daughter are cited in the previous chapter, altered the arrangements for Sultan Jahan's education after her grandmother's death and the girl's usual nine or so hours of study dwindled to four a day. In her mother's opinion it was more important that she should acquire experience in domestic and official duties than 'progress in scholarly knowledge'. Having read the entire Koran before she was eleven, she was now made to study it a second time and English and Persian were her only actual lessons, however she was also made to read and write orders upon various official papers which were sent to her daily by her mother.<sup>274</sup>

Years later, at the start of her own rule, Sultan Jahan appreciated that these were papers on which orders had already been passed and connected with matters of no interest or importance, giving her neither experience nor information. After her marriage she was

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<sup>272</sup> Sultan Jahan Begam, *An Account of My Life* (London, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 17-18.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 23-9.

to recognise the shortcomings of her own education and lack of administrative work, 'The training of a young chief can never be adequate if it is confined to the study of books and to such experience as he can gain from intercourse with his teachers'.<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless for a Muslim princess at the end of the nineteenth century, the breadth of Sultan Jahan's education does appear to have been extraordinary. At the start of the twentieth century, having discussed the question of princely education with Lord Curzon, Sultan Jahan seriously considered sending her youngest son, Hamidullah Khan, to Mayo College in Ajmer, as opposed to Daly College in Indore which was in a precarious financial situation. However to use the education of her son as an example she decided instead to establish a special school for the *jagirdar* class which he would attend following a short period under the tutelage of an Oxford graduate, C. H. Payne. The Alexandra Nobles School, designed by Sir Swinton Jacob at an estimated cost of Rs. 153,241, was opened in Bhopal in 1903.<sup>276</sup>

## WESTERNISATION

Whereas in Bhopal Sultan Jahan espoused western ideas in a manner which proved highly satisfactory to the paramount power, the influence of particularly forceful British tutors upon their young charges did not always achieve as desirable a result. The leader of the 'independence movement' among Indian princes was Sayajirao, Gaekwar of Baroda, successor to Malharrao, whose deposition is discussed in the chapter on administration.<sup>277</sup> The roots of Sayajirao's antagonism can be traced to the ruler's

<sup>275</sup> *Account*, Vol I, p. 217.

<sup>276</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 330-332.

<sup>277</sup> For perceived examples of Sayajirao's anti-British stance see Ian Copland, 'The Dilemmas of a Ruling Prince: Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar and "Sedition"' in P. Robb and D. Taylor (eds.), *Rule, Protest, Identity: Aspects of Modern South Asia* (London, 1978), pp. 24-28; Charles W. Nuckolls, 'The Durbar Incident', *Modern Asian Studies*, 24, 3 (1990), pp. 529-59; and Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign*

desire, shaped by the unorthodox teaching of his tutor, Frederick Elliott, to run his state on 'original lines'.<sup>278</sup> The period of Elliott's influence lasted from 1881 to 1895 and was a time of continuing reform in the state.<sup>279</sup> To all intents and purposes Sayajirao developed into a humane, cultivated and conscientious prince. His day began at six in the morning with prayers, after which he spent a few hours reading authors such as Bentham, de Tocqueville, J. S. Mill and Shakespeare.<sup>280</sup> However despite the dissemination of suitable liberal texts, Elliott was by no means popular in British government circles due to his championship of Baroda interests over those of Britain and in 1895 he was forced to revert to British service. British officials identified the fruits of Elliott's influence in arguments put forward forcibly by the Gaekwar to combat supposed British infringements of his liberty, as displayed in a report of an interview in 1898 in which the ruler declared, 'I am only quoting the words of Mill ... when I call the Government of India a despotic Government. It is without doubt a despotic Government, some may call it a despotic despotism, but it is nevertheless despotic'.<sup>281</sup>

Having been versed by his tutor in the benefits of exposure to western ideas, the Gaekwar objected in particular to Curzon's ruling that Indian princes wishing to travel to

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*Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 2003), pp. 47-69.

<sup>278</sup> Sayajirao Rao to Lord Reay, 20 January 1897, quoted in J. P. Sergeant, *The Ruler of Baroda* (London, 1928), pp. 280-1.

<sup>279</sup> In the Gaekwar's reply to the Governor of Bombay's address at the ruler's investiture, he declared that Elliott's contribution to his education had produced 'an indelible impression'. Enclosure No. 21, P. S. Melvill, AGG Baroda, 'Investiture of Gaekwar', 2 January 1882, attached to GoI to SoS, No. 10, PSCI, 1875-1911 Box II. Elliott was given a wide brief in his subsequent duties in Baroda and in 1885 was dispatched to England for three months to arrange for the care and education of young men whom the Gaekwar wished to be trained as 'Engineers, Surveyors, Artists and Doctors'. GoI to SoS, No. 108, 11 July 1885. PSCI, 1875-1911, Box V.

<sup>280</sup> Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997), p. 337. At the time of their arranged marriage, his wife, Chinnabai, had been fourteen and illiterate. Her husband immediately arranged for her to receive an education and many years later wrote, 'An educated lady in the house is more able to shed the light of happiness than one who is ignorant'. Sayajirao Rao, 'My Ways and Days', *Nineteenth Century and After* XLIX, p. 223 quoted James, *Raj*, p. 337. Her education bore fruit in a book launched in 1911 entitled *The Position of Women in Indian Life*, giving an international view of the 'women's movement'. It examined the successes and failures of women in Europe, America and Japan, and contrasted the status of women elsewhere with that of women in India. The book contained a number of 'radical ideas and assertions'. Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*, p. 58.

<sup>281</sup> Report of interview between the Baroda Res., Col. M. J. Meade and Gaekwar 14 February 1908, R/1/1/288.

Europe must give notice to the Government of India, so that an official verdict could be given on the necessity or advisability of such a trip. He complained that the notice has now become 'a communication in the nature of an application for permission' to leave India and affected his 'position and dignity'.<sup>282</sup> To successive viceroys the Gaekwar showed great dereliction of duty in his absenteeism from Baroda. The ruler was away from his state for periods aggregating seven and a half years between 1886 and 1908 and, in the view of the Baroda Resident, had failed to recognise the 'injury' such absences caused the administration and the 'discontent and dissatisfaction ... engendered in the minds of the people'.<sup>283</sup>

At the Foreign Office, Sir Henry Durand in 1894 recognised the

danger in educating Native Chiefs too much according to our own views, they become too fond of English amusements, and lose all pride and interest in their States. They thus lose their *raison d'être* and become useless as part of the Indian political system. We want ruling Chiefs, in touch with their people, not absentee landlords who race and drink. They are worse than useless.<sup>284</sup>

The difficulty in reconciling western and oriental ideas when it came to princely rule was well demonstrated in the state of Pudukkottai. Nicholas Dirks considers that the British success in weaning the minor Rajah Martanda Bhairava Tondaiman away from the 'seething intrigue of the *zenana* and state' eventually resulted in the ruler's premature retirement and total withdrawal from state affairs.<sup>285</sup> When Martanda, adopted grandson of Rajah Ramachandra, succeeded to the *gadi* in 1886 there was a certain amount of British relief that the young heir had been spared the insalubrious aspects of palace life due to his youth and adoption from outside the main family. The British government

<sup>282</sup> Ibid. File R/1/1/293 sets out the bitter objections of the Gaekwar to Curzon's circular on foreign travel. The circular itself is discussed at greater length in the chapter on hierarchy and ritual.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Extract from memorandum by Sir H. M. Durand, 20 April 1894, R/1/1/164.

<sup>285</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 392.

resolved to pay particular attention to the education of the Rajah, appointing Frank Crossley in 1887 as his English tutor with explicit instructions to ensure the inculcation of English ideas and values.

The western educated Dewan of Pudukkottai, A. Sashiah Sastri,<sup>286</sup> expressed grave fears concerning the young ruler's education when Martanda was removed from Pudukkottai to a bungalow near the British cantonment in Trichinopoly to be educated by Crossley and instructed in the appropriate social graces by the Political Agent, R. H. Farmer.<sup>287</sup> By 1890 the attention to body over mind was a daily fact of the Rajah's routine, described by Sastri in a letter to the Maharajah of Travancore, 'He nominally goes through a few lessons in English, Sanskrit, and drawing in the hot hours of the day and spends all the morning and all the evening in driving, tennis, golf, shooting in the jungles, playing chess, playing the banjo and the violin and billiards'.<sup>288</sup> In his yearly reports on the progress of his royal charge, Crossley mentions repeatedly the importance the political agent placed on scheduling the raja with 'less time to the cultivation of the intellect and more to the body', nevertheless noting that his 'increasing obesity gives grounds for serious apprehension as regards his health'.<sup>289</sup> Travel was an important component of his education and paramount importance was attached to exposing the young Rajah to wider vistas and perspectives so that he would not become engulfed in the 'Byzantine preoccupations of court life'.<sup>290</sup> He was taken on grand tours of northern India and Europe to accomplish this objective.

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<sup>286</sup> Sashiah Sastri was born into a poor family, educated at Scottish mission schools in Madras and received the 1<sup>st</sup> Prize of the Madras Council of Education. He was later Head Sheristidar of the Madras Revenue Board, the highest position to which an Indian could rise, and a fellow of Madras University. Menon, 'Popular Princes' p. 263.

<sup>287</sup> Joanne Punzo Wagthorne, *The Raja's Magic Clothes* (Pennsylvania, 1994), p. 74.

<sup>288</sup> Quoted *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 77.

<sup>289</sup> Pudukkottai *Durbar* Files, Administration Report for 1888-9, quoted Wagthorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 75.

<sup>290</sup> Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, p. 390.

The progress of the eager and able student pleased Crossley to such an extent that the British viewed Martanda's accession to the throne in 1894 with 'a mixture of complacency and optimism', although it was soon apparent that the qualities so assiduously instilled in the ruler were to make his rule 'highly troublesome'.<sup>291</sup> It was noted that the Rajah was 'always knocking about amusing himself and but seldom troubles Pudokkottai with his presence ... Mr. Crossley has, I fear, done him no good of late, and instead of pressing him to buckle down to the task of governing has encouraged him to do quite the reverse'.<sup>292</sup> In August 1897 a letter from the Madras Government declared that 'the Raja is more like a coloured European gentleman, with entirely European tastes, than a Native Prince', however as a ruler he had made no real effort to gain insight into the administration, the wants of his people or the expenditure of state funds.<sup>293</sup> Between his installation in November 1894 and the writing of this letter the Raja spent a total of eight weeks in the state, returning principally for festivals and shooting expeditions, apparently encouraged in this somewhat untaxing lifestyle by Crossley.<sup>294</sup>

In the Rajput state of Bikaner the dissemination of western ideas had an equally significant effect upon the young ruler, if with a somewhat more productive outcome. The majority of royal Rajput families preferred to employ a Brahman as the predominant educative authority in the palace. Such a teacher would be imported from various parts of Rajasthan, Gujurat or Kashmir to teach their sons Sanskrit texts like the laws of Manu and epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.<sup>295</sup> Despite British pressure, there

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<sup>291</sup> *Hollow Crown*, p. 391.

<sup>292</sup> Note by 'JFP', 11 February 1897, R/2/892/268.

<sup>293</sup> Chief Sec. Govt. Madras to Sec. GoI, FD, 6 August 1897, R/2/892/271

<sup>294</sup> *Hollow Crown*, p. 391. See R/2/892/268 for Government criticism of Crossley.

<sup>295</sup> Paolo Durisotto 'Traditional Rule and Modern Conventions: The Maharajas of Bikaner and their Relationship with the Raj, 1887-1947', Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Royal Holloway College, University of London, 2001, p. 45.



was great reluctance on the part of some royal Rajput families to employ an English tutor to impart administrative knowledge at the expense of a religious education.

Maharajah Ganga Singh's first tutor at the Bikaner court was Pandit Ram Chandra Dube, a Kashmiri *pandit* who was with the Maharajah through childhood and adolescence. He was not quoted often in the Maharajah's later correspondence and did not leave his mark in the records of the regency period, although he remained Ganga Singh's tutor even after the Regency Council decided in 1889 to send the Maharajah to Mayo College to complete his education.<sup>296</sup> The Vice-President of the Regency Council and Dewan, Sodhi Hukm Singh, a Sikh who was constantly conspiring in the *zenana* and the head of the most important faction at court, saw the return of Ganga Singh from Mayo College in 1894 as a threat to his influence. The Dewan concurred with the view of other members of the Council that the young ruler should go to Mount Abu<sup>297</sup> to learn Persian and Urdu, before visiting other parts of India and England under the guardianship of a competent and trustworthy officer, ostensibly 'to keep him away from bad temptations'.<sup>298</sup>

However the Agent to the Governor General in Rajputana, Colonel Trevor, informed the Council that Brian Egerton, the 'scion of an old English family of high standing in Cheshire' who 'combined sympathy and tact with firmness and a wholesome believe [sic] in discipline',<sup>299</sup> should be appointed as a guardian. Normally royal professional tutors were employed by *durbars* rather than by the Government of India, however

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> During the hot season Ganga Singh had previously spent holidays in Mount Abu in the companionship of Maharaj Kunwar, the heir to the Jodhpur gadi, in order that friendly relations would be established between the two Rahtore families. Col. C. K. M. Walter to Sec. GoI, FD 16 January 1888, R/2/182/356. Mount Abu was and remains a popular Rajput pilgrimage destination, due to the significant number of Jain and Hindu religious sites.

<sup>298</sup> Durisotto 'Traditional Rule', p. 52.

<sup>299</sup> K. M. Panikkar, *His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner. A Biography* (London, 1937), p. 42

Egerton's record had impressed Curzon to such an extent that the Viceroy deliberately selected him to further British influence in the Bikaner minority administration. Egerton's upper class background and his conservative outlook were common features of political officers in native states. His previous assignments in Rajputana as District Superintendent of Police in Ajmer, where he wrote the report on the 1891 census, followed by Boundary Settlement Officer in Udaipur from 1892-5, suggest that he had 'the disposition of an inflexible bureaucrat rather than of a humanist'.<sup>300</sup> Ganga Singh remembered Egerton's arrival in Bikaner in the hot season when the young Maharajah was living in part of the recently completed old palace 'minus electric light, minus electric fans ... and minus water pipes'.<sup>301</sup> Colonel Tom French-Mullen, a senior British officer, was of the opinion that it was impossible for a European to stay there in temperatures of 110 degrees, but Egerton declared that 'his place was with his ward and he insisted on residing in the Fort'.<sup>302</sup>

An ordinary day's routine for the young Bikaner consisted of riding or shooting before breakfast, studying during the morning and afternoon, and playing polo and roller skating in the evening. On holidays the routine included visits to the royal residence at Gajner, a pleasure palace and a favourite shooting retreat of the Maharajahs of Bikaner. Visits to other parts of the state were frequent, including interviews with nobles and landowners, and religious and state ceremonies were strictly performed after some years of laxity under the Regency.<sup>303</sup> The pupil received a grounding in Hindu law before he applied himself to state administration. His training then consisted of the explanation of various files and papers by senior officials of each department of state, after which he wrote up his own decisions on cases, making notes on the evidence on record. Land

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<sup>300</sup> Durisotto, 'Traditional Rule', p. 53.

<sup>301</sup> Pannikar, *Maharaja of Bikaner*, p. 42.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Pannikar, *Maharaja of Bikaner*, p. 47

settlement classification and an examination of correspondence between former Ministers, the Maharajah and the Residency also formed part of his administrative education. Biographies and letters of 'great men' were read to learn the history of Bikaner and of India.<sup>304</sup> Christopher Bayly suggests that residents and tutors in states assumed 'the position of close personal adviser which had been occupied by uncles or royal mothers in the independent courts'.<sup>305</sup> Ganga Singh often repeated that the 'after life [sic]' of a minor prince depended mostly on the right choice of guardian. He deemed himself very fortunate to have had a much more rigorous grounding than most other young rulers in finance, revenue, customs and excise, and other departments of administration.<sup>306</sup>

#### BROADENING PRINCELY HORIZONS

Not surprisingly, given the example of blatant neglect of state affairs displayed by rulers such as Martanda Tondaiman of Pudukkottai, young princes were not encouraged to leave India to complete their education. A proposal in 1876 by Lt. Col. Minchin, Political Agent in the Punjab state of Bahawalpur, that the young Nawab should come to England to study with three other boys was greeted by the Secretary of State with some misgivings, 'the Nawab will have completed his fifteenth year, and it seems to me questionable whether, after attaining that age, a native of India is likely to derive

<sup>304</sup> Durisotto 'Traditional Rule', p. 56.

<sup>305</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, p. 111.

<sup>306</sup> Durisotto 'Traditional Rule', p. 56. The Maharajah of Bikaner, no doubt partly due to the influence of an English tutor, also turned out to be inordinately fond of foreign travel. In 1902 Curzon feared that, although 'very opinionated, and decidedly vain', he was 'much the most attractive in manner and style' of the Indian rulers and would be made 'the darling of London Society'. Curzon to Hamilton, 21 May 1902, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 161. As demonstrated in the chapter on royal marriage western ideas also had a dramatic effect on the Maharajah's choice of bride.

advantage from a two years' residence at a public school or with a Tutor in England'.<sup>307</sup>

When aristocratic Indians did aspire to educational qualifications in England, problems tended to arise. Sahib-Zadah Wahid-ud-Din, a member of one of Mysore's leading families, accumulated large debts while studying for the Bar, but was treated sympathetically by the India Council as the case represented 'the first genuine experiment' and required 'exceptional clemency'.<sup>308</sup> There could also be ulterior motives in educating the scions of Indian ruling families abroad. It was believed that the Nawab of Rampur<sup>309</sup> in central India kept his younger brother, the Sahibzada Nasir Ali Khan, in an English school for reasons of 'jealousy or fear'. The Nawab appeared to be under the impression that if his brother returned to Rampur before a lawful heir was born, he might become a 'centre of intrigue and danger'.<sup>310</sup> However the Government of India took the view that there was already sufficient intrigue and danger in Rampur for it to be desirable for the Sahibzada to remain in England to complete his education, having passed his Moderations at Oxford and subsequently reading for the Bar.<sup>311</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was greater princely enthusiasm for an English education, arousing further disapproval among government officials. The Secretary of State, Henry Fowler, wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, in 1894 that 'it was possible to overdo the English education of young Chiefs'. The sons of two or three princes were at Eton and being brought up 'in all respects like English boys ... how this may affect their influence in their own States is a question of some difficulty'.<sup>312</sup> When

<sup>307</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 59, 15 June 1876, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 2. Had the Nawab received an education in England, it is possible that he might have been more amenable when it came to sending his own son to Aitchison College. See the chapter on succession.

<sup>308</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 13 1872, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 15.

<sup>309</sup> The Nawabs of Palanpur, Tonk and Rampur, as well as one or two lesser Muslim rulers, shared a common ancestry as descendants of Pathan tribesmen from Afghanistan who entered India in search of the traditional 'Zan, Zar, Zamin' – women, gold and land. Allen, *Lives of Indian Princes*, p. 44.

<sup>310</sup> Chief Sec. Govt. Punjab to Sec. GoI, FD, 22 April 1899, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXIX.

<sup>311</sup> Chief Sec. Govt., NWP and Oudh, to Agent to Lt. Gov., 15 September 1899, R/2/801/6.

<sup>312</sup> Fowler to Elgin, 15 June 1894, Elgin Collection, Vol. 1.

the Gaekwar of Baroda intended his sons to go to Eton and Balliol Lord Curzon objected strongly, since he was convinced that at an English public school and university an Indian might develop a contempt for his own people. The Viceroy was proved correct when the eldest son of the Gaekwar, Fateh Singh Rao, had to be removed from Oxford due to 'idleness and misconduct' and upon his return to India 'developed great extravagance' and consorted with 'low people'. Curzon observed that 'A youth, either at Eton or Oxford, acquires ideas and tastes which are incompatible with subsequent residence in a Native State, or with sympathy for the people over whom he may be called to rule'.<sup>313</sup>

However, despite the appeal of a famous establishment like Eton, in the last decades of the nineteenth century British efforts to set up Indian colleges modelled on the very English public schools to which some Indian rulers aspired failed dismally to capture princely imagination and to prove a great enough incentive to break centuries of educational and cultural habits. For many royal families in the first years of transition from traditional kingship to modern ruler the concept of such a dramatic form of westernised education came too soon and was too alien in nature. The following section of this part of the princely life cycle deals with the setting up of the princely colleges and gives an evaluation of the success and failure of the experiment during the period.

## PRINCELY COLLEGES

In his study of the effect of the English public school system upon the British empire, J. A. Mangan sees the creation of colleges for Indian royalty and nobility as a 'tangible

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<sup>313</sup> Curzon to Brodrick, 2 February 1905, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 164.

symbol of both political expedience and moral conviction'.<sup>314</sup> The British hoped to win over at least some of the influential traditional minority and 'so succour a band of political evangelists sympathetic to the gubernatorial standards of the imperial race'.<sup>315</sup> The idea for establishing such schools sprang from Capt. F. K. M. Walter, Agent for Bharatpur, who in his 1869-70 annual report declared that:

If we desire to raise the chiefs of India to the standard which they must attain in order to keep pace with the ever advancing spirit of the age, if we wish to make clear to them that our only object is to perpetuate their dynasties and to make them worthy feudatories of the crown of England, we must place within their reach, greater facilities for bestowing on their sons a better education than they can possibly now attain. Then and not till then can we hope to see the native princes of India occupying the position they ought to hold as the promoters of peace, prosperity and progress among their own people and hearty supporters of British authority.<sup>316</sup>

To achieve this aim, Walter urged 'the establishment of an 'Eton in India', a college on an extensive scale ... with a complete staff of thoroughly educated English gentlemen, not mere book-worms but men fond of field sports and outdoor exercise, and the elite of the Native gentlemen belonging to the Education Department'.<sup>317</sup> Walter's ideas were formally adopted by the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, who at a *darbar* in Ajmer in 1870 asked for the co-operation of princes and nobles in Rajputana, 'If we wished you to remain weak, we would say, "Be poor, and ignorant, and disorderly". It is because we want you to be strong that we desire to see you rich, instructed and well governed'.<sup>318</sup> Mayo believed that for the sake of civilisation the *darbars* should not be allowed to sink into disrepute and under his viceroyalty schools like Mayo College for Rajputana and Rajkumar College for Kathiawar in western India were founded. These were followed by Daly College for central India and Aitchison College for the Punjab. This section of

<sup>314</sup> J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London, 1986), p.125.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> Quoted in H. Sherring, *The Mayo College 1875-1895* (Calcutta, 1897), Vol. I, p. 2.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> Article from *The Pioneer* of 17 October 1870, attached to letter from Mayo to Argyll, 2 November 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. II.

the chapter on education will deal mainly with Mayo College, with briefer references to the other three schools.

## THE FIRST PHASE

The four main princely colleges were subject to the general control of the British Government and each controlled by a council or committee responsible for general administration, made up of distinguished British and Indian members. For example the Mayo College council included the Viceroy, the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana, the Commissioner of Ajmer, seventeen rulers of Rajputana and political officers to the states involved.<sup>319</sup> The colleges were by no means open to all; even a boy of high birth would not be admitted unless he or his father was a *darbari* and entitled to assist at *darbars* convoked to meet a viceroy. Some *darbari* nobles were poor and to aid their cause and 'prevent the decadence of the native aristocracy' a considerable number of scholarships were created, which were assigned according to the merits of the fathers of candidates.<sup>320</sup>

While the colleges were founded on the initiative of the British, they were financed initially by large contributions to endowment funds from the native rulers themselves and to a lesser degree by Government support. As numbers of pupils increased, Indian royalty and nobility gave generously to provide extra classrooms. The proposal for Mayo College, confined initially to the sons of rulers in Rajputana, was received with enthusiasm by the local princes, who promised contributions amounting to Rs. 594,500 to an endowment fund. In addition to these grants, the rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur,

<sup>319</sup> *Progress of Education in India*, Fourth Quinquennial Review, 1897-98 to 1901-02, p. 182.

<sup>320</sup> J. Chailly, *Administrative Problems of British India* (London, 1910), p. 222.

Udaipur, Bikaner, Alwar and Jhalawar gave large sums for the construction of boarding houses for pupils from their respective states. The Government of India undertook to provide seven *lakhs* of rupees: three for monthly payments towards the working expenses of the college and four to be expended on buildings, houses and sports facilities.<sup>321</sup> Fees made up the bulk of annual revenue in all colleges except for Mayo, where the munificence of the rulers' endowment fund was sufficient to run the establishment. Fees were paid by the individual state to which the young ruler belonged or by the estate of his family and were generally determined according to means by the political officer concerned. The cost of educating individual pupils was by no means standardised, as in the public schools of England, and could vary considerably.<sup>322</sup>

The question of an appropriate architectural style for Mayo College was not easily resolved. In the end seven separate designs, submitted by four different architects to three viceroys were required before construction began. A classical design was Lord Mayo's original preference and in the summer of 1871 he asked the executive engineer, J. Gordon, to prepare a plan for a 'plain but handsome Hall, with class rooms surrounding a pillared verandah'.<sup>323</sup> The princes, when consulted belatedly in 1872, also gave their support to the 'Grecian' model, however it was finally decided to use an Indic design.<sup>324</sup> The college was, after all, meant for the use of the princes of Rajputana. These princes, although now incorporated as feudatories within the British imperial system, still embodied some of India's oldest ruling dynasties. Therefore in themselves they represented that link with India's past to which the British wished to gain access. Indeed, as by the later nineteenth century the princes became increasingly creatures of

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<sup>321</sup> Report on Mayo College at Ajmer, attached SoS to GoI, No. 109, 28 September 1876, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 2.

<sup>322</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 128.

<sup>323</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London, 1989), p. 69.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*



the colonial order, it became all the more important that these men were able 'to define their rulership in terms derived from India's past and mark out visibly in their architecture their position as leaders of such a "traditional" order'.<sup>325</sup> It was unthinkable that the 'Indian Eton' set down in the Rajasthan desert, despite its playing fields and boarding houses, should take the shape of a Grecian temple.<sup>326</sup>

The architect of the college, Major Charles Mant of the Bombay Engineers, used a style termed Indo-Saracenic, which had been developed as a result of the debate over the relative suitability of various styles to British building in India. As Giles Tillotson makes clear in his study of the tradition of Indian architecture, the debate involved not only criteria such as climate and cost, but also political considerations. It was insisted on the one hand that the style chosen, whether classical or Gothic, must be western; that the mission of empire was civilising and westernising in matters of law and education and British architecture should reflect the same values. On the other hand it was argued that the role of empire was paternalistic and it was desirable to see the adoption of Indian styles, or the evolution of a style incorporating Indian features. The phrase Indo-Saracenic was originally adopted by scholars such as James Fergusson to describe India's Islamic architecture, generally characterised by a blend of Indian and Islamic design ideas.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> *Imperial Vision*, p. 76.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> G. H. R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy and Change since 1850*, (New Haven and London, 1989), p. 46. See also Tillotson, 'Orientalizing the Raj: Indo-Saracenic Fantasies' in Christopher W. London ed. *Architecture and Victorian and Edwardian India* (Bombay, 1994), pp. 15-34. Tillotson considers that the term Indo-Saracenic was poorly chosen, as the Islamic element in Indian buildings was not strictly Saracenic. India's Muslim conquerors were not Arabs, but Afghans and Central Asians who drew many of their cultural ideas from Persia. However, given the nineteenth century association of Islamic with Saracenic, the term was clear, if inexact, in its application to the architecture of the Moguls and their predecessors

Mant, in a single sentence describing the design for Mayo College, spoke of its 'Hindu feeling and treatment', but concluded somewhat vaguely that 'the whole building may be almost literally described, as being an adaptation of modern Hindu domestic architecture'.<sup>328</sup> The 'Building News', illustrating the design for Mayo College, announced that Mant had 'boldly taken the indigenous ancient style' and yet had produced a construction that was both 'suitable and essentially modern'.<sup>329</sup> The interior layout of the college, with its lecture halls and teaching rooms, represented the modern world the British were attempting to bring to the princes. However here, also, Indian symbolic forms were prominently displayed. The main lecture hall, for example, decorated throughout with richly carved panelling, had in its ceiling two large flat lights of coloured glass, one 'a conventional representation of the sun, and the other one of the moon, the mystical sources from which the chief Rajpoot Dynasties claim to have sprung'.<sup>330</sup> In the view of Lord Curzon, the young rulers were similarly 'to combine the merits of East and West in a single blend'.<sup>331</sup> Trained and educated in Western ways, but ruling their states 'upon Native lines, they were to be not 'relics' but rulers; not puppets, but 'living factors in the administration'.<sup>332</sup> Mayo College, where an elaborate Indo-Saracenic façade enclosed rooms in which young princes were to study English history and geography, perhaps most vividly represented Britain's inconsistent visions of princely India.

The college opened on October 1st, 1875. The Maharajah of Alwar, a minor, was the first and initially the only pupil. Since no accommodation was at that stage available in the college grounds, the Maharajah lived in a house outside the grounds and commuted to his daily studies on an elephant. Seven boys soon followed him from Jaipur, six from

<sup>328</sup> Quoted Tillotson, *Tradition of Indian Architecture*, p. 52.

<sup>329</sup> Quoted Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, p. 77.

<sup>330</sup> Note by Hardinge, January 13 1913, quoted *Imperial Vision*, p. 81.

<sup>331</sup> Speeches by Lord Curzon, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 559, pp. 60-67.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*

Jodhpur, including the Maharajah's youngest brother, six government wards, two sons of *thakurs* from the Ajmer College and Bakht Sing, Maharajah of Jhalawar. Other pupils were expected from Udaipur, Bikaner and Tonk. The age of the boys ranged from seven to seventeen, but most pupils were between nine and thirteen. In the first year of the College there was an English staff of three: the headmaster, the principal and a writing and arithmetic master. In addition an Indian staff of three was employed: an Urdu and Persian tutor, a Hindi and Sanskrit tutor, and a junior English and vernacular master. Major Oliver St. John, principal of the College, wrote in 1876 that 'as yet the nobles of Rajputana generally had shown no spontaneous inclination to send their sons to be educated and for some at least, constant pressure will have to be exerted on parents through the *Durbars* of the States'.<sup>333</sup>

However by the time of the Annual Report for 1876/77 the number of pupils had increased to 40. Major St. John wrote that the

moral and physical improvement throughout the College has been more remarkable than the mental. Little taste, if not decided disinclination, was shown at first to all but comparatively sedentary games, and even to riding ... in study the boys are inclined to be idle, and are at first generally insubordinate; but I have, I am glad to say, as yet found it unnecessary to inflict any corporal or other severe punishment.<sup>334</sup>

If a boy did err, in, for example, telling a lie, he was put 'in coventry' which was the severest penalty ever inflicted. In Sherring's opinion 'It is equivalent to being put out of caste and it is peculiarly adapted as a deterrent to a country like India'. The boy was forbidden to join in any game, no boy was allowed to speak to him, and even his own servants were unable to communicate with him, beyond giving him his meals.<sup>335</sup>

<sup>333</sup> 'Report on Mayo College at Ajmer', attached to SoS to GoI, No. 109, 28 September 1876, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 2. Sidney and Beatrice Webb were informed that parental pressure was still lacking when they visited Mayo College in March 1912. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Indian Diary*, p. 160.

<sup>334</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 5, 17 January 1878, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 4.

<sup>335</sup> Sherring, *Mayo College*. Vol. I, p. 151.

Such attention to moral rectitude was also apparent at the opening of Rajkumar College, when Colonel Anderson, the Political Agent in Kathiawar, voiced the feelings of those present at the opening ceremony when he exhorted the teaching staff to mould 'a manly set of noble youths ... burning with emulation to outstrip each other in the glorious task of elevating humanity'.<sup>336</sup> Rajkumar (like Mayo) was to become an 'eastern Eton' which would stamp its mark on every pupil. However when the first term started in 1871 there was little to suggest that the College would ever become an 'eastern Eton'. Among the dozen or so *kumars* who comprised the initial enrolment there were several reluctant members who soon deserted the classroom for the more comfortable surroundings of the *zenana*, while those who remained, like the princes of Bhavnagar and Junagadh, were always accompanied, according to *The Pioneer* newspaper, to their lessons by 'bands of armed retainers, strange, wild-looking creatures who might have come out of the middle ages'.<sup>337</sup> The headmaster, Chester MacNaghten, a Cambridge graduate, felt that his task at Rajkot was not to turn out erudite scholars, but to mould the character of his pupils so that they would emerge as efficient and benevolent rulers. High on his list of priorities was the ability to accept advice:

Another question specially applicable for you who are here to be under my training is - do I do my duty towards my superiors, to those who are placed in authority over me? Am I obedient to them, and respectful? Do I do as well as I possibly can all that they tell me to do, all that they gave me to learn?<sup>338</sup>

It is conceivable that the authoritarian tone adopted by MacNaghten revealed the ultimate goal of the establishment, which was to create 'a generation of rulers who

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<sup>336</sup> Article *The Pioneer*, 24 December 1870, quoted Copland, *British Raj*, p.134.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Chester MacNaghten, *Common Thoughts on Serious Subjects: Addresses delivered between the years 1887-9 to the elder boys of Rajkumar College in Kathiawar* (London, 1912), pp. 20-21. MacNaghten eventually broke down under the relentless strain of being the only European in the school.

would automatically look to their political agents for advice and invariably do the bidding of government'.<sup>339</sup>

In the internal organisation of the schools, the British clung faithfully to the 'familiar educational blueprint' which served the upper classes in England. The Mayo timetable was virtually indistinguishable from its British counterpart, however in the early years a shortage of European staff resulted in a different house system. Houses were supervised not by English housemasters but *musahibs* or *motamids*, native staff who were rarely teachers but responsible for matters such as tidiness and general behaviour.<sup>340</sup> At Mayo there were ten houses, organised to accommodate boys from the states which had endowed the individual buildings.<sup>341</sup> At Rajkumar the wings of the main building formed two houses and boys took rooms as they became available. Arrangements at Daly were similar with Rajputs, Kalthis and Muslims mixed together in four houses. At Aitchison, on the other hand, there were three houses for Muslims, Hindus and scholars respectively.<sup>342</sup>

The Annual Report for Mayo College for 1875-76 makes it clear that the system of separate boarding houses 'although doubtless a necessary deference to Rajput prejudice', had many disadvantages when it came to discipline and the promotion of friendly relations among the boys of different states.<sup>343</sup> It was felt that it was difficult to instil 'habits of cleanliness and decorum combined with a proper feeling of self reliance' into boys surrounded by a 'set of dirty and obsequious servants' during the entire time that they were absent from study.<sup>344</sup> In accordance with the original proposals for the school,

<sup>339</sup> Copland, *British Raj*, p. 135.

<sup>340</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 131.

<sup>341</sup> V. A. Stow, *A Short History of the Mayo College 1869-1942* (Ajmer, 1942), p. 3.

<sup>342</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 131.

<sup>343</sup> Extract from 'Annual Report on Mayo College 1875-76', quoted Stow, *Short History*, p. 5.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

boarding houses were maintained by the states which built them and boarding house staff were state, not college, employees, over whom the college had only partial control. Under the rules boys were allowed three private servants, however the rule seems to have been interpreted liberally from the start and many boys retained more than the prescribed number.<sup>345</sup> Individual arrangements had to be made for some pupils: the Maharajah of Kotah arrived at Mayo with 200 followers, for whom a special village was built, and the Maharajah of Alwar had a stable of over twenty polo ponies and four carriage horses.<sup>346</sup>

### ACADEMIC PROWESS

As at Eton, private tutors were a feature of the schools, however their role, influence and numbers varied from college to college. These tutors served as an instrument for British rule, in all cases had to be approved by the Government and were frequently selected by political officers. Occasionally, when a pupil's status merited it, they were Englishmen. Although Indian language and culture maintained a strong presence, English as a subject was 'a vital element of the curriculum' in all colleges. However differences of ability, motivation and facility with the language meant that pupils completed their studies at varying speeds.<sup>347</sup> The emphasis placed upon the importance of the use of the English language in princely government was stressed by successive viceroys. Speaking to the students at Mayo College in 1883 Lord Dufferin insisted that:

English is the official language of the Supreme Government under which you live, and of the books which deal with the public affairs, the domestic administration and

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Stow, *Short History*, p. 18.

<sup>347</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, pp. 131-2.

the general interests of your country, and it will be of continual use – indeed I may say of absolute necessity – to you in the positions which you may be called upon to fill. The keen-witted inhabitants of many other parts of India have fully appreciated this fact, and all their energies have consequently been devoted to the acquisition of English.<sup>348</sup>

Before 1890 the boys of Mayo College were prepared first for the entrance examination of Calcutta University and later for the matriculation examination of Allahabad University. The subjects studied were English, English and Indian History, Physical and General Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid and Mensuration, Sanskrit and Persian, and Hindi and Urdu.<sup>349</sup> E. Giles, Education Inspector of the Bombay Northern Division, in a report on Mayo, pointed out that this course was very long, difficult and uninteresting, and of little utility compared to other courses that might to advantage be chosen. As a foundation to a scholastic career it was satisfactory, but as an education in itself it left much to be desired. The instruction that a young ruler obtained at Mayo College was, in nine cases out of ten, all the education he would receive for the rest of his life.<sup>350</sup> Therefore, at Giles's suggestion, the course was changed, the university textbooks abandoned, and a special curriculum drawn up for the college. As far as Mathematics were concerned, only Arithmetic was taught until the top class, when students started Algebra, Euclid and Mensuration. The second language course remained much as before and pupils learned either Hindi or Urdu until the higher class when they could study either Sanskrit or Persian. In the lower classes Indian history was taught in Hindi by means of textbooks prepared especially for the college by a former master and in the upper classes this subject was taught in English, using the 'Elementary History of India'. English history was studied only in the first and second classes.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Sherring, *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 201.

<sup>349</sup> *Mayo College*, Vol. I, pp. 103-6.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

Geography was taught entirely through the drawing of maps. The world was divided into six divisions and a class was instructed to draw a map of each division, showing boundaries of land and water, countries and towns. When the map for a new year was learned, the map for the previous year was revised, thus when a boy reached the college class at the top of the school 'the whole world is portrayed in his mind's eye'.<sup>352</sup> At Giles's recommendation General Knowledge was introduced as a subject, using in the higher classes Paul Bert's 'First Book of Science' as a textbook, containing elementary studies of Natural History, Geology, Botany, Chemistry, Physics and Physiology. The headmaster, H. Sherring, remained convinced of the benefits of the addition of a scientific education, declaring that 'Profound ignorance of the ordinary laws of nature, with its resulting superstition, disease and poverty, is the prevailing characteristic of the Orient, and if the Mayo College has succeeded in illuminating this intellectual gloom with some stray rays of science, its work has not been in vain'.<sup>353</sup>

Two hours a day was given to the study of English. In Sherring's opinion each boy prided himself on his acquaintance with the 'ruling language' and when he returned home the extent of his general education was measured by his power of speaking, reading and writing English. By the time a student reached the college class he had learnt by heart over 1,000 lines of the 'masterpieces' of English literature. Each boy took it in turn to go through a page of reader daily and did his best to enunciate the exact meaning. The next day this passage was read again, but with other paragraphs added. In this way it was hoped that a boy would be able to form English sentences and in a few weeks learn to think in the language he was studying. In the two upper classes an attempt was made at original composition. Some subject likely to be of interest to the boys was chosen and, when the subject had been thoroughly discussed, each student

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<sup>352</sup> *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 107.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*



attempted to write his own opinions and impressions. In the college class the finishing touch was put to students' previous studies by reading Shakespeare and Tennyson, prose authors such as Dickens, Thackeray and Scott, and daily papers such as 'The Pioneer'.<sup>354</sup>

In the second class boys read Whitworth's law lectures, originally given to pupils of Rajkumar College and subsequently embodied in book form. The lectures treated penal law and criminal procedure and were deemed to be especially useful to young rulers who would be called upon to exercise judicial functions in their own states. In the first class Jevon's 'Primer of Political Economy' was studied. Sherring declared that:

The ideas of an inhabitant of India, even though he be the highly educated product of our Colleges and Schools, on such subjects as the proper use of charity, taxes, the functions of government, wages, rent, capital, the investment of money, banking, the causes of poverty and many others connected with his every-day life, are extremely vague and distorted.<sup>355</sup>

The study of political economy would force students to find reasons for their ideas and beliefs and learn to think for themselves 'which is the true aim of education'. The pupil's memory would not be 'stuffed with useless facts', moreover 'cramming of any kind was studiously avoided'.<sup>356</sup>

However academic standards at the princely colleges left much to be desired, as a result of professional complacency on the part of the staff and laziness on the part of both masters and pupils. Much of the curriculum was of 'dubious relevance' to the education of Indian princes. The teaching of English was not as thorough as it might have been and general studies suffered from a lack of goals.<sup>357</sup> Giles laid out bluntly further

<sup>354</sup> *Mayo College*, Vol. I, pp. 108, 110.

<sup>355</sup> *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 109.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> Mangan, '*Games Ethic*', p. 132.

reasons for poor intellectual standards in 1890 in a report on Mayo College. The Inspector found 'a tendency towards idleness and indifference due to a lack of any necessity to learn, pupils' prolonged absences from college, a disinclination to return at the end of holidays and antagonism towards the school within the boys' homes'.<sup>358</sup> However he was aware of the fact that, in estimating the value of the institution as a whole, attention should be directed 'not so much to what pupils learn as to what they are'. He was greatly impressed by the 'admirable training in discipline, truth and manliness', which sent the boys out as 'honest and straightforward gentlemen, who may become worthy rulers of their own people, and the loyal and enlightened subjects of the Empire'.<sup>359</sup> One area which was proving most successful was character training for leadership and, as at an English public school, the games field was the site for achievement.

#### MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO

Often struck by the idleness of the native ruler, the British wished above all to develop a physical and moral robustness in the allegedly effete sons of princes or nobles. The 1883 Report of the Commission on Indian Education stated that it was not intended to make the young chiefs great scholars, but to encourage in them 'a healthy tone and manly habits'.<sup>360</sup> Not surprisingly it was cricket which was deemed to combine the most

<sup>358</sup> Sherring, *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 77.

<sup>359</sup> *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 86. Emulating no doubt those English public school products who were 'worthy rulers' of the empire. As the Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, wrote to Curzon, 'I often ponder over the secret of young Englishmen being so extraordinarily successful as administrators and governors of races and countries other than their own; and I believe their success is more the result of the sense and spirit of fair play which the average Englishman possesses, but which is so much fostered early in life by public school training'. Hamilton to Curzon, 28 April 1899, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 158.

<sup>360</sup> Report of the Commission on Indian Education, 1883, p. 482, quoted Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 132-3.

efficacious moral and physical training. Sherring noted that the game 'formed half the existence of the Mayo College boy. It was apparently often played every day of the week including Sundays'.<sup>361</sup>

The ideal of manliness was pursued in the colleges by generations of public schoolmasters imported from England for the purpose. The epitome of such a master was Chester MacNaghten, a 'pioneer of the public school education of the feudatory chiefs'. MacNaghten came from a family with a long history of service in India. After an English education culminating in a Masters degree at Trinity College, Cambridge, he returned to the subcontinent in 1867 where he was tutor to the Maharajah of Darbhanga, the great Bengal *zamindar*, before joining Rajkumar College. As headmaster he attached the 'utmost value to games as a training in character'.<sup>362</sup> In his view they developed 'energy, promptitude, judgement, watchfulness, courage, generous emulation, appreciation of the merits of other and the highest standards of truthfulness and duty'.<sup>363</sup> A typical prize giving address emphasised the need to combine the moral and physical with the mental,

we have aimed at the training of a liberal character, the sort of training, *mutatis mutandis*, which characterises English Public Schools. We have wished, of course, that our boys may be scholars, but we wish that they may be much more than mere scholars, that their bodily faculties may be developed as well as those of their minds, that they may be practical men of the world, knowing the right and daring to do it, retaining, amid the influence of the western ideas, the chivalry of their Rajput ancestry.<sup>364</sup>

The emphasis upon manliness in the ethos of the princely colleges is perhaps somewhat surprising in the light of the fact that two of the colleges were founded to

<sup>361</sup> Sherring, *Mayo College*, p. 46.

<sup>362</sup> *The Times*, 11 May 1895, p.5, quoted Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 133. Macnaghten taught cricket to the famous Indian batsman Ranjitsinji, Jam-Saheb of Bhavnagar.

<sup>363</sup> Sir Bhavasinhji Takhtsinhji, Maharajah of Bhavnagar, *Forty Years of the Rajkumar College 1870-1910* (London, 1911), Vol. II, p.3.

<sup>364</sup> Address by Chester MacNaghten, *The Indian Magazine 1889*, 'Prize Giving at Rajkumar College by the Duke of Connaught'.

serve the boys of the Punjab and Rajputana, both classified by the British as breeding grounds for the 'warrior races' of India, as opposed to Bengal, deemed to be the home of the effeminate type of Indian. The people of the Punjab and Rajputana, whether defined by race, climate or personality, most resembled the British self-image. During an official visit to Multan the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, reported with favour upon the physical attributes of the natives, who possessed

greater vigour and more use of their lungs both in talking and running than one sees in Bengal - evidently, a more manly and a finer race. This is very striking to any one who inspects the schools in the two provinces; a Calcutta school is the perfection of order and quiet, but these Punjabee boys are as difficult to keep quiet as English boys, cheer and play cricket.<sup>365</sup>

However praise of Punjabi manliness was obviously unable to eradicate the generally accepted image of the effeminate Indian prince in the eyes of those seeking to produce Anglicised rulers at the princely colleges; and indeed ancient Indian practices and the somewhat hedonistic lifestyle of the nobility ensured that the fairly Spartan, games orientated public school existence was viewed by many upper class Indians both in the Punjab and Rajputana as most unpalatable. As the next section makes clear, there was also little enthusiasm on the part of rulers for Indian public education for their sons.

#### DURBAR ANTAGONISM

Throughout the century there was evidence of much resistance emanating from *darbars* against any form of princely education which removed a young ruler from the

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<sup>365</sup> Northbrook to Argyll, 14 November 1872, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 9.

palace environment, although matters gradually improved. The Local Education Committee return for Delhi College in 1845 reported an encouraging

diminution in the existing prejudices on the part of the Native Aristocracy, against our system of Public Education. Two youths of noble families, one a son of the Nawab of Jhujur, and the other a son of Rajah Sohun Loll, late Prime Minister to the King of Delhi, had been sent to the college and it was expected that more of the same grade would follow.<sup>366</sup>

Education reports throughout Delhi College's history continued to show that, in spite of the presence of some leading Muslim scholars on the staff and occasional examples of lavish Muslim patronage, the founders' original intention of attracting the sons of the displaced Muslim elites to the classrooms had never really been fulfilled.<sup>367</sup> Although some of the alumni from the pre-1857 classes won high reputations in scholarly circles in the second half of the century, most of the Muslim students were neither from *ashraf* backgrounds, nor did they make much impact in their subsequent careers. The enrolment of the relation of a *nawab* was certainly an occasion for comment, as for instance when the son of Nawab Faiz Muhammed Khan of Jhajjar chose to study at the college.<sup>368</sup> This was rare, since the Muslim aristocracy preferred private tuition for their sons. The sons of *ulama* families were also usually taught privately, albeit in some cases by Delhi College lecturers in their own time, or 'drawn in preference to the many renowned traditional *madrasas* of the city'.<sup>369</sup>

A clue to the unpopularity of Indian high schools was given in the General Review of Benares College for 1844-45 where:

A special class has been instituted to those people whose parents, being persons of wealth and rank, wish them to be kept separate from the general mass of the

<sup>366</sup> 'Local Education Report for Delhi College, 1845', in *General Report on Public Instruction in the N. W. Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1853-4*, V/24/905, p. 75.

<sup>367</sup> Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries* (Richmond, 1993), pp. 200-1

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

students. For this privilege, a monthly payment of five rupees, or such other sum as the Committee may direct, is demanded. The feeling which induces Natives of respectability to dislike their children mixing familiarly with those of a much inferior grade, is not thought to be unreasonable. Some feeling of the kind probably exists in every country. But there is much inconvenience necessarily attendant upon a special class, which requires special accommodation and separate instruction.<sup>370</sup>

There was criticism of the Agra College in 1846 from C. C. Fink, Superintendent of Indigenous Schools to the effect that schools such as the College, which offered free instruction, injured not only the indigenous schools by drawing away scholars who could pay for their education, but the College itself by making it accessible to the lower orders of the community, deterring 'respectable' people from sending their children there.<sup>371</sup>

However it is clear that the question of mixing with social undesirables was not a factor that taxed most princely families. For many *darbars* the mere departure of a young ruler from his state was perceived to have potentially disastrous consequences. In Sherring's view antagonism toward the princely colleges arose because the public school education of a future ruler tended to mean state officials' loss of influence and power. Within a state the

most influential men hope to increase their own influence in proportion as their chief's capacity is lessened; and to such persons the idea of an educated ruler means prevention of illicit gains instead of aggrandisement. The wish and desire and the aim and object of the evilly disposed men of power and status in any state are to retard the education of their master, and in this they are ably seconded by court sycophants who lose no opportunity of placing temptations to entice their leader astray.<sup>372</sup>

A tutor was often employed on the advice of some favourite *darbaries* who well understood that it was to their advantage to secure a man who would be under their

<sup>370</sup> *General Review of Benares College 1844-5*, V/24/905, p. 75.

<sup>371</sup> 'Local Education Report', V/24/905, p. 3.

<sup>372</sup> Sherring, *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 171.

control and would not interfere with their plans for securing their own advancement. As he had little authority the service of a man of 'intrinsic worth and independence of character' was not likely to be obtained. By some noble families the whole idea of educating princely youths was seen as inconsistent with their rank and position. Rajkumars were born 'to wield the sword, to command others, to rule and to live in clover on the properties of their ancestors'.<sup>373</sup>

One British observer wrote of the typical young prince:

From his boyhood everything about him combines to put education into the background. The influence of the *zenana* is generally opposed to any enlightenment. Early marriage with its hindrances and distractions ... [and] in some case hereditary instinct leads him to regard education as scarcely better than a disgrace'.<sup>374</sup>

Chester MacNaghten agreed that 'the *zenana* very often in the acts of Native Courts possesses a visible authority which its invisible presence does not prepare us to accept'.<sup>375</sup> The influence of female protagonists at court was evident in a lengthy correspondence in the 1890s concerning the Dowager Maharani of Indore who, against the wishes of Maharajah Holkar, vociferously opposed the education of his two nephews at Daly College. Holkar, in a letter to W. J. Cuningham, Foreign Secretary, of 1895 revealed an impressively modern attitude in denouncing his stepmother's interference in what he considered to be a matter of great importance:

You will agree with me that my nephews and illegitimate brother have been simply wasting their valuable time, which, in my opinion, should be devoted to education only. The consequent result is that they are surrounded by all sorts of evil influences and are becoming mischievous and troublesome ... What I would

<sup>373</sup> Narullah Khan, *The Ruling Chiefs of Western India and the Rajkumar College* (Bombay, 1898), pp. 8-9.

<sup>374</sup> The Rev. J. Johnston, *Abstract and Analysis of the Report of the Indian Education Commission*, p. 83, quoted Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 138.

<sup>375</sup> Article contributed to the *Calcutta Review* 1879, Vol. XLVIII, quoted in Bhavasinhji, *Forty Years*, Vol. VI, p. 11.

suggest is that they should be sent under proper guardianship either to Poona, Jabalpur or Allahabad High School, or to the Mayo College at Ajmere, and that I would remit to them their allowances through the Residency authorities. Once I had placed my illegitimate brother, Yadorao, in the Indore Daly College ... instead of remaining there he removed himself into the town on the pretext of sickness. I am sure that they will do the same again when kept under proper supervision, but this should not be heeded. I therefore request that you, as Foreign Secretary ... be good enough to help me insisting on the education of my nephews and illegitimate brother being commenced as soon as possible; otherwise the blame of neglecting their education will be placed on me.<sup>376</sup>

However, although R. J. Crosthwaite, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India was prepared to threaten the Dowager with an unfavorable report to the Government of India, the Viceroy himself was 'reluctant to offer advice on such a delicate matter'. Intervention in court politics, even to further princely education, was not to be undertaken lightly.<sup>377</sup>

Despite the rosy picture painted by Maharajah Holkar of discipline and dedication to work at the princely colleges, in 1891 the Education Inspector Giles made the point that Mayo College resembled one of the more aristocratic English public schools rather than an Indian high school, in that the students were freed from the 'stimulus of poverty and the necessity of employing education as a means of livelihood'.<sup>378</sup> The Inspector maintained that, if at Eton a large number of boys did as little work as possible, it was hardly surprising that at Mayo there was a tendency towards idleness or indifference, most marked among those students who joined the college at an age when their 'habits of life have become to some extent settled'.<sup>379</sup> The boys had no necessity to learn, the

<sup>376</sup> Letter from Holkar to W. J. Cuninghame, 25 January 1895, R/1/1/154. See also R/1/1/129. Holkar later revealed surprisingly firm views on the education he wished for his own son, 'a Prince should learn to read and write, to understand accounts and to go deep in the administration instead of becoming proficient in playing polo, football etc. In saying so it is not meant that I do not approve of these manly sports, but that they should have a secondary consideration'. Holkar to Viceroy 30 July 1900, R/1/1/253.

<sup>377</sup> Kharitas from Viceroy to Holkar, 28 March 1894 and 19 March 1895, R/1/1/154. The Indore Ranis were not to be trifled with, as the chapter on royal women makes clear.

<sup>378</sup> Quoted Sherring, *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 80.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*



class of society from which they were drawn was 'hitherto unaccustomed to literary effort' and home influences usually 'entirely wanting, or decidedly antagonistic, to such effort'.<sup>380</sup> Nevertheless in the opinion of Narullah Khan, an old boy of Rajkumar College and a Cambridge graduate, British efforts at princely education had gone far in overcoming difficulties which at first seemed 'insurmountable'.<sup>381</sup> Such difficulties included the reluctance of the chiefs to allow their sons to associate even with young men of their own rank and position, the 'paternal affection' which was such a deterrent to separation and engendered fears that the youths might become victims 'to the machinations of designing persons', and a false idea of their own dignity which led rulers to look down upon each other, even though they were of equal or nearly equal rank.<sup>382</sup>

Yet while some Indian rulers proved to be enthusiastic supporters of the colleges, many were indifferent or apathetic. The academic results of the first decades satisfied neither parents nor the Government of India. It was alleged that pupils received no solid instruction, acquired no taste for reading beyond 'illustrated papers', and speedily forgot almost everything they had been taught when they returned home.<sup>383</sup> Moreover there was inadequate control by the motamids in the boarding houses. The Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Sir Walter Lawrence, wrote that two Rajput boys who left Mayo College in 1894 had informed him 'that the boys drank and had intercourse with prostitutes' and 'ran a risk of becoming profligates', and Capt. Pinhey, Resident at Udaipur, also complained about the facility to obtain liquor, an inadequate knowledge of English and bullying between older and younger boys.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Khan, *Ruling Chiefs*, p. 3.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Chailly, *Administrative Problems*, p. 223.

<sup>384</sup> Quoted Durisotto 'Traditional Rule', pp. 49-50.

By the end of the nineteenth century, after some twenty years, the schools could only muster about 190 pupils in total.<sup>385</sup> Both the low numbers and the status of entrants produced disappointment. In 1897 it was noted with regret that at Mayo 'As regards rank and numbers, the chief drawback is that no heir or ruling chief from the three first class states of Udaipur, Jodhpur or Jaipur has attended the College, nor has any prince or *thakut* been entered from the States of Bundi or Dungaput'.<sup>386</sup> In 1901 Sir Walter expressed the opinion that the low number of pupils suggested 'the grand conception of Lord Mayo' had not yet 'commended itself to the Rajputs in spite of their loyalty to the English and their admiration of English customs'.<sup>387</sup> Mayo College was created, in part, to bring Rajputs into the public affairs of their states. However the college was offering its education not only to princes, but also to the great barons' sons who had neither the need nor the inclination for *darbar* employment, who scorned such employment as 'subservience to a chief who was only the first among his equal clan coparceners', and were in fact not employable by their *darbars* because the maharajahs feared to bring them too close to their *gadis*.<sup>388</sup>

Why were the 'ruling chiefs' prepared to contribute with such generosity to the building and running of the princely colleges when they were patently unprepared to send their offspring to such establishments? The significance of a display of largesse among

<sup>385</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 137.

<sup>386</sup> Sherring, *Mayo College*, Vol. I, p. 161.

<sup>387</sup> Sir Walter Lawrence, 'Confidential Report on Chiefs' Colleges', 31 August 1901, Curzon Collection, F111/257, p. 100. However for some Rajput princes there were less altruistic uses for colleges such as Mayo than mere education. As Edward Haynes points out in his study of traditional rulership in Alwar, the power of Maharajah Mungul Singh was more secure than that of any of his predecessors on the Alwar *gadi*. Following a period of rebellion of Alwar *thakurs* against their prince, the recalcitrant *thakurs* were forced out of the state, and their *jagirs* were resumed and regranted to younger and, in the eyes of the British, 'presumably more pliant heirs'. These young *jagirdars* were then sent to the newly established Mayo College to join Mungul Singh who had entered the school in 1875 as the first student. With the careful isolation of possibly dissenting Rajput lineages the Alwar ruler achieved a position that a British officer described as 'something more than *primus inter pares*, as there are no very great nobles whose power might, if combined, overshadow the throne, as is so often the case in the Rajput States'. Thomas Holbein Hendley, *Ulwar and its Art Treasures* (London, 1888), p. 5, quoted Edward S. Haynes, 'Alwar: Bureaucracy versus Traditional Rulership' in Jeffrey (ed.) *People, Princes*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>388</sup> Robert W. Stern, *The Cat and the Lion* (New York, 1988), p. 159.

Indian princes may well have played a major part in stimulating their generosity, despite the fact that for the great majority the tradition (and safety) of education within the palace walls was well-entrenched and unlikely to change before the twentieth century. In linking themselves to objects of public concern, such as schools (albeit schools for such an elite clientele), rulers could be seen to be meeting the needs of broad-based social and political welfare, as well as focusing attention on the giver. Sawai Ram Singh, Maharajah of Jaipur, had under his patronage Maharajah's College, which after the Mutiny became the premier institution in Rajputana for the recruitment and training of a modern professional and administrative class, and in 1861 he founded the Nobles College in Jaipur, anticipating by more than a decade the major British effort to educate the Rajput nobility.<sup>389</sup> Other educational beneficiaries of princely plenty were the Khalsa College of Amritsar, of which Hira Singh, Maharajah of Nabha and Rajindar Singh, Maharajah of Patiala were both patrons at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>390</sup> Subscriptions to such educational establishments, as well as those to the princely colleges, were well published and inevitably enhanced the status of the individual ruler. As is emphasised in the chapter on hierarchy and ritual, the royal gift was basic to statecraft in pre-colonial kingdoms and princes frequently supported both traditional and modern projects in an effort to maintain an aura of largesse.

For those royal and noble families who were prepared to send their sons to the princely colleges there was undoubtedly a certain amount of prestige involved. The volume of 'Chiefs and Ruling Families of Rajputana' of 1894 identifies at least twenty-six young rulers as having attended Mayo College. Individual biographies compiled by C. S. Bayley, the Political Agent for Bikaner, suggested that for some

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<sup>389</sup> Stern, *Cat and Lion*, p. 124.

<sup>390</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack, 'Punjab States, Maharajahs and Gurdwaras: Patiala and the Sikh Community' in R. Jeffrey, (ed.) *Princes, People*, pp. 177, 179.

members of the ruling class such an education was a prized commodity worth displaying.<sup>391</sup> However there is little to suggest that it made a significant difference to their later roles in life. Remarkably few *thakurs* applied themselves to duties over and above managing their estates, although Thakur Mangal Singh of Pokaran, having passed the University Entrance Examination, became a member of the Maharajah of Jodhpur's Council<sup>392</sup> and the son of Thakur Chatar Sal of Fathpur was employed in the state police.<sup>393</sup> Three of the jagirdars elected to the Jagir Council of Alwar in 1907, Daulat Singh of Khora, Phul Singh of Para and Sewai Singh of Chimraolim, were graduates of the College and, leading the bureaucratic opposition to the same Council, was the Judicial Minister, Durjan Singh of Jaoli, also an alumnus of Mayo.<sup>394</sup> For some old boys, however, the benefits of an English education bore no fruit: Zalim Singh Bahadur, Maharajah of Jhalawar had his ruling powers withdrawn in 1887 'having failed to administer his government in accordance with the principles laid down for his guidance' and his administration was entrusted to a British officer, as had been the case during his minority.<sup>395</sup>

## CURZON'S CURE

By 1902 Lord Curzon was complaining that only twelve out of the thirty-two 'ruling chiefs' of Kathiawar had been educated at Rajkumar College.<sup>396</sup> Moreover most of the rulers of the Punjab failed to send their sons to Aitchison College, and Daly College

<sup>391</sup> *Chiefs and Leading Families in Rajputana*, Calcutta: Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, 1894, Introduction.

<sup>392</sup> *Chiefs and Leading Families*, p. 9.

<sup>393</sup> *Chiefs and Leading Families*, p. 87.

<sup>394</sup> Haynes, 'Alwar' in Jeffrey, ed., *People, Princes*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>395</sup> *Chiefs and Leading Families*, p. 86.

<sup>396</sup> Sir Thomas Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from his Speeches as Viceroy and Governor General 1898-1905* (London, 1906), p. 244.

never attracted the princes and nobility of the larger central states such as Gwalior, Bhopal and Dewas. V. A. S. Stow, headmaster of Mayo College in the 1940s, commented that there had always been a fluctuation in numbers. The presence of the heir apparent of a state at the College tended to result in an influx of other boys from that state and when the heir left the others followed him. Alternatively, some apparently trivial incident could lead to a withdrawal of support from a certain state.<sup>397</sup>

However to a great extent the ruling classes had shown that they wished to cling to their own culture and were far from keen to give their children an English education. Ganga Singh, Maharajah of Bikaner, complained that the long periods of absence at school contributed to an estrangement from his people and his responsibilities as a ruler, while the Council of Regency in the state enjoyed too much freedom in its decisions. Ganga Singh did not send his son Sadul Singh to Mayo and also discouraged his nephew, Karni Singh from going there.<sup>398</sup> As a regular financial contributor to the college he encouraged other princes to carry more weight in decisions concerning education, and his comment that 'science must be compulsory' suggested that his negative experience at Mayo could be due to what he perceived as scant attention to the new demands of princely rule.<sup>399</sup> By 1900 complaints of the standards in the colleges were circulated widely. The Gaekwar of Baroda criticised the English public school model in the journal *East and West* in January 1902, and his criticisms were reproduced in *The Voice of India* and *The Kathiawar Times*.<sup>400</sup> As a result Curzon was under no illusion as to the rulers' dissatisfaction with the 'high cost and general irrelevance' of the education provided.<sup>401</sup>

<sup>397</sup> Stow, *Short History*, p. 20.

<sup>398</sup> Durisotto, 'Traditional Rule', p. 50.

<sup>399</sup> 'Report of the Proceedings of the Conference at Ajmer in connection with Chiefs' Colleges, 10-16 March 1904', enclosed A. H. T. Martindale to Sec. GoI, 5 April 1904, Curzon Collection, F112/442.

<sup>400</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 140.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.* Curzon considered that *thakurs* and *jagirdars* should be trained in Agricultural Science, Civil

The Viceroy called a conference in Calcutta in 1902 to discuss the reform of the constitution and curriculum of the colleges.<sup>402</sup> The conference lasted for four days and was attended by principal political officers, representatives of the native chiefs and heads of existing colleges. In his opening speech Curzon laid out what were in his opinion the three main cases for the paucity of pupils in the colleges. Firstly, the deeply embedded conservatism of the states, enforcing the tradition that young rulers or nobles should be trained among their own people and supported on the one hand by the strength of the *zenana*, which was alarmed at the idea of 'emancipated individuality', and on the other by the court, which was conscious of the loss of prerogative and authority which would result if the 'young recruits from the west start to stir up the sluggish Eastern pools'.<sup>403</sup> Secondly, the fact that college education was too costly and many rulers had been affected by famines and other adversities. If families found that it was considerably cheaper to educate their sons by private tutors within the home it would not be unnatural for them to adopt that course of action. Thirdly, it was doubtful whether the rulers or nobles were entirely satisfied with the class and quality of the education. Too much appeared to be spent on bricks and mortar and too little on tuition. The Viceroy demanded of the college committees:

How can the best pupils be expected without the best teachers and how can the best teachers be forthcoming unless you offer them adequate prospects and pay? Where are the Public Schoolmen, and where are the University graduates, European and Indian, upon your staffs and what is their number?<sup>404</sup>

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Engineering, Land Records and knowledge of stock and plants, while for young princes emphasis should be placed on History, Geography, Maths., Political Economy and Science. Speech by the Viceroy Opening Conference on Chiefs' Colleges, Calcutta, 27 January 1902, F111/257.

<sup>402</sup> L/PS/10/5 is a huge file, devoted entirely to the future policy for the Chief's Colleges following the impetus of the Conference.

<sup>403</sup> Quoted Bhavasinji, *Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 75.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* In 1889 when there was a vacancy for the principal of Rajkumar College the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, wrote that it was of the 'utmost importance that we should get a first-rate man to take charge' and wondered if there was a 'really strong candidate in England'. Unfortunately the salary was hardly compelling at a mere Rs. 750 per month. Lansdowne to Cross, August 1889, Lansdowne Collection, D558, Vol. 2.

Later in 1902 a Government of India circular to provincial governments suggested among other recommendations that 'both European and Native staffs should be strengthened and improved, an effort being made to procure English masters of the highest educational and social standing and to select for the Native staff Native gentlemen of good family and a liberal education'.<sup>405</sup> A further conference was held at Ajmer in 1904. The aims of the changes suggested were to improve academic standards, to make the curriculum more relevant to the needs of future Indian rulers and at the same time to make the colleges even more like English public schools and thus raise their tone. One of Curzon's actions was to reduce Daly to the status of a feeder college for Mayo in 1903, but reforms improved the school to such an extent that in 1905, at the request of the local chiefs, Daly was enlarged and raised again to the status of a major college.<sup>406</sup> By 1912 the numbers at the colleges had risen to a total of 413.<sup>407</sup>

The relatively low academic standards set by the princely colleges in the late nineteenth century were indeed to some extent dictated by the educational backgrounds of those who taught in them. Although the first headmaster of Rajkumar College, Chester MacNaghten, had a Cambridge degree, his original staff consisted of five Indian teachers and no Europeans, which had obvious disadvantages when it came to instruction in English subjects. Writing in 1942 V. A. S. Stow, headmaster of Mayo College (having been principal of Rajkumar College), commented that the revised 1892 curriculum was not very different from the curriculum of the 1940s, however fifty years earlier the standard appeared to him to have been appreciably lower.<sup>408</sup> The first three principals of Mayo College, Major St. John, Major Powlett and Colonel Loch, were all military

<sup>405</sup> Quoted in Bhavasinhi, *Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 88.

<sup>406</sup> Raleigh, *Curzon in India*, p. 234.

<sup>407</sup> *Progress of Education in India*, Sixth Quinquennial Review, 1907-12, p. 227.

<sup>408</sup> Stow, *Short History*, p. 11.

officers seconded from the Political Department and, as has been discussed at the start of this chapter, were as such probably less fit to attend to the scholarship of their charges than an officer of the Indian Civil Service who had himself been subject to a more rigorous education. Colonel Loch himself admitted that the quality of teaching was poor; both he and the headmaster, H. Sherring, were neither public school men nor university graduates, 'Twenty-three years ago I was appointed to the Mayo College as Principal ... with, I fear, no other qualifications than a love of discipline and an affection for natives engendered from a service of thirteen years in my old regiment, the 19<sup>th</sup> Bengal Lancers'.<sup>409</sup>

Only with the reorganisation of Mayo College under Curzon in 1903 was the need for higher qualified teachers emphasised. Provision was made for a teaching staff of twelve, four English teachers and eight Indians. The English staff, while remaining members of the Indian Educational Service, were to form a separate branch of the service to be known as the Chiefs' Colleges cadre, especially recruited for such colleges and serving under the Political Department. A university degree appears to have been an essential requirement for the branch. Two English assistant masters, were recruited from England: F. J. Portman, a graduate of Oxford<sup>410</sup> and S. F. Madden, a graduate of Cambridge. The early death of Madden resulted in the appointment of another Oxford graduate, C. H. H. Twiss, who was at the time teaching at Aligarh College.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Conference for Chiefs' Colleges, Calcutta, 27 January 1902, Part II, Curzon Collection, F112/442.

<sup>410</sup> Portman excelled at running, tennis, cricket and racquets. Unfortunately his enthusiasm reached such heights that he literally ran himself to death racing with his pupils before breakfast during their training for the school sports day. *The Radleian*, 3 March 1906, p. 314, quoted Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 136.

<sup>411</sup> Stow, *Short History*, pp. 9,11. In addition to each of the permanent regular English staff sanctioned for the four Chiefs' Colleges the Government of India instituted a leave reserve of first one, and later two, English assistant masters who, when not wanted elsewhere, were attached to Mayo. Under these conditions an Oxford graduate, W. Fanshawe, joined the staff of Mayo College in 1908 and remained there until 1926 when he left to take up the appointment of principal of Daly College. The incoming principal of Mayo in 1917 was F. A. Leslie Jones who had been principal of Aitchison College, a further example of the circularity of academic appointments within the Chiefs' Colleges.



The education of young Indian rulers no doubt benefited from the fact that the policy of indirect rule was very much a public school balance between custom and efficiency. In his study of British leadership and the public school tradition, Rupert Wilkinson considers that the essence of indirect rule was that it respected traditional communities and traditional authorities. The policy was not without drawbacks, in that on the whole it deterred the British from making radical efforts to train native bureaucracies and from founding educational systems which would eventually have supported democratic government. Such innovations would have disrupted indigenous authority and many British officials felt some personal loyalty to native chiefs and princes with whom they closely worked.<sup>412</sup> Certainly by dealing exclusively with royal and aristocratic families, there was little demand for the princely colleges to offer schooling for bureaucratic and professional employment. During a ruler's minority a temporary administration was frequently set up, based on the larger bureaucratic machinery of British India, ensuring that there was no great need for a prince to be deeply involved in the administrative affairs of his state. When Jai Singh, Maharajah of Alwar returned from Mayo College in 1897, he brought a view of an westernised Rajput ruler which conflicted with the independent role which the rationalised bureaucracy had made for themselves in the Alwar government. The Alwar state servants were reluctant to accept a reassertion of the Maharajah's power, in either modern or traditional terms, and retained enough

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Stow, *Short History*, pp. 36-7. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a prevalence of masters who had been educated at public schools. J. C. Mayne, educated at Tonbridge and Oxford, taught at Brighton College and several Indian schools before becoming principal of Rajkumar College in 1903. C. W. Waddington, educated at Charterhouse and Oxford, was appointed principal of Mayo College in 1903 and held the post until 1917. Three of the Indian public school headmasters were assistant masters at Marlborough at one time or another: F. A. Leslie Jones and V. A. S. Stow at Mayo, and E. C. Marchant at Daly College. Mangan, *Games Ethic*, p. 217. The Annual Report for Rajkumar College for 1904-5 emphasised that the staff had been considerably strengthened during the year: there was a new Vice Principal, P. Hide, with a degree from Oxford, in conjunction with two assistant masters, both with degrees from Bombay University. Bhavasinghji, *Forty Years*, Vol. IV, p. 165.

<sup>412</sup> Rupert Wilkinson, *Gentlemanly Power: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (New York, 1964), pp 102-3.

influence to oppose him in his efforts.<sup>413</sup>

While Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, had hoped that through education the 'better class' of natives would not only be trained in 'noblesse oblige' but also fitted for employment 'in our services'<sup>414</sup> (and presumably states' services), the British officers who made Mayo College's policy were decidedly uninterested in preparing the sons of impecunious and obscure Rajput cadet families and the younger boys of ordinary *jagirdars* for gainful employment. One thing the imperial government wanted Mayo College not to be was a university preparatory school. The universities belonged to the middle class, the *babus* about whose loyalties the British had increasing doubts. The princely colleges were meant to belong to those whose loyalties the British were courting. In 1876 the viceroy created a few posts in various government offices to be filled by 'young men of rank and education', but the government would not allow the princely colleges to prepare their students for university matriculation. Until it would, they could only 'limp along' trying vainly to transform the sons of a handful of princes and nobles who were not greatly interested in attending at all and 'still less in being transformed into a nobility with serious obligations to anything but their families and their families' estates'.<sup>415</sup> Mayo College came finally to resemble an Indian Eton and function like one only during the first decades of the twentieth century, when the British government gave way to the princes' request to allow the college to become a university preparatory school for Rajputs who wanted careers for their sons.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Haynes, 'Alwar', in Jeffrey, (ed.) *People, Princes*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>414</sup> Quoted Stern, *Cat and Lion*, p. 159.

<sup>415</sup> *Cat and Lion*, p. 159.

<sup>416</sup> *Cat and Lion*, pp. 159-60.

## CONCLUSION

The British probably performed as well as they could when it came to individual princely education at the end of the nineteenth century. In some cases it was remarkable, bearing in mind the highly conservative, tradition-bound nature of Indian *durbars* and the extraordinary power wielded by the *zenanas*, how easily the Government of India was able to convey to royal families the desirability of palace schools based on English models and of English tutors imparting ideas of a radically different nature to those of native tutors formerly employed in the same role. In some ways for the first generation of young princes to be exposed to such an education the conservative nature of royal Indian life was a saving grace. In the few cases where western views were too vociferously imparted by English tutors and too readily accepted by their pupils the young rulers tended to be stranded in a 'no man's land' in which they fitted neither into a western nor an oriental template: Sayajirao, the Gaekwar of Baroda, used his British education to adopt an independent, modernising stance within his state which proved unacceptable to the wary paramount power. Neither in an individual palace environment nor in the princely colleges was education aimed to achieve a particularly high academic standard, due often to a lack of intellectual rigour and corresponding lack of expectations on the part of those teaching. However it could be argued that during such a seminal period of transition between traditional and westernised rule teaching on more sophisticated lines would have proved too mentally demanding for pupils lacking exposure to English language and culture, and even less acceptable to royal families.

In the case of the princely colleges, the British approach was in many ways hugely arrogant in supposing that, however warmly they may have admired some aspects of English society, Indian princes and noblemen would wish to emulate an English

education. The character building elements of the public school with boys in mixed houses, a Spartan style of living and an emphasis on sport must have engendered an inevitable reluctance to leave a somewhat sybaritic lifestyle, particularly if there was encouragement from the *zenana* and *darbar* officials to eschew any exposure to western ideas. Moreover to the first generation of young rulers, used to a rigid, religion-based tutelage at home, the indigestible mixture of English subjects must have seemed an unappetising prospect. However for the members of the Indian ruling classes who did attend the princely colleges, the true failure of the system lay in the fact that there were virtually no opportunities to put their newly found liberal teaching into practice. As will be pointed out in the chapter on administration there was little support from the Political Department for a ruler's modern role in a state which was dominated by a powerful Minister and bureaucracy and too great a demand for reform to allow sufficient time for a newly educated prince to develop into an effective ruler. By the start of the twentieth century only a handful of rulers had been given the opportunity to master the necessary skills to be able to control their administrations and to demonstrate that their education in British hands had been a worthwhile exercise.

Commenting on the benefits of an Indian public school education, as an old boy of Rajkumar College Narullah Khan declared that there was

evidence that the critical faculty has been developed amongst an Oriental people, owing to the material and moral advancement which society is undergoing under the enlightened British administration . . . . To recommend and support a policy which will effect reforms, diffuse education and enlightened ideas, encourage culture and abolish old customs which are unsuitable to the wants and needs of the present is therefore a duty especially incumbent upon educated and thinking men.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Khan, *Ruling Chiefs*, p. v.

In his view 'anarchy was the rule rather than the exception and the people groaned under misgovernment' in the states before British supremacy was established.<sup>418</sup> However if by the end of the nineteenth century 'anarchy' in the states had to some extent been overcome, it was due less to the influence of the western education 'diffused' to traditional rulers than to the education in British India of a more humble breed of bureaucrats who were able speedily and effectively to take over the government of a state.

This chapter has provided many examples of the negative approach of palace women towards the introduction of western ideas. The following part of the princely life cycle, dealing with marriage and royal women, makes it clear that such negativity was by no means universal. By subscribing to western ideology a small number of royal females proved able to wield considerable power to contribute to the British goal of 'good government'.

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<sup>418</sup> *Ruling Chiefs*, p. 1.

## MARRIAGE AND ROYAL WOMEN

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To the Victorians the state of moral degeneration of India's women was visibly represented by the *zenana* and the veil.<sup>419</sup> Thomas Metcalf considers that, confined to a life of languid idleness in closed rooms, hidden from view, India's women were seen by Victorians as suffused with 'an unhealthy sexuality and a disabling passivity'.<sup>420</sup> In the same vein, in his study of the 'imperial imagination' Lewis D. Wurgaft suggests that, more than any other Indian institution, the locked doors of the *zenana* symbolised the barrier between British society and the unsettling mysteries of native life.<sup>421</sup> On a practical level the British in the nineteenth century were particularly concerned with bringing the Indian woman out of the darkness and into the light. Wurgaft maintains that one part of the impulse behind this need for reform was genuinely humanitarian. Another part of it helped to rationalise the British conviction that 'social rather than political reform was necessary for genuine progress' and only Britain could guide India to that end.<sup>422</sup> However there was a third element in the commitment to reform, the need to bring Indian sexuality into a 'more open and accessible sphere, where it could be controlled and tailored to imperial requirements'.<sup>423</sup>

Palaces were considered to be riddled with mystery and intrigue, often permeated with sex and excess, and rulers were frequently pictured surrounded by servants egging them on to uncontrolled sensuality or even debauchery. Travelling as a journalist in the states

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<sup>419</sup> Purdah is a Persian word which literally means a 'curtain' or 'screen'. In popular use it applies to the use of the veil among Muslim women as well as seclusion within the household.

<sup>420</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 94.

<sup>421</sup> Lewis D. Wurgaft, *The Imperial Imagination: Magic and Myth in Kipling's India* (Middletown 1983), pp. 51-53.

<sup>422</sup> *Imperial Imagination*, p. 53.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

of Rajputana, Rudyard Kipling was constantly oppressed by the configurations of the native princes' palaces. In the palace of Amber he found 'crampt and darkened rooms, the narrow smoothwalled passages with recesses where a man might wait for his enemy unseen, the maze of ascending and descending stairs leading nowither, the ever present screen of marble tracery that may hide or reveal so much', suggesting that 'it must be impossible for one reared in an Eastern palace to think straightly or speak freely'.<sup>424</sup>

In the nineteenth century British architects found rational motives for bringing about a change in the architecture of princely palaces. Sir Lepel Griffin, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, wrote that in the past a palace had been required to offer 'protection against attack from without and privacy to a very large female population within'.<sup>425</sup> The first of these requirements no longer existed and the second was rapidly losing its force, as chiefs become 'content with one wife and do not need the 100 rooms and hazy labyrinths of an Oriental *zenana*'. For those princes, Sir Lepel continued,

whose minds have been enlightened by English training, the old, and it may be, picturesque designs of native palaces are odious. They cannot breathe in the confined rooms and narrow passages which were good enough for their fathers. They demand well-ventilated rooms, light and air, wide staircases and imposing halls. Such conveniences find no place in the conventional designs of native architecture.<sup>426</sup>

It was suggested that, once incorporated into the new order of the Raj, with his values and expectations appropriately transformed, an Indian ruler would inevitably find an old insalubrious palace unsuited to his new moral transparency and, like him, the female members of his household would be exposed to the 'light and air' of which they were deprived in the *zenana*.

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<sup>424</sup> Rudyard Kipling, 'From Sea to Sea', *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (New York, 1940). Vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>425</sup> Lepel Griffin, letter of 29 January 1887 in *The Pioneer*, Allahabad, 5 February 1887, pp. 4-5.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*

This chapter of the princely cycle has two sections. The first deals with the efforts of British officials to eradicate the more unwholesome sexual aspects of palace life through the regulation of royal marriages. It suggests that political officers removed princely authority by masterminding marriage alliances and by attempting to apply western constraints to existing royal marriage practice. The second section discusses the proposition that, in contrast to the Victorian view expressed by Metcalf, far from displaying a 'disabling passivity' the women of the royal *zenanas*, often ironically by acting as a conduit for British liberal ideology, were capable of wielding a degree of power in affairs of state which was remarkable not only by Indian but also by British norms of the time.

## **MARRIAGE**

### **EARLY BRITISH IMPACT**

The British system of indirect rule affected all aspects of royal practice, influencing both the motives behind and the contracting of royal marriages. One of the first casualties of British intervention was the practice of polygamy, which declined as a result of general British policy towards the Indian states rather than a deliberate British moral crusade.

Rajputana provides an interesting model of polygamy in that the practice assumed particular importance in the region, due to the military and political problems that the Rajput chiefs faced in the creation, expansion and consolidation of their territories and the social structure they evolved to meet the situation. The major Rajput clans came from outside Rajasthan and conquered lands from other ruling groups like the Bhils.



Subsequently they fought continuously against each other for the further expansion of their territories.<sup>427</sup> The Rajput chiefs adhered to a social system based on kinship and clan which served to keep them united for purposes of military strength. The recruitment base was narrowed down to the individual clan and within this restricted field the supply of manpower was only possible if there was an adequate number of male offspring.<sup>428</sup> The Rajputs also used marriage to form alliances with other clans to expand their area of influence and military strength. The marriages of Rajput chiefs were not arrangements between individuals, but two houses, and political relationships were forged through matrimonial agreements.<sup>429</sup>

Although the Moguls established their rule over the Rajput rulers through informal treaties and matrimonial relations, this did not bring about any fundamental alteration in the political system, other than loosening the clan bonds.<sup>430</sup> With the coming of the British, Rajput rule underwent important changes. In concluding precisely written treaties during the first decades of the nineteenth century the British took upon themselves the responsibility of safeguarding the territory of the Rajput princes, under which the rulers agreed to act in subordination to the British government. In her study of Rajput courts Varsha Joshi makes it clear that polygamy lost its appeal as political marriages lost their use, 'The clan army no longer had a role. The concept of having more male progeny to increase fighting strength had lost its relevance'.<sup>431</sup> Moreover under British rule the Rajput *jagirdars* were particularly sensitive to the fact that a large number of children would result in the fragmentation of *jagirs*, as there was now no possibility of territorial expansion.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Varsha Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs* (Jaipur, 1995), p. 39.

<sup>428</sup> *Polygamy and Purdah*, p. 40.

<sup>429</sup> *Polygamy and Purdah*, p. 56.

<sup>430</sup> *Polygamy and Purdah*, p. 55.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

Under Lord Bentinck zealous British reform resulted in further intervention in Indian royal marriage practice with the enactment of the abolition of *sati*<sup>433</sup> in 1829, which had a particular impact on royal widows. *Sati* resulted from the political and economic circumstances of the polygamous marriage system and the hierarchical structure of the *zenana*. On the death of a chief, the mother of the son who succeeded to the *gadi* enjoyed higher status and privileges over the other *rani*s. In the case of a ruler being a minor she was designated queen regent and in that capacity all the powers of administration were vested in her. The life of a widowed *rani* whose son was not heir was dramatically degraded and, like other Hindu widows, many restrictions in relation to dress, food and physical movement were imposed upon her.<sup>434</sup> The instances of self-immolation were relatively rare after the first decades of the nineteenth century, partly due to the decrease of polygamy and partly due to British use of sheer constraint where warranted.<sup>435</sup> When Maun Singh, Maharajah of Jodhpur died in 1848 one *rani*, four concubines and one female slave committed *sati*. However his successor, Maharajah Tukht Singh, left on his death in 1873 about 28 legal and 15 illegal wives as well as an 'immense number' of slave girls, yet, as a result of British orders to lock and guard the doors of the *zenana*, not a single woman attempted self-immolation.<sup>436</sup>

#### CHOICE OF BRIDE

As the nineteenth century progressed less emphasis was placed by the British on reform than on the desirability of regulating royal marriages and broking sound political matches motivated by, in British eyes, good judgment rather than the Machiavellian

<sup>433</sup> The self-immolation of a Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyre.

<sup>434</sup> 'Polygamy and Purdah', pp. 141-2.

<sup>435</sup> 'Polygamy and Purdah', p. 148.

<sup>436</sup> Offg. Pol. Agent Marwar and Jaisalmer to Offg. AGG Rajputana, 3 February 1873, R/2/182/359.

intrigues of individual *durbars*. There was hope that through the introduction of western ideas on, for example, monogamy, the lax moral standards which existed in many Indian palaces could be considerably tightened. The Government of India made it clear that it expected to be well informed of forthcoming royal alliances. When the Nawab of Rampur declared that it was a curtailment of his rights to divulge details of his various marriages, it was seen by British officials as a 'curious perversion' on his part, since it was understood that the Government of India needed such information in order to deal with problems of succession.<sup>437</sup> Indeed the matter of succession emerged as a matter of considerable importance in the case of the Nawab of Rampur. Much official correspondence was generated by the question of whether or not the Nawab was a Shiite and his son by an informal marriage to a concubine therefore able to qualify as a legitimate heir.<sup>438</sup>

Similarly, when it was discovered that the proposed wedding of Scindia, Maharajah of Gwalior, to a girl from a Tanjore family had been negotiated in secret by the President of the Regency Council and the Regent Maharani, the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India expressed great displeasure, since the Government of India had a responsibility in the matter of all important marriage negotiations and needed information on family, age and other details of the parties concerned.<sup>439</sup> It appeared that the marriage plans had been deliberately hidden from the Government of India with the 'real object' of getting the Maharajah out of his guardian's hands as soon as possible.<sup>440</sup> Scindia was thirteen years old and the girl eleven, and although the ceremony was to

<sup>437</sup> W. J. Cunningham, Sec. GoI, FD to T. Stoker, Chief Sec. to Govt. of NWP and Oudh, 9 February 1898, R/2/783/18.

<sup>438</sup> See R/2/801/3. Referring to a *muta* or temporary marriage permitted by the law of the Ithna Asharis, making up the majority branch of Shiites, but not sanctioned elsewhere in Islam. The temporary marriage is contracted for a fee received by the woman, rather than a dowry. In the 1977 Satyajit Ray film *The Chess Players* a British officer suggests that the real meaning of the word *muta* is 'enjoyment'.

<sup>439</sup> A. Martindale, 1st Asst. AGG CI, to Res. Gwalior, 26 December 1888, R/2/750/14.

<sup>440</sup> Major David Barr, Resident Gwalior, to F. Henvey, AGG CI, 17 January 1889, R/2/750/14.

take place within the next month or so there was no intention of allowing the young ruler to live with his bride for some years.<sup>441</sup> The President of the Council of Regency, Babu Sahib Jadu, had suggested that she lived in one of the palaces in the meantime, however the Resident, Major David Barr, was of the opinion that she should return to her parents. Had she been of a good family, the marriage would have taken place at her father's house, but 'being of small account' she was 'to be consigned like a bale of goods, to the keeping of the Maharani'.<sup>442</sup> There was a strong probability that she would reach puberty in two years when Hindu religion and custom would require the Maharajah to live with her, after which all further efforts to educate the boy would be futile.<sup>443</sup>

In fact the Tanjore bride was subsequently found to be twelve or more years old and therefore agreed by all to be unsuitable. It was suggested that the Government of India should take advantage of the situation by informing the Maharani Regent that in the interests of Scindia's education, training and general welfare, the ruler's future bride should be at least five years younger than him.<sup>444</sup> A somewhat unsuitable consort for a chief of such an 'exalted position' was eventually found in Satara, having exhausted the princely families of Baroda, Kolhapur, Nagpur, Tanjore and others, however the Viceroy was disinclined to forbid the match, as 'direct interference in such a matter should, if possible, be avoided'.<sup>445</sup>

The words 'direct interference' were open to interpretation. Political officers on the whole appeared to need little encouragement to enter into the cut and thrust of marriage arrangements between states. In 1896 British political officers were involved in intense

<sup>441</sup> Barr to Henvey, 12 January 1889, R/2/750/14

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Barr to Henvey, 17 January, 1889, R/2/750/14..

<sup>444</sup> Barr to Henvey, 27 January 1889 R/2/750/14.

<sup>445</sup> Henvey to Barr, 24 October 1890, R/2/750/14. Obviously the royal families of Satara and Nagpur were still relatively socially acceptable despite the fact that the states were annexed by the British in the 1850s.

diplomatic negotiations to marry one of the Mysore princesses to the Maharao of Kotah, aged twenty two, who was looking for a wife over thirteen with five *lakhs* of dowry to cover the wedding expenses. Colonel Loch, Principal of Mayo College, (who, as is cited in the chapter on princely education, was by his own admission better fitted for personnel work than academia) telegraphed to the Resident in Mysore that in his opinion the young man possessed an 'honest and absolutely faithful disposition [sic] gentle bright sympathetic and most thoughtful health excellent has no signs whatever of any hereditary disease his personal views are I know entirely in favour of monogamy'.<sup>446</sup> However the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana reported that there was no chance of such an alliance succeeding at this stage, due to the conservatism of ruling families in Rajputana and prejudice over matters of caste and other social questions.<sup>447</sup> This proved to be the case and the Maharajah's three sisters eventually married Ursus, members of a lesser branch of the Mysore royal family.<sup>448</sup>

The vexed question of finding an appropriate royal partner for their brother was illustrated by a report sent to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, from the Resident at Mysore, Donald Robertson, on the negotiations in 1897 for the Maharajah of Mysore's marriage:

At one time there seemed some chance of an alliance with Baroda. The Maharani favoured the idea, and I was given to understand that the Gaekwar would have acquiesced. An insuperable difficulty arose, however, in the tender age of the girl. She is only five years old and it would hardly have been prudent to bind the young Maharajah here to celibacy for seven or eight years more.<sup>449</sup> A marriage with Baroda would have extinguished, for all time, the chances of a matrimonial alliance with a good Ruling Family in Rajputana, but, as Your Excellency is aware, the prospects of such a match are exceedingly remote. The Diwan next tried Cutch. The Rao is, I

<sup>446</sup> Col. Loch to W. Mackworth Young, Res. Mysore, 24 December 1896, R/2/29/273.

<sup>447</sup> H. S. Barnes, Gol to W. Mackworth Young, 30 April 1896, R/2/30/274.

<sup>448</sup> Sir Donald Robertson, Res. Mysore, 'Secret Notes on Mysore' 25 September 1903, R/1/1/1064.

<sup>449</sup> Although the Government of India's Age of Consent Act of 1891 is not mentioned in Crown Representative Records, at the end of the nineteenth century it appears to have been rigidly adhered to by British officials in Indian *durbars*. Political officers insisted upon the prohibition of consummation of marriage for girls below the age of twelve when making post-nuptial arrangements in royal households. The Gaekwar initiated the Infant Marriage Prevention Act in Baroda in 1904.

believe, a good Rajput and everything promised favourably. A deputation was indeed to start thence for Mysore, when it was discovered that the Mysore and Cutch families both claim to belong to the same gotra, or sect, of Kshatryas. Marriages within the same gotra are prohibited ... the objection as regards Cutch applies, unfortunately, with equal force to the other Bombay States, which are branches of that House. There are, however, two or three more eligible Chiefships left in Bombay, an alliance with one of whom may serve as a stepping stone eventually to something better in Rajputana, and these the Diwan is now exploiting. We may take it that any marriage outside the circle of the Arsoos [Ursus], who are the poor relations of the Mysore Ruling House and who have hitherto held the field as candidates for matrimonial favours, will be strenuously objected to locally, but Her Highness professes to fully appreciate the wisdom of importing a new strain of blood into Mysore.<sup>450</sup>

A confidential memorandum from the Dewan of Mysore in July 1898 listed the requirements for those in '*loco parentis*' making a selection of possible brides for the Maharajah. Top of the list were the purity of Kshatriya blood, the personal health and appearance of the bride, the respectability and status of the family and, finally, the character, temper and disposition of the candidate.<sup>451</sup> The Maharani Regent was well aware of the great benefit which would accrue to her children and the Mysore royal family of marriage alliances with Rajput families in the north of India, despite the inevitable unpopularity that such matches would produce in the local community.<sup>452</sup> Regardless of the failure of the Maharajah's sisters to find Rajput husbands, a delegation was despatched from Mysore to Rajkot, consisting of a high ranking member of the Council, the Maharani's brother, the Civil Surgeon in Bangalore and a palace official, to seek the 'good advice' of the Bombay Government and in particular that of the Political Agent in Kathiawar, Colonel J. M. Hunter, since such a marriage would offer 'considerable temptations to unscrupulous adventurers'.<sup>453</sup>

In 1899, with British political officers acting assiduously as marriage brokers in 'the

<sup>450</sup> Robertson to Elgin 22 October 1897, R/1/1/195.

<sup>451</sup> Confidential memo of Dewan of Mysore, 26 July 1898, R/2/30/278.

<sup>452</sup> K. Sheshadri Iyer, Dewan Mysore, to W. Lee Warner, 11 September 1895, R/2/29/272.

<sup>453</sup> Robertson to the Hon. S. W. Edgerley, Sec. Govt. Bombay, 16 March 1898.

process of exhausting all desirable and possible selections', the Maharajah under pressure agreed to a match with the elder daughter of the Rana of Vana, a Rajput 'connected with other ruling Chiefs' in Kathiawar.<sup>454</sup> The girl was eleven, four years younger than her husband to be, and apparently desirable in appearance, physical condition and temperament. It was suspected that the family was not of a sufficiently high political status for a matrimonial union with Mysore, but British officials saw the objection as relatively minor in importance while the advantages were 'weighty and obvious'.<sup>455</sup> It was a new departure for the Mysore royal family to seek a bride in the north and it was unusual for a Rajput Kshatriya ruler to forsake his 'conservative traditions' in contracting alliances. For some years Mysore had been 'practically isolated' as far as marriage was concerned and the claims of the royal family to be Kshatriya at all were 'mythical rather than historical', therefore it was a privilege to be able to marry into a Kshatriya family with as high a status as Vana.<sup>456</sup> Eventually marriages between Mysore and important Rajput states might be negotiated 'on level terms', but at this stage the proposed match in which a comparatively obscure *thakur* allied himself with one of the wealthiest houses in India was considered a 'satisfactory advance'.<sup>457</sup> After the wedding the young bride would live with and be trained by her mother-in-law at Mysore. The Maharani's 'good sense and right feeling' could be confidently relied upon for the judicious and timely decision on the matter of the consummation of the marriage and it was proposed 'to defer the commencement of marital relations for about three years'.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>454</sup> Robertson to Sec. GoI, FD, 26 June 1899, R/2/44/413.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid. See also R/1/1/1062. A match with a more 'obscure' wife could have its advantages. In 1878 a letter from the Pol. Agent in Kolhapur, Colonel F. Schneider, revealed that the Kolhapur *darbar* was deliberately looking for a bride 'of reduced circumstances' for the Maharajah. Whereas brides from 'more exalted' backgrounds tended to 'become dissatisfied' and their dependents often gave much trouble to the *darbars* concerned, those chosen from a humble source were 'proud of their elevation and more easily guided'. Col. F. Schneider, Political Agent Kolhapur, to C. Gonne, Sec. Govt. Bombay, 2 February 1878, R/2/1018/1006.

The Maharani's fears over local disapproval of the alliance with Vana were well founded. A letter to the Viceroy from the editor of the Bangalore *Evening Mail* dramatically illustrated the complications which could ensue from all but the most clear-cut of royal marriages and questioned the authority of the Maharajah in relinquishing the traditional practice of a local marriage. It declared that the decision to bring in a foreign bride was 'attended with many evils'.<sup>459</sup> It was asked whether 'domestic felicity' could be maintained if such a princess was introduced into the palace. The princes of Mysore were 'pure vegetarians' and the Rajputs 'generally flesh-eaters' and drinkers of alcohol 'who have no hesitation even to mix with the Mahomedans'.<sup>460</sup> In the palace there were many priests, sycophants and dependants, who were always trying 'to work out some intrigue' and the introduction of people of 'dramatically opposite views and practices' would ruin the harmonious atmosphere. Relations between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law would be 'peculiar' and there would be no common language in which to converse.<sup>461</sup> Doubtless the wife would exert her power over her husband and through her influence his 'present practices and habits' might be changed, causing annoyance to his subjects since a prince should live 'not for himself but for his people'. The editor demanded to know how suitable matches for the offspring of such a marriage were to be made, and whether the 'degradation' of a change of caste would be necessary. Neither Rajput princes nor Mysore Ursu families would consider alliances with the children. The social organisation of India was 'very complicated and very rigid' and the Mysore royal family would be forced to look for bridegrooms and brides from other communities, leading to 'further complications and disturbances in the palace'.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Editor, *Evening Mail* to Viceroy, 14 October 1899, R/2/44/413.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.



Inevitably palace 'complications' such as those feared in Mysore did ensue following princely adoption of western models of behaviour in matters of marriage. The following section deals with two such cases.

#### WESTERN INFLUENCE ON ROYAL MARRIAGES

There was evidence that at the turn of the century, Ganga Singh, Maharajah of Bikaner was strongly influenced by the ideas of his English tutor, Brian Egerton, whose adherence to austerity and discipline discussed in the chapter on education may have been at odds with the somewhat loose custom of betrothal. After Ganga Singh succeeded to the gadi the Regency Council attempted to betroth him to the daughter of Fateh Singh, Maharana of Udaipur. In 1897 when marriage negotiations were taking place, the Bikaner ruler expressed his determination not to marry the Udaipur princess, alleging that the betrothal ceremony to her had not been formally completed, but in fact because he felt that the ultra-conservative Maharana would be a troublesome father-in-law and the girl was too young and not sufficiently good looking.<sup>463</sup> The Maharana wrote to the Agent for the Governor-General in Rajputana, R. J. Crosthwaite, emphasising that the betrothal was valid. In a letter to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, Crosthwaite made the Maharana's feelings plain,

[he] tells me that, if the marriage is broken off, there will no longer be friendship between the States, and he and Bikanir will have a bad name throughout the whole of Hindustan. The result, he will probably say, of English education and an English tutor, is that young Chiefs learn to break their engagements ... if the Maharajah breaks the engagement, he will be considered to have acted contrary to the Rajput code of honour. He will undoubtedly inflict an injury on the Oodeypore lady. She has been reserved for him, and it will be difficult now to find a suitable match for her. It is to be regretted that the Maharajah having been brought up by an English tutor should commence life by acting in a manner which the Chiefs will probably consider

<sup>463</sup> Durisotto 'Traditional Rule', p. 58.

dishonourable. We must, however, expect that the Western wine will break the old Hindu bottles.<sup>464</sup>

The Viceroy, although sharing some anxiety over the breach of harmony between two states, could not hide his satisfaction in noticing that the policy of giving young rulers 'some insight into the ideas of morality and social habits' which were considered 'essential points of modern civilisation' had been somewhat successful.<sup>465</sup> He admitted that 'as we have educated the young Maharaja in an English fashion, we must not be surprised if he finds it difficult to conform to Hindu custom'. The Rajput custom of betrothal was inconsistent with the progress that the Government of India had tried to encourage and it could not be maintained except under a system of polygamy that was no longer welcome to young rulers. In substance Elgin agreed with Crosthwaite, 'As you say, "the Western wine must break the old Hindu bottles" and while we must take care that it is not our hands that deal the blow, I see no reason in a case like this to regret the smash'.<sup>466</sup>

Nevertheless the decision not to marry the daughter of the Maharana was not a particularly wise move in Rajput society. Ganga Singh could be regarded as having committed a breach of faith and acting dishonourably towards the most prestigious Rajput ruler. At only seventeen it is possible that the Maharajah thought that in eschewing the custom of betrothal he was adopting a modern stance and the British would commend his action.<sup>467</sup> The British certainly did not discourage him and, bearing in mind the amount of influence exercised by Egerton over the young ruler, it is possible that the tutor was to some extent responsible for Ganga Singh's surprising refusal.

<sup>464</sup> R. J. Crosthwaite, AGG Rajputana to Elgin 22 May 1897, Elgin Collection, F84/70. The 'Oodeypore lady' eventually married the Maharajah of Kishengarh in February 1904. R/2/177/33 gives details of the extensive guest list, including at least forty Europeans.

<sup>465</sup> Elgin to Crosthwaite, 4 June 1897, Elgin Collection, F84/70. See also Elgin to Crosthwaite, 12 May 1897, R/1/1/1054.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Crosthwaite to Elgin 31 May 1897, Elgin Collection, F84/70.

However later in life the Maharajah was to display a somewhat less disciplined attitude to marriage practice in general and, despite British hopes that he would eschew polygamy, Ganga Singh married three times to obtain male heirs.<sup>468</sup>

Despite the potency of 'Western wine' and its perceived benefits, exposure to western ideas did not always have a successful outcome. The complications of an Indian prince marrying a European woman were well demonstrated by the Rajah of Jind's marriage in 1900 to Olive, said to be the daughter of P. A. von Tassel, a balloonist and parachutist 'of Dutch or German origin'.<sup>469</sup> After the wedding von Tassel received a sum of Rs. 35,000 from the Rajah, the bulk of which was to be deposited in an English bank for the bride, but which appeared to be rapidly disappearing in the hands of her parents. The Government of India much deplored the misjudgement of the Rajah in contracting such a match, as he had recently changed from a 'mere idler and pleasure-seeker' to 'a man addicted to business habits with something of a real regard for his duties towards his people'.<sup>470</sup> It was regretted that the Political Officer, Lieutenant A. Irvine, had been unable to stop the match, however after the Rajah's investiture Irvine had been instructed by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Mackworth Young, to teach the young heir to stand alone and to seek advice only when absolutely necessary. Recognising that his action might not meet with British approval, the Rajah had resorted to the 'utmost secrecy and rushed the ceremony at the dead of night'.<sup>471</sup>

Problems were also generated by the marriage proposed in 1905 by the Nawab of

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<sup>468</sup> Durisotto 'Traditional Rule', p. 62. The predecessors of Ganga Singh of Bikaner, although already ruling under British protection, were convinced polygamists: Maharajah Sardar Singh, his grandfather, married more than ten times and Maharajah Dungar Singh, his father, seven times.

<sup>469</sup> J. M. Douie, Chief Sec. Govt. Punjab to Sec. GoI, FD 25 November 1900, R/1/1/264.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

Rampur's brother, the Sahibzada Nasir Ali Khan<sup>472</sup>, although in this case due to the fact that the groom was impecunious, unlike the magnanimous Rajah of Jind. The Nawab for dubious reasons wished his brother to settle down in England after he finished his education there, offering him an allowance of £1,000 a year on the condition that he remained out of India until the Nawab requested his return, and stayed loyal to his brother, avoiding any 'intrigue' with other subjects of Rampur.<sup>473</sup> Nasir Ali Khan was free to marry and to take up an offer he had received to enter the Middle Temple and qualify as a barrister. Matters were complicated by the fact that he was enamoured of a Miss Ethel Hopkins, daughter of a London art dealer, who was well educated with 'considerable personal attractions' and the prospect of an inheritance of £100,000. E. M. Hopkins, her father, objected to any formal engagement unless the Nawab settled on his brother an income sufficient to maintain a wife. Moreover he drew up a set of extraordinarily demanding marriage stipulations: Nasir Ali Khan was to become a naturalised English subject, he was to renounce for ever all rights and claims to the succession of Rampur, his children were to be brought up in his mother's religion and, finally, he was to settle in approved English trust securities a sum sufficient to produce an annual income of £3,000.<sup>474</sup>

British officials noted that the position of the Sahibzada was a 'peculiar one'. He had received an English education, all his 'tastes and proclivities' were English, and he wished to marry an English girl who was said to be clever and attractive.<sup>475</sup> Every obstacle had been placed in the way of his return to India, and if he was to remain in England he could do much worse than to marry Miss Hopkins. It was noteworthy that he was the first native of high birth to take a high degree at Oxford or Cambridge and his

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<sup>472</sup> The Sahibzada also features in the chapter on education.

<sup>473</sup> Confidential memo by Political ADC India Office, Sir Curzon Wylie, 17 October 1905, R/1/1/337.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

record at school and college had been blameless.<sup>476</sup> Extremely grudgingly the Nawab was eventually persuaded by the Government of India to offer his brother a guaranteed income of £1,020 a year, plus £820 a year to his widow and children for their lives, and the Sahibzada was strongly recommended to accept the offer, as it was felt that better terms would not be forthcoming.<sup>477</sup>

Due to his enforced existence in England and his wish to take an English bride, the Muslim Sahibzada of Rampur's alliance was indeed a special case. However royal Muslim marriage arrangements in India by no means followed a hard and fast formula. The two cases of Hyderabad and Bhopal illustrate the extent to which such arrangements could differ.

#### ROYAL MUSLIM MARRIAGES IN HYDERABAD AND BHOPAL

At a meeting in Hyderabad in 1882 between the Resident and the Minister, Salar Jung I, the living quarters for a possible wife for the Nizam, Mahbub Ali Khan, were discussed, in an effort to dissuade the ruler from participating in some of the more unsavoury sexual practices of the royal household. In the opinion of British officials in the state the wife should remain in the Purana Haveli and no females other than those permitted to attend upon her would have access to the palace.<sup>478</sup> Salar Jung expressed the strongest disapproval, declaring that the control necessary to keep other females from entering the palace would be a 'violent innovation contrary to the customs of the *zenana*' and derogatory to His Highness's wife; that it would be contrary to all custom and usage to

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> GoI to John Morley, SoS, 11 October 1906, R/1/1/337.

<sup>478</sup> Report of meeting between W. B. Jones, Res. Hyderabad, Major Trevor and Salar Jung, 21 December 1882, R/1/1/1226.

keep His Highness's wife apart from the general *zenana*; that if his wife were in the Purana Haveli the Nizam would 'necessarily' be in and out of the *zenana* in any case and this could not be prevented; and, finally, that the restraint proposed to be placed on the Nizam would be displeasing to the ruler.<sup>479</sup> The Minister stated that marriage would make no difference to the Nizam's opportunities for intercourse with women in attendance on his wife, and would fail to check his desire to avail himself of such opportunities.<sup>480</sup>

The Resident suspected that Salar Jung was afraid to consent to any arrangement which would be particularly distasteful to the Nizam's mother and the *zenana* in general. Captain Clerk, the Nizam's tutor, later reported that the young ruler had decided to perform a *nikah* ceremony.<sup>481</sup> To Clerk it seemed that in British terms this ceremony was 'worth but little, our marriage customs being so different to those of the *zenana* and our point of view so different to the Mahomedan'.<sup>482</sup> Yet if His Highness were anxious to contract a marriage, he should be allowed to do so, provided his grandmother and mother approved of the young lady. It would be inconsistent for those immediately concerned with his training to make an objection to the ruler's doing what was 'lawful and right by Mahomedan law', while allowing his licentious behaviour to continue.<sup>483</sup> The only restriction that might be made would be to limit his so-called visits to his mother to 'what, strictly speaking, they ought to be'. As far as the issue of a *nikah* wife was concerned, the first-born male, whether legitimate or illegitimate according to European 'notions' of the status of the mother, would be recognised as having the first

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<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> A Muslim marriage contract. A *nikah* ceremony does not need to take place in a mosque nor in the presence of a religious official, which may have contributed to the idea of its informal nature in the eyes of British officials.

<sup>482</sup> Capt. John Clerk to Salar Jung, 4 January 1883, R/1/1/1226.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

claim to succeed to the *gadi* according to the custom of the state.<sup>484</sup>

Over twenty years later moral standards in the Hyderabad palace were said still to be 'exceedingly lax' and the power of the *zenana* unbroken. Sir David Barr, Resident in Hyderabad, expressed much concern over the unmarried state of the Sahibzada, the eldest son and heir of the Nizam. It was suspected that the Nizam had in fact never been involved in a marriage ceremony and had no recognised wife, only an 'enormous number' of concubines who constituted the *zenana*.<sup>485</sup> In Sir David's view, having experienced 'the evils – not to say discomfort – of an establishment of this nature', the Nizam should save his son from such a miserable fate by allotting him one wife with whom he could lead a happy and respectable life, 'such as has not been known in the Hyderabad palaces for many years'.<sup>486</sup> It was not the custom for English women to 'interview' any of the women of the *zenana* when visiting the palace, but supposedly the Nizam's mother was the virtual head of the household and, although not of high birth herself, she exercised considerable control over her son. Sir David was of the opinion that the *zenana* was the worst aspect of the Hyderabad palace, 'The number of women maintained at the cost of His Highness is I believe nearer 10,000 than 5,000; they live under very unsanitary conditions – and their manners and customs, according to common report, are altogether shocking and disreputable'.<sup>487</sup> Curzon also held a particularly low opinion of the lifestyle of the Nizam, declaring that 'He cares only for the gratification of his personal whims and desires, and is ... wrapped up in sloth in the seraglio and scarcely capable of an intelligent conversation'.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Sir David Barr, Res. Hyderabad, 'Confidential Note on Hyderabad Affairs' 8 February 1905, R/1/1/1281

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 28 December 1899, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 158.

In Bhopal, the second largest Muslim state, the approach to royal marriage was infinitely more circumspect than that existing in Hyderabad. In selecting a husband for Sultan Jahan Begam, noble birth and a frugal disposition were the first considerations which her grandmother, Sikander Begam, required, 'though a handsome appearance and the habits and manners of a gentleman were by no means unessential'.<sup>489</sup> It was agreed that a few of the most eligible boys should be presented to Sikander, and if one of the candidates met with her approval, he was to go to Bhopal where arrangements for his training would be made and, after sufficient time to form a 'just estimate of his habits and temperament', a final decision would be given.<sup>490</sup> The Begam alighted upon a representative of one of the noblest and most ancient families of Jalalabad, Ahmad Ali Khan, who at the age of seven was taken to Bhopal where he was constantly with his prospective bride both in study and play until the age of eighteen. By that stage it was agreed that his behaviour 'left nothing to be desired' and his progress in his studies was 'more than satisfactory'.<sup>491</sup> However the final decision to marry in 1874 did not rest with the royal family. It was apparent that in the case of Bhopal the traditional power of a ruler to choose his or her spouse now required British sanction. A *kharita* had to be sent to the Viceroy for his approval, without which the marriage could not be concluded.<sup>492</sup>

A marriage contract was drawn up which curtailed the rights of the groom but also gave the most liberal powers to a Muslim wife. The marriage would be annulled if Ahmad Ali converted from Sunni to Shiah. He was to fulfil 'all the duties of a husband' and not interfere in any way with her *jagir* or other personal property.<sup>493</sup> Failure to abide by these terms would give his wife the right to bring about a separation. The groom agreed

<sup>489</sup> Sultan Jahan, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 50.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 51-2.

<sup>493</sup> *Account*, Appendix B.



not to take a second wife (permissible under Muslim law) without the 'express permission and approval of Sultan Jahan' and to have nothing to do with the marriages of any of his wife's children, male or female, leaving such matters to her and her mother.<sup>494</sup> He promised to treat the nobles, *jagirdars* and officials of state with respect and not to retain in his service any person to whom the ruler or her ministers might take exception, or who was reputed to be ill disposed towards the state or the British Government. None of his relatives or friends was to intervene in affairs of state. Finally he authorised his mother-in-law, Shahjehan, to decree a separation in the event of a 'serious disagreement' between his wife and himself, a separation that would be binding and not questionable in a court of law. For the wife the marriage contract contained conditions which would also enable her to end the marriage in case of disagreement, interference or sheer incompatibility. This document received the signature of the Political Agent to give it British approval.<sup>495</sup>

Although Sultan Jahan herself admitted later that many of the clauses could not be legally enforced,<sup>496</sup> the marriage contract displayed the uniqueness of Bhopal as an Indian, and in particular a Muslim, state in allowing a ruling female such extraordinary powers over her husband and independence in her affairs. However other royal women in India during the period, although not rulers in their own right, also succeeded in wielding a considerable amount of power, often by subscribing to British ideas on matters such as education and government and thereby gaining British support for their position within the state administration. The increasing influence of the press and access to British legal advisers was also able to further the cause of female members of royal families. The next part of this chapter deals with some of these women.

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> *Account*, p. 56.

## ROYAL WOMEN

A truly public profile was inconceivable for all but a handful of royal females, such as the Begams of Bhopal. However, as far as raising their status was concerned, royal Indian women were to find one of their greatest champions in Lord Lytton. Aware of the social advantages assured to the Viceroy as the first representative of the Crown within India, Lytton saw no reason to continue to defer to Indian custom as far as women were concerned, whether such custom applied to princely or plebeian circles. In a letter to the Queen's Private Secretary, Major General Ponsonby, the Viceroy declared that, while using the Imperial Assemblage of 1877<sup>497</sup> to do away with the 'worn out and inconvenient system' of exchanging presents, it appeared that the occasion was 'singularly fit and favourable' for introducing the European manner of displaying women in public.<sup>498</sup> Lytton admitted that the idea was revolutionary in India, 'the strict seclusion, not to say suppression of the female sex is so prevalent throughout the East, that the appearance in public of any Englishwoman, of the least rank or position, would shock native prejudices, and lower her in the eyes of the natives'.<sup>499</sup>

However the Viceroy was persuaded by 'previous personal intercourse with the better class of natives in India' that this was an anachronistic official tradition. Why should the British

conform our own social life and customs to the low standard of those whose masters we are by reason of our superior social enlightenment. In any case, the particular prejudice which this un-English custom was intended to satisfy appears to me to be one which it is not only beneath our dignity and self-respect to adopt and incorporate into our own manners and customs, but also contrary to the acknowledged principles of our policy, and the best interests of our Government, to encourage and perpetuate

<sup>497</sup> The Assemblage appears in the chapter on hierarchy and ritual.

<sup>498</sup> Lytton to Major General H. T. Ponsonby, 12 January 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

on the part of the natives themselves. We have put down *suttee* with the strong hand and have done much to improve the position of Hindu widows and Mahomedan wives. We are establishing *zenana* schools throughout India and exhorting the better class of natives to educate their women and humanise female life in their homes. Is it consistent with such a policy to stultify our precepts by our practice? .... To me the adoption of such a course seemed singularly inappropriate to the solemn proclamation of the title of a female sovereign to the Empire of all India.<sup>500</sup>

Accordingly at the Assemblage, Lytton determined that his wife should accompany him on his state entry into Delhi, and was most satisfied to see that, in the light of the British position of social supremacy, such an assault on Indian accepted practice had no adverse effects:

So far from shocking the Native Princes, it has, to all appearances, greatly flattered and pleased them. Each of those who were present at the Viceroy's subsequent receptions spontaneously asked to be presented to Lady Lytton and all of them showed her the most deferential and courteous attention. When afterwards she appeared at the races, they rose, greeted and conversed with her as respectfully and cordially as the most polished Englishman could have done. Such conduct on their part was an entire novelty, surprising to many and gratifying to all who witnessed it: and I fully believe that the course adopted in the ceremonials at Delhi, if judiciously followed up, will help to bridge over at least some portion of the inconvenient and deplorable gulf which exists between English and native society.<sup>501</sup>

This lack of deference to traditional Indian ideas of female subjugation was reinforced by Lytton's request to the Queen in 1877 for the initiation of a special order for women within the Indian empire.<sup>502</sup> Such an order would be 'extremely useful and advantageous', not only in raising 'in the estimation of husband and male relatives the present depressed social condition of the female portion of Your Majesty's native subjects', but also in helping 'to introduce the personal influence of the Empress of India

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid. Lytton's efforts failed to bear fruit with any rapidity. In 1897 it was reported that the Maharani of Cochin was unwilling to leave the privacy of the palace to meet the Governor of Madras and Lady Havelock at the Residency. There had been no instance of a female member of the Cochin royal family calling at the Residency on such occasions and, due to her 'sensitiveness' the Maharani found the idea of breaking tradition 'not quite agreeable' and 'too delicate for discussion'. Maharajah Rama Varma to J. D. Rees, Res. Cochin, 10 October 1897, R/2/9/47

<sup>502</sup> The Order of the Crown of India, which was given to Governors' wives, to the Vicereine and to the spouses of the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for India in London, as well as high-ranking Indian women. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 90.

into the *Zenanas* of Native Courts, which are at present shut to British influence, and where the other influences now predominating are often as mischievous as they are powerful'.<sup>503</sup> The Viceroy recommended the Maharani Jumnabai, adoptive mother of the young Gaekwar of Baroda, as an ideal candidate, reporting that she was in need of British support,

the object of many influential native officials being to destroy the influence of Her Highness over her son by surrounding him with all those temptations which generally make the royal *Zenanas* of this country the more deplorable schools for male or female character. All this she has nobly and successfully resisted.<sup>504</sup>

Maharani Jumnabai was just one of a number of powerful female regents during the period.

## REGENTS

Prior to Lytton's recommendation the Maharani Jumnabai had indeed shown a particular aptitude for administrative detail and a desire to instil methods of accountability within her state. She demanded a significant role in the administration during the minority of her son, Sayajirao III, and a scheme was devised by the Resident for the Minister, T. Madhava Rao, to spend a day a fortnight with her to discuss a short report on the state. The Minister was to arrange for members of the Gaekwar family in the palace to seek her advice with regard to their various needs. He was also to frame budgets for the palace and for twenty-five *karkhanas*, on the principle that within the budget arrangement the Maharani was to have complete authority in managing the *karkhanas* other than the submission of six monthly accounts. In framing the budgets the Maharani

<sup>503</sup> Lytton to Queen, 28 August 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

was to be freely consulted and if there was a difference of opinion between the Maharani and the Minister, the matter was to be referred to the Agent to the Governor-General.<sup>505</sup>

The royal women of Mysore also demonstrated an extraordinary enthusiasm for liberal ideas of government. In 1877 a *kharita* from the senior Maharanis to the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, raised with great clarity a number of subjects including the education of the young Maharajah, in an effort to achieve the 'enlightened principles of justice' which were 'so characteristic a feature of British rule' and particularly significant in light of the fact that the state was to be restored to native rule in 1881, as has been discussed in the chapter on succession.<sup>506</sup> The Maharanis requested an English gentleman from an English university to be appointed as tutor to the young ruler and a 'high officer of ability and standing' to act as guardian and to train him in the 'principles of good government'. Moreover as he was fifteen they wished to see him married in accordance with the Mysore 'religious code'.<sup>507</sup> They expressed the need for the 'machinery of Government' to be simplified, since the current administration did not compare favourably with its predecessor and the Mysore people were 'not a whit more prosperous'. Public Works and other departments were not working well and radical change was required. The famine had been badly mismanaged and the remissions of assessments 'too grudgingly and sparingly made'. Thousands of Mysoreans had died as a result of leaving the state to find food and employment.<sup>508</sup> The royal women, in a surprisingly perceptive paragraph, recognised that there was a need for the imposition of a 'house tax' on the nobility. The middle classes of the community and Moslem

<sup>505</sup> Memorandum by T. Madhava Rao, Minister of Baroda, 13 May 1875, R/2/539/321.

<sup>506</sup> *Kharita* from the Senior Maharanis of Mysore to Lord Lytton 1877, R/2/27/241. Somewhat at odds with the description of the *zenana's* efforts to sabotage the Maharajah's education written by Colonel G. Malleon in September 1869 (see the second chapter on education). It is hard to imagine that the royal women of Mysore developed a considerably more liberated stance towards education in eight years. Perhaps Malleon was making assumptions about the evil intentions of the *zenana*.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*

descendants of aristocratic families lived in virtual destitution as they drew very small salaries; more could be employed in the palace, with an allowance continuing to their heirs after their death. Finally, the Maharanis suggested that the office of Town Magistrate and President of the Municipality be filled only by a European officer of experience, since the present incumbent was hated by Moslems and disliked by Hindus, due to his overbearing conduct.<sup>509</sup>

The widow of Chamarajendra Wadiar Bahadur, the Maharajah of Mysore whose education the senior Maharanis were discussing in their *kharita*, displayed similarly assertive qualities. In December 1894 the Resident, Colonel Henderson, wrote that he was of the opinion that it would be unwise for the Maharani Vanivilas Sannidhana, to be appointed Regent, since she was

a lady of domestic tastes who has not concerned herself with events beyond the range of her family and the palace walls. The palace is, as it ever was, a hot bed of petty and mischievous intrigues, and a lady living in seclusion might with the best intentions be moved by evil influences to exert her authority in a wrong direction.<sup>510</sup>

It would be advisable to 'leave Her Highness the control and management of all affairs connected with the palace and of the expenditure of the Civil List, subject to certain restrictions, and I am inclined to think that she would not wish for more'.<sup>511</sup> However by January Henderson was aware that he had underestimated the Maharani's potential. He was informed by her brother that she had expressed strong feelings against the Dewan's autocratic behaviour. Moreover

she had felt very much the practical seclusion of her own countrymen from palace and power, and considered that a Council should be more representative than the

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> Memorandum from Col. P.D. Henderson, Res. Mysore, to W. J. Cunningham, Sec. GoI, FD, 30 December 1894, 6 January 1895, R/1/1/143.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

present one, and should wield more influence. She was averse to the Brahmin element being too strong in the public service, and especially the Madras Brahmin element.<sup>512</sup>

The Maharani would oppose any British move to appoint the Dewan as Regent on the grounds that it would be more suitable for her to fill the position. The Resident admitted 'I have come to the conclusion that the Maharani is a woman of decided opinion and of considerable strength of character, and that any one who supposes she is going to prove a puppet is likely to find out his mistake'. It appeared that she was 'a lady of education and intelligence not likely to be much influenced by bad advisers' and it would be very difficult 'not to give due weight to her representations'.<sup>513</sup>

An account of a meeting between the Resident and the Maharani, 'without the intervention of the *purdah*', reinforced the picture of a forceful female character. The Resident pointed out to her the 'manifest difficulties' of carrying out the duties of Regent while living in 'oriental seclusion'.<sup>514</sup> He also stressed that in a constitutional state responsible officials carried out all administrative work under certain laws and regulations, and opportunities for the exercise of direct authority were rare. The Maharani replied in English that she was always perfectly willing to give audiences to her advisers, she had received a good education in both English and her own language, and was willing to devote time and trouble to the cases before her. She understood that in a state where the government organised the system of administration it was not necessary to interfere in the details. Wherever action was necessary on her part she would ask for and follow the advice of the Resident, whose supervision she hoped would be closer than before.<sup>515</sup> The Maharani suggested that the Council should not be purely

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. See also R/2/29/264.

<sup>514</sup> Henderson to Cuningham, 9 January 1895, R/1/1/143.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

consultative as at present, but with executive functions apportioned among the members and important matters referred to the entire assembly. She was particularly adamant that members should not be appointed by the Dewan, but by herself as Regent or by the Government of India. Mysoreans were not represented sufficiently in public service or in the Council and she wished her countrymen's interests to be 'cared for' in these areas.<sup>516</sup>

The Maharani's success in persuading the British of her competence is demonstrated in the arrangements for the minority rule of her son, Maharajah Krishnaraja Wadier Bahadur, whose marriage prospects were discussed earlier in this chapter. The administration was to be conducted by the Maharani as Regent and by the Dewan in Council. The Council was to consist of the Dewan and three officers nominated by the Regent with the approval of the British Government. The work of the various state departments was to be distributed by the Dewan in Council between himself and the three Councillors. As suggested by the Maharani, the member in charge of each department would attend to the ordinary work of the department and would issue orders in the name of the Mysore Government, referring only matters of 'doubt, delicacy or importance' to the Dewan.<sup>517</sup> The decisions of the Dewan in Council would be carried into effect, unless they were opposed to the decisions of the majority of the Council, in which case the matter would be referred to the Regent for final orders. However in any case where reference was made to the Resident, whether by the Regent or the Dewan, no orders could be issued which might conflict with the advice of the Resident.<sup>518</sup>

Despite her obvious admiration for a more open British style of rule, the Maharani

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Henderson to Cuningham, 22 January 1895, R/1/1/143.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.



expressed great reluctance to relinquish any form of control over her son to British officials and resented in particular the arrangements for separate rooms for him at Bangalore and Mysore. When the door leading to the *zenana* from these rooms was locked by the young prince's British guardian there was much discontent from the 'Palace party'.<sup>519</sup> The Maharani installed a telephone wire from her own bedroom to the Summer Palace to maintain contact with her son, despite the fact that there was already telephonic communication day and night, and also installed her own official to supervise the preparation of the Maharajah's meals. The ruler's guardian, Stuart Fraser, whose earnest attempts to turn the young prince into 'a wise, sagacious, and highly cultured ruler'<sup>520</sup> are noted in the chapter on education, refused to tolerate the presence at the Summer Palace of an Old Palace official who was not subordinate to him but nevertheless giving orders to his servants and demanded that the Maharani recognise the limitations of her powers as Regent in matters connected with the prince, since it was the Government of India which exercised the guardianship.<sup>521</sup>

It was agreed that it would be difficult to remove the Maharajah, aged eleven, from the care of his mother, but there were 'corrupting influences about the Palace' over which the Maharani had little control, despite the fact that in many ways she was an 'educated and sensible woman'.<sup>522</sup> In 1896 there were signs that the Maharani was still attempting to interfere with the terms set out for the young ruler's residence at the three palaces in Mysore, Bangalore and Ootacamund, announcing her intention while at Bangalore to proceed to Mysore for a religious ceremony, taking him with her. The Resident was forced to point out how unsettling this was for the Maharajah and how carefully his programme of studies should be followed. He admitted 'There is no doubt that this little

<sup>519</sup> Report by S. M. Fraser, 21 November 1896, R/2/33/314.

<sup>520</sup> Quoted Vadivelu, *Mysore Worthies*, p. 63.

<sup>521</sup> Report by S. M. Fraser, 21 November 1896, R/2/33/314.

<sup>522</sup> Hamilton to Elgin, 26 November 1895, Elgin Collection, Vol. 13.

lady, extremely nice though she be, when roused is exceedingly determined and overawes her relations and dependents'.<sup>523</sup>

These differences of opinion appear eventually to have been satisfactorily overcome. At the end of the Regency the Dewan in Mysore reported that

in arrangements made for the education of the Maharajah, in management of Palace affairs as well as in concerns of State, Her Highness has shown a great capacity to grasp the bearings of the questions that have come before her .... Her Highness is almost a unique instance in the history of Mysore of a lady of her position responding successfully to an emergency and establishing by her breadth of mind, natural sagacity and high sense of duty a reputation which cannot but reflect on her sex.<sup>524</sup>

It was recommended that the Maharani should continue to receive a 19-gun salute with accompanying honours.<sup>525</sup> By this stage the Maharajah to all intents and purposes had assumed power within the palace. Stuart Fraser noted that now the ruler was more mature, his mother possessed 'little power to move him when he has made up his mind'.<sup>526</sup> A case in point was a unilateral decision to postpone his nuptials until after his installation, a matter in which normally 'custom would make the voice of a Hindu mother supreme'.<sup>527</sup>

Not all royal women were as commendable in British eyes as Vanivilas Sannidhana. With access to British advisors and the new opportunities offered by the availability of the press at the end of the nineteenth century, some royal females were able to defend themselves against male relatives or ministers of state to an impressive degree, if not always with maximum success.

<sup>523</sup> Col. Donald Robertson, Res. Mysore, to Elgin, 2 October 1897.

<sup>524</sup> P. N. Krishna Murthi, Dewan Mysore, to Robertson, 9 May 1902, R/2/31/293.

<sup>525</sup> H. Daly, Deputy Sec. GoI, FD to Robertson, 25 August 1902, R/2/31/293.

<sup>526</sup> S. M. Fraser to Robertson, 13 July 1902, R/2/31/299.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

## FEMALE PROTAGONISTS

With recourse to British advisors in the 1890s the Indore *ranis* were able to carry on a lengthy and highly acrimonious battle with the Maharajah, Holkar. The Maharajah bemoaned the fact that it 'may appear at first that my step-mothers, women as they are, cannot do anything against me, who am the ruler of the State possessed of full powers', whereas they 'bribe my personal servants and attendants and the police peons on watch duty at my palace with a view to annoy and irritate'.<sup>528</sup> He gave orders to the Treasurer to stop paying his step-mothers' allowances until they, firstly, stopped fighting him over the Khasgi estate in Bombay, of which they retained possession, secondly, sent his nephews to a boarding school such as Daly College (an issue discussed at more length in the chapter on education) and, thirdly, dismissed their lawyer, Mr. Rochfort Davis, and other similarly employed persons.<sup>529</sup>

In Holkar's view there was 'serious misconduct' on the part of the Dowager Maharani Radabhai. On the death of the ruler's mother, acting on the advice of the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, Francis Henvey, Holkar had given orders for the Khasgi Department to be taken over by his *durbar* and for the current land agent, Madhav Rao Gogte, to be dismissed as unsatisfactory.<sup>530</sup> However the Dowager Maharani Varanasi Bai who, in the Maharajah's opinion, had 'no right to interfere in any way in the administration of the Khasgi or any other department of my State', directed the agent to bar access to Holkar's nominee and only to take orders from her, as she considered herself to be the heiress and ruler of the Khasgi Department.<sup>531</sup> Holkar stated that he could, on application to a civil Court of Law, have Gogte turned out and his

<sup>528</sup> Holkar to R. J. Crosthwaite, AGG CI, January 1891, R/1/1/129. Also Holkar to Crosthwaite, 16 March 1891, R/1/1/129.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

nominee installed in his place, 'but I shrink from proceeding against a member of my own family in an open Court of Law, and virtually the suit would be against the Maharani Radabhai'.<sup>532</sup>

One of Maharani Radabhai's advisers, Rochfort Davis, was a pensioner of the British Government who wrote defamatory articles against Holkar in the *Eastern Herald*. As Henvey pointed out in 1890, such articles 'revived and exacerbated' the fury of royal Indore family quarrels.<sup>533</sup> If the Maharajah was a private individual he could prosecute the newspaper, but a ruler of his rank could not according to 'native usages' appear in the Cantonment Magistrate's Court and subject himself to the ordeal of cross examination. However if he remained silent, the Maharajah feared that the accusations against him would be repeated in every corner of India. Henvey recognised the unfairness of the position of the ruler:

Whatever may be thought of an unlicensed freedom of the press in British India, a cantonment of British troops, or a Residency situated in foreign territory and in the midst of powerful, suspicious and sensitive Chiefs, should not be used as a place of refuge, from which coarse and defamatory attacks may be securely levelled against Her Majesty's feudatories.<sup>534</sup>

The anti-Holkar publicity initiated by female members of the royal family was both 'mischievous and politically dangerous'.<sup>535</sup>

Both the Dowager Maharani Radabhai and Junior Maharani Parwatibai had received large monthly allowances from the State Treasury which were partly used for the payment of men such as Rochfort Davis, whose 'injurious articles' induced the Dowager Maharani to give him money for his services. The cash payments which Holkar

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<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> F. Henvey, AGG CI, to Sec. GoI, FD, 5 April 1890, R/1/1/117.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid

proposed suspending were, the ruler emphasised, unrelated to expenses for living, i.e. houses, food, clothes, servants, carriages, attendants and guards, which were 'provided free by the State in the most liberal style'.<sup>536</sup> In 1891 the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, R. J. Crosthwaite, responded to a memorial from the Dowager Maharani by declaring that he was unable to interfere on her behalf since she was continuing to retain the Khasgi estate in defiance of Holkar.<sup>537</sup> Moreover she refused to meet the ruler's wishes regarding the education of his nephews, whom she retained with their mother in her custody, apparently in the hope that the elder boy would succeed to the *gadi*. Under the Treaty of Mandisore the British Government had declared that it had no concern with any of the Maharajah's children, relations, dependents, subjects or servants, over whom the Maharajah had absolute control. The British Government would therefore decline to intervene between the Maharajah and the ladies of the family unless circumstances existed to 'imperatively require' the interference of the ruling power. So long as the Dowager Maharani retained the property she had no right to complain if the Maharajah declined to pay her allowances.<sup>538</sup> Crosthwaite was under no illusion as to the ability of the women of the *zenana* to impede the smooth running of state affairs, declaring that 'Certainly we should get on better without these Dowagers'.<sup>539</sup>

A memorial of 1899 written to the Viceroy by Maharani Varanasi Bai, incensed at the lack of British justice in failing to reinforce the property rights of royal women such as herself, shows no signs of female reticence. It dwells at length on the fact that, as the Maharani of Indore, she was the trustee of vast estates held

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<sup>536</sup> Holkar to Crosthwaite, AGG CI, January 1891, R/1/1/129.

<sup>537</sup> Crosthwaite to Sec. GoI, FD, 21 August 1891, R/1/1/129

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Crosthwaite to H. M. Durand, 8 August 1891.

on behalf of future Maharanis .... The Khasgi estate is in the nature of a *jagir* in the Indore State and the possessor has inherent rights like any other *jagirdar*, chieftain or landlord which cannot be tampered with. The ruling Rani exercises supreme revenue and judicial powers, subject to an appeal to the Maharaja in respect of serious offences alone. The Rani holds *Durbars* for the transaction of business. There is a separate throne, a separate seal, a separate establishment; separate *nazars* are presented to her on solemn and festive occasions; and the Rani at the time of her accession is placed on the throne and receives a salute in the same way as the Prince does .... Further the Khasgi has a treasury of its own. It has independent jurisdiction both in matters civil and criminal.<sup>540</sup>

The Maharani pointed out that in the history of the Khasgi estate over 150 years no possessor had been removed. Twice attempts had been made by the reigning prince and on both occasions proved unsuccessful as a result of the interference of the British Government. It was hoped that, as her position as Maharani of Indore precluded her from appealing to a court of law,<sup>541</sup> the Viceroy would now afford her the same protection as that given to her female predecessors so that she could attend to 'the maintenance of the dignity of the Senior Maharani, and the performance of charitable and religious acts'.<sup>542</sup> However she failed to receive such a guarantee of protection from the Viceroy, since relations between Holkar and the Government of India were by the end of the century so strained that it was felt that it would hardly be advancing the cause of the Maharani to interfere in royal financial transactions.

Rani Janaki Subbamma Bai, second wife of Raja Ramachandra of Puddukkottai, also benefited from the newly found accessibility of British advisers. From 1878 to 1886 while Ramachandra was still alive, the Dewan of the state, A. Sashiah Sastri, began his measures to end corruption among palace servants, to reorganise some overstuffed

<sup>540</sup> Memorial from Varanasi Bai, Senior Maharani of Indore, to Viceroy, 5 May 1899, R/1/1/229.

<sup>541</sup> In contrast in British Indian courts *zamindari* women felt no inhibitions in resorting to litigation to challenge male honour and authority, as is discussed in more detail in the chapter on succession. See Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, pp. 47-76.

<sup>542</sup> Memorial from Varanasi Bai to Viceroy, 5 May 1899, R/1/1/229. Also memorial of 15 March 1899, R/1/1/229, and R/1/1/252 in which the Senior Maharani accuses Holkar of having 'a very imperfect knowledge' of the 'illustrious' position of women of reigning Mahratta houses to make her the insulting proposal of Rs. 1,000 for monthly expenses. Varanasi Bai to Curzon, 14 February 1900.

departments and to put the palace buildings in good repair. As mentioned in the chapter on education, after Sastri assumed the regency of Pudukkottai during the minority of the young heir, Martanda, the Dewan's interference in every detail of palace life was 'overt', given clear encouragement from the British. However, as Joanne Punzo Wagthorne points out in her study of the Pudukkottai royal family, the Rani after 1886 'left nothing undone' in order to bring about Sastri's departure from the state, hiring a British lawyer to put forward her case to save her remaining authority in the palace.<sup>543</sup> Her argument was preserved by Sastri in his own printed response to her formal letter to the political agent, which he entitled 'Memorandum Drawn up by the Dewan Regent Stating Categorically the Result of Correspondence between him and the Political Agent and Orders of the Government on Various Subjects alluded to and Allegations Made by the Junior Ranees Sahib'.<sup>544</sup>

The Rani's 'mystifying and confounding' defence conducted through her lawyer raised issues which seemed as trivial as Sastri claimed.<sup>545</sup> An argument over the use of a playground for the minor Rajah roused the Rani to assert her right to freedom of religion. The senior princess's wrath was incurred because Sastri wanted to move her temporarily out of her old apartments in order 'to make them sanitary'.<sup>546</sup> The rest of the ill-will arose from the ladies' unwillingness to give up the company of 'a band of notorious villains' which included a group of unsavoury playmates caught openly playing cards with the Rajah's brothers, and the supposedly dangerous 'dancing girls who were found in constant company with the Princess'. It appeared that 'the beleaguered Dewan had only persisted in his duty, much against the petty stubbornness of the palace ladies'.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Wagthorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p.59.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 62.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

However the expulsion of the 'dancing girls' was an act which fundamentally affected the existence of the princess, as these girls, the *devadasis*, served crucial functions for the palace women. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Tondaiman royal females were still expected to keep *purdah*. The *devadasis*, who were free from such restrictions, accompanied them on all their visits outside the palace and held up cloth screens to protect them from the public eye as they moved from their palanquins. The education of the palace women also depended on the *devadasis* who taught the essential arts of song and dance. Thus, deprived of their company, the senior princess would literally be captive in the palace and prohibited from fulfilling many of her ritual obligations.<sup>548</sup>

Sastri argued that many of the Rani's objections to his rules of cleanliness in the palace, and to his mandates for the places where the minor Rajah should play and which apartments her daughter should occupy were based on 'superstition'. But the Rani countered Sastri in a long letter to the political agent:

To meet me with the plea that my objections are untenable because they are superstitious is a dangerous answer in the mouths of the representatives of the British government. It is but so much of a slip from the domain of sentiment to the domain of religion. Yet could you expect obedience from me or approval from the government if you were to turn a deaf ear to my objections against the proselytizing of my son on the ground that the adherence to my own creed was a foolish form of superstition?<sup>549</sup>

Here the Rani argued convincingly that much of Sastri's reforms fell into the category of the interference into Hindu religious affairs prohibited by the Queen's Proclamation of 1858.<sup>550</sup> However her letter of complaint resulted in an interview with the Governor of Madras that, instead of being a hearing of her grievances, backfired into a stern lecture

<sup>548</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 63. See also Frederique Apffel Marglin, *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi, 1985), and Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, p. 69.

<sup>549</sup> Quoted *Raja's Magic Clothes*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>550</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 60.



on her behaviour. As the Dewan reiterated in his official answer to her complaint, the Rani's 'character' was already well known to the British. Reports of past political agents portrayed her as the twenty-year power behind the throne in Pudukkottai.<sup>551</sup> She and 'her relations' and 'two or three Brahmans, her special favourites' supposedly inveigled the Rajah out of the state seal and 'took control of the judicial process'. In addition 'her Brahman Parasites' weakened the power of the former *dewan's* office. Sastri pointed to the 'disgrace and ruin she has been to the character of her late husband, and to the State'.<sup>552</sup>

The obsessive ambition displayed by the Rani of Pudukkottai was by no means unique. In 1890 the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, scathingly observed of the Maharani of Rewa in Rajputana that she was representative of a breed of grasping royal widows:

In all cases where a very young ruler succeeds to a Native State, the widows of his predecessor give an infinite amount of trouble. Their object is of course to get hold of the boy and to bring him up under conditions which in a few years will convert him into an imbecile and leave the power in their hands. Our object is to prevent such a state of things arising.<sup>553</sup>

Cynically the Viceroy agreed with the Maharani's regret that, owing to the 'abolition of *suttee*' she and other widows of the late Maharajah 'were prevented from removing themselves from this troublesome world immediately after their consort had left it'.<sup>554</sup>

However not all royal mothers were so eager to wrest power from their offspring and were able to use British advice, on occasions turning to the Government of India itself, to ensure that their children were not usurped by other, possibly less desirable,

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<sup>551</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 61.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>553</sup> Lansdowne to Cross, 19 May 1890, D558, Vol. 3.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*

candidates to the throne. Following the death of her husband, the Maharani of Dumraon expressed her unwillingness to adopt a son in order not to disinherit her daughter, the Maharani of Rewa<sup>555</sup> and her possible offspring. It was noted by Sir Charles Paul, advising the Council of India, that the late Maharajah had been well aware of the chance of the power of adoption not being exercised after his death and had deliberately left the matter entirely to the wish and option of his wife.<sup>556</sup> Legally she was not bound to adopt, moreover it was impossible to hold the view that she was incompetent to manage the property in question until her daughter inherited it. The late Maharajah had spoken of his wife in his will as 'possessed of great intelligence and capacity for business', moreover when interviewed officially she had given satisfactory answers and could read and write 'freely'.<sup>557</sup> In the eyes of Sir Charles to be female was not a disqualification for owning an estate, 'As *Purdanashin* ladies do not go out into the world but manage through Managers' this particular role was well suited to those women capable of running a successful business.<sup>558</sup>

As the following section makes clear, in the state of Bhopal '*Purdanashin* ladies' were capable of running not simply a business, but an entire state.

## BHOPAL

When it came to demonstrating their capability, the profile of royal women was highest in the state of Bhopal. Yet, ironically, despite the traditionally martial stance of female rulers in Bhopal discussed in the chapter on succession, during the latter half of the

<sup>555</sup> Interestingly the daughter-in-law of the despised Maharani of Rewa, who apparently had failed in her attempts to emasculate her son.

<sup>556</sup> Note by Sir Charles Paul, 19 March 1898, R/1/1/217.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

nineteenth century the ruling Begam, Shahjehan, was to provide a good example of 'disabling passivity'. Moreover under the sway of her second husband her unwillingness to cooperate with political officers undoubtedly decreased her political authority. Shahjehan Begam was, like her mother Sikander, honoured for her loyalty to the paramount power by British officials in the late nineteenth century. However government files revealed internal problems in Bhopal from 1881, when high officials in the Foreign Department were informed of the compilation of 'seditious' works on *jihad*, or religious war, by Sadiq Hassan, Shahjehan Begam's second husband and a prominent supporter of the Wahabi movement. Named after the Arab evangelist, Abdul Wahab, the movement focused upon the puritan values of Islam, drawn from the Quran and Sunnah, and in the eyes of the British engendered religious fanaticism.

The 1857 Mutiny, although it originated in the army and found supporters among Hindus and Muslim alike throughout northern India, was widely viewed as a product of enduring Muslim animosity towards the British. Into the 1860s this aura of suspicion remained a powerful force shaping British conception of their Muslim subjects.<sup>559</sup> Constantly on the alert for outbreaks of violence, the British saw in the Wahabi movement the gathering together of the more extreme elements of 'the tribes of Islam' to 'wage holy war against the *Faringhi*'.<sup>560</sup> However this view was gradually re-evaluated, mainly as a result of the publication in 1871 of W. W. Hunter's *The Indian Mussalmans* which questioned whether 'these British subjects' were 'bound by their religion to rebel against the Queen'.<sup>561</sup> The central objective of the work was to urge upon the Government a less hostile policy towards Muslims and to distinguish between the

<sup>559</sup> See Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972), Ch. 3

<sup>560</sup> Quoted Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 140.

<sup>561</sup> Hardy, *Muslims of British India*, p. 85.

'fanatical masses' and 'the landed and clerical interests'.<sup>562</sup> In fact despite the British fear of pan-Islamic activities (particularly in the wake of the Madhist revolt in 1881 in the Sudan) Islamic movements, even that of the Wahabis, very rarely presented a significant threat to the British.<sup>563</sup>

Although Colonel Henry Daly, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, initially dismissed fears of Bhopali disloyalty, the situation came to a peak under his successor, Sir Lepel Griffin, when the Nawab-consort persisted in disseminating his publications and works in Arabic, Persian and Urdu appeared in major centres of Arabic scholarship, such as Egypt, Constantinople and Mecca. Late in 1885, the Government of India publicly stripped Sadiq Hassan of his titles, salutes and rank.<sup>564</sup> Francis Robinson points out that Sadiq Hassan was no charlatan but a leading Muslim fundamentalist reformer who wrote over 200 hundred books and has become the subject of 'serious study'.<sup>565</sup> Moreover Claudia Preckel notes that the model of a reformed and modernised Islamic state which was created with his advice survived his deposition. Throughout Bhopal in the nineteenth century there was 'a strong development of Islamic religious and cultural reform'.<sup>566</sup> This Islamic revival could have been regarded with disapproval by the British authorities, however its inclusion of 'huge architectural projects, educational and literary efforts and economic as well as administrative reforms' resulted in a growing admiration for the female rulers of the state both within Indian and British circles.<sup>567</sup>

After her husband's deposition, although Sir Lepel was often blunt and rude to the

<sup>562</sup> Quoted *Ideologies*, p. 141.

<sup>563</sup> *Ideologies*, p. 144.

<sup>564</sup> See extensive correspondence in R/1/1/32 and R/1/1/33.

<sup>565</sup> Francis Robinson, Introduction, Princess Abida Sultaan of Bhopal, 'The Begums of Bhopal', *History Today*, 30 (October, 1980), p. 31.

<sup>566</sup> Claudia Preckel, 'The Roots of Anglo-Muslim Cooperation and Islamic Reformism in Bhopal' in Jamal Malik (ed.), *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History, 1760-1860* (Leiden, 2000), p. 65.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

Begam in private he continued to show respect for her in public meetings, placing all the blame for corruption and intrigue in the state on the Nawab-consort.<sup>568</sup> However a lengthy article in *The Times* of 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1886, revealed sordid details regarding the Begam's second marriage. The article declared that the Begams, in the mould of female rulers such as the Czarina Catherine, had never been famous for their 'domestic virtues' and Sadiq Hassan had been a 'too successful lover'.<sup>569</sup> The Foreign Department issued apologies, yet in all of the correspondence surrounding this incident the charges against Shahjehan were never actually contradicted. Instead, officers remarked on the 'want of prudence and generosity' involved in publishing in an international newspaper the 'fact' of a reigning princess having been 'seduced by a clerk'.<sup>570</sup>

To British officials in India Shahjehan, far from emulating the Czarina Catherine, fitted neatly into the role of the 'degraded' Oriental woman existing in submissive subordination to her husband. A government memorandum of 1886 pointed out that since her second marriage the Begam, who previously appeared in public and took a personal and active share in the administration, 'has retired behind the *purdah*, and has become a mere cypher in the hands of her husband'.<sup>571</sup> Sir Lepel dismissed the ruler as 'a weak misguided woman, completely under the influence of her husband, [who] had permitted her State and her subjects to become the prey of an adventurer'.<sup>572</sup> Nothing short of banishing Sadiq Hassan from the state would provide an effective remedy for the existing maladministration of Bhopal. As long her husband was allowed to remain in the state, the Begam would be entirely unable to shake off his authority and govern on her own account through responsible Ministers. In Sir Lepel's view:

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<sup>568</sup> See R/1/1/35.

<sup>569</sup> 'An Episode in Indian Government' in *The Times* (London) 27<sup>th</sup> December 1886, R/1/1/55.

<sup>570</sup> Note of D. [Earl of Dufferin], 5 February 1887, R/1/1/55, quoted Lambert Hurley 'Contesting Seclusion', p. 154.

<sup>571</sup> Memorandum by FTH, 28 March 1886, R/1/1/33.

<sup>572</sup> Lepel Griffin, AGG CI, to H. M. Durand, Sec. GoI, FD, 10 March 1886, R/1/1/33.

It is impossible to exaggerate the ascendancy which he [Sadiq Hassan] has acquired over the Begam. All her attendants and relations attribute it to charms which he has given her, and which she wears in her hair and there is, indeed, something almost miraculous in her steadfast adherence to a man whose forgeries, perjuries and tyranny are thoroughly known to her. She cannot plead ignorance and she is as fertile as her husband in inventing lies to screen offences and crimes of his, which she is unable to deny.<sup>573</sup>

The inaccessibility of the Begam was much to be regretted, 'she and her mother having been accustomed to come in public unveiled and dispose of State business face to face with their Ministers'.<sup>574</sup> Moreover her female visitors had been discouraged from coming to the palace with the result that she was 'virtually a prisoner'. All information on state affairs 'she has heard with the ears of the Nawab and seen with his eyes alone'.<sup>575</sup> Sir Lepel suggested that if the ruler were to come out of *pardah* many of the difficulties of administration would be removed.<sup>576</sup> The Begam, hinting that the image of a 'mere cypher' may have been wrongly ascribed to her by British officials, replied somewhat acerbically that the Agent to the Governor-General appeared to imagine that her ideas and opinions were written on her face, standing firm in her refusal to come out of *pardah* as it was 'contrary to her creed'.<sup>577</sup>

With the removal of Sadiq Hassan from the administration and his death in 1889, Shahjehan to some extent reasserted her political position. The Political Agent in Bhopal, Colonel W. Kincaid, congratulated her for her personal conduct of various areas of the administration. The ruler was prepared to sit in court daily during certain hours 'ready to hear all reports and listen to complaints' to ensure that justice was carried out, and to issue speedy orders for enquiries into cases against the police. Moreover she had given an order to the Minister to visit the jails twice a month and was in the process of

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> 'History of Bhopal', Lepel Griffin to Durand, September 1885, R/1/1/33.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

<sup>576</sup> Lepel Griffin to Durand, 29 October 1885, R/1/1/33.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

dividing the authorities in control of jails and police.<sup>578</sup> Nevertheless the Acting Minister, Colonel C. Ward now had full power in all departments, subject to the Begam's orders given by her personally, in a hope that 'Constitutional Government will ... take the place of a crushing and omnipotent tyranny'.<sup>579</sup>

Demanding more control in affairs of state, in a spirited *kharita* to the Viceroy in 1888 Shahjehan complained forcibly that her authority had undergone 'great diminution' and the state had become a 'laughing stock to its enemies'.<sup>580</sup> The appointment of an empowered Minister and the substitution of a new system of administration for the old customs of the State had reduced the Begam to an 'imaginary picture'. She complained that no cases, except those connected with *jagirs*, were referred to her and demanded 'full powers to conduct the State as formerly'.<sup>581</sup> Such powers included the ability to engage a Minister to her liking on a salary suitable to the small revenues of the state; to introduce measures for improving and bettering the condition of subjects, officials and *jagirdars*; to punish officials by fine or dismissal; to appoint and promote officials; to call for reports from officials for negligence or irregularity; and to settle all cases according to the established usage of the state.<sup>582</sup>

Colonel Ward stressed that, despite her protestations, the Begam still possessed great authority, 'there is not one single case of any importance in which she has not been consulted by me, either revenue or civil. As for money matters, she is supreme – even my office bill goes to her monthly for sanction and payment'.<sup>583</sup> Ward also credited Shahjehan with a certain amount of acuity in dealing with administrative reforms and, in

<sup>578</sup> Col. W. Kincaid, Pol. Agent, Bhopal, to Begam, 28 July 1885, R/2/453/71.

<sup>579</sup> Lepel Griffin to Sec. Govt, 21 February 1886, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box VI.

<sup>580</sup> Kharita Begam of Bhopal to Viceroy, 28 July 1888, R/1/1/96.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Col. C. Ward to F. Henvey, AGG CI, 26 July 1888, R/1/1/88.

particular, the problems facing the state in the collection of settlement revenue. The Begam regretted the excessive burden of taxation on her subjects and demanded that the Minister fix an assessment that was more realistic.<sup>584</sup> However the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, R. W. Crosthwaite, was not equally euphoric over her conduct of the administration when it was suggested that she should receive a further two guns to her personal salute. He was of the opinion that, 'As a lady she has many difficulties to contend against, and the ability and discretion with which she governs are worthy of admiration. But in the actual condition of the State there is nothing in the administration which calls for special praise'.<sup>585</sup>

Sultan Jahan Begam, Shahjehan's daughter, from whom the ruler was estranged for much of her reign<sup>586</sup>, observed of her mother that, 'like the majority of her sex, she was wilful and obstinate'. She could rarely be induced to change her opinion, or to deviate from a course of action she had once determined to follow.<sup>587</sup> Yet Shahjehan was by no means without her successes. It was not until her reign that Urdu literature and poetry flourished in Bhopal. The Begam was particularly fond of poetry and offered substantial state pensions to the men of learning who gathered at her court, also acting as patron to a circle of female poets.<sup>588</sup> The most extraordinary of Shahjehan Begam's writings was *Tahzib un-Niswan*, a 475-page manual for women, first published in 1889. It was written in a simple style, which made it accessible to most Urdu-speaking women, and as a result it was extremely popular and was reprinted several times. Considered the first women's encyclopaedia in India, the volume covered a wide variety of topics relating to women's work in the household and their status in Islam. It attempted to give women

<sup>584</sup> Ward to Durand, 10 September 1886, R/1/1/47.

<sup>585</sup> R. W. Crosthwaite, Note of 24 October 1894, R/1/1/1225.

<sup>586</sup> See the alleged attempted disinheritance of Sultan Jahan by her mother in the chapter on succession.

<sup>587</sup> Sultan Jahan, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 200.

<sup>588</sup> Lambert Hurley, 'Contesting Seclusion', p. 37.



some control over their own lives by teaching them about pregnancy, child-rearing and hygiene, as well as marriage, divorce and other ceremonies within Islam.<sup>589</sup> Shahjehan also recognised the need for a hospital specifically designed for the needs of *pardah* women, and 'The Lady Lansdowne Hospital for Women' was opened in Bhopal in 1892.<sup>590</sup>

During the last years of Shahjehan's reign, under the Minister of State, Munshi Imtiaz Ali Khan, the administration of Bhopal deteriorated to an alarming degree. A corrupt system of revenue collection resulted in a fall in the state population from 900,000 to 600,000 due to death or emigration, and courts of justice degenerated into arenas for 'bribery competitions'.<sup>591</sup> Munshi Imtiaz Ali's successor, Maulavi Abdul Jabbar Khan, was old, inexperienced in revenue administration and unable to tackle the corrupt practices which he had inherited in all departments. After Shahjehan's death Sultan Jahan determined to train herself in administrative detail. In many ways she revealed herself to be as 'wilful' as her mother. In the light of ministerial behaviour during Shahjehan's reign, she believed firmly that it was impossible for a Minister to be 'in sympathy with the people and their interests to the same extent as the natural ruler of the State'.<sup>592</sup> For a year and a half the Begam ruled the state unaided then, unable to cope, compromised by appointing two Ministers and dividing the work between them.<sup>593</sup> At the start of her reign in 1901 she made a personal tour of the various districts of the state to deal with settlement arrangements, noting that,

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, p. 156.

<sup>591</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp.173-4.

<sup>592</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, p. 225. Sultan Jahan also believed that the 'appointment of an absolute Minister can seldom be productive of good results. It is only in accordance with the natural order of things that a person so appointed should be jealous of his authority, and should endeavour to make his will the law of the land. He would need to be a man of exceptional loyalty who could, in such a situation, patiently defer to the wishes of the Chief when they happened to be in conflict with his own'. *Account*, Vol. I, p. 224.

<sup>593</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, p. 262.

The affairs of every *mahal* that I visited stood in urgent need of reform and of the personal attention of the ruler. Four thousand six hundred and ninety-nine petitions were presented to me during this tour ... amongst these there were very few which were not deserving of attention, and on which orders were not passed.<sup>594</sup>

In her inspection to determine and grant leases it was impossible to get through the work of a single *mahal* in less than eight days, 'My own work occupied me eighteen hours daily ... sometimes until past midnight, I was occupied with correspondence on various State matters, and in devising and directing measures for the suppression of plague'.<sup>595</sup>

Apart from a revision of the settlement procedures, one of Sultan Jahan's first reforms consisted of the appointment of a Legislative Council, moreover she heard, personally, every appeal that was made against the decisions of the Ministers' courts. In 1903 she displayed considerable courage and determination in undertaking a hazardous pilgrimage to Mecca, in the course of which Bedouins fired upon the royal party.<sup>596</sup> The newly installed ruler also opened the Madrissa Tabia Asifia, specialising in the teaching of Yunani medicine in 1903, and, against much opposition influenced by '*purdah* considerations', opened in the same year the Madrissa Suleiman, the first school for the education of girls in Bhopal.<sup>597</sup> After visiting Europe in 1911, Sultan Jahan's educational and social campaign for women's emancipation moved to an all-India stage and she became the founding President of the All-India Muslim Ladies Conference in 1914. This conference supported girls' education and raising the age of marriage, but discouraged the abandonment of *purdah*.<sup>598</sup>

Ten years later the Begam attended the All-India Women's Conference on Educational

<sup>594</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, p. 281.

<sup>595</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 277-8.

<sup>596</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 338-352. See also Sultan Jahan Begam, *The Story of a Pilgrimage to Hijaz* (Calcutta, 1909), pp. 19-127.

<sup>597</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 317-325.

<sup>598</sup> Shaharyar M. Khan, *The Begums of Bhopal*, p. 180.

Reform. By then, at the age of seventy, her stance on *purdah* had 'mellowed'. At the Conference, well aware of the need to make life easier for her gender, rich or poor, she advocated 'a lessening of *purdah* restrictions, greater focus of work on under-privileged women and a style of education less geared to domestic matters'.<sup>599</sup> Describing the life of her mother after her death, Sultan Jehan voiced the problems faced by all the Begams of Bhopal as the only female rulers in India in the nineteenth century and indeed faced by other royal Indian women in positions of power at that time, 'When we realise the difficulties of the position she was called upon to fill, remembering at the same time the limitations by which in Eastern society ladies of noble birth are surrounded, we cannot but be amazed that her success was so great and her mistakes so few'.<sup>600</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The British regulation of Indian princely marriages was not simply part of the imperial exercise to create a more ordered, tidy society in the states. It had several specific aims. By demanding that the details of proposed marriages were reported to the Government of India it was possible to eliminate the substantial wheeling and dealing of *darbars* in contracting alliances. As will be seen in the chapter on succession, royal children had a habit of appearing out of the woodwork as a ruler's reign progressed and the monitoring of marriages was essential to ensure that the Government could arrive at the correct decision as to the heir to the throne. Such monitoring tended to include a thorough inspection of the physical and mental attributes of the parties concerned, thereby preventing weaknesses occurring in the line of descent. There were obvious advantages, particularly in major states, to a suitable political match and, despite the unwillingness of

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

<sup>600</sup> *Account*, Vol. I, p. 202.

some senior British officials to condone intervention in private royal matters, there appears to have been no reticence on the part of political officers to enter into marriage negotiations with great enthusiasm. However the same enthusiasm was not reserved for those rulers who entered into marriages with European women, with the cultural differences which seemed destined to create complications.

British scrutiny of the princely nuptial process inevitably removed power and authority from royal families, resulting in much resentment. Marriage was seen by the more devious members of such families as a means by which the young heir could escape the clutches of British tutors or guardians. The British determination to ensure that a bride was sufficiently younger than her royal husband to allow him to live independently until an age when he had completed his education put paid to this ruse. Much resentment was also caused by the British attempt to supplant the allegedly more licentious practices of the *zenana* by the introduction of monogamous royal marriage, an attempt which was still proving somewhat unsuccessful by the start of the twentieth century. However, despite the fact that they were without a mandate from the Government of India to enforce western norms, limited interference by political officers was enough to remove total independence in marriage matters from many *durbars* and to alter traditional practice to some extent.

Whereas within a state a prince was frequently the principal loser in the face of British efforts to change traditional rule at the end of the nineteenth century, the women of his family stood much to gain by adopting and implementing British liberal ideas, particularly in the areas of princely education and administration. It must be stressed that those who took advantage of such an opportunity were few and far between. In the vast majority of princely *durbars* the highly resistant and conservative weight of the

*zenana* constantly thwarted British efforts at 'improvement', particularly during a minority when they were able to wield significant control, as has been demonstrated in the chapter on education. However those royal women who proved themselves 'useful' in the process of British indirect rule were able, remarkably, to assume a female role in affairs of state which, with the exception of the monarch herself, was inconceivable at that time in England.

With access to the press and British legal advisors, if not the law courts of British India, royal women were capable of defending their position to an extent which had not been possible before the end of the century. Just as princely honour was being undermined by British intervention in palace life, it could also be undermined by a challenge in public from a female relative. However, far from arousing admiration for the spirit and determination of the female protagonist, such behaviour tended to confirm 'the Orientalist stereotype of *zenana* women as idle intriguers who, ignorant of substantial affairs of the world, preoccupied themselves with making trouble for others'.<sup>601</sup> In doing so it played an unwitting role in strengthening the desirability of the 'orthodox norms of feminine modesty and submission'.<sup>602</sup> 'Idle intriguers' or not, power was undoubtedly removed from the *zenana* by the start of the twentieth century, in that the introduction of western ideas in some *durbars* opened up state administration and palace life, and the women's quarters could no longer act as effectively as a source of invisible but at times almost despotic power. The following chapter examines the manner in which the British attempted to make state administration both accessible and accountable, and the effects of the implementation of western forms of government upon the rulers of certain states.

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<sup>601</sup> Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, p. 75.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

## ADMINISTRATION

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With the arrival of Lord William Bentinck as Governor-General in 1828, the British embarked upon an intensive programme of reform in India. Building upon what had previously been 'little more than a vague expectation' that somehow British rule ought to bring 'improvement', free traders, Utilitarians and evangelicals created a distinctive ideology of imperial government shaped by the ideals of liberalism.<sup>603</sup> The representatives of these groups, their scope of action limited within Britain, looked to India as a space where their theories might be implemented and tested. James Mill, Utilitarianism's most influential proponent, identified the despotic oriental form of government as the root of Indian degradation and therefore saw reform of law and administration, particularly land revenue, and the introduction of an accountable and efficient centralised government as the means of reforming Indian society.<sup>604</sup> These arguments instigated a reinterpretation of morally responsible British rule as a mission to bring India into the modern age.

Liberals differed over the urgency of reform and the relative importance of particular measures of reform, such as law or education. However they attempted invariably to free individuals from their 'bondage to priests, despots and a feudal aristocracy' in order that those individuals could become autonomous, rational beings, leading a life of 'conscious deliberation and choice'.<sup>605</sup> Liberals had for the most part little sympathy with established institutions that were sustained by antiquity alone. Individual self-reliance, character and merit were required to shape a proper society, not a hierarchy that

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<sup>603</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 28.

<sup>604</sup> E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), p. 35. Also D. A. Low, *Lion Rampant* (London, 1973), ch. 2.

<sup>605</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 29.

rewarded individuals on the basis of patronage and status. The administrative 'rationalism' of utilitarianism embodied the distinction between the order associated with British rule and the anarchy and slothfulness of Oriental despotism.<sup>606</sup>

The spirit of colonial administration produced 'subtle and pervasive' changes in the Indian aristocracy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The capacity to mobilise followers through the politics of court was diminished. Kingliness and the distribution of honours became less important and less practicable, while 'economy' and 'good management' were the measures of success for the dependent princes and the landlords of the British territories.<sup>607</sup> Ideas of largesse and gifts for service 'succumbed to European concerns for financial rectitude and educational qualification' and, as the nineteenth century progressed under British rule, the reinforcement of legal and administrative systems both in British India and the Indian states became a priority.<sup>608</sup>

The channels of British influence upon Indian rulers were both direct and indirect. The political agent not only advised in the matter of a prince's education but also was frequently involved in the setting up of a temporary administration until the ruler attained his powers, usually at eighteen. As the paramount power, the government reserved the right, if the new ruler happened to be a minor, to take steps to safeguard his patrimony during his minority. Minority rule provided the occasion for strong, often creative, intervention and laid the basis for subsequent influence. The assumptions which governed British relations with the Indian princes in the latter part of the nineteenth century held that 'intimate British involvement in all but the largest states

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, pp. 152.

<sup>608</sup> *Indian Society*, p. 153.

would not be allowed to continue beyond a ruler's majority, when the established patterns of administration would continue under the supervision of the adult raja'.<sup>609</sup> Therefore if changes were to be made in the administrative basis of a state under minority rule, they could not simply be introduced by the authority of the agent, but would have to be 'deeply ingrained in the bureaucracy'. Any advances in the administration would otherwise be artificial and easily removed or adapted when British participation was reduced.<sup>610</sup> The minority administration was an exact replica of the larger administrative machinery run in British India. The Government of India with a regency council under its control usually reorganised the state administration already in force, which was frequently outmoded and medieval in many respects, and cautiously introduced its own administrative ideas.

By operating through the medium of Indian ministers and bureaucracies the doctrine of liberal reform was administered in the states both during and after minorities, justifying British imposition of land reform, law and, of prime importance in the states, efficient and accountable government. The agents of administrative reform were frequently, although not exclusively, the products of education, training and experience in British India. Of all the British resources that in one way or another permeated state boundaries 'bureaucratic centralisation seems to have had the greatest effect on altering the parameters of politics in the states'.<sup>611</sup> Under British sponsorship *darbar* bureaucracies grew and impinged increasingly upon the customary rights and privileges of royalty by introducing rigorous systems of economy and sound management. The imperial government did not superimpose its political system on states, but rather counted on being able to serve its interests by 'manipulating, through minimal interference, political

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<sup>609</sup> Haynes, 'Alwar' in Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes*, p. 38.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> Robert W. Stern, 'An Approach to Politics in the Princely States' in Jeffrey (ed.), *People Princes*, pp. 359.



systems that were not subject to its direct bureaucratic control'.<sup>612</sup> More than minimal interference was almost always considered by British authorities to be undesirable in that it was 'costly, offensive to loyal princes and often productive of British involvement in local intrigues from which they found difficulty in extricating themselves'.<sup>613</sup>

However once begun in the states, administrative reforms tended to develop an impetus of their own, quite apart from British policy statements. Although it may have been at odds with the original intention of British officials of all ranks to work towards the ideal of the westernised ruler in charge of his administration, the momentum of such reforms and the increase in power of those administrators who instigated new systems of government frequently resulted in a considerable loss of a ruler's control within his own state and subsequent loss of status in his relationship with his subjects. As Ashis Nandy suggests, modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through military and technological prowess as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order. These hierarchies opened up new vistas, particularly for those exploited or cornered within a traditional system. To them 'the new order looked like -- and here lay its psychological pull -- the first step towards a just and equal world'.<sup>614</sup>

For various reasons the Political Service lacked the determination to stop the loss of princely control. Weakened by Government of India financial parsimony, prejudice against intellectual ability, and lack of provision of training in administrative skills, political officers were frequently accused of needless and unproductive intervention in states' affairs by their superiors and given little encouragement in reconciling different factions within a state to arrive at an effective administration. During the

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<sup>612</sup> Stern, *Cat and Lion*, p. 23.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

<sup>614</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi, 1983), p. ix.

last decades of the century the ability of such officers to uphold the position of a ruler was increasingly diminished by the rise of powerful bureaucracies headed by intellectually acute Indian Ministers, who succeeded to a greater or lesser extent to put in place accountable administrations on the British Indian model without much help from either resident or ruler. It is hardly surprising that in many cases political officers were content to leave their princely charges as figureheads rather than prime movers in the government of a state, if such a government was in any case progressing in line with liberal ideals. Indeed it could be argued that such officers were more successful in moving towards their goal of 'good government' by so doing.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first deals with Government policy in general as far as the administration of the states was concerned and the second consists of four case studies to examine the workings of individual administrations.

The first section covers three areas: the official line taken towards the states in the decades following the Mutiny; the negative opinion of the role of political officers expressed both by senior British officials and by the princes whom political officers served; and, finally, various cases of excessive princely misrule in which the power of the Government of India machinery was brought to bear upon the offender over and above political officers on the ground, ironically often displaying much of the ineptitude of which such officers were accused by their superiors.

## GENERAL POLICY

## THE OFFICIAL POST-MUTINY APPROACH TO INTERVENTION

The post-Mutiny policy appeared to have achieved little in moulding the princes into responsible servants of the Crown. In fact it was argued that it had made the *darbars* more belligerent and unyielding in their conservatism. The Political Secretary at the India Office, Sir Owen Tudor Burne, questioned the wisdom of his predecessors' decision to perpetuate the states regardless of their administrative worth or potential:

The fortunate moment which will never recur again was apparently lost, of recasting the whole of our Treaties with Native States in terms favourable to them whilst equally advantageous to ourselves, by equalisation of tribute or contribution, control of their armies ... and the initiation of some form of constitutional gov[ernmen]t applicable to all in a general sense.<sup>615</sup>

Renowned in British Indian circles as a force for improvement the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, was highly conscientious in his approach to the states. Until his assassination in 1872 he threw himself into the work of the political portfolio with an enthusiasm reminiscent of Dalhousie. Mayo was the first Governor-General to undertake a comprehensive tour of the princely states and found the experience disturbing. He informed the Secretary of State, Lord Argyll

that in Joudhpore, Ulwar and Odeypore and several of the small states a state of chronic anarchy prevails - that corruption and intrigue is as rife in several courts as it was in the days of the Emperors, that female infanticide and many of the other old evils prevail to an enormous extent - that to begin what must be the work of many, many years, an Entire Change of Policy must be adopted, the present mixture of *Laissez-Faire* and niggling interference must be abandoned and the Chiefs must be told what they will not be allowed to do.<sup>616</sup>

<sup>615</sup> Minute by Sir O. T. Burne, 22 January 1875, quoted in Copland, *British Raj*, p.127.

<sup>616</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 7 February 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. I.

Mayo was convinced that if the princes were to act as 'loyal feudatories', a policy must be found 'to exalt the dignity, strengthen the authority and increase the personal respectability of these ancient families'.<sup>617</sup> Britain should 'obtain real and lasting influence by showing them that that which they value above everything, i.e. the support of the British Government ... is only to be gained by the exercise of justice, by the certain punishment of crime and the encouragement of those who support our recommendations'.<sup>618</sup>

The task was not an easy one, since the majority of rulers hardly constituted promising material. Mayo referred scathingly to 'these men who are children in some respects but treacherous and savage in others'.<sup>619</sup> Moreover relations with the states were extremely ill-defined:

We act on the principle of non-interference but we must constantly interfere. We allow them to keep armies for the defence of their States but we cannot permit them to go to war - we encourage them to establish courts of justice but we cannot hear of their trying Europeans - we recognise them as separate Sovereigns but we daily issue orders to them which are implicitly obeyed - we depose them ... when the Ruler commits or sanctions a grievous crime - or create an administration for them as in the Ulwur case when the Chief misgoverns and harries his subjects - with some we place political agents, with others we do not - with some as with Jeypore, Bhopal and Puttialla we are on terms of intimacy and friendship, with others as with Dholepore we scarcely ever address them except to find fault with some gross neglect of Duty ... [we] are governed by the Circumstances of the Time and the Character of the Ruler.<sup>620</sup>

Mayo did not believe that the princes had a natural entitlement to imperial protection. As a part of the new hierarchy which was to emerge as a result of the Queen's Proclamation he was adamant that the Indian rulers should earn British support. Speaking to the assembled Rajput princes at Jaipur in October 1870 he outlined his

<sup>617</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 10 May 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. I.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

<sup>619</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 7 February 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. I.

<sup>620</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 25 November 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. II.

view:

If we respect your rights and privileges, you must also respect the rights and regard the privileges of those who are placed beneath your care. If we support you in your power, we expect in return good government. We demand that everywhere throughout the length and breadth of Rajpootana justice and order should prevail; that every man's property should be secure; that the traveller should come and go in safety; that the cultivator should enjoy the fruits of his labour and the trader the fruits of his commerce; that you should make roads, encourage education, and provide for the relief of the sick.<sup>621</sup>

However examples of the British desire to avoid a too harsh imposition of British rule appear frequently during the viceroynalties of both Mayo and his successor, Lord Northbrook. In 1869, a despatch from Argyll dealing with the proposed territorial distribution for the Rajputana agencies made the position clear,

the entire redistribution of the political Agencies in Rajpootana without the views of the Chiefs being in any way taken into consideration indicates a tendency to treat Rajasthan too much as if it were a British Administrative Division. It is essential to bear in mind its distinctive character, as a territory of which the internal administration belongs, alike of right and by Treaty, to the many important states among whom it is divided.<sup>622</sup>

This view was reinforced by the official reaction to disputes between the Maharajah of Bikaner and his nobles, 'Her Majesty's Government are averse from a direct and authoritative interference in the affairs of the State, regarding such interference as being, except in extreme cases, inexpedient, especially when, in the case of Bikaner, it is not provided for in our Treaty with the Chief'.<sup>623</sup>

The Maharajah of Marwar's decision the following year to appoint a Council to deal with grievances of his nobles was commended by the Secretary of State, who ended a

<sup>621</sup> Speech by Mayo 21 October 1870 in *The Times*, 5 December 1870, quoted Sir W. W. Hunter, *A Life of the Earl of Mayo* (London, 1876), I, pp. 11-12.

<sup>622</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 204, 30 September 1869, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 12.

<sup>623</sup> SoS to GoI, No.153, 20 December 1871, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 14.

relevant despatch to the Government of India, 'I entirely approve your intimation to the Maharaja that we have no desire to interfere in the Government and that our interest in the state is confined to its being prosperous and well governed'.<sup>624</sup> A similar line was adopted when dealing with Holkar, Maharajah of Indore, who was allegedly confiscating the holdings of those nobles beneath him whose guarantees did not exist in the recently republished treaty of Indore, 'it must be borne in mind that in the absence of an express guarantee, we have no right to interfere between Holkar and his feudatories'.<sup>625</sup> The case of Indore illustrated the paradoxical situation in which a ruler was able to exploit his subjects in the safe knowledge that the threat of British intervention prevented internal uprisings within a state. Referring to Holkar, Sir Lepel Griffin, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, in 1881, 'These chiefs are proud of their extortions, and boast that the British Government would never dare to take what they can from the people; forgetting that it is no love for them which keeps their subjects quiet, but the great shadow of the British Government which is ever seen sheltering the Raja's throne'.<sup>626</sup>

Even in cases which would have aroused the fury of social reformers earlier in the century, if a ruler was not directly implicated in misdeeds within his state no particularly stringent action was taken by the Government of India. When dealing with the failure of the Rewah *darbar* in 1870 to investigate two cases of *sati* and punish those involved, it was merely suggested that surprise and displeasure be conveyed to the prince, which 'may lead to increased vigilance in the repression of the crime ... in other Chiefs'.<sup>627</sup> Ian Copland refers to the all-out effort to reform the states in the image of the West in the

<sup>624</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 57, 6 June 1872, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 15.

<sup>625</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 211, 12 October 1869, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 12.

<sup>626</sup> Lepel Griffin to Ripon, 15 June 1881, Ripon Collection, ADD 43614.

<sup>627</sup> SoS to GoI, No.13, 21 January 1870, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 13.

period from 1870 to 1890,<sup>628</sup> but in many cases this zeal was tempered by a desire to persuade miscreant rulers to change their ways rather than to force them into action. In attempting to eradicate the kidnapping of children in the Madras and Bombay presidencies, advice was given by the India Office to the effect that native rulers should not be coerced into supporting British efforts at reform,

the obvious duty of each political officer [is] to urge on the Chief to whose *Durbar* he is accredited that the summary repression of this infamous practice is due, not so much to the demands of the British Government, as to those of common humanity and that, on this ground, Her Majesty's Government fully rely on his cordial cooperation in a matter so closely affecting the welfare of his subjects.<sup>629</sup>

In the 1870s it was unlikely in any case that particularly effective intervention in states' affairs would have been possible. When Mayo took over the viceroyalty Indian finances had shown a deficit for the past three years, and resources were hardly available to fund the employment of a sufficiently large force of political officers to deal with all miscreant rulers. There was also an idealistic side to the Viceroy's reasoning. Mayo and his chief political adviser, the Calvinistic Sir Charles Aitchison, were staunch believers in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. They were confident that, 'with proper guidance, the princes could be induced to mend their ways'.<sup>630</sup> This was an optimistic view shared by a vast majority of the Indian Political Service. However intervention by Political Agents was often seen as far from constructive by both Calcutta and London. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century official condemnation of the Political Service flowed both in government despatches and viceregal correspondence. The India Office made it clear that British political officers would 'most surely earn the approbation of the Government which they serve by abstaining from all obtrusive and vexatious interference with details, while showing themselves ready to aid with their

<sup>628</sup> Copland, *British Raj*, p. 123.

<sup>629</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 263, 11 October 1869, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 12.

<sup>630</sup> Copland, *British Raj*, p. 129-30.

advice the chiefs and rulers to whom they are accredited'.<sup>631</sup>

## THE BLIGHT OF THE POLITICAL OFFICER

The loudest and most vigorous criticism of the new wave of political officers came from the Council of India. During the Duke of Argyll's term as Secretary of State (1868-1874) hardly a despatch went out which did not contain either general or specific criticism of political style. Two of the most able and experienced members of the Council, Sir Erskine Perry and Sir George Clerk, voiced their views clearly in notes attached to a despatch of 1873 on the succession of the grandson of the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur. According to Perry, if the small states who gained independence at the break up of Maharatta power were not supported by the officers of the paramount power, they would be absorbed by the larger princes, such as Patiala and Scindia, 'Our presence however prevents this sort of natural crystallization going on, which is the tendency of native (perhaps of all) society. We keep things in "status quo" but at the same time we destroy all energy and capacity for self-government'.<sup>632</sup> Clerk agreed that 'Faction is fomented, responsibility paralyzed and the self respect of Rulers destroyed in this puerile meddling and muddling in the affairs of certain ever loyal States, willing in all emergencies to serve us with their entire resources'.<sup>633</sup>

Sympathy was given to a plea by the Maharajah of Bharatpur to be relieved of the continual presence of a Political Agent at his court, on the grounds that the Agent tended 'to diminish his self-reliance and to cramp his personal exertions'. The India Office

<sup>631</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 2, 11 March 1875, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 1.

<sup>632</sup> Undated note by Sir Erskine Perry attached to SoS to GoI, No. 78, 4 June 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.

<sup>633</sup> Undated note by Sir George Clerk attached to SoS to GoI, No. 78, 4 June 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.



advised the Government of India that:

Her Majesty's Government would be loth to encourage among Native Chiefs any possible feeling that, whilst the evil results of the system in force are attributed to the Native ruler, the good is assigned to the interposition, more or less directly exercised, of the British officer, that they have responsibility without independence and that they are placed in a false position with respect to both the British Government and their own subjects.<sup>634</sup>

On the grounds of the 'highly satisfactory account' of the prince, agreement for the removal of the Agent was accordingly given.<sup>635</sup>

Similar British sympathy was shown by Argyll over the appointment of a Resident to the court of Kashmir, a measure fiercely opposed by the Maharajah on the grounds that his treaty exempted him from such supervision. The Secretary of State admitted that 'it is the very fact of dependence which makes the arrangement distasteful to Native Princes in India. In the case of really independent nations, there is no danger of the representatives of other States interfering or being troublesome; whereas our Residents, in virtue of our Suzerain powers, are very apt to be perpetually interfering and practically make the Princes feel that their "Raj" is over'.<sup>636</sup> Correspondence between the Maharajah of Kashmir and the Afghan leader, Shere Ali, which was intercepted in 1879, revealed the extent to which the Indian ruler detested British interference. It was reported that the Maharajah had written letters to the effect that

the practical difference between the British and the Russian Raj, assuming one or other to be our master, is that, under the Russian Raj, we shall at least be spared the intrusion of the Resident Political Officer. The Russians put garrisons where such garrisons will give them the military and political control of their subject Asiatic provinces, and to the native rulers of those provinces this involves only a matter of tribute, the amount of which, if left to their own devices, they can always wring out of their subjects. The British, on the other hand, come upon us with certain preconceived and semi-religious ideas (which, like all religious ideas, are not

<sup>634</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 58, 30 April 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Argyll to Northbrook, 23 December 1873, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 9.

susceptible of open discussion) about administrative proprieties, and the duties of rulers towards their subjects, etc; which ideas are not only uncongenial, but absolutely incomprehensible to us ... The presence of a political officer lifts our '*purda*'; and the moment our '*purda*' is lifted, goodbye to our local independence. If we do not act in precise conformity with the foreign notions prevalent amongst what is, so far as we can judge, the lowest class of a distant western community, necessarily ignorant of the practical conditions of our Eastern life, the political officer immediately reports the fact to his Raj; and his Raj then comes down upon us with a heavy hand, in the name of 'humanity' or 'civilisation', or some other such absurdity undreamed of in our philosophy. Under the Russian Raj, we should no doubt still be feudatories, but feudatories free at least to wallop our own packages with our own sticks in our own way, and rid of that intolerable nuisance – 'the British Political Officer'.<sup>637</sup>

Northbrook's successor, Lord Lytton, was in entire agreement with the Maharajah as far as the intervention heavy-handed political officers was concerned,

I have long thought that the British Resident at Native Courts is on the whole a political mistake. I am certain that he is regarded by those Courts as an intolerable nuisance, and that, instead of facilitating our relations with them, or increasing our influence over them, he is either a chronic source of irritation to them, or else, for all practical purposes, their agent and advocate in every matter of dispute with the British Government.<sup>638</sup>

However although the Viceroy prided himself on the 'great dominant purpose of the British Raj to improve and civilise wherever it extends its power', whereas the Russian Raj 'craves power in every direction, without any reference to the power of doing good', he was unable to produce a formula which would move the states forward to an ideal standard of 'political perfection and social prosperity' without some form of British presence. With limited resources to furnish every ruler with a political officer of substance, there seemed to be no practical alternative between 'crushing' a ruler or leaving him alone.<sup>639</sup>

Throughout his viceroyalty, Lytton remained convinced that the general system of

<sup>637</sup> Lytton to Cranbrook, 5 November 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

Residents had not been successful, 'certainly our best relations are with the Punjab states, at whose Courts we have no Residents', and criticism had been made that no case could be cited of any 'really important' reform in a native administration directly due to the influence or agency of a Resident, since all such reforms had been carried out by the direct intervention of the Government of India during minorities, or under similar conditions.<sup>640</sup> However the Viceroy did admit that the reason why it was now possible to withdraw political officers from some native courts was that 'the relations between those Courts and the Suzerain Power have long ago been reduced to their right permanent position by the local action and influence of the Resident'. The work of Sir Richard Meade in Hyderabad was one example of a highly competent political officer in the demanding position of dealing with a 'feudatory authority whose personal aims we know to be incompatible with our political interests'.<sup>641</sup>

As a matter of long-term policy, Lytton favoured the system originally suggested by Lord Mayo of reducing the number of political officers and grouping native states under 'collective relations to one superior political authority' with few officers resident at their respective courts. This measure would 'strengthen our political control over the feudatory Courts, and greatly improve our relations with them'.<sup>642</sup> A proposed amalgamation of the central Indian and Rajputana agencies could create savings of Rs. 218,920 per year. It would not be necessary to delegate greater powers to one Agent to the Governor-General than were already possessed by two. Moreover, when railway communications were complete, one Agent could see more of every chief than two had been able to do previously and could 'easily manage to visit every State in the two Agencies, at least once a year, if required, even taking his camp with him', since 'there is

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<sup>640</sup> Lytton to Sir R. E. Egerton, 2 December 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.

<sup>642</sup> Lytton to Cranbrook, 5 November 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

not a State which could not be reached within two days from the nearest railway station'.<sup>643</sup>

However there was evidence that the constant surveillance of Indian rulers was not confined to British officials operating within the states. In 1885 the Secretary of State, Lord Randolph Churchill, expressed further concern over the amount of British intervention in states' affairs:

A much more generous and pleasing policy might be pursued by the Foreign Office at Calcutta towards many of the Native Princes. My impression, when I left India, was that relations between many of the Native Princes and the Foreign Office showed a constant nagging petty interference by the latter with the former in all affairs, small and great, and that this was working great mischief.<sup>644</sup>

Churchill's successor, Lord Hamilton, agreed with this view. Writing to the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, in 1899 he expressed the opinion that it would be worthwhile to 'cultivate kinder relations' with the Gaekwar of Baroda, 'a man of ability ... [who] governs his territories well'.<sup>645</sup> The Secretary of State added 'Few, if any, of our great Feudatories love the Paramount Power, and I am not at all sure that in several cases this antipathy is not largely due to tactlessness, mistakes and undue interference on the part of the various Foreign Offices and Political Residents'.<sup>646</sup> In the case of Sir Lepel Griffin, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, such criticism was quite possibly justified. When Sir Lepel was accused by the Begam of Bhopal of using 'imperative terms' while addressing her,<sup>647</sup> a senior British official failed to rush to his defence, noting that 'Local officers in these matters are not always safe guides. They allow themselves to be influenced by local prejudices and they are apt to fancy that any opposition to their

<sup>643</sup> Lytton to Sir Alfred Lyall, AGG Rajputana, 26 August 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

<sup>644</sup> Churchill to Dufferin, 7 August 1885, Dufferin Collection, IOR Neg. 4352.

<sup>645</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 2 February 1899, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 158.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid.

<sup>647</sup> See the section on Bhopal in the chapter on marriage and royal women.

wishes is a crime against the State'.<sup>648</sup>

Similarly when it was reported that the Nizam of Hyderabad 'bitterly resented' a proposed examination of his personal finances, and, rather than undergo such an indignity, was prepared to give the Government of India a guarantee that he would limit his expenditure to 55 lakhs from the public treasury, Curzon saw the proposal as not unreasonable, 'I am certain that these Princes are to be got at by a little personal courtesy, and that what is represented as disloyalty to Government is often no more than the irritation produced by a long course of friction with a not very tactful British representative'.<sup>649</sup> On the other hand, in Curzon's view, turning a blind eye to princely activity was hardly the answer to good management of the states. On a visit to Chumba, a minor Himalayan state which 'wisely or unwisely, we leave almost entirely to itself', Curzon noted that no political officer or Resident was *in situ*, and the young Rajah was visited only once or twice a year by the Lahore Commissioner. As a result he had degenerated into a 'timid and useless inebriate... . For want of a little schooling he has gone hopelessly to pieces'.<sup>650</sup>

Unlike Lytton, Curzon had little faith in the Punjab system of managing states, which 'leaves them utterly alone until they have turned into fuddle-headed jockeys, like Patiala, or into hopeless debauchees, like the late Bhawalpur ... .Every day that I am here, I am more impressed with the futility of managing Native States through Local Governments,

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<sup>648</sup> Letter from W. Bell, 17 April 1886, R/1/1/35. Sir Lepel was hardly a model of tact, writing in 1883 that it would be unwise for the British 'to descend from the high place which the genius of Englishmen has rightly won, and endeavour to persuade the people of India what, indeed, only the most credulous of them would believe – that they are intellectually or morally our equals, and that to them have been confided by fortune those secrets of government which in the modern world, are the inheritance of the Anglo Saxon race alone'. 'Indian Princes at Home', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 34, October 1883, p. 495.

<sup>649</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 23 March 1899, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 158.

<sup>650</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 25 September 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159

who have neither the tradition, the training, nor the men for the job'.<sup>651</sup> Of the twelve 'gun' rulers of the Punjab, the Viceroy identified no fewer than seven who 'afford a spectacle that cannot be studied with complacency'.<sup>652</sup> Local administrations possessing no Political Service had failed to provide support to young rulers who had 'enjoyed the advantages of tuition at the best European hands' at the very time when they most needed it.<sup>653</sup> The Rajah of Jind was allotted a military member of the Punjab Commission to act as his tutor and guardian.<sup>654</sup> As discussed in the chapter on royal marriage, the Rajah subsequently secretly married the daughter of 'a professional aeronaut of low character', which to Curzon illustrated 'how imperfect the authority and control of the Local Government must be', supporting his view that 'wherever possible, these young Chiefs, at the most ductile period of their lives, should be put in charge of Political Officers, not picked haphazard from the ranks of the Army, or from the Civil Commission, but selected from the trained Political Department'.<sup>655</sup>

Writing to the Secretary of State in 1900 during a tour of Cochin and Travancore, Curzon repeated his criticism of the monopoly of local governments over princely states in their control. He declared the system 'utterly vicious and rotten'.<sup>656</sup> Practically it would be difficult for the Foreign Department to manage either the states of Madras, because of their distance from headquarters, or the states of Bombay, because their administration would 'add so immensely to our own labours'. Yet there was great danger in leaving the local governments to supervise states and rulers 'whom they now consistently mismanage, and who, under this plan, drift away

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<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Minute by Viceroy on 'The Appointment of a Political Agent to the Phulkian States', 11 October 1900, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXXV.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> The outcome of much deliberation, detailed in the chapter on education.

<sup>655</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 3 October 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159.

<sup>656</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 18 November 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159.

altogether from the Imperial system'.<sup>657</sup> According to the Viceroy, the inevitable weakness of the local organisation lay in the fact that Residents had no political training before they were sent to a state, 'Everything depends on the idiosyncracies of the individual; but there is no system, no tradition, no body of rules; and a tactless Political Officer, with a weak or obstinate Native *Durbar*, can very soon bring the whole edifice to the ground'.<sup>658</sup> Such officers were in stark contrast to those men who reported directly to Curzon:

From my Agents to the Governor-General I receive incessant and minute reports. I know everything that goes on in the Courts of the Chief under their charge ... take the case of the Local Governments. During the 2½ years in which I have been in India, I have had only one reference from the Madras Government with regard to Cochin and Travancore. With the exception of the boundary dispute, I have never had any reference from Bombay about Cutch. Till famine arose, and they required loans from us, I never heard a word about the Kathiawar States ....The Local Governments, in their treatment of their Native States, pursue a policy of absolute independence, and never refer anything to the Government of India except in the last resort.<sup>659</sup>

However the Political Committee in England was adamant that the control of states under local Governments should remain under their Governors rather than be transferred to Calcutta. The Committee contended that were such control transferred to the Political Department of the Government of India, the Foreign Office would find it impossible to supervise the increase in work. Moreover there would be the greatest difficulty in finding men outside the areas where the states were situated who had an adequate regional knowledge of race, customs, traditions and systems of administration and taxation.<sup>660</sup> The Secretary of State did recognise that local governments lacked departments or high officials adequately trained to scrutinise the work of political agents to ensure continuity or energy within the service. It was

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

<sup>658</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 28 November 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159.

<sup>659</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 15 May 1901, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 160.

<sup>660</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 28 March 1901, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159.

suggested that a compromise might be found whereby the Government of India should have a voice in the selection of agents. They should be taken from the local service and there should be a division of matters to be referred for orders: those relating to revenue matters and local habits to be referred to local governments, and those political in a broad sense to be referred to the central government.<sup>661</sup>

#### PRINCELY MISRULE

Although, other than during Curzon's regime, it was officially seen as desirable to reduce interference to a minimum, serious abuses of power within princely administration could not be tolerated. As links in the chain of British rule, the Indian princes must not be allowed to appear as symbols of depravity, although during the latter part of the nineteenth century there was little evidence of a defined Government of India policy to deal with major or minor princely shortcomings.

Following an attack upon an individual by armed men in the employment of the Maharajah of Rewa, which constituted not only a serious outrage but a breach of his treaty with the British Government, the ruler was fined Rs. 10,000 which 'will no doubt serve to note the liability of a Chief, in his position, to punishment when avenging, in outrageous form, an insult'.<sup>662</sup> In 1875 the Maharajah made the state over to the care of a Political Agent 'until debts were discharged, and a fair system of administration established'. The state revenue had dwindled from 35 lakhs to 8½ lakhs and the ruler had squandered vast sums in gifts to *jagirdars* and priests.<sup>663</sup> The

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid

<sup>662</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 109, September 10 1874, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 17.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid.



Nawab of Janjira, who killed two gaolers by flogging, having previously displayed his unfitness to rule by other misdeeds, was deprived of criminal jurisdiction and allotted a Political Agent at his own expense.<sup>664</sup> Given the opportunity, the Bombay Government would have inflicted a similar punishment on the Rana of Porbandar for the torture and murder of an Arab who entered the *zenana* of his late son. The Government of India opposed such strong measures, but under pressure from Bombay agreed to demote the prince to the third class of Kathiawar chiefs.<sup>665</sup>

In cases of excessive misrule Britain was forced to take more serious action. If the princes were now to be representatives of the Crown, a certain standard of civilised behaviour was required on their part and, if such a standard were not met, it would be necessary to remove them from power. The Home Government duly approved the deposition of the Maharajah of Patna in Bihar in January 1871, as a result of cases of 'scalping and human sacrifice'.<sup>666</sup> Forceful, if less drastic, punishment was meted out to Dungar Singh, Maharajah of Bikaner, in 1884. In marked contrast to the rule of his somewhat enlightened son,<sup>667</sup> the Maharajah had shown a 'persistent disregard' for the advice of the Government of India. In January a despatch declared that if

owing to chronic misrule a Native State has fallen into a condition of disorder so complete that the authority of the Chief can be maintained only by the employment of British troops, it appears to us that the Government of India is ... bound to take adequate steps for the reform of the administration and the redress of the grievances from which the people of the State are suffering.<sup>668</sup>

<sup>664</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 273, December 9 1869, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 12.

<sup>665</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 8, 27 January 1870, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 13.

<sup>666</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 1, 5 January 1871, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 14.

<sup>667</sup> See references to Ganga Singh, Dungar Singh's son, in the chapters on education and marriage.

<sup>668</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 5, 8 January 1884, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box IV.

A Political Officer was to be appointed and the upkeep of the Agency was to be borne by the Maharajah, as well as the cost of a British military expedition sent to end a dispute between the ruler and some of his *thakurs*.<sup>669</sup>

On the whole, the more powerful the state, the more severe was British treatment of misrule. British leniency in a major, much exposed test case would be seen to create a dangerous precedent. Moreover, whereas in minor states there were limited British resources to control the administration and it was necessary to gain the co-operation of local rulers, in the largest of the princely dominions British manpower and financial support were much more readily available. Malharrao of Baroda was without doubt the most important prince to be deposed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Baroda was opened up for the first time to British influence, and the princes at large reminded forcefully of the strength of the paramount power.<sup>670</sup>

The report of the Second Baroda Commission, published at the beginning of April 1875, proved totally inconclusive. Sir Richard Meade and his two English colleagues serving on the commission found the Gaekwar guilty of attempting to poison the Baroda Resident, Colonel Robert Phayre. The three Indian members held him to be innocent. The supreme government was faced with a grave problem: if they accepted the verdict of the commission, which was technically 'not guilty', they were obliged to restore Malharrao to his throne. If on the other hand they ignored the findings, they would be forced to find some other justification for his deposition. Eventually, after much pressure from the Cabinet, it was decided to remove Malharrao on the grounds

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<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

<sup>670</sup> Edward C. Moulton, *Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration* (London, 1968) devotes a whole chapter to the Baroda crisis and S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1857-1905* (Oxford, 1953) also singles it out for attention.

of 'gross misrule'.<sup>671</sup> Northbrook deeply regretted the Cabinet's decision. He realised that the removal of the Gaekwar on the grounds of maladministration would be a breach of his Government's earlier pledge, giving the prince until December 1875 to introduce reforms, and would in addition deny the credibility of the enquiry.<sup>672</sup> The Viceroy was well aware that there was already 'some sympathy with the Gaekwar among the Native Princes, not personally, but because of the class of evidence against him - i.e. his own Private Secretary and the Residency servants'.<sup>673</sup>

In refusing to give the Gaekwar the benefit of the doubt when the three Indian commissioners concluded that the charge was not proven, Northbrook acted inconsistently with his policy of placing them on the commission in the first place. The damage to relations between Britain and the princes stemmed less from the eventual deposition of Malharrao, who was blatantly unfit to rule, than from the obvious British contempt for native ability and integrity. As Salisbury stated,

the Baroda experiment ... has sufficiently indicated to us that an open enquiry and Native members of the tribunal are instruments in advance of present Indian requirements. The moral which the whole of this affair has left written upon Indian history is that the Government is still supreme to punish Princes who do wrong, unfettered by any obligations or customary pledges as to procedure, and with that broad result we have no reason to be dissatisfied.<sup>674</sup>

Minuting in May 1876, Northbrook's successor, Lord Lytton, found nothing in the performance of governments in either Bombay or Calcutta to indicate 'any well considered and well-defined policy' towards the states.<sup>675</sup> In his opinion, Northbrook had 'neglected feudatory policy to his cost'.<sup>676</sup> However during his own viceroyalty,

<sup>671</sup> Copland, *British Raj*, p. 150.

<sup>672</sup> Northbrook to Salisbury, 21 April and 21 June 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12.

<sup>673</sup> Northbrook to Salisbury, 19 March 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12.

<sup>674</sup> Salisbury to Northbrook, July 30 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12.

<sup>675</sup> Minute dated 18 May 1876 quoted Copland, *British Raj*, p. 153.

<sup>676</sup> Copland, *British Raj*, p. 153.

in dealing with the ruler of Kashmir, Lytton proved no more proficient in finding a satisfactory means of disciplining the Maharajah without moving inexorably towards annexation.

Lytton reported to the Secretary of State, Lord Cranbrook in July 1879 that, despite being under severe pressure from the Punjab Government and public opinion in India to undertake the management of the major famine in Kashmir, he was loath to intervene to stop the 'wholesale corruption and terrible depopulation'.<sup>677</sup> As the Viceroy explained,

This I have declined to do, partly because the famine is too far gone to be successfully treated by any system, or at any cost, but mainly because such an attempt would involve the suppression of the whole local machinery, as well as of the Maharajah's authority and ultimately the annexation of Kashmir, after a great and useless expenditure of money by us ... all Native States are badly governed, according to our standard, and if we once begin to interfere in the internal affairs of independent Native Governments, we shall infallibly end by being forced to annex them.<sup>678</sup>

Fear was expressed by the Viceroy that too strong an approach against the Maharajah of Kashmir on the grounds of gross, or even criminal, mismanagement of the famine should not be taken, as such an approach 'would have shocked and shaken to the base, the confidence of every one of the Queen's great feudatories throughout India'.<sup>679</sup>

Writing to Sir Robert Egerton, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, he expressed his opinion that if the Kashmir administration were put under unprecedented supervision, British action would be regarded by other states as

that of political Pecksniffs, endeavouring, under a pretence of philanthropy, to secure an extension of political powers, for which no other pretext could be devised. In that case, all our other Native States would, I think, consider

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<sup>677</sup> Lytton to Cranbrook, 8 February 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Lytton to Sir R. E. Egerton, 2 December 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

themselves to be in the cave of Polyphemus, and each would be wondering whose turn would come next.<sup>680</sup>

However it was recognised that in the case of Kashmir some disciplinary action must be taken. 'Philanthropic sentiment' had been 'outraged' by the painful accounts of the famine. In the light of the fact that the Maharajah had used the independent political action allowed to him 'to augment his own importance, rather than to promote British interests', the Viceroy felt that the prince should be deprived of all powers in relation to the territories of Chitral and Yassin, and told firmly that 'henceforth, he will neither be required, nor permitted, to meddle with the affairs of any state, great or small, beyond the Cashmere frontier'.<sup>681</sup> In 1883 Lytton's successor, Lord Ripon, was advised that on the death of the current Maharajah strong measures should be adopted to deal with the state,

a regular Resident, under some other name if necessary, with an assistant to remain all the year round in Kashmir; the British flag should be hoisted over the Residency (as it has never been so yet); and things symbolic of the paramount power be put as ostentatiously forward as they are now studiously suppressed.<sup>682</sup>

Drastic grounds for intervention also occurred in the northeastern state of Manipur in 1891. An anti-British revolt resulted in the murder of the Political Agent, the Chief Commissioner for Assam and four British officers. A purge of all British influence in the state followed: telegraph offices and lines were destroyed, telegraph operators murdered, a sanatorium burned down and British graves desecrated.<sup>683</sup> Within a fortnight British forces converged upon Manipur. The royal palace was looted and razed to the ground to make way for a permanent military camp and Tikendrajit, the subversive brother of the ruler, was publicly hanged. The execution of a prince, albeit

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> O. St. John to Ripon, 22 July 1883, Ripon Collection, ADD 43613.

<sup>683</sup> *The Times*, 4 May 1891.

a villain, upset Queen Victoria, who protested to the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, suggesting that the behaviour of residents and political agents tended to exacerbate events in a princely state. The Viceroy agreed that 'the bearing of our Residents to the Native Princes is not what it should be, and they are often rude and overbearing, their notion being that of governing India by fear, and by crushing, instead of by firmness, joined with conciliation'.<sup>684</sup> However he was determined to maintain the principle that all subjects of native states found guilty of rebellion against the paramount power were, *prima facie*, worthy of death.<sup>685</sup>

There was an assumption by the press in England that Manipur would be annexed with 'a good deal of acceptance in official circles'.<sup>686</sup> Lansdowne was not prepared to admit that annexation must follow as a matter of course. There were points to be resolved: whether by annexation responsibilities would be incurred which would be better avoided; what would be the financial cost of the step; what political effect it would have on other states; and 'whether it was beyond the power of the Government to devise an arrangement which would secure all the advantages of annexation, without its disadvantages'.<sup>687</sup> Lansdowne considered that, if the state were not annexed, the government should declare that Manipur had forfeited its independence, but that, 'as an act of clemency, we are prepared to restore it, subject to any conditions upon which we may find it desirable to insist'.<sup>688</sup> It would be a great deal more difficult to avoid annexation if those people concerned in the rebellion escaped punishment. Moreover there was a need to ensure that feelings of clemency in England did not override the Government of India's decision.<sup>689</sup> The new ruler of Manipur was to be Chura Chand,

<sup>684</sup> Lansdowne to Cross, 19 August 1891, Lansdowne Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>685</sup> Lansdowne to Cross, 23 June 1891, Lansdowne Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>686</sup> Lansdowne to Cross, 15 April 1891, Lansdowne Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup> Lansdowne to Cross 30 June 1891, Lansdowne Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*

aged five, descended from the same ancestor as the ex-Maharajah. Lansdowne was adamant that it was 'most important to show that we are making an entirely new departure and that the new ruler will owe his position altogether to our favour ... a long minority under the guidance of a careful British officer will be much the best for this purpose'.<sup>690</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century direct opposition to the orders of the Government of India was in some cases seen as a worse princely crime than actual misrule. The 'final battle' to depose Holkar, Maharajah of Indore, rested on relatively minor issues such as decisions by the Maharajah to order the permanent expulsion of four innocent people released from prison by the Government of India, and to recant previous statements made in the press of his good intention to rule well. Curzon declared that

Of course the serious element in the points at issue lies in the fact of direct insubordination to the orders of the Government of India ... Such acts of disobedience, though perhaps small in themselves are, if committed with impunity, more fatal to the Government of India than any evidence of local misgovernment, however gross.<sup>691</sup>

Repeated defiance of the Government of India also brought about the deposition of the Maharajah of Jhalawar, who consistently breached the agreement under which ruling powers were restored to him. The Council of India set out its justification that it was to Britain alone that the subjects of the state could look for protection against misgovernment,

<sup>690</sup> Lansdowne to Cross, 15 September 1891, Lansdowne Collection, Vol. 4.

<sup>691</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 5 July 1899, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 158. The man dealing with the nut and bolts of Holkar's deposition and the installation of the ruler's son was the current Resident in Indore, Francis Younghusband, who was soon to depart on his infamous expedition to Tibet.

Misrule on the part of a Government which is upheld by British power is misrule in the responsibility for which the British Government becomes in a measure involved. It becomes, therefore, not only the right but the positive duty of the British Government to see that the administration of a state in such a condition is reformed, and that gross abuses are removed.<sup>692</sup>

In the light of the Baroda trial it was nevertheless seen as essential to adopt the correct judicial procedure for any proposed deposition to avoid the possibility of antagonising other rulers. In the case of the Maharajah of the central Indian state of Panna, Madhava Singh, who was directly implicated in a case of poisoning in which his uncle died, the Secretary of State advised Curzon that

If you have not appointed your Judicial Commissioner for the trial of the Maharajah of Panna, I would suggest sending two, and not one, Commissioners. The trial and deposition of ruling Princes for offences of this kind are somewhat ticklish; we got into trouble [in] ... Baroda some years ago, and I think it would be satisfactory to the Princes generally if the decision did not rest in one man's hands alone.<sup>693</sup>

The Maharajah was duly deposed and imprisoned, the eldest son of his uncle nominated in his place and despatched without delay to a princely college.<sup>694</sup>

Curzon's withering view of the princes as a whole was set out in a letter to Lord Hamilton in 1900,

... to a large extent we act as their schoolmasters. For what are they, for the most part, but a set of unruly and ignorant and rather undisciplined schoolboys? What they want more than anything else is to be schooled by a firm, but not unkindly, hand; to be passed through just the sort of discipline that a boy goes through at a public school in England, but which they have never had out here; to be weaned, even by a grandmotherly influence, from the frivolity and dissipations of their normal life.<sup>695</sup>

<sup>692</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 50, 18 March 1896, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXI.

<sup>693</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 17 October 1901, Curzon Collection F111/ Vol. 160.

<sup>694</sup> Not surprisingly, the British were particularly sensitive to the reactions of other princes to the deposition of one of their fellow rulers. Following an official visit to Orchha, during which the Maharajah made 'offensive and uncalled for allusion' to the deposition of the Maharajah of Panna, the Viceroy declared that no further viceregal visits should be made to the state during the lifetime of the present ruler. Note from Viceroy's Camp, Udaipur, 17 November 1902, R/1/1/287.

<sup>695</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 29 August 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159.



Already princely subjects were

beginning to protest against the extravagance and tyranny of many of these rulers, and it is to us they turn and ask for security and protection .... So long as Lord Canning's policy is adhered to ... we are bound to train, and discipline, and control them, and so to fit them for the unique position which we have placed within their grasp.<sup>696</sup>

To many British political officers the requirement 'to train, and discipline and control' their princely charges post-Canning had given them an ideal opportunity to focus not only upon moral correctness but also upon the virtues of financial rectitude and accountability in state administration. It is possible that had such officers had concentrated more upon upholding the traditional role of the Indian ruler as the prime mover in his state, and less upon the implementation of bureaucratic procedure, by the end of the nineteenth century the princes might have emerged less in the mould of 'rather undisciplined schoolboys'.

## CASE STUDIES

The second main section of this chapter examines four case studies of states during the period to discover to what extent the Government of India view on non-intervention was in fact adhered to by political officers and how far their efforts succeeded in producing the desired species of Indian ruler. In all of the studies the imposition of British methods of 'good government' at the end of the nineteenth century tipped the existing balance of power within a state administration. There is less of a defined policy within states than a series of shifting relationships between the

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

ruler, his minister and bureaucracy, the British resident and, in the case of Rajputana, the nobility.

The tasks of protecting imperial interests within the states, and increasingly integrating the states into an imperial whole, were assigned to political officers who were theoretically accountable to their superiors in British India. However Robert Stern considers that in a modern bureaucratic empire the source of effective policy-making frequently tends to lie at the lower end of the scale, pointing out that 'in no bureaucratic structure can one assume congruence between general policy statements emanating from the top and the implementation of policy with regard to particular cases at the bottom'.<sup>697</sup> Moreover, as has been suggested in the preface, the power structure of a state administration was by no means well defined, in that the British position of dominance was diluted by the requirement for negotiation and cooperation between British political officers and English educated Indian bureaucrats and ministers. Despite the official British line against intervention in princely states, were political officers sufficiently 'empowered' to take a controlling role in the administration or did they merely act as buffers between a *dewan* at times of an impressively high intellect, a powerful bureaucracy and a ruler whose interests it was increasingly difficult to protect if 'sound' government were to be achieved? Was traditional Indian royal rule sacrificed in the cause of well-regulated and efficient systems of rule?

The states selected are: Mewar (Udaipur), the most prominent Rajput state, which provides an example of typical British attitudes towards the states of Rajputana at the end of the nineteenth century; Mysore, taken under British rule in 1831 and restored

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<sup>697</sup> Stern 'Approach to Politics' in Jeffrey (ed.) *People, Princes*, pp. 362-363.

to an Indian ruler fifty years later, the administration of which was under the particular scrutiny of both British and Indians; Baroda, following the deposition of its ruler in 1875 an arena for important and far-reaching administrative reforms; and Hyderabad, the major Muslim state in India, maintaining an intricate balance between the modernisation of the Mogul system of administration and the preservation of traditional institutions and personnel. It is not intended to discuss in any detail the financial intricacies of individual administrations, as these varied hugely from state to state over the period. It would require a significant study to cast light on not simply state budgets, but what were at times decidedly murky dealings involved in state and imperial transactions.

#### MEWAR

The British treated the states of Rajputana as a special case. The interactions of princes and barons in early nineteenth century Rajput polity were 'so reminiscent of similar interactions in medieval Europe' that the British tended to identify the Rajput system as feudal.<sup>698</sup> The major influences in shaping British officers' conceptions of Rajput feudalism and suggesting, in the broadest terms, imperial policies appropriate to these conceptions were the works of Lieutenant Colonel James Tod and Sir Alfred Lyall. Tod was one of the earliest explorers of Rajputana when it was still *terra incognita* to the Company and, as a surveyor and negotiator he played an important role in helping the Company to establish its protectorate over the Rajput states. Lyall was a man of greater official and literary distinction who in the mid 1870s served as Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana.<sup>699</sup> Both men believed that the less their government and its officers interfered in the internal affairs of the Rajput states the better. In Tod's view a

<sup>698</sup> Stern, *Cat and Lion*, p. 24.

<sup>699</sup> *Cat and Lion*, pp. 24-5.

policy of intervention would only 'destroy the links which connect the prince and his vassals' and leave the Rajputs with no system at all 'or at least not a system of feuds, the only one they can comprehend'.<sup>700</sup> A policy of non-interference, on the other hand, would allow feudalism's 'renovation' and a return to its pristine state.<sup>701</sup>

Lyall, reflecting on more than half a century of British indirect rule, judged it to have been 'considerably less than successful' in reaching Tod's goal of renovating Rajput feudalism. He regretted the persistent 'inclination of an English government ... toward the support of the central administration' in the Rajput states, 'To make haste to help the chief to break the power of his turbulent and reactionary nobles, in order that he may establish policy and uniform administration over his whole territory, is to an Englishman at first sight an obvious duty, at the second look a dubious and short sighted policy'.<sup>702</sup>

Lyall wanted the British in Rajputana 'to abstain as much as possible from interference, and to maintain, so far as we do interfere, the equilibrium of weight between chief and nobles', to avoid the danger of changing the Rajput 'tribal chieftain' into an ordinary Indian 'petty autocrat'.<sup>703</sup> He contrasted the Maratha ruler, Scindia, 'a despot of the ordinary Asiatic species, ruling absolutely the lands which his ancestor seized by the power of a mercenary army' with the rulers of the Rajput states, where the 'feudal lords' counterbalanced the sovereign power of the prince to effectively prevent him from becoming 'an arbitrary despot'.<sup>704</sup> As a result, he said, although the peasantry were often reduced to near serfdom, the 'feudal system' of Rajputana was 'the only free institution of India'. A system of government that could be described by analogy with that of Europe, even the Europe of the Middle Ages, was by definition superior to a

<sup>700</sup> James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan I* (originally published 1829), pp. 223-4 quoted Stern, *Cat and Lion*, p. 32.

<sup>701</sup> *Cat and Lion*, p. 32.

<sup>702</sup> Alfred C. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social*, 'The Rajput States of India', Chapter 8, quoted *Cat and Lion*, p. 33.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>704</sup> Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, pp. 224, 244, quoted Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 74.

system which was purely 'Oriental' in character.<sup>705</sup>

As Robert Stern points out in his study on Jaipur, the 'bureaucratic chains' which linked the various parts of British administration in Rajputana to one another and to parts of the wider bureaucratic empire were by the end of the nineteenth century becoming more intricate and extensive. In these chains the Rajput *jagirdars* were the 'missing links'.<sup>706</sup> The Foreign Department of the Government of India was linked to its Agency in Rajputana, which was linked to its residencies in the Rajput states, which in turn were forging links with the bureaucratised parts of the various *darbars*' administration. In addition 'the Department, through its Agency, was managing for ... all of Rajputana para-military (the local corps), quasi-judicial (the courts of *vakils*) and educational (Mayo College) bureaucracies'.<sup>707</sup> With their economic, military and judicial effects on Rajputana, the railways brought corresponding bureaucratic connections, as did the incorporation of Rajputana into the vast area of imperial free trade, the extension of the British salt monopoly to Rajputana and the integration of the Rajput maharajahs into one imperial system of graded princes. However the *jagirdars*, who were the lords of most of Rajputana and about seventy per cent of Rajputana's cultivators, were frequently 'beyond the reach of *darbar* authority'.<sup>708</sup>

The loss of the link of the Rajput nobility in the bureaucratic chains had been caused in the first place by the arrival of British indirect rule. By concluding treaties in the early nineteenth century with individual Rajput rulers, thereby committing to protect them, the Company had established a direct relationship between the princes and the paramount power which ousted the nobility from its role as a major player and counterweight in

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<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> *Cat and Lion*, p. 154.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

state politics. In 1884 Lyall spoke of British rule as having 'rescued' the Rajput states from the anarchy that had followed the decline of Mogul rule. However he also recognised that the 'listless security produced by our protection' had brought about a 'rapid deterioration' in the effective functioning of such states.<sup>709</sup> Moreover, despite their belief in the efficacy of some sort of feudal system in Rajputana, the reluctance on the part of British officials to interfere on a consistent basis to maintain the political strength of the *jagirdars* resulted in a failure to provide the checks and balances within government which might have prevented a general trend towards Rajput monarchical absolutism. The case of the state of Mewar clearly illustrates this failure.

The Sesodia Maharanas of Mewar had a universally recognised claim to the highest rank and dignity among the Rajput princes of India. More than any other Rajput dominion, Sesodia rule exhibited the ancient and uncorrupted Hindu polity, practically unchanged by Mogul interference.<sup>710</sup> However the political system of Mewar cracked during the disintegration of the Mogul empire, when the country was overrun from without by marauding bands of Marathas and Pathans and torn from within by feuds between rival *jagirdars* who rose frequently in rebellion against the prince. In 1818 Mewar entered into a treaty of subordinate alliance with the British and an agreement between the Maharana and his chiefs was ultimately reached through tense negotiations under Tod's supervision.<sup>711</sup> Constitutional and administrative reforms carried out in the two decades following the Mutiny were due to the initiative of British officials. Consequently reforms came to be associated with the pro-British party at the *darbar*, headed by the highly influential official, Mehta Panna Lal.<sup>712</sup>

<sup>709</sup> Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, pp. 204, 261-63 quoted Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 79.

<sup>710</sup> Rajat K. Ray, 'Mewar: The Breakdown of the Princely Order', in Jeffrey (ed.) *People, Princes*, p. 206.

<sup>711</sup> Ray, 'Mewar', pp. 211-12.

<sup>712</sup> Ray, 'Mewar', p. 222.

The accession of Maharana Fateh Singh in 1884 brought this era of limited reform to an end. A report on Mewar written in 1901 by the Resident, Major A. F. Pinhey, noted that the Maharana worked harder than any other ruler he had known and was 'always influenced by laudable motives', however at the same time he was 'uneducated, very undecided, suspicious of every one and uncompromising in his attitude towards the *Jagirdars* ... too conservative to appreciate the necessity of keeping abreast of the times'.<sup>713</sup> The ruler was reduced to a 'position of isolation' which prevented him from benefiting from the assistance of his natural advisers in conducting the administration and every question, however trivial, went before him before final orders were passed. Upon the dismissal of Mehta Panna Lal, Fateh Singh had assumed personal charge of state affairs and in spite of repeated British requests the ruler refused to appoint a new Dewan, since he regarded such an influential officer as a potential ally of the British.<sup>714</sup> It was impossible for the Maharana to control his officials adequately, he was scarcely able to leave the capital and his knowledge of what was occurring in the districts was based on whatever unreliable information his officials cared to give him.<sup>715</sup>

Relations between the *jagirdars* and the *darbar* were becoming increasingly more unsatisfactory. Many of the older, more influential *jagirdars* had died recently and their successors were minors, while, as Pinhey noted, 'the *Durbar* has become, with our assistance, far more powerful than it used to be'.<sup>716</sup> *Durbar* officials quite unfitted for

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<sup>713</sup> Major A. F. Pinhey, Res. Mewar, 'Note on Mewar', 7 March 1901, R/2/147/97.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid. In the same way the Rajputana Agency proved only partially successful in bureaucratising the Jaipur *darbar*. To the Agency's dissatisfaction Maharajah Sawai Madho Singh evidently failed to acknowledge the 'self-evident superiority of European rule and system' and became the autocrat of his administration. In theory a council of ten men assisted him, but most of them were 'sleeping members in the firm' and the council was unable to pass orders on the smallest matter without reference to the Maharajah. Lt. Col. C. Herbert, Res. Jaipur, Note on Jaipur, 8 August 1905, R/1/1/328. For three and a half decades he used his council as it pleased him, without attaching much weight to Residents' advice or regard for bureaucratic consistency or restraints. During this period the complementary interests between the British government and Sawai Madho Singh of, principally, railways and salt blocked the access of the nobility. Stern, *Cat and Lion*. pp. 182-4.

<sup>716</sup> Pinhey, 'Note on Mewar', 7 March 1901, R/2/147/97.

the responsibilities of their position managed the estates of *jagirdars* under minorities, missing opportunities to improve the administration and to free the estates from debt. The *jagirdars* had been 'from ancient times hereditary counsellors and pillars of the state', however they were seldom associated with the Maharana in the administration.<sup>717</sup> When they came to Udaipur with their grievances they were treated with 'scant respect' by state officials and they found it impossible to obtain an impartial hearing. The *jagirdars* were no doubt largely to blame for the state of affairs as they failed to attend at the capital when requested and annoyed Fateh Singh by setting themselves up as virtually independent rulers. Nevertheless the Resident was convinced that they were thoroughly loyal to the Maharana as the head of the clan and if he met them with more sympathy yet firmness, their grievances could be amicably settled.<sup>718</sup>

Highly conscious of the heroic and glorious past of the Sesodias, the great ambition of Fateh Singh was to restore to the position of Maharana the dignity enjoyed by his predecessors and to resist all innovations. In spite of British objections he stopped work on a projected railway line from Udaipur to Chittor on the grounds that funds were not available. Moreover Mewar remained the only important princely state free from the obligation to supply troops to the British.<sup>719</sup> The State Education Committee, appointed by the previous Maharana, was abolished and control for that department given to the *darbar*, which showed no inclination to spend the accumulating sums allocated to education.<sup>720</sup> In addition the virtual breakdown of earlier agreements between Fateh Singh and his *jagirdars* seriously affected the administrative capacity of the state to cope with the devastating famine of 1899. Distrustful of his own officials, he attempted to

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<sup>717</sup> Ibid.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid.

<sup>719</sup> Ray, 'Mewar', p. 223. The Imperial Service Troops scheme is discussed in the chapter on hierarchy and ritual.

<sup>720</sup> Ray, 'Mewar', p. 224. In 1912 Sidney and Beatrice Webb commented on the absence of a College or other educational establishment for the young men of Mewar. *Indian Diary*, p. 156.



centralise government into his own hands with the result that he was overwhelmed by 'a mass of confusing details'.<sup>721</sup> The power of *jagirdars* in civil and criminal cases was not defined and the state police exercised little or no authority over the greater nobles. The latter, although outwardly submissive to the Maharana, constantly disobeyed his orders.<sup>722</sup>

In 1906 a confidential note from the Resident discussed the possible death of the Maharana and the action of the Resident if he were to take over the administration of the state. In many ways Pinhey was still adhering to the principles laid down by Tod and Lyall. He advised that:

Local conditions and customs should be scrupulously respected and no change should be introduced merely because it coincides with some preconceived idea of how a thing should be done or because a different system prevails in British India ... . As few outsiders should be introduced as possible, at any rate until it has been definitely demonstrated that local men are really incompetent or untrustworthy if properly supervised .... It would be a great mistake to entirely lose sight of old traditions or to attempt to transform an essentially Rajput state into a model British province. The Rajput element should be fostered and encouraged and the more important and better-educated Rajput nobles should be taken unreservedly into our confidence.<sup>723</sup>

In Pinhey's view it would be impossible to improve the administration as a whole unless the *jagirdars* were involved and felt that they had a real stake in the country. This was particularly the case as far as judicial and police matters were concerned, but also in areas relating to education, medical and sanitary arrangements, and the extension of irrigation and famine programmes.<sup>724</sup> The first move should be to reappoint the committee of officials and nobles nominated by the Maharana's predecessor. Secondly, a Court of Wards should be established under a European officer for the proper

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<sup>721</sup> Lt. Col. W. H.C. Wylie, AGG, Rajputana, to Sec. GoI, FD, 1 April 1901, R/2/147/97.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Pinhey, 'Confidential Note on Mewar Affairs', 8 March 1906, R/2/147/97.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

management of the *jagirs* under minority administration in order to restore their prosperity. Where the recognition of traditional rights did not interfere with the administration of the state under modern requirements, these rights should be conceded.<sup>725</sup>

However, despite the obvious imbalance of power in the state, the Government of India was reluctant to interfere in Mewar affairs. While generally concurring in the line of action proposed to reform the administration, senior government officials felt that it was most important to show the Maharana plainly that it had 'no intention of pressing reforms upon him against his will' and it would be 'wise to leave largely to his initiation the actual undertaking of improvements'.<sup>726</sup> As a result Fateh Singh was able to maintain, as far as possible within the limitations of treaty relations with the British, a deeply conservative and safely autocratic position until forced to step down in favour of his son after the First World War.<sup>727</sup>

Within Mewar and certain other Rajput states during the period, such as Jaipur, the British were unable to control an unhealthy gain of power on the part of rulers by failing to support the nobility or to introduce an effective bureaucracy. In the other three case studies discussed below it can be argued that, conversely, princely power was diminished due to a British inability or will to control an unhealthy gain of power on the part of bureaucracies and the ministers at their head. Neither approach succeeded in producing a model princely administrator.

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

<sup>726</sup> Asst. Sec. GoI, FD to E. G. Colvin, AGG Rajputana, 6 May 1907, R2/147/97.

<sup>727</sup> The Maharajah of Bikaner also managed to achieve an 'autocratic position'. In 1905 the Political Agent noted that as a result of a 'novel experiment', instead of using a Dewan or Executive Council the Maharajah conducted the work of state personally through secretaries in charge of various departments. The 'essence of the scheme' was apparently to ensure to His Highness a more close and personal control over the affairs of his state. Major A. F. Bruce, Pol. Agent Bikaner, Note on Bikaner, 6 July 1905, R/1/1/328.

## MYSORE

The Mysore of Haidar Sultan and his son, Tipu Sultan, was a Muslim conquest state created in 1761 by a coup against the Hindu ruling house. The new Mysore was maintained by rigorous revenue management and a growing emphasis on the power of the sultan, posing a threat to British dominance through an increased military capacity which challenged the Company's army. Following Tipu's death fighting Wellesley's armies in 1799 the state was made over by the British to Krishnaraja Wadiar III, the relation of a Hindu family which had once ruled a small portion of it.<sup>728</sup>

The establishment of colonial government in Mysore was greatly facilitated by the use made of the old Dewan as a de facto ruler, however when the young Maharajah failed to maintain law and order, the state was taken under direct British rule in 1831. After 1857 the emerging imperial strategy to treat the Indian princes as allies resulted in a decision by the British government to restore Mysore to native rule in 1881, by which time the British would have prepared the adopted son of the Maharajah for rule. The task of the princely regime to win British favour after reinstatement was helped by the policies of the British Commission prior to 1881. When Maharajah Chamarajendra Wadiar was reinvested with his powers, he was presented with a fully developed administrative structure based upon Madras and Bombay models. The British also inserted an Indian official of the highest calibre as Dewan and a tradition was soon established of a strong centralization of power in his hands. This tradition was carried on by a number of accomplished successors who were able to maintain the high quality of administration given to them by the British. Consequently before the end of the century knowledgeable and highly critical British observers cited Mysore as 'the best administered native state

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<sup>728</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, pp. 95-7.

in India'.<sup>729</sup>

There was a strong continuity in direct British day-to-day contact, as many British officers were retained in higher administration, in control of several important areas such as the Public Works, Judicial and Police Departments. At least forty Europeans remained in the Mysore government.<sup>730</sup> The Viceroy, Lord Mayo, had earlier seen the need to introduce natives into the minority administration to retain British credibility in Mysore. He regretted the fact that 'This Country is almost wholly wanting in the class of "Good Native Families" from whom we ought to be able to select well educated young men' and felt that it might be advisable to establish a special class in the High School for a number of Indian youths to be educated towards service in the higher ranks of the state administration.<sup>731</sup> However, as a later despatch made clear, the task would not be an easy one, due to the complexity of the administration introduced by the British during the young prince's minority. The Mysore system was 'too much encumbered by forms' with 'too intricate departmental systems' to be worked satisfactorily by a native government and it was feared that the transfer of such an administration to native hands would 'ensure the failure of the restored government'.<sup>732</sup> This result would have the worst possible effect upon the people and princes of India who had been watching the experiment with interest and 'who would not hesitate to impute to us the worst motives in failing to accomplish its success'.<sup>733</sup>

In 1878 the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, stressed that it was extremely desirable to introduce

<sup>729</sup> W. Lee-Warner to *The Times*, 18 August 1897, Lee Warner Collection, File 31. See also James Manor 'Princely Mysore before the Storm: the State-level Political System of India's Model State, 1920-36', *Modern Asian Studies*, IX (January, 1975), pp. 31-58.

<sup>730</sup> Sharma Rao, *Modern Mysore*, Vol. II, p. 46 quoted Bjorn Hettne, *The Political Economy of Indirect Rule: Mysore 1881-1947* (London, 1978), p.50.

<sup>731</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 20 April 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. I.

<sup>732</sup> SoS to GoI, Draft No. 133, 3 October 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

'constitutional principles', not to give the new native government 'any recognised representative character', but to organise it 'upon the basis of a certain balance in the administrative powers of the State'.<sup>734</sup> Safeguards were to be built into the financial administration: a specific sum was to be fixed for the civil list of the Maharajah, to be kept firmly apart from the revenues of state, and the administrators of the Mysore revenue would be responsible, not to the Maharajah personally, but to the state 'of whose financial interests the Suzerain Power would still remain guardian'.<sup>735</sup> There was to be a legislative body, 'by no means necessarily elective', whose decisions would be made 'subject to the ratifications sanctioned by the Viceroy in Council, as Representative of the Suzerain Power of all India'.<sup>736</sup> These stringent measures, which in effect would drastically curtail the young Maharajah's ability to exercise power over his own state, were deemed necessary

to provide against the possibility of all the powers of the new Native State falling eventually into the hands of any one man - be he the Prince himself, or a popular and powerful Minister - over whose use of them the Government of India could exercise no adequate control without hostile, and possibly violent intervention.<sup>737</sup>

However by 1894 there was little evidence that such a balance of power was being maintained. A memorandum from Colonel P. D. Henderson, Resident in Mysore, to the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India stated that, although in many ways the current Dewan's administration had been 'a brilliant success', there had been 'more or less autocratic rule' by K. Sheshadri Iyer under cover of the Maharajah's name.<sup>738</sup> Native Mysoreans were driven to seek a living outside the province. The non-Brahminical classes had little chance of obtaining even the most humble government

<sup>734</sup> Lytton to J. D. Gordon, 21 June 1878, Lytton Collection, Vol. 20.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

<sup>738</sup> Col. P.D. Henderson, Res. Mysore, to W. J. Cuningham, Foreign Sec. GoI, 30 December 1894, 22 January 1895, R/1/1/143

posts and there was a tendency to fill almost all positions from the 'lowest Amin upwards' with Brahmins who formed 'a powerful and impenetrable clique'.<sup>739</sup> The Muslim population was particularly discontented with Brahminical rule and complained that it did not receive justice in revenue matters from Brahmin officials. In the courts much the same situation existed and officials treated Muslims with an absence of consideration for their social position. The Mysorean Brahmins were discontented at the preponderance of imported Madras Brahmins, ignorant of the language of the country and out of sympathy with the people. The Dewan's 'pet hobby, that of filling the higher grades of the Civil Service by successful candidates at a competitive examination open to all India is unfavourably regarded as filling the service with foreigners'.<sup>740</sup> A wider representation of all classes in the government was needed and the regulation of admissions to the Civil Service in all grades to prevent a monopoly by any one class.<sup>741</sup>

Nevertheless to the British the accountability and efficiency that Sir Sheshadri Iyer's regime had brought to state affairs made any internal differences within the administration pale into insignificance. A report by Sir Donald Robertson, the Resident in 1902, referred glowingly to the way in which Mysore was 'governed on enlightened principles' and the fact that the administration was 'practically the same as that in force in the fifty years of British occupancy which terminated in 1881'.<sup>742</sup> The 'liberal policy and enlightened statesmanship of the late Dewan, Sir Sheshadri Iyer, have produced results probably finer than anything in British India'.<sup>743</sup> That the Maharajah had had little to do with this major achievement appears to have been immaterial to British officials, in fact the British insistence upon bureaucratic procedures which resulted in the

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid. Strong views on this state of affairs were aired by the Maharani Regent, Vanivilas Sannidhana, quoted in the chapter on royal women.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid.

<sup>742</sup> Sir Donald Robertson, Res. Mysore, 'Mysore Narrative' 1902, R/2/14/92.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

removal of power from the palace had been stated clearly by the Secretary of State and quoted in a memorandum from the Resident in 1895,

it is obviously necessary that a large part of the details of current business should be disposed of by His Highness's Ministers ... we consider it essential under this system of personal government that all important acts and orders shall necessarily have passed through certain departmental formalities, and shall have undergone certain processes of examination and joint consultation before they issue in the Maharajah's name and by his will.<sup>744</sup>

In 1903 it was reported that the new Dewan, Sir Krishna Murti, was displaying many of the same 'autocratic' characteristics as his predecessor. The Resident complained that he was hardly involved in administrative measures since his role was confined to securing 'adequate recognition' for the Maharajah and 'fair play' for the 'sanctioned scheme of administration in all its branches'.<sup>745</sup> He was entirely dependent for information upon stray conversations with visitors, newspaper reports and belated monthly proceedings. It was suggested that Krishna Murti was not giving the young ruler the 'real support and assistance' he had a right to demand of his Dewan.<sup>746</sup> The Dewan was still clinging to the idea that he was head of the administration and orders promulgated by the Maharajah, which were not exactly in accord with his wishes, were 'unjustifiable curtailments of his power and dignity'.<sup>747</sup> He had resorted to 'sundry stratagems' such as holding back papers indefinitely and keeping Councillors in the dark over the issuing of orders, and had started a 'Camp Office, a 'most mischievous and undesirable' institution, which was unfair to the secretariat as papers were lost and an 'entirely unnecessary adjunct to the administrative machinery'.<sup>748</sup> In attempting to assert his position the Maharajah had been diverted from profitable work and the completion of

<sup>744</sup> Henderson, 'Memorandum on Mysore Minority Arrangements', 17 January 1895, R/2/29/264.

<sup>745</sup> Robertson, 'Secret Notes on Mysore', 25 September 1903, R/1/1/1064.

<sup>746</sup> Robertson, 'Note on the Work of the General Secretariat', 30 April 1903, R/2/32/302.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

his education.<sup>749</sup> The Resident admitted that 'the science of good government' was 'almost as well known to the clever officials of Mysore as to us'. Nevertheless there was 'a feeling that most Brahmins entertain, namely that should the Palace party assert itself the authority of the hitherto all-powerful Brahmin element must decline'.<sup>750</sup>

Yet the 'Palace party', like the much-lauded Representative Assembly, was to prove no threat to the Dewan and his bureaucracy. Notes written at the beginning of the twentieth century by the Resident, Sir Donald Robertson, dismissed the Assembly as a 'harmless institution', consisting of 'raiyats, pleaders and merchants' elected to represent certain qualified areas, which met annually at the capital for a few days.<sup>751</sup> It had been of 'little practical use either to the people or the State' and its aims had been 'mistakenly described as securing popular representation'.<sup>752</sup> In future it should be encouraged merely as a means of affording the people an opportunity of paying homage to their ruler at the festival of Dassara or making direct representations to him. On any other basis it would probably in time prove both 'anomalous and mischievous' in an Indian state.<sup>753</sup> At first the Assembly was not even allowed to be called 'representative' as it was feared that such an expression might give rise to misunderstandings. According to Hindu political theory councils and assemblies were 'organs in the body politic', with the Maharajah as the supreme head and the Dewan as executive arm, therefore no power existed that was not derived from the ruler's person.<sup>754</sup> However in the long run it was not possible to maintain the assembly as a body of 'royal sycophants' and by the beginning of the twentieth century debates were dominated by the struggle between

<sup>749</sup> Robertson to Krishna Murthi, 13 April 1903, R/2/32/302.

<sup>750</sup> Robertson, 'Secret Notes on Mysore', 25 September 1903, R/1/1/1064.

<sup>751</sup> 'Mysore Narrative' 1902, R/2/14/92.

<sup>752</sup> Robertson, Note on Mysore, 5 November 1900, R/1/1/260.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Hettne, *Political Economy*, p. 365.



Madrassi and Mysorean bureaucrats,<sup>755</sup> with little recognition of the Maharajah's traditional role as leader of government.

## BARODA

In 1817, after the final defeat of the Peshwa, the Gujerati lands of western India claimed by the Marathas were divided between the British and the local warlords, the Gaekwars. The Gaekwars' share became known as Baroda state.<sup>756</sup> The power of the Gaekwars was based originally on an informal alliance between the Gaekwar, various local Gujerati notables and some rich Vania financiers, however this system of rule provided little stability. The final downfall of the system was brought about by the personal misrule of two Gaekwars, Khanderao and his successor, Malharrao, who, as has been discussed in the first section of this chapter, was deposed by the British in 1875 on the grounds that the Baroda government was riddled with corruption and that Malharrao was not capable of carrying out the necessary reforms.<sup>757</sup>

The British created an artificial minority by replacing Malharrao with a twelve-year-old boy from an obscure branch of the Gaekwar family, Sayajirao III and, following the Minister's departure from Travancore, the state was placed in the capable hands of Sir Madhava Rao. Before 1875, when the young Maharajah began his reign, Baroda was under a 'patrimonial' system of government whereby office holders owned their positions personally and ran their offices with the help of their followers, relatives and

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<sup>755</sup> Ibid.

<sup>756</sup> David Hardiman, 'Baroda: The Structure of a 'Progressive' State' in Jeffrey (ed.) *People, Princes*, p. 108.

<sup>757</sup> Hardiman, 'Baroda', pp. 107-13. In his recent study of Baroda and Mysore, Manu Bhagavan makes the point that Malharrao inherited a significant number of problems from his predecessor and received the blame for them from the British. *Sovereign Spheres*, p. 43.

friends. Under Madhava Rao's imposition of a modern bureaucratic system of government local notables and hereditary office holders lost their power to officials appointed by merit, who were paid regular salaries by the state. In his study of Baroda as a 'progressive' state David Hardiman suggests that what had once been considered as 'an office holder's worthy solidarity with kith and kin came to be seen as nepotism and corruption'.<sup>758</sup> State employed officials became the local political powers and also the representatives of the people. This change in administrative practice inevitably brought considerable dislocation. However, despite the discontent which resulted, Baroda was one of the few Indian states to instigate a full modern bureaucratic system similar to that found in British India.<sup>759</sup>

Under the new system, power was concentrated into the hands of the Dewan and his subordinates. Although an Executive Council existed, consisting of the Dewan, Deputy Dewan and two leading officials, there was no provision for the nomination of non-officials before 1940. The same applied to the Legislative Council, which was founded in 1907. Although Baroda was far in advance of most princely states in having such a body at all,<sup>760</sup> it was likewise under the control of the bureaucracy. The Dewan was President, the Council could only give 'advice' and there was a majority of officials and government nominees among the eighteen members. At the local level, the new bureaucratic system followed the British pattern closely, with each of the four districts of the state placed under a revenue officer.<sup>761</sup> The Baroda bureaucracy maintained its political power through the control of state expenditure. In the past most of the state revenue had gone towards the upkeep of the Gaekwar and the maintenance of his army, the police and princely administration. Between 1876 and 1934 state expenditure in

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<sup>758</sup> Hardiman, 'Baroda', p. 116.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

<sup>760</sup> R. L. Handa, *History of the Freedom Struggle in Princely States* (New Delhi, 1968), p.61.

<sup>761</sup> Hardiman, 'Baroda', p. 117.

these areas declined from 70 per cent to 33 per cent and by 1934 most of the revenue was spent by the bureaucracy on public works, education and various improvement projects to aid the development of Baroda. For instance, between 1876-7 and 1933-4 education expenditure rose from 1 per cent to 17 per cent of total state expenditure. During the same period expenditure on public works rose from 5 per cent to 13 per cent.<sup>762</sup>

Following a rivalry which grew up between Madhava Rao and Sayajirao's tutor, F. A. H. Elliott, the Minister retired prematurely in 1882. The period of Elliott's influence lasted from 1881 to 1895<sup>763</sup> and was a time of continuing reform in the state. However, according to the Agent to the Governor-General in Baroda, the administration 'under the cloak of codes, laws, regulations and highly paid officials' was anything but sound.<sup>764</sup> Elliot, despite at times preventing friction between residency and *darbar*, was not qualified to act as an adviser in matters relating to civil and political administration and, unable to distinguish between his clear duty to his own government and his 'fancied duty' to the young man he had educated, upset one Minister after another.<sup>765</sup> During this period British officials in service of the state, instead of 'forwarding' the policy of the Government of India, did their utmost to foster the Gaekwar's ill will towards Britain and vied with each other in supplying him with arguments with which to combat the Agent to the Governor-General. The administration of which they were supposedly in charge was a 'pale copy' of that existing in British India 'with all its defects magnified and its vivifying spirit wholly wanting'.<sup>766</sup> It was considered that any benefit that the empire at large might derive from proposed reforms in Baroda was counterbalanced by

<sup>762</sup> *Baroda Administration Report*, 1876-77, p. 101 and *Baroda Administration Report*, 1934-5, p. 85 quoted Hardiman 'Baroda', p. 117.

<sup>763</sup> Elliott's influence is discussed in greater detail in the chapter on princely education.

<sup>764</sup> Lt. Col. N. C. Martelli, AGG Baroda to W. J. Cuningham, Sec. GoI, FD, 29 May 1895, R/1/1/162.

<sup>765</sup> Ibid. See also Martelli to Cuningham, 30 May and 21 August 1895, R/1/1/162.

<sup>766</sup> Oliver St. John, 'Memorandum on Baroda Affairs', 28 September 1888, R/1/1/1040.

the antagonism to British rule.<sup>767</sup> Due to his championship of Baroda interests Elliott was by no means popular in British circles and in 1895 he was forced to revert to British service.<sup>768</sup>

A report of 1895 on Baroda affairs written by Colonel J. Biddulph, Agent to the Governor-General in Baroda, emphasises the unsatisfactory attitude of the Gaekwar towards the Government of India during Elliott's term. It refers to the ruler's efforts at 'pulling the whole administration to pieces and building up an unworkable system that [he] has been taught to believe is superior to anything in British India'.<sup>769</sup> Having adopted Machiavelli's *The Prince* as his political guide, the Gaekwar subscribed to the belief that the Baroda state was politically equal with the British Government, 'which has no more right to interfere with Baroda affairs than it has to interfere in the affairs of Denmark or Portugal'.<sup>770</sup> Colonel Biddulph's report suggests that, despite attempts at reform during this period, major problems still existed in the state. The official class was very corrupt in spite of high salaries. A large proportion of officials consisted of Mahrattas imported into the state for the purpose of building up a Mahratta administration and 'only concerned to make money and convey it into British territory', with the result that there was constant intrigue between Mahrattas and Gujeratis and 'a substitution of regulations for personal responsibility'.<sup>771</sup> Bankers had been ruined by previous regimes and their grievances never remedied. Petty landlords were subjected to great oppression, as the policy of the state was to get as much land as possible into its hands. Although Baroda College was satisfactory, the Education Department was mismanaged and compulsory education, which 'started with a great flourish of trumpets

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<sup>767</sup> Ibid.

<sup>768</sup> See R/1/1/162.

<sup>769</sup> Col. J. Biddulph, AGG Baroda, 'Report on Baroda Affairs', attached to No. 185, 18 September 1895, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XX.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid.

in 1893' was 'a sham'. The judicial service was highly paid and although there were attempts at 'honourable independence', some of the younger judicial officers were very corrupt and the *Durbar* did not hesitate to interfere with and disregard judicial verdicts when it pleased.<sup>772</sup>

However Biddulph's view was not necessarily the definitive picture of the Baroda administration. The Baroda Resident, Captain Evans Gordon, in 1894 expressed the opinion that the Gaekwar was 'an extremely able man with apparently a perfect knowledge of every detail concerning the condition of his people and the administration of his state'.<sup>773</sup> The Gaekwar had pointed out to British officials that a ruler could never guarantee how accurately his opinions on administrative matters were represented to the Government of India. The Residency was the channel for all communications 'and they are coloured in the passage by the personal feelings, character, and opinions of the individual in charge .... Supposing a Resident to be adverse, the Government of India hear the worst side only'.<sup>774</sup> In the Gaekwar's opinion the system was faulty in principle and had been accentuated by the frequent change of Resident which had occurred in recent years. The only remedy would be 'a closer and more intimate knowledge by the Viceroy and the Foreign Secretary of the Chiefs themselves; and a fuller representation of their views by Political Officers, as apart from the personal opinion of the latter'. In meetings with the Viceroy the Gaekwar 'sometimes could not fail to detect the tutoring hand of the Resident or the Foreign Secretary' which made him uneasy.<sup>775</sup> Colonel Biddulph in particular was determined 'to interfere in everything', undermining the ruler's influence. The Viceroy had once told the Gaekwar that he wished the 'Rulers of Native States should govern them in fact as well as theory', but this would prove an

<sup>772</sup> Ibid. See also R/1/1/1040.

<sup>773</sup> Capt. W. Evans Gordon to Cuninghame, 16 May 1894, R/1/1/140.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid.

impossible task if the Political Officer took pains to show the people that their ruler's authority was 'little more than nominal'. Such an attitude might be necessary in a badly governed, backward state, but in states like Baroda where there had recently been a genuine attempt at improvement 'it paralyses the usefulness of the best Native Chief'.<sup>776</sup>

No doubt partly due to the frustration of having to spar constantly with British political officers, during the latter period of his reign Sayajirao spent increasingly more time away from Baroda and he was not involved in the day-to-day administration of the state, relying increasingly on Ministers who lacked adequate arrangements for the continuation of work in his absence.<sup>777</sup> The outgoing Resident at Baroda, Major C. Pritchard, reported in 1906 that the Gaekwar 'leaves very much to his Dewan and Council' and the latter was responsible for the 'sometimes unsuitable style of correspondence' with the Residency with the object of contesting the orders of the Government of India, belittling the Resident and his assistants and reducing the Residency to 'a mere pillar box'.<sup>778</sup>

During Curzon's viceroyalty there was yet again an official difference of opinion as to the calibre of the Baroda ruler. The Viceroy was of the opinion that, although Sayajirao professed to have enlightened standards of government, his famine administration in 1900 had been 'slack and abominable'.<sup>779</sup> Moreover his frequent and lengthy absenteeism on European visits, which he was accused of financing through the imposition of an income tax in Baroda, had convinced a succession of viceroys of his

<sup>776</sup> Ibid. See also report of interview between Res. Baroda Col. M. J. Meade, and Gaekwar, 14 February 1908, R/1/1/288, in which the Gaekwar complains that 'The tendency is more and more to treat us like officers or servants in charge of districts, rather than the hereditary rulers of States'.

<sup>777</sup> Cunningham to Evans Gordon, 21 February 1894, R/1/1/140. See also R/1/1/288.

<sup>778</sup> Major C. Pritchard, Res. Baroda, to Sir L. W. Dane, Sec. GoI, FD, 16 December 1906, R/1/1/339.

<sup>779</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, October 29 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159. Curzon's vitriol knew no bounds when it came to the Gaekwar, 'the most disagreeable, contumacious and cantankerous of the whole of our Chiefs ... The man, as you know, was the son of a cow-herd and his humble origin and antecedents are constantly, in spite of his considerable ability, coming out in his words and deeds.' Curzon to Hamilton, 4 June 1902, Curzon Collection. F111, Vol.161.

readiness to abandon his subjects and their needs.<sup>780</sup> However the Secretary of State,

Lord Hamilton, having met the ruler in England, rejected Curzon's dismissal:

He has thought and read a good deal, and being selfish and self-seeking, he analyses with great acumen the motives and guiding influences of his fellow-countrymen ... contrasting him with other Native Princes, he undoubtedly shows far more aptitude than the majority for governing and managing his own affairs.<sup>781</sup>

In Hardiman's view Sayajirao was an extremely effective and popular ruler, imbued with the faith that western institutions could greatly enhance the power and prestige of his state. He was not an original thinker, but he was extremely receptive to the original thought of others and depended a great deal on good advisers.<sup>782</sup> Had he been encouraged more by British officers and had his genuine efforts at reform received a more receptive audience from them it is possible that he, rather than the bureaucracy which supposedly served beneath him, might have gained more credit by the end of the nineteenth century as the power behind one of the most progressive of Indian states.<sup>783</sup>

<sup>780</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 25 June 1902, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 161. Also 12 March 1903, Vol. 162 and Curzon to Brodrick, 30 March 1905, F111, Vol. 164. Despite viceregal protestations over the Gaekwar's frequent visits to England, such visits afforded great opportunities for some hard bargaining. The Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, pointed out that if the ruler attended Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1887, he might be persuaded to abolish transit duties and to find a solution to problems existing over a new telegraph line 'over which he wishes to have supreme jurisdiction'. Dufferin to Cross, 16 May and 3 June 1887, Dufferin Collection, Vol. 8A.

<sup>781</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 25 April and 1 August 1901, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 160.

<sup>782</sup> Hardiman, 'Baroda', p. 114.

<sup>783</sup> In Bhagavan's opinion the Gaekwar observed that western ideas could be 'modified in the Indian milieu to become distinctly Indian in nature' and turned into a 'tool of resistance' to counter colonialism. *Sovereign Spheres*, pp. 51,55. Using institutions of reform such as universities, the states of Baroda and Mysore could in the twentieth century be termed 'sites of native modernity', a state of affairs which was especially detrimental to colonialism since, in the colonial idiom, the princely states represented the 'fossilized past' that 'defined the modern-ness of the British in India'. *Sovereign Spheres*, p. 178.

## HYDERABAD

Since 1766 the Company had occupied the rich coastal districts of Hyderabad, the domain of the former governors of the Mogul empire, the Nizams. During the next decades the Nizam's control over the Telegu warriors of his outlying districts became so weak that the annual tribute which the Company continued to pay for these districts was crucial to the survival of the state. A new subsidiary alliance in 1798 enforced the Nizam's dependence upon the British and expelled the French battalion which had given him some room for manoeuvre. The British already had a powerful group of supporters at Hyderabad consisting of Shia Muslims and north Indian Hindus who looked to the British for protection against the Marathas. After Hyderabad lost more of its outlying districts in 1800-1, it was drawn firmly into the British orbit, as a succession of powerful residents built up an alliance with the diwans of the day.<sup>784</sup>

The policies and practices of the Diwan, Salar Jung I, effective ruler of Hyderabad from 1853 to 1883, initiated a modernising administration. In 1853 Hyderabad was in severe financial straits, and the Government of India threatened to take over the state through loans, cession of land, or direct administration. To preserve Hyderabad's independence, the young Diwan had to reorganise the revenue system and the bureaucracy, both to achieve financial stability and to meet British criticism of its corruption and inefficiency.<sup>785</sup> The Diwan understood that the importation of British Indian administrative practices and personnel could have a significant cultural and political impact upon Hyderabad society. Personally opposed to the cultural changes accompanying western education and the use of English elsewhere in India, his main

<sup>784</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>785</sup> Karen Leonard, 'Hyderabad: The Mulki-Non-Mulki Conflict' in Jeffrey (ed.) *People, Princes*, p. 67.



goal was to preserve Hyderabad's Mogul political traditions and culture.<sup>786</sup> Therefore he developed policies to prevent and control change, whereby the Hyderabad nobles, the new administrators, and British officials were kept isolated from each other, from the Nizam and from political power as centralised in the Diwan. In addition to the regulation of social contacts, there was a prohibition on British entry into the old walled city to insulate the nobility and court from English political and cultural influence. The insularity of the old city and its inhabitants provided politically useful for Salar Jung and on several controversial matters during his thirty year Diwanship he forestalled reforms urged by successive Residents by 'citing cultural backwardness' on the part of the Nizam or nobles.<sup>787</sup> Recurring issues were the implementation of judicial reforms, the reduction of Arab troops, use of the Hyderabad Contingent and the construction of the railroad through Hyderabad.<sup>788</sup>

Since both the British and the new Diwani officials were denied access to leading Hyderabad representatives, they became allies. In their efforts to construct a modern bureaucracy the officials were constrained by a strong Diwan, a powerful traditional aristocracy, and a Nizam secluded with his palace retainers. Many of the new administrators had come from the Indian Civil Service and the Hyderabad Diwani administration was modelled upon British Indian administration.<sup>789</sup> In 1888 William Digby, founder and director of the Indian Political Agency, bemoaned the fact that Hyderabad and other states removed from the British provinces

the best of their Mahomedan and Hindoo sons ... statesmen for whom there is no

<sup>786</sup> H. Fraser, *Memoir and Correspondence of General J. S. Fraser of the Madras Army* (London, 1885), Appendix p. xxvi.

<sup>787</sup> Leonard, 'Hyderabad', p. 70.

<sup>788</sup> Thomas Henry Thornton, *General Sir Richard Meade and the Feudatory States of Central and Southern India* (London, 1898) and Richard Temple, *Journals Kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal* (London, 1887), Vol. I.

<sup>789</sup> Leonard, 'Hyderabad', p. 71.

room in our scheme of rule. Without begrudging him to the Nizam we want Mehdi Hasan in the Chief Justiceship of the North-West Provinces, not in that of Hyderabad. We want British India to receive some of the many benefits which follow from the judicial and administrative efforts of such men'.<sup>790</sup>

In some respects the departmental secretaries in Hyderabad had more power than their counterparts in British India. These administrators were familiar with the modernising policies of British India and their implementation and they were aware of developments occurring in other Indian states. There was impatience with the obstacles to modernisation set up by elder members of the Hyderabad nobility and a distaste for the use of 'antiquated Urdu'. Moreover in Hyderabad they were confronted with a civic culture which they judged to be a regional and inferior version of the Mogul heritage then disintegrating in British India.<sup>791</sup>

By 1890 it was clear that non-Hyderabadis dominated the Diwani administration. The Civil List of 1894 included 680 gazetted officers; the number of non-Hyderabadis had nearly doubled, from 230 to 447 men, in the eight year period from 1886, and the number of Hyderabadis had actually decreased.<sup>792</sup> Salar Jung II, who took over the Diwanship after his father's sudden death in 1883 had begun his Diwanship as an old friend of the young Nizam, Mahbub Ali Khan,<sup>793</sup> and was in fact appointed by the Nizam against the wishes of the Government of India, who viewed the new Minister as 'without ability, strength of character, or official training'.<sup>794</sup> However the Diwan's apparent manipulation by Diwani and Residency officials soon provoked conservative opposition to him. The Nizam declared that Salar Jung wished to 'exclude him altogether from interference in public affairs' and the Minister's misrepresentation of

<sup>790</sup> Letter from William Digby to the Editor of the *St. James's Gazette*, 16 May 1888, Dufferin Collection Vol. 11A.

<sup>791</sup> Nawab Jivan Yar Jung's English translation of his father's Urdu autobiography, *Server-el-Mulk, My Life*, (London 1932), p. 92, quoted Leonard 'Hyderabad', p. 71.

<sup>792</sup> Leonard, 'Hyderabad', p. 76.

<sup>793</sup> Mahbub Ali Khan features strongly in the chapters on education and royal marriage.

<sup>794</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 60, 9 May 1887, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box VII.

matters to the Resident was creating 'constant mischief'.<sup>795</sup> Palace officials, such as the ruler's secretary, Sarwar Jung, and others of the old order who had the ear of the Nizam turned Mahbub Ali Khan against his Diwan, obstructed proposals which did not suit their interests and encouraged the Nizam in extravagant spending, with the result that the finances of the state degenerated to a drastic degree.<sup>796</sup>

It was apparent that over the years political officers had been unable to convince Hyderabad rulers of the benefits of subscribing to British advice, thus failing to strengthen the Nizam's position vis-à-vis his Minister. However the officiating Resident, Colonel K. J. Mackenzie, observed in 1894 that British officials were to some extent responsible for this princely mistrust:

While I am here my constant endeavour will be to induce the Nizam to see and feel that I am his friend, that I wish to see him strong and a real power for good, that if I differ from him, it is not because we want ... to back any one who, as our agent, would be subservient to our policy against the interests of his State; but because the difference of opinion is an honest one, dictated purely in the interests of himself and his State and with no ulterior motives whatever ... it has been a great misfortune that we have so often backed Ministers personally distrusted by or distasteful to the Nizam of the day, and frequently have kept them in power for years against his wishes. The natural result was that the Nizam either sulkily effaced himself, or secretly intrigued against us.<sup>797</sup>

A later Resident, Sir David Barr, also regretted the lack of British support for the Nizam:

I am more than ever convinced that there is no state in India more dependent upon the Government of India and indirectly upon the Resident than is Hyderabad. If the Resident is on good terms with the Nizam his power is almost unlimited. Every one in the State recognises this - and the consequence is that intrigues are discouraged, and the authority of the Nizam is upheld.<sup>798</sup>

<sup>795</sup> Dufferin to Kimberley, 6 March 1886, Dufferin Collection, Vol. 5.

<sup>796</sup> Trevor Chichele Plowden, Res. Hyderabad, 14 November 1895, R/1/1/165. See also R/1/1/51 and R/1/1/193.

<sup>797</sup> Col. K. J. Mackenzie, Offg. Res. Hyderabad, to W. J. Cuningham, 6 October 1894, R/2/67/17. Mackenzie was intrigued by the fact that the Nizam had had a photograph of him enlarged and painted, 'So I suppose the little beggar in a way does like me a bit - but it is deuced hard to say. I'm inclined to think he thinks us all a d-----d nuisance!'. Mackenzie to Cuningham, 12 October 1895, R/1/1/1251.

<sup>798</sup> Confidential note on Hyderabad affairs by Sir David Barr, Res. Hyderabad, 8 February 1905,

To achieve changes in the Hyderabad administration efforts were made by British officials to diminish what was perceived as 'despotic' power on the part of the Minister in favour of increased control by the bureaucracy beneath him. The leading characteristic of the scheme was a distribution of responsibility in place of a concentration of authority in a single individual. Sub-ministers were to be invested with 'definite' powers to be exercised 'without reference to others'.<sup>799</sup> The Cabinet Council, to which all business of importance was to be referred, was to meet three times a month and was designed to check the exercise of despotic authority by making the whole body of ministers answerable for the treatment of major issues. Finally, attempts were made to prevent the Nizam from 'divesting himself of the responsibility of a ruler of a great state'. The proceedings of the Cabinet Council were to be reported regularly to him and he could modify decisions at will.<sup>800</sup> However the Nizam continued to be 'peculiarly inaccessible'. The Minister and other Hyderabad officials could only obtain rare interviews with the ruler and consequently great delay resulted in dealing with state affairs. The confidence which the Nizam placed in his secretary, Sarwar Jung, 'made it easier to play upon the traditional jealousy with which the Chief of a Native State is apt to regard his Minister, and so bring the administration almost to a stand-still'.<sup>801</sup>

Official files suggest that by the end of the century the British were over-preoccupied with the relationship between Nizam and Minister, leaving the Diwani administrators much to their own devices. Over-ambitious secretaries, who acquired the real power in the state, disregarded the views of sub-ministers. Grave financial mismanagement occurred and public scandals were frequent.<sup>802</sup> The Resident admitted that he saw more value in acting behind the scenes as a 'lightning-conductor ... carrying off, harmlessly,

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R/1/1/1281.

<sup>799</sup> Chichele Plowden to Sec.GoI, FD, 2 April 1894, R/2/66/10.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid. See also R/2/66/13.

<sup>801</sup> Chichele Plowden to Sec.GoI, FD, 9 February 1897, R/1/1/183.

<sup>802</sup> Bawa, *Hyderabad under Salar Jang*, p. 220.

storms which might otherwise wreck the administration', rather than entering officially into the formal fray of government.<sup>803</sup> In 1898 the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, W. J. Cuninghame, warned the Viceroy that 'the personal question naturally looms largely' in Hyderabad.<sup>804</sup> The only solution to save both Nizam and state appeared to rest in the prevention of the Minister's downfall, upon which the Nizam was intent, as demonstrated by his establishment of a Nobles' Council as a rival body to the Minister's Cabinet Council.<sup>805</sup> Cuninghame declared that

authoritative interference in superseding the Nizam's power is as big an act of State as the Government of India have ever touched in connection with the Native States of India. It would be of course denounced most vehemently in Hyderabad itself where the ideas of the State's political independence are very exalted .... Everything which lends support to the contention that the Minister and the Resident in collusion have brought the affairs of the Nizam to a crisis, will weaken the position of the Government.<sup>806</sup>

However it was required that the Nizam govern his state in a reasonable manner in order to avert 'dangerous danger and confusion'. In the last resort it was the duty of the British Government to save the state from such consequences.<sup>807</sup> Initial attempts by the British Comptroller-General to examine the Hyderabad financial situation succeeded only in generating much official secrecy over existing accounting procedures.<sup>808</sup> In 1901 the weakness of the position of Diwan was recognised by the Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, who saw the need to find a 'competent European' to overhaul the present state of finances in Hyderabad, 'It is very improbable that you would be able to find any Native outside Hyderabad, capable of coping both with the Nizam and Hyderabad nobles, as Dewan. If you can once get through a reliable European control over the finances, the Dewan's weakness or mal-administration is of secondary

<sup>803</sup> Sir David Barr, Offg. Res. Hyderabad, Report 6 August 1900, R/1/1/1281.

<sup>804</sup> Cuninghame to Viceroy, 28 January 1898, R/1/1/202.

<sup>805</sup> See R/1/1/209.

<sup>806</sup> Cuninghame to Viceroy, 28 January 1898, R/1/1/202.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

<sup>808</sup> See R/1/1/171 and R/1/1/202.

importance'.<sup>809</sup>

In the meantime the Diwani administration became a largely autonomous bureaucracy, constituting itself as an elite. No longer checked by the Nizam, the Diwan or powerful nobles, it was left to make decisions that affected the structure of Hyderabadi society. The accelerated modernisation and expansion of the administration enhanced its political power and the Mogul bureaucracy was 'effectively dismantled and its personnel disinherited at all levels'.<sup>810</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The need to abstain from intervention urged upon political officers by their superiors in the latter part of the nineteenth century undoubtedly deterred such officers from maintaining a sufficiently high profile in state affairs to be able to uphold Indian rulers as prime movers in states' administrations. Strongly advised to refrain from 'meddling' in state politics, the reforming zeal of such officers appears to have been concentrated upon achieving high standards of administrative procedure through bureaucracies operating according to British Indian models, rather than attempting to secure the traditional role of a prince as the authoritative voice in government, a task that would have required blatant intervention in state affairs. When the Government of India was forced to intervene itself in cases of undeniable misrule, the fear of the effects upon other princes of severely chastising or even deposing one of their kind resulted in a lack of consistent policy to provide a yardstick for princely behaviour for both rulers and political officers.

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<sup>809</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 22 August 1901, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 160.

<sup>810</sup> See Leonard, 'Hyderabad', p. 66.

In Rajputana the British appear to have been mesmerised by the mystique of traditional 'feudal' government. However despite appreciating that an essential part of such government was provided by the checks and balances of baronial power, British officials failed to maintain *jagirdars* as a power base, choosing rather to introduce where possible a somewhat limited bureaucracy to further their own interests. As a result several rulers in Rajputana, such as Fateh Singh, Maharana of Mewar, moved gradually towards autocracy, curbed neither by their nobles nor by the Government of India, which was reluctant to meddle in what it perceived as the tried and tested art of Rajput politics.

The importance of Mysore as an example of a 'model state' after its return to native rule after 1881 and the inheritance of a sophisticated British administration necessitated the employment of a powerful, highly competent *dewan* and an educated bureaucracy imported largely from British India and versed in British methods. There was little role for the Maharajah beyond that of a signatory on a checklist and, in the interests of sound, accountable government, the British appeared reluctant to remove power from *dewan* and bureaucracy in order to change the ruler's role from symbolic head of state to instigator of administrative achievements in the state.

On the contrary, the power base of Sayajirao, Gaekwar of Baroda, was not threatened by an intellectually superior *dewan*. By some British officials the ruler was seen to be a wise and innovative administrator, determined to replace traditional elements within Baroda society by a powerful class of bureaucrats owing more to merit than patronage. However a loss of British support resulted from the fact that other officials were rankled by his leaning towards independence and supposed antagonism towards the paramount power. Princely disillusionment led to disinterest in state administration, and Britain failed to maximise the skills of a potentially able ruler.

In Hyderabad a bureaucracy imported from British India and isolated from both Resident and Nizam by a powerful *diwan* succeeded in establishing an unassailable position over the state administration. Nizam Mahbub Ali Khan, conservative by nature and an easy prey to subversive influences, failed to control state expenditure or to participate in any positive way in government. The British in their turn and by their own admission failed to pay heed to his dislike of the autocratic methods employed by successive *diwans* or to push the Nizam to any great extent to mend his ways. As in Mysore and Baroda, while the individual figures of rulers and ministers waxed and waned an elite class of administrators achieved greater power, steadily achieving its independence from the indirect control of the Political Department and the greater authority of the Government of India.

As princely authority decreased within state administration it was also diminished by the imposition of an imperial hierarchy in which the princes were effectively subordinated in rank in their relationship to the paramount power. The next chapter examines the manner in which such subordination occurred and the efforts of the British to restrain traditional princely adherence to lavish ceremonial display through the introduction of ideas of economy and accountability.



## HIERARCHY AND RITUAL

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Unlike the other stages of the princely life cycle in which states were treated by the British on an individual basis in identifying channels through which western ideas and moral improvements could be introduced, efforts to change princely hierarchy and ritual occurred in a more centralised and formal manner. The determination behind such efforts revealed the degree to which the Government of India was prepared at a high level to intervene in royal practice to reinforce the position of Britain as the paramount power, despite constant criticism by senior British officials of the intervention of political officers on the ground. Protocol for ceremonial events, increasingly remote from the ceremony of pre-colonial India, was rigidly standardised in memoranda issued from the Foreign Department of the Government of India. Any deviation from the unyielding instructions of such memoranda was a source of immediate concern at the heights of the imperial administration.

Traditionally the Indian royal ritual process was highly fluid and capable of being adapted to meet the requirements of the current political situation. Ritual performances were visual statements of variable honour and status and under Mogul rule a prince, as the supreme authority within his state, was able to a great extent to orchestrate ritual display to meet his own ends. However under British control in the latter part of the nineteenth century bureaucratic rules and regulations increasingly forced ceremonies into a straitjacket of rigid format in which a ruler was deprived of the opportunity to dazzle or influence his subjects on a political level. By the end of the nineteenth century the ceremonial *darbar* became separate from the administrative *darbar*, with the former becoming only a ritual (and increasingly Europeanised) celebration of Diwali, Dassara

and other major festivals. The administrative *darbar*, which had previously represented an open discussion of the affairs of state between the ruler and his kinsmen as well as the prominent non-kindred interest groups of the state, was being transformed into the more restricted meetings of the new 'state council' which began to rule individual states under increasing British influence.<sup>811</sup>

Following the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 a highly detailed hierarchical structure of Indian society was designed by British officials, within which princely subordination to British rule and the person of the British monarch was repeatedly reinforced to an extent unknown under the Mogul empire. Moreover measures of economy were increasingly applied to princely lifestyles. With the disappearance of direct tools of control, particularly legitimate armies which were disbanded following the signing of individual treaties between states and the British, the largesse of Indian rulers had increased in importance in the early nineteenth century. Yet such largesse, unless directed towards an imperial cause or a project of liberal 'reform', was by the end of the century severely curtailed by British political officers in an effort to control princely expenditure in the interests of states' subjects.

This part of the princely life cycle continues with two main sections. The first deals with princely hierarchy and studies the change in *darbar* practice. It also looks at the Imperial Assemblages which took place under Viceroys Lytton and Curzon, and the investiture of the Star of India. The second section deals with the impact of British ideas of frugality and accountability upon religious ceremonies at court and princely largesse, and the resulting change in royal ritual practice under British rule.

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<sup>811</sup> Edward S. Haynes, 'Rajput Ceremonial Interactions as a Mirror of a Dying Indian State System 1820-1947', *Modern Asian Studies* XXIV (1990), p. 474.

## PRINCELY HIERARCHY

To the great advantage of the East India Company there were several features of the theory and practice of the successor regimes to the Mogul empire which smoothed the path to overall control. First an ideology of empire existed, largely unaffected by current political events. Even Hindu and Sikh warriors who were in open revolt against the Mogul empire retained much of its revenue machinery and continued to operate within a loose imperial system of honours and legitimacy which still centred on Delhi. The person of the Mogul became, if anything, more significant. As Bernard Cohn has argued, one reason for British success was the close attention to Indian court ritual and diplomatic usage. They used the name of the emperor, his charters, seals and *darbar* halls, in a manner which placated the urban populace. They stabilised the relationship between the emperor and his vassals, and respected the diplomatic system, placing themselves in a position of importance.<sup>812</sup>

In the decades preceding the Indian Mutiny the attitude of both Company and residents towards court rituals altered to conform to the change in Company policy towards the states in general. By and large the Company gradually distanced itself from the values expressed by court formalities, tending to regard them as 'essentially ineffectual and far removed from the real business of administration'.<sup>813</sup> Most residents attempted to show other Europeans that they regarded much of the ritual as 'empty pageant'. However they continued to show appreciation of the depth of meaning of such ceremony for Indian audiences, both at court and among the general populace. Company policy was 'to respect, or at least not overtly insult, court rituals while at the same time indicating to

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<sup>812</sup> Cohn 'Representing Authority', pp. 165-209

<sup>813</sup> Fisher, *Indirect Rule*, p. 251.

European audiences its low estimation of them'.<sup>814</sup> Particularly representative of this attitude was the Company's policy towards rituals associated with the Mogul emperor. The emperor continued as the nominal sovereign of the Company until 1857 and received ceremonial visits from Company officials up to that date, despite the fact that he was regarded by many Company employees as a somewhat 'quaint vestige of the distant past'.<sup>815</sup> British tourists would visit the emperor's palace, the Red Fort, as a stop on their tour through India's ruins. They would 'wander freely through neglected imperial audience halls, gardens and even the throne room'. Some tourists included in their itinerary an audience with the emperor himself.<sup>816</sup>

The rising of 1857 led to the desecration of the person of the Mogul, resulting in actions such as holding Christian services in the audience hall of the emperor and quartering Sikh cavalry in the imperial mosque.<sup>817</sup> The Government of India Act of 1858 and the Queen's Proclamation of the same year ended the ambiguity of the position of the British in India, as the British monarchy now encompassed both Britain and India. For the British ruling elite, at home and in India, the meanings attached to the events of 1857-58 and the resulting constitutional changes were increasingly 'the pivot around which their theory of colonial rule rotated',<sup>818</sup> leading to redefinitions of Indian society and the relationship of the rulers to the ruled. As part of the larger colonial project of ordering the whole of India's society its princes and landlords, were perceived as 'natural leaders', situated at the top of society.<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>814</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 252.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.* Also Mrs Colin Mackenzie, *Six Years in India: Delhi: The City of the Great Mogul* (London, 1857).

<sup>817</sup> *Indirect Rule*, p. 253.

<sup>818</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 179.

<sup>819</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 192.

David Cannadine suggests that the hierarchical principle underlying the British perception of empire was not exclusively based on the collective colour-coded ranking of social groups, but depended as much on the 'more venerable colour-blind ranking of individual social prestige'.<sup>820</sup> In Cannadine's opinion the British empire has been extensively studied as a complex racial hierarchy, but has received far less attention as an equally complex social hierarchy. When the British thought of the inhabitants of their empire in individual terms rather than collective categories they tended to be more concerned with rank than with race, and with 'the appreciation of status similarities based on perceptions of affinity'.<sup>821</sup> Since most Britons came from what they believed to be a hierarchical society, it was natural for them 'to search for overseas collaborators from the top of the indigenous social spectrum, whom they supported, whose cooperation they needed and through whom they ruled'.<sup>822</sup> The British chose their allies abroad because of the social perceptions they brought with them from home. Moreover, and 'in conformity with the historic practices and traditions of British local government', this also made financial sense. If the empire was to be run 'on the cheap', there must be 'voluntary collaborators' and the best people with whom to collaborate were likely to be the rich, wellborn and powerful. Imperial peoples were no 'aggregated, collective mass, all regarded without exception as inferior and potentially hostile: they were seen differentially and often individually'.<sup>823</sup>

No doubt as 'collaborators' the Indian princes were placed in an elevated position in the social hierarchy fabricated in India by their British rulers, yet Cannadine's work fails to emphasise the fact that this system was used by the British as much to reinforce Indian princely subordination to the paramount power and its monarch as to bolster the native

<sup>820</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 9

<sup>821</sup> *Ornamentalism*, p. 123.

<sup>822</sup> *Ornamentalism*, p. 124.

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid.* See also C. Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, (London 1971) p. 186.

rulers as upholders of traditional society and values. In Indian political tradition whoever was powerful enough to make a good claim to control sizeable human and material resources could act like a king and be accorded the appropriate deference. However after 1858 individual Indian princely status was that of a loyal supporter of the monarch of Great Britain. Durbars were no longer ritual displays of power over prominent members of a ruler's community but meetings involving the British and the Indian rulers, in which the latter were frequently relegated to a position of equality with British officials. The following section examines the change in tone and content of such meetings over the latter part of the nineteenth century.

#### THE DURBAR

As part of the reestablishment of political order in 1858 Canning undertook a series of extensive tours through north India to clarify the new relationship proclaimed by the Queen. As one of their main features the Viceroy's tours included *darbars* with large numbers of Indian princes, notables, and Indian and British officials, at which honours and rewards were presented to Indians who had demonstrated loyalty to the British in the 1857 mutiny.<sup>824</sup> At such *darbars* Indians were granted titles such as Rajah, Nawab and Rai Sahib and presented with special clothes and emblems, granted special privileges and some exemptions from normal administrative procedures, and rewarded in the form of pensions or grants. The *darbar* model derived from court rituals of the Mogul emperors, utilised by Hindu and Muslim eighteenth century rulers, then adapted in the early nineteenth century with English officials acting as Indian rulers.<sup>825</sup>

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<sup>824</sup> 'Representing Authority, pp. 167-8.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid.

The central ritual in the Mogul *darbar* was the act of incorporation. The person to be honoured offered *nazar* (gold coins) and/or *peshkash* (valuables such as elephants, horses, gold or other precious objects). The emperor, or his deputy, would present *khilats*, which consisted of specific and ordered sets of clothes, but could also include horses and elephants with various accoutrements as signs of authority. The number of such items and their value was always carefully graded.<sup>826</sup> Under the Moguls and other Indian rulers ritual presentations were not understood as simply an exchange of goods and valuables. The *khilat* was a symbol of continuity or succession, implying that the recipient was 'incorporated through the medium of clothing into the body of the donor'.<sup>827</sup> This 'incorporation', according to F. W. Buckler, was based on the idea that the king stood for a 'system of rule of which he is the incarnation ... incorporating into his body ... the persons of those who share his rule'.<sup>828</sup> The offering of *nazar* in the coins of the ruler was the officer's acknowledgment that the ruler was the source of wealth and well-being and its presentation was reciprocal to the receipt of the *khilats*.<sup>829</sup> Both were 'acts of obedience, pledges of loyalty, and the acceptance of the superiority of the giver of the *khilats*'.<sup>830</sup>

The British in the seventeenth and eighteenth century tended to misconstrue the acts of the *darbar* by seeing them as economic in nature and function. Offerings of *nazar* and *peshkash* were seen as 'paying for favours, which the British then translated into "rights" relating to their trading activities'.<sup>831</sup> Objects which formed the basis of a relationship through incorporation, such as cloth, clothes, gold or silver coins, animals, weapons or jewellery, were seen by the British as utilitarian goods which

<sup>826</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 168.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid.

<sup>828</sup> F. W. Buckler, 'The Oriental Despot', *Anglican Theological Review* (1927-8), p. 239 quoted Cohn, 'Representing Authority', p. 168.

<sup>829</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 168.

<sup>830</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 169.

<sup>831</sup> Ibid.

were part of their system of trade. At the end of the eighteenth century Parliament and the Directors of the Company began to limit the acquisition of private fortunes by Company employees by eliminating private trading activities and defining as 'corruption' the 'incorporation of officials of the Company into the ruling native groups through the acceptance of *nazar*, *khilats*, and *peshkash*, which were declared to be forms of bribery'.<sup>832</sup> In addition Company officers were prohibited by their employers and Parliament from participating in rituals and constituting improper relationships with Indians who were their subordinates. However, in relationships with territorial rulers who were allied with the British, it was recognised that loyalty to the Company had to be symbolised in some form. Reversing roles the British therefore began the practice of presenting *khilats* and accepting *peshkash* in formal meetings that could be recognised by Indians as *darbars*.<sup>833</sup>

Although the British as 'Indian rulers' in the first half of the nineteenth century continued the practice of accepting *nazar* and *peshkash* and giving *khilats*, they tried to restrict the occasion for such rituals to highly significant ceremonies such as the installation of a ruler.<sup>834</sup> The giving of *nazar* as a ceremonial payment by a ruler to the British when an adoption *sanad* was bestowed by the paramount power was also encouraged as an act of obedience and pledge of loyalty, although seen to be in need of regularisation 'with due regard to the circumstances of each case'.<sup>835</sup> A despatch of April 1873 declared that Her Majesty's Government had been under the impression that payment of *nazarana* was 'not only in accordance with Native custom under Mogul and Mahratta Rule, but was also entirely consonant to the feelings of the Chiefs, as indicating, by its receipt, a direct recognition, by the Paramount Power, of

<sup>832</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 171.

<sup>833</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 171-2.

<sup>834</sup> See R/2/750/12 for details of the installation of Maharajah Madho Scindia, Maharajah of Gwalior.

<sup>835</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 74, 30 April 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.



the succession on account of which it was accepted'.<sup>836</sup> Although the levy of *nazarana* had been discontinued during the earlier period of British rule, it was suggested that its reintroduction would be 'readily if not gladly witnessed'.<sup>837</sup>

When a prince or notable visited Government House in Calcutta or when the Governor-General, governors, commissioners and lower British officials went on tour, a *darbar* would be held. *Khilats* were always granted in the name, and by the permission of, governors of presidencies or the Governor-General. Items offered by Indians as *nazar* and *peshkash* were never kept by the official to whom they were given. Valuations and minute listings were made of the objects presented, which were ultimately deposited in the *Toshkana*, the special government treasury for the receipt and disbursement of presents.<sup>838</sup> Unlike Indians, the British recycled the presents which they received, either directly, by giving one Indian what had been received from another, or indirectly, by selling at auction in Calcutta what they received and using the proceeds to buy objects to be given as presents. The British always 'tried to equalise in economic terms what they gave and received by instructing Indians of the exact worth of objects or cash they would be allowed to give'.<sup>839</sup>

An official description of the installation of Sultan Jahan, Begam of Bhopal, in 1901 illustrates the manner in which palace ritual was defined by the British in monetary rather than symbolic terms. It was reported that articles composing the *khilat* for the Begam from the Viceroy 'to the value of Rs. 10,000' were brought into the Sadr Manzil palace where the Agent to the Governor-General tied an emerald and pearl necklace

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<sup>836</sup> Ibid.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid.

<sup>838</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 172.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid.

from the *khilat* around the ruler's neck and seated her on the Chair of State.<sup>840</sup> Her Highness presented the 'usual *nazar* of gold *mohurs*', expressing her determination to abide by the traditions of her house. The Nawab Consort was invested with the 'usual *khilat*, valued at Rs. 10,000', by placing a pearl and ruby necklace on his neck, affixing a *sarpech* or head jewel on his turban, wrapping a shawl around his shoulders and 'girding him with the sword of honour'.<sup>841</sup> The Nawab then presented *nazar* of 101 gold *mohurs* and 'expressed in suitable terms his gratitude to the Paramount Power'. Proceedings terminated with 'the usual distribution of *atar* and *pan*'. The report emphasises unequivocally that 'articles for the *khilats* for both Her Highness the Begam and the Nawab Consort were provided by the state, and the *nazars* presented in return were credited to the state treasury'.<sup>842</sup>

The Mogul ritual might seem to have been retained, but the meaning had changed. What had been under Indian rulers a ritual of incorporation had now become 'a ritual marking subordination, with no mystical bonding between a royal figure and chosen friend or servant'.<sup>843</sup> A contractual relationship was formed by converting what was a form of present giving into an economic exchange between a British official and Indian subject or ruler.

An equally precise code of conduct was established for princes and chiefs for their attendance at a *darbar*. The clothes they wore, the weapons they could carry, the number of retainers and soldiers that could accompany them to the viceroy's camp, where they were met by British officials in relation to the camp, the number of gun

<sup>840</sup> Lt.-Col. M. J. Meade, Offg. AGG CI, to H. S. Barnes, Sec. GoI, FD 9 July 1901, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box 36.

<sup>841</sup> Ibid.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid. R/2/28/261 itemises the articles making up the Viceroy's *khilat* at the installation of the Maharajah of Mysore in January 1895.

<sup>843</sup> 'Representing Authority', p. 172.

salutes fired in their honour, the time of the entry into the *darbar* hall or tent, whether the viceroy would rise and come forward to greet them, where on the viceregal rug they would be saluted by the viceroy, where they would be seated, how much *nazar* they could give and whether they would be entitled to a visit from the viceroy, were all 'markers of rank' and could be changed by the viceroy to raise or lower their standing.<sup>844</sup> In 1898 the Maharajah of Travancore was formally promoted to a salute of twenty one guns, as during his twelve years of rule he had in every way proved himself a 'wise and sympathetic ruler' and expressed an 'unselfish subordination of personal to public interests.'<sup>845</sup>

The status of a prince represented at a *darbar* was not always to the ruler's satisfaction. With the exception of Maharana Sajjan Singh, who was a minor at the Imperial Assembly of 1877, no Maharana of Udaipur had made obeisance after other Indian rulers, and the suggestion that at the 1911 Coronation Durbar he would be not occupy a position of superiority was seen as a 'bitter pill', resulting in great loss of '*izzat*'.<sup>846</sup> The problem was solved by the Maharana's appointment as 'Ruling Chief in Waiting' to King George V and his participation in the ceremonies as such.<sup>847</sup> Some British

<sup>844</sup> 'Representing Authority', p 180. R/2/783/20 deals in detail with the number of attendants permitted to accompany the Maharajah of Benares, the Nawab of Rampur and the Rajah of Tehri at *darbars*, in an effort to introduce 'a uniform scale classified according to salutes ... to systematise the ceremonial observed at meetings between the H. E. the Viceroy and rulers'. R/2/69/52 discusses the 'ceremonials' to be observed on the occasion of official visits between the Governor of Madras and the Maharajah of Mysore and R/2/880/48 looks at the vexed question of the 'garlanding' of British officials by Indian royalty. A supplement to *Allen's Indian Mail* giving a gradation list of 'Chiefs of the Indian Empire' is attached to Salisbury to Lytton, 13 July 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 3A.

<sup>845</sup> Chief Sec. to Govt. of Madras to Sec. to GoI, FD, 11 January 1898, R/2/892/275. Travancore and Cochin did not have a tradition of kingly wealth and pomp. In contrast kingship was associated with austerity and dharmic morality. In his thesis on the two states Vikram Menon points out that, instead of a history of 'princely misgovernment, royal posturing and theatrical extravaganzas, there is a record of investment for growth, an educated and enlightened monarchy and a simplicity of lifestyle'. Vikram Menon, 'Popular Princes: Kingship and Social Change in Travancore and Cochin 1870-1930', pp. 20, 261.

<sup>846</sup> A word of Persian origin which was assimilated into Hindustani during the period of Islamic rule. Sometimes translated as 'prestige', more usually as 'honour', *izzat* was both a source of power and a focus of obligation. While it turned the ruler almost into a demi-god, it also predisposed him to act in a way which would maximise the glory of the state.

<sup>847</sup> J. G. Kaye, Res. Udaipur, to E. G. Colvin, AGG Rajputana, 20 July 1911, R/2/161/206. The Rajput rulers were particular sticklers for protocol: R/2/168/267 is devoted to the procedure of Rajput princes at

officials, such as Charles Tupper and William Lee-Warner, spent years sorting out the correct relationship between the Queen-Empress's regal status and that of the Indian princes. Tupper confidently declared the princes to be 'chiefs' but not kings, citing Pudukkottai as a prime example of a state whose *dewan* had to be reprimanded after daring to call his rajah a 'royal person'. Quoting Sir Henry Maine from a memorandum dated 1864, Tupper reminded his reader 'There may be found in India every shade and variety of sovereignty but there is only one independent Sovereign, the British Government'.<sup>848</sup>

Proof of the determination to enforce a new definition of the relative standing of the Indian rulers to the paramount power appears in an official despatch of May 1873 concerning the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Gaekwar of Baroda and the Maharajah of Mysore, all of whom received in British territory a gun salute equal to that given to the Viceroy and higher than that to which the Governors of Madras and Bombay were entitled. It was decided that advantage was to be taken of the fact that the rulers of Hyderabad and Mysore were both minors, and the Gaekwar had just succeeded to the *gadi*, to reduce their gun salutes from 21 to 19 guns in British territory and, in so doing, to raise British officials in rank *vis-a-vis* the three major princes.<sup>849</sup> However such a blatant sign of demotion was in hindsight seen to be capable of counter-productive ramifications. A year later when discussing the question of modifications to the Gaekwar's *darbar* practice the Secretary of State admitted that

the Native Princes must submit, in the inevitable course of things, to constant retrenchments of power at our hands, and, therefore, I should be inclined to be the

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the wedding of the Maharana of Udaipur and a princess from Idar in 1875.

<sup>848</sup> Charles Lewis Tupper, *Indian Political Practice: A Collection of the Decisions of the Government of India in Political Cases* (London, 1893), pp 19-20.

<sup>849</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 70, 8 May 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16. In fact the Government of India expressed no desire to interfere with the practice of a ruler receiving from his own artillery and within his own territory a salute greater than that to which he was entitled to receive from British artillery or under the orders of a British officer. R/2/880/52.

more cautious not to diminish the ceremonial observances to which they have become accustomed. They care most about the show; we care most about the power. For some time at least we may hope to travel along peaceably with them upon those lines.<sup>850</sup>

Nevertheless in the light of the 1858 Queen's Proclamation efforts were made to curtail the pretensions of the rulers in relation to the paramount power. The aspirations of Holkar, Maharajah of Indore, towards equality with the British royal family were apparent in 1877 when an official despatch reported that letters had been received from the prince to the Queen and Prince of Wales, together with two boxes of *til* seeds. It was declared unwise for the Queen to reply to Holkar, even under the Royal Sign Manual, as there was no precedent for 'conceding such an honour to a Native Prince'.<sup>851</sup> It was suspected that the real occasion for the Indian ruler's letter was 'the entrance of the sun into the northern solstice - an annual occurrence which the Maharajah is in the habit of celebrating by sending letters and *til* seeds to various personages in England and elsewhere', therefore Holkar's letter would be repeated year after year, each expecting a reply. The Secretary of State noted that a royal letter might well give the Maharajah 'an idea of equality of station with the Queen, which would be prejudicial'.<sup>852</sup> The Queen was also discouraged from signing formal letters to princes, as it was important to impress upon the rulers that they must look upon the Viceroy as the Queen's representative in India and all communications to or from them should pass through him. Any new practice 'might disturb the minds of the Native Princes' and it was 'most desirable to avoid any possible risk of an apparent diminution of the authority of the Viceroy'.<sup>853</sup>

<sup>850</sup> Salisbury to Northbrook, 24 April 1874, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 11.

<sup>851</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 65, 4 October 1877, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 3.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid.

<sup>853</sup> Fowler to Elgin, 27 July 1894, Elgin Collection, Vol. 2.

Great attention was paid to the phrasing of official speeches made by the Viceroy to princes to avoid any doubt in the new order of precedence that followed the Queen's Proclamation. Writing to Argyll in 1872, Northbrook reported that in meeting Holkar and ten other Central Indian rulers in *darbar*, 'I took care to use the words "allegiance to the British Crown" and to assert the duty of the British Government to interpose as the paramount power in case of a disturbance of peace and order in India, because Holkar is reported to me as somewhat disposed to assume a position of equality'.<sup>854</sup> Any such suggestions of princely equality with the British Crown were to be firmly quashed, as was apparent during the Prince of Wales's tour of India in 1875. Rumours existed of private communications between Sir Salar Jung, Diwan of Hyderabad and the Prince's staff on the subject of a royal visit to the state and the Viceroy was quick to point out that 'His Royal Highness could not, without seriously diminishing the position of the British Government, visit Hyderabad territories unless the Nizam first visits and pays his respects to the Prince'.<sup>855</sup>

The British now suggested that at no time in the history of the Indian rulers had they been kings in the accepted sense. Any attempt to use monarchical terms such as 'king', 'kingdom' or 'royal', or even to refer to the *gadis* or cushions on which the rulers sat on formal occasions as 'thrones', was to be vigorously opposed over the next decades. When dealing with the proposed visit to England of a small number of princes for the Queen's Jubilee in 1887 it was agreed that the rulers 'would be flattered if the Queen

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<sup>854</sup> Northbrook to Argyll, 6 December 1872, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 9. As is seen in this chapter, and the chapters on royal women and princely administration, Holkar was a constant thorn in the side of the GoI until his deposition.

<sup>855</sup> Northbrook to Salisbury, 23 August 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12. Salar Jung insisted that the Nizam was too unwell to travel to Bombay to visit the Prince of Wales. The Resident, C. B. Saunders, 'in his blunt, blundering British fashion' questioned the authenticity of the illness and the resulting acrimony between Minister and Resident resulted in the publication by the former of relevant correspondence in the *Bombay Gazette* and *Times of India*. Finally a deputation of Hyderabad nobles including Salar Jung represented the Nizam in Bombay and the Government of India formally absolved the co-Regents and the Nizam of disrespect. Bawa, *Hyderabad under Salar Jang*, pp. 176-82.

would grant them a private audience or, better still, Her Majesty might hold a *darbar* in true Indian fashion',<sup>856</sup> but it was stressed that neither Holkar nor other rulers should be allowed to assume the title of Royal Highness.<sup>857</sup>

Fifteen years later the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, was still experiencing difficulty in curbing the 'external symbols of sovereignty' claimed by the princes,

I wage quiet, but unceasing warfare here against their inclination to call their offspring the Royal Family, to speak of this or that son as the Prince, or the Heir-Apparent, or His Highness, to use the words 'sovereign', 'reign' and 'throne', to assume the Royal Crown on writing paper ... and to put their servants into the royal scarlet livery'.<sup>858</sup>

Curzon was also perturbed about the status which Indian rulers automatically assumed in England, irrespective of their behaviour in India, 'It is hopeless for me to endeavour to take a strong line in India about the unworthy and dissolute members of the Princely class, if, at the same time, they receive encouragement and compliments from the Queen at home. I am afraid that every Indian Prince, whatever his character or personality, is invested with a sort of halo in Her Majesty's eyes'.<sup>859</sup> The Viceroy was well aware of the fact that in the case of the Indian rulers abroad, pride would come before a fall:

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<sup>856</sup> Dufferin to Cross, 17 April 1887, Dufferin Collection, Vol. 8A. Dufferin had a jaundiced view of those princes who were prepared to attend the Jubilee. The Rajput Pratap Singh 'does not speak English, his teeth are disfigured by betel chewing and his only notion of smart get up is to make himself look as much like an English jockey as possible'. Cooch Behar, 'if only he will dress in native costume, will quite realize the British idea of what an Indian Rajah should look like'. Finally, Holkar, 'a burly, ill-mannered, vulgar Mahratta' whose 'principal idea in the whole business is simple debauchery'. Dufferin to Cross, 20 March 1887, Dufferin Collection, Vol.8A .

<sup>857</sup> Ibid.

<sup>858</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 9 April 1902, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 161. See also R/1/1/265, R/1/1/266 and R/1/1/275 for GoI directives to political officers in Hyderabad, Travancore and Cochin, Rajputana and Central India, pointing out the 'misuse' of words 'prince', 'throne' and 'reign' in relation to Indian rulers in official documents.

<sup>859</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, November 28 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159. Curzon's view of the Queen's attitude towards the Indian rulers does seem to have been correct. In 1897 she recommended the Maharajah of Kapurthala (described by the Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, as 'dissipated and a spendthrift') for an honour on the grounds that 'knighted European sovereigns and princes are not always of spotless reputation'. Hamilton to Elgin, 18 June 1897, Elgin Collection, Vol. 15.

In India the real proportions and merits of these individuals are carefully sifted and thoroughly understood, at home every man with a turban, a sufficient number of jewels, and a black skin, is mistaken for a miniature Akbar, and becomes the darling of drawing-rooms, the honoured guest of municipalities, and the hero of the newspapers. During the next few months ... a good many balloons that have been sailing high in the English firmament will experience a dismal collapse.<sup>860</sup>

As Curzon suggested, the 'unworthy and dissolute members of the Princely class' received a less generous reception in India. Inasmuch as it invariably involved the paramount power, the slightest hint of scandal at a major *darbar* was to be rigorously avoided. The 'disagreeable and embarrassing' behaviour of Holkar, who refused to dispense with his male lover, Gopalia, threatened to sabotage the young ruler's succession ceremony. Holkar, having promised solemnly that he had expelled Gopalia, on the day of his private inauguration 'not only recalled this creature to Indore, but in full *Durbar* conferred a *jagir* upon him and a pearl necklace which was tied around his neck by the chief official of the State'.<sup>861</sup> To avoid a scandal the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, Sir Lepel Griffin, was left with little alternative but 'to pretend ignorance of the *Durbar* incident', at which, 'fortunately', British officers were not present.<sup>862</sup> However the Viceroy was informed that it 'would be an open insult if this man were occupying a seat of honour in *Durbar* when Her Majesty's representative installed the new Chief' and it was recommended that the installation would only take place if Gopalia was not present at this *darbar* or any other public ceremony in which the Viceroy was involved. If the Maharajah was not in agreement, the confirmation of full powers would be postponed.<sup>863</sup>

<sup>860</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 27 August 1902, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 161.

<sup>861</sup> Lepel Griffin to H. M. Durand, 6 July 1886, R/1/1/36.

<sup>862</sup> Ibid.

<sup>863</sup> Durand to Viceroy, 10 July 1886, R/1/1/36. Holkar was duly installed and there was no record of Gopalia being in evidence, however the 'notorious favourite' turned up again in 1889 when he appeared aboard a ship bound for Poona, ostensibly on the way to Europe with Holkar who had given the British 'the slip'. Lansdowne to Cross, 24 May 1889, Lansdowne Collection, D558, Vol. 2.



The emphasis placed on the enhanced rank of British officials vis-à-vis Indian princes grew during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As early as 1873 a seating arrangement proposed by the Gaekwar of Baroda for a visit from the Governor of Bombay, in which the Governor was placed on the left rather than the right of the ruler, met with a stern reprimand from the Government of India. The Baroda Resident was requested to inform the Gaekwar that this was not 'a question of courtesy to be shown to His Highness by the British Government, but of respect to be shown by him [the Gaekwar] to Her Majesty's representative in the Bombay Presidency'.<sup>864</sup> To add insult to injury the Gaekwar was also informed that the traditional presence of British soldiers when he left or returned to Baroda was no longer appropriate, 'Ceremonies asked for by His Highness Malharrao, besides being most inexpedient as the troops are exposed to the sun, were opposed to rules laid down in 1841 that such escorts are for State occasions only'.<sup>865</sup>

An example of court protocol in Hyderabad at the end of the century further illustrates the ranking procedure between Indian rulers and British officials. At a *darbar* to announce Colonel K. J. L. Mackenzie's appointment as officiating Resident in 1894, the practice was introduced of standing up when a *kharita* from the Viceroy was being read. The Nizam asked if the innovation could be abandoned, since there was no evidence in Residency files to suggest that it had previously been the custom to stand.<sup>866</sup> However the First Assistant to the Resident, A. Tucker, pointed out to Nawab Vikar-ul-Umra, the Minister, that there was no reason why, once a practice had been adopted, it should not continue. As Tucker stated firmly:

<sup>864</sup> Sec. GoI, FD to Sec. Govt. Bombay, 14 January 1873, R/4/489/75.

<sup>865</sup> Sec. Govt. Bombay to Sec. GoI, FD, 28 May 1874, R/4/489/75. See also R/1/4/307, Circular No. 955I, GoI to local governments and senior Political officers, concerning the ending of the practice of military officers taking part in 'Peshwai' ceremonies accorded to Indian rulers on their arrival at military stations.

<sup>866</sup> Col. K. J. L. Mackenzie to W. J. Cuningham, Foreign Sec. GoI, 17 October 1894, R/1/1/135.

Matters connected with ceremonial in one view are trivial, yet in another view they have an importance of their own, and, if the standing up is a form of respect that ought to be paid to communications from His Excellency the Viceroy when read in *Durbar*, Colonel Mackenzie is sure His Highness is the last person to wish that that form of address should not be paid.<sup>867</sup>

In the same vein the Political Agent in Eastern Rajputana, Major Prideaux, complained vociferously that the Maharajah of Alwar did not pay him the 'compliments' due upon every formal visit. The Maharajah had not met the officer at the railway station, nor fired a salute when the officer was on an official visit to the ruler, nor fired salutes every time the Political Agent arrived in or departed from the state. The ruler treated the Agent to the Governor-General with the correct protocol and it was unreasonable that he should not do so in the case of the Political Agent 'whose status, conferred upon him by the Imperial Government, entitles him to compliments of the same character'.<sup>868</sup>

The increase of European influence upon princely ceremonies is demonstrated by a description by the Political Agent in Baroda, Mr P. S. Melvill, of the investiture of the Gaekwar. Two hundred and thirty four European guests attended, among whom were

the Consuls at Bombay of France and the U.S.A.; the heads of the mercantile community of Bombay; travellers of distinction from England, Italy and Belgium; and civil and military officers of Government .... A band attends every evening (except Sunday) after dinner, and the guests find pleasure in a nightly dance.<sup>869</sup>

At the state banquet given by the Gaekwar there were only eight 'Native gentlemen, those few who were occasionally invited to dine at Government House in Bombay' and at a fancy dress ball the following night the maharanis and ladies of the palace were situated in an adjoining room 'which was veiled from outside gaze by open-work

<sup>867</sup> Ibid.

<sup>868</sup> Major W. B. Prideaux, Pol. Agent, Eastern Rajputana, to W. H. J. Wilkinson, 1<sup>st</sup> Asst. AGG Rajputana, 16 December 1912, R/2/169/276. There is no record of whether or not Prideaux succeeded in obtaining what he saw as his rightful recognition.

<sup>869</sup> Enclosure No. 21, P. S. Melvill, AGG Baroda, 'Investiture of Gaekwar', 2 January 1882 attached to GoI to SoS, No. 10, PSCI, 1875-1911 Box II.

screens, but through which the inmates could see the ball-room'.<sup>870</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century there was evidence of less fraternisation between Indians and Europeans at residency gatherings as well as more formal ceremonies such as the Gaekwar's investiture. Sir David Barr, Resident in Hyderabad in 1905, wrote that when he first arrived in the state,

it was the practice to invite a large number of the Nobles and officials of the state to the Residency on occasions of dinners and dances when English ladies were present. I have done all I can to discourage this practice. I never invite Native gentlemen or Nobles to dances – and restrict official entertainments, such as Breakfasts and Dinners, at the Residency to gentlemen (English and Indian) only. The only exception is when the Nizam dines at the Residency, then we invite ladies as well as gentlemen to meet His Highness and we ask for a list of those nobles and officials whom His Highness wishes to be invited to meet him. The practice of the nobles ... to invite ladies and gentlemen of the garrison of Secunderabad to Dinners, Picnics etc. has been discouraged by me.<sup>871</sup>

This widening of the gap between Indian and European over the nineteenth century is illustrated by the description of Edward Raleigh, who accompanied the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, on a diplomatic tour through Bengal in 1828, of the way in which an Indian ruler would be embraced on entering the *darbar* tent. During the ceremony the Governor-General might inspect the presents arm-in-arm with the visitor. Such acts of physical intimacy denoted respect, acknowledged a certain level of equality, even affection, all of which were integral to the creation of an intimate bond between the two men.<sup>872</sup> Although the British did not always relish the participation in such acts,<sup>873</sup> the retention of these ceremonies in their original format suggests that the British were willing to acknowledge their significance. The British acceptance of Indian structures of power meant that they were also forced to submit to such indignities as standing in the

<sup>870</sup> Ibid.

<sup>871</sup> Sir David Barr, Res. Hyderabad, 'Confidential Note on Hyderabad Affairs', 8 February 1905, R/1/1/1281.

<sup>872</sup> E. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 129.

<sup>873</sup> Lord Auckland, according to his sister, 'detest[ed] a great part of the ceremonies, particularly embracing the rajahs!'. Emily Eden, *Up the Country, Letters from India* (first published 1886), p. 27.

presence of the Mogul Emperor, from whom, theoretically, they derived their authority, and the practice of a Resident taking off his shoes when visiting the Nizam of Hyderabad.<sup>874</sup>

However such acts of subordination on the part of the British disappeared following the removal of the Emperor of Delhi into exile and the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the new monarch of India, resolving the position of the British as de facto rulers deriving their authority from a virtually powerless figurehead. The *darbar*, reinvented on a national level as the Imperial Assemblages of 1877, 1903 and 1911, became a place where the Indian princes, redefined as feudal allies, expressed their allegiance to the British. Any suggestion that British officials might be symbolically subordinate to Indian rulers was removed. The British rid themselves of unwanted intimacy with their subjects, such as the physical contact of embracing and handholding. The new format 'transformed the physical performance of the princes from one which symbolised incorporation, equality and respect, into one of homage'.<sup>875</sup>

## IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGES

The Imperial Assemblages of 1877, 1903 and 1911 were the most successful appropriations of the indigenous form of the *darbar*, articulating the traditional social order and legitimating the position of the British monarch at the head of it, with the Indian princes firmly relegated to the role of native aristocracy. A strong element of psychological manipulation lay behind the mountain of bureaucratic detail involved in the organisation of these mass gatherings, and viceregal and other official

<sup>874</sup> Barr, Report 6 August 1900, R/1/1/1281.

<sup>875</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 129.

correspondence dealing with arrangements for the Assemblage of 1877 reveals a certain amount of racism in British attitudes towards the Indian rulers. The susceptibility of the Indians to symbols and show was assumed. The British, Lord Lytton declared, could gain the allegiance of the rulers, 'without giving up any of our power ... the further East you go, the greater becomes the importance of a bit of bunting'.<sup>876</sup> Although the Viceroy suspected that he might appear 'fussy, or frivolous' in his attention to detail, he stressed the importance of display to Disraeli, 'The decorative details of an Indian pageant are like those parts of the animal which are not used at all for butcher's meat, and are even unfit for scientific dissection, but from which augurs draw the omens that move armies and influence princes'.<sup>877</sup>

Following the assumption by Queen Victoria of the title of Empress of India, it was agreed that the Viceroy would distribute gold medals with a suitable inscription to 'chief dignitaries'. The Viceroy's Council eventually decided upon 'Kaiser-i-Hind', an imperial title not monopolised by any crown since the Roman Caesars, which gave it 'a lofty and mysterious place in the imagination of the eastern populations'.<sup>878</sup> However Lytton stressed that the new title of Empress was only potentially popular in India. If the major princes were put to trouble and expense simply to be informed that the Queen had assumed a title which Her Majesty and her government regarded as a mere technicality and 'unconnected with any practical advantage, or benefit to themselves' they would leave the Assemblage disappointed and angry.<sup>879</sup> The Viceroy recognised that 'Here is a great feudal aristocracy which we cannot get rid of, which we are avowedly anxious to

<sup>876</sup> Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

<sup>877</sup> Lytton to Disraeli, 3 October 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

<sup>878</sup> Lytton to Salisbury, 30 July 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18. The title was suggested by G. W. Leitner, a Hungarian Professor of Oriental Languages and Principal of the Government College in Lahore. Leitner argued that the term 'Kaiser' was well known to the natives of India, having been used by Muslim writers in relation to the Roman Caesar. Moreover it neatly combined the Roman 'Caesar', German 'Kaiser' and Russian 'Czar' imperial titles. Cohn 'Representing Authority', p. 201.

<sup>879</sup> Lytton to Disraeli, 30 April 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

conciliate and command, but which we have as yet done next to nothing to rally round the British Crown as its "feudal head"<sup>880</sup>.

Political motives for such a glittering ceremony were evident. As Lytton explained to the Queen during the planning of the Assemblage, the celebrations would also help Britain from a strategic point of view. In a letter of November 1876 he declared that, if there was a threat of European war which might bring Europe 'into collision' with Russia in Central Asia, 'it is essential to the success of our military operation that we should, as soon as possible, rouse the enthusiasm, secure the confidence, and confirm the loyalty of the Native States of India, in order that we may be able to withdraw troops from the interior without any risk to the stability of our rule'.<sup>881</sup> The Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, agreed that Britain should 'try and lay the foundations of some feeling on the part of the coloured races towards the Crown other than the recollection of defeat and the sensation of subjection'.<sup>882</sup>

As was to be their role throughout the Assemblage, the princes attended as recipients of largesse and honour given to them by their empress.<sup>883</sup> Somewhat surprisingly princely reactions indicate that the majority of the most powerful rulers were by no means unwilling to accept their new role of loyal servants of Queen Victoria. Much attention was given to the question of suitable recognition for Scindia, Maharajah of Gwalior, one of the most influential princes, whose position was already so elevated by previous 'marks of favour from the Suzerain Power, that it was hard not to lower it by the honours

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

<sup>881</sup> Lytton to Queen, 15 November 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

<sup>882</sup> Salisbury to Lytton, 7 July 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 3A.

<sup>883</sup> See Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp. 45-6; Copland, *British Raj*, pp. 154-5; L. A. Knight, 'The Royal Titles Act and India', *Historical Journal* XI, no. 3 (1968) p. 488; M. Lutyens, *The Lyttons of India: Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty* (London, 1979), pp. 74-89.

and privileges to be given to princes of lower rank and smaller salutes'.<sup>884</sup> Upon being informed that he would receive the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, Scindia spoke of the Queen using a word which in its original meant 'the power of issuing absolute orders which must be obeyed'. Delighted, Lytton assured his sovereign that this reference 'permanently and publicly fixes your Majesty's suzerain, and more than suzerain, power in India, beyond all possibility of future question'.<sup>885</sup> However, to make sure that the Maharajah was left in no doubt as to his position in the new hierarchy, Lytton stressed the point that for a Viceroy to travel to Gwalior for the investiture would be 'improper'. Scindia was therefore instructed to visit Calcutta to receive the Order.<sup>886</sup>

In a similar vein a sycophantic letter from Holkar to the Prince of Wales, rejoiced in the fact that the Queen was 'pleased to confer upon the Native Princes new dignities commensurate with their ranks, and admit them also to participate in her new greatness, so that the whole political fabric of India may appear together as one harmonious group, tending, by its united effort, to exalt the British name'.<sup>887</sup> However Holkar's true suspicions are reflected in the last paragraph, in which he expressed the hope that the 'independence' of native princes would continue to be respected 'according to treaties which have been ratified by Her Majesty's Proclamation of 1858'.<sup>888</sup> Unfortunately Lytton could not give the princes any guarantee of their independence. He admitted to Salisbury that the rulers presented a dilemma which was not to be solved by a devolution of power, 'For whilst on the one hand, we require their cordial and willing allegiance, on

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<sup>884</sup> Lytton to Queen, 23 December 1876 to 10 January 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19

<sup>885</sup> Ibid.

<sup>886</sup> Lytton to Salisbury, 11 October 1877, Lytton to Scindia, 23 November 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19.

<sup>887</sup> Holkar to Prince of Wales, 21 September 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

<sup>888</sup> Ibid.

the other hand we certainly cannot afford to give them any increased political power independent of our own'.<sup>889</sup>

The sheer mass of detail of the Assemblage succeeded in impressing upon the 'feudatories' the fact that, for all their personal wealth and influence, they were unable to place themselves on an equal footing with their imperial overlords.

Scindia's Minister, Sir Dinkur Rao, was heard to say that:

If any man would understand why it is that the English are, and must necessarily remain, the masters of India, he need only go up to the Flagstaff Tower, and look down upon this marvellous camp. Let him notice the method, the order, the cleanliness, the discipline, the perfection of its whole organisation, and he will recognise in it at once the epitome of every title to command and govern which one race can possess over others.<sup>890</sup>

Holkar confided to Lytton that 'India had been till now a vast heap of stones, some of them big, some of them small. Now the house is built and from roof to basement each stone of it is in the right place'.<sup>891</sup> The ruler of Indore, 'the most avaricious and stingy Prince in India', was so pleased with the promise to rectify one of his boundaries, that he subscribed £800 to famine expenses.<sup>892</sup> Moreover the attitude of the Maharajah of Kashmir at the Assemblage showed a respect for the paramount power which had not hitherto been apparent, dismissing his councillors and declaring to Lytton, 'I am now convinced that you mean nothing that is not for the good of me and mine. Our interests are identical with those of the Empire. Give me your orders and they shall be obeyed'.<sup>893</sup>

The only state whose officials failed to admit that the Imperial Assemblage provided

<sup>889</sup> Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

<sup>890</sup> Lytton to Queen, 23 December 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19.

<sup>891</sup> Lytton to Queen, 10 January 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19.

<sup>892</sup> Lytton to Queen, 4 May 1876, Lytton Collection, Vol. 18.

<sup>893</sup> Ibid.



incontrovertible proof of British supremacy was Hyderabad. Sir Salar Jung's delusions of grandeur were at their most blatant during the celebrations, when he referred to relations between the Nizam's administration and the British government as 'equal in sovereignty', although 'unequal in strength'.<sup>894</sup> Lytton reported to the Queen that, at the presentation of the banner and medals to the Nizam, when

I alluded to your Majesty's reliance on the loyal allegiance of His Highness, Salar Jung translated the words 'loyalty' and 'allegiance' by the words 'friendship' and 'alliance'. My interpreter having noticed this, I corrected the intentional mistranslation and caused the young Nizam to be informed that I meant not only friendship and alliance, but obedience and fidelity.<sup>895</sup>

The Viceroy was swift to demand a 'written acknowledgment of the supremacy of your Majesty's Government over that of His Highness' and, after several unacceptable drafts, such an acknowledgment was received, leaving relations with Hyderabad 'on a more safe and dignified footing' and firmly placing the Nizam publicly in 'the true position of ... one of your Majesty's feudatories'.<sup>896</sup>

At the Imperial Assemblage of 1903, the Coronation Durbar to proclaim Edward VII Emperor of India, Curzon was determined to give princely morale a further boost by securing the active participation of the leading princes in the ceremony. Each prince in turn mounted the dais and offered a message of congratulation to the King-Emperor, and in place of the presentation of *nazar* Curzon simply shook hands with each ruler as he passed. Some such interchange of 'homage and courtesy', Curzon insisted, had been 'an immemorial feature of Indian Accession *Durbars*'.<sup>897</sup> However, although like its

<sup>894</sup> Lytton to Queen, 23 December 1876, 10 January 1877, Lytton Collection, Vol. 19.

<sup>895</sup> Ibid.

<sup>896</sup> Ibid. See also Bawa, *Hyderabad under Salar Jang*, pp. 187-193.

<sup>897</sup> Minute of 11 May 1902, quoted Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 197. See also Note from H. S. Barnes, Sec. GoI, FD for a sample of the gargantuan amount of bureaucratic material involved in planning the Coronation Durbar, 16 July 1902, R/2/449/3. R/2/505/122 and R/2/505/123 deal extensively with arrangements for the Gaekwar and the Baroda party at the Coronation Durbar. R/2/13/86/1 deals with the Mysore party.

predecessor of 1877 the Durbar provided an elaborate display of traditional Indian rulership, it was intended above all to demonstrate the power and majesty of the British Empire. Never before, Curzon exalted, had there been a gathering of the Asiatic feudatories of the British Crown' from such a 'sweep of territory', extending over 'fifty-five degrees of longitude' from Aden to Burma. By bringing together this great number, Curzon hoped to give India's ruling elite a sense of 'common participation in a great political system and of fellow citizenship of the British Empire'.<sup>898</sup>

The Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, suggested to the Viceroy that the rulers might be given ideas above their station, 'you and the Ruling Princes necessarily were 'en evidence', and the performers in the series of functions, and the rest of the officials, nowhere: will this not give the Native Princes a more exaggerated sense hereafter of their own importance and make them more difficult of management by their agents?'<sup>899</sup> However Curzon was convinced of the rulers' awareness of their supporting role as figureheads rather than prime movers in the Durbar, as in the Indian empire, 'I believe that they went away, not only conscious that they had played a prominent and glorious part in a magnificent pageant, but proud of their honourable position as partners and pillars of the Empire'.<sup>900</sup>

## INVESTITURES OF THE STAR OF INDIA

Lytton's medievalist vision also found expression in the creation of orders of knighthood. In India, as throughout the empire, such orders grew throughout the later

<sup>898</sup> Speeches by Lord Curzon, Vol. 3, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 559, pp. 60-67.

<sup>899</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 23 January 1903, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 162.

<sup>900</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 13 January 1903, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 162.

nineteenth century. For example, in addition to the award of Indian titles, the government in 1861 created a special English order of knighthood entitled the Star of India. Restricted to the most influential princes and senior officials, it at once became the most coveted of all the distinctions at the disposal of the viceroy. At first the order of the Star of India, which included both Indian and British knights, was restricted to twenty-five members consisting of the most important Indian princes and distinguished senior British civil and military officers. In 1866 it was expanded by the addition of two lower ranks, and by 1877 there were several hundred holders of knighthoods in the order, which were granted by the Queen.<sup>901</sup> However the granting of the order to the most senior princes such as the Maharajahs of Mysore, who could reasonably expect to receive the Star of India in every generation, was something of a two-edged sword. As David Cannadine points out,

many a ruling prince posed for his portrait in the mantle, star, collar and sash of the Order of the Star of India, as did the governors of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, and also the viceroy himself: another sign of ordered hierarchy and honorific equality, as the British proconsuls and Indian princes were merged together.<sup>902</sup>

Bernard Cohn suggests that the investiture and holding of chapters of the order added an important European component to the ritual that the British were establishing in India. The accoutrements of the order were 'English and "feudal": a robe or mantle, a collar, a medallion with the effigy of the Queen (the wearing of such a human effigy was an anathema to Muslims) and a jewelled pendant'.<sup>903</sup> A report of the investiture ceremony stated that 'on the ground, in front of the dais, is a crimson carpet, with a large oval frame of scrolls worked in relief, in gold, and the Lion and Unicorn with "*Dieu et mon*

<sup>901</sup> Cohn, 'Representing Authority', p. 181.

<sup>902</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp. 90, 100.

<sup>903</sup> Cohn, 'Representing Authority', p. 181. R2/50/894 'Installation and Investiture *Durbars*' shows the great care for precedent and precision in investiture programmes.

*droit*" in the centre'.<sup>904</sup> The ceremony was conducted in a European style with the reading of the warrant and a presentation of the insignia, the newly entitled knight kneeling before the monarch's representative. The 'contractual aspect of the entitlement was painfully clear to the Indian recipients, as the accoutrements given had to be returned on the death of the holder'.<sup>905</sup> Unlike symbolic accessories received from Indian rulers in the past which were kept in treasure rooms as objects to be viewed and used only on sacred occasions, these had to be returned. Statutes of the order required the recipients to sign a bond that the valuables would be returned by their heirs.<sup>906</sup>

The knighthoods not only became rewards for 'good service', as in the case of Nawab Faiz Ali Khan, prime minister of Jaipur, recommended for the Companion of the Star of India in 1870 for the 'progress, public works, good order and general good native government' of his state<sup>907</sup> and the Phulkian rulers of Jind and Nabha, distinguished by their service to the Government of India and 'the excellence of the contingents which they have furnished for service in the field' in 1879.<sup>908</sup> They could also act as one of the final sanctions that might be served against the rulers in cases of grave misconduct. The absence of the Maharajah of Jodhpur from Mayo's viceregal *darbar* at Ajmere in 1870, on the grounds that he was unable to 'sit on an equality' with the Maharana of Udaipur, was one such instance; a reduction in his gun salute was deemed to be insufficient punishment and the 'only other possible penalty' suggested by the Viceroy was to deprive him of the Star of India on the grounds that he had committed a 'misdemeanour derogatory to his honour'.<sup>909</sup> Mayo took an unequivocal stand,

<sup>904</sup> Undated article from *The Pioneer* on Star of India investiture Calcutta, 3 January 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. I.

<sup>905</sup> Cohn, 'Representing Authority', p.182.

<sup>906</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>907</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 7 February 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. I.

<sup>908</sup> Lytton to Cranbrook, 3 April 1879, Lytton Collection, Vol. 21.

<sup>909</sup> Mayo to Argyll, 9 November 1870, Argyll Collection, Vol. II.

I can look upon the conduct of the Joudhpore Raja in no other light than a deliberate and premeditated insult to her Majesty's Representative. I hold that if the Viceroy desires the attendance of the feudatory chiefs in *Durbar*, it is for him and not for any particular Chief to settle any question of precedence - the greatest care is taken in this matter that ancient custom and well ascertained right should be strictly adhered to - and it is most desirable that all these questions of Precedence should be determined on and finally settled.<sup>910</sup>

Until 1875 British holders of the Star of India far outnumbered their native counterparts. Thirty-eight British Knights of the order existed, as against thirteen native Knights, and sixty-nine British Companions of the order as against thirty-one native Companions. Northbrook put forward the suggestion in 1875 that there should be a fixed proportion between British and native holders of both the KCSI and CSI, resulting in a ratio of forty British to twenty native Knights and eighty to forty native Companions. Nevertheless the numbers were still heavily weighted in favour of the British holders of the order.<sup>911</sup>

Attempts on the part of the Indian princes to create their own order were firmly curtailed. In 1885 the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, wrote to the Secretary of State, Lord Kimberley, that a 'sudden fancy had seized the Nizam for instituting an Order and distributing decorations'.<sup>912</sup> Indian princes were entitled to grant 'titles' of honour at their discretion to their own subjects, so 'we cannot plead that the Empress is the sole fountain of honour'.<sup>913</sup> However it was 'not desirable that every petty Rajah or Maharajah should be sowing stars and ribands broadcast over India'. A distinction should be made between a 'purely Indian ornament and one which should imitate the insignia of our Western Orders'.<sup>914</sup> A further rebuke was delivered later in the century to the Rajah of the Punjab state of Kapurthala, informing him that personal orders with insignia in any

<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> Northbrook to Salisbury, 15 April 1875, Northbrook Collection, Vol. 12.

<sup>912</sup> Dufferin to Kimberley, 5 June 1885, Dufferin Collection, Vol. 2.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid. See also R/2/66/6 regarding the conferral of a native title by the Nizam on Capt. John Clerk, superintendent of his education. A GoI despatch declared that there was no formal objection to Capt. Clerk receiving the title and form of address when within Hyderabad territories, however such a title should not be used by the Resident or other British officers.

way resembling British decorations to reward officials and subjects would not obtain recognition.<sup>915</sup> In Curzon's view the Rajah of Kapurthala had 'never been the same man since he confabulated with the Czar of Russia and the Emperor of Germany', persisting in calling himself a Maharajah, whereas he was 'only a Raja, and a very small one at that'.<sup>916</sup> Dufferin's successor, Lord Lansdowne, warned the Queen that although the expectation of a honour was always 'a useful stimulus' to a ruler, there was a danger that decorations could do more harm than good, 'The Chiefs watch very closely the manner in which such awards are distributed and are quick to notice the selection of an undeserving member of their class'.<sup>917</sup>

*Durbars* and Star of India ceremonies were not the only areas in which British ideas of order were imposed upon India's royalty. Religious ritual at court and general displays of largesse were, in the hands of political officers, subject to great scrutiny and modification in the interests of accountability and sound bookkeeping.

## ROYAL RELIGION AND LARGESSE

### BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELIGIOUS RITUAL

As early as 1755 officers of the East India Company had begun to move into the Indian ceremonial world in both royal palaces and temples. The Company frequently sent troops and bands to march in processions that accompanied festivals at the temples in

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<sup>915</sup> Capt. H. Daly, Dep. Sec. GoI, FD to Chief Sec. Govt Punjab, 12 April 1901, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXXVI.

<sup>916</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 20 August 1902, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 161. The Rajah was no doubt also inflated by the attention of Queen Victoria, as seen in the footnote earlier in this chapter.

<sup>917</sup> Lansdowne to Queen, 6 November 1893, Lansdowne Collection, Vol. 1.

their newly acquired territories. By the 1840s the issue of British participation in such 'idolatry' reached the floor of Parliament and direct connection to temple ritual was soon severed following Parliamentary pressure.<sup>918</sup> Hinduism in particular tended to be regarded by the British as an elaborate mixture of cultic practices and superstitious beliefs, incoherent at best and frequently debased and licentious.

Although efforts at religious reform were generally abandoned after the Mutiny, there was evidence in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the British wished to distance themselves in general from Indian religious practices. The change in attitude is illustrated by two examples of British attendance at religious festivals held within states. In 1862 the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, Richard Meade, wrote to the Political Agent in Gwalior, Major R. H. Keatinge, making it clear that in British eyes the festival of Dassara was 'not a religious but a military pageant'.<sup>919</sup> Meade conceded that 'as with all such proceedings among natives there is a religious act to complete to consecrate this Festival, but with that we have nothing to do'. He adopted the view that 'If we confine ourselves to the military no objection can be raised in the case of religion'.<sup>920</sup>

A similar example of imperial aloofness was displayed in 1875 when it was reported that, at variance with orders of the Court of Directors of 1841, during the festival of Ganpati British troops were paying military honours to the Gaekwar of Baroda at a close proximity to a tank where the religious ceremony was performed. Moreover, when the procession carrying the idols reached a certain spot, the Resident and the Commanding Officer 'mount elephants and join it, and march with it past the open place where the

<sup>918</sup> Wagthorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 33.

<sup>919</sup> R. J. Meade, AGG CI, to Major R. H. Keatinge, Pol. Agent, Gwalior, 26 September 1862, R/2/750/2.

<sup>920</sup> Ibid.

troops are standing, to within a stone's throw of the tank where the idols are worshipped and immersed'.<sup>921</sup> This Hindu ritual amounted to a 'non-Christian act of worship', even 'more glaring and more painful' when the festival took place on a Sunday and the European officers and troops were kept waiting for several hours to the exclusion of their own religious services. Orders were therefore to be given that the attendance of the British at the procession should cease, although marks of respect could be paid to the Gaekwar on his return to the palace. No troops or military bands should be called out and no salutes fired in honour of the festival.<sup>922</sup> However British curiosity into Hindu practices did not entirely disappear. The Reverend Samuel Mateer of the London Missionary Society wrote in 1883 of the Hindu festival of Dassara in Travancore, which included ritual worship of the sword. According to Mateer, 'A British officer, who seemed not to have carefully considered the moral aspect of his action, informed me that he and many others are accustomed to hand over their swords to the *sepoys* for this festival, with a contribution towards the expenses. Enlightened natives, on the other hand, plead that they only join in this absurd worship through fear of giving offence to their elders'.<sup>923</sup>

Despite the fact that in the latter part of the nineteenth century there was a deliberate attempt to curb princely pretensions, the British nevertheless continued to recognise the potency of significant elements within Indian court tradition. British observers noted the childlike devotion of the Indian people to a paternalistic ruler and their insatiable appetite for the trappings of Oriental monarchy. Theodore Morison, principal of the Moslem college in Aligarh, in inviting his readers 'to enter into the political ideas of the people of India' in 1899 described how

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<sup>921</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 106, 12 August 1875, PSCI, 1865-1911, Vol. 1.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid.

<sup>923</sup> Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (London, 1883), p. 131.



when the glare of day has softened to a golden haze ... the Rajah's elephant, in long housings of velvet and cloth of gold, comes shuffling down the steep declivity ... the women and children rush to the doors of their houses, and all the people gaze upon their prince with an expression of almost ecstatic delight; as the elephant passes, each man puts one hand to the ground and shouts 'Maharaj Ram Ram! .... The most indolent tourist cannot fail to notice the joy upon the people's faces; and when the cavalcade winds home and he realises the intensity of delight which the mere sight of their prince has caused the subjects, he will begin to understand the suitability of monarchy to certain phases of social evolution.<sup>924</sup>

Harcourt Butler, Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, in 1907 was also of the opinion that the 'visible and outward embodiment of Hindu secular power', the *ksatriya* rajah, even when stripped of his kingly powers, retained, along with the Brahmin priest, his 'old world claim and grasp upon the reverence of Hindus'. Although the rajah might be 'over-bearing, often cruel ... [his people] live at his gate, where his horses and cattle and elephants are stalled, and there is a strong bond of common humanity between them. It is the old idea, "You shall be my people and I will be your God"<sup>925</sup>.

The tutor to the Maharajah of Mysore, W. A. Porter, also noted that during the Maharajah's tours of the state:

On the part of villagers, the feeling manifested had something in it of almost religious veneration. Away on the outskirts of the crowd, too far away to receive any notice or recognition, or serve any object except to gratify his feeling of reverence, a poor *ryot* would drop on the ground and this simple act of devotion over would rise and stare with all his eyes .... Any one could see by unmistakable signs that loyalty to the ancient dynasty of Mysore is still a living and powerful feeling.<sup>926</sup>

However, despite the existence of an 'almost religious veneration' among state subjects, British political servants tended to disregard the religious aspect of royal

<sup>924</sup> Theodore Morison, *Imperial Rule in India* (London, 1899), pp 48-9.

<sup>925</sup> Quoted Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 192.

<sup>926</sup> W. A. Porter to J. D. Gordon, Chief Commissioner of Mysore, 15 September 1879, R/2/27/239.

life, although they did not fail to notice its existence.<sup>927</sup> In official records *durbars* were strictly classified as 'political' and religious festivals were called simply 'ceremonials', as in the case of the observance of the Dassara festival in Mysore in which the Resident and other European guests visited the palace to exchange the 'usual salutations' with the Maharajah.<sup>928</sup>

In her study of the south Indian state of Pudukkottai, Joanne Punzo Wagthorne suggests that British participation in princely ritual was to be as disinterested spectators, subscribing to the belief that it was unnecessary to invest such ritual with ontological significance beyond 'representation' or 'symbolisation'. In Wagthorne's view Rajah Ramachandra was even in his court part of a religious system in which the ornamentation and the public display of gods and the king was central to theology. However under British rule during the second half of the nineteenth century the Pudukkottai palace 'could no longer be allowed to function as a ritual centre in any profoundly religious sense',<sup>929</sup> since the assumption of the power of God by mere mortals was blasphemous to the British.<sup>930</sup>

Wagthorne's work suggests an interesting reaction of British officialdom to the 'idolatry' of Indian courts, however it seems likely that the change in the nature of royal religious observance in Pudukkottai and other states was due more to British attempts to turn the ritual framework of the state to the rule of law and order than to British efforts to eradicate the religious aspects of palace ritual. Civil ceremonies, particularly if political officers had a hand in orchestrating them, were quantifiable in fiscal terms to British officials, whereas the somewhat unknown quantity of Indian

<sup>927</sup> Sir William Barton, *The Princes of India* (London, 1934), p.61.

<sup>928</sup> Programme for Dassara, R/2/28/261,

<sup>929</sup> Wagthorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 72.

<sup>930</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 115.

religious practice was not. In Pudukkottai Rajah Ramachandra's earlier requests in the 1850s and 1860s for sums of money centred on rites within the family or a series of rituals that had been part of the history of his own house. However such requests for expensive ceremonial displays with a religious connotation were decreasingly granted, in favour of ceremony with an imperial connection.<sup>931</sup>

The Rajah was allowed Rs. 2,000 in 1870 for new carriage horses to be used for the British Governor's intended visit, whereas in 1867 the ruler's request for Rs. 10,000 for his daughter's puberty rites (a major ceremony in royal Tamil households) had been denied.<sup>932</sup> In 1870 Rs. 20,000 was sanctioned to allow the Rajah to attend a reception for the visiting Duke of Edinburgh, and in 1877 a grand *darbar* was held to honour the assumption of the title of Empress of India by Queen Victoria and the ruler was permitted to purchase a silver throne for the visit of the Prince of Wales. However every year from 1852 to 1884 his budget requests for the Hindu festival of Dassara were disputed by the Political Agent.<sup>933</sup> By 1884, although still in debt, the Rajah had his title restored. The Dewan of Pudukkottai had Rs. 2,500 approved by the Political Agent, and more funds were provided for coconuts, fireworks, shawls and drinking water for the public celebration of this event. Certainly Rs. 2,500 was economical, compared with the Rs. 10,000 the Rajah normally requested for his Hindu family rituals. Nevertheless the request seemed to work primarily because the need was presented in a mode more accountable and 'palatable to the secular requirements of the British'.<sup>934</sup>

On occasions sacred sites within royal palaces were casualties of British measures of

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<sup>931</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 48.

<sup>932</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>933</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>934</sup> *Rajah's Magic Clothes*, p. 49. Also Note on Grand *Darbar* held on 19 May 1884 to celebrate the granting of the title of 'Highness' to the Rajah of Pudukkottai, R/2/879/21.

economy. During A. Sashiah Sastri's years as reforming dewan of Pudukkottai<sup>935</sup> the importance of the Tirugokarnam temple outside the palace walls soon overshadowed the significance of the Dakshinamurti temple, built directly in front of the Rajah's old seat of state. Early records emphasised the importance of the Rajah's *darbar* in the palace, the elaborate Dassara festival and his daily rides to the Dakshinamurti temple to display himself to his people.<sup>936</sup> By the twentieth century the palace worship was much diminished and all the major royal rituals were conjoined to the cycle of the Tirugokarnam temple, not least because in Sastri's view the general squandering of temple funds in the state required closer scrutiny.<sup>937</sup> Similar measures of economy were enforced in Idar under the control of the Bombay Government. The insolvency of the state had been aggravated by huge alienations, chiefly of a religious nature, made by the Maharajah at the end of the nineteenth century. After the ruler's death in 1901 the Political Agent declared that all religious endowments to individuals were to cease, and those conferred on religious institutions were to be 'considered hereafter'. Moreover the temple attached to the palace was to be run as cheaply as possible until 'we can overcome the sentimental objection of the Ranis to close it and provide for the Idol elsewhere'.<sup>938</sup>

In these cases the British condemnation of 'excessive' religious ceremony appeared to be a campaign against general extravagance and a lack of accountability rather than a deliberate attempt to secularise court life. Such a campaign was waged by the British not only over the intricacies of palace ritual, but also over secular displays of princely largesse.

<sup>935</sup> Sastri's efforts at ordering other areas of the royal household are discussed in detail in the chapters on education and royal women.

<sup>936</sup> Wagthorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 73.

<sup>937</sup> Ibid.

<sup>938</sup> Pol. Agent Mahi Kantha to Sec. to Govt. of Bombay, Political Dept. 24 February 1901, R/2/157/178.

In Pudukkottai the Dewan's penchant for rules, regulations, bookkeeping and records backed a full frontal attack on the *huzur* establishment of the palace.<sup>939</sup> Sastri initiated his revisions of the *huzur* establishment as part of the Inam Settlement of 1888. The *inam*, or tax-free right to land, was a particular privilege and entitlement to a special status, a royal relationship. The privileges of *inamdars* included rights to titles, offices and honours, rights to command groups of people, as well as the right to offer particular services to an overlord in a hierarchical political and social system.<sup>940</sup> In other words, the *inam*, as both gift and entitlement, was a basic ingredient of the social and political relations of the 'little kingdom', in which it became one of the principal means for the creation and maintenance of the local structure of privilege. All political action was predicated on understandings and assumptions about the meaning of gifts, honours and emblems, ties of affinity, offers of service and various codes for conduct. These meanings were simultaneously practical, instrumental and cultural. The gifts kings gave to their subjects were often the means by which the latter became not just subjects but subject to their king. While the gifts did not specify service in a contractual form, they were often given after services were performed or with the expectation that future services would be performed.<sup>941</sup>

In the state of Pudukkottai in the mid nineteenth century less than 30 per cent of the cultivated land was either taxed or given out from year to year on a share (*amani*) system. Seventy per cent of the cultivated land was *inam*, or tax-free.<sup>942</sup> Instead of payment for services through unenfranchised gifts of land with rights to its cultivation

<sup>939</sup> The general name given to the complex set of servants who ministered to the rajah within the palace.

<sup>940</sup> Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, pp. 325-33. Also 122-25.

<sup>941</sup> Ibid.

<sup>942</sup> *Hollow Crown*, pp. 117.

tax-free, Sastri substituted wages for all palace personnel and deeded their land to them permanently, but subject to taxation.<sup>943</sup> The Dewan was well aware of the exact names and services performed by each member of the *huzur* establishment, yet 'he chose to officially reduce their importance from palace incumbents to palace servants whose position depended on their personal conduct'.<sup>944</sup> After the Dewan's reforms, the actual purpose and importance of individual employment was glossed over by a vague category, such as 'menial service', which retained the office but demeaned the officeholder. Paid servants were given money to do a job; they were given land that had to be used to make money to pay taxes, a distinction between the traditional Indian concept of land as a sign of power over people and the British concept of land as capital. When the interconnectedness of person to office was broken, the palace itself began to look on paper 'just like a well-regulated part of the general bureaucratic machinery of the state'.<sup>945</sup>

Under British rule measures of economy such as those enforced in the Pudukkottai palace were applied to Indian princes across the board. The rulers were exhorted to behave as responsible agents of the Crown and self-indulgent displays of wealth such as huge marriage expenses were viewed as highly irresponsible. Such indulgence provided a target for India Office criticism. In the case in 1871 of the vast retinue taken by the Maharajah of Kotah to Idar for his marriage to the ruler's sister it was suggested that

when the Chief is accompanied by a European officer as a representative of the Government, advantage should be taken of the circumstance to discourage so far as possible all such inordinate outlay .... It is only by inducing the larger Chiefs to set the example of a wise economy on marriage ceremonies that we can hope to influence the smaller Rulers, and, through them, the people.<sup>946</sup>

<sup>943</sup> Wagthorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 67.

<sup>944</sup> *Raja's Magic Clothes*, p. 68.

<sup>945</sup> Ibid. See also Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, p. 125.

<sup>946</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 132 of 9 November 1871, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 14.

In 1875 the Maharana of Udaipur was 'induced' by his Political Agent to reduce his wedding retinue to travel to Kishengarh to 1,800 men, 500 horses, 30 elephants, 1,000 baggage camels, 50 riding camels and 500 bullocks.<sup>947</sup> Similarly, as the result of correspondence in 1877 between the Ranis of Mysore (whose enlightened ideas on government are considered in the chapter on royal women) and the Government of India, assurance was given that the Maharajah's forthcoming marriage would be celebrated with 'suitable splendour, but with due regard to economy', a measure felt to be of particular importance during a time of famine.<sup>948</sup>

There was official discouragement of the giving of lavish gifts by native princes during the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh in 1869:

It is to be anticipated that the occasion of the first visit ever paid by a Prince of the Blood Royal of England to Her Majesty's Indian possessions will elicit a disposition on the part of the Princes and Chiefs of India to manifest their loyalty to the Queen by costly offerings to Her Majesty's son. It will be the duty of Your Excellency to discourage this tendency through the agency of your several representatives at the Native Courts, and to assure all whom it may concern that it is not the desire of Her Majesty that her esteemed friends should testify their devotion to her by lavish gifts.<sup>949</sup>

Due to famine, ideas of a 'vast assemblage' in honour of the Duke's visit were abandoned and the Home Government later expressed pleasure at the fact that many of the princes had chosen to celebrate the stay of the Prince in India by acts of goodwill to

<sup>947</sup> Pol. Agent, Mewar to Offg. Police Superintendent, Hilly Tracts, Mewar, 27 January 1875, R/2/160/202.

<sup>948</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 72, 15 November 1877, PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol. 3. See also R/2/32/303 and R/2/11/73/1 which deal in minute detail with the expenditure for the Maharajah of Mysore's wedding in June 1900 and the marriages of two of his three sisters. The Government of India originally sanctioned an amount of 3 *lakhs* of rupees from the state for the marriage of the Maharajah, but was adamant when practically double that sum had been spent on the celebrations that no further financial help would be forthcoming. H. R. C. Dobbs, 1<sup>st</sup> Asst. Res. Mysore, to T. R. A. Thumboo Chetty, Dewan Mysore, 13 October 1900, R/2/32/303.

<sup>949</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 230 of October 28 1869, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 12.

their subjects rather than extravagant ceremonies.<sup>950</sup> A visit to Calcutta and Bombay by the Prince of Wales in 1875 was also seen as a good opportunity to instil ideas of economy into princely behaviour. Expenses should be kept 'within the most reasonable limits'.<sup>951</sup> The Viceroy did not intend to hold a ceremonial *darbar* and an exchange of presents at less significant *darbars* would not be made. The Indian rulers might wish to present the Prince of Wales with examples of special manufactures of their states, but he had specified that presents should not exceed 'a reasonable amount' in value.<sup>952</sup>

It was hoped that the princes would in the future express their loyalty to the Crown through good government rather than mutual exchanges of wealth. This line of thought was reinforced when dealing with congratulatory letters received in England from the princes to the Queen and the Prince of Wales on the latter's recovery from serious illness, 'The growing practice of sending such Letters in costly boxes and bags, elaborately ornamented with valuable jewels, is one which, like the sending of expensive presents, it is expedient, as far as possible, henceforth to discourage'.<sup>953</sup> There were undoubtedly motives of self aggrandisement involved in the exchange of gifts in some cases, such as the presentation of a 'handsome gift' by Sir Salar Jung, Dewan of Hyderabad, to the Prince of Wales, for which, a newspaper report stated, the Minister received by telegraph 'the cordial thanks of His Royal Highness'.<sup>954</sup> Lytton declared that such a report was extremely harmful, as 'by a long-standing rule of this Government, Native Princes, and their Ministers, are forbidden to present gifts to members of the Royal Family, or to correspond with them'.<sup>955</sup> This rule was 'salutary and necessary' and the effect of the report on the public of India was

<sup>950</sup> SoS to GoI, No. 81 of 29 June 1871, PCI, 1792-1864, Vol. 14.

<sup>951</sup> C. U Aitchison, Sec. GoI, to AGG Rajputana, 5 August 1875, R/2/167/258.

<sup>952</sup> Ibid.

<sup>953</sup> SoS to GoI, Draft No. 21 of 6 March 1873, PCI, 1792-1874, Vol. 16.

<sup>954</sup> Lytton to Francis Knollys, 15 February 1878, Lytton Collection, Vol. 20.

<sup>955</sup> Ibid.



especially prejudicial, inasmuch as all the gifts hitherto made by Sir Salar Jung to influential personages in England, for the purpose of increasing his own popularity and importance there, appear to have been surreptitiously paid (for) out of the Hyderabad treasury or subtracted from the State regalia, of both of which the British Government is guardian through the Nizam's minority.<sup>956</sup>

However measures of economy did not always produce ideal results. The Resident in Mysore, Sir Donald Robertson, wrote in 1903 that it was essential to avoid any 'sweeping retrenchment' in the Maharajah's Civil List, as this would be undesirable for 'a Chief on the threshold of his career'.<sup>957</sup> The Maharajah currently had living with him his mother, brother and three married sisters, all of whom were accustomed to keeping up a 'certain amount of state', such as participation in ceremonies, and it was difficult for him 'summarily' to curtail their expenditure. However he was attempting to exercise 'a gentle and beneficial restraint' on their 'somewhat extravagant notions'.<sup>958</sup> Over ten *laks* of the total expenditure from the ruler's Civil List was of a permanent nature, such as Rs. 276,000 for stipends to illegitimate branches of his family and 'family adherents', Rs. 422,000 for departmental charges for his establishment, Rs. 162,000 for gifts and donations, including principally religious contributions, and Rs. 150,000 for the upkeep of his residences. In the Resident's opinion this left insufficient provision for 'Purchases, Tours, Extraordinary Charges and Personal Expenditure'.<sup>959</sup> Frequently the Maharajah was asked for contributions which he was forced to turn down, or compelled

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<sup>956</sup> Ibid. The Government of India was particularly sensitive when it came to expenditure during a minority. Ten years later Sir Lepel Griffin, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, commissioned a portrait of himself by Frank Holl for a sum of £1,000 to be paid by the Gwalior state. In the eyes of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, this commission was bound to 'create a most unfavourable impression all over India', particularly since the ruler was a minor and 'a mere Council, who are bound to exercise the strictest economy in the application of their master's money, would certainly commit a very grave blunder if they disbursed a thousand pounds for the portrait of a British officer, no matter how great the services he might have rendered'. Dufferin to Cross, 29 June 1888, Dufferin Collection F130, Vol. 11A.

<sup>957</sup> Sir Donald Robertson, 'Note on Mysore Civil List', 4 September 1903, R/2/28/258.

<sup>958</sup> Ibid.

<sup>959</sup> Ibid.

to contribute sums 'quite inadequate to his position in this part of India'. He now had to 'forego luxuries and conveniences' to which a prince of his position was entitled.<sup>960</sup>

Sir Donald presumed that 'All we are, I imagine, concerned to secure is the prevention of undue extravagance, and the restriction of the privy expenditure within the bounds which the State can afford'.<sup>961</sup> In the light of the fact that the current Civil List had been fixed twelve years ago, since when the income of the state had increased by fifty *lakhs*, he felt that it was reasonable to request an increase, particularly as the Maharajah had already instituted a careful examination of palace debts. It was no doubt desirable to maintain a clear dividing line between state and palace budgets, but not expedient to place the ruler in a position where 'necessities may often operate as a temptation to overstep the limitations thus imposed; and either to incur debts or to seek assistance ... by obtaining relief in an irregular and unworthy manner'.<sup>962</sup> The Resident concluded that:

Probably no Chief of a status approaching that of His Highness is relatively as poor as the Maharajah of Mysore. He has no personal or private estate or income other than the amount allowed for his Civil List, it is incumbent upon him to live in the style of one of the leading Princes of India, and so long as he is not guilty of reckless waste or extravagance we should ... assist him to carry on after the manner public opinion expects from one of his position.<sup>963</sup>

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<sup>960</sup> Ibid. The British also discouraged the display of extravagant decorations when the Maharajah of Mysore went on tour in his state, asking for more flowers and 'less cloth and tinsel'. *Ryots* who found it hard to refuse demands for money or supplies in the name of the Maharajah were involved in expenditure they could ill afford and reimbursement by officials in charge of the organisation was invariably late. Sir Donald Robertson, Res. Mysore to Dewan of Mysore, 4 May 1901, R/2/13/85.

<sup>961</sup> Sir Donald Robertson, 'Note on Mysore Civil List', 4 September 1903, R/2/28/258.

<sup>962</sup> Ibid.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid. Under Curzon measures of frugality were also imposed upon political officers, much to their indignation. R. C. Carr, Acting Resident in Travancore and Cochin, in 1906 wrote to the Government of Madras, forcibly arguing that 'The Resident has for more than a century represented the British power to the people in these two States. In the course of years the Establishment has grown around him, and if the shears are put in too ruthlessly, the Resident's position in the eyes of the Chiefs and of the people must be lowered'. 'Entertainments', such as weekly garden parties, were valuable 'from a political point of view'. The Resident was duty bound to make his parties attractive and could not hope to do so without a large staff of servants. R. C. Carr, Acting Res. Travancore and Cochin to M. Hammick, Chief Sec. Govt. Madras, Pol. Dept. 2 May 1906, R/2/893/293. .

The Resident's pleas succeeded in procuring an increase of two *lakhs* in the Maharajah's Civil List from the Government of India, on the understanding that no further requests would be considered for several years. However palace expenditure rose from Rs. 451,000 in 1903 to Rs. 642, 000 in 1909 on items such as the Palace Family Goddess, the *Zenana*, the Insignia Department, the Cattle Department, the Elephant Department, the Zoological Gardens and the Engine Department. Miraculously the Maharajah achieved a further four *lakhs* from the Government of India in 1910.<sup>964</sup>

To preserve their royal reputation for distribution rulers tended to make magnanimous gestures during state festivities, at times incorporating events with an imperial connection to gain the approval of the paramount power. An account of the celebrations in Mysore for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in June 1897 described events such as the 'feeding and clothing of the poor of all classes and inmates of charitable institutions', sports and entertainments for children of public and private schools, a display of fireworks in Cubbon Park, the illumination of public offices and the Museum, and a display of massed bands. In addition the release of 79 prisoners and the remission of sentences for 315 other detainees were hailed as acts of 'grace and clemency'.<sup>965</sup> However the Jubilee was also seen as an ideal occasion for the laying of the foundation stone of the Victoria Hospital in Bangalore. An initial sum of Rs. 5,000 was sanctioned from the state and subsequent grants of Rs. 3,000

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<sup>964</sup> Extract from note by Maharajah's Private Secretary, 7 July 1910, R/2/32/303. Another item of expense in the palace expenditure was no doubt the exotic garden. The Mysore *darbar* twenty years earlier had expressed much interest in obtaining a European head gardener from England and the Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew was asked to select and send out a suitable person. It was considered that 'To induce a taste for gardening with artistic grouping and colouring of plants and their sweet perfume should be as much an object of State care as technical schools and the like'. Extract from note by Mr. Ricketts, 19 September 1890, attached to No. 48, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box X.

<sup>965</sup> Account of Diamond Jubilee celebrations Mysore 1897, R/2/8/63.

from Provincial Funds and Rs. 2,000 from City Municipal Funds were forthcoming.<sup>966</sup>

Even when not associated with imperial celebrations such as the Diamond Jubilee, westernised projects achieved a higher profile in princely benefaction in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In 1881 a letter from the Resident in Mysore reported that as well as giving Rs. 5,000 to the Datavya Bharata Kavyalaya in Calcutta, the Maharajah had donated Rs. 1,000 to the Town Hall in Madras as an 'act of private liberality'.<sup>967</sup> Similarly during a visit in 1886 to Calcutta to see the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, the Begam of Bhopal subscribed to several institutions: Rs. 10,000 was given to the Lady Dufferin Fund for women's hospitals, Rs. 1,500 to the Bible Fund, and Rs. 2,000 to the Islamia Madrissa, as well as a scholarship of Rs. 6,000 to enable a student to study either Law or Medicine in England for three years.<sup>968</sup> A memorial to 'confer a permanent benefit on the people of Bhopal' marked the 1887 Golden Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria in the form of a walkway around the Shahjahanabad Lake, to be called the Kaiser Embankment.<sup>969</sup>

Following Queen Victoria's death, the establishment of the Victoria Memorial Fund to erect a building on the Calcutta Maidan was greeted with much enthusiasm by Indian royalty. By 1903 contributions had reached a total of nearly fifty *lakhs* of rupees. The Maharajah of Mysore offered one *lakh* as a 'preliminary donation',<sup>970</sup> and, following the example of other princes such as Scindia of Gwalior, agreed later

<sup>966</sup> Account of Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Mysore, Appendix B, 22 June 1897, R/2/8/63.

<sup>967</sup> Sir James Gordon, Res. Mysore to Maharajah of Mysore, 20 July 1881, R/2/32/303.

<sup>968</sup> Sultan Jehan, *Account*, Vol. I. pp. 131, 133.

<sup>969</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>970</sup> Walter Lawrence, Private Sec. to Viceroy, to Sir Donald Robertson, Res. Mysore, 19 March 1903, R/2/30/286.

to subscribe a further one and a half *lakhs* when there was a shortfall in funds.<sup>971</sup> Designed by William Emerson, with its vast size, tessellated marble paving, soaring domes and Renaissance styling, a building such as the Victoria Memorial went far towards reassuring Britain's princely allies that they were contributing to an empire which was not a 'moribund organism' but still in its youth with 'the vitality of an unexhausted purpose'.<sup>972</sup>

However princely contributions to the imperial cause were not confined to charitable funds and architectural projects. Having guaranteed the defence of Indian rulers by treaty in the early nineteenth century, thereby removing the principal *raison d'etre* of state armies, the British in the last decades of the century made a concerted effort to find a profitable means of satisfying the traditional princely requirement for military display. Writing to the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, in 1885, the Secretary of State, Lord Randolph Churchill, envisaged a total transformation of the armies of the states in which they would be

incorporated effectually in the military resources of India, each state maintaining a certain military quota calculated upon its population and revenue, which should be efficient as our own native troops in equipment, skill, and discipline, and frequently inspected by British officers and brigaded with British troops. This would lead to a tremendous reduction in point of numbers of the Native armies, but the Princes would be so gratified by the superior efficiency and responsibility that I do not think they would object. Here you might find your outlet for native military aspirations which our policy since the Mutiny has unduly, I think, repressed.<sup>973</sup>

In 1887 the Government of India first introduced its Imperial Service Troops scheme. Under the scheme, Indian princes were invited to designate already existing or recently organised units of their armies to be trained and equipped by the British to the levels of military efficiency of comparable units in the Indian Army. British officers were

<sup>971</sup> Telegram from Res. to Lawrence, 24 April 1903, R/2/30/286.

<sup>972</sup> Curzon, speech upon receiving the Freedom of the City of London, 20 July 1904, quoted Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 168.

<sup>973</sup> Churchill to Dufferin, 22 September 1885, Dufferin and Ava Collection, IOR Neg. 4352.

assigned to these imperial service troop units for the purposes of 'advising, superintending and instructing' them in the ways of modern armies, but not to command them.<sup>974</sup> Imperial Service units were not contingents of the peacetime Indian army. Rather, they were elite corps of their separate state armies; available for imperial service in times of need, but ordinarily commanded by their own Indian officers and under the political control of their princes. Lord Roberts, Commander in Chief of the Indian Army, and a leading proponent of the scheme was of the opinion that, because they were isolated in their states and scattered over the map of India, imperial service units were themselves unlikely to be the cause of serious disturbance. He remained

convinced that our wisest policy ... is to let the chiefs see that we are prepared to trust them' and congratulated the government 'at having obtained a material addition to its available military forces at a comparatively insignificant cost, and on having at the same time secured ... important political advantages.'<sup>975</sup>

This new opportunity for a display of princely largesse immediately met with success. In 1888 offers of help were received from rulers of states such as Hyderabad, Jaipur and Kashmir. Although in the eyes of the Government of India it was deemed not 'altogether desirable or proper to accept grants of money from states, some of which can ill afford to make them', it appeared to be possible to train and equip portions of states' armies for use in time of war, starting with Kashmir and the Punjab, then 'useful material' in Rajputana, to protect and defend the passes leading from Afghanistan to India.<sup>976</sup> A scheme was put forward in 1889 to train individual, state-based troops to add 25,000 men to the effective force of the empire and by 1892 more than 15,000 had been recruited. It was agreed that the states ought to be associated with the population of British India for the defence of the country, as

<sup>974</sup> Quoted Stern, *Cat and Lion*, pp. 199

<sup>975</sup> Quoted *Cat and Lion*, p. 200.

<sup>976</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 206, 24 November 1888, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box IX.

No part of India has gained more from the establishment of English supremacy than the territories of the Native Chiefs. Protected from external attack and aided whenever necessity arises in the suppression of internal disorder, the Native States have become wealthy and prosperous in a very remarkable degree.<sup>977</sup>

Regiments raised in the states were to be 'State troops proper', not recruited outside the state. The rulers themselves would greatly prefer this arrangement, which would enable them to feel a legitimate interest and pride in their armies. Moreover in the case of a serious disturbance within India, 'forces of this nature would be more under the control of their rulers and less likely to be influenced by any external disaffection, than forces of a less distinct and isolated character'.<sup>978</sup> The scheme would provide an opening for the sons of many great Indian families 'who have at present no career before them, and whose lives are passed in idleness and often in discontent'.<sup>979</sup>

Unfortunately to a significant number of princes the appeal of a life 'passed in idleness' proved infinitely more attractive than the commitment involved in sustaining a military force of sufficient weight to support the paramount power. Other less worthy substitutes for traditional largesse were luxuries emulating the lifestyle of affluent westerners. By the start of the twentieth century the Rajah of Pudukkottai no longer spent money on palanquins, jewels, or extravagant religious ceremonies, but on items of western luxury. His absenteeism had left too much uncontrolled authority in the hands of the Dewan, he was unduly extravagant and inclined to ignore the Political Agent. Moreover it was feared that in establishing the proposed revenue settlement of the state the ruler might 'be tempted to aim at a high assessment in the hopes of a larger personal allowance'.<sup>980</sup>

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<sup>977</sup> GoI to SoS, No. 41, 13 March 1889, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box X.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid.

<sup>979</sup> Ibid.

<sup>980</sup> Chief Sec. Govt. Madras to Sec. GoI, FD, 6 August 1897, R/2/892/271.

In discussing the Privy Purse expenditure of the Rajah in 1901 it was agreed by the Government of India that the amount at his disposal, one *lakh* of rupees, was intended to cover all tour charges in India other than State tours, his 'table' charges, charges for his personal establishment including the pay of a European Private Secretary, and private stable charges. He was expected to live within his income, however he was suspected of debiting against the state, 'small items of personal expense which he ought to provide for from the Privy Purse'.<sup>981</sup> Five years later matters had not improved. It was agreed that the Rajah was not 'fully alive to the impropriety of spending State funds on private objects i.e. motor cars, carriages and horses, European and tours other than State visits i.e. the expense of meeting H. H. the Prince of Wales at Madras [at] no less than Rs. 25,000'.<sup>982</sup> Although the ruler kept himself 'remarkably free from intrigue' it was a regrettable fact that he did not spend enough time in Pudukkottai to become involved in state affairs.<sup>983</sup> By 1917 neither His Highness's subjects nor the British were prepared to welcome him and he married an Australian beauty, Molly Fink, making it clear that he wished to abdicate the throne.

Curzon was particularly anxious to make his princely charges accountable when major expenditure occurred which might affect states' subjects. Referring to a request from the Maharajah of Cooch Behar for £40,000 to cover a foreign trip, the Viceroy aired his

<sup>981</sup> G. Stokes, Chief Sec. Pol. Dept. Govt. Madras, to Sec. GoI, FD, 4 June 1901, R/2/893/284.

<sup>982</sup> The Hon. H. Bradley, Acting Chief Sec. Govt. Madras to Sir Louis Dane, Sec. GoI, Foreign Dept., 7 December 1906, R/1/1/344. Other princes were guilty of subscribing lavishly to a western lifestyle. An account sheet for the Maharajah of Mysore itemising palace expenditure for 1883-4 includes Rs. 31,294 for chandeliers and furniture from Osler and Co. in Calcutta, Rs. 7,908 on a marble bust of His Highness and Rs. 5,943 for a 'Fancy Ball' at Bangalore. Memorandum from K. Sheshadri Iyer, Dewan, to Sir Oliver St. John, Res. Mysore, Appendix A, 25 June 1890, R/2/28/250. The Maharajah of Patiala was also a great source of disappointment to the British in his 'liberality'. Memorandum from C. L. Tupper, Chief Sec. Govt. Punjab, to Sec. GoI, FD, 16 July 1892, R/1/1/122.

<sup>983</sup> Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, p. 391. L/PS/10/90 is an extensive file devoted entirely to tracking down the Rajah as he traversed Europe. In 1900 Curzon turned down an application for him to leave India so soon after his last travels, declaring that, 'If this is the way we treat these young sprigs, how can we possibly expect them to bear good fruit? There are some shocking loose fish among the Indian princes as it is. I do not want to breed any more during my time'. Curzon to Sir Arthur Godley, 4 July 1900, Curzon Collection, F111, Vol. 158.



suspicion that the money for 'this unnecessary and ill-advised visit to London ' was either 'taken from the pockets of the peasants in Kuch Behar or filched from the allowance which the Maharajah undertook to set apart for the future maintenance of his children'.<sup>984</sup> The Government of India should stop rulers 'gallivanting' over Europe with the disastrous financial consequences that 'commonly ensue'.<sup>985</sup> Curzon's predecessor, Lord Elgin, had in 1896 been informed by the Secretary of State for India of the need to keep the Maharajah out of London jewellery shops due to 'the ease with which women can get anything out of him'. With a son at Eton he had a 'plausible excuse' for travel, however the Secretary of State observed that such 'intermingling ... was not dissociated from financial transactions'.<sup>986</sup>

To combat the absenteeism of rulers of the Maharajah's ilk the Viceroy issued a circular in 1900, demanding that applications for princely foreign travel be transmitted to the Government of India some time before departure. Local Governments should not sanction visits in advance, either conditionally or absolutely. The Viceroy's Council was to be left with an 'unfettered discretion to comply or refuse'.<sup>987</sup> The circular stated that, in return for British protection, rulers should devote their energies not 'to the pursuit of pleasure, nor the cultivation of absentee interests or amusements', but to the welfare of their own subjects and the administration of their states.<sup>988</sup> Trips abroad could lead to 'a widening of the range of knowledge of an intelligent ruler', but such cases were in the minority. 'Habits of restless and extravagance' were more likely to be 'inculcated in the Oriental mind' by the sudden change of environment, and by the temptations of European society, than 'incentives to duty or aspirations for reform'.<sup>989</sup> As a result the

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<sup>984</sup> Curzon to Hamilton, 28 May 1903, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 162.

<sup>985</sup> Ibid.

<sup>986</sup> SoS to Viceroy, 17 July 1896, Elgin Collection, Vol. 14.

<sup>987</sup> Curzon circular 20 July 1900 re foreign travel of princes, PSCI, 1875-1911, Box XXXIII.

<sup>988</sup> Ibid.

<sup>989</sup> Ibid.

outcome of foreign tours was more often a collection of expensive furniture in the palace and of 'questionable proclivities' in the mind of the returned traveller, than an increase in his capacity for public or political service'.<sup>990</sup> However the Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, while agreeing that many of the princes were 'children in character and determination', felt that it was unwise to reveal to the entire world the extent of British control over them. The circular had apparently given 'deep offence' in certain quarters and the Queen and Royal Family were 'somewhat excited'.<sup>991</sup>

As, among other western influences, foreign travel changed the princely lifestyle, Edward Haynes notes the changes in architectural development that might be equated to stages in the changing pattern of ritual display as princes moved under the umbrella of imperial rule.<sup>992</sup> The first stage consisted of the hilltop fortress which could serve as a military base, a place of refuge and the earliest ceremonial focus. Forts were usually simple and Spartan and frequently lay in fairly isolated areas. The ceremonial quarters would often sport mural paintings of the rajah seated in a formal *darbar*, surrounded by subordinate kinsmen, providing a vital form of advertising for the current administration. The second location was a ceremonial and symbolic 'feudal fort'; the earlier defensive fort was either transformed into a more luxurious palace or replaced by a new structure, 'closer to the realms of taxable wealth than plunderable wealth'.<sup>993</sup> While the fort might have a reserve military function it was becoming predominantly an arena for ceremonial interaction with the ruler's troublesome kinsmen, a place where they could be awed by

<sup>990</sup> Ibid. Curzon's vitriol reached greater heights when the Gaekwar complained that he had not been received in England with as much distinction as the Khedive of Egypt, 'The theory at home is that an enlightened Prince is taking a tour for the improvement of his own mind and the ultimate edification of his devoted and delighted subjects'. In fact 'what he goes for is to have his interviews with European royalty, to buy a number of expensive gew-gaws for his palace, to accumulate a great stock of rifles and ammunition, and to have a costly flutter with the *demi-monde* of the Boulevards or of Leicester Square'. Curzon to Hamilton, 18 July 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 158.

<sup>991</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 20 September 1900, Curzon Collection F111, Vol. 159.

<sup>992</sup> Haynes 'Rajput Ceremonial Interactions', p. 476.

<sup>993</sup> Ibid.

private artistic displays of music, miniature painting, dance and quasi-religious court ceremony.<sup>994</sup> The third stage was the building of a new city palace. As conditions in the state stabilised and as the ruler came to receive recognition from a powerful external power, whether Mogul or British, having survived challenges to his authority and succession, the general pacification of the country allowed the construction of an urban palace in the city which had now grown up at the foot of the hill on which the ceremonial fort had been built. The palace became administrative rather than military in nature, following the British guarantee to protect the ruler from attack by kinsmen, and was used to receive representatives of the paramount power.<sup>995</sup>

The final stage consisted of the luxury palace. Ceremonial demands on the ruler had moved from formal *darbar* to luxuriant garden party, and unhealthy and cramped conditions were seen as less than desirable by college-educated young chiefs. A new palace was needed on the outskirts of the state's capital city. In Haynes's somewhat cynical view, this structure, 'representing the late phase of princely Indo-Saracenic decadence, also represents the final collapse of the state system'.<sup>996</sup> In his opinion the structures were better prepared for their ultimate fate, to serve as hotels for foreign tourists and a residence for the 'deposed and culturally encapsulated ruler' than a venue for ceremonial behaviour such as the *darbar* which had supported and sustained an individual state administration.<sup>997</sup>

Into this last category of inordinate excess can be found the Jai Vilas Palace, built at great speed by Jayaji Rao, Maharajah of Gwalior, between 1872 and 1874 to

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<sup>994</sup> Ibid.

<sup>995</sup> Ibid.

<sup>996</sup> Ibid.

<sup>997</sup> Ibid.

accommodate the Prince of Wales,<sup>998</sup> the Amba Vilas Palace in Mysore, constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century,<sup>999</sup> and the Laxmi Vilas Palace built by Sayajirao, Maharajah of Baroda, designed by Charles Mant and completed in 1890 at a cost of about £180,000.<sup>1000</sup> Possibly because the building of such edifices may have fallen under the category of Public Works or because, as has been suggested in the chapter on marriage, the British welcomed a move towards a more open palace construction, signifying a more accessible princely lifestyle, there is no record in official files that these highly prominent examples of conspicuous consumption provoked the anticipated ire of the budget conscious officers of the Government of India.

## CONCLUSION

Subject to British control during the latter half of the nineteenth century Indian rulers were subject to major changes in ceremonial practice. In the precolonial period a person was ranked, 'not according to an absolute scale, but in relation to the changing assets and achievements of others in a specific ritual context'.<sup>1001</sup> Under British rule an Indian ruler, safe on his *gadi* unless found guilty of gross misrule, no longer had a requirement to influence his kinsmen or rivals and was unable to consort with his fellow rulers except under extraordinary circumstances such as Imperial Assemblages. Ceremonies which had been sufficiently fluid to display pomp and wealth to influence individual audiences and sufficiently adaptable to change the parameters of local politics were now detailed in rigid format in Government of India files. *Durbars*,

<sup>998</sup> Maharajah of Baroda and Virginia Fass, *The Palaces of India* (London, 1980), p. 112.

<sup>999</sup> *Palaces of India*, p. 146.

<sup>1000</sup> *Palaces of India*, p. 156. Appropriately enough the Laxmi Vilas was named the White Elephant Palace. E. St. C. Weeden, *A Year with the Gaekwar of Baroda* (London, 1912), p. 81.

<sup>1001</sup> Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*, p.17.

traditionally arenas for a princely exhibition of authority, evolved into meetings between British officials and individual princes, in which the Indian rulers deferred to the paramount power.

Increasingly, as the century progressed, the Indian ruler was not only bound by the strictures of a rigid hierarchical system within which he owed allegiance to the British monarch and was frequently consigned to a position of equality with British officials, but also constrained by the need to subscribe to the tyranny of imperial bookkeeping and measures of economy. Religious ceremony and princely largesse of a lavish nature was firmly discouraged in an attempt to instil methods of accountability into palace procedure. A number of Indian princes contributed substantial amounts to both traditional and westernised charitable projects and found an outlet for the need for military display in the Imperial Service Troops scheme. However others, deprived of the opportunity to reveal their abundance in ceremonial ritual, channelled a need for ostentatious exhibition into foreign travel, the accumulation of western luxuries and the construction of inordinately extravagant modern buildings.

The change in ceremonial practice was not without its critics. In 1909 an impassioned letter from the Maharajah of Bikaner to the Viceroy, Lord Minto, raised the question of 'restoring the *Izzat* and position of the Chiefs to their former glory' through the 'honours and courtesies' extended to ruling princes on official occasions. The Maharajah stressed that 'our dignity and importance has gradually diminished to some extent and ... we do not occupy the same position as we did some fifty years ago'.<sup>1002</sup> Some procedures had been allowed 'to drift away from the desirable and original line' and, since 'splendour and ceremonials' were special features of the East, 'the importance of a person is gauged

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<sup>1002</sup> Maharajah of Bikaner to Viceroy, 29 December 1909, R/2/752/36.

by the populace according to the compliments paid to him'.<sup>1003</sup> In Minto the Maharajah was to find a sympathetic ear. Following a policy of *laissez-faire* toward the Indian states, the Viceroy conveyed to the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana that he wished to impress 'most forcibly on all Political Officers the great importance of maintaining ceremonials in accordance with local custom and of doing nothing to lower the position of loyal Ruling Chiefs in the eyes of their subjects'.<sup>1004</sup> However for most Indian rulers the 'desirable and original line' of royal ritual had already been irretrievably lost by the start of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1003</sup> Ibid. Prestige could also be lost through the arrival of imperial innovations in a ruler's state. In 1895 considerable delay occurred in the construction of a railway line in Jodhpur, as the Maharajah regarded the withdrawal of jurisdiction over railway property as a 'diminution of 'izzat' and therefore refused to find the necessary funds. Col. G. H. Trevor, AGG Rajputana, to W. J. Cuninghame, Sec. GoI, FD, 6 February 1895, R/1/1/139.

<sup>1004</sup> S. H. Butler, Sec. GoI, FD to E. G. Colvin, AGG Rajputana, and Lt. Col. H. Daly, AGG CI, 21 April 1910, R/2/752/36.

## CONCLUSION

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In October 1906 the Governor of Bombay, Lord Lamington, urged the new Viceroy, Lord Minto, to 'initiate a policy of relieving them [the princes] from so much Government supervision and interference'.<sup>1005</sup> Minto needed little encouragement, resenting the aggressive and dictatorial behaviour of his predecessor, Lord Curzon, towards the states. A year later he informed John Morley, the Secretary of State, that Scindia of Gwalior had declared, 'the tyranny of Curzon's rule towards the Native Chiefs had been so unbearable that nothing would have induced them to put up with it and that they would have united together without regard to religion or caste to throw it off'.<sup>1006</sup> With the appointment of Harcourt Butler at the head of the Foreign Department in 1908,<sup>1007</sup> Curzon's ideas were officially discarded and replaced by a policy of non-interference in states affairs.

Various factors had led to the adoption of such a policy. It had been deemed necessary to reduce the demands made of the overworked and understaffed Foreign Department and, after much open resentment on the part of the rulers, to relieve them of the constant overseeing of their private affairs, examples of which are evident in the chapters on education, marriage and hierarchy and ritual. In addition the Viceroy believed strongly that, given the home government's determination to introduce constitutional reforms in

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<sup>1005</sup> Lamington to Minto 9 October 1906, Minto Collection no 12765, quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 36.

<sup>1006</sup> Minto to Morley, 12 September 1907, Morley Collection, No. 12.

<sup>1007</sup> Butler's appointment was surrounded by controversy. The new Foreign Secretary had entered the Indian Civil Service in 1888 and had reached the position of Deputy Commissioner at Lucknow in the United Provinces before taking charge of the Department. He qualified for the position neither on the basis of his seniority nor his previous experience in the states or on the frontier. His appointment took many senior political officers on active service completely by surprise and they greeted it with open hostility.

the provinces, in order to appease critics of the Raj he was morally bound to grant a corresponding concession to its most faithful allies. Minto and Butler were persuaded by an argument put forward by the Gaekwar in 1909<sup>1008</sup> that 'a looser leash on the princes would improve, rather than retard, the standard of their administrations'.<sup>1009</sup> Above all, however, the policy was designed to ensure that the princes would act to support the British position in India.

Confronted with the rise of extreme nationalism following Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905, Minto and Butler reached the conclusion that the Indian rulers could be both 'capable and willing alliance partners'. At the beginning of the discussions which led to the Indian Councils Act of 1909, Minto suggested that a Council of Princes might serve as a possible counterpoise to the Indian National Congress, the vehicle for the nationalist movement. John Morley, the Secretary of State, doubted the wisdom of the suggestion on the grounds that 'if the princes were allowed to combine and confer they might conceivably use the opportunity to unite against the Government'.<sup>1010</sup> However, although Minto failed to secure constitutional recognition for the princes, he was determined that his viceroyalty would not leave them empty handed.<sup>1011</sup> In a speech at Udaipur in November 1909 he unveiled the principles of the new non-interference policy, declaring:

I have always been opposed to anything like pressure on *Darbars* with a view to introducing British methods of administration, - I have preferred that reforms should emanate from the *Darbars* themselves, and grow up in harmony with the traditions of the State. It is easy to overestimate the value of administrative efficiency - it is not the only object to aim at, though the encouragement of it must be attractive to keen and able Political Officers, and it is not unnatural that the temptation to further it should for example appeal strongly to those who are

<sup>1008</sup> Speech by Gaekwar of Baroda at viceregal reception, Baroda, 15 November 1909. Mary, Countess of Minto, *India, Minto and Morley 1905-10* (London, 1934), p. 351.

<sup>1009</sup> Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 30.

<sup>1010</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 195.

<sup>1011</sup> *Ibid.*



temporarily in charge of the administration of State during a minority, whether they are in sole charge or associated with a State Council. Their position is a difficult one – it is one of peculiar trust – and though abuses and corruption must of course as far as possible be corrected, I cannot but think that Political Officers will do wisely to accept the general system of administration to which the Chief and his people have been accustomed. The methods sanctioned by tradition in States are usually well adapted to the needs and relations of the ruler and his people. The loyalty of the latter to the former is generally a personal loyalty, which administrative efficiency, if carried out on lines unsuited to local conditions, would lessen or impair.<sup>1012</sup>

The Udaipur speech makes it clear that Minto was well aware of the fact that, as has been set out in this thesis, ‘the value of administrative efficiency’ by which ‘keen and able Political Officers’ set such store, had frequently undermined the traditional basis of rule in the Indian states, at times totally disregarding the ‘needs and relations’ of the ruler and thereby undermining his status vis-à-vis his subjects. The precise details of the new policy were formulated by Butler in the Political Department Manual. In sharp contrast to the policy of Curzon, the political officer was now given strict instructions that he was not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the princes unless misrule was rampant. Paragraph six of the Introduction to the Manual insisted that:

He should leave well alone; the best work of a Political Officer is often what he has left undone .... Having guaranteed internal independence to the states, and having undertaken their protection against external aggression, the Imperial Government have assumed some responsibility for the maintenance of order and fairly efficient government of them and cannot consent to being an indirect instrument of oppression. The degree of misrule which will call for interference is a question for decision on the merits in each case. It may be stated generally that, unless misrule reaches a pitch which violates the elementary laws of civilisation, the Imperial Government will usually prefer to take no overt measures for enforcing reform; and in any case, the attempt to reform should, so long as is possible, be confined to personal suasion.<sup>1013</sup>

The reappraisal of government policy towards the states during Minto’s viceroyalty was accompanied by an equally significant development among the princely ranks. A

<sup>1012</sup> Minto, Speeches, 1905-10, (1911) pp. 323-6, quoted C. H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858-1947: Select Documents* (London 1962), p. 426.

<sup>1013</sup> GoI Introduction to the Manual of Instructions to Officers of the Political Dept. 1909, R/2/18/117.

new type of prince, 'anglicised in outlook and social habits' began to emerge. Curzon's administration had done much to stimulate this development. In attempting to foster a new sense of responsibility among the princes, Curzon was largely responsible for 'dismantling the traditional barriers of isolation'<sup>1014</sup> which had prevented a prince from looking beyond the narrow confines of his own state. As has been discussed in different chapters of this thesis British influence, particularly in the area of education, had produced westernised princes such as Jey Singh, Maharajah of Alwar and Ganga Singh, Maharajah of Bikaner, both products of Mayo College. However these men were not representative of the princely order as a whole and the transition was not always wholly successful.<sup>1015</sup> A prince could become both physically and culturally estranged from his subjects, endangering the traditional respect for authority which was still seen to validate the existence of the princely regimes.

Such estrangement was not inevitable. In a few isolated cases, as Manu Bhagavan has suggested, 'by bridging the gap between the colonial and the colonized', princes and their bureaucracies could use 'modern' ideas successfully to provide model examples of states. Wearing one hat, they could claim to be loyal representatives of the empire and, wearing the other, the last line of defence protecting the Indian people from the 'full onslaught of English evil'.<sup>1016</sup> The packages of reforms pursued by the administrations of Krishnaraja Wadiar of Mysore and Sayajirao, Gaekwar of Baroda during the first three decades of the twentieth century were warmly received by their people, who expressed their general contentment by rejecting frequent calls for

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<sup>1014</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 46. Ironically, having removed 'the traditional barriers of isolation', Curzon's conception of a prince was a ruler who would remain in his state and submit to a superior British will.

<sup>1015</sup> See Ashton, *British Policy*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>1016</sup> Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*, p. 176.

agitation against their governments.<sup>1017</sup> However for many princes less ambitious in their outlook the 'methods sanctioned by tradition' to which Minto referred at Udaipur were no longer an option either in internal state government or palace life. In December 1915 Scindia, Maharajah of Gwalior, described the irreversible situation created by the loss of his traditional role, informing the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, that although political officers had used minority periods to remove long-standing abuses and improve the finances of the states, their methods had 'shaken the adherence of the people to their traditional customs and ways'. He considered that minorities had worked to alter the ties of personal loyalty and obedience between the subjects and their prince when the latter entered upon his inheritance.<sup>1018</sup>

As the possibility for a political partnership increased, relations between the British and the princes came to be characterised more by consultation than control of subordinate by superior, particularly after the establishment of the Chamber of Princes in 1921, which allowed rulers direct access to the Delhi authorities. Pre-eminent among those rulers who played a prominent role in institutions such as the Chamber of Princes and the Committee of Ministers were Ganga Singh of Bikaner, Udaibhan Singh of Dholpur, Dijiujaysinhji of Nawanagar, Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, Sultan Jahan Begam and Nawab Hamidullah of Bhopal. However it must be stressed that the dazzling status achieved by these rulers on the all-India stage was unable to hide the fact that in most cases in their own states the traditional power base of the princely rank had been severely diminished by the lack of British support during the last decades of the previous century. Ian Copland suggests that the princes failed to maximise their domestic political advantages in advance of the British departure from India in 1947 by 'formally incorporating elite sections of their own people, particularly the growing commercial and

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<sup>1017</sup> Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*, p. 179.

<sup>1018</sup> Quoted Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 48.

professional middle class, into the local darbari system'.<sup>1019</sup> The insistence placed by British officials on the employment of 'highly credentialled' outsiders in the form of dewans and senior bureaucrats, increasingly playing a more significant role in the state administration than a prince himself, might not have been in the long term a good policy. As foreigners they were often unpopular with the people and 'as mercenaries their primary loyalty was to their paymasters'.<sup>1020</sup> The rulers might have fared better in the denouement of 1947-8 if they had opted for less distinguished but more patriotic 'servants with roots in the regions'.<sup>1021</sup>

James Manor views the implementation of a *laissez-faire* policy towards the states as the major factor determining the downfall of the princes.<sup>1022</sup> Other historians agree that the commitment by Minto to the 'minimum of interference' from the imperial government went far towards preventing the introduction of internal reforms within the states and, unreformed, they stood little chance of positive participation in a new democratic India. Barbara Ramusack states that the adoption of an official *laissez-faire* policy towards the states in 1909 marked a point beyond which virtually nothing was done to secure the political future of the rulers.<sup>1023</sup> Stephen Ashton considers that the introduction of the policy was a 'landmark', and the principles underlying it stood in marked contrast to the principles underlying the policies pursued during the nineteenth century,<sup>1024</sup> and Ian Copland expresses the view that during the thirty years from 1909 to 1939 the British 'did not do nearly enough to ready their clients for the time when they would have to

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<sup>1019</sup> Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 277.

<sup>1020</sup> *Princes of India*, p. 7.

<sup>1021</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1022</sup> James Manor, 'The Demise of the Princely Order: A Reassessment' in Jeffrey, ed., *People, Princes*, p. 307-8.

<sup>1023</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of a Patron-Client System, 1914-1939* (Columbus, 1978), pp. 233-235.

<sup>1024</sup> Ashton, *British Policy*, p. 193.

stand on their own feet, without the support of imperial patronage'.<sup>1025</sup> Yet this thesis makes it clear that during the latter part of the nineteenth century, although considerable effort was expended by the British to regulate palace life and, by exposing young heirs to the *gadi* to western liberal thought, to lay the groundwork for a 'modern monarchy', a British *laissez-faire* approach to the princes already existed when it came to matters of government. Adult rulers were to a great extent left to their own devices by the paramount power. Reforms could 'emanate from the *Darbars* themselves', but such reforms tended to 'emanate' from an administration supervised by a competent *dewan* and his bureaucracy, not an Indian prince.

During the period the British had high hopes that the stereotype of the 'Oriental despot' could be erased, replacing it by the model of a ruler embodying the virtues of rectitude and clean living, and overseeing a fiscally circumspect government intent upon the improvement of the moral and social welfare of its people. There was little delicacy on the part of British officials when it came to undermining traditional princely practice. For political officers in particular the ends were seen to justify the means in a rigorous determination to produce order where there was chaos. As demonstrated below, such determination is evident in every stage of the princely life cycle. However in the most important stage for the ruler, the one in which he was intended to rule, the British pursuit of order undoubtedly reduced the traditional authority of an Indian prince to the greatest extent without providing him with the support to recreate his role in a modern mould.

Despite the granting of adoption *sanads* by Canning in an effort to maintain princely loyalty, the British still retained the ultimate sanction of royal successions in the Indian states. If a prospective heir was deemed 'unfit to rule' for any reason, or if a

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<sup>1025</sup> Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 276.

succession was unclear, the Government of India showed little hesitation in alighting upon a candidate who showed a readiness to adopt modern methods of rule. To instil such a progressive attitude the British were rigorous in their dedication to princely education, if not wholly successful in achieving the desired results. The British attempt to regulate royal marriages and to improve the moral tone of palace life was to a great extent to ensure that a dissolute environment did not dissipate their efforts on the princely educational front. In some cases their campaign against what they perceived as ignorance, prejudice and superstition was furthered by the presence of powerful royal women who subscribed to British ideas. As far as royal ritual was concerned, ceremony was now bound by rules and regulations, and traditional royal largesse was curtailed by severe economic restrictions. The subordination of the Indian princes to British imperial rule was constantly emphasised in subtle and less subtle ways as their position was established in the imperial hierarchy. Finally, the British obsession with efficiency and accountability in the realm of administration resulted in adult princes being deprived of the opportunity to act as an essential cog in the wheel of a sound, modernised government.

The word 'puppet-like' has frequently been used to describe the Indian rulers during the period,<sup>1026</sup> yet there is little proof that the British set out deliberately to manufacture puppet rulers. Why should the paramount power have devoted so much time and energy towards 'civilising' young princes if they were intended merely to act as figureheads? The problem lay in the fact that the regulations and economic measures required to produce well ordered and open government were on the whole alien concepts to the first generation of Indian westernised rulers. Attempting to integrate a relatively untrained, and often unwilling, ruler into the administrative

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<sup>1026</sup> Most recently by Niall Ferguson in *Empire* (London, 2003), pp. 206 and 230.

procedure was frequently more trouble than it was worth, particularly with the endless round of negotiation required between the various parties involved in state politics. As far as individual rule was concerned, a British *laissez-faire* policy towards the princes had begun decades before the Minto declaration. These decades were by no means the 'golden age' that Metcalf described. Traditionally the protectors and sustainers of the social fabric, the status of the Indian princes had been dramatically diminished by the process of enforcing in their administration the virtues of 'Clearness, certainty, promptitude, cheapness' advocated so enthusiastically by James Mill.<sup>1027</sup>

As Butler recognised in the 'private and secret' handing-over note he wrote to his successor in 1910:

The indigenous system of government is a loose despotic system tempered by corruption, which does not press hard on the daily lives of the people and relies for its sanctions on occasional severe punishments of erring and offending individuals. Our system is a scientific system which presses steadily on the people in their daily lives, controls them, regulates their actions, attempts to be preventive and through its hordes of subordinates makes itself everywhere felt. The advancing Native States generally adopt our methods, because it is easy to get good men of their own school with modern training .... But it would be a bold man who said that our system was always the better.<sup>1028</sup>

As 'The Power behind the Throne' makes clear, for the purposes of modelling aware and progressive rulers of India, the enforcement of the rigorously ordered British 'system' during the crucial phase of princely development at the end of the nineteenth century was by no means the 'better' solution. Rejecting the view that Britain 'built up' her princely allies to retain their loyalty in the latter part of the nineteenth century,

<sup>1027</sup> James Mill, *British India*, Vol. V, p. 521, quoted D. A. Low, *Lion Rampant* (London, 1973), p. 51.

<sup>1028</sup> 'Handing Over Note', 1910, quoted Creagh-Coen, *Indian Political Service*, p. 17.

this thesis comes to the conclusion that British indirect rule, by commission or omission, severely undermined the traditional role of the Indian prince. In adding significantly to the understanding of the involvement of the British in princely India during the period the work makes a strong contribution to research on imperialism under the Raj.



## GLOSSARY

<i>ashraf</i>	respectable class
<i>atar</i>	fragrant essential oil of jasmine, roses and other flowers
<i>begam</i>	Muslim female ruler, married Muslim woman
<i>devadasis</i>	a woman 'married' to a god in a temple, participating in ritual dancing
<i>dewan</i>	senior minister, head of administration ( <i>diwan</i> in Hyderabad)
<i>darbar</i>	royal court, formal assembly
<i>darbari</i>	courtier
<i>faringhi</i>	foreigner
<i>gadi</i>	throne
<i>huzur</i>	literally, 'the presence', the seat of authority
<i>inam</i>	a gift of rent-free land to reward service or recognize kinship
<i>inamdar</i>	one who receives an inam
<i>izzat</i>	honour, respect, prestige
<i>jagir</i>	hereditary estate
<i>jagirdar</i>	grantee of hereditary estate
<i>karkhana</i>	office or place where business conducted
<i>khalsa</i>	state-owned or controlled
<i>kharita</i>	formal letter to or from a ruler
<i>khilat</i>	robe of honour worn on ceremonial occasion
<i>Ksatriya</i>	Hindu military caste
<i>kumar</i>	heir of rajah, every son of rulers of Gujerat and Kathiawar
<i>lakh</i>	a hundred thousand (unless otherwise specified, rupees)
<i>madrasa</i>	Muslim school of learning originally attached to a mosque
<i>mahal</i>	division of district yielding revenue
<i>maharajah</i>	princely ruler
<i>maharani</i>	wife of princely ruler
<i>mohur</i>	gold coin worth fifteen rupees
<i>munshi</i>	clerk
<i>nautch</i>	intricate traditional dance performed by professional dancing girls
<i>nawab</i>	Muslim princely ruler
<i>nazar, nazarana</i>	offerings of presents or coins to signify loyalty to a ruler
<i>nizam</i>	Muslim princely ruler, originally Mogul governor
<i>pan</i>	betel vine prepared as a savoury
<i>pandit</i>	Hindu theology teacher
<i>peshkash</i>	tribute
<i>pardah</i>	veil or curtain, practice of keeping women in seclusion
<i>pardahnashin</i>	veiled or secluded woman
<i>raj</i>	ruling regime
<i>ryot</i>	peasant cultivator
<i>sahibzada</i>	son of ruler
<i>sanad</i>	grant or deed conferring rights or title
<i>sardar, sirdar</i>	nobleman
<i>sepoy</i>	soldier
<i>shastras</i>	sacred Sanskrit texts
<i>shariat</i>	Islamic law
<i>Shia and Sunni</i>	the two principal Muslim sects
<i>taluqdar</i>	revenue official presiding over district, landed aristocrat in Awadh
<i>thakur</i>	minor Rajput ruler

<i>til</i>	sesame
<i>ulama</i>	scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, learned man
<i>vizier</i>	Muslim high official
<i>wakil</i>	agent, attorney
<i>zamindar</i>	landholder, landed aristocrat in Bengal and elsewhere
<i>zenana</i>	women's quarters

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