

Official Cultures & Literary Worlds of Nineteenth Century Provincial Administrators in Company India

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Introduction

Of the nearly 350 years of British presence in India (c. 1600–1947), the *English East India Company* (Company) operated in India for over 250 years. During its long lifespan, the meaning of “Company India” was periodically reimagined with changes in the corporation’s character, institutional culture, and territorial holdings. The Company metamorphosed from an early modern corporation trading under royal charter into a sovereign over territories in Asia that were exponentially larger in size and population than the United Kingdom. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Company was actively involved in driving out competing European colonial powers from India, and interfering in local affairs of Indian polities to establish a firmer foothold. By the late eighteenth century, the Company was sovereign over an ever-increasing patchwork of territories in India acquired through military or diplomatic means. The Company required vast bureaucratic undergirding to manage its fitful but frequently expanding holdings. Across different regions, the forms and structures of government were varied, dependent upon both British and Indian collaborators.¹ Company bureaucracy in India was neither English

office-holding spiced with Indian flavours, nor was it a continuance of long-standing indigenous government with a European tint. Rather, it was an agglomeration of various surviving pre-Company bureaucratic regimes involving fraught, but frequent, interactions between a handful of British officials and numberless Indians. This article contributes to our understanding of this unique period in India’s colonial bureaucracy by foregrounding and exploring literary imaginings of the Company’s administrative culture.

This article contends that the early nineteenth century was one of flux. This formlessness was spurred on by a failed attempt in the late eighteenth century by the Company to replace existing legal and bureaucratic structures with more familiar European models of government involving courts and formal regulations.² Simultaneously, attempts were underway to professionalise civilian and military bureaucracy through the establishment of formal training institutions for young British men joining Company service. The prevailing thinking of running India through Indian institutions, and an aversion to replacing indigenous

bureaucracy, was championed by Orientalist *scholar-administrators* with considerable in-country experience in India. What emerged was a hybrid bureaucracy that archival sources call the Company *Sircar*.³

Considerable scholarship about Company India spans fields such as history, literature, and law. This seldom ventures outside their distinctive disciplinary silos. Early scholarship disproportionately focussed on higher echelons of Company government, with notable Indian absences from Company India's story. Few high-ranking Company officials ever visited India. Those who did mostly resided in Presidencies.⁴ Thus, gaps remained in understanding engagement between British and Indian officials, and accounts of life, just some days outside Presidency towns.⁵ To some extent, this void was filled by writings about Orientalist *scholar-administrators*.⁶ Frequently interacting with Indians, adopting their lifeways and learning Indian languages, studies of their lives provide valuable insights into the hybridity of the Company *Sircar*.

Though promising directions are presented in literary studies about provincial Company India, they are thus far thematically narrow,⁷ focussed on Anglophone literature's dissemination in India,⁸ or provide metropole-centred accounts of Company bureaucracy.⁹ While a literary tradition of Company officialdom has been established with studies of the Company school of poetry, similarly comprehensive studies are lacking for prose. Further, in attempting to provide a comprehensive ›Indian‹ snapshot, this scholarship's ability to appreciate regional particularities or assess everyday textures and musings of Company India's provincial bureaucracy is compromised. Neither does this scholarship sufficiently account for quotidian experiences within the Company *Sircar*, nor does it chronicle provincial Company Indian bureaucracy's dull ambience. Looking beyond the grand narratives of imperialism enables us to focus on the ground-level imaginings of provincial officials.

Having identified these general lacunae, this article fills them by focussing on the institutional culture of provincial Company India's low-level officialdom. While the focus remains on literary mediations of »writer-officials«,¹⁰ this article zooms in on provincial Company bureaucracy. This article's method is archive-based rather than centred in literary studies. It juxtaposes official and literary writings of two under-researched

British Company officials holding provincial charge in early nineteenth century India. Notably, their writings reveal how the Company *Sircar* was experienced by, and projected to, British men. Similar contemporaneous writings by Indians in English either did not exist or have not survived.¹¹ Although beyond this article's scope, works by Indians in non-English languages present important perspectives about Company India that require further study.¹²

The two officials studied here are Captain (later General) John Briggs (1785–1875), and William Browne Hockley (1792–1860). They served the Company's military and civilian establishments, respectively. Both spent much of their careers in neighbouring provinces recently conquered by the Company. Briggs' career was clouded by controversies involving arbitrary executions, mismanaging his territorial charge, and an ugly misunderstanding with a Company colleague that festered for years.¹³ Hockley was charged with corruption in judicial office that involved conspiring with Indian middlemen. While Briggs partially cleansed himself of the taint, scandal was career-ending for Hockley. Both resorted to literature to reinvent themselves on their return to England, drawing heavily on their time in the Company *Sircar* serving as provincial officials.

This article is in four parts. The first provides a contextual overview of the bureaucratic milieu and region within which Briggs and Hockley held provincial Company office. The second reads Briggs' personal letters to his superior, alongside an epistolary novel instructing young Company recruits about working in India. The third studies Hockley's short but tumultuous Company career, and examines his three-volume novel featuring a morally dubious protagonist that was published soon after Hockley's dismissal.¹⁴ The article concludes by calling for greater attention to the literary output of Company India's provincial bureaucracy as a way to more precisely understand colonialism's internal logics, motivations, and manifestations.

Company Bureaucracy in the Commissioner's Territories

Following the military defeat of the Maratha ruler, the Peishwa, in western India by joint Crown and Company

armies in 1818, the Company acquired vast swathes of territory. These new conquests were placed under a transitional authority, the *Sole Commissioner for Territories Conquered from the Peishwa* (Commissioner). Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859) was designated the first Commissioner. A Scottish aristocrat who was well regarded, and well connected in powerful Company circles, Elphinstone established himself in a palace in Poona, which was the seat of the recently deposed Maratha government.¹⁵ The Commissioner was to oversee the transition from Maratha rule to Company government. The Commissioner was largely independent but under the formal supervision – initially of the Company’s Supreme Government in Bengal, and later – of the Bombay Governor in Council.¹⁶ Rather than implementing regulations like in Bengal and Madras, Elphinstone chose to issue »instructions« to the lead officer of each province, the Collector. These instructions sought to avoid »innovations«, as far as possible from Maratha practises and govern the new conquests along lines familiar to its Indian inhabitants.¹⁷ The result was a system of government that continued Maratha practises in form, but in practise, was headed and reimagined by British Company officials.¹⁸

The Collector, as overall head of a province in the Commissioner’s territories, exercised revenue, policing, and judicial functions. Collectors were mostly British Company army officers. Collectors were assisted by a handful of junior British Company officials in civilian or military service. These British officials, in turn, relied on Indians either employed by the Company or by themselves privately. Indian Company officials, known variously in different provinces, performed a range of functions of varying importance. Amongst the most important were *dufterdars* who were in-charge of the *huzoor cutcherry* (headquarters) situated in one of the province’s larger towns. Dufterdars regularly interacted with the Collector and his British assistants, as also Indians within and outside the Company. Steeped in bureaucratic practises of past governments, dufterdars likely acquainted British Company officials with the practises of provincial government, serving as chiefs-of-staff for the cutcherry’s Indian employees. Supporting them were several officials like *shiretidars* (record-keepers), *peons* (who performed clerical functions), and numerous scribes who transcribed and translated

documents. These cutcherry employees often possessed numerary and literary skills valued by the Company and belonged to privileged castes like Brahmins from within the region, or elsewhere in India.¹⁹ Family ties and heredity were integral to scribal appointments at the cutcherry, but their nature was altered by Company rule as the Collector, rather than local Indian magnates, became the central source of regional patronage. Alongside previously valuable skills, supplication to the regional British and Indian Company officials became a necessary qualification for low-level bureaucratic office. Cutcheries became chaotic sites where hopeful candidates hung about seeking ad hoc or permanent employment at the Collector’s discretion if an existing scribe tripped up.²⁰

While this was the provision in the huzoor cutcherry, each province was subdivided into districts with a host of officials. Supervising the cutcherry’s functioning required that Collectors or their assistants frequently travel to distant parts of their territorial charges to hear complaints, assess revenue, quell unrest, and adjudicate cases. Usually only about thirty years old, these officials lacked requisite training or language abilities. They simultaneously depended upon, while being constantly suspicious of, the Company’s Indian officials and local magnates through whom much of the business of government was undertaken. Thus, although the cutcherry was arguably overstaffed, British Company officials frequently complained about having few trustworthy administrators. Their difficulties were further compounded by challenging climate, local hostility, loneliness, disease, drunkenness, and debt. Embodying a distant and incorporeal sovereign, it is the lived and imagined worlds of these provincial British officials that are examined below.

John Briggs’ Lived and Projected Experiences of Western India

John Briggs was the eldest son of a Company surgeon in Madras. Born in 1785, Briggs joined a long, if not illustrious, ‘India family’, with several relations working as Company civilians and army officers. Having lost his mother at four, Briggs returned to England with his brother. Here he spent a decade at a preparatory school

and five unhappy years at Eton, where he was »very often flogged«. ²¹ By 1801, Briggs returned to India as a cadet in the Company's Madras Army. ²² A gifted linguist, Briggs became renowned for his Persian abilities, which secured him military intelligence and war-logistics positions. He accompanied his distant cousin Sir John Malcolm on missions to Persia and served as assistant to Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was then Resident of Poona. This part focuses chiefly on the decade between 1818–1828, when Briggs held provincial charge, until his return to England.

Briggs' private correspondence with Elphinstone fills three volumes and is revealing of the quotidian minutiae of provincial Company bureaucracy. ²³ Although catalogued as private, Briggs' letters frequently stray into official matters. They seem to be written chiefly from a sense of duty and responsibility, and not merely amity with Elphinstone.

Written in a neat but hurried hand, Briggs' letters to Elphinstone from Khandesh reveal he was a harried man surrounded with death, illness, and despair. While Briggs' five years in Khandesh tested him, there were a few occasions when his letters were upbeat. These were when he had either physically or mentally escaped Khandesh and was writing about his wife and children, Company gossip, or hunting. Elphinstone's responses are not discretely archived, which makes it difficult to gauge his reactions. The regularity of their correspondence – often several times a month – could well have also provided Elphinstone intellectual companionship within the Bombay Presidency's busy but vapid social life. Additionally, it provided Elphinstone an opportunity to mentor a younger officer, who kept him informed about the latest happenings from Khandesh beyond what was reported through official channels. Fluctuating in tone between formality and familiarity, their correspondence is revealing of an institutional culture where much depended on the goodwill and discretion of the senior official upon his subordinate.

In stark contrast to his correspondence with Elphinstone was Briggs' self-descriptively titled epistolary novel »Letters Addressed To A Young Person In India: Calculated To Afford Instruction For His Conduct In General, And More Especially In His Intercourse With Natives« (»Letters«). ²⁴ Published

on his return to England in 1828, »Letters« presents a sanitised, sermonising, and occasionally light-hearted account that seeks to serve as advice for young British men joining the Company's service. Beyond situating it within broader ideas of colonial paternalism, scholarship seldom dwells on »Letters« nor compares it with Briggs' documented experiences in his first independent charge in Khandesh. ²⁵ The province of Khandesh had been devastated by a decade of conflict, epidemics, and political upheaval. Briggs described Khandesh as recovering, »but like a patient who has been debilitated by a chronic complaint it is by slow degrees only that the symptoms of returning health are certainly apparent«. ²⁶

With »Letters« finding only passing mention in the limited scholarship about Briggs, and his private letters being underexamined, the distance between Briggs' lived and projected experiences of provincial Company India merits closer scrutiny. ²⁷ Despite the divergent »realities« between Briggs' correspondence and »Letters«, the pervasiveness of provincial Company bureaucratic work in both Briggs' lived and projected experiences is striking.

»More duty than one man could perform«: John Briggs in Khandesh

Khandesh was a challenging first independent charge for Briggs. Judicial trials, revenue investigations, and frequent travel left him »hardly enough time for rest, and none for relaxation.« ²⁸ At the cutcherry, and on tour, Briggs received representations and complaints from Indians in writing and verbally in Marathi (a regional language). ²⁹ Considering his peripatetic lifestyle and the variety of official duties, Briggs' assertion of being in office daily between 10:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. seems an unattained ideal. ³⁰ This communication to Elphinstone was perhaps only to demonstrate how easily accessible he was to the Indians he governed and to preclude complaints about maladministration, which later emerged.

Briggs complained of having »More duty than one man could perform« and being perpetually understaffed. ³¹ Briggs relied heavily on his Indian officials, overlooking murmurs of corruption amongst his *dufterdars*. ³² *Mamlutdars* (important Indian regional

officials), Briggs complained, were »most of them very negligent«, writing that if he had not focussed just on essentials, he »should have gone mad before this.«³³ Corruption in Khandesh appeared rampant with few civil disputes coming before Briggs.³⁴

Other than one Lieutenant Hodges, Briggs lacked constant British assistance in Khandesh.³⁵ A young assistant named Macshaith was briefly appointed to Khandesh, but Briggs found him »impatient at being a subordinate«, and annoyed if all his plans were not approved.³⁶ Briggs assessed Macshaith as »a very fine young man« but one who was »sadly prejudiced and is not very well versed in general principles.«³⁷ Briggs granted Macshaith independent revenue charge so that »his pride will not be hurt by being placed under any one.«³⁸ In private correspondence, Briggs implored that Elphinstone publicly clarify Macshaith's appointment and salary.³⁹ Macshaith's death from fever shortly after rendered this moot.⁴⁰

Illnesses raged all around Briggs. Cholera, which also afflicted Briggs, caused deaths of »six to 10 & 12 persons daily« in Khandesh.⁴¹ Cholera and the then undiscovered malaria claimed many lives. Briggs administered calomel to cholera-sufferers and bled other patients.⁴² Forewarning Elphinstone about his poor performance in Khandesh, Briggs stated:

*What with all the disturbing (?) accounts of the sick in all quarters and the quantity of other things I have to think of and to do I hardly know how I get on and if business flags a little in this quarter you must not be surprised at it.*⁴³

Yet, on the notable days which were »fortunately [...] not fever day«, Briggs could »push a good large budget of papers in all directions.«⁴⁴

Briggs felt isolated and disfavoured amongst peers. Grumbling that »All the other civilians Grant, Robertson & Pottinger are living in Palaces«, he only had a tent to house his wife in Khandesh.⁴⁵ Reduction in allowance added »so many more years to my stay in this country.« However, Briggs reassured Elphinstone it did not »affect my public zeal or private happiness one iota- I am a satisfied and grateful subject.«⁴⁶ Briggs longed to »run down to Bombay for a month« to see his wife, but lamented that with his heavy official burden,

he »might as well expect to be able to spare time for a trip to Cashmeer«.⁴⁷ Frequently imagining escaping Khandesh, was a »delightful change from wilderness & desolation«.⁴⁸

Adding to Briggs' woes were frequent rebukes in official Company proceedings by the Bombay Government (including Elphinstone), the Company's Supreme Government in Calcutta, and even Company overseers in London. These rebukes were chiefly for irregularities in capital trials, and failures to curb cutcherry corruption. While Briggs escaped punishment due to Elphinstone's backing, his reputation was tarnished. Relieved when appointed as Resident of Satara (a kingdom in the Commissioner's territories), however, Briggs confessed his »mind was hardly free from the anxieties of Candeish«. Briggs relied on »your [Elphinstone's] friendship to allow me to proceed quietly now to Sattara if it is practicable.«⁴⁹ (*words in bracket mine*). It was at Satara, a relatively more comfortable posting that Briggs composed »Letters« in 1823, although it was only published in 1828 on his return to England.

»Letters« claimed to merely publish actual correspondence between Briggs and two young Company men, after endeavouring to »suppress or to soften down« some observations about systems and persons. However, private letters to Elphinstone amply evidence »Letters«' fictitious origins. Briggs communicated his gratefulness and honour on being chosen by Elphinstone for the task. Although initially unsure about its form, he sent Elphinstone a draft in 1823 in the style of an epistolary novel.⁵⁰

While the original 1823 draft is unavailable, Briggs appears to have acted on Elphinstone's »hint« to ensure »Letters« contained »nothing bad regarding India«.⁵¹ Briggs let neither the despair of Khandesh, nor the bitterness about his feelings towards the Company seep through in »Letters«. Apart from Elphinstone, Briggs got input for »Letters« from his two younger brothers in the Company army, to make it »sufficiently amusing to cheat the idlest Griffin into their perusal«.⁵² Absent a complete archival picture of Briggs' various correspondents, it remains unclear why Briggs wrote »Letters«, or why it was dedicated to the then Governor of Bombay, Sir John Malcolm, instead of Mountstuart Elphinstone (then retired), who selected him to write it. Perhaps it was a vehicle to salvage

his ruined reputation, or perhaps it was inspired by Malcolm's instructions to his subordinates, which is appended to »Letters«. Written as he was departing from central India, Malcolm's instructions bore some similarities to Briggs' letters, including similarities related to the treatment of Indians and the importance of using discretion in exercising bureaucratic power. However, unlike »Letters«, which was a more general account of Company officials preparing themselves for a career in India and dealings with Indians, Malcolm's instructions were specifically directed at men already in Company service who routinely interacted with the heads of polities of varying sizes. The tone of Malcolm's reflections, though authoritative, also reflects on his own experiences and occasionally admits missteps. In »Letters«, conversely, rather than demonstrating candour and admitting mistakes, Briggs reveals little of himself other than assuming the role of a wise, all-knowing correspondent in matters related to India and Indians. Whatever the motivations behind publishing »Letters«, regarding its necessity Briggs felt no doubt. From Satara, Briggs complained privately to Elphinstone about his assistant, one Mr. Shaw, and recommended his transfer. Not only did Shaw refuse to learn his duties, Briggs feared that if the volatile assistant was entrusted with official work, he might »throw down some one of the *Rajah's* (king's) people for not showing him proper respect.« In refusing to even dine with Briggs, Shaw »declared war with me«, and was »going to the dogs.« Despite Briggs withdrawing Shaw's Indian servants due to ill-treatment, Shaw assaulted one servant of whom Briggs, wrote »the poor Devil came here covered with blood«. Though Briggs did not officially report it, »from reasons of delicacy«, he hoped, referring to his fictitious addressees in »Letters« that Shaw would »take a lesson from these boys«. ⁵³ The following section examines »Letters«' structure, contents, and style.

Briggs' Letters to Young Recruits

Briggs' chief stated aims in »Letters« were to avoid it being »dull and tedious«, »attract the juvenile reader«, and »impart much instruction in a small compass« regarding »topics possessing little general interest to the European reader«. ⁵⁴ »Letters« attempted this through the devices of practical advice, humorous

anecdotes, examples of *faux pas* about Indian socio-religious customs, and fatal interracial romances. Contemporaneous reviewers were full of praise, terming it »a manual indispensably necessary« for Company recruits and others interested in India. ⁵⁵

There were twenty-three letters spanning several years to George, a young Company civil service »writer« in the Commissioner's territories. George was a new sort of civil servant, trained at the East India Company College, Haileybury, and leaving for India at 18 years. By contrast, George's elder brother, Charles, had gone to India as a Company army »cadet« at 16. Cautionary tales from Charles, and anecdotes of recklessness and witlessness by other Company officials form subthemes in each letter to George. »Letters«' narrative thread sees George rise through the ranks, shed prejudices about Indians, acquire Indian languages, and eventually secure the coveted post of assistant to a Resident. Each letter to George covered distinctive subjects like packing; Indian history; appropriate conduct; classifications of Indians based upon religion, caste, and gender; and tasks expected of young Company officials.

Preparing and Departing for India

Though most Company army and civilian recruits attended the Company College or the Company Military Seminary at Addiscombe by the time of »Letters«' publication, Briggs considered them ill-prepared for India. »Letters« described recruits as having »seen very little of the world«, and knowing »nothing beyond what they have acquired at the schools«. ⁵⁶ »Letters« attempted to prepare readers materially, intellectually, and attitudinally. Materially, »Letters« listed items recruits should bring along to India, leaving measurements with London tradesmen. ⁵⁷ Intellectually, »Letters« urged readers to continue their studies by bringing along college books, learning Indian history, and Indian languages on their long sea voyage. ⁵⁸

Attitudinal aspects of working in Company India occupy the greatest part of »Letters«. Briggs considered far too many recruits to be ignorant about India and Indians resulting in prejudice, physical violence, and use of pejorative terms like »black fellow«. ⁵⁹ Briggs listed several examples highlighting how Indians were »by no means in that low state of barbarism in which you have

been induced to think it.⁶⁰ Becoming »useful as a public functionary« required appreciating that Indians were not deficient in talents and good qualities.⁶¹ Rather than unlearning prejudices after occupying offices of trust and responsibility, »Letters« advised that young recruits arrive in India knowing something of its languages and peoples.⁶² Just as British Company officials found Indian customs, habits, and religion to be strange or objectionable, the converse was equally true. »Letters« impressed upon Company recruits the need to broaden their own horizons and take in new experiences in India, »without at all meaning to impeach the propriety of our own (customs), or to uphold those of the East«.⁶³

Writings like Briggs' thus reinforced the hybrid bureaucracy of Company India by seeking to mediate between the constructed worlds of the »East« and of »Europe«. Broadly following the Orientalist traditions then in vogue, Briggs declared himself an »enemy to innovations«, and was wary of changing or replacing Indian institutions without sufficient knowledge – even if they appeared faulty at first glance.⁶⁴

Character and Routines of Model Company Men

»Letters« viewed the Company in India as having reached a »dangerous pinnacle of power«, where its officials risked forgetting that its foundations were based on their moral strength.⁶⁵ The heavy burdens of office and high levels of trust placed in a handful of British officials meant there were many opportunities to go astray. The personal conduct of British Company army cadets needed to be impeccable, as embodiments of »the hinge on which the machinery of our Indian army turns«. Briggs, however, lamented that nearly daily »some act or other of the European officer tends to loosen or rivet the attachment of the sepoys«.⁶⁶

»Letters« had much to say about the challenges confronting Company recruits. This included indebtedness, gambling, drunkenness, and spending more time with women than with the *moonshy* (language tutor).⁶⁷ An embodiment of all that young recruits could do incorrectly was one of George's friends. His tale was to serve as a caution for readers. This young official gambled his way into debt, and frequented late-night debauches. Having wantonly ill-treated Indian

attendants and being irregular with their pay, all but one of his nearly fifteen Indian servants deserted him in his last days. Although fever occasioned his death, »Letters« concluded this fate was »brought on by his own imprudence«, his actions being »discreditable to himself«, reflecting »disgrace on his family«.⁶⁸

»Letters« considered consorting with Indian women as highly objectionable and deleterious to the moral foundations of Company India. Briggs exclaimed that this led Indians to think »their European superiors availing themselves of their power and rank to insult the people instead of protecting them!«⁶⁹ »Letters« notes an instance of the murder, by her husband, of an Indian woman, who was suspected of having dalliances with a British Company official. Her husband killed her »to protect his honour and his wife's character«. The paucity of British Company officials in provincial India meant that the same official not only conducted the inquest on the corpse, but also recorded the husband's confession and supervised his execution.⁷⁰

As both »supineness or excess of rigour are immediately felt«, ⁷¹ governance needed to be conducted »by men of the very highest qualifications«.⁷² These were not paper qualifications but rather an unblemished moral character, since the actions of British officials, both private and public, were under constant scrutiny by numerous Indians.⁷³ Analogising Company bureaucracy to the caste system, a letter advising George mentioned that governing a »nation of castes«, required British Company officials to themselves become »members of a sort of caste«.⁷⁴ Young Company recruits needed to assiduously follow routine and be abstemious if they wanted, not only to keep out of trouble, but also to rise in Company ranks.

Learning Indian languages was imperative, as recruits would find »nothing can be done without them«.⁷⁵ Language was to be acquired through a moonshy, foregoing »hot tiffins or luncheon«, and instead, devoting the »heat of the day...to your moonshy«.⁷⁶ Daily persistence and practise would not only provide better insights into Indian customs, but also expedited promotions.⁷⁷ For writers, failing to learn languages could result in dismissal. Cadets needed language skills to command parades, pay sepoys, and inspect troops.⁷⁸

Outside the time spent with moonshies, young writers were to peruse past Collectorate records, correct copies of outgoing letters, and make abstracts of incoming correspondence. This would teach »steady habits and lead you imperceptibly to be methodical«.⁷⁹ Once sufficiently proficient in an Indian language, writers were to translate the »several native papers which are daily received«. Although »extremely irksome and unimportant«, performing or avoiding these duties distinguished idlers from promising Company officials. With greater mastery of language, civilians were to examine village records. Seemingly »so complicated as if it were impossible to understand them« at first glance, persistence, study, practise, and interactions with agriculturists would diminish difficulties.⁸⁰ Nuanced understanding of agriculture would be critical for civilians to justly assess land revenue rates, the Company's lifeblood.⁸¹

Dealing with »Natives«

With young officials being daily involved in dealings with many Indians, Briggs considered it imperative for recruits to know how to engage with them officially and personally. »Letters« repeatedly underscored that subjecting Indians to physical violence was »very cruel and unmanly«.⁸² British Company officials who attained notoriety for violence occasionally faced retaliation from Indians.⁸³

Many rules based upon the conventions, taboos of caste, and social hierarchies amongst Hindus and Muslims needed to be remembered.⁸⁴ »Letters« classed Indians into three categories: the higher, middle, and lower orders. In justifying caste-based government as »the frame of Indian society«, »Letters« was loathe to destabilise it.⁸⁵ Young civilians would mostly interact with middle-class Indian society comprising the Company's Indian officials, agriculturists, tradesmen, and merchants. However, unlike those Briggs considered high or low, »Letters« found it hard to prescribe a general rule to govern conduct towards these Indians other than permitting those attending the cutcherry to sit on the floor when stating their case. Having cornered nearly all the important civilian bureaucratic posts, young officials would frequently interact with Brahmins. Treating Brahmins as a special case amongst the middle

orders, »Letters« wrote that they expected »not only civility, but even some attention«.⁸⁶ They were not only permitted to sit down, but were not to be kept waiting, nor to be subjected to harsh language.⁸⁷ Simultaneously, however, »Letters« cautioned officials that Brahmins had a proclivity to screen caste members suspected of wrongdoing, and would jockey for bureaucratic appointments for their kin.⁸⁸

»Letters« classed many Indians as »menials and outcastes«, in dealing with whom young officials needed to exercise particular caution. They were not to commingle with them, or treat them on par with others, as this risked alienating other Indians upon whom the Company depended.⁸⁹ »Letters« illustrated this by envisaging the ritual purification, dishonour, and offence that would be caused by »a magistrate sending an outcast with his badge of office into the house of a Bramin, to deliver a summons requiring his attendance in his court«.⁹⁰

»Letters« contended that caste taboos mattered less to British Company army recruits, as most Indian troops were from the »lower orders«. Despite extolling their bravery, meriting recognition as »comrades«⁹¹, »Letters« noted that Indian troops were generally regarded poorly by other Indians. This, it contended, was because »It is absurd to suppose that a bit of parchment, though bearing the seal of the state, and the names of the council, can alter the man«.⁹²

Young recruits were unlikely to encounter »natives of the upper ranks«, except on hunts or as assistants to Residents later in their careers. Although seldom possessing much wealth, they were valuable for their services to the government or for their local influence. When dealing with princes especially, young officials were to be particularly careful, behaving in a manner befitting a »representative of the British nation«.⁹³ It was important that »you are not rude, [...] but you must learn to be polite and attentive«.⁹⁴

»Letters« also contained general instruction about the importance of a young official's numerous servants. During a recruit's early days, he would have little opportunity to interact with Indians outside their household establishments, or those they met officially.⁹⁵ Briggs observed that »Servants in all countries have it greatly in their power to contribute to our comforts as well as to impose on us, and even sometimes to inflict

on us positive distress, and this must be particularly the case in a strange land like this«. ⁹⁶ Briggs recommended »procuring of one man of respectability« and engaging him to employ other servants. ⁹⁷ »Letters« also elaborated on the importance of ceremony, like appropriate salutations and etiquette in official functions. ⁹⁸

»Letters« contends that Company rule was different from India's previous »haughty conquerors«, the Mughals, in its liberality, wherein Indians could live by their own religious dictates and customary rites. ⁹⁹ However, »Letters«' fastidiousness towards protocols and reciprocity of respect belies Company power's lingering insecurities and tenuousness – even at the height of its power. »Letters« thus provides a unique insight into the Company's »Indian empire« run by a handful of British officials with the aid of many Indians, which was the »most wonderful anomaly which history presents«. ¹⁰⁰ The Company's very survival depended upon officials keeping to character, and the lumbering transimperial bureaucratic behemoth's ability to »blend our administration with the political institutions of the Indian communities«. ¹⁰¹

The Rise and Fall of William Browne Hockley

William Browne Hockley joined the Company College, Haileybury, as a Company civil servant in 1810. ¹⁰² Ostensibly trained in Indian languages and administration to what higher Company echelons deemed adequate, Hockley was commissioned into the Bombay civil service. By 1818, he made his way to become First Assistant to the Collector at Ahmednagar, Henry Pottinger. In this role, Hockley routinely decided civil and criminal cases and appears to have become proficient in the regional language, Marathi. Hockley also appears to have made close alliances with various Indians through official duties and personal dealings. These entanglements would not only be the source of his downfall and dismissal from the Company in 1823, but would also serve as the basis for his later literary endeavours.

Although Hockley has been variously numbered amongst »major Company novelists« ¹⁰³, and a »pioneer in the field of Anglo-Indian literature«, ¹⁰⁴ scant traces

remain of him outside published works. Much of what comprises archival materials attributable to Hockley are those generated during his shameful exit from the Company. Thus far unexplored, this part examines Hockley's time in the Company and studies its influence on his first novel, »Pandurang Hari: Memoirs of a Hindu«. ¹⁰⁵ This study textures the official archive and animates the otherwise static bureaucratic ambience of provincial Company India.

Hockley's Official Career in India

Absent clear guidance on judicial standards, Company justice was based upon subjective assessments by officials like Briggs and Hockley. Whereas Briggs' woes were his improper use of judicial discretion, it was Hockley's close association with Indians that attracted the Company's ire. Particularly, Keshoo Row Mistry, a carpenter signalled to litigants that he could sway Hockley's favour for a price. The amounts which were termed as *darbar khurch* (court/assembly expenses), were concealed by a *shroff* (moneylender) named Hindu Mull, who allegedly fabricated entries in books of accounts to conceal Hockley's ill-gotten gains.

Hockley's nefarious dealings first emerged after leaving Ahmednagar for a judicial position in another part of Company India. Hockley was accused of soliciting a bribe amounting to five percent of the value of a civil dispute involving land and valuables. Fearing this information could leak through cutcherry scribes, Collector Henry Pottinger confidentially sought instructions from the Commissioner on how to proceed. ¹⁰⁶ Pottinger's discreet inquiries proved Hockley's complicity, and a proclamation was issued calling for anyone asked for bribes by Hockley or on his behalf to come forward. Several persons did, and Hockley was suspended from Company service as allegations began to »assume a tangible shape«. ¹⁰⁷ Simultaneously, letters sent by Keshoo Mistry to Hockley were intercepted. These contained intricate designs for a venetian blind, which Pottinger suspected was a cypher for details of bribe amounts arising from Hockley's corrupt dealings. ¹⁰⁸

The Bombay Government appointed two civil servants to enquire into fifty-four charges against Hockley, with Pottinger as prosecutor. ¹⁰⁹ Despite

Hockley's numerous protests, he was forced to travel to Ahmednagar to face the enquiry.¹¹⁰ Examining only five charges, the enquiry found against Hockley. The Bombay Council considered this sufficient basis for a criminal trial. Hockley was humiliatingly brought to Bombay from Ahmednagar under military guard on foot rather than on horseback.¹¹¹ Following a lengthy jury trial, however, Hockley was acquitted.¹¹²

Notwithstanding the acquittal, Hockley was dismissed from Company service by the Bombay Council. His plea for making a personal representation to the Company Directors in London was rejected, but Hockley unauthorisedly travelled to London nonetheless. This representation was unsuccessful, and his dismissal cut short a promising – if not remunerative – career in Company India.¹¹³ Hockley's later subsistence appears to be largely dependent on his fiction-writing, in which he was no more than modestly successful.¹¹⁴ Hockley's best-known novel, »Pandurang Hari«, was published anonymously in three volumes. This permitted him several literary transgressions. These included portraying various kinds of 'Indians' in his novels, giving his emotions and opinions free range through feats of »colonial ventriloquism«,¹¹⁵ and using daily parlance instead of officialese. The novel purported to be a translation of a Marathi manuscript by an Indian man, who was uncharacteristically different from his otherwise »irksome«, »selfish« countrymen, and »left his mask at home«.¹¹⁶ The following section reads it for portrayals of petty Company bureaucracy.

The Travels and Travails of Pandurang Hari

The novel's picaresque protagonist, Pandurang, was portrayed as an authentic personification of Indian vileness and cunning, while simultaneously exposing imperfections of Company rule. The book traces the adventures of Pandurang, a Maratha man, through the early nineteenth century, as he fitfully traverses regions controlled by various sovereigns – including the Company – pursuing the woman he loves. The story is told from Pandurang's perspective as an unreliable narrator. It chronicles his encounters with kings, commoners, rogues, ascetics, thugs, soldiers, and merchants. Pandurang, like Hockley, finds himself amidst the tumult of a fragmenting Maratha

Confederacy and the looming expansion of Company power in western India. Amongst the crowded medley of characters vying for attention are British diplomats, judges, merchants, and soldiers, who are collectively referred to as *toppe-walas* (hat-wearers).

Throughout the novel, Pandurang occupies various roles in both petty bureaucracy and high office, including as a Maratha judge and revenue official, a peon with an English merchant, a soldier in several armies, and a pleader before the Company's courts, before eventually discovering his lineage to Satara's throne. When in Bombay, early on in the book, Pandurang was told of several labouring roles that include ferrying people and goods, working at the cotton works, docks, or gardens. Alternatively, Pandurang could be a sepoy in the Company's service, or a peon where he gets to »wear a badge and have some little authority in the bazaar«.¹¹⁷ While few qualifications are formally required for these posts, the jobseeker needed to pass through a complex network of Indian traders and intermediaries. Pandurang secured employment as a peon at an English trader's warehouse where »My business was to wait at the door, carry about notes, and accompany the coolies from house to house with articles from the shop«.¹¹⁸ Pandurang was »invested with a red belt, having a brass plate attached to it« with some characters engraved in English. The tedium of this position, bleak promotion prospects, and ill-treatment by his employer meant Pandurang soon quit.¹¹⁹ Pandurang subsequently sought employment in a police office, or as a government peon where he could »hasten or retard business of a complaint in proportion to the rupees he put into my hand«.¹²⁰ Securing a role in the police let Pandurang superintend punishments of the rattan, enabling him to »mitigate or increase the pain, according to the sum given me.«¹²¹

Through his travels, Pandurang met several characters who narrated their life stories. One was a man named Fuzl Khan who was in perpetual conflict with law across various regimes, including the Company's judicial system. Fuzl's narrative terms Company justice an alien and »tedious process«, which sustains »a regular set... who live by the trade of swearing« and can create false documents »as quickly as you can roast a kabob«.¹²² »Pandurang« notes that although the Company aspired to create an incorruptible judicial system, »the great

ends of justice were defeated by the means taken to dispense it.«¹²³ »Pandurang« assessed the Company's system to be better than Maratha justice, but although viable in theory, was considered »liable to perversion« by »artful agents of the court-house...perpetually on the look-out, to take advantage of every new regulation or decision of the judge.«¹²⁴

The novel examined one instance of a provincial British Company judge as »a fair sample of the profession everywhere« to see how justice in Company India was subverted.¹²⁵ This judge frequented feasts, *nautch* (dance) and social events hosted by an official of the Parsi faith, and soon came under the latter's influence. Their proximity meant nobody dared complain about the Parsi official's excesses – of which there were many – to the British judge who was the region's highest legal authority.¹²⁶

Particular ire was reserved for the administration of justice in the Commissioner's territories, where assistants like Hockley adjudicated cases.¹²⁷ Although Collectors were chosen for their linguistic proficiency, »Pandurang« exclaimed that »not one of these military Englishmen in the Deccan could understand the contents of a letter unless it were read to him by an attendant clerk!«¹²⁸ This gave rise to middlemen and corruption. The novel mentions a middleman named »Loochajee«, (literally »Mr. Sly«) who perverts justice for a price.¹²⁹ Although respectable in external appearance, »characters like Loochajee were in reality, depraved and unprincipled.«¹³⁰ Like Loochajee, there were others who claim to have the favour of some British or Indian Company official, while in reality they are merely »hangers-on of some inferior offices of the courts« and »turn a penny by the sale of justice.«¹³¹ Self-referentially, Hockley's novel observed:

*At length a gentleman was appointed to the office who saw into the devices of this class of men: they determined, however, to get rid of him at all hazards. They collected together charges against him that were groundless in themselves, but which they offered to substantiate; and he was recalled, for their benefit and his own ruin.*¹³²

Hockley's literary alter-ego, Pandurang, thus performs the feat of »colonial ventriloquism«,¹³³ wherein he purportedly represents various Indian voices throughout the book. In calling the Company out for its failures, it seeks to obliquely – but unsuccessfully

– evoke sympathy for Hockley's disappointments. Numerous anonymised instances in »Pandurang« appear to be based upon things Hockley heard or experienced. For instance, the novel mentions a prison riot in Ahmednagar where several prisoners were killed. The incident occurred, in actuality, under Collector Pottinger's charge (Hockley's prosecutor). Pottinger suppressed the uprising using a cannon and deploying military force. Although finding Pottinger's use of force to be excessive, the Bombay Council merely asked Pottinger to inquire into his own conduct, and absolved him of any wrongdoing.¹³⁴ While Pandurang raised this issue with several British Company officials in the novel, they were reluctant to discuss it. Nestled deep within the novel's intricate narrative, Hockley's attempt to settle scores with Pottinger was unsuccessful, as the reference was lost on both contemporaries and later scholars.¹³⁵ »Pandurang« uses this incident to pillory a nameless official and criticise Company bureaucracy, observing, »It is strange that the toppe-walas boast of their desire to do justice, but never take notice of complaints against their agents...«, even in instances of »unparalleled and monstrous severity.«¹³⁶

Despite occasional setbacks, Pandurang's life is a resounding success. Having married the woman he loved, Pandurang ascended the Satara throne and produced an heir. By contrast, Hockley's life after the Company was one of hardship and penury, even though his name became synonymous with his literary character rather than corruption in India.¹³⁷

Although Hockley's career with the Company ended prematurely, his life and published writing provide important insights into the multiple realities and fictions of Company India. The reading of Hockley's archival fragments alongside his literary outputs can thus shed some light on the practises of, and actors within, provincial Company government in ways that are otherwise irretrievable.

Conclusion

Using archival and literary works of Briggs and Hockley as entry points, this article encourages us to reassess our understanding of Company India's provincial bureaucracy. Imprecisely fitted within the Company's

hierarchical structure, London had only a vague idea of the nature of duties required to be performed by British Company officials in provincial India. Much depended upon the exercise of discretion by British Company officials on the ground.

Linguistic limitations, illness, and disagreements between provincial British Company officials hampered bureaucratic functioning. Company bureaucracy in provincial India was thus heavily dependent upon Indians, mostly those who were lettered and landed. Despite much turning upon Indian aid in running Company government, British officials were deeply and constantly suspicious of Indians. This resulted in tensions and ambiguities in how ›natives‹ were to be treated. With little to guide provincial British Company officials in their interactions with Indians in various capacities, it was the published experiences of provincial officials that became bridgeheads into the unknown.

Although writings such as Briggs' ›Letters‹ and Hockley's ›Pandurang Hari‹ claimed authenticity, seemingly based upon a true picture of what happened in Company India, there is sufficient material to demonstrate their fictional and idealised nature. In writing about the treatment of Indians, Briggs was unable to stop his own subordinates from assaulting them, nor could he, as Collector of Khandesh, prevent corruption or avoid arbitrary executions. Briggs' published work presented a picture of regularity, while his letters to Elphinstone from Khandesh displayed only the disparate and desperate actions of an overwhelmed provincial official. While in ›Letters‹ Briggs positioned himself as wise and approachable, the Company's own bureaucratic hierarchy was highly inflexible and overly formal. Hockley's account purported to provide insights into Indian motivations for engagement with the Company, and the superiority of the Company's judicial systems when compared with parallel systems that existed in the region. Yet, this was after Hockley had himself been betrayed by his Indian associates and disappointed by the Company's judicial system – at multiple levels.

For both authors, from modest backgrounds in the United Kingdom, India was a site for reinventing themselves.¹³⁸ Literature was a vehicle for further reinvention after service in India clouded by scandal. For Briggs, ›Letters‹ served to bury his past mistakes

and project himself as an old hand at Indian affairs and ingratiate himself with young Company recruits entering the perilous world of the Company Sircar. It serves, variously, as a relic symbolising bureaucratic flux in Company India, and simultaneously as a vehicle for Briggs to salvage his tarnished reputation. For Hockley, anonymity elided confrontation with his indelibly stained character. Through ›Pandurang Hari‹, Hockley sought to salvage his personal reputation, settle scores, and obtain financial succour. The guise of fiction provided both Briggs and Hockley opportunities to freely express thoughts which they could not vocalise within the rigid bureaucratic hierarchies and the banal routines of their official lives. Both ›Letters‹ and ›Pandurang Hari‹ demonstrate diversity in portrayals of the Company Sircar. While ›Letters‹ recognised Company India's tenuous nature, it sought to regularise the impermanent. By contrast, ›Pandurang Hari‹ demonstrated the Company Sircar's quotidian workings and the many failings of all grand designs when put into operation.

Yet, neither ›Letters‹ nor ›Pandurang Hari‹ achieved what their writers had intended and appear to have been largely ignored within the great torrent of Anglo-Indian literature that followed in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Several factors likely contributed to their works being sidelined. Rapid transformations within the Company government, with a swing away from hybrid bureaucratic models, appeals to a very narrow readership, or merely the reluctance of Anglophone readership to engage with granularities of Indian administration quite different from their own, may all have been contributing factors to their being overlooked as literature.

For scholars of colonialism and bureaucracy, however, the literary products and archival remnants of British Company officials in provincial India remain invaluable artifacts. More careful and interdisciplinary excavation of the Company Sircar's forgotten archival and literary fragments will reveal invaluable clues to the origins of how postcolonial bureaucracies manifest in the present day. To better understand the working of societies – present or future, real or imagined – it is imperative we learn lessons from bureaucracies past.

- 1 For an illuminating and personified account of indirect rule in Company India by British residents to Indian princely courts, see Callie Wilkinson: *Empire of Influence: East India Company and Making of Indirect Rule*, Cambridge (UK) 2023.
- 2 P.J. Marshall: *Problems Of Empire: Britain And India 1757–1813*, London 1968.
- 3 See further Sanchita Khurana referring to *sarkar* in her article as a commonly used term in India today.
- 4 For instance, see Lynn Zastoupil: *John Stuart Mill and India*, Stanford 1994; Thomas Babington Macaulay, architect of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 visited India for only a few years and mostly resided in present-day Kolkata. See also Moss Michael and Thomas David: *How the File Was Invented*: in *Administory* 4/1 (2019), pp. 28–52 at pp. 29, 39–40.
- 5 Jon Wilson: *The Domination of Strangers*, Basingstoke 2008, pp. 74–76.
- 6 Martha McLaren: *British India and British Scotland, 1780–1830: Career Building, Empire Building, & A Scottish School of Thought on Indian Governance*, Ohio 2001; Eric Stokes: *The English Utilitarians and India*, New York 1959.
- 7 Leila Neti: *Colonial Law in India and the Victorian Imagination*, Cambridge (UK) 2021.
- 8 Sharon Murphy: *Imperial Reading? The East India Company's Lending Libraries for Soldiers, c. 1819–1834*, in: *Book History* 12 (2009), pp. 74–99.
- 9 Eddy Kent: *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786–1901*, Toronto 2014.
- 10 Ceri Sullivan: *Literature in the Public Service: Sublime Bureaucracy*, Basingstoke 2013. pp. 81, 86. A distinction is necessary between the term »writer«, which was a position in the Company's civil service and Sullivan's »writer-official« who are bureaucrats who write literature.
- 11 For instance, see Lutfullah Khan: *Autobiography of Lutfullah, a Mohammedan Gentleman* (ed. Edward Eastwick), London 1857.
- 12 A striking example is Ghulam Mir Gholam Hussein-Khan: *Siyar-Ul-Mutakherin, or, A Review of Modern Times* (Haji Mustefa and John Briggs, trans.), London 1832.
- 13 The dispute originated in some wartime booty seized. Major Evans Bell: *Memoir Of General John Briggs Of The Madras Army*, London 1885, pp. 66–71.
- 14 William Browne Hockley: *Pandurang Hari or Memoirs of a Hindoo*, 3 vol., London 1826.
- 15 Amongst Elphinstone's several influential relatives was William Fullerton Elphinstone, a director in the Company who served as the Company's chairman thrice. For a colonial biographical account, see T. E. Colebrooke: *Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone*, 2 vol., London 1884.
- 16 Archival materials cited are at the British Library, London's Asia Pacific Collection, which are listed as searchable in the catalogue. British Library (London), IOR/F/4/675/18664, »Permanent annexation of the districts of Khandesh, Ahmednagar and Poona to the Bombay Presidency«, 4. 12. 1819.
- 17 BL (London), MSS/Eur/F88/407, ff. 46–67 »Draft of a circular letter to Collectors and Political Agents on revenue and justice« undated 25. 10. 1819.
- 18 Elphinstone's »experiment« held the field until soon before his retirement in 1827 when he piloted codified law for Bombay, including for the Commissioner's territories.
- 19 Kenneth Ballhatchet: *Social Policy & Social Change in Western India 1817–1830*, London 1957, p. 93.
- 20 Bhavani Raman: *The Familial World of the Company's kacceri in Early Colonial Madras*, in: *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 9/2, (2008), unnumbered pages.
- 21 Bell: *Memoir*, p. 8.
- 22 Bell: *Memoir*, pp. 9, 12.
- 23 BL (London), MSS/Eur/F88/209–211 »Briggs' Private Letters to Elphinstone in 3 Volumes«. Of these, only vol. 2, BL (London) MSS/Eur/F88/210, is relied on for this article.
- 24 John Briggs: *Letters: Letters Addressed To A Young Person In India: Calculated To Afford Instruction For His Conduct In General, And More Especially In His Interchange With Natives*, London 1828.
- 25 D. H. A. Kolff: *Administrative Tradition and the Dilemma of Colonial Rule*, in: C. A. Bayly / D. H. A. Kolff (eds.): *Two Colonial Empires: Comparative Essays on the History of India and Indonesia in the Nineteenth Century*, Dordrecht 1986, pp. 95–110 at pp. 97–98; Cohn has the thickest description of »Letters«, whereas others merely cite it for reproduction of Sir John Malcolm's instructions. Bernard Cohn: *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, Princeton 1996, pp. 41–42.
- 26 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 191–194, 2. 11. 1820.
- 27 Arvind Deshpande: *John Briggs In Maharashtra (A Study of District Administration under Early British Rule)*, Delhi 1987 has a few pages on letters; A. J. Arbuthnot (revised by Roger T. Stern): *John Briggs (1785–1875)*, in: *Oxford National Dictionary of Biography*, online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3410> (21. 12. 2022) cursorily mentions »Letters«. Neither studies his private letters, though Ballhatchet: *Social Policy* frequently draws on them.
- 28 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 200–202, 18. 11. 1819.
- 29 Ballhatchet: *Social Policy*, p. 105.
- 30 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 155–158, 26. 7. 1819.
- 31 The phrase by Briggs occurs in relation to corruption of Indian revenue officials. Spread over IOR/P/399/2 and IOR/P/399/3 at ff. 2973–3292 running serially as consultations considered on 12. 9. 1821.
- 32 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 155–158, 26. 7. 1819.
- 33 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 155–158, 26. 7. 1819.
- 34 Ballhatchet: *Social Policy*, pp. 220–221.
- 35 Recounting his time in Khandesh in defending his actions to the Directors, Briggs wrote of trying unsuccessfully to enlist »some skilful native revenue assistant as well as more European assistants«. IOR/F/4/1022/28050: »The Bombay Government Defend Measures They Took to Control and Pacify the Bhil tribes of Khandesh«, 16. 4. 1825.
- 36 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 147–148, undated.
- 37 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 151–152, 6. 5. 1819.
- 38 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 124–125, 21. 2. 1819. (emphasis in original).
- 39 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 124–125, 21. 2. 1819.
- 40 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 194–196, 25. 11. 1820.
- 41 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 151–152, 6. 5. 1819.
- 42 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 59–60, 3. 11. 1818; ff. 62–63, 9. 11. 1818.
- 43 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 62–63, 9. 11. 1818.
- 44 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 40–42, 23. 10. 1818.
- 45 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 72–74, 18. 11. 1818. (emphasis in original). Collectors in different provinces in the Commissioner's territories were nearly all military officials.
- 46 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 218–221, 31. 5. 1820.
- 47 Today, Kashmir in northern India, known for its cooler climate. *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 52–64, 3. 11. 1818.
- 48 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 109–115, 17. 1. 1819.
- 49 *Private Letters to Elphinstone*, ff. 263–267, 23. 2. 1823.

- 50 Private Letters to Elphinstone, ff. 259–263, undated; ff. 274–277, 25. 6. 1823.
- 51 Private Letters to Elphinstone, f. 281, 16. 9. 1823.
- 52 Private Letters to Elphinstone, f. 281, 16. 9. 1823.
- 53 Private Letters to Elphinstone, f. 281, 16. 9. 1823.
- 54 Briggs: Letters, p. vi.
- 55 Abraham Valpy / Edmund Barker: *The Classical Journal* 38 (1828), pp. 12–16; *The Asiatic Journal and Month Register* considered that »More may be learned upon these subjects from this little book than from some ponderous volumes«, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Review* 25 (1828), pp. 786–790. More recently, Sen termed »Letters« as »popular«. Sudipta Sen: *A Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India*, London 2002, p. 147.
- 56 Briggs: Letters, p. 24.
- 57 Briggs: Letters, p. 24. These included saddles, spare furniture, boots, shoes, and gloves. Other than things required aboard ship, the rest was to be packed into tin-lined sea chests.
- 58 Amongst other works, Briggs here alluded to one of his own forthcoming works from Persian on Indian history. pp. 4–6.
- 59 Briggs: Letters, pp. 14, 79, 86–89.
- 60 Briggs: Letters, p. 18.
- 61 Briggs: Letters, p. 14.
- 62 Briggs: Letters, pp. 99–100.
- 63 Briggs: Letters, p. 102. Briggs wrote that young recruits should learn about the lifeways of »foreigners« by travel around continental Europe. Being better travelled and learning Indian languages would help them view Indians with less »repugnance«. Briggs: Letters, p. 6.
- 64 Briggs: Letters, pp. 133–136, 139–149, 160–162 on unrest by Indian soldiers about specifications about headgear, and Company policy on sati (Hindu widow immolation). Kolff: *Administrative Tradition* places Briggs within a broader conspectus amongst the Orientalist scholar-administrators of the period.
- 65 Briggs: Letters, p. 143.
- 66 Briggs: Letters, p. 47.
- 67 Bell: *Memoir*, pp. 9–11 observes how Briggs himself did not smoke, drink, or gamble after early experiences left him scarred.
- 68 Briggs: Letters, pp. 121–122, 123–127.
- 69 Briggs: Letters, p. 108.
- 70 Having performed this melancholy duty, the civilian could no longer bear it, and eventually shot himself. Briggs: Letters, p. 107. »Letters« does not contain any marginalia or footnotes that establish or controvert the veracity of this incident. It may well have been a figment of Briggs's imagination, as no references to this have been found so far in archival or published sources.
- 71 Briggs: Letters, p. 144.
- 72 Briggs: Letters, p. 19.
- 73 Briggs: Letters, p. 139 borrows Malcolm's notion that the Company's opinion was one based on public opinion. This is reiterated in Malcolm's instructions appended to the end of Briggs: Letters, p. 190; Kent: *Corporate Character*, pp. 121–122, 126 writes of India being a panoptical space where the social space was self-regulating.
- 74 Briggs: Letters, p. 19. See also Jonathan Foster referring to »imagined bureaucratic communities«, "[full reference here after typesetting]"
- 75 Briggs: Letters, p. 9.
- 76 Briggs: Letters, p. 111.
- 77 Briggs: Letters, pp. 50–54.
- 78 Briggs: Letters, pp. 9, 10, 49–54.
- 79 Briggs: Letters, p. 120.
- 80 Briggs: Letters, pp. 145–146.
- 81 Briggs: Letters, pp. 128–130. For information about agricultural taxation and tenure see, pp. 147–151, 153–156. On hereditary offices and village policing, see, pp. 152–156, 163–168.
- 82 Briggs: Letters, p. 79.
- 83 Briggs: Letters, pp. 41–43, 54–55, 79–81.
- 84 Briggs: Letters, pp. 34–36, 57–58.
- 85 Briggs: Letters, p. 118. On caste and colonial rule, see Nicholas Dirks: *Castes of the Mind*, Princeton 2001. For more contemporary scholarship on caste, see Chinnaiah Jangam, *Dalits and the Making of Modern India*, Oxford 2017.
- 86 Briggs: Letters, p. 112.
- 87 Briggs: Letters, pp. 112–113.
- 88 Briggs: Letters, p. 113.
- 89 Briggs: Letters, pp. 118–119.
- 90 Briggs: Letters, p. 118.
- 91 Briggs: Letters, p. 40.
- 92 Briggs: Letters, pp. 47–48.
- 93 Briggs: Letters, p. 178.
- 94 Briggs: Letters, p. 179.
- 95 Briggs: Letters, p. 128.
- 96 Briggs: Letters, p. 11.
- 97 Briggs: Letters, pp. 11–12, p. 30 contains detailed instructions on items such as furniture, food, drink, and clothing required when travelling in India. The head servant was responsible for arranging this.
- 98 Briggs: Letters, pp. 89, 91–92.
- 99 Briggs: Letters, p. 138.
- 100 Briggs: Letters, p. 186.
- 101 Briggs: Letters, p. 186.
- 102 BL (London), IOR/J/1/25/225-37 (microfilm), ff. 225–236, April 1810. [Replacing April with 4 might be confusing as there is no further context to that. If this is not within the style guidelines then perhaps delete reference to the month altogether as the page number is specific enough. Only 1810 need be retained- This comment needs to be deleted.]
- 103 Kent: *Corporate Character*, p. 96. However, Kent states Hockley retired from Company service, whereas he was dismissed following a hotly contested disciplinary inquiry (as this article states). Chakraborty alludes to this but does not cite sources. Ayusman Chakraborty: *Pandurang Hari and the Criticism of British Rule in India: An Assessment*, *The Criterion*, 5/II (2014), pp. 80–86, online: www.the-criterion.com/V5/n2/Ayusman.pdf (19. 12. 2022).
- 104 Chakraborty: *Criticism of British Rule in India*, p. 80.
- 105 »Pandurang Hari« receives close literary examination in James Watts: *British Orientalists 1759–1835*, Cambridge 2019, chapter 7.
- 106 BL (London) IOR/P/398/82, ff. 1398–1402, 16. 5. 1821.
- 107 BL (London) IOR/P/398/83, ff. 1795, 13. 6. 1821; ff. 1813–1815, 20. 6. 1821.
- 108 BL (London) IOR/P/398/82, ff. 1531–1536, 23. 5. 1821; IOR/P/398/83, ff. 1611–1628, 6. 6. 1821.
- 109 BL (London) IOR/P/398/83, ff. 1795, 13. 6. 1821; ff. 1813–1815, 20. 6. 1821.
- 110 Hockley claimed travelling to Bombay by sea during the monsoon was unsafe, and he was unable to find suitable overland baggage carriers for carrying papers related to his defence to Bombay. Hockley's request to postpone the inquiry after the monsoons was rejected, and he was directed to arrive in Ahmednagar forthwith. BL (London) IOR/P/398/83, ff. 1751–1758, 6. 6. 1821.
- 111 The Bombay Council reasoned that »any symptom [*sic*] of his (Hockley) putting his horse out of a common walking pace (even though unintentional) might be misunderstood by the Guard and lead to serious consequences.« (emphasis in original). BL

- (London) IOR/P/399/5, ff. 4509–4510, 17. 10. 1819; ff. 4578–4579, 24. 10. 1821.
- 112 BL (London), IOR/E/4/1044: Dispatches to Bombay, ff. 501–525.
- 113 BL (London) IOR/P/399/18, ff. 6682–6693, 30. 10. 1822; IOR/E/4/1044: Dispatches to Bombay, ff. 501–525, 31. 3. 1823; BL (London), Rare Books and Manuscripts, Loan 96 RLF 1/1526 »Mr. William Browne Hockley«, ff. 2, 7, 1860, contains brief outlines of Hockley's life, in his own hand, after leaving the Company.
- 114 Although Hockley published several books, both he and his works seem largely forgotten, according to a foreword by Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere in a republication of »Pandurang Hari«, London 1877 ed., p. v.
- 115 Pablo Upamanyu Mukherjee: *Crime and Empire: The Colony in Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Crime*, Oxford 2003, p. 119.
- 116 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol.1, pp. vi–vii.
- 117 Hockley: *Pandurang*, pp. 108–109.
- 118 Hockley: *Pandurang*, pp. 109–110, 117. *Coolies* here refers to labourers carrying head-loads.
- 119 Hockley: *Pandurang*, pp.117–119.
- 120 Hockley: *Pandurang*, p. 120.
- 121 Hockley: *Pandurang*, p. 120. He lost this role a little while after being involved in a conspiracy and was directed to leave Bombay. p. 129.
- 122 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 2, pp. 52–55, 62. This also mentions how documents are rubbed on the back of a bullock to give it a dirty hue and eliminate gloss. Fuzl himself was frequently involved in perjury and profited from collusive litigation in a Company town.
- 123 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, pp. 5, 8.
- 124 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, p. 60.
- 125 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, p. 5.
- 126 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, pp.5, 8.
- 127 *Pandurang* criticises panchayats, or the Indian adjudicatory forum, including panchayats in criminal cases, which had a short-lived existence in Khandesh under Briggs.
- 128 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, p. 162.
- 129 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, p. 153.
- 130 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, p. 157.
- 131 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, pp. 160–161.
- 132 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, p. 162.
- 133 Mukherjee: *Crime and Empire*, p. 119.
- 134 BL (London), IOR/P/399/3, ff. 3524–3554, 3. 10. 1821.
- 135 Pottinger went on to occupy high office within imperial bureaucracy. Watts: *British Orientalism*, pp. 249–250 refers to this incident from »*Pandurang*«, while Mukherjee: *Crime and Empire*, p. 119 mentions this incident, citing Hockley's last book as the source (William Browne Hockley: *Memoirs of a Brahmin*, vol. 2, London 1843, pp. 14–15). Neither examines Hockley's archival records or comments upon the incident's veracity.
- 136 Hockley: *Pandurang*, vol. 3, pp. 391, 393–394.
- 137 The poet Edward Fitzgerald asked William Frederick Pollock in June 1842, »Pray ask Thackeray (likely William Makepeace) if he has done anything for poor *Pandurang Hari*—I wish he could.« Alfred McKinley Terhune / Annabelle Burdick Terhune (eds.): *The Letters of Edward Fitzgerald*, vol. 1, London 1980, p. 326. Desperately short of money, Hockley sought support from the Royal Literary Fund in 1860. By then he was a widower following a discordant marriage, had been imprisoned in France, beset by illnesses, and faced an acute lack of interest in his writings about India from publishers. Hockley was given £15. BL (London), Rare Books and Manuscripts, Loan 96 RLF 1/1526 »Mr. William Browne Hockley«, ff. 2, 7, 1860; Hockley died that same year. Chakraborty: *Criticism of British Rule in India*, p. 80, citing Udayon Misra: *The Raj in Fiction: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Attitudes towards India*. Delhi 1987, p. 60.
- 138 Kent: *Corporate Character*, p. 19.

Abstract

This article reads the official and literary output of two underresearched English East India Company officials, John Briggs and William Browne Hockley, who served in India in the early nineteenth century. Reading unpublished archives alongside published literary works provides insights into how the Company's officialdom in provincial western India was experienced and projected by these British men. Beyond portrayals of colonial officialdom, this article also examines how Briggs and Hockley variously attempted to use literature to reinvent themselves. This article calls for greater attention to the study of juxtaposed official and literary sources as a method to reveal the underlying logics and frameworks of colonial rule, which continue to animate and shape postcolonial bureaucracies.

About the Author

Nishant Gokhale is a lecturer in law at the University of the West of Scotland and is pursuing a doctorate in legal studies at the University of Cambridge. Nishant's doctoral research examines how regional actors, both British and Indian, navigated the English East India Company's legal regime in early nineteenth century western India. Nishant's undergraduate degree is in law and humanities from the National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata (India). Nishant also has an LL.M. from Harvard Law School, and several years of experience as a litigating lawyer. Nishant is broadly interested in issues surrounding bureaucracy and institutional cultures, indigeneity, and legal history.