PART I

The Birth of
British Orientalism
1773–1800
Historically, European oriental research rendered a service to Indian and Asiatic nationalism which no native could ever have given. . . . The resuscitation of their past fired the imagination of the Hindus and made them conscious of a heritage of their very own which they could pit not only against the Muslims' but also against that of the more virile English. Psychologically, the Indian people crossed the line which divides primitive peoples from civilized peoples.

—NIRAD CHAUDHURI
The Cultural Policy of Warren Hastings

When Warren Hastings returned to Bengal for the second time in 1772, he found himself confronted with what a parliamentary committee spokesman once referred to as "the most atrocious abuses that ever stained the name of civil government."¹ A generation of rapacious Company servants in search of quick profits had unabashedly ravaged Bengal and left the once fertile province "a confused heap as wild as the chaos itself."² The "shaking of the pagoda tree"³ had culminated in the 1769-70 famine—which provided an additional source of profits from rice speculation—and left the miserable populace "feeding on the dead."⁴ News of the famine that reached London impelled Horace Walpole to repudiate his countrymen abroad: "We have outdone the Spaniards


³ This expression is taken from the chapter title, "First Shaking of the Pagoda Tree," in G. T. Garrett, E. Thompson, Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India (reprinted; Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1962), pp. 98-111.

in Peru. They were at least butchers on a religious principle, however diabolical their zeal. We have murdered, deposed, plundered, usurped—nay, what think you of the famine in Bengal in which three millions perished being caused by a monopoly of the servants of the East India Company?  

Between the victory at Plassey in 1757 and Hastings's second arrival, the English in Bengal had changed radically from "patterning traders quarrelling over their seats in church . . . into imperialist swashbucklers and large scale extortionists." Often called the "Clive generation" after the noted but ill-starred empire-builder, they benefited from an ironic political situation. The local governor or Nawab, who ruled, did so without power, while the Company, which held the power, refused the responsibility of administration. This peculiar power vacuum was accentuated by the gradual disappearance between 1757 and 1765 of the Dutch and French commercial interests as restraining influences in the region.

Warren Hastings himself represented the transformation from merchant to empire-builder. He had first come to Bengal in 1750 at seventeen and, like other Company agents, began his career as a lowly clerk at £5 a year. When he left India in 1764, he had accumulated a fortune of £30,000. Like Clive, Hastings returned to Bengal as a virtual Caesar entrusted with the political and military responsibility of preserving the Company's possessions from the inroads of other Indian powers.

Warren Hastings underwent a significant transformation that set him apart from the majority of his peers and made him the prototype of a new kind of civil servant in India. Most Company agents, according to Percival Spear, were "frequently ignorant of the country languages and the debased Portuguese, . . . the lingua franca of the coast, was all they acquired." Hastings, on the other hand, as an Indian admirer of his reminds us,

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7 For a classic biography of Clive, the man who won the Battle of Plassey in 1756, carved out a domain for himself in Bengal, and later died in poverty in England, see H. Dodwell, Dupleix and Clive (London: Methuen and Co., 1920).
9 Spear, Nabobs, p. 127.
knew that the quickest route to the heart of a people is through
the language of the country and had accordingly proficiency in
Bengali and Urdu, besides a fair acquaintance with Persian, the
language of the Muslim Court. Sitting in a remote Bengali town,
with ample leisure for reflection, Hastings wondered at the vast-
ness of the country, its richness and variety, and above all the an-
tiquity and splendour of its civilization.\(^\text{10}\)

Despite the commonly held notion of the Indianized Englishman
of the late eighteenth century, there is little evidence to suggest
the existence, until the advent of the Hastings administration, of
official encouragement of more constructive forms of culture con-
tact. To be sure, there were isolated individuals in Company service
—men like Alexander Dow and J. Z. Holwell—who acquired an
intellectual appreciation of Indian civilization similar to that of
Hastings.\(^\text{11}\) But in the majority of cases, for the reason that rela-
tionships between Company servants and their Bengali agents were
built almost entirely on commercial dealings, to cultivate one an-
other’s languages for other than economic gain seemed inconceiv-
able.\(^\text{12}\)

In short, the post-Plassey political vacuum in Bengal was ac-
 companied by a kind of cross-cultural vacuum. Though English-
men lived with Indian women, appreciated Hindustani dancing
girls and acquired a taste for smoking the huka, they were still
alien freebooters longing to return home shouldering their bags of
riches.\(^\text{13}\)

The disastrous impact of the Bengal famine on Company profits
prompted the reversal of British policy in India. As Spear described
the situation:

\(^\text{10}\) V. B. Kulkarni, *British Statesmen in India* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans,

\(^\text{11}\) Zephania Holwell, whom we generally associate with the Black Hole
incident of 1756, was apparently also a student of “Hindoo antiquities” and
published works on “Indian politics and mythology.” He was important for
the European image of India because he “was one of Voltaire’s main sources
of information about India.” See A. Aronson, *Europe Looks at India* (Bom-
bay: Hind Kitabs, 1945), p. 17. Alexander Dow was a far more ambitious
scholar very close to the later Orientalists both in his debt to the eighteenth-
century *philosophes* and in the quality of his scholarly output between 1768
and 1774. For additional information, see the excellent analysis of “Alexander
Dow: Philosopher and Mercantilist,” in R. Guha, *A Rule of Property for
Company, 1963), pp. 21–42.


Bengal and Bihar, for the first time in centuries, were seriously underpopulated for two generations. It dealt a heavy blow at the whole social system. Many of the zemindars or hereditary farmers of the revenue, were ruined as the result of inability to collect regular assessments from a reduced and enfeebled peasantry. Hunter dates the ruin of two-thirds of the old aristocracy from this time. The loss both of artisans and cultivators caused a steady decrease in the Company’s profits and so hurried on the financial crisis of 1772 which led to state interference in the Company affairs.14

On August 6, 1772, the reform intent of the Court of Directors was made clear in a dispatch to Hastings which declared the Company’s willingness “to stand forth as Diwan” and “by the agency of the Company’s servants to take upon themselves the entire management of the revenues.”15 Since civil justice and tax collection were closely allied, this step “meant the direct control of the whole civil administration.”16

The Court order to Hastings was important not only in that it terminated the dual system of government but also because it ended the era of the commercial servant by establishing the rudiments of British civil service in India. For the first time, Englishmen were assigned to districts as collectors and their activities were to be regulated by a Board of Revenue in Calcutta. The Court, however, by providing little in the way of salary increases, better recruiting procedures, or service training, seemed to nullify any possibility for a radically different kind of covenanted servant.

In 1773, Parliament passed the Regulating Acts which helped the Company avert bankruptcy.17 Hastings became governor-general and a council was formed to assist him. In terms of British history, the Acts fused a long-needed administrative reform with a beneficial gesture to the Indian masses. In the light of subsequent Bengali social and cultural history, the change of regime was crucial because, as a result, Calcutta became the capital of British India. From “a straggling village of mud-houses” in 1771, with “the whole of the ground south of Chandpal Ghat thickly covered with jungle and forest trees,”18 Calcutta gradually evolved into an appropriate

17 Memoirs of Hastings, I, 204.
18 De, p. 42.
urban setting for expanding the channels of constructive influences from the West and for establishing new organizations offering greater opportunities for intellectual exchange between the two cultures.

In a political position without precedent, in a region impoverished by famine, and beset with factional conflicts that arose out of structural weaknesses of the Parliamentary plan, Hastings seemed to face a hopeless situation. In almost every undertaking, his ideals clashed with harsh circumstance. His dilemma was not that he lacked the talent for producing the appropriate solution for the immediate problem, but that he had so little to work with in realizing his objectives.

This was particularly true of Hastings’s notion of a British civil-service elite in India, to which he gave high priority during his administration. Himself proficient in South Asian languages, he saw a direct correlation between an acculturated civil servant and an efficient one. As Spear has pointed out, he sought “to understand Indian culture as a basis for sound Indian administration.” The Company and Parliamentary mandate for administrative responsibility in India had been vaguely worded and could be interpreted in either of two ways by the governor-general. He might choose a “Westernizing” approach (as Cornwallis later did) and thus impose alien institutions on Indian soil. Or he might opt, as did Hastings, who “came nearer to the heart of India than any of the other pre-Mutiny rulers,” to work within the existing indigenous institutions.

Because of Hastings’s background and inclinations, he was predisposed toward a new cultural policy in which he aimed at creating an Orientalized service elite competent in Indian languages and responsive to Indian traditions. Indianization should be conducted thenceforth not only on the level of social intercourse but also on that of intellectual exchange. Inasmuch as the British servant was expected to work alongside his Asian counterpart in

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19 For example, decisions were made in the governor-general’s council by majority vote. During the first two years, Hastings was often outvoted on crucial issues. See Memoirs of Hastings, I, 215.
20 Ibid., p. 380.
21 Spear, Oxford History, p. 513.
22 For an interesting analysis of the attempt by Cornwallis to impose “a Western type of law system” upon Indian soil, see Stokes, pp. 3–7.
23 Spear, Oxford History, p. 513.
the administrative hierarchy, the Englishman would have to learn
to think and act like an Asian. Otherwise, the British would be
treated as aliens, rapport between ruler and ruled would break
down, and the empire would ultimately collapse. In 1784, with
the idea of an Asiatic Society in mind, Hastings wrote:

Every accumulation of knowledge, and especially such as is ob-
tained by social communication with people over whom we exer-
cise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the
state: it is the gain of humanity. . . .

When he took office, Hastings found himself saddled with Com-
pany agents of the same type as those who had served under Clive.
As Thompson and Garrett have reported, "Hastings's letters to
individual Directors glowed with indignation at the arrogance and
general incompetence of the servants in the field." Since he could
do little with the raw material he had, Hastings tried to do the
next-best thing. In 1773, he drafted a proposal for the establishment
of a professorship of the Persian language at Oxford University.
He urged that civil servants study Persian and possibly Hindustani
(Urdu) there before coming to India. In 1773 Persian was im-
portant—as it would be throughout the first half of the nineteenth
century—because it was the language of diplomacy, administration,
and the courts of law. At that time Hindustani was the lingua
franca of India. Not until 1790, however, did the Company autho-
rize official action toward providing linguistic training.

Hastings solved the problem of language training by developing

25 Ibid., p. 72.
26 Letter of Hastings to N. Smith, October 4, 1784, quoted in S. K. Dās,
Bāmla gadyasāhityer itiḥās (Kalikātā: Mitralay, 1963), p. 52.
27 Garrett and Thompson, p. 119.
28 Home Miscellaneous Series, CCCCLXXXVII, 213–215, cited by B. B.
Misra, The Central Administration of the East India Company (Oxford:
29 In that year, Cornwallis provided each man holding the title of writer
(the lowest rank in the Company service) with an extra 30 rupees a month
to engage a munshi (tutor) who was to teach him Persian. See ibid.
30 In 1801, when Hastings's idea was developed and formalized in a new
civil-service training institution known as the College of Fort William,
Hastings wrote: "About thirty-five years ago, I drew up a proposal for the
establishment of a professorship of the Persian language in the University
of Oxford, and presented printed copies of it to all the gentlemen who had
at that time the direction of Company affairs. It had the approbation of the
Noble Lord who was the Chancellor of the University, and the late Dr.
a coterie of selected aides whom he personally inspired with a love for Asian literature. He turned to the younger men recently arrived in India. Among the earliest were Charles Wilkins, who came to Bengal in 1770, and Nathaniel Halhed and Jonathan Duncan, who both began their tour of duty in 1772. William Jones, the most famous of the new Orientalists, did not arrive until a decade later, in 1783.

In order to meet the urgent need of translating Hindu and Muslim laws into English for the use of the average Company representative, and to translate Company regulations into the languages of the Indian people, Hastings was compelled to accelerate the process of learning and transformation. To stimulate the self-study of languages he instituted financial inducements for those able to translate them. The implementation of Hastings’s policy in the growing cosmopolitan center of Calcutta contributed enormously to the awakening of the Bengali mind. Since Bengal was the immediate cultural frame of reference for that policy’s realization, the Bengali lan-

Johnson promised, if it took place, to frame a code of regulations for the conduct of it. It met with no other encouragement, and was therefore dropped.” *Home Miscellaneous Series*, CCCCLXXXVII, 193–207, quoted in Davies, p. 449.

According to Gleig, even as early as 1773, when Hastings set up his first committee of revenue, the governor-general decided “to appoint to this duty not the senior servants of the Company, but such as, by the knowledge of the Persian and Hindostanee languages, and the other qualifications of temper and talent, should appear best fitted to execute the trust.” See *Memoirs of Hastings*, I, p. 380. These linguistically competent men were sent out to rural areas or towns of inspection.

William Chambers, Interpreter to the Supreme Court, translated Impey’s Code into Persian in 1783 for 2,000 rupees a month, and when the job was finished he had accumulated 32,000 for it. See Narain, p. 14. Jonathan Duncan, who translated the same Code into Bengali also in 1783, received 15,000 rupees. See *ibid*. This patronage continued into the Cornwallis era. In 1788, for example, when William Jones prevailed upon Cornwallis to play Justinian and patronize an English translation of Manu’s Code, the government was so liberal in its expenditure as to pay Jones’s chief pundit, Tarkapanchanan, 3,600 rupees a year for his services. See B. Banerji, *Dawn of New India* (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar and Sons, 1927), p. 77.

Hastings was apparently aware of the impact that his new cultural policy would have on Calcutta. In 1773, he already envisioned “Calcutta as . . . the first city in Asia . . . if I live and am supported a few years longer.” Letter of Hastings to M. Sykes, March 2, 1773, *Memoirs of Hastings*, I, 285.
guage became the first Sanskrit-derived vernacular to be studied systematically by Englishmen. In 1788, Nathaniel Halhed, one of Hastings's bright young men, published a *Grammar of the Bengali Language* which the esteemed scholar of Bengal, S. K. De, considers "one of the earliest and for some time the best introduction to the scientific study of the language." Though intended for the use of other civil servants, Halhed's meticulous method of extracting the "authentic" language from Muslim and Portuguese influences not only inspired William Carey in the same endeavor but led directly to a renaissance in Bengali language and literature.

Secondly, Hastings's need to reproduce official documents in Oriental script promoted the rise of printing and publishing in Calcutta. Charles Wilkins, another of Hastings's favorites, and nephew of the English printer and engraver Robert B. Wray, applied himself to the task in the 1770's. By 1778, he had completed a set of Bengali types and established the first vernacular printing press in India. That same year Wilkins published Halhed's *Grammar* as the pioneering work printed in Bengali. In 1779, Hastings channeled all official documents in Asian languages through Wilkins' establishment, now a government press. A year later, Wilkins published *Hickey's Gazette*, the first English newspaper in India.

Increasingly, Britishers in South Asia acquired a curiosity about the whole range and substance of what has since been called Indian civilization. By 1784, when Hastings founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, his vision of an acculturated service elite had been partially realized. This transformation played a major role in re-shaping the self-image of later civil servants by making them increasingly conscious of their professional and public responsibilities.

In perspective, the fact that British Orientalism in India can trace its original source of inspiration to Warren Hastings is of outstanding importance. Behind the expediencies of his policy lay a fund of understanding of and benevolence toward the Indian

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34 De, p. 72.
38 *Das*, p. 31.
40 *Infra*, pp 31, 34.
masses. This is not to imply that Hastings was a saint. In his relations with Indian potentates, Hastings was not above using Machiavellian means to extend British power and influence on the subcontinent. Nonetheless, it is still true of Hastings, as Thompson and Garrett have pointed out, that “he loved the people of India, and respected them to a degree no other British ruler has ever equalled”\textsuperscript{41} According to Spear, “his name became a legend, passing into popular folklore, his exploits celebrated in popular verse.”\textsuperscript{42} Hastings sought to instill his feeling for India into the new class of Company officials. His basic convictions became the credo of the Orientalist movement: to rule effectively, one must love India; to love India, one must communicate with her people; and to communicate with her people, one must learn her languages.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} Garratt and Thompson, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{42} Spear, Oxford History, p. 513.
\textsuperscript{43} As Gleig aptly points out, the Orientalist credo really represented the reverse side of a new philosophy of cultural encounter. In his cultural policy, Hastings aimed not only at producing an acculturated class of English civil servants, but at providing the means by which Indians might revitalize their own culture. Gleig writes: “He encouraged bodies of learned pundits to settle in Calcutta, and supported them while they translated out of the Sanskrit into more acceptable dialects, the poems and mythological and moral treatises of their native land. He founded colleges for the instruction of native youths in the laws and usages of their own country. He held out inducements to the study by the natives of English literature and English science. He laboured, in short, to promote not only the political, but the moral and rational improvement of the provinces. . . .” Memoirs of Hastings, III, 156–157.
The Orientalist in Search of a Golden Age

If the new elite of Company servants owed to Warren Hastings their transformation in India—from commercial adventurer to civil servant, the basis of their thought and scholarship was the set of values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Most of them brought with them to Calcutta the conceptual baggage of the philosophe. In one sense, therefore, the remarkable historical breakthroughs of such men as William Jones and Henry Colebrooke are reminiscent of those of Gibbon and Voltaire—for all of them were products of the eighteenth-century world of ideas.

To appreciate fully the phenomenal Orientalist rediscovery of the Hindu classical age, it is necessary to isolate those components of the European Enlightenment that predisposed the Company servants in that direction. The intellectual elite that clustered about Hastings after 1770 was classicist rather than “progressive” in their historical outlook, cosmopolitan rather than nationalist in their view of other cultures, and rationalist rather than romantic in their quest for those “constant and universal principles” that express the unity of human nature.¹ What made them an especially fertile field for Hastings’s experiments in cultural interaction was the idea of tolerance, the mainspring of their historical and cultural relativism:

In one of his essays on the French Enlightenment in The Party

of Humanity, Peter Gay characterized Voltaire as a "subversive anthropologist."² "Voltaire was a real cosmopolitan," Gay concludes, "fond of England, impressed with China, attached to pagan Greece and Rome."³ This view of Voltaire as representative of an age that combined an outgoing universalism with an appreciation for particularist diversity suggests a similar critical concept of twentieth-century scholarship.⁴ In the following passage from the Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations, Voltaire's "anthropological" attitude is very apparent:

It follows from this survey of history that everything which pertains intimately to human nature is much the same from one end of the world to the other; that everything which depends on custom is different, and it is mere chance if there is any resemblance. The empire of custom is indeed much larger than that of nature. It extends over manners, over all usage; it spreads variety over the universal scene. Nature spreads unity; it establishes everywhere a small number of invariable principles: thus the foundation is everywhere the same, and culture produces diverse fruits.⁵

This concept of unity and diversity, of process and pattern, viewed in historical perspective was perhaps one of the most significant ideas to emerge in the eighteenth-century philosophy of history.⁶ The belief that man, though culturally different, is basically the same everywhere enabled Voltaire, as Ferguson asserts, "to pave the way for a history of civilizations."

Voltaire and his contemporaries paved the way for a proper study of historical civilization, and they also felt a deep and lively

³ Ibid.
⁴ The reference here is specifically to the cultural and historical relativity found in Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict among anthropologists and Arnold Toynbee among historians (especially the first volume in the latter's Study of History). See also the foreword to L. Woolley, The Beginnings of Civilization, UNESCO History of Mankind (New York: New American Library, 1965), I, v–xl.
⁶ In Ferguson's view, the importance lay in Voltaire's ability to "recognize the peculiar and varying spirit of nations or of ages, while still denying that these differences are essential or inherent in the nature of men of different times or different races." See ibid., p. 82.
⁷ Ibid.
interest in its classical form. "Whoever thinks, or whoever possesses taste," wrote Voltaire, "only counts four centuries in the history of the world."8 The four ages were all classical or neoclassical: Greece, Augustan Rome, Renaissance Italy, and the age of Louis XIV.9 To the men of the Enlightenment, therefore, the history of civilizations did not show uninterrupted progress toward Utopia, but was, on the contrary, cyclical in its discontinuous movements from greatness to decline.

Hence, what permeates Gibbon’s masterpiece of eighteenth-century classicism, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, is a kind of Greek sense of tragedy. Written between 1776 and 1788, it not only represented the cyclical interpretation of history but also expressed a profound identification with a remote age of antiquity. For Gibbon, the decline of the classical world was not so much a cause of jubilation as it was sufficient reason for despair. Referring to Gibbon’s philosophy of history, Christopher Dawson has aptly pointed out: “Every man and every state have their hour, and though genius and virtue could realize the possibilities of that happy moment, they could not preserve it or make the wheel of fortune to stand still.”10

This mood of despair has provided since Petrarch the proper emotional receptiveness for a concept of dark ages.11 The ages of gold and the ages of darkness seem so closely interrelated that it is difficult to know whether—in the case of many European renaissance historians—those historians are exuberantly optimistic about the rebirth of the classical world in Italy or deeply fascinated by the decline of antiquity.

Cosmopolitanism, classicism, and rationalism were distinguishing features of the enlightened eighteenth-century mind, but it was

9 Ibid., pp. 5–8.
11 According to Ferguson: “With Petrarch the division between ancient and later history took on a new meaning, founded on romantic admiration for pagan Roman literature, the city of Rome, and ideal of republican virtue. . . . Defining his terms, he called the period, prior to adoption of Christianity . . . ancient (antiqua) . . . his own age modern (nova). And this modern age he qualified consistently as one of barbarism and darkness (tenebrae). Petrarch, indeed, may well be regarded as the originator of the conception of the ‘dark ages.’” Ferguson, p. 8.
the idea of tolerance that proved crucial to British Orientalists seeking to transcend alienation from another culture. The high intellectual regard for non-European peoples and cultures (even primitive ones) was presumably as prevalent in the 1700’s as it was to become rare in the 1800’s. In sharp contrast with the age of Kipling, the Age of Enlightenment believed, as Carl Becker tells us, “That for the greater part of mankind, during far the greater period of recorded history, had lived (except indeed, when oppressed and corrupted by Christian powers) more happily and humanely, under laws and customs more free and equitable, more in accord with natural religion and morality, than the peoples of Europe had done during the centuries of ecclesiastical ascendency. . . .”

It may be said that the *philosophes*’ spirit of tolerance reached out to all but those guilty of intolerance. This seems to be Gay’s explanation for Voltaire’s low level of patience for Catholicism and its legacy of medieval “barbarism,” with its “despicable faith steeped in superstition and stained with persecution.” His high evaluation of Chinese mandarins, on the other hand, was due to “their admirable religion free from superstitions and the rage to persecute.”

Both intolerance for the intolerant and a positive sympathy and appreciation for the histories of other cultures were regularly invoked “in the service of reason and common sense.” In Gibbon’s work, for example, the iconographical ritualism of medieval Catholicism was compared unfavorably with the puritanical simplicity of the Muslim faith. The special quality of the period that enabled historian-philosophers like Gibbon to combine a critical attitude toward one’s own culture with an admiration for the virtues of another contributed to the birth of comparative history. In fact, this capacity for viewing history and culture relativistically, which is the key to understanding British Orientalist historiography, was strongly characteristic of Gibbon’s thought. The fol-

12 Becker, pp. 107-108.
13 Gay, p. 50.
14 Voltaire’s admiration of the Chinese was very strong. In one passage, he wrote: “Never was the religion . . . and of the tribunals dishonoured with impostures; never was it troubled with quarrels between the priests and the empire; never was it burdened with absurd innovations. Here the Chinese were superior to all the nations of the universe.” Voltaire, “The Philosophy of History,” *Best Known Works* (New York: The Book League, 1940), p. 400.
15 Becker, p. 108.
lowing passage from *The Decline and Fall* could only have been written by an Orientalist: “More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the law of Moses, the religion of Mahomet might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which in the seventh century disgraced the simplicity of the Gospel.”

It seems evident, therefore, why many of the Company recruits who went to India were predisposed to adopt the basic tenets of Hastings's Orientalism. This is not to argue that they were necessarily influenced by European thought or that Orientalism was simply an intellectual extension of the West on Indian soil. At the other extreme, to argue that civil servants became Orientalists wholly as a result of their Indian experience, or that Orientalism was derived only from conditions of European rule in Asia, is to give too shallow an explanation for too complex a phenomenon.

It appears, rather, that the European climate of thought and opinion favored an Orientalist movement in Asia. Judging from the Dutch experience in Indonesia, such a movement was not inevitable. On the other hand, later in the nineteenth century in England, when cosmopolitanism became less fashionable than nationalism and when tolerance for other peoples gave way to the intolerance of national self-adulation, the fitting atmosphere for an Orientalist movement or for a Warren Hastings himself largely disappeared.

The earliest Hastings-trained generation of officials was born between 1740 and 1765. As was customary in Company recruiting procedures, every man was originally sponsored by a relative or friend of the family. In many instances it was because of their

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17 It would be interesting to speculate on what might have happened if the British had kept Indonesia. T. S. Raffles, who served as governor-general of Java between 1811 and 1816, was an Orientalized civil servant “imbued with the principles of the Enlightenment.” See W. Bingham, *et al., A History of Asia* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965), II, 177. Raffles studied the language of Java and wrote a classic history of the island. See T. S. Raffles, *History of Java* (London: John Murray and Company, 1830). Raffles also ordered the first survey to be made of the magnificent Borobodur monument.

impecunious circumstances and their desire to accumulate wealth rapidly that the men were prompted to apply. The majority of them began their ascent of the Company ladder in either commercial or revenue offices, and in true Horatio Alger fashion worked their way up through initiative and hard work.

The key to advancement, in most cases, was linguistic proficiency. Charles Grant, who moved from the post of resident in Malda to the Board of Trade in Calcutta, and on to greater heights in London, was an outstanding exception. When he met William Jones in 1785, the “variety and depth of learning” of the Orientalist filled Grant with the “shame of being unlearned.” Grant’s was a special kind of transformation. After the death of his two children from smallpox in 1776, Grant became deeply religious, and this attitude apparently served the same end for him as did the Orientalist commitment for other company employees.

In the era of Hastings, and for some time thereafter, the mastery of Indian languages opened the way to both professional advancement and the literary treasures of an Oriental civilization. Charles Wilkins, for example, who like Grant served in Malda and was at first unresponsive to the study of languages, suddenly applied himself to mastering Sanskrit. Wilkins’s proficiency in the classical language of the Hindus not only endeared him to Hastings—who invited him to Calcutta—but also led to a major scholarly conversion. The same Wilkins who managed the first government press in Calcutta also translated the Bhagavat Gita in 1783, pioneered in the use of inscriptions to reconstruct the history of the Palas of Bengal, and was one of the charter members of the Royal Asiatic Society. His reputation as a “Sanskritist” earned him a D.C.L. from Oxford in 1805 and a knighthood in 1833.

Not all conversions conformed so neatly to this pattern. Henry

19 Spear, Oxford History, p. 527.
22 De, p. 73.
23 Ibid., p. 75.
T. Colebrooke—who was destined to be, next to Jones, the greatest of the Orientalists—prided himself at first on having resisted the temptation to join the translation game. "Translations," he wrote, "are for those who need to fill their purses." According to A. J. Arberry, not only did Colebrooke ridicule the Hastings policy, but he spoke disparagingly of such Orientalists as Wilkins as "Sanskrit-mad" and described their early publications as "a repository of nonsense."

Colebrooke first came to India at the age of eighteen in 1783 as a writer in Madras. In the manner of Gibbon and like many of the more intellectually gifted men in Company service, he experienced an "intoxicating" love for the classical civilization of Greece and Rome. In fact, Colebrooke was the type of eighteenth-century man who would prove most receptive to the Hastings ideal and was most likely to succeed as an Orientalist. In Madras, the youthful Colebrooke gained a reputation for eschewing both drinking and gambling and was concerned as little with illicit profiteering as he was in accumulating debts in order to keep up appearances. Instead, he spent long hours in his room studying the European classics.

The change in Colebrooke may well have been caused by the sudden depletion of the family fortune, which made a career in England impossible for him. When he turned finally to the study of Sanskrit, it was with the same sobriety and thoroughness that he had applied to the study of the classics and that were, as his German admirer, Max Müller has written, "the distinguishing features" of his later accomplishments. Colebrooke's subsequent service near the holy city of Benares afforded him an unusual opportunity to study at first hand the Sanskrit language and Sanskritic culture.

By 1794, his scholarly reputation in India was so generally acknowledged that he was chosen the logical successor to William Jones, who had died earlier that year. The scholarly reputation that Colebrooke continually reinforced by original research and brilliant articles not only won him laurels in Europe but contributed

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27 Müller, p. 233.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 232.
directly to his later career in Calcutta (1800–15), where he served in the highest offices of the state.\textsuperscript{31}

If officials such as Colebrooke, Wilkins, and Jones developed into great scholars as a result of the new Hastings spirit, it must be added that most of the other Orientalists proved mediocre scholars but outstanding civil servants. The pioneering achievements of a few men and the erudite aura of the Asiatic Society of Bengal have contributed to the mistaken impression that British Orientalism was made up of professorial individuals who spent most of their time on research and publication.

Jonathan Duncan, for example—for whom, unlike Colebrooke, no German ever thought of erecting a statue\textsuperscript{32}—nevertheless was closer to the Hastings ideal of a civil servant than perhaps any one else in his generation. Though he was an able translator of Bengali and Persian and author of scholarly articles in the \textit{Asiatick Researches},\textsuperscript{33} his bent was far more administrative than intellectual. Like Charles Metcalfe in the next generation,\textsuperscript{34} he expressed his Orientalist love and knowledge of India in programs of social improvement that were relevant to urgent popular needs.

Duncan’s career in India, 1772–1811, almost perfectly typifies that of the transformed civil servant. The Hastings policy opened up the attractive alternative of a noncommercial public-service career, and Duncan grasped the opportunity. The stages in his development are familiar: linguistic proficiency, translation of official documents, close relationships with the Hindu literati, exploration of and an ever-deepening appreciation for Hinduism, and charter member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Professionally, Duncan ran the gamut of elitist positions in the administration. From a writership and a minor judicial position, he worked his way up through the ranks of the Revenue Department.\textsuperscript{35} He was one of three or four key aides whom Cornwallis

\textsuperscript{31} Most important among his post–1800 positions in Calcutta were as mem-
ber of the Supreme Council (1807) and Supreme Court Judge (1813).

\textsuperscript{32} Wrote Max Müller: “Had he lived in Germany, we should long ago
have seen his statue in his native place, his name written in letters of gold on
the walls of academies; we should have heard of Colebrooke jubilees and
Colebrooke scholarships . . . .” Müller, p. 230.

\textsuperscript{33} His most important article—because it led to the discovery of Sarnath
as a Buddhist center—was, according to R. C. Mitra: “Discovery of Two Urns
in the Vicinity of Benares,” \textit{Asiatick Researches} (1797), V, 131–133.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Infra}, pp. 106–107.

\textsuperscript{35} Narain, p. 9.
inherited from Hastings and whom he greatly depended upon throughout his tenure of office. Duncan served Cornwallis as Persian interpreter, Secretary of the Public and Revenue Departments, Resident of Benares and Commissioner of Territories Ceded by Tipu Sultan. In 1795 he was appointed Governor of Bombay, a post he held until his death in 1811.

Duncan always coupled his duty to the Company with his responsibility to the people under his jurisdiction. In 1789, he took steps to abolish infanticide among the Rajkumars, a local grouping of Rajputs. As Resident of Benares, he might have legislated the evil out of existence. Instead, he met with the chiefs and discussed with them from various standpoints the deliberate starvation of their children. He pointed out that, for example, this practice contravened the dictates of the Hindu scriptures. Knowing that female children were an economic drain on many families, he offered government compensation if the Rajputs would agree to end the practice. In June of that year, the Rajkumars, apparently without coercion on the part of the government, complied with Duncan’s wishes and put an end to infanticide.

In the Hastings manner, Duncan followed a consistent policy of encouraging the revitalization of Hindu learning and philosophy. While still at Benares, he proposed to his superiors in 1791 that a “Hindu College” be established “for the preservation and cultivation of the Laws, Literature and Religion of that Nation at this Centre of their Faith.” In support of his proposal, Duncan pointed out that this institution, unlike the many smaller seminaries in Benares, would be a “public university” offering the Hindus a totally new concept of research and education. It would be both a center for correcting existing texts and a “precious library of the most ancient and valuable learning and tradition.” Finally it would prove “a Nursery of future Doctors and Expounders of the Law to assist European Judges in . . . regular and uniform administration. . . .”

While Duncan typified the ideal Orientalized civil servant and Colebrooke was one of the finest Oriental scholars produced in the same milieu, many of the Company employees who lacked the integrity of the one and the intellect of the other achieved a com-

38 Charles Grant and George Barlow were the other two.
37 For additional information on this and other similar episodes, see Narain.
38 Duncan quoted in ibid., p. 169.
39 Ibid., p. 171.
promise between the values of the Clive generation and those of the new administration. At the same time that Duncan won approval for the first Sanskrit university to be established in British India, another Scotsman, destined for Orientalist fame as a scholar of Hindustani language and literature, was engaged in some shady indigo operations in the vicinity of Benares.

This Scotsman, John B. Gilchrist, represented a group of Company-recruited surgeons who subsequently established favorable reputations for themselves as skilled linguists. William Hunter, John Leyden, and H. H. Wilson also arrived in India as doctors and left as reputed philologists. Gilchrist was a shrewd man who seems to have turned to translation work as a means of augmenting his income after other means had failed. We first find him in Benares in 1787 buying land illegally for the cultivation of indigo.\(^40\) In 1793 Gilchrist had actually organized an army which went into combat against other Europeans also hoping to cultivate indigo in the same area.\(^41\) A year later he came to Calcutta and must have observed the opportunities beginning to open for anyone who was proficient in the Urdu language.

Whatever their intent upon arriving in India, whatever their motivation in mastering Indian languages and then translating them for profit, the first generation of Orientalists left India with a tradition of public service and cultural empathy which for the most part was lacking in the generation they replaced (see Table 1). More important, perhaps, the Hastings-inspired amateur scholars brought into being a new concept of the Hindu golden age as a legacy for the rising Indian intelligentsia.

The combination of a transplanted elite transformed on Indian soil and their eighteenth-century background helps to explain both the institutional genesis of the Asiatic Society and the nature of its intellectual values. The Asiatic Society was not properly the conception of any one man, be it Hastings or Jones, but the expression of a collective need. After a decade of studying facets of Hindu and Muslim civilization in India, the Hastings generation now required a more formal organization.

The Asiatic Society of Bengal was, until the nineteenth century, an association for an elite of Company officials in the Calcutta area meeting irregularly either in the Supreme Court building or in

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 98.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 101.
Table 1
THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS UNDER HASTINGS, 1770–1785

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>European Education</th>
<th>Arrived in India</th>
<th>Language Mastered</th>
<th>Elitist Post</th>
<th>Principal Orientalist Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chambers, Robert</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>Aristocrat</td>
<td>Harrow, Oxford</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Supreme Court Judge</td>
<td>Translator; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colebrooke, Henry</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Banker's son</td>
<td>Secondary; classical</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>Supreme Council</td>
<td>Scholar; translator; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan, Jonathan</td>
<td>1756</td>
<td>Company director's son</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>1772</td>
<td>Persian, Bengali, Sanskrit</td>
<td>Resident, Benares</td>
<td>Social reformer; scholar; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmunstone, Niel B.</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Aristocrat</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>Persian, Bengali</td>
<td>Persian Secretary</td>
<td>Translator; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forster, Henry P.</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>Aristocrat</td>
<td>Oxford (?:)</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>Calcutta Mint</td>
<td>First modern Bengali dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilchrist, John B.</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Heriot's Hospital, Edinburgh</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Professor, College of Fort William</td>
<td>Translator; Urdu grammar and dictionary; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halhed, Nathaniel B.</td>
<td>1751</td>
<td>Aristocrat</td>
<td>Harrow, Oxford</td>
<td>1772</td>
<td>Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian</td>
<td>Supreme Court Judge</td>
<td>First modern Bengali grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter, William</td>
<td>(?:)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Aberdeen, Marishal College</td>
<td>1781</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Professor, librarian, College of F.W.</td>
<td>Translator; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>European Education</th>
<th>Arrived In India</th>
<th>Language Mastered -</th>
<th>Elitist Post</th>
<th>Principal Orientalist Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jones, William</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Aristocrat</td>
<td>Harrow, Oxford</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic</td>
<td>Supreme Court Judge</td>
<td>Translator; Asiatic Society; reformer; scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkins, Charles</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Persian, Sanskrit, Bengali</td>
<td>Director, Company Press, Calcutta</td>
<td>Translator; scholar; Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

private homes.\textsuperscript{42} Though the general membership had been well over 100 since 1790,\textsuperscript{43} the active core of members attending meetings was rather naturally limited to a small group of administrative and judicial figures stationed in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{44}

Apparently, the original intention of Society members was not so much to publish their findings as to make available English translations of Oriental classics. William Jones, their first président, contemplated the publication of one volume every year in a series to be entitled "Asiatick Miscellany."\textsuperscript{45} Unfortunately, lack of funds compelled him to abandon the scheme and instead he sought a publisher for the papers read at each meeting. In 1788, Manuel Cantonother agreed to publish the papers—on the condition that every Society member promise to buy each volume at 20 rupees per copy.\textsuperscript{46} The resulting journal, \textit{Asiatick Researches}, was eagerly read by European scholars, who welcomed the first fruits of original research in India. Five volumes of the \textit{Researches} were published by 1797 and one pirated edition appeared in Europe in 1798.\textsuperscript{47} (See Table 2.)

For William Jones, the most outstanding intellect in the Asiatic Society until his death in 1794, the decision to subordinate translation work to scholarship proved a turning point in his life. It was not his translation of \textit{Sakuntala}, however well received,\textsuperscript{48} that established him as the great seminal figure of the Orientalist movement but rather his varied research, his brilliant analysis, and his broad, deeply suggestive generalizations on Asian antiquity. The papers that he read at Society seminars in the form of discourses were re-written for the edification of European scholars who conscientiously scanned the pages of the \textit{Researches}. So anxious was Jones to integrate every finding into elaborate conceptual schemes

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{44} In 1799 this clique included Sir John Anstruther, John H. Harington, John Gilchrist, Francis Gladwin, Francis Macnaughten, and William Roxburgh.
\textsuperscript{45} Mitra, \textit{Centenary Review}, Part I, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{48} As Jones's biographer, G. Cannon, points out, Kalidasa's rediscovery had its most important impact on Indians: "Now Indians could hold up their heads as civilized, cultured men. The way had been opened for them to regain their literature . . ." G. Cannon, p. 166.
that he reminded Max Müller "of the dashing and impatient general who tries to take every fortress by bombardment and storm."\(^{49}\)

As soon as Jones reached Calcutta in 1783, he immediately concentrated upon applying his eighteenth-century ideals to an alien environment. His own vision of an Asiatic Society proved to be, as Garland Cannon has aptly pointed out, the crystallization of a new ideology of cultural encounter between Asia and the West. In Cannon's words: If it [the Asiatic Society] could stimulate Europeans to intellectual endeavor in regard to Asian culture, it would not just help prevent their indulgence in vice-ridden cities—a strong temptation against which Benjamin Franklin had warned Jones—but it would be promoting understanding between peoples, a condition necessary for a successful rule of the vast sub-continent.\(^{50}\)

In contrast to the Orientalism of the nineteenth century with its romanticist view of cultural diversity, the scholarship of Jones was universalist and rationalist. In his first presidential address to the Asiatic Society, Jones clearly stated that his "inquiry into the History, Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia" was a means to the end of discovering truths about "Man and Nature."\(^{51}\) Asian knowledge would add a new dimension to our understanding of human learning. Human learning, or knowledge, which was for Jones the true concern of the Asiatic Society, he divided into three parts: "history, Science and Art." In his own words:

The first [history] comprehends either an account of natural productions, or the genuine records of empires and states; the second [science] embraces the whole circle of pure and mixed mathematics together with ethicks and law, as far as they depend on the reasoning faculty; the third [art] includes all the beauties of imagery and the chorus of invention, displayed in modulated language, or represented by colour, figure or sound.\(^{52}\)

William Jones was the man who, in 1786, may have been the first seriously to consider that India's golden period as a culture lay in a remote, unchartered period in world history. Moreover, this view was propounded in the very same discourse that outlined

\(^{49}\) Müllers, p. 271.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 114.


\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. xii.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientalist</th>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Primary Research Interest</th>
<th>Principal Discovery</th>
<th>Major Publication (With Date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colebrook, H. T.</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>Vedic age</td>
<td>Monotheism, widow remarriage, etc.</td>
<td>**&quot;On the Vedas,&quot; 1805 **&quot;On Hindu Widows,&quot; 1795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, S.</td>
<td>Diplomatic</td>
<td>Hindu science</td>
<td>Early algebra, trigonometry</td>
<td>**&quot;On Astronomical Calculations of the Hindus,&quot; 1795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan, J.</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>History, Benares</td>
<td>Sarnath as Buddhist center</td>
<td>**&quot;Discovery of Two Urns in the Vicinity of Benares,&quot; 1797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwin, F.</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>History, Mughals</td>
<td>Akbar's India from Persian texts</td>
<td><em>On Institutes of Akbar, 1783–86</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington, J. H.</td>
<td>Judicial</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Early account of Buddhism in Ceylon</td>
<td>**&quot;On Buddhist Stupas in Ceylon,&quot; 1799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, W.</td>
<td>Judicial</td>
<td>Sources of Indo-European languages and cultures</td>
<td>Linguistic links between Indo-Europeans</td>
<td>**&quot;Third Annual Discourse,&quot; 1788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackenzie, C.</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>History, South India</td>
<td>Collected 1,568 mss. 8,076 inscriptions; wrote earliest accounts of Jains in South India</td>
<td>**&quot;Remarks on Antiquities on West Coast Ceylon,&quot; 1799, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm, J.</td>
<td>Diplomatic</td>
<td>History of West India</td>
<td>Earliest history of the Sikhs</td>
<td>**&quot;Sketch of the Sikhs,&quot; 1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientalist</strong></td>
<td><strong>Branch</strong></td>
<td><strong>Primary Research Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Principal Discovery</strong></td>
<td><strong>Major Publication (With Date)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strachey, E.</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>Mathematics of Hindus</td>
<td>Algebraic and arithmetical knowledge of ancient Hindus; earliest account of transmission of mathematics to Arabs</td>
<td>*&quot;On Early History of Algebra,&quot; 1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilford, F.</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Historical geography of ancient India</td>
<td>Earliest analysis of geography of ancient India</td>
<td>*&quot;On the Ancient Geography of India,&quot; 1815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkins, C.</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>Pre-Muslim Bengal</td>
<td>Earliest historical treatment of Pala Dynasty in Bengal based on inscrptional evidence</td>
<td>*&quot;A Royal Grant of Land on a Copper Plate,&quot; 1788, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Asiatick Researches

Source: Compiled principally from *Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, "Manuscript Proceedings" of the Asiatic Society of Bengal Library of the ASB, Calcutta.
his remarkable rediscovery of a common source of the languages of the Indo-European peoples. Both these intellectual achievements were the work of a universalist who sought to explain cultural unity through common origins. In the following oft-quoted passage, Jones gives his reasons for maintaining that Sanskrit was the fountainhead of many languages:

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity both in the roots of verbs and in the form of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; . . . there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtick, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family. . . .

Indeed, what Jones actually accomplished, and which would have important repercussions in later generations, was that by linking Sanskrit, the language of the ancient Hindus, to the European language family he related Hindu civilization to that of Europe and reanimated the resplendent Hindu past. Jones responded in the same way to Indian philosophy. In contrast to the bias of German scholars who increasingly viewed the Vedanta as a unique manifestation of the “Aryan genius,” Jones reacted to it by stressing similarities between it and other comparable works of philosophy. It was not possible for him, for example, “to read the Vedanta or the many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India.”

In the 1786 discourse Jones admitted that, in the absence of authentic historical knowledge, his observations concerning the Indo-European period were impressionistic. His intellectual curiosity was whetted by extant fragments of a civilization which he understood incompletely. Bits and pieces of Sanskrit language and literature, the six schools of Indian philosophy, the Laws of Manu, the religious myths and symbols, and the varied sculptural and architectural remains all testified to a “people with a fertile and inventive genius.” But these people had since then substituted

84 Ibid., p. 425.
85 Ibid., p. 421.
astrophysical calculations for a viable chronological scheme and had buried their history in "a cloud of fables." For Jones, one thing seemed certain: "... how degenerate and abased so ever the Hindus may now appear, that in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government; wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge. ..."  

If Jones is to be remembered for those sweeping but nonetheless intuitively correct generalizations which portrayed a grandiose Indo-European world, H. T. Colebrooke should be recalled for his specialized interests and incisive monographic studies on Vedic India. Max Müller, who admired Colebrooke far more than Jones, believed that "few scholars were able to go beyond Colebrooke." Whereas "Sir William explored a few fields," Müller wrote, Colebrooke tackled "the really difficult works, the grammatical treatises and the commentaries, the philosophic systems, and before all, the immense literature of the Vedic period."  

In his treatment of universal history, Colebrooke, like Jones, displayed a typical intellect of the eighteenth century. Colebrooke viewed history not as a chronicle of political events but as a record depicting the growth of civilizations. In the tradition of Voltaire, he once said before the Royal Asiatic Society:

I do not refer merely to the succession of political struggles, national conflicts, and warlike achievements; but rather to less conspicuous, yet more important occurrences, which directly concern the structure of society, the civil institutions of nations. Their internal, more than their external relations, and the yet less prominent, but more momentous events which affect society universally, and advance it in the scale of civilized life.

Colebrooke also expressed the familiar argument of the eighteenth century in behalf of a liberal spirit between cultures. The West, he stated, "owes a debt of gratitude" to the civilizations of Asia for their contributions in the arts and sciences. In fact, "civilization had its origin in Asia." Now, whereas the West was taking large strides forward, Asia was in a state of decline. The

58 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Müller, p. 262.
59 Ibid., p. 270.
61 Ibid., pp. 1–2.
way to help Asians, the Orientalist Colebrooke recommended, was to "investigate" the history of their cultures "with the hope of facilitating ameliorations of which they may be found susceptible."

Though Colebrooke held out hope for a rebirth of a declining East, his fascination with the rediscovery of a Hindu age of splendor drew him closer and closer to Gibbon's form of classicism. Far more than Jones, Colebrooke concentrated his research upon Vedic India, and by the end of his career, he had devised a new composite image of the Indo-Aryan period as an age of gold. As with Max Müller, who continued Colebrooke's work, each discovery or rediscovery of Vedic India was dramatically and metaphorically contrasted with the peculiarities of contemporary Hindu society. It was Colebrooke, for example, approximately twenty years before Rammohun Roy's first tract on sati, who demonstrated from textual sources that the voluntary immolation of widows in Bengal was a departure from the authentic tradition. It was Colebrooke who first sought the historical origins of the Indian caste system and discovered the many discrepancies between ancient textual requirements and actual contemporary practices.

It was not until Colebrooke was brought to Calcutta by Governor-general Wellesley to be professor of Sanskrit at the College of Fort William (1800), that he was able to study the Vedas seriously for the first time. He used the college library to piece together the Vedic fragments which had been collected by Jones, Halhed, Martine, and Chambers. He collated their manuscripts with his own (which he had brought from Benares) and five years later published his results in the famous "Essay on the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus." Though he never translated the Vedas, an arduous task performed by Max Müller fifty years later, he did analyze their general contents, and placed them historically as dating prior to the age of the Puranas.

The significance of Colebrooke's "Essay on the Vedas," especially in the light of the later history of the Brahma Samaj, was his dis-

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63 Ibid., p. 2.
66 Infra, pp. 51, 87.
covery of "the unity of the Godhead," or a monotheistic tradition, in ancient India. In an earlier article he had already argued that the existence of polytheism and idolatry in present-day India suggested to him that "modern Hindus seem to misunderstand their numerous texts." In 1805 Colebrooke stated emphatically of the Vedas that "Most of what is there taught, is now obsolete; and in its stead new orders of religious devotees have been instituted; and new forms of religious ceremonies have been established. Rituals founded in the Puranas and observances borrowed from a worse source, the Tantras, have in great measure... [replaced] the Vedas."

The Jones-Colebrooke portrayal of the Vedic age to which a Müller would add the finishing touches, and which today is widely accepted, depicted a people believed to have behaved very differently from present-day Hindus. It was the first reconstructed golden age of the Indian renaissance. The new view romanticized the virtues of the Aryan inhabitants of north India in the second millenium B.C. Instead of being introspective and other-worldly, the Aryans were thought to have been outgoing and non-mystical. They were pictured as a robust, beef-eating, socially equalitarian society. Instead of Oriental despotism, scholars discerned tribal republics. There were apparently no laws or customs to compel a widow to commit sati. There were no temples, and there was not the slightest evidence to suggest that Aryans concretized idola-trous images of their gods. And to round out the picture, also absent were the fertility goddesses, the evil personification of Kali, and the rites and rituals of later Tantrism.

In the first decade of the 1800's the work of the Orientalists seems to have been well received by the literate English public. The men of the Asiatic Society were not infrequently likened to the Italian humanists. They were regularly praised in the press for their gift of a new renaissance in the East. In one popular poem of the period, Hastings was wreathed as "father of India... saviour of the East," and on Wilkins was bestowed the double distinction of "Sanskritist" and the patient scholar "who gave to Asia typographic art."

71 Ibid., p. 115.
Jones was accorded the greatest honor of all: he was credited with restoring India to her rightful place among the civilizations of the world by rediscovering her golden age of arts and letters.

In the roster of Bengal-renaissance giants appeared the name of a man who was being lauded as Hastings's worthy successor. Lord Wellesley, then governor-general of India, was hailed as the Medici-like patron of the Eastern revival. In a poem by John Collegins, Wellesley was described as deserving of the laurel crown of the famed family of Italian merchant-princes, and Calcutta, the seat of British influence on the subcontinent, was portrayed as becoming the Florence of Asia.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., p. 113.
PART II

The Establishment of an Orientalist Training Center
1800-1805
By its employment of the Press, by pecuniary and other encouragement, by affording a central place for the needed contact of mind to mind, [the College of Fort William] gave such an impetus to Bengali learning, as was never given by any other institution since the establishment of British rule.

—SUSHIL KUMAR DE
Wellesley’s “Oxford of the East”

When Marquess Wellesley was named governor-general in 1798, he was thirty-seven years of age, a small man with a strong sense of mission and also a profound knowledge and love of the classics, particularly the Roman ones. Years later, after having built the now-famous Government House in Calcutta, he would sit in a room plotting moves and countermoves against his opponents, both military and political, while surrounded by marble busts of the twelve Caesars.¹ An aristocrat by birth, he remained loyal to his class. He dedicated himself, as did his brother, the future Duke of Wellington, to fight against what they considered the pernicious ideas of the French Revolution.

When Wellesley prepared to set sail for India in 1797 the war was going so badly against England that it had lost its only ally, Austria, after Campo Formio; had abandoned the Mediterranean when faced with a combined Dutch, French, and Spanish fleet; and was almost invaded by a French expeditionary force operating in concert with Irish insurgents.² It is therefore understandable why Wellesley, upon arriving in Calcutta, was determined not only to crush French military influence in India but also to suppress any subversive radical thought he found there. He sought to stop the flow of alien ideas into India and his censorship of the Calcutta

press was absolute. Nonofficial Europeans were particularly unwelcome during Wellesley’s administration and were often suspected of being French spies or propagandists.

During 1898, the Calcutta press carried articles and reprinted threatening letters by Napoleon relating to the expected Egyptian conquest and his ambitious desire to link up with sovereign Indian states. On June 18 and November 26, 1898, the Secret Committee sent the governor-general dispatches warning him about Napoleon and advising him to “be on guard.” A letter from the Court of Directors to Wellesley also dated November 26 reported that Napoleon had seized Egypt. In 1899, Dundas and other court officials were so frightened by the success of the French army in the Middle East that they urged Wellesley to give serious consideration to attacking Egypt from India.

By the time Wellesley was finally recalled from India (1805), a political revolution had occurred there in which the extent of British expansion on the subcontinent, through actual territorial acquisition or by means of subsidiary alliances, was so vast and expensive as to stagger the imagination of his contemporaries. Less known is the fact that Wellesley was also responsible for a cultural revolution in India no less significant than the political one. That revolution was principally effected by the activities of the College of Fort William, which he created. In both cases, a root cause of Wellesley’s actions was, by his own admission, his fear

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4 In October, 1899, when British Baptist missionaries were preparing to disembark at Calcutta, Wellesley was convinced that they were really radicals in disguise and ordered the ship’s captain, an American, to surrender them to the local police. The captain’s refusal and the Danish governor’s offer of protection at Serampore saved them from imprisonment, deportation, or even death. For more details, see J. C. Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* (London: Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1859), I, 118–120.
and hatred of France and the very real danger of French expansion in India:

It cannot be denied that during the convulsions with which the doctrines of the French Revolution have agitated the Continent of Europe, erroneous principles of the same dangerous tendency had reached the minds of some individuals in the civil and military service of the Company in India. . . . To fix and establish sound and correct principles of religion and government in their minds at an early period of life was the best security which could be provided for the stability of the British power in India. . . .

On July 10, 1800, Wellesley proclaimed the formation of a college at Fort William which he hoped would transform inept, self-seeking servants of the East India Company into efficient, devoted civil servants of the British Empire in India. Wellesley’s Minute of August 18, 1800, in which the college statutes were spelled out in detail, brought into being on November 24 of the same year an experimental institution of higher learning designed to extend the Hastings ideal of a generation earlier to every servant of the Company establishment.

The British possessions in India now constituted a great empire. In spite of the fact that Parliamentary Acts of 1773, 1784, and 1793 acknowledged the responsibilities of administration for the Company, little had been done officially to require writers, factors, and merchants to prepare themselves as judges, administrators, and statesmen. Boys still came to India at the age of thirteen to sixteen and were apprenticed as copying clerks. There was no formal instruction or orientation, and it seems almost miraculous that a few good men did somehow develop into honest, capable servants. Furthermore, young men freshly arrived from England often embarked upon a way of living which in some cases led to dissipation and physical decline.

For these reasons primarily Wellesley directed that a college be founded comparable to Cambridge and Oxford in size and in the

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diversity of means it offered for enriching the intellect.\textsuperscript{13} Professorships were to be established "as soon as may be practicable and a regular course of lectures commenced."\textsuperscript{14} Besides Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, six Indian "vernaculars" would be taught.\textsuperscript{15} Muslim and Hindu law would be studied, as well as English law, jurisprudence, and the laws enacted by the Governor-General-in-Council. A course on political economy was visualized similar to the one that Malthus would later teach at Haileybury. World geography and mathematics would be offered. The modern languages of Europe as well as Latin, Greek, and the English classics would be provided for. Wellesley not only saw the need for courses in ancient and modern European history but organized a course in cooperation with the Asiatic Society of Bengal called the History and Antiquities of Hindustan and the Deccan.\textsuperscript{16} Finally, included among the sciences were natural history, botany, chemistry, and astronomy.

To neutralize the temptations of the novice's first encounter with Calcutta, college discipline and general administration would be in the hands of two Anglican clergymen. Instruction would be for three years, each year being divided into four quarters. Public examinations and disputations in the native languages would be held annually, and qualified students were to receive prizes—including liberal cash awards. In this connection Wellesley made it clear that thenceforth "promotion in the civil service shall be a necessary result of merit publicly approved according to the discipline and institutions of the College."\textsuperscript{17}

With the aim of counteracting the prevalent tendency of civil servants in Calcutta to contract debts, Wellesley authorized a three-hundred-rupee monthly allowance for students during their three-year course of study. Theretofore, many a young man, in the hope of keeping up with his peers, had found it necessary to gamble at cards and bet on horseraces.\textsuperscript{18} More often than not, he began to live beyond his means and fell prey to the alluring offers of loans

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 343.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 354.
\textsuperscript{15} The languages were Hindustani, Bengali, Telegu, Marathi, Tamil, and Kannada. Regulations for the Foundation of a College, August 18, 1800, ibid., p. 359.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 360.
by enterprising Bengali moneylenders, who were flocking to the metropolis in great numbers.

Wellesley realized that the Court of Directors would never approve such a college if its expenditures in any way reduced the dividends of Company stockholders. He decided, therefore, that expenses should be met by a "small contribution from all the civil servants in India to be deducted from their salaries." Wellesley also directed that additional income be derived from the profits of a government printing press.

Recruitment of a Faculty

Wellesley diligently set about staffing his proposed “Oxford of the East,” and since his program was an extension of that of Hastings, it was logical that he turn to the earliest generation of Orientalists. He was presumably determined to carry out his plan as quickly as possible and then present London with an accomplished fact.

Persian, the language of Mughal rule in India, was given high priority and a department was organized by Neil B. Edmonstone, then official Persian translator to the government and a key official in the Diplomatic Office. Assisting him were John H. Harington, High Court judge and active Asiatic Society member who had been in India since 1780, and Francis Gladwin, the linguistically proficient soldier-diplomat whom Hastings had sent to Tibet in 1783.

For Arabic studies, Wellesley selected Lt. John Baillie, one of the few available men proficient in that language now that William Jones was dead and Nathaniel Halhed was back in England. Arabic was considered second in importance to Persian not only because it was the classical language of the Islamic world but because it was the vehicle of many key Mughal legal texts.

The Hindustani Language and Literature Department was entrusted by Wellesley to John B. Gilchrist, who in the early 1790’s

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1 Edmonstone, an aristocrat like Wellesley, had been in India since 1783. In 1791, Cornwallis chose him to translate into Bengali the existing regulations for the administration of criminal law.

2 In 1775 Francis Gladwin distinguished himself by writing an English-Persian Vocabulary in which he analyzed the influence of Arabic on Persian and Persian on Hindustani.

3 Jones, it may be recalled, died in 1794; Halhed left for England in 1785.
had left his medical and commercial careers behind him, come to Calcutta, and ambitiously turned to the Indian lingua franca as his passport to Orientalist respectability. An Urdu grammar and dictionary won for him the notice of the governor-general, who in 1798 appointed Gilchrist director of a pilot project for the College of Fort William.

H.T. Colebrooke was Wellesley’s logical choice to develop a Sanskrit Department. Interestingly enough, the classical language of the majority of India’s inhabitants was not a required subject at the college. The reason was that this language of Hindu antiquity, although of considerable scholarly interest, was necessarily less important than the languages of the Muslims whom the British had replaced as rulers.

Indeed, in 1800, with the exception of Bengali, the English knew virtually nothing of the Hindu vernaculars. It was probably out of ignorance, therefore, that Wellesley casually invested one man with the responsibility of teaching and cultivating all Hindu popular languages. The man chosen to fill this peripheral post was a remarkable Baptist missionary named William Carey. It is worthy of note that Carey, later honored by many scholars as the “father of modern Bengali prose,” was originally hired with great reluctance by Wellesley and at a salary and rank below those of any other member of the staff.

Destined to become the most productive scholar in the history of the College of Fort William, Carey, like his Orientalist colleagues, was an acculturated Englishman. His life and work in Bengal provides an excellent case study of an eighteenth-century religious counterpart of the secular Orientalists in Company service. By mastering languages and by carefully studying the literature and culture of the Bengali people with whom he lived, Carey underwent an intellectual change no less significant than that of any servant of the Hastings administration.

It might be added that Carey was not the first Protestant missionary in India known to have become Orientalized as a result of acculturation. Early in the eighteenth century, at the Danish port of Tranquebar in Tamilnad, a German Lutheran named Ziegenbalg experienced a similar change.

In 1706, when he first arrived in Tamilnad, Ziegenbalg was com-

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4 Supra, p. 31.
pletely ignorant of the “Malabaree language and Culture.”6 Because there were no German or Latin books available, he began to study Tamil. Two years later, he felt sufficiently competent to start a Tamil translation of the New Testament.6 At the same time, he used the language to probe deeply into Tamil history and thought. By 1713, when he published his second book, On the Malabarees, for European consumption, it was already evident to his superiors in Europe that he was “showing sympathy for the heathen Malabaree culture.”7 In fact, as Ziegenbalg’s biographer, E. Arno Lehman, has pointed out, his fellow Christians in Europe had understated the case: “As he (Ziegenbalg) immersed himself in Tamil literature, he himself, was able to think much better of them . . . how these Malabar heathen had attained as high a level as the ancient Greeks and Romans; yes, had completely surpassed them.”8

The missionaries not only continually defended the Tamils against charges of barbarism but went so far as to claim that the people of Malabar “were often more moral than Christians by their upright life.”9 In a reaction that recalls the trouble Carey would experience later with the home office, one Lutheran Church official wrote back angrily to Ziegenbalg that “the missionaries were sent out to exterminate heathenism in India, not to spread heathen nonsense all over Europe.”10

It is evident then that Carey’s experience in Bengal was neither unique nor without precedent in South Asia, but represented a special kind of acculturation process. It is interesting to speculate how much of the eighteenth-century world view rubbed off on him and predisposed him for his Orientalist role. As early as 1786, Carey had assembled in England his arguments for a Protestant missionary movement, in a manuscript later published as Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to use the Means of Conversion of the Heathen.

The document reveals that Carey had not only read the travel literature of the period but felt a sympathetic fascination for the peoples and cultures in areas remote from European experience. In one of the best and most recent of the biographies on the Baptist

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6 Ibid., p. 25.
7 Ibid., pp. 31–32.
8 Ibid., p. 32
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
missionary, A. H. Oussoren relates how, in 1785, Carey as a teacher-clergyman in England constructed a leather globe with a large world map and taught children by “marking down the population, language, customs and religion” of all the known peoples of the world.\textsuperscript{11}

The Enquiry not only clearly expresses this cosmopolitan outlook but also the complementary value of tolerance. The purpose of a Christian missionary movement, Carey believed, was not to impose one culture upon another but to make the heathens “useful members of their society.”\textsuperscript{12} The proper means for converting them was not by teaching one’s language to the “heathen” elite, but to reach the masses in their own languages.\textsuperscript{13} Above all, he urged missionaries to work toward the “cultivation of friendship.” In Carey’s view, missionaries “must be careful not to resent injuries which may be offered to them, not to think highly of themselves, so as to despise the heathens, and by those means lay a foundation for their resentment, or rejection of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{14}

When the Enquiry was written in 1786, Carey was twenty-five years old and already an ordained minister in the Baptist Church.\textsuperscript{15} Self-educated and by his own admission a plodder rather than innately intelligent, Carey had long ago risen above the condition of his father, a peasant working the English soil at five shillings a week.\textsuperscript{16} In most biographies, Carey is credited with an amazing linguistic ability which supposedly made him a master of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Dutch before he was fifteen.\textsuperscript{17} In 1779 he renounced the Church of England and joined the Baptist ranks.\textsuperscript{18}

When Carey was approached for a position in the College of Fort William he was thirty-nine years old, despised by the respectable Europeans in India for his “anabaptism,” distrusted by his own

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{17} S. Mookerjee, “William Carey,” \textit{Calcutta Review}, XLXII (September, 1934), 347.
\textsuperscript{18} Oussoren, p. 25.
Baptist Society in England for his commercial activities, and tormented by self-doubts as a preacher of the gospel because he had made virtually no conversions among the “heathen” in six years.

In the midst of hard physical labor, and beset by enormous personal and other problems, Carey had applied himself vigorously to the study of the Bengali and Sanskrit languages. His early letters to the Baptist Society in England were filled with minute details of his slow, methodical struggle to master these tongues. In a letter to the Brethren dated January 16, 1798, Carey wrote that he was so busy learning languages, correcting former translations of the Scriptures, and translating new material, that he could not even keep his journal up to date. He added, “I am writing the whole [New Testament] with my own hand, in the Bengali character. It is considerable labour, notwithstanding that I write it as quick as I do English. . . . Besides this I am learning the Sangskrito Language which with only the help procured here, is perhaps the hardest Language in the world. I am at work on a Sangskrito Grammar and Dictionary. . . .”

Letters such as this indicate that at that time Carey’s linguistic undertakings were no more than a means to an end. Before he was hired at the college his sole aim had been to reach the “heathen” through their own vernacular and classical languages. Carey dreamed of a mission with a dedicated and highly versatile band of brethren who would be equipped with printing presses and cheap, worm-proof paper, all working to disseminate knowledge and spiritual truth to the Indian masses, long before Marshman and Ward disembarked on Indian soil.

Unfortunately for Carey, so long as the Government of India discouraged missionary activity in Bengal and so long as he was dependent on the hard-pressed Baptist Society in England for funds, his dream remained unfulfilled. In one of a dozen letters which reiterated the same theme, Carey pleaded for financial support to publish his translations of the New Testament. “Whether a Printing Press shall be sent from England,” he wrote in 1797, “or whether it shall be printed here or whether it shall be printed at all now.

19 Letters from William Carey to the Baptist Mission Society, January 16, 1798, in William Carey Letters (Baptist Mission Society Archives, London), Box 3. (Cited hereafter as Carey Letters.)

20 This was his position even as early as 1794, as we can see in a letter to the Brethren on August 5, 1794; ibid.

21 In a letter to Fuller written on June 22, 1797, Carey proposed a Moravian-type plan for the Mission; ibid.
rests with the Society. . . .”28 Even as late as 1799 Carey was still begging for funds from his Brethren. In a letter written on January 10 of that year Carey estimated that it would cost £2,000 to print and circulate 1,000 copies of the New Testament. He informed his associates that it was a conservative estimate, which would cover type, paper, and skilled workmen, and that the Society must be in a position to underwrite the total cost.28 Three months later he reported that he had been able to raise some 2,400 rupees for the expense of casting type. His plan now was to publish the whole Bible in four volumes at a cost of £700 or 16,000 rupees. He hoped to sell half the number of books printed for 32 rupees each and to give the rest away.24

By July, 1799, however, Carey's optimism seemed to have vanished. His dream of establishing a mission to begin the full-scale work of publication and conversion seemed crushed. The Government of India, under Wellesley, had instructed the district magistrates to rid Bengal of all foreigners who were not covenanted servants of the Company. For the first time Carey actually admitted in a letter that missionary settlement in English India was impossible. Besides this, the indigo factory that he managed in order to survive had been destroyed by severe floods, and his savings were almost depleted as a result.25 In despair, Carey wrote Fuller, “you must be tired reading such a Letter as this, about nothing but things Temporal. I wish I could say other things. . . .”28

Once more the indefatigable Carey raised several thousand rupees, with which he purchased another indigo factory. Whether or not this business venture would ultimately have succeeded we can never know. Conceivably he might have continued his life as an obscure planter-padre had it not been for two crucial events. But for these events in 1799–1800 William Carey might never have fulfilled himself as a brilliant educator, linguist, and missionary.

One Sunday morning, on October 15, 1799, just as dawn was breaking, another obscure missionary named Joshua Marshman fell to his knees at the Danish settlement of Serampore fifteen miles from Calcutta and thanked God that both he and his party had reached India safely. Only a few hours before, Governor-general

22 Cary to Fuller, March 23, 1797, ibid.
23 Cary to the Brethren, January 10, 1799, ibid.
24 Cary to the Baptist Mission Society, April 1, 1799, ibid.
25 Cary to the Baptist Mission Society, July 17, 1799, ibid.
26 Ibid.
Wellesley had ordered an American ship to escort its "subversive" passengers—Marshman and his companions—to the police station. If Captain Wickes refused, he would not be permitted to unload his cargo in Calcutta. Wellesley was convinced that these men were actually Jacobins in disguise.

Carey must have had mixed feelings about the arrival of Marshman's party in Serampore, although he did not disclose them in his correspondence. He undoubtedly was happy at the safe conclusion of their long journey. However, since his original plan had been to organize the mission near his indigo factory, he had instructed these adventurous Baptists to pose as indigo cultivators and not to make an issue of their missionary objectives.²⁷ Had not Carey himself managed to remain in Bengal all these years without incurring direct official opposition? In vain he tried to persuade the government to permit his friends to join him.

The second crucial event which altered the course of Carey's life took place on November 23, 1800, the day before the opening of the College of Fort William. Carey had been called to Calcutta for an important meeting with Reverend Claudius Buchanan, Vice-Provost of the College. This conference prepared the way for reconciliation between the government and the newly arrived Serampore missionaries, made it possible for Carey to be hired as a teacher in the college, and promised lucrative rewards for linguistic and other means of assistance that the missionaries might offer in support of Wellesley's institution.

²⁷ Marshman, I, 111.

The Bengali Hindu literati who in 1801 found employment at the College of Fort William, and who were expected to assist European professors in compiling textbooks or in lending authenticity to language classes, were by no means representative of a unitary society or culture. Indologists such as Colebrooke quickly observed that Bengali Hinduism, though related to other forms of Hinduism by means of the Sanskritic culture, had developed its own peculiarities both on the high and popular cultural levels. By 1800, however, after a half-century or more of unusually severe socio-economic stress and its corresponding cultural repercussions, the composite of socio-cultural practices and attitudes of the Bengali people—Kulin Brahmanism, sectarian Buddhism, Vaishnavism, and a unique kind of Hindu-Muslim syncretism, among other elements—seemed to have lost the ethos which had been its cohesive force.
The first Bengali pundits to be employed at the College of Fort William had seen their province pass from the chaos of a disintegrating Mogul empire to the stability of the British empire in India. Most of the pundits were born during the administration of Warren Hastings (1772–85), soon after the political upheaval in 1757, unparalleled economic exploitation between 1756 and 1770, and the disastrous famine of 1770–72. They also saw nature itself play havoc with western Bengal’s river system in the later decades of the century, causing it to withdraw from vital old commercial and cultural centers and creating entirely new rivers that displaced economic opportunities toward the east.

This period of prolonged and chronic social and economic distress in Bengal was reflected in cultural decay. It is common for scholars of Bengali literature to refer to the period between Bharat Chandra’s death in 1760 and the opening of the College of Fort William in 1800 as the least productive in the entire literary history of Bengal. S. K. De has perhaps gone farthest of all in linking the literary and cultural decadence of the period to the gradual disappearance of the old order in Bengal:

It is obvious that under these political, social, and intellectual conditions, no literature worth the name could easily flourish. With the ruin of the zemindars and the depredation of the Brahmins, who constituted respectively the aristocracy of wealth and the aristocracy of intellect, a process of disintegration had begun in the social fabric which ended in an absolute dissolution of all social solidarity.

In 1778, when Nathaniel Halhed published the first Bengali grammar using Bengali script, he was appalled at the decadent state of Bengal’s language, literature and general culture. Applying European principles of grammar to Bengali was difficult for him because the language seemed to have lost “its general underlying principles.” Its “unsettled” orthography exasperated him.

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30 See especially De, pp. 5–56.
31 Ibid., p. 32.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
found “no clear cut division between colloquial and literary Bengali.” Furthermore, he had been assured that Bengal’s literary tradition was rich, but upon investigation he could discover “no more than a half-dozen old Bengali works.”

Several British surveys and reports of the first decade of the nineteenth century portray Bengal as suffering from literary and academic sterility, primitive forms of religion, and progressive stiffening of social attitudes and practices. The Wellesley-sponsored survey of the Twenty-four Pargannas, Hooghly, and Midnapore in 1801, and Francis Buchanan’s survey of most of the other districts of Bengal in 1807, 1808, and 1809, were depressingly negative in their depiction of the prevailing state of indigenous institutions. Individual reports such as Carey’s on his mission to Nabadvip in 1801 on behalf of the College of Fort William were also extremely unfavorable. Interestingly enough, Carey had gone to Nabadvip to enlist support for the college from “the illustrious center of Bengali language and literature” but discovered that there existed “no more than 40 separate works, all in manuscript, as the whole literature of 30,000,000 of people up to that time.”

The majority of pundits hired at the College of Fort William in 1801 were Brahman scholars of Bengal who were beginning to come to Calcutta in the 1790’s from ancestral villages and towns in rural Bengal. They were almost all members of the three subcastes which monopolized the Sanskrit tuls throughout Bengal—the Varendra, Rorhi, and Vaidikar. As traditional literati, their most common professions were those of logician, law specialist, astrologer, and instructor of Sanskrit poetics, sacred literature and Puranic mythology. Significantly, in the light of Rammohun Roy’s major criticism of Hinduism several decades later, Bengal

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58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 The results of these exhaustive surveys may be found in History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India, comp. M. Martin (3 vols.; London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1838).
61 Carey letter to Baptist Mission Society, n.d., quoted in De, p. 47.
62 Among the original pundits hired by the Bengali Department were Mrtyunjay Vidyalankar, Rāmnāth Viddabāchhashpati, Sripati Mukhopadhyāy, and Rājiblochan Mukhopādhyāy.
63 These Brahman centers in the Twenty-four Pargannas, Hooghly, and Nuddea are described in W. Adam, Reports on the State of Education in Bengal, 1835 and 1838 (Rep. paper; Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1941), pp. 22, 57, 75.
64 Ibid., p. 249.
65 Ibid.
had virtually no Vedantic schools and, with the possible exception of Nabakrishna Deb's pundit, Jaganath Tarkapanchanan, and one of Rammohun's own pundits, Ram Chandra Vidyabagish, we have little evidence of Vedantists developing in the region's highly scholastic and ritualized cultural atmosphere.

It is also important to stress that, despite the reputation of Bengal's indigenous universities, eighteenth-century Bengal was not generally considered a center for "definitive" knowledge about Hinduism. The Bengali literati apparently considered Benares such a center. Whether legendary or actual, Rammohun Roy's knowledge of Hinduism has been valued chiefly because he is said to have acquired it in Benares. Even as late as the 1840's Debendranath Tagore felt it necessary to send four Brahmans to Benares to discover whether or not the Vedas were infallible. The Orientalists of the Asiatic Society, before the establishment of the College of Fort William, generally ignored Bengali Hindu scholars and took every opportunity to go to Benares for reliable information. Finally, it should be remembered that the only government-sponsored Hindu college in the eighteenth century was not established in Bengal but in Benares by Jonathan Duncan.

These Bengali Brahman scholars who had little knowledge or interest in Persian and even less in English began to find their position indeed precarious as the old zemindari class, their only source of patronage, gradually approached extinction. The Rani Bhowani of Rajshahi, for example, who was perhaps the most generous of all patrons to Bengali Brahmans, found herself as early as the 1770's trapped between the government's revenue policies on the one hand and the unscrupulous practices of Calcutta banians on the other. The Rani, it might be pointed out, was in 1792 one of the first zemindars forced into selling some of their land by public auction.

A second major type of Bengali literati on the eve of the nine-

44 Bannerji, p. 86.
45 Müller, p. 40.
48 Ibid., p. 157.
teenth century consisted of the Persianized Hindus. Moghul policy throughout Hindustan had been generally tolerant and welcomed Hindu participation in both the high and middle ranks of its administration. In Bengal, during the Moghul period, just as the Islamic mysticism of Sufism helped fuse the popular culture of the Hindus and Muslims, a Persianized cultural pattern was pervading the arts, literature, and etiquette and contributing to a syncretic high culture shared by many elitist Hindus and Muslims. Many Hindus wore Persian dress, spoke and wrote Persian as well as any educated Muslim, and, if Bengali Hindu literature of the eighteenth century accurately reflects their thoughts and sentiments, embraced a Persianized world-view to a considerable degree. It is important to add, however, that the Bengali literati, whether high-caste Brahmans or Kayasthas, apparently were never fully assimilated into the Islamic culture but remained Hindus.

Many Hindu and Muslim zemindars shared the same fate when in March, 1793, Cornwallis changed the legal status of these traditional tax collectors and made them landlords obliged to pay a fixed tax every year or lose their property. Whether from lack of industry or inability to function in the new role, zemindars were being displaced by the new urban commercial elite of Calcutta who had the wealth and influence to buy up considerable property lost by default. What probably hurt the Persianized Hindu most of all was the Cornwallis policy of excluding natives from the responsible posts in the administration, thus leaving this highly educated group unemployed. On the other hand, long association with an alien culture may well have enabled many of these people to survive, since they were flexible enough to adjust to the new socio-cultural values of the European. This was particularly true of the Tagore family, which soon had established profitable relations with the French in Chandernagore and with the English in Calcutta, and of Ram-mohan Roy, who grew wealthy from his association with English

49 Spear, Nabobs, p. xvi.
50 See section on Bengal Sufism in “Bibliographic Notes on Early, Medieval and Modern Sufism with Special Reference to its Bengali-Indian Development,” D. Kopf, Folklore, VIII (February, 1962), 72–80.
51 It has become customary for Bengali scholars to look upon the eighteenth-century Persian atmosphere as culturally depraved. See De, pp. 25–26.
52 Tripathi, p. 18.
53 Iniva, p. 239.
civil servants.\textsuperscript{55} Ramram Basu, another Persianized Hindu, accommodated himself neatly to the Baptist missionaries and was one of the first munshis hired at the College of Fort William in 1801.

Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, while Calcutta developed as an urban center, many Bengalis accumulated riches through advantageous associations with the Europeans, profiting by the vacuum created from the deterioration of Mughal authority and the adventurism of European commercial expansion. Nabakrishna Deb, who founded the Sabhabajar Raj family, was powerful and wealthy as a result of his close contact with Clive and Hastings.\textsuperscript{56} Gobindaram Mitra, Holwell’s “black deputy,” made his money as a collector in Calcutta and promptly bought land with it—much to the advantage of his descendants.\textsuperscript{57} During the Napoleonic wars, Ramdulal Dey built his fortune largely on the American shipping trade, which flourished at the expense of Company shipping.\textsuperscript{58}

These mid-eighteenth-century figures were members of an economic elite, but their generation, perhaps because they were far too preoccupied with trade and finance, produced no modern intellectual class. They were mostly banians, largely of obscure caste origins in spite of their surnames, who subsequently raised their caste status by adopting the cultural and religious customs of higher castes.\textsuperscript{59} They spent their money buying land, building bathing ghats and temples, exhibiting dancing girls, and lavishly fulfilling their religious and familial obligations.\textsuperscript{60}

Their descendants were more inclined to literary activity but, like Radhakant Deb (grandson of Nabakrishna), they were prosperous enough to maintain themselves independently. Despite his wealth, Tarinicharan Mitra, a friend of Radhakant, sought employment at the College of Fort William. Both Tarinicharan and Radhakant represented the new Hindu of linguistic ability who was

\textsuperscript{55} Infra, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{56} Y. C. Bāgal, Rādhākant Deb (S-s-c series; 1957), p. 5.
\textsuperscript{60} Nabakrishna Deb spent nine lakhs of rupees on his mother’s śrādh ceremony. Sinha, Economic History, II, 223.
enjoying the benefits of a cosmopolitan urbanized setting. They
cultivated English for the same basic economic reasons as did their
fathers, though they now regarded Persian and Urdu as less neces-
sary, although still useful. For the new generation, also, a knowledge
of Sanskrit was particularly important in carrying out the socio-
religious activities mentioned above, aimed at maintaining, their
newly won status. This unusual linguistic background especially
endured Mitra to John Gilchrist, who promptly hired him as the
second pundit in the Muslim-dominated Hindustani Department.61

Between 1801 and 1805, Wellesley’s dream of a university of the
East was in large part realized through the phenomenal growth of
the College of Fort William. Between November 24, 1800, and
October 31, 1801, 630,000 rupees ( £78,750) had been spent on
the institution’s various activities.62 All the known languages of
India were being taught by professors earning as much as 2,600
rupees ( £320) per month. They were assisted by an Asian faculty
whose numbers increased each year and who received salaries rang-
ing from 40 to 200 rupees per month.63 Students not only were
wined and dined at Company expense but each received a monthly
allowance of 300 rupees. They were given free textbooks and en-
couraged to compete for yearly achievement prizes which some-
times amounted to 5,000 rupees each.64

The campus of the college, originally intended to be at Garden
Reach to the south of Calcutta, was finally situated in the centrally
located Writers’ Buildings on present-day Dalhousie Square, which
had been used since 1780 to house newly arrived junior writers.65
In this complex of buildings the government, between 1801 and
1805, partitioned off and furnished classrooms, at least one science
laboratory, a library, administrative and other offices, a dining room
and the professorial quarters.66

After 1803, public examinations and disputations were held in
the newly constructed Government House (a grandiose building
which had cost £140,000 and was built without the knowledge or

61 Indian National Archives, New Delhi. “Proceedings of the College of
Fort William,” in Home Miscellaneous Series, DLIX (May, 1801), 4. Cited
hereafter as PCFW.
62 Ibid. (October 31, 1801), 12.
63 Ibid. (April 24, 1801), 1–6.
65 Newton, p. 8.
66 PCFW, DLIX (January 8, 1802), 23.
Recruitment of a Faculty

consent of the Court of Directors). Disputations in Indian languages were conducted in a large and stately columned hall paved with dark grey marble and illuminated by costly imported chandeliers. From Wellesley’s administration through that of Marquess Hastings this event was the most important social function of the year. A description of the occasion written in 1818 by a visitor to Calcutta contained the following passage:

In a state chair covered with crimson velvet and richly gilt, with a group of aides-de-camp and secretaries standing behind him, sat the Governor-General. Two servants with state punkahs of crimson silk were fanning him, and behind them again were several Native servants bearing silver staffs. Next to him, on either side, were seated the examiners, and below them again, the most distinguished ladies of the Presidency. Next in an open space, were two small rostra for the disputants, and chairs for the professors; the room behind these, and fronting the Marquis, was quite filled with company, and in the rear of all, the bodyguard was drawn up in full uniforms of scarlet with naked sabres.

At the apex of the college power structure was the governor-general, who was assisted by a College Council composed of his most trusted associates. Matters of discipline were entrusted to a provost and vice-provost (both clergymen), who during these early years were also concerned with academic affairs. The European faculty that Wellesley went through such great trouble and expense to recruit represented, by 1805, a dozen departments. Through them, knowledge of Europe and Asia were disseminated to the student body (see table 3).

The students were covenanted servants of the Company, who had won their opportunity for a career in India not by merit through competitive examination but by patronage. In some cases, perhaps, the myth of the returning nabob still excited a greed for quick riches which was sharpened by a relative’s reminiscences. From mid-summer 1800 on, these young men were met at the docks, taken from the ship to the dormitory, and bluntly informed that they were to spend the next three years at an institution of

67 Newton, p. 3.
69 In 1801 the Council was composed of Wellesley, Brown, Harlow, Buchanan, and Edmonstone. PCFW, DLIX (June 30, 1801), 10.
higher learning where they would study subjects never before taught in Europe at any level.\textsuperscript{71}

**Table 3**

DEPARTMENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF FORT WILLIAM, AND KEY INSTRUCTORS, 1800–1805

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>European Instructor</th>
<th>Branch of Service</th>
<th>Teaching Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Baillie, J.</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>Carey, W.</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>New Testament translation into Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Legal Studies</td>
<td>Barlow, H.</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>Helped draft permanent settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Classics</td>
<td>Buchanan, C.</td>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>B. A. Degree, Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European History</td>
<td>Buchanan, C.</td>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>B. A. Degree, Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu Languages</td>
<td>Carey, W.</td>
<td>(Same as above)</td>
<td>(Same as above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustani</td>
<td>Gilchrist, J.</td>
<td>Former surgeon</td>
<td>Urdu dictionary and grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Antiquities of Hindustan and Deccan</td>
<td>Asiatic Society members</td>
<td>All branches</td>
<td>Orientalist scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Lumsden, M.</td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>Interpreter, translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Instruction</td>
<td>Brown, D.</td>
<td>Chief Company chaplain</td>
<td>Anglican clergyman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>Colebrooke, H.</td>
<td>Civil and Judiciary</td>
<td>Translations and scholarly articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Mathematics</td>
<td>Dinwiddie, R.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{71} The Statutes of the College of Fort William in Bengal (Calcutta: Honorable Company Press, 1841), pp. 1–12.
PART III

The College of Fort William and the Bengal Renaissance
1800-1813
In the eighteenth century, on the eve of the establishment of British rule, the Hindus had no recollection of their real past, nor any idea of the true character of the classical Sanskritic civilization. Their Hinduism was a broken-up and simplified version of the Hinduism of ancient India. It was unorganized in space and unsupported in time. Its quality was neutral where it was not purely negative.

—NIRAD CHAUDHURI

No doubt, the College of Fort William's greatest achievement in the history of intellectual progress in this country consists in its revival of the ancient culture of the land, with its all-comprehensive orientalism daring far beyond the intrepid dreams of scholars like Sir William Jones, Wilkins, and Colebrooke.

—SUSHIL KUMAR DE
The College as Pivot of an Institutional Complex

Between 1801 and 1805, the college not only had evolved into an institution where fifty or more civil servants were being intellectually exposed to India in classrooms but had become the center of a costly program of literary patronage and linguistic research. More than a hundred original works in oriental languages were published by presses largely financed by the college.¹ Expeditions to Mysore, Travancore, and Ceylon were organized and sponsored for the purpose of discovering and cataloging manuscripts for the use of the growing college library.² Projects were initiated in collaboration with institutions such as the Asiatic Society of Bengal to publish European translations of Indian classics.³ By 1805 the college had become a veritable laboratory where Europeans and Asians worked out new transliteration schemes, regularized spoken languages into precise grammatical forms, and compiled dictionaries in languages relatively unknown in Europe.

Until the Wellesley era, the Asiatic Society was loosely organized, without any solid institutional base or constitution. It depended on the enthusiasm of its members for scholarly research and voluntary contributions of money. There was no true executive

² PCFW, CLIX (March 7, 1805), 393, and (August 7, 1805), 430.
body, but simply a president and a secretary who took minutes of each meeting.

After the death of Jones in 1794, the structural weakness of the Society became apparent, interest waned, and by July 1800, a resolution had to be adopted urging members to attend meetings, then being held only once every three months.\(^4\) Finances were in such a chaotic state as a result of “members defaulting in payment” that the first treasurer, Henry Trail, resigned angrily on October 3, 1799.\(^5\)

The earliest proposal for strengthening and stabilizing the institutional life of the Asiatic Society was offered at a meeting held on September 29, 1796. A special committee proposed “a charter of incorporation through the Governor-general,” a regular admission fee and other “regular fees,” the election of a treasurer and two vice-presidents annually, weekly meetings (as in the era of Jones), and the construction of a Society building to house a library and museum.\(^6\) These propositions were embodied in a letter to John Shore, who was both Society president and governor-general. Shore was a friend of Charles Grant and later a member of the Clapham sect, and his attitude toward Orientalism was ambivalent. This may account for his cool reception of the proposal. However, by 1797 new executive officers had been chosen and a treasury created. Also, a special committee was formed to screen papers to be read at future meetings.\(^7\)

The next few years saw a continuing struggle to find a permanent place to house the Society and its growing acquisitions of books, coins, and botanical specimens.\(^8\) Other schemes were devised with the aim of making the Society both the chief repository of Orientalist works in the world and the primary agency for the dissemination of oriental research to European centers of learning.\(^9\)

It was not until the Wellesley administration, however, that the Asiatic Society gradually completed the process of institutionalization. Between 1801 and 1804, Wellesley made use of the Society by recruiting his faculty members from it and by enlisting its organizational support for his college program. This arrangement

\(^5\) LASB-MP, I (October 3, 1799), 146.
\(^7\) *Ibid.* (September 29, 1796), 117.
\(^8\) *Ibid.* (May 3, 1798), 130.
\(^9\) *Ibid.* (December 6, 1798), 137.
seemed mutually satisfactory for a time, and the Society was able to maintain its informal but exclusive club-like atmosphere.

On April 2, 1800, John Gilchrist (later, Hindustani professor at the College of Fort William) became secretary of the Society—a position which, in responsibility and importance, now came to be second to that of the president. H. H. Wilson and James Prinsep were destined to fill the post of secretary with distinction in later years. Upon assuming his post, Gilchrist immediately reopened the question of building a house for the Society and won the approval of the majority of members. It was not until 1804, after much campaigning by the Wellesley faction of Gilchrist, Harington, Buchanan, Anstruther, and Colebrooke, that the Society finally petitioned the government for assistance. At that time the College of Fort William was facing the real danger of extinction, and the Wellesley clique in the Society began pushing very hard in an effort to transform the “club” into an institution with a more functional role in the execution of cultural policy. Work commenced by 1805 on the Asiatic Society building at its present site on Park Street and Chowringhee. When the building was completed in 1808, the first fully-equipped institution in the world for the advancement of Asian studies began to function.

Wellesley’s college also provided both the impetus and the financial support for many of the original schemes of William Jones that had been regularly set aside for lack of funds. The notion of sponsoring oriental translations, for example, had been frequently proposed at Asiatic Society meetings. Gilchrist, on December 6, 1798, urged the Society not only to publish Indian classics but to “give them gratis to Colleges in America, Ireland, Britain, and Europe....”

Not until the establishment of the College of Fort William were the practical means for publishing Asian classics available. Even then, the Jones ideal of translations from the actual manuscripts was not realized because the purpose of the college was to prepare

10 Wilson became secretary in 1811 and, except for an occasional leave of absence, served in that post until his departure for England in 1833. James Prinsep replaced him and held the post until his own departure in 1838.
11 LASB-MP, II (May 6, 1801), 3.
14 LASB-MP, II (May 15, 1805), 19.
15 Ibid., I (December 6, 1798), 138.
textbooks based on the classics. The original texts were carefully abridged and altered in such a way as to make them acceptable to British students. Ironically, the initiative for promoting the Jones ideal came from the missionaries at Serampore. The Serampore Mission, which now had the best Sanskrit press in the world and had many excellent Hindu scholars associated with it, was willing and able to undertake the work of translating and printing. In 1805 the Serampore missionaries drew up a plan for a cooperative project involving the Asiatic Society, the college, and Serampore. William Carey, the Serampore missionary who was being groomed to replace Colebrooke as Sanskrit professor at Fort William, was selected as the European in charge of the operation. In May, 1805, Claudius Buchanan, vice-provost of the College of Fort William, presented the Serampore plan to fellow Orientalists. And in 1806, Carey chose the Ramayana as the first classic to be translated.

Through such joint activities, the Orientalist scholars at the Asiatic Society drew closer and closer to the College of Fort William. In 1807, Henry Colebrooke was chosen president of the College Council, and in the same year the Asiatic Society selected him as president. William Hunter, who succeeded Gilchrist as secretary of the Asiatic Society in 1804, was also made secretary of the college in 1805. The Asiatic Society library contained very few books or manuscripts until Colebrooke became its president and transferred a section of the college library to the Park Street building in 1808. Whenever manuscripts or copies of inscriptions were sent from a remote place in India to Calcutta for analysis by the Asiatic Society, the college often paid the bill.

Wellesley’s College of Fort William therefore revitalized the Asiatic Society by giving it a viable structure, by supporting its scholarship, and by making available its library and other resources for the promotion of Orientalism. Perhaps most important, the college, as a training center for civil servants, supplied the Asiatic Society with a younger generation of potential scholars to carry on the work of the men originally inspired by Hastings.

16 Ibid., II (May 15, 1805), 19.
17 Letters from Carey to the Baptist Mission Society, January 1, 1806, Carey Letters, Box 3.
18 PCFW, DLX (August, 1807), 316.
19 LASB-MP, II (April 2, 1807), 23.
20 Ibid. (April 4, 1804), 14.
21 PCFW, DLX (November 1, 1805), 69.
22 LASB-MP, II (April 1, 1807), 27.
John Leyden, H. H. Wilson, Brian Hodgson, and Thomas Roe-
buck were a few among the new generation of Orientalists who ar-
rived in India after 1800 and who were initiated into Indological
studies by serving in a professorial, examining, or student capacity
at the college. It should be noted that, although these men were
undoubtedly motivated by scholarly curiosity, they owed a great
deal to the generosity of the College Council in its distribution of
monetary grants—which may well have been the original stimulus
for the students' willing cooperation, hard work, and prolific schol-
larly output. Whereas, in 1800, Wellesley as governor-general went
to the Asiatic Society to recruit Orientalists for Fort William, in
later years the Asiatic Society often turned to the college for men
and financial aid.

The interaction between the College of Fort William and Seram-
pore Mission that resulted ultimately in the systematic study of
Hindu popular culture within the Bengal setting may be explained
as the product of mutual institutional usefulness. The college was,
after all, a school for training civil servants who were expected to
go out to remote districts prepared to speak the language of the
people. The scholarly interests of the Asiatic Society, emphasizing
as it did classical culture and classical languages, would hardly suf-
fice in training civil servants. In 1800, only the Serampore mis-
sionaries seemed organized for studying the popular culture or
languages. It was no coincidence, then, that William Carey was re-
sponsible for cultivating every Indian vernacular language at the
college with the exception of Urdu. Furthermore, only the Seramp-
pore Press had consistently thought it important enough that costly
fonts of type be cast for the irregular and neglected languages of the
Indian people. By 1805 the Serampore Mission Press could print
any work in Bengali, Urdu, Oriya, Tamil, Telegu, Kanarese, or
Marathi.28

On the other hand, Serampore Mission derived many advantages
from its association with the college. Aside from the purely prac-
tical gains such as financial assistance, de facto recognition, and
social mobility within the European community, the missionaries
benefited chiefly by utilizing the fruits of college-directed activities
for the ultimate purpose of mass evangelization. Carey was quite
willing to prepare grammars and dictionaries of Indian tongues for

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student use. No sooner had he derived the grammatical and lexicographical principles of a given language with the assistance of college pundits than he promptly translated the Bible into that language\(^ {24}\) and had it published at the Serampore Press. All the secular achievements of the college that accrued in the course of its cultural program were transformed into potentially useful weapons for conveying the gospel to the Hindu masses.

When William Carey arrived in the Danish colony of Serampore for the first time on January 10, 1800, he was accompanied by his four sons and a psychotic wife. After years of comparative security as an indigo planter, he found himself in a situation in which six missionaries—all suspect in the eyes of the Indian government—were expected to start a mission with a total capital outlay of 3,000 rupees or £375.\(^ {25}\) Two of the missionaries, Fountain and Ward, had police records in England for openly supporting or advocating the French revolutionary cause.\(^ {26}\)

During the week that followed their arrival, the brethren—more from necessity than from choice—decided to adopt a Moravian model for their missionary organization.\(^ {27}\) In a manner not dissimilar to that of the present-day Israeli kibbutzim, the missionaries voluntarily agreed to pool all their future earnings for the common good and to renounce engaging in any kind of private trade.

After Carey was appointed mission treasurer and Fountain the first librarian, Ward, a printer by profession, was entrusted with an old wooden printing press which Carey had bought in Calcutta for £40.\(^ {28}\) On March 18, 1800, Ward “set the first types with his own hands, and presented the first sheet of the New Testament to Mr. Carey.”\(^ {29}\)

William Ward, who built the earliest and, for decades, the most important printing and publishing house in the world for books in the oriental languages, was in many ways the most interesting of the Serampore trio. Born in 1769, son of a carpenter, he brought with him to Bengal the self-acquired wisdom frequently found


\(^ {25}\) Marshman, I, 128.

\(^ {26}\) Ibid., pp. 94, 75–76.

\(^ {27}\) Ibid., pp. 78–79, 124–125.

\(^ {28}\) Carey to Sutcliffe, April 5, 1798, Carey Letters, Box 3.

\(^ {29}\) Marshman, I, 129.
among the Baptists of the period, a humorless intensity, and years of journalistic experience. His belief in sociopolitical equality had impelled him at least once to turn his Baptist meetinghouse in Derby into a political hall for a “democratic orator.” It was Ward’s inflexibility—or courage—so evident in his letters and diary entries, that made him the least “Indianized” of the group.

On May 1, 1800, Joshua Marshman and his wife, Hannah, opened in Serampore two English-style boarding schools for boys and girls of European and Eurasian parentage. This scheme was not so much designed as an educational program for reaching the “heathen” as an expedient way of earning desperately needed rupees. Just as Carey gained a reputation as Serampore’s eminent Orientalist and Ward was noted as its foremost printer and publisher, Marshman established himself as the Serampore Mission education specialist. Among the Europeans, he was the leading source of inspiration for many of the later experiments in popular and higher-level education for Bengalis, such as Serampore College and the Calcutta School Society.

It is significant that, despite their lower-class origins in England, the Serampore trio—Carey, Ward, and Marshman—were well educated through their own efforts and not formally. The European Enlightenment was somehow permeating the ranks of the English common people, especially the Baptist converts being trained for the ministry. Marshman, for example, was the son of a weaver who had escaped his environment by becoming a seaman. The father’s intellectual curiosity about peoples and cultures was passed on to his son. Joshua became a voracious reader very early, and developed into a schoolteacher and a scholar of repute in the classics. It was this peculiar combination of communicative skills—linguistics, printing, and education—that stamped itself indelibly on the basic character of the Serampore Mission.

30 Ibid., p. 74.
31 Ibid., p. 94.
33 Ibid.
34 Marshman, I, 81–83. In 1816 Joshua Marshman published Hints Relative to Native Schools, Together with the Outline of an Institution for Their Extension and Management (Serampore: Serampore Press, 1816). This book was a manual for the Calcutta School Society.
35 Marshman, I, 107.
At the meeting of November 23, 1800, in Calcutta between Buchanan and Carey, the reconciliation between the government of India and Serampore was made contingent upon whether Carey would offer his services to the College of Fort William.\textsuperscript{38} Wellesley needed Serampore because of the linguistic ability of Carey and the printing ability of Ward. The missionaries were, as usual, in dire need of money. One building alone, purchased in Serampore, cost them twice their total assets.\textsuperscript{37} “Printing,” Carey wrote in a letter, “plus a regular expense will be 400 rupees a month.”\textsuperscript{38} In addition, how could they hope to evangelize India when not one of them was permitted by British officials to set foot outside of Serampore?

In Carey’s letter to Fuller on November 23, in which he reported his meeting with Buchanan, he seemed to intimate that strained relations between Calcutta and Serampore were now a thing of the past. There was a rather relaxed tone about the letter which contrasted sharply with the grim cast of the epistles of a few months earlier. There was even a touch of humor: “When Marquis Wellesley first heard of a Printing Press at Serampore he supposed that some wild Democrat might have run from Calcutta and got protection under the Danish Governor.”\textsuperscript{39}

By January 30, 1801, the reconciliation must have been complete and the job offer was only a question of time. Formerly Carey had offered apologies to his superiors for his mercantile activities as an indigo foreman but now he was apologetic about his political activities: “We are on the most friendly footing with Reverend . . . Buchanan. Be perfectly easy about our meddling with politics for I assure you we are from conscience averse to anything of the kind.”\textsuperscript{40}

On April 8, 1801, Carey wrote to Sutcliffe that the brethren had decided that he should “accept the position of Bengali professor at the College.”\textsuperscript{41} Buchanan, representing Wellesley, had been most persuasive. According to Carey’s own account: “I pleaded my inability to them [Brown and Buchanan] . . . They replied that (two or three Deists or atheists excepted) there was no other per-

\textsuperscript{38} Supra, p. 56.

\textsuperscript{37} Carey to Baptist Mission, February 5, 1800, Carey Letters, Box 3.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Carey to Fuller, November 23, 1800, ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Carey to the Baptist Mission Society, January 30, 1801, ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Carey to Sutcliffe, April 8, 1801, ibid.
son in Bengal who was qualified. And as the Morals of the Students must be well looked after, it would be a very improper thing to consign [them] to the management of such persons. . . .”43 In the same letter Carey justified his decision to accept the appointment on the basis of the Mission’s chronic financial embarrassment. The Baptists in England had not yet been able or willing to assist Serampore with substantial sums of money.44 “If I am appointed,” wrote Carey, “it will bring about Rs 600 a month into the Family . . . and it will put us in our power to enlarge our plans. . . .”44

Writing to Sutcliffe on April 13, Carey displayed a certain enthusiasm when he announced:

The Business of the Professorship is settled. . . . I was appointed by his Excellency [Wellesley] in the Character of Missionary, or in conjunction with the Mission so that our Friends in England may now be perfectly at ease respecting the safety of the Mission. This College will be on so extensive a scale as that I am credibly informed that the expense of it equals that of the whole University of Cambridge. . . .45

The news was conveyed with great emotion also because of its obvious implications for the Baptist mission: “The New Testament would be introduced in College, it [i.e., Carey’s joining the faculty] would make the Mission respectable. . . . It would spread books into the whole Country. . . . It would open Calcutta to preaching and would put a number of respectable Hindoos under my direction as Moonchis. . . .”46

Carey’s connection with Wellesley proved to be useful to the Mission almost immediately. In a ramification of the European war between England and France (in which the Danish had become implicated on the French side in 1800), British troops occupied Serampore on May 8, 1801. The offer of protection by the Danish crown proved to be a paper pledge. J. C. Marshman’s authentic account of the event and its implications are worth noting:

The missionaries were thus deprived of the friendly protection of the Crown of Denmark, and were completely within the power of those who, but for that protection, would have expelled them from the country eighteen months before. It was natural for them

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Carey to Sutcliffe, April 13, 1801, Ibid.
46 Ibid.
to entertain some feelings of disquietude in the new position in which they now stood; but Lord Wellesley no longer regarded their missionary enterprise with alarm, and they were therefore safe. Nor did they fail to contrast, with feelings of the deepest gratitude to God, the security they now enjoyed, with the danger to which they would have been exposed if the settlement had been captured by the English at an earlier period. During the fourteen months in which the town remained in the hands of British officers, the missionaries were permitted to prosecute their labours without interruption.47

The importance of this event cannot be overstressed, following as it does the Carey-Wellesley pact on behalf of the College of Fort William. Wellesley’s act of friendliness to the missionaries constituted the first de facto acceptance by the Indian government of missionary activity in India.

It was the College of Fort William that first made Serampore prosperous, allowing the already existing institutional rudiments to mature fully. As early as January 21, 1802, Carey’s letters to England began to convey an optimistic excitement that had been lacking in his previous letters:

The Society is expanding. . . . We have purchased 13½ bighas of Land in Serampore for 10,000 Rupees and so the Society now has two of the Best Houses in Serampore. . . . The Press is humming. . . . My Bengali Grammar and Colloquies and Bashoo’s History . . . these are sold off. The Government took 100 copies of each for the College. We are printing the Hitopodesha from Sanscrit into Bengali and the Mahabharat. . . .48

In a letter of February 27, 1804, Carey wrote Fuller that the Mission operations were developing beyond any previous expectations.49 “We are now in a position for expansion,” Carey added, “and will set up subordinate stations for the Mission (100 miles from each other.”50 He was also pleased to report that the government had just paid him 6,400 rupees (£880) in advance for his recently completed Sanskrit Grammar.51

The years 1805 and 1806 were perhaps the happiest of Carey’s life. Carey’s letter to Fuller dated December 10, 1805, commenced

47 Marshman, I, 150.
48 Carey to Fuller, January 21, 1802, Carey Letters, Box 3.
49 Carey to Fuller, February 27, 1804, ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
with the now-familiar elation: "This has been the most prosperous year the Mission has yet seen. . . . We are in good terms with the Government. . . . I had breakfast with the Deputy Governor General, Sir George Barlow yesterday and his attitude was most cordial. . . ."52 The truly interesting part of this letter, however, dealt with Carey’s first admission of familiarity with the Asiatic Society elite. The Serampore Baptists seemed well on the way toward achieving a certain social equality or respectability. This was evident in Carey’s enthusiasm about a new project:

The College and the Asiatic Society have agreed to allow us three hundred Rupees a Month to translate and publish the Sangskrit Writings of the Hindoos, the profits of the Sale to be ours. Sir J. Anstruther has very kindly addressed a Letter to learned Bodies [in India] to recommend the Work. He told me last Friday that he would also address the Court of Directors on the same subject. . . .53

Growing respectability and affluence apparently did not deflect the missionaries from the original purpose of their charter. Carey’s salary of 6,000 rupees a year was almost entirely surrendered to the common Mission fund.54 The Serampore Press, which was contracted to do virtually all the college printing, was spending 37,966 rupees per year for printing expenses.55 In 1805, though Ward was able to move into “more commodious premises”56 and was managing at least three presses constantly turning out works in “seven major and current Indian languages,”57 he was still drawing £20 a year for personal expenses as he had done in 1801.58

Carey’s letters to England in 1806 not only reflected continued enthusiasm and optimism for the success of the Mission but also indicated that he devoted much of his time to Orientalist projects for both the college and the Asiatic Society. On January 1, 1806, he wrote that college duties were all-consuming: “My whole time is now occupied in translating and preparing copy for the press.”59

52 Carey to Fuller, December 10, 1805, Carey Letters, Box 3.
53 Ibid.
55 Carey to Baptist Society, September 25, 1804, Carey Letters, Box 3.
56 Khan, p. 240.
57 Ibid., p. 231.
58 Williams, p. 17.
A month later he admitted in a letter to Morris that "the translation of the Ramayana occupies all the time I can spare; it is esteemed the first poem that ever was written by the Hindoos." On March 14 he reported to Fuller: "I hope our translations of the Ramayana will serve the Mission as it respects temporal supplies. We have 300 Rupees a month for it besides the profits issuing from the sale. The Governor General has subscribed for three copies and the Judges of the Supreme Court for three more. The translation so occupies my time that I have little leisure for writing."

During the next few years, Serampore Mission continued to prosper from its association with Fort William. The Mission Press was still the chief instrument for college publications even though new printing establishments were developing—also with college support—and the atmosphere was growing more competitive. It was difficult, however, for any printing establishment to match Ward's inventiveness. Even as early as 1807, his press had four fonts of Indian type: Devanagari, Bengali, Oriya, and Marathi. When a fire destroyed most of Ward's printing shop in 1812, fourteen fonts in the Eastern languages and the manuscript version of a polyglot dictionary (containing words of every known oriental tongue) were among the missionaries' impressive achievements in the communicative arts that perished.

Though Carey muffled the Press as a medium for missionary zeal between 1808 and 1813, he promoted the spread of missionary activity in his usual unobtrusive way. It is noteworthy that during the same years in which Wilberforce was gradually building up public support in England for opening the official gates to the mission movement in India, Carey had already won the governor-general's backing in doing precisely the same thing. In 1810 when William Ward reviewed Serampore's progress in its first ten years of spreading the Gospel he observed:

They had succeeded in settling four stations in Bengal; they had sent a missionary to Patna, and planted stations on the borders of Orissa and Bootan, and in Burmah; the number of members in church fellowship exceeded two hundred; they had obtained a footing in Calcutta, where a chapel had been erected at a cost of

60 Carey to Morris, February 7, 1806, Carey Letters, PA III, 161.
61 Carey to Fuller, March 14, 1806, Carey Letters, not numbered.
62 Khan, p. 252.
63 Carey to Sutcliffe, July 24, 1812, Carey Letters.
more than 3,000 Rupees, and a large church and congregation collected; the Scriptures had been printed, in whole or in part, in six languages, and translations had been commenced in six others.  

Also in 1810, in a note to Minto, Carey proposed sending missionaries to the Punjab, and in fact he had already published a grammar in Punjabi for the college. Minto refused the request but nevertheless allowed mission stations to be located in Agra and Delhi. Unfortunately, Chamberlain, the missionary in Agra, encountered so much hostility there from the military personnel that he was forced to leave.

Carey’s letters home expressed no feeling of incongruity between his Orientalist activities and his Christian ones. From 1808 onward, especially when he was informed by Fuller of the growing polarization of cultural positions in England between Orientalists and Evangelicals, Carey’s references to his Fort William activities seem to have been reported with judicious care.

However well he might have concealed the full extent of his nonmissionary activities as an Orientalist professor, Carey could not dissipate the enthusiasm he felt for this aspect of his life's work. Though in a letter of 1810 he dismissed John Leyden as a man “totally destitute of Religion,” it was impossible for him not to admire this eminent linguist who had “a faculty of acquiring languages exceeding that of any person with whom I am acquainted. . . .” Such references by Carey reflected the thoughts of a scholar entranced with his subject matter for its own sake. On July 24, 1812, he wrote Sutcliffe: “I have another scheme in my head, for the purpose of insuring the gradual perfection of the translations. This is an Unusual Dictionary of Oriental Languages derived from Sanskrit. . . . I will give the etymology and synonyms of the different languages derived from Sanskrit with equivalent Greek and Hebrew and perhaps the Arabic. This work will be great and it is doubtful whether I will live to compleat it.”

In Carey’s mind, in fact, there was little contradiction between his Orientalist activities and those related to carrying out the ob-

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64 Marshman, I, 421-422.
65 Khan, bibliographical section.
66 Marshman, I, 431.
67 Ibid., p. 481.
68 Carey to Sutcliffe, May 11, 1810, Carey Letters.
69 Ibid.
70 Carey to Sutcliffe, July 24, 1812, Carey Letters.
jectives of the Mission charter. There is no evidence to suggest that the missionaries at Serampore were hypocritical, compromising, or primarily concerned with their own self-interest. Carey’s missionary philosophy had developed gradually and pragmatically according to circumstances. His close relationships with Orientalists, civil servants, Anglican clergymen, Bengali Brahmans and others demonstrated his realistic policy of advancing the Christian cause by reconciling differences rather than by accentuating them. If Carey had a philosophy of the Christian mission, it was flexibly accommodating. The absence of a dogmatic spirit in Carey’s policy of accommodating Christian values and practices within the indigenous civilization may be in large part explained by his personal and cultural transformation while living in Bengal. He had, as he in fact admitted as early as 1804, become “Indianized”:

I now an old man have lived for a long series of years among the Hindoos. . . . Their Language is nearly as familiar to me as my own. This close intercourse with the Natives for so long a period and in different parts of our Empire, has afforded me opportunities of information not inferior to those which have hitherto been presented to any other person. I may say indeed that their manners, customs, habits and sentiments are as obvious to me, as if I was myself a native. . . .