1-1-2011

Sahib and Sepoy : The British Perspective on the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857

Harley Derek Walden
walden4@marshall.edu

Sahib and Sepoy: The British Perspective on the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate College of Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History

by

Harley Derek Walden

Approved by

Dr. William Palmer, Committee Chairperson

Dr. David Mills

Dr. Phillip T. Rutherford

Marshall University

December 2011

Acknowledgments

Sahib and Sepoy: The British Perspective on the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857

This thesis would not have reached its potential without the guiding hand of my committee chairperson, Dr. William Palmer. My limitless thanks first go to him because, without his careful and knowledgeable reservoir of insight about writing and knowledge on British history, this work would never be what it is now. Dr. David Mills brought in a great second pair of eyes to this work and his knowledge of Middle East history brought an expertise to the Indian side of the text. Dr. Phillip Rutherford gave me in-depth Victorian era military knowledge and a perfect sense of what is was like to think like a Victorian. I would also like to thank Dr. Jill Treftz of the Marshall University English Department for her expertise on Victorian literature, which was invaluable in creating my last complete chapter.

I would also like to thank my parents, Harley and Deborah Walden, for fostering a love for reading and learning that has guided me throughout my collegiate experience. Their love and constant support always shines through even in times of self-doubt or writing anxieties. Finally, I would like to thank my aunt and grandmother, Margarette "Margie" Walden and Wilda Walden, whose moral and sometimes financial support were immeasurably an integral part of my entire thesis process. Their care and constant advice drove me to complete this work, no matter the time involved.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments……..…..ii

Abstract……...iv

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: Historiography and Background Information……..…1

Chapter 2: The Anglo-Indian Connection: Perspectives in Parliament…….……21

Chapter 3: We were Soldiers: Military Memoir and Recollections……..….49

Chapter 4: Hot off the Presses: British Perspectives in Print……72

Conclusion……...……107

Bibliography……125

Curriculum Vitae……..……130

Abstract

Sahib and Sepoy: The British Perspective on the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857

Harley Derek Walden

The Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 was a truly significant event in the annals of British history and imperial study as well. The recent historiography on the British perspective of the event neglects to consider the positive Anglo-Indian perspective, dismissing it as a dissident or non-existent sentiment. However, through analyzing the British Parliamentary debates, military memoir, and Victorian literature, a more dynamic picture emerges of mid-Victorian Britain. Britons from varying social classes felt sympathy and admiration for their Indian counterparts, even in lieu of the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857. They differentiated between loyal Indian soldiers and the rebels that threatened to overthrow the crown jewel of the British Empire. This thesis revises previous scholarship on the British perspective of the Sepoy Rebellion and brings to light the divergent Anglo-Indian feelings that many Britons held.

Chapter One
Setting the Scene: Historiography and Background Information

With untold casualties mounting and lasting over a year, the Sepoy Rebellion was the greatest foreign challenge to the British Empire during the nineteenth century. Hindered by two other foreign entanglements, the Crimean War and Second Opium War at the same time, the Sepoy Rebellion was initially not the primary worry of British military commanders. Britain was simultaneously waging three military campaigns and ineptly merging military units from one campaign to another, which resulted in a delayed reaction to the rebellion in India. Another aspect of the Sepoy Rebellion, which also greatly hindered the British in quelling the uprising, was the large and violent civilian rebellion that accompanied the military conflict.

The British became engulfed in a quagmire that drew in many military units from surrounding stations, which altered the ways in which the colonizers viewed their subjects. To fully understand the dichotomy between colonizer and subject, one must first acknowledge the proper manner in which to view the British perspective. How did the British view their empire before and after the rebellion? How did they view their Indian subjects in light of the conflict? A blanketed-universal political science term, "metropole," is not sufficient in explaining the strong anti-imperialist sentiment expressed by many different groups of British society. Calls for restraint and integration of Indian culture in government were rampant among the many voices being heard during the months and years following the Sepoy Rebellion. Therefore, a more localized or regional interpretation, as manifested through the published editorials and articles, is required to fully explain this sentiment.

Before one can understand the British reaction to the rebellion, an introduction into both Indian culture and the rebellion itself is necessary. From its inception in 1600 until its official fall from power in 1858, the British East India Company monopolized the subcontinent with an iron fist. The origins of the Company's power date back to Elizabethan England with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. A collective group of merchants petitioned Elizabeth I for the right to sail the Indian Ocean under the banner of exploration. With the Queen's approval, in 1591 three ships sailed from England, with one (the Edward Bonaventure) eventually making its way to the Malay Peninsula, before returning home in 1594.[1] After several more unsuccessful attempts to reach the East, on 31 December 1600 the Queen granted a royal charter for fifteen years to the merchants under the name of the "Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading with the East Indies." The charter granted the Company the right to trade with all countries to the east of the Cape of Good Hope to the west of the Straits of Magellan.[2]

The Company's initial competition came from the Dutch as they had a monopoly on the spice trade for many years before the arrival of the British. Upon the Company's first voyage to India, it established a trading post in the city of Bantam, which lasted until 1683. The pepper from the Java region became a highly desirable import in England. During the following two years, the Company established its first factory in the village of Machilipatnam, on the coast of the Bay of Bengal.[3] Based on reports of incredibly high profits, in 1609 King James I extended the Company's charter for an indefinite period

---

[1]John Kaey, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), 11-14.

[2]Ibid., 14.

[3]Ibid., 20-21.

with only one caveat: the charter would expire if trade proved unprofitable for three consecutive years.

The Company's domination of trade in India began with the suppression and ouster of all other foreign competition. In 1612 at the Battle of Swally, the British East India Company defeated the Portuguese for supremacy in the Indian Ocean. Once the Company defeated its open-seas competition, the focus shifted toward mainland trade. By 1615, King James sent Sir Thomas Roe as his official royal envoy to the Mughal Emperor Nuruddin Salim Jahangir, in an effort to procure a treaty granting the Company exclusive rights to build factories and trade in Surat and the surrounding area.[4] In exchange for these rights, the Company gave Jahangir exotic goods from the European market.

The Company's next goal was trade expansion into the interior of India. It created trading posts in Surat, Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta and surpassed Portugal's Estado de India as the premiere trading company. By 1643, the company had twenty-three factories in all three regional divisions of India. The three major factories included Fort William in Bengal, Fort St. George in Madras, and the Bombay Castle.[5] In 1657, Oliver Cromwell extended the rights and charter of the Company with only minute alterations. Also, under the restoration of the monarchy, the Company flourished as never before with the passage of five legislative acts by King Charles II granting it the rights to issue currency,

---

[4]Ibid., 86-87.

[5]Ibid., 130-131.

command fortresses and troops and form alliances, wage war and peace, and to govern both civilly and criminally over acquired territories.[6]

As many stock-holders returned home to Britain, expensive estates and land-holdings were established. These wealthy businessmen also established a lobby in Parliament for political interests and power. Many of these men desired to establish private investment firms inside India, separate from the Company's interests. These desires led to the passage of a deregulating Act of 1694.[7] This act ended an exclusive charter, which existed for one hundred years. Now any private interest group could trade in India as long as no act of Parliament specifically restricted it. By a similar act passed in 1694, a second India trading company was established, the "English Company Trading to the East Indies." The two organizations competed for dominance over trade in India. However, by 1708 both companies merged into a single entity called the "United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies."[8] In 1730, Parliament extended the charter until 1766.

During this time Britain and France became bitter enemies. Constant conflicts erupted over colonial possessions and foreign interests. Fearing the financial burden of a large scale conflict with France, Parliament extended the Company's charter until 1783 for a loan of one million pounds. Unfortunately for Parliament, war did erupt on a large scale for Britain. Between 1756-1763, the Seven Years' War directed Britain's attention away from Company concerns and towards colonial preservation and protection.[9] The

---

[6]Ibid., 133.

[7]Ibid., 170-172.

[8]Ibid., 215-216.

war escalated to the point that even India became embroiled in international drama as Company forces battled French troops. In 1757, Parliament issued the Pratt-Yorke opinion, which defined the difference between foreign land obtained through private treaty and military conquest.[10] In Parliament's eyes, land acquired through private treaty was not royal domain and therefore not part of Britain.

During its trade expansion into the interior of India, Company forces constantly faced the threat of military resistance from local rulers. Robert Clive led Company forces against the last independent Nawab (king) of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. This conflict called the Battle of Plassey in 1757 resulted in the acquisition of the Bengal province. Also after the Battle of Buxar, the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II relinquished all legal and governmental authority to Company forces. This indirectly made Robert Clive the first British Governor of India in 1757.[11] A very similar conflict occurred as the ruling nobility of Mysore, Tipu Sultan and Haidar Ali, resisted British rule and incursion, as they battled Company forces in a series of four wars aimed at ousting the occupying force. In 1799 Mysore finally dissolved and relinquished all autonomy to British control. Britain acquired eastern, southern, and western India in a matter of just a few years of military expansion. The final agencies of Indian local power resided in northern India, as Company forces still faced determined pockets of resistance in Delhi, Oudh, Rajputana, and the Punjab.[12] These examples of clandestine opposition did not stand for long, as

---

[9]Ibid., 287.
[10]Ibid., 311.

[11]Ibid., 297-298.

[12]Ibid., 411-413.

Company officials undermined the provincial leaders' sovereignty and legitimacy through land annexation and through other political maneuverings.

In 1856 the territory of Oudh was annexed by the East India Company and this caused a great deal of discontent among the lower caste soldiers. The land-owning class was also quite upset over this political decision as they lost all their revenue and prestige among their fellow gentry.[13] Also the fundamentalist Muslims and Sikh Hindus viewed the evangelical, Christian missionaries as a sign of forced conversion and intentional undermining of traditional religious sovereignty within India's complex social structure. The Hindu and Muslim populations were both also apprehensive about the presence of these foreign occupiers who opposed commonly held practices such as sati and the refusal to allow Hindu widows the right to remarry. Sati is a Hindu religious practice in which a widow voluntarily throws herself on the flaming funeral pyre of her late husband. Religious rights reserved for the higher caste Sepoys were also withdrawn as they were now required to both serve in less familiar land and serve abroad.[14] The pension promised to Sepoys was withdrawn although this mainly applied to new recruits. The fear remained that this new practice of restricting the rights of Sepoys would retroactively be applied to all serving and retired men.

The Sepoys' fears would quickly spread from the religious realm directly into the military one as well. The anxieties and frustrations of the Sepoys seemed to climax with the introduction of a new rifle cartridge. The Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle required the soldier to bite the cartridge open with their mouth in order to successfully load the gun. A rumor spread amongst the Sepoys that the cartridges were greased with lard (pork) and

---

[13]Brian Gardner, *The East India Company* (New York: McCall Publishing, 1971), 96-99.

[14]Burton Stein, *A History of India* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 226.

tallow (beef) fat, which offended both Muslims and Hindus. These types of grease were utilized in conjunction with the rifle because the lard and tallow fats were inexpensive and also because it shortened the amount of time it took for a soldier to load the weapon. The British became aware of this phenomenon once a dispute between a high caste Sepoy and a lower caste soldier resulted in a highly publicized military episode. The army quickly withdrew all cartridges from operation and ordered them ungreased so the Sepoys could mix the grease for their rifles themselves.[15] This recall had the opposite effect as the Sepoys believed that their fears and suspicions were true after all.

As if the military uprisings were not enough, many local rulers joined the rebellious Sepoys. The civilian rebellion that accompanied the Sepoy military's conflict was also a battle of frustrations, grievances, and erosion of traditional rights. As the Company saw fit, the regulations governing India were universally split into three territories: Bombay, Bengal, and Madras. The regions coincided with the divisions among the army itself. There were three components of Indian society that were involved with the civilian rebellion: the peasants, the rural landlords (talukdars), and the traditional nobility. The Doctrine of Lapse prohibited a long-standing social tradition of passing on titles and land to adopted heirs. This was a British governance policy devised to dictate the position of leadership in many royal provinces and regions. It was created by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India in 1846, to annex any region in which the ruler was either incapable of producing a legitimate male heir or was found incompetent to rule; it resulted in many of the nobility losing their claim to royal domains or

---

[15]J.A.B. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 19-21.

possessions.[16] This policy was implemented in 1848, as sanctioned by the British government subsidiary system, through the administrative powers of the British East India Company.

In two particular cases, this negligence would only exacerbate a larger problem which the British failed to recognize. This problem was the perceived erosion of traditional, indigenous rights and customs. The provincial rulers, Rani of Jhansi and Nana Sahib, both felt the repercussions levied by the British governance. Both of these local rulers enabled the Sepoys in their quest for Mughal restoration and fought alongside other rebellious units. In stark contrast to regions where the Doctrine of Lapse did not come into effect, local princes remained loyal to the British. Saugar and Indore had both felt the impact of the rebellion but still honored their sworn oath to Britain.

Along with the problems in British governance at the national level, local issues surfaced as well. The talukdars were evicted from their property due to the many agrarian reforms that the British imposed upon the citizenry coinciding with the annexation of Oudh. The peasantry found themselves on the newly available land that was made vacant by the talukdars. These landlords repossessed the land, and, in many circumstances because of the social structure of Indian society, the peasantry did not complain. In fact, much of the peasantry joined the rebellion in an attempt to restore the traditional property-owning legislation that they viewed as more suitable to their needs.[17] Finally, financial lenders were also a target of Sepoy aggression as many of them loaned the

---

[16]Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 368.

[17]Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 375-376.

talukdars money to expand or invest in property.[18] Because the legal procedures were extremely unfamiliar to the feudal landlords, they eventually became heavily indebted to the creditors and lost their possessions. For these reasons, all three different classes of Indian society decided to aid the Sepoys in an attempt to combat the British and restore their traditional way of life.

The first month of 1857 would bring many indications for the British of what the following year would hold. Sepoys set fire to Calcutta in January. During the following month, the rumors of contaminated rifle cartridges spread to all Sepoy army divisions. The British military hierarchy eventually withdrew the cartridges from use, but the damage to credibility had already been dealt in the Sepoys' eyes.

The first historically proven incident of armed resistance to British authority came on 29 March 1857 in Barrackpore. A Sepoy, Mangal Pandey, refused to disarm himself on the parade ground, when ordered by his superior officer. As a result of Company frustrations, he protested the annexation of Oudh and also the rumor that the greased cartridges infiltrated the thirty-fourth and nineteenth Bengal infantry units. British Sergeant-Major Hewson was alerted of the rebellious Sepoy by several loyal soldiers. He was the first British commanding officer on the scene. Inhibited by bhang (drink made with dry cannabis leaves) and opium, Pandey threatened to kill the first British officer he saw and encouraged other Sepoys to join his cause in eliminating the occupying British.[19] Upon arriving on the parade ground, Hewson ordered the Jemadar, the Indian officer in

---

[18]Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 188-190; Percival Spear, *Oxford History of Modern India: 1740-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 215-218.

[19]Ibid., 237-238.

control of the thirty-fourth unit, to seize Mangal Pandey. The Jemadar, Ishwari Prasad, refused to arrest Pandey, as he stated that the rebellious Sepoy was too powerful for one man to subdue.

During the argument between Hewson and Prasad the Adjutant of the thirty-fourth unit, Lieutenant Baugh, arrived on the parade ground to attend to the matter, as he was also warned by several concerned Sepoys. Pandey hid behind the station gun and fired upon Baugh, as he approached on horseback. While missing Baugh, Pandey managed to injure his horse and both fell to the ground. Baugh escaped his saddle and other entanglements just as Pandey rushed towards him with a talwar, an Indian broad sword.[20] Pandey critically injured Baugh on the shoulder and brought him to the ground. All other Sepoys remained inactive except for Shaikh Paltu. Paltu was the lone Sepoy who acted in defense of the British soldiers. Hewson rushed toward Pandey, but was struck from behind with Pandey's rifle butt. The Jemadar, Ishwari Prasad, ordered the Sepoys to engage the British officers and free Pandey. Both British officers and Paltu backed away as they were pelted with rocks and debris from the surrounding Sepoys.

News of these events reached commanding officer General Hearsey as he and his two sons rode off towards the parade ground. Upon arriving at the scene, Hearsey ordered a Sepoy guard to follow him and arrest Mangal Pandey, threatening to shoot all disobedient Sepoys. Realizing the dire consequences of disobedience, Pandey attempted suicide, but only managed to superficially wound himself.[21] Paltu was promoted to high rank in the Bengal Army. Along with the insubordinate Jemadar, Pandey was sentenced to death on 8 April 1857. Pandey was hanged and the Jemadar's sentence was carried out

[20]Ibid., 240.

[21]Ibid., 241.

on 21 April 1857. Pandey's entire thirty-fourth unit was disassembled and stripped of all official vestiges (including uniforms) of Company service.[22] Many of these former Sepoys returned home with a sentiment of dissatisfaction toward British involvement in India. This was the beginning of the Meerut outbreak and subsequently the start of the Sepoy Rebellion.

In the town of Meerut, there was a very large military cantonment, which held several warehouses containing the controversial rifle cartridges. On 24 April 1857 Colonel George Carmichael-Smyth, commander of the Third Bengal Light Cavalry, ordered ninety of his men to perform military firing drills. Nearly all of his men (all except five) refused to follow the official orders and were subsequently court-martialed and sentenced to ten years of hard labor. The commanding officer corps of the Third Bengal Light Cavalry was called in to quell the Sepoys off of the parade ground and into the brig. The unit was stripped of their rank and uniforms and was paraded off into the garrisons.[23] Reports of rallying cries from the Sepoys reached others in more physically isolated units.

The following Sunday found a great deal of discontent throughout the bazaars and marketplaces. Many of the British officers were off-duty as Sunday was traditionally the Christian day of rest. The Sepoys set fires and angry mobs started gathering outside the military base. The Third Light Cavalry of the Bengal Army had revolted and freed eighty-five of the imprisoned soldiers.[24] In addition to the soldiers, nearly eight hundred

---

[22]Ibid., 237-238.

[23]Ibid., 239-240.

[24]Percival Spear, *Oxford History of Modern India: 1740-1947*, 224.

convicted criminals were also set free upon the streets of Meerut. The junior officers who attempted to thwart the efforts of the insubordinate Sepoys were killed by their own men. Officers' and civilians' quarters were attacked. Eight women and children were killed as were four civilian men. Those Sepoys who remained loyal to their commanding officers aided in the evacuation of family members to the town of Rampur. Some fifty Sepoys were also killed in defense of Meerut. Once the British received news of this revolt, it was already too late. The rebellious sects of Sepoys had left for the town of Delhi.[25] On 11 May 1857, the first units of the rebellious Sepoys reached the king of Delhi and demanded his cooperation in the revolt. The king largely ignored their complaints, although many in his personal court had secretly already joined the rebels. Fearing for his own life, Bahadur Shah allied himself with the Sepoys.[26]

There was a terrific explosion several miles outside of the city near a large garrison that contained most of the Bengal Army's surplus ammunition. The nine British guards, who protected the cache of weaponry, decided to destroy the garrison as opposed to seeing it fall into the hands of the three rebellious Sepoy brigades. Six of the men died, but the explosion had also killed many bystanders in the streets and within the vicinity. This allowed the Sepoys to actually seize the ammunition, without resistance, as the deaths of the bystanders drove undecided Indians into outright anger. The few surviving British citizens made their way either to Karnal or Flagstaff Tower in the north, where the telegraph stations sent distress signals to nearby military bases. The king of Delhi, Bahadur Shah, organized his first formal court proceedings in years, as he reluctantly ordered fifty British citizens killed in the royal courtyard. He declared himself emperor of

[25]J.A.B. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, 76-79.

[26]He was the last Mughal emperor in Indian history; Ibid., 124-128.

all India and issued coins with his name on them to substantiate his sovereignty as a Muslim ruler.[27] This decision angered many Sikh (Hindu) subjects of the king as they fought against decades of Islamic rule before.

The British response to these revolts was slow at best as much of their military was already engulfed in warfare in the Crimean War or on their way to China. The difficulty in military organization hindered the Company's forces from swiftly quelling the rebellion. Two military units were already based in India, the Simla and Meerut companies. After two months' time, the two units converged at Karnal and proceeded onto Badli-ke-Serai. Once arriving there, the Company forces started pushing Sepoy units towards Delhi. The Company established a military base in the northern part of the city where the Siege of Delhi originated. The siege lasted from July 1 to September 1.[28] During most of the battle, the Company forces were greatly outnumbered and disease, exhaustion, and incessant attacks from organized Sepoy units reduced the Company's will to keep fighting. The united forces of British and Sikh soldiers were able to eventually break through the column of Sepoy combatants. The British commander John Nicholson led these forces onto subsequent victories by August.[29] At the end of the month the rebels offered terms of surrender, which were "honorably" refused. A heavily armored and supplied train reached Delhi on 14 September 1857. The Company forces initiated a military directive at the city gates on the fourteenth but received heavy casualties including Nicholson himself.

---

[27]Michael Edwardes, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), 27-29.

[28]Ibid., 32-35.

[29]Ibid., 39-42.

After a week's time, the Company reached the Sepoys' "Red Fortress" and retook the city. The king fled to a royal tomb, but was eventually arrested. The king's sons were all shot and killed in retaliation for his allegiance with the Sepoys.[30] Finally a cohesive military column was forged and marched onto Cawnpore where the bloodiest and most violent battle of the entire Rebellion would ensue. The recapture of Delhi allowed the Company the ability to send communications from the east of India to the west.

In June of 1857, the Cawnpore units of Sepoy armies began to rebel. The commanding officer, Wheeler, neglected to fortify or efficiently supply the British military base there. He was a highly respected military veteran and also married to a high "caste" Indian woman. His choice to rely on native cooperation and respect would ultimately prove to be his own undoing.[31] The local prince of the region, Nana Sahib, offered the British safe passage to Allahabad, provided they leave on the night of the twenty-sixth. Nana Sahib was revered by the Sikh Sepoys who rebelled as he was the heir to the Maratha throne. From the Sikh perspective, the Maratha royalty was considered an integral component of the traditional ruling class in pre-colonial India, equally as vital as the Mughal royalty was to Indian Muslims.

The British survivors left their quarters on the morning of the twenty-seventh, headed for the Ganges River. There were several large boats awaiting the British. Most of the Sepoys who remained loyal to the British were removed from duty because of their sympathies. Also the few surviving British soldiers of the siege who were supposed to tail the boats were killed. The river was lined with Sepoys on both sides as they had a

---

[30]Ibid., 48-50.

[31]Ibid., 69-70.

clear vantage point. Once the captain waved for the departure, the crew abandoned ship and set fire to the boats. The armed Sepoys, located on the river banks, opened fire upon the British onboard the boats. The Sepoys on horseback waded into the water to finish off any potential survivors. Only four men escaped; all others were shot. All of the women and children were taken prisoner and held at the local palace. Over two hundred and six men, women, and children were held captive for two weeks in their Bibighar confines. [32] Outbreaks of cholera and dysentery were frequent as the small prison was not meant to hold that quantity of people.[33]

Nana Sahib became aware of advancing Company forces from Allahabad a few weeks into his decision to hold the British survivors hostage. In July of 1857, he decided to kill all of the survivors in order to alleviate himself of the burden of keeping them alive. He ordered the Sepoys to carry out the deed, but they refused. A small band of his personal bodyguards entered the Bibighar confines, armed only with knives and hatchets, and killed every person within the prison. The prison walls were stained with the bloody hand prints of the British prisoners and the floor of the prison was covered with their bone fragments and clothes remnants. Nana Sahib then ordered their bodies to either be dumped into one of two wells or then the Ganges River itself. After the incident, Nana Sahib fled to Nepal and eluded capture by the British but ultimately died of cholera. This incident polarized the conflict for the British as retaliation was both swift and brutal. After the British recaptured the city, the soldiers escorted the Sepoy prisoners to the

[32]This was the residence of the local magistrate.

[33]Lawrence James, *Raj*, 250-251.

Bibighar and forced them to lick the walls clean with their tongues. All of the captured Sepoys were then promptly executed.[34]

Another significant battle during the rebellion was that of Lucknow within the newly annexed territory of Oudh. The siege began just after the outbreak at Meerut. The British commander, Henry Lawrence, positioned himself within the military base with efficient fortifications. The rebels used explosives and underground tunnels to infiltrate the compound and eventually reduced the British forces to small pockets of resistance. On 25 September 1857, the Company unit led by Henry Havelock reached Lucknow on its way back from Cawnpore. The small company of soldiers was able to defeat several larger Sepoy units.[35] The unit was eventually forced to join Lawrence's group within the compound. In October, another Company unit reached Lucknow and by November the group led by Colin Campbell successfully evacuated the survivors to Cawnpore. Within the beginning of 1858, Campbell returned to Lucknow to push the Sepoys out of the Oudh region.[36] He faced several pockets of disorganized rebel Sepoy groups, which eventually fled to the south.

The British victory was ensured at Jhansi. The prince of Jhansi died without a legitimate heir to the throne and his wife, Rani Lackshmi Bai, was forced to abdicate her royal titles and rights under the Doctrine of Lapse. This document restricted her adopted son from assuming the throne and carrying on the family's right to rule. Once the rebellion broke out, the Rani gave British civilians safety within her palace. She arranged

---

[34]Ibid., 252.

[35]Richard Collier, *The Great Indian Mutiny* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1964), 289-291.

[36]Ibid., 338.

their evacuation, but once the British left the protection of her fortress, they were killed by rebel Sepoys just outside her palace.[37] The territory of Jhansi was constantly under pressures of war from within its own state. The Rani had just defeated two invading armies from neighboring provinces in October of 1857. The Central India Field Force Company unit led by Hugh Rose infiltrated the city and successfully captured the entire region. The Rani managed to escape and fled to the city of Gwalior. By June of 1858, Rani defeated British sympathizers and captured the fortress within the center of the region. By 16 June 1858, the army led by Rose entered the city and defeated the rebel groups, thus solidifying the British victory of the Sepoy Rebellion.[38] Gwalior was the last stronghold of Sepoy resistance and Rose, with his elite force, managed to withstand the city walls and, within nineteen days, recapture the fortress.

The fallout from the Sepoy Rebellion resulted in the mass execution of many Sepoy prisoners and also civilians believed to be linked with the rebel cause. The main factor in British reprisals against the citizenry was in part due to the increase in the word of mouth amongst Company survivors. The brutality of men like Nana Sahib and Bahadur Shah had not worked according to their intended purpose. The expectation was that the British would totally be shocked and deterred from carrying on the war, but, instead, it only strengthened the resolve to save survivors or recapture lost regions. The Government of India Act of August 1858 ended the British East India Company's rule in the country. It was not the end of the British Raj but an alteration in both mindset and

---

[37]Michael Edwardes, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny*, 160-162.

[38]Ibid., 170-172.

temperament toward the Indian people. [39] The Sepoy Rebellion definitely changed the minds of the British people about imperialism and accountability. The departure of mindset was from a "master-subject" dichotomy to a more respectful "inclusionary" position by the new governmental agency, known as the Indian Office, with the newly created position of Viceroy of India.[40] The changes included the incorporation of Indians into the civil services sector of government, more religious tolerance amongst higher and lower castes, and the abolition of land reforms and financial lenders. The perspective of the British people was most certainly influenced by many factors, but this rebellion forever altered the supposition that the empire was absolute and invincible.

Historians have interpreted the Sepoy Rebellion in several distinct manners. The general historiography of the Sepoy Rebellion is divided into two main arguments based on the purpose and intent of the rebellion. The first ideological school of thought believes that the rebellion is not a war of independence but merely a smaller, armed resistance against British colonialism. The works of historians such as George O. Trevelyan, G.B. Malleson, and Sir John Kaye all undermine the idea that there was a sense of national identity amongst the rebellious Sepoys. The central components of this argument consist of many different denials of Indian political authority. Some of these arguments include the fact that not all of the rebel Sepoys accepted the return of the Mughals, most went home after the military units were disbanded instead of fought, the rebellion was split along religious and economic lines, many local warlords fought against one another instead of the British, a united India did not exist during this time, the rebellion was put

---

[39]This is the name given to the time period of colonial British rule in India (1858-1947).

[40]Percival Spear, *Oxford History of Modern India*, 233-236.

down with the aid of other Indian forces, and the conflict was limited to areas where the political impact was not felt. This ideological group denies the intent of the Sepoys to truly reorganize their country under domestic rule. Most of the authors writing from this ideological perspective are of European descent.

The second ideological school of thought involved with the Sepoy Rebellion argues that the conflict was a major war in India's First War of Independence, a traditional nationalistic stance. The works of V.D. Savarkar, Nandalal Chatterji, and S.B. Chaudhuri all echo this nationalistic sentiment within their historical interpretations. This scholarship denies that the Sepoy Rebellion was simply an isolated military uprising. The major arguments posed by these historians are as follows. One of the specific arguments that this scholarship argues is that, although the Sepoys were geographically from all over the country, they were united with a common goal, the restoration of the Mughal Empire (a nationalistic symbol for the Sepoys). The fact that the rebellion spread to many regions proves the fact that the conflict was not just military, it was ideological. The Sepoys sought to drive the British not just out of their local principalities but the entire country. The territories that were overtaken by the Sepoys were ruled by the Sepoys themselves, thus a total denial of colonial authority that was issued through the power of local princes. This ideological group is mainly fixated on promoting the rebellion as part of the long-standing recalcitrance of the Indian populous against foreign invaders. The authors of this scholarship are, not surprisingly, of Indian descent.

Although these two ideological schools of thought are concerned with the rebellion in a general sense, the reaction from the British home front has often been ignored or inferred based on racial supremacist social theories. These assumptions seem

crude and subjective in a field founded on scientific methodical procedures and the support of objectivity. The works of Jenny Sharpe, Nancy Paxton, Guatam Chakravarty, Ranajit Guha, Rudranshu Mukherjee, Patrick Brantlinger, and Christopher Herbert briefly deal with the reaction in Britain to the rebellion but fail in their attempts to fully disclose the scope of the sentiment expressed by different sects of society. All of these historians apply political science terminology, such as “metropole,” and broad theories of imperialism to the British reaction in order to explain the Victorian perspective as the united desire for a swift military reprisal. A counter argument can be made that the reaction in Britain can best be understood as a more localized affair in which physical locations or regions, as manifested in the primary source material, can more effectively explain the reactions of active participants in society.

Chapter Two
The Anglo-Indian Connection: Perspectives in Parliament

Not since the Crimean War and not again until the Boer War, had an event such as the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 captured the imagination of the British mind. The events of March 1857 held great importance for the British people, their empire, and subsequently the Indian people as well. Contrary to contemporary interpretations of the British perspective on the Sepoy Rebellion that rely on the application of "metropole," many members of Parliament offered and raised issues which both benefited and protected the rights of the Indian people as they viewed them with respect and admiration.

The political alignment of the mid-Victorian Parliaments traced their origins to a split in the Tory Party in 1847. An internal disagreement over the Corn Laws forced some members of the party to side with Robert Peel on the argument of free trade. This internal disagreement focused on whether farmers had the right to sell their product at a certain price to the government. The other members of the party remained dedicated to both preserve the remnants of the Tory ideology and oust Peel from office. Once these Protectionists were able to remove Peel from office, the Peelites (supporters of Robert Peel) no longer constituted a majority in the House of Commons.[41] The Peelites became politically isolated as they refused to collaborate with either the Whigs or the Protectionist Tories (who never managed to create a majority in Parliament).[42] The Whig Party was also in a state of instability as they were divided between a large block of

---

[41]John Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2002), 12.

[42]David Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy: 1846-1855* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 56.

conservative members and a smaller, more radical faction of businessmen who wanted to redirect the party's agenda more toward higher tariffs on imports. The Whigs eventually became known as the Liberal Party and the Proctectionist Tory Party became known as the Conservative Party.[43] Also, Irish members of Parliament mainly voted together, forming an unofficial special-interest group further complicating the possibility of forming any majority in the House of Commons.

Within this political turmoil, several vital members of Parliament who played a large role in both Parliamentary history in general and specifically the debates over the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 emerged. Benjamin Disraeli emerged from the Protectionist Tory Party as the leader of the House of Commons.[44] His counterpart in the House of Lords was the Earl of Derby, who was known more for his exploits out of office than in. Derby had strong interests in gambling and playing cards with only limited participation in party politics. Disraeli was of Jewish descent and entered politics as a Conservative in 1837. Disraeli came from a wealthy family and was groomed for Parliamentary life. Upon entering Parliament, he stood against Robert Peel and his position for free trade.[45] Disraeli attempted to take control of the Conservative faction but was perturbed by anti-Semitism and prejudice against his former profession, writing novels. Eventually, Disraeli asserted himself as the leader in the House of Commons.

Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister during the Sepoy Rebellion, entered political office at the age of twenty-three. Among the many offices held by Palmerston, he served

---

[43]Ibid., 12-13.

[44]Jonathan Perry, *Benjamin Disraeli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11-12.

[45]Ibid., 12-14.

as Lord of the Admirality, Secretary of War, Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary, and Prime Minister. His foreign policy was more aggressive than most of his contemporaries. Palmerston held no reservations as to the foundation of European greatness saying, "England is one of the greatest powers in the world and her right to have and to express opinions on matters…bearing on her interests is unquestionable; and she is equally entitled to give upon such matters any advice which she may think useful."[46] More often than not, he acted without consulting the Foreign Office. Palmerston's aggressive foreign policy led to several clashes with the Queen.[47] In 1848 Palmerston sent military arms to guerilla groups operating in Sicily. As he opposed the King of Naples. Ultimately, he was forced to apologize for the international fiasco.

Two years later, Palmerston used the claims of Don Pacifico to further extend his aggressive foreign policy to other regions of the globe. Don Pacifico, a native of Gibraltar, claimed that the Greek government was interfering with his rights as a British citizen. In retaliation for interfering with a British citizen, Palmerston blockaded Greece with the British naval fleet, much to the disproval of France and Russia, as Greece was under the protection of the three powers.[48] The French ambassador temporarily left London and the incident was raised in Parliament. Palmerston was on trial, as the House of Lords condemned his involvement in the Don Pacifico affair. The House of Commons reversed the decision, after hearing from Palmerston himself.[49] Palmerston defended not

---

[46]Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Escher, ed, *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1867* (London: J. Murray Press, 1907), 463.

[47]David Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy: 1846-1855*, 90-91.

[48]Ibid., 101-102.

only his involvement in the Greek incident, but also his foreign policy in all other recent matters. In his self defense speech, Palmerston claimed Don Pacifico was like a citizen of the Roman Empire as in "Civis Romanus Sum" or that Pacifico was protected with all the rights that any citizen of the British Empire had, regardless of his location.[50]

Queen Victoria issued a statement to the Prime Minister expressing her disproval of Palmerston's recent disregard for royal precedent in failing to submit his intentions for the Foreign Office to the Crown. Palmerston did not resign, as he felt his authority came from Parliament not from the Queen.[51] Upon hearing of Louis Napoleon's coup in France, Palmerston told the French ambassador in London that he approved of such actions. Lord John Russell advised his resignation but Palmerston had the final decision. Palmerston was widely popular with the common people throughout his political career for greatly expanding the British Empire. He became prime minister twice and died in office in 1865.

Now with an understanding of the political scene during the mid-Victorian Parliament and knowledge about the key members of Parliament, the Parliamentary debates can be analyzed. The first mention of the Sepoy Rebellion in Parliament occurred on 19 May 1857 in a House of Lords debate presented by the Earl of Ellenborough. He inquired into what the Secretary of War intended to do about the "recently received" news of an uprising in India and if military units were to be sent to

---

[49]Ibid., 12.

[50]Ibid., 103.

[51]Ibid., 119.

reinforce the troops and civilians already there.[52] Lord Panmure, the Secretary of War, replied that the "intelligence recently received from India had not been such as to create any apprehension in the minds of Her Majesty's Ministers for the safety of our Indian empire." In fact, the government was so secure about its Indian territory that the troops originally destined for India were redirected to China in an effort to improve operations in the Second Opium War. Panmure stated that, in five weeks' time, four other regiments would be sent to India to replace the units headed for China in order to bolster the units and civilians already stationed there.[53] Ellenborough asked what the specific number of soldiers would amount to in June. Panmure responded that the total would be 4,000 troops.

The rumor that the Enfield rifle cartridges were greased with tallow and lard fat did not escape Parliament, as on 22 May 1857 the issue was raised by Mr. Stanley in a House of Commons debate. He asked the Under Secretary of War, Sir John Ramsden, if any plans were made by the War Department to replace the "troublesome necessity of the soldier having to bite the cartridge" with the advent of now "attaching the cap to the cartridge."[54] Stanley, showing concern not only for British forces, but also for native Indian troops, was the first of many members of Parliament (MPs) to raise this issue. Ramsden replied that the War Department noted the controversy over the cartridges in India but that the government had "certain objections in detail, which rendered its adoption impracticable." Ramsden elaborated that a new model of the Enfield rifle had

---

[52]*Hansard Parliamentary Debates,* 3d ser.,vol. 145 [1857], cols. 480-481.

[53]Ibid., cols. 480-481.

[54]Ibid., cols. 711-712.

been developed with modifications which permitted soldiers "to open the rifle by the hand, and when that rifle had been supplied to the whole of the army there would be no necessity for the soldiers to bite the cartridge at all."[55] Unfortunately this new model of the rifle (Snider-Enfield rifle) was indeed developed, but it was not introduced to native Indian troops until the onset of WWI! This is a prime example of the major problem that existed between MPs and British East India Company officials; the MPs raised a relevant issue concerning the safety of both its domestic and foreign troops and the Company (British East India Company) official simply responded with an empty promise or vague reply, which was never fulfilled.

As the rebellion dragged on, the official causes for the uprising were still not known to either Parliament or the public. MPs were left with only speculation on the basis of news from telegraph reports circulating from India. By June, Lord Ellenborough began to question the government's role in the rebellion, as well as their intentions of undermining the Sepoys' native religions. He stated, "I can come to no other conclusion than that the source of all that discontent and mutiny is the apprehension that there is an intention on the part of the Government to interfere with the religion of the natives. It is impossible to come to any other conclusion."[56] Ellenborough did not go so far as to accuse the company of intentionally meddling with the native peoples' religions, but asserted that the Governor-General of India, Lord Canning, was "entertaining" the idea of converting the Indian population to Christianity. Ellenborough described a newspaper article he read that gave "the names of colonels, and of six or eight important persons in

---

[55]Ibid., cols. 711-712.

[56]Ibid., cols. 1393-1401.

the civil administration of the country, high in office, mentioned as being connected with missionary operations."[57] Ellenborough added, "And to my great astonishment—I can scarcely believe it now to be true, though I saw it distinctly stated in the papers—that the Governor General himself, Lord Canning, largely subscribes to every society which has for its object the conversion of the natives."[58] As Canning was Britain's head of government over India, his power and authority was almost unchallenged.

Ellenborough warned of the dangerous implications of such political interests, as he feared that a "bloody revolution" would ensue and that "the English will be expelled from India; and, expelled from that country, they will not leave behind them a dozen sincere converts to Christianity." The Earl of Malmesbury, a close friend of Lord Canning, even stated that "the rumours respecting the Governor General of India on this subject did not rest on such dispatches only. He had seen it stated in letters from India that Lord Canning had subscribed to a missionary association having for its object the conversion of the Natives."[59] The Marquess of Landsdowne agreed with both MPs as he added, "One in his high position should hold himself aloof from any such associations as those which had been referred to. Indifference in such matters, in his public position, was one of the first duties of his Government, nor should he in any degree, or by any act of his, give countenance to such reports as seemed most unaccountably and mysteriously to have prevailed in India."[60] This anti-interference sentiment was widespread among MPs and proved another example of how they viewed India as common part of the empire, not

---

[57]Ibid., cols. 1393-1401.

[58]Ibid., cols. 1393-1401.

[59]Ibid., cols. 1393-1401.

[60]Ibid., cols. 1393-1401.

just a commercial investment.With all of the evidence of governmental interference in religious matters, a majority of MPs in both houses found it difficult to trust the Company in both political and financial matters regarding India's security. Many MPs kept the religious rights of all their subjects, even Indian, in mind when debating laws that effected their empire.

The condition of the Indian troops was a concern for many MPs, as they received news that some Sepoy units in northern India not only remained loyal but also died in attempting to rescue their British commanding officers. The benefits of the native Indian soldier serving under the Company declined over the years as Lord Canning became Governor-General. The loss of many traditional rights held for Sepoys prompted House of Commons member, Mr. Rich, to raise the suggestion of a bill to improve the standard of benefits and promotion for Sepoys serving under the Company. He asked the President of the Board of Control, Vernon Smith, "whether any measures have been taken for raising the general condition of the Native officers, and for opening promotion to the rank of Native officer at a shorter term than the twenty or thirty years of previous service." He believed that an increase in either benefits or a quicker promotion rate provided Sepoys with an incentive to remain loyal to the Company and thus secure Britain's domain against the advance of the Russians and the intrigue of the Great Game.[61] This conflict was a Cold War between the British Empire and the Russian Empire over control of central Asia between the Russo-Persian Treaty of 1813 until the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.

Smith replied that he "was not aware that any measures had been taken with the view of raising the general condition of Native officers, nor did he know that any

[61]Ibid., cols. 1564-1566.

complaints had been made upon the subject. Nothing had been done in reference to the question of opening promotion to the rank of Native officer at a shorter period than the ordinary term of twenty or thirty years."[62] Other MPs feared that loyal Sepoy troops would be disbanded as retribution for the Meerut rebellion and directly weaken the military's reinforcement efforts of quelling the rebellion. Brydges Willyams (MP) raised this issue of Indian troop disbandment with Vernon Smith. Smith replied that although the 19th Regiment of the native infantry in Meerut was disbanded, there was no "intention of disbanding any others, unless—which he trusted and believed would not be the case—a similar insubordination should be manifested."[63] Once again the Company used its powerful influence over Parliament to obstruct the suggestions of many Indio-sympathetic MPs. The Company's representatives often ignored calls for restraint and Indian support by providing vague statements of India's societal improvement since the Company's entrance into the sub-continent.

Parliament sought answers to both the causes of the rebellion and also the remedy for the violence which ravaged the northern territory of India. On 29 June 1857, Benjamin Disraeli inquired into the causes of the uprising in Meerut and what the government planned to do to resolve the conflict. Disraeli spoke of the many sacrifices Britain made in three "Eastern" wars, which were all aimed at preventing the loss of their Indian empire. The wars with Russia, Persia, and China all came at the cost of many lost lives and the "public debt and the taxation of the country were considerably increased."[64]

---

[62]Ibid., cols. 1564-1566.

[63]*Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 146 [1857], cols. 25-251.

[64]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

Disreali saw India as the underlying connection throughout all three conflicts as the preservation of "its resources are so great, that there is nothing the people are not prepared to endure, no expenditure which they are not prepared to incur, and no effort which they are are not prepared to make, in order to maintain that empire which it is the boast of this country so long to have possessed, and which is one of the chief sources of our wealth, our power, and our authority." Disraeli questioned the competency of the Governor-General and even asked if his resignation was on the Queen's table yet.

The difficulty in governing India was not lost on Disraeli as he described the complexities as "twenty-five nations different in race, different in religion, and different in language, I think it is not easy, perhaps it is not possible, for such heterogeneous elements to fuse into combination. Everything, however, is possible; every disaster is practicable, if there be an inefficient or negligent Government."[65] The problem and major cause of the rebellion, in Disraeli's mind, was not the native people of India, but the inefficient and inept government that ruled it. Disraeli began to emerge, with his counterpart in the House of Lords, Lord Ellenborough, as one of the leading voices in the call for restraint and consideration for the Indian people.

However, the President of the Board of Control replied with many denials and vague statements, which typified the response from the Company. Smith began his refutation of Disraeli by arguing that the Crimean War was not over the security of India, but rather "If it had been we should still be waging it; because I believe that if any persons were sorry for the conclusion of that war, they were the residents of India and the Indian Government. They would have wished that Power to have been infinitely more

---

[65]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

thwarted than it was, and to have been beaten infinitely further from the approaches to the Indian empire."[66] Smith, claiming Britain's victory over Russia during the Crimean War did not make India any more secure, argued that Russia presented a larger threat to Indian security than the rebellion did. This argument did not hold much truth, as the Khyber Pass, bordering Afghanistan and India, was more secure after the Crimean War than it had ever been.

Smith also addressed Disraeli's concern over what course of action the Company might take by stating that at the end of July 10,000 troops were supposed to be sent to India, in the form of reinforcements for the beleaguered British units. Of these 10,000 men, 7,690 came from the Queen's army, while only 2,250 came from the British East India Company's reserves. The Court of Directors offered to supply an additional 4,000 men for the reinforcement effort, thus creating a total of approximately 14,000 men by the end of July.[67] Smith stubbornly refused to acknowledge that India was even in danger, as he stated "I cannot agree with the right hon. Gentleman when, after summing up the possible dangers that might occur, he tells us that our Indian empire is 'imperilled' by the present disaster. I deny that assertion. I say that our Indian empire is not 'imperilled,' and I hope that in a short time the disaster, dismal as it undoubtedly is, will be effectually suppressed."[68] As news of the fall of Delhi reached Parliament, Disraeli demanded answers from Smith as to what actions the Company were taking in order to retake the old capital city. Smith responded with an attempt to reassure the House of Commons that "everything that can be done is being done in India" while adding that, as of the last

[66]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

[67]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

[68]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

telegraph, "General Anson would shortly be before the town with an ample force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery." Unfortunately for Smith, events did not transpire as he hoped. The Siege of Delhi did not even begin until July 1 and lasted until September 1 (not to mention General Anson died in the attempted military directive).[69] Delhi was not actually recaptured until the week following 14 September 1857.

Smith concluded his rebuttal by addressing Disraeli's call for Lord Canning's resignation. Smith questioned Disraeli's motives for such a drastic change as he stated, "Resign in such a crisis as this! Why, Sir, I should imagine that there is no one less likely to allow such a thought to enter his head than my noble friend, Lord Canning, and I am happy to state, that neither on this occasion, nor on any previous occasion, has my noble Friend tendered his resignation."[70] Smith, surprised by Disraeli's frank demand, only offered promises of a more peaceful and secure India under Lord Canning's administration. In an attempt to dispel any misinformation regarding Canning's India, Smith redirected the topic of consideration to a subject he was more comfortable with, money. Just as Smith concluded his argument regarding the military stability of India, he communicated his feelings about the "stability" of the East India Company. He asserted that the most efficient manner in which to gauge public efficacy in the Company's ability to quell the rebellion was to interpret the "barometer of the state of public feeling—the funds." Smith assured Disraeli that the funds were "not disturbed" and remained "in exactly the same state as it was before these occurrences took place."[71] He was careful

---

[69]Michael Edwardes, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), 48-50.

[70]*Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 146 [1857], cols. 536-545.

not to elaborate into the actual revenue of the Company as it was in fact operating on a deficit supplied by a large loan from Parliament.

The mismanagement of funds, people, and now an entire sub-continent did not deter the Company and its officials from their rhetoric as Smith once again denied the rumor that India was in serious danger. He claimed, "I do not believe that any danger does exist further than what must arise from any outbreak which may happen periodically in India from fanaticism or other causes, to be put down as surely as the present outbreak will be. Therefore, I anticipate no danger to our Indian empire."[72] Smith held to his main argument during the exchange with Disraeli, mainly that India was secure and that Parliament should not acknowledge the circulating rumors that the Company was failing.

As June passed into July, the majority of the debates still referred to the Sepoy Rebellion and the ongoing saga relayed through bi-weekly telegraph. As regular telegraphic communication was not restored between Britain and India until September with the recapture of Delhi, intelligence from the field was routed through Italy and France before reaching London. As the storming of Delhi was under way, the commander of Indian forces, Anson, died in the attempt to retake the city. The issue of reinforcements and the appointment of a new military commander became the primary topics of discussion for both houses. In a July 13 debate in the House of Commons, Sir John Packington quoted reports that during the Siege of Delhi the rebellious Sepoys had a force of 7,000 men, whereas the Company only mustered "1,800 men, consisting partly of Sepoys."[73] He inquired into what happened to these men and who replaced Anson in

---

[71]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

[72]Ibid., cols. 536-545.

India. The Prime Minister of Britain, Lord Palmerston, stated that "The telegraphic message has given the Government no details of that encounter. The despatch simply states that an encounter had taken place under the walk of Delhi, and that twenty-six guns had been taken, and that Her Majesty's troops had taken possession of the heights round the city." The replacement for Anson was Sir Colin Campbell. He was offered the job and literally set sail for India the very next day. To accompany the new commander, Parliament approved a military order of "14,000 men who were under orders to go out to India."[74] These additional troops, as ordered by Palmerston, set sail by the end of July in an effort to bolster the recapture of Delhi.

In an interesting turn of fate, the Company's neglect for Anglo-Indian relations surfaced yet again in a July 16 House of Commons debate, in which Mr. Vansittart asked Vernon Smith if the reports were true that the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces of India issued a proclamation granting amnesty to "all the mutineers who will lay down their arms," in an effort to bring about a more timely end to the rebellion. The rumor also included the fact that upon hearing this claim, Lord Canning demanded the man's resignation.[75] Smith replied that "he believed it was substantially correct that the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces did issue such a proclamation" and that the "Governor General of India, with that promptitude and vigour of mind which distinguished him, immediately disapproved it, and issued an order, withdrawing it."[76] With all of the Company's failed attempts to manage the governance of India, it came as

---

[73]Ibid., cols. 1367-1371.

[74]Ibid., cols. 1367-1371.

[75]Ibid., cols. 1568.

[76]Ibid., cols. 1568.

no surprise that it would thwart any effort, even from within, to broker peace with the opposition. The Company was not concerned with the ever-increasing death toll but had more financial interests in mind.

On 27 July 1857 Benjamin Disraeli delivered the most important speech in Parliament on the Sepoy Rebellion. He began his speech with an analysis of how both the American and French Revolutions originated and compared them with the outbreak of the mutiny in Meerut. Disraeli explained how seemingly insignificant events "proved to be pregnant with momentous consequences."[77] So, when news reached Britain of the rebellion in India, many disregarded it as a mere military conflict or disagreement. However, Disraeli examined the rebellion and desired to know the true causes of the rebellion and discuss a resolution to the disagreement between the Sepoys and their superior British commanding officers. Company officials, such as Vernon Smith, only presented Parliament with conflicting information in contrast to what was received from telegraph dispatches. Based on this faulty and unreliable intelligence, the House of Lords decided "that the conduct of the native troops in India was looked upon as a mere military mutiny."[78] The information submitted to Parliament was presented in a way that made the Company appear courageous and caring.

The question then became whether Parliament viewed the conflict in India as a "national revolt" or a "military mutiny" as the appropriate course of action for each situation was entirely different. Disraeli explained that he sought definitive answers to both the causes of the mutiny and what actions the government would take to ensure a

---

[77] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates,* 3d ser., vol. 147 [1857], cols. 440-546.

[78] Ibid., cols. 440-546.

swift end to the violent and costly rebellion. Lord Melville, a Company general, presented the current condition of the Bengal army to Parliament as a formal report based on Colonel Jacob's published pamphlet. The condition of the Bengal army was described as "having not improved, but deteriorated, and that the grievances, or alleged grievances, of the Sepoys, instead of having diminished, have perhaps increased."[79] Disraeli further argued that the Company officials, who were supposedly agents of goodwill and intervention, were nothing more than agents of frustration and grief. Disraeli sarcastically hinted at causes of Sepoy frustration by saying, "I think the House will agree with me, that it is unnecessary to enter into the question of the pay, the pension, the furlough of the Sepoy, his foreign service, or general service."[80] By stating that he did not intend to submit such facts into the record, he emphasized the Company's mismanagement of the Indian army, especially its native Indian population, without directly accusing the Company of negligence.

Disraeli went on to say that he believed the British government in India "alienated or alarmed almost every influential class in the country." According to Disraeli, the practices, policies, and ordinances of the British East India Company created a united hatred for foreign intervention and colonization. He elaborated that "prejudices between rival religions and different races, which were the cause of segregation between powerful classes in that country, have of late years, in consequence of our policy, gradually disappeared, and that for them has been substituted an identity of sentiments, and those

---

[79]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[80]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

sentiments, I am sorry to say, hostile to our authority."[81] On behalf of the crown, the Company instituted policies, such as the Doctrine of Lapse, which mobilized that universal hatred into violence against British colonizers. Of all the important and powerful "classes" Disraeli mentions, the army is the most influential. He believed that the Company isolated and persecuted Sepoys to the breaking point, at which time they lashed out against their commanding officers. Disraeli mentioned a state paper issued by Lord Dalhousie, which chronicled the history of the Indian army, with one glaring omission. The native Indian soldier is mentioned only once. In fact, literally only one sentence is dedicated to the discussion of the Sepoys' position. The sentence read, "The position of the native soldier in India has long been such as to leave hardly any circumstance of his condition in need of improvement."[82] With such a faulty and small amount of consideration for the Indian people, it was no surprise that the Company had any problems with governing such a diverse and complex nation as India.

Disraeli chastised the Company's lack of respect for traditional Indian religious rights and customs. He emphasized that the Company lacked positive leadership, such as "Malcolm, Metcalfe, Elphinstone, and Munro," and that, with an equivalent amount of foresight, the Company would not have faced the dangers of 1857. The diversity of India's caste system prevented many would-be rebellions from ever occurring. Historically speaking, Disraeli stated two reasons why invading nations (Islamic conquerors and the Mahrattas) never succeeded in India.

---

[81]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[82]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

First, the religious ideology of the invading army was utilized as a tool of subversion against the native Indians, thus persecuting the people instead of assimilating them. Second, whenever the finances of the invading army dwindled, they resorted to pillaging and robbing the countryside of its wealth to sustain a large force. According to Disraeli, England historically abstained from such practices on the "guarantee of their lands, and a solemn engagement not to tamper with their religion."[83] These promises were the basis for the establishment of a trust system between Britain and its many colonies. Britain also allowed independent, native states the right to retain sovereign rulers. The evidence of British respect for Indian autonomy permitted for what Disraeli called "safety valves" of the empire.[84] Whenever internal pressures or political fractures became too divisive, the local principalities could settle their own disputes in ways they saw fit. India, under Company rule, managed to break both of Disraeli's considerations for colonial success.

Disraeli provided three criteria for the "general discontent among all classes of that country" under British rule. First, was the visible "destruction of native authority." Second, was the confiscation of property and the erosion of willed-property rights. Third, was the "tampering with the religion of the people."[85] All of these destructive behaviors happened in India, with the greased cartridges simply being the final disregard for tradition. Disraeli said, "The decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by an accumulation of

[83]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[84]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[85]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

adequate causes."[86] The declining state of the Indian empire was not solely based on rumors of contaminated cartridges but merely a symptomatic manifestation of how British interference in Indian society negatively impacted Indian life since colonial rule.

The call for restraint permeated Disraeli's speech as he implored the MPs to both selectively and judiciously remember that the rebellious Sepoys do not represent all Indians. The course of action that Parliament decided rested directly in the hands of the men he tried to persuade. If this task was accomplished, then a swift end through diplomatic avenues might be achieved. Disraeli reminded the MPs that "the great body of the population of that country ought to know that there is for them a future of hope. I think we ought to temper justice with mercy." A desperately needed analysis of the rebellion came with the call for diplomacy. Disraeli scoffed at the thought of an exclusively European ruling presence in India as this scenario would result in the end of British rule. He recommended that "there must be no more annexations—no more conquests. You must entirely change all your relations with the States coterminous with your Indian empire."[87] In addition to that recommendation, he suggested a cohesive, integrated army consisting of both native Indian troops and British forces. Disraeli questioned the thought process of Company officials and even asked, "How could they journey through those burning deserts and perform those duties which now are with facility accomplished by the Native troops? You could not do it."[88] He did not merely

---

[86]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[87]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[88]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

suggest that the army remain integrated for logistic issues but more for the sense of brotherhood against a common enemy, Russia.

Disraeli concluded his speech by appealing to Parliament to "send to that country competent men—men of high station and ability, such as would entitle them to such office—and who shall appear in Hindostan in the Queen's name and with the Queen's authority."[89] Disraeli thought that the government "ought to issue a Royal Proclamation to the people of India, declaring that the Queen of England is not a Sovereign who will countenance the violation of treaties—that the Queen of England is not a Sovereign who will disturb the settlement of property—that the Queen of England is a Sovereign who will respect their laws, their usages, their customs, and, above all, their religion." Disraeli wanted nothing short of a governmental overhaul with the replacement of the Company with the installation of the crown. As he believed in the abilities of the crown over those of the Company, Disraeli called for an international dialogue between India's native rulers and Parliament's most skilled diplomats. He said, "a united Parliament and a strong Government are two circumstances most necessary in the difficult position in which we are placed."[90] With more diplomacy, Disraeli believed that events could be reversed and order restored to the Indian empire.

Vernon Smith's response to Disraeli's speech began with sarcastic praise of "a very able and remarkable speech," but then Smith questioned, "But at the close of his three hour speech I am tempted to ask what is the use of this oration."[91] Smith had no

---

[89]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[90]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[91]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

tolerance for such criticism but still managed to issue an array of personal criticisms against Disraeli. Smith accused Disraeli of wasting valuable time with "introduced topics calculated to produce a vast amount of mischief."[92] Smith's accusations stemmed from Disraeli's criticism of the government's involvement in recent Indian affairs. As President of the Board of Control, Vernon Smith was forced to answer questions regarding governance in India. He stated that there were two issues that proved the efficiency of Company rule. Smith stated that "there are not the slightest symptoms of the mutiny being a national revolt. There is not a tittle of evidence, and the right hon. Gentleman has adduced none to show that the outbreak arose from national discontent." As an extension of that argument, Smith added, "no native Prince has been as yet concerned in these transactions."[93] The state of discontent spread to the native princes and their domains. Rulers, such as Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi, were affected negatively by the Doctrine of Lapse and provided aid to the rebellious Sepoys in an effort to oust the British from India.

Smith refuted all three of Disraeli's claims that the Company mismanaged the government of India. The first accusation of the "destruction of native authority" was refuted by Smith on the grounds that the government could not be held responsible for the adverse reaction by native princes in matters of religion. He attempted to imply that Disraeli opposed both the British abolishment of sati and the added rights for Hindu widows to remarry. This accusation was hailed by chants of "No, no!"[94] Smith agreed

---

[92]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[93]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[94]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

that these were sources of frustration for the Indian population but argued that "these measures were the result of the irresistible course of events in this country, for which no man can fairly hold the Government responsible." Smith then discussed Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse and its application to native principalities. He stated, "The fact cannot be too much insisted upon, that there is no apparent connection between the Native Princes and this revolt. If the Native Princes were offended with the conduct of the Government towards the Rajah of Sattara, no doubt they would have manifested that feeling at the time."[95] Smith implied that since only three grievances were brought to the attention of Parliament by native princes, then discontent regarding the abolition of inherited domains must be minimal. He also refused to condemn Lord Dalhousie for enacting such a piece of legislation, as the Doctrine of Lapse. Smith argued that since each principality had its own law of inherited domain, the cases should be analyzed individually. He added, "This, however, is a grave question, well deserving the attention, not of the House of Commons only, but of other persons who are more capable of solving it, and of eliciting the exact truth."[96] Smith argued that Parliament was not capable of such unbiased analysis and suggested that the Board of Control be allowed the right to review individual cases.

Smith then refuted the second claim of the "disturbance of property in India." He described a Royal inquiry into the tenure rights held by native princes. These rights were traditionally held by native princes and allowed them the right to tax their subjects. Some of these land tenure rights were ordered "to keep horses saddled and bridled ready for the

---

[95]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[96]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

use of the Rajah when he went into action." When the Company took over control of India, these tenured land rights were confiscated by the British. Smith argued that "These fines were done away with; but, by the equalization of their property, it has been found that, on the whole, the People have rather gained than otherwise."[97] Smith accused Disraeli of scoring political points in light of a national tragedy by minimizing the successes of the Company in India.

The third accusation of "interference with the religion of the natives" was countered by tracing religious grievances in India back to the revolt in Vellore. Smith claimed that, it was not specifically the dissemination or ministry of the Christian missionaries that angered the natives, but the "belief that the Government entertained the idea of compulsory conversions. I believe it is much the same now; I believe that the missionaries, excellent and intelligent men, are received wherever they go."[98] The Christian missionaries were only the beginning of the government's plan to convert the Indian population to Christianity, as military officials soon began preaching the Bible to their soldiers. Even Smith acknowledged that military officials should remain neutral in matters of religion. He admonished Colonel Wheeler for "preaching in the bazaars and distributing tracts to the soldiers of his own regiment, they begin to fear that the Government is contemplating compulsory conversion."[99] The perception of compulsory conversion to Christianity led many Sepoys to join their rebellious counterparts and was recorded as one of their major grievances against Company rule.

---

[97]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[98]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

[99]Ibid., cols. 440-546.

On 6 August 1857, the first of three petitions was introduced for the charges against the King of Oude to be dropped. This petition issued by his wife, oldest son, and brother denied the King's complicity in the rebellion of the Bengal Presidency. Although he was apprehended by Company officials, the King in fact remained loyal to the Company and only wished "that it might be disclosed to the King of Oude what charges were made against him, and that they might have the opportunity of proving his innocence and of corresponding with him."[100] Many MPs could not believe that the King was apprehended, but the Company urged them to consider the dangerous times in India.

On 29 April 1858 the Earl of Albemarle raised a petition on behalf of "12,000 of the Inhabitants of Manchester and Salford" for the King of Oude to be restored to his throne.[101] This petition set a precedent, as it was the first issue concerning India to be raised by common citizens of Britain. Albemarle added, "no language could be too strong to express the abhorrence which he felt at the wholesale system of the annexation, or, more properly speaking, of the confiscation of the dominions of the Native Princes of India."[102] He presented the petition to Parliament in hopes of overturning the decree which rendered the King of Oude's right to rule illegitimate. The Earl of Albemarle presented a third petition on 18 May 1858 on behalf of "inhabitants of Keighley, in the West Riding" district in hopes "that the Royal Family of Oude may be restored to the throne of their ancestors."[103] Once again, the citizens of Britain expressed their desires

---

[100]Ibid., cols. 1119-1121.

[101]Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3d. ser., vol. 149 [1858], cols. 1921-1923.

[102]Ibid., cols. 1921-1923.

[103]Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3d. ser., vol. 150 [1858], cols. 858-859.

for Indian consideration to Parliament. Unfortunately, the restoration of the King of Oude was not possible as Parliament had already voted the Doctrine of Lapse into law.

In a 21 August 1857 House of Lords debate, the Earl of Shaftesbury raised an issue regarding the recruiting practices of the Indian army. He described the recruiting policy as looking for "muscular, well-built young Men are what are required in the Native Army, and these must be obtained apart from such Considerations; yet it seems unadvisable, where others can be obtained, to replenish our ranks with low caste Men, who are from ill Feeding, rarely equal in Stamina to their better-caste Neighbours."[104] The recruitment of high caste men was an unofficial policy of the Bengal Army as most of its soldiers were Brahmins. This Company order was immediately canceled after the outbreak of rebellion in Meerut. Shaftesbury believed that the discontent amongst the Bengal Army resided in the fact that "nothing has tended more to foster the prejudices of the Natives and to encourage among them self-conceit, and the idea of possessing exclusive rights and privileges, than the apparent homage paid to caste by the officers and the European authorities."[105] A more inclusionary military unit should consist of soldiers of many castes, so no Sepoy feels more powerful or privileged than another.

The Earl of Granville brought up an interesting issue on 7 December 1857 as Major-General Hearsey was reprimanded for promoting Shaikh Paltu to the rank of havildar in the Indian army for aiding in the restraint of Mangal Pandey, the first Indian mutineer. Upon reading the official charges against Hearsey, the Earl of Derby found that "not only is the act itself disapproved of, but there is not the slightest notice of the gallant and distinguished conduct of the General on the outbreak of the mutiny, and under the

[104]Ibid., cols. 1949-1952.

[105]Ibid., cols. 1949-1952.

most critical circumstances."[106] The Governor-General, Lord Canning, thought that the Major-General did not have the authority to promote a mere Sepoy to such a high military rank. This conflicting information shows how the Company viewed such efforts from within. Sepoys, even loyal ones, were not to be promoted or glorified and anyone who rewards loyalty will suffer the consequences.

Seeking to alter the current state of disasters in India, Palmerston took the initiative of introducing legislation that changed the complexion of British India forever. On 12 February 1858 constantly bombarded with Company frustrations, Palmerston submitted the Government of India Act of 1858. He submitted the bill "on the ground of the inconvenience and injurious character of the existing arrangements."[107] The company ran afoul with Palmerston on more than one occasion. Palmerston lamented that the Company became a "phantom of its original body."[108] He thought that "it is most desirable that this complicated machine should be simplified and reduced in fact and form to that which it is imagined to be, but which it practically is not."[109] In essence, Palmerston changed the company from a weapon of political, military, and economic leverage into simply a trading company with interests only in the realm of imported and exported goods.

The legislation passed on 18 February 1858 with the vote of 318 Ayes and 173 Noes, with a majority of 145 votes. After the bill became law on 2 August 1858, the

---

[106]Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3d ser., vol. 148 [1857], cols. 228-237.

[107]Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3d ser., vol. 148 [1858], cols. 1276-1359.

[108]Ibid., cols. 1276-1359.

[109]Ibid., cols. 1276-1359.

name of the legislation changed to "An Act for the Better Government of India."[110] The major provisions of the bill included the fact that the British East India Company and all its assets were liquidated to the Crown. All territory under the control of the Company was transferred to the Queen. The creation of an India Civil Service, under the control of the Secretary of State, was established so qualified Indians could enter government jobs. The Queen's Principal Secretary of State received the powers and duties of the Company's Court of Directors.

A council of fifteen members was appointed to assist the Secretary of State for India. The council became an advisory organization in India affairs. For communications between Britain and India, the Secretary of State became the official intermediary.[111] The Secretary of State for India was entrusted to send discreet dispatches to India directly, without having to consult the council. He was also authorized to constitute select subcommittees of his council. A new governmental agency known as the Indian Office, with the newly created position of Viceroy of Indian was established. The Crown also reserved the right to appoint any future Governor-Generals and all governors of local principalities.[112] Through the passage and introduction of this bill, MPs displayed their dedication to all sectors of the British Empire, not just the metropole.

After the end and suppression of the Sepoy Rebellion, the topic of India was brought up only sparingly. Yet as in a 15 February 1859 House of Commons debate, the issue of humanity and mercy were once again brought to Parliament's attention. MP, Mr.

---

[110]*Hansard Parliamentary Debates,* 3d ser.*,* vol. 148 [1858], cols. 1607-1715.

[111]Ibid., cols. 1607-1715.

[112]Ibid., cols. 1607-1715.

Richardson, asked the Secretary of State, Lord Stanley, "whether orders have been sent to discontinue the practice of blowing human beings from guns."[113] This practice was the method of execution from the Mughal Dynasty and subsequently utilized by the Company, in which traitors were tied to the mouth of a canon and blown to death. Lord Stanley responded that he "hoped that the time has arrived when military executions will cease. At this time, no orders have been sent out to India with regard to the matter in which capital sentences are to be carried out."[114] The majority of MPs in both houses of Parliament still remained optimistic that through time, the equal treatment of all British subjects would exist.

The metropole did not impose their will of swift revenge, as contemporary historians have argued. Contrary to that theory, the metropole was influenced by the periphery and struggled to promote equal rights of mercy and humility in a time of civil unrest. Through Lord Palmerston's Government of India Bill, the history of India changed with more inclusionary measures that gave more consideration for the Indian people. The course of India's history was forever changed with the suppression of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 and the Anglo-Indian sympathizers in Parliament demonstrated a widespread sentiment that foreign colonies or possessions are as important to British strength as England itself.

---

[113]*Hansard Parliamentary Debates,* 3d ser., vol. 152 [1859], cols. 400.

[114]Ibid., cols. 400.

Chapter Three
We were Soldiers: Military Memoir and Recollections

War is an event that binds men through unbelievable challenges and life-threatening obstacles. The personal experiences and memories of soldiers who fought in the same war, however, are typically different. These accounts usually differ from conflicting emotions about the enemy to varying degrees of reliability about the surrounding terrain. Every man has a unique experience that is all his own, yet shares a common enemy with the rest of his military unit. The military recollections from the Sepoy Rebellion diverge from most collections of war memoirs in that most reveal unrelenting feelings of trust and loyalty to their Indian counterparts. Although from different nations, these men fought against insurgents in similarly unfamiliar military circumstances. These accounts involving British soldiers and their Sepoys also reveal reliable information regarding timelines and battleground descriptions.

Before truly analyzing the military accounts, a knowledge of the British military in India is required. Military service in India during the middle 1800s was unique from all other tours of duty. The different physical terrain, societal, and linguistic barriers that faced British soldiers serving in India separated them from their European and American-based counterparts. Also further complicating their military service was the fact that there were in effect two officially active British military forces in India at the same time, the British East India Company's units and those belonging to the royal military.

In reality, there were three different types of British soldiers in India at this time. The first were "soldiers of fortune" or mercenaries who served native Indian rulers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on a "for hire" basis. Second, there were the officers and NCOs of the British East India Company's native infantry units. Many of these

volunteers did so on a desire to quickly acquire wealth through a series of expansionist military campaigns by the East India Company.[115] Third, there were the soldiers serving on behalf of the British army, horse, and foot regiments. The distinguishing characteristic of these units was an attached prefix of "HM" (her majesty's) prior to to the regimental number of the unit.[116] Some soldiers serving under the auspices of the Crown intentionally joined with aspirations of achieving money in India, but most simply followed their respective military assignments wherever it took them.

Although distinctly different from one another, these three military classifications were neither permanent nor impermeable. In fact, a great deal of transition/migration from one category to another was quite common. For example, James Skinner began his military career as a for-hire soldier of fortune and died as a British officer and Captain Felix Smith of HM's 36th Regiment and died under the command of George Thomas, a deserter of the Royal Navy turned mercenary, who eventually established his own state and ruled from a fortress named after himself, Georgegarh.[117] Many British soldiers serving under HM's command transitioned to the East India Company's regiments with the promise of a substantially large financial bonus once their royal units left India. After the dissolution of the East India Company, some soldiers refused to re-enlist into their assigned British regiments once Britain took control of India in 1858, resulting in the

[115]Richard Holmes, *Sahib: The British Soldier in India: 1750-1914* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), xxv.

[116]Ibid., xxv.

[117]Ibid., xxvi.

White Mutiny of 1859-1861.[118] However, many soldiers continued their service under the command of the Crown.

Sometimes labels and terms define a person's status in society. British people who lived in India during the nineteenth century called themselves "Anglo-Indians," a term in contemporary times exclusively used in referring to people of mixed-race or Eurasian descent. The relations between Indians and and their British counterparts were very strong. In fact a great deal of British men and Indian women inter-married and had biracial children. These children were called "karani-log" by native Indians and, according to Walter Lawrence, "they are no longer called Eurasians, but 'Anglo-Indians.'" The former term became a mark of shame as it denoted a hybrid or mixed-race heritage with no home and was deemed negative, but Anglo-Indian was a positive title, which brought forth ideas of British power combined with native Indian traditions. In fact, one of Sir John Bennet Hearsey's (British attendant at Meerut Rebellion) Anglo-Indian sons publicly horse-whipped the editor of a British magazine for publishing an article by Rudyard Kipling that disparaged biracial people. Andrew Hearsey stated, "I will have my name treated with proper respect....descendants of the Saxons and British were called Anglo-Saxons, their descendants with the British were called Anglo-Normans, and we are therefore Anglo-Indians."[119] Many soldiers respected this new title and accepted their fellow Indian countrymen.

The change in attitudes came from a generational gap between Georgian gentlemen and their older and more socially conservative Victorian counterparts. Most of

[118]Ibid., xxvi.

[119]Ibid., xxvii.

the time, these Georgian fathers upheld their families and marriages to Indian women.[120] The relations between British soldiers and their Anglo-Indian counterparts suffered a setback when in 1792 the Court of Directors of the Honorable East India Company barred mixed-race children from service. Its decision read "no person, the son of a native Indian shall henceforth be appointed by this court to appointments in the civil, military, or marine services of the company."[121] With time, they were allowed to serve as bandsmen (member of the regimental music band) and farriers (specialists in horse hoof care), but high rank was still denied to these men. By 1829, the Court of Directors withdrew this order and allowed Anglo-Indian men the rights and rank entitled to them based upon military service.

With an understanding of the British military structure during Victorian India, the soldiers' experiences will be examined in chronological order according to timelines of specific battles. In the town of Meerut, there was a very large military compound, which held several warehouses, containing the controversial rifle cartridges. On 24 April 1857 Colonel George Carmichael-Smith, commander of the Third Bengal Light Cavalry, ordered ninety of his men to perform target practice. Nearly all of his men (all except five) refused to follow the official orders and were subsequently court-martialed and sentenced to ten years of hard labor. The commanding officer corps of the Third Bengal Light Cavalry was called in to quell the Sepoys off the parade ground and into the brig. The unit was stripped of their rank and uniforms and was paraded off into the

[120]Ibid., xxvii.

[121]Ibid., xxvii.

garrisons.[122] News of the incarcerations reached other Sepoys in more physically isolated units.

The following Sunday found a great deal of discontent throughout the bazaars and marketplaces. Many of the British officers were off-duty as Sunday was traditionally the Christian day of rest. The Sepoys set fires and angry mobs started gathering outside the military base. The Third Light Cavalry of the Bengal Army had revolted and freed eighty-five of the imprisoned soldiers.[123] In addition to the soldiers, nearly eight hundred convicted criminals were also set free upon the streets of Meerut. The junior officers who attempted to thwart the efforts of the insubordinate Sepoys were killed by their own men. Officers' and civilians' quarters were attacked. Eight women and children were killed as were four civilian men. Those Sepoys who remained loyal to their commanding officers aided in the evacuation of family members to the town of Rampur. Some fifty Sepoys were also killed in defense of Meerut. Once the British received news of this revolt, it was already too late. The rebellious groups of Sepoys left for the town of Delhi.[124]

News of the Meerut uprising spread quickly amongst the native regiments of northern India. Many British commanders and soldiers harbored trust and faith with their native Indian counterparts in a time of speculation and fears. Memoirist Major-General Sir Charles D'Oyly of the Bengal Native Army was at the time a captain in charge of a large horse depot for the army. D'Oyly employed numerous native Indian soldiers at his

---

[122]Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 239-240.

[123]Percival Spear, *Oxford History of Modern India: 1740-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 224.

[124]J.A.B. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 76-79.

depot and admired all for maintaining loyalty to their regiment.[125] Desiring to re-affirm his trust in his Sepoys, D'Oyly asked them about their opinion on the greased cartridge incident at Barrackpore. They replied, "Individually they did not think so, but that everyone was saying it was so, and that it was difficult to know what to believe or disbelieve." D'Oyly believed the Sepoys and said that they were "most respectful and certainly did not show the slightest symptoms of an inclination to mutiny."[126] The relationship between a British commander and his Indian Sepoys was one of trust and inter-dependence. The Sepoys depended on their commanders for a job and pay, whereas the British depended on Indian Sepoys for honesty in service and knowledge of local surroundings.

After receiving a letter regarding the recent Meerut rebellion, D'Oyly decided to relocate his wife and child to a nearby military fortification called the "Dum-Dumma."[127] He left his home and valuables guarded by the loyal Sepoys of the Treasury Guard at his depot. After visiting some British comrades at the Meerut barracks, D'Oyly learned that his wife died from pneumonia and that now his child was in the care of a native Indian women at a British general's home.[128] D'Oyly returned to his depot and began to organize a combined force of his regiment with that of a local Jat Sikh leader, Jumayut Singh, described as a "fine old man of undeniable courage and full of resource."[129]

---

[125]Charles D'Oyly, *Eight Months' Experience of the Sepoy Revolt in 1857* (Blandford: Henry Shipp, 1891), 3.

[126]Ibid., 4.

[127]Ibid., 6.

[128]Ibid., 7-8.

[129]ibid., 10.

D'Oyly thought of the Jats (a traditionally Hindu ethnic majority in northern India) as a "well conducted body of men" who were to be utilized as a de-facto police force against the advances of Walidad Khan, a Islamic tribal leader who allied himself with Bahadur Shah, the king of Delhi. After being informed by a loyal Sepoy of Walidad Khan's plan to attack the depot and steal the treasury, D'Oyly met with Jumayut Singh to devise a defense strategy.[130] The two men agreed that British control of the region must be maintained to preserve peaceful relations between native and foreign troops.

Singh promised D'Oyly the loyalty of all local Sikh tribes and that he would "send out scouts to Malagurh, who shall report on every movement of this villain....and sound big drums in the neighboring villages" warning of any new developments.[131] Singh even advised D'Oyly to send a message to Khan warning that any attack on the depot would result in numerous casualties at the hands of Sikh and British soldiers. In a surprising turn of events, D'Oyly followed Singh's suggestion and managed not only to secure the safety of the depot throughout the rebellion, but also to smuggle the treasury safely out to the British cavalry in Meerut. D'Oyly trusted the native Sepoys so much that they were the lone transporters of the treasury and were rewarded with "three months' pay in advance, besides a gratuity, and certificates of good behavior....and when the rebellion was over they would be rewarded and promoted."[132] Through cooperation and trust, D'Oyly demonstrated that British and native Indian Sepoys could work together to ensure military victories against the rebels.

---

[130]Ibid., 11-12.

[131]Ibid., 13.

[132]Ibid., 14-15.

Through his personal memoirs, another instance of British and Sepoy cooperation is seen in Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop's military account of the activities of his regiment known as the "Khakee Ressalah" (referring to the brown color of their uniforms), operating officially as the Meerut Volunteer Horse unit. Lieutenant-Colonel Dunlop was a volunteer officer in the Meerut Volunteer Horse regiment serving in India during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. Dunlop learned of the Meerut rebellion while in the Himalayas, due to a medical condition that required a cooler climate. Dunlop then made his way back to Simla and noticed that the Sepoys serving in the Nusseeree Battalion revolted and stated that the battalion "did not possess so many of those brave little fellows, the Gurkhas, as the Simoor and other Hill corps, had there been none but Gurkhas in the regiment, it is probable no cause for anxiety would have arisen." Then Dunlop makes an interesting analysis and distinction about the people of India when he stated that "many in England seem to class all tribes of Indians together, whereas the Hillmen and the Sikhs are less like the Poorbeas than Englishmen are like Russians or the men of European Turkey."[133] Clearly, Dunlop admired the skill and loyalty of the Sepoys under his command.

Upon reaching Karnal, Dunlop was assigned to lead a group of native Sepoy riflemen to fortify the camp. As an expert hunter, Dunlop's expertise and skills were utilized to help in the defense against rebellious Sepoys. Dunlop described his unit as "noble-looking fellows the Guide Corps, from the Peshwar frontier...." and that they "were a powerful looking and admirably equipped body of men." In fact, Dunlop recounted that one of his men actually encountered one of the rebellious Meerut Sepoys

---

[133]Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop, *Service and Adventure with the Khakee Ressalah or Meerut Volunteer Horse during the Mutinies of 1857-1858* (London: Richard Bentley Publishing, 1858), 5.

outside the camp. Dunlop described the battle with a sense of awe as "the head of a mutineer regular was swept from his body."[134] The efficiency and skill of Dunlop's rifle unit eventually led to the creation of the Meerut Volunteer Horse regiment. Dunlop encountered Major-General Charles D'Oyly near the outskirts of Meerut and was commissioned with expanding his riflemen to a group consisting of "European civil, and other officers, then refugees in Meerut." The threat of Walidad Khan hastened the formation of such a large force. Dunlop was unsuccessful in recruiting a sufficient quantity of soldiers, but within a few days, he was able to create an impressive number of volunteers called the "Khakee Ressalah."[135] With D'Oyly serving as second in command, the Khakee Ressalah expanded to an even larger unit consisting of "a troop of Englishmen, Eurasians, and Sikhs" who were "fit for duty."[136] The next step for Dunlop's regiment was the defeat of Walidad Khan's forces and the recapture of the Meerut district.

The most dangerous battle for the Khakee Ressalah occurred in a small village called Seekree just outside Meerut. A group of Khan's forces, known ethnically as Goojurs, captured a vital passageway between Meerut and Delhi, threatening to destroy the only bridge connecting two main roads used by British forces.[137] The Goojurs already destroyed several Sikh Jat villages along their way to Seekree. In fact, Dunlop stated that they "dug up three guns which were concealed underground, and mounted them on this

---

[134]Ibid., 15-16.

[135]Ibid., 55.

[136]Ibid., 56.

[137]Ibid., 57.

fort in furtherance of the plan to establish a Goojur government."[138] The Khakee Ressalah approached the small village within a day's time and managed to surprise the Goojur network of reconnaissance spies. Dunlop's unit entered the village, only to encounter an angry mob of peasants who began to fire upon the soldiers. After several exchanges of fire, the peasants returned to cover and began firing large cannons mounted on top of surrounding buildings. D'Oyly breached the fortress door but was shot through the neck and nearly severed his left hand. The battle lasted five hours with the Khakee Ressalah using a twelve-pound howitzer gun to destroy the three Goojur cannons and infiltrate the fortress. According to Dunlop, in particular "two of the party distinguished themselves." Both Sepoys displayed bravery during the Seekree battle as Dunlop recounted that they "requested me to give them a lift, and being light weight sent them over the wall where a good chance stood of them receiving the contents of any spare matchlocks that might be ready."[139] Dunlop summarized his thoughts on Sepoy bravery in a scenario where they "pursue their enemy with commendable energy and vigor, rushing on with a courage bordering on reckless indifference to danger."[140] Dunlop's unit quickly recaptured the vital territory and managed to secure most of the Meerut district without outside aid.

On 11 May 1857, the first units of the rebellious Sepoys reached the king of Delhi and demanded his cooperation in the revolt. The king largely ignored their complaints, although many in his personal court had secretly already joined the rebels. Fearing for his

---

[138]Ibid., 57.

[139]Ibid., 76.

[140]Ibid., 77.

own life, Bahadur Shah allied himself with the Sepoys.[141] He declared himself emperor of all India and issued coins with his name on them to substantiate his sovereignty as a Muslim ruler.[142] There was a terrific explosion several miles outside of the city, near a large garrison that contained most of the Bengal Army's surplus ammunition. The nine British guards, who protected the cache of weaponry, decided to destroy the garrison as opposed to seeing it fall into the hands of the three rebellious Sepoy brigades. Six of the men died; but the explosion also killed many bystanders within the vicinity, which allowed the Sepoys to actually seize the ammunition without any resistance.

The difficulty in military organization hindered the Company's forces from swiftly quelling the rebellion. The Company established a military base in the northern part of the city, where the Siege of Delhi originated. The siege lasted from July 1 to September 1.[143] During most of the battle, the Company forces were greatly outnumbered and disease, exhaustion, and incessant attacks from organized Sepoy units reduced the Company's will to keep fighting. The united forces of British and Sikh soldiers were able to eventually break through the column of Sepoy combatants. British commander John Nicholson led these forces onto subsequent victories by August.[144] At the end of the month the rebels offered terms of surrender, which were "honorably" refused. The Company forces initiated a military directive at the city gates on the fourteenth, but

---

[141]He was the last Mughal emperor in Indian history; J.A.B. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, 124-128.

[142]Michael Edwardes, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), 27-29.

[143]Ibid., 32-35.

[144]Ibid., 39-42.

received heavy casualties including Nicholson himself. Eventually in a week's time, the Company reached the Sepoy's "Red Fortress" and retook the city.

Memoirist Reginald Garton Wilberforce served in HMs 52nd Light Infantry during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. Wilberforce was transferred to the 52nd under Lord Hardinge's command in an effort to bolster Commander Nicholson's forces in the Punjab region of India. Nicholson faced fierce resistance during the Siege of Delhi as many organized Sepoy units prevented any British military advance into the city.[145] With help from the 52nd Light Infantry and loyal Sikh Sepoys, Nicholson's forces gained victories over larger and more organized rebel units. Wilberforce's unit was forced to leave most of their supplies at base camp, as they headed out for Umballa and then Delhi. The 46th Native Infantry was charged with guarding these goods, as Wilberforce recounted, "everything valuable that the regiment had except for some wonderful Chateau Margaux, was left in the custody of these loyal Sepoys."[146] Wilberforce relied heavily on his Sikh Sepoy counterparts for help with navigating the harsh desert terrain and methods of conserving personal rations of water. At a regional council meeting of regimental commanders, Wilberforce recounted that "colonel after colonel declared that whatever others might be, the soldiers he commanded were loyal to their salt-were devoted to the English-and would shed the last drop of their blood for the Sirkar."[147] Commanders, such as Nicholson, instilled notions of respect and admiration for loyal Sepoys into their

---

[145]Reginald Garton Wilberforce, *An Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny: Being of the Personal Reminiscences of Reginald Garton Wilberforce, Late 52nd Light Infantry, Compiled from a Diary and Written on the Spot* (London: John Murray, 1894), 2-3.

[146]Ibid., 6.

[147]Ibid., 11.

British soldiers. A culture of cooperation and trust fused these moveable columns together in times of uncertainty and struggle.

Throughout his military memoirs, Captain Julius George Medley of HM Bengal Engineers fought several key battles during the Sepoy Rebellion with most of his time spent at Delhi and the struggle to retake the city from rebel forces. Medley's main task was to erect platforms for the howitzer cannons and also to construct ammunition magazines to hold the regiment's weaponry. Leading up to the assault on Delhi, Medley's work parties consisted mostly of native Sepoy laborers.[148] Medley recounted that the Sepoys possessed "passive courage so common to natives that, as man after man was knocked over, they would stop a moment, weep a little bit for their fallen friend, pop his body in a row along with the rest and then work on as before."[149] The heavily fortified city of Delhi provided great challenges to British regiments as the Engineers were called on to breach the walls with ladders and lead the way into the gates. Medley had a policy of releasing enemy prisoners based on ethnicity. Several loyal Bhishti Sepoys impressed Medley so much that the "rebel Bhishtis were spared out of respect for their fraternity, and many a windfall of loot from the bodies of the slain did our regimental Bhishtis get ahold of."[150] The act of releasing any captured rebel Sepoy was rare, but, as Medley displayed, the respect and brotherhood shared between British officer and Sepoy was stronger than the rebellion itself.

---

[148]Captain Julius George Medley, *A Year's Campaigning in India: March 1857 to March 1858* (London: W. Thacker, 1858)*, 82-83.*

[149]Ibid., 83.

[150]Ibid., 93.

Upon breaching the city walls, the British forces faced close-quarter street fighting between rebellious Sepoy brigades that had the advantage of knowing the schematics of the Delhi palace. Many British commanders utilized Sepoy units, instead of British regiments, during the assault on Delhi, due to this fact. Medley recalled seeing many brigades of Sepoy forces directing British soldiers in battle within the city. In fact, he said that "no other officer was well acquainted with the localities of the place and after the most strenuous exertions of the European officers, the column was compelled to retreat, covered by the Gurkhas of Reid's battalion in their usual cool manner."[151] This was one instance in which Sepoy units led British forces in battle during the rebellion and displayed leadership traits that legitimized their military rank.

In June of 1857, the Cawnpore units of Sepoy armies began to rebel. The British commanding officer, Hugh Massy Wheeler, neglected to fortify and efficiently supply the British military base there. His choice to rely on native cooperation and respect would ultimately prove to be his own undoing.[152] The local prince of the region, Nana Sahib, offered the British safe passage to Allahabad, provided they leave on the night of the twenty-sixth. Nana Sahib was revered by the Sikh Sepoys who rebelled, as he was the heir to the Maratha throne. From the Sikh perspective, the Maratha royalty was considered an integral component of the traditional ruling class in pre-colonial India, equally as vital as the Mughal royalty was to Islamic Indians.

The British survivors of the Cawnpore battle left their quarters on the morning of the twenty-seventh, headed for the Ganges River. There were several large boats awaiting

---

[151]Ibid., 110.

[152]Ibid., 69-70.

the British. Most of the Sepoys who remained loyal to the British were removed from duty because of their sympathies. Also, the few surviving British soldiers of the siege who were supposed to tail the boats were secretly killed. The river was lined with Sepoys on both sides as they had a clear vantage point. Once the captain waved for the departure, the crew abandoned ship and set fire to the boats. The armed Sepoys, located on the river banks, opened fire on the British onboard the boats. Only four men escaped; all others were either shot or captured. All of the surviving women and children were taken prisoner and held at the local palace. Over two hundred and six men, women, and children were held captive for two weeks in their Bibighar confines. [153] Outbreaks of cholera and dysentery were frequent, as the small prison was not meant to hold that quantity of people.[154]

Nana Sahib became aware of advancing Company forces from Allahabad a few weeks into his decision to hold the British survivors hostage. In July of 1857, he decided to kill all of the survivors in order to alleviate himself of the burden of keeping them alive. He ordered the Sepoys to carry out the deed, but they refused. A small band of his personal bodyguards entered the Bibighar confines, armed only with knives and hatchets, and killed everyone within the prison. Nana Sahib then ordered their bodies to either be dumped into one of two wells or the Ganges River itself. After the incident, Nana Sahib fled to Nepal and eluded capture by the British but ultimately died of cholera. This incident polarized the conflict for the British as retaliation was both swift and brutal. After the British recaptured the city, the soldiers escorted the Sepoy prisoners to the

---

[153]This was the residence of the local magistrate.

[154]Lawrence James, *Raj*, 250-251.

Bibighar and forced them to lick the walls clean with their tongues. All of the captured Sepoys were then promptly executed.[155]

Memoirist Colonel George Bourchier of HMs Bengal Horse Artillery commanded the Number 17 Light Field Battery. Bourchier's regiment was attached to Sir Colin Campbell's movable column en route from Lucknow. The united forces reached the rebellious Sepoy entrenchment at Cawnpore and began crossing the Ganges River to establish a base-camp.[156] According to intelligence gathered by Bourchier's men, the rebels accumulated a force of "25,000 men....thirty-six guns in number, together with a few guns from the Nana." The British devised a plan to attack from the defeated General Windham's old position to mask the true size of the new force.[157] The forces split up to attack Cawnpore on each side of the rebel entrenchment. Bourchier's regiment supplied artillery fire from the adjoining river bank to provide cover for advancing infantry. Bourchier noted the courage of the loyal Sepoy brigades when he stated that, "the Sikhs of the 4th Punjab Infantry, thrown into skirmishing order, supported by H.M.'s 53rd, attacked the enemy in some old mounds to our left with great vigor." As a direct result of this unified force, the British were able to recapture Cawnpore and demolish the enemy's heavy artillery positioned upon the city walls.[158] After the recapture of Cawnpore, Bourchier's regiment headed for Lucknow and reconvened with Campbell.

---

[155]Ibid., 252.

[156]Colonel George Bourchier, *Eight Months' Campaign against the Bengal Sepoy Army during the Mutiny of 1857* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1858), 170-171.

[157]Ibid., 171.

[158]Ibid., 174.

The Sepoy Rebellion memoirs of General Sir James Hope Grant revealed a sentiment of unity between Sepoys and their British counterparts. Grant was Brigadier General of the British cavalry serving in India, answerable only to Sir Colin Campbell, commander-in-chief of military operations. After aiding in the recapture of Delhi, Grant's cavalry headed towards Cawnpore where Nana Sahib was still believed to reside.[159] Grant's unit was sent to Cawnpore once news reached them about the attack on General Windham's regiment inside the city. Grant commented on the same regiment of Sikh Sepoys that Bourchier had during the battle for Cawnpore. The Sikhs of the 4th Punjab Infantry led the attack on the city walls as Grant stated that "nothing could withstand the impetuous attack made by the Sikhs and the Europeans."[160] After the recapture of the city, Grant's regiment was ordered to pursue the enemy down river and investigate Bithoor, Nana Sahib's residence. Grant's unit pursued the rebels to the Serai Ghat, a river crossing near Allahabad.

The rebels mistook the approaching British caravan for a nomadic group of Indian goat-herders. The Sikhs of the 4th Punjab Infantry charged the rebel group, managing to "easily overtake them."[161] The surviving rebellious Sepoys scattered and headed south down the river. After dispatching the remaining rebels, Grant's next goal was to reclaim several stolen cannons, which were submerged in quicksand along the river bank. Once again, the Sikhs led the operation as "they were of great assistance, they worked like

---

[159]James Hope Grant, *Incidents in the Sepoy War: 1857-1858. Compiled from Private Journals of General Sir Hope Grant G.C.B. Together with some Explanatory Chapters by Henry Knollys* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1873), 159-160.

[160]Ibid., 206.

[161]Ibid., 209.

dray-horses hauling the bullocks out by their heads and tails."[162] Grant's unit retrieved the precious guns and then destroyed the vacated palace of Nana Sahib along their way with Campbell's force to Lucknow.

Another significant battle during the rebellion was that of Lucknow within the newly annexed territory of Oudh. The siege began just after the outbreak at Meerut. The British commander, Henry Lawrence, positioned himself within the military base with efficient fortifications. The rebels used explosives and underground tunnels to infiltrate the compound and eventually reduced the British forces to small pockets of resistance. On 25 September 1857, the Company unit led by Henry Havelock reached Lucknow on its way back from Cawnpore. The small company of soldiers was able to defeat several larger Sepoy units.[163] However, the unit was eventually forced to join Lawrence's group within the compound. In October, another Company unit reached Lucknow and by November the group led by Colin Campbell successfully evacuated the survivors to Cawnpore. Within the beginning of 1858, Campbell returned to Lucknow to push the Sepoys out of the Oudh region.[164] He faced several pockets of disorganized rebel Sepoy groups, which eventually fled South.

Memoirist James Wise was a doctor attached the East India Company's Native Artillery regiment at Meerut. Wise's regiment moved with Colin Campbell's column on the road toward Lucknow. Wise cared for many injured Sikh infantry soldiers and noted on one occasion that "a mine was sprung and about two hundred of our men, principally

---

[162]Ibid., 213.

[163]Richard Collier, *The Great Indian Mutiny* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1964), 289-291.

[164]Ibid.,, 338.

Sikhs were carried up....it is truly lamentable losing men this way, men before whom the enemy does not dare to stand."[165] Wise recognized the admiration and fear that was felt by rebellious Sepoys against the Sikh Native Infantry. The Sikh infantry fought against Muslim invaders centuries before the arrival of British colonizers and as a result seemed to foster a hesitation to fight against their Sikh counterparts.

Memoirist A.R.D. Mackenzie of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry was an officer at the time of the rebellion. He served with many loyal Sikh Sepoy brigades, who served as guides to the British forces unfamiliar with the Indian terrain. Mackenzie's unit headed to the south of Lucknow, in an effort to cut off the rebels' escape path, once flushed out of the city.[166] Mackenzie fostered a great deal of camaraderie with his Sikh counterparts. In particular, he recounted that his unit became separated and that he found himself alone against a rebel Sepoy outside the city. The rebel fumbled for his pistol, as Mackenzie fired six shots, missing the man each time. Mackenzie dismounted his horse and killed the rebel with several gashes from his sword. After seeing several Sepoys escaping in the distance, he called for his native Sepoy attendant to bring the long-range Lancaster rifle. Other sepoys explained that, "Don't you know Sahib, that your orderly has been killed."[167] The loyal Sepoy secretly followed Mackenzie and was the recipient of the rebel's final shot.

---

[165]James Wise M.D., *Diary of a Medical Officer during the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857* (Cork: Guy and Company, 1894), 243.

[166]A.R.D. Mackenzie, *A Cavalry Officer during the Sepoy Revolt: Experiences with the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, the Guides and Sikh Irregular Cavalry from the Outbreak of the Indian Mutiny to Delhi and Lucknow* (London: Leonaur, 1891), 114.

[167]Ibid., 118.

The shot fatally wounded the Sepoy and Mackenzie called for a medical transport to base camp. Mackenzie lamented that "my worst fears were realized, he was dead." A truly grief-stricken Mackenzie also faced the young Sepoy's father at base camp. The older Sepoy came to inquire about his son, not knowing of his death. Mackenzie recalled that "my heart was too full to speak." As was custom with Sikh Sepoys, the father attempted to replace his son as Mackenzie's attendant. Mackenzie replied, "I am not ashamed to say that this touching act of simple, unaffected Spartan fortitude completely unmanned me."[168] Stories similar to that of Mackenzie demonstrate a mutual contract of loyalty between British officer and loyal Sepoy that characterized the British army during the rebellion.

The British victory was ensured at Jhansi. The prince of Jhansi died without a legitimate heir to the throne and his wife, Rani Lackshmi Bai, was forced to abdicate her royal titles and rights under the Doctrine of Lapse. This document restricted her adopted son from assuming the throne and carrying on the family's right to rule. Once the rebellion broke out, the Rani gave British civilians safety within her palace. She arranged their evacuation, but once the British left the protection of her fortress, they were killed by rebel Sepoys just outside her palace.[169] The territory of Jhansi was constantly under pressures of war from within its own state. The Rani had just defeated two invading armies from neighboring provinces in October of 1857. The Central India Field Force Company unit led by Hugh Rose, infiltrated the city and successfully captured the entire region. The Rani managed to escape and fled to the city of Gwalior. By June of 1858,

---

[168]Ibid., 119.

[169]Michael Edwardes, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny*, 160-162.

Rani defeated British sympathizers and captured the fortress within the center of the region. By 16 June 1858, the army led by Rose entered the city and defeated the rebel groups, thus solidifying the British victory of the Sepoy Rebellion.[170] Gwalior was the last stronghold of Sepoy resistance and Rose's elite force managed to breach the city walls and, within nineteen days, recapture the fortress.

The military memoirs of Major-General Sir Owen Tudor Burne praised the courage and honor with which the Sepoys served. Burne was the military secretary to Sir Colin Campbell, the commander-in-chief of military operations. Burne describes the many struggles that faced Hugh Rose's small Central India Field Force Company during the final battles. In particular, the battle for Gwalior became the defining moment for Rose as a commander. After the fall of Jhansi, Rose's unit secured the road to Gwalior with the aid of loyal Sepoy regiments. The 25th Bombay Native Infantry was utilized as a decoy unit to lure the rebels into close range for attacks. Rose noted that the "Native Infantry, under cover of the guns, cleared the woods, temples, and walled gardens." Rose implemented a military strategy that utilized Sepoy and British units in tandem operations. His force was so efficient that he wrote the Governor-General, stating that "another claim to the obligations I owe this regiment for their very distinguished conduct at all times in the field."[171] Rose's unit was small in size, but he retained confidence in the fact that his British forces, bolstered with the native Sepoy brigades, could win any battle to end the rebellion. Once again, Rose wrote of his affinity for his troops as "these

---

[170]Ibid., 170-172.

[171]Sir Owen Tudor Burne, Rulers of India: Clyde and Strathnairn (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1891), 127.

noble soldiers whose successes were never checked by a reverse, with a discipline which was as enduring as their courage never proffered one complaint."[172] With the combined efforts of both native and British regiments, the rebels at Gwalior were routed and the fortress secured for another victory.

Memoirist Sergeant William Forbes-Mitchell of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders fought in several key battles during the Rebellion. In particular, the battles for Gwalior and the war against the Gwalior Contingent of rebellious Sepoys were a major emphasis on Forbes-Mitchell's recollections. The infamous Gwalior Contingent consisted of "twenty-five thousand well-disciplined troops, with about ten thousand of the Nana Sahib's Mahrattas and all the budmashes of Cawnpore, Jhansi, and Gwalior, under command of the Nana in person."[173] Forbes-Mitchell's brigade was attached to Campbell's moveable column of the 53rd and 4th Punjab Infantry units. The military objective was to encircle the rebels' camp and push the rebellious Sepoys straight into the oncoming advance of the lancers. Forbes-Mitchell recalled that "Sir Colin led the advance, the Fifty-Third and Fourth Punjab Infantry in skirmishing order, with the Ninety-Third in line."[174] As the troops rounded the camp, the rebels opened fire, but as Forbes-Mitchell noted "nothing daunted, our skirmishers soon lined the canal and our line advanced." The native Sepoy units led the charge against the Gwalior Contingent, without any hesitation. Forbes-Mitchell even recalled thinking that the rebels "had different men to meet from those whom they had encountered under Windham a week

---

[172]Ibid., 132.

[173]Sergeant William Forbes-Mitchell, Reminiscences of the Great Mutiny including the Relief and Siege and Capture of Lucknow and the Campaigns in Rohilcund and Oude (London: Macmillan and Company, 1893), 139.

[174]Ibid., 139-140.

before."[175] With the help of the Sepoy brigades, the British forces routed the enemy into retreat by sunset.

The feelings expressed within these military memoirs of the Sepoy Rebellion revealed senses of mutual admiration, brotherhood, and gratitude that British commanding officers had for their native sepoy regiments. Contrary to contemporary historiography on the British interpretation of the Sepoy Rebellion, they understood the distinction between loyalist and rebel Sepoy brigades. The British imagination and understanding of the Sepoy Rebellion was more fragmented than most contemporary historians believe. The brotherhood and general feeling of camaraderie between the British soldiers and their native Sepoys was an enduring relationship that lasted through WWII and ended with the partition of India in 1947. After the end of both the East India Company and the Rebellion itself in 1858, the military was reorganized to include higher positions for native Indian soldiers, thus reducing the feeling of a patriarchal system. This change allowed for a more widespread level of acceptance and authority for Indian soldiers throughout the country. In some instances Indian Sepoys commanded British soldiers, something thought impossible during the Rebellion. Through a common struggle, these men also came to understand each other better than ever before or perhaps since.

[175]Ibid., 140.

Chapter Four
Hot off the Presses: British Perspectives in Print

Sensationalism, political satire, and romantic-gothic imagery typified the British Victorian novel and print industry. International and domestic struggles both altered and influenced printed media during the Victorian period. Historically, the Victorian period is divided into the three segments of early (1837 to 1850), middle (1851-1870), and late (1871-onward).[176] The most socially turbulent and politically unstable of the three periods, the middle Victorian age encompassed the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Sepoy Rebellion (1857-1858), and the Second Opium War (1856-1860). The expansive British Empire was challenged and threatened by foreign colonies that sought British foreign policy change and social equality.

Before analyzing the representation of the Sepoy Rebellion in literature, the ideas and general literary themes of authors in mid-Victorian Britain must be understood. Literature in mid-Victorian Britain focused on the domestic front of society, casting off doubts and fears of foreign engagements. The previous century harbored much war and instability. The distinction between the previous generation of Georgians and the subsequent Victorian period can be seen as a reaction against what Victorians perceived as moral frailties, such as the rise of gin production and other vices.[177] Still, most of what became associated with mid-Victorian literature began with the erosion of the Enlightenment's focus on reason and its replacement with sentimentalism and romanticism.

---

[176]John Gardiner*, The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), 4.

[177]Ibid., 5.

Notions of imperialism also greatly played a major role in defining literary Victorian themes. These concepts, rooted in Evangelical belief, led Britain to expand and colonize many foreign lands publicly in the name of religion, but primarily for financial gain. It was in fact this religious burden to civilize the non-Christian world, that led to conflict with Britain's most valuable colony, India. Britain's foreign policy aimed at protecting its connection with India, not necessarily protecting its domestic domain.[178] As a result of this phenomenon of foreign policy, in literature Britain came to view Russia as its primary adversary, not Germany.

In actuality, Germany was Great Britain's newly "emerging rival" and the distinction came as a contrast of a "path of complete bourgeois triumph as against Germany's holding onto 'feudalism.'"[179] Germany's late Industrial Revolution was shaped by the unique Junker aristocracy of Prussian military descent, very different in comparative wealth and political belief than Great Britain's aristocracy.[180] This Prussian nationalistic/militaristic attitude pushed Germany away from close relations with Great Britain and into mutual conflict through both world wars. Russia's imperial expansion surrounding India caused the most unrest in many novels.[181] "The Great Game" (as evident in Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim)* was a political and military stalemate between the two most powerful empires during the middle Victorian period (Russia and Great Britain) that was a direct result of Britain's desire to protect India.

---

[178]Ibid., 8.

[179]Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit: 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 8.

[180]Ibid., 9.

[181]Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect*, 8.

The three largest factors that influenced mid-Victorian literature were rapid population growth, Industrial Revolution, and a dramatic surge in Victorian literacy. Britain's population reached 24,000,000 in 1831 and by 1901 it reached 41,000,000.[182] The Victorians believed in sustaining a large and strong home for future generations to ensure the family's social position in society. Perhaps more than any other generation, the Victorians placed a strong level of emphasis on class and wealth. The origin of the Victorian emphasis on social value and its correlation to wealth was traced back to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the ruling, land-owning aristocracy of Great Britain.[183] As the Industrial Revolution began, the traditional land-owning gentry accommodated the newly emerging middle class with similar value systems based in capitalistic belief. Thus, the middle class became socially subservient to the aristocracy through "cultural hegemony," a reshaping of its value system in a passive role to mirror that of the non-industrial gentry's emphasis on accruing wealth (previously land and now money).[184] One's social value was associated with the amount of money earned and the type of job in which the husband was employed. In most cases, this created a self-defeating cycle for middle class people as it became almost impossible to break out of poverty until the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution brought rapid changes to everyday life in Great Britain. Many novels detailed the perceived evils that the Industrial Revolution brought to a placid, Victorian way of life. Greed, pollution, and oppression upon lower-class workers by negligent employers typified literature than came to be known as the "condition of

---

[182]Ibid. 9.

[183]Wiener, *English Culture*, 8.

[184]Ibid., 8.

England" dystopian, gothic novel. From Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) to Elizabeth Gaskell's 1848 novel *Mary Barton*, these themes predominated in the stories produced during a time of social upheaval that was as much reactionary against change as it was social commentary.[185] Change was not particularly popular amongst literary Victorians as they believed it upset the natural balance of things. The Industrial Revolution managed to not only upset the natural balance of things but also allowed the middle-class citizens of England the ability to financially manage their way out of destitution and social deference to higher class elites. A new upper-middle-class was created through industrialization, which was "shaped by the gentlemanly ideal" and were "generally more relaxed, more cultivated, and more detached from economic struggle than its predecessors."[186] Most of these new wealthy elites resented their parents' values and sought to replace them with a more refined and socially utopian and intellectual system. Industrialization also created political cleavages between traditional cities that were allotted representation in Parliament and newly emerging industrial centers, such as Manchester and Leeds (with combined populations totaling over 5,000,000).[187] These "pocket boroughs" represented the traditional land-owning class that were reduced to ghost towns by the middle 1800s and replaced by these new urban centers of power with no MPs for representation.

The surge in literacy rates during the Victorian era in Britain actually began in the late Romantic Period (1790-1830) when authors sought more sophisticated and flowery ways of explaining human relations and emotions in light of the Industrial Revolution.

---

[185]Gardiner, The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect, 13.

[186]Wiener, *English Culture*, 30.

[187]Gardiner, The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect, 13

According to William St. Clair's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period,* there was a dramatic shift in literacy beginning in the late eighteenth century. This drastic increase in readership was made possible by advances in printing technology that were "essentially unchanged since they were devised and put in place in the late fifteenth century and altered in the late eighteenth."[188] This advance in technology allowed readers from different social and financial backgrounds the ability to purchase, rent, or borrow texts and eventually develop a desire for more books.

St. Clair stated that "the rapid expansion in reading occurred across all strata of society, whether categorized by income, by occupation, by educational attainment, by geographical location, by age, or by gender."[189] This change in British culture was permanent as "the romantic period marked the start of a continuing, self-sustaining, expansion, a take-off in the reading nation's equivalent to the take-off in manufacturing production which accelerated at about the same rate."[190] Thus, advances in manufacturing and printing technology that got Britons interested in reading, largely through the serialization of books in weekly installments, creating a cliff-hanger ending that was continued in the following issue.

In 1810, stereotyping, a new printing and copying technique, was developed that allowed a faster and more cost efficient manner of producing books in a large quantity. The process began after the book was set in a moveable type and the proofs were corrected. The printers created a plaster mold of the type and poured molten metal into it,

---

[188]William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2.

[189]Ibid., 11.

[190]Ibid., 13.

which made it "possible to make a durable metal plate, in effect a duplicate of each sheet of moveable type."[191] This process made reprinting new editions of old texts much easier, as "after a number of copies had been printed from the first edition made by moveable type, and the type put back in the cases for use on the next order, as many copies as were required could be run off from the plates."[192] This advance in printing technology sped up the mass production of books and made it much more
cost effective for printers to reproduce old texts as well as newly written books. After a few small technical problems were fixed with the molds, the printing industry standards "…by 1839 it was said that 100,000 impressions could be taken from one set of plates, and with care a million, and the invention of paper molds and electrotypes soon afterwards raised the potential output figures even higher."[193] Through an advancement in the reproduction of printing, reading became cheaper and more accessible to Britons of any financial standing.

In reaction to this advance in printing technology, a popular desire for reading from the working class and policy changes in public education from wealthy elites in Parliament further shaped the surge in literacy during the Victorian period. In David Mitch's *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy,* the strong desire for reading from the working class in Great Britain created a demand for reprints of older texts along with copies of newly written books. A sharp fall in the price of newspapers helped facilitate the working class's desire

---

[191]Ibid., 182.

[192]Ibid.

[193]Ibid., 184.

to read and keep up to date on sporting events and other popular topics of discussion at work. By the 1830s, the price of a newspaper was seven pence; in comparison, a farmer earned about fifteen to twenty-five pence daily, whereas city laborers earned thirty-five to forty-five pence daily.[194] The price of a popular novel was sixteen schillings in 1828. In 1830, the cost of mailing a letter was more than six pence. The Royal Post Office exploited and financially over-taxed Britons by making the act of mailing a letter almost unaffordable for the working class.

Although Britons received reading lessons in schools, through corporate greed and over-pricing texts, those in control of disseminating texts to the working classes prevented them from using their newly discovered literacy skills. By the middle of the nineteenth century, newspaper prices decreased sharply as "the removal of the stamp and paper taxes as well as improvements in printing technology and paper manufacture" facilitated a more affordable way working class Britons could read and write.[195] The heavy stamp tax was abolished in 1855 and the cost to mail a letter dropped to a penny after new reforms of the Royal Post Office were instituted by Rowland Hill (British teacher and social reformer) in 1839.[196] Finally after many decades of heavy taxation, the working class in Great Britain read many texts and mailed letters to family members in an effort to practice writing and master literacy skills they only recently received.

In conjunction with a popular desire to read from the working class, reforms in public policies regarding education drastically aided in the surge in literacy rates in

---

[194]David Franklin Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 47.

[195]Ibid., 48.

[196]Ibid.

Victorian Britain. Education during the mid-Victorian period was "primarily acquired through formal schooling during childhood."[197] Mitch identified three variables that influenced the cost of acquiring literacy skills. The fees and physical location of the school determined whether the family could afford to send the child. Second, the quality of the education offered at schools varied, so for the price a student might receive a good curriculum or a far inferior lesson might be administered. Finally, the "opportunity cost" of attending the school came into a family's decision of whether their child was sent to school.[198] Mitch also identified that some social trends influenced all three factors. The decline in child labor and the increase in adult labor greatly influenced a family's ability to send their children to school.

Private organizations began subsidizing public education through large financial grants and investments in the construction of school buildings, teacher-training centers, and teacher-certification programs. As early as the seventeenth century, private organizations like the Society for the Preservation of Christian Knowledge began funding educational programs for the poor in Britain.[199] Through the establishment of Sunday schools in the early nineteenth century, other organizations like, the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, spear-headed efforts to create a public education system for the working class. As a result, Parliament set aside funds for the construction of elementary schools in affiliation with the National, British, and Foreign School Societies. The Committee of Council on

---

[197]Ibid., 111.

[198]Ibid.

[199]Ibid.

Education was also established and created a standardized curriculum and defined standards for teaching certification.[200] Attendance drastically rose and "between 1820 and 1880 the proportion of the population enrolled in elementary day schools that received some form of subsidy increased fivefold." This event was followed by "compulsory school laws," which mandated children attended these public school through strict enforcement.[201] Through state intervention and private subsidies, public education aided in the literacy surge that swept Victorian Britain.

Finally, literature of the mid-Victorian period owed a great deal to the new urbanization that spread throughout Great Britain during the middle 1800s. In literature, the use of gothic and romantic imagery was a tool to remember times of simpler, more human ways of living. By 1851, surveys showed that more people lived in cities and towns than in the more remote countryside.[202] This is remarkable because for the first time, people changed the ways in which they connected with other people. Many authors detailed the horrid conditions of urban cities with "clanking factories, and a population-swollen society."[203] The use of imaginary and sensationalized scenarios revealed a social commentary and message to readers that perhaps technology and "progress" did not benefit mankind for the better.[204] This created a schizophrenic literary duality between desires to return to the past through escapism with desires to push forward with industrialization.

---

[200]Ibid., 112.

[201]Ibid., 113.

[202]Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect*, 16.

[203]Ibid.

[204]Ibid., 17.

With an understanding of the general literary themes of mid-Victorian literature and the context for the mid-Victorian belief system, the representation of the Sepoy Rebellion in Victorian literature can be analyzed. In 1897, author Hilda Gregg wrote in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* that "of all the great events of this century, as they are reflected in fiction, the Indian Mutiny has taken the firmest hold on the popular imagination." In a comparative approach Gregg stated that "the impression made on imaginative literature by the Crimean War is a very faint one."[205] The importance and influence that the Sepoy Rebellion had on the British imagination is truly significant. The Sepoy Rebellion was the second in a series of three military conflicts during the middle Victorian period. However, the Rebellion of 1857 was unique in that, it not only threatened to replace British rule in India, but also created the possibility that Russia could usurp power and assume control of the highly profitable colony. The Sepoy Rebellion also revealed weaknesses in British foreign policy and the instability of the East India Company's governance and military capabilities. The subsequent literature that was influenced by the Rebellion reflected both British frustration with the government's ability to manage such a large and diverse foreign colony as India and also respect and affection for loyal Indians who refused to join the rebels. No other imperial event during the middle Victorian period of 1851-1870 influenced the British imagination as much as the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857.

As there are numerous novels that detail or are directly influenced by the Sepoy Rebellion, seven of the most popular are discussed in chronological order of publication. The first novel to be discussed was written by Wilkie Collins. Collins was born in 1824

---

[205]Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 199.

in London and spent the most formative years of his young adult life with his family in Italy. His father's death in 1847 inspired Collins to publish his first novel, *Memoirs of the Life of Wilkie Collins.* In 1851, Collins met Charles Dickens, with whom he edited Dickens's popular magazine, *Household Words,* and became life-long friends.[206] Unfortunately, Collins suffered from rheumatic gout, a form of arthritis, and became severely addicted to laudanum (opium).[207] Collins never married but did father three children out of wedlock.[208] Collins even maintained two relationships with different women simultaneously until his death in 1889.

The 1868 novel *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins did not directly deal with the Sepoy Rebellion but was certainly influenced by and contained attitudes toward Indians that were shaped by the Sepoy Rebellion. The novel's prologue was set in India during 1799, the novel's central plot occurred in 1848, and the novel itself was published in 1868. The fact that none of these dates is 1857 was irrelevant because the aftermath of the Sepoy Rebellion loomed heavy in the background in nearly every scene and in the portrayal of the three Indian Brahmin priests. *The Moonstone* was the first English detective novel to be published and used the story's plot to reveal British attitudes toward Indians after the Rebellion. The novel began with a young woman's eighteenth birthday party. Rachel Verinder, an Englishwoman, received a large diamond from her uncle, who served as an army officer in India.[209] Unknown to Verinder is the fact that the diamond

---

[206]Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing, 1868); Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (New York: First Signet Publishing, 2002), 3.

[207]Ibid., 6.

[208]Ibid., 5.

[209]Ibid., 35.

was stolen from a Hindu temple guarded by three Brahmin priests sworn to protect and recover it with their lives. During the birthday party, three Indian jugglers arrived to entertain the guests.[210] Without a doubt, Collins intentionally inserted the three Indian jugglers as a means of commentary on the Sepoy Rebellion, which took place only eleven years before the novel's publication. Verinder wore the diamond on her dress to show off her expensive gift. After the celebration, the diamond disappeared and a detective was called upon to solve the mystery.

A year passed without any developments and the same three suspects remained (Verinder, her cousin, and a maid). It was revealed that her cousin Franklin Blake, who was drugged and in a trance-like state, stole the diamond and gave it to another cousin, Godfrey Ablewhite.[211] Ablewhite planned to use the gem to pay off an expensive loan he accrued. Through several interrogations, Blake and the detective discovered the location of the diamond but arrived too late. The three Indian jugglers (the priests in disguise) murdered Ablewhite and returned the gem to the temple in India.[212] Blake and Verinder married and the mystery was solved by Sergeant Cuff, a Scotland Yard detective.[213] Wilkie Collins utilized multiple perspectives as a literary tool to reveal different opinions about the theft of the gem, which ultimately was a metaphor for the treatment of Indians in general.

---

[210]Ibid., 42.

[211]Ibid., 456-457.

[212]Ibid., 481-482

[213]Ibid., 470.

In the aftermath of the Rebellion, Collins portrayed Indians as a diverse and socially advanced people. There is no doubt that this novel was the first noteworthy piece of literature to be influenced by the Sepoy Rebellion, even though it did not specifically mention the event, which was still too fresh and painful for most Britons to discuss. He began his novel with an introductory background story of how the moonstone was stolen. Collins portrayed the real life siege of Seringapatam in 1799 with sympathy and reality as a British officer stole the gem and killed all of the guards. The narrator revealed that his cousin, Herncastle, was the individual who actually stole the gem. He recounted that the soldiers "loaded themselves with gold and jewels. It was in the court outside the treasury that my cousin and I met, to enforce the laws of discipline on our own soldiers."[214] This depiction of British soldiers behaving improperly and greedily is rare among Victorian novels, which generally boast about the valor and integrity of its military. Elaborating on this sentiment the narrator revealed that Herncastle "was very unfit, in my opinion, to perform the duty that had been entrusted to him."[215] Collins utilized the theft of the moonstone as a vehicle to emphasize the arrogance and often negligent nature of British imperial rule.

Melissa Free, a contemporary historian, assessed *The Moonstone* and its association with a sympathetic viewpoint of the Sepoy Rebellion. In her article, "Dirty Linen: Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins's '*The Moonstone*'", Free argued that Collins presented a glorification of imperialism, not a cautionary warning against its many evils. Free also asserted that Collins portrayed the family's motives as an attempt to

---

[214]Ibid., 27.

[215]Ibid.

"remove the 'suspicion' under which the characters of innocent people have suffered and may suffer in the future." She continued to say, "…his archive, that is, in fact, *The Moonstone*, actually documents not innocence, but collusion with the imperial project."[216] Collins did not insert the family's misfortune to impart criticism against the family's lack of imperial zeal but to emphasize the fact that it was imperialistic greed and murder that brought disaster and death upon the family and was an allegory for Britain's exploitation of the Indian population during its occupation of the country as a cause of the Sepoy Rebellion.

Melissa Free claimed that Collins subliminally inserted a desire to separate Indians and Britons as he desired a "upholding of the separation from England and colony, home and Empire."[217] Free believed that Collins viewed British colonizers as racially superior to their Indian counterparts and needed to keep them under constant control far away from the imperial center, Britain. Free also attempted to show that Collins viewed India as nothing more than a pawn to be exploited for the greater benefit of Britain. She stated that "when the diamond threatens to expose the family guilt when the jewel in the crown proves to be something that as Betteredge says, 'I wish to God had never found its way into this house!' both Rachel and her mother are willing to sacrifice it."[218] This theory failed to consider the fact that the misfortune was brought on by British (Herncastle's theft) greed and exploitation of traditional Indian customs. Had Herncastle

---

[216]Melissa Free, "Dirty Linen: Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins's '*The Moonstone*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* Vol. 48 Issue 4 (Winter 2006): 340.

[217]Ibid., 359.

[218]Ibid.

not stolen the gem and murdered the innocent Brahmin priests, then the family's misfortunes would not have been set in motion.

Henry Kingsley wrote the second novel to be discussed. Kingsley was born in 1830 in Northamptonshire, England.[219] Kingsley came from an educated family and attended Worcester College in Oxford yet failed to graduate. He left Britain for Australia where he became a gold prospector. Kingsley returned to England in 1858 and focused on pursuing a career as an author. Kingsley wrote many novels with his 1861 *Ravenshoe* garnishing the most acclaim.[220] Kingsley married Sarah Maria Haselwood in 1864 and moved to Sussex in 1874 where he died of cancer in 1876.

Henry Kingsley's 1869 novel, *Stretton,* detailed the violence of the Sepoy Rebellion and the war-time atrocities from both Indian and British perspectives. The recurring theme of cultural unity presented itself throughout the novel. The novel's plot began with three young British men (Roland, Eddy, and Jim) in the English county of Shropshire.[221] The young men's lives were chronicled from childhood in Church Stretton and Church Pulverbatch to college and eventually adulthood as the last third of the novel detailed their involvement with the Sepoy Rebellion. The novel's main source of outrage was the Cawnpore killings of British captives by Nana Sahib. In fact the novel's main antagonist was the Rajah of Bethoor, a characterization of the real Nana Sahib.[222] The

---

[219]Stanley Kunitz, edit., *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: H. Wilson Company, 1936), 350-351.

[220]Ibid.

[221]Henry Kingsley, *Stretton: A Novel* (London: Ward, Lock, and Company, 1897), 94.

[222]Ibid., 314-315.

novel's conclusion resulted in the three men returning home to Britain with a sense of not only victory but survival of their most horrifying challenge in their lives.

Stretton described the cultural differences between British and Indian societies but focused the similarities that resulted in unlikely friendships between Indian Sepoys and their British commanding officers. Toward the end of the novel, Jim had a conversation with his colonel and an elderly, loyal Sepoy. The colonel had great respect for the Sepoy and apparently all loyal Indian soldiers. The colonel commented "that old man who sits beside you has rendered great service to the Queen's Government which shall not be forgotten." Interestingly, the Sepoy stated that he "desired nothing, took nothing, and will accept nothing. I think British rule is good for India, and my three boys have died for you. I have sown and I will reap."[223] Kingsley used the elderly Sepoy as an example to commemorate the sense of duty and loyalty which he thought all loyal Indian soldiers possessed. Kingsley also used the three main British characters as a source of social critique of British imperialism.

In one particular discussion between Roland, Jim, and a mutual friend, Claverhouse, they debated different punishments for their rebel Sepoys. Claverhouse remarked that "we have no authority. India was not conquered by authority, was it? And won't be saved by it. Clive is dead it seems."[224] This negative commentary on the origins of British involvement in India was quite surprising, as the British soldier, Claverhouse, clearly thought that Britain had no right to invade India and rule its land. Roland's simple reply to Claverhouse's statement about Lord Clive was also very remarkable as he said

---

[223]Ibid., 242.

[224]Ibid., 298.

"by his own hand," referring to his death. Obviously, this statement placed the blame for the Rebellion on the British themselves and their failed attempts at imperialistic foreign rule.

The third novel to be discussed was written by Philip Meadows Taylor. Taylor was born in 1808 in Liverpool, England, and was sent to India at age fifteen to act as an apprentice to a Bombay merchant. This merchant faced many financial misfortunes and Taylor was transferred to the service of the prince of Hyderabad.[225] The prince moved Taylor from the military realm into the role of a civil servant as he studied local Indian languages and laws. Taylor wrote his first novel about India, *Confessions of a Thug*, while in England during 1840.[226] This novel's popularity about the Indian religious cult of the Thugs, who ritualistically abducted and then murdered travelers, allowed Taylor the opportunity to pursue a career as a full-time author. Taylor married a Eurasian woman, Mary Palmer, and returned to India as a special correspondent for *The Times* between 1840-1853. Interestingly, Taylor was never employed by the East India Company but managed to become a Deputy Commissioner of the Nizam districts following the suppression of the Sepoy Rebellion.[227] He retired in 1860 to focus on his personal life and died in 1876.

In 1872 Philip Meadows Taylor wrote *Seeta,* the third novel in a series chronicling the history of India. Taylor's first novel in the series, *Tara,* focused on the rise of the Hindu Maratha ethnicity in India during the year 1657. The second novel in

---

[225]Philip Meadows Taylor, *The Story of My Life* (London: William Blackwoods and Sons, 1882), vi.

[226]Ibid., ix.

[227]Ibid., xii.

the series, *Ralph Darnell*, focused on the British victory in the Bengal region of India and the military Battle of Plassey during the year 1757. *Seeta* was the third in the Indian trilogy, which chronicled the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. Taylor was of Eurasian descent and utilized *Seeta* as an avenue to promote positive Anglo-Indian relations throughout his novel. The plot involved an Indian widow (Seeta) who desired to escape her fate, as Hindu tradition demanded, to remain celibate for the remainder of her life.[228] She fell in love with an Englishman and eventually married him. This scenario of interracial marriage was controversial during the years after the Rebellion.

The novel placed Azrael Pande as its main antagonist. He traveled northern India, spreading ideas of rebellion and spoke of the exploitive tactics used by the East India Company.[229] Pande encouraged all native Indians to join his cause, not just Sepoys. Taylor described the rebel Sepoys as facing caste defilement by the British, for whom they served loyally for a century.[230] Caste defilement was an unbelievably threatening reality for the Sepoys as they held this religious sanctity higher than any other social value.

Taylor described the many social barriers that an interracial marriage provided for both parties. Brandon became ostracized by his British family and friends for marrying Seeta. At the same time, Seeta faced social rejection by her Indian acquaintances also.[231] Both characters demanded that the other accept marriage instead of some other form of

---

[228]Philip Meadows Taylor, *Seeta* (London: C. Keagan Paul, 1881), 43-44.

[229]Ibid., 147-148.

[230]Ibid., 216.

[231]Ibid., 240.

social union. Religion provided another barrier as Seeta practiced Hinduism and Brandon was a Christian. The two married with native Hindu ceremonies and customs as Brandon hoped to reenact the ceremony later with the traditional Christian ceremony. Taylor used her death (caused by Pande) as commentary on how religion and imperial failures by the British led to the Rebellion itself.[232] He also summarized the source of the Rebellion as Britain's fault.

Taylor described the rebels in a sympathetic manner. Perhaps, principally because of his Indian ancestry, these rebels and their motives are detailed at remarkable length. Next Taylor questioned and criticized British imperialism and the Doctrine of Lapse, when Azreal Pande stated, that when "the year the Rajah of Jhansy died, a man who flew the English flag over his fort with his own. He left his little kingdom to be taken care of by the English for his descendants; but they seized it themselves, and kept it fast." Taylor also noted that "the greed of dominion had come" in an unfair manner to the constantly loyal people of India.[233] *Seeta* provided ample criticism of British imperialism, while still appealing to a large audience with a Victorian story of romance and lost love.

George Tomkyns Chesney wrote the fourth novel to be discussed concerning the Sepoy Rebellion. Chesney was born in 1830 in Tiverton, Devon England. Chesney was educated at a boarding school in Tiverton and in 1848 decided to enlist with the Bengal Engineers as a second lieutenant.[234] Upon learning of the outbreak of the Sepoy Rebellion, Chesney volunteered with an Indian regiment during the Siege of Delhi.

---

[232]Ibid., 377.

[233]Ibid., 148.

[234]Stanley Kunitz, edit., *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century*, 125.

During this siege, he was severely injured and received a medal for his military exploits. In 1860, he was appointed as the head of a new department that worked with the civil servants sector. His 1868 work *Indian Polity*, covered the administration of multiple sectors of Indian government, garnered acclaim and remained in use for many decades.[235] In 1871, he wrote a popular short story called "The Battle of Dorking," a story which described a fictitious invasion of England by Germany. After leaving India in 1892, he entered British Parliament as a Conservative Party member.[236]

The 1876 novel by Sir George Chesney, *The Dilemma*, utilized the Rebellion as a backdrop for a love story. The title referred to an unfortunate scenario for the main character, Olivia, as she feared her husband, Colonel Falkland died during the attack on Mustaphabad.[237] After Kirke's Horse retook the town, Kirke and the story's hero, Arthur Yorke, encountered a small caravan. Kirke commanded his regiment to kill the wealthy Indian travelers and then to confiscate their collection of jewelry, without turning it over to the government's treasury department.[238] The violence of the incident did not bother Yorke, but Kirke's refusal to turn over the seized jewelry did. When the Rebellion concluded, Olivia chose to marry Kirke, instead of Yorke. The married couple then went bankrupt and planned to flee India. Kirke planned to go to Egypt for military service, while Olivia was to be sent with their children to America.[239]

---

[235]Ibid.

[236]Ibid.

[237]Sir George Chesney, *The Dilemna: A Tale of the Mutiny* (New York: William Abbatt Publishing, 1908), 218.

[238]Ibid., 259-260.

[239]Ibid., 395-396.

Yorke discovered Olivia and her children living nearby as she was unrecognizable due to being severely disfigured in an attack during the Rebellion. Olivia's home caught fire as Falkland rescued her family.[240] As a result, Falkland died and Olivia finally identified him. She realized that all the while she lived in social disgrace for marrying someone while still officially being married to someone else. Olivia then threw herself into an icy river after not being able to cope with knowing she lived in bigamy. Yorke managed to pull her out of the river but she eventually died, due to the extreme cold.[241] The dilemma was not the military struggle against the rebels but more in the moral struggle that Olivia faced. Was it better to live with social disgrace or die with dignity? Olivia chose death in accordance with her Victorian belief system.

Chesney depicted the palanquin scene as a method of offering criticism of the brutality of the British military in India. Similar in Collins' portrayal, Kirke ordered the death of the wealthy Indian traveler to steal his valuables. The victim sat "in the palanquin, holding up his joined hands in prayerful supplication, and constantly repeating the formula that Kirke was a protector of the poor."[242] The defenseless traveler was then killed and his jewelry stolen. Yorke questioned Kirke's motives as he asks, "Would it not have been worth while to bring in a prisoner" and adding that "I felt little better than a Pindari robber when we were stripping that poor wretch."[243] This display of guilt was a larger notion felt by many British military officers after the Rebellion. Incidents, such as

---

[240]Ibid., 422.

[241]Ibid., 427.

[242]Ibid., 259.

[243]Ibid., 260.

the numerous raids by Hodson's Horse regiment displayed that the valor associated with the Victorian British military was misplaced.

The fifth novel to be analyzed was written by Henry Seton Merriman. Hugh Stowell Scott (pseudonym), better known as Henry Seton Merriman, was born during 1863 in Newcastle-on-Tyne.[244] Initially an insurance and credit assessor by profession, Merriman began traveling the British Empire and writing literature, based on his experiences from many of his travel destinations.[245] In fact, it was on his 1877 trip to India that Merriman acquired the idea for *Flotsam*.[246] Merriman died of appendicitis at the age of forty in Suffolk, England.

In 1892, Henry Seton Merriman's novel, *Flotsam: The Study of a Life* was published. The plot of *Flotsam* focused on Harry Wylam, a young would-be British hero whose bad decisions in life proved to be his own undoing. At the beginning of the novel, Wylam squandered most of his money in failed gambling ventures and left his fiancee, Miriam Gresham, for another woman, a major Victorian character flaw.[247] Wylam's replacement love interest was the daughter of a British traitor, who spied for the Sepoy rebels against the British. His new wife's father, Philip Lamond, also persuaded Wylam into robbing and looting a sacred Indian temple. As a result of his bad marital judgement, Wylam's wife stole the remaining finances in his account and his father-in-law gets

---

[244]Karen Karbeiner, Christine Kreuger, and George Stade, edit., "Scott, Hugh Stowell", in *Encyclopedia of British Writers: 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Facts on File Books, 2003), 301.

[245]Ibid.

[246]Ibid.

[247]Henry Seton Merriman, *Flotsam: The Study of a Life* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz Publishing, 1896), 71-72.

exposed as a spy.[248] Now, Wylam faced social disgrace for both being complicit in spying for the enemy and stealing from an Indian temple without reporting it to the national treasury.

After his public embarrassment, Wylam returned to England with his daughter with the intent of placing her in the care of his ex-fiancee, whom he jilted earlier in the novel.[249] With his daughter in safe haven, Wylam traveled to South Africa to reconcile and get closure with his troublesome past. The title was referenced as Wylam's life was described as "the end of a fortnight he drifted northward with the scum that ever floats on the wave of civilization."[250] Wylam's life was the result of many bad decisions and consequently surfaced in the public's mind as most disgraceful.

Merriman provided a critique of British imperialism through the characters of both Lamond and Wylam. The true enemies were not the rebel Sepoys but merely the poorly implemented British foreign policies themselves. The aspects of espionage associated with fifth-columnist Philip Lamond also extended to Wylam as his accomplice. As Wylam's regiment approached a temple full of rebel Sepoy riflemen, Lamond emerged from an alley informing them of possible military strategies and logistics. Lamond was a civilian and had an interest other than a military victory. Apparently, the rebel treasury was located within the temple's confines and Lamond appealed to Wylam's sense of greed to steal the loot. Wylam expressed his reservations about Lamond's plan as he stated, "yes...But we must not forget that the chief object is to

---

[248]Ibid., 236-237.

[249]Ibid., 259.

[250]Ibid., 281.

blow up the buildings."[251] This hesitation showed the conflict between differing opinions on British foreign policy at the time.

Lamond replied, "I am not forgetting it. But we are not such fools as to blow up a lot of bullion that is only waiting there to be taken." Sarcastically, Merriman provided some commentary about the character of a typical British soldier as the narrator described Lamond's response as "that fine spirit of commercial enterprise and common sense upon which Englishmen may pride themselves."[252] The use of sarcastic language and the fact that Lamond was a traitor also suggested that Merriman not only disapproved of British foreign policy in India, but also mistrusted the stereotypical British Victorian military hero.

In Christopher Herbert's *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma*, Merriman's novel *Flotsam* is assessed. Herbert claimed that Merriman inserted themes of racial bigotry and was "full of praise for 'the masterfulness of the dominant race' in India."[253] At the least, this criticism failed to account for anachronistic attitudes that were popular then and are thankfully not in present times. Also this claim neglected the portrayal of the main character, Harry Wylam, as a young, troubled British soldier who squandered his life pursuing many illegal and morally-flawed endeavors. Wylam was aided on his many misadventures by Philip Lamond, a British fifth-columnist. Both of these depictions of the two major British characters did not display heroism or good character traits. They displayed arrogance, greed, and corruption, which Merriman

---

[251]Ibid., 155.

[252]Ibid.

[253]Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 129.

believed symbolized the British presence in India. Herbert also questioned Merriman's motives for replacing "earlier ideas of military heroism in the British imagination-ideas imbued with 'the poetry and romance of war,' in George Hodson's phrase-by imagery of sheer mass butchery."[254] Merriman placed scenes of military violence and sporadic episodes of "mass butchery" to illustrate a larger point that the Sepoy Rebellion was a result of both British imperialist greed and hubris and that the stereotypical image of the British military hero was misplaced as was the case with George Hodson, a British military commander infamous for his killing and looting exploits.

The sixth novel concerning the Sepoy Rebellion to be analyzed was written by George Alfred Henty, who was born in 1832 in Trumpington, Cambridgeshire England. He attended college but left early to volunteer with the army during the Crimean War.[255] Disgusted with the living conditions for the British soldiers fighting in the Crimea, Henty wrote home detailing the poor conditions of life. Henty's father was impressed by these writings and sent them to the *Morning Advertiser* where they were published. These writings became so popular that Henty was offered the position of special correspondent, what is contemporarily known as a war correspondent. In 1859, Henty became a captain in the army and shortly thereafter retired to focus on his family life. In 1865, his wife died and he began writing for the *Standard* newspaper.[256] The *Standard* sent Henty as their special correspondent to document the Austro-Italian War, the British expedition to Abyssinia (Ethiopia), and the Ashanti War. He also witnessed many historic events such

---

[254]Ibid., 130.

[255]G. Manville Fenn, *George Alfred Henty: The Story of an Active Life* (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1907), 16.

[256]Ibid., 39.

as the opening of the Suez Canal. Henty's prolific career as an author included 122 books, most of which were aimed at children, but some were also written for adult audiences.[257] Henty died in 1902 in Dorest, England.

George Alfred Henty's 1893 novel, *Rujub the Juggler,* also displayed information about how British and Indian society interacted in light of the events of the Rebellion. An interesting fact about this novel is that it was intended for a young male audience. Ralph Bathurst was an officer in the British military during the Rebellion. He saved Rujub the Juggler's daughter from a tiger and in return the magician managed to rescue him from Nana Sahib and the events of Cawnpore.[258] Bathurst got anxiety attacks during battle and faced severe indecision in times of peril. This led one of his military rivals to accuse him of being weak and a coward. Bathurst's childhood love, Isobel Hannay, got captured by Nanna Sahib, who planned to rape and torture her.[259] In an attempt to save herself from that disgrace, Hannay poured acid on her face. With Rujub's magical skills, Bathurst managed to break into the Bibighar and rescue Hannay. The scars on her face also magically healed due to Rujub's mysterious powers.[260] Hannay and Bathurst married and both realized how lucky they were to escape death and have a renewed sense of love for Indian people through Rujub's numerous and selfless acts of kindness.

Henty utilized the main character, Ralph Bathurst, as an allegory for the typical British soldier, a hero under pressure. His friend, Rujub, was the model for the perfect

---

[257]Ibid., 335.

[258]George Alfred Henty, *Rujub the Juggler* (New York: Hurst and Company, 1906), 304-305.

[259]Ibid., 318.

[260]Ibid., 385.

loyal Sepoy. At the end of the novel, Bathurst asked Rujub his opinion about the chances the British had against the rebels and he replied that "there is a tremendous task before them. There is all Oude and the Northwest to conquer, and fully two hundred thousand men in arms against them, but I believe that they will do it. They are a great people, and now I do not wish it otherwise."[261] Rujub then followed that statement with a continuation of his feelings for British rule in India. Rujub stated that he had "been obliged to see all this, and felt now that their destruction would be a frightful misfortune" and that he "could see the benefit their rule has given to India."[262] In Rujub's mind, it was British rule that maintained India's peace and social order. The threat of insurgent rule was one of Rujub's fears. However, as presented in terms of historical rulers, the loyalist Sepoys wanted no separation from Britain.

Flora Annie Steel wrote the seventh novel to be discussed. Steel was born in 1847 and, by age twenty, she was married and lived in the Punjab territory of India.[263] It was her twenty-two years in India that inspired Steel to begin writing about the connections between the British and their Indian counterparts. Steel gave birth to a daughter while living in India, which allowed her to learn several native Indian languages and ethnic folktales through her interactions with Indian nannies.[264] In 1889, Steel and her family relocated to Scotland, where she continued writing until her death in 1929. In addition to her popular fictional novels, she also wrote a successful comprehensive history of India.

---

[261]Ibid., 364.

[262]Ibid., 280.

[263]Karen Karbeiner, Christine Kreuger, and George Stade, edit., "Steel, Flora Annie", in *Encyclopedia of British Writers: 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Facts on File Books, 2003), 324.

[264]Ibid.

In 1896, Flora Annie Steel's novel *On the Face of the Waters* was published and dealt with the events of the Rebellion in a direct manner. Jim Douglas, the main character, was a horse trainer for the Nawab of Oude. After the region was annexed and the king was no longer in power, he became employed by the British government as a spy just before the Meerut outbreak of rebellion. He arrived in Delhi on 11 May disguised as a native Indian horse-rider.[265] As the Rebellion had already begun, Douglas hoped to rescue and save as many citizens as he could. He rescued his future wife, Kate Erlton, and dropped her off at a safe-house just outside the city gates of Delhi.

Douglas returned to Delhi as it was under siege by rebel Sepoy forces. Douglas was able to detail specific descriptions about the city during a time in which all or most British citizens were already dead. His disguise was so authentic that he passed unnoticed through all rebel encampments and managed to gather information about the Rebellion and procure more safe-houses throughout the city.[266] Douglas, Erlton, and her son with then husband Major Erlton, managed to survive in hiding for two months during the Rebellion in Delhi. While hiding in Delhi, the family created a facade for the outside world, living as a Muslim family with traditional daily activities. She fell in love with Douglas and planned to reject her previous marriage to Major Erlton. Douglas disguised himself as an Afghan horse dealer and ventured into the bazaars of Delhi on a daily basis to discover the truth about the Rebellion's origin.[267] Douglas's constant acts of espionage displayed how much respect Victorian Britons had for native Indian knowledge.

---

[265]Flora Annie Steel, *On the Face of the Waters* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann Limited, 1985), 191.

[266]Ibid., 214.

They stayed in the city between 11 May to 17 September 1857. Douglas reflected on his earlier life in India as similar to that with Erlton. During that time he lived with a native woman in Lucknow, Zora, with whom he had a child. As Zora and child died during the pregnancy, Douglas thought about the many difficulties associated with raising a person of both Indian and British race.[268] Soon after this reflection, Douglas is hired again as a spy by the British government. His goal was to track the daily activities of a nearby Syed Ahmadullah, a ruler in Faizabad, as he lived close to Ahmadullah's palace.[269] This act of espionage demonstrated how the British hero can infiltrate the world of the rebel and return safely to a life of domesticity with a British family and happiness.

Steel described a scene where a British officer came upon loyal Sepoys and the warning they gave him. Steel described the scene as "Brigadier Graves wheeled his horse slowly northward but at the sight the Sepoys of the 38th, still friendly to him personally, crowded round him, urging speed. It was no place for him they said."[270] Steel also felt that East India Company rule hindered positive relations between Indians and Victorian Britons. During a climactic battle scene, Steel described "an old Sepoy officer who had served boy and man in one regiment, rising to its command at last, was loathe to believe that the 38th regiment, which had been specially commended to him by his own, would turn against him, if only he were free to handle it."[271] The loyal Sepoy could have

---

[267]Ibid., 254.

[268]Ibid., 32-34.

[269]Ibid., 40.

[270]Ibid., 266.

[271]Ibid., 263.

intervened on behalf of British counterparts and stopped his renegade Sepoy unit, but was under orders from East India Company officers to refrain from such actions. Steel was commenting on how British racism and bureaucracy prevented loyal Indian Sepoys from helping their British comrades.

The primary literary critic of Victorian British literature of the Sepoy Rebellion was Patrick Brantlinger. In his *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, Brantlinger assessed Henry Kingsley's novel, *Stretton*. Brantlinger believed that Kingsley wrote *Stretton*, as a vehicle to issue commentary against the many "nameless" acts of violence committed by rebel Indian Sepoys against their British counterparts. Brantlinger thought that "Kingsley's reluctance to name the nameless is matched by his opinion of the Mutiny as 'causeless.'"[272] Brantlinger's assumption failed to consider the fact that many British authors who wrote about the Sepoy Rebellion did not mention the specific incidents of rebel Indian violence against the British because they did not want to alienate or disgust their audience with tales of exaggerated gore and trauma.

Furthermore, Brantlinger asserted that "Kingsley suggested India should be annexed for the good of Indians, a message often expressed in post-Mutiny fiction."[273] Brantlinger's statement was issued without any supporting evidence to prove that Kingsley desired such retaliatory action against India. This statement also did not provide any supporting and specific examples of other authors who desired such actions. Brantlinger also contradicted his own statement concerning Kingsley's desire to "annex"

---

[272]Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 210.

[273]Ibid., 211.

India as when he stated that the Indian courts as described in *Stretton,* could "almost be read as a critique of imperial expansion."[274] Brantlinger's claims were generalized and vague assertions about Kinglsey's novel, which was full of examples providing imperial criticism against the British and displayed sympathy for loyal Indian Sepoys.

Throughout Brantlinger's assessment of *Seeta,* Brantlinger marginalized Taylor's true purpose for writing *Seeta*, as he thought that Taylor was not "interested in preaching a positive gospel for Indians as he is in criticizing the religious and racial intolerance of his compatriots."[275] Brantlinger played the "race card," as Taylor was of Eurasian (both British and Indian) racial descent. Taylor did mention the difficulties with interracial marriages in Victorian Britain, from his own experience, but this was not his motivation behind criticizing British imperialism and rash British judgment against Indians such as depicting rebel Sepoys as having clearly defined grievances with the East India Company. Brantlinger also commented that "*Seeta* was the only pre-1890s novel about that event which does not focus reductively on Nana Sahib and the massacres of Cawnpore."[276] Brantlinger failed to recognize the *Moonstone* as another "pre-1890s novel" that did not portray Nana Sahib as the main villain. Also, in analyzing Brantlinger's claim, he undervalued the importance of *Seeta* as he placed its significance solely on its lack of Nana Sahib as the main protagonist.

Patrick Brantlinger's assessment of Chesney's *The Dilemma* fell far short of explaining the numerous examples that depicted sympathetic feelings toward loyal

---

[274]Ibid.

[275]Ibid., 215.

[276]Ibid., 216.

Sepoys. Brantlinger claimed that the "the failure of the two parts of the novel-Mutiny and love story or, better, repression-of-love story-to intersect mirrors precisely the same failure of many Victorians after 1857 to imagine any common ground between themselves and Indians."[277] Clearly, Chesney provided sufficient examples of the main characters refraining from or regretting retribution against innocent Indians during the Rebellion such as the palanquin scene.

Brantlinger continued his criticism of *The Dilemma* by stating that "on the one hand, the violence and lust of the Mutineers are repositories for feelings and impulses that Chesney cannot attribute to his English characters."[278] This was simply not true, as during the palanquin scene the ruthless Kirke ordered the death of an innocent Indian traveler, who happened to have only valuable jewels, and then failed to report the confiscation of goods to the local treasury office.

In his assessment of *Rujub the Juggler,* Patrick Brantlinger claimed that Henty's placement of Rujub as a magician allowed "a ready-made excuse for for rejecting them as irrational."[279] Brantlinger's claim is simplistic, as it neglected to account for Henty's desired audience, young boys. *Rujub the Juggler* was a fictitious fantasy-adventure novel for young boys, which also provided life lessons of resiliency and tolerance for people from different cultures. Brantlinger misinterpreted Ralph Bathurst, the British hero in the novel, as he thought that "Rujub is right to be an Anglophile because Bathurst is in every

---

[277]Ibid., 212.

[278]Ibid.

[279]Ibid., 217.

way admirable" and "an imperial commonplace."[280] Henty portrayed Bathurst as a reluctant hero who suffered from anxiety and fear. This character was portrayed this way to provide criticism against the stereotypical image of the British hero and also teach children the lesson of over-coming fears in times of need.

Patrick Brantlinger also assessed Flora Annie Steel's novel, *On the Face of the Waters*, in his book *Rule of Darkness*. Brantlinger argued Steel's personal feelings about the Rebellion filled the dialogue between the novel's main characters. In particular, Brantlinger criticized Steel for only "maintaining the appearance of impartiality" throughout the narration of the story and "whenever the narrator appears to criticize the British, the text always contains an at least implicit exoneration."[281] Brantlinger's critique of Steel's dialogue was inaccurate as when many of the characters in *On the Face of the Waters* criticized the British for their actions, the "exoneration" was expressed by a different character or one whose attitudes were changing in light of the violent treatment they witnessed against the captured Sepoys.

In particular, Brantlinger claimed Steel used the main character, Jim Douglas, as a vehicle to express such sentiments. If this were the case, then it would not make sense to establish Douglas's ethnic descent as Eurasian and have him maintain a relationship with an Indian woman as Steel explained in the novel. Brantlingler also asserted that Steel felt like "almost all Victorian writers, the Mutiny was evidence of Indian racial and cultural inferiority, as she made plain in her descriptions of feuding and chaos at the court of

---

[280]Ibid.

[281]Ibid., 221.

Delhi."[282] Steel described the Indian princely courts in Delhi as chaotic because the country was in a state of upheaval and uncertainty. The king of Delhi, Bahadur Shah, was reluctant to join the rebellious Sepoys because he knew that, if he refused the Sepoys's demands, they might kill him and that if he did join them the British would seek retribution against him. The state of affairs in India during the Sepoy Rebellion were unstable and chaotic for both the British and the Indians.

The Sepoy Rebellion forced British Victorians to reconsider their moral and ethical code in relation to their colonial possessions. Many authors inserted critiques of British imperialism and racial supremacy throughout their novels, suggesting their own personal beliefs in a positive Anglo-Indian relationship. The Rebellion itself and in particular the events of Nana Sahib at Cawnpore polarized that relationship as a distinction between loyalty and subversion. Contrary to contemporary historical writings, these authors did not homogenize all Indians into one category as a vile, wretched people but clearly distinguished between those whose interests and trust remained with the British during the duration of the Rebellion and those whose did not.

Themes of religion, race, and love permeated all literature influenced by the Rebellion. Using these universal themes, this comparison served to show the many similarities between two cultures that initially do not appear similar at all. The Sepoy Rebellion's influence upon literature displayed a larger sentiment felt by most Britons of the time, that of affection and admiration for a culture as diverse and rich as Indian society. The future of these two cultures became intertwined and sometimes interdependent on one another the day the East India Company colonized the

---

[282]Ibid., 222.

subcontinent. Since that day, India and Britain still share similar cultural experiences forged through the Sepoy Rebellion.

Conclusion

Now with an understanding of the true, fragmented nature of popular British opinion about the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, a discussion of post-colonial theory concerning the event must be analyzed. The post-colonial theory concerning the Sepoy Rebellion is divided into three different ideological categories: those based in gender theory, Indian nationalism/subaltern studies, and those from a British perspective based in racial supremacy theory. The scholar writing from a gender theory perspective believed that all British opinions and views about the Sepoy Rebellion exploited and utilized the widespread rumor of the possibility of Indian rape and torture of British women and children to justify racial hatred and harsh violent, military reprisals against all Indians. The historians associated with this historiographic field of study were Nancy Paxton and Jenny Sharpe. Both Paxton's and Sharpe's seminal works chronicled the Victorian British opinion of Indians during the Sepoy Rebellion by studying popular fiction of the day. Through a lens of gender theory, Paxton created a reasoning for her belief that all Victorian Britons despised their Indian counterparts and viewed them as racially inferior. Through depictions of rape and torture of Victorian British women and children by Indians in popular fiction, Paxton sought to validate her theory.

Nancy Paxton's *Writing under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination 1830-1947*, studied the representation and portrayal of the rape of British women in Victorian British novels during colonial India. In particular, Paxton emphasized the evolution of the depiction of rape in Victorian British fiction as it practically disappeared from novels concerning British domestic life in the late eighteenth century. However by the middle to late nineteenth century, the depictions of

rape in Victorian British fiction reappeared as colonial India rose to prominence. Also, the role of the rape victim was reversed, as native Indian women were originally depicted as being raped by white, British men. However, after the outbreak of the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857, the rape victims became white British women and the perpetrator became native Indian Sepoys.[283] Paxton studied novels written by Victorian Britons about what she called the "colonial contact zone" of British India as it represented an intersection of different cultures, religions, and peoples. She claimed that Victorian British novels about the Sepoy Rebellion created the possibility of rape scenarios in fiction as they popularized British military victories and "sensationalized the deaths of innocent English civilians, including approximately 200 Englishwomen and children."[284] Paxton's thesis stated that these portrayals of rape were perpetuated by Victorian British authors as a way to "legitimize more authoritarian, forceful, and racist policies in British colonial strategies" during the suppression of the Rebellion.[285] In other words, the fear of Indian men raping white, British women was used as a justification for the violent and unfair British reaction to the Rebellion.

Paxton utilized feminist gender theory to expand on her thesis by concluding that "these national epics of the race were designed to shore up Victorian notions of gender by assigning British women to the role of agency-less victims, countering nineteenth century feminists' demand for greater political equality and social participation."[286] Paxton believed that these novels not only gave justification for Britain's violent military

---

[283]Nancy Paxton, *Writing under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination 1830-1947* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 3.

[284]Ibid., 5.

[285]Ibid., 6.

[286]Ibid., 112.

reprisals against the rebel Sepoys, but also attempted to portray the stereotypical Victorian British male as a racially and gendered superior figure. This stereotypical British male was viewed as worthy of having increased social and political rights, which their female counterparts were denied. Paxton's thesis withstood much criticism and helped to explain the evolution of Victorian British novels of the Sepoy Rebellion. Paxton focused on two specific portrayals of the rape of white women in Victorian British novels about the Sepoy Rebellion.

First, Paxton analyzed Philip Meadows Taylor's novel, *Seeta*. Taylor's use of the rape scenario began with a rivalry between the story's British hero, Cyril Brandon and its villain, Azrael Pande. Once Pande became aware of Seeta's marriage to Brandon, he became "obsessed with possessing the rich and beautiful Seeta." In an attempt to turn all loyal Indians against Brandon and the British, he "continued to threaten Seeta with abduction and rape even after her marriage."[287] Paxton believed that this threat of rape was an attempt by Taylor to reinforce the racist, imperial notion of "white men saving brown women from brown men."[288] Pande convinced the Sepoys into believing that Seeta was the victim of kidnapping and rape by "a powerful Englishman" and that she needed to be rescued. Paxton claimed that Taylor "illustrated the incendiary power of rumors about interracial rape during the Indian Uprising of 1857" by "transforming the news of Seeta and Cyril's marriage." She also stated that Taylor "recognized the intensified racism that characterized colonial administrations in the 1850s by noting that the Englishmen who are Brandon's superiors in the colonial bureaucracy saw the

[287]Ibid.,125.

[288]Ibid., 123.

politically dangerous consequences of interracial marriage."[289] Paxton concluded her critique of *Seeta* as she stated that "by cutting short Seeta's marriage before she can produce an heir and hinting at her near conversion to Christianity when she was on her deathbed, Taylor reasserted familiar colonial desires that identify Christianity as providing the sacred and necessary foundation for the new 'national' family."[290]

She critiqued Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters* for "giving in to the demands of the New Imperialism" and "imagining Englishmen as natural conquerors and Englishwomen as the best guardians of the purity of the race."[291] Earlier in Steel's novel, the hero Jim Douglas's soon-to-be wife, Kate Erlton, faked her own rape by an Indian Sepoy in order to hide with Douglas during the siege of Delhi. Erlton assumed the disguise of a native Indian woman and "screamed, as if she expected to be raped." Paxton believed that Steel utilized this rape scene to "teach her morally rebellious hero, Jim Douglas, to appreciate the pleasures of a chaste and compassionate English marriage."[292] Ultimately, this scenario was explained for the reader to understand the "real fear" of losing control and power of India, resulting in complete chaos. Paxton concluded her criticism of Steel's novel by stating that "showing her heroine's rape as a ruse, Steel like Taylor, avoided repeating rumors about the rapes of Englishwomen which were used to justify the limits imposed on Englishwomen under the Raj."[293] Although Steel's rape scene was falsified in the novel, the event still had the same effect as if it were actually

---

[289]Ibid., 125.

[290]Ibid., 126.

[291]Ibid., 134.

[292]Ibid., 132.

[293]Ibid., 136.

perpetrated; the image of a violent, sexual encounter was still produced. Paxton's criticism failed to recognize the similarities between staging an event and falsifying one.

In Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, emphasis was placed on the Victorian British portrayal of the interracial rape of white, British women by Indian men (mainly rebellious Sepoys). According to Sharpe, the cause for this sexist and racist portrayal was the British maxim that they had lost colonial authority and power in India. In fact she claimed that "the European fear of interracial rape does not exist so long as there is a belief that colonial structures of power are firmly in place."[294] Sharpe's assessment placed complete blame for these depictions of rape on the chaos and civil unrest during the Sepoy Rebellion. It was too simplistic to wholly blame a Rebellion for the depiction of racist attitudes, which some Britons already held prior to any civil unrest.

Sharpe asserted that "rather than being a closed system of representation, colonial constructions of native inferiority bore the inscriptions of the campaign of terror conducted against Indians during the 1857 revolt" and that "stories describing what rebels did to English women mirrored the highly ritualized form of punishment and retribution that the British army executed."[295] What Sharpe failed to acknowledge in her argument was that, although the depictions of rape were indeed violent, there were no historically recorded incidents of white, British men raping Indian women en masse. If these portrayals of rape were indeed unique to novels about the Sepoy Rebellion and caused by a fear of imperial chaos or loss of power in India, then there would be no other recorded

[294]Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 3.

[295]Ibid., 6.

accounts of interracial rape in novels before or after the Sepoy Rebellion, which there were. Sharpe even admitted that during the 1947 Madagascar Revolt, there were "fictitious stories of natives raping white women circulating among European settlers."[296] Even though this historical event was France's colonial rebellion, it proved that the depictions of the interracial rape of white women by non-white colonized peoples was not unique to the Victorian British nor caused specifically by the Sepoy Rebellion.

Sharpe claimed that the depictions of interracial rape in Victorian British novels began with so-called first-hand accounts of these incidents. She asserted that British newspaper printed sensationalized versions of "first-hand" accounts that "showed a strong desire to represent rumor and hearsay as fact and information."[297] Sharpe claimed that these reported accounts were "carried from town to town by a mobile avenging army, the tales of which had no known origin" and that "what these so-called eyewitnesses 'saw' was invariably seen by a friend."[298] It was entirely plausible for these accounts to have originated from faulty and intentionally misleading eyewitness accounts as a minority of Victorian Britons wanted to impose their racist, imperial ideas onto others and explain an event for which there was no recent precedent. Sharpe explained that "Mutiny fiction, like the newspaper reports, invested English womanhood with such extraordinary value that the lives of the women themselves were devalued."[299] This claim too was plausible as these ill-proportioned representations of the ideal Victorian woman were unattainable and by result left ordinary women lacking in virtue for some Victorian

[296]Ibid., 3.

[297]Ibid., 62.

[298]Ibid.

[299]Ibid., 100.

elites. A central theme to all Victorian British fiction about the interracial rape scenario was "dominated by romance, a genre devoted to the knightly virtues of honor, valor, and the protection of women."[300] Sharpe gathered several generalized facts about the development of the interracial rape scenes as depicted in Victorian British fiction, but her conclusion failed to continue with a plausible explanation for the origins of these depictions.

However, this research was important in understanding the Victorian British psyche and its complex attitudes toward other colonial cultures. Nancy Paxton's research owed a great deal to Sharpe's book as it built and expanded on Sharpe's thesis to include the dimensions of feminist-gender theory. Paxton's application of feminist-gender theory to Sharpe's thesis gave rise to a more complete view and understanding of these depictions of rape in novels about the Sepoy Rebellion as it allowed for the possibility that the violence of the Sepoy Rebellion (in particular the "Cawnpore massacre") merely unearthed previously held racial supremacy beliefs.

Not surprisingly, Indian scholars also created their own field of historiographic writing on this particular aspect of the Sepoy Rebellion. Scholars writing from a nationalistic or subaltern studies approach emphasize the fact that the Sepoy Rebellion was not an isolated historic revolt but rather the first in a series of military conflicts against the British and aimed at Indian independence. They believe that the Victorian British opinions of the Sepoy Rebellion are heavily racist and aim at vilifying all Indians as subordinate heathens deserving of nothing, save annihilation. These scholars include Guatam Chakravarty, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, and Ranajit Guha.

---

[300]Ibid., 99.

Guatam Chakravarty's *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* emphasized the claim that the British perception of the Sepoy Rebellion was shaped by a racist, imperial mode of thought. He believed that subsequent British generations also viewed the event through their imperialist sensibilities. Chakravarty claimed that the "imagination that seized on the rebellion of 1857-1859 was the vulgate of late-nineteenth century British expansionism."[301] He perceived the Victorian British zeitgeist as consisting of the amalgamation of many generations' worth of belief in conquering other racially and religiously inferior countries. Chakravarty also undermined the Victorian British opposition to the suppression of the Rebellion. He thought that the "imperial idea had its enemies" and people who objected to the idea of British racial superiority, but that they were "a minority in perennial opposition."[302] Chakravarty only acknowledged the Victorian British opposition to racist supremacy theories because to completely deny its existence is inaccurate. His dismissal of the opposition as a strong and constant presence in publication allowed him the possibility to appear as an objective historian who conceded all points of view. Chakravarty's thesis that a pervasive and inherently racist, imperial imagination existed in Victorian Britain was false. Throughout Victorian Britain's rise to imperialism, dissenters consistently challenged the British government's role in other countries' affairs. For instance, Benjamin Disraeli, many British soldiers returning from India, and British authors all protested and critiqued the British presence in India even before the Sepoy Rebellion was over.

---

[301]Guatam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

[302]Ibid., 2.

Chakravarty also asserted that Britain's perception of the Sepoy Rebellion recalled the outcome of many other military conflicts during the late nineteenth century as the British perception was forged by "the resistance of the Sudanese, the Chinese, Jamaican slaves, Maoris, and the indigenous peoples of Rhodesia." He claimed that "the public outcry in Britain and in Anglo-India, with its xenophobia and shrill call for revenge" were similar to other Victorian military conflicts in that they all forced the British to "produce a sophisticated form of metropolitan counter-mobilization structured around themes of race, religion, pacification, imperial identity, and a forthright binary of civilization-savagery."[303] Chakravarty's claim generalized the British reaction to these military conflicts (Opium Wars, Maori Wars, Ashanti War, and the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica) as imperially racist when each conflict had situation-specific resolutions to its problem. Peoples in Jamaica did not desire the exact same resolution that peoples in China desired, and the same was true for India in 1857. India was split over British rule, as some liked the Raj and others fought against it. Chakravarty concluded his argument by claiming the the Victorian British perception of the Sepoy Rebellion was based on "many simplifications, much contempt, ignorance, and inability to comprehend that 'in an Asiatic race there might be a spirit of independence and a love of country.'"[304] The Victorian British commentators of the Sepoy Rebellion did acknowledge this "desire for independence and love of country," as when the rule of the East India Company ended, many new civil servant programs were created to give Indians a more active role in their own country's governance. The problem with the Victorian British perception of the

---

[303]Ibid., 32-33.

[304]Ibid., 180.

Rebellion was that they could not visualize India ruling itself without British help (mainly because India was Britain's most profitable colony and secondly because of fears of Russian encroachment).

Throughout Rudrangshu Mukherjee's *Spectre of Violence: The 1857 Kanpur Massacres*, Mukherjee emphasized his feeling that the available evidence on the Sepoy Rebellion was exclusively one-sided (British). Mukherjee stated that the "documentation is entirely in English, by the English, and for the English" and that he "was not interested in retelling the sufferings and tribulations of the British, which was the staple of most of the accounts of Kanpur."[305] Mukherjee looked at the available British accounts of the Sepoy Rebellion, in particular the Indian killings of British civilians in Cawnpore, and determined by what was present and what was missing that the evidence is skewed and intentionally misleading. Mukherjee claimed that "it was difficult for members of a master race to come to terms with violence directed at them" and that the "bias and incomprehension was writ through all the British attempts to write histories of the uprisings and of the massacres in Kanpur."[306] Mukherjee's claim that all available evidence regarding the Sepoy Rebellion and the "Cawnpore Massacre" were skewed because of its pro-British stance neglected the wealth of documentation unearthed in the Indian archives by other historians, such as Andrew Ward's *Our Bones are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* and Lawrence James's *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India.* Both of these historians from European descent managed to document and translate source material from Indian libraries and archives

[305]Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence: The 1857 Kanpur Massacres* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1998), 3.

[306]Ibid., 4.

into the English language to further expand the perceived accounts of witnesses to the Sepoy Rebellion.

Mukherjee concluded that the lack of Indian primary accounts of the Sepoy Rebellion denoted that the "archive of the revolt is a monument to the victor" and that it was "not an exaggeration to say that the entire documentation of the rebellion is British."[307] Within the numerous British military memoirs that were recorded, the accounts of both captured rebel Sepoys and those who remained loyal were also recorded as part of the documentation. This claim stemmed mainly from a desire to create a revisionist and nationalistic Indian approach to researching the Sepoy Rebellion. Mukherjee claimed that all post-colonial Indian historians were "trapped in what Gyan Pandey once tellingly called 'the view of the observable.'"[308] His belief that Victorian British censorship limited the available Indian primary source documentation was in part a longing for an Indian nationalistic revision of history about the Sepoy Rebellion and also a way to counteract countless British-issued viewpoints on the event. Mukherjee's conclusion lacked convincing support, especially when British-descended historians had translated (with the help of countless Indian scholars) Indian primary source materials to aid in uncovering the accounts of rebel Sepoys.

Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* emphasized his claim that British representation of Indian insurgency and its causes were often undermined and ignored. Guha's main purpose for writing the book was "to try and identify some of these 'common forms of general ideas' in rebel consciousness during the

[307]Ibid., 82-83.

[308]Ibid., 161.

colonial period," which he felt were misinterpreted in British opinions.[309] These "elementary aspects" of rebel and peasant insurgency were characteristics and traits that reoccurred in many primary sources he studied and, according to him, over-looked the most. Also the span covered in Guha's research was 117 years between 1783 (peasant revolt against Deby Sinha) and 1900 (the Birsaite Rebellion). His selective study amounted to this timeframe mainly because of the availability and number of primary sources.[310] Guha utilized two main categories of source material to compile his idea of peasant mentality. First, he studied the intercepted messages of peasants by British authorities, usually under interrogation. Second, he studied the official transcripts and minutes recording British proceedings on the peasant uprisings to gather a divergence of viewpoints, that of a subaltern mentality and an elitist mentality.[311] Guha's viewpoint is influenced by his own background and, country and as a result, rails heavily against colonial and in particular British representations of Indian uprisings.

Guha presented his research of the Indian representation of the Sepoy Rebellion as a difference of opinion between those in power (the British) and those subjected to their power (Indians). He noted "how clearly the peasants distinguished between enemies and allies."[312] In particular, he offered the example of an uprising in the Uttar Pradesh province in 1857 in which bankers and private land-owners were the victims of violence by rebel Sepoy units. As reported by two local Indian magistrates from different provinces, "the Buneahs and Mahajuns were in the majority of cases the victims" and

---

[309]Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Bombay: Delhi Oxford University Press, 1983), 12.

[310]Ibid., 13.

[311]Ibid., 16.

[312]Ibid., 21.

"the universal ousting of all bankers, Buniyas, Marwarees, etc. from landed property...by whatever means they acquired it, whether it auction, by private sale or otherwise."[313] Guha tried to illustrate the idea that Indians represented the Rebellion in one manner (the truth) and the British portrayed it in another (lies).

During the same period of time, Guha claimed that a British magistrate reported that the "very asylums built from charitable funds provided by the Christian population for the relief of the people were burnt down and demolished wish as much ill-will as our public offices." Guha believed that these portrayals depicted Indian insurgency as an assault on "authorities, institutions, and groups as were hostile to the subaltern population."[314] Guha's claim that the Victorian British perception of the Sepoy Rebellion was inaccurate, due to racist and religious prejudices, neglected to account for the fact that many Victorian British reporters and military memoirists reported the events of the Rebellion as they happened and were protected and substantiated by many loyal Indian Sepoys. To totally discredit Guha's research is unfair; however, a complete assertion that all Victorian British recordings of the Sepoy Rebellion are inaccurate is also unfair.

The scholars and historians writing from a British perspective, based in racial supremacy theory, have similarities that categorize them together and set them apart from others. These scholars emphasize the fact that most, if not all, Victorian British writings and opinions concerning the Sepoy Rebellion view all Indians as lower, racially inferior subjects of the British Empire. These scholars include Patrick Brantlinger and Christopher Herbert.

---

[313]Ibid.

[314]Ibid., 25.

Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* emphasized Brantlinger's belief that "Victorian accounts of the Mutiny displayed extreme forms of extropunitive projection, the racist pattern of blaming the victim expressed in terms of an absolute polarization of good and evil, innocence and guilt, justice and injustice, moral restraint and sexual depravity, civilization and barbarism."[315] Brantlinger supported his claims with quotations from British novels concerning the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. Often these quotations were taken out of context or were from characters who eventually changed their opinion about Indians after witnessing the violent British reprisals against any captured Indian, loyal or not.

Brantlinger also emphasized the fact that the plot of some Victorian British novels cast Nana Sahib as the main antagonist and villain for the story's hero. In fact, Brantlinger's chapter dedicated toward the Sepoy Rebellion is titled "The Well at Cawnpore," after the infamous rebel Sepoy killings of British women and children. Brantlinger claimed that "Nana Sahib, Satanic locus of all Oriental treachery, lust, and murder, was one of the most familiar villains in novels and melodramas, and by far the most familiar Indian character."[316] Indeed, Nana Sahib was often portrayed as a central villain, mostly because of the violent incidents reported at Cawnpore and the scenes recorded afterwards (not so dissimilar to contemporary portrayals of Osama bin Laden with regard to fiction concerned with the World Trade Center terrorist attacks). Brantlinger concluded his criticism of the Victorian British opinion of the Sepoy Rebellion as "most Victorian accounts insistently mystified the causes of the Mutiny,

---

[315]Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 200.

[316]Ibid., 204.

treating the motives of the rebels as wholly irrational, at once childish and diabolic."[317] On the contrary, most representations of the rebellious Sepoys gave detailed reasons or grievances behind their decision to rebel. Both the loss of traditional Indian rights, which allowed the passage of royal titles to adopted heirs, and the rumors of greased rifle cartridges were depicted. Many Victorian Britons became well informed about the reasons why the rebel Sepoys decided to revolt. They simply could not fathom the level and violence that the Rebellion would escalate to.

In Christopher Herbert's *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* the concept of "Victorian trauma" was studied as a recurring theme of retribution in Victorian British literature and histories. This trauma suggested a social injustice committed against Victorian Britons by an enemy they viewed as racially inferior and the aftermath of anger and reprisal that they enacted. His theory further explained that this traumatic event polarized popular Victorian British opinion into one of confusion and contempt for a racially inferior Indian enemy. Herbert claimed that popular Victorian British depictions of the Sepoy Rebellion "celebrated the time as a glorious vindication of British racial prowess and imperial destiny."[318] Herbert also claimed that any study or research performed on the Victorian British perspective of the Sepoy Rebellion was to "inhabit imperialist society and virtually by definition to be blind to the cruel reality of imperial domination."[319] Indeed, according to Herbert the nature of any research into this field was moot as practically everything to be said about the Victorian British

---

[317]Ibid., 222.

[318]Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-2.

[319]Ibid., 5.

imagination was already understood. Herbert's claim that any new research into this field was pointless undermined the possibility and certainty that new perspectives and understandings could be found. Victorian British writings about the Sepoy Rebellion alone presented divergent opinions about Indian society and the causes for the Rebellion.

Herbert also noted that Victorian British novels about the Sepoy Rebellion were "items of commercial art produced for a broad readership; for this very reason, they were particularly valuable as indices of popular consciousness at the time."[320] Indeed, most of the Victorian British novels about the Sepoy Rebellion were very popular during their time and, as a result, have not maintained their widespread popularity in contemporary times because of their idiosyncratic and historically specific references to events and people. Building on that fact, Herbert added that these novels often emphasized "the complete alienation and isolation of the British community from the local population, the spread of shockingly abusive racism, and the inability of British officers and administrators to communicate with Indians in their language."[321] Contrary to Herbert's claim, many novels and most military memoirs about the Rebellion displayed instances of cooperation between loyal Indian Sepoys and their British commanding officers. It was this system of co-dependence that allowed the British literary heroes to escape capture from the rebels and also infiltrate rebel Sepoy camps to gather reconnaissance information, such as Jim Douglas in *On the Face of the Waters*. Popular Victorian British opinion was shaped by these novels and military accounts and, as a result, reflected a comparable mix of both pro- and anti-Indian sentiment.

---

[320]Ibid., 273.

[321]Ibid., 282.

Contrary to what contemporary historians stated about the Victorian British perception of the Sepoy Rebellion, there was a considerable element of imperial dissension. Throughout the records of the British parliamentary debates, published military memoirs, and popular novels, the opinions of many different groups of Victorian Britons expressed the same sentiment of imperial criticism and outrage against negative, racist portrayals of Indians. The outbreak and violence of the Sepoy Rebellion did not unleash a seething, united contingency of racist hatred for all Indians; it revealed a divergence of Victorian British opinions about race, empire, and colonization. The opinions of criticism and dissension were not held by political and social dissidents but, instead, were believed by political, intellectual, and social groups from all walks of life. The significance of this difference of opinion has been overlooked and often undermined by historians, but now its widespread and important role in forming the Victorian British imagination of the Sepoy Rebellion is revealed.

My thesis is parallel to Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* and Guatam Chakravarty's *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination.* Drawing from a sympathetic British perspective toward Indians, my thesis looked at sources analyzed by both Brantlinger and Chakravarty and also many sources not discussed by either. Both historians viewed the British interpretation of the Sepoy Rebellion as racist and imperialistic but from different points of view (a racially superior British perspective and an Indian nationalistic perspective). My thesis fits in between these two perspectives as a revisionist work that focused on the overall reaction to a tumultuous event. It is a mixed feeling of sympathy tempered with shock and anger,

but not a unified sense of revenge and bloodlust that many historians claimed existed during the middle-Victorian Age.

My thesis is significant because it revealed through a variety of important primary sources, in contrast to evidence shown to the contrary, that the Victorian British perspective on the Sepoy Rebellion was a mixture of sympathy and care for the loyal Sepoys and Indians with a sense of resentment that a colony of non-Anglo people dared to challenge the British Empire. Through the evidence found in Hansard Parliamentary Debates, military memoirs of British soldiers, and Victorian British novels, the sentiment of many Britons was revealed. This pro-Indian sentiment was a strong and widespread belief as displayed through the many varieties of Victorian Britons who expressed it, and was at least as powerful as the imperialist call for revenge and anger. As the Sepoy Rebellion was indeed a transformational event for both India and Britain, the Anglo-Indian perspectives of many Britons during this event help historians understand a larger concept that rarely ever does a powerfully traumatic event force bystanders to view it in the same way or feel unified in a time of upheaval. These opinions shed light onto a time that was considered wholly racist and imperialistic; now however, a more diverse and divergent perception shows that people from different social backgrounds used their own judgments and did not fall prey to a racist few.

Bibliography: Primary Sources

Bourchier, Colonel George. *Eight Months' Campaign against the Bengal Sepoy Army during the Mutiny of 1857.* London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1858.

Burne, Owen Tudor. *Rulers of India: Clyde and Strathnairn.* Oxford: Oxford Press, 1891.

Chesney, George. *The Dilemma: A Tale of the Mutiny.* New York: William Abbatt Publishing, 1908.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone.* New York: First Signet Publishing, 2002.

D'Oyly, Charles. *Eight Months' Experience of the Sepoy Revolt in 1857.* Blandford: Henry Shipp, 1891.

Dunlop, Robert Henry Wallace. *Service and Adventure with the Khakee Ressalah or Meerut Volunteer Horse during the Mutinies of 1857-1858.* London: Richard Bentley Publishing, 1858.

Forbes-Mitchell, Sergeant William. *Reminiscences of the Great Mutiny including the Relief and Siege and Capture of Lucknow and the Campaigns in Rohilcund and Oude.* London: Macmillan and Company, 1893.

Grant, James Hope. *Incidents in the Sepoy War: 1857-1858. Compiled from Private Journals of General Sir Hope Grant G.C.B. Together with Some Explanatory Chapters by Henry Knollys.* London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1873.

Henty, George Alfred. *Rujub the Juggler.* New York: Hurst and Company, 1906.

Kingsley, Henry. *Stretton: A Novel.* London: Ward, Lock, and Company, 1897.

Mackenzie, A.R.D. *A Cavalry Officer during the Sepoy Revolt: Experiences with the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, the Guides and Sikh Irregular Cavalry from the Outbreak of the Indian Mutiny to Delhi and Lucknow.* London: Leonaur, 1891.

Merriman, Henry Seton. *Flotsam: The Study of a Life.* Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz Publishing, 1896.

Medley, Captain Julius George. *A Year's Campaigning in India: March 1857 to March 1858.* London: W. Thacker, 1858.

Steel, Flora Annie. *On the Face of the Waters.* New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann Limited, 1985.

Taylor, Philip Meadows. *Seeta.* London: C. Keagan Paul, 1881.

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 145 (1857).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 146 (1857).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 147 (1857).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 148 (1857).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 148 (1858).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 149 (1858).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 150 (1858).

United Kingdom. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d ser., vol. 152 (1859).

Wilberforce, Reginald Garton. *An Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny: Being of the Personal Reminiscences of Reginald Garton Wilberforce, Late 52nd Light Infantry,Compiled from a Diary and Written on the Spot.* London: John Murray, 1894.

Wise M.D., James. *Diary of a Medical Officer during the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857.* Cork: Guy and Company, 1894.

Bibliography: Secondary Sources

Benson, Arthur Christopher and Viscount Escher, ed. *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837-1867.* London: J. Murray Press, 1907.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Brown, David. *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy: 1846-1855*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Collier, Richard. *The Great Indian Mutiny*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1964.

Chakravarty, Guatam. *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Edwardes, Michael. *Battles of the Indian Mutiny*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1963.

Fenn, G. Manville. *George Alfred Henty: The Story of an Active Life.* London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1907.

Free, Melissa. "Dirty Linen: Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins's 'The Moonstone.'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language Vol. 48 Issue 4* (Winter 2006): 340-371.

Gardiner, John. *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect.* New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2002.

Gardner, Brian. *The East India Company.* New York: McCall Publishing, 1971.

Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India.* Bombay: Delhi Oxford University Press, 1983.

Herbert, Christopher. *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Hibbert, Christopher. *The Great Mutiny: India 1857.* New York: Viking Press, 1978.

Holmes, Richard. *Sahib: The British Soldier in India: 1750-1914.* London: Harper Perennial, 2005.

James, Lawrence. *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India.* New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.

Kaey, John. *The Honourable Company: A History of the British East India Company.* London: Harper Collins, 1991.

Karbeiner, Karen, Christine Kreuger, and George Stade, edit. "Scott, Hugh Stowell." in *Encyclopedia of British Writers: 19th and 20th Centuries.* New York: Facts on File Books, 2003.

Karbeiner, Karen, Christine Kreuger, and George Stade, edit. "Steel, Flora Annie." in *Encyclopedia of British Writers: 19th and 20th Centuries.* New York: Facts on File Books, 2003.

Kunitz, Stanley, edit. *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century.* New York: H. Wilson Company, 1936.

Mitch, David Franklin. *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1992.

Mukherjee, Ramkrishna. *The Rise and Fall of the British East India Company.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Mukherjee, Rudrangshu. *Spectre of Violence: The 1857 Kanpur Massacres.* New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1998.

Palmer, J.A.B. *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Paxton, Nancy. *Writing under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination: 1830-1947.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

Perry, Jonathan. *Benjamin Disraeli.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Sharpe, Jenny. *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Spear, Percival. *Oxford History of Modern India: 1740-1947.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

Stein, Burton. *A History of India.* London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998.

Taylor, Philip Meadows. *The Story of My Life.* London: William Blackwoods and Sons, 1882.

Wiener, Martin J. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit: 1850-1980.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Harley Derek Walden
Marshall University, Department of History
3606 Piedmont Rd
Huntington, WV 25704
Walden4@marshall.edu
(304) 638-4692

Curriculum Vitae

Education

M.A., Marshall University, In Progress
Thesis: "Sahib and Sepoy: British Reaction to the Rebellion of 1857"
Directed by William Palmer

B.A., Marshall University, Department of Political Science, December 2007

Conferences

"Child Labor during the Industrial Revolution: The Taboo of Capitalism"
2010 Phi Alpha Theta Kentucky Regional Conference
Highland Heights, March, 2010

"Fetch Me my Mead Wench: Feminine Gender Roles in the Viking Age"
19th Annual Bluegrass Regional Graduate Student Conference
Lexington, February, 2010

Awards

"Graduate College Travel Support Grant"
For travel to conferences, Marshall University
Granted January, 2010

"West Virginia Promise Scholarship"
For college tuition
Granted June, 2003

"Westmoreland Society Scholarship"
For college tuition
Granted June, 2003

Organizations and Services

Member,
Phi Alpha Theta

References

Dr. William Palmer
Marshall University, Dept. of History
Harris Hall 114
Huntington, WV 25755
Palmer@marshall.edu

Dr. David Mills
Marshall University, Dept. of History
Harris Hall 109
Huntington, WV 25755
Millsd@marshall.edu

Dr. Laura Michele Diener
Marshall University, Dept. of History
Harris Hall 115
Huntington, WV 25755
Diener@marshall.edu