



University
of Glasgow

David, Julian Saul Markham (2001) *The Bengal army and the outbreak of the Indian mutiny*. PhD thesis.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1742/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

The Bengal Army and the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny

by

Julian Saul Markham David

**Ph.D Thesis, University of Glasgow, Department of History
February 2001**

Abstract

This thesis is a study of the Bengal Army from c. 1800 to c. 1870. Its central aim is to explain why the majority of the Bengal Army's native troops mutinied in 1857. It begins by comparing the pre-mutiny trends in the Bengal Army to those in its sister armies of Madras and Bombay: in particular the Bengal Army's changing pattern of recruitment, its growing list of professional grievances, the deteriorating relationship between its sepoys and their European officers, its relaxation of discipline and its sepoys' use of caste issues as a smokescreen for other grievances. Then it analyzes the events of 1857: the cartridge question, the conspiracy and the pattern of the mutiny itself. Finally it outlines the deliberations of the post-mutiny Peel Commission and the subsequent army reforms, and puts the Indian Mutiny in the context of the recent historiography of military revolts. Its conclusion is that the essential cause of mutiny in 1857 was not the defence of caste and religion, as is generally supposed, but service issues particular to the Bengal Army.

Table of Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	iii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	v
<i>Glossary</i>	vii
<i>Map</i>	ix
<i>Author's Note</i>	x
 Introduction	 1
Chapter One - Recruitment	20
Chapter Two - Professional Grievances	60
Chapter Three - European Officers	96
Chapter Four - Discipline	123
Chapter Five - Caste and Religion	152
Chapter Six - Mutiny: The Cartridge Question	168
Chapter Seven - Mutiny: The Conspiracy	196
Chapter Eight - Mutiny: The Pattern of Rebellion	224
Chapter Nine - The Peel Commission and Military Reform	260
Conclusion	276
 <i>Appendix 1 - The disposition of Bengal troops as of 10 May 1857</i>	 290
<i>Appendix 2 - When and where Bengal regiments mutinied, were disarmed or disbanded in 1857-58</i>	296
<i>Appendix 3 - Estimate of the number of Bengal native troops who mutinied, were disarmed or disbanded, or stayed loyal in 1857-58</i>	301
 <i>Bibliography</i>	 310

List of Tables

1. Ethnic composition of a new battalion of Bengal native infantry in 1815	22
2. Ethnic composition of the Bengal native infantry in 1842	25
3. Ethnic composition of the Bengal native infantry in 1851	30
4. Ethnic composition of the 34 th Bengal Native Infantry on 21 April 1857	32
5. Ethnic composition of the seven loyal regiments of Bengal native infantry in Sept. 1858	33
6. Ethnic composition of the regular Bengal native army on 1 April 1858	34
7. Ethnic composition of the 7 th Bengal Irregular Cavalry in May 1857	41
8. Ethnic composition of the Bengal native artillery in 1858	43
9. Ethnic composition of the Madras native infantry in 1858	46
10. Country of origin of the Madras native infantry in 1858	46
11. Ethnic composition of the Madras light cavalry in 1858	47
12. Country of origin of the Madras light cavalry in 1858	48
13. Ethnic composition of the Madras native artillery in 1858	48
14. Country of origin of the Madras native artillery in 1858	48
15. Ethnic composition of the Madras Sappers and Miners in 1858	48
16. Country of origin of the Madras Sappers and Miners in 1858	49
17. Ethnic composition of the regular Madras native army in 1858	49
18. Country of origin of the regular Madras native army in 1858	49
19. Ethnic composition of the Bombay native infantry in 1858	52
20. Country of origin of the Bombay native infantry in 1858	52
21. Ethnic composition of the Bombay light cavalry in 1851	53
22. Ethnic composition of the Bombay light cavalry in 1858	54
23. Country of origin of the Bombay light cavalry in 1858	54
24. Ethnic composition of the Bombay native artillery in 1858	56
25. Country of origin of the Bombay native artillery in 1858	56

26. Ethnic composition of the Bombay Sappers and Miners in 1858	56
27. Country of origin of the Bombay Sappers and Miners in 1858	56
28. Ethnic composition of the regular Bombay native army in 1858	57
29. Country of origin of the regular Bombay native army in 1858	57
30. Pay, allowances and pensions for native light cavalry and horse artillery from 1837	69
31. Pay, allowances and pensions for native infantry and foot artillery from 1837	69
32. Average length of service of infantry officers on promotion to their rank in Oct. 1853	114
33. Average age of infantry officers on promotion to their rank in October 1853	114
34. Corporal punishment in the Bengal native army 1850-4	133
35. Corporal punishment in the Madras native army 1850-4	133
36. Corporal punishment in the Bombay native army 1850-4	133
37. Sentences of Bengal native courts-martial 1850-4	146
38. Sentences of Madras native courts-martial 1850-4	146
39. Sentences of Bombay native courts-martial 1850-4	146

List of Abbreviations

B.E.F.	Bengal European Fusiliers
B.E.R.	Bengal European Regiment (infantry)
BL	British Library (Department of Manuscripts)
B.M.C.	Bengal Military Consultations
D.G.	Dragoon Guards
F.A.	Foot Artillery (personnel attached to either a garrison or a Field Battery)
F.B.	Field Battery (five 9-pounders and one 24-pounder howitzer)
G.O.C.C.	General Order of the Commander-in-Chief
G.O.G.G.	General Order of the Governor-General
G.O.P.C.	General Order of the President of the Council
G.O.V.P.	General Order of the Vice-President of the Council
H.A.	Horse Artillery (five 6-pounders and one 12-pounder howitzer per troop)
H.C.	House of Commons
H.L.	House of Lords
H.M.	Her Majesty's (i.e. Queen's as opposed to Company troops)
I.C.	Irregular Cavalry
I.H.	Irregular Horse
I.I.	Irregular Infantry
I.M.C.	India Military Consultations
L.	Lancers
L.C.	Light Cavalry (regular)
L.I.	Light Infantry
M.P.	Military Police
NAI	National Archives of India
NAM	National Army Museum (Department of Documents)
NAS	National Archives of Scotland

N.I.	Native Infantry
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library
P.C.	Political Consultations
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
S.C.	Secret Consultations

Glossary

alkaluk Long, loose tunic worn by irregular cavalry

anna One sixteenth of a rupee

assami A payment made, or debt incurred, by a *silladar* trooper upon receiving his uniform, weapons and horse.

Aryan One belonging to, or descended from, the ancient people who spoke the parent Aryan language (often called Indo-European) from which Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Teutonic and Persian (and their modern representatives) are derived; one of those who invaded and conquered India c. 1500 B.C.

bania (banya) Hindu moneylender or merchant

batta field allowance for soldiers

bell-of-arms Conical bell-shaped building used for storing weapons

Brahmin Member of the first *varna*, traditionally priests and scholars; the highest Hindu caste

caste Ascribed ritual status in the Hindu social hierarchy

crore One hundred lakhs, or 10,000,000

dhoti Loin cloth worn tucked between the legs and fastened at the waist

Din (Deen) Faith or religion

Diwan (Dewan) Chief minister of a royal court

Durbar Royal court or levée

ghi (ghee) Clarified butter

havildar Native non-commissioned officer, equivalent to sergeant

jagir Assignment of government revenue from a district, often in return for military service

jemadar Junior native officer in regular infantry or cavalry regiment

Hindi Major Aryan vernacular of northern India, spoken (with many dialects) from the frontiers of Bengal to those of the Punjab and Sind

Hindustan Originally the region of the river Indus; in the colonial period it denoted upper India (the plain of the Ganges, except Bengal)

Hindustani See Urdu

kurta Loose frock coat worn by irregular cavalry

Kshatriya Member of the second, or warrior, *varna*

lakh 100,000 units, usually rupees

naik Native non-commissioned officer, equivalent to corporal

pugri (puggree) Light turban or thin scarf worn round hat

Pandit Learned Hindu Brahmin

parwana Order or warrant

Peshwa Hereditary leader of the Maratha Confederacy; originally the minister of the Raja of Satara

purbia (purbiya) Inhabitant of the north Indian region that included Oudh, Bihar and Benares

pyjamas Loose native trousers

Raja Indian prince or ruler; title of nobility

Rajput Member of the most prominent military and landholding caste in northern India; Kshatriya class

ressalah (risala) Troop or squadron of irregular horse

ressaldar (risaldar) Senior native officer in irregular cavalry regiment

rupee Indian silver coin, valued at one-tenth (two shillings) of a pound sterling (gold) until about 1870

Sati (Suttee) Hindu custom requiring the self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre

sepoy Infantry private

Shudra Member of the fourth *varna*, of serfs or labourers

Sikh Member of a monotheistic religion founded in the Punjab in the fifteenth century

silladar Irregular cavalryman who provides, or pays for, his own weapons, horse and accoutrements

sowar Cavalry trooper

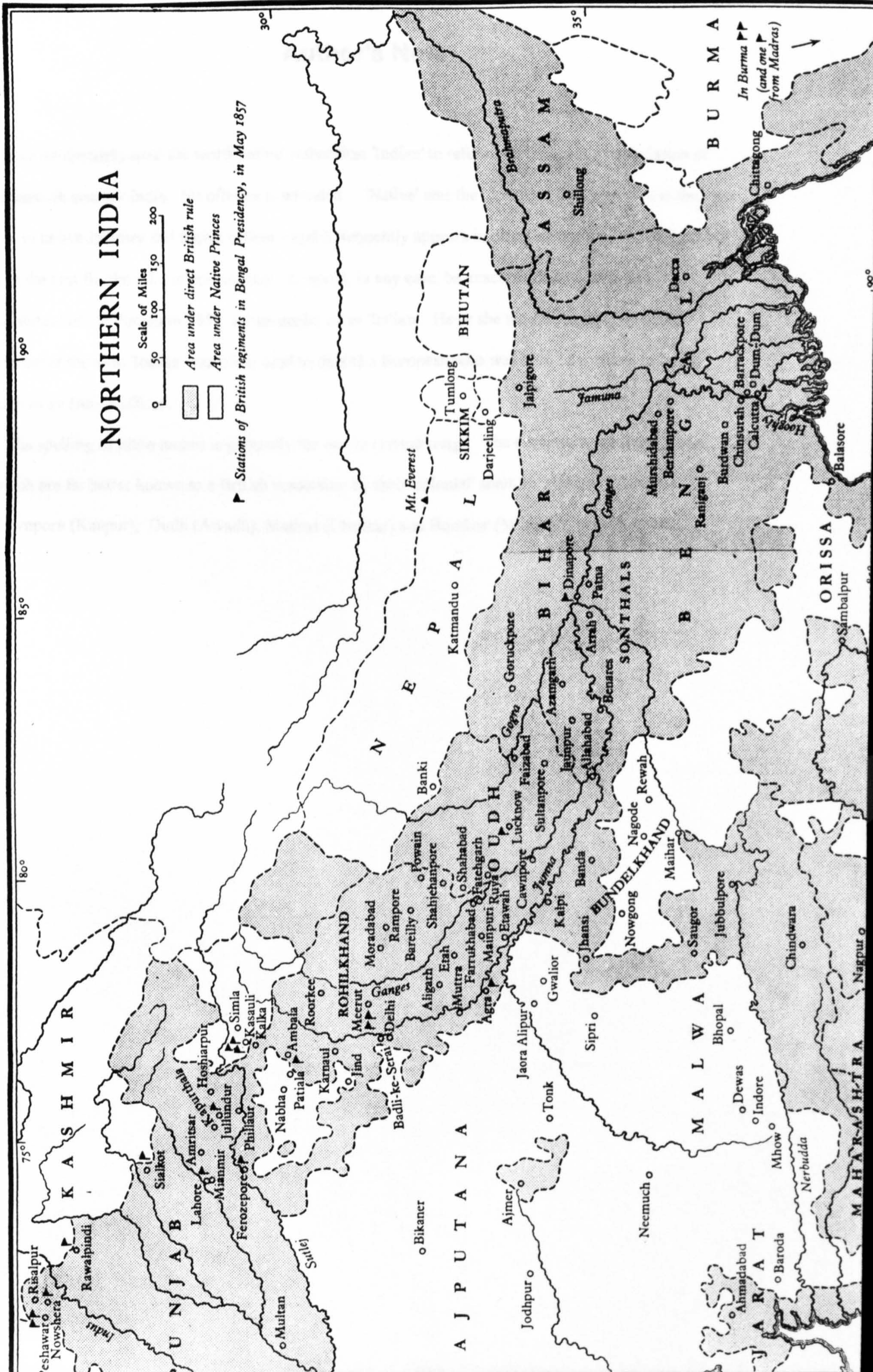
subedar Senior native officer in regular infantry or cavalry regiment

tulwar (talwar) Native sword

Urdu Language of the Muslim conquerors of Hindustan, derived from Hindi, but written in Arabic script; also known as Hindustani

varna One of the four pre-ordained classes - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras - into which all Hindu society is divided

Vaishya Member of the third *varna*, of farmers and merchants



Author's Note

I have deliberately used the word 'native' rather than 'Indian' to refer to the indigenous population of nineteenth century India. No offence is intended. 'Native' was the term used by the British at the time - as in native infantry and native officer - and it frequently appears in direct quotation. I have favoured it in the text for the sake of consistency. It would, in any case, be anachronistic to describe an inhabitant of the Punjab in 1857, for example, as an 'Indian'. He or she would not have done so. Moreover the term 'Indian' was often used to denote a European who was born or working in India, such as an Indian officer.

The spelling of place names is generally the one in current usage. The exceptions are those places which are far better known to a British readership by their 'colonial' spelling: Benares (Varanasi), Cawnpore (Kanpur), Oudh (Awadh), Madras (Chennai) and Bombay (Mumbai), among others.

Introduction

As every schoolboy knows, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 came about because the native troops of the Bengal Army refused to bite cartridges greased with cow and pig fat: the former unacceptable to Hindu sepoys and the latter abhorrent to Muslims. Of course historians have shown the underlying causes to be far more complex. Yet certain unresolved questions remain: were the prime motives for mutiny really the preservation of caste and religion, or were grievances particular to the Bengal Army more to blame? Did the sepoys act of their own volition, or was there an element of manipulation both from within and without the military?

The pre-mutiny history of the Indian Army - and its Bengal component in particular - has been the subject of a number of recent studies.¹ But only three books concentrate exclusively on the pre-mutiny period - Amiya Barat's *The Bengal Native Infantry*, Dirk Kolff's *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, and Seema Alavi's *The Sepoys and the Company* - and not one of them extends beyond 1852. They are, therefore, unable to test their various theories as to why the mutiny took place by an analysis of the actual sequence of events. This study is designed to fill that void.

It is also an attempt to reinstate the military dimension of the mutiny. For there has been a trend among recent scholars - such as Chaudhuri, Stokes, Bayly, Mukherjee and Roy² - to view the mutiny as a reflection of what was happening in Indian society. The sepoys were an integral part of peasant society, they argue, and were therefore susceptible to the same social, economic and religious pressures

¹ The principal publications include: Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: its organisation and discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962); Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (Delhi, 1971); Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers and Men* (London, 1974); T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (London, 1974); Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The ethnology of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990); Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India 1819-1835* (London, 1995); Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770-1830* (Delhi, 1995).

² S.B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies 1857-1859* (Calcutta, 1957); Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1978) and *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857* (Oxford, 1986); C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983); Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt 1857-58: A study of Popular Resistance* (Delhi, 1984) and "'Satan let loose upon the earth', The Kanpur massacres in India in the revolt of 1857', *Past and Present*, No. 128, 1990, pp. 92-116; Tapti Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857* (Delhi, 1994).

that affected civilians. Seen in this light the mutiny was little more than a precursor to a general revolt by disaffected elements of the native population. Yet by taking this approach there is a tendency to lose sight of the fact that the mutiny was, first and foremost, a military uprising and that, without it, the civil rebellion would almost certainly not have taken place.

Not all scholars have been guilty of this omission. Sir John Kaye, the first and most thorough historian of the mutiny, devoted a third of the first volume of his unfinished work to the evolution of the East India Company's Indian Army and the gradual alienation of the sepoys from their colonial masters. His conclusion was that as the sepoy

grew less faithful and obedient, he grew also more presuming; that whilst he was less under the control of his officers and the dominion of the State, he was more sensible of the extent to which we were dependent upon his fidelity, and therefore more capricious and exacting. He had been neglected on the one hand, and pampered on the other. As a soldier, he had in many ways deteriorated, but he was not to be regarded only as a soldier. He was a representative man, the embodiment of feelings and opinions shared by large classes of his countrymen, and circumstances might render him one day their exponent.

Kaye was, therefore, able to take account of both the internal and external factors which contributed to the sepoys' disaffection. Yet in his opinion these external factors - the "political and social measures of the British Government" - might have been disregarded by the sepoys had it not been for the fact that they "affected others, wiser in their generation, more astute, more designing, who put upon everything we did the gloss best calculated to debauch the [sepoy's] mind, and to prepare him, at a given signal, for an outburst of sudden madness". These *agents provocateurs* were able to point to a series of government measures - culminating in the cartridge question - that "tended to persuade" the sepoys that they "were directed to one common end, the destruction of Caste, and the general introduction of Christianity into the land". As to the identity of these conspirators, Kaye suggested everyone from the agents of dispossessed princes to "members of old baronial families which we had brought to poverty and disgrace", and from "emissaries of Brahminical Societies" to "mere visionaries and enthusiasts".³

This external 'conspiracy' theory was downplayed by the British historian T. Rice Holmes in his *History of the Indian Mutiny*, published in 1883. In his opinion, the native troops of the Bengal Army

³ Col. G.B. Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8* (London, 1888), I, pp. 255-8.

were relatively unaffected by outside influence. They had, moreover, hardly any substantial professional grievances beyond the fact that "a small fraction of officers and men were underpaid" and "there was no legitimate outlet for ambition". Yet they were "less attached to their British officers than they had once been" and a "relaxation of discipline had encouraged them to twist into a grievance anything that startled their imaginations, or offended their caprices". They had, in conclusion, "become so powerful and were so conscious of their power that, from purely selfish causes, they were ripe for mutiny". The cartridge question simply acted like a "flaming brand hurled into a mass of stored gunpowder".

Holmes did not dismiss the possibility of disgruntled civilians scheming to embarrass the British government of India. But because of a lack of genuine provocation, "coupled with the diversities of race, religion, rank, status and aim among the discontented", he felt that they "neither wished nor were able to combine" against their colonial overlords. Instead they simply took advantage of the disorder created by the mutiny. The sepoys were different. Even in Dalhousie's time they "were in a mutinous temper, and doubtless had vague ideas of rising", though Holmes was certain that "they formed no definite plot for a general mutiny" before "the greased cartridge story got abroad". Thereafter "a correspondence was kept up among the regiments of the Bengal Army" who "generally agreed to refuse the cartridges". Holmes therefore placed even less importance than Kaye on the effect external factors had in alienating the sepoys from their European employers. For him, the key to the mutiny was more a question of minor professional grievances, deteriorating discipline, overindulgent officers and the sepoys' overdeveloped sense of power - all factors internal to the army.⁴

However since the turn of the twentieth century, and particularly since India gained its independence in 1947, most Indian and British historians of the mutiny have tended to downgrade the importance of these military factors. In his 1909 publication, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*, the revolutionary poet V.D. Savarkar defined the mutiny and the rebellion that succeeded it as a popular uprising in defence of *swadharma* (religion) and with the aim of winning back a *swaraj* (kingdom). Kaye's self-serving civilian conspirators have been replaced by nationalist freedom fighters like Nana Sahib and Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. Savarkar was prepared to concede that the sepoys had some

⁴ T.R.E. Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1883), p. 564-5.

military grievances, but they were minor compared to the economic, political and social factors that had alienated Indian society as a whole.⁵

Professional historians have taken a less 'political' view of the revolt. To coincide with the centenary of the mutiny, the Indian government commissioned S.N. Sen to write an 'official' history. Published on 10 May 1957, Sen's *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* rejected Savarkar's notion of a nationalist uprising. Only in Oudh and Shahabad was there "evidence of that general sympathy which would invest the Mutiny with the dignity of a national war". Elsewhere the rebels tended to look back rather than forward. Sen wrote: "What began as a fight for religion ended as a war of independence for there is not the slightest doubt that the rebels wanted to get rid of the alien government and restore the old order of which the King of Delhi was the rightful representative." Thus while Sen and Savarkar disagreed about the ultimate nature of the struggle, they were united in their belief that it was fought initially for religion. Sen noted: "Religion is the most potent force in the absence of territorial patriotism and in 1857 men from all walks of life joined hands with the sepoy in the defence of religion."

Sen was also prepared to concede that the sepoys had professional grievances - in particular their maltreatment by European officers and N.C.O.s and their lack of career prospects - but explained them as merely symptoms of a more general malaise that would eventually afflict any indigenous mercenary army. "The sepoy enlisted for the sake of his bread and sooner or later he was bound to recoil against the obvious humiliation of his unnatural position, for as a sepoy it was his duty to hold his country under the foreign heel... The Mutiny was not inevitable in 1857 but it was inherent in the constitution of the empire."⁶

A second work to appear in 1957, *The Sepoy Mutiny & Revolt of 1857* by R.C. Majumdar, was even more categorical in its insistence that religious grievances were the chief cause of the military uprising. The sepoys "had many grievances against the British government", wrote Majumdar, but the most serious "was the interference with their time-honoured religious practices and social customs and conventions". Their "deep-rooted conviction...that it was the deliberate object of the British to convert them by direct or indirect means to Christianity" was the "reason the question of greased cartridge produced a conflagration". While conceding that there was much evidence to suggest that the "besetting sin" of the sepoys during the mutiny was "greed", Majumdar put this down to the fact that "evil passions, once aroused, do not remain confined to their immediate object" (i.e. the defence of

⁵ V.D. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* (London, 1909).

religion). As to the possibility of a general conspiracy among the sepoys, Majumdar could not rule it out. "It is likely," he wrote, "that some secret negotiations were going on between the leading sepoys of different cantonments, though the exact nature of this cannot be ascertained. It is probable that the object of these negotiations was to organise a general mutiny, but for this we have got no definite evidence... But though there might have been understanding and negotiations between the different bodies of troops, the plot was confined to them, or rather to some leading figures in each group, and no connection has been established between the mutinous sepoys and the ruling chiefs, or other prominent leaders mentioned above." The furthest that Majumdar was prepared to go on the question of external interference was to concede that the sepoys "might have been excited by outside agencies like Maulavi Ahmadulla or some other persons, but the actual plot was hatched by the sepoys themselves". He is prepared to accept, however, that "once the sepoys were excited by a mutinous spirit it was fanned and inflamed by interested individuals to serve their own purpose, so that what was in the first instance a mere desire to resist an infringement of their religion took, in certain cases or areas, a decidedly political character".

Majumdar is very clear about the sequence and overall nature of the uprising. The civil outbreak "was the direct outcome of the initial success of the Mutiny, and was fed by the volume of discontent and resentment existing against the British". But as there was "no coherence" between the "several distinct elements" of the general revolt, "each being limited in extent and objectives", and "no definite plan, method, or organisation, it cannot be regarded as a national rising, far less a war of independence". Instead the "miseries and bloodshed of 1857-58 were not the birth-pang of a freedom movement in India, but the dying groans of an obsolete aristocracy and centrifugal feudalism of the mediaeval age".⁷

S.B. Chaudhuri's *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies* was the third major study to be published in 1957. Though essentially an analysis of the civil uprising, it devoted a section to the causes of the mutiny in the army, concluding that they "were in part purely military, in part a discontent shared by the general population". These military grievances - which "flowed independently of any external pressure and originated from the conditions of the existing military service" - included a "consciousness of power" that had "grown up among the sepoys" and a feeling "that India was weakly guarded by England". Far more important than both, however, was the controversy over the greased cartridges in

⁶ S.N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Delhi, 1957), p. 411-12, 23-8, 417.

⁷ R.C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (Calcutta, 1957), pp.172, 174, 176, 218, 210, 268 and 241.

early 1857 which produced a genuine fear among sepoys that their religion and caste were in danger. Such a fear had been "reinforced by similar feelings of the civil population in respect of religion arising from the ever increasing pressure of western civilization including the whole series of progressive measures from the establishment of the railways to the legalisation of widows' marriages and the dissemination of female education", not to mention the "missionary activities against early marriage and the purdah system, the messing in jail, the compulsory system of shaving, and the enlistment order of 1856", all of which had "ruffled the feelings of caste and strengthened the suspicion that the government intended to force them all to embrace christianity".

In other words, the mutiny came about because sepoys were just as susceptible to the type of non-professional grievances - particularly socio-religious and economic - that had affected the rest of Indian society for many years previously. "There is no doubt," wrote Chaudhuri, "that the strong under-current of popular disaffection which was frequently manifesting itself in open resistance against the British in the early period culminated in the sepoy war of 1857." The end result was a "national outburst against foreign rule" that was "an anticipation of the future and not a mere recoil to the past". He thereby rejected the conclusion reached by his former teacher, R.C. Majumdar.⁸

The American historian Thomas Metcalf, in his 1964 publication *The Aftermath of Revolt*, concurred with many of Chaudhuri's conclusions, particularly his belief that it was a broad, popular uprising. For Metcalf, the sepoy uprising was "little more than the spark which touched off a smouldering mass of combustible material". Nevertheless, when assessing the causes of the sepoy mutiny, Metcalf is prepared to accord professional grievances a certain weight. "By 1857," he writes, "the Bengal Army was no longer the vigorous fighting force it had been in the days of Wellesley and Lake. Discipline had grown lax, the best British officers had abandoned their regiments for more attractive civil employment, and the sepoys, after many victories in which British troops had played only a small role, had become puffed up with a sense of their own importance. Many even believed that British rule in India was dependent upon their support and would collapse without it." In addition to this "slow deterioration of morale" were "specific grievances with regard to pay, pension rights, and terms of service", the loss of the "special privileges" which the sepoy had enjoyed as the "servant of the Company" with the annexation of Oudh, and a "general dissatisfaction at the limited prospects of promotion, at the enervating system of seniority, and at the contemptuous arrogance of junior officers".

Yet Metcalf identified "professional discontent" as "only the beginning". Of far more significance to the actual outbreak of mutiny was the fact that by 1857 "the sepoys were convinced that the English were out to take away their caste and convert them forcibly to Christianity". A belief that had been brought about, according to Metcalf, by the evangelical zeal of Christian missionaries and European officers, and the introduction of greased Enfield cartridges in early 1857.⁹

The 1984 publication of Rudrangshu Mukherjee's *Awadh in Revolt*, a micro-study of a major area of rebellion, promised fresh insights into the cause of the sepoy mutiny - not least because his geographical choice of study, the recently-annexed province of Oudh, was where the majority of Bengal sepoys were recruited. Yet his chief conclusions in this regard were not that far removed from Chaudhuri's. Mukherjee was also convinced that the primary cause of mutiny was the preservation of religion and that the grievances of the Oudh sepoys were similar to those held by their civilian counterparts. He noted: "Here was a military mutiny, sparked off by certain fears about caste and religion, merging itself with disaffection created by interventions in the traditional rural world of Oudh, using the loss of land, loss of a king and threats to religion as a rallying cry, seeking its identity in the traditions of a former despotism and finding its popular base among a rural confraternity held together by bonds of mutual interdependence."

According to Mukherjee, this link between sepoy and civil society also helps to explain why the rumour that the British were going to despoil caste and religion spread so quickly through the Bengal Army. "The ties of the village world," wrote Mukherjee, "which were automatically carried over into the army by the sepoys' common origins, facilitated the workings of the grapevine." The closest that Mukherjee came to acknowledging that professional grievances played an important part in the outbreak of mutiny is to state that the sepoys displayed "sheer greed for money, evident from the plunder of the treasury and the sepoys' concern about the movement of treasure". In his opinion, however, this was "a natural act on the part of a body of men who were proverbially ill-paid" and not a fundamental cause of mutiny.¹⁰

⁸ S.B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies 1857-1859* (Calcutta, 1957), pp. 1, 258, 6, 4, 297-8

⁹ Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1965), pp. 61, 47-8

¹⁰ Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, pp. 169, 78-9, 71

Eric Stokes pioneered the practice of analytical micro-study in *The Peasant and the Raj* (1978), a collection of academic articles that concentrated on a handful of districts in upper India.¹¹ But it is in his seminal and posthumously-published work *The Peasant Armed* (1986) that he developed further the theme of a close association between peasant and sepoy. Though primarily concerned with the identification of rural rebels - whom he characterized as pseudo-gentry who had lost out during British rule because of heavy revenue demands, adverse ecology and poor communications - Stokes included a chapter on 'The Sepoy Rebels'. He died before he could supply a conclusion to this collection of essays, so his thoughts on the specific link between the mutineers and the rural rebels were, in the words of his editor C.A. Bayly, "implicit rather than explicit". Bayly's own interpretation, included in the introduction, was that the "peasantry formed the vital link between military mutiny and rural turbulence".¹² In his chapter on the sepoy rebels, Stokes fell into line with recent historiography by identifying their defence of caste and religion as the primary cause of mutiny. But his assessment of their motives was far more sophisticated than anything that had hitherto been proposed because it interlinked socio-religious discontent with grievances that were particular to the military. He wrote:

For the most part, mutiny required a successful internal insurrection beforehand within the rank and file. This was usually the work of a small minority playing upon the hopes and fears of their fellows. And fear was always a more powerful spur to action than hope or greed. Fear for loss of caste was unquestionably the most common sentiment among the sepoys, but apprehension of defilement in a purely religious sense was not at the root of this sentiment, as was to be seen when later sepoys cheerfully used the Enfield rifle. Loss of caste denoted rather loss of that superior status by which *ashraf* (respectable) Muslims, Brahmins, Rajputs, and all who aspired to Rajput status, had traditionally secured a near monopoly over entry into the Bengal Army. If the British were to be allowed to enforce practices demeaning to the higher castes, the respectability of the military profession and their quasi-monopoly over it were gone.

As evidence that the British were preparing to transform a "loosely disciplined mercenary army" into "a modern force yielding unhesitating obedience and prepared to serve anywhere it was ordered", Stokes cited "the General Service Enlistment Order of August 1856" which "ended - at least for new recruits - the Bengal Army's privilege of not being required to serve overseas except on a voluntary basis". He

¹¹ Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (London, 1978).

¹² Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, p. 14.

also points out that the low pay of the sepoy - seven to nine rupees per month - "was an indication that he was driven to serve by strong pressure from his domestic situation". For infantry sepoys in particular, military service "was often the only honourable escape for men from families whose 'ownership' of the land had failed to keep pace with growing numbers, and who were steadily being forced down into the position of the humbler tillers of the soil". This "attribute of gentility was their last economic asset" and it underlay their "desire to retain their monopolistic grip on the Bengal regiments".

Thus did Stokes hint at the connection between mutinous sepoys and rural rebels, both of whom came from the same impoverished gentry background. One of the major causes of the mutiny, he insisted, was the gradual erosion of the recruitment monopoly enjoyed by high-caste Bengal sepoys. "The 'closed shop' of the *Purbias* (easterners) of the middle Ganges was under obvious threat," writes Stokes, "and with it all those privileges of 'home service' and a certain independent negotiating power characteristic of mercenary armies. Hence solid material fears underlay the apprehension over any infringement of caste rules by British authority." The only other relevance that Stokes was prepared to attribute to 'military' factors was a recognition that "slackness of discipline, traditional usage, and compassionate consideration by commanding officers for the susceptibilities of their men had led to a highly respectful form of trade union bargaining". Such a tradition of collective negotiation was dangerous in the highly-charged atmosphere of 1857 because "the voicing of grievances" tended to verge "upon open disobedience", causing the British authorities to "swing suddenly from the extreme of conciliation to the harshest of penalties".¹³

The micro-study tradition was continued by Tapti Roy's *The Politics of a Popular Uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857* (1994) - but with a difference. By concentrating on the actions of different categories of men in the province of Bundelkhand - from ordinary people to rajas, sepoys to Rajput landowners - she was able to demonstrate how "the rebels of 1857, operating at different levels, were involved in a fight for power, attempting to capture nothing less than the apparatus of the state". Her chapter on the sepoys was particularly revealing. "A mutiny does not dissolve a body of soldiers," observed Roy, "it turns them *as a body* from the side of the state to its opposite. A rebel army, in other words, carries on its body the signs of order and legitimacy; only now it has forsaken its old loyalty and is looking for a new source of authority to give it social recognition as an instrument of legitimate

¹³ Ibid., pp. 50-3

force." This attempt to create "a centralized, supra-local political order, as an alternative to the British authority they had displaced" had "never happened before" and therefore, in Roy's opinion, marked a break in the "linear progression from the sporadic mutinies of the early nineteenth century to this widespread ferment of 1857".

So Roy rejected the "standard historiographical practice" of explaining the mutiny "narratively by its causal antecedents", preferring to take the mutiny itself as the "first term of narrative". Using this method, Roy observed that the mutineers always spoke "in the idiom of religion", and that such a "justification for their actions reads quite differently from the historians' analyses of the causes", which include unsatisfactory conditions of service, the growing distance between the sepoys and their officers, and even their sympathy with the economic, social and political discontent felt by the rest of rural society. Yet Roy believed that scholars like Stokes and Mukherjee were right to extend "the causal space from the army barracks to the wider society from which the soldiers came" because there was evidence to show that mutineers "drew upon their wider social traditions when conceiving of the struggle in terms of a cause and an ideology". In particular, the "written addresses sent out to mobilize men in the cause of rebellion" described the uprising "not so much as a struggle for political ends as an imperative, a sacred duty, for upholding religion which was threatened by the British rule". Roy added: "The cause of religion also enabled the mutineers to justify and legitimize their actions which refuted the basic norms of loyalty." The only vague concession that Roy was prepared to make in terms of professional grievances was that "a practical need to mobilize men for military action against the British" meant that "religious evocations" were "often juxtaposed with material allurements", and that to "separate the two and to ask which was the 'real' incentive for action" would be "a useless exercise".¹⁴

For most of the twentieth century, therefore, historians tended to downplay the importance of professional grievances and other specifically 'military' factors in their accounts of why the mutiny took place. The two exceptions in chief were Metcalf and, to a lesser extent, Stokes. Yet Metcalf still considered the defence of caste and religion to be the key factor behind the mutiny, while Stokes made much of the connection between high-caste sepoys and their impoverished civilian counterparts, equating the sepoys' fear of losing their caste with a fear of losing their status as members of a privileged military 'club'. However Stokes seemed to regard the high-caste sepoys' defence of their

¹⁴ Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, pp. 21, 24-8, 50-1 53.

privileged monopoly as an issue more 'social' than 'military' in nature. The opposite interpretation was made by the young Indian historian Kaushik Roy, who wrote: "Before 1857, the Bengal Army became dependent on a particular group, the *Purbias*, when numerical decline of the white troops and weakening of the punishment system made the *Purbias* conscious of their own power. The English tried to balance them with the Sikhs. This was too little and too late. Enraged at encroachment into their monopoly the *Pandies* revolted." Roy added that "peasants and sepoys were distinct entities" and that it was "problematic to fuse the sepoy insurgency with peasant insurgency".¹⁵

This is not to deny either that there was a link between the sepoys and their civilian counterparts, or that many sepoys genuinely feared the loss of their caste and religion in 1857. But the extent to which these factors were primarily responsible for the mutiny has perhaps been exaggerated. The evidence of this study leads me to conclude that caste issues between Bengal sepoys and the Indian government were as much about a privileged majority asserting its exclusive position and collective bargaining power as they were about religious faith and social position. Internal military issues, on the other hand, have been consistently underestimated.

All armies have generic grievances relating to conditions of service, including pay, promotion, discipline and relations with officers. What made colonial armies different was that they were volunteer mercenary forces officered by men of a different race and religion. Their loyalty to their paymasters, therefore, was entirely dependent upon the incentives for service outweighing the disincentives. This point becomes particularly pertinent when considering Tapti Roy's observation that, in 1857-8, the Bundelkhand mutineers largely kept together as a disciplined body and actively sought to replace their British employers with a new political order. Could it not be argued that this desire to replace one employer for another is proof that the sepoys' grievances were essentially professional in nature?

This was exactly the point made by two recent historians of the Indian military labour market, Dirk Kolff and Seema Alavi. Kolff's thesis - in his book *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy: The ethnology of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (1990) - was that the Company sepoys were simply the latest in a long line of professional soldiers from eastern Hindustan (hence *purbias* or 'easterners') available to the highest bidder. No sooner did service under an alternative employer prove more attractive than the sepoys would unilaterally terminate their contracts. Kolff's study identified two quite

¹⁵ Kaushik Roy, 'The Historiography of the Colonial Indian Army', *Studies in History*, Vol. 12, No. 2,

separate Rajput traditions: "at one end, mainly in Rajasthan, a genealogically defined Rajput aristocracy and a centre and opposite end occupied by a variety of peasant groups and tribal elites, largely in Hindustan, whose values and behaviour kept alive a more ancient layer of Rajputhood." It was in this "older, pastoralist tradition" that Kolff saw the ethnic connection between the Rajput mercenaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Rajputs and Brahmins from the eastern Hindustan region who came to dominate the Bengal Army in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

"This phenomenon," wrote Kolff, "can only be explained as the successful endeavour of the dominant groups in the Bhojpur and Oudh region to reserve to themselves what quickly became the most important redistributive institution of the new British empire in India, to wit the Bengal Army." He added: "An inevitable ritual complement of this closed shop social strategy was a tendency towards brahminical exclusiveness, in other words, towards the doctrine of caste. The new monomania for the privileges of employment soon took on religious overtones and stands in sharp contrast to the old survival strategies characterised by multiple layers of identity of Cheros, Bhumimars and 'spurious' Rajputs, and to the open attitude towards adopting and recruitment that had been typical of centuries of peasant soldiering. The Bhojpuri and Avadhi soldier-elite, securely ensconced in the new empire, now adopted the 'modern' - to use Buchanan's epithet - ideology of caste. It justified their closed shop practices."

In other words, said Kolff, Bengal sepoys reinvented caste issues to protect a monopoly that was increasingly under threat as "British North India was almost totally demilitarised", the "opportunities for military employment had dwindled" and "competition for service had become acute". However Kolff pointed out that caste was not an issue in the Bombay Army, despite the fact that many of its sepoys were recruited from the same area of Hindustan as the Bengal Army. In this respect, "the old North Indian tradition of service suited the modern state better than the 'modern' emphasis on exclusiveness". Nevertheless, wrote Kolff, the 1857 mutiny "still showed that two crucial features of the old service tradition survived when the old Purbiya gentry closed its shop". First was "the sociological link between soldiering and agrarian society", in that sepoys continued to remit as much as three-quarters of their pay to their families. Second, and a "feature that was lost in Bombay", came the "peasant soldier's insistence on what was his birthright, i.e. to negotiate his own alliances or, in other words, to choose his employers himself". The threat posed by such a tradition was only broken after the mutiny when the

"colonial administration in disgust dropped Hindustan as a recruitment area" and the "market for military labour ceased to be a sellers' market".¹⁶

Kolff therefore made two important points with regard to the 1857 mutiny: on the one hand the Bengal sepoys were simply part of a long tradition of mercenary soldiers from eastern Hindustan who were liable to switch employers if the occasion demanded; while on the other hand they represented a break with the past in that they reinvented caste issues as a means to defend their privileged position. Both points support my own thesis that issues exclusive to the military are more central to an understanding of the mutiny than has hitherto been recognized. Yet Kolff was unable to prove his theory with evidence drawn from the mutiny because his study ends in 1850. My research is designed to provide that missing evidence. It will show that the cartridge question was used by at least some sepoys - mainly the ringleaders - as a pretext to oppose the state. It will also demonstrate the extent to which the sepoys were seeking to replace one, no longer acceptable, employer with another. Proof of this latter assertion includes the fact that many mutinous regiments retained their organisation and discipline, that the ringleaders were in many cases the native officers who simply took over from their European counterparts, and that these native officers invariably sought to legitimize their actions by placing their regiments under the command of an alternative political authority.

In her 1995 publication, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770-1830*, Seema Alavi came to much the same conclusion as Kolff: that the mutiny came about because the Bengal sepoys were seeking an alternative employer. She differed from Kolff in her explanation why. Her argument is that, far from being simply the latest in a long line of mercenary paymasters, the Company introduced a new military tradition into northern India by replacing the dominant urban Mughal cavalry with high-caste peasant infantry from Benares, Bihar and Oudh. Among the chief characteristics of this new service were regular pay and attention to the recruits' religious sensibilities. The sepoys began to look for alternative employers, said Alavi, when these financial, social and religious benefits began to disappear.

Like Kolff, Alavi insisted that "the high-caste status in rural north India was reinvented" by the Bengal Army. It "formalized" the "social tensions hinging around the ritual purity of the rural high caste" and "made them more obvious and rigid". But for the Bengal Army's policy of selective recruitment, "the evolution of high-caste status in rural India would have progressed differently".

¹⁶ Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 73, 186-191.

However, wrote Alavi, while it was keen to ensure the loyalty of its sepoys by "buttressing their assumed high-caste status", the East India Company also took pains to abstract them "from the constraints and hierarchy of 'Hindu' society". It did this by "exempting" the sepoys from "certain religious obligations which reinforced the superiority of the priestly class of Brahmins", such as the payment of pilgrim dues and fees during the performance of religious rituals in temples outside the cantonments. According to Alavi, this attempt by the Company to separate the Bengal Army from society by creating a "very specific form of military Hinduism" would ultimately backfire.

Alavi's central thesis is that the principal role of the army was political in that it functioned as a cultural link between the rulers and the ruled. She argued that as the Company advanced to "a position of political strength and maturity" by the early 1830s, it instituted a number of reforms designed to "increase its effective control over the army". For example the establishment of military offices "to administer the settlements of invalid soldiers and their families", which would enable the Company "to intervene in the family affairs" of its sepoys and thereby increase its grip over its peasant regiments. But instead of ensuring political, economic and social stability, these reforms merely created bad feeling within the army.

Though the stopping point for Alavi's study is 1830, she attempted to explain the outbreak of the 1857 mutiny as the inevitable result of this policy of excessive control. While doing so, she rejected Kolff's theory of "a conflict in which an antique Indian warrior tradition protested against the increasing encroachments of a militarily modernized Company". Instead, wrote Alavi, "Company power was under threat from its military 'subalterns' who were incensed because the reforms of the 1830s had disturbed the power relations within which they and their families had enjoyed financial security and a high religious and social status". Such resentment was manifested in their opposition to the withdrawal of foreign service batta in Sind and the Punjab in the 1840s, in their postings to distant military outposts and, more importantly, in "their apprehensions over the infringement of their high-caste status which...the Company had sedulously promoted over the previous three generations". In this respect, the cartridge question was the final straw. The end result was the re-emergence in 1857 "of that contested military labour market which the Company had done its best to control since the beginning of the nineteenth century". Alavi added: "All at once the Company ceased to be the most attractive

employer in India and patrons amongst the rebel leaders were able to hold out to them the material, political, and ritual inducements which the Company had once monopolized." ¹⁷

While Alavi makes a number of good points - not least her assertion that the mutiny was an attempt by sepoys to secure a more amenable employer - her overall thesis is unconvincing. Far from being caused by excessive interference, I will argue that one of the reasons the mutiny came about was because the Bengal Army's control over its sepoys had progressively weakened. This trend can be seen in the reduction of the commanding officer's power to punish and reward, and in the relative lack of interest shown by young officers in the welfare of their sepoys. Moreover the bulk of military reforms in the 1830s were essentially benign in nature and designed to improve the sepoys' conditions of service. Examples include the abolition of flogging for native troops, the institution of the Orders of British India and of Merit, the award of Good Conduct pay and an increase in the Bengal Army's marching *batta* (or extra allowance) to bring it into line with the other presidency armies. Kaushik Roy was surely right to point out that there was a "lobby which constantly cried for reforms between 1830-1856", in particular the Punjab school which called for a policy of mixed recruitment. "If their programmes had been implemented," wrote Roy, "there may have been no 1857 mutiny".¹⁸

Constrained by the chronological parameters of her study, Alavi was forced to rely mainly on secondary sources for her assessment of the nature of sepoy grievances in the 25 years that preceded the mutiny. The best of these sources is Amiya Barat's *The Bengal Native Infantry*, the publication of her Ph.D thesis and the first scholarly work on the colonial Indian Army to appear since Indian independence. But even Barat's study ended in 1852, a full five years before the mutiny begins. This is deliberate. Though her work is ultimately geared to pinpointing the causes of the 1857 outbreak, Barat admitted that she did not want to become involved "in the very complex issues raised by the mutiny of 1857". This is something of a contradiction in terms: for she cannot hope to prove her theories without a detailed study of the mutiny itself. Her thesis's other weaknesses are its neglect of the separate arms that made up the Bengal Army - most notably the artillery and the regular and irregular cavalry - and her failure to draw conclusions from a comparison with the Bombay Army (which suffered just a handful of mutinies) and the Madras Army (which was uniformly loyal). This study will cover all of these areas.

¹⁷ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 76, 85-6, 90, 293-6

¹⁸ Roy, 'The Historiography of the Colonial Indian Army', p. 270.

Nevertheless Barat deserves credit for pinpointing a deterioration in the Bengal sepoys' service conditions and a gradual disintegration in the relationship between sepoys and their European officers in the years prior to the mutiny. The thrust of her argument is that the sepoys' professional grievances caused a number of "increasingly serious and frequent" mutinies after 1824, by which time "many of the grievances of the European officers had been redressed". The 1857 mutiny was, therefore, simply the culmination of the sepoys' various grievances. But as not all of them were serious enough to require such "drastic action", mutiny had to be a "sign of maladministration, of bad man-management". This, in turn, was caused partly by the ambiguous position of the native officers who both identified with their men and yet were "seen by the men as part of the officers' group, indifferent or hostile to their interests". It was also caused, said Barat, by the lack of contact between the men and their European officers who hankered after better paid detached appointments and neglected regimental duties. Increasingly, too, young cadets would arrive from Britain with a fixed idea of the inferiority of Indians which hardly improved relations. "Another common feature of the regiments in which mutinies occurred," wrote Barat, "was the absence of a considerable proportion of such officers as had been posted to them". There is much in this. But the absence of European officers is only relevant in the sense that those left behind resented being passed over and became increasingly lax in their duty. That a large number of European officers were not needed to ensure the loyalty of sepoys is proven by the fact that the post-mutiny Bengal Army had far fewer officers per regiment and yet rarely displayed a mutinous disposition.

Barat identified pay and allowances as one of the issues "round which discontent frequently focussed"; such a preoccupation with financial rewards was only to be expected from a mercenary army. As proof that the sepoys were becoming progressively worse off, Barat cited the fact that their pay of seven rupees a month stayed constant throughout the period of her study, whereas the cost of living and the average wage of a labourer or ploughman was increasing. In addition, more and more sepoys "found themselves posted to up-country stations" in recently-annexed provinces like Sind and Punjab "where peace was of recent introduction", "agriculture was less prosperous" and prices were generally higher. This extension of the Company's territory also imposed upon the sepoys ever longer marches that were both "tedious" (their uniforms were uncomfortable and their equipment unwieldy) and "expensive" (they paid for their own carriage and contributed to new hutting). Other consequences included the difficulty for sepoys returning on leave to their villages and the curtailment of *batta* for

service beyond the boundaries of the Bengal Presidency. The latter grievance was behind the serious mutinies in Sind in 1844 and in the Punjab five years later. Barat also pointed to the diminishing opportunities for promotion and the fact that there was no "spur for ambition" equivalent to the European officer's "opportunities outside the regiment, in the political or civil lines, or in service with irregular regiments".¹⁹

This claim that pay and prospects were major grievances does seem to be borne out by a study of the mutiny itself. In almost every case, the first action of the mutineers was to seize or attempt to seize the district treasure. But instead of simply dividing it up among themselves, they often guarded it until it could be handed over to the new military or political authority (in effect their new employers). For their part, the rebel leaders recognized the importance of financial incentives by issuing a series of proclamations offering increased pay to all sepoys who joined them. Improved career prospects were also a factor in that the majority of mutinous regiments were led by native officers who had been prevented from rising to pre-Company positions of prominence by the presence of European officers.

According to Barat, the "other permanent cause of disturbance was the caste feeling of the sepoys, and in particular the sepoy's dislike of serving outside India and of sea voyages". This she identified as the main cause of mutinies in 1824 and 1852. "Yet in 1857," wrote Barat, "when those same scruples were again offended, there was, initially at least, a great readiness [by the authorities] either to pooh-pooh or dismiss them, or to attempt to overcome them by force."²⁰ This latter statement underlines the problem Barat had in equating the 1857 mutiny with previous small-scale mutinies without a specialist knowledge of the later uprising. Far from dismissing the sepoys' caste and religious scruples in 1857, the authorities did everything they could to allay their fears. The fact that they were so spectacularly unsuccessful could be seen as an indication that other factors lay behind the mutiny. There is, in addition, much evidence to suggest that the earlier mutinies were motivated more by professional grievances than issues of caste and religion.

The argument that the 1857 mutiny was caused by service issues particular to the Bengal Army is supported by the bulk of evidence given to the Peel Commission, set up in 1858 to report on the post-mutiny reorganization of the Indian Army. Former and serving officers of the Indian and British armies who gave oral and written evidence to the Commission were generally agreed, for example, that the Bengal Army had become an interconnected brotherhood because it was recruited from too restricted an

¹⁹ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. xii, 294, 296-7, 299-302, pp305-6

area and among too few castes. They also tended to concur in the view that the sepoys had little outlet for ambition, that the power of Bengal commanding officers to punish and reward had diminished to the extent that they had become mere cyphers, that Bengal sepoys were overindulged with regard to caste issues, and that the discipline of the Bengal Army as a whole had become too lax.²¹ There is, of course, the possibility that such responses contain more than a little hindsight. On the other hand, a number of senior officers and administrators - including General Sir Charles Napier, Sir Henry Lawrence and Lieutenant-Colonel John Jacob - had warned that reforms in these areas were necessary in the decade or so prior to the mutiny.

The nature of the subsequent Indian Army reforms also supports the theory that military factors were central to the mutiny. The most far-reaching reform was the replacement of all regular native cavalry and infantry regiments with irregular ones that had far fewer European officers (six, and later seven, as opposed to twenty-four). This had the effect of increasing the career prospects and job satisfaction of native officers by giving them more responsibility. Their pay was also increased. Other reforms were designed to increase the authority of commanding officers: on the one hand they were given complete authority to select their N.C.O.s on merit; on the other they were accorded the summary power to reduce N.C.O.s to the ranks and to discharge N.C.O.s and sepoys. Finally, the high-caste Hindus and well-born Muslims from north-east India who had formerly dominated the Bengal Army were replaced by Pathan, Sikh, Dogra and Punjabi Muslim recruits.²² The result of these reforms: no serious mutiny in any part of the Indian Army until the First World War. Even the revolt by four companies of the 5th Light Infantry at Singapore in February 1915, in which 34 people were killed, is described by David Omissi in *The Sepoy and the Raj* (1994) as a "minor" affair.²³

In his chapter on mutinies in *Soldiers of the Raj* (1997), the Indian historian and former general S.L. Menezes put most of the post-1858 tumults down to "poor leadership by the commanding officers concerned, many of whom were removed". The exceptions were those risings in the First World War "where a religious appeal by the Caliph not to fight the Turks supervened, or in the Second World War, where communist influences appear to have been at work". Menezes concluded: "In general, up to the

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 303-4.

²¹ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, pp. 1-645.

²² A.H. Shibly, *The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies, 1858-1879*, Ph.D. Thesis, S.O.A.S., London University, 1969; Articles of War, Act XXIX of 1861, OIOC, L/MIL/17/11/15; Bengal Army Regulations, 1873, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/443, p. 98.

²³ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994), pp. 135, 151.

time of the British Government's Partition announcement of 3 June 1947, the fidelity of the undivided Indian Army was not in doubt".²⁴

²⁴ S.L. Menezes, 'Race, Caste, Mutiny and Discipline in the Indian Army, from its Origins to 1947', *Soldiers of the Raj: The Indian Army 1600-1947* (London, 1997), Alan J. Guy and Peter B. Boyden (eds.), p. 111.

Chapter One - Recruitment

This chapter will trace the development of the East India Company's recruitment policy for the Bengal Army over the hundred years that preceded the Indian mutiny, providing a comparison with the policies practised by the Bombay and Madras armies. It will concentrate, in particular, on the attempt to widen the Bengal Native Infantry's sphere of recruitment in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

In 1857, the total strength of the native Indian Army was 232,224 men.¹ Of the three presidency armies that made up the Indian Army, the Bengal force was by far the largest with 135,767 troops.² The biggest single element of the Bengal Army, and therefore the Indian Army as a whole, was its regular Bengal Native Infantry of 74 regiments, with an establishment strength of just under 86,000 men. The 18 regiments of Bengal Irregular Cavalry numbered 10,500 men, while the regular Bengal Light Cavalry was just ten regiments and 4,900 men strong. Even smaller was the artillery component of four horse troops and 18 foot companies (3,000 men) and the twelve companies of sappers & miners (1,630 men). The balance was made up of irregular and local regiments. It is because the Bengal Native Infantry was so pre-eminent in size, and because it was the arm most affected by the shift in the Company's recruitment policy, that it dominates much of this chapter.

The first companies of native infantry sepoys³ under British command were raised in the Madras Presidency by Major Stringer Lawrence in 1748. But Bengal saw the formation of the first native battalion - the famous *Lal Paltan* (or 'Red Regiment' from the colour of the sepoy's coats) - by Robert Clive at Calcutta in January 1757. Its recruits were chosen from the agricultural classes of India

¹ 'Return showing the Numbers of the troops, regular and irregular, which were serving in the three Presidencies immediately before the Mutiny', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 17, p. 379. The same return gives the total number of European troops as 45,522: 6,170 officers and 38,562 other ranks (24,263 of whom were Queen's troops). An alternative source gives a grand total of 275,304 native troops, but this includes regular, irregular, local and contingent forces officered from the line. It does not include the Punjab police battalions, the Scinde and other organized police who, together, numbered at least 16,000 drilled and well-armed soldiers. To these could be added about one hundred thousand ordinary police and revenue peons. [Source: 'Tabular Statement of the Army of India in January 1856', Sir Henry Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political, Written in India* (1859), pp. 370-1]

² Ibid. Another source gives the total number of regular, irregular, local, contingent and military police troops officered from the Bengal Army as 176,834 men. [Source: 'Statement showing the Number and Distribution of all Troops, Native and European, serving in the Bengal Presidency in January 1857', P.P., H. C., 1859, VIII, p.13].

because Company officials had already decided that, as in Britain, they would make the best soldiers. According to the Company ideologue Robert Orme, the inhabitants of the wheat-producing zones of northern India were better built and thus more 'martial' than the shorter people in the rice-producing areas of the south and east. "In practice," writes Seema Alavi, "this meant that recruitment was guided by two main considerations: the Company would only consider peasants with a well-built physique and an average height of 5 feet 7 inches; secondly, at this stage, at least, it confined recruitment to the Company's territories and established direct contact with the recruiting villages in wheat-growing areas." ⁴

After Clive's victory over the Nawab of Bengal at Plassey on 23 June 1757 had established British supremacy in the province, the Company began to recruit from the rural areas of Bengal, particularly around Burhanpur and Dinapore. But not enough recruits of the requisite size were available, causing the recruitment base to be extended westward to the wheat-growing areas of north India. In Kolff's opinion, the Company's gradual reliance on recruits from outside Bengal proper stemmed partly from the fact that the majority of the two thousand or so sepoys who fought with Clive at Plassey were brought from Madras but had names that "indicate a Rajput or Northern origin". These new infantrymen were clothed by the Company, armed with firelocks rather than matchlocks, commanded by European officers and "drilled and disciplined according to the methods first tried out in the South in the decades preceding Plassey". They came to be known by the old name of *purbia* and were simply "new incarnations of the same old soldiering tradition of Hindustan" in which Rajputs and pseudo-Rajputs from Purab - a term that describes the Oudh, Bihar and Benares region - had travelled far and wide to find employers. ⁵

Most of these new recruits from outside Bengal were high-caste Hindu peasants: Rajputs, the traditional warrior caste of northern India; or Bhumimars, the military wing of the priestly caste of Brahmins; or Brahmins themselves (though, for official purposes, the two latter groups were lumped together as 'Brahmins'). This reliance on high-caste recruits was partly because they were the most physically imposing, partly because the Company assumed that these "traditional high-caste warriors" would prove to be the most loyal, and partly because Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General (1774-85), was keen to preserve Indian caste roles in the military institutions the Company was

³ From the Persian *sipahi* (soldier)

⁴ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 35-7.

⁵ Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 177-8 and 87.

gradually imposing upon north India. The "high-caste overtones of the army" suited the political interests of the Company, wrote Alavi, because "it provided the requisite legitimacy to Company rule".⁶

The Purab in general - but particularly Oudh - would supply the majority of recruits for the Bengal Native Infantry right up until the mutiny. Of the 279 N.C.O.s and sepoy of the 22nd N.I. who deserted in 1824 while on the march from Lucknow, 263 (or 94%) came from Oudh.⁷ Major-General Sir Jasper Nicholls told the select committee of 1831 that "the whole sepoy army of Bengal is drawn from the Company's province of Bihar and Oudh, with very few exceptions..."⁸ Ten years later, William Sleeman noted: "Three-fourths of the recruits of our Bengal Native Infantry are drawn from the Rajput peasantry of the kingdom of Oudh."⁹ Finally, General Sir Patrick Grant, a former Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army, informed the Peel Commission that recruits for the Bengal Native Infantry were drawn "chiefly from Oude, a few from the the Punjaub, and the rest from Bhajepoor [in Bihar] and the Doab"¹⁰

High-caste Hindus were still dominating the Bengal Native Infantry by 1857, though their overall majority was under threat. Clive had recommended in 1765 that native battalions should contain an equal number of Muslims and Hindus to balance each other, but this policy was never carried out because there were not enough suitable Muslims in the areas that had been targeted for recruitment. High-caste Hindus were, in any case, preferred by successive governors-general because they were seen as more pliable than Muslims. In 1789, therefore, Cornwallis was able to inform the Court of Directors that four-fifths of the Bengal Army - by now 36 native infantry battalions strong - was composed of Hindus.¹¹

The initial method of recruitment was for the commanding officer of a battalion to enlist from the area in which his regiment was stationed. Occasionally recruiting parties were sent out to neighbouring areas when sufficient recruits were not available. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century the preferred method was to encourage sepoy on furlough to bring recruits from their own villages. This

⁶ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 45.

⁷ Bengal Military Consultations, OIOC, P/31/10, No. 33 of 6 Jan 1825.

⁸ Quoted in Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 119

⁹ Major-General Sir William Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1844, this edition 1915), p. 624

¹⁰ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 481

¹¹ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p121; Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, 179-80

was because the serving sepoy "acted as the guarantor of the respectable antecedents and future loyalty" of the new recruit.¹² Thus was the high-caste monopoly perpetuated.

One such recruit was Sitaram Pandey, a high-caste Brahmin from the Rai Bareilly district of southern Oudh. The son of a small landholder, he was persuaded to join up in 1812 by his maternal uncle who was a jemadar (junior native officer) on leave from his battalion of Bengal Native Infantry. Sitaram's father gave his permission not out of financial necessity, but because he had a lawsuit pending over the disputed ownership of a grove of mango trees "and he thought that having a son in the Company *Bahadur's* service would be the means of getting his case attended to in the law courts of Lucknow". For though Oudh was still an independent state, "it was well known that a petition sent by a soldier through his commanding officer", who forwarded it to the British Resident in Lucknow, "generally had prompt attention paid to it, and carried more weight than even the bribes and party interest of a mere subject of the King of Oudh".¹³ The removal of this privilege by the annexation of Oudh in 1856 was to add yet another grievance to the sepoys' growing list.

The virtual monopoly that high-caste Hindus enjoyed over the Bengal Native Infantry is illustrated by the ethnic breakdown of officers and men in a battalion raised at Benares in 1814-15 (see Table 1).¹⁴

Table 1 - *Ethnic composition of a new battalion of Bengal Native Infantry in 1815*

BRAHMINS	RAJPUTS	HINDUS OF INFERIOR CASTES	MUSLIMS	TOTAL
392 (43.9%)	304 (34.1%)	108 (12.1%)	92 (10.3%)	892

High-caste Hindus (Brahmins and Rajputs) made up almost four-fifths of the battalion, while Hindus of all castes were 90 per cent of the whole. Though this sample is only one of many - the Bengal Native Infantry had expanded, because of war, to 27 two-battalion regiments by 1808 - it is generally representative of the whole. In 1824, for example - by which time a reorganization of the army had

¹² Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 48.
¹³ James Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army, written and related by himself* (1873, this edition 1970), p. 5. Sitaram completed his memoir shortly after his retirement in 1861. It was translated and first published by his former commanding officer, Lt.-Col. J.T. Norgate, in 1873. Doubt has been cast on its authenticity by several authorities, most recently J.A.B. Palmer. But Sir Patrick Cadell, the distinguished historian of the Bombay Army who devoted many years to a study of the memoir, came to the conclusion that it was genuine. I, too, am convinced that only a genuine Bengal sepoy could have supplied the rich and (mostly) accurate detail that the memoir contains.
¹⁴ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 122.

produced 68 single battalion regiments - a descriptive roll for 279 N.C.O.s and sepoys who had deserted from the 22nd N.I. showed that more than 84 per cent of them were high-caste.¹⁵

Some of the reasons for this official bias are given in a journal entry for May 1818 by the then Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of Bengal, Lord Hastings (1813-1823). "In our native regiments," he wrote, "none but men of high caste are suffered to enlist; so that individuals being ordinarily connected with respectable families, have the best chance to be impressed with any just sentiments or principles of rectitude that may be afloat in the country. A dignity, too, is attached by general opinion in India to the character of a soldier; whence the sepoy may be expected to habituate his mind to a generous tone of thought."¹⁶

Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General from 1828 to 1835 (and Commander-in-Chief of Bengal from 1833 to 1835), also believed in the superior 'character' and physique of the recruits from northern India; but he did not confine that admiration to high-caste Hindus alone. In his minute on military policy of March 1835, he wrote that "the Hindustani is larger and more robust than the native south of the [River] Narbada and the presumption must be that he is considered a more powerful if not a better soldier".¹⁷ He then pointed out that even those Bombay sepoys who had been recruited from Hindustan (about half the total) were smaller and lighter than those in Bengal, while the incidence of corporal punishment in the Bombay Presidency was much higher. From this he was able to form the opinion "that the Hindustanis engaged at Bombay" were "inferior in stature and character to those of the Bengal Army". Bentinck's solution was to abolish the Bombay Army, transferring its Hindustani half to the Bengal Army and to allow "the Bombay half to remain as a separate corps to be recruited always within the territories" and to be commanded by a major-general "as any other division of the army".¹⁸ Fortunately, the Court of Directors did not agree. If they had, the mutiny of 1857 might have been more widespread still.

¹⁵ 'Proceedings of a Special Committee of Inquiry, Berhampore, 13 Dec 1824', Bengal Military Consultations, OIOC, No. 33 of 6th Jan 1825, P/31/10. The ethnic breakdown was as follows: Brahmins 122 (43.7%); Rajputs (Chuttees) 113 (40.5%); Muslims 12 (4.3%); Other castes 32 (11.5%).

¹⁶ Marchioness of Bute (ed.), *The Private Journals of the Marquess of Hastings: Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in India* (1858), vol. 2, pp. 324-5.

¹⁷ C.H. Philips (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck: Governor-General of India 1828-1835* (Oxford, 1977), II, Letter 810, pp. 1445-6. Bentinck gave the average height and weight of sepoys from the three presidency armies as follows: Bengal - height 5' 7.82", weight 9st 0.8oz; Bombay - height 5' 4.75"-5'-6.5", weight 8st 5.25oz -9st 0.5oz; Madras - height 5' 5.36"-5' 6.59", weight 7st 9.73oz-8st 5.18oz. The statistics for the Bombay and Madras Armies are variable because some of their sepoys were recruited from outside their presidencies; the higher figures are those recruited from Hindustan. Almost all Bengal sepoys were recruited from Hindustan.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1445-6.

In Bentinck's opinion, all Indian sepoys suffered from a "want of physical strength, and of a moral energy" which would prevent them from defeating a European invader such as Russia. Recent wars with "enemies of a more masculine character" like the Nepalese and Burmese had proved this to be the case. Yet Bentinck believed "that if the bolder and larger men of the north were mixed with a due proportion of European troops, and excited to acts of valour by sufficient encouragement", there was no reason why they "should not acquire the same superior bearing as the Portugese and Neapolitans, under British and French direction". As for the sepoys from the "territories proper of Madras and Bombay" he could "entertain no such hope". Short of disbanding them entirely - which was clearly out of the question - the only solution he could suggest was to increase the proportion of European troops to native troops in India from less than 1:6 to 1:4.¹⁹ But while considerably more European troops were stationed in India over the next 20 years, their native counterparts also increased in number, so that the proportion of European to native troops only improved to 1:5.1 (45,522 to 232,224). In Bengal, however, the ratio in 1857 was about 1:5.6 (24,366 to 135,767).²⁰ If all native troops commanded by European officers are taken into account - including regulars, irregulars, local corps, contingents and military police - then the ratio falls back to 1:6 for India generally (45,522 to 275,304) and 1:7.3 (24,366 to 176,834) for Bengal.²¹

If Bentinck had a marked preference for sepoys from Hindustan, he and his government did not agree with the semi-official policy of confining recruitment to the highest Hindu castes. They were, in particular, convinced that the army contained too many Brahmins who tended to put caste issues before duty. As early as 1830, the Bengal government had commented that "an unusually large number of Brahmins has of late entered the service [and that] it would be desirable, to follow the proportion which formerly prevailed by giving a decided preference to the Rajputs and to the Mahomedans".²² But the Brahmins simply got round this restriction by enlisting - in the 59th N.I., for example - as Rajputs.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1450-2. Bentinck gives the relative strength of the Indian Army in 1835 as follows: European 18,016; Native 112,684.

²⁰ 'Return showing the Numbers of the troops, regular and irregular, which were serving in the three Presidencies immediately before the Mutiny', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 17, p. 379. The number of European troops in Madras and Bombay are given as 10,730 and 10,430 respectively. An alternative troop breakdown is given in 'A Return of the actual Military Force that was in India at the time of the Outbreak of the Mutiny at Meerut', NAM, 8211-13-14. This source gives the total number of troops in India as follows: Bengal, 118,663 natives and 23,138 Europeans; Madras, 49,737 natives and 10,194 Europeans; Bombay, 30,940 natives and 9,589 Europeans. It appears to exclude local troops, contingents, military police and some irregular corps.

²¹ 'Tabular Statement of the Army of India in January 1856', Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 370-1; 'Statement showing the Number and Distribution of all Troops, Native and European, serving in the Bengal Presidency in January 1857', P.P., H. C., 1859, VIII, p.13

Bentinck's solution was to issue, in late 1834, a General Order which stated that "all objections to men belonging to the respectable classes of the native community, or preferences among such classes on account of caste or religion, shall cease to operate in respect to their admission into the ranks of the Bengal Army".²³ It removed, at a stroke, the recent prejudice against Brahmins and the more entrenched bias against 'respectable' Muslims and Hindus who were not high-caste Brahmins and Rajputs. Among these 'respectable' Hindu castes were Ahirs (the cowherd caste of Bihar and Upper India), Bhats (a caste of genealogist and family bards), Kaits (the writer caste of Bengal proper and Bihar) and Kumbis (a very large cultivating caste of upper India, Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa).²⁴ The overall result, Bentinck hoped, would be an erosion of the high-caste (particularly Brahmin) monopoly.

But this cleverly disguised assault on the Brahmin-dominated brotherhood of high-caste sepoys was a far cry from throwing the ranks open to natives of all castes. For while this policy of non-prejudice towards any particular element of the "respectable classes" was re-emphasized by the Bengal Army regulations of 1855 (the first revised edition for 16 years), they also stipulated that "special care" had to be taken "to reject all men of inferior caste" and "any others habitually employed in menial occupations". Moreover the regulations stressed that "it was not considered desirable to have too large a proportion of Brahmins in any regiment", but added that appearances of "strength, activity, boldness, and smartness, should be the principal guide in the selection of recruits". Furthermore, they affirmed the established practice of new recruits being brought to the regiments by soldiers returning from leave as the primary method of recruitment, a policy hardly calculated to cut the ties of kinship and caste that existed in the Bengal Army.²⁵

Nevertheless the high-caste monopoly was gradually eroded. In 1842, according to figures presented by Lieutenant-General Briggs, the proportion of Rajputs and Brahmins in the Bengal Native Infantry was 34.9% and 31.0% respectively (see Table 2).²⁶

Table 2 - *Ethnic composition of the Bengal Native Infantry in 1842*

Rajputs	Brahmins	Hindus of inferior caste	Muslims	Christians	Total
27,993 (34.9%)	24,840 (31.0%)	13,920 (17.3%)	12,411 (15.4%)	1,076 (1.3%)	80,240

²² Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p.123.
²³ G.O.G.G., 31 Dec 1834, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.
²⁴ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 122.
²⁵ Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, pp. 215-16.
²⁶ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 123.

It is not ideal to compare these figures with those for the single newly-enlisted battalion of 1814-15.

But if we do, then it becomes clear that more Muslims and Hindus of inferior caste have been recruited at the expense of high-caste sepoys (the latter's combined total having slipped from 80 per cent to just under 66 per cent), and that the Rajputs have replaced the Brahmins as the dominant caste.

But this marginal change did not satisfy Henry Lawrence, a talented artillery officer who had been seconded to the Political Department. In 1844, while serving as Resident in Nepal, he wrote the first of a number of anonymous articles for the *Calcutta Review* that advocated sweeping military reform. Entitled 'Military Defence and our Indian Empire', it declared his belief that the British deceived themselves if they thought that their government was "maintained otherwise than by the sword". It was necessary, therefore, to keep that sword from rusting. Not least because, in his opinion, the greatest threat to British rule "is from our own troops" and the recruitment policy of the Bengal Army was partly to blame. He wrote:

Our Sepoys come too much from the same parts of the country; Oude, the lower Dooab and upper Behar. There is too much of clanship among them, and the evil should be remedied by enlisting in the Saharunpoor and Delhi districts, in the hill regions, and in the Malay and Burmah States... We would go farther, and would encourage the now despised Eurasians to enter our ranks, either into sepoy corps where one or two here and there would be useful, or as detached companies or corps...²⁷

At first Lawrence's warnings fell on deaf ears as most Bengal Army officers were still of the opinion that high-caste peasants made the best soldiers. But the two Sikh wars of the 1840s were to cause a shift in recruitment policy nonetheless. After the successful conclusion of the first war (1845-6), two local regiments of Sikh infantry - the Ferozepore and Ludhiana - were raised to protect the new frontier with Punjab with the same pay, allowances and pensions as regiments of the line.²⁸ A further four regiments of Sikh frontier infantry (later known as the 1st-4th Sikh Infantry) were enlisted in 1846 and 1847. The famous Corps of Guides - which initially consisted of two companies of infantry and one troop of cavalry - was also formed in 1846 to assist the Sikh rulers of the Punjab in policing the turbulent North-

²⁷ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, pp. 5, 29-30.

²⁸ G.O.C.C., 30 July 1846, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

West Frontier with Afghanistan.²⁹ "The object of the corps," wrote its first commandant, "was to have trustworthy men who could at a moment's notice act as guides to troops in the field, and collect intelligence beyond as well as within the border."³⁰ It was initially recruited from Hindustani soldiers serving in the Sikh army, Pathans who had served with the British in Afghanistan, and some Mazbi - or low-caste - Sikhs.

Following the second war (1848-9) and the annexation of the Punjab, five regiments of irregular infantry and five of cavalry were enlisted in the province to pacify and protect the North-West Frontier.³¹ This had the effect of absorbing some of the 100,000 soldiers who lost employment when the Sikh army was disbanded. The irregular infantry regiments, for example, were composed of roughly equal proportions of Pathans, Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus (many of whom were high-caste).³² The Guides were also increased to three troops of cavalry and six of infantry, and the whole force became known as the Punjab Frontier (later Irregular) Force. While none of these augmentations directly threatened the high-caste power base in the regular infantry regiments, they did provide the Company with an alternative instrument of authority and an alternative source of recruits.

The necessity for such an option was made all the more urgent in 1849 when a number of Bengal Native Infantry regiments reacted angrily to the news that foreign service batta would no longer apply in the Punjab because it had become a British territory.³³ Sir Charles Napier, the Commander-in-Chief, would ultimately receive information that as many as 24 native infantry regiments (a third of the total) were tainted with a "mutinous spirit".³⁴ The first sign of discontent came at Rawalpindi in July 1849 when the 13th and 22nd regiments refused to receive their reduced pay. Though both regiments were eventually persuaded to back down, Napier was uneasy because his intelligence indicated that other disaffected regiments were in communication with their Rawalpindi comrades.³⁵ He decided to act on hearing that high-caste sepoys were to blame. "When it was made known that Brahmins were at the

²⁹ Captain Lionel J. Trotter, *The Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse* (London, 1901), pp. 43-4.

³⁰ Lt H.B. Lumsden to Lt. J. Younghusband, P.S. Lumsden and G.R. Elsmie, *Lumsden of the Guides* (London, 1899), p. 37. Quoted in Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph. D, p. 122.

³¹ G.O.G.G. 18 May 1849 and 15 February 1851, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.

³² Evidence of Lt.-Col. Alfred Wilde, 26 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 91.

³³ G.O.G.G. 25 Oct 1849, *ibid.* The exception to this rule were the troops stationed across the Indus because "being on the extreme frontier of a newly conquered country" they were "required to be in constant readiness to move at a moment's notice". As a result, they were allowed to continue to receive the same foreign batta given to those in Sind, i.e. two more rupees for sepoys in cantonment, and three and a half for those in the field.

³⁴ Sir Charles Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military, of the Indian Government* (London, 1853), p. 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

head of the insubordinate men of the 13th and 22nd," he wrote later, "and that in the first regiment alone there were no less than four hundred and thirty, the necessity of teaching that race they should no longer dictate to the Sepoys and the Government struck me, and my thoughts at once turned for means to the Goorkas."³⁶

The troops in question were the same hillmen that Henry Lawrence had recommended for the native infantry in 1844. At that stage there were three irregular Gurkha battalions - the Nasiri, Sirmur and Kumaon - which had been raised in the wake of the 1st Nepal War of 1814-15. They were recruited from both the independent kingdom of Nepal and the neighbouring hill country that was ruled by the British, and though the vast majority were officially described as 'Rajputs', they included Gurkhas, Doteallies, Ghurwallies and Kumaonees, and bore little relation to the Rajputs from the plains of India.³⁷ According to Napier, they were the "bravest of Native troops" and "at the battles on the Sutledge [Sutlej in the 1st Sikh War] displayed such conspicuous gallantry as to place them for courage on a level with our Europeans".³⁸

An even greater attraction for Napier, however, was the fact that they did not take their own caste rules too seriously. "It is said they do not like cow-beef," wrote Napier, "yet a cow would not be long alive with a hungry Goorka battalion; they mess together, these Goorkas, and make few inquiries as to the sex of a beefsteak!"³⁹ The "higher Hindoo castes", by contrast, were all "imbued with gross superstitions" and allowed "their religious principles to interfere in many strange ways with their military duties".⁴⁰ The worst offenders, in Napier's opinion, were the Brahmins: "Having two commanders to obey, caste and captain, if they are at variance the last is disobeyed, or obeyed at the cost of conscience and of misery."⁴¹

For Napier, the Gurkhas were the ideal soldiers to combat the influence of the Brahmins, not least because they were "said to have a dislike to the [Bengal] Sepoys amounting to contempt".⁴² Having recently heard from one of their commanders that a combination of high prices at Simla and their low pay as a local battalion (just five and a half rupees a month) meant that they were all but starving,

³⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁷ Caste Returns of the Sirmoor, Kemaon and New Nusseeree Battalions, May 1851, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/43/38, No. 45 of 14 May 1852.

³⁸ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 28.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 28-9. Napier added: "One goes to the devil if he eats this; another if he eats that; a third will not touch his dinner if the shadow of an infidel falls over it; a fourth will not drink water unless it has been drawn by one of his own caste."

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 29.

Napier decided to "adopt the Goorka regiments into the line, abolish their limitation of service to the hills, and give them pay and allowance as Sepoys".⁴³ This move was formally sanctioned by the issue of a General Order by the Governor-General in March 1850⁴⁴. Napier's long-term plan was to enlist up to 40,000 Gurkhas. Backed by them and 30,000 European troops, the British possession of India would no longer "'depend on opinion', but on an Army, able with ease to overthrow any combination among Hindoos or Mahomedans, or both together!"⁴⁵ He concluded: "We may thus set the Brahmin at defiance, if he behaves ill."⁴⁶

Unfortunately for the British, Napier fell out with the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie - over his unilateral decision to mollify the sepoys by cancelling an earlier government order to reduce the compensation paid to them when their fixed rations exceeded a certain price - and resigned before he could undertake such a radical reform. He nevertheless made some headway with his plan to dilute the high-caste Bengal sepoy. By far the most serious act of disaffection over the abolished batta issue took place in February 1850 when the 66th N.I. made an abortive attempt to sieze the fortress at Govindghur in the Punjab. Napier's immediate response was to disband the regiment and replace it with the Nasiri Battalion, henceforth known as the 66th (Gurkha) N.I. "I resolved to show these *Brahmins* that they cannot control our enlistment," he informed the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, on 27 February 1850. "I mean to repeat the operation if another regiment mutinies, unless your Lordship disapproves."⁴⁷ However there were no more mutinies because, wrote Napier, the "Brahmins saw that the Goorkas, another race, could be brought into the ranks of the Company's Army - a race dreaded as more warlike than their own"⁴⁸

But there was one more significant change in the Bengal Army's recruitment policy before Napier was replaced by Sir William Gomm as Commander-in-Chief in December 1850. A circular letter was sent by the Government of India to all commanding officers on 11 November 1850, containing an extract of a letter from the Court of Directors which stated that inhabitants of Punjab "should, under the general regulations of the service, with respect to age, height, and fitness, and with due advertence to the number of Hindoos, Mussulmans, and Seikhs in each Regiment, be considered eligible as Recruits

⁴² Ibid., pp. 29-30 and 28.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁴ G.O.G.G. 22 March 1850, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.

⁴⁵ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 134.

for our Regular Native Army ".⁴⁹ This reform was highly significant because it made Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims eligible for service in regular infantry regiments. Though their number in any one regiment, as stated by the Bengal Army Regulations of 1855, was "never to exceed 200, nor are more than 100 of them to be Seikhs", the threat this posed to the high-caste monopoly was obvious.⁵⁰

The effects, however, took time to make themselves felt. The caste breakdown for the Bengal Native Infantry in 1851 - as given in evidence to a Parliamentary select committee by Philip Melvill, Secretary to the Government of India in the Military Department, the following year - is remarkably similar to that provided by General Briggs in 1842 (see Table 3).⁵¹ The only meaningful changes are the increases in the proportion of inferior caste Hindus from 17.3% to 18.8%, and Brahmins from 31% to 32.1%. But as the percentage of Rajputs had shrunk from 34.9% to 32.6%, the overall proportion of high-caste sepoys had fallen marginally from just under 66% to 64.7%, a decrease of just over one per cent.

Table 3 - *Ethnic composition of the Bengal Native Infantry in 1851*

Rajputs	Brahmins	Hindus of inferior caste	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Total
27,335 (32.6%)	26,983 (32.1%)	15,761 (18.8%)	12,699 (15.1%)	1,118 (1.3%)	50 (0.1%)	83,946

Part of the reason for the small increase in the proportion of Brahmin sepoys was because commanding officers often ignored official guidelines. For as Lieutenant-Colonel Wyllie informed the post-mutiny Peel Commission, "the feeling was that [in Brahmins] they have a more respectable man, in the same way as in our country you would rather have a farmer's son than a man taken from the streets".⁵² In 1856, Sir Henry Lawrence - now Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana - argued against this practice in another essay demanding military reform in the *Calcutta Review*. He blamed the "Hindoo prejudices of commanding officers" for the fact that "scarcely three thousand" Sikhs had been recruited to the Bengal Native Infantry since the regulations were altered in November 1850.⁵³ The actual number was probably half as much, Lawrence believed, because "some Sikhs have abjured Sikhism, others have been driven out of it, and not a shadow of encouragement has been given to

⁴⁹ Circular No. 2346, 11 Nov 1850, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.
⁵⁰ Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, p. 215.
⁵¹ P.P., H. of L., 1852-3, XXXI, p. 10.
⁵² Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 124.
⁵³ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 423.

counteract the quiet, but persistent opposition of the Oude and Behar men". Such internal opposition "to the introduction of new classes into the army" had even prevented Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant, then a captain, from recruiting "hardy Aheers" and "Ranghurs" into the ranks of the newly-raised Hurriana Light Infantry in the late 1830s. According to Lawrence, who heard it from Grant himself, "the Rajpoots and Brahmins bullied the new levies out of the corps". Lawrence's solution had not altered much since 1844. It was both to extend the field of recruitment for the regular army and to have regiments of separate classes. He wrote:

Oude should no longer supply the mass of our infantry and regular cavalry; indeed, twenty years hence, it will be unable to do so. The Punjab, Nepaul, and the Delhi territory should be more largely indented on; as should the whole North-West Provinces, and the military classes of Bombay and Madras.... The plan to be followed, to get and to keep the best soldiers throughout India, and to *quietly* oppose class against class, and tribe against tribe, is to have separate regiments of each creed or class, filling up half, three-fourths, or even more of the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks from their own numbers... We have not a doubt that, thus organized, the low-caste man, who, under present influences, is the mere creature of the Brahmin, would as readily meet him with the bayonet, as he would a Mahomedan.⁵⁴

As before, Lawrence's recommendations received no official sanction. Yet the high-caste sepoys' defence of their dominant position could not succeed indefinitely. It was to receive a further blow in the summer of 1856 when the new Governor-General, Lord Canning, ordered that all enlistment to the Indian Army would henceforth be for general service.⁵⁵ Hitherto it had been the practice in Bengal to ask for volunteers when troops were needed for service beyond sea. This was in deference to its Brahmin and Rajput sepoys who, theoretically, would lose their caste if they travelled over the 'black water'. As a result, only the Bengal Artillery and six of the 74 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry had been recruited for general service.⁵⁶ Now all new recruits would be taken on that basis. Leaving specific caste issues aside (they will be dealt with in a later chapter), one of the main reasons why Brahmin and Rajput sepoys objected to this measure was because they thought it would discourage their brethren from enlisting and so undermine their monopoly. Sir John Kaye wrote: "There was an end, indeed, of the exclusive privileges which the Bengal Sipahi had so long enjoyed. The service

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 421-2, 424-5.

⁵⁵ G.O.G.G., 25 July 1856, quoted in P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 14, p. 376.

never could be hereafter what it had been of old; and all the old pride, therefore, with which the veteran had thought of his boys succeeding him was now suddenly extinguished."⁵⁷

Lord Canning was of the opinion that the new regulation was not in any way responsible for the disaffection shown by certain regiments of the Bengal Native Infantry in early 1857. "Not a murmur has been heard against it anywhere," he informed the President of the Board of Control, "and the two regiments who have shown the worst spirit, the 2nd and 34th [N.I.], have enrolled as many recruits monthly under the new system as the old & without any signs of difference between the old sepoys & their new comrades".⁵⁸ But Sir Henry Lawrence, recently appointed Chief Commissioner of Oudh, provided evidence to the contrary. "The General Service Enlistment Oath is most distasteful," he informed Canning on 1 May 1857, "keeps many out of the service, and frightens the old Sipahis, who imagine that the oaths of the young recruits affect the whole regiment." He had been told as much the previous week by "one of the best captains of the 13th N.I.". In addition, Mr E.A. Reade of the Sudder Board had "had the General Service Order given to him as a reason last year, when on his tour, by Rajputs for not entering the service".⁵⁹

If the General Service regulation is seen in the context of the previous 20 years, when successive government measures had sought to broaden the recruitment base of the Bengal Army, then it is possible to understand why, in Kaye's words, it caused the "the old race of Sipahis" to leap to the conclusion "that the English had done with the old Bengal Army, and were about to substitute for it another that would go anywhere and do anything, like coolies and pariahs".⁶⁰ Canning may have insisted that the new legislation had not affected the recruitment pattern of the 34th N.I., seven companies of which were disbanded for mutinous conduct in early May 1857, but the writing was clearly on the wall (see Table 4).⁶¹

Table 4 - *Ethnic composition of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry on 21 April 1857*

Brahmins	Rajputs	Hindus of inferior caste	Muslims	Sikhs	Christians	Total
335 (30.8%)	237 (21.8%)	231 (21.2%)	237 (21.8%)	74 (6.8%)	12 (1.1%)	1,089

⁵⁶ These were the 27th, 47th and 65th N.I., which were then at Pegu, and the 40th, 67th and 68th N.I. which had all served there as recently as 1854.

⁵⁷ Malleson (ed.), *Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, I, p. 344.

⁵⁸ Canning to Vernon Smith, 23 March 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/4.

⁵⁹ G. Anderson and M. Subedar (eds.), *The Last Days of the Company: A Source Book of Indian History 1818-1858* (London, 1918), I, pp. 109-10

⁶⁰ Malleson (ed.), *Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, p. 345.

⁶¹ George W. Forrest (ed.), *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India 1857-58* (Calcutta, 1893), I, p. 177.

If we relate the figures in Table 4 to those for the whole Bengal Native Infantry in 1851, then it is clear that the high-caste majority had suffered a significant erosion. For compared to an average of just under 65% then, the high-caste proportion has fallen to less than 53%, with Rajputs the biggest losers. The main beneficiaries, on the other hand, are the Sikhs (up almost 7% on the 1851 average), the Muslims (up more than 3%) and low caste Hindus (up 2.5%). No figures relating to the whole of the Bengal Native Infantry are available for 1857, and the extent to which the 34th N.I. was typical is difficult to assess - not least because it was a relatively new regiment, having replaced the original 34th on its disbandment for mutiny in 1844. But even in its former guise - as the Infantry of the Bundelkhand Legion - it had been recruited from much the same areas and castes as the regular infantry.

There are, in any case, alternative statistics for ethnic composition which confirm that the number of high-caste sepoys had fallen significantly since 1851. The first, dated September 1858, is an official caste breakdown for the seven regiments of Bengal Native Infantry which had remained loyal or partially loyal: the 21st, 31st, 47th, 65th, 66th (Gurkhas), 70th and 73rd (see Table 5).⁶² Their high-caste proportion was 58% (33.7% Rajputs and 26.2% Brahmins).

Table 5 - *Ethnic composition of the seven loyal regiments of Bengal Native Infantry in September 1858*

Rajputs	Hindus of inferior caste	Brahmins	Muslims	Sikhs and Punjabis	Total
2,676 (33.7%)	2,080 (26.2%)	1,930 (24.3%)	1,195 (15%)	54 (0.7%)	7,935

The first point that needs to be made is that the Rajput figure would be much lower if it did not include the hill 'Rajputs' who formed the majority of the 66th (Gurkhas) and who, as already mentioned, had little in common with their plain-dwelling namesakes. If we take the 66th regiment out of the equation - using the 1851 caste composition of 88% or so 'Rajputs' in the Sirmur and Kemaon Battalions as a template⁶³ - then the total number of Rajputs in the six remaining regiments would be 1,708 out of 6,835, or 25.0%. This, in turn, would give those six regiments a high-caste proportion of 53.2%, a figure remarkably similar to the 53% in the 34th N.I. in 1857.

⁶² P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.

The second set of statistics concerns the ethnic composition of the whole Bengal Army in April 1858 (see Table 6).⁶⁴ Of the 23,187 regular native soldiers who had not mutinied, deserted or been disbanded by this date, 21,928 were infantrymen and the rest from the light cavalry. Though the figures are slightly distorted by the presence of a few cavalrymen, the overall proportion of high-caste soldiers (56.8%) is still roughly in line with the other statistics for the native infantry of 1857-8. A comparison with the ethnic breakdown of the mutinously-disposed 34th Regiment, however, raises a tantalizing question: does the relatively small number of Sikhs (0.6%) in the loyal and disarmed regiments indicate that those regiments which had been least affected by the changes in recruitment policy were the least likely to mutiny? For the mutinously-disposed 34th N.I. had a far higher proportion of Sikhs (7%) and a slightly larger share of low caste sepoys (21.2% compared to 18.8%).

Table 6 - *Ethnic composition of the regular Bengal native army on 1 April 1858*

Rajputs	Brahmins	Hindus of inferior caste	Muslims	Gurkhas	Christians	Sikhs & Punjabis	Total
6,635 (28.6%)	6,549 (28.2%)	4,361 (18.8%)	4,214 (18.2%)	590 (2.5%)	511 (2.2%)	327 (1.4%)	23,187

Stokes has suggested, on the other hand, that "unity of action could be seriously affected by any dilution of the high-caste element" and that this might have been the reason "why Mangal Pande was not supported by his comrades when he sought to raise the 34th Regiment at Barrackpore on 29 March 1857".⁶⁵ Only a close study of the ethnic composition of all the mutinous and non-mutinous regiments in the Bengal Native Infantry would be able to prove this point one way or the other. Sadly the statistics are not available. Those that are show that the proportion of high-caste sepoys in the Bengal Native Infantry had fallen a long way from its high point in the 1810s (when one newly-raised battalion contained 78% Rajputs and Brahmins).

Barat summed up the "image of a representative Bengal sepoy recruit" in the first half of the nineteenth century as follows: "He was a Hindu of high caste, a resident of Bihar and Oudh regions and had Hindustani as his mother tongue. He was a person of good physique and in sharp contrast to his English fellow soldiers [in the service of the Company], hailed from the peasantry and a station which

⁶³ Ibid. In 1851, the Sirmoor Battalion contained 654 Rajputs out of a total of 749 native officers and men (or 87.3%) and the Kemaon Battalion contained 720 Rajputs out of a total of 810 (or 88.9%).
⁶⁴ Evidence of Lt.-Col. Durand, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 71. Quoted in Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 7.
⁶⁵ Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, p. 52.

possessed a social heritage. In fact, as like as not, he was of the landed gentry and did not seek escape in the ranks; rather by enlistment he gained status in his society to which he continued to retain his allegiance. He therefore remained a civilian at heart though becoming a soldier by profession."⁶⁶ Yet by the outbreak of mutiny, just five years after Barat's study ends, these "representative" high-caste sepoys were barely in a majority. In 1858, summing up the replies given by a number of senior serving officers to the Peel Commission, Lieutenant-Colonel Durand noted that the Bengal Native Infantry "was composed of Mahommedans, Brahmins of all denominations, Chuttryas [Rajputs], Gwallahs, Kaits, Aheers, Jats, and that some few low caste men, such as Mallees, Kuchees, Gurrereeahs, i.e. Shepherds, had crept into corps".⁶⁷ They came from "Oude, from North and South Behar, especially the latter", from "the Doab of the Ganges and Jumna, from Rohilcund, a few from Bundlecund, and since the conquest and annexation of the Punjab, a proportion from that province".⁶⁸

Some historians have suggested that mutiny was a means of reversing this trend. In summing up the apprehensions of the 19th and 34th N.I. at Lucknow during the annexation of Oudh in early 1856, Pandit Kanhyalal, a nineteenth century historian of Oudh, wrote: "They were discontented because they thought that their rights had been taken away from them, and were angry over the introduction of Punjabi and Sikh soldiers in the army. They saw the latter as the new recipients of the Company's favours which were now being denied to them."⁶⁹

This was also the conclusion reached by Eric Stokes, who wrote: "The 'closed shop' of the *Purbias* (easterners) of the middle Ganges was under obvious threat, and with it all those privileges of 'home service' and a certain independent negotiating power charactersitic of mercenary armies. Hence solid material fears underlay the apprehension over any infringement of caste rules by British authority."⁷⁰ Stokes also believed, unlike Barat, that the main reason the high-caste sepoys "from southern Oudh, the eastern part of the North-Western Provinces, and western Bihar" were so determined to "retain their monopolistic grip on the Bengal regiments" was because "military service was often the only honourable escape for men from families whose 'ownership' of the land had failed to keep pace with

⁶⁶ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 125-6.

⁶⁷ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 71, p. 536.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 537.

⁶⁹ Pandit Kanhyalal, *Tarikh-i-baghawat-i-hind, 1857* (Kanpur, 6th edition, 1916). Quoted in Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 295-6.

⁷⁰ Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, p. 52.

growing numbers, and who were steadily being forced down into the position of the humbler tillers of the soil".⁷¹

Once in the army, however, these peasant soldiers were relatively insulated from civilian life. They sent and received letters and went on leave once a year. For the rest of the time they lived and behaved, in Tapti Roy's words, as a "corporate body". She added: "The sense of belonging to a corporate identity, a single body of men, was inculcated in the Company's soldiers in their everyday life in the army. They lived in cantonments, mostly situated at some distance from the towns and usually alongside the civil lines where the British officers lived... The day for a soldier began with the music of reveille and closed with the beating of the retreat while the last post was played late at night."⁷²

One contemporary who believed that the mutiny came about because the Bengal sepoys were more influenced by their intra-regimental brotherhood than by their family ties was Lord Elphinstone, the perspicacious Governor of Bombay (1853-60). In a minute on the future composition of the Indian Army in September 1857, he stated his opinion that "the influence of the family and the village was wholly wanting" in the regiment of a high-caste Bengal sepoy.⁷³ Instead his family links "had a directly opposite tendency, for the Bengal sepoy had his relations and his correspondents in half the regiments in the army", and "any attack real or fancied upon the susceptibilities of one regiment was thus felt by the whole, and when one mutinied, the rest followed, as if impelled by some unseen, but irresistible impulse, as if an electric shock had been felt by them all".⁷⁴ Elphinstone believed that the Bengal Native Infantry's over-reliance on high-caste men from the same province "was the radical error to which the greatest disasters which we have experienced were chiefly to be attributed".⁷⁵ Yet caste itself was not to blame, rather "a system of enlistment which fosters those feelings of common interest and mutual reliance upon each other, and that consciousness of power, without which no mutiny of an army *en masse* could ever be brought about".⁷⁶

By 1857, the high-caste Hindu majority in the Bengal Native Infantry was clearly under threat. However the extent to which this trend contributed to the mutiny is difficult to assess. Stokes believed that it was a major factor, and that it underlay perceived infringements of caste such as the cartridge question. That may have been true for many high-caste sepoys. But it does not explain why so many

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 51.

⁷² Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, pp. 49-50.

⁷³ Lord Elphinstone's minute of 21 Sept 1857, P.P., H. C., 1859, V, Appx. 67, p. 501.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

lower caste Hindus, Muslims and even Sikhs also mutinied. All we can say with any certainty is that the high-caste brotherhood made a general mutiny possible.

As far as the other arms of the Bengal Army were concerned, the Company's recruitment policy was much less provocative. The first two regiments of regular light cavalry were formed in 1796 by the conversion of existing regiments of irregular cavalry. The main difference between the two arms was in the number of European officers: the regulars then had 15, the irregulars just two. A third light cavalry regiment was raised in 1796 and a fourth a year later. Two more followed in 1800, and a further two in 1806. These original eight regiments were supplemented in 1824 by two Extra regiments which became the 9th and 10th Light Cavalry (L.C.). in 1826. However the original 2nd L.C. was disbanded in 1841 for misbehaviour during the 1st Afghan War and replaced by the cavalry regiment of the Bundelkhand Legion which was renamed the 11th L.C. In 1850, after distinguished service at Multan in the 2nd Sikh War, the 11th was renumbered the 2nd L.C. When mutiny broke out in 1857, the number of light cavalry regiments was still ten, each consisting of 24 European officers and about 500 native officers and men.⁷⁷

According to Alavi, the recruitment pattern of the regular cavalry after 1802 was determined by the East India Company expansion into the central and western Doab, later known as the Ceded and Conquered Provinces. "It soon realized," writes Alavi, "that a peasant army recruited on the basis of an assumed high-caste Hindu identity was less relevant here."⁷⁸ This was partly because the Company wanted to stem the migration of Muslim troopers from the area to the Maratha army, partly because incidents like the Vellore mutiny of 1806 meant that the peasant army was "gradually being viewed with greater scepticism", and partly because the "relatively small population of Brahmins and the weaker nature of Hindu social hierarchy" made the recruitment of respectable Muslims more attractive.⁷⁹ From 1802, therefore, the Company began to recruit those Muslim troopers who were affluent enough to provide securities. Many of them came from the princely state of Rampur, to where

⁷⁶ Lord Elphinstone's minute of 22 May 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 67, p. 503.

⁷⁷ W.Y. Carman, *Indian Army Uniforms Under the British: from the 18th century to 1947* (London, 1961), I, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 225.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

most of the Rohilla aristocracy had fled after their defeat by the British in 1774. Alavi concluded: "The Company never experienced any difficulty in attracting the landed class of wealthy Rampuri Rohillas who, once in Company service, used their political connections to protect their wealth in Rampur. However, a recruitment method which looked for the wealthy and the rich was bound to attract only a limited section of the Rohillas."⁸⁰ The regular cavalry was therefore forced to recruit the same high-caste Hindus who dominated the infantry.

Though there are no separate statistics for the ethnic composition of the Bengal Light Cavalry in 1857, it has generally been assumed that Muslims formed the biggest component. In his Ph.D. thesis on the post-mutiny reorganisation of the Indian Army, A.H. Shibly noted that the Bengal cavalry contained a "much larger infusion of the Muhammadan element" than the infantry "where the Hindus dominated".⁸¹ George Chesney, a contemporary civil servant, was even more specific in his highly-regarded book on British rule in India. "The cavalry," he wrote, "was principally recruited in Rohilcund and the country westward of the Gangetic Doab; it consisted chiefly of Mahomedans, and it was generally expected to prove indifferent to any passions which had their origin in Hindoo caste-prejudices."⁸²

Both these writers seem to have made the mistake of grouping the regular and irregular cavalry together. The latter force was dominated by Muslims in 1857 (as we shall see), but the former was not. Lieutenant Colonel Harington of the 5th Bengal L.C. - which was disarmed at Peshawur on 22 May 1857 - told the Peel Commission that his regiment was composed of roughly "one-fourth Mussulmans and two thirds Brahmins, of the fighting class, and the others a lower class".⁸³ When asked if it might have mutinied if it had not been disarmed, he replied: "Yes, if it had been down country, for the men were of the same caste, country, and feeling as the other corps...which murdered their officers."⁸⁴ This explains Sir Henry Lawrence's comment in 1856 that "Oude should no longer supply the mass of our infantry and regular cavalry".⁸⁵ It also helps to explain why the majority of Bengal Light Cavalry regiments were so willing to follow the lead taken by mutinous sepoys in 1857. Seven out of ten mutinied, or partially mutinied, and the remaining three were disarmed. Of this latter group, two - the

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 230.

⁸¹ Shibly, *The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies*, Ph.D Thesis, p. 315.

⁸² George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (London, 1868), p. 339.

⁸³ Evidence of Lt. Col. Harington, 24 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 48.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 421.

5th and 8th - were initially ear-marked for rearmament. But the decision was reversed by Canning in early 1858 when he discovered that their conduct since disarmament made neither of them "worthy" of being "retained in the service".⁸⁶ Unlike the trend in the native infantry, the proportion of high-caste Hindu recruits in the Bengal Light Cavalry seems to have increased in the decades prior to the mutiny. But despite being more secure as a group, they would naturally have sympathized with their high-caste kinsmen.

The Bengal Irregular Cavalry, too, was initially recruited from the Muslims of northern India who had dominated the pre-Company Mughal cavalry. But unlike the regular cavalry, it retained its overwhelming Muslim majority until the mutiny. The first Bengal irregular unit was the Mughal horse, raised by Major Calliaund in 1760. It differed from subsequent regular regiments in that all its troopers provided their own horses, arms and equipment. It also had far fewer European officers - the maximum of four being a commandant, second-in-command, adjutant and doctor - giving its native officers more responsibility. Such regiments performed the true light cavalry work of escort duty and reconnaissance.

As already stated, the two surviving units of irregular cavalry were converted to regulars in 1796. But as the Company began to make incursions into the central and western Doab at the turn of the nineteenth century, and its peasant armies proved incapable of combatting the Mughal cavalry of the Marathas, the need for irregular cavalry returned. So the government turned to Eurasian officers who had commanded irregular regiments in the armies of Indian princes to raise new regiments. The most famous was James Skinner, the son of a Bengal officer and a Rajput woman, who resigned from the army of the Maratha ruler of Gwalior when the Company declared war in 1802. The first corps of Skinner's Horse (later the 1st Bengal Irregular Cavalry) was raised in 1803 from a body of Perron's Horse in Scindia's service who had come over to the British after the Battle of Delhi. Skinner tended to recruit the same well-born Rohilla and Afghan troopers who had served the Mughals and later the Marathas. If a man brought 100 horses, he was given the rank of rissaldar; if he brought 60 then he was made a naib rissaldar, and so on. He also recruited Ranghurs, the descendants of Rajputs who had become Muslims, though he did not believe they were respectable enough to be made officers.⁸⁷ By 1809 there were twenty-two rissalahs (or troops) of more than 3,000 men on Skinner's estate which

⁸⁶ Lord Canning to the Court of Directors, 8 July 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 63, p. 469.

⁸⁷ Lt.-Col. C. Carmichael Smyth, *A Rough Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Irregular Horse of the Bengal Army* (privately printed, 1847), p. 8.

stretched from the Aligarh district to Hansi in Harrianah. But not all Skinner's recruits were Muslim: he also enlisted Ahirs, Jats and Gujars.⁸⁸

With the successful conclusion of the Pindari and Third Maratha Wars in 1818, the need for irregular cavalry diminished and Skinner's regiments became little more than a local police force. As a result, most of them were disbanded when Bentinck sought to reduce military expenditure in the late 1820s. By 1840, when the Bengal local horse was formally renamed irregular cavalry, there were just six regiments in existence: the 1st and 4th had evolved out of Skinner's Horse; the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th had been raised in 1809, 1815, 1823 and 1838 respectively. But as the Company expanded into Sind and the Punjab in the 1840s, twelve more regiments were added. The last eight were recruited after the 1st Sikh War in 1846 by the offer of tenders to respectable Muslims who brought their relations and retainers with them.⁸⁹

In late 1844, Henry Lawrence described the irregular cavalry as "mostly Pathans or Rajpoots and Mahommedans of family".⁹⁰ Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant, the former Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army, was more specific in his evidence to the Peel Commission in 1858. He stated that the regiments were composed of "Hindoostanee Mahommedans, Sheikhs, Synds, Moghuts, and Pathans, and Hindoos, Brahmins, Rajpoots, Jats, and some also of the inferior castes", as well as "considerable numbers" of Ranghurs and "some few Sikhs and Afghans".⁹¹ As in the regular regiments, recruits tended to be the friends and relations of those already serving, while castes "habitually employed in menial occupations" were excluded.⁹² The main areas of recruitment were Delhi and Rohilkhand.⁹³ Other senior officers specifically mentioned the towns of Hansi, Hissar, Meerut, Moradabad, Kurnaul, Bareilly, Agra, Bharatpur, Farruckabad, Mainpuri, Shahjehanpur, Patiala and Ludhiana, and to a lesser extent Jullundur, Hoshiapur, Cawnpore and Lucknow.⁹⁴

Sir James Hope Grant and Major Daly told the Peel Commission that the Bengal Irregular Cavalry was "composed chiefly of Mahomedans of various tribes and races" and that Rajputs "were formerly in greater numbers than now, though there are still some to be found, and a few Brahmins".⁹⁵ The method of recruitment had also altered. "In the early days of its formation," they noted, "the nobles and chiefs

⁸⁸ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 244-5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁹⁰ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 32.

⁹¹ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 490.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Appx. 72, p. 564.

of tribes brought their retainers into the field, and thus troops and regiments were raised. Gradually this has changed, and though the services still has attractions for men of mark, as all have to pass through the ranks to position, these have decreased."⁹⁶ Lately, such had been the demand for irregulars, "that no man who could manage a horse, and find good security among his comrades, has been refused service".⁹⁷ There is, however, no evidence that this change in recruitment policy was particularly resented by the ordinary sowars.

The ethnic breakdown for the 7th Bengal I.C., which was disarmed at Peshawur in May 1857, proves that Muslims were still the dominant faction (see Table 7).⁹⁸ Muslims made up more than four-fifths of the regiment, while fewer than one in six were high-caste Hindus. Such a relatively small proportion of Brahmins and Rajputs shows that the Bengal Irregular Cavalry was not linked to the native infantry by ties of kinship and caste in the same way that the regular cavalry was. This might help to explain why only ten out of eighteen regiments of irregular cavalry mutinied or partially mutinied in 1857 (the lowest proportion of the three native arms of Bengal infantry and cavalry), why three regiments retained their weapons and fought on the side of the British, and why eight regiments were later considered loyal enough to be incorporated into the reorganized Bengal Army.⁹⁹

Table 7 - *Ethnic composition of the 7th Bengal Irregular Cavalry in May 1857*

Muslims, Synds & Pathans	Muslim Rajputs (Ranghurs)	Brahmins	Rajputs	Sikhs	Hindus of inferior caste	Total
392 (66.9%)	82 (14.0%)	62 (10.6%)	28 (4.8%)	20 (3.4%)	2 (0.3%)	586

Alavi insists that there is a connection between the "mutiny-rebellion" of 1857 in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces and the resentment of Company troopers who, thanks to the military retrenchment of the 1820s, "had been forced to give up their military income and had been settled on land which often proved insufficient or was resumed by the Company".¹⁰⁰ However she does not speculate on the extent to which these discontented ex-troopers influenced their serving brethren. My own feeling is that low pay and indebtedness were more important factors behind the decision by some to mutiny.

⁹⁵ Ibid.
⁹⁶ Ibid.
⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ Ibid.
⁹⁹ The regiments of Bengal Irregular Cavalry that mutinied or partially mutinied in 1857 were the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th. Those that remained loyal and retained their arms were the 1st, 2nd and 6th. Those that were incorporated into the reorganized Bengal Army were the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 17th, 18th.

It may not be a coincidence that the Bengal Artillery also had a minority of high-caste recruits in 1857 (though the proportion was bigger than in the irregular cavalry) and a comparatively modest number of mutinous units. The first foot artillery companies were formed in all three presidencies in 1748.¹⁰¹ But because of the tactical importance of the arm, the men who fired the guns remained exclusively European for the rest of the century. They were assisted in unskilled work by units of natives known as *Golandaze* (literally 'ball-throwers'). By the first reorganization of the presidency armies in 1796, the Bengal Foot Artillery had grown to three European battalions of five companies each.¹⁰² Early in the nineteenth century, however, as the Bengal Army continued to expand and the cost of forming more European artillery became prohibitive, native foot artillery companies were raised. At around the same time, troops of élite horse artillery were formed with their native proportion. By 1857, the Bengal Foot Artillery was made up of six European battalions of four companies each, and three native battalions of six companies each. The Bengal Horse Artillery comprised three brigades of three European troops and one native troop. (The exception was the 1st Brigade which had a fifth native troop, a remnant of the contingent raised by the British to fight for Shah Shuja in the 1st Afghan War of 1838-42).

The largest single grouping in the Bengal Artillery was Muslim. "There is a much larger infusion of the Mahometan element than in the infantry", Lord Clyde (the former General Sir Colin Campbell, Commander-in-Chief, India, during the mutiny) informed the Peel Commission in 1858.¹⁰³ This was partly because Muslims had tended to dominate the Mughal artillery of pre-Company days, and partly because the *Golundaze* auxiliaries of the eighteenth century had been recruited from the Muslims of lower Bengal. Clyde observed: "Some men (particularly gun lascars) come from Lower Bengal, which furnishes hardly any soldiers to any other branch of the army. These are Mahometans."¹⁰⁴ But most came from "Oudh, the Doab, Rohilcund, and the districts of Agra".¹⁰⁵ While these were all former Mughal areas, Oudh and the Doab plain between the rivers Jumna and Ganges contained a majority of Hindu inhabitants. Recruits from these areas counterbalanced the Muslims.

¹⁰⁰ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 297.

¹⁰¹ Bryan Robson, 'The Organization and Command Structure of the Indian Army', *Soldiers of the Raj: The Indian Army 1600-1947* (London, 1997), p. 10.

¹⁰² Shibly, *The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies*, Ph.D Thesis p. 24.

¹⁰³ Lord Clyde's replies, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 53, p. 423.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

According to the 1858 caste return of the 1,017 native officers and men of the Bengal horse and foot artillery who did not mutiny and were not disbanded, the Muslims were not in an absolute majority (see Table 8).¹⁰⁶ They were, however, the biggest single grouping, with high-caste Hindus (Brahmins and Rajputs combined) and 'Hindus of inferior caste' not that far behind. With such a mixed level of recruitment, it is perhaps logical that artillerymen rarely took the initiative in the mutinies of 1857. Of the nine companies of foot artillery and two troops of horse artillery that actually mutinied or deserted, only one - the 6th Company, 8th Battalion at Bareilly - seems to have taken an active part in the plot to mutiny. Most of the others were coerced to join the rebels by the mutinous native infantry. None is credited with having murdered its European officers, and many actually helped them to escape.¹⁰⁷ It is probably no coincidence that the 5th/1st B.H.A., the only Bengal Artillery unit that actually fought alongside the British during the mutiny, was raised for service in Afghanistan in 1838, and therefore had a different recruitment pattern from its older counterparts. It would, for example, have contained a relatively small proportion of *purbiyas* because travel north of the Indus was said to involve loss of caste.¹⁰⁸

Table 8 - *Ethnic composition of the Bengal Native Artillery in 1858*

Muslims	Hindus of inferior caste	Rajputs	Brahmins	Gwallahs	Total
438 (43%)	290 (29%)	162 (16%)	126 (12%)	1	1,017

The smallest and last arm of the regular Bengal Army (the irregular cavalry was regular in all but name) was its Sappers and Miners. Founded in 1803 as the Pioneer Corps, within five years it had become the Corps of Pioneers and Sappers, with eight companies of 90 men each and a company of miners. In 1819 two companies and contingents from the rest formed the Bengal Sappers and Miners, while the remaining pioneers were absorbed during the military cutbacks of 1833. Fourteen years later, when it was renamed the Bengal Sappers and Pioneers, the corps was comprised of three companies of Sappers and Miners, officered by engineers, and seven of pioneers, under infantry officers. The distinction

¹⁰⁶ 'Return showing the Number, Caste, and Country of the Native Officers and Soldiers of each Regiment, Regular and Irregular, of each Presidency, Sept 1858', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.

¹⁰⁷ The only murders that appear to have been carried out by artillerymen were those of a European staff sergeant's wife and three children by the Golundaz of the 4th Troop, 1st Brigade, Bengal Horse Artillery, at Nimach on 3 June 1857. (Source: 'List of Regiments and Detachments of the Native Army which have taken part in the Mutinies', 11 Aug 1858, F.C., NAI, 1753-4 of 30 Dec 1859.)

¹⁰⁸ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 85. Sitaram writes: "The *sepoys* dreaded crossing the Indus because it was beyond Hindustan; this is forbidden by our religion and the very act means loss of caste. Consequently many *sepoys* obtained their discharge, and many deserted."

between the two branches ended in 1851 and the title Bengal Sappers and Miners was readopted. By 1857 the number of companies had increased to twelve, each containing two native officers, 14 N.C.O.s, 2 buglars and 100 sepoys. The corps was commanded by four European officers (a commandant, an adjutant, an interpreter and a quartermaster), while each company was headed by a junior European officer with a European N.C.O. as his assistant.

Although there are no ethnic breakdowns available for the Bengal Sappers and Miners, Lord Clyde, Commander-in-Chief in India (1857-60), informed the Peel Commission that the pre-mutiny corps had been composed of "mostly Hindoostanees" of all types from "the usual recruiting grounds" of the North-Western Provinces, though "there were probably fewer higher caste Hindoos than in the infantry".¹⁰⁹ That Brahmins and Rajputs were in a majority, however, was confirmed by the testimony of Colonel Felix, a former military secretary to Lord Dalhousie, who agreed that Bengal Sappers and Miners had been "enlisted all from one district" and belonged "generally to one caste, namely, the higher caste of Hindoos".¹¹⁰ Colonel Leslie of the Bombay Artillery concurred, telling the Peel Commission that the Bengal sappers he came across during the 1st Afghan War "were a high-caste set of men" and "did not care about doing their work".¹¹¹ Yet the very fact that high-caste Hindus were prepared to join a corps that, by definition, indulged in menial work such as digging is negative confirmation of the argument that the army invented a tradition of caste (see Chapter Five). A fellow feeling towards their brethren in the native infantry could be one reason why six out of twelve companies of Sappers and Miners mutinied - including four at Meerut on 16 May 1857, murdering their commandant and havildar-major in the process - while the remaining six were disarmed.

Madras had the second biggest presidency army in 1857 with 51,244 native troops.¹¹² Its largest component was its 52 regiments of regular native infantry, numbering around 43,000 men. It also had eight regiments of regular native cavalry (2,800 men), nine companies of Sappers and Miners (820 men), one battalion (or six companies) of foot artillery and two troops of horse artillery (1,200 men).

¹⁰⁹ Lord Clyde's replies, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 53, p. 425.

¹¹⁰ Colonel O. Felix's evidence, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 65.

¹¹¹ Colonel J.T. Leslie's evidence, *ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹² 'Return showing the Numbers of the troops, regular and irregular, which were serving in the three Presidencies immediately before the Mutiny', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 17, p. 379..

However the ethnic composition of these native units bore little relation to their counterparts in the Bengal Army.

This had not always been the case. According to Kolff, "Rajputs were employed as early as 1664 to defend Fort St George and, from the earliest years of the Madras Army, people from outside the Presidency had been generally preferred as recruits to Madrasis".¹¹³ The eight Circar battalions who were disbanded in 1785, for example, were composed of men of northern descent who spoke Hindustani, "though it may have been generations since their families had settled in the South in search of service".¹¹⁴ But unlike its Bombay rival, the Madras Army began to confine its recruitment to its own presidency and an experiment, in the 1790s, of importing sepoys from Bengal was not repeated.¹¹⁵

In his 1835 minute on military policy, Lord William Bentinck noted that Madras sepoys were "recruited principally from their own territories" and had "only a small portion of Bengal men in their ranks".¹¹⁶ Though not shorter than Bombay sepoys recruited from their own presidency, the Madras troops were lighter, causing Bentinck to doubt their martial qualities. "It is impossible," he wrote, "for any dispassionate observer, who has seen the Madras sepoys, not to say that their physical defects, their small stature, and delicate frame, supposing all other qualities equal, render them very inferior to the northern Hindustanis, and that consequently, as a body of men, they are inferior to either of the other armies..."¹¹⁷ Given that it was politically and logistically impossible to recruit the southern Madras Army entirely from the northern Bengal Presidency, Bentinck had concluded that the only solution was to increase the number of European troops in India.¹¹⁸ But this was because he identified the principal danger to British India's security as an external one. If he had recognized the threat from within, he might have been comforted by a recruitment policy which ensured that at least one presidency army had virtually no ties of caste or kinship with the other two.

Three years earlier, the Court of Directors had ordered both the Madras and Bombay governments to restrict the recruitment of their armies to their own territory. Now Bentinck's government asked them to convene a military committee to consider whether the order "had operated beneficially or whether it would be better to permit the Madras and Bombay armies to recruit as formerly in Bengal territory".¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 177.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Philips (ed.), *Bentinck Correspondence*, II, p. 1444.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1446.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1451-2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 1446.

The response of the Madras committee was that no alterations were necessary for the cavalry, "the men being chiefly Mussulmans from the Carnatic", whereas the number of Bengal men in the infantry could be increased "with advantage" to one hundred per regiment.¹²⁰

This latter recommendation does not appear to have been carried out. In his evidence to the Peel Commission, Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant, Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army (1856-61), noted: "All men physically fit for soldiers, and of the prescribed age, without distinction of race, tribe, or caste, are eligible for enlistment in the Madras Army. There is no exclusion either by regulations or practice."¹²¹ Without specific discrimination, it was inevitable that the Madras Army in general - and the native infantry in particular - would be largely representative of the ethnic groups that dominated Madras society (see Tables 9 and 10).¹²²

Table 9 - *Ethnic composition of the Madras Native Infantry in 1858*

Muslims	Telingas (Gentoo)	Tamils	Christians & Eurasians	Brahmins & Rajputs	Hindus of inferior caste	Total
15,856 (37.1%)	15,613 (36.5%)	4,372 (10.2%)	2,868 (6.7%)	2,005 (4.7%)	2,021 (4.7%)	42,735

Telingas, Tamils and the vast majority of Muslim recruits were natives of the Madras Presidency. Not surprisingly the chief recruitment areas - Northern Circars, the Carnatics, Tanjore and Mysore - were also within that region. Less than five per cent of Madras sepoys were recruited in Hindustan, and

Table 10 - *Country of origin of the Madras Native Infantry in 1858*

Northern Circars	Central Carnatic	Southern Carnatic	Tanjore	Mysore	Hindustan	Others
17,255 (40.4%)	9,080 (21.2%)	4,937 (11.6%)	3,736 (8.7%)	2,757 (6.5%)	1,989 (4.7%)	2,981 (7.0%)

most of them would have been high-caste Hindus. Evidently the number of men from the Bengal Presidency was far below the one hundred per regiment, or 5,200 in total, that the Madras committee had recommended in 1835. It is not particularly suprising, therefore, that just one of the 52 regiments of Madras Native Infantry - the 36th - showed any outward sign of disaffection during the mutiny of the Bengal Army in 1857 (half its rifle company refused to volunteer for service in Bengal in August

¹²⁰ Ibid.
¹²¹ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 483.
¹²² P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.

1857). Lord Harris, the Governor of Madras, put this down to Muslim influence. "The men are not actually disloyal but their confidence is shaken," he informed Robert Vernon Smith, the President of the Board of Control, on 27 August. This, on top of quite separate grievances, had enabled the "evil disposed" in regiments dominated by Muslims "to produce an unfavourable impression".¹²³

The Madras regular cavalry contained an even greater proportion of Muslims. According to General Grant, it had "for many years been considered the birth right of the Mahommedans of the Arcot district" and, "with the exception of a few Mahrattas", commanding officers had "made little effort to recruit elsewhere".¹²⁴ Since 1843, some effort had been made to recruit more Rajputs and Marathas, "with but partial success".¹²⁵ The composition of the regular cavalry in 1858, therefore, was largely the same as it had been "when the two senior regiments were transferred to the East India Company in 1784 by the Nawab of Arcot".¹²⁶ The vast majority were Muslims from the Arcot district, Vellore and Madras (see Tables 11 and 12). Less than 4% were Rajputs and fewer than 1% came from Hindustan. They had, therefore, no local ties to the mutineers of the Bengal Army. Their only connection to some of the mutineers (notably in the Bengal Irregular Cavalry and artillery) was their dominant faith: Islam.

Table 11 - *Ethnic composition of the Madras Light Cavalry in 1858*

Muslims	Marathas	Indo-Britons	Rajputs (& Brahmins)	Christians	Others	Total
2,024 (77.4%)	306 (11.7%)	159 (6.1%)	93 (3.6%)	32 (1.2%)	2 (0.1%)	2,616

The only regiment of Madras Light Cavalry to display disaffection during the mutiny was the 8th when it refused to sail by ship to Bengal to fight the rebels in August 1857. In a letter to Vernon Smith, Lord Harris put this partly down to "a disinclination to act against men of their own race & faith".¹²⁷ But a

Table 12 - *Country of origin of the Madras Light Cavalry in 1858*

C. Carnatic	Mysore	S. Carnatic	Tanjore	N. Circars	Hindustan	Others
1,905 (72.8%)	215 (8.2%)	212 (8.1%)	91 (3.5%)	67 (2.6%)	22 (0.8%)	104 (4.0%)

more pertinent reason, in his opinion, was their wish to have their old levels of pay and pension restored (both had been reduced in 1837 to bring them into line with Bengal regulations). "I have no doubt," he

¹²³ Lord Harris to Vernon Smith, 27 Aug 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/5.
¹²⁴ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 488.
¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 488-9.
¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 488.

wrote, "that this was thought a good opportunity to make a stand on the point that this regiment was considered to represent the whole of the cavalry".¹²⁸

Local Muslims were also the biggest group in the Madras Native Artillery, though they did not represent an absolute majority (see Tables 13).¹²⁹

Table 13 - *Ethnic composition of the Madras Native Artillery in 1858*

Muslims	Tamils	Telingas	Brahmins & Rajputs	Marathas	Others	Total
535 (43.2%)	243 (19.6%)	217 (17.5%)	62 (5.0%)	26 (2.1%)	155 (12.5%)	1,238

Most Madras native artillerymen came from the Central Carnatic and other Madras regions; only 6% hailed from Hindustan (see Table 14).¹³⁰

Table 14 - *Country of origin of the Madras Native Artillery in 1858*

Central Carnatic	Southern Carnatic	Mysore	Hindustan	Nothern Circars	Tanjore	Others
717 (57.9%)	183 (14.8%)	82 (6.6%)	74 (6.0%)	72 (5.8%)	52 (4.2%)	58 (4.7%)

The Madras corps of Sappers and Miners, on the other hand, was dominated by low-caste Hindus (see Table 15).¹³¹

Table 15 - *Ethnic composition of the Madras Sappers and Miners in 1858*

Hindus of inferior caste	Tamils	Christians	Telingas (Gentoo)	Muslims	Others	Total
358 (43.3%)	181 (21.9%)	120 (14.5%)	102 (12.3%)	51 (6.2%)	14 (1.7%)	826

As with the artillery, most members of the Madras Sappers and Miners came from the Central Carnatic, the Southern Carnatic and other parts of the Madras Presidency; Hindustan provided just 3.1% of recruits (see Table 16).¹³² With so little in common with their Bengal counterparts, it is perhaps no

¹²⁷ Lord Harris to Vernon Smith, 27 Aug 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/5.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

surprise that the Madras artillery and sappers not only stayed loyal during the Indian mutiny, but in some cases served with distinction against the rebels and mutineers in central India.¹³³

Table 16 - *Country of origin of the Madras Sappers and Miners in 1858*

Central Carnatic	Southern Carnatic	Tanjore	Mysore	Northern Circars	Hindustan	Others
359 (43.5%)	162 (19.6%)	93 (11.3%)	82 (9.9%)	65 (7.9%)	26 (3.1%)	39 (4.7%)

Overall the regular Madras native army was dominated by Muslims and Telingas from its Northern Circars and Carnatic provinces (see Tables 17 and 18).¹³⁴

Table 17 - *Ethnic composition of the regular Madras native army in 1858*

Muslims	Telingas (Gentoo)	Tamils	Christians & Eurasians	Brahmins & Rajputs	Others	Total
18,466 (38.9%)	15,932 (33.6%)	4,796 (10.1%)	3,202 (6.8%)	2,167 (4.6%)	2,772 (5.9%)	47,415

This was hardly surprising given the fact that infantrymen were more than nine-tenths of the total. Brahmins and Rajputs, on the other hand, accounted for fewer than 5 per cent, as did those from Hindustan. In an ethnic sense, therefore, the Madras Army had little in common with its northern

Table 18 - *Country of origin of the regular Madras native army in 1858*

Northern Circars	Central Carnatic	Southern Carnatic	Tanjore	Mysore	Hindustan	Others
17,459 (36.8%)	12,061 (25.4%)	5,494 (11.6%)	3,972 (8.4%)	3,136 (6.6%)	2,111 (4.4%)	3,182 (6.7%)

neighbour. This absence of common ties would be reflected in the fact that only two Madras units - the 8th L.C. and the 36th N.I. - showed any signs of a mutinous disposition in 1857.

Bombay possessed the smallest presidency army in 1857 with 45,213 native troops.¹³⁵ Its largest component was its 29 regiments of regular native infantry, made up of around 25,000 men. It also had

¹³³ B Company of the Madras Sappers and Miners, for example, served with distinction in the Deccan and Central India Field Forces.

three regiments of regular native cavalry (1,500 men), one troop of horse artillery and two battalions - or twelve companies - of foot artillery (2,000 men), and five companies of Sappers and Miners (450 men). The balance was made up of irregular troops. Unlike their Madras counterparts, however, a significant proportion of Bombay troops were recruited from the same classes and areas that supplied the Bengal Army.

The first company of native sepoys under their own officers was formed in Bombay from Rajputs in 1684, though the first battalion would not be created for another 83 years.¹³⁶ Though it was said of these sepoys in 1739 that they were "formerly subjects and have relations and are intermarried with the inhabitants" of the Bombay area, Kolff is of the opinion that "they may well have been of Northern origin as in 1747 the Council of Fort St David on the Coromandel Coast asked Bombay for 'the best Northern People...as they are reported to be much better than ours, and not so liable to Desertion'".¹³⁷ Kolff adds: "The name of Purbiya...was soon in general use in Bombay to denote these Northerners, thousands of whom would serve the company in Western India especially after 1818."¹³⁸

According to Sir George Malcolm, Governor of Bombay from 1827 to 1830, the number of sepoys from Hindustan - generally known as Pardesis or 'foreigners' - before 1817 "did not exceed 4,000".¹³⁹ But after the start of the 3rd Maratha War in that year, and more particularly during that with Burma in 1824-5, the number steadily increased until they formed a slight majority of the Bombay Army in 1830.¹⁴⁰ Malcolm was at a loss to explain why this had come about, though he cited the increase of the Bombay Native Infantry's establishment in 1825 to 1,000 men per battalion, with an addition of two extra battalions, as a point at which "this class was greatly augmented, caused a good deal perhaps by the station of the Bombay troops at Mhow [formerly a Bengal station in central India], where an officer was specifically employed to recruit for the army". On the other hand, noted Malcolm, this "increase of foreigners over the natives of the Bombay territories was by no means desired by the more experienced officers of this army, and was, moreover, contrary to the wishes of the Court of Directors who, in 1821, directed that the armies of the three Presidencies should be kept as distinct as possible to their

¹³⁴ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.

¹³⁵ 'Return showing the Numbers of the troops, regular and irregular, which were serving in the three Presidencies immediately before the Mutiny', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 17, p. 379.

¹³⁶ Shibly, *The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies*, pp. 8-10.

¹³⁷ Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 176.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 176-7.

¹³⁹ Malcolm to Lord George Bentinck, 27 Nov 1830, quoted in Major-General Sir John Malcolm, *The Government of India* (London, 1833), p.233.

respective territories". In 1824 the recruitment of Bombay sepoys in the Bengal provinces was "positively prohibited" by the Indian government. While the Bombay officers "generally considered it beneficial to have a mixture of castes in their regiments", wrote Malcolm, including a proportion of Hindustani men (though not more than 200 per battalion), they only considered them "indispensable when their own provinces cannot recruit their ranks". The officers regarded the Hindustanis as superior to their own men "in size, appearance, and perhaps in a certain degree of military pride", but "in nothing else". The Concanis and Deccanis, by contrast, were thought to be "more patient under privation and fatigue, more easily subsisted and managed, and in bravery to be fully their equals".¹⁴¹

Malcolm's own preference was for less high-caste Hindustani recruits because they tended to "lower the self-esteem, and damp the hopes of men of lower caste and stature".¹⁴² He added: "Till within twelve years the general sentiment among [the Bombay Army] was pride of corps. I regret to observe that the pride of caste is now much cherished by the men and considered by the officers. There are no prejudices and pretensions that will be found so injurious, if not restricted, as those minor ones of caste, if they receive more attention than is due to them."¹⁴³

In 1832, as mentioned above, the Court of Directors again instructed the Bombay and Madras governments to restrict military recruitment to their own territories. But again the directive made little difference. According to Bentinck's reading of the report by the Bombay military committee in 1835, the "court's restrictive order" had been "totally inoperative because though the order had been so far obeyed, that no recruiting parties had been sent to Bengal, yet the Bengal men having voluntarily presented themselves for enlistment they had been engaged as before".¹⁴⁴ In any case, the committee recommended sending recruiting parties to Bengal as before "for the purpose of getting a better description of man".¹⁴⁵

In providing evidence for the Peel Commission in 1858, Lord Elphinstone explained that no races, tribes or castes had been excluded from enlistment to the Bombay Army by the regulations, though in practice "hardly any recruits have been hitherto obtained from Guzerat, and few from the Southern Mahratta country". In addition "Bheels, Kolies, Beeruds, and other aboriginal tribes" were "virtually

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Malcolm's place of origin breakdown for the 24,401 native troops of the Bombay Army in 1830 is as follows: Hindustan 12,476 (51.1%); Concan 10,015 (41.0%); Deccan 1,910 (7.8%).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 234-5.

¹⁴⁴ Philips (ed), *Bentinck Correspondence*, II, p. 1444.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 1444-5.

excluded from the ranks of the regular army". As with the other presidency armies, recruits were "brought in by their comrades when they return from furlough", but recruiting parties were also sent out. Elphinstone added: "All castes are professedly admitted, but most commanding officers have hitherto given the preference to the higher castes."¹⁴⁶

This preoccupation with appearance was to ensure that the the proportion of high-caste sepoys remained almost constant.between 1830 and 1858 (see Table 19).¹⁴⁷ During the same period, the

Table 19 - *Ethnic composition of the Bombay Native Infantry in 1858*

Marathas	Hindus of inferior caste	Brahmins & Rajputs	Muslims	Christians	Purwarees, Jews etc.	Total
8,096 (31.8%)	7,918 (31.1%)	6,609 (25.9%)	2,159 (8.49%)	275 (1.1%)	376 (1.5%)	25,433

number of Hindustanis in the Bombay regular native infantry only fell by about five per cent (see Table 20).¹⁴⁸

Table 20 - *Country of origin of the Bombay Native Infantry in 1858*

Hindustan	Concan	Deccan	Central Carnatic	Southern Carnatic	Others	Total
11,357 (44.7%)	11,051 (43.5)	1,877 (7.4%)	449 (1.8%)	216 (0.8%)	483 (1.9%)	25,433

By the outbreak of mutiny, therefore, just under one in two Bombay sepoys were from Hindustan, while more than one in four were high-caste Hindus, mostly from Oudh.¹⁴⁹ Yet only six of the 29 regiments of Bombay Native Infantry gave any cause for anxiety during the mutiny, though the trouble was invariably traced to men from Hindustan.¹⁵⁰ When part of a detachment of the 12th Bombay N.I. refused orders at Nasirabad on 10 August 1857, for example, the Hindustanis "threatened to shoot the Marattas, Purwarees and other castes if they tried to separate themselves".¹⁵¹ Both of the other regiments that actually mutinied - the 21st at Karachi on 12 September and the 27th at Kolhapur on 31

¹⁴⁶ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 68, p. 507.
¹⁴⁷ 'Return showing the Number, Caste, and Country of the Native Officers and Soldiers of each Regiment, Regular and Irregular, of each Presidency, Sept 1858', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.
¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
¹⁴⁹ Sir Patrick Cadell, *History of the Bombay Army* (London, 1938), p. 200
¹⁵⁰ The six regiments of Bombay Native Infantry that displayed a mutinous disposition in 1857 were the 2nd, 12th, 21st, 27th, 28th and 29th. Only three partially mutinied: the 12th, 21st and 27th.
¹⁵¹ *Return affording the information on Mutiny since January 1857, as called for by the Honourable Court of Directors...in Letter No. 829, dated 29 January 1858, from the Military Secretary to the Government of Bombay*, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII.

July - were relatively new and contained a high proportion of Hindustanis.¹⁵² The 27th, the sole regiment to murder some of its officers, had only been raised in 1846, following the conquest of Sind, and "had no record of past warfare to keep it steady".¹⁵³ The 28th and 29th regiments, elements of which planned to rise at the same time as the 27th, were also "new regiments with no tradition behind them, and a considerable Pardesi element".¹⁵⁴ While the 2nd Grenadiers, a part of which attempted an uprising at Ahmedabad on 15 September 1857, had been dominated by Hindustanis "ever since such men had been recruited to improve the appearance of the regiment when it had been made 'Grenadiers' after [the Battle of] Koregaum" [in 1818].¹⁵⁵ Despite this, the disloyal element was "overcome by the Marathas of the battalion".¹⁵⁶

The first two regiments of Bombay regular cavalry were raised in 1817, followed by a third three years later. According to Cadell, "they differed markedly from the infantry battalions, as they only took men of high caste, and particularly men of Pathan descent and Hindustani Mussulmans".¹⁵⁷ This was, he claims, in response to the Bombay General Order of 5 November 1817 which stated that the first two regiments were to recruit exclusively "men of Musselman, Mahratta or Purbee Cast"¹⁵⁸ Yet by 1851 the largest ethnic group was none of these three (see Table 21).¹⁵⁹

Table 21 - *Ethnic composition of the Bombay Light Cavalry in 1851*

Hindus of inferior caste	Muslims	Rajputs (and Brahmins)	Marathas	Christians	Total
441 (29.9%)	435 (29.5%)	406 (27.5%)	109 (7.4%)	84 (5.7%)	1,475

By 1858, the balance had tipped even more in favour of the Hindus of inferior caste and Muslims (see Table 22).¹⁶⁰

Table 22 - *Ethnic composition of the Bombay Light Cavalry in 1858*

Hindus of inferior caste	Muslims	Brahmins and Rajputs	Marathas	Christians	Total
520 (35.6%)	471 (32.2%)	261 (17.9%)	119 (8.1%)	67 (4.6%)	1,461

¹⁵² Cadell, *History of the Bombay Army*, p. 202.
¹⁵³ Ibid.
¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 204.
¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 202.
¹⁵⁶ Ibid.
¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 163.
¹⁵⁸ Ibid.
¹⁵⁹ P.P., H.L., 1852-3, Vol. XXXI, p. 11.
¹⁶⁰ 'Return showing the Number, Caste, and Country of the Native Officers and Soldiers of each Regiment, Regular and Irregular, of each Presidency, Sept 1858', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22.

Though the high-caste representation fell quite steeply in the 1850s, the vast majority of Bombay cavalrymen in 1858 still came from Hindustan (see Table 23).¹⁶¹ It is, therefore, not particularly

Table 23 - *Country of origin of the Bombay Light Cavalry in 1858*

Hindustan	Deccan	Concan	Central Carnatic	Northern Circars	Others	Total
1,073 (73.4%)	127 (8.7%)	115 (7.9%)	30 (2.2%)	22 (1.5%)	94 (6.4%)	1,461

surprising that two of the three Bombay Light Cavalry regiments displayed a mutinous disposition in 1857. On 28 May, the 1st Bombay L.C. (Lancers) refused to follow their British officers in a charge to recover guns captured by mutinous Bengal sepoys at Nasirabad, two officers dying as a result. A captain in one of the mutinous Bengal regiments later commented: "It is a well known fact that the Bombay Cavalry Regiment here are ripe for mutiny, but are only deterred from breaking out by a wholesome dread of being followed up by our European Horse Artillery."¹⁶² A trooper of the 1st Bombay L.C. was also said to have incited the mutiny of the 12th Bombay N.I. at Nasirabad on 10 August 1857.¹⁶³ Two days later, a conspiracy to mutiny by part of a squadron of the 2nd Bombay L.C. was discovered at Nimach and three ringleaders were hanged; according to the commanding officer's report, the plot was "confined to a party of Patan Beloochees and Purdesee [or foreign] sepoys" who were "associated with disorderly troops of native states, many from same districts, who had been discharged the British service".¹⁶⁴ The mutinous disposition of both the 1st and 2nd regiments, therefore, can probably be explained in part by their empathy with their Hindustani brethren, and could even have been a high-caste reaction to their diminishing numbers.

As late as 1839, Bombay possessed just one regiment of irregular cavalry: the Poona Auxiliary Horse (raised in 1817). In that year, the Sind Irregular Horse was formed around the Cutch levy of the Poona Horse which had been serving for some time on the border between Cutch and Sind.¹⁶⁵ The Gujerat Irregular Horse was also formed in 1839, followed by the Southern Maratha Horse in 1850, but both were raised for police duties and came under the civil authorities whereas the Sind Horse was a purely

¹⁶¹ Ibid.
¹⁶² Captain T. Pierce to his parents, 30 June 1857, Pierce Letters, BL, Add. MSS 425000, vol. 3.
¹⁶³ *Return affording the information on Mutiny since January 1857, as called for by the Honourable Court of Directors...in Letter No. 829, dated 29 January 1858, from the Military Secretary to the Government of Bombay*, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

military formation. Its distinctive recruitment pattern evolved after John Jacob became commandant in 1842. According to Cadell, the new commandant "disliked the Baluch and Pathan soldiers and recruited his horsemen entirely from Hindustani and Deccani Mussulmans and Deccani Marathas: the Hindustanis finally predominating".¹⁶⁶ This claim is largely borne out by an 1848 general return for the two regiments of Sind Horse (the second was raised in 1846) which states that out of 1,600 men, over 1,500 came from Hindustan, mainly the Delhi districts and Oudh.¹⁶⁷ There were 52 Deccanis and just three men - including two officers - from Baluchistan. Muslims accounted for about 85 per cent of the total. Of the Hindus, 34 were Marathas and 140 were Brahmins and Rajputs.¹⁶⁸ In other words, it had a recruitment pattern that was remarkably similar to that of the Bengal Irregular Cavalry. Yet the Sind Horse never wavered in its loyalty to the British government during the mutiny despite some severe provocation, particularly from disaffected members of the 6th Bengal I.C. which was stationed at Jacobabad - the regimental headquarters of the Sind Horse - during the summer of 1857.¹⁶⁹ Jacob would have put this down to the high level of discipline that prevailed in the Bombay Army in general - and his corps in particular - because commanding officers still had sufficient powers to punish and reward.

The Bombay artillery contained an even bigger proportion of low caste Hindus than the regular cavalry, though a majority still hailed from Hindustan (see Tables 24 and 25).¹⁷⁰

Table 24 - *Ethnic composition of the Bombay Native Artillery in 1858*

Hindus of inferior caste	Marathas	Brahmins and Rajputs	Muslims	Others	Total
919 (46.3%)	410 (20.6%)	340 (17.1%)	307 (15.4%)	7 (0.4%)	1,983

As with the infantry and cavalry, Hindustani *golundaze* are said to have been behind the foiled plot to mutiny by the 5th Company, 4th Battalion at Hyderabad in Sind on 8 September and the partial mutiny

¹⁶⁵ Cadell, *History of the Bombay Army*, p. 175

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁶⁷ 'A general return of the age, size, caste, country and length of service of the Indian officers and men of the Scinde Horse, dated 21st Sept 1848', quoted in H.T. Lambrick, *John Jacob of Jacobabad* (London, 1960), pp. 178-9.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p 179.

¹⁶⁹ Bartle Frere to Brig. Jacob, 6 Oct 1857, Jacob Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F 75; Lambrick, *John Jacob of Jacobabad*, pp. 332-4, 348-9.

¹⁷⁰ 'Return showing the Number, Caste, and Country of the Native Officers and Soldiers of each Regiment, Regular and Irregular, of each Presidency, Sept 1858', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22.

of the 3rd Company, 4th Battalion, at Shirkapur in Sind on 23 September 1857.¹⁷¹ Both companies were raised in the 1840s and contained a large number of Hindustanis.

Table 25 - *Country of origin of the Bombay Native Artillery in 1858*

Hindustan	Deccan	Concan	Northern Circars	Central Carnatic	Others	Total
1,190 (60.0%)	391 (19.7%)	338 (17.0%)	27 (1.4%)	22 (1.1%)	11 (0.6%)	1, 983

The 464 Bombay Sappers and Miners had a similar ethnic make-up to the artillerymen in 1858 (see Table 26).¹⁷²

Table 26 - *Ethnic composition of the Bombay Sappers and Miners in 1858*

Hindus of inferior caste	Marathas	Brahmins & Rajputs	Telingas (Gentoo)	Muslims	Total
200 (43.1%)	103 (22.1%)	63 (13.6%)	49 (10.6%)	46 (9.9%)	464

Though not an absolute majority, Hindustanis made up the biggest single group (see Table 27).

Table 27 - *Country of Origin of the Bombay Sappers and Miners in 1858*

Hindustan	Deccan	Concan	Central Carnatic	Others	Total
202 (43.5%)	194 (41.8%)	57 (12.3%)	6 (1.3%)	2 (0.4%)	464

In 1858, the regular Bombay native army contained 29,341 native officers and men. The largest ethnic groups were (in descending order): Hindus of inferior caste, Marathas, Brahmins and Rajputs, and Muslims (see Table 28).¹⁷³

Table 28 - *Ethnic composition of the regular Bombay native army in 1858*

Hindus of inferior caste	Marathas	Brahmins & Rajputs	Muslims	Christians	Others	Total
9,557 (32.6%)	8,728 (29.7%)	7,273 (24.8%)	2,983 (10.2%)	342 (1.2%)	210 (1.5%)	29,341

¹⁷¹ *Return affording the information on Mutiny since January 1857, as called for by the Honourable Court of Directors...in Letter No. 829, dated 29 January 1858, from the Military Secretary to the Government of Bombay, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII.*

¹⁷² *'Return showing the Number, Caste, and Country of the Native Officers and Soldiers of each Regiment, Regular and Irregular, of each Presidency, Sept 1858', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

Hindustan was the biggest provider of soldiers, followed by the Concan and the Deccan (see Table 29).¹⁷⁴ Given the close ties of country and caste that bound many Bombay and Bengal sepoys, the fact that the cavalry was dominated by Hindustani Muslims to whom the reestablishment of the Moghul

Table 29 - *Country of origin of the regular Bombay native army in 1858*

Hindustan	Concan	Deccan	Central Carnatic	Southern Carnatic	Others	Total
13,642 (46.5%)	11,561 (39.4%)	2,589 (8.8%)	509 (1.7%)	222 (0.8%)	818 (2.8%)	29,341

emperor at Delhi was expected to appeal, and the likelihood that the Maratha element - the biggest single group in the army - might well have sympathized with rebel Maratha princes like Nana Sahib (who declared himself Peshwa), the Rani of Jhansi and the former ruling families of Satara, Baroda and Kolhapur, it is perhaps suprising that more mutinies did not take place in the Bombay Army. Instead a large number of Bombay units played a key role in suppressing the mutiny.¹⁷⁵ In Cadell's opinion, this was chiefly because the Bombay Army was more disciplined, more meritocratic and less inclined to pander to caste than its Bengal counterpart. He wrote:

In the Bombay regiments...men of all castes, some high, others extremely low, stood and worked together. Promotion was by merit and selection, and men of low caste were constantly promoted to the commissioned ranks: while those of exceptionally intelligent, though numerically small, classes, such as the Bene Israel, supplied a large number of officers, who had no caste ties. In the Bengal Army, moreover, officers nominally in command of regiments had, in the words of a Bengal officer, become Serjeant-Majors owing to excessive centralization and interference from above. In Bombay such officers still commanded their regiments. To some extent the jealousy between the sepoys of Bengal and Bombay...tended to prevent the Bombay men from following the evil example of the mutiny. But the main reason was the superior discipline of the Bombay sepoys. Above all their traditional attachment to their regimental colours and their officers...¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.
¹⁷⁵ The Bombay native units that fought against the rebels and mutineers inside and outside their presidency in 1857-9 included: 1st, 2nd and 3rd L.C.; 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 19th, 23rd, 24th, 25th N.I.; 3/3rd, 2/4th and 4/4th F.A.; 2nd, 3rd and 5th Companies, Bombay Sappers and Miners; 1st and 3rd Baluch Irregular Infantry; units of the Baluch, Gujarat, Poona, Southern Mahratta and Sind Irregular Horse; the 1st and 3rd Cavalry, and 1st and 5th Infantry, Hyderabad Contingent.

Eric Stokes believed that a major cause of mutiny in 1857 was the determination by high-caste Bengal sepoys to retain their stranglehold over recruitment.¹⁷⁷ But he provided no compelling evidence. The point is merely inferred from the steady decline in the proportion of high-caste Bengal infantrymen, particularly after the 2nd Sikh War. It could just as easily be argued, as Stokes did himself, that "unity of action could be seriously affected by any dilution of the high-caste element".¹⁷⁸ In other words, the government's recruitment policy had succeeded in making a general mutiny less likely in 1857 than it would have been ten years earlier because the Bengal Native Infantry was less homogenous. That it took place nonetheless - and involved many other Bengal troops who had little in common with the high-caste sepoys - is perhaps an indication that other, more generally held professional grievances were involved. The debt-ridden Muslims that dominated the Bengal Irregular Cavalry, for example, seem to have been motivated by plunder and the promise of higher pay in the service of the restored Mughal emperor. The fact that service issues such as these were less prominent in the other two presidency armies might help to explain why the Bombay Native Infantry, despite containing a significant proportion (25.9%) of high-caste sepoys from Hindustan,¹⁷⁹ experienced so few mutinies in 1857. The Madras Army, on the other hand, had virtually no ethnic ties to its Bengal counterpart. Only two of its regular regiments displayed any mutinous disposition in 1857: on both occasions the ostensible reason was a disinclination to serve against their fellow Muslims among the Bengal mutineers; but the underlying grievances were identified as professional.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Cadell, *History of the Bombay Army*, pp. 201-2.

¹⁷⁷ Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, pp. 51-2.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁷⁹ 'Return showing the Number, Caste, and Country of the Native Officers and Soldiers of each Regiment, Regular and Irregular, of each Presidency, Sept 1858', P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 22, p. 382.

¹⁸⁰ Lord Harris to Robert Vernon Smith, 27 Aug and 10 Oct 1857, Lyveden Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/5.

Chapter Two - Professional Grievances

This chapter will outline the professional grievances held by the native troops of the Bengal Army in the years prior to the Indian mutiny, particularly those that were not shared by the Madras and Bombay sepoy. It will argue that certain grievances - such as insufficient pay and inadequate career prospects - played a much more important role in the decision to mutiny than has hitherto been acknowledged.

All armies have professional grievances and none are more typical than those that relate to their conditions of service. Of particular irritation to the sepoy of all three presidency armies were the rules and regulations concerning dress and accoutrements which mirrored those of the British Army. In place of his baggy native dress, a sepoy had to wear a tight red coatee, or swallow-tail coat, and close-fitting dark blue trousers (white in summer). On his head he wore a shako dress cap that weighed from two and a half to three pounds with its brass rims, scales and badge, "a heavy unwieldy *thing*, more like an inverted fire-bucket than a chaco".¹ Sitaram Pandey, who joined the 26th Bengal N.I. in 1814, recalled: "At first I found it very disagreeable wearing the red coat; although this was open in front, it was very tight under the arms. The Shako was very heavy and hurt my head, but of course it was very smart. I grew accustomed to this after a time, but I always found it a great relief when I could wear my own loose [cotton] dress."² Describing other elements of a sepoy's equipment, Captain Hervey of the Madras Native Infantry wrote:

On his back is slung a great knapsack, fastened to his body by means of leather-straps going round his shoulders and his chest, tight enough to cut him in two... Across his chest he has two broad belts, held together by a brass plate passing on either side of him. To one of these is fastened his bayonet, and to the other his pouch or cartouch-box, large enough to contain some sixty rounds of ball ammunition, the whole sufficient to break a poor man's

¹ Charles Allen (ed.), *A Soldier of the Company: Life of an Indian Ensign 1833-43* [Capt. Albert Hervey] (London, 1988), p. 148.

² Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 23.

back. Round his waist passes another belt, intended to keep the others together, but tight enough to cut his very intestines out of him.³

Upon his feet the sepoy wore "a pair of clumsy things called sandals", while constricting his neck was a stiff black leather stock.⁴ But most irksome of all was his unwieldy musket known as the 'Brown Bess', weighing a full 10 lbs. 3 ozs. and with an effective range of 300 yards, though only accurate up to one hundred.⁵ Sitaram found his musket "very heavy, and for a long time my shoulder ached when carrying it".⁶ Hervey noted that it was "heavy enough for a roast-beef-fed Englishman to carry, but too much for the delicately-formed light body and slender limbs of the sepoy lad".⁷ Though Bengal sepoys were generally bigger than their Madras counterparts, they still struggled to carry and fire this large weapon.

There were many calls for the reform of sepoy dress and equipment in the years prior to the mutiny. According to the *Delhi Gazette* in 1852, so heavy and unsteady was the shako that a sepoy could barely move without using his free hand to keep his hat on.⁸ The following year *The Times* commented: "The soldier ought to be so clothed that his natural acquirements may be as little cramped as possible. Every exception to this rule diminished his utility and rendered him ridiculous."⁹ John Jacob, the commandant of the Sind Irregular Horse, was even more explicit in an essay in 1854: "A sepoy of the line, dressed in a tight coat; trousers in which he can scarcely walk, and cannot stoop at all; bound to an immense and totally useless knapsack, so that he can hardly breathe; strapped, belted and pipeclayed within a hair's-breadth of his life; with a rigid basket-chako on his head, which requires the skill of a juggler to balance there, and which cuts deep into his brow if worn for an hour; and with a leather stock round his neck, to complete his absurd costume - when compared with the same sepoy, clothed, armed, and accoutred solely with regard to his comfort and efficiency, forms the most perfect example of what is madly called the 'regular' system."¹⁰ In his famous treatise on the defects of the Indian Army, Sir Charles Napier made many of the same points, adding that the sepoys' muskets were "too heavy" and "should

³ Allen (ed.), *A Soldier of the Company*, p. 148-9.

⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵ Major G. Tylden, 'The Principal Small Arms carried by British Regular Infantry', *JSAHR*, Vol. 45, 1967, pp. 244-5.

⁶ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 23.

⁷ Allen (ed.), *A Soldier of the Company*, p. 148.

⁸ *Delhi Gazette*, 24 April 1852.

⁹ *The Times*, 12 January 1853, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Captain Lewis Pelly (ed.), *The Views and Opinions of Brigadier-General John Jacob C.B.* (London, 1858), p. 129.

be reduced to six or seven pounds weight".¹¹ It is ironic, therefore, that the only pre-1857 reform of dress or equipment was the replacement of the 'Brown Bess' musket with the lighter Enfield rifle (8 lbs. 14ozs.)¹² whose greased cartridge was the ostensible cause of mutiny.

The Peel Commission of 1858 heard much evidence recommending reform. Major-General Birch, Secretary to the Government of India in the Military Department, was of the opinion that sepoys should henceforth wear "a loose dress or tunic, loose trousers, and turbans";¹³ as was, among others, Major-General Mansfield, the Adjutant-General of Bengal, who advised that "tight jackets and shakos should be forgotten for ever".¹⁴ The Punjab Committee - consisting of Sir John Lawrence, Brigadier-General Chamberlain and Lieutenant-Colonel Edwardes - noted that "a sepoy in his European dress could neither stoop to the ground nor take rest in his accoutrements",¹⁵ while Sir Mark Cubbon pointed out that more men had been "invalided and pensioned from the chest-foundering action of the knapsack than ever would have been the ordinary risks of the sepoys".¹⁶ During the mutiny itself, many sepoys discarded their knapsacks and shakos, and replaced their trousers with loose-fitting dhotis, though for a time they continued to wear their red coats as a sign of regimental unity. A contemporary print of the siege of Arrah House in August 1857, shortly after the mutiny of the 7th, 8th and 40th N.I. at Dinapore, shows the mutineers in forage caps, full dress jackets and white trousers. In the background can be seen a full regiment in parade formation, still carrying its regimental colours. James Atkinson's pencil drawings of a rebel artilleryman and a rebel trooper also contain many elements of the soldiers' original uniforms. Captain George Atkinson's print of 'Mutinous sepoys', on the other hand, depicts the rebels in white turbans or skull caps, white jackets or shirts, and white dhotis. Only their cartridge belts, pouches and waist-belts have survived.¹⁷

The dress and accoutrements of the regular light cavalry were also styled on the British Army, though their quilted tunics - short-waisted and extremely tight - were 'French grey' (light blue) rather than the dark blue or scarlet of the British light cavalry. They, too, wore the awkward shako (made even more top-heavy by its horse-hair plume), choking leather stock, clumpy jack-boots and close-fitting leather or

¹¹ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, pp. 302, 307

¹² Tylden, 'The Principal Small Arms carried by British Regular Infantry', *JSAHR*, Vol. 45, 1967, pp. 244-5.

¹³ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p.433

¹⁴ Ibid., Appx. 62, p. 452. Colonel J. Holland of the Bombay Army was another who recommended that turbans and loose-fitting clothes should replace shakos and coatees (Ibid, Appx. 7).

¹⁵ P.P., H.C., 1859, VIII, p. 28. Quoted in Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 167.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 106. Quoted in Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 167-8.

¹⁷ Boris Mollo, *The Indian Army* (Poole, 1981), pp. 90, 100-1.

cloth breeches with straps under the instep (the latter were dark blue until 1847 and French grey thereafter). But the most unsuitable pieces of their equipment were the heavy, slightly-curved light dragoon sword (1821 pattern) and the tall, European-style saddle. The former was cumbersome and unwieldy, and could neither cut nor thrust to any real effect; the latter pushed the rider so high above the horse that he was forced to ride by balance alone. The irregular cavalry, by contrast, wore *pugris* (turbans), long loose *alkaluks* (tunics), cummerbunds, and baggy *pyjama* trousers with either puttees or long boots. They were armed with the lightly-curved and extremely sharp native sword known as the *tulwar*, or the scimitar-like *shamshir*, and seated on low, local pattern saddles.¹⁸

Among the most strident critics of regular cavalry equipment was Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Carmichael Smyth who had commanded regiments of Bengal light and irregular cavalry. In 1847, in a pamphlet recommending the transformation of all regular cavalry to "demi-irregular cavalry" (an idea first proposed by James Outram of the Bombay Army), he condemned the regulars' restrictive uniform, pointless headdress and ineffective sword. His solution was to clothe and equip all cavalry like irregulars with "a broad cloth Ulkaluck [sic], or long native dress, a pair of loose trowsers, a turban and Kummerbund, with Hindoostanee saddles and bridles". For the sake of uniformity these items would be supplied by the same clothing agents that kitted out the regulars, with troopers charged stoppages of one and a half rupees a month (out of a minimum pay of 23 rupees a month) so that commanding officers would continue to profit from the off-reckoning fund - unlike British colonels, they pooled any profits from the annual sum they were paid to clothe their men. With regard to arms, Carmichael Smyth suggested that each man "should carry a sharp sword of his own selection", with some also carrying lances and pistols and others carbines. All weapons would be "supplied from the magazines, and sold to the men at prime cost", thereby reducing the expense to government.¹⁹

Other officers were quick to emphasise the detrimental effect that unsuitable equipment had on combat effectiveness. In his eye-witness history of the 2nd Sikh War, for example, Captain E.J. Thackwell put the shameful performance of three regiments of Bengal Light Cavalry at Chilianwalla down to inadequate arms and tack. "It was incontrovertibly proved," wrote Thackwell, "at this and subsequent actions, that the Troops of the Light Cavalry have no confidence in their swords as effective weapons of defence. It would have been difficult to point out half-a-dozen men who had made use of

¹⁸ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, pp. 38-9; Mollo, *The Indian Army*, pp. 55-6.

¹⁹ Carmichael Smyth, *A Rough Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Irregular Horse of the Bengal Army*, pp. 22-5.

their swords. On approaching the enemy they have immediate recourse to their pistols, the loading and firing of which form their sole occupation... Very few natives have ever become really reconciled to the long seat and powerless bit of the European Dragoons."²⁰ Thackwell's solution, partly influenced by the illustrious charge of Jacob's Sind Horse at the Battle of Gujerat, was to convert all light cavalry into irregulars.²¹

Another vocal critic was Captain Nolan of the 15th Hussars (who was to die so infamously with the Light Brigade at Balaklava). Having served in India for much of the 1840s, he published a best-selling book on cavalry tactics in 1853. Its recommendations for the Indian regular cavalry included replacing all European dress and equipment with their native equivalents.²² Nolan was partly influenced by an officer's letter to the *Delhi Gazette* which stated: "A cavalry soldier should find himself strong and firm in his seat, easy in his dress, so as to have perfect freedom of action, and with a weapon in his hand *capable of cutting down an adversary at a blow*. There is scarcely a more pitiable spectacle in the world than a native trooper mounted on an English saddle, tightened by his dress to the stiffness of a dummy, half suffocated with a leather collar, and a regulation sword in his hand, which *must* always be blunted by the steel scabbard in which it is encased."²³ Henry Lawrence agreed. In his 1856 essay entitled 'The Indian Army', he wrote: "Every trooper should be permitted to fit his own saddle, and adapt his bit to his own horse. Lancers should be abolished, and the tulwar, the weapon of the Indian horseman, should be allowed, as also a carbine and one pistol, to each trooper. It must be borne in mind that they are light horsemen, *not* heavy dragoons."²⁴ The majority of oral and written evidence presented to the Peel Commission concurred in that it recommended replacing regular cavalry regiments with irregular ones. Colonel Becher, the Quartermaster-General of the Bengal Army, was typical. When asked if the native cavalryman preferred wearing his own dress and riding on a familiar saddle, he replied: "Certainly... I would have all cavalry in future on the irregular system."²⁵

The East India Company's native foot artillery wore shakos, dark blue coatees with scarlet facings, and were "virtually indistinguishable in their uniforms from the Royal Artillery".²⁶ The dress of their horse artillery counterparts "was, if anything, even more splendid than those of the British service, for

²⁰ E.J. Thackwell, *Narrative of the Second Sikh War* (London, 1851, 2nd edition), pp. 180-1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²² Captain L.E. Nolan, *Cavalry: Its History and Tactics* (London, 1853), p. 102

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁴ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 411.

²⁵ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, H.C., p. 26

²⁶ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 41.

although both wore a short blue jacket decorated with rows of gold lace and ball buttons, the Company's men wore, instead of the RHA hussar busby, a great Roman helmet, like that of the French cuirassier, with a long flowing mane of red or black horsehair".²⁷ Sappers and Miners in all three presidencies wore shakos, scarlet jackets with blue facings and were armed with 'sapper carbines' which were considerably longer than the cavalry version (the exception being the Bombay corps which used the Brunswick rifle).²⁸ None of these corps are specifically mentioned in the many calls for uniform and accoutrement reform, though their inclusion is probably implicit.

The Indian government's failure to bow to this pressure for change is particularly surprising given the alterations that were made to the uniforms of both its European troops and the British Army at this time. Criticism of the top-heavy shako and tight-fitting coatee worn by British infantrymen had begun in the late 1820s. Minor improvements were made to these items in the 1840s but it was not until two generals of royal blood, the Duke of Cambridge and Lord Frederick Fitzclarence, entered the lists that real change became possible. Both supported the replacement of the coatee and leather stock with a frock coat that provided better protection from the elements and was easier to wear. But because the frock coat was bigger and therefore more expensive than the coatee, it was bound to reduce the profits that many regimental commanding officers made out of 'off-reckonings', the fixed sum they were paid annually to clothe their regiments. This obstacle was finally removed in June 1854 when the provision of clothing by regimental colonels was abolished in favour of a contract system. Within a year, the coatee had been superseded by a double-breasted tunic (a modified version of the frock coat) and the Albert-pattern shako by a lower shako. The other branches of the British Army also had their uniforms redesigned on the basis of practicality.²⁹

Even the European troops of the Indian Army experienced some relief from the restriction of their uniform. As early as 1845, Sir Charles Napier, then Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Sind, had complained to Sir Henry Hardinge, the Governor-General, about the weight of the shako. He himself wore a double-peaked cap with a white cover and Hew Strachan, in his essay on the pre-Crimean reform of British uniforms, speculated that this was the template for the "trial frame of a helmet or cap that he had made up in 1850, ostensibly for adoption by the Indian Army".³⁰ But he resigned as

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mollo, *The Indian Army*, p. 57.

²⁹ H.F.A. Strachan, 'The Origins of the 1855 Uniform Changes: An Example of Pre-Crimean Reform', *JSAHR*, Vol. 55, 1977, pp. 85-117

³⁰ Ibid., p. 109.

Commander-in-Chief of India before his vision could become reality. More successful was Lord Frederick Fitzclarence who in 1853, during his tenure as Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, modified the dress of his European troops by replacing their leather stocks with square collars. He also made their coatees less tight-fitting. Uniforms for native troops, on the other hand, received no such modification. There are two possible explanations: either Indian colonels, like their British Army counterparts, were unwilling to see a diminution in their profits from the off-reckonings system (they would have been supported by the 21 senior officers - nine from Bengal, eight from Madras and four from Bombay - who also received a cut of the cake);³¹ or senior administrators believed that the survival of British India depended upon the separation of its soldiers from civil society, and that a European-style uniform was one way to achieve this.

A second professional grievance held by native troops in general - and Bengal sepoys in particular - was with the nature of their duties. "Year after year," writes Barat, "[the Bengal sepoy] would have to face the monotonous round of peace time assignments - forenoon parade for cleaning his arms and accoutrement, evening parade for orders, guard duties, a brigade exercise once a week, regimental exercises four or five times a week - and would have to carry out these tasks as a sepoy with years to serve before he could expect promotion."³² Barat argues that the situation became particularly acute after the 1800s because "campaigns were waged at less and less frequent intervals and the native soldiery was restricted to duties which it considered to be monotonous and tiring".³³ For while annexations reduced the chances of active service, they increased the need for policing the new areas. Such duties - which included escorting treasure and guarding prisoners - were increasingly undertaken by infantry sepoys. In a minute of 1833, Lord William Bentinck quoted the two most recent half-yearly returns for the "disposable force that could be collected upon an emergency from the principal stations of the Bengal Army, after providing all the guards required for the headquarters of corps, sick, baggage etc."³⁴ In one case 54 per cent of troops were available, and in the other just 42 per cent.³⁵ Bentinck commented:

³¹ Details of the development and workings of the East India Company army's off-reckonings fund are contained in the Bombay Military Regulations, 1850, L/MIL/17/4/548, OIOC, pp165-90.

³² Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 154.

³³ Ibid., p. 155.

³⁴ Philips (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck*, II, p. 1332.

At every one of the large stations mentioned in the statement, there are government establishments of all kinds; commissariat, ordnance magazines, public cattle, pay office, bazars, and other deposits of public property, requiring protection and their separate guards. The largeness of the country...and the large bands of dacoits...require that all detachments going with treasure or any other escort, should be large and efficient... No greater political error can be committed than that of imposing upon the sepoy during peace excessive duty, or by tormenting him with an overstrained system of drill and discipline, which too frequently occur... Care should be taken, when estimating the total amount of force to be required, that the ordinary duty should never fall hard upon the sepoy.³⁶

Yet conditions did not improve. In 1844, for example, Henry Lawrence suggested that all treasuries and magazines, as well as a number of fortresses, should be "garrisoned by invalids, supported by small detachments of regulars for night and exposed duties".³⁷ This would relieve the majority of regulars from such arduous tasks. Lawrence added: "There should be no after drill and parades to *keep men out of mischief* - to disgust them with their duty. They should have as much of exercise and instruction as should keep them practised and able soldiers, and their lives should be rendered happy, that they might remain willing and contented ones."³⁸

But no reforms were instituted. Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant told the Peel Commission that, as Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army during Napier's time as Commander-in-Chief (1849-50), he submitted a return which showed that "one third of the entire native army was permanently on duty, day and night, from year's end to year's end".³⁹ Barat states that during 1849-50 "more than 30,000 Bengal native soldiers were engaged in guarding treasure and that too for a total period of 15 months".⁴⁰ These figures did not escape the attention of Napier who informed the Duke of Wellington in 1849 that it was necessary to have a large and efficient police force that would "leave the military to their own duties".⁴¹ His later treatise on the defects of the Indian Army stressed that the breaking up of a regiment into small detachments for guard duty made it "unservicable as a military body" and

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 1332-3. The figures quoted are for 45 regiments of native infantry, comprising 31,320 drummers and rank and file. The first figure of 16,833 men is for 1 January 1833 when all the men were present; the second figure of 13,213 is for 1 August 1833 when the usual proportion were absent on furlough.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 1333-4.

³⁷ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 25.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

³⁹ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 485.

⁴⁰ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 155.

destroyed discipline.⁴² "Soldiers hate to be constantly on guard," he wrote, "constantly dressed and accoutred in any climate, in a tropical one it is unendurable, and therefore evaded... Here is the origin of the general Indian custom of guards going to bed and self-relief of sentries."⁴³ Lord Ellenborough (Governor-General 1842-4) had tried to reduce the number of sepoy needed for civil duties by forming police battalions. But only a handful had been raised by the time he left India. "The evil therefore remains," concluded Napier, "and the Sepoys are wearied and disgusted."⁴⁴

It was not a problem that was confined to the Bengal Army. After he took command of the Bombay Army in 1856, General Grant "made repeated representations" that that army was "similarly overworked".⁴⁵ Yet Napier felt that the discipline of the Bengal Army had suffered the most as a consequence. "The officers of the Queen's and Bombay Armies," he wrote, "naturally cry out, when they see sentries self relieved and guards going to bed; but when the remote causes of this loose discipline were revealed, I saw that a partial effort to remedy would make matters worse."⁴⁶

Onerous duties were a particular irritant for Bengal sepoy because, proportionately, they were strung out over a far wider area than their Madras and Bombay counterparts. The situation was made even worse by the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 and parts of Burma in 1853, though Bombay's territory was also augmented by Sind in 1844. Yet irksome duty remained one of the few grievances that Bengal and Madras native troops had in common. The fact that no Madras sepoy actually mutinied in 1857 might help to explain why, unusually, this professional grievance was not ameliorated by the post-mutiny reforms of the 1860s. For, as late as 1879, the Commander-in-Chief of Madras was complaining that one of the reasons his regiments were undermanned was because sepoy's duties had "considerably increased of late years - the discipline is stricter - and very often the men do not get the nights in bed they are entitled to by Regulation".⁴⁷ He added: "Heavy guard duty, combined with constant parade instruction and a more rigid discipline have lessened the popularity of the army."⁴⁸

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 228.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 229-30.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 231.

⁴⁵ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 485.

⁴⁶ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 231.

⁴⁷ Gen. Sir N. Chamberlain to the D. of Cambridge, 17 April 1879, Chamberlain Correspondence, OIOC, MSS Eur/C203.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The well-being of voluntary armies has always depended upon the adequacy of their incentives to serve. These can be roughly divided into two groups: financial reward and enhanced status. In 1845, Sir Henry Hardinge, Governor-General of India, listed the grounds upon which the allegiance of the native army rested as "superior pay, good pensions, just & kind treatment, high consideration & respect for the profession of a soldier" and a "conviction that these advantages are more secure under the irresistible good fortune of British rule, than by taking service under any Native Prince".⁴⁹ My contention is that by 1857 the Bengal Army's incentives were no longer sufficient to ensure its loyalty.

The chief incentive for volunteer armies - particularly colonial armies - is usually pay. In this respect, the East India Company's army was an immensely attractive proposition in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because it offered regular pay, pensions and other financial benefits - perks largely unheard of in the armies of native states. Yet the basic pay for ordinary sepoy - seven rupees or 14 shillings a month - was the same in 1857 as it had been at the turn of the century (and would remain so until it was raised to nine rupees in 1895). This figure was identical in all three presidencies, although the Bengal sepoy were paid a basic five and a half rupees with one and a half as an allowance, known as half batta.⁵⁰ Until 1837, the presidencies differed in the amount of batta they paid to their sepoys when they were on the march or in the field. A Bengal sepoy received an extra one and a half rupees a month, a Madras sepoy 2 rupees 5 annas 4 pice, and a Bombay sepoy two and a half rupees.⁵¹ The initial justification for this discrepancy was that the price of rice was higher in Madras and Bombay than in Bengal. But after Bentinck pointed out in 1835 that rice or a grain substitute was virtually the same price "in all the interior part of India where the great body of native troops are employed", the Court of Directors eventually agreed that the pay and batta for all native regular troops should be regulated by the Bengal standard.⁵² The alteration was formally introduced by general order in April 1837 (and was still in operation at the time of the mutiny). As well as equalizing pay, it reduced the number of years that ordinary sepoy had to serve to qualify for a pension from twenty to fifteen, and increased the rate from three rupees a month to four (see Tables 30 and 31).⁵³

⁴⁹ Hardinge to Sir Charles Napier, 31 Oct 1844, Napier Papers, BL, Add. MSS 54517, f. 102.

⁵⁰ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 132.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁵² Ibid., p. 134.

⁵³ G.O.C.C., 17 April 1837, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

Table 30 - *Pay, allowances and pensions for Light Cavalry and Horse Artillery from 1837*

Rank	Pay (with half batta)	Extra batta (field)	Pension (15 yrs' service)	Pension (Disabled or 40 yrs' service)
Subedar Major*	105	15	25	40
Subedar*	80	15	25	40
Jemadar	32	8	12	20
Havildar	20	5	7	12
Naik	16	4	7	12
Trumpeter	16	4	7	12
Trooper	9	1.8	4	7

Table 31 - *Pay, allowances and pensions for Native Infantry and Foot Artillery from 1837*

Rank	Pay (with half batta)	Extra batta (field)	Pension (15 yrs' service)	Pension (Disabled or 40 yrs' service)
Subedar Major*	92	15	25	40
Subedar*	67	15	25	40
Jemadar	24.8	7.8	12	20
Havildar	14	5	7	12
Naik	12	5	7	12
Trumpeter	11	5	4	7
Sepoy	7	1.8	4	7

* Bengal Army only; Madras and Bombay retained their own pay structure for subedars and subedar-majors based on their length of service.

As far as the equalization of pay and allowances was concerned, the big losers were the ordinary sepoys, sowars and native officers of the Madras and Bombay presidencies who now received less field batta. The Madras troops also forfeited the full batta of three rupees a month which they had been paid for serving outside their own presidency, though all sepoys still received a higher rate of pay for service beyond the frontiers of British India. The only beneficiaries were N.C.O.s (naiks and havildars) in all arms of the Madras and Bombay armies who had formerly received less basic pay than their Bengal counterparts.⁵⁴

In theory, all native troops stood to benefit from the institution of long service pay in 1837.⁵⁵ Also recommended by Bentinck, it increased the monthly pay of a sepoy by one rupee after 16 years of

⁵⁴ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 133. The pre-1837 monthly pay for havildars and naiks was as follows: Bengal 14 rupees and 12 rupees; Madras and Bombay 10 rupees 12 annas and 8 rupees 12 annas. Jemadars were paid the same and the rate for subedars in the respective presidencies did not change.

⁵⁵ G.O.G.G., 17 April 1837, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

service and by two rupees after 20 years. It was, however, dependent upon good service and would be forfeited by those who had been convicted by a court martial "of some serious offence", or whose names had been twice entered in the regimental defaulter book during the two years prior to the completion of the period of service.⁵⁶ Also Bentinck's proposal for a graduated scale of pay in every rank had not received the Court of Directors' approval, resulting in a standard rate for all. Yet in 1838 a subedar in the 1st Bengal N.I. told his former officer, William Sleeman, that the introduction of long service pay had increased the value of the service "very much".⁵⁷ Of the 800 or so men in his regiment, "more than" 150 received two extra rupees a month and the same number number qualified for one.⁵⁸ The native officer continued:

This they feel as an immense addition to the former seven rupees a month. A prudent sepoys lives upon two, or at the utmost three, rupees a month in seasons of moderate plenty, and send all their former seven to their families. The dismissal of a man from such a service as this distresses, not only him, but all his relations in the higher grades [ie native officers], who know how much of the comfort and happiness of his family depend upon his remaining and advancing in it.⁵⁹

Writing four years after the new pension regulations of 1837 (see Tables 30 and 31), Sleeman noted that the pension was "probably the greatest of all bonds between the government and the native army".⁶⁰ The basic rate of four rupees a month was paid to sepoys who had served at least 15 years and who had been pronounced no longer fit for duty by a board of surgeons. The higher rate of seven rupees a month was given to those who had served 40 years, those disabled by wounds, and the families of those killed in action. According to Sleeman, there were 22,381 military pensioners and 1,730 family pensioners in the Bengal Presidency as of 1 May 1851.⁶¹ "I question," he wrote, "whether the number of retired soldiers maintained at the expense of government bears so large a proportion to the number actually serving in any other nation on earth."⁶² General Alexander, the former Adjutant-General of the Bombay Army, was less enthusiastic because, he told the Peel Commission in 1858, the

⁵⁶ G.O.C.C., 5 May 1837, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 617.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 640.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 643.

⁶² *Ibid.* The proportion of pensioned to serving soldiers was 22,381 out of 82,027 men, or 27.3%.

new pension regulations favoured sepoys over more senior ranks.⁶³ A sepoy received almost 60 per cent of his monthly pay after 15 years, whereas a subedar, with at least 30 years' service behind him, would get just over a third. The consequence, said Alexander, was that native officers appealed to their commanding officers "not to have them removed to the pension-list", while sepoys had a far greater inducement to feign incapacity and leave the army.⁶⁴

Yet according to Colonel Keith Young, Judge Advocate-General of the Bengal Army from 1852 to 1862, a major cause of discontent was the fact that it was so difficult for Bengal native officers and sepoys to get on the Pension Establishment in the first place. "There is", he wrote in 1857, "no chance whatever" of a Bengal soldier "being granted a pension as long as he can put one foot before another". He added:

So a commanding officer of a regiment, do what he will, cannot get rid of useless, worn-out men, who are sent back to him by the invaliding committees to become a source of discontent in the corps. [Capt. H.W.] Norman, our Assistant Adjutant-General...told me of an instance within his knowledge of every man who was sent before the invaliding committees of a certain regiment having been rejected, except one, and that poor fellow died before his papers could be made out for pension. At Bombay, where the Army has always been in a more contented state than here, the invaliding rules are quite different, and men are admitted to pensions there - if pronounced unfit by the regimental authorities - who would be kept on the strength of the Army for years longer in Bengal.⁶⁵

The 1840s saw the native troops granted a number of other financial concessions. From 1842, for example, they were allowed to receive one family letter per month free of charge (they already had the reciprocal privilege of sending one letter per month the other way for nothing).⁶⁶ But this privilege was withdrawn in the early 1850s, prompting Sir Henry Lawrence to describe the "new post-office rules" in a letter to Lord Canning as "bitter grievances" and one of the "many recent acts of Government" which had "been skilfully played upon by incendiaries".⁶⁷ In 1845 the Bengal Army was brought into line with the other presidencies by the award of hutting money. The full allowance of three rupees for

⁶³ Evidence of Major-General Robert Alexander, 25 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, pp. 79, 81.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 81

⁶⁵ Col. K. Young to Col. H.B. Henderson, 2 May 1857, in Gen. Sir Henry Norman and Mrs Keith Young (eds.), *Delhi-1857: The Siege, Assault and Capture as Given in the Diary and Correspondence of the Late Colonel Keith Young C.B.* (London, 1902), p. 10.

⁶⁶ G.O.P.C., 11 Nov 1842, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁶⁷ Lawrence to Canning, May 1857, quoted Anderson and Subedar (eds.), *The Last Days of the Company*, p. 110.

sepoys (rising to 30 rupees for subedars) was for the "erection of huts on the formation of new Lines"; a half allowance was for repairing those they moved into when changing stations.⁶⁸

But despite these boons (one of which was only temporary), and contrary to the testimony of Sleeman's native officer, Barat has produced much evidence to suggest that many Bengal sepoy found it difficult to make ends meet. This was partly because they were charged for a number of items of dress and equipment, including three undress tunics, three pairs of white linen trousers, one pair of coloured trousers, one set of beads, one pair of shoes, one cummerbund, one turban and cover, one knapsack and one greatcoat. As of 1828, they were given a jacket and a pair of woollen pantaloons every two years free of charge, while deductions for the other items were not to exceed five rupees per annum. But this figure was often exceeded. And there were other expenses, such as buying their own food, paying for the services of a washerman, barber and sweeper, and defraying the cost of transporting their baggage when on the march (a sum that generally came to more than the marching batta of one and a half rupees a month).⁶⁹ Bengal sepoy would also send as much as three-quarters of their pay back to their villages to support their families (a practice that was not followed by Madras and Bombay sepoy because their families lived with them in the military cantonments).⁷⁰ Was it any wonder, asks Barat, that the Bengal sepoy "found himself in strained circumstances, lived on the cheapest kind of food, and at times even starved so as to fulfil his various social obligations"?⁷¹

But Bengal sepoy were not the only ones who found it difficult to make ends meet. Captain Hervey considered the pay of a Madras sepoy to be totally inadequate to convey and feed himself and his family when on the line of march. He wrote:

Before starting a sepoy generally receives an advance of pay... With [it] he has to clear himself from the station (for probably he has incurred debts), besides paying an advance equal to one half, for the means of conveying his goods and chattels, as well as his numerous family, some of whom, particularly the young and aged, are unable to walk. Exclusively of all this, he has to provide the means of sustenance for himself and dependants, and that with a total of perhaps two rupees in his pocket, for a journey of about two or three or four hundred miles! How can he do

⁶⁸ G.O.G.G., 15 August 1845, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁶⁹ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 136-7, 177.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

⁷¹ Ibid.

this? Impossible! He must starve and so must his family; at all events, they must from sheer necessity feed themselves upon the most economical plans that they can possibly devise.⁷²

To put a Bengal sepoy's pay into perspective, Barat states that domestic servants of European officers earned between four and 20 rupees a month, field labourers from two to six rupees, carpenters from five to 10 rupees and blacksmiths from five to 20 rupees.⁷³ She also points out that the cost of living (in the shape of the price of grain) "nearly doubled between 1796 and 1852"; but "whereas the wages of the ploughman and the labourer increased to keep pace with the rising prices, that of the sepoy remained static".⁷⁴ In other words, his pay fell in real terms by almost 50 per cent during the first half of the nineteenth century. By contrast, a private in one of the East India Company's European regiments was given 10 rupees, 3 annas and 2 pice a month (with an additional 2 rupees, 6 annas and nine pice after 14 years' service, and one rupee, nine annas and 4 pice for service 200 miles beyond the presidency capital).⁷⁵ A private in the British Army was paid a shilling a day (or roughly 15 rupees a month) and a similar pension after 21 years' service (or 10d. if he was discharged at his own request).⁷⁶ He also received, from 1839, an extra 1d. a day and a ring of lace around his arm for every seven years of good conduct (the term was reduced to five years in 1845).⁷⁷ While such pay was adequate for India, it did not go a long way in Britain at a time when agricultural labourers earned twelve shillings a week and skilled labourers more than £1.⁷⁸ In a comparative sense, therefore, Bengal sepoys were better paid than their British counterparts. But then they tended to be drawn from the rural élites, whereas most British soldiers were either from the lowly class of agricultural labourers or the lowest rungs of urban employment.⁷⁹

⁷² Allen (ed.), *A Soldier of the Company*, pp. 149-50. General Alexander, a former adjutant-general of the Bombay Army, supported Hervey's argument by telling the Peel Commission that the pay, batta and hutting money of the Madras native troops was "insufficient" [Source: Evidence of Major-General Robert Alexander, 25 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 79]

⁷³ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 138-9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 313.

⁷⁵ 'Establishment and Allowances of a Regiment of the Honourable Company's European Infantry', Pay and Audit Regulations 1849, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/459, p. 147.

⁷⁶ Hew Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy: The Reform of the British Army 1830-54* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 69-70. The pension rates quoted came back into force after 1847. From 1833 to 1847 a British private discharged after 21 years was given just 6d. a day, though this could rise to a shilling after additional service, or be added to by a disability.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

At a time when the spending power of sepoys was being gradually eroded, pay remained a highly sensitive issue. "Whether in Bombay, Madras or Bengal," wrote Sir Henry Lawrence in 1856, "doubts as to the intentions of Government in regard to pay have been at the bottom of most mutinies."⁸⁰ This was certainly the case with Bengal and Madras troops in the 1840s. The first sign of disaffection in the Bengal Army arose during the garrisoning of Sind. The province had been annexed in August 1843 after a successful campaign by Bombay troops. But the government decided to replace them with Bengal troops because the Bombay Army had barely enough men to meet its own presidency commitments. Four Bengal Native Infantry regiments - the 4th, 34th, 64th and 69th - were earmarked for the task. But all four objected to serving in Sind, a notoriously unhealthy and expensive province, without the extra allowance known as money-rations (rations or their equivalent in money in excess of pay and field batta) that had been granted to troops in Sind during the military operations that preceded its annexation.⁸¹ Some also demanded that pensions should be paid to the heirs of those who might die of disease in Sind. Yet the government had already authorised the payment of field batta to troops in cantonment in Sind, while money-rations in excess of field batta were given to those in the field.⁸² Beyond this it would not go, not least because the Bombay troops had submitted to the withdrawal of money-rations before their departure in 1843. Unfortunately the same order had not been communicated to the Bengal troops until mid-October 1843, by which time some of the Bengal regiments had already received orders to proceed to Sind.⁸³

The upshot was that the 34th regiment was disbanded in March 1844, while 38 members of the 64th regiment were sentenced to punishments ranging from death to five years in prison.⁸⁴ The other two regiments discharged a total of 281 men.⁸⁵ Yet in retrospect the Court of Directors was not unsympathetic to the cause of the mutineers, declaring that it would "be prepared to sanction such a regulation for the future grant of money rations to the troops serving beyond the boundaries of Hindustan" as might be consistent with the peculiar nature of service.⁸⁶ The response of Lord Hardinge, the new Governor-General (1844-8), was to concede that Sind was a special case by granting troops in cantonments there an extra allowance of two rupees, while those in the field received three

⁸⁰ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 406.

⁸¹ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 236-64.

⁸² G.O.G.G., 12 March 1844, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁸³ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 260.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 247, 253.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 256, 259. The total number of discharged men included 191 from the 4th N.I. and 90 from the 69th N.I.

and a half more.⁸⁷ A sepoy of under 16 years' service in cantonments, therefore, would be given pay of seven rupees, field batta of one and a half rupees, and this special Sind allowance of two rupees, making a total of ten and a half rupees. Money rations, however, would cease to be drawn by sepoys in the field, though compensation would be paid when the price of "provisions forming the native soldier's diet" rose beyond an aggregate of three and a half rupees a month.⁸⁸ This last stipulation - applicable to all native troops wherever they were stationed - actually left the Sind troops worse off because it superseded Lord Ellenborough's general order of March 1844 which had granted them compensation when the price of individual items of food (including attah, dholi, ghee and salt) became too high.⁸⁹

The disaffection displayed by a number of Bengal sepoy regiments in the Punjab in 1849 and 1850 (see Chapter One) was linked directly to the above settlement. For until the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the native troops there had enjoyed the same allowances granted to those in Sind. From the summer of 1849, however, only those troops serving on the frontier beyond the Indus were eligible for foreign batta.⁹⁰ In early 1850, after the first flames of mutinous discontent had died away, the Commander-in-Chief, Napier, tried to mollify the sepoys in the Punjab by reinstating the terms of Ellenborough's 1844 general order whereby compensation was paid whenever the price of individual food items rose beyond a certain level. Declaring Hardinge's 1845 regulation - which denied compensation unless the aggregate price of rations reached a certain level - as "both impolitic and unjust" Napier announced that henceforth compensation would be issued under the terms of the old regulation.⁹¹ He explained: "As in the present state of transition, from Scinde pay and allowances, to the regular pay of the troops, a transition which has produced a most unprovoked state of insubordination in some regiments, the Commander-in-Chief thinks that no cause of dissatisfaction should be given to the troops."⁹² Napier's failure to consult the government before making his decision, however, was to result in the protracted dispute with the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, that was to culminate in his departure from India in December 1850.

The mutinies in Sind in 1843 and the Punjab in 1849-50 emphasize how sensitive the Bengal sepoys were to minor adjustments in their pay. This was partly because most sepoys were genuinely hard up

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 262.

⁸⁷ G.O.G.G., 15 August 1845, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 140-1.

⁹⁰ G.O.G.G. 25 Oct 1849, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.

⁹¹ Col. Grant, Adj.-Gen. of the Bengal army, to the Pres. of the Council, 20 Jan 1850, quoted in Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 138.

and found it difficult to support their families when serving in distant and expensive provinces, and partly because, as Sir Henry Hardinge noted in 1844, native troops did not consider collective bargaining "leading to mutiny" as a disloyal act, but rather a legitimate "means to obtain a justifiable end".⁹³ This was particularly so in the Bengal Army where the brotherhood of high-caste sepoys regarded mutiny as a way of asserting their authority *vis-à-vis* the government. *The Mofussilite*, a pro-British newspaper founded at Meerut in 1845, referred to both factors in an article of 8 February 1850. Native soldiers served only for their pay, it commented, and unless that pay enabled them to send money back to their families then they would quickly become sullen, insolent and even mutinous.⁹⁴ Yet, it added, the Bengal sepoy had been "so petted, belauded and indulged [that he was] quite spoilt" and "should be kept well under and taught to think less of himself than he does at present".⁹⁵

Given that only Bengal Native Infantry regiments were involved in the more serious mutinies prior to 1857, it is tempting to conclude that pay was not an issue that affected the other arms of the Bengal Army, or indeed the other presidency armies. Yet, as already noted, the simmering discontent in the Bombay Army over the 1837 abolition of foreign service batta was to resurface 20 years later when the 8th L.C. refused to sail to Bengal to fight the mutineers. The 1840s also saw Madras troops involved in two mutinies over the issue of pay. The first involved the 6th L.C. which, towards the end of 1843, was ordered to Jabalpur in central India to replace Bengal troops needed on the Indus. Madras troops generally suffered more than their Bengal counterparts when sent to distant stations because they had to pay for the transport of their families. Madras cavalrymen suffered the most because they were principally well-born Muslims, and the rigid seclusion in which their women were kept greatly added to the cost of transport. So when the troopers of the 6th L.C. were told that not only was their posting permanent (it had earlier been declared temporary) but that they would not receive extra allowances, "they broke into open manifestations of discontent, and bound themselves by oaths to stand by each other whilst they resisted the unjust decree".⁹⁶ They only agreed to return to their duty after increased rates of pay were granted. But no sooner had one Madras regiment been mollified than another refused to obey orders. This time it was the 47th N.I. which had been ordered to supplement Sir Charles Napier's force in Sind because the Bombay Army was so stretched. Previously under orders to proceed

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hardinge to Sir Charles Napier, 31 Oct 1844, Napier Papers, BL, Add. MSS 54517, f. 103.

⁹⁴ *The Mofussilite*, 8 February 1850. Quoted in Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 283.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, I, p. 214.

to Moulmein on the east coast of the Bay of Bengal where foreign batta and ration allowances applied, the 47th was promised by its government that the same allowances would be paid in Sind. But the Supreme Government disagreed and informed the sepoy at Bombay in February 1844 that they would not receive the advantages of foreign service. The tumult died down only after advances of pay were given to the near-starving sepoy. However Sir John Kaye is of the opinion that these two examples of disaffection were far less ominous than those displayed by the Bengal Army in the 1840s. "The Madras Army," he wrote, "was not destined to supply the want accruing from the defective loyalty of Bengal. It broke down at a critical time; but only under such a weight of mismanagement as might have crushed out the fidelity of the best mercenaries in the world."⁹⁷

There is, on the other hand, much evidence to suggest that the possibility of loot and increased pay was a major incentive to mutiny for all arms of the Bengal Army in 1857, particularly its irregular cavalry. Of the regular Bengal troops, only the cavalry and horse artillery received more pay than the infantry, with a trooper given nine rupees a month, a subedar 80 and a subedar-major (the highest commissioned rank a native could obtain) 105. The Bengal foot artillery and Sappers and Miners were paid the same as their infantry counterparts, with sepoy receiving seven rupees a month, subedars 67 and subedar-majors 92. In an essay for the *Calcutta Review* in 1856, Henry Lawrence advised that the pay of specialist arms like the foot artillery and sappers "should be higher" than the infantry.⁹⁸ In a subsequent essay that year, he added: "In all Native armies the artillery are the best and trustiest men. They are always true to their guns; they worship them... A thousand Golundauze cost no more than as many sepoy. The more is the pity. They should be taught to consider themselves a separate and selected body... Their number should not exceed the European artillery, but, whatever the number and proportions, let the Golundauze receive *the one extra* rupee. It would be good economy."⁹⁹ The opportunity to secure more pay with an alternative native employer during the mutiny may well have tipped the balance for a number of wavering artillerymen.

For members of the Bengal Irregular Cavalry, this was almost certainly the case. Though paid more than the regulars, their expenses were far higher. This was because the irregular horse was organized on what was known as the silladar principle. In return for a higher rate of pay, the silladar (or recruit) agreed to provide and maintain his own horse and equipment. To ensure uniformity, these items were

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 217.

⁹⁸ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 395.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 432.

provided by the regiment. The recruit simply paid the regiment a sum corresponding to the value of these items, known as an assami. Alternatively, a recruit's assami could be paid for by a native gentleman who often became his native officer. When the recruit left the regiment, either the value of his assami was refunded to him (or his benefactor) or he kept his horse and equipment. If he was dishonourably discharged he forfeited his assami, which thus "acted as a bond for good behaviour".¹⁰⁰

But the irregular cavalryman had so many expenses that his basic pay of 20 rupees a month (rising to 150 rupees for a rissaldar, the senior rank) was not nearly enough to keep him out of debt.¹⁰¹ In an essay published in 1844, Henry Lawrence pointed out that Bengal Irregular Cavalrymen were mostly well-born Muslims with "expensive habits".¹⁰² To make matters worse, they rarely received their full pay. He wrote:

Every man entering, in (we believe) seven out of the nine corps [in existence in 1844], has not only to purchase his horse and equipments, but to pay one hundred and fifty rupees or thereabouts to the estate or family of the man whose decease or invaliding caused the vacancy. Such donation of course throws the recruit at once into the moneylender's hands, and often leaves him for life a debtor. If the man again has not the cash to purchase a horse, he rides one belonging to a Native officer or to some privileged person, and becomes what is called a bargeer - the soldier receiving only seven or eight rupees a month, and the owner of the horse the balance of the twenty allowed by Government.¹⁰³

Lawrence considered the "evil" of this system to be "so great" that "Government would do well to redeem all debts as they now stand and forbid the system for the future".¹⁰⁴ Instead irregular regiments should be open to all men of respectability who could bring their own horse or were in a position to "purchase that of the man who created the vacancy".¹⁰⁵ Broadly similar views were expressed by John Jacob, the founder of the Sind Irregular Horse (part of the Bombay Army), in an article for the *Calcutta Review* of March 1846. He was particularly critical of the existence of a regimental bank in irregular

¹⁰⁰ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 39.

¹⁰¹ 'Establishment and Allowances of a regiment of Irregular Cavalry of Six Russallahs', Pay and Audit Regulations 1849, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/459, p. 220a. The pay in cantonments for the various ranks of the Bengal Irregular Cavalry in 1851 was as follows: sowar 20 rupees a month; trumpeter 25; nishanburdar (junior N.C.O.) 28; duffadar (junior N.C.O.) 28; kote duffadar (senior N.C.O.) 35; jemadar (junior officer) 45; naib rissaldar (junior officer) 50; rissaldar (senior officer) 80; rissaldar (senior officer) 150.

¹⁰² Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 32.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

regiments. "It paralyses every energy," he wrote, "nearly every man is hopelessly in debt; frequently he cannot even pay the interest of these debts." Jacob knew of one commandant who had "to borrow, on his own personal responsibility, some *three lakhs of rupees* to pay off the men's debts, so as to get rid of the ruinous rate of interest they were then paying". His solution was to introduce the system that operated in his own regiment. "There is," he wrote, "a regimental fund, formed by the subscription monthly of fourteen annas per horse, and two annas per man; all fines etc. also go into the fund. On the death of a horse, the owner receives Rs. 100 from the fund, to assist him in the purchase of another... There is *no* regimental banker, and no shop-keeper in the regiment bazar dare give a man credit beyond the end of the month (this rule is strictly enforced). *Any man getting into debt to purchase a horse forfeits his assamee*... In consequence, the men are *not* in debt at all, as they never need be, and therefore are always ready for service." Jacob also believed that an irregular sowar's pay of 20 rupees a month was insufficient. His own sowars received 30 rupees, and even that was not enough "to maintain the horseman as he ought to be".¹⁰⁶

Lord Gough, Commander-in-Chief in India from 1843-9, strongly urged a parliamentary select committee in 1853 to recommend a pay increase for the Bengal Irregular Cavalry to 25 rupees a month. "The rate of pay is not sufficient in many parts of Bengal, and particularly in going upon service," he declared. "Those soldiers are very hard pressed; they get into debt, they get involved, and they borrow money, which is a bad thing always in any country, but particularly in India."¹⁰⁷ Yet by the time Henry Lawrence wrote another article demanding military reform in early 1856, nothing had been done, despite the fact that Sir Charles Napier and "almost all irregular cavalry officers" had joined Gough in calling for a pay increase of five rupees a month.¹⁰⁸ In September of that year, Lawrence again recommended an increase:

Government allow mounted officers thirty rupees a month for each horse; few gain materially by such contract; and yet twenty is given to the trooper, who ought not to be materially worse mounted! Of this twenty, after deductions for the remount-fund, clothing, gear, washing, watermen, barber, etc., there is not, we firmly believe, a sowar in the service who receives more than seventeen, to feed himself, his family, and his horse, and to provide arms, a tent, and a hut! Fix, then, twenty as the sum to *be actually paid to each man*, every month. Let the balance, whether

¹⁰⁶ Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, pp. 149-50, 155-6.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of Lord Gough, 14 March 1853, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 412.

four or five rupees, be retained in the commandant's hands for remounts, clothing, etc... The proposed scheme would prevent the *necessity* of debt, and would enable every sowar to ride a three-hundred-rupee horse.¹⁰⁹

The Peel Commission also heard much evidence of the Bengal Irregular Cavalry's indebtedness. Colonel Harington of the 5th L.C. told the commission that the "regiment disbanded at Peshawur for mutiny last year [the 10th I.C.] owed nearly £10,000" to its regimental banker.¹¹⁰ Colonel Becher, the Quartermaster-General of the Bengal Army, insisted that the irregulars were always "very much embarrassed and in debt" and that shortly before the mutiny "General Anson and the Government" had been asked to raise their pay. Others - including Sir J.H. Grant, Sir George Clerk and Major Daly - repeated many of Jacob's recommendations by calling for a post-mutiny increase in pay (to 25 rupees), the abolition of regimental banks, a subsidy to help pay for arms and accoutrements, and the discharge of any men found to be in debt.¹¹¹ The only contrary note was struck by Lieutenant General Sir Patrick Grant who stated that 20 rupees a month was "sufficient on ordinary occasions to keep a sowar and his horse well".¹¹² While he was prepared to admit that most irregulars were "more or less in debt", he put this down to the fact that Muslims generally spent all they received.¹¹³ But as a former Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army (1846-50) who may well have blocked earlier demands for a pay increase on the ground of economy, Grant is hardly an objective witness.

The bulk of this evidence confirms that the sowars of the pre-mutiny Bengal Irregular Cavalry were underpaid and hopelessly in debt. They therefore had a very strong financial incentive to mutiny which, in certain instances in 1857, may have overridden the fact that (as stated in the previous chapter) only a small proportion of them were linked to the mutinous native infantry by ties of kinship and caste.

All native troops suffered a reduction in the real value of their pay in the decades prior to the mutiny. But the consequences of lower pay were partially offset by successful military campaigns and the accumulation of war booty. Plunder had long been a welcome supplement to the ordinary pay of Indian mercenaries; the East India Company had even legitimised the practice in the form of prize money. By the 1850s, however, the internal conquest of India was complete and the occasional action against the tribes of the Sonthal and North-West Frontier did not provide the same opportunity to loot as a conventional campaign. Henceforth native troops would have to fight in wars outside India - with

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 418.

¹¹⁰ Evidence of Lt. Col. Harington, 24 August 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 47.

¹¹¹ Evidence of Sir George Clerk, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 40; Appx. 72, *ibid.*, p. 571.

¹¹² Appx. 65, *ibid.*, p. 491.

Hindu sepoys risking a theoretical loss of caste - if they wished to supplement their diminishing pay. For this reason an uprising against their colonial masters, and a return to the traditional cycle of war, would have appealed to many native troops.

A professional grievance that may have been even more influential than low pay as a motive to mutiny in 1857 was the inadequacy of career prospects. The highest commissioned rank to which a native could rise in all three presidency armies was subedar-major in the regular units and rissaldar-major in the irregulars. Yet both were inferior in rank to the most junior European officer - ensign in the infantry, cornet in the cavalry and second-lieutenant in the artillery - nor could they give orders to the two European N.C.O.s present in Bengal native units.¹¹⁴

In an article for the *Calcutta Review* in 1844, Henry Lawrence pointed out the absurdity of this situation "in a land,...that above all others, has been accustomed to see military merit rewarded, and to witness the successive rise of families from the lowest conditions". The East India Company army, he added, "offered no inducement to superior intellects, or more stirring spirits" who left in disgust. There were, as a result, "many commandants in the Mahrattah and Seikh service, who were privates in our army", including General Dhokul Singh who had risen to the exalted rank of drill naik (corporal) in the Bengal Army before transferring his allegiance to the Maharaja of Lahore. While nine out of ten sepoys were no doubt satisfied with the possibility of reaching the rank of subedar-major by the age of sixty, noted Lawrence, it was for the tenth - "the bold and daring spirit that disdains to live for ever in subordinate place" - that a greater stimulus was necessary. Among his recommendations were commands of irregular corps, grants of land and "pensions to the second and third generation". He also believed that "no place or office should be absolutely barred to the native soldier, although the promotion of every individual should be grounded on his individual merits".¹¹⁵ On all counts his advice fell on deaf ears.

So Lawrence repeated these arguments in an 1856 article. Now he believed up to three sepoys in a hundred were "*thoroughly and dangerously discontented*" because "they feel they have that in them which elsewhere would rise them to distinction". His solution was to allow a certain number of

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ According to Henry Lawrence, there were few European N.C.O.s in the Bombay Army by 1856 "because they clash with the Native officers". See Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 398.

irregular corps to be commanded by a native officer on at least 400 rupees a month, while subedars in other irregular corps should be given company allowances and an increase in pay from "67 rupees a month to 140, or about one-third that of captains *doing the same work*", with jemadars given a proportionate increase. The ordinary sepoy, on the other hand, was "*amply paid*". Lawrence added: "He has even been pampered and petted. The extra batta and donatives that he has received, have done him harm, and induced greed... The many are usefully provided for, but honours and rewards, present and future, are still wanted for the few."¹¹⁶

Napier, too, appreciated the danger of thwarting ambition. In his posthumously-published book, he noted that native officers had "a full share of Eastern daring, genius, and ambition", but to nourish these qualities they had to "be placed on a par with European officers". To allow a veteran subedar to "be commanded by a fair-faced beardless Ensign, just arrived from England" was the "imposition of conquerors" and "one which the Native gentlemen feel deeply and silently resent". Equality between natives and Europeans was being ceded in the civil service, wrote Napier, "so it must be for the military".¹¹⁷

Yet no reforms had been instituted by the time Lawrence wrote to Canning on 2 May 1857, warning him that "until we treat Natives, and especially Native soldiers, as having much the same feelings, the same ambition, the same perception of ability and imbecility as ourselves, we shall never be safe".¹¹⁸ The accuracy of Lawrence's prediction was proven during the mutiny. In the majority of mutinous regiments in 1857 (as we shall see), native officers were either behind the plot to rise or they quickly assumed control once their European counterparts had been driven off or killed. A few were appointed to command rebel brigades and even armies. The incentive to mutiny for ambitious yet frustrated native officers was obvious.

A complementary grievance that particularly affected the native troops of the regular Bengal Army was the system of promotion by seniority. According to Barat, promotion in Bengal regiments "was generally made on the basis of seniority" or length of service even before the reorganisation of the army in 1796. The regulations of that year reaffirmed the seniority principle, though merit was also to be taken into consideration. In the event of a vacancy for a native officer, the commanding officer would generally recommend to the Commander-in-Chief the senior soldier in the rank below. A similar

¹¹⁵ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 27-8, 57

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 396-8.

¹¹⁷ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, pp. 255-7.

process applied for N.C.O. vacancies, though recommendations were made by company officers to the commanding officer and higher authority was not involved. All recommendations were subject to the proviso that "the fullest consideration and attention should invariably be given to the claim of seniority in every grade where no such disqualifications as want of respectability of character or other equally proper and just cause of objection to the advancement of the seniors should exist".¹¹⁹

Though the system of promotion for the regular Bengal Army was in theory a combination of seniority and merit, in practice merit was rarely rewarded. Bentinck acknowledged as much when he recommended the establishment of the Orders of British India and Merit for native troops in 1834 as a "counterpoise to the paralysing effects of rise by seniority, a principle of advancement indispensable to the fidelity and allegiance of our native troops, though injurious in many respects to discipline and efficiency".¹²⁰ The two orders were eventually confirmed by the same General Order of April 1837 that brought in long service pay. The Order of British India, which was to be given to native officers "for long and honorable service", had two classes: first class, for 100 subedars and rissaldars, conferring the title *sirdar bahadoor* and two rupees a day; and second class, for 100 native officers of all grades, conferring the title *bahadoor* and one rupee a day. Half the appointments would go to Bengal native officers, a third to those of Madras, and one-sixth to those of Bombay. But given that the Bengal native army was about a third bigger than the other two presidency armies combined, its native officers would receive fewer orders than was their due. The Order of Merit, on the other hand, was open to to all native ranks for "distinguished service in action" and had three classes: 1st class, which entitled the holder to double pay, or full pay if he was a pensioner; 2nd class (two-thirds of full pay); and 3rd class (one-third of full pay). To receive the Order of Merit, 1st class, however, a soldier would have to commit three acts of outstanding valour as only the holders of 3rd class orders were eligible for advancement to the 2nd class, and so on.¹²¹

Bentinck's hope that these two orders would compensate ambitious and gallant soldiers for the time-serving nature of promotion by seniority was not realized. Henry Lawrence put his finger on the reasons why in the first of two articles for the *Calcutta Review* in 1856. The Order of British India he dismissed as "virtually the reward of old age" with its wearers "mostly invalids at their homes", while

¹¹⁸ Lawrence to Canning, 2 May 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 151.

¹²⁰ Bentinck's minute on honours for sepoys, 22 Sept 1834, Philips (ed.), *Bentinck Correspondence*, II, p. 1380.

¹²¹ G.O.G.G., 17 April 1837, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

the Order of Merit, "though its numbers are not *positively* limited, had "so many restrictions to its obtainment, that 'the decorated' are so few as to be hardly discoverable". Despite a "very large acquaintance with the Native army", he could not recollect seeing more than a dozen silver stars (denoting the 2nd and 3rd classes of the order) and not "*a single golden one*" (1st class). As for the scales of extra pay, "what reward are they to the adventurer whose sword, under a different regime, would have carved out for himself a principality?" he asked, before providing the answer: "None."¹²²

As well as the introduction of these orders, the 1830s also saw an attempt by the military authorities in Bengal to emphasize that merit should take precedence over seniority when sepoys or sowars were promoted to naik (junior N.C.O.). In December 1836, after a subedar of the 10th Light Cavalry had been court-martialled for encouraging his subordinates to complain that junior soldiers had been "unfairly promoted over the heads of their seniors", Sir Henry Fane, the Commander-in-Chief (1835-9), issued a General Order to clarify the matter. The subedar, wrote Fane, should have referred his troopers to section 16 of the standing orders of the Bengal Army which state "that 'vacancies in the rank of Naick are to be filled up from the most deserving sepoys,' (not the oldest) and it is particularly pointed out to 'the young and aspiring soldier, that he may rely on his own exertions for the notice of his officers and advancement in the service". This would have left the troopers in no doubt that "merit, which renders itself conspicuous, gives the claim for promotion from the ranks, and not mere seniority".¹²³ In May 1837, to hammer home the point, part of section 16 of the standing orders was revised by Fane to read: "Vacancies in the rank of Naik are to be filled by selection from the best qualified and most deserving sepoys... Seniority can be permitted to operate in this selection only when the qualifications and fitness of two or more sepoys are equal in which case the Senior is always to be preferred. Sepoys whose merits are merely negative and are based on long service only, will now be otherwise rewarded [by Good Conduct pay]."¹²⁴

Despite these new guidelines, the majority of promotions in the Bengal Army continued to be made on the principle of seniority. In December 1838, Subedar Shaikh Mahub Ali of the 1st Bengal N.I. (who had recently been awarded the Order of British India, 1st class) told Captain Sleeman that only two men in their regiment "had been that year superseded, one for insolence, and the other for neglect of duty", and "that officers and sepoys were all happy in consequence - the young, because they felt

¹²² Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 393.

¹²³ G.O.C.C., 21 Dec 1836, Bengal Standing Orders and Regulations 1830-6, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/413, p. 38.

more secure of being promoted if they did their duty, and the old because they felt an interest in their young relations". Sleeman himself commented: "We might, no doubt, have in every regiment a few smarter native officers by disregarding this rule than by adhering to it; but we should, in the diminution of the good feeling towards the European officers and the Government, lose a thousand times more than we gained."¹²⁵

However there were enough examples of Bengal commanding officers promoting without regard to seniority to set alarm bells ringing in London and Calcutta. In October 1850, therefore, after representations from the Court of Directors, the Bengal government issued a general order (drafted by the Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army, Colonel Tucker) criticizing a number of recent promotions, including "a Naick superseding 17 seniors, and a sepoy, 23rd on the roll of the Company and 216 on the gradation roll of the regiment", and reiterating its rule that "full consideration be given to the point of seniority".¹²⁶ Privately Napier, the Commander-in-Chief, preferred the Bombay system of promotion where merit took precedence. But publicly, in his posthumous book, he accepted that he had had "no right to alter the Court of Director's rule and break Government faith with the sepoys". He added: "This faith, respected by all my predecessors in command, was by the oldest and most distinguished officers of the Bengal Army judged not only binding but vital, and the Commander-in-Chief, who has not the right to order the change of a button in the uniform, could not alter an organic regulation."¹²⁷

Major Jacob, the commandant of the Sind Horse, was unconvinced by this argument. In an 1854 essay responding to comments in Napier's book, he wrote: "It is a fatal error to suppose that we are guilty of breach of faith in promoting according to merit, instead of according to seniority; for the sepoys, on enlistment, know and think nothing about their rights to promotion; they enlist to obey orders, and serve the State; and their notions of seniority are always acquired after they enter the service, under the influence of a vicious system." In his opinion, the "unavoidable" outcome "of promoting according to the seniority system only" was "the paralysation and ultimate ruin of the army", because under its operation "talent, skill, energy, high principle, and soldierlike pride" fell "crushed and powerless".¹²⁸ In an earlier essay, Jacob had argued that the Bengal system of promotion undermined

¹²⁴ G.O.C.C., 5 May 1837, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

¹²⁵ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 623.

¹²⁶ G.O.G.G., 18 October 1850, quoted in Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 152.

¹²⁷ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 236. See also Major John Jacob, *Notes on Sir C. Napier's Posthumous Work* (London, 1854), p. 21.

¹²⁸ 'The Vices of the Seniority System in the Native Army', 1854, Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, p. 211.

discipline and efficiency: "The men, not feeling that their prospects of advancement in the service depend on the favourable opinions of their European officers, want the most powerful stimulus to good conduct. They are never disciplined (as I understand the word), are often mutinous, and never acquire the knowledge of their profession which may qualify them to hold commissions with advantage to the service."¹²⁹

One consequence of the 1850 general order was that native troops were confirmed in their belief that promotion by seniority was a right "irrespective of past conduct and general qualification".¹³⁰ In the summer of 1851, therefore, the new Commander-in-Chief, General Gomm, issued a general order reminding troops that while claims of seniority would "always be taken into account", they would "never be allowed to prevail against proved disqualification in other respects".¹³¹ This proviso - which had existed since 1796 - was still in place when the last pre-mutiny Bengal Army regulations were published in 1855. So that it could be strictly observed, commanding officers were instructed to publish in the same regimental orders that announced promotions "the names of those passed over, and the causes of their supersession". The only major change from the rules that applied at the beginning of the century was the disqualification from promotion of sepoys "without a competent knowledge of reading and writing in at least one character".¹³² Though this rule had been introduced some years before, Lord Clyde informed the Peel Commission, it was widely disregarded and considered "a dead letter". But after 1855 it "was very generally enforced" and "occasioned much dissatisfaction amongst men who had expected promotion, and were thus suddenly superseded owing to the revival of this rule".¹³³

According to Henry Lawrence, the end result of all these orders and counter-orders was that Bengal commanding officers pursued very different policies with regard to promotion. "There *is* authority [in Bengal], though not very explicit, for promotion by merit," he wrote in 1856, "and provision is made, by increase of pay after terms of seven years, for the superseded, but recent orders have directed differently. The consequence is, that commanding officers do much as they like. One finds reason for

¹²⁹ 'Comparison between the Systems obtaining in the Armies of Bengal and Bombay', *ibid.*, p. 120.

¹³⁰ G.O.C.C., 29 July 1851, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, pp. 397-8.

¹³³ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 53, p. 421.

promoting all the old, another all the young... Discipline suffers, and deserving Native soldiers of all ranks suffer, and are often driven with disgust from the service."¹³⁴

However, most of the officers who gave evidence to the Peel Commission agreed that seniority took precedence. The Punjab Committee, for example, testified that the system of promotion in the regular Bengal native army was "based nominally on seniority and merit, but really on seniority, as the senior was never passed over unless he was imbecile".¹³⁵ The opinion of another group of senior officers (including Generals Hearsey, Cotton, Hope Grant and Brigadiers Farquharson, Coke and Troup), summarized by Colonel Durand, was that "the general rule in the native infantry of the Bengal Army was promotion by seniority" and that "exceptions were rare", hence "the noted inefficiency of superior grades of native officers".¹³⁶ This latter point was confirmed by Sitaram Pandey who served "forty-eight years of hard wear and tear" before being promoted to subedar. "I was an old man of sixty-five years of age," he wrote in his memoirs, "and had attained the highest rank to be gained in the Native Army, but I would have been much better fitted for this position thirty years earlier."¹³⁷ When part of the 7th L.C. mutinied at Lucknow on 31 May 1857, its subedar-major was 70-years-old.¹³⁸

A significant number of witnesses thought that promotion by seniority had weakened the authority of commanding officers. Colonel Wintle, who left India in 1856 after thirty-nine years in the Bengal Native Infantry, told the commission that he knew of instances where the Commander-in-Chief had disregarded a commanding officer's recommendation for promotion to native officer because he was not the most senior.¹³⁹ Colonel Wyllie agreed that many Bengal commanding officers were even afraid to promote to the rank of junior N.C.O. on merit because the soldiers passed over might send petitions to headquarters which would cause them to be rebuked.¹⁴⁰ As a former member of the Adjutant-General's office, he knew of many instances in which - contrary to regulations - such petitions had been sent to the Commander-in-Chief direct. A great many other officers shared the views of the Punjab Committee, which noted:¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 388-9.

¹³⁵ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 71, p. 549.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 172.

¹³⁸ Evidence of Lt. Col. Robert Master, 24 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 59

¹³⁹ Evidence of Colonel Edmund Wintle, 28 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 130-1.

¹⁴⁰ Evidence of Colonel Wyllie, 10 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 22.

Rewards and punishments are the two great sources of a commanding officer's influence over his men, and both seem to have been almost taken out of his hands. The principle of seniority promotion has been so hedged in, watched and enforced, (even by such a professed military reformer as Sir Charles Napier, whose general order on the subject is, perhaps the strongest on record), that practically the commanding officer has no discretion whatever, and promoted the senior on the roll, rather than enter upon a vain struggle to prefer a better man. The regimental commandant was interested in superseding the inefficient; and the inefficient found a readiness at head-quarters to believe injustice had been committed.¹⁴²

Commandants of Bengal irregular units, on the other hand, generally had more say in the promotion of their men. According to Lieutenant-Colonel Wilde, the men of the Punjab Irregular Force were "selected for promotion according to their merits, and not by seniority". In his own regiment, the 4th Punjab I.I., the average age of native officers was 26 years. These handpicked men - some of whom had been commissioned on recruitment - had real authority in that they were company commanders, rather than powerless adjuncts to the authority of European officers in regular regiments. Such an atypical system of promotion had come about, said Wilde, because the Punjab Irregular Force was under the authority of the Punjab government rather than the Commander-in-Chief.¹⁴³ On the question of promotion in the Bengal Irregular Cavalry, however, opinion was divided. Brigadier Christie claimed that it was "based on merit", while Major-General Cotton noted that there was "no rule" regarding seniority and that the system varied "according to the ideas of the commandant",¹⁴⁴ whereas Sir Patrick Grant and Sir J.H. Grant thought promotion was based chiefly on seniority.¹⁴⁵

There was also some disagreement as to best system of promotion for the post-mutiny Bengal Army. Lord Ellenborough, Lord Clyde and General Grant all thought that seniority should continue to play a dominant role.¹⁴⁶ But the vast majority of officers thought that the authority of the commanding officer needed to be bolstered by an extension of his discretion to promote. These views were reflected in statements by the members of the Commission themselves. General the Marquess of Tweeddale and Major-General Montgomerie both thought that the selection of naiks should be left to the commanding

¹⁴¹ They included: the Oude committee; Generals Cotton, Hearsey, Hope Grant and Griffith; Brigadiers Farquharson, Coke, Steel and Troup; Colonel Burn, Lieutenant Colonels Master and Wilde, Major Williams, Captain Browne (Source: *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 34, 91, 119, 556-7)

¹⁴² P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 72, p. 556.

¹⁴³ Evidence of Lt.-Col. A. Wilde, 26 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁴⁴ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 72, p. 556.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendices 65 and 72, pp. 490 and 567.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Appendices 2, 53 and 65, pp. 363, 421 and 490.

officer without regard to seniority.¹⁴⁷ Major-General Viscount Melville, Lieutenant-Generals Harry Smith and Sir George Wetherall, and Colonels Burlton and Tait, went even further by saying that commanding officers should choose both N.C.O.s and native officers on merit.¹⁴⁸

But the most forthright opinion was expressed by Major-General Hancock, a former Adjutant-General of the Bombay Army, who produced his own report because he did not believe the official version went far enough. Like the Punjab Committee, Hancock was convinced that a major cause of mutiny was the "fatal policy" of reducing the Bengal commanding officers' powers of reward and punishment to a "minimum", thereby reducing those officers to mere "cyphers" and making "the maintenance of sound discipline, even by commanders of the highest ability,...absolutely impossible". They had, in particular, been "deprived of the principal means of rewarding merit, by being compelled to make promotions in all the native ranks by seniority". His solution, therefore, was to give commanding officers "the power to enlist and to promote, upon their own authority alone, as regards all non-commissioned ranks" and "to select for all promotions to and in the commission grade, and for the appointments of subedar-major and native adjutant". Other powers to reward should include the right "to confer good conduct badges, with additional pay, by selection from the entire list of privates", to select for appointment to the Order of British India and the Order of Merit, and to grant "leave of absence in time of peace to all native ranks".¹⁴⁹

The inevitable outcome of this waning power to reward or punish was that sepoys ceased to regard their colonels with the same amount of awe and respect as hitherto, and discipline suffered as a result.

The system of promotion that General Hancock wished to impose upon the post-mutiny Bengal Army was essentially that which operated in his former presidency of Bombay. In theory, the system was similar to Bengal's in that it was a mixture of merit and seniority; in practice merit was the dominant principle. Testifying before a Parliamentary select committee in 1853, Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Cotton, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army, stated that promotion in Bombay was usually by selection. He went on to say that selection was "so much preferable to seniority" that if he had been the Commander-in-Chief in Bengal he would have tried to introduce such

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Appendices 74 and 78, pp. 583 and 597.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., Appendices 75, 76, 77, 79 and 80, pp. 587-8, 594, 601, 607.

¹⁴⁹ Report of Major-General Hancock, 5 March 1859, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 641-2.

a system there.¹⁵⁰ In his posthumous book, Sir Charles Napier observed that "to disregard seniority is the custom" in the Bombay Army, which in turn brought on "Native officers and non-commissioned officers, younger, more active, and more *ambitious* than those of Bengal". But, as already noted, he also believed that the introduction of this system in the Bengal Army would have been interpreted by its sepoys as a breach of government faith.¹⁵¹

A number of Bombay officers who gave evidence to the Peel Commission in 1858 confirmed that merit took precedence over seniority. Colonel Poole, with 30 years' service in the Bombay Light Cavalry, explained that men from the ranks were "generally recommended" for promotion by their company officers on the grounds of "smartness", "being good drills" and "general good conduct". Promotion to the commissioned ranks was also "entirely by selection" and Poole had known "a havildar promoted to be a native officer who had only been a short time in that grade". The average age of native officers in the Bombay Army, added Poole, was "about 35" which was "rather young".¹⁵² Colonel Hill, who commanded the Bombay Sappers and Miners during the mutiny, insisted that the Bombay system of promoting by "general merit" was a "very excellent one indeed", though it did not always operate as well as it could have. Partiality was "sometimes shown" and "sufficient general attention" was "not given to the qualifications of the men". Yet he still regarded it as "the only just system which can be pursued with regard to the promotion of natives or Europeans".¹⁵³ Major-General Capon, who retired in 1850 after 40 years' service, thought that promotion by merit "made the whole regiment smart and willing to be brought into notice", whereas under the seniority system "they do not care a pin about the officers, because they know they cannot do them good or harm". The European officer, in turn, had no incentive to discover "the character of the men under him" because he simply promoted the "first man on the roster". On the subject of promoting a havildar to the rank of jemadar (or junior officer), Capon stated that a Bombay commanding officer's selection was "always" confirmed by the Commander-in-Chief and that he "never had any instance of it being otherwise".¹⁵⁴ This was in direct contrast to the practice in Bengal whereby the commanding officer's choice could be - and often was - overridden by his Commander-in-Chief if it infringed the principle of seniority.

¹⁵⁰ Evidence of Lt.-Gen. Sir W. Cotton, 24 Feb 1853, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, p. 20.

¹⁵¹ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 237.

¹⁵² Evidence of Colonel S. Poole, 27 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 117.

¹⁵³ Evidence of Colonel John Hill, 26 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁵⁴ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. David Capon, 28 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 126.

Promotion by merit was even more strictly observed in Bombay's irregular regiments. According to Major Merewether of the Sind Irregular Horse, his sowars had to pass an examination by the adjutant before even being considered for promotion to naik. Of those who passed, the ones considered to have the best characters would then be examined a second time before the best candidate was promoted. "And so on throughout," noted Merewether, "only that the standard of efficiency is of course raised as you go up the list".¹⁵⁵ Merewether's claim is supported by an 1848 return for the two regiments of Sind Irregular Horse which lists ten native officers with less than ten years' total service, and three under the age of 30. Jacob, the founder of the regiment, noted many instances of sons overtaking their fathers in rank, one becoming a jemadar while his father, "a most respectable and efficient soldier, but, as he knew himself, unfit for further promotion", remained a naik.¹⁵⁶

In Madras the system of promotion was a genuine combination of seniority and merit, though the crucial first step from sepoy to lance-naik was on the latter principle. "It must...be borne in mind, in all promotions up to the commissioned ranks," stated the Bombay Army regulations of 1849, "that while on the one hand a system of succession by mere seniority cannot but fail in exciting the men to zeal and exertion in the performance of their duty, on the other hand the supercession of seniors, without a specific and sufficient cause, is no less injurious by creating feelings of dissatisfaction and inducing a want of confidence in the impartiality of their superiors." The regulations also stressed that, providing he could read and write, a private might be promoted to lance naik after just three years in a regiment, and that such selections should be left to troop or company commanders. Thereafter they were to be "promoted according to their standing in the Roll" unless their commanding officer judged them to be unfit for further advancement.¹⁵⁷

Merit therefore played a more important role than seniority. Major-General Alexander explained: "The officer of a company has the first promotion to a lance-naik; he selects the fittest man that he thinks proper, and if on trial that man is unfit he is remanded to the ranks. When he is promoted to be a naik...he is brought into a general regimental list, and he rises in it if he behaves well; if not, he is brought to court-martial and reduced. So far the seniority goes on in that way, but no man is ever promoted by seniority unless he is competent." A fortunate man could expect to become a native officer within 15 years of enlistment, said Alexander, though 18 or 20 years were probably more

¹⁵⁵ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 6, p. 367.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Lambrick, *John Jacob of Jacobabad*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁷ General Regulations of the Bombay Army, OIOC, L/MIL/17/3/491, p. 108.

typical. Given that most sepoy enlisted at 19, the average age of Madras jemadars was about 37 to 40, and the average age of subedars "above 50"¹⁵⁸ - older than in Bombay, but younger than in Bengal where sepoy were rarely promoted to the rank of junior N.C.O. until they had reached the top of the regimental seniority list. A Madras practice that did mirror Bombay, however - according to Colonel Felix, a former private secretary to Lord Tweeddale - was the Commander-in-Chief's habit of bolstering the authority of his commanding officers by always confirming their recommendations for promotion to native officer.¹⁵⁹

While all the professional grievances mentioned in this chapter contributed in some way to the growing level of disaffection felt by Bengal native troops in the years prior to 1857, some were more particular to them - and therefore more relevant to their decision to mutiny - than others. A dissatisfaction with European-style dress and accoutrements, for example, was present in all three presidency armies. As, to a certain extent, was the belief that their duties were unnecessarily onerous, though Bengal troops probably suffered the most because, proportionately, they had to cover a far larger area. Also, as Napier pointed out, irksome duties seem to have had a more deleterious effect on the discipline of the Bengal Army (which was, as we shall see, being simultaneously undermined by a number of other factors). Low pay was another issue that affected all three armies, particularly after their pay scales were equalized in 1837. They were all hit by the 50 per cent reduction in the real value of pay during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed it could be argued that Madras and Bombay troops were relatively worse off after 1837 because they received less batta than hitherto. There is, however, no doubt that many Bengal native troops - particularly irregular sowars - were in financially straitened circumstances in the decade or so prior to the mutiny. Extra pay and booty were very real incentives to rebel. Yet the real significance of the mutinies over pay in the 1840s is that they demonstrate a willingness by the brotherhood of high-caste Bengal sepoy to ameliorate a professional grievance by collective action.

The one professional grievance that was confined mainly to the Bengal Army was that of inadequate career prospects. This was because the Bengal system of promotion was dominated by seniority, whereas merit held sway in Bombay and Madras. The dire consequences of this seniority

¹⁵⁸ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. R. Alexander, 25 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 81.

system were as follows: it deprived the commanding officer of an important power to reward, thereby reducing his authority over his men; it frustrated ambitious and talented sepoys who had to wait in line for promotion; and it produced old, inefficient and often bitter native officers who had no worthwhile occupation. These two latter groups may hold the key to the mutiny. Lawrence believed that three out of a hundred sepoys were "dangerously discontented" in 1856 because they "they feel they have that in them which elsewhere would rise them to distinction".¹⁶⁰ It is highly probable that such men were the instigators of the mutinies in 1857, and that they used the religious and caste implications of the cartridge question to persuade the rank and file to join them in rebellion. Yet the vast majority of rebel regiments were led by their old native officers. The implications of this observation are twofold: first, that the mutinous regiments retained their cohesiveness and former command structure, and that they did so because their rebellion was simply an attempt to find an employer who could offer them more attractive incentives to serve; second, that a significant number of native officers were so alienated by service under the British that they were prepared to put both their lives and their future pensions at risk. Twelve years before the mutiny, Sir Henry Hardinge applauded the Bengal policy of "preferring inefficiency & seniority, to activity and selection" because aged and inactive native officers were less likely to lead an armed insurrection than their younger and more zealous counterparts.¹⁶¹ He could not have been more wrong.

So why did the native officers of the Bengal Army become so despondent? With regard to the native officers of the Bengal Native Infantry, Barat cites a number of reasons: the relatively low pay of a subedar (67 rupees a month) compared to that of a fresh-faced English ensign (180 rupees) or a native civil officer (250 rupees on average, rising to a maximum of 500 rupees); the gradual curtailment of the authority of Bengal native officers from 1786 onwards when European officers were assigned to each company ("From being leaders of their men," writes Barat, "the native officers were reduced to playing the role of contact-men between the sepoys and the commanding officers of their regiments..."); and the deteriorating relationship between native officers and their European counterparts in the years prior to the mutiny (a theme I will consider in the next chapter).¹⁶² There was also the fact that the new pension regulations of 1837 favoured the junior ranks. It could be argued, therefore, that fewer Bengal

¹⁵⁹ Evidence of Colonel Orlando Felix, 25 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 395

¹⁶¹ Hardinge to Sir Charles Napier, 31 Oct 1844, Napier Papers, B.L., Add. MSS 54517, f. 104.

¹⁶² Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 181-5

native officers would have mutinied in 1857 if pensions had been more generous. They certainly had relatively little to lose in a financial sense by rebelling - and much to gain.

While such professional grievances were not exclusive to the Bengal Army, they were certainly exacerbated by its seniority system of promotion. "The Bengal native officers are inefficient, and necessarily so under the present system," wrote John Jacob in 1850, "because they are chosen without any regard whatever to their fitness to hold commissions, and because they are almost always worn out with age before they receive them."¹⁶³ In an earlier essay, he commented:

[The] value of native officers is not properly understood in the army of Bengal. They have in that army little power over the men, are perfectly separated in heart and feeling from the European officers, and only half understand each other: moreover, they are very often old imbeciles, incapable of active exertion, whether of mind or body. But it is not so with us. A native officer or soldier after twenty years' service in the Bombay Army is half an Englishman in feeling. He is not valued, either by himself or others, on account of his caste, etc., but according to his abilities as a soldier, and his conduct as a man.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ 'Comparison between the Systems obtaining in the Armies of Bengal and Bombay', 1850, Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, p. 120.

¹⁶⁴ 'Remarks on an Article in the "Calcutta Review" for March 1846, entitled "Hints on Irregular Cavalry", etc.', *ibid.*, p. 148.

Chapter Three - European Officers

The deteriorating relationship between the native troops of the Bengal Army and their European officers was, arguably, one of the principal causes of the Indian mutiny. This chapter will cover some of the factors which contributed to that breakdown of trust.

With regard to relations with their troops, the social origins of the European officers of the East India Company army are particularly revealing. In the early days of Company service the military officers were not even gentlemen. "Pay was extremely low, and attracted none with pretensions to gentility, or indeed even to respectability," wrote T.A. Heathcote. "In 1753 it was stated that one of the Company's military officers had been a trumpeter at a travelling circus in England, while another had previously been a barber." As the Company's army increased in size in the 1750s and 60s, and the end of the War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War left a large number of British Army officers on half-pay, efforts were made to recruit a "better class of men".¹ This policy was bolstered by the decision, in 1794, to grant Company commissions in the name of the Crown so that Indian officers could command troops of the British Army in India. Yet these commissions ceased to have any authority west of the Cape of Good Hope, and Company officers could not appear at their sovereign's court in uniform.

Nevertheless, it is still commonly believed that Company officers in the early nineteenth century were drawn from the same social élite - the aristocracy, gentry and rich upper middle-classes - that supplied the bulk of British Army officers. In fact, according to the unpublished doctoral thesis of J.M. Bourne, they came from "the 'pseudo-gentry', from the genteel poor and from the sons of East India Company servants who were effectively barred, by their lack of connexions and lack of cash, from access to the traditional areas of gentlemanly employment - government service, the established church, medicine, the armed forces of the Crown and the English bar". These poor middle-class parents could not have afforded the high purchase price of a commission in the British Army. Commissions in the East India Company army, on the other hand, were in the gift of the Court of Directors whose members, wrote Bourne, "were not forgetful of their less fortunate comrades at home and in India". During the period 1796-1854, the "most significant change in the pattern of recruitment" to the Company's service "came

in the proportion of recruits born in India": 2.7% in 1800 compared to 36.8% in 1854. Bourne concluded that recruits to the Indian services "were drawn overwhelmingly from the service, business, leisured and professional middle classes, with a significant minority from the sons of manual workers and tradesmen", and that "very few were connected with the aristocracy or gentry".²

This claim is supported by Heathcote's analysis of the class origin of 2,000 officers who served in the Bengal Army between 1820 and 1834, which reveals that twelve were sons of peers and 26 sons of baronets. Only one succeeded to a peerage (the second son of the Earl of Carnwath) and six to baronetcies (three of whom were originally younger sons).³ A similar analysis of the social origins of British Army officers in 1830 by Hew Strachan, author of *Wellington's Legacy*, shows that 21 per cent were aristocrats, 32 per cent landed gentry and 47 per cent rich middle-class. "It was not birth that dictated the grant of commissions," comments Strachan, "so much as the wealth to purchase and to provide a private income."⁴ Many Company officers, by contrast, were either illegitimate or orphans, both categories that were treated with kindly compassion by the Court of Directors. According to Bourne, one in four cadets who entered the Company's service between 1810 and 1854 "came from families in which the head of the household was dead".⁵

Given that the economic status of cadets was "predominantly poor", it follows that their chief motive for entering the Company's service was because it was well paid and "offered an accessible avenue to social status and financial security".⁶ In 1849, a lieutenant-colonel in a native infantry regiment received 1,227 rupees and 14 annas (or just under £123) a month; if he was in the field or stationed 200 miles from the seat of his presidency's government, he was paid 1,432 rupees and 4 annas (or £143) a month. At the other end of the scale a lieutenant received a basic 225 rupees and 12 annas (£22 10s.) a month, rising to 256 rupees and 10 annas (£25 14s.) with batta, and an extra 30 rupees (£3) if he commanded a company. An ensign, the lowest commissioned rank, was paid just over 182 rupees (£18) a month, or 202 rupees (£20) including batta.⁷ In the British Army, by contrast, an infantry lieutenant-colonel received the equivalent of just 253 rupees (or £25) a month, a lieutenant between 96 (£9 12s.) and 111 rupees (£11 2s.) depending upon his length of service, and an ensign a mere 78

¹ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 122.

² J.M. Bourne, 'The Civil and Military Patronage of the East India Company, 1784-1858', Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Leicester, 1977, pp. 169, 172, 183-4, 192.

³ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 123.

⁴ Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy*, p. 110.

⁵ Bourne, 'Civil and Military Patronage', Ph.D thesis, p. 197.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 200.

rupees (£7 16s.).⁸ According to Strachan, a private income of at least £50 to £100 a year was "essential for any rank under that of major".⁹ However, British Army officers were paid Company allowances when in India, which is why those without sizeable private incomes were keen to serve there.

All of the Company's irregular regiments were officered by men on detachment from regular units. They were paid a fixed sum that varied from regiment to regiment. The commandant of a regiment of Bengal Irregular Cavalry, for example, received 1,000 rupees (£100) a month, his second-in-command 500 rupees (£50), and the adjutant an allowance of 170 rupees and 14 annas (£14 4s.) in addition to his normal pay. Whereas the commandant of an infantry regiment of the Gwalior Contingent was paid 845 rupees (£84 10s.), his second-in-command 600 rupees (£60) and the adjutant 500 rupees (£50).¹⁰ The competition for these lucrative appointments was understandably intense.

Before 1836, Company officers could retire on the full pay of their rank after twenty-five years' service, of which three could be spent on furlough. But in that year, because the vagaries of regimental promotion meant that some could attain the rank of major in 12 years while others would take more than 30, the principle of granting pensions for length of service was introduced.¹¹ Henceforth all officers could retire on the pay of a captain after 23 years, of a major after 27 years, of a lieutenant-colonel after 31 years, and of a colonel after 35 years, including three years furlough. Alternatively, they could retire on half-pay after ten years (though a lieutenant had the option to leave after six on the half-pay of an ensign, cornet or second-lieutenant).¹²

In this struggle to "maintain a social position in British life", wrote Bourne, the "needs of India were secondary, if considered at all". He adds:

The Bengal Army, in particular, was tragically undermined by the nature of its [officers who]... looked to transfers in the more lucrative stations, which paid full *batta*, or to employment on the staff, the superior status, emoluments and opportunities of which deprived regimental officers of all effective decision-making and lowered their prestige in native eyes. Financial considerations produced a distaste for the ordinary round of sepoy management and

⁷ Pay and Audit Regulations 1849, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/459, p. 273.

⁸ Ibid., p. 124c.

⁹ Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy*, p. 112.

¹⁰ Pay and Audit Regulations 1849, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/459, p. 222a.

¹¹ Evidence of Philip Melvill, 14 Dec 1852, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, p. 10.

¹² Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 101-2.

training and conspired to create a positive dislike of the sepoy and of all things Indian, a development pregnant with danger.¹³

It did not help that the standard of training and education that Company officers received before joining their regiments was generally poor. A Military Seminary was established at Addiscombe, near Croydon, in 1809 but it only educated artillery and engineer officers until the admission of 'general service' cadets in 1827. From that date on, Addiscombe produced an average of seventy-five cadets a year, with 60 per cent joining the artillery or engineers and 40 per cent the infantry. But even for these fortunate officers, the system of education was highly unsatisfactory. The curriculum was dominated by mathematics (which occupied 22 hours of a 54 hour academic week), while fortification, based on Vauban, "was largely obsolete and irrelevant to Indian conditions", chemistry and classics too narrow in their focus, and the study of Hindustani "perfunctory". The aim of the seminary, wrote Bourne, was "to cram into [the cadet's] mind the greatest number of facts in the shortest possible time, a system which at best produced cultivated pedants, and at worst cramped and desiccated intellects incapable of original thought and swift action".¹⁴

Even Addiscombe, however, was preferable to the sketchy education received by direct-entry cadets (who accounted for two-thirds of all new officers), particularly after the closure of Baraset college near Calcutta in 1811, just seven years since it had been established to provide newly-arrived cadets with basic instruction in military duties and Indian languages. Until 1851 - when the Company instituted exams for direct-entry cadets in arithmetic, English, Latin, French or Hindustani, History, geography, elementary drawing and fortification - there was no academic requirement. As a result, most direct-entry cadets had "received the bare minimum of education" by the time they reached India.¹⁵

Company officers, therefore, were characterized by poor education and an unseemly desire to abandon regular regimental duty for more lucrative detached appointments (in civil posts such as assistant commissioners, for example, officers continued to receive regimental pay as well as civil allowances). This was a particular problem in Bengal because the large expansion of its territory in the first half of the nineteenth century meant an increasing demand for civil administrators, political officers, staff officers, surveyors, engineers and commandants of local and irregular corps. The

¹³ Bourne, 'Civil and Military Patronage', Ph.D thesis, pp. 210-11.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 254, 258-9, 294.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 250.

potential consequences of too many officers on detached employ were twofold: first, the regiment was left underofficered and efficiency suffered; second, the most talented and best-connected officers were taken, leaving their less fortunate comrades to regard regimental duty as a sign of failure rather than pride.

Before 1796, the withdrawal of officers for detached duties did not affect regimental establishments because they were simply replaced from a general list for each branch. But with the introduction of regimental lists in that year, whereby an officer was allotted to a specific regiment and promoted according to his seniority within it, any future withdrawals were absorbed by a regiment's fixed establishment. At first the number of absentees was relatively small. In 1805, out of a total of 803 officers, the Bengal Native Infantry had 132 (16.4%) absent on civilian and staff duties and a further 49 (6.1%) on furlough. By 1825, however, the number of absentees had risen steadily to 379 out of 1,237 (or 30.6 %), with 93 (7.5%) on furlough.¹⁶ And these figures do not include officers on sick leave. In 1827, with Bengal infantry regiments down to about 60 per cent of their fixed establishment, the Indian government ordered that no more than five officers per regiment were to be absent on staff employment.¹⁷ But this restriction was not strictly adhered to. In 1830, for example, less than half the Bengal Native Infantry's 1,400 officers were present with their regiments: 547 (39%) were absent on detached duty and 185 (13.2%) on furlough.¹⁸ Though the incidence was not as high in Bombay, the outgoing governor, Sir John Malcolm, was sufficiently alarmed to pen a minute to the Court of Directors in November 1830, deploring the fact that many "excellent" officers preferred junior staff appointments to the command of a regiment. His solution was to insist that officers had passed their native language certificate and had served a minimum period with their regiments before they could take up staff appointments; he also suggested changing brigade and line staff every three years.¹⁹ In a subsequent book, Malcolm recommended the formation of a "corps of officers without men, from whom vacancies caused by appointments to the staff could be filled, who might be employed on the staff, and would join corps with whom their services might be required..., but should rise in unattached corps".²⁰ A number of other officers suggested the institution of a Staff Corps, in one form or another,

¹⁶ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, Appx. C., p. 308.

¹⁷ G.O.V.P., 17 Aug 1827, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, L/MIL/17/2/435, OIOC.

¹⁸ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, Appx. C., p. 308.

¹⁹ Minute of 30 Nov 1830, Malcolm, *The Government of India*, Appx. A., p. 33.

²⁰ Sir John Malcolm, *Political History of India*, II, p. 234.

in the years prior to the mutiny.²¹ Even Lord Dalhousie was sympathetic.²² But the scheme was always rejected "on account of its enormous cost".²³ Only after the mutiny did it come into being.

The first of Malcolm's recommendations was partially implemented in 1837 when the Court of Directors ordered that all officers who entered the service after that date would need to have passed an examination in the Hindustani language to be eligible for detached duty.²⁴ Four years earlier, however, Bentinck had exempted officers on the personal staff of senior civilian and military officials from the five officers absent per regiment rule.²⁵ The net result was that the number of absentee Bengal Native Infantry officers dropped to 344 in 1835, before rising steadily to 549 in 1852.²⁶ Yet the percentage of absenteeism never reached the 1830 level because the total number of officers continued to rise, particularly after the addition of one extra captain per regiment in 1845.²⁷

In general, the number of absentee officers throughout India was on the increase prior to the mutiny, with the greatest burden falling on the Bengal Army. In 1852, Philip Melvill told a Parliamentary select committee that the "number of officers required for detached employments" had risen from 532 in 1834-5 to the latest figure of 1,040. With regard to this latter figure, the Bengal Army was supplying an average of six officers per regiment, the Bombay Army five, and the Madras Army three and a half. Each regiment had, in addition, an average of one officer absent in Britain on private affairs and two-and-a-half because of ill health.²⁸ The Bengal Army was proportionately the hardest hit because most of the new civil appointments were in the recently-annexed Punjab. Bombay was next because it had absorbed Sind and was geographically closer to Bengal where the vast majority of extra-regimental appointments were available. To accommodate the rising demand, the Indian government increased the number of officers eligible for detached duty to six per regiment in 1851 and seven - "in cases of great emergency" - in 1853.²⁹ But so great had become the need for staff officers in Bombay by May 1854 that the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Frederick Fitzclarence, informed the Governor, Lord Elphinstone,

²¹ They included General Sir Charles Napier, Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Cotton, John Jacob and Henry Lawrence.

²² Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D thesis, p. 200

²³ Dissent by J.P. Willoughby, 4 July 1860, quoted in Shibly, *ibid.*, p. 201.

²⁴ G.O.G.G., 9 Jan 1837, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

²⁵ G.O.G.G., 19 Oct 1833, *ibid.*

²⁶ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, Appx. C., p. 308.

²⁷ *Ibid.* In 1835, for example, the established officer strength of the 74 Bengal Native Infantry regiments was 1,702, the actual strength 1,416, the number of absentees 344 (24.2%) and the number on furlough 154 (10.9%). In 1852, the established strength was 1,776, the actual strength 1,741, the number of absentees 549 (31.5%) and the number on furlough 172 (9.9%).

²⁸ Evidence of Philip Melvill, 14 December 1852, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, pp. 9-10.

that he did not know how he could supply them. There were, he wrote, only five regiments who were "not up to their number, 6, and in these none I fear are passed in surveying"; his only hope was to make up the shortfall "from the Queen's troops".³⁰

So worried was Lord Canning, the newly-arrived Governor-General, by the high number of officer absentees that, in April 1856, he asked the Board of Control to authorise two extra subalterns for each native regiment, and four for each European corps, the necessity of which was "patent and urgent".³¹ His request was rejected - presumably on the ground of expense - and the problem simply got worse. By 1857, the total number of Indian officers on detached employ had risen to 1,237.³² In April of that year, to reduce the pressure on the Indian Army generally, and the Bengal Army in particular, Canning opened staff appointments to British Army officers.³³ But the mutiny broke out before this order had time to take effect. At this point, most Bengal Native Infantry regiments had fewer than 12 of their 24 European officers present. According to General Grant, the first twelve regiments of Bengal Native Infantry had a total of 133 officers, or eleven and a half per regiment.³⁴ Even more alarming was the fact that they had just 10 field officers and 34 captains out of the established totals of 36 and 96 respectively. Grant added: "Deduct commanding officer, adjutant and quartermaster, and all ensigns under two years' service, and there remains five and three quarter officers per regiment for company duty." In a regiment of ten companies, this meant just over one qualified officer for every two companies. The official returns for a further 24 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry give a total of 235 officers, or just under ten European officers per regiment, present when the mutiny began.³⁵ The 58th and 60th regiments had the highest number of officers with 15; the 16th regiment the lowest with six. Yet there does not seem to be any obvious correlation between a lack of officers and a tendency to mutiny. The 60th N.I. mutinied while the 31st N.I., with just nine officers present in May 1857, was one of the few to remain loyal. On the other hand, the 55th and 72nd regiments had nine officers and both

²⁹ G.O.G.G., 10 Feb 1851 and 10 June 1853, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.

³⁰ Fitzclarence to Elphinstone, 16 May 1854, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 7A/26.

³¹ Canning to Vernon Smith, 8 April 1857, quoted in MacLagan, *'Clemency' Canning*, p. 62.

³² Colonel Holland's memorandum, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 7, p. 371.

³³ G.O.G.G., 9 April 1857, Sandhurst Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/D174, p. 238.

³⁴ Memorandum by Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant to the Governor-General, 29 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 66, p. 497.

³⁵ 'A Return of the Name or Number of each Regiment and Regular and Irregular Corps in India which has mutinied, or manifested a disposition to mutiny, since the 1st day of January 1857', P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 1-64. The regiments of Bengal Native Infantry referred to were the 15th, 16th, 17th, 19th, 24th, 26th, 27th, 30th, 31st, 33rd, 36th, 37th, 40th, 46th, 49th, 50th, 55th, 57th, 58th, 60th, 61st, 64th, 67th, 72.

mutinied, but so did the 36th and 37th regiments with thirteen and fourteen respectively. The 16th and 58th regiments were both disarmed.

The Bombay Native Infantry had a similar number of absentees. According to a return of July 1858, only 362 - or half - the established strength of 725 officers were available for regimental duty: 218 were absent on staff employ, 78 ensign vacancies were waiting to be filled, and 67 were on furlough.³⁶

The consequence of such high levels of absenteeism was much debated before and after the mutiny. Generally, however, it was felt to have had a detrimental effect on regimental morale and discipline, particularly in the Bengal Army. Referring to the period before the mutiny, Sitaram Pandey recalled that "any clever officer was always taken away from his regiment for some appointment" and that when he returned many years later "he knew very little about the men".³⁷ One of the reasons that Sir Charles Napier gave for first tendering his resignation in April 1850 was "that the officers of the Indian Army looked at their regiments merely as stepping stones to lucrative civil appointments" which were not dependent upon "professional character". He added: "No fewer than 443 officers in the Bengal Army had thus been withdrawn from their regiments and placed in lucrative employments by the civil authorities, without any distinct recommendation through the military authorities... Thus the mainspring of the Army was relaxed. The officers saw that the posts of emoluments were not granted for military duties, and military duty became a painful task." This in turn made it "impossible for the Commander-in-Chief to maintain the requisite degree of military spirit, discipline, and efficiency, in the Army".³⁸

Napier expanded on this theme after his return to England. The absence of senior officers meant that subalterns were "constantly in command of regiments without being, as in the Irregular Corps, selected for command". Their inexperience caused the sepoys to lose their respect for their British officers and "the regiment goes to pieces". Instead it was necessary to keep field officers and captains with their regiments. "Dull Generals, Colonels and Majors there are," wrote Napier, "yet white hairs meet with respect, and veteran commanders know at least the routine of service." He also believed that each company need a captain: "Experienced Captains are the pillars of discipline, but scarce in Native regiments, the best being taken for staff, or civil employments, which generally turns a good Captain in to a bad "political". His solution, like Malcolm before him, was to recommend "a Staff Corps of

³⁶ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 69, p. 522.

³⁷ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 77.

³⁸ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, pp. 195, 198.

officers, having no more pay than in the line, and no extra advantage than allowance for horses, according to rank".³⁹

Napier's fears were confirmed by Montagu Hall, who in 1852 did duty as an ensign with the 16th N.I., a regiment with a "very distinguished record of war service". Hall remembered: "I was awfully disappointed with what I saw of native Regiments; the whole thing seemed to be a sham and a delusion... The 16th had a nicely appointed Mess, but the senior officers were all either absent on Staff employ, leave, or married. We went most mornings to be drilled under the European Sergeant-Major, but parades of the regiment, there seemed none. The Adjutant did all the work and the chief idea of the officers seemed to be how to get away from regimental duty."⁴⁰

John Jacob expanded on this theme in an essay written in 1854. "The 'REFUSE' only remain," he wrote. "All proper feeling is thus totally destroyed between the native soldier and his European superior." This was not because there were too few officers, but rather because too many of those left were mediocre and uninterested in their duty or their men. Jacob believed that "one active, energetic, right-feeling, and right-thinking English gentleman can, even when alone, infuse an excellent spirit into thousands of these Eastern soldiers". His solution, therefore, was to appoint only three European officers, "carefully selected and entrusted with full powers", to each native regiment, drawn either from the strength of the Indian Army's European regiments or from a single unattached list (similar to Malcolm's Staff Corps).⁴¹ In an essay published in the *Calcutta Review* in 1856, Sir Henry Lawrence also suggested a Staff Corps, but only to provide officers for staff appointments; he believed that regular regiments needed more, not fewer officers, and that native officers would have to be abolished to make way for them.⁴²

By the outbreak of mutiny, however, nothing had changed. "It ought not to be the aim of every officer, or of most of them, to leave the Army for a Civil appointment, but so it is," wrote Lieutenant Chamier, interpreter to the recently-disbanded 34th Bengal N.I., in early June 1857. "One can rarely rely on a fortune by serving with a corps."⁴³ *The United Service Gazette*, in an article a week later, went so far as to identify absenteeism by officers as a key cause of mutiny. The best way to restore discipline, it argued, was "by compelling the Officers to make their regiments more distinctly their

³⁹ Ibid., p. 247-8.

⁴⁰ Hall Papers, NAM, '1857' (54)/11919, p. 4.

⁴¹ Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, pp. 124, 126, 130-2.

⁴² Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 398-9.

⁴³ Chamier to his father, 5 June 1857, Chamier Letters, NAM, 7510-31.

homes by associating with the men, entering into their feelings, respecting their prejudices, sharing in their games, and keeping them to their duty". This could only be achieved by "limiting the number of Staff absentees in each Corps, and placing the qualifications for the Staff so high, that very few Officers will go out of their way to seek such preferment".⁴⁴

General Grant was also convinced that the absence of officers in the Bengal Army was central to the outbreak of mutiny. In a memorandum to Lord Canning, during his brief stint as Commander-in-Chief in Bengal after the death of General Anson in May 1857, Grant identified a "want of officers in whom the sepoy could confide" as one of the four factors that had given rise to a feeling of "dissatisfaction and distrust" among the Bengal sepoys long before their religious fears were played upon by conspirators. This, in turn, was caused by the fact that so few officers were present with their regiments. "Further, these officers are discontented," wrote Grant, "only looking forward to leaving their regiments for some more pleasant employment, so that they perform, and unwillingly, the bare outline of their duty; and never, as a general rule, mix or converse with their men; but, on the contrary, too often refuse to listen to their complaints, at the best telling them to go to the adjutant, and not unfrequently, "Go to hell - don't bother me".⁴⁵

Similar sentiments were expressed by many of the officers who gave written or oral evidence to the Peel Commission.⁴⁶ They did not, on the other hand, necessarily believe that a regiment would be less efficient if it had a high number of officers absent. Major-General Birch, the former Secretary to the Government of India in the Military Department, repeated Jacob's argument "that a regiment well commanded will be quite as efficient with but a few officers as a regiment indifferently commanded with a larger number of officers, and even more so". Yet he also believed that European officers needed to fulfil their duties more "punctually and exactly" as an "example to their men", and that they needed to "go more often into the lines and among the men than is generally done".⁴⁷ As to whether a regiment with a small number of officers had been more susceptible to mutiny, most witnesses did not believe that to be the case.⁴⁸ If the influence of a European officer had kept any regiment from

⁴⁴ *The United Service Gazette*, 13 June 1857.

⁴⁵ Memorandum by Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant to the Governor-General, 29 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 66, p. 496.

⁴⁶ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, pp. 25, 72, 486-7. They included Lt. Col. Becher, Maj.-Gen. Sir Scudamore Steel, Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Appx. 61, p. 441.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 215, 441-2, 562, 571-3. Among the witnesses holding this opinion were Lord Canning, Lord Clyde, the Punjab committee, Major-General Birch, the Oude committee, Sir Sydney

mutinying, noted Birch, it was that exercised by the "commanding officer, or the adjutant, or some highly respected and efficient officers in the corps".⁴⁹ In other words, quality was more important than quantity. This argument was underlined by Lord Tweeddale, a member of the Peel Commission, who noted:

The discipline of a native regiment does not depend so much on the number of European officers present with the regiment, as it does on the commanding officer and adjutant, and one officer to each company, being thoroughly masters of their business and able to instruct others. Example and regularity in carrying on duty commands the respect of a native soldier more than any other cause.⁵⁰

That the problem of officer absenteeism affected all three presidency armies is proven by the written answers provided by the Commanders-in-Chief of Madras and Bombay. In a memorandum dated July 1858, Lieutenant-General Sir Patric Grant noted that the efficiency of Madras regiments was "most injuriously affected by the number of officers taken from corps for staff employment". He added: "Either regiments are drained of their best and most deserving officers, or patronage is not dispensed with justice to individuals, and solely with reference to superior merit." He also quoted from a minute he had sent to the Supreme Government and to the home authorities on 21 May 1857, warning that the principal causes of complaint in the Madras Army were "the unceasing demands upon the energies of the men, their poverty, and, more than all, the great paucity of European officers of standing and experience present with regiments". Officers "must be taught to look upon their regiments as their home", he advised, "and not to fix their whole thoughts, as they now do, on devising means of getting away to staff or other detached employment". The consequences of this "craving" were "utter indifference, not to say positive dislike, towards their men, and the engendering of a restless, discontented disposition, which is, I doubt not, communicated to the soldier".⁵¹

Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Somerset, also writing in July 1858, bemoaned the fact that a cadet's first priority was to find a good staff appointment. "The young man joins his regiment," wrote Somerset, "learns a little of his drill, but very shortly finds himself selected for military or political employ on the staff, and this without any reference to his qualifications, and invariably without any

Cotton, Sir John Hearsey, Sir George Clerk, Brigadiers Farguharson, Steel, Coke, Troup, Colonel Wintle and Major Williams.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Appx. 71, p. 562.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Appx. 74, p. 583.

reference to his commanding officer." This trend was exacerbated by the fact that the rule stating that no more than a certain number of officers could be taken from each regiment was "frequently broken through", leaving regiments "almost entirely without officers". He had known of officers who, after absences of up to 18 years, had returned to command their regiments. "How can such a man know anything of his duty?" asked Somerset. "And how can any discipline be carried on in any army where such a system exists?" ⁵²

The consequences of absenteeism for the Bengal Army were neatly summed-up by George Chesney in his perceptive study of pre-mutiny British India. The "paucity of officers", wrote Chesney, "was the smallest part of the evil, for a dozen officers under a good system should have been an ample complement for a native battalion". Instead the "mischief lay in the unhealthy feeling of dissatisfaction with which regimental duty came to be regarded, as the last course, only to be undergone by the minority who could get nothing better". As this "degeneracy of feeling" was bound to be "reflected by the men", wrote Chesney, the absence of officers, "from the manner in which it came about, "was unquestionably one of the many causes which led up to the great mutiny". ⁵³

Though officer absenteeism was clearly a problem for all three presidency armies, it would only prove fatal for the Bengal Army when it was combined with other factors unique to that army which were also working to undermine the relationship between the officers and the sepoys. The most important of these factors was the diminishing power of the Bengal commanding officer to reward and punish. But there were others.

When Sitaram Pandey joined the 2/26th Bengal N.I. in 1814, the relationship between sepoys and officers was very close. "The *sahibs* often used to give *nautches* [erotic entertainment by professional dancers] for the regiment," he recalled many years later, "and they attended all the men's games. They also took us with them when they went out hunting, or at least those of us who wanted to go. Nowadays they seldom attend *nautches* because their Padre *sahibs* have told them it is wrong." Sitaram also remembered his company commander - whose nickname was the 'Wrestler' because he used to join the men in their wrestling arena - entertaining a constant stream of men at his house. Some went to further

⁵¹ Ibid., Appx. 65, p. 486-7.

⁵² Lt.-Gen. Sir Henry Somerset's replies, 24 July 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 69, p. 521.

⁵³ Chesney, *Indian Polity*, p. 288-9.

their chances of promotion, but most "because we liked the *sahib* who always treated us as if we were his children". Part of the reason for this closeness, said Sitaram, was because most of the officers "had Indian women living with them", which naturally facilitated their grasp of Hindustani and the ease with which they could communicate with their men. The practice began to die out in the 1820s and 30s as more and more wives and female relatives of civil and military officers came to live in India and it became socially unacceptable to keep a native mistress (or *bibi*) or marry a Eurasian. This, in turn, meant that Europeans began to keep their own society and contact between officers and men was reduced to a minimum. "I have lived to see great changes in the *sahibs'* attitude towards us," recalled Sitaram. "I know that many officers nowadays only speak to their men when obliged to do so, and they show that the business is irksome and try to get rid of the *sepoys* as quickly as possible. One *sahib* told us that he never knew what to say to us. The *sahibs* always knew what to say, and how to say it, when I was a young soldier..."⁵⁴ It is surely no coincidence that the commanding officers of the only two traditionally-recruited regiments of Bengal Native Infantry to remain loyal and keep their weapons in 1857 both had native family ties: Major Henry Milne of the 21st regiment had married the Eurasian grand-daughter of Colonel James Skinner; Major William Hampton of the 31st regiment had two daughters by a native mistress.⁵⁵

But even in the early years of Sitaram's service the relationship between European officers and native troops (particularly native officers) was not always harmonious. In December 1826, for example, Lord Combermere, the Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Army, felt it necessary to issue a circular urging junior officers to be more respectful to native officers. To ensure cordial relations, subalterns were instructed never to leave native officers standing when they were waiting to report; instead they were to be invited to sit. Furthermore, it was the responsibility of ensigns and cornets to learn the various modes of address in Hindustani to avoid giving offence to native gentlemen. Finally, Combermere wished it to be understood that he considered "a conciliatory disposition and manner towards the Native Soldiers, and a due courtesy towards the Native Officers" as essential qualifications for those officers aspiring to the command of a troop or company.⁵⁶

But this was not always the case. In 1841, William Sleeman noted that the "good tone of feeling between the European officers and their men" had become "somewhat impaired" when regiments were

⁵⁴ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, pp. 24-5.

⁵⁵ Service Records of the officers of the East India Company Army, Hodson Index, NAM.

concentrated at large stations. "In such places," he wrote, " the European society is commonly large and gay; and the officers of our native regiments become too much occupied in its pleasures and ceremonies to attend to their native officers or sepoys... The consequence is that they often become entirely alienated from their men, and betray signs of the greatest impatience while they listen to the necessary reports of their native officers, as they come on or go off duty."⁵⁷

In an attempt to halt this trend, the Indian government issued a general order in 1844 to the effect that no subaltern would be allowed to take command of a troop or company until he had passed a colloquial examination in the Hindustani language which would prove his competence to converse with the men under his command.⁵⁸ For officers who had joined since 1837, the appointments of adjutant and regimental interpreter were already dependent upon the possession of the basic qualification in written and spoken Hindustani (which itself was worth 500 rupees).⁵⁹ Yet, according to a letter to the editor of the *United Service Magazine* from a Madras officer in 1853, the number of Indian Army officers who were qualified as interpreters in two languages - Hindustani and Persian - was becoming "small by degrees and beautifully less". The correspondent put this down to the fact that young officers had begun to realize that, as far as their career prospects were concerned, patronage was far more important than a knowledge of native languages: "The cadet comes out, studies hard, and then finds that without interest all his efforts and money have been thrown away. His brother cadets seeing this, are warned in time, and consequently resolve to pitch Hindustani books and moonshees [native language teachers] to the devil."⁶⁰

The consequences were inevitably harmful to officer/soldier relations. During his time as Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Napier knew of a number of cases in which sepoys had been court-martialled for insolence when they were simply trying to make their officer understand what they were saying; the other side of the coin was that an officer's language deficiencies enabled some of his men to be deliberately insolent. Part of the problem, according to Napier, was that officers were "now more numerous than formerly, and associate apart". He added: "All old officers of name in the Company's service...have complained that the younger race of Europeans keep aloof from Native officers; showing

⁵⁶ Circular No. 2399 of 29 December 1826, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

⁵⁷ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, pp. 638-9.

⁵⁸ G.O.G.G., 1st March 1844, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁵⁹ Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, p. 237.

⁶⁰ 'A Few Remarks upon the Present Organization of the Indian Army', Letter to the Editor from "Military Reform", dated 1 May 1853, published in the *United Service Magazine*, August 1853.

thereby want of foresight, and casting away, as of no value, the strong attachment these natives are so susceptible of forming for them. How different this from the spirit which actuated the old men of Indian renown...!"⁶¹

One of these "old officers" was Brigadier J.S. Hodgson who wrote, in 1850, that "the reserved and exclusive habits" of European officers were gaining ground, and that most of them "took but little interest in their men, who, on their part, ceased to feel either love or reverence for superiors who were virtually strangers to them and powerless, besides, to reward or punish".⁶² This lack of sympathy between officers and men appeared to Hodgson as "fraught with impending peril". Lord Dalhousie agreed. A few months after arriving in India in 1848, he informed a close friend in Scotland that if there was a danger to the loyalty of the Indian Army it was "in the growing distance between European officers and the native soldiers" and in "the diminished interest those officers are now said to take in the native troops under their orders". In particular, Dalhousie regretted the low status accorded to native officers who, except on parade, were no more important than sepoys. They were "never received by European officers, never consorted with" and when they went to make a report they were, despite Combermere's order to the contrary, "probably left to stand in the lobby". How could such a man "have respect in his own eyes"? asked Dalhousie. How could he have "authority in the eyes of his men"?⁶³

In an 1851 article entitled 'The Defects of the Bengal Army', John Jacob identified the "entire absence of a proper confidence between the officers and the native soldiers" as one of the most serious faults particular to that army. Recent proof of this, he added, was the tendency of men to desert their officers in the field and the fact that no officers had received any forewarning of the recent spate of mutinies.⁶⁴ Jacob's first point probably refers to the infamous behaviour of three regiments of Bengal native cavalry at Chilianwalla during the 2nd Punjab War in 1849: two retreated without orders (though the stampede was said to have been precipitated by a British regiment)⁶⁵ and a third - the 5th Bengal L.C. - refused to advance.⁶⁶ There were similar episodes during the 1st Sikh War, such as the abandonment of their officers by the men of the 26th Bengal N.I. at the Battle of Ferozshah in December 1845. "It was a fearful crisis," wrote William Hodson, a recently-arrived ensign, "but the bravery of the English

⁶¹ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, pp. 239-40, 248, 250.

⁶² Quoted in S.A.A. Rizvi and M.L. Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh: Source Material* (Lucknow, 1957), I, p. 324.

⁶³ Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, 4 Aug 1848, J.G.A. Baird (ed.), *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie* (London, 1910), p. 31.

⁶⁴ Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, p. 103.

⁶⁵ Lord Dalhousie to Wellington, 22 January 1849, Dalhousie Papers, NAS, GD46/6/323/

regiments saved us. The Colonel, the greater part of my brother officers, and myself, were left with the colours and about thirty men immediately in front of the batteries!"⁶⁷ So mistrustful of native troops did Hodson become after this experience that he requested, and was granted, a transfer to the 1st Bengal European Fusiliers, "the finest regiment in India, with white faces too".⁶⁸

The deterioration of the officer/soldier relationship was emphasized by Colonel (later General Sir) Patrick Grant, the former Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army, who told a parliamentary select committee in 1853 that the "confidence and attachment" between European officers and native troops was less than it had been when he had entered the service because officers were more self-important and treated their men with more contempt than had formerly been the case.⁶⁹ This attitude was illustrated by the anonymous British author of *The Rebellion in India*, who wrote: "The officers and men have not been friends but strangers to one another. The sepoy is esteemed an inferior creature. He is sworn at. He is treated roughly. He is spoken of as a 'nigger'. He is addressed as a 'suar' or pig, an epithet most opprobrious to a respectable native, especially the Mussalman... The old men are less guilty as they sober down. But the younger men seem to regard it as an excellent joke..."⁷⁰

Like officer absenteeism, it was not a problem that was confined to Bengal. According to Captain Hervey, who published his memoirs in 1850, many young Madras officers arrived in India with scant respect for the natives, referring to their men as "*those horrible black nigger sepoys*" and cursing them on parade. But Hervey also gave many examples of the close bond that existed between the officers and men of his second regiment, the 40th Madras N.I.: of cricket matches, hunting expeditions and picnics enjoyed by both, and of one incident where a sepoy saved his adjutant's life by tackling a cheetah armed only with a knife.⁷¹ Part of the reason for the closeness of this bond may have been the fact that, according to Colonel Felix, English was much more commonly spoken in Madras than in other parts of India, making communication between officers and men easier.⁷²

In Bombay, too, the pre-mutiny relationship between officers and men was not always harmonious. In a letter to Lord Elphinstone of 22 January 1854, Lord Frederick Fitzclarence contrasted the "ignorance" with which his officers went about their duty with the "intelligence & knowledge of the

⁶⁶ Lambrick, *John Jacob of Jacobabad*, p. 181.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Charles Allen, *Soldier Sahibs: The Men who made the North-West Frontier* (London, 2000), p. 68.

⁶⁸ Trotter, *The Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse*, p. 31.

⁶⁹ Evidence of Col. Patrick Grant, 14 March 1853, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, p. 133

⁷⁰ Quoted in Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 23.

⁷¹ Allen (ed.), *A Soldier of the Company*, pp. 38, 103-4.

sepoy, added to the enviable correctness of the native officer", and concluded that such a state of affairs was "*dangerous* to the Empire". His solution was to extend the examination already instituted by him for extra-regimental military appointments - which tested ensigns on the duty of a captain, and lieutenants and captains on the duty of a major - to civil appointments as well. "These examinations," wrote Fitzclarence, "added to those I have ordered for passing an officer to be an adjutant, to have the payment of a company, to the Brigadier's examination of all the officers at his yearly review, & occasionally during the year of all young & nearly joined officers, will place the army in the state it should be in." ⁷³ The Bombay government's compliance with this scheme, not to mention Fitzclarence's other reforms, undoubtedly improved the efficiency and knowledge of its European officers and, by extension, their relationship with their men. The unfortunate consequences of officer absenteeism that was such a feature of the Bengal Army - neglect of duty and worsening relations with the native troops - were thereby counteracted. Many of the Bombay officers who gave evidence to the Peel Commission were certainly keen to emphasize the depth of mutual respect that existed between them and their men. Colonel Poole of the Bombay Lancers, for example, recalled how he would leave for evening parade half an hour early if one of his native officers was ill, to give him time to sit and talk with the convalescent. ⁷⁴

Relations between Bengal officers and their men, on the other hand, continued to deteriorate in the years leading up to the mutiny. In 1856, Sir Henry Lawrence recommended the abolition of native officers because it would give European officers the opportunity to look into "the interior economy" of their regiments or companies. "Seldom is anything of the kind done at present," wrote Lawrence. "So long as all is smooth and quiet on the surface, few inquiries are made. All may be rotten below; the jog-trot is followed - a mine may be ready to be sprung, for all that nine-tenths of the officers would know. *Many do not know the very names of the men of their own company.*" ⁷⁵ Referring to the incident at Barrackpore in March 1857 when most of the 34th Bengal N.I. stood idly by as one of their number attempted to murder the adjutant, *The Hindoo Patriot* could only conclude that "the system of officering the native army" had resulted in "*the annihilation of all moral influence of officers over their men*". It added: "That the Sepoy should see his officer set upon by an assassin and that the officer

⁷² Evidence of Colonel Orlando Felix, 25 August 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 66.

⁷³ Fitzclarence to Elphinstone, 22 January 1854, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 7A/26.

⁷⁴ Evidence of Colonel S. Poole, 27 August 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 118.

⁷⁵ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, pp. 398-9.

should cry for help, and in vain...is an occurrence which can be accounted for only on the hypothesis *that the European Commissioned officers of the Bengal army have utterly lost their prestige.*"⁷⁶

Sir George Clerk, a former Commissioner to the Punjab and Governor of Bombay, summed up many of the reasons for this loss of "moral influence" in his evidence to the Peel Commission. Asked whether there had been a "more intimate association" between European officers and native troops twenty or thirty years earlier, he replied:

Yes. That association was not a preference. Formerly the officer had fewer comrades, the civilian no associate. Their duties were more pressing and uninterrupted. They therefore found more objects of interest in attending to those duties. They had not everywhere large stations, with a variety of permanent English society, with its amusements and connexions of every sort. There were not reinforcements of European troops close at hand... The necessity of knowing the native soldiers and the people was imposed on them in order to continue our dominion.⁷⁷

Two other factors contributed to the worsening relations between officers and men: the generally poor quality of commanding officers in the Indian Army, and the fact that a great number of them were relatively unfamiliar to their troops in 1857. Both factors were the result of the same system of promotion by seniority that applied to their sepoys. On arrival in India, newly appointed officers hurried to join their regiments because their pay and seniority did not begin until they had. Thereafter their promotion was strictly on the basis of regimental seniority. Officers were promoted from senior ensign to lieutenant, and from senior lieutenant to captain when a vacancy arose within the regiment (though all lieutenants who had failed to reach the higher rank after 15 years' service were awarded a brevet captaincy without additional pay). The senior captain also had to wait for a vacancy before he could be promoted to the single majority, and so some officers never attained the latter rank. Only when regimental officers died, became invalids or agreed to retire in return for a lump sum or 'subscription' from their juniors - an infantry major, for example, would receive Rs. 30,000, Rs. 12,000 of which would be subscribed by the senior captain and only Rs. 150 by the junior ensign - was this extremely slow system accelerated.⁷⁸

On promotion to lieutenant-colonel the officer was removed from his regimental list to a branch list for the whole army. Once on that general list, he would only be appointed to command his own

⁷⁶ *The Hindoo Patriot*, 7 May 1857

⁷⁷ Evidence of Sir George Clerk, 24 August 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 43.

regiment if the major was either absent (most took their home furlough of three years after reaching that rank) or the most junior in the branch. Otherwise he would take command of the regiment with the most junior commander; which is why so many regiments were commanded by men who had spent the majority of their service elsewhere.⁷⁹ In May 1857, twenty-six of the 74 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry were commanded by officers who had been present for less than three of the previous 20 years,⁸⁰ five by officers who had been present for more than three and less than five,⁸¹ and nine by officers who had been present for more than five but less than ten.⁸² In other words, forty (54.1%) of the 74 regiments were commanded by officers who had been present for less than half the previous 20 years. On the other hand, thirty regiments were commanded by officers who had been present for more than 15 of the previous 20 years,⁸³ and four by officers who had been present from between 10 and 15 years.⁸⁴ But of these thirty-four officers who had served more than ten of the previous 20 years, nineteen - or more than half - were majors or captains in temporary command.⁸⁵

An interesting pattern emerges when we equate a commanding officer's time with his regiment to its behaviour during the mutiny. Of the 54 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry that mutinied or partially mutinied in 1857, twenty-three (or 42.6%) were commanded by officers who had served with them for less than three of the previous 20 years⁸⁶, two (3.7%) by officers who had served for more than three and less than five years,⁸⁷ and eight (14.8%) by officers who had served for more than five and less than 10 years.⁸⁸ On the other hand, nineteen (or 35.2%) were commanded by officers who had served with them for more than 15 of the previous 20 years⁸⁹, and two (3.7%) by those who had served more than

⁷⁸ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 132.

⁷⁹ Notes by the Marquess of Tweeddale, 1 Jan 1859, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 74., p. 583.

⁸⁰ Service Records of the officers of the East India Company Army, Hodson Index, NAM. The twenty-six regiments were: 1st, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 19th, 22nd, 37th, 39th, 40th, 44th, 45th, 51st, 54th, 55th, 56th, 60th, 64th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st and 73rd Bengal N.I.

⁸¹ The five regiments were: 5th, 15th, 16th, 25th and 49th Bengal N.I.

⁸² The nine regiments were: 9th, 12th, 20th, 23rd, 32nd, 34th, 41st, 42nd and 66th Bengal N.I.

⁸³ The thirty regiments were: 2nd, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, 18th, 21st, 24th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 33rd, 36th, 43rd, 47th, 48th, 50th, 52nd, 53rd, 57th, 58th, 59th, 61st, 62nd, 65th, 72nd and 74th Bengal N.I.

⁸⁴ Ibid. The four regiments were: 35th, 38th, 46th and 63rd Bengal N.I.

⁸⁵ The nineteen regiments commanded by temporary C.O.s (captains or majors) who had served more than ten of the previous 20 years were: 2nd, 13th, 17th, 18th, 21st, 24th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 31st, 43rd, 46th, 50th, 53rd, 58th, 59th, 61st, 65th and 74th Bengal N.I. Another four regiments were commanded by temporary officers who had served less than ten of the previous 20 years: 4th, 5th, 9th and 12th Bengal N.I. Overall, therefore, 23 out of 74 regiments were commanded by temporary officers.

⁸⁶ The regiments were: 1st, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 19th, 22nd, 37th, 40th, 44th, 45th, 51st, 54th, 55th, 56th, 60th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 71st and 73rd Bengal N.I.

⁸⁷ The regiments were: 5th and 15th Bengal N.I.

⁸⁸ The regiments were: 9th, 12th, 20th, 23rd, 32nd, 34th, 41st and 42nd Bengal N.I.

⁸⁹ The regiments were: 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, 18th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 36th, 48th, 50th, 52nd, 53rd, 57th, 61st, 62nd, 72nd and 74th Bengal N.I.

ten and less than 15 years,⁹⁰ though ten of these twenty-one regiments had captains or majors in temporary command⁹¹. Of the 17 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry that were disarmed and did not mutiny, only three (17.6%) were commanded by officers who had been present for less than three of the previous 20 years,⁹² while another three had served more than three and less than five years,⁹³ whereas nine (52.9%) were commanded by officers who had been present for more than 15 of the previous 20 years,⁹⁴ and two (11.8%) by those who had served between 10 and 15 years.⁹⁵ Both regiments of traditionally-recruited Bengal Native Infantry that did not mutiny and retained their arms - the 21st and 31st N.I. - were commanded by officers who had been present for more than 15 of the previous 20 years. The only other loyal regiment - the 66th Gurkhas - had no ties of kinship or caste with the rest of the Bengal Native Infantry, and therefore the time its commanding officer had spent with it (more than five and less than ten of the previous 20 years) was not so relevant to its decision to stay true to its salt.

There were a number of factors that determined whether a regiment would mutiny or not in 1857: proximity to other mutinous regiments; the presence of European troops; and, among others, the relationship between the sepoys and their senior officers, particularly the adjutant and the commanding officer. The above data would seem to suggest that a regiment was more likely to mutiny if it was commanded by a relatively unfamiliar officer (i.e. one who had spent less than half the previous 20 years with it). If, on the other hand, it had a commander - particularly a permanent commander - who had been with it for more than ten of the previous 20 years, it was more likely to stay loyal or allow itself to be disarmed. Sitaram Pandey stressed the importance of continuity when he noted that there was "always discontent" in a regiment when "someone completely strange" was sent to command it. "Among us there is a great dislike for new ways," he added. "One *sahib* upsets what the other has done, and we do not know what to do because what we have been taught one day is wrong the next. I have known four Commanding Officers come to a regiment within a year, and three Adjutants, and two Quartermasters... It takes us a long time to learn the ways of a *sahib* and once the men have got used to him it is wrong to have him removed."⁹⁶ Sitaram's regiment, the 63rd, was disarmed as a precaution in August 1857 and became one of only eight disarmed native infantry regiments to be incorporated into

⁹⁰ The additional regiments were: 38th and 46th Bengal N.I.

⁹¹ The regiments were: 13th, 17th, 18th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 46th, 50th, 53rd, 61st and 74th Bengal N.I.

⁹² The regiments were: 39th, 64th and 70th Bengal N.I.

⁹³ The regiments were: 16th, 25th and 49th Bengal N.I.

⁹⁴ The regiments were: 2nd, 24th, 27th, 33rd, 43rd, 47th, 58th, 59th and 65th Bengal N.I.

⁹⁵ The regiments were: 35th and 63rd Bengal N.I.

⁹⁶ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 77.

the post-mutiny Bengal Army. It was commanded by Brevet Colonel Houghton, 53, who had joined the regiment as a subaltern in 1823 and remained with it for most of the next 34 years (though he was absent on staff duties for much of the 1840s). The presence of such an "old" hand in 1857 may well have prevented his regiment from mutinying.

The overall effect of promotion by seniority was that officers did not reach the upper ranks of the army until a relatively late age (see Tables 32 and 33).⁹⁷

Table 32 - *Average length of service (in years) of infantry officers on promotion to their rank in October 1853*

	Colonels	Lt. Colonels	Majors	Captains	Lieutenants
Bengal Army	43.8	32.0	28.0	13.4	4.7
Madras Army	39.4	31.3	26.5	12.8	4.3
Bombay Army	39.3	31.2	27.8	12.2	4.6

Table 33 - *Average age of infantry officers on promotion to their rank in October 1853*

	Colonels	Lt. Colonels	Majors	Captains	Lieutenants
Bengal Army	60.8	49.0	45.0	30.4	21.7
Madras Army	56.4	48.3	43.5	29.8	21.3
Bombay Army	56.3	48.2	44.8	29.2	21.6

In the Bengal Army in 1853, some majors had been promoted after just 18 years' service, while others had to wait 35 years. In Madras and Bombay the most fortunate majors were promoted in 14 and 13 years, and the least fortunate in 34 and 33 years respectively. Amongst the captains of the three armies, the most fortunate were of nine, eight and seven years' standing, while the least fortunate had been subalterns for 26, 20 and 17 years respectively.⁹⁸ Overall Bengal infantry officers had to wait the longest for promotion, but officers in the other two armies were not that far behind. No native infantry officer, for example, could expect to receive the permanent command of a regiment much before his 48th birthday, or 31 years of service. My own study of the service records of the officers commanding all 74 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry in May 1857 gives an average age of 50.5 years, though this figure includes 23 officers in temporary command.⁹⁹ The eldest was 61 (Lieutenant Colonel John Liptrap of the 45th N.I.) and the youngest 35 (Major John Shakespear of the 24th N.I.). Of the 51

⁹⁷ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, pp. 457-8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

officers in permanent command (with a rank of brevet lieutenant-colonel or higher), the average age was 53 years.

The youngest of these permanent commanders, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel David Pott of the 47th N.I., was 45 (and just 43 when he received his promotion). Apart from furlough and sick leave, Pott had served with the regiment since joining it as a 17-year-old ensign in 1829, seeing action in both the 1st Sikh War (when he was a captain in temporary command) and the 2nd Burma War. It may not be a coincidence that his corps was one of only eight disarmed regiments of Bengal Native Infantry to be incorporated into the post-mutiny Bengal Army (i.e. they were considered to be the least disaffected). Of the other seven, five were commanded by officers who had joined them as ensigns and since served more than 10 of the previous 20 years¹⁰⁰ (and four by officers who had served more than 15 of those years).¹⁰¹ Only one, the 70th, was commanded by an officer who had been present for less than three of the previous 20 years, while the commander of the remaining regiment, the 32nd, had served between five and ten years. The age of these eight officers ranged from 45 to 54, with an average of 49.9 years (almost identical to the average for the whole Bengal Native Infantry). Four were permanent commanders and four in temporary command. These statistics would lead one to conclude that the familiarity of a commanding officer was a more important factor than his age in determining whether or not his regiment remained loyal. Younger officers were probably more efficient; older officers more respected.

The average age of the officers commanding the ten regiments of Bengal Light Cavalry in May 1857 was, at 49.7, only marginally younger than that of their native infantry counterparts. The eldest was 53 (Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Barton of the 6th L.C.) and the youngest 42 (Major Alfred Harris of the 1st L.C.).¹⁰² But there was little difference between the average age of the commanding officers of the seven regiments that mutinied and the three that were disarmed, and therefore age can be discounted as

⁹⁹ Service Records of the officers of the East India Company Army, Hodson Index, NAM. The average age of the 23 officers in temporary command was 45.7 years.

¹⁰⁰ The regiments were: 33rd, 43rd, 59th, 63rd and 65th Bengal N.I.

¹⁰¹ The regiments were: 33rd, 43rd, 59th and 65th Bengal N.I.

¹⁰² The name and age of the Company officers commanding the 10 regiments of Bengal Light Cavalry in May 1857 were as follows: Major Alfred Harris, 42, 1st L.C.; Brevet Major Edward Vibart, 49, 2nd L.C.; Brevet Col. George Carmichael-Smyth, 53, 3rd L.C.; Brevet Col. Henry Clayton, 52, 4th L.C.; Brevet Lt.-Col. Thomas Harington, 46, 5th L.C.; Brevet Lt.-Col. Nathaniel Barton, 53, 6th L.C.; Lt.-Col. Robert Master, 50, 7th L.C.; Brevet Col. James Mackenzie, 52, 8th L.C.; Lt.-Col. Archibald Campbell, 52, 9th L.C.; Major Ronald McDonell, 48, 10th L.C.

a factor.¹⁰³ Commandants of the 18 regiments of Bengal Irregular Cavalry, on the other hand, were generally much younger because they had been appointed on the basis of selection rather than seniority. Their average age was only 39.7 years, with the eldest 52 (Brevet Major James Verner of the 10th regiment) and the youngest just 23 (Lieutenant James Campbell of the 14th regiment).¹⁰⁴ Their ranks reflect this: two were lieutenants (in temporary command), three were captains, eight were brevet majors, one was a major, two were brevet lieutenant-colonels and only one was a substantive lieutenant-colonel (and he was a British Army officer).¹⁰⁵ But unlike the light cavalry, there is a noticeable difference between the average age of the Company officers who commanded the nine regiments that mutinied (36.8 years), and of those who commanded the three loyal and five disarmed regiments (42.1 years). Taken in conjunction with the earlier data relating to officer familiarity in the Bengal Irregular Cavalry, these statistics would seem to suggest that the older and more experienced a commandant was, the better chance he had of preventing his troops from mutinying.

Henry Lawrence addressed the problem of aged senior officers in 1844 by recommending that all European and native officers be either sent to the invalids at the age of 50 or, if their health was up to it, allowed to serve for another five years; but no officer was to be allowed to remain with his regiment beyond the age of 55, or 60 in the case of the invalids. Lawrence was also concerned that the seniority system of promotion failed to weed out those unsuitable for higher command. Every officer was "not fitted for command", he stressed, "much less to command soldiers of a different religion and country"; those that could not manage their regiments because they were either too severe or too weak "should be removed from them, and that quickly, before their corps are irredemiably destroyed".¹⁰⁶ But this rarely happened. In 1853, Colonel Grant told the Select Committee on Indian Territories that he had "never seen an officer withdrawn from the command of a regiment on account of age and infirmity", and knew

¹⁰³ The average age of the commanding officers of the seven regiments of Bengal Light Cavalry that mutinied was 49.6 years; the average age of the commanding officers of the three regiments of Bengal Light Cavalry that were disarmed was 50.0 years.

¹⁰⁴ This average age is for the Company officers who commanded 17 out of the 18 regiments of Bengal Irregular Cavalry. Lieutenant-Colonel S. Fisher of the 15th I.C. is not included because he was a British Army officer.

¹⁰⁵ The name and age of the commandants of the 18 regiments of Bengal Irregular Cavalry in May 1857 were as follows: Brevet Major Crawford Chamberlain, 36, 1st I.C.; Brevet Major George Jackson, 44, 2nd I.C.; Brevet Major Sydney Hire, 34, 3rd I.C.; Brevet Major Anthony Martin, 46, 4th I.C.; Brevet Major John Macdonald, 48, 5th I.C.; Captain James Curtis, 37, 6th I.C.; Brevet Lt.-Col. William Mulcaster, 36, 7th I.C.; Lt. Alexander Mackenzie, 32, 8th I.C.; Brevet Lt.-Col. James Fraser-Tytler, 35, 9th I.C.; Brevet Major James Verner, 52, 10th I.C.; Captain William Alexander, 39, 11th I.C.; Brevet Major James Holmes, 40, 12th I.C.; Captain Henry Guise, 39, 13th I.C.; Lt. James Campbell, 23, 14th I.C.; Lt.-Col. S. Fisher, age uncertain, 15th I.C.; Brevet Major Wright Davison, 46, 16th I.C.; Major John Liptrott, 44, 17th I.C.; Brevet Major William Ryves, 45, 18th I.C..

of only "one instance of a commanding officer having been reported by the inspecting officer as unfit to exercise command". But in the latter case the officer refused to transfer to the invalid establishment and the matter was dropped. When asked whether an officer was given the command of a regiment on account of seniority, and regardless of his suitability, Grant replied: "He must be promoted; but it rests with the Commander-in-Chief to withhold a command of that sort from him or not. But I have never known that power exercised." The system of seniority therefore affected the discipline of Bengal regiments, Grant believed, "inasmuch as, with very few exceptions, an officer is far advanced in years before he attains the rank which would entitle him to the command of a regiment". In his opinion, the service would greatly benefit from younger senior officers as few men were "as efficient at 60 or 70 as they are at 40 or 50".¹⁰⁷ He himself, at 48, was the youngest full colonel in the Bengal Army, though he did not expect his energies to be unimpaired by the time he succeeded to the command of a division in not less than 15 years. As it happened, Grant was promoted to major-general the following year, and lieutenant-general commanding the Madras Army within three years. But he was the exception to the rule.

Promotion to the higher ranks of brigadier and general was theoretically on the basis of merit, with the Commander-in-Chief's selection confirmed by the Indian government. But in practice the claim of seniority was rarely ignored. The Court of Directors underlined this principle in 1835 by pointing out that while officers had no right to succeed to the appointments of brigadier or brigadier-general "on the ground of mere seniority, these being staff appointments, involving both confidence and responsibility", they had every right to expect that their respective governments would never set aside their claims "arising out of length of service" except on public grounds. In effect, Colonel Durand told the Peel Commission, the rule was one of selection but "with a strong preference to the claims of the senior officer, if not unfit".¹⁰⁸ The average age of Company officers who had reached the rank of brigadier and major-general (in command of a division) in the Bengal Army in May 1857 was 55.6 and 66.4 years respectively.¹⁰⁹ The average ages in Madras were slightly lower at 55.1 and 62.5 years

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of Col. Patrick Grant, 14 March 1853, P.P., H.C. 1852-3, XXVII, p. 127.

¹⁰⁸ Evidence of Col. Henry Durand C.B., 25 November 1858, *ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁰⁹ Service Records of the officers of the East India Company Army, Hodson Index, NAM. The youngest Bengal brigadier in May 1857 was Alexander Jack, 51, commander of the Cawnpore station (Neville Chamberlain, 37, the commander of the Punjab Irregular Force, had the responsibility of a brigadier but his substantive rank was only captain); and the oldest was Hugh Sibbald, 66, commander of the Bareilly brigade. The youngest Bengal major-general was John Hearsey, 64, commander of the Presidency Division; and the oldest was George Gowan, 68, commander of the Lahore Division.

respectively,¹¹⁰ while in Bombay they were lower still at 53.4 and 60.0 years respectively.¹¹¹ A Bengal Army officer, therefore, was the last to receive promotion in every rank.

In a private letter of January 1851, Lord Dalhousie underlined the consequences. "The Court," he wrote, "refuse to believe in the inferiority of the Bengal Army in discipline and order; nevertheless, it is true... [The] supervision of the boys when they join, the maintenance of order in a corps, the discouragement of extravagance and vice, are things which each commanding officer in his own corps alone can effect. But commanding officers are inefficient; brigadiers are no better; divisional officers are worse than either, because they are older and more done; and at the top of all they send commanders-in-chief seventy years old [Napier]. How can things go on right under such a system?" To rectify the situation, Dalhousie stated his determination not to confirm any promotion to brigadier or major-general unless his new Commander-in-Chief, Gomm, could tell him that the officer was "*undeniably competent* for the efficient and active discharge of his duties".¹¹² But this was wishful thinking and senior officers continued to be promoted on the basis of seniority.

In March 1856, Sir Henry Lawrence warned that there had to be a "bar against the command of regiments being the reward of thirty and forty years of incompetence" because bad colonels were even more harmful to an army than bad generals. He conceded that some commanding officers, "to the injury of the service, were good men and true twenty years ago", but others "were never fit for a corporal's charge" and could only have risen from the subaltern ranks in a seniority service.¹¹³ In a second essay that year, he embellished this point by stating that the British Army had only ever escaped disaster by superseding its senior officers after the first disastrous campaign of each war. And yet the Bengal Army was full of officers - "not one of whom would have been intrusted in his youth, health, and strength with the charge of a mill, by a sensible cotton-spinner, during a disturbance" - who had been placed in commands "where their incompetence may any day blow a spark into a flame that may cost hundreds of lives and millions of money". The answer, he said, was to create an unattached list for superannuated colonels that would free up promotion below them and reduce the average period of

¹¹⁰ Ibid. The youngest Madras brigadier in May 1857 was Edward Messiter, 53, commander at Thayet Mew; and the oldest was George Whitlock, 58, commander at Bangalore. The youngest Madras major-general was James Bell, 55, commander of the Pegu Division; and the oldest was Alexander Tulloch, 68, commander of the Northern Division.

¹¹¹ Ibid. The youngest Bombay brigadier in May 1857 was Willoughby Trevelyan, 51, commander at Rajcote; and the eldest was Robert Honner, 57, on field service in Persia. The youngest Bombay major-general was Sir James Outram, 54, commander of the Persian Expeditionary Force; and the oldest was George Wilson, 67, commander of the Southern Division.

¹¹² Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, 13 Jan 1851, Baird (ed.), *Dalhousie Letters*, p. 108.

service in the grade of lieutenant-colonel from 10 years 2 months to 5 years and 10 months.¹¹⁴ But as with all Lawrence's suggestions for army reform prior to the Indian mutiny, this measure was not taken up by the Indian government.

The deteriorating relationship between the native troops of the Bengal Army and their European officers was probably the single most important cause of the mutiny. A series of factors contributed to this breakdown of trust, not least the arrival of an increasing number of poor, badly-educated officer cadets whose chief motives for entering the Company's service were social advancement and financial gain. "It was, therefore, the object of every ambitious and capable officer to secure" one of the more lucrative extra-regimental appointments, observed Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, a Bengal subaltern in the 1850s, "and escape as soon as possible from a service in which ability and professional zeal counted for nothing".¹¹⁵ For the mediocre majority who possessed neither the talent nor connections necessary to obtain a detached appointment, regimental duty came to be regarded as a sign of failure rather than of pride - and was despised as a consequence. Such dissatisfied officers had little interest in the welfare of their men.

But perhaps the biggest factor in the breakdown of officer/sepoy relations - and one that was particular to the Bengal Army - was the gradual reduction in the authority of the commanding officer. This was partly the result of the seniority system of promotion which failed to weed out old, unsuitable and inefficient officers, and which caused a significant number of regiments to be commanded by unfamiliar officers. An even more important antecedent, however, was the gradual weakening of the commanding officer's power to reward and punish. The former trend was considered in the previous chapter; the latter will form the basis of the next chapter. Yet it is worth pointing out that this reduction in power was the necessary consequence of the seniority system. "The seniority rise among the officers of a native regiment, originally appointed at hazard," wrote John Jacob in 1854, "renders it impossible at present to ensure there being at the head of each native regiment a man capable of wielding the

¹¹³ Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, pp. 383-4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 415-16, 455-61.

¹¹⁵ Field Marshal Lord Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1898), p. 244.

powers necessary to govern it efficiently and well. This is the great difficulty experienced at head-quarters; this is the stumbling-block of all honest reformers...¹¹⁶

In other words, the lack of a process of selection meant that the commanding officers of the Bengal Army were a mixed bunch who could not be trusted with the powers necessary to gain the respect and devotion of their native troops. And yet, in a foreign mercenary army more than any other, the attainment of such respect was crucial. Sitaram Pandey noted:

The *Sirkar* should remember that the value of a regiment of sepoy greatly depends on the Commanding Officer. If the men like him, if he understands them and can enter their feelings and has their confidence - which is not to be done in one day, or even in one year - and above all if he has power and is just, they will do anything, will go anywhere, and his word is law.¹¹⁷

Sitaram does not bother to spell out the alternative. But it is only too clear that most Bengal commanding officers had neither the physical nor moral authority to avert mutiny in 1857.

¹¹⁶ Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, p. 126.

¹¹⁷ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 77.

Chapter Four - Discipline

Regimental commanding officers in all three presidency armies experienced some diminution in their power to punish in the decades prior to the mutiny, but Bengal colonels suffered the most severe reductions as more authority was concentrated in the offices of the Commander-in-Chief and Adjutant-General. This move towards a more centralized military system was part of a wider process of government reform in India from the 1820s which, wrote Stokes, "was to eradicate in the name of utility all the historical associations connected with the rise of British power; and in the cause of efficiency, simplicity, and economy, sought to reduce the historical modes of government to one centralized, uniform practice".¹

Driving these reforms was the political philosophy of Utilitarianism: a belief that until humans "had sufficiently disciplined themselves to forgo immediate pleasure for the sake of lasting happiness, a 'severe schoolmaster' was necessary in the form of law"; human legislators were required to "assist men to avoid harmful acts by artificially weighting such acts with the pains of punishment". Utilitarianism retained, therefore, an immense faith in the power of law and government to shape conduct and transform character. With regard to India, its chief proponents were men like James Mill, his son John Stuart Mill and Edward Strachey, all senior officials of the East India Company in London in the 1820s and 30s, and Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India from 1827 to 1835 (and also Commander-in-Chief from 1833 to 1835). At a farewell dinner in London, attended by a number of leading Utilitarians including Jeremy Bentham, Bentinck is said to have remarked to James Mill: "I am going to British India, but...it is you that will be Governor-General."²

The Utilitarian passion for uniformity, mechanistic administration and legislative regulation was not shared by the Monro school which had dominated Indian policy until the 1820s.³ The latter's members made a careful distinction between uniformity and unity. Sir John Malcolm, for example, was the first to recognize the need for a more unified system of government as the Company expanded its territory. But he believed that economy, efficiency and a greater consistency of principle could be achieved "by

¹ Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), p. 14.

² Ibid., pp. 55, 51.

³ The Monro school was named after Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras from 1819 to 1827. Its leading members were: the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay from 1819 to 1827; Sir

the delegation of full powers to trusted individuals, and not through a deadening centralized administration".⁴ Among the natural heirs to the Monro school were the Lawrence brothers, Lord Elphinstone, Sir Charles Napier and John Jacob. For most of the 30 years or so that preceded the mutiny, however, Utilitarian policy was in the ascendancy at Calcutta and the consequent move towards a more centralized military justice system was to prove disastrous for the Bengal Army.

Until 1845, when the first Articles of War were enacted for the whole Indian army, each presidency army was regulated by its own articles. But only one section of the Bengal articles, which dated from 1796, alluded to the power of a commanding officer to punish without the intercession of a court-martial. It stated: "Every non-commissioned officer and soldier shall retire to his quarters or tent at the beating of retreat, in default of which he shall be punished, according to the nature of his offence, by the commanding officer." In lieu of any specific guidelines, therefore, Bengal commanding officers were able to impose a wide range of summary punishments - including dismissal, corporal punishment with a rattan cane, reduction of N.C.O.s to the ranks, refusing furlough and awarding extra drill and duty - for most of the first three decades of the nineteenth century. But these powers, never "authoritatively conferred upon commanding officers", were gradually reduced by the introduction of official regulations.⁵

In 1828, shortly after the arrival of Lord William Bentinck at Calcutta, new standing orders for the Bengal Native Infantry limited the power to discharge sepoy to those who were either physically unfit or awkward at drill. In all other cases of unfitness for service, the sanction of the Commander-in-Chief was required. "In other words," Major-General Birch told the Peel Commission, "commanding officers were declared to have no power to dismiss men as a punishment for offences committed."⁶ This regulation was eventually enshrined in the 1845 Articles of War. Article 2 provided that "no Commissioned Officer shall be dismissed except by the Sentence of a General Court Martial" and "no Non-Commissioned Officer or Soldier shall be Discharged as a punishment except by the Sentence of a Court Martial, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief at the Presidency to which he may belong".⁷ When the revised code of regulations was published in 1855, it took away from commanding officers

John Malcom, Governor of Bombay from 1827 to 1830; and Sir Charles (later Lord) Metcalfe, a longtime Resident at Delhi and Member of the Supreme Council from 1827 to 1834.

⁴ Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 22.

⁵ Replies by Major-General Birch, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p. 436.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Articles of War, Act No. XX of 6 September 1845, OIOC, V/8/32.

the power even to discharge men who were physically unfit. Henceforth all such cases would have to be referred to the Commander-in-Chief.⁸

Corporal punishment with a rattan cane was generally carried out on incompetent drill recruits or sepoys who displayed stupidity or obstinacy during regimental parades. It was abolished for native troops throughout India by Bentinck's General Order of February 1835 (the same order that did away with flogging).⁹ But not all native soldiers thought abolition was a good thing. In 1838, a senior subedar told Captain Sleeman, formerly of his regiment, that "doing away with the rattan at drill had a very bad effect". He added: "Young men were formerly, with the judicious use of the rattan, made fit to join the regiment at furthest in six months; but since the abolition of the rattan it takes twelve months to make them fit to be seen in the ranks." There was much virtue in its use, he believed, and "it should never have been given up".¹⁰ But it was not reintroduced, even when flogging was brought back for certain offences in 1845. The "punishment of soldiers with a rattan," stated the Bengal Army Regulations of 1855, "at the pleasure of individuals entrusted with the instruction of recruits, or on any other occasion whatever, is strictly prohibited".¹¹

The practice of commanding officers demoting N.C.O.s was not curbed until the enactment of the Articles of War of 1845. Article 107 stipulated that "no Non-Commissioned Officer shall be reduced to the ranks but by the sentence of a Court Martial, or by order of the Commander in Chief of the Presidency to which the offender shall belong". Article 109 outlined the remaining summary punishments that a commanding officer could award his native troops. They included: extra drill, with or without pack, for a period not exceeding fifteen days; restriction to barrack limits, not exceeding 15 days; confinement in the quarter guard or defaulter's room, not exceeding seven days; solitary confinement, not exceeding seven days; removal from staff situations or acting appointments; piling shot and cleaning accoutrements.¹² But even these modest powers were further reduced in Bengal by General Gomm's general order of November 1854 which stipulated that any man awarded drill exceeding six days or confinement to barracks for six days - adjusted two months later to drill for 15 days, imprisonment in the quarter-guard or defaulter room, or confinement to barracks for six days -

⁸ Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, pp. 189-90.

⁹ G.O.G.G., 24 February 1835, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

¹⁰ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 621.

¹¹ Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, p. 390.

¹² Articles of War, Act No. XX of 6 September 1845, OIOC, V/8/32.

could choose to be court-martialled instead.¹³ In his own report (separate to the official report of the Peel Commission), Major-General Hancock referred to the absurdity of a system in which Bengal commanding officers "were so completely stripped of all power to punish, upon their own authority alone, that private soldiers were allowed to claim a court-martial at their option, on their commanding officers awarding a punishment of only a few days' drill, and to forward written complaints against him *direct* to the Commander-in-Chief".¹⁴ The effect this reduction of power could have on the discipline of a regiment is illustrated by Lieutenant-Colonel Drought who, after three years furlough, resumed command of the 60th N.I. in January 1857. He wrote:

I saw very great laxity in all ranks, worse even than when I got command of the regiment in 1849. The authority of the commanding officer had become less than mine was as a subaltern, as regards punishment drill to non-commissioned officers, owing to army standing orders being set aside by circulars, and by station orders issued by officers perfectly ignorant of the proper method of keeping sepoy in subjection, and thereby interfering with a commanding officer's authority, and rendering him a mere cipher in the eyes of his men...¹⁵

By comparison, regimental commanding officers in the British Army had the summary power to award stoppages of pay (to make up losses incurred by damage or for habitual drunkenness), extra drill or guard duty, 'biling up' men in the 'black hole' for up to two days, and confinement to barracks for up to two months. But these relatively minor punishments were backed up by the ultimate threat of corporal punishment, a recourse not available to Indian army colonels from 1835 to 1845, and only for the most serious offences thereafter.¹⁶

As well as the curtailment of their powers of summary punishment, Bengal commanding officers also experienced considerable interference in their authority to convene court-martials and to confirm their sentences. At the same time the range of sentences those courts-martial could impose was reduced. Native troops could be tried by three types of court-martial: regimental, district (or garrison in larger cantonments) and general. Only a general court-martial could sit in judgement on a native officer (or a European officer for that matter), whereas all three could try privates and non-commissioned officers. A general court-martial was also the only tribunal that could pass a sentence of death. It was

¹³ G.O.C.C., 16 Nov. 1854, quoted in P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p. 439.

¹⁴ Report of Maj.-Gen. Hancock, 5 March 1859, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 642.

¹⁵ Brevet Lt.-Col. R. Drought to Major Ewart, 23 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 63.

¹⁶ Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy*, pp. 81, 83.

composed of no less than 13 native officers; regimental and district courts-martial had a minimum of three and five native officers respectively. All three were superintended by a single European officer who exerted a disproportionate influence. The native officers "remain in a state of mesmerism during the whole of the proceedings," noted one Bengal officer, "and when finally called upon for their opinion, invariably answer the superintending officer with 'Jo apkee khooshee (What your honour pleases)', and can seldom, if ever, be induced to give any other reply".¹⁷

The 1796 Bengal Articles of War had directed that no sentence of a regimental court-martial could be carried out until the commanding officer (not being a member of the court) or the garrison commander had confirmed it.¹⁸ But all this changed in 1818 when Lord Hastings, the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, came to the conclusion that regimental and district courts-martial were not being conducted "with the strictest adherence to legal Form, and the Laws of evidence". In other words, he did not believe that commanding officers and brigadiers (who confirmed district courts-martial) were capable of ensuring that all native troops received a fair trial. He therefore issued a general order which stated that all sentences by courts-martial inferior to general courts-martial would henceforth be confirmed by the local divisional commander, or major-general. He also ordered the deputy judge advocate-general in each division to keep a register of all courts-martial, in which the confirming general had noted his opinion on "the quality of the proceedings, the aptitude of the finding and sentence, and of the Commanding Officer's procedure thereon".¹⁹ If the proceedings were not satisfactory, the general could set aside the sentence of the court-martial. "Reversal of sentence was never directed without the most cogent reasons," commented Major-General Birch, "but no doubt the practice was one which worked ill for the discipline of the regiments."²⁰

The authority of commanding officers with regard to courts-martial was further reduced by Lord Combermere's general order of March 1827, which limited the award of corporal punishment in the Bengal native army to the crimes of stealing, marauding or gross insubordination. It also directed that dismissal from the service would invariably follow the infliction of such punishment and that, in line with Hastings' general order, the divisional commander's sanction would be required.²¹ In Madras and

¹⁷ Col. J.S. Hodgson, *Opinions on the Indian Army: originally published at Meerut in 1850, under the title of Musings on Military Matters* (London, 1857), p. 136.

¹⁸ Replies by Major-General Birch, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p. 439.

¹⁹ G.O.C.C., 6 Nov. 1818, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

²⁰ Replies by Major-General Birch, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p. 440.

²¹ Bentinck's minute on army corporal punishment, 16 Feb. 1835, Philips (ed.), *Bentinck Correspondence*, II, p. 1427.

Bombay, meanwhile, commanding officers still had the authority to confirm the sentences of regimental courts-martial, including flogging for a whole host of minor offences. This was probably down to the influence of the Governors of Madras and Bombay, Sir Thomas Munro and the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, neither of whom were convinced by the Utilitarian creed of centralization.

Some temporary relief was provided for commanding officers in Bengal by Sir Edward Barnes, Commander-in-Chief of India (1832-33), who came to the conclusion that this interference in inferior courts-martial by divisional commanders had led to "some injurious consequences". His circular of November 1832, therefore, overturned Hastings' general order by authorizing the convening officers of all courts-martial to confirm and carry into effect the sentences (the only exception being a sentence of imprisonment with or without hard labour).²² The circular also undermined Combermere's general order by giving a commanding officer "the power to confirm or not a sentence of corporal punishment, and to discharge a sepoy sentenced to flogging instead of inflicting that punishment".²³ But this power would not be enjoyed for long.

On succeeding Barnes as Commander-in-Chief of India in late 1833 (whilst also retaining the civil post of Governor-General), Lord William Bentinck set up military committees in each presidency to report upon the well being of their respective armies. Of particular interest to Bentinck was the expediency of abolishing flogging. "I had long been of opinion," he wrote in 1835, "that without some reason of much more urgent necessity than any I had heard this degradation could no longer be inflicted upon the high caste sepoy of the Bengal Army". The general feeling among all three military committees was that flogging could not be abolished entirely without endangering the discipline of the service, though some form of restriction was desirable. The Madras Committee, for example, suggested giving courts-martial the authority to award solitary confinement instead of corporal punishment, while the Bengal and Bombay Committees advised limiting the award of corporal punishment to general courts-martial (though the Bombay Committee also thought that offences which regimental courts-martial could punish by dismissal should also incur sentences of flogging). But Bentinck condemned these recommendations as "prejudice" and "opposed to reason", highlighting instead comments made by a majority of the Madras Committee and a minority of the Bengal Committee that "young men of respectable connections are deterred from entering the ranks, and that it

²² Circular No. 1661A, 2 Nov. 1832, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

²³ Replies by Major-General Birch, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p. 440.

produces a baneful moral influence upon the pride, the manly feeling and character of the whole service".²⁴ The fear of discouraging high-caste recruits was the main reason the lash was already less prominent in Bengal than in the other two presidencies. From 1829 to 1833, the average annual incidence of flogging was 7.59 men per Bengal regiment (or roughly one per cent), 23.79 men per Madras regiment (roughly three per cent), and 36.54 men per Bombay regiment (roughly four and a half per cent).²⁵

Such arguments dovetailed nicely with Bentinck's Utilitarian belief that human character could be transformed by enlightened legislation. With the concurrence of the Council of India, therefore, he abolished corporal punishment (the cat o' nine tails and the rattan) throughout the native Indian army by a general order of February 1835. Henceforth, minor courts-martial were empowered to dismiss soldiers for offences that had formerly been punishable by flogging, though all such sentences had to be confirmed by divisional commanders.²⁶ Thus were some of the powers conferred on commanding officers by Barnes's order of 1832 removed.

Most of the Indian military regarded the abolition of flogging as a mistake, particularly those British Army officers who occupied the senior commands. Their colleagues were in the process of seeing off a sustained campaign by Radical MPs to abolish flogging in the British Army, though the maximum number of lashes awardable by regimental and district courts-martial had been limited in 1833 to 200 and 300 respectively.²⁷ Wellington was the most strident supporter of corporal punishment. He believed, as did many in India, that army discipline depended upon the regimental commanding officer having the ultimate threat of flogging to back up his power to impose summary punishments. Without it, he informed the Adjutant-General, "We might as well pretend to extinguish the lights in our houses or theatres by extinguishers made of paper as to maintain the discipline of the army". The statistics seemed to confirm Wellington's argument. In 1826, 5,524 courts-martial resulted in 2,242 cases of flogging; in 1834 (despite a reduction in the establishment of the British Army by 8,000 men), 10,212 courts-martial resulted in just 963 cases of flogging. In other words, as the use of flogging declined the overall crime rate increased. Yet more parliamentary calls for abolition in 1833 forced the military

²⁴ Bentinck's minute on army corporal punishment, 16 Feb. 1835, Philips (ed.), *Bentinck Correspondence*, II, pp. 1426, 1430-1.

²⁵ Douglas M. Peers, 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820-50', *JICH*, Vol. 23: 2, 1995, p. 229.

²⁶ G.O.G.G., 24 February 1835, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

²⁷ Peers, 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash', *JICH*, 23:2, 1995, p. 233.

authorities to agree to restrict flogging to the punishment of mutiny, insubordination or violence, drunkenness on duty, the sale of equipment, stealing or disgraceful conduct. Only thus could they save for regimental courts-martial the right to award corporal punishment. The calls for abolition were temporarily silenced by the setting up of a Royal Commission on corporal punishment which published its report in 1836. "It endorsed the views of the vast majority of commanding officers," writes Hew Strachan, "who agreed that corporal punishment should be inflicted as rarely as possible and anticipated its eventual abolition, but who were extremely reluctant to answer for their regiments without the lash."

²⁸ As a result, regimental, district and general courts-martial were limited to 100, 150 and 200 lashes respectively. But after the death of a private who had received 150 lashes in 1846, the maximum punishment was further reduced to 50 lashes and restricted to general and district courts-martial. Corporal punishment was finally abolished in the British Army in 1868.

Back in India in the 1830s, most senior officers of the native armies were vehemently opposed to abolition. In a memorandum of November 1836, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert O'Callaghan, Commander-in-Chief of Madras (1831-8), stated his belief "that there may be occasions, even in cantonment, when the power of resorting to corporal punishment would alone prove adequate to the maintenance of order, while in the field, on the march, the want of that power may lead to the most disastrous consequence". These remarks were prompted in part by the high incidence of indiscipline displayed by Madras troops during their service in Goomsur in 1836, the first time they had seen action since the end of flogging. His advice therefore was for flogging to be reintroduced "in cantonments for acts of mutiny or violence against a superior officer, or disgraceful crimes, and when marching in the field for all offences at discretion"²⁹ Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief of India (1835-39), was sufficiently impressed by the concerns expressed by O'Callaghan and other Madras officers to pass them on to Lord Auckland, the new Governor-General (1836-42).³⁰ Further representations were made in 1838 by Lieutenant-General Sir Peregrine Maitland, O'Callaghan's successor, who called for the reintroduction of corporal punishment "in extreme or disgraceful cases",³¹ and in 1839 by Sir Jasper Nicolls, Fane's successor, who noted that the abolition of flogging "has been productive of the worst consequences to the discipline of the Native Army, and probably of serious discontent amongst the

²⁸ Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy*, p. 81.

²⁹ Memorandum by the Adjutant-General of Madras, 8 March 1836, 'Copy of Correspondence & Minutes from C-in-C India & others on Bentinck's G.O. of 1835 abolishing corporal punishment', OIOC, L/MIL/5/417/341.

³⁰ Minute by Sir Henry Fane, 6 Nov. 1836, *ibid.*

European soldiery, the sooner it can be restored the better".³² Additional pressure for the reintroduction of flogging was brought to bear by the Madras government, the Court of Directors and the Board of Control.³³

But Auckland - who, like Bentinck, had a strong moral objection to flogging - retorted by pointing out that the recent high incidence of indiscipline in the Bengal Army was caused by a sudden influx of recruits at the outbreak of the Afghan War in 1838.³⁴ His position was bolstered by the opinion of officers like Major-General Sir William Casement, the Military Member of the Supreme Council and a former native infantry commanding officer, who argued that the "recent addition to the flower of our native army" was due to the abolition of corporal punishment and that its restoration would "create extensive disgust with our service".³⁵ The only concession Auckland was prepared to make was the reintroduction of flogging for camp followers in 1839.

Most native troops were naturally pleased with abolition. In 1838, a senior Bengal subedar told Captain Sleeman, his former officer, that there was not one native officer in a hundred who did not regard the end of the lash in a positive light. "Flogging was an odious thing," he explained. "A man was disgraced, not only before his regiment, but before the crowd that assembled to witness the punishment." Abolition, on the other hand, had "reduced the number of courts-martial to one-quarter of what they were before, and thereby lightened the duties of the officer". It had also made bad men more orderly. The subedar explained:

A bad man formerly went on recklessly from small offences to great ones in the hope of impunity. He knew that no regimental, cantonment or brigade court-martial could sentence him to be dismissed the service; and that they would not sentence him to be flogged, except for great crimes, because it involved at the same time dismissal from the service. If they sentenced him to be flogged, he still hoped that the punishment would be remitted... Now he knows that these courts can sentence him to be dismissed from the service - that he is liable to lose his bread for ordinary transgressions, and be sentenced to work on the roads for graver ones. He is in consequence much more under restraint than he used to be.³⁶

³¹ Maitland to Fane, 18 Dec. 1838, *ibid*.

³² Minute by Sir Jasper Nicolls, 7 Jan. 1839, *ibid*.

³³ Peers, 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash', *JICH*, 23:2, 1995, p. 236.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

³⁵ Minute by Sir William Casement, 29 July 1839, OIOC, L/MIL/5/417/341.

³⁶ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 616.

On the other hand, this same subedar (as already mentioned) did not believe that abolishing the use of the rattan was in the interest of regimental discipline. And not all native soldiers were glad to see the end of the lash. One old Bengal subedar of more than 30 years' service remarked: "*Fauj be dar hogya* (The army has lost its fear)."³⁷ Sitaram Pandey was of a similar opinion,³⁸ as were most European officers. According to Sleeman, the vast majority thought that the abolition of corporal punishment in general had been, or would be, "attended with bad consequences". In the early 1840s, Sleeman himself condemned the "odious distinction which it leaves in the punishments to which our European and our native soldiers are liable", arguing instead that corporal punishment should apply to all soldiers in India for mutiny and gross insubordination in cantonments, and for plunder or violence while in the field.³⁹

In 1839, in response to this chorus of criticism by European officers, the Supreme Council of India gave regimental, district and general courts-martial the additional authority to sentence native soldiers to periods of imprisonment with or without hard labour for up to six months, one year and two years respectively for the same crimes that had formerly been punishable by flogging. The down side for regimental colonels was that only those sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for any period, or to imprisonment without hard labour for periods exceeding six months - and therefore outside the remit of regimental courts-martial - would also be dismissed. Furthermore, all sentences of imprisonment required the confirmation of the local major-general.⁴⁰ As if this was not enough, Bengal commanding officers were then denied the right to try sepoys for desertion before a regimental court-martial by Sir Jasper Nicholls' general order of 1840. In future just general courts-martial were to have that power; inferior courts could only try soldiers on the lesser charge of absence without leave.⁴¹ A year later, Nicholls restricted the sentences of regimental courts-martial to six months' deprivation of pay and 20 days' solitary confinement.⁴²

It was not until the Governor-Generalship of Sir Henry (later Lord) Hardinge (1844-8), a Tory, that various measures were introduced to bolster the powers of commanding officers. Chief among them was the reintroduction of flogging. Even before leaving London, Hardinge had sounded out Sir Charles Napier, then Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Sind, as to the feasibility of bringing back the

³⁷ Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 165.

³⁸ Lunt (ed.). *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 75.

³⁹ Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, pp. 619 & 621.

⁴⁰ G.O.P.C., 2 Oct. 1839, Abstract of General Orders from 1817 to 1840, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/435.

⁴¹ G.O.C.C., 5 May 1840, *ibid.*

⁴² G.O.C.C., 29 March 1841, *ibid.*

lash.⁴³ His reason for so doing, he told the Queen in a letter of October 1845, was because the most experienced officers in India believed that the discipline of the army had "greatly degenerated since 1835", as proved by the recent rash of mutinies by Bengal and Madras regiments, particularly those ordered to serve in Sind. Hardinge's own conviction was that the introduction of imprisonment with hard labour for offences formerly punishable with flogging had not been a success, not least because the sepoys considered it to be "more hurtful to their feelings by the loss of caste than the former punishment of corporal punishment". His preference was for the reinstatement of flogging without mandatory dismissal for "military offences such as insubordination and other irregularities incident to the life of a soldier" committed on the line of march or in the field, while disgraceful crimes such as stealing would continue to be punished by imprisonment with hard labour and the loss of livelihood.⁴⁴ In other words, he believed that high-caste Hindus would regard being flogged and retained in the service as less disgraceful than being sent to work in a chain-gang with common felons before being discharged. Bentinck had regarded immediate discharge as less disgraceful than flogging. Both were eager to placate the high-caste sepoys who dominated the Bengal Army.

But the "uncertain temper" of the native army - thanks to the recent disasters in Afghanistan and the spate of mutinies over pay - required Hardinge to proceed with caution. He therefore made discreet enquiries of the senior civil and military officers in India as to the desirability of restoring corporal punishment. The response was all but unanimous. "Every Governor, Councillor, and Commander in Chief and the great majority of the General and field officers have concurred in the necessity of this measure," he informed the Queen. "The public press of India have taken the same view." In August 1845, to sweeten the pill, he made the native army a number of financial concessions such as increased allowances for those serving in Sind and hutting money (see Chapter 2).⁴⁵

Flogging was formally reintroduced by the enactment of the first Articles of War that applied to all three presidency armies in September 1845. They empowered all courts-martial to award up to 50 lashes for a wide range of offences, including 'disgraceful' crimes such as stealing, embezzlement and the self-infliction of wounds to avoid service.⁴⁶ But because Hardinge was anxious to restrict the infliction of corporal punishment "to offences of a strictly military nature, the delinquent remaining

⁴³ Hardinge to Napier, 7 June 1844, Napier Papers, BL, Add. MSS 54517, ff. 55-8.

⁴⁴ Hardinge to the Queen, 22 Oct 1845, Peel Papers, BL, Add. MSS 40475, ff. 45-7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., ff. 51-2.

⁴⁶ Articles of War, Act No. XX of 6 September 1845, OIOC, V/8/32.

within the service",⁴⁷ he also announced a resolution of the Supreme Council which stated that flogging could only be awarded for the crimes of mutiny, insubordination, violence, using or offering violence to superior officers and drunkenness on duty. In ordinary circumstances and in cantonments it was not to be inflicted for disgraceful conduct. But on the line of march, on board a ship or on service in the field the full power of the Articles of War could "be exercised according to the absolute necessity of the case". Officers in command of troops were to "clearly understand" that the object of the resolution was to "inflict corporal punishment as seldom as possible, commuting it for other punishment in all cases where it can be done with safety to the discipline of the army".⁴⁸ A further restriction was imposed in Bengal by the issue of an Adjutant-General's circular in 1846 which warned commanding officers to take account of the "state of the weather at the time of inflicting punishment" because "extreme heat, cold or damp" might affect the health of the flogged soldier.⁴⁹

The overall effect of these restrictions was that flogging was used sparingly in all three presidencies (see Tables 34, 35 and 36).⁵⁰ During the period 1850 to 1854, the lash was inflicted upon an average of just 24.2 Bengal sepoys per annum, 20.2 Madras sepoys and 12.6 Bombay sepoys. If we take into account the relative size of the Bengal Army - two and half times that of Madras and three times that of Bombay - it had by far the lowest incidence of corporal punishment: an average of 0.02%, compared with 0.04% in Madras and 0.03% in Bombay. By contrast, the average annual incidence of flogging in the pre-abolition period of 1829 to 1833 was about 1% (50 times greater) in the Bengal Army, 3% (75 times greater) in the Madras Army and 4.5% (more than a 150 times greater) in the Bombay Army. The disparity in the incidence of flogging between Bengal and the other presidencies was therefore not as great as it had been before abolition. But the frequency of corporal punishment after reintroduction was much, much lower. So low, in fact, that Bengal sepoys did not regard it as a deterrent to indiscipline. In his evidence to the Peel Commission, Lieutenant-Colonel Master of the 7th Bengal L.C. made no distinction between abolition and reinstatement. "I think that the abolition of flogging did more harm to the army than anything else," he declared. "My own native officers have often said to

⁴⁷ Replies by Major-General Birch, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, p. 436.

⁴⁸ Resolution of the Supreme Council of India, 30 Aug. 1845, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Adj.-Gen.'s Circular, No. 2317, 20 Oct. 1846, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁵⁰ India Military Consulations, OIOC, P/43/37, P/44/18 and P/45/59, No. 5 of 30 April 1852, No. 333 of 4 April 1853 and No. 41 of 13 April 1855.

me, 'As long as that rod was hanging over that bad man's head he was all right, but now they do not care for the commanding officer or anyone else.'⁵¹

Table 34 - *Corporal punishment in the Bengal Native Army 1850-4*

Year	Corporal punishment inflicted			Corporal punishment not inflicted		
	With discharge	Without discharge	Total	Remitted	Set aside	Total
1850	0	25	25	0	0	0
1851	0	17	17	0	0	0
1852	0	21	21	9	1	10
1853	2	27	29	1	0	1
1854	0	29	29	0	0	0

As well as reintroducing corporal punishment on a limited scale, the 1845 Articles of War were also designed to bolster the authority of commanding officers in all three armies by restoring to them the power to confirm all sentences passed by a regimental court-martial, including flogging, reduction to

Table 35 - *Corporal punishment in the Madras Native Army 1850-4*

Year	Corporal punishment inflicted			Corporal punishment not inflicted		
	With discharge	Without discharge	Total	Remitted	Set aside	Total
1850	0	14	14	0	1	1
1851	0	19	19	0	2	2
1852	0	21	21	1	0	1
1853	0	19	19	3	0	3
1854	1	27	28	2	1	3

the ranks, loss of seniority, up to six months' imprisonment with or without hard labour, solitary confinement and dismissal. They also gave them extensive powers to commute and mitigate sentences. But commanding officers could not carry into effect the sentences of corporal punishment, dismissal or

Table 36 - *Corporal punishment in the Bombay Native Army 1850-4*

Year	Corporal punishment inflicted			Corporal punishment not inflicted		
	With discharge	Without discharge	Total	Remitted	Set aside	Total
1850	2	8	10	5	0	5
1851	1	7	8	2	0	2
1852	1	13	14	0	0	0
1853	0	21	21	0	0	0
1854	2	8	10	0	0	0

⁵¹ Evidence of Lt.-Col. R. Master, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 61.

imprisonment with hard labour, nor could they mitigate or commute such sentences, without higher authority.⁵² These limitations were removed by the revised Articles of War in 1847 which gave commanding officers the "power to confirm and carry into effect, or to mitigate, all Sentences whatever" passed by a regimental court-martial.⁵³

However, regimental courts-martial were excluded from trying a range of offences, including insubordination and 'disgraceful' crimes such as stealing and fraud. Commanding officers were therefore allowed to try in regimental courts-martial some of the less serious crimes normally reserved for district or garrison courts-martial - but only after permission had been obtained from higher authority.⁵⁴ In practice, however, this discretionary power was quickly abused. In 1846, Lord Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, was forced to issue a general order informing commanding officers that he had had to overturn a number of sentences of dismissal because, though "convicted on clear evidence of disgraceful conduct or of insubordination", the sepoys had been "tried by inferior Courts Martial without due permission obtained, or tried under inaccurate charges, or sentenced to punishments not in accordance with the Articles of War and the Orders of Government". In future, commanding officers were directed to pay special attention to all these requirements.⁵⁵

But even when courts-martial were legitimate, Bengal sepoys had the opportunity to overturn convictions by petitioning the Commander-in-Chief. Sitaram recalled one particularly farcical episode when a havildar, on being sentenced to dismissal for insolence to a superior officer, turned to his commanding officer and told him that he would go straight to the Commander-in-Chief and lodge an appeal. The result of that appeal was that he was restored to his regiment, "thereby laughing in the face of the General, Brigadier and his Commanding Officer". Sitaram added: "No *sepoy* worried about a court-martial at that time, but this was in the days when any complaint received attention from the Commander-in-Chief. The Colonel *sahib* was furious, but he had no power, and what could he do?"⁵⁶ In theory, no native soldier could petition his Commander-in-Chief except through the medium of his commanding officer. Yet in the Bengal Army petitions were regularly sent from sepoys directly to the Commander-in-Chief without censure; and to add insult to injury, these appeals were often upheld. Brigadier Coke told the Royal Commission that many Bengal commanding officers had had men who

⁵² Article 76, Articles of War, Act XX of 6 Sept 1845, OIOC, V/8/32.

⁵³ Article 79, Articles of War, Act XIX of 18 Dec 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/11/14.

⁵⁴ Article 65, Articles of War, Act XX of 6 Sept 1845, OIOC, V/8/32.

⁵⁵ G.O.C.C., 15 May 1846, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

had been dismissed as unfit, or by sentence of a court-martial, returned to their regiments after they had presented petitions at headquarters. The general feeling engendered among sepoys by these and other similar acts (such as the lack of "discretion to promote, save by seniority"), thought Coke, was "that their commanding officer was helpless to punish or reward". This gradual erosion of a commanding officer's power was, in Coke's opinion, "one of the principal causes of bringing about the mutiny".⁵⁷

Many other officers agreed. In an 1851 essay, John Jacob listed eight serious defects of the Bengal Army, the second of which was the "want of power placed in the hands of regimental commanding officers" and the "want of confidence reposed in, and support afforded to them, by the Commander in Chief and by Government".⁵⁸ Three years later, in a subsequent essay, he expanded upon this point. To be in a "really efficient state", sepoys needed to regard their commanding officer as "their absolute prince - as the paramount authority". Yet by concentrating all real power at army headquarters, the authorities had done considerable harm. "In many instances," wrote Jacob, "the sepoy has been allowed and encouraged to look on his regimental commander as his natural enemy; and, in the Bengal Army, at least, to forward secret complaints against him to army head-quarters. While courts-martial, articles of war, rules and regulations, bewilder the native soldier, and fill his mind with the idea that his officers are wishing to keep him out of his rights". In Jacob's opinion, the only principle of military discipline which a native soldier "thoroughly understands is obedience to his commanding officer". As such, it was vitally important that "enlistment, discharge, promotion to all ranks, and everything else should rest with the regimental commander alone".⁵⁹ These were, of course, the very powers that Jacob enjoyed as commanding officer of the Sind Irregular Horse (a system of command that, according to his successor, Major Merewether, produced "perfect trust, confidence, and mutual respect on all sides" and the "best and most satisfactory state of discipline").⁶⁰ Yet Jacob was well aware that he and other irregular officers had been selected, whereas regular commanding officers had risen through seniority, and that something had to be done about the quality of the latter before they could be entrusted with more power.

Many of these points were echoed by Subedar Sitaram Pandey after the mutiny. He wrote:

⁵⁶ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p.75.

⁵⁷ Replies of Lt. Col. H.M. Durand, 4 September 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 71, p. 557.

⁵⁸ 'The Defects of the Bengal Army', 1851, Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, p. 102.

⁵⁹ 'Remarks on the State of the Native Army of India in General', 1854, *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁶⁰ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 6, p. 367.

The Articles of War are often read out to regiments, but the language is seldom understood, being nearly all Persian and Arabic... [A] sepoy does not require a lot of rules and regulations to be read out to him. They only fill his head with doubts and fears. He should look upon his Commander as his father and mother, his protector, his god, and as such be taught to obey him. We do not understand divided power; absolute power is what we worship. Power is much divided among the English... The Commanding Officer has to ask half a dozen officers before he can punish a sepoy and the permission takes months before it is received. By the time the punishment is inflicted, half the men will have forgotten all about the case and the effect of the punishment entirely lost.⁶¹

As the extent of the disaffection in the Bengal Army became evident in 1857, an increasing number of military and civilian officials identified the weakening of commanding officers' authority as a contributory factor. In May 1857, before he had learned of the outbreak proper, Robert Vernon Smith, the President of the Board of Control, was informed by Colonel Tait of the 3rd Bengal I.C. that there was "a severance between the officers & men of the Native Infantry" that was likely to interfere with the good feeling that used to exist, and that he attributed it "very much to the late regulation for transferring all power to the C-in-C which used to be given more to Regimental officers". Vernon Smith told Canning that he had heard similar comments from "many quarters" and that "all recent changes" had "tended towards the same severance".⁶²

In mid-June, Vernon Smith received a letter from Lord Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, which repeated the point Jacob had made in his 1854 essay on the state of the native army. It was because the seniority system had produced "the most incapable officers in command of regiments & even of stations & divisions", wrote Elphinstone, that it had become necessary to "concentrate authority as much as possible in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief". The evil effects of such a system of concentration were "more felt in the large army of Bengal, occupying such an immense extent of country, than in the smaller armies of the subordinate Presidencies". As a result, discipline in the Bengal Army had "relaxed to a degree which appears hardly credible".⁶³

But most telling of all were the assertions made by Sir Patrick Grant in a memorandum to Canning during his brief stint as acting Commander-in-Chief of India in the summer of 1857. Four years earlier, while giving evidence to a Parliamentary select committee, Grant had insisted that the powers of

⁶¹ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 74-5.

⁶² Vernon Smith to Canning, 26 May 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/4.

⁶³ Elphinstone to Vernon Smith, 14 June 1857, *ibid.*, MSS Eur/F231/5.

Bengal commanding officers were "sufficient if judiciously exercised".⁶⁴ By the outbreak of mutiny, however, the former Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army (and therefore a man partially responsible for the erosion of those powers) had altered his opinion. One of the four main reasons why dissatisfaction and distrust had developed in the Bengal Army, he told Canning, was because officers did not have "sufficient control over their men" and were therefore "not looked up to and respected as they should be". He cited four contributory factors: the "order preventing officers from punishing non-commissioned officers except by sentence of a court-martial", which was tantamount to saying that an officer had no authority over them because it was "impossible to try a man for the thousand and one trifling faults which made up the sum of a bad" N.C.O.; the "inability to reduce a bad and careless non-commissioned officer except by sentence of a court-martial for some very gross fault, and the consequent laxity of discipline in the army"; the "difficulty experienced in punishing even bad men by a court-martial, as any legal flaw, however, trifling, is sufficient to invalidate the proceedings", so that officers preferred to ignore indiscipline than to demonstrate "their own powerlessness to their men"; and the encouragement of petitions against officers "who have either to prove their case or submit to reproof", while the presenter of an unfounded petition - which was the case 99 times out of a hundred - escaped "scot free".⁶⁵

Grant then gave two examples of how the authority of regimental commanding officers was routinely undermined (related to him by "one of the most intelligent field officers" in the Bengal Army). In the first case, a non-commissioned officer, who had plundered property and then perjured himself to conceal his crime, took his discharge to avoid a court-martial. Some months later, having petitioned the Commander-in-Chief to be reinstated, he was found guilty of his offences, but still allowed to remain in the service and returned to his regiment. In the second case, a native officer tried to gain a second month's extension to his leave by pleading urgent business in the civil courts, even though he knew his commanding officer had no power to make such a concession. The colonel duly refused, instructing him to return immediately, but despite several orders to this effect the native officer stayed away until the end of the second month. Arrested on his return, he pleaded illness as the reason for his absence. His commanding officer's response was to apply for permission to court-martial him for disobedience and falsehood. But the divisional commander would not agree, pointing out that a "native officer had a

⁶⁴ Evidence of Col. Patrick Grant, 14 March 1853, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, p. 129.

⁶⁵ Memorandum by Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant to the Governor-General, 29 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 66, pp. 496-7.

right to expect that his application would be attended to, and the man was released with a reprimand". A few days later, a "very excellent native officer" requested two months leave, and the same commanding officer applied to the same general of division that it should be granted. The general's response was that the government was already so liberal in its leave to soldiers that he could not consider such an application. Grant's only comment was that "the system which allows a commanding officer of a regiment to be so lowered in the eyes of his men, calls loudly for amendment".⁶⁶

The United Service Gazette, which received much correspondence from both British and East India Company officers, was under no illusion as to one of the major causes of disaffection in the Bengal Army. In early June 1857, before news of the Meerut and Delhi uprisings had reached England, it commented: "Discipline has been relaxed by the tendency to deprive Commanding Officers of power." A month later, by which time the full picture was known, it recommended the restoration of commanding officers' powers of summary punishment and reward, including corporal punishment, to prevent mutinies in the future. "The old bonds which united the Sepoy to his European Officer have been loosening for a quarter of a century," opined its editor. "Let them be drawn closer by the return to the system which prevailed before the late Lord W. Bentinck assumed the command of the Army."⁶⁷

Much of the evidence given to the Peel Commission was in a similar vein. In Lord Clyde's opinion, the reduced power of Bengal commanding officers had rendered them "almost cyphers". He added: "The commanding officer being thus crippled, found his only means of getting influence with the men was by flattering and coaxing them, and thus discipline was still further shaken. In truth, it was only when it suited the pleasure and convenience of the sepoy that he went heartily with the commanding officer." Clyde's solution was to give commanding officers the power to discharge sepoys, demote non-commissioned officers, curtail furlough and confine sepoys with stoppages of pay, as in the Queen's service. "But above all," he wrote, "they should be as little interfered with as possible by superior authorities in matters of regimental detail. The Asiatic soldier must look to his commanding officers as very powerful." If he was inefficient then the Commander-in-Chief should have the power to replace him.⁶⁸

The Punjab Committee considered a Bengal commanding officer's powers of summary punishment to be wholly inadequate:

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 497.

⁶⁷ *The United Service Gazette*, 6 June and 11 July 1857.

⁶⁸ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 53, pp. 422-3.

He could neither flog for insubordination, nor dismiss for general bad character; he could not give extra duty to the negligent soldier, nor refuse furlough to an habitual offender; he could not send a non-commissioned officer to drill, nor reduce without formal trial; and he was even prohibited from confining one before trial, and required to put him simply under arrest. When to all these restrictions is added the facility of direct appeal through the post office by any sepoy to the commander-in-chief, and even the reception of anonymous petitions, we can understand how such a system in course of years undermined the legitimate influence of the commanding officers, and gradually reduced them to the cyphers which they were found to be in 1857.⁶⁹

The Committee's recommendation was simple: "Trust the European officers with power; train them to its exercise; supersede them unhesitatingly if they prove unequal to the trust; and heavily punish them if they abuse it. We may then hope to hear no more of mutiny."⁷⁰

According to Colonel Durand, virtually all the senior British and East India Company officers he consulted in India in 1858 on behalf of the Peel Commission expressed views broadly similar to those of the Punjab Committee. They included the Oudh Committee, Major-Generals Sir Sydney Cotton, Sir James Hearsey and Sir James Hope Grant, Brigadiers Farquharson, Coke, Steel and Troup, Colonel Burn, Lieutenant-Colonel Macpherson and Major Williams. All believed that the authority of commanding officers needed to be enhanced. The Oude Committee suggested that they should have the summary power to flog. Brigadiers Farquharson and Coke, and Colonel Burn, went even further by recommending magisterial powers (similar to those enjoyed by the commander of the Sind Irregular Horse), as well as the power to promote, demote, dismiss and inflict corporal punishment. Coke would have no Articles of War and no oath of loyalty; standing orders and field exercise would be sufficient to maintain drill and discipline.⁷¹ General Mansfield, Clyde's chief of staff during the mutiny campaign, also recommended abolishing the Articles of War and replacing them with "a set of simple regulations". He too believed that the power of commanding officers needed to be increased. "In the eye of the native," he noted, "there should be no apparent limit to the power of his immediate chief."⁷²

The lone voice of dissent was that of Major-General Birch, the Military Secretary to the Government of India, who insisted that the powers of regimental officers had neither increased nor diminished in any perceptible degree during his period of service in India. Birch, it will be recalled, had helped to

⁶⁹ Replies of Lt.-Col. H.M. Durand, 4 Sept 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 71, p. 557.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 559.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 557 and 559.

frame the Articles of War of 1845 and 1847. He now stated his belief that the "greatly extended powers granted to officers commanding regiments" by those articles "must have had at least a beneficial tendency on the discipline of regiments", and where that had not been the case the fault lay "with the officers themselves". Nevertheless he was prepared to recommend an enhancement of certain powers, including a commanding officer's summary power to demote N.C.O.s and to award corporal punishment with a rattan cane. He also believed that once a commanding officer had confirmed a court-martial's sentence of dismissal, there should be no right of appeal.⁷³

Many of the witnesses who appeared before the Peel Commission in London were likewise of the opinion that Bengal commanding officers needed more authority over their men, including enhanced powers to punish and reward. They included: Major-General Low, the former military member of the Supreme Council of India; Lieutenant-Colonel Wyllie, a former Assistant Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army; Colonel Becher, the Quartermaster-General of the Bengal Army; Sir George Clerk, the former Governor of Bombay; Sir Charles Trevelyan, a former deputy secretary of the Political Department of the Government of India; Colonel Henry Durand, the former Agent for the Governor-General in Central India; Colonel Wintle, a former commander of a regiment of Bengal Native Infantry; and Lieutenant-Colonels Harington and Master, both former commanders of regiments of Bengal light cavalry.⁷⁴ Typical of those witnesses with regimental experience was Wintle, an officer of 39 years' service, who particularly regretted the loss of the summary power to dismiss, adding: "We certainly felt as regimental officers that the men did not care about our authority."⁷⁵

Of the eleven members of the Peel Commission, four made specific written references to this issue. The most forthright was Major-General Hancock who recommended that commanding officers be granted the summary power to demote, to dismiss and to award up to 50 lashes. He also believed they should have the authority to convene and confirm regimental courts-martial for more serious offences, and the power to recommend that non-commissioned officers be removed to the pension establishment, awarded a reduced pension, or dismissed altogether for repeated dereliction of duty.⁷⁶ Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Smith thought that "every power consistent with judgement and discretion should be

⁷² Replies by Maj.-Gen. W.R. Mansfield, 4 Sept 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 62, p. 452.

⁷³ Replies by Maj.-Gen. Birch, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 61, pp. 436 & 440.

⁷⁴ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, pp. 13-14, 21, 28, 42, 107, 315, 131, 51 and 61.

⁷⁵ Evidence of Brevet Col. Wintle's, 24 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷⁶ Report of Major-General Hancock, 5 March 1859, *ibid.*, pp. 642-3.

restored or established for the officers commanding corps and regiments".⁷⁷ General the Marquess of Tweeddale considered the summary power to dismiss to be a sufficient enhancement of authority, though he also suggested replacing regimental courts-martial with the punchayet system (see below).⁷⁸ Colonel Tait, the only former or serving Bengal officer on the Royal Commission, wanted a complete revision of the Bengal regulations and the less the discretion of commanding officers was limited the better. "I believe," he added, "that the limitations placed on their power of late years have been greatly instrumental in causing an entire separation between the native soldiery and their European officers, from whom they had nothing to hope or fear."⁷⁹

Most of the foregoing evidence refers to the inadequate powers possessed by the commanding officers of regular Bengal corps - including the artillery and the Sappers and Miners. After 1846, it could just as easily apply to the commandants of Bengal Irregular Cavalry regiments. For much of the first half of the nineteenth century, the system of discipline in those regiments was similar to that in the Sind Irregular Horse. Commandants had complete authority over their men and could flog, demote and dismiss at will. According to one irregular officer, even the legendary Colonel Skinner "was a great advocate for strict discipline, and though loved for his benevolence and justice, he was feared for his habit of punishing defaulters" by flogging them with a *zeerbund* (or *martingale*).⁸⁰ But all this changed in 1846 when the branch was brought under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief and made subject to the Articles of War.⁸¹ The following year, an Adjutant-General's circular removed the power of the punchayet court - the irregular cavalry's less formal equivalent of a regimental court-martial in which an offender was tried by a "jury of native officers, under the guidance of the commandant"⁸² - to rule on anything other than private disputes. Henceforth, all "offences of a public nature, involving the discipline of a Corps and Criminal cases", had to be referred to regular courts-martial.⁸³

The outcome of these reforms, the Punjab Committee told the Peel Commission, was that the authority of an irregular cavalry commandant had diminished even more than that of his regular

⁷⁷ Lt.-Gen. Smith's answers, 3 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 76, p. 588.

⁷⁸ Notes by the Marquess of Tweeddale, 1 Jan 1859, *ibid.*, Appx. 74., p. 583.

⁷⁹ Colonel Tait's answers, 3 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 80, p. 607.

⁸⁰ Carmichael Smyth, *Irregular Horse*, p. 9.

⁸¹ Replies by Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant, 16 July 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 65, p. 490.

⁸² *Precis of Replies on Subject of Irregular Cavalry*, *ibid.*, Appx. 72, p. 571.

infantry counterpart. Men could no longer be discharged or demoted without a court-martial. "The commandant," it wrote, "has not even the power to order any man in his regiment to be given an extra allowance of grain to a horse out of condition. All minor punishments must be dealt out according to regulation. In fact, the thing has been laid down by Procrustean rule, and the 'irregular cavalry' has long been a misnomer." The end result was "to reduce the efficiency of the regiments, and to render them dangerous to the state". Similar opinions were expressed by Sir Sydney Cotton, Sir J.H. Grant, Brigadier-General John Jacob and Brigadier Christie, the latter commenting: "In former days the men looked up to their commanding officer, and did everything in their power to please him. Now matters are greatly changed, knowing that all power has been taken out of the hands of commanding officers."⁸⁴ Not surprisingly, all recommended an increase of the commandant's powers. The Marquess of Tweeddale went even further, it will be recalled, by suggesting the replacement of all regimental courts-martial with punchayet courts.⁸⁵ Even Sir Patrick Grant, whose circular had abolished punchayets in 1847, was able to comment with hindsight that the erosion of the irregular cavalry commandant's "almost absolute authority" had been "very injurious". He now believed a resumption of these former powers to be desirable.⁸⁶

The Punjab Irregular Force was the branch of the Bengal Army that experienced the least weakening of its commanding officers' power to punish in the years prior to the mutiny. It was also the most loyal with just one minor example of disaffection in 1857.⁸⁷ Formed in 1849 and placed under the civil authority of the Punjab government rather than the Commander-in-Chief, the five regiments of irregular cavalry and five (later six) of irregular infantry were not at first bound by the Articles of War. Instead the commandants were given the summary powers of a civil magistrate and could sentence their men to 50 lashes, a fine of 50 rupees, dismissal from the service and up to three years' imprisonment with hard labour. In theory all this changed in 1852 when, against the wishes of the commandants, the whole Punjab Irregular Force was made subject to the Articles of War and courts-martial were required for most serious offences. One unfortunate consequence, according to Lieutenant-Colonel Wilde of the 4th Punjab I.I., was that the "men began to look beyond their commandants to get their punishments

⁸³ Adjutant-General's Circular, No. 1408, 19 June 1847, Abstract of General Orders from 1840 to 1847, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/436.

⁸⁴ *Precis of Replies on Subject of Irregular Cavalry*, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 72, p. 571.

⁸⁵ Notes by the Marquess of Tweeddale, 1 Jan 1859, *ibid.*, Appx. 74., p. 583.

⁸⁶ Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant's Replies, 16 July 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 65, p. 491.

reprieved or remitted, or their promotion granted". Yet some commandants still used their discretion and would "flog the first man that refused obedience". Wilde explained: "In any extreme case, we should have taken the law into our own hands, as we always felt we should be fully supported by the brigadier and government." In 1857, as a number of Punjab regiments were ordered south to retake Delhi, Wilde and the other commandants asked the local government to reconfer their old power of magistrates. "It was granted," Wilde told the Peel Commission, "and from that time to this we have never had any difficulty."⁸⁸

Given that the Articles of War of 1845 and 1847 applied to all three presidencies, it follows that regular commanding officers in the Madras and Bombay armies also experienced a marked restriction in their power to punish in the years prior to the mutiny. By 1857, their power to award summary punishment and to convene and confirm courts-martial was almost identical to that exercised by their Bengal counterparts.⁸⁹ The only significant difference was that Bengal sepoys awarded the summary punishments of extra drill and confinement to barracks were able to opt for a court-martial instead.

Even the Bengal practice of appealing against punishment by sending a petition direct to the Commander-in-Chief was mirrored by some Madras sepoys. "They ought not to do so," Major-General Steel told the Peel Commission, "but they have done so." He also admitted that they were rarely punished for this breach of regulations, and that, as a result of such petitions, the Adjutant-General had sometimes interfered with the decision of a commanding officer.⁹⁰ Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant, Commander-in-Chief of Madras, explained the erosion of power in the following terms:

If we could always arrange to have none but sensible, judicious, and thoroughly competent officers in command of regiments, it would certainly be desirable to increase their powers and to give them every latitude. But constituted as the service is, and that an officer not notoriously incompetent must obtain command of a regiment when he attains a certain rank and standing, the restrictions imposed on the powers of commanding officers have been salutary I conceive.

⁸⁷ Three Hindustani native officers of the 2nd Punjab Irregular Cavalry were executed for inciting others to mutiny during the siege of Delhi (Source: *Precis of Replies on Subject of Irregular Cavalry*, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 72, p. 571).

⁸⁸ Evidence of Lt.-Col. Alfred Wilde, 26 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, pp. 90-2.

⁸⁹ Madras Army Regulations 1849, OIOC, L/MIL/17/3/491; Bombay Army Regulations 1850, OIOC, L/MIL/17/4/548.

Nevertheless he was prepared to recommend that commanding officers be given the additional power to confirm and execute the sentences of all regimental courts-martial "without referring to any superior authority", to award non-commissioned officers the summary punishments of extra drill (with or without packs) and loss of seniority, and to cane sepoys and recruits at drill. If any officer was "so wanting in judgement, temper and discretion as to be incapable of fitly exercising these increased powers", he was unfit for command and should be removed.⁹¹

Bombay differed from Madras in that it did not allow its sepoys to appeal directly to the Commander-in-Chief over the heads of their commanding officers. When a havildar in the Bombay Light Cavalry did just this in an attempt to overturn the sentence of a court-martial, he was tried a second time and dismissed the service. According to his commanding officer, Colonel Poole, the submission of a petition without going through the proper channel was "considered a great military offence" and "dealt with accordingly".⁹² Yet most Bombay officers were of the opinion that regular commanding officers had inadequate powers to punish. Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Somerset, Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, told the Peel Commission that the magisterial power which "answers admirably in the irregular regiments" might "with advantage be introduced generally". He referred particularly to the summary award of flogging "for theft, insubordination, and any disgraceful conduct, to which should be added imprisonment, and as a consequence expulsion".⁹³ Colonel Willoughby concurred by noting that commanding officers should always have the power to inflict summary punishment "for any offence" that was given to them on the outbreak of mutiny.⁹⁴ A minimum requirement, according to Colonel Sinclair, was the summary power to discharge.⁹⁵ Both Sinclair and Willoughby contrasted the Bombay commanding officer's lack of power to punish with his ample power to promote.

Thus while regular commanding officers in all three presidency armies suffered a broadly similar reduction in their theoretical power to punish, the effect in Bengal was exacerbated by the way the military authorities were prepared to receive and act upon petitions from native soldiers that bypassed commanding officers. In Madras the authorities were also prepared to tolerate such an irregular practice, though it was much less frequent. In Bombay it was punished severely. When asked by the

⁹⁰ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. Sir S. Steel, 25 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 73.

⁹¹ Replies by Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant, 6 July 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 65, p. 485.

⁹² Evidence of Colonel S. Poole, 27 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹³ Replies by Lt.-Gen. Sir H. Somerset, 24 July 1858, *ibid.*, Appx. 69, p. 521.

⁹⁴ Evidence of Col. M. Willoughby, 26 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 103.

Peel Commission if such a practice was likely "to shake discipline almost more than anything", Colonel Felix replied: "Certainly."⁹⁶

If we accept that Bengal commanding officers experienced the most serious diminution of their authority in the years prior to the mutiny, then it would follow that the Bengal Army was more indisciplined than its Madras and Bombay counterparts. But does the evidence bear this out? In the early 1850s there were, in a proportionate sense, many fewer court-martial convictions in Bengal than in the other presidencies (see Tables 37, 38 and 39).⁹⁷ In 1854, for example, the Bengal Army had less than twice the number of convictions of the Bombay Army and only 50 per cent more than Madras. Such statistics can be viewed in one of two ways: either the Bengal Army required proportionately fewer courts-martial because it contained men of a better character who were in a higher state of discipline (as Bentinck believed in the 1830s); or the low figures are a reflection of the fact that Bengal commanding officers preferred to turn a blind eye to indiscipline rather than risk the humiliation of an acquittal or the overturning of a sentence on appeal (a point made by Sir Patrick Grant in his memorandum of May 1857). The evidence would seem to support the latter interpretation. That the Bengal Army was the least disciplined of the three is confirmed by contemporary opinion. In 1846, shortly before his transfer from the 26th N.I., Ensign Hodson informed a friend that in "discipline and subordination [the sepoys] seem to be lamentably deficient". A couple of months later, having joined the 1st Bengal European Fusiliers (renamed fusiliers in recognition of their excellent service during the 1st Sikh War), he commented: "We are under much stricter

Table 37 - *Sentences of Bengal native courts-martial 1850-4*

Year	Inflicted	Remitted	Set aside for irregularities	Total
1850	824	25	17	866
1851	635	49	29	713
1852	616	35	10	661
1853	727	44	14	785
1854	845	36	14	895

⁹⁵ Evidence of Col. J. Sinclair, 26 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁹⁶ Evidence of Col. O. Felix, 25 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 68.

discipline in this corps, both officers and men, and obliged to be orderly and submissive. No bad thing for us either. I hold there is more real liberty in being under a decent restraint than in absolute freedom from any check."⁹⁸

Table 38 - *Sentences of Madras native courts-martial 1850-4*

Year	Inflicted	Remitted	Set aside for irregularities	Total
1850	649	22	17	688
1851	591	16	14	621
1852	600	31	25	656
1853	562	17	23	602
1854	513	34	15	562

Sir Charles Napier was even more explicit. On assuming command of the Bengal Army in the early summer of 1849, he found it "in a state of gross undiscipline, and grievously inexpert in military movements".⁹⁹ In the same year Brigadier the Hon. Henry Dundas (later Major-General Lord

Table 39 - *Sentences of Bombay native courts-martial 1850-4*

Year	Inflicted	Remitted	Set aside for irregularities	Total
1850	361	16	1	378
1851	428	24	12	464
1852	381	41	6	428
1853	425	17	7	449
1854	429	19	16	464

Melville, a member of the Peel Commission), commanding the Bombay Field Force's 1st Cavalry Brigade in the 2nd Sikh War, offended some Bengal officers - who were "boastful that their army had been the one that had conquered India" - by telling them that the indiscipline of the Bengal Army "would be the means of losing India".¹⁰⁰

Though a Bombay officer, John Jacob had seen much of the Bengal Army and had had many conversations with its officers during his long years of service. In an essay published in 1850, he noted that, to an outsider like himself, the Bengal Army appeared to be in a permanent "state of *mutiny*". The sepoys "are *not* taught and trained instinctively to obey orders", he added, "and even the European

⁹⁷ India Military Consulations, OIOC, P/43/37, P/44/18 and P/45/59, No. 5 of 30 April 1852, No. 333 of 4 April 1853 and No. 41 of 13 April 1855.

⁹⁸ Trotter, *Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse*, pp. 33-3.

⁹⁹ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁰ Lord Melville to Jacob, 18 Nov 1857, Jacob Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F75/5.

officers are afraid of them".¹⁰¹ So struck was he with the Bengal Army's "defects and indiscipline" that, the following year, he wrote an article on that subject alone. In it he identified eight "serious faults" that were particular to the Bengal Army. They included: the "want of power placed in the hands of regimental commanding officers"; the "entire absence of a proper confidence between the officers and the native soldiers"; the "very bad and fatally injurious" system of promotion by seniority"; and the "entire absence of proper discipline throughout the native part of the Bengal Army". This latter fault was the necessary consequence of the rest. It manifested itself not only in the more serious cases of mutiny, but in everyday military life. Citing the example of sentry duty, Jacob explained that only one Bengal sepoy would remain at his post while, contrary to regulations, the rest of the guard undressed and went to sleep. Eventually, when he had had enough, the sentry would relieve himself by handing his musket to the first man he could wake. All the while the naik was fast asleep under his sheet. According to Jacob, he had been "assured by numerous Bengal officers that this is the regular way of mounting guard". Such slackness was even more extraordinary given the fact that there were four men to a guard party in Bengal, but only three in Bombay and Madras, meaning that Bengal sepoys would be on duty for just six hours in every 24, instead of eight. Part of the problem, wrote Jacob, was that many Bengal guards were only relieved once a week, and sometimes at even longer intervals. When Henry Dundas took command at Peshawur during the latter stages of the 2nd Sikh War, he caused much "grumbling and complaining" by insisting that the Bengal guards be relieved daily. In Jacob's opinion, "where guards are relieved weekly, where the sentries relieve each other as they please, and where the whole guard strips naked, there can *be no discipline whatever*".¹⁰²

A number of other Bombay and Madras officers made the same point about lax Bengal sentries in their evidence to the Peel Commission. During the siege of Multan in 1848, Major-General Capon was astonished to see a half-dressed and lackadaisical Bengal sepoy guarding the divisional commander's tent.¹⁰³ General Alexander recalled that some lazy Madras sepoys, having served with Bengal troops at Sagar in central India, "used to grumble and send in anonymous petitions, stating that the Bengal Army were allowed to do so-and-so, and asking for the same privileges".¹⁰⁴ The root of the problem, according to Captain Browne, was that while Madras sepoys were forbidden to take off their accoutrements for the 24 hours they were on guard duty, Bengal sepoys could do so when eating. The

¹⁰¹ Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, pp. 122-3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 115-16.

¹⁰³ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. David Capon, 28 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 126.

practice of Bengal sentries sleeping naked was clearly a manipulation of this privilege. They had got into the "habit of taking great liberties", said Browne, which would never have been allowed in his own regiment.¹⁰⁵ Napier put the laxity of Bengal sentries down to fact that they were constantly on detached guard duty and only rarely relieved (see Chapter 2). The Bombay Army was more disciplined, he explained, because its troops were spread out over a much smaller area.¹⁰⁶ On a more general level, Herbert Edwardes, a Bengal officer on detached Political employ who saw both armies in action during the 2nd Sikh War, gave "the palm of discipline to the Bombay sepoys".¹⁰⁷

By 1857, the indiscipline of the Bengal Army was notorious. In February 1857, before the first news of the cartridge question had reached Britain, *The United Service Gazette* described the sepoy in the heart of India as a "lackadaisical, discontented idler, prompt to seize excuses for refusing to do his duty, and absolutely rendering the presence of Europeans necessary...to keep him to his allegiance".¹⁰⁸ On 28 May, with the mutiny in full swing, a lieutenant in the 47th N.I. informed his wife: "There is no doubt that all this will turn out for the benefit of the army; discipline was at the lowest ebb, and something like this must have taken place before Government *would* do anything for the Army. They have had warning enough, for the papers have been teeming with it for the last 6 years."¹⁰⁹ The magistrate of Benares, in a letter of 31 May, blamed the "fake and hollow" system of military government. He added: "The system of centralization has proved to be the ruin of the native army. All power is centred in the highest authority. Regimental officers have no authority, they are mere puppets, and the sepoys cannot look up to such weak and powerless men with respect. In days of yore the commanding officer was the [lord] of every sepoy, he could punish neglect & reward [diligence]. He was therefore respected and beloved. Now he cannot promote a sepoy to be a naik without the sanction of proper authority."¹¹⁰ In a letter to Lord Elphinstone of 9 June, Bartle Frere, the Commissioner of Sind, rejected the fashionable opinion that the disaffection in the Bengal Army was "attributable to anything but bad system" as a dangerous fallacy. A week later, continuing this theme, Frere voiced his regret at John Lawrence's recommendation of Sir Patrick Grant as acting Commander-in-Chief of India. "He *cannot* be the man to eradicate the evils which have ruined the Bengal Army," wrote Frere (with

¹⁰⁴ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. R. Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁵ Evidence of Captain Brown, *ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, p. 228.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Cadell, *History of the Bombay Army*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁸ *The United Service Gazette*, 21 Feb 1857

¹⁰⁹ Lt. Walcot to his wife, 28 May 1857, Walcot Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/B227.

¹¹⁰ Francis Lind to his mother, 31 May 1857, Lind Papers, NAM, 5108-4.

reference to Grant's time as Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army), "evils with the creation of which he has had much to do."¹¹¹ Elphinstone agreed, telling the President of the Board of Control that the revolt had been caused by the "faulty system & want of discipline in the Bengal Army".¹¹²

There was also a belief that the laxity of discipline in the Bengal Army had inflated the sepoys' sense of self-importance, and that confrontation had been inevitable. "The [Bengal sepoys] are confident of their power to dictate terms to their masters," remarked the pro-government *Friend of India* on 7 May 1857.¹¹³ The following March, during his closing speech at the trial of the rebel King of Delhi, the prosecutor described the Bengal mutineers in the following terms: "Pampered in their pride and besotted in their ignorance, they had as a body become too self-sufficient for military subordination and unhesitating obedience."¹¹⁴ Giving evidence to the Peel Commission, Major-General Cotton remarked upon the "leniency with which various acts of misconduct, all more or less bordering on mutiny, were on several occasions dealt with", in consequence of which the Bengal sepoys, "who under their own system of government would have been ruled with a rod of iron, lost the awe necessary to the preservation of discipline in a large army".¹¹⁵ The loyal native officer Sitaram Pandey expressed a similar opinion. "The principal cause of the rebellion," he wrote in his post-mutiny memoirs, "was the feeling of power that the *sepoys* had, and the little control the *sahibs* were allowed to exert over them. Naturally, they assumed from this that the *Sirkar* must be afraid of them, whereas it only trusted them too well."¹¹⁶ The final word on discipline must go to the distinguished Victorian historian T. Rice Holmes, who wrote:

The relaxation of discipline had encouraged [the Bengal sepoys] to twist into a grievance anything that startled their imaginations, or offended their caprices: they were from various causes far less attached to their British officers than they had once been: it was in the nature of things impossible that, without such attachment, they should feel active loyalty towards the British Government; and they had become so powerful and were so conscious of their power that, from purely selfish causes, they were ripe for mutiny.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Frere to Elphinstone, 9 and 15 June 1857, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 6B/8/1.

¹¹² Elphinstone to Vernon Smith, 14 June 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/5.

¹¹³ Quoted in Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, p. 328.

¹¹⁴ P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 257.

¹¹⁵ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 72, p. 557.

¹¹⁶ Lunt (ed.) *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 174.

¹¹⁷ Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 564.

Chapter Five - Caste and Religion

Most recent historians agree that the defence of caste and religion was the chief cause of mutiny in 1857. Moreover some scholars of the Company army, like Barat and Alavi, are convinced that the caste feeling of Hindu sepoy - in particular their dislike of serving outside India and of sea voyages - was a permanent cause of disaffection in the decades prior to the mutiny. Yet the evidence suggests that caste awareness in the Bengal Army was partly a British invention, that caste rules were not as inflexible as Bengal sepoy would have their European officers believe, and that they provided a useful excuse both to avoid unwelcome duty and to provide redress for other grievances.

The ancient religious scriptures divided Hindu society into four pre-ordained and mutually exclusive *varna* (classes): Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaishya (farmer and merchant) and Shudra (serf). To marry, take food from or mix with a person from a lower class was to become ritually polluted. The Mleccha (Untouchables) were outside the class system and performed degrading tasks like sweeping and working with leather; all Christians and Muslims were ritually unclean and therefore to be avoided if at all possible.¹ The caste system was gradually developed as Brahmins sought to divide the invading Aryans and the indigenous population into a large number of distinctive groups or *jati*, based loosely on region and occupations, and each internally bound by rules concerning diet and marriage.² Castes were regulated by local committees of senior members who could both formulate rules and judge those who infringed them. Expulsion was the dreaded penalty for serious breaches of caste rules. A person who was ritually polluted would lose his place both in the cosmic order (his class) and in society (his caste). Castes, however, were not immutable: new castes appeared, rules changed and membership was not necessarily exclusive. In his *Account of the District of Shahabad in 1809-10*, Buchanan observed that Bhumimars (or military Brahmins), like Rajputs, were "not scrupulous in admitting into their number whatever tribes adopted their manners".³

¹ Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, p. 81.

² N.K. Dutt, writing in the 1930s, noted there were more than 3,000 castes in India, some "confined to a few score men", while others claimed "millions of members". See Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India* (London, 1931), I, pp. 3-4.

³ Quoted in Kolff, *Naikur, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 185.

Until relatively recent times, Indian civil society did not take caste distinctions that seriously. According to the historian and social anthropologist Susan Bayly, the modern concept of caste in India "has been engendered, shaped and perpetuated by comparatively recent political and social developments". Even in "parts of the so-called Hindu heartland of Gangetic upper India," wrote Bayly, "the institutions and beliefs which are now often described as the elements of 'traditional' caste were only just taking shape as recently as the eighteenth century".⁴ By the 1820s, India was still not a homogenous 'caste society'. Bayly noted:

The boundaries between individual orders or classes was still open and ambiguous in the early decades of British expansion; the language of caste or castelike relationships still allowed for the great man who could reshape or disregard conventional marriage rules and dietary codes, and for the thrusting regional elite with the power to proclaim something new about their birth and moral attributes. This openness and fluidity were much less apparent at the end of the nineteenth century, when many more Indians had embraced forms of caste that were significantly more formalised than those of their recent forebears.⁵

As the nineteenth century progressed, caste distinctions became increasingly important to those Indians with "anxieties about the preservation of status and economic advantage". Bayly refers, in particular, to the "superior landholders who found themselves clinging to inherited lordships in India's most volatile agricultural regions", the self-same impoverished gentry that Stokes identified as the dominant force in the Bengal Army.⁶ Enhanced caste status was a means of compensating for their increasingly humble standard of living. It is important to remember, however, that this Rajput and Brahmin "insistence on the radical differentiation between those who were and those who were not defined as high, clean and superior" was a relatively recent phenomenon. As such, caste rules were never as rigid as they might have appeared.⁷

⁴ Susan Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol. IV:3 - Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 4.

⁵ Ibid., p. 188.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 190 and 197; Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, p. 51. However Bhadra has argued that rural rebels in 1857 were not motivated solely by economic grievances. 'At a primary level,' he wrote, 'a notion of community organized along ethnic settlements and an aversion to the encroachment of an alien power into this territorial unit determined the domain of rebel authority.' See Bhadra, Gautam, 'Four Rebels of Eighteen-Fifty-Seven', in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 142.

⁷ Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol. IV:3*, p. 201.

The same could be said about caste consciousness in the Bengal Army. According to the sacred laws, the role of warrior was confined to the kshatriya class. From the earliest times, however, the Hindu armies of India were composed of men from different castes and even classes. The Rajputs of western India, whose name was later synonymous with kshatriya, were descendants of non-aryan invaders. Brahmins turned to soldiering because there was not enough employment for priests. At no time was there a caste barrier to men serving as soldiers. All this was to change in the late eighteenth century when Warren Hastings and his successors strove towards the creation of a high-caste monopoly in the Bengal Army (see Chapter One). "An inevitable ritual complement of this closed shop social strategy," writes Kolff, "was a tendency towards brahminical exclusiveness, in other words, towards the doctrine of caste. The new monomania for the privileges of employment soon took on religious overtones and stands in sharp contrast...to the open attitude towards adopting and recruitment that had been typical of centuries of peasant soldiering."⁸

Alavi takes this argument one step further by demonstrating how, "by providing a forum for sorting out the social tensions hinging around the ritual purity of the rural high caste, the army formalized these tensions and made them more obvious and rigid". But for the Bengal Army's recruitment policy, says Alavi, the "evolution of high-caste status in rural north India would have progressed differently". Part of the process of achieving this high-caste monopoly was the promotion of the sepoys' religious, dietary and travel preferences. In 1779, during the 1st Maratha War, Hastings sent reinforcements from Bengal to Bombay by the slower overland route because he knew that a sea crossing would offend the religious feelings of the high-caste sepoys. By the early nineteenth century, a complex set of rules governed the Bengal sepoys' diet, manner of preparation and mode of eating. According to Alavi, the sepoys began to eat food "which had previously been associated exclusively with high caste and ritual purity". They were therefore able "to mark out their high-caste status much more effectively than would have been possible in their own villages". In a sense, "the Company was promoting the "sanskritization of the military."⁹ Buchanan referred to the creation of a "modern" doctrine of caste.¹⁰

The diet of high-caste sepoys was strictly vegetarian. It included: atta (flour), gram, dal, ghi (clarified butter), salt, wheat, sugar and some vegetables. They were not supposed to consume fish, meat, pulao (spiced rice), curry or alcohol. Tubular vegetables like potatoes, aubergines, radishes, leeks and

⁸ Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 186.

⁹ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 45, 76.

¹⁰ Quoted in Kolff, *Naukur, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 187.

onions were also avoided. To maintain their ritual purity, the high-caste sepoys cooked their own food, ate alone and then spread fresh cow-dung on their place of repast (as laid down in the Shastras). The type of food available at the permanent station bazars and temporary camp bazars mirrored these preferences. As did the type of food provided by government for overseas expeditions, beginning with the Sumatra campaign in 1789.

The Company also authorised the celebration of religious festivals in cantonments, and encouraged European officers to participate. So successful were the latter's attempts to absorb the culture of their men that their names were often introduced into the Holi festival songs. The Ramlila festival was particularly endorsed, says Alavi, because it "provided the company with a cultural idiom through and by which British authority could be represented in India". But its significance went further than this. In medieval times, Ram's defeat of the giant Ravana had been represented by a sword-bearing horseman; but during the Company period, artillery was used to depict the victory of good over evil. "The form of celebration therefore changed to express new power relations and create a new tradition," writes Alavi. "Further, the Company, by making the sipahis celebrate Ramlila independent of the patronage of any priestly figure, created a superior status for [the British]."

This attempt to separate sepoys from the influence of Brahmin priests was deliberate: Hindu temples, for example, were rarely situated in military cantonments. Of course this did not preclude contact with Brahmin priests outside the regiment. But even here the "military maintained its exclusive high-caste status independent of and superior to that of the Brahmin patronage networks" by exempting the sepoys from certain religious obligations such as pilgrim dues and shrine fees. The success of this policy to isolate high-caste sepoys from Hindu society can be gauged by the use of Bengal regiments to disperse crowds of Brahmins protesting against cow slaughter in the Kumaon district in 1815, and, more importantly, the peaceful response to the banning of *sati* (self-immolation by high-caste widows) in 1829.¹¹ In the latter case, Bentinck sounded out no less than 49 experienced officers as to the sepoys' likely reaction before introducing the measure.¹² If the sepoys did not object to infringements in Hindu customs, it was argued, they could be relied upon to put down any form of civil protest. This point is important because it suggests that sepoys were relatively insulated from the type of religious issues that affected civil society; their own acts of disobedience, it follows, were much more likely to be motivated by 'selfish' professional grievances.

¹¹ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 79-90

It has, of course, been pointed out that Bengal sepoys genuinely resented any infringement of the ritual rules by which the Company had redefined their status and identity. The mutinies at Barrackpore in 1825 and 1852 have both been attributed to this reason (as has, to a certain extent, the mutiny of Madras sepoys at Vellore in 1806).¹³ But whether the instigators really were acting in defence of their caste and religion, or were simply using these issues as a rallying call to achieve other ends, is open to question. The Vellore mutiny took place after Sir John Cradock, the recently-appointed Commander-in-Chief, had ignored the advice of his Army Board and issued controversial new dress regulations, including the removal of beards, caste marks and ear-rings, and the replacement of turbans with round caps decorated by leather cockades (made from, it was said, the skin of cows and pigs). The typical explanation for the mutiny - which cost the lives of more than 100 Europeans and 350 sepoys - is that Muslim and Hindu sepoys alike were responding to a perceived "attack on their respective religions".¹⁴ But there is also evidence to link the mutiny to a plot to re-establish the sons of Tipu Sultan, who were living in the fort of Vellore, as the rulers of Mysore.¹⁵ And there were other parallels with the mutiny of 1857. According to Holmes, the sepoys were resentful because the reorganisation of 1796 had increased the number of European officers and thereby reduced the authority of native officers; it had also introduced the system of promotion by seniority for Europeans and natives alike, so that commands were often held by men unfit to exercise authority.¹⁶

If the defence of religion and caste really was the motive for mutiny, why did the disaffection spread to other Madras stations *after* the withdrawal of the obnoxious dress regulations? It is true that Lord William Bentinck, Governor of Madras, then issued a proclamation assuring the sepoys that the government had no intention of interfering with their religion. But the Court of Directors probably got it right when they blamed the new generation of commanding officers for failing to earn the confidence of their men. "If the reorganisation of 1796 had not blasted the hopes of the sepoys and deadened their interest in their profession," concluded Holmes, "if the new generation of English officers had treated their men with the sympathy which their predecessors had ever shown", the danger might never have arisen.¹⁷

¹² Philips (ed.), *Bentinck Correspondence*, I, p. xxvii.

¹³ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 91; Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 303-4.

¹⁴ Menezes, 'Race, Caste, Mutiny and Discipline', in *Soldiers of the Raj*, p. 104.

¹⁵ Malleson (ed.), *Indian Mutiny*, I, pp. 165-7.

¹⁶ Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-4.

The mutiny at Barrackpore in 1825 was likewise the result of mixed motives. It was sparked by an order for three regiments of Bengal Native Infantry - the 26th, 47th and 62nd - to march to Chittagong to reinforce the British and Madras troops fighting in Burma. Having reached Barrackpore near Calcutta, however, the sepoys of the 47th N.I. refused to proceed any further. Alavi cites two main reasons: the sepoys objected to the high cost of bullock transport for their equipment (including their individual cooking and drinking vessels); and they feared that if they did not go by land they would be forced to travel by sea. Their ostensible motive, therefore, was the protection of their ritual status.¹⁸ They may, on the other hand, have been using the defence of caste as an excuse. News had filtered through of the defeat of British troops at Ramu. The native papers were full of stories about the difficulty of Burma's terrain, the deadliness of its climate and the military prowess of its inhabitants. Even when the 47th's colonel offered to provide bullock transport from his own funds, the sepoys upped their demands: they would not proceed by sea, and they would not march unless they were guaranteed double batta. The showdown came to a climax on 2 November 1825 when a parade of the recalcitrant sepoys refused to ground their arms and Sir Edward Paget, the inexperienced Commander-in-Chief, ordered European troops to open fire. A one-side massacre ensued. It had been caused, in Kaye's opinion, by the sepoys' eagerness "to find a pretext for refusing to march on such hazardous service". But Kaye also stressed the damage done to the "discipline and efficiency of the Indian army" by the reorganisation of 1824 which had split each two-battalion regiment into two separate regiments and, in particular, the division of battalion officers between the two new regiments, so that a great many "were detached from the men with whom they had been associated throughout many years of active service".¹⁹ A lack of empathy between officers and men was therefore a factor, just as it had been in 1806 and would be in 1857.

The 1852 'mutiny' was much less serious. Reinforcements were needed to fight in the 2nd Burma War and the 38th N.I., with its headquarters at Barrackpore, was the most conveniently placed. But because it was not a general service regiment, its sepoys were asked if they would volunteer for service in Rangoon. The initial response, from the bulk of the regiment on duty at Fort William, was that the sepoys "were not unwilling to go" if their officers accompanied them.²⁰ But the first sign of disaffection appeared when Burney, the commanding officer, ordered his company commanders to

¹⁸ Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 91.

¹⁹ Malleson (ed.), *Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, pp. 193-4.

²⁰ Quoted in Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 285.

"assemble their men, call their roll, ask each man to volunteer, & if he declined *to cause him to state the reason why he declined*". No. 1 Company refused to comply because, Lord Dalhousie told General Gomm, "the sepoys looked on this as compulsion, which practically it was".²¹ Brigadier Warren, the station commander, cancelled the order and instructed the regiment to parade before him the following morning. There he told them that the government wished to send them to Rangoon by sea; but if they refused to volunteer, they would be marched to Arracan to relieve the 67th N.I., a general service corps, which would take their place in Burma. The sepoys' response was that they were "ready to move in any direction by land".²² But the atmosphere soured when some of the native officers continued to try to persuade the sepoys to volunteer for the sea journey. It was later claimed that Burney told the men they would be sent to Arracan as a punishment if they did not volunteer; he is also said to have threatened them with the loss of their invalid pensions. Their patience finally snapped on 17 March when, depressed by rumours that they would be put on ships by force, they disobeyed repeated orders to return to their lines before finally submitting.

The Court of Inquiry put most of the blame on Burney and censured his attempt to pressurize the men by asking them to state their reasons for not volunteering. He was transferred subsequently to another regiment (the 32nd N.I. which, ironically, was one of just eight regiments disarmed in 1857 but later reincorporated into the new Bengal Army). Dalhousie was also sympathetic towards the sepoys. "The men refused nothing we had the right to order them to do," he informed Gomm. "We may condemn their poor spirit, but we have no right to term them insubordinate, for not volunteering to go on board ship." But as the men of the 38th were still in a ferment, "as they suspected Col. Burney of some dodge by which he was to get them on board ship when half-way (!), as they could not go at this season by country boats to Chittagong, & as they therefore could not reach Arracan till the middle of June", the military authorities "thought it better to get rid of all doubt, difficulty, *and* Colonel Burney by ordering the 38th to Dacca" which was much closer.²³ It was also a notoriously unhealthy station and many sepoys died of fever and other illnesses during their time there.

But the central question remains: was the 'mutiny' of the 38th N.I. really about the defence of caste? Or were the sepoys simply looking for an excuse to avoid the unwelcome prospect of fighting in Burma? Despite Burney's pressure and the inevitable rumours, the sepoys were never actually ordered

²¹ Dalhousie to General Gomm, 10 March 1852, Dalhousie Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/Photo Eur. 309.

²² Quoted in Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 286.

²³ Dalhousie to Gomm, 27 March 1852, Dalhousie Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur./Photo Eur. 309.

to embark on ships. There was, moreover, a long tradition of high-caste Bengal sepoys volunteering for action outside British India: in 1811, seven thousand had served against the French in Mauritius and Java; more recently, the 38th regiment itself had fought in Afghanistan, despite the dread most high-caste sepoys had of crossing the Indus because, in the words of Sitaram (himself a volunteer), "the very act means loss of caste";²⁴ and during the mutiny, three disarmed regiments of Bengal Native Infantry - the 47th, 65th and 70th - would volunteer for service in China. There was also the example set by the Bombay Army: a quarter of its sepoys were high-caste men from Hindustan, yet they had never objected to foreign service and, in 1856-7, would cross the sea to fight in Persia without demur. In theory, all three presidency armies were recruited on the basis that their sepoys would march where they were directed, "whether within or beyond the Company's territories".²⁵ But the various interpretations of this rule were very different, as Philip Melvill explained to a Parliamentary select committee in 1852:

In Bengal, except for general service regiments, men enlist upon the understanding that they are not sent by sea for service in foreign parts; but the sepoys of the Madras and Bombay armies enlist upon the understanding that they will go wherever they are sent. At the same time, it is the practice at Madras to apprise the sepoys of a regiment ordered on foreign service, that if any are unwilling to follow their colours their places will be supplied in volunteers.²⁶

Even Bombay sepoys expected to be consulted before serving outside their presidency, but it was purely a formality. "They have never objected to go on general service, to go abroad, or anywhere," Colonel Leslie told the Peel Commission.²⁷ The obvious conclusion is that caste was pandered to in Bengal but not in Bombay. This, itself, was the consequence of the deliberate policy to create an exclusively high-caste army in Bengal (a policy that only began to be reversed after the mutiny at Barrackpore in 1825 had shown how dangerous caste sensitivity, however contrived, could be). One anecdote, told to Sir George Malcolm by one of his staff officers, perfectly illustrates the different attitude in the two armies: A Brahmin naik was asked by a European officer why he had left his former corps in the Bengal Army on the promotion of a low caste man, but was now serving in a Bombay

²⁴ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 85.

²⁵ Bengal Army Regulations 1855, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/442, p. 220.

²⁶ P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, p. 8.

regiment with a Jew subedar, a Purwaree jemadar and other low caste men. The naik replied:

"*Hindoostan zat ke ghyrat, Bombay pultun ke ghyrat*" ("In Hindustan it is the pride of caste, in Bombay that of the corps"). Malcolm's fear that pride of caste was becoming more prevalent in the Bombay Army was the reason he advised Bentinck, in 1830, to limit the number of Hindustani recruits to no more than 200 per battalion (see Chapter One).²⁸ This never came to pass, though the overall number of Hindustanis in the Bombay Army fell slightly from just over 50% to just over 46% (while the number of high-caste troops remained steady at around 25%). Nevertheless, except in the few native infantry regiments which had an unusually high proportion of high-caste men - such as the 2nd, 27th, 28th and 29th - professional considerations continued to outweigh issues of caste.

Major John Jacob emphasized this crucial difference between the Bengal and Bombay armies in an essay published in 1850. So much attention was paid to caste in the Bengal Army, he wrote, that the sepoys looked upon their European officers not as superior beings but as bad Hindus. He added:

Instead of being taught to pride themselves on their *soldiership* and discipline, the sepoys are trained to pride themselves on their absurdities of caste, and think that their power and value are best shown by refusing to obey any orders which they please to say do not accord with their religious prejudices. It is a grave mistake to suppose that religious feelings have any real influence on these occasions...; but it is certain that the Bengal sepoy is a stickler for his imaginary *rights of caste* for the *sake of increased power*; he knows that by crying out about his caste, he keeps power in his hands, saves himself from many of the hardships of the service, and makes his officers afraid of him.

As proof of this, Jacob provided a comparison: In Bombay a low-caste sepoy could, and often did, rise to the rank of subedar by his own merit; in Bengal such a man would not even be admitted to the ranks for fear of contaminating the high-caste sepoys. Yet in the Bombay Army "the Brahmin (father, brother, or son, it may be, of him of Bengal) stands shoulder to shoulder in the ranks - nay sleeps in the same tent - with his Purwaree fellow-soldier, and dreams not of any objection to the arrangement!" If this anomaly was pointed out to a Bombay Brahmin sepoy, as it sometimes was by Bengal officers, the answer would always be: "What do I care; is he not the soldier of the State?"²⁹

²⁷ Evidence of Col. Leslie, 26 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 94.

²⁸ Malcolm, *Government of India*, pp. 234n, 233-4.

²⁹ Pelly (ed.), *Views and Opinions*, pp. 118-19.

Douglas Peers has argued that a "growing disenchantment with the high-caste prejudices of the Bengal Army" was partly responsible for the clamour to reinstate corporal punishment in the 1840s. He quotes one officer as saying "The sepoys did not accept the abolition as a boon or a compliment; on the contrary, they merely treated it as a tribute to their own strength, wrung from the fears of the government."³⁰ While there may be some truth in this, it should also be recalled that one of the reasons why Hardinge recommended the resumption of flogging was because he considered it to be more acceptable to high-caste sepoys than hard labour and mandatory dismissal. And whatever their misgivings, the majority of Bengal officers continued to defer to caste at the expense of discipline.

How else can we explain the many instances of Bengal sepoys being allowed to avoid manual labour because it was demeaning to their caste? After the battle of Chilianwalla, for example, most of the entrenching work was done by European troops because Bengal sepoys declined (and were allowed to do duty as a covering party instead).³¹ At the siege of Multan, so General Dundas informed the Bombay government, the Bengal sepoys refused to work in the trenches. The officer commanding the Bengal Sappers and Miners at Multan later rejected this charge.³² But on spurious grounds. For as Colonel Hill, a former commandant of the Bombay Sappers and Miners, told the Peel Commission, the Bengal troops did indeed "march to the trenches and took the pickaxes and shovels in their hands, but they did not work." Hill recalled another occasion during the 2nd Sikh War when the divisional commander ordered him to enlist Bengal sepoys for working parties. Their commanding officer refused to comply, however, on the ground that an order for "Bengal troops to work on fatigue parties was tantamount to ordering them to mutiny at once". In the Bombay Army, by comparison, Hill had never known caste to interfere with the performance of duty. He related how one of his high-caste sepoys, a Brahmin from Oudh, had been in hospital when the corps received orders to march to Bombay for embarkation to Persia in early 1857. But instead of staying put, the Brahmin discharged himself and marched night and day to overtake his company on the premise that he "would be disgraced if his company went on service without him".³³

A number of other witnesses testified to the fact that only in Bengal was caste allowed to interfere with duty.³⁴ Colonel Leslie recalled how unwilling high-caste Bengal sappers were to dig

³⁰ Peers, 'Sepoys, Soliders and the Lash', *JICH*, 23:2, 1995, p. 238.

³¹ Thackwell, *Narrative of the Second Sikh War*, p. 190.

³² Evidence of Col. Patrick Grant, 14 March 1853, P.P., H.C., 1852-3, XXVII, pp. 127-8.

³³ Evidence of Col. John Hill, 26 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, pp. 95-6.

³⁴ They included Maj.-Gen. Steel, John Thomas and Sir Charles Trevelyan, *ibid.*, pp. 70-1, 88, 112,

emplacements during the 1st Afghan War, whereas Madras sappers were quite the opposite. So frustrated did Leslie become that, on more than one occasion, he ordered his troop of European horse artillery to dismount and do the work instead.³⁵ Major-General Steel confirmed that caste was not pandered to in the Madras Army: on receiving a petition from a high-caste sepoy who objected to the palanquin marriage of a lower caste havildar in cantonments, the Commander-in-Chief ruled that the bride's palanquin was not to be interfered with - and that was the end of the matter. "If there was an act committed to insult or disturb a Mahomedan, a man of high or low caste, or of no caste at all," stated Steel, "we should deal with it according to the articles of war, as contrary to good order and military discipline".³⁶ This was possible because, as one old Madras subedar told Captain Hervey, "We put our religion into our knapsacks, sir, whenever our colours are unfurled, or where duty calls." Hervey added:

Not being over particular, therefore, as regards the due observances of their religion, not overburdened with tender consciences, they indulge in the good things of life whenever it suits their convenience, much to the disgust of those high-caste bigots of the upper provinces, who look upon the natives of Southern India, and more particularly our sepoys, as a set of brute beasts not worthy to exist. Our men in general care not what they eat, or drink... I have myself seen Hindoos and Moslems...rolling drunk in the ditch; their castes and their religion are matters of secondary importance.³⁷

In Bengal, however, caste distinctions could even override military rank. One Bombay officer recalled the following conversation during the siege of Multan between a high-caste sepoy and a lower caste naik of the Bengal Army: "We have left our lines: I intend to take command, you go into the ranks, and you will obey me." According to one of the officer's subedars (himself a high-caste Hindu), such a proceeding was not unusual.³⁸ Even Major-General Birch, Military Secretary to the Government of India, could not "conceive the possibility of maintaining discipline in a corps where a low-caste non-commissioned officer will, when he meets off duty a Brahman sipahi, crouch down to him with his forehead on the ground." And yet he had seen such an act with his own eyes.³⁹

³⁵ Evidence of Col. John Leslie, 26 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 94.

³⁶ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. R. Alexander, 25 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, pp. 76-7.

³⁷ Allen (ed.), *Soldier of the Company*, p. 112.

³⁸ Evidence of Colonel S. Poole, 27 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

³⁹ Quoted in Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, p. 243n.

Kaye recorded the typical Bengal response to the criticism of Bombay and Madras officers: "that high-caste Hindustanis enlisting into the Bombay or Madras Armies were, to a great extent, cut off from the brotherhood, that they were greatly outnumbered in their several regiments, that it was convenient to conform to the custom of the country, and that what he did in a foreign country amongst strangers was little known at home".⁴⁰ There is something in this. But even Bengal sepoys were prepared to disregard caste rules when it suited them. This much became clear to John Lang, a British lawyer, when he fell in with a company of Bengal Native Infantry escorting treasure from Mainpuri to Agra in the early 1850s. In the course of a long conversation with Lieutenant Sixtie, the company commander, he discovered that it had become commonplace for high-caste sepoys to ask permission to carry the remains of popular officers to the grave, though it was technically an infringement of their caste rules. Sixtie commented:

So much for caste, if it can be got over by an understanding amongst themselves! Caste! More than four-fifths of what they talk about is pure nonsense and falsehood, as any straightforward native will confidentially confess to you. I don't mean to say that some Hindoos are not very strict. Many, indeed, are so. But I mean to say that a very small proportion live in accordance with the Shasters [sic], and that when they cry out, "if we do so and so we shall lose our caste," it is nothing more than a rotten pretext for escaping some duty, or for refusing to obey a distasteful order.

The truth of Sixtie's words was brought home to Lang the following day when he witnessed a sick Brahmin sepoy drink a mixture of brandy and water from his officer's silver tumbler. On being lightheartedly accused of having lost his caste, the sepoy replied:

The Sahib logue [Europeans] believe everything that the natives tell them about caste, and the consequence is they believe a great many falsehoods... There is no mention of brandy in the Shasters, Sahib... But, supposing that it were forbidden; do not men of every religion frequently and continually depart from the tenets thereof, in minor things, or construe them according to their own inclination or convenience, or make them sort of bundobust (agreement) with their consciences? Indeed, if we did not make this bundobust, what Hindoo or Mussulman would come in contact at all with one another, or with Christians, and certainly we, the natives of India, would not serve as soldiers... We should be in continual dread of having our bodies contaminated and our souls placed beyond the reach of redemption - and who would submit to that for so many rupees a month? Who can say what animal

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 243.

supplies the skin which is used for our chacos and accoutrements? The cow, or the pig? The Mussulmans, when we laugh together about it, say the cow. We protest that it is pigskin.

The sepoy also told the tale of Pertab Singh, an emissary of the Rani of Lahore, who tried to encourage the Bengal regiments at Barrackpore to rise in 1848 on the ground that the leather on their shakos was insulting to both Hindus and Muslims. He was listened to as long as his money lasted, and then handed over to the authorities.⁴¹

Sir Henry Lawrence made the same point about the adaptability of religious and caste rules in 1856. "A cap, a beard, a moustache, a strap, all in their time have given offence," he wrote. "*All on the pretence of religion*. But by a little management, by leading instead of drawing, almost anything may be done. The man who would not touch leather a few years ago, is now, in the words of a fine old subedar, "*up to the chin in it*." This was because leather cap-straps had been provided free, whereas cloth straps cost between one and two annas. Lawrence concluded: "Tact and management, *not Brahminism* in officers are wanted."⁴² No officer exemplified better the qualities Lawrence was referring to than John Jacob. In September 1854, after a particularly raucous celebration of the Muslim festival of Mohurram by his men, Jacob banned all "noisy processions" and "disorderly displays...under pretence of religion". Though mostly Muslim his men complied with the order. Three years later, with the same festival approaching, the disaffected members of the 6th Bengal I.C. tried to use Jacob's prohibition to induce the Muslim troopers of the Sind Irregular Horse to rise. The response from a senior native officer was that "it is the order and must be obeyed". And it was. Jacob's biographer observes that this order became "deservedly famous, as a practical and conclusive proof of the truth of his doctrine that under a proper system of discipline the Indian soldier would cheerfully lay aside the prejudices of caste or religion when his commanding officer...declared that this was necessary".⁴³

The only branch of the Bengal Army that operated a similar system of discipline was the Punjab Irregular Force. Colonel Wilde told the Peel Commission that his men would have been "severely punished" if they had used caste or religion as a pretence to avoid duty. That did not mean that the officers were insensitive to religious prejudices: they would not ask their Muslim soldiers to drink from a pigskin water-bag, for example; and if such a mistake was made, they would quickly rectify it. But

⁴¹ John Lang, *Wanderings in India: and other Sketches of Life in Hindostan* (London, 1859), pp. 140-7.

⁴² Lawrence, *Essays, Military and Political*, pp. 408-9.

where military duty was concerned, caste issues were not allowed to interfere. So when Wilde's regiment was ordered to dig the entire foundations of a fort at Bahadoor Khail, everyone took part, including the Brahmins.⁴⁴

In the regular Bengal Army, on the other hand, so-called caste rules were accorded far too much respect. So much so, noted a Madras correspondent to the *United Service Magazine* in 1853, that "the Sepoy, seeing himself the object of so much care and solicitude, does not evince that feeling of reverence and respect that he did in days 'lang syne'". It was, the author added, only natural for the sepoy to take advantage of the fact that his officer hesitated every time he ordered him to undertake a duty that might transgress his caste. Four years later, with the mutiny underway, the editor of the same magazine listed the various reasons that had been put forward to explain why the regular Bengal Army was so indisciplined. It is argued, he wrote, "that caste, and what it forbids, and the danger attending any attempt to control or weaken its despotism, have been grossly exaggerated and greatly overrated, which, being only too apparent to the apprehension of the native, has suggested to him the the advantage of keeping up the delusion, and gratuitously furnished him with a...pretext under the cloak of which he can further his own ends".⁴⁵

One senior Madras officer, in his evidence to the Peel Commission, blamed the mutiny of the Bengal Army on the "way in which caste was pampered and got the upper hand of discipline and subordination".⁴⁶ Even a former Bengal colonel was prepared to admit that he and his fellow officers took more notice of caste than their counterparts in the other presidencies, and that the excuse of caste was to a great extent an absurdity. "The men," he added, "would be just as willing to take our service, without any reference to caste, as the Madras and Bombay troops do."⁴⁷

The evidence of this chapter leads to the conclusion that Bengal sepoys did not treat ritual rules as seriously as most historians have supposed. This is not to say that they would not have died in defence of their caste and religion - but rather that what constituted a genuine threat to both has often been misunderstood. Kolff has shown that caste exclusiveness was absent from the long tradition of peasant soldiering in north India until Warren Hastings favoured high-caste recruits for the Bengal Army in the late eighteenth century. Thereafter the British positively encouraged the observance of caste rules that

⁴³ Lambrick, *Jacob of Jacobabad*, pp. 201-2, 334.

⁴⁴ Evidence of Lt.-Col. Alfred Wilde, 26 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 92.

⁴⁵ *United Service Magazine*, August 1858 and July 1857, pp. 604 and 318-19.

⁴⁶ Evidence of Maj.-Gen. Robert Alexander, 25 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 80.

⁴⁷ Evidence of Col. Edmund Wintle, 28 Aug 1858, *ibid.*, p. 132.

were even stricter than those that applied to civilians. The intention was to create an élite force that was separate from peasant society. Only then could the native army be trusted to enforce government laws that infringed upon religious and social customs. The success of this policy would seem to support the argument that Bengal sepoys cared more about professional grievances than infringements of Hindu custom such as the abolition of sati.

For the Bengal Army's doctrine of caste was never as inflexible as it appeared: partly because it was distinctive to the army and therefore not necessarily enforceable by the village caste committees; and partly because caste rules in civil society did not assume their modern exclusiveness until the first half of the nineteenth century. "Until well into the colonial period," wrote Susan Bayly, "much of the subcontinent was still populated by people for whom the formal distinctions of caste were of only limited importance as a source of corporate and individual lifestyles."⁴⁸ This was not, of course, the impression gained by the sepoys' European officers who did everything in their power to avoid giving offence to caste or religion. It was only natural that the sepoys would take advantage. In his 1858 minute on the reconstruction of the Bengal Army, Major-General Mansfield wrote that he had long been convinced that "the surly conduct of the sepoys when called on to do what did not exactly suit their fancy" would lead sooner or later to a confrontation. He added:

The subserviency of the officers generally to the feeling of high caste, which gave them handsome and intelligent men, was, I believe, appreciated in all its strength by the sepoys, who actually played with the fears of their Brahminized colonels, and insisted, on many instances, on the observance of certain customs, even in the presence of an enemy, to which we know they are perfectly indifferent under really intelligent and energetic command. Thus was the germ of resistance to authority and discipline fostered, and it but too often happened that commanding officers openly admitted the presence of a power superior to their own discipline, succumbed to it themselves, and induced superior authority to give countenance to it also.⁴⁹

Mansfield was right. Bengal sepoys were only too happy to use caste as an excuse to avoid unpleasant duties: from digging to foreign service. Yet there are plenty of examples of Bengal sepoys being persuaded both to dig (as at Arracan during the 1st Burma War) and to serve overseas. High-caste sepoys, as we have seen, were quite prepared to disregard caste rules when it suited them. In this

⁴⁸ Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India: IV:3*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx. 62, p. 454-6.

context, the General Service Enlistment Order of 1856 (see Chapter One) was unpopular not because it threatened a loss of caste *per se*, but because it seemed to represent yet another nail in the coffin of the high-caste 'brotherhood' which dominated the Bengal Army. On 8 November 1856, Canning informed the President of the Board of Control that he had no reason to fear that caste feelings would be excited by the new enlistment regulation because it would only apply to new recruits, and because the number of high-caste sepoys who were happy to join a general service army like Bombay proved that they did "not on first entering the service hold very closely to caste privileges".⁵⁰ If caste really had been under threat, Rajput and Brahmin recruits would have dried up after the publication of the order; yet according to Canning that did not happen.⁵¹

Caste could also be used as a smokescreen for other grievances. The mutinies at Madras in 1806 and Barrackpore in 1825 are said to have been motivated by a defence of caste and religion. Yet in both cases other factors were arguably more important, such as a lack of empathy between the sepoys and their European officers and (in the case of 1806) a desire to re-establish a traditional ruler as an alternative employer. It is surely no coincidence that similar grievances contributed to the 1857 mutiny. Moreover the Bengal tradition of using caste as a means to achieve other ends did not cease with the suppression of the Indian mutiny. In 1917, for example, 120 members of the 3rd Brahmans mutinied when group messing was introduced during the Mesopotamian campaign. "The authorities suspected that the main concern of the mutineers was not to preserve their caste," wrote Omissi, "but to exploit the system of individual messing to avoid frontline service. (The food which was introduced was in line with Brahmin practice, and was later freely eaten by the regiment.)"⁵²

⁵⁰ Canning to Vernon Smith, 8 Nov 1856, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS. Eur./F231/4.

⁵¹ Canning to Vernon Smith, 23 March 1857, *ibid.*

⁵² Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 141.

Chapter Six - Mutiny: The Cartridge Question

It is almost impossible to identify with any degree of certainty the exact reason why almost three-quarters of the regular Bengal Army chose to mutiny, or partially mutiny, in 1857.¹ Most historians have pinpointed the fear of an enforced conversion to Christianity as the primary motive. They cite a series of recent laws and trends that appeared to undermine traditional customs and beliefs - such as the legalization of widows' marriages, the establishment of group messing in jails, the passing of the General Service Enlistment Order, and the upsurge of missionary activity - and argue that the introduction of Enfield cartridges greased with cow and pig fat was the last straw. But a detailed study of the so-called 'cartridge question' can lead to a quite different conclusion.

All the East India Company's weapons were ordered direct from British manufacturers by its Military Store Department in London. These arms were similar to those supplied to the British Army by the Board of Ordnance, thus enabling both Company and Royal troops in India to use the same ammunition. In 1840, in line with the British Army, the Company switched from flintlock to percussion small-arms (the muzzle-loading muskets retained the same 'Brown Bess' design that had been in use since the eighteenth century, but with their flints replaced by percussion caps). The first Company troops to use percussion arms in action were sepoys of the 2nd Madras N.I. at the storming of Chin-kiang Fu in China in July 1842. Over the next decade or so, nearly 460,000 percussion muskets, carbines and pistols were despatched to India. But the procurement of these smooth-bore firearms ceased in June 1851 when the British government decided to equip its troops with the revolutionary Minié rifle.²

Rifles had been used by the British and East India Company armies for skirmishing and sniping since the early nineteenth century. But their accuracy had been more than offset by a slow rate of loading, a seemingly inevitable consequence of the need for the ball or bullet to have a loose fit during loading and a tight fit in the rifling grooves on being fired. This conundrum was solved in the 1840s by two French officers: the first, Delvigne, developed an elongated bullet with a hollow base which expanded

¹ Seven out of 10 Bengal Light Cavalry regiments and 54 out of 74 Bengal Native Infantry regiments mutinied or partially mutinied in 1857. These figures do not include the many other regiments that displayed a mutinous disposition before they were disarmed.

² D.F. Harding, *Smallarms of the East India Company 1600-1856* (London, 1997), I, pp. 232-3, 239

when fired; Captain Minié improved the design by adding a cup in the cavity to assist uniform expansion. Though both men wanted the concept to be called the 'Delvigne-Minié', it came to be known by the latter's name alone. The first such weapon chosen by the Board of Ordnance for the British Army was the Pattern 1851 Rifled Musket, otherwise known as the Minié rifle. But it was never generally issued because the British government's 'Committee on Small Arms' decided in 1852 that the Minié's .702 bore was too large. The Pattern 1853 Rifled Musket, or Enfield rifle, with a .577 bore was eventually chosen instead.³

Though the East India Company was promised 30,000 new Enfield rifles by the Board of Ordnance in 1854, it did not receive any for two years. This was partly because the government factory at Enfield was neither large nor modern enough to meet demand; and partly because Britain's entry into the Crimean War in 1854 meant that Lord Raglan's expeditionary force was given priority. The war also enabled the British government to corner the small-arms market and extinguish unwelcome competition by forcing the Court of Directors in March 1856 to cede control of its arms procurement to the new War Department (which had replaced the Board of Ordnance in February 1855).⁴ The first consignment of 1,500 Enfield rifles finally reached the Bengal Presidency in the spring of 1856. They were ear-marked for the Bengal Army, but the Indian government agreed to assign them to H.M. 60th Rifles on the ground that their existing rifles were "unservicable and should be replaced immediately".⁵ By the outbreak of mutiny in 1857, the Bengal Presidency had received just over 12,000 Enfields. But the only regiment in possession of these weapons was H.M. 60th Rifles (it had received 1,040). The remainder were in the arsenals at Fort William (4,395), Allahabad (3,000), Ferozepore (3,000), Delhi (41), the Artillery Depot of Instruction at Meerut (525) and the musketry depots at Dum-Dum (Damdamah), Sialkot and Ambala.⁶

It was not the rifles themselves, however, but their ammunition that was to prove so controversial. Cartridges for most muzzle-loading percussion firearms of this period took the form of a tube of paper that contained a ball (lead tin alloy) and enough powder for a single shot. The approved method of loading such a cartridge was to bite the top off to allow the powder to be poured down the barrel. The

³ Ibid., pp. 119-23.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 123-44.

⁵ Col. A. Abbott to Col. R.J.H. Birch, 7 April 1856 and Birch to Abbott, 25 April 1856, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/43/36, Nos. 194 and 195 of 25 April 1856.

rest of the cartridge, including the ball, would then be forced down the barrel with the ramrod. This type of ammunition was used by both the existing percussion musket and the Enfield rifle. But the crucial difference between the two was that the Enfield rifle's grooved bore required the bottom two-thirds of its cartridge to be greased to facilitate loading.⁷ Another rifle - the two-grooved Brunswick model - had been used by the 60th Rifles and rifle companies in some Bengal Native Infantry regiments since the early 1840s. Its ammunition consisted of a powder cartridge and a separate ball covered with a 'patch' of fine cloth smeared with beeswax and coconut oil, and was therefore considered to be inoffensive to both Hindus and Muslims. This was not the case with the substance used to grease the new Enfield cartridges.

In 1853, when the first Enfield cartridges were sent to India to test their reaction to the climate, General Gomm warned the Secretary to the Military Board that "unless it be known that the grease employed in these cartridges is not of a nature to offend or interfere with the prejudices of caste, it will be expedient not to issue them for test to Native corps". As it happened, the grease contained an element of tallow (animal fat) which may well have come from either cows or pigs. But the Military Board chose to ignore Gomm's counsel and the ammunition was tested over a period of some months by being carried in the pouches of sepoy guards at Fort William, Cawnpore and Rangoon. No objection to these cartridges was raised either by the sepoys themselves or by the committees of European officers set up to report on them.⁸ The tests confirmed that the grease could stand up to the Indian climate and the consignment was returned to England in 1855. A year later, following hard on the heels of the first batch of Enfield rifles was a shipment of greased cartridges and bullet moulds.⁹ Thereafter the Bengal Army's Ordnance Department began to manufacture its own cartridges at its Fort William, Meerut and Dum-Dum arsenals. The grease used for the rifle patch - a mixture of wax and oil - was discounted because its lubricating properties disappeared when cartridges were bundled. Instead the same combination preferred by the Royal Woolwich Arsenal - five parts tallow, five parts stearine and

⁶ Col. Chester to Col. Abbott, 29 April 1857, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/47/18, No. 81 of 19 June 1857.

⁷ Lewis Winant, *Early Percussion Firearms: A History of the Early Percussion Firearms Ignition* (New York, 1959), p. 255-6.

⁸ Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, pp. 379-80.

⁹ Birch to Abbott, 7 Nov 1856, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/46/55, No. 24 of 7 Nov 1856.

one part wax - was used.¹⁰ But the department made the fatal, and unforgiveable, error of not specifying what type of tallow was to be used.¹¹

The 60th Rifles received their full complement of 1,040 Enfield rifles on 1 January 1857.¹² At around the same time, Bengal Native Infantry regiments began to send detachments of seven men (one European officer, one native officer and five non-commissioned officers and sepoy) for instruction in the care and handling of the new weapon at the Musketry Depots at Dum-Dum near Calcutta, Ambala in the Cis-Sutlej States and Sialkot in the Punjab.¹³ But not a greased cartridge had been issued, nor a practice shot fired, by the time a rumour began to circulate among the sepoys at the Dum-Dum depot in late January that the grease for the new cartridge was offensive to both Hindus and Muslims, and that this was part of a systematic plot by government to convert all Indians to Christianity. The origin of the rumour was a conversation between a high-caste sepoy of the 2nd N.I. and a low caste *khalasi* (or labourer) from the Dum-Dum magazine. According to a report by Captain Wright, commandant of the Rifle Instruction Depot, the sepoy had rejected the *khalasi*'s request to drink from his *lota* because he did not know his caste, to which the *khalasi* replied: "You will soon lose your caste, as ere long you will have to bite cartridges covered with the fat of pigs and cows."¹⁴

Wright's report was submitted to the station authorities on 23 January 1857 by Major Bontein, commanding the Musketry Depot, who also gave details of a parade held the evening before at which two-thirds of the native portion of the depot (including all the native officers) had stated their objection to the grease applied to the new cartridges and a request for wax and oil to be used instead. Both letters were then forwarded to Major-General J.B. Hearsey, commanding the Presidency Division, who sent them on to Colonel Birch, the Military Secretary to the Government of India, with the comment that the *khalasi*'s claim was "no doubt totally groundless", but so "suspiciously disposed" were the sepoys that the only remedy was to allow them to grease the cartridges themselves with materials from the bazar.¹⁵ The Government of India, ever conscious of religious issues, was swift to react: on 27 January, having

¹⁰ Evidence of Lt. M.E. Currie, Commissary of Ordnance, 23 March 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 261; Memorandum by J.G. Bonner, Inspector-General of Stores, 23 March 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 4.

¹¹ Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, pp. 380-1.

¹² J.A.B. Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 14.

¹³ Birch to Sir John Lawrence, 5 Feb 1857, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/47/5, No. 51 of 6 Feb 1857.

¹⁴ Capt. J.A. Wright to the Adjutant of the Rifle Instruction Depot, 22 Jan 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, p. 3.

¹⁵ Maj. J. Bontein to the Station Staff Officer, 23 Jan 1857 and Hearsey to Maj. W.A.J. Mayhew, 24 Jan 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

consulted Colonel Abbott (Inspector-General of Ordnance), Birch ordered that all cartridges at the Depots of Instruction (including the Artillery depot at Meerut) were to be issued free from grease and that the sepoys were to be allowed "to apply, with their own hands, whatever mixture for the purpose they may prefer". Abbott, however, was quick to inform Colonel Chester, the Adjutant-General, who was up country with the Commander-in-Chief, General Anson, that such a solution would "answer well enough for practice, but would be impracticable on service" because balled cartridges needed to be greased before they were bundled. He therefore suggested the replacement of balled cartridges with balls covered with grease patches and powder-only cartridges.¹⁶

Abbott also anticipated the government by making inquiries as to the exact composition of the cartridge grease. On 29 January, he reported to Colonel Birch that, in line with the instructions received from the Court of Directors, "a mixture of tallow and bees' wax" had been used and that "no extraordinary precaution" appeared to have been taken "to insure [sic] the absence of any objectionable fat". In a separate letter that day, Abbott informed Birch that strict orders would be given for the exclusive use of sheep or goats' fat if it was decided that some form of tallow was necessary.¹⁷ It has never been proven beyond doubt that the original grease for the Enfield cartridge contained beef or pork fat. But the circumstantial evidence is compelling. In a letter to the President of the Board of Control of 7 February, Canning himself stated that the grease grievance had "turned out to be well founded".¹⁸ In March, the officer in charge of the Fort William arsenal testified that no one had bothered to check what type of animal fat was used. At the same tribunal, Abbott admitted that the tallow may well "have contained the fat of cows or other animals".¹⁹

At this stage, therefore, the Dum-Dum sepoys appear to have had a genuine grievance - though not one or them had been, or ever would be, issued with a greased cartridge. Even more perplexing is the claim by Major Bontein that no greased cartridges were ever made at the Dum-Dum magazine because its operatives were still learning the complicated process of manufacture when the rumour began. Nor were any greased cartridges ever sent from the Fort William arsenal, where they were being made, to

¹⁶ Birch to Maj. Mayhew, 27 Jan 1857, Birch to Col. C. Chester, 27 Jan 1857 (Telegraphic), Abbott to Chester, 28 Jan 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, pp. 37-40.

¹⁷ Abbott to Birch, 29 Jan 1857 (two separate letters), *ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

¹⁸ Canning to Vernon Smith, 7 Feb 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/4.

¹⁹ Evidence of Lt. Currie and Col. A. Abbott, 23 March 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 261.

the Dum-Dum depot.²⁰ How, then, did the Dum-Dum *khalasi* discover the truth about the cartridge grease? We can only speculate.

What we do know is that the government moved swiftly to correct its earlier error by halting the production of greased cartridges and authorizing the sepoys to apply their own grease. No sooner had this concession been announced, however, than sepoys from the four regiments of Bengal Native Infantry at Barrackpore, the great military station 16 miles north of Calcutta (and about 30 miles from Dum-Dum), were voicing their fears that the paper encasing the new cartridges also contained objectionable fat. These suspicions first arose when ungreased Enfield cartridges and the paper used for making them were shown to a parade of the 2nd N.I. at Barrackpore on 4 February (similar fears were also expressed during a separate parade of the 34th N.I.). At a subsequent court of inquiry, held four days later, witness after witness stated his belief that the paper was objectionable to his caste. One said that the rumour began with *khalasis* from the Fort William arsenal; others referred to bazar gossip and a "general report in the cantonment". Two witnesses, a sepoy and the havildar-major (native sergeant-major), claimed to have experimented with the paper: the former said that it made a fizzing noise when burnt "and smelt as if there was grease in it"; the latter that it would not dissolve in oil and that this had convinced him there was no grease in it. But despite this, the havildar-major would not bite off the end of an ungreased cartridge because "the other men would object to it".²¹ This objection to the cartridge paper was groundless: it contained no grease and certainly no tallow. Suspicions had arisen partly because the English manufactured paper was slightly thicker than that used to make musket cartridges.²² But the lack of a genuine reason prompts the speculation that some guiding hand - within or without the regiments - was trying to keep the cartridge controversy alive by switching attention from the grease (which was no longer an issue) to the paper. Canning suspected such a conspiracy and told Vernon Smith that there was a mutinous spirit in the 2nd N.I., or at least part of it, which had "not been roused by the cartridges alone if at all".²³

The first serious outbreak of open mutiny took place at Berhampore, 110 miles north of Calcutta, during the night of 26/27 February. The previous afternoon, the men of the 19th N.I. had refused to receive their copper caps for firing exercise on the morning of 27 February because they suspected that the paper for the blank practice cartridges contained objectionable grease. These cartridges, it should

²⁰ Evidence of Maj. Bontein, 18 March 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 259.

²¹ Proceedings of a Special Court of Inquiry, 6 Feb 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 7-13.

²² Evidence of Maj. Bontein and Lt. Currie, 18 March 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, pp. 259-60.

be stressed, were for their old muskets - not the new Enfield - and were the same type that had been issued to the army for many years. They had, moreover, been made up in the regimental magazine the previous year by the sepoys of the 7th N.I.. Lieutenant-Colonel Mitchell reminded the native officers of these facts and warned them that any sepoy who refused to accept the blank cartridges at the morning parade would be court-martialled. At around 11 p.m., however, the sepoys broke into their bells-of-arms and seized their muskets. Mitchell responded by ordering a detachment of the 11th I.C. and some European artillery to cover the mutinous sepoys while he went to speak to them. Four hours later, after much negotiation, Mitchell finally agreed to the native officers' suggestion to withdraw the cavalry and guns. The men then lodged their weapons and returned to their lines.²⁴

During the subsequent Court of Inquiry, the native officers, non-commissioned officers and sepoys of the 19th N.I. sent a petition to General Hearsey to explain their behaviour. They stated that the rumour about the new cartridges containing objectionable fat had been in circulation for "two months and more", and that they were very much afraid for their religion. Their minds had been temporarily put at ease by Colonel Mitchell's announcement that grease for the new cartridges would be made up in front of the sepoys by the company pay-havildars. But their fears returned when they inspected the blank cartridges at their bells-of-arms on the afternoon of 26 February. "We perceived them to be of two kinds," they wrote, "and one sort appeared to be different from that formerly served out. Hence we doubted whether these might not be the cartridges which had arrived from Calcutta, as we had made none ourselves, and were convinced that they were greased." It was for this reason, they claimed, that they refused to accept the firing caps. Colonel Mitchell had angrily responded by threatening to take the regiment to Burma, where they would all die of hardship, if they did not accept the cartridges. This outburst had convinced them that the cartridges were greased. They had seized their arms in fear of their lives amidst shouts that they were about to be attacked by Europeans, the cavalry and the guns.²⁵

The sepoys' objections, therefore, had switched from the grease on the Enfield cartridge, to the paper used for the Enfield cartridge, and finally to the paper on the old musket cartridge. The reference to two different kinds of blank cartridge is explained by the fact that, since the mid-1850s, some of the paper used for musket ammunition had been produced by the Serampore mills near Calcutta. Its paper

²³ Canning to Vernon Smith, 22 Feb 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/4.

²⁴ Lt.-Col. W. St. L. Mitchell to Major A.H. Ross, 27 Feb 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, p. 41.

²⁵ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 45-7.

was of a slightly darker shade than the familiar English product of John Dickinson & Co.²⁶ Yet it contained no grease, nor was grease ever applied to cartridges for smooth-bore muskets. There is, therefore, no rational explanation for the behaviour of the 19th N.I. on the night of 26 February beyond a complete breakdown of trust between the sepoys and their European officers. Colonel Mitchell had assured them that the cartridges were of the old type and contained no grease, and yet they preferred to believe the wild rumour that the Indian government was planning their forcible conversion to Christianity. It is highly probable that certain members of the regiment were playing upon the fears of their comrades to incite mutiny. These ringleaders were almost certainly behind the false reports that the blank cartridge paper contained grease and that the regiment was about to be attacked during the night of 26/27 February.

By mid-March, the disaffection had spread to the Musketry Depot at Ambala where detachments from 41 Bengal Native Infantry regiments were being instructed in the use of the new Enfield rifle. On the morning of 16 March, as all the native detachments were being paraded for drill, Lieutenant Martineau, Instructor of Musketry, called aside the native officers to express his surprise that the men were still discussing whether or not to use Enfield cartridges despite his assurance that they could apply their own grease. At which point a native officer from the 71st N.I. stepped forward and stated that the men at the depot were against using any of the new cartridges until they had ascertained that their doing so was "not unacceptable to their comrades in their respective corps". For they feared being taunted with loss of caste on return to their regiments. That this was not the generally held opinion, however, is proved by the interjection of a jemadar from the 36th N.I. who claimed that the previous speaker knew "perfectly well that many of the detachments here entertain no such feelings". The Jemadar added:

I will fire when I am told, & I know many others will do the same. I have sufficient confidence in Government & my officers to know that no improper order will be given to us, & to demur using cartridges merely because they are of a different form, or made of different paper, is absurd, in fact there is no question of caste in the matter, & he who refuses to obey proper orders, or who cavels about doing so on the pretext of religion, is guilty of mutinous and insubordinate conduct.

²⁶ David Harding, 'Arming the East India Company's Forces', *Soldiers of the Raj*, p. 145.

According to Martineau, the jemadar's sentiments were backed up throughout by the native officers of the 10th and 22nd N.I., while others loudly denounced the views of the first speaker.²⁷ Here then is evidence that not all native soldiers were sufficiently disillusioned with either their European officers or the government to believe, or even claim to believe, that the cartridge question was still a legitimate issue. Those who continued to do so were, in this native officer's opinion, using religion as a pretext.

Nevertheless, the fear of social ostracisation was not without foundation. On 19 March, the Commander-in-Chief, General the Hon. George Anson, arrived in Ambala on a tour of inspection with his escorting regiment, the 36th N.I. But when a havildar and a naik from the regiment, part of the detachment doing duty at the Musketry Depot, went to the camp to greet their comrades they were refused entry to the tents and taunted by one subedar with having become Christians. Martineau was asked to obtain some redress not only by the two aggrieved N.C.Os., but also by the native officers at the depot who "regarded the insult as intended for all who as good soldiers were obeying the orders of Government by using the new Enfield rifle".²⁸ He therefore conducted his own inquiry among the depot's detachments and discovered, so he told the Assistant Adjutant-General, the existence of a rumour that the Enfield cartridge had been purposely greased with beef and pork fat "with the express object of destroying caste", and that the weapon itself was "nothing more or less than a Government missionary to convert the whole Army to Christianity". That "so absurd a rumour should meet with ready credence" was proof that the feeling of native troops was anything but sound. Yet it was "generally credited", he added, and punchayets had been formed in all Bengal corps from Calcutta to Peshawur, determined to regard as outcastes any men who used the new cartridges.²⁹

On 23 March, having been informed of the above developments, General Anson addressed a parade of the native officers at the depot. Through the medium of an interpreter, he told them that the rumoured intention of the government to interfere with their caste and religion, or to coerce them or the people of the country in general to do anything which would involve loss of caste, was "utterly groundless and false", and that he looked to them to satisfy those under their authority on this point.³⁰ The response of the native officers, through the medium of Lieutenant Martineau, was that *they* knew the rumour to be false, but it *was* "universally credited, not only in their regiments, but in their villages

²⁷ Capt. E.M. Martineau to Sir John Kaye, 20 Oct 1864, Kaye Mutiny Papers, OIOC, H725, pp. 1023-4.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 1027-8.

²⁹ Lt. Martineau to Capt. S. Becher, 20 March 1857, Martineau Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/C571.

³⁰ Becher to Col. Birch, 25 March 1857, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/47/11, No. 335 of 3 April 1857.

& their homes". They would not disobey an order to fire, but they wanted the Commander-in-Chief to understand the social consequences to themselves, namely loss of caste. Martineau himself could not offer any definitive explanation, yet he was disposed to regard the greased cartridge "more as the medium than the original cause of this wide spread feeling of distrust that is spreading dissatisfaction to our Rule".³¹ Part of his reason for believing this, he later testified, was because only Hindu sepoys appeared to be genuinely worried by the cartridge question; the Muslim sepoys, on the other hand, simply "laughed at it".³²

Anson was of a similar conviction. "The 'Cartridge' question is more a pretext, than reality," he informed Lord Elphinstone on 29 March, adding: "The sepoys have been pampered & given way to, & have...grown insolent beyond bearing."³³ Yet he accepted that the native officers at Ambala genuinely feared social ostracism, and so ordered the deferment of actual target practice at the three musketry depots until the government had voiced its opinion.³⁴

The Supreme Government had meanwhile come to another decision. On 27 March, Canning's general order announced the forthcoming disbandment of the 19th N.I. for "open and defiant mutiny". It also took the opportunity to assure the native army that it had ever been "the unvarying rule of the Government of India to treat the religious feelings of all its servants, of every creed, with careful respect", and that had the sepoys of the 19th N.I. "confided in their Government, and believed their commanding officer, instead of crediting the idle stories with which false and evil-minded men have deceived them, their religious scruples would still have remained inviolate".³⁵ The 19th N.I. was duly disbanded at Barrackpore on 31 March, in the presence of the garrison's four regiments of native infantry, the Governor-General's Body-Guard and five companies of H.M. 84th Foot sent up from Calcutta and Chinsurah respectively.

Two days earlier, Barrackpore witnessed the first outbreak of mutinous violence when Sepoy Mungul Pandey of the 34th N.I., armed with a musket and sword, tried to murder the European sergeant-major, Hewson, and the adjutant, Lieutenant Baugh. Both received severe sword cuts before Pandey, confronted by General Hearsey and his staff, turned his gun upon himself. What was particularly shocking about this incident was the fact that upwards of 400 sepoys watched Pandey's unprovoked

³¹ Martineau to Becher, 23 March 1857, Martineau Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/C571.

³² Examination of Captain Martineau, 23 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 210.

³³ Anson to Elphinstone, 29 March 1857, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 11B/18.

³⁴ Becher to Col. Birch, 25 March 1857, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/47/11, No. 335 of 3 April 1857.

attack without intervening. Furthermore, the Jemadar of the Quarter Guard ignored repeated orders to disarm Pandey, and there is even evidence to suggest that some members of the Guard assisted in the attack upon the two Europeans (Hewson, for example, recalled being felled from behind by blows from a sepoy's musket). That Hewson and Baugh survived was mainly due to the intervention of Sepoy Shaik Pultoo, the only native to offer assistance, who was badly wounded in the process.³⁶

Pandey's intention is unclear, though it would appear to have been a failed attempt to incite the whole regiment to mutiny. "Come out, you *bhainchutes* [sister-violaters], the Europeans are here," he is said to have shouted on emerging from his hut. "From biting these cartridges we shall become infidels. Get ready, turn out all of you."³⁷ A separate statement by the same witness has Pandey warning the men that the "guns and Europeans had arrived for the purpose of slaughtering them".³⁸ Hewson recalled him saying: "*Nikul ao, pultun; nikul ao hamara sath* (Come out, men; come out and join me - You sent me out here, why don't you follow me)."³⁹ Pandey himself admitted that he had recently been taking *bhang* (an infusion of Indian hemp) and opium, and was not aware of what he was doing at the time of the attack.⁴⁰ It seems likely, therefore, that an intoxicated Pandey acted prematurely before his co-conspirators were ready. Certainly his false references to the approach of Europeans and the loss of religion were repeated in many other mutinies, and they had clearly been decided upon as the best way to win over waverers. But in the case of the 34th N.I., there had been no specific dispute over the issue of cartridges (though the men had expressed their suspicions about the paper for the new Enfield cartridge), and the ground was not yet prepared for full-blown mutiny.

It was later suggested that the evangelism of the 34th's commanding officer, Colonel Wheler, was largely to blame for the bad feeling in the regiment. Wheler himself admitted that he had been in the habit of speaking to "natives of all classes, sepoys and others" on the subject of Christianity "in the highways, cities, bazars and villages", though "not in the lines and regimental bazars".⁴¹ He had, he said, "often addressed" sepoys of his own and other regiments in the stations where he had been quartered with the aim of converting them to Christianity.⁴² Such an officer, Canning told the President

³⁵ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 94-7.

³⁶ Examination of Sgt.-Major J.T. Hewson and Lt. B.H. Baugh, 6 April 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 117-122.

³⁷ Examination of Havildar (late Sepoy) Shaik Pultoo, 6 April 1857, *ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁸ Examination of Havildar Shaik Pultoo, 9 April 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

³⁹ Examination of Hewson, □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ *ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴⁰ Interrogation of Mungul Pandey, 4 April 1857, *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴¹ □□□□□ S. Wheler to the Offg. Brig. Major, 4 April 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 202.

⁴² Wheler to Major Ross, A.A.G. Presidency Division, 15 April 1857, *ibid.*, p. 205.

of the Board of Control, was "not fit to command a regiment".⁴³ But other opinion was divided. An anonymous letter to the *Friend of India* asked, with reference to a report that Wheler was about to be removed from his command, "by what law a man who lives as a Christian, and peaceably endeavours to induce others to be Christians like him, is made an offender".⁴⁴ *The Bengal Hurkaru* responded with the comment that the "least likely way of making Christians of the Natives in this country, is to get turned out of it ourselves".⁴⁵ Lieutenant Martineau later testified that he had never heard any sepoys at Ambala speak complainingly of the efforts of Wheler and missionaries in general to convert natives to Christianity and did not think "they cared one bit about it".⁴⁶ Anson did not believe the disaffection of the Bengal Army could be "traced to the preaching of Commanding officers" because Wheler was an isolated case.⁴⁷ *The Bengal Hurkaru* also had "no reason to suppose that the prevalence of disaffection and insubordination in the Bengal Army had been caused by the proceedings of proselytizing officers". Yet, it added, what was "more likely to cause general disaffection in an army of illiterate natives than the suspicion of a design against their national faith", what "more likely to excite such a suspicion than the spectacle of a military Commander ... teaching and preaching a foreign religion". In other words, the actions of Wheler and men like him were grist to the mill of those who wished "to win away the allegiance of the sepoys from Government".⁴⁸

In civil society as a whole, many Indians had become increasingly wary of the government's attempts at anglicization during the previous 40 years. In 1813, as part of the 20-year renewal of the East India Company's Charter, two decisions were taken which were to have far-reaching consequences for Indian language and culture: the Indian government was committed to spending £10,000 a year on education; and the long-standing ban on Christian missionaries was removed. As a result of the first initiative, Anglicizers and Orientalists began a fierce debate as to what kind of education - English or classical Indian - should be funded.⁴⁹ The question was finally settled in 1835 when Thomas Babington Macaulay, law member to the new Legislative Council of India, penned his notorious Minute on Education which recommended raising up an English-educated middle-class "who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in colour and blood, but

⁴³ Canning to Vernon Smith, 9 April 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/5.

⁴⁴ *Friend of India*, 13 April 1857

⁴⁵ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 19 April 1857

⁴⁶ Examination of Captain Martineau, 23 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 210.

⁴⁷ Anson to Lord Elphinstone, 10 May 1857, Elphinstone Papers, MSS Eur/F87/ Box 6A/No. 4, OIOC.

⁴⁸ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 28 and 29 May 1857

English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect".⁵⁰ Already a new anglicized élite in Calcutta had begun "to create institutions to serve its own interests". These were largely educational establishments that taught English language, literature and western sciences, and included the Hindu College (1816), the Calcutta School Society (1818), the Sanskrit College (1824) and the Oriental Seminary (1829). They were supplemented by missionary schools that generally taught Indians of all religions and castes for free, notably Dr Duff's Free Church Mission in Calcutta. But even those Calcutta élites who accepted the necessity of learning English were split between conservatives who wanted to limit the incorporation of foreign culture within Hindu society (such as the members of the Hindu Dharma Sabha) and "cultural radicals who rejected Hindu social norms in favour of English culture and secular rationalism imported from Europe" (led by the brilliant young Eurasian, Henry Derozio, who supported the abolition of *sati* in 1829, just two years before his untimely death at the age of 22).⁵¹ The extent to which these cultural developments affected rural communities and military cantonments, however, is open to question. The abolition of *sati*, for example, caused hardly a ripple among the native troops.

The activity of Christian missionaries, however, was potentially more problematical. With the ending of the ban on their activity in 1813, missionaries of all denominations made rapid inroads into Company territory. At first they were required to possess an official licence; but this stipulation was dropped when the Company's Charter was renewed for a further 20 years in 1833. By then, moderate evangelicals were receiving the enthusiastic support of both Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General (1828-35), and Daniel Wilson, the Bishop of Calcutta (1832-58).⁵² In 1834, the American Presbyterian Mission established its headquarters at Ludhiana in the Cis-Sutlej States (then part of the Punjab). A year later the Mission acquired a printing press and began to publish tracts, translations of the scriptures and dictionaries in Punjabi, Urdu, Persian, Hindi and Kashmiri. After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, a number of new missions sprang up. A similar process took place at Agra where the Anglican Church Missionary Society set up a mission, orphanage and printing press in 1838. By 1846 the major missionary societies had an annual budget of £425,000, nearly half of which was spent

⁴⁹ Kenneth W. Jones, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol III:1 - Socio-religious reform movements in British India*, pp. 27.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Stokes, *English Utilitarians in India*, p. 46.

⁵¹ Jones, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol III:1*, pp. 28-9.

⁵² Porter, Andrew, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. III - The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p. 231.

by Anglicans and Methodists. The campaign of proselytism in the North-Western Provinces, in particular, provoked a stream of pamphlets, books, journals and newspapers in defence of the Hindu and Muslim religions from native-owned presses in Agra, Delhi and Meerut. But despite the Christian zeal of a number of governors-general - including Lord Canning who made donations to the Calcutta Bible Society, the Serampore College (established by Baptist missionaries) and the Free Church Mission - the actual number of conversions to Christianity in the Bengal Presidency prior to the mutiny was relatively insignificant: the Anglican Church Missionary Society, for example, had just 19,000 church attendants throughout India by the 1840s, most of them outside Bengal; in the Punjab, where the American Presbyterian Mission was active, the total number of converts was fewer than 4,000 by the 1880s. In the Madras Presidency, on the other hand, the Tinnevely district recorded nearly 40,000 Christian converts by 1850, with a further 20,000 in southern Travancore (though the process of conversion was actually begun by Jesuits in the 17th Century). They were chiefly Untouchables who had little social status to lose. Respectable Hindus in southern India responded in the mid-1840s by forming two organizations: the Vibuthi Sangam (Sacred Ash Society), a shadowy group dedicated to ending Christian conversions; and the Madras-based Sadu Veda Siddhanta Sabha (Society for Spreading the Philosophy of the Four Vedas), which sought the same end by legal means. Both societies were probably behind the spate of attacks on Christian villages that were commonplace in the late 1840s and 1850s. If anything, therefore, the antagonism towards missionaries was much higher in the Madras Presidency than in Bengal. But Hindus across India - especially those of the higher castes - were undoubtedly alarmed by the Company's amendment of Hindu law: first, in 1850, to allow Christian converts the right of inheritance; and second, in 1856, to legalize the second marriage of Hindu widows (and thereby legitimize their subsequent offspring).⁵³

Perhaps of more relevance to the disaffection of the 19th and 34th regiments than issues of caste and religion, however, was the fact that both were commanded by relatively unfamiliar officers. Mitchell had been with his regiment for just 18 months. Wheler a few years longer, though he had only returned to take command of the 34th in 1856 after an absence of seven years. Wheler had also been in temporary command of the original 34th N.I. when it was disbanded in 1844 for refusing to serve in Sind without extra benefits. It may be assumed, therefore, that he was not particularly popular.

⁵³ Jones, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol III:1*, pp. 52-3, 87, 156-8; Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997), pp. 222, 228-9; MacLagan, *Clemency Canning*, pp. 114-15.

Furthermore it is surely no coincidence that both regiments were stationed in Lucknow, the capital of Oudh, when that kingdom was forcibly annexed by the East India Company in February 1856 on the ground of misgovernance. Many of their sepoy came from that province (as did a large proportion of sepoy in the Bengal Army as a whole). Not only was the annexation a blow to their national pride, but it also brought an end to the privilege enjoyed by all Company soldiers from Oudh of being able to prosecute their legal cases and petitions through the British Resident. So abused had this privilege become - with some sepoy receiving up to 10 months leave for the sole purpose of prosecuting their claims - that in 1853 the maximum leave was stipulated as that which "would enable the applicant to travel to Lucknow, remain there for 10 days, and then return (unless the Resident certified that the man's continued presence was necessary)".⁵⁴ Yet the privilege remained until annexation and there is no doubt that its loss - and with it the prestige of serving the Company - was keenly felt. In a letter to Canning of 1 May 1857, Sir Henry Lawrence mentioned that he had received a number of letters attributing the "present bad feeling *not* to the cartridge or any specific question, but to a pretty general dissatisfaction at many recent acts of Government which have been skilfully played upon by incendiaries". Lawrence gave the example of an Oudh sowar in the Bombay cavalry who was asked if he liked annexation. "No," the sowar replied. "I used to be a great man when I went home; the best in the village rose as I approached; now the lowest puff their pipes in my face."⁵⁵ There were other occasions when the annexation of Oudh was cited as a grievance. Lieutenant De Kantzow of the 9th N.I. noted that some of his younger sepoy, who had seen the annexation of Oudh with their own eyes (including the auctioning of the King's property), referred to their country as having been "snatched".⁵⁶ Martineau recalled that dissatisfaction with the annexation of Oudh was "occasionally alluded to" by sepoy at the Musketry Depot at Ambala.⁵⁷ And during the mutiny itself, Captain Thomson of the 53rd N.I., one of only four men to survive the Cawnpore massacres, was informed by mutinous sepoy that "the Company's raj would cease" because of the annexation of Oudh alone.⁵⁸

The upshot of the aborted rising of the 34th N.I. was that Mungul Pandey and the Jemadar of the Guard, Issuree Pandey, were hanged for mutiny on 8 and 21 April respectively. With just 10 exceptions

⁵⁴ Col. Sleeman to C. Allen, 14 Oct 1852, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/43/61, No. 375 of 5 Nov 1852; G.O.G.G., 16 Feb 1853, Abstract of General Orders from 1848 to 1853, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/437.

⁵⁵ Anderson and Subedar (eds.), *The Last Days of the Company*, I, p. 110.

⁵⁶ Kantzow Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/Photo/Eur 86, vol. 1, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Examination of Captain Martineau, 23 Feb 1858, P.P., 1859, XVIII, p. 210.

⁵⁸ Capt. Mowbray Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (London, 1859), p. 194.

- three native officers, three N.C.O.s and three sepoy - the remainder of the seven companies present at Barrackpore when the incident took place (the other three companies were on detached duty at Chittagong) were found guilty of passive mutiny and disbanded by order of the Governor-General on 6 May.⁵⁹ The reaction of the native newspaper, *The Hindoo Patriot*, to the outbreak of disaffection in the Bengal Army was to indicate a cause far deeper than the cartridge question. "*Months before* a single cartridge was greased with beef-suet or hogslard," it commented on 2 April, "we endeavoured to draw public attention to the unsatisfactory state of feeling in the sepoy army... There is no want of distinctness or prominence in the symptoms which have already appeared to warn us against the existence of a powder mine in the ranks of the native soldiery that wants but the slightest spark to set in motion gigantic elements of destruction."⁶⁰

Also in early April, on the advice of Lieutenant-Colonel Hogge (the Director of the Artillery School of Instruction at Meerut) and Major Bontein, the government attempted to remove any remaining objection to the new cartridges by altering the firing drill for both rifles and muskets.⁶¹ Instead of tearing the top of the cartridge with their teeth, sepoy would now do so with their left hand.⁶² With this and the other main concession in place (that of allowing sepoy to apply their own grease), Canning authorized the musketry depots to commence firing practice. Any further postponement, he observed, would be viewed by the sepoy's comrades in their regiments as a victory; the government would be seen to have "admitted the justice of the objection or at least as having doubts upon it, and the prejudice would take deeper root than ever".⁶³

The first live firing at the Ambala musketry depot - using Enfield cartridges greased by the sepoy with a composition of *ghi* and beeswax - took place on 17 April. The native troops at the depot had warned Martineau that it would lead to an outbreak in the station - which was garrisoned by the 4th L.C., 5th and 60th N.I., H.M. 9th Lancers and two troops of European Bengal horse artillery - and the increased frequency of arson attacks seemed to confirm this.⁶⁴ As early as 26 March an attempt was made to burn down the hut of the native officer in the 36th N.I. who had been the first to declare his

⁵⁹ G.O.G.G., 4 May 1857 and Maj.-Gen. Hearsey to Col. Birch, 6 May 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 222-6.

⁶⁰ *The Hindoo Patriot*, 2 April 1857.

⁶¹ Lt.-Col. Hogge to Col. Chester, 20 Feb 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 68; Bontein to Major Ross, 2 March 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 36-8.

⁶² Gov.-Gen. in Council to the Court of Directors, 8 April 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, pp. 5-6.

⁶³ Col. Birch to Col. Chester, 3 April 1857, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/47/11, No. 346 of 3 April 1857.

⁶⁴ Examination of Captain Martineau, 23 Feb 1858, P.P., 1859, XVIII, p. 210.

willingness to fire the new cartridge. The fires resumed on 13 April, when the authorities at Ambala received orders to commence firing practice, and continued on into May. The targets included the depot hospital, a barrack in the European lines, an empty bungalow, a European officer's stables, and huts belonging to two high-caste native officers and a havildar from the 5th N.I. who were attached to the depot (and who, according to their C.O., had "fired the new cartridges without demur" and repeatedly assured him that there was "nothing objectionable in them").⁶⁵ That no one would identify the incendiaries despite the offer of a large reward was, Martineau was told, "a certain sign of general dissatisfaction and some impending outbreak".⁶⁶ But not all native regiments were outraged by the news from Ambala. When the detachments from the Cawnpore regiments returned from Ambala, noted Captain Thomson, "they were amicably received, and allowed to eat with their own caste, although they had been using the Enfield rifle and the suspected cartridges". One Muslim sepoy from Thomson's 53rd N.I. even "brought with him specimens of the cartridges, to assure his comrades that no animal fat had been employed in their construction".⁶⁷ This docile reaction is confirmed by Jhokun, the servant of Colonel Williams of the 56th N.I., another of the Cawnpore units. "The cartridge question used to be talked about," claimed Jhokun, "but it did not engross much attention. The 53rd and 56th N.I. showed great lukewarmness until the mutiny actually broke out." This was probably because the instigators of the eventual mutiny at Cawnpore were from the other two regiments: the 2nd L.C. and the 1st N.I.⁶⁸ The cartridge question, therefore, was only of interest to those who wished to foment mutiny.

At the Dum-Dum depot live firing commenced on 23 April without incident. Major Bontein told the Assistant Adjutant-General of the Presidency Division that his orders had been "obeyed as a matter of course", which was only to have been expected after the "alteration in the method of loading and greasing the cartridges".⁶⁹ One of the first to step forward and declare his willingness to fire the new cartridge was Subedar Bholah Upadhyaya, a Brahmin from the 17th N.I. His loyalty was rewarded when his commanding officer, Major Burroughs, recommended him for the vacant subedar-majorship in the regiment though he was only the second senior subedar. The subedar who was passed over, Bhoondu

⁶⁵ Capt. E.W.E. Howard to G.C. Barnes, 4 May 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 443; Return by Maj. F. Maitland, 5th N.I., 24 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 44. A jemadar in the 5th N.I. was charged with inciting the regiment to ostracize these men, but was acquitted by a native court-martial.

⁶⁶ Examination of Captain Martineau, 23 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 210.

⁶⁷ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, pp. 24-5.

⁶⁸ Deposition of Jhokun, No. 34, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., p. CXCVII.

⁶⁹ Bontein to Maj. Ross, 23 April 1857, India Military Consultations, OIOC, P/47/15, No. 334 of 15 May 1857.

Sing (an Ahir), would later lead the regiment in mutiny at Azimgarh on 3 June.⁷⁰ Before that event took place, the men frequently voiced their suspicions about the new cartridges. Unable to understand their objections in the light of the government's concessions over greasing and loading, Burroughs sought an answer from his shrewdest and most intelligent havildar, Juggernath Tewarry. While refusing to enter into specifics, Tewarry pointed out that it was the object of all smart sepoy to get into their regiment's rifle company (if it had one), and once there to use patches greased in the government magazines. "We do not know what that grease is made of," added Tewarry, "but did you ever hear any sepoy objecting to it?" Then why, said Burroughs, was an objection made known? Tewarry replied: "From villainy." But would say no more.⁷¹

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact day on which firing practice began at the Sialkot depot. But we do know that on 26 April, the day after an "uneasy feeling about the Enfield rifle and cartridge showed itself", Lieutenant-Colonel Darwall of the 57th N.I. at Ferozepore "caused a native letter to be written to the detached party at the Sialkot depot, to assure them that no greased cartridges were in the regimental magazine, or would be used". The letter was also read out to the regiment. "The men were satisfied," noted Darwall, "and nothing further occurred" until 286 men deserted when the regiment was disarmed on 14 May.⁷² At Sialkot, meanwhile, the sepoy were firing the Enfields without a murmur. After a visit to the depot in early May, Sir John Lawrence informed Canning that the sepoy were "highly pleased with the new musket, and quite ready to adopt it", not least because they realized the advantage it would give them in mountain warfare on the North-West Frontier.⁷³

Within a week the mutiny proper had begun at Meerut. The ostensible cause, as it had been at Berhampore in February, was a refusal to accept blank cartridges for firing practice. The soldiers in question were 90 skirmishers of the 3rd L.C., made up of the 15 men in each troop to whom carbines were issued, and described by one officer as "more or less picked men, and quite the élite of the regiment".⁷⁴ On 23 May, these skirmishers were ordered to attend a parade the following morning to practise the new firing drill whereby the cartridge was torn rather than bitten. That evening, five of the six troop commanders were warned by their men that the skirmishers would not fire the cartridges for

⁷⁰ Statement by Lt. Col. F.W. Burroughs, 3 June 1857, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, pp. 344-5.

⁷¹ Burroughs to Capt. I. H. Chamberlain, 23 Jan 1860, *ibid.*, p. 348.

⁷² Return of the 57th N.I. by Lt.-Col. E. Darwall, 3 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 50.

⁷³ Lawrence to Canning, 4 May 1857, quoted in Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, pp. 427-8.

⁷⁴ Sir Patrick Cadell, 'The Outbreak of the Indian Mutiny', *JSAHR*, 33, 1955, p. 119.

fear of getting a bad name. One of these officers informed the adjutant (for transmission to the C.O., Colonel Carmichael-Smyth) that the men had said "if they fire any kind of cartridge at present they lay themselves open to the imputation from their comrades and other regiments of having fired the objectionable ones".⁷⁵ In other words they did not care whether the cartridges they were being asked to fire were unobjectionable or not; their concern was to escape social ostracization. The warnings were genuine. At the following day's parade, 85 out of the 90 skirmishers refused to accept the three blank cartridges they were offered, despite Carmichael-Smyth's assurance that they were not greased and were the same as they had been using all season. According to the colonel, none of those who refused gave any reason for doing so "beyond that they would get a bad name; not one of them urged any scruple of religion; they all said they would take these cartridges if the others did."⁷⁶ They numbered 48 Muslims and 37 Hindus. Of the five non-commissioned officers who took the cartridges, three were Muslims and two Hindus.

At the subsequent court of inquiry, both the native quartermaster-havildar and the former acting quartermaster havildar testified that the blank cartridges involved had been manufactured in the regimental magazine the previous year. They also confirmed that the paper was the same as that in use for many years, and that there was nothing in the material of the cartridges or the manner in which they had been made up that would be objectionable to either a Hindu or a Muslim. The former acting quartermaster-havildar, one of the five men to accept the cartridges, had even supervised their production.⁷⁷ So, too, had Bhuggun, the Regimental Tindal, who had been making similar cartridges in the regiment for over 33 years. "Till now," he stated, "I never heard any objection of any kind against them, and even now I cannot understand what point in particular is objected to."⁷⁸

Apart from Carmichael-Smith, the only other witnesses to give evidence to the court of inquiry were the senior Muslim and Hindu sowars from each troop, none of whom was involved in the parade. Asked in turn whether they were aware of anything objectionable in the material of the cartridges, most admitted that they knew of nothing and that the cartridges seemed to be of the type always used. And yet, many added, there was a general rumour or suspicion that there was something wrong with them. Only the senior Muslim sowar in the 6th Troop was prepared to elaborate: "They apparently look like

⁷⁵ Capt. H.C. Craigie to Lt. Melville-Clarke, 23 April 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 228-9

⁷⁶ Evidence of Col. G.M. Carmichael-Smyth, 25 April 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 230-2

⁷⁷ Evidence of Quartermaster-Havildar Thakoor Sing and Havildar Pursaud Sing, *ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

⁷⁸ Evidence of Bhuggun, *ibid.*, pp. 236-7.

old ones, but they may, for aught I know, have pig's fat rubbed over them." ⁷⁹ The court, made up of seven native officers from the two regiments then at Meerut (three from the 3rd L.C. and four from the 20th N.I.), ⁸⁰ concluded that there was "no adequate cause" for the disobedience the previous day beyond a vague rumour that the cartridges contained a suspicious material. They, however, were unanimously of the opinion that there was "nothing whatever objectionable in the cartridges" and that they could be received and used as before without affecting the religious scruple of either a Hindu or a Muslim. Any claim to the contrary was "false". ⁸¹

In the opinion of Major G.W. Williams, who later conducted an extensive investigation into the outbreak at Meerut, those cartridges served out to the troopers could not have been confused with the new Enfield cartridge. "Though we can fairly allow for suspicion to have entered the minds of some," he added, "yet this fact is significant of a hostile feeling against Government, and a determination to make the worst of the matter, by extending the prejudice originally incited by...the Enfield cartridges, to those of the same kind as has been used by them for generations past." ⁸²

As a result of the court's findings, Anson agreed with the recommendation by the Judge Advocate-General, Colonel Young, that the 85 skirmishers should be charged with collective disobedience before a general court-martial. ⁸³ But before the trial could be convened, two similar episodes occurred. First, on 27 April, a squad of native artillery recruits at Meerut refused to accept blank cartridges for carbine drill. They were paid up and discharged from the service forthwith. ⁸⁴ Five days later, at Lucknow, the 7th Oudh I.I. (a local corps under British command) also refused cartridges for musketry practice, alleging they were greased. The officer involved is said to have ordered them to bite the cartridges because he had not received the revised instructions for loading drill. Nevertheless "it was a foolish and groundless objection," noted Lieutenant Bonham of the Oudh Artillery, "for the cartridges were the same as those always in use with the regiment, and being of the ordinary kind, for use with the old smooth-bore musket, they had not, of course, been greased. All this was fully explained by the officer

⁷⁹ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 234-6.

⁸⁰ The 15th N.I. had left Meerut for Nasirabad in early April and would soon be replaced by the 11th N.I. from Mirzapur.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 237.

⁸² Memorandum by Major G.W. Williams, 15 Nov 1857, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, pp. 10-11.

⁸³ Memorandum by Col. K. Young to Col. Chester and Anson to Chester, 29 April 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 237-240.

⁸⁴ Major J.H. Campbell to Major J. Waterfield, 30 April 1857, *ibid.*, p. 241-2.

in charge of the parade, but the men still remained obdurate."⁸⁵ The following day, 3 May, it was discovered that men from the 7th were inciting another native regiment at Lucknow to mutiny. Thereupon the Chief Commissioner of Oudh, Sir Henry Lawrence, ordered the disarmament of the 7th and during this operation a number of sepoys panicked and deserted. Lawrence's inclination was to disband the remaining sepoys and re-enlist those whose innocence could be proved.⁸⁶ Canning disagreed, pointing out that only the guilty ones should be discharged.⁸⁷ In the event, Lawrence erred on the side of caution by dismissing only fifteen sepoys and all the native officers bar two; the others were forgiven, though as a precaution only 200 were rearmed.⁸⁸ But Canning's fellow Supreme Council members held very different opinions as to the motive for the 7th's disobedience. Major-General Low and J.P. Grant thought that most of the regiment refused to bite the cartridges because they genuinely feared a loss of caste; whereas Joseph Dorin regarded the biting of the cartridge as an "excuse for mutiny" on the ground that "no new rifles or greased cartridges" had been issued to the 7th.⁸⁹

The court-martial of the 85 men of the 3rd L.C. took place over the three days of 6, 7 and 8 May. The court comprised 15 native officers: four from the 11th N.I. (which had arrived in Meerut at the end of April), two from the 3rd Light Cavalry, one from the 20th N.I., one from the Artillery and five from Native infantry regiments stationed in nearby Delhi (one from the 74th and two each from the 38th and 54th). Havildar Matadeen, the senior rank of the accused, tried to excuse his action by claiming that the night before the parade Brijmohun Sing, the Havildar-Major's orderly, had boasted that he had fired off two of the new greased cartridges. It was therefore a fear of losing their caste that had caused him and the other men to disobey orders the following day.⁹⁰ This accusation is highly suspect. Brijmohun had in fact fired off two old blank carbine cartridges using the new loading drill in the presence of his colonel. Why, then, would he lie to his comrades? Palmer has suggested a desire to create mischief.⁹¹ Certainly Brijmohun, a low-caste Hindu who was considered to be Carmichael-Smyth's pet, was unpopular in the regiment and his hut was duly burnt down during the night of 23 April. But presumably that was because he had admitted to firing any cartridge, rather than a greased cartridge

⁸⁵ Col. John Bonham, *Oude in 1857: Some memories of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1928), pp. 20-1.

⁸⁶ G. Couper to the Sec. to the Govt. of India, 4 May 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁷ Canning's minute of 10 May 1857, P.P., 1857, XXX, p. 248.

⁸⁸ Lawrence to Canning, 17 May 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, p. 20.

⁸⁹ Minutes by Dorin and Low, 10 May 1857, and Grant, 11 May 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 11-16.

⁹⁰ Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, pp. 65-6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

which did not exist. The truth is that there was no real justification for refusing the cartridges on 24 April beyond a general determination to stick together in defiance of legitimate authority. Some may have swallowed the canard that their religion and caste really were in danger; others dared not step out of line. But most were probably being manipulated by a hard-core of conspirators who had other ends in sight: not least the replacement of the East India Company with a more amenable employer. This conspiracy theory will be explored in detail in the next chapter. For Lieutenant Mackenzie of the 3rd L.C. was surely right when he noted that word had been "passed throughout the Bengal native army to make the cartridge question the test as to which was stronger - the native soldier or the Government".⁹²

By a majority verdict of 14 to one, all 85 defendants were found guilty and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour. The court recommended favourable consideration on the ground of good character and the fact that the men had been misled by rumours. But the reviewing officer, Major-General Hewitt, thought that the latter circumstance aggravated rather than mitigated the crime. He therefore confirmed the majority of the sentences, while halving those of the 11 men who had served less than five years on the basis that they were young and had been led astray by their seniors.⁹³ The verdict of the court was read out to the prisoners on Saturday, 9 May, at a morning parade attended by the whole Meerut garrison: the 3rd L.C., the 11th and 20th N.I., H.M. 60th Rifles, H.M. 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers), a troop of European horse artillery and battery of European foot artillery. The prisoners were then stripped of their uniforms and shackled in irons. During the hour or so it took to complete the shackling, some men cried out "*bey kussor* (without fault)" and threw their boots away in disgust; others called upon their comrades for assistance while also castigating their colonel, the native officers who had composed the court-martial and the government. But however tempted they may have been, the watching natives troops did nothing, not least because they were being covered by the guns of the European soldiers. With the shackling complete, the prisoners were marched to the jail in Meerut and there handed over to the civil authorities.⁹⁴

It has often been claimed that the bloody rising at Meerut the following day - the start of the mutiny proper - was motivated by a desire to free these prisoners. But Palmer has shown beyond doubt that the native infantry, rather than the cavalry, were the first to rise, and that the plot to mutiny had been

⁹² Col. A.R.D. Mackenzie, 'The Outbreak at Meerut', a chapter in Col. E. Vibart, *The Sepoy Mutiny* (London, 1898), p. 216.

⁹³ Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, p. 67.

⁹⁴ Mackenzie, 'The Outbreak at Meerut', *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 218-19; Vet. Surg. John Phillipps to R.M. Edwards, 9 May 1857, Edwards Papers, NAM, 7902-8.

maturing for at least a fortnight. The rescue of the prisoners, therefore, was a "last minute addition to the plan".⁹⁵ The evidence for a more general plot encompassing regiments in Delhi and elsewhere will be considered in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that the cartridge question, even in its most watered down form as seen at Meerut, was a perfect vehicle for conspirators to turn the rank and file sepoys against British rule. "Some scoundrel has seized upon the cartridge question as an opportunity to unite both creeds", wrote the veterinary surgeon of the 3rd L.C. on 9 May, the day before his death at the hands of mutineers.⁹⁶

A particularly convincing argument for the cartridge question to be seen as a pretext to mutiny was put forward by Major Marriott, the prosecutor, at the trial of the King of Delhi in March 1858. "That neither Mussulman nor Hindu had any honest objection to the use of any of the cartridges at Meerut or Delhi," declared Marriott, "is sufficiently proved by the eagerness with which they sought possession of them, and the alacrity with which they used them, when their aim and object was the murder of their European officers." Marriott also mentioned the fact that not one of the numerous petitions that had been sent to the 'restored' King of Delhi by mutineers during the summer of 1857 made any reference to the cartridge question, though they contained a host of other trivial grievances. Yet whenever the mutineers' words were "uttered with a prospect of reaching European ears, greased cartridges are always brought forward". Lastly Marriott made the point that Muslims had no caste nor had they ever claimed a loss of religion by touching pork; many Muslim servants of Europeans, he said, handled pork daily. And to back this up he reminded the court of Martineau's claim that the Muslim sepoys at Ambala had laughed at the cartridge question. "We thus perceive," he concluded, "that these men initiated open mutiny without one pretext for so doing... They had not even the extenuation of a pretended grievance; yet they at once leagued themselves in rebellion against us, and induced the Hindus to join them, by speciously exciting them on that most vulnerable of points, the fear of being forcibly deprived of their caste."⁹⁷ Marriott's additional evidence for this was Mrs Aldwell's claim to have been told by Hindu sepoys, after the battle of Hindun on 30 May 1857, that they greatly regretted what they had done, "reproached the Mahomedans for having decieved them on pretence of their

⁹⁵ Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, pp. 129-31.

⁹⁶ Phillipps to R.M. Edwards, 9 May 1857, Edwards Papers, NAM, 7902-8.

⁹⁷ Address by Major F.J. Harriott, 9 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 245 and 363.

religion, and seemed to doubt greatly whether the English Government had really had any intention of interfering with their caste".⁹⁸

Marriott was trying to prove that the King of Delhi was at the centre of a Muslim conspiracy to overthrow British rule. He was not the only one to blame the Muslims. In mid-May, shortly after the disarmament of native troops at Lahore, Donald MacLeod, the Judicial Commissioner for the Punjab, told Bartle Frere that the cartridges had been used to "seduce the credulous, weak & superstitious of either class", and that he believed the intrigues to be of Muslim origin.⁹⁹ A month later, Canning's private secretary confided to the Governor of Ceylon that the "rebellion is now pretty well understood to be a Mahomedan one - and the Cartridge question to have been only a pretext to unite the Hindoos with them".¹⁰⁰ It is probably incorrect to blame the mutiny on the Muslims alone. What is not in doubt is that a sizeable number of sepoy conspirators - Hindu and Muslim alike - were prepared to use the cartridge question to unite opposition to British rule, not because they genuinely feared for their caste and religion, but because they believed they would be better off in the service of a native government. Major-General Hearsey made just this point in his evidence to the Peel Commission, describing the mutiny as a "general movement among the soldier class of Hindoostan" to "throw off the dominion of a foreign race, and then to sell their services to the highest native bidder".¹⁰¹ Hearsey had no doubt been influenced by a letter from an officer of the 70th N.I. reporting a comment made to him by a Muslim sepoy that "when first the report was spread about, it was generally believed by the men, but that subsequently it had been a well understood thing that the cartridge question was merely raised for the sake of exciting the men, with a view of getting the whole army to mutiny and thereby upset the English Government; that they argued, that as we were turned out of Cabool [Kabul in 1842] and had never returned to that place, so, if once we were entirely turned out of India, our rule would cease and we should never return".¹⁰²

Many other officers and officials were similarly unconvinced that the cartridge question - or religion in general - was a genuine cause of mutiny. "It was all a sham about the cartridges," wrote a Bengal Artillery officer at the siege of Delhi, "for they are now firing them against us."¹⁰³ Another Bengal

⁹⁸ Evidence of Mrs Aldwell, *ibid.*, p. 203.

⁹⁹ MacLeod to Frere, 15 May 1857, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 6B/8/1.

¹⁰⁰ Hon. George Talbot to Sir Henry Ward, 19 June 1857, Talbot Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F271/1.

¹⁰¹ P.P., 1859, V, Appx. 71, p. 562.

¹⁰² Capt. Greene to Hearsey, 15 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 503.

¹⁰³ 2nd Lt. H. Chichester to his mother, 14 June 1857, Chichester Letters, NAM, MSS Eur/Photo Eur. 271.

officer on detached duty from his regiment described the cartridge question in July 1857 as a "mere farce", adding: "The mutiny is a well organised and pre-concerted plan for the extermination of the hated English from India."¹⁰⁴ According to Hervey Greathed, the senior civilian at Delhi during the siege, sepoy deserters invariably cited the cartridge question as the cause of disaffection. But Greathed considered the real cause to be the growth of a "consciousness of power" in the army "which could "only be exercised by mutiny".¹⁰⁵ William Muir, the intelligence chief at Agra to whom these views were divulged, was of a similar opinion:

The fact is [he informed the Secretary to the Home Department on 19 August 1857] that the sepoys had long been puffed up with conceit that the Imperial fabric rested on their shoulders alone: they had constructed it; they maintained it. This filled them with an arrogant and independent feeling, which led to the constant feeling of grievance when they were not petted and humoured in everything. Here were the elements of disaffection and mutiny. The cartridge was used by the bad designing men of each regiment to inflame the otherwise contented soldiery, and when distrust was once infused our most solemn disavowals of interference with caste were disbelieved.¹⁰⁶

In a memorandum for the Supreme Council in 1858, Sir John Lawrence characterized the cartridge question as simply the spark that ignited a combustible mass. What had made the mass combustible, he declared, was the fact that the sepoy army had become too powerful. The sepoys were aware that most of the key installations in the country - the fortresses, magazines and treasuries - were largely under their control. They imagined they could overthrow the British government at will, and replace it with one of their own. It was this sense of their own power, said Lawrence, that had induced them to revolt.¹⁰⁷

But arguably the most perspicacious comment on the cartridge question and the causes of the mutiny was provided by Christopher McGuinness, a lowly sergeant in the Bengal Army's Public Works Department, in a letter to his brother-in-law. He wrote:

¹⁰⁴ Captain Pierce to his parents, 12 July 1857, Pierce Letters, Add. MSS 425000, III, BL.

¹⁰⁵ Greathed quoted in W. Muir to Brig.-Gen. Havelock, 12 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857-8, XLIV, p. 200.

¹⁰⁶ Muir to C. Beadon, 19 Aug 1857, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, p. 331.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Sir Richard Temple, *Lord Lawrence* (London, 1889), pp. 127-8.

For some years past the Bengal Sepoy has been changing the tone of his conduct. He was in former years a humble man. He became a pet in all cases where his caste could be brought forward. He was allowed every indulgence. His commanding officer became a mere cypher, without the power to either punish or promote; his officers instead of studying regimental duties were seldom present with their corps, in fact each eagerly sought staff employment from it... The result of such mis-regulations soon became apparent. The sepoy became self-conceited, impertinent, careless, a grumbler... From recent information we are led to suppose that an excuse for a general uprising of sepoys in open mutiny was long wanted, and an unfortunate affair of cartridges being made at home for our improved rifle, gave the first spark to the flame.¹⁰⁸

There is, of course, much evidence that appears to support the theory that sepoys were motivated by nothing more than a desire to preserve their caste and religion. Some of it is provided by European officers. At the height of the cartridge question, for example, Lieutenant De Kantzow of the 9th N.I. was asked by some of his Oudh sepoys why, having already endured the loss of their country, they could be expected to stand by and see their caste "contaminated also"?¹⁰⁹ Having spoken to the native officers of the 4th N.I. in May 1857, Captain Taylor was convinced that they genuinely believed the cartridges were a "trick injurious to their religion".¹¹⁰ Captain Sneyd of the 28th N.I., in a letter to his mother of 27 May, noted that the majority of the sepoys liked their officers but were "suspicious of the Government about their *religion*".¹¹¹

Other evidence comes from native sources. According to Ghulam Abbas, during a stormy interview with the King of Delhi in the Red Fort on 11 May, the native officers of the 3rd L.C. justified the mutiny at Meerut on the ground that they had been "required to bite cartridges" greased with beef and pork fat.¹¹² This lie was then repeated in the Delhi Proclamation, issued by the rebels between 11 and 15 May 1857, which stated that the Governor-General had served out "cartridges made up with swine and beef fat" to "deprive the army of their religion".¹¹³ A similar attempt to justify the rebellion on the ground of religion was made by Nana Sahib's proclamation of 6 July.¹¹⁴

Tapti Roy is convinced that such evidence proves the mutiny-rebellion was religiously motivated. "Let us listen...to what the soldiers said after they had mutinied," she writes. "Without exception, they

¹⁰⁸ Sgt. McGuinness to Mr Moore, dated 1857, McGuinness Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/Photo Eur.183.

¹⁰⁹ Kantzow Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/Photo/Eur 86, vol 1, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Capt. Reynell Taylor to Major D. Wilkie, 19 May 1857, Wilkie Correspondence, NAM, 5607-74.

¹¹¹ Capt. H. Sneyd to his mother, 27 May 1857, Sneyd Letters, NAM, 7802-79.

¹¹² Examination of Ghulam Abbas, 29 Jan 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 137.

¹¹³ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, pp. 438-9.

¹¹⁴ P.P., H.C., 1857-8, XLIV, pp. 112-13.

answered in the idiom of religion. Not only are there official reports on sepoy actions but also letters and proclamations written by the rebels themselves in which they declare their reasons for turning against their masters... The widely shared opinion among the British officers that the 'soldiers had a hard religious panic' was substantially corroborated by the language used in the written addresses sent out to mobilize men in the cause of religion. Here the uprising was described not so much as a struggle for political ends as an imperative, a sacred duty, for upholding religion which stood threatened by the British rule."¹¹⁵

Much of what Roy says is true. Many officers, sepoys and rebels did talk in the idiom of religion. The real question is why? The officers were simply repeating the accusations made by their own troops. They may even have wanted to believe that religion was the primary grievance because the alternative - deeper-lying professional grievances - would have reflected badly on them and the service in general. Some of the sepoys (perhaps even the majority) may well have considered their caste and religion to be in danger, however irrational this belief became in relation to the cartridge question itself. But that in itself shows a complete breakdown of trust between them and their European officers, an intra-service issue that was many years in gestation. For these sepoys the defence of religion may have provided a personal justification for mutinying that professional grievances could not. Lastly there were the conspirators (both within and without the Bengal Army) and the rebel leaders who jumped on the band-waggon. These men were bound to set up a cry of "religion in danger" as the only way to unite both Muslims and Hindus against their British overlords. Their aspirations were the real driving force behind mutiny. Ahsanullah Khan, the King of Delhi's personal physician, who had much contact with the leading mutineers, wrote later:

Although the issue of the new cartridges was the ostensible cause of the mutiny, it was not in reality so. Some individuals of the native army had long before been adverse to and dissatisfied with the British Government. They considered that they were treated with severity, and eagerly seized the opportunity of the issue of new cartridges as affording a good pretext for their defection. The wily and intriguing among them made it the fulcrum of their designs to excite the whole army against their rulers, and, mixing therewith a religious element, alienated the minds of the troops from the Government... [Had] the new cartridges not been issued, they would have made some other

¹¹⁵ Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, p. 51.

pretext to mutiny, because if they had been actuated by religious motives alone, they would have given up service; and if they wished to serve, they would not have mutinied.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Supplementary Evidence of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 267.

Chapter Seven - Mutiny: The Conspiracy

Some historians have acknowledged the existence of a widespread conspiracy within the Bengal Army in 1857,¹ others the possibility that external agencies were also involved.² Yet they still identify the defence of caste and religion as the key to the mutiny. But if, as this chapter will demonstrate, disaffected elements of the Bengal Army were in contact with each other and with disgruntled civilians both before and during the cartridge question, there is every likelihood that the conspirators' aims were far more ambitious.

A comparison between the mutinies in the Bengal Army in 1849/50 and 1857 is particularly instructive. In the former case, it will be recalled, Napier received information that as many as 24 native infantry regiments (a third of the total) were tainted with a "mutinous spirit" and that they were in communication with each other. Napier commented:

In all mutinies, some men more daring than others are allowed to take the lead while the more wary prepare to profit when the time suits; a few men in a few corps, a few corps in any army begin; if successful they are joined by their more calculating, and by their more timid comrades... To what extent [the conspiracy] was secretly carried is unknown; but the four sepoys condemned [in the 32nd N.I. at Wazirabad] went from company to company administering unlawful oaths to insist on higher pay from a Government of a different religion, and a different race! Many regiments were of the same mind, and it may be assumed that each had, at least, four agitators similarly employed.³

There is good reason to suspect the existence of similar small cabals in each regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry and Cavalry in 1857. During his 12 years as adjutant of the 17th N.I., Major Burroughs established a "thorough system of espionage" which enabled him to know exactly what was going on. But when he tried to re-establish this system on returning to the regiment as commanding officer in early 1857 (after a two year detachment as commandant of the Bhagulpur Hill Rangers), he found "no

¹ See Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 565; Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, p. 218; Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, pp. 130-3; and Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, pp. 50-1.

² See Malleson (ed.), *Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, p. 256.

³ Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military*, pp. 14, 61-2.

one willing or possessing sufficient courage" to give him any information. This, and other circumstances, caused him to conclude that "the plot for revolt, was not recent, although probably known to a select few only in each Regiment".⁴

One of the senior civilian conspirators was almost certainly Dhondu Pant (better known as Nana Sahib), the adopted son of Baji Rao II, the last Peshwa of the Maratha Confederacy. Defeated by the British in the 3rd Maratha War of 1817-18, the Peshwa had exchanged his power base in western India for a Company pension of 800,000 rupees and exile in Bithur, 12 miles north of Cawnpore. When he died in 1851, Nana Sahib inherited his Bithur estate and a huge personal fortune of 25 million rupees. But Lord Dalhousie - in a decision that contradicted the Hindu practice of allowing adopted heirs to succeed their royal fathers - would not allow the Nana to assume the title of Peshwa, nor would he pay him all or even a part of Baji Rao's pension.⁵ The Nana was not even permitted to use the Peshwa's honorific title of maharaja. The Nana appealed against these decisions - without success - to both the Governor-General and the Court of Directors in London. In the latter instance, the petition was carried in person by his confidential agent, a young Muslim named Azimullah Khan. During his return journey, Azimullah learnt of the failure of the British assault on Sebastopol of 18 June 1855. He therefore made a detour to the Crimea to judge the course of the war for himself. According to the celebrated *Times* correspondent, W.H. Russell (who met him there), he discovered a British Army in a "state of some depression" and formed "a very unfavourable opinion of its *morale* and *physique* in comparison with that of the French".⁶ Back in India at this time, the native bazaars of the great military stations were buzzing with the news that Britain had suffered a catastrophic reverse in the Crimea. "[The] news was always fabricated to show that the *Sirkar* was usually defeated, and that the Russians had destroyed all the English soldiers and sunk all their warships," recalled Sitaram Pandey of the 63rd N.I. "This idea was fostered by interested parties with the result that when the Mutiny broke out, most Indians believed that the *Sirkar* had no other troops than those which were already in India."⁷ The sepoys' belief in British invincibility had been shattered first by the ignominious retreat from Kabul

⁴ Lt.-Col. Burroughs to Capt. I.H. Chamberlain, Jan 1860, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, p. 347.

⁵ The same principle underpinned Dalhousie's infamous Doctrine of Lapse, whereby states were forfeited to the paramount power (the East India Company) in the event of there being no natural heirs. The doctrine was used to justify, among others, the annexation of Satara in 1848, and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854.

⁶ W.H. Russell, *My Diary in India* (London, 1859), I, pp. 167-8.

⁷ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 73.

in 1842. The reverses of the Sikhs wars and the Crimean War were seen as further proof that British military power was in irreversible decline. In other words, the time was right for a change of employer.

After returning to India, says Russell, Azimullah accompanied the Nana to Lucknow, where they remained some time, and subsequently the "worthy couple, on the pretence of a pilgrimage to the hills - a Hindoo and a Mussulman joined in a holy excursion - visited the Military stations all along the main trunk road, and went as far as [Ambala]".⁸

Corroboration of the Nana's scheming is provided by a native emissary called Sitaram Bawa. In a statement given to the Judicial Commissioner of Mysore in January 1858, Sitaram claimed that Nana began suggesting rebellion to native princes - including the rulers and former rulers of Gwalior, Assam, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jammu, Baroda, Hyderabad, Kolapore, Satara and Indore - as early as the autumn of 1855. At first nobody replied to his letters. But after the annexation of Oudh, the "answers began to pour in" from both Hindus and Muslims. Among the Nana's first adherents, said Sitaram, was Maun Singh, the biggest talukdar (landowner) in the Faizabad district of Oudh, who lost all but three of his villages in the revenue settlement of 1856. Other dispossessed talukdars then joined the conspiracy, as did the "Soukars" of Lucknow and Golab Singh, the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir. An agreement was also made with the King of Delhi. The financial assistance provided by many of these influential plotters was used to seduce serving sepoy and disbanded members of the King of Oudh's army alike. "The military classes were enticed by a promise of restoring the old times of licence," commented Sitaram, "and they all prefer that to a regular form of Government."⁹

Kaye, for one, was convinced by this and other evidence. "There is nothing in my mind more clearly substantiated," he wrote, "than the complicity of the Nana Sahib in wide-spread intrigues before the outbreak of the mutiny. The concurrent testimony of witnesses examined in parts of the country widely distant from each other takes this story altogether out of the regions of the conjectural." Kaye particularly refers to machinations between the Nana and the family of the late Raja of Satara whose south Maratha state had 'lapsed' to the Bombay Presidency in 1848. He also links Nana's plot to the attempt by adherents of the King of Oudh to tamper with the troops in the Presidency Division in early 1857.¹⁰ Kaye, it should be mentioned, was an officer in the Bengal Artillery (1832-41) before becoming a journalist (he founded the *Calcutta Review* in 1844) and finally a member of the East India

⁸ Russell, *My Diary in India*, I, pp. 170

⁹ Statement of Sitaram Bawa to H.B. Devereux, 28 Jan 1858, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, pp. 372-6

Company's Home Service (1856-74). His willingness to believe in an external conspiracy theory may have been an unconscious attempt to protect the reputation of the Bengal Army and its officers. He had, on the other hand, published many of Henry Lawrence's articles criticizing the army and was well aware of its shortfalls.

Russell's claim that Nana Sahib and Azimullah both visited military stations as far as Ambala is not quite accurate. Kaye believed that the Nana, who rarely ventured beyond the limits of Bithur, made three journeys in the early months of 1857: to Kalpi, Delhi and finally to Lucknow.¹¹ But Azimulla did travel to Ambala. Lieutenant Martineau bumped into him at the Dak bungalow in January 1857, shortly after taking up his appointment as instructor of the Musketry Depot. Martineau had first made Azimullah's acquaintance the previous October on the journey from Suez to Aden, and had been struck by the bitterness with which he spoke of Lord Dalhousie's recent annexation of Nagpur. On meeting him again at Ambala, Martineau gained the impression that he was on a "tour of inspection to feel the temper of the Mahratta, Rajpoot, & Seik Chiefs on his route from Bombay to enable him to report progress to his master".¹² Further evidence linking the Nana and Azimullah to the eventual outbreak of mutiny at Cawnpore in June 1857 will be considered in Chapter Eight.

The first definite indication of a conspiracy to mutiny within the Bengal Army was given on 26 January 1857 when, according to Jemadar Durriow Sing, the subedar-major and other senior native officers of the 34th N.I. made an abortive attempt to capture key installations in Calcutta with the assistance of three companies of the regiment en route to Chittagong in east Bengal. All four regiments at Barrackpore were implicated in the plot by Sing, as were the Calcutta Native Militia and certain retainers of Wajid Ali, ex-King of Oudh, who had been living in exile at Garden's Reach in Calcutta since his deposition in early 1856. The sepoys' reward was to have been an increase in pay from seven to 10 rupees a month. The plan was abandoned, said Sing, partly because he sent two of his sepoys to warn the authorities to be on the alert, and partly because the guard on the Lieutenant-Governor's residence at Alipore, commanded by Subedar-Major Ram Lall, the chief conspirator, was relieved by Europeans on the morning of the 26th. But this did not prevent Ram Lall from trying to incite Sing's

¹⁰ Malleson (ed.), *Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, p. 425.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

¹² Capt. E.M. Martineau to Sir John Kaye, 20 Oct 1864, Kaye Mutiny Papers, OIOC, H725, pp. 469-70.

Treasury guard to mutiny by saying he would not serve any longer because of the objectionable cartridges.¹³

Three important observations can be made about Sing's evidence: first, that the chief conspirators were all senior figures in the regiment (Sing identified by name the subedar-major, two subedars, one jemadar, the drill havildar and the regimental munshi), though overall they were a relatively small group and had yet to convince enough of their colleagues that mutiny was in their interests; second, that the timing of the conspiracy, just four days after the supposed origin of the cartridge controversy at the Dum-Dum depot, could mean that the plot to overthrow the British government had been in existence for longer than the rumour about the cartridges (which must have been seen as a godsend); third, that the supposed aim of the conspirators was to replace the British with a native ruler who would increase their pay (in other words, their motive was partly financial).

The existence of a wider plot to mutiny is confirmed by other evidence. On 28 January, General Hearsey reported to government the simultaneous burning of European property at Barrackpore and the railhead of Raniganj, where separate wings of the 2nd N.I. were stationed.¹⁴ It was later alleged by Mainodin Hassan Khan, one of the leading rebels at Delhi during the mutiny (and therefore in a position to know), that the burning of the Raniganj telegraph office was a preconcerted signal that would be communicated along the line from Calcutta to Punjab, and that those in the know would respond with similar acts. Mainodin also claimed that the origin of the mutiny was not religious but political, namely the annexation of Oudh. It was, therefore, no coincidence that two of the three native infantry regiments stationed in Lucknow at that time - the 19th and 34th Regiments (the other was the 17th) - were at the centre of the conspiracy. Mainodin explained:

Both these regiments were full of bitterness...and from them letters were written to other Purbeah regiments. The 34th took the lead. These letters reminded every regiment of the ancient dynasties of Hindustan; pointed out that the annexation of Oude had been followed by the disbandment of the Oude army, for the second time since the connection of the English with Oude; and showed that their place was being filled by the enlistment of Punjabis and Sikhs, and the formation of a Punjab army. The very bread had been torn out of the mouths of men who knew no other profession than that of the sword. The letters went on to say that further annexations might be expected, with little or no use for the native army. Thus was it pressed upon the Sepoys that they must rebel to reseat the

¹³ Evidence of Jemadar Darriow Sing, 17 April 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 156-60.

¹⁴ Hearsey to Major W.A.J. Mayhew, 28 Jan 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 4-5.

ancient kings on their thrones, and drive the trespassers away. The welfare of the soldier caste required this; the honour of their chiefs was at stake.¹⁵

Sitaram Pandey of the 63rd N.I. was also convinced that the "seizing of Oudh filled the minds of the *sepoys* with distrust and led them to plot against the Government". He added: "Agents of the Nawab [King] of Oudh and also of the King of Delhi were sent all over India to discover the temper of the army. They worked upon the feelings of the *sepoys*, telling them how treacherously the foreigners had behaved towards their king. They invented ten thousand lies and promises to persuade the soldiers to mutiny and turn against their masters..."¹⁶

The involvement in this plot of Wajid Ali, the Muslim ex-King of Oudh, or at least members of his entourage, is highly possible. Major Burroughs discovered after the mutiny of his regiment - the 17th - in June 1857 that it, the 19th and the 34th had all offered their services to the King of Oudh at the time of annexation in early 1856.¹⁷ The link between the Barrackpore conspirators and Wajid Ali is further established by the correspondence of an unnamed jemadar of the 34th N.I. in which he refers to members of his regiment and the 2nd N.I. "joining" or "siding with" the King of Oudh. Sir John Kaye, who read these letters in their original form, was convinced that the *sepoys* at Barrackpore "were induced to believe that, if they broke away from the English harness, they would obtain more lucrative service under the restored kingship of Oudh".¹⁸

From the start senior figures in the Bengal Presidency suspected outside interference. In his letter to the Deputy Adjutant-General of 28 January, Major-General Hearsey blamed "Brahmins or agents of the religious Hindu party in Calcutta (I believe it is called the *Dhurma Subha*)" for the rumour that the cartridges were part of a government plot to convert natives to Christianity.¹⁹ By late February, Canning told Vernon Smith, he had switched his suspicions to the "King of Oude's people at Garden Reach". Canning himself was not entirely convinced. "I cannot say that his evidence is very conclusive," he added, "but if there has been any attempt to seduce them with a view to embarrassing the Government it is much more likely to have come from the Oude courtiers than the Brahmins as was first suspected."²⁰ Within a month Canning's belief in a conspiracy had hardened. He told Vernon

¹⁵ Charles T. Metcalfe (trans.), *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi* (London, 1898), pp. 37-9.

¹⁶ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 161.

¹⁷ Burroughs to Chamberlain, Jan 1860, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, p. 342.

¹⁸ Malleon (ed.), *Kaye and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny*, I, p. 421.

¹⁹ Hearsey to Major W.A.J. Mayhew, 28 Jan 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Canning to Vernon Smith, 7 February 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS. Eur/F231/4.

Smith that while many sepoys, even the majority, were sincere in their alarm for their religion, these fears had been put into their heads by civilians, though once such feelings had taken root they were "disseminated from one corps to another without aid from without". He was convinced that the prime movers had no ostensible connection with the army, though whether they were "political malcontents such as the King of Oude's followers or religious alarmists" he could not say. But despite the emphasis on religion, he added, the "moving purpose may be purely political" and there were some small incidents" to point the finger at the "Oude herd".²¹ Hearsey, a fluent Hindi speaker who had Eurasian sons and who prided himself on his close relations with his native troops, was of a similar opinion. "Rajah Maun Sing and other [senior advisers] of the ex-King of Oude," he informed government on 5 April, "have been bribing some evil-minded & traitorous Hindoos of the 19th and 34th N.I. to seize the first opportunity to incite disturbance. This cartridge business came opportunely for them & they seized it even before the cartridges were made for distribution... In short, the sepoys have never even seen a *greased cartridge*."²²

At Barrackpore, meanwhile, the conspirators were struggling to win over enough of their fellow soldiers. During the evening of 5 February, the same Jemadar Durriow Sing of the 34th who had helped to foil the plot to seize Calcutta was forcibly taken by two sepoys to the parade ground where he found a large gathering of about 300 soldiers from all four regiments, their faces covered with masks. Having asked Sing to join them, they explained that they were willing to die for their religion and that, if they could make an arrangement that evening, they would plunder the station and kill all the Europeans the following night. Sing responded by advising the men to disperse and warning them that they would "not get such good masters in future". But he did not inform his superiors until 10 February, when he gave a sworn deposition in the presence of his company commander, adjutant, commanding officer and station commander (Brigadier Grant). The only voice he could recognize, he told them, was that of Mookta Persaud, the drill havildar who was part of the earlier plot to seize Calcutta.²³

Sing's version of events is backed up by Ramshahai Lalla, a low-caste (Kait) sepoy in the same regiment. He told the authorities that he had been aware of the secret assembly on 5 February but did not attend it. The following day, however, he discovered that a second meeting had been arranged for that evening at which delegates from each of the four regiments at Barrackpore would take an oath and

²¹ Canning to Vernon Smith, 23 March 1857, *ibid*.

²² Hearsey to Col. Birch, 5 April 1857, Mutiny Papers, BL, Add. MSS 41489, f. 78. The italics are Hearsey's.

decide on their future course of action. Lalla then waited until early evening before taking this intelligence to his company commander, Lieutenant Allen, with whom he was on particularly good terms. He told Allen that the men were "apprehensive of being forced to give up their caste and be made Christians" and that they had determined to rise up against their officers before proceeding to Calcutta. They had decided to act before it was too late, said Sing, because rumours had already reached them that a European regiment and artillery was on its way from Dinapore to assist in carrying out the measures of government. Men of other regiments were to be asked to cooperate with their comrades in Barrackpore, he added, as it was an affair which concerned them all equally. But despite Lalla's suggestion that he should proceed to the meeting place (a large tree near the station magazine) between eight and nine p.m. to see for himself, Allen chose to inform his superiors. When he did finally reach the assembly point, it was after nine and the place was deserted. Lalla was convinced that the conspirators cancelled the meeting because they suspected the authorities were on to them.²⁴

In a letter to government of 11 February, Major-General Hearsey likened the disaffection at Barrackpore to a "mine ready for explosion". The minds of the sepoys, he added, had "been misled by some designing scoundrels who have managed to make them believe *that their religious prejudices, their caste, is to be interfered with by Government*".²⁵ That some of these scoundrels were probably soldiers themselves does not seem to have occurred to Hearsey at this juncture. These ringleaders were almost certainly behind the move to spread the net of disaffection. On 12 February, for example, the native doctor of the 43rd N.I. told his commanding officer that he had overheard a sepoy of 2nd N.I. tell a comrade that a *coSSID* (hand-delivered message) had been sent to the 19th N.I. at Berhampore and to the regiments at Dinapore (the 7th, 8th and 40th N.I.), "informing them that ten or twelve of us have raised a disturbance, and we want you to support us".²⁶ The mutinous behaviour of the 19th N.I. during the night of 26 February, therefore, needs to be seen in the context of this mutinous correspondence. It is surely no coincidence that a havildar's guard from the 34th N.I., escorting a party of European invalids, arrived at Berhampore the day before the mutiny.²⁷ On 11 March, Canning told Vernon Smith that there was much evidence to show that the men of the 19th N.I. had been "seduced from without",

²³ Deposition of Jemadar Durriow Sing, 10 Feb 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 20-2.

²⁴ Examination of Sepoy Ramsahai Lalla, 11 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 22-4; Statement by Lt. A.S. Allen, 8 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁵ Hearsey to Col. Birch, 11 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁶ Statement by Major H.W. Matthews, 12 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

²⁷ Lt.-Col. Mitchell to Major Ross, 27 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, p. 41.

particularly the sending of emissaries from Barrackpore and the arrival of the guard of the 34th.²⁸ But the clincher came after the regiment had been disbanded on 31 March. In two petitions to Major-General Hearsey, the "faithful" officers and men of the 19th claimed that the regiment had been led astray by the "advice of some wicked men". The names of the instigators, they added, were only known to their enemies who were young sepoy and therefore "independent of the Honourable Company's service". Those thought to be faithful had not been let in on the plot. They were prepared to say, however, that the guard of the 34th was the cause of the mutiny.²⁹

Given that the disbanded men of the 19th were trying to secure a reversal of the government's punishment, there is every reason not to accept these two petitions at face value. It is extremely unlikely that the "loyal" officers and sepoy would not have known the identity of at least some of the ringleaders. Their decision not to hand them over, therefore, is probably an indication that a sizeable proportion of the regiment *was* disaffected. Certainly there is evidence that, having dispersed, the disbanded men of the 19th incited other regiments to mutiny. In May, for example, the commanding officer of the 17th N.I. prohibited the admittance of strangers into the regimental lines in an attempt to prevent fraternization between his sepoy and those former members of the 19th who lived in the vicinity (the two regiments had forged close links during their time at Lucknow). But contact was made, nonetheless, and the 17th mutinied soon after.³⁰ So who were these disaffected men? One clue was provided by a conversation between the regimental doctor and a group of disbanded Muslim sepoy. Asked the real reason behind the mutiny, the Muslims replied that the Hindus in the regiment "had threatened them with instant death" if they told the authorities, yet they promised to disclose the "true cause" of the supposed cartridge outbreak after the Hindus had dispersed to their homes.³¹ This promise was never kept, but we can surmise that the Muslims were referring particularly to the majority high-caste Hindus. We can also surmise that the "true cause" was not a genuine fear for religion but a general dissatisfaction with the service of the British raj: partly because of the annexation of Oudh, from where many of them hailed; partly because of the change in recruitment policy which was beginning to undermine the high-caste monopoly; and partly because of a number of professional grievances such as low pay and poor career prospects.

²⁸ Canning to Vernon Smith, 11 March 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/4.

²⁹ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 103-4.

³⁰ Return by Major F.W. Burroughs, 4 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 25.

³¹ Hearsey to Col. Birch, 4 April 1857, Mutiny Papers, BL, Add. MSS 41489, f. 73.

March saw further attempts by Barrackpore troops to incite a rising. First, on 5 March, a jemadar of the 70th N.I., which had only arrived in January, held an illegal meeting in his hut at which he encouraged the men of his company to refuse to bite the new cartridges and to take part in a prospective mutiny. Five days later, two sepoys of the 2nd N.I. tried and failed to induce the subedar in command of the Mint Guard at Calcutta to march his men into Fort William as part of a wider mutinous venture. All three were found guilty of mutiny by native general courts-martial (mainly on the strength of evidence provided by their fellow soldiers): the two sepoys were given 14 years' imprisonment with hard labour; the jemadar got away with dismissal. Anson, believing this latter punishment to be insufficient, asked the court to reconsider, but it would not budge.³² The court's recalcitrance is revealing not only because it implies a wider sympathy towards the jemadar's illegal action, but also because it emphasizes the court's lack of respect for their Commander-in-Chief (not to mention the latter's inability to insist upon a more suitable punishment).

In late March, the Barrackpore conspirators made contact with the 63rd N.I., part of a field force that was stationed in the unsettled Sonthal region of west Bengal. The only tangible consequence was a temporary refusal by 14 sepoys in three companies of the 63rd to take annual leave until the regiments at Barrackpore had taken theirs.³³ Colonel Burney, commanding the field force, traced this intransigence to the recent arrival of two sepoys from Barrackpore, travelling incognito by train and bearing *cossids*.³⁴ The first doubts about the new cartridges, however, had been raised by the detachment of the 63rd N.I. at the Dum-Dum depot. "The men from our regiment wrote to others in the regiment telling them of [the objectionable grease rumour]," recalled Jemadar Sitaram Pandey, "and there was soon excitement in every regiment. Some men pointed out that in forty years' service nothing had ever been done by the *Sirkar* [Indian government] to insult their religion, but...the sepoys' minds had been inflamed by the seizure of Oudh. Interested parties were quick to point out that the great aim of the English was to turn us all into Christians, and they had therefore introduced the cartridge in order to bring this about..."³⁵ But the majority of the 63rd would not be won over by the blandishments of the conspirators and, though later disarmed at Berhampore, the corps became one of only 11 native infantry regiments to be reincorporated as a body into the post-mutiny Bengal Army.

³² P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, pp. 109-24, 257-94.

³³ Two of them were the élite light and grenadier companies. In many of the mutinies of 1857, the most disaffected soldiers were from these companies. This is possibly because they contained the tallest and smartest soldiers, and therefore a large proportion of high-caste sepoys.

³⁴ Col. Burney to Major Ross, 29 March 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 104

Also included in that number were the 43rd and 70th N.I. Of the four Barrackpore regiments, only the 43rd was not directly implicated in the plotting. During March, in an attempt to keep his regiment separate from its disaffected counterparts, the subedar-major of the 43rd rejected an invitation to dine with the 2nd N.I..³⁶ The native officers and men of the 70th N.I. would later attempt to prove their loyalty by offering to serve against the mutineers (this offer was not accepted, though they were subsequently sent overseas to fight in the 2nd China War). It was a Muslim sepoy of the 70th, it will be recalled, who informed one of his officers that the cartridge question was merely a pretext to mutiny. The sole black mark against the 70th was the agitation of the disaffected jemadar, and he was promptly handed over to the authorities by men of his own regiment. So why were the 43rd and 70th regiments so impervious to the blandishments of the conspirators? With regard to the 43rd, the presence of a much-respected commanding officer, Major Matthews, should not be underestimated. Matthews had joined the regiment in 1824 and been present for most of the next 33 years (the main exception being four and a half years on detachment to the Assam Sebundy Corps), seeing action on the Bhutan frontier, in the 1st Afghan War, the Gwalior campaign and the 1st Sikh War. Colonel Kennedy of the 70th, on the other hand, had served most of his 30 year career in the 25th N.I. and Commissariat Department. Only in 1856 was he appointed to command the 70th Regiment.³⁷ He was, therefore, virtually a stranger to his sepoys, though his experience as a Commissariat officer, having to speak the vernacular and dealing with natives of all classes, may have compensated to some extent.

The only other evidence we have of contact between the Barrackpore conspirators and other native troops at this time is a claim by Colonel Sherer, the commanding officer of the 73rd N.I., that a sepoy from his two companies at Dacca was sent to Barrackpore in March to find out what was going on. When those two companies rejoined regimental headquarters at Jalpigori in June, they contained a number of disaffected men who spread a falsehood that Europeans were on their way to disarm the corps. This nearly provoked a mutiny, with almost all the grenadier company and many from other companies sleeping with their loaded muskets. But Sherer managed to regain control by winning over the dominant Oudh and Bhojpore factions: the former group by promoting an influential Oudh naik to jemadar; and the latter by appointing a popular Bhojpore man to the vacant havildar-majorship. These two men subsequently arrested two havildars and nine sepoys who were plotting to murder their

³⁵ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 162.

³⁶ Maj. H.W. Matthews to Brig. Grant, March 1857, Mutiny Papers, BL, Add. MSS 41489, f. 19.

³⁷ Service Records of the officers of the East India Company Army, Hodson Index, NAM.

officers. The only mutiny involving the regiment took place in November as a consequence of an attempt to disarm the two new companies on duty at Dacca.³⁸ Sherer, it should be added, had only been in command of the regiment since January. But like Kennedy he was a good linguist who had spent much of his service on detached duties (latterly in the Stud Department). He had also become a soldier at the relatively late age of 21 - Kennedy was 22 - having begun a degree at Oxford.³⁹ High-flyers with staff experience, like Sherer and Kennedy, probably made more effective colonels than regimental officers who were no longer with their original corps (Mitchell and Wheler) and even some of those who were (Carmichael-Smyth of the 3rd L.C.).

In the light of all the evidence placing the 34th at the very centre of the conspiracy to overturn British rule, the reaction of the regiment to Mungul Pandey's bungled attempt to incite mutiny on 29 March begins to make sense. But why did Pandey's action not result in full-blown mutiny? The answer probably lies in the ringleaders' realization that the time was not right: partly because not enough members of the other Barrackpore regiments, particularly the 43rd and 70th, had been won over to the cause of mutiny; and partly because the 34th itself was not of one opinion. As with the 19th N.I., the main pro-mutiny faction was probably dominated by high-caste Hindus (who comprised 53% of the regiment). This might explain why, during the drama of 29 March, one sepoy told Colonel Wheeler that no one would use force against Mungul Pandey because he was a Brahmin.⁴⁰ Captain Drury confirmed this impression when he told the Court of Inquiry that he was convinced the Quarter Guard would have refused any order to shoot Pandey on account of their "sulky and reluctant manner", their "natural disinclination to kill a man of his caste", and their fear of the bad "opinion of their comrades in the lines as it was impossible to say, there being a large proportion of Brahmins in the regiment, who approved of what he was doing and who did not".⁴¹ Two Sikh members of the Quarter Guard later claimed that their Brahmin jemadar, Issuree Pandey, ordered them not to intervene.⁴² Stokes has argued that the relatively high proportion of Sikhs in the regiment (around 7%) affected its unity of action on this occasion.⁴³ But that was surely down to the unwillingness of the other high-caste sepoys to commit themselves. The significance of the Sikhs, on the other hand, is that they were too few in number to

³⁸ Col. G.M. Sherer to Major Ross, 28 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 14-15

³⁹ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

⁴⁰ Evidence of Lt.-Col. S.G. Wheler, 30 March 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 147-8.

⁴¹ Evidence of Capt. Drury, *ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴² Ensign F.E.A. Chamier to Capt. Drury, 7 April 1857, *ibid.*, p. 1523

⁴³ Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, p. 52.

support their European superiors. Captain Drury, who did not believe they were mixed up in the disturbances, said they were unwilling to come forward on the 29th because they were in such a minority.⁴⁴ However Sikhs were not always a calming influence. The Ludhiana regiment of irregular Sikh infantry mutinied at Benares on 4 June, and Sikhs played a leading part in the mutiny of the two wings of the 12th N.I. at Jhansi and Nowgong on 6 and 10 June respectively.⁴⁵

With the failure of Mungul Pandey's attempt to provoke the 34th N.I. to mutiny on 29 March (and the subsequent disbandment of the regiment on 6 May), the focal point of disaffection moved from the Presidency Division to the more isolated stations up country. One of the means by which ill-feeling spread throughout the Bengal Army was the fraternization of detachments at the musketry depots. In mid-March, it will be recalled, Lieutenant Martineau was told by sepoys at the Ambala depot that all Bengal regiments contained cabals determined to brand those who used the new cartridges as outcasts. These secret committees had one aim: to convince their comrades that the cartridge question was part of a wider government conspiracy to deprive them of their religion and caste. In case they were doubted, a number of other rumours were spread to reinforce this belief.

In early March, for example, a sepoy at Ambala showed Martineau a letter from his brother in the 1st N.I. at Cawnpore warning him about contaminated flour. A couple of days later, after the sepoy had shown the letter to his comrades, he explained its significance to Martineau. The rumour was that flour retailed from government depots had been deliberately mixed with the ground bones of cows and pigs to deprive the natives of their religion. "I was excessively startled," recalled Martineau, "and saw at once that some brain of more than ordinary cunning had succeeded in combining for the time being the parties of both Hindus and Mahomedans against us."⁴⁶ According to W.H. Carey, resident in India at the time, the rumour originated on 8 March when a merchant, hoping to clear his stock before other supplies arrived, sold a large quantity of flour at an unusually low price in the market at Cawnpore. Carey identified a sepoy who bought some of the flour as the man responsible for spreading the "evil report" that it had been mixed with bullock and pig's bones at the Canal Department's mills at

⁴⁴ Evidence of Capt. Drury, 30 March 1857, *ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴⁵ Gov.-Gen. to the Court of Directors, 19 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857-8, XLIV, p. 425; Deposition of Francis Reilly, 5 & 6 July, Mutiny Papers, BL, Add. MSS 41996, f. 97; Capt. Scot to Mrs Ryves, 12 July 1857, Scot Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/C324.

⁴⁶ Captain E.M. Martineau to Sir John Kaye, 20 Oct 1864, Kaye Mutiny Papers, OIOC, H725, p. 1023.

Cawnpore.⁴⁷ The fact that the mills were run by native contractors with whom the owners of the grain made their own arrangements was either not known or deliberately concealed.⁴⁸ The cartridge question had been so skilfully handled by the conspirators that many of their fellow soldiers were willing to believe the government was capable of just about anything. In the coming months more than one officer would hear his men repeat the contaminated flour rumour as if it were fact. It was taken so seriously by the sepoys of the 10th Oudh I.I. that, in early June, they insisted on emptying carts of flour - which had been procured for them by the native mayor - into the river.⁴⁹ They and other troops at Sitapur mutinied the following day.

The bone dust rumour was predated by the mysterious arrival of chapatties in the North-West Provinces. They first appeared in the Agra Division in January and quickly spread north to the frontier of the Punjab, east to Oudh and south-east to Allahabad. The recipients of these flat unleavened cakes were *chaukidars* (village watchmen) who were told to bake five more and deliver them to their counterparts in the five nearest villages. In this way the chapatties spread, in geometrical ratio, at a rate of up to a hundred miles a night. The origin and purpose of these chapatties has never been satisfactorily established, though contemporary speculation was rife. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan pointed out that, with cholera prevalent at the time, some people regarded the chapatties as a talisman to ward off the disease.⁵⁰ But most interpretations were not so benign. The native newspapers at Delhi thought their appearance was "an invitation to the whole country to unite for some secret object afterwards to be disclosed".⁵¹ Mainodin Hassan Khan, then the *thanadar* (chief officer) of a police station just outside Delhi, told the local magistrate that he regarded the chapatties as "significant of some greater disturbance, that would follow immediately". Before the downfall of Maratha power, Mainodin explained, a sprig of millet and a morsel of bread had been passed from village to village to signify a forthcoming upheaval.⁵² The British spy Jat Mall, a resident of Delhi, claimed that some people regarded the chapatties as a warning of some impending calamity, others that their purpose was to warn against the government's plot to force Christianity upon the people, and still others that they were being circulated by government to intimate to the people of Hindustan that they would all be compelled to eat

⁴⁷ W.H. Carey, *The Mahomedan Rebellion* (Rurki, 1857), pp. 27-8.

⁴⁸ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, p. 396.

⁴⁹ Ibid., II, p. 22.

⁵⁰ Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *An Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt* (Calcutta, 1860), Capt. W.N. Lees (trans.), p. 3.

⁵¹ Examination of Chuni, 9 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 195.

⁵² Metcalfe (trans.), *Two Native Narratives*, pp. 39-41.

the same food as Christians.⁵³ One food and one faith. This last view, according to Martineau, was prevalent among "the sepoys of every regiment that furnished a detachment to the depot at Ambala".⁵⁴

At the time the British did not attach particular importance to the appearance of the chapatties. "Is it treason or jest?" asked the pro-government *Friend of India* on 5 March. "Is there to be an 'explosion of feeling' or only of laughter?" Captain Thomson of the 53rd N.I. noted that "various speculations were made by Europeans as to the import of this extreme activity", but it was invariably dismissed as native superstition.⁵⁵ The exceptions, according to the Collector of Mathura, were those "few who remembered that a similar distribution of cakes had been made in Madras towards the end of the last century, and had been followed by the mutiny of Vellore".⁵⁶ Only in retrospect were the chapatties generally regarded as the harbingers of mutiny. In his narrative of the outbreak at Agra, the commissioner stated that he had reason to believe the appearance of the chapattis "had some bearing upon the Hindoo prophecy limiting British rule to a centenary of years", and that sepoys of the 34th N.I. were involved in some way.⁵⁷ Lieutenant Mackenzie of the 3rd L.C. was in no doubt that they were "in some way a signal, understood by the sepoys, of warning to be in readiness for coming events".⁵⁸ The commissioner of Agra's reference to the 34th N.I. is the only tenuous link between the military conspirators and the chapatties. Yet the appearance of the cakes in January 1857, at the outset of the cartridge question, suggests a possible connection. If the intention was to unsettle the minds of sepoys and civilians alike, and make them more receptive to wild rumour, then it certainly succeeded.⁵⁹

⁵³ Examination of Jat Mall, 3 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 184.

⁵⁴ Examination of Capt. Martineau, 23 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁵⁵ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ Mark Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1884), p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of Disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Agra Division in 1857-58* (Calcutta, 1881), p. 4.

⁵⁸ Mackenzie, 'The Outbreak at Meerut', *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 216-17.

⁵⁹ Ranajit Guha has argued that 'there is no way of knowing whether or not the chapati had anything to do with the uprisings of 1857'. He added: 'Yet the attempt on the part of some bureaucrats and scholars to decipher it after the event and the size of the literature this has inspired are a measure of the urge for an understanding of insurgency in terms of the processes of its transmission. At a certain level this urge expressed itself in the search for a prime cause and helped by an obvious predilection, spawned a conspiracy theory. It was then easy to read into this hitherto inexplicable relay a meaning appropriate to that theory and brand it, in retrospect, as the signal of the troubles just experienced.' (Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* (Delhi, 1983, p. 240). Guha has a point. But his argument does not preclude the possibility that disaffected soldiers and/or civilians may have initiated the spreading of the chapatties with no specific 'message' in mind. They would not have wanted them to be understood by the peasant communities who received them. Their intention was rather to create a general climate of fear and suspicion in which rebellion could flourish. 'If the transmission of these

The next obvious example of conspiracy took place at Lucknow on 3 May, the day after the 7th Oudh I.I. had refused the blank cartridges, when two sepoys from that regiment sent a note to the 48th N.I. saying they had acted for the faith and awaited the 48th's orders. It can probably be deduced from this that ringleaders from at least two native regiments at Lucknow (and probably more) had agreed in advance that they would act when the cartridge question came to a head. Unfortunately the messenger delivered the note to an old subedar - almost certainly not the intended recipient - who handed it over to his European superiors. The two sepoys were arrested, the regiment disarmed and the plot to mutiny not reactivated until the end of the month.⁶⁰

On the same day at Nowgong in Central India, where a portion of the 12th N.I., 14th I.C. and 4/9th Foot Artillery (F.A.) were stationed, Dr Thomas Mawe informed his sister of his belief that the various fires since 24 April had been coordinated by a small group of conspirators. Mawe added that a sepoy on leave from his regiment at Benares (the 37th N.I.) had recently attempted to incite a local raja to rise against the government; but the raja had handed him and his seditious documents over to the British resident.⁶¹ The Joint Magistrate of the Ambala cantonment was convinced that the spate of fires at his and other stations was evidence of a conspiracy embracing the whole Bengal Army. Not all sepoys were directly involved, he told the Commissioner of the Cis-Sutlej States, but a majority were supportive to the extent that "no single man dared come forward to expose it".⁶²

And so to the outbreak at Meerut on 10 May 1857. Sen concluded that it was not pre-meditated.⁶³ But the evidence to the contrary is highly persuasive. We know, for example, that the refusal by skirmishers of the 3rd L.C. to accept blank cartridges on 23 April was planned in advance. According to depositions taken from three Hindu members of the regiment by Major G.W. Williams, the first act of "open and decided mutiny" took place during the evening of 22 April when two Muslim naiks, Pir Ali and Kudrat Ali, convinced their comrades that the cartridges for firing practice the next day had been prepared with beef and pork fat; the men then swore on the Ganges and the Koran (depending upon

cakes was only intended to create a mysterious uneasiness,' wrote one British magistrate, 'that object was gained.' (Sherer, *Daily Life during the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 7-8).

⁶⁰ Lawrence to Canning, 3 May 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, p. 8.

⁶¹ Mawe to his sister, 3 May 1857, Mawe Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/C324.

⁶² Capt. E.W.E. Howard to G.C. Barnes, 4 May 1857, P.P. H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 444.

⁶³ Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 402.

their religion) that they would refuse the cartridges until the whole Bengal Army had accepted them.⁶⁴ The two Alis were clearly the ringleaders. Their arrest with 83 other skirmishers the following day is possibly the reason why the 3rd L.C. did not play a leading part in the rising on 10 May.

That role was taken on by the ringleaders of the 20th N.I. - the 11th N.I. had only arrived at Meerut in late April - who began by concerting their actions with the three native infantry regiments at Delhi, 30 miles to the south-east. But the plot may also have involved Bahadur Shah II, the 82-year-old King of Delhi who had succeeded to the throne of the great Moghul emperors in 1837. The title had not conferred any real authority since the fall of Delhi to the British in 1803 (and long before that date the Moghuls had been eclipsed by the Maratha Confederacy as the dominant power in north and central India). A Company pensioner whose temporal power did not extend beyond the walls of the Royal palace (also known as the Red Fort), the King was nevertheless a symbol of ancient legitimacy to many Hindus and Muslims alike. Moreover his relations with the British had been deteriorating since Lord Ellenborough had discontinued the practice whereby Governors-General presented him with *nazirs* (ceremonial gifts) three times a year. He had particularly resented the government's refusal to recognize as heir his youngest and favourite son, Mirza Jawan Bakht, after the death of the heir-apparent, Prince Dara Bukht, in 1849. Instead the government nominated Bahadur Shah's eldest surviving son, Mirza Fakir-ud-din, on condition that he vacated the Red Fort on becoming King.⁶⁵ In 1854, according to his secretary Mukund Lal, Bahadur Shah allowed some infantry soldiers at Delhi to become his disciples and from this day "a sort of understanding was established between the army and the King".⁶⁶ His *hakim* (personal physician) and adviser, Ahsanullah Khan, said his actual intrigues began a year later when he sent his nephew with a letter to the Shah of Persia, requesting assistance against the British "in the shape of money and troops". Despite subsequent letters, Ahsanullah was not aware of any reply, though during the Persian War (1856-7) the King told him that "he had strong hopes of receiving aid from Persia in the shape of money and troops".⁶⁷ According to an itinerant mendicant who had good contacts in the palace, these hopes were fostered by Hasan Askari, a religious adviser to the King, who told him that he had had a divine revelation that the dominion of Persia would extend over the whole of Hindustan, and "that the splendour of the sovereignty of Delhi will again

⁶⁴ Major G.W. Williams' memorandum of 15 Nov 1857, Rivzi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, pp. 10-11; Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, p. 60.

⁶⁵ Supplementary evidence of Ahsanullah Khan, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 264; Malleon (ed.), *Indian Mutiny*, II, pp. 10-25.

⁶⁶ Examination of Mukund Lal, 12 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, p. 206.

revive".⁶⁸ Delhi Muslims in general (including sepoys) were excited by the possibility that Persian troops might invade India to eject the British, said one native news-writer. The anticipation was heightened further by the anti-British sentiment of the leading native journal, the *Sadik-ul-Akhbar* ('Authentic News'), copies of which were delivered to the Royal palace.⁶⁹ Ahsanullah claimed that the Royal princes, in particular, attached great importance to the journal's false reports that the British were being defeated by the Persians, and that they may have communicated its contents to the King.⁷⁰ But Ahsanullah could not confirm that Bahadur Shah had been in contact with Bengal troops during the cartridge question, though the King undoubtedly "believed that his own prosperity would go hand in hand with the ruin of British power".⁷¹ Mukund Lal has claimed, on the other hand, that the Royal palace received intelligence that the troops at Meerut were going to mutiny a full 20 days before they actually did. Four days before the outbreak at Delhi (11 May), he added, the King's personal attendants were predicting that the army would soon revolt and "come to the palace, when the government of the King would be re-established".⁷²

Other hints that the insurrection at Meerut and Delhi was planned in advance were provided by Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, the Joint Magistrate at Delhi, who later testified that an anonymous petition was presented to the magistrate in late April 1857, stating that the Cashmere Gate would soon be wrested from British control. "This gate being our chief stronghold in the city, and main connection with the cantonments of Delhi," commented Metcalfe, "it would naturally be the first point seized in any attempt at insurrection in the city, and it was the only gate at which there was ever a military guard." The guard duly mutinied on 11 May and the gate was secured by the rebels. At around the same time in April, said Metcalfe, a member of the King's Bodyguard "secretly urged a ressalidar of the 14th I.C. to leave our service, and to take service with the King, telling him, as an inducement to do so, that before the hot weather was over, the Russians would have come to India, and the Government of the English be at an end". Metcalfe had been given this information by the ressalidar himself - a Eurasian named Everett - who also told him that, about six months earlier, the King had sent an emissary to Russia.⁷³ There was also a curious conversation that took place at the beginning of May between Captain Tytler of the 38th

⁶⁷ Supplementary evidence of Ahsanullah Khan, *ibid.*, pp. 265-6.

⁶⁸ Petition from Muhammad Darwash to the Lt.-Gov. of the North-Western Provinces, 24 March 1857, *ibid.*, p. 179.

⁶⁹ Examination of Chuni, 9 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 194-5.

⁷⁰ Examination of Ahsanullah Khan, 11 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 201.

⁷¹ Supplementary evidence of Ahsanullah Khan, *ibid.*, p. 266.

⁷² Examination of Mukund Lal, 12 and 13 Feb 1857, *ibid.*, p. 207.

N.I. and one of his old servants who was going to visit his family. When Tytler said he hoped he would return, the man replied, "Yes, sir, provided your hearth is still in existence". Tytler inferred from this that the man had forewarning of some type of disturbance.⁷⁴

But the key evidence linking the outbreaks at Meerut and Delhi was provided by Jat Mall, the British spy. A few days before the mutiny, he claimed to have learned from sepoys on duty at the palace that "it had been arranged in case greased cartridges were pressed upon them, that the Meerut troops were to come here [to Delhi], where they would be joined by the Delhi troops, and it was said that the compact had been arranged through some native officers, who went over on court-martial duty to Meerut".⁷⁵ Five of the 15 native officers who sat in judgement on the 85 skirmishers of the 3rd L.C. from 6 to 8 May, it will be recalled, were from the three native infantry regiments at Delhi: one from the 74th and two each from the 38th and 54th. Sceptics may argue that the harsh sentence passed on the skirmishers contradicts the theory that the native officers from Delhi were part of a plot to mutiny. A lesser sentence or an acquittal, however, would simply have aroused the suspicions of the British. In any case, the outbreak would provide an ideal opportunity to rescue the prisoners.

Ahsanullah Khan went even further than Jat Mall by revealing that men of the 38th N.I. had told him that "they had leagued with the troops at Meerut" before the mutiny, and that the latter had "corresponded with the troops in all other places, so that from every cantonment troops would arrive at Delhi". Even after the outbreak, said Ahsunulla, "letters were received at Delhi from which it was evident that [sepoys all over India] had beforehand made common cause among themselves". For their part the mutinous officers at Delhi wrote - and got the King to write - to many regiments, inviting them to join them. A typical appeal, according to Ahsunulla, was as follows: "So many of us have come in here; do you also, according to your promise, come over quickly?"⁷⁶

Sen has argued that there was not even a conspiracy to mutiny among the regiments at Meerut. He cites evidence that purports to show that the mutiny began after a cook's boy from H.M. 60th Rifles started a rumour in the Sudder Bazar that Europeans troops were coming to disarm the natives.⁷⁷ The rumour was believed, according to General Hewitt, because the 60th Rifles were parading for evening

⁷³ Examination of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, 8 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

⁷⁴ Examination of Capt. R. Tytler, 13 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 209.

⁷⁵ Examination of Jat Mall, 3 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 182.

⁷⁶ Additional evidence of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, *ibid.*, p.268.

⁷⁷ Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, pp. 53-4.

church service.⁷⁸ But Palmer rejected this version of events on the grounds that the story of the cook boy was hearsay and the church parade was not due to take place until 6.30 p.m, a full hour and a half after the rumour began. He suspects that sepoys from the 20th N.I. were responsible for the rumour. Certainly the uproar began first in their lines before spreading to those of the 11th N.I. and 3rd L.C.⁷⁹ The 20th's leading role may also be connected to the appearance of a mysterious Hindu *fakir* (religious mendicant) at Meerut about a month before the mutiny. According to one havildar, he arrived on an elephant and was accompanied by a native carriage, horses and about 10 followers. He is said to have stayed a number of days in the lines of the 20th N.I. before being ordered out of the station by the magistrate, Johnstone. During his subsequent investigation, Major G.W. Williams discovered that, prior to arriving at Meerut, the *fakir* had been seen at the musketry depot at Ambala, but despite these "suspicious facts" nothing of a seditious nature was ever proved against him.⁸⁰

Palmer also points to two important facts which contradict Sen's claim that the outbreak was not premeditated: the warning given during the evening of 9 May by a native officer of the 3rd L.C. to his troop commander, Lieutenant Gough, that the native infantry would mutiny the following day and the cavalry would follow their lead;⁸¹ and the deliberate cutting of the telegraph line between Meerut and Delhi before 4 p.m. on the 10 May.⁸² There is also evidence that, at 2 p.m., a Kashmiri prostitute named Sophie was told by a sepoy in the Sudder Bazar that the native troops would mutiny that day.⁸³ The speed with which native civilians - particularly Muslim butchers from the bazar - joined in the mayhem and murder would seem to imply that even they were forewarned.

At Delhi, Captain Tytler noted that a carriage containing sepoys from Meerut arrived in his regiment's lines at 3 p.m on 10 May.⁸⁴ His wife concluded that they were "emissaries sent over from Meerut to warn the soldiers to be prepared for the next day's proceedings".⁸⁵ Jat Mall confirmed the arrival of letters at the palace that day "bringing intelligence that 82 [sic] soldiers had been imprisoned, and that a serious disturbance was to take place in consequence". As a result of this, the sepoys guarding the

⁷⁸ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, p. 250.

⁷⁹ Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, pp. 72-6

⁸⁰ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, pp. 397-9; Major G.W. Williams' memorandum, 15 Nov 1857, *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸¹ Gen. Sir Hugh Gough, *Old Memories* (London, 1897), pp. 21-2.

⁸² Vibart, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 255-6.

⁸³ Deposition of Gulab Jan, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, p. 404.

⁸⁴ Examination of Capt. Tytler, 13 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 208-9.

⁸⁵ Anthony Sattin (ed.), *An Englishwoman in India: The Memoirs of Harriet Tytler 1828-1858* (Oxford, 1986), p. 114.

palace made no secret of their belief that, after mutinying, the troops at Meerut would come to Delhi.⁸⁶ The conclusion drawn by Captain Marriott, the prosecutor at the trial of the King of Delhi, was that the outbreak at Meerut did not occur on 9 May - the day the skirmishers were put in irons - because the conspirators needed time to warn the Delhi regiments. Even the hour of mutiny (5 p.m.) was evidence of "cunning and craft" in that the native lines were two miles from their European equivalent. The conspirators would have calculated on the lapse of at least one and a half hours before the Europeans could have made an appearance. By which time it would have been dark, said Marriott, and the mutineers long gone - which is exactly what happened.⁸⁷

The disagreement between the mutineers as to their eventual destination is sometimes cited as proof that the risings at Meerut and Delhi were not coordinated. According to Munshi Mohanlal - who overheard a conversation between a sowar of the 3rd L.C. and a sepoy in Delhi - the main body of mutineers stopped a few miles outside Meerut to decide on a course of action. The majority wanted to head for either Rohilkhand to the north-east or Agra to the south. This fact, however, is entirely consistent with the theory that only a small number of sepoys and sowars were part of the conspiracy to mutiny at Meerut. It was almost certainly these men who persuaded the majority that any march without artillery would be fatal. Delhi was a much more attractive proposition, they argued, because it was void of European troops and would be easy to capture. It also contained a large magazine and the King of Delhi, round whom more rebel troops could rally. The pro-Delhi speakers have never been identified. But it is reasonable to assume that they were the self-same conspirators who had already been in contact with the Delhi troops. Sir John Lawrence, who was aware of Mohanlal's evidence, later wrote: "It is very possible, indeed probable, that the native soldiers [at] Delhi were so far in the scheme that they had engaged to stand by their comrades at Meerut. Such, indeed, was the case all over the Bengal Presidency."⁸⁸

The behaviour of the troops at Delhi during the morning of 11 May certainly supports Lawrence's theory. Even before the vanguard of the Meerut mutineers - sowars of the 3rd L.C. - entered the walled city of Delhi at around 7.30 a.m., the local garrison was showing signs of disaffection. At an early morning parade to hear the general order announcing the execution of Jemadar Issuree Pandey of the 34th N.I., the three Delhi regiments gave vent to their disapproval. The 38th, for example, "hissed and

⁸⁶ Examination of Jat Mall, 5 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 185.

⁸⁷ Address by Major F.J. Harriott, 9 March 1858, *ibid.*, p. 246.

shuffled their feet" as the order was read out in the vernacular, "showing by their actions their sympathy with the executed sepoy".⁸⁹ When the news of the mutineers' arrival reached the military cantonments - on a ridge to the north of the city - Lieutenant-Colonel Ripley was ordered to march his regiment, the 54th N.I., down to the Cashmere Gate to quell the disturbance. Confronted there by sowars of the 3rd L.C., Ripley ordered his men to open fire. But to a man they refused and the mutinous troopers were able to cut down Ripley and a number of his officers without hindrance.⁹⁰ Ripley had only been transferred to the 54th from the 1st Bengal European Fusiliers a year earlier, and his experience of native troops was extremely limited.⁹¹

Captains Tytler and Gardiner, meanwhile, had been instructed to take their companies of the 38th N.I. to a house on the ridge above the new powder magazine in case the mutineers decided to advance. As the cartridges and caps were being handed out, Tytler noticed that many of the men seized more than they were entitled to, but he was in too much of a hurry to do anything about it. Having arrived at the house, Tytler sent out pickets and ordered the rest of the men to shelter from the sun inside. But with fires visible in the city, the sepoys began to gather in little groups outside and Tytler had to order them in again. That afternoon, on entering one of the rooms, Tytler came across a sepoy telling the rest of the men that "every power of government existed their [sic] allotted time, and that it was nothing extraordinary that that of the English had come to an end". Before he could arrest the man, the main magazine in the city exploded and the men of the two companies grabbed their arms and set off for the city, shouting "*Prithivi Raj Ki Jai!* (Victory to the Sovereign of the World)". Tytler later expressed his conviction that his men had been expecting a disturbance before it actually broke out.⁹²

The King of Delhi is often said to have been surprized by the arrival of the mutineers on 11 May. This is the impression given by the evidence of his confidential advisor, Ghulam Abbas, at the King's trial in 1858. But then Ghulam, who was acting as the King's attorney, was trying to depict Bahadur Shah as an unwilling figurehead of the rebellion. When the sowars of the 3rd L.C. first appeared beneath the walls of the Royal palace, said Ghulam, the King immediately informed Captain Douglas, the Commandant of the Palace Guard. Soon after the King complied with a request by Simon Fraser, the Commissioner, to provide guns and infantry to protect Douglas's apartments in the palace's Lahore

⁸⁸ Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, p. 120; Sir John Lawrence's minute of 19 April 1858, Anderson and Subedar (eds.), *The Last Days of the Company*, I, pp. 111-12

⁸⁹ Sattin (ed.), *An Englishwoman in India*, p. 115.

⁹⁰ Vibart, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 12-13, 16-17

⁹¹ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

Gate and to send palanquins to collect two European ladies who were staying there. But they arrived too late and all the Europeans were massacred. Then, as sowars from Meerut, accompanied by two companies of native infantry on guard at the palace, marched into the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience) and told the King that they had mutinied because they had been "required to bite cartridges" greased with beef and pork fat, and had therefore come to Delhi to claim his protection, he is said to have replied: "I did not call for you; you have acted very wickedly." At which point another 200 Meerut mutineers (this time infantry) arrived to tell the King that "unless you join us, we are all dead men, and we must in that case just do what we can for ourselves". Whereupon the King sat down and "the soldiery, officers and all, came forward one by one, bowed their heads before him, asking him to place his hand on them", which he did.⁹³

Despite Ghulam's partiality as a witness, it is possible that the King - however disaffected - was not personally aware of the plot to mutiny at Meerut and Delhi. But some senior palace figures undoubtedly were. How else can we explain the involvement of the King's armed retainers in the murder of Fraser, Douglas and other Europeans in the Red Fort even before Bahadur Shah had given his blessing to the mutineers in the Hall of Private Audience?⁹⁴ Or the despatch of a detachment of the palace guard to the city magazine between 10 and 11 a.m. - ostensibly under orders from the King - to relieve the regular guard of the 38th N.I. and to escort all the European employees of the Ordnance Department to the Red Fort. When the handful of Europeans refused to open the gates, the King's guards brought scaling ladders for sepoys of the 11th and 20th N.I. to use in an attack which lasted more than three hours. It prompted the whole native establishment of the magazine to switch sides and was coordinated, according to Lieutenant Forrest (one of only three survivors), by a son and grandson of the King. The siege was finally brought to a conclusion at 3.30 p.m. when the European defenders blew up the magazine.⁹⁵

In retrospect, Forrest was convinced that the magazine's native employees were expecting an uprising. For several days prior to the outbreak, he told the King's trial, the employees had been "insolent and overbearing", particularly the Muslims. On 11 May itself, the senior natives and workmen had arrived for work in smarter clothes than normal. It was only after reaching the safety of Meerut, however, that he heard a second-hand account that someone in the magazine at Delhi had been sending circulars to all

⁹² Examination of Capt. R. Tytler, 13 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 209.

⁹³ Examination of Ghulam Abbas, 29 Jan 1858, *ibid.*, p. 136-7

⁹⁴ Examination of Jat Mal, 3 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 181.

the native regiments to the effect that the cartridges prepared in the magazine had been smeared with a objectionable fat, and that they were not to believe their European officers when they denied it. Forrest suspected Karim Baksh, the head of the native establishment, "an intelligent man and also a good scholar, capable of writing Persian well". So suspicious was Baksh's conduct during the attack on the magazine that the Commissary of Ordnance, Lieutenant Willoughby, ordered Forrest to remove him from the gate and shoot him if he returned to it. He was later hanged "for his treacherous conduct on that occasion".⁹⁶ If the story about Baksh and the circulars is true, it confirms both the involvement of magazine employees in the plot to mutiny and the theory that the cartridge question was being used as a pretext to incite mutiny. For no one knew better than Karim Baksh that Enfield cartridges were never manufactured at the Delhi arsenal. The greased variety were only ever made at the Fort William and Meerut arsenals, and not anywhere in India after January 1857.

An interesting codicil to the outbreak at Meerut and Delhi occurred in Ambala. During the morning of 10 May, a sepoy from the Grenadier Company of the 60th N.I. was arrested for demanding to be taken by the orderly havildar to his company commander to complain about the introduction of the new cartridge. No sooner had news of his confinement spread than 200 members of his regiment assembled in undress at the quarter-guard, demanding to be placed alongside the prisoner. They only agreed to disperse when their C.O., Lieutenant-Colonel Drought, promised a thorough inquiry. Not long after, in a curious echo of events at Meerut, a cry went up in the 60th lines and the musketry depot lines "that the lancers and artillery were coming down to cut up the native infantry regiments". At which point men from every company broke into their bells-of-arms and grabbed muskets and ammunition. Once again the commanding officer's personal intervention calmed the situation and the men eventually agreed to return their weapons.⁹⁷ Drought, it will be recalled, had only returned to the 60th in January after nearly three years on furlough. But prior to that he had served with the regiment for almost 30 unbroken years, seeing action at the siege and capture of Bharatpur and during the latter stages of the 1st Afghan War.⁹⁸ He was a familiar and experienced officer whose influence may well have prevented an outbreak at Ambala.

⁹⁵ Examination of Capt. Forrest, 5 and 6 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

⁹⁶ Examination of Capt. Forrest, 6 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 188.

⁹⁷ Brevet Lt.-Col. R. Drought to Major Ewart, A.A.G. Sirhind Div., 23 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 61.

⁹⁸ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

Having read the proceedings of the subsequent court of inquiry, which probably sat on 11 May, Drought ordered the release of the prisoner on the ground that he was a "mere tool, and that the whole tumult on the 10th...was a preconcerted plot" in which the "credulity of the men, on the score of caste" had been "worked upon by traitors to the State". According to Private Potiphar of H.M.'s 9th Lancers, the conspiracy had even spread to their *syces* (native grooms). Coordinated by a senior *syce* known as a jemadar, the plan was to hamstring the lancers' horses so they would not be able to act against the mutinous sepoys. But the plot was given away by a low-caste *syce* and the jemadar was arrested on 10 May. Among his papers, wrote Potiphar, "letters were found which proved that he had been holding correspondence with many of the regiments who afterwards mutined". He was tried, found guilty and hanged. The other jemadars were discharged.⁹⁹

Drought was later accused by Sir Henry Barnard, commanding the Sirhind Division, of covering up the mutinous acts of his men and superseded in command by Lieutenant-Colonel Seaton (formerly of the 35th N.I.), but not before fresh attempts were made to provoke the regiment to mutiny. At sunset on 12 May, the officer of the day was warned by the native officer commanding the quarter-guard that the sepoys intended to rise at 10 p.m. and murder all their officers. Nothing occurred that night, but the following evening "some evil-disposed person" again started a panic in the lines of the 60th by spreading a report that the European troops were on their way. For the third time Drought managed to defuse the situation, this time by allowing each company to furnish a picket of 10 men under a European officer. The next day - the last of Drought's independent command - fragments of anonymous letters in the "Persian and Nagtee character" were found on the 60th's parade ground. On the morning of 10 June, the day the regiment finally mutinied at Rohtak near Delhi, a number of men received similar letters written in Persian. Drought is convinced that these letters precipitated the mutiny.¹⁰⁰

This sequence of events concerning the 60th N.I. is revealing in a number of ways. The attempted rising on the 10th, for example, bears an uncanny resemblance to the simultaneous outbreak at Meerut in that both were the result of a conspiracy to take advantage of the cartridge question, and both were set off by the same lie that European troops were approaching. Also the decision to incite the first up-country mutinies in stations that contained a sizeable European garrison may have been deliberate: partly because the presence of European troops made it easier to promote a climate of fear and panic; and partly because the Europeans would be harder to catch off guard once the uprising had begun. This

⁹⁹ T/S Account of Mutiny, Potiphar Papers, NAM, 7201-45-2, pp. 5-6.

is how it proved in the Punjab, where the majority of European troops were stationed, and where the authorities took pre-emptive action to disarm a number of disaffected regiments in the fortnight or so after the outbreak at Meerut. The only circumstantial evidence that links the events at Meerut and Ambala, however, is Major Williams' claim that the mysterious *faqir* had recently been present in both stations.

So why did the rising at Ambala not develop into the full-blown mutiny that was witnessed at Meerut? One possible answer is that the 5th, the other native regiment at Ambala, was not sufficiently disaffected to be included in the plot. But we know from Major Maitland, the commanding officer of the 5th, that his regiment contained a cabal that was fiercely opposed to the new cartridges. Gimlette is convinced that the 5th was in on the plot to mutiny on 10 May, and its sepoys also broke into their bells-of-arms, though Maitland makes no mention of this in his official report. He does state, however, that the 5th displayed so mutinous a disposition at Ambala on 18 May that it was broken up into small detachments.¹⁰¹ This failed to remove the bad feeling and two companies subsequently mutinied, two were disbanded and the rest were disarmed. In other words, the 5th did contain enough disgruntled sepoys to make it a willing participant in the attempted mutiny of 10 May. Could it be, then, that the conspirators in the 5th N.I. were waiting to follow the 60th N.I.'s lead, just as the 11th N.I. and 3rd L.C. responded to the 20th N.I.'s promptings at Meerut? If so, then the reason why the sepoys of the 60th N.I. would not cross the Rubicon by killing Europeans - as the 20th N.I. did - may explain why the rising failed at Ambala and succeeded at Meerut. And the answer to that question may lie in the identity of the respective commanding officers. Drought, as already stated, was a familiar figure in his regiment. Maitland, on the other hand, only joined the 5th N.I. as a captain in 1842 and spent most of the next 15 years on detachment to the Gwalior Contingent.¹⁰² If the 5th had taken the lead on 10 May, the outcome may well have been different.

At Meerut, the experienced colonel of the 20th N.I. was absent on 10 May (possibly on sick leave), and a relatively junior officer, Captain Taylor, was in temporary command.¹⁰³ Though Taylor had served with the regiment for 18 years, seeing action in the 1st Afghan War and against the Afridi

¹⁰⁰ Drought to Ewart, 23 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 61-2.

¹⁰¹ Return of Major F. Maitland, 24 Feb 1858, *ibid.*, p. 44; Lt.-Col. G.H.D. Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny: an attempt to trace the subsequent careers and fate of the rebel Bengal regiments, 1857-8* (London, 1927), pp. 177-80.

¹⁰² Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

¹⁰³ See Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, p. 75. Palmer describes Taylor as a brevet Major; his service record confirms he was a captain.

tribesmen in 1853, he may not have commanded the same respect as a more senior officer. It is probably no coincidence that the other two native infantry regiments in the temporary command of captains - the 28th and 29th - both mutinied in 1857. The least disaffected regiment at Meerut, the 11th N.I., was commanded by a colonel, Finnis, who had only joined the regiment in June 1856. But like Kennedy of the 70th and Sherer of the 73rd, Finnis had extra-regimental experience (with the Public Works Department) which may have stood him in good stead.¹⁰⁴ He was killed on 10 May by sepoys of the 20th N.I., as was Captain Macdonald, one of their own officers.¹⁰⁵ The remaining native regiment at Meerut - the 3rd L.C. - was commanded by Colonel Carmichael-Smyth who, though experienced, was not popular with his men. Referring to the skirmishers' refusal to accept blank cartridges on 24 April, Cornet MacNabb noted that the men "hate Smyth" and "if almost any other officer had gone down they would have fired them off". MacNabb added that the adjutant, Lieutenant Clarke, was "always severe to the men".¹⁰⁶ Clarke was just 22 and had only been with the regiment for four years (three months as adjutant). This combination of an unpopular commanding officer and a young, inexperienced and overbearing adjutant made it much less likely that the majority of the 3rd L.C. would remain loyal in 1857.

After the suppression of the mutiny, James Cracroft Wilson, the former Judge of Moradabad, was appointed a Special Commissioner to punish guilty and reward deserving natives. The evidence he collected, he said, was proof that "Sunday, 31st of May, 1857, was the day fixed for mutiny to commence throughout the Bengal Army; that there were committees of about three members in each regiment, which conducted the duties of the mutiny; that the sepoys, as a body, knew nothing of the plans arranged; and that the only compact entered into by regiments, as a body, was, that their particular regiments would do as the other regiments did".¹⁰⁷

However Major G.W. Williams, Cracroft Wilson's fellow Special Commissioner, did not agree. It was only after the outbreak at Meerut, he wrote, that "corps after corps caught the infection, excited and encouraged by the uncontradicted boast of the extermination of all Europeans, and the overthrow of the British rule" by the native troops at Meerut and Delhi. Even when the boast proved hollow, they were "still lured on by the glowing accounts of unbounded wealth obtained from the plunder of Europeans

¹⁰⁴ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

¹⁰⁵ Palmer, *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut*, pp. 76-7.

¹⁰⁶ Cornet John MacNabb to his mother, 10 May 1857, quoted in Cadell, 'The Outbreak of the Indian Mutiny', *JSAHR*, vol. 33, 1955, pp. 120-1.

¹⁰⁷ Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, II, pp. 107-8.

and Government treasuries, and the honors and promotions expected from a rebel King". Many also believed the rumours, "kept alive by evil and designing men", that their religion was in danger. If any such plot for a general mutiny had existed, Williams concluded, the Meerut troops "were indeed rash and insane to mar the whole".¹⁰⁸

The truth probably lies midway between these two theories. Cracroft Wilson omitted to specify the evidence from which he drew his conclusion. But his point about secret committees coordinating the uprising is supported by much of the documentation already cited in this chapter. For security reasons alone, those made party to such a plot would necessarily have been few in number. Williams, on the other hand, is surely right in his assessment of the motives that drove many sepoys to mutiny. If the two theories are combined, we are left with a loose network of conspirators who were prepared to incite mutiny as and when the occasion presented itself. Their success would depend upon a number of variables: the closeness of the relationship between the native troops and their European officers (particularly the commanding officer); the presence of other European troops; the proximity to unguarded treasure and other regiments that had already mutinied; and, of course, the number of sepoys prepared to believe (or appear to believe) that their religion and caste were in danger. Given that most soldiers were in the dark, however, the conspirators would not have been foolish enough to imagine that they could coordinate a general mutiny on a single day.

But to understand why the cartridge question was manipulated to provide a pretext for mutiny, we need to identify the aspirations of the army ringleaders themselves. They were, by definition, ambitious men. They were drawn from a complete cross-section of army ranks - including native officers who were close to receiving their pensions and therefore had the most to lose - and were probably united by a shared exasperation with the limitations of Company service. Their pre-mutiny links to the courts of disaffected princes like the ex-King of Oudh and the King of Delhi are surely indicative of an aim that was both political and professional: the replacement of their British employers with a native government that would provide greater career opportunities and increased pay.

¹⁰⁸ Maj. G.W. Williams' memorandum of 15 Nov 1857, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, pp. 20-3.

Chapter Eight - Mutiny: The Pattern of Rebellion

Much can be learned about the nature of 1857 by studying the pattern of mutiny after the outbreak at Meerut. How, when and where did the various regiments revolt? What proportion of their numbers became active mutineers, remained loyal or returned to their homes? Who were the chief instigators and did they take command of the mutinous regiments? Did the mutineers retain their regimental discipline or become a disorganised rabble? What were the mutineers hoping to achieve? In an attempt to answer these questions, this chapter will first chart the spread of mutiny to its high point in June before moving on to specific themes. The narrative section will consider, in particular, the possible link between a commanding officer's record of service and the willingness of his regiment to mutiny.

If the post-Meerut mutinies were solely about "contagion", as Mukherjee has suggested,¹ then a gradual spread outwards from Delhi would be expected. To some extent this happened. But the disarmament of regiments about to mutiny also needs to be taken into account. In May, most of these incidents took place in the Punjab, hundreds of miles from Delhi, where the majority of European troops were stationed.² They provide further evidence of a widespread conspiracy and indicate a desire to strike before the Europeans could recover from the shock of Meerut and Delhi by securing key strategic points such as Lahore Fort, the Ferozepore magazine and the Attock Ferry.

Thanks to the actions of two young telegraph signallers at Delhi, fragmentary news of the outbreak reached Ambala on 11 May.³ From there it was flashed to Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, and on to the main stations in the province. A rider was also sent to inform General Anson, the Commander-in-Chief, who was at Simla in the hills. Brigadier Corbett, commanding at Lahore, received the telegram from Ambala on the morning of 12 May. Around the same time, the cantonment Joint Magistrate passed on information from his spies that the four native regiments at Lahore - the 16th, 26th and 49th

¹ Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*, p. 65.

² In 1852 the Indian garrison included 29 Queen's regiments. This total was reduced by three during the Crimean War, with only one added by the outbreak of the mutiny. There were, therefore, 27 Queen's regiments (4 cavalry and 23 infantry) assigned to India in May 1857: 18 to Bengal, 5 to Bombay and 4 to Madras. Each presidency had, in addition, three regiments of Company European infantry. But three of Bombay's European regiments were serving in Persia, while two of Bengal's and one of Madras's were stationed in Burma. As a result, the Bengal presidency had only 19 European regiments (2 of H.M.'s cavalry, 14 of H.M.'s infantry and 3 of Company infantry) located within its territory: 12 of whom were in the Punjab and the neighbouring Cis-Sutlej region.

N.I. and the 8th L.C. - intended to mutiny and seize the fort on 15 May when the monthly relief took place and 1,100 armed soldiers would have been present. Corbett decided to take no chances and disarm all four corps.⁴ He was supported by Robert Montgomery, the Judicial Commissioner of the Punjab, who was the senior civil officer present in Lahore.⁵ Policed by H.M. 81st Foot, two troops of Bengal European horse artillery and four companies of Bengal European foot artillery without cannon, the disarmament parade passed without incident on the morning of 13 May. The disaffection of the Lahore brigade, however, was not in doubt. On 14 May, a plot by the disarmed regiments to secure the Ferozepore magazine, 45 miles to the south, was also foiled by intelligence from spies, though a number did desert. Finally, on 30 July, the majority of the 26th N.I. mutinied, butchering their C.O., Major Spencer, the European quartermaster-sergeant, and a subedar and havildar-major who tried to intervene. The other regiments are also said to have intended rising at the signal of the midday gun, but the plan was disrupted by Spencer's murder. Of the 600 sepoys who fled the cantonments at Mian Mir, 500 were subsequently drowned, killed fighting mounted police and villagers, or executed. They were mainly Oudh men who had earlier been separated from 140 of their comrades, Bhojpore Brahmins from Behar province, because the latter were thought to be more loyal. The same segregation had been applied to the other two native infantry regiments. In the event, the Bhojpore men were not involved in the conspiracy and survived.⁶

With Lieutenant-Colonel Evans on sick leave, Spencer was in temporary command in the summer of 1857. Apart from a brief spell as cantonment magistrate in the early 1850s, he had served with the 26th for all of his 28-year career, seeing action in the 1st Afghan and 1st Sikh Wars (the regiment so distinguished itself during the former campaign that it was made into an élite light infantry corps).⁷ His murder, therefore, is particularly puzzling. He may have been unpopular (like Carmichael-Smyth), or he may simply have been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The existence of a plot for combined action between the native regiments at Lahore and Ferozepore, the largest arsenal in upper India, is implied by the behaviour of 45th and 57th N.I. at the latter station on 13 and 14 May. On the 13th, as the 57th N.I. was being replaced as the magazine guard by H.M. 61st

³ P.V. Luke, 'How the Electric Telegraph Saved India', Vibart, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 250-67.

⁴ Statement by Brig. S. Corbett, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 48.

⁵ Sir John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner, was en route to join his family in the Murree hills and had reached Rawalpindi when he received news of the outbreak.

⁶ Statement by Brig. S. Corbett, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 48; Off. Sec. to the Chief Comm. of the Punjab to the Sec. to the Govt. of India, 3 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857-8, XLIV, pp. 303-4.

⁷ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

Foot, the majority of the 45th's sepoys - led by the grenadiers - mutinied and burnt much of the cantonment. The following day, as the remnants of the 45th N.I. and the whole of the 57th N.I. were being disarmed, almost 300 of the latter corps fled.⁸ The 10th L.C., the other native corps at Ferozepore, is said to have behaved well at this time, even helping to capture some of the mutineers. It was disarmed as a precaution on 10 July but resented having its horses requisitioned for the Delhi Field Force. Two hundred sowars finally mutinied on 19 August, killing their veterinary surgeon and two European gunners in the process.⁹ Members of all three regiments joined the rebels at Delhi.¹⁰

Lieutenant-Colonel Liptrap had only been in command of the 45th, the most disaffected regiment at Ferozepore, since 1856. Most of his service had been with the 42nd N.I. with whom he had seen action in the 1st Burma War, the 1st Afghan War and the Sonthal Revolt of 1855. He was, at 61, the oldest regimental commander in the Bengal Army. Lieutenant-Colonel Darvall of the 57th N.I., on the other hand, was 50 and had served with the regiment for most of his career. Major MacDonell, the 48-year-old commander of the 10th L.C., boasted a similar record - including active service in the 1st Afghan War, the Gwalior campaign and the 2nd Sikh War - and it may have been due to his influence that the regiment did not mutiny on 13 May.

The next rising was, once again, at Meerut. After the initial mutiny, six companies of Bengal Sappers & Miners were ordered down from their headquarters at Rurki to stiffen the force that was planning to march on Delhi. On 16 May, despite the presence of so many European troops, four companies mutinied, killing their commandant, Captain Fraser, and the havildar-major. The ostensible cause was Fraser's insistence that their ammunition be kept under lock and key. Pursued by Carabiniers and horse artillery, 56 sappers were killed and 280 escaped. The other two companies, on duty at the time, were disarmed but continued to work. Two days later, the two companies left behind at Rurki also mutinied.¹¹

On 20 May, four companies of the 9th N.I. rose at the small town of Aligarh, between Delhi and Agra. According to one European witness, the news of the mutinies at Delhi and Meerut had caused an "immense sensation" in the area and during the night of 17 May a vacant European bungalow was burnt

⁸ Return of 45th N.I., 3 March 1858 and Return of the 57th N.I. by Lt. Col. Darwall, 3 March 1858, P.P., H.C., XVIII, pp. 49-50.

⁹ D.F. MacLeod to B. Frere, 15 May 1857, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 6B/8/1; Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁰ Off. Sec. to the Chief Comm. of the Punjab to the Sec. to the Govt. of India, 27 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857-8, XLIV, p. 307.

to the ground. Two days later, four sepoy of the 9th were attending a wedding at a village near Aligarh when they heard a local Brahmin *zemindar* (landholder) boast that he was responsible for the attack and that worse was in store. They reported this and a trap was laid. The following day, as the *zemindar* was in the process of telling a native N.C.O. that he would provide two thousand men to assist in murdering the Europeans and plundering the treasury if the regiment could be induced to mutiny, he was arrested by sepoy hidden nearby. A native court-martial found him guilty of rebellion and his execution was fixed for that evening. But during the parade to witness his hanging, one sepoy incited the others to mutiny with the words: "Behold a martyr to our religion."¹² The military and civil officers, however, were allowed to escape with their lives. It may be significant that the 9th's temporary commanding officer, 48-year-old Major Eld, had spent much of his career on detached duties in Assam and Manipur, though he had been present for most of the previous seven years.¹³ As the news of the Aligarh rising spread through the Agra region, the other detachments of the 9th N.I. rose in sympathy. Only a week earlier, however, members of the two companies at Etawah killed four and captured two mutineers from the 3rd L.C. who were trying to resist arrest.¹⁴ Such contradictory behaviour was repeated all over India and suggests an ongoing power struggle in most regiments between the disaffected and those who preferred to remain true to their salt. Even a portion - between 60 and 70 - of those most violent of mutineers, the 3rd L.C., had stayed loyal on 10 May.

Meanwhile, sepoy at Peshawur in the North-West Frontier Province were plotting a mutiny. On 18 May, conspirators in the 51st N.I. sent a letter to the respective headquarters of the 64th N.I. and Kelat-i-Ghilzie Regiment (a corps of irregular infantry) at nearby Fort Shubkudr in the Khyber Pass. It stated that it came from the whole Peshawur cantonment and informed the two regiments that cartridges would have to be bitten on 22 May. "O brother!" it continued. "The religion of Hindoos and Mahommedans is all one. Therefore all you soldiers should know this. Here all the sepoy are at the bidding of the Jemadar, Soobadar, Buhadoor, and Havildar Major. All are discontented with this

¹¹ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, I, pp. 253-4, 256-7; Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 28-9.

¹² *The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette*, 12 March 1858; Return by Major Percy Eld, 9th N.I., P.P., H.C., XVIII, p. 53; Kantzow Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/Photo.Eur.86, vol. 1, p. 10.

¹³ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

¹⁴ Narrative by Allan Hume, Magistrate at Etawah, 18 Nov 1858, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, pp. 630-4.

business, whether small or great. What more need be written? Do as you think best." A postscript in a different hand urged the regiments to march into Peshawur on the 21st.¹⁵

The bearer of the letter, a Brahmin priest, handed it to a sepoy of the 64th N.I. He probably gave it to his subedar-major (to whom it was principally addressed) and it was eventually turned over to the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Garrett. Herbert Edwardes, the Commissioner of Peshawur, was particularly surprised by this act of loyalty because the seizure of other mutinous correspondence between Muslim "bigots" at Patna and a naik and sepoys of the 64th N.I. had convinced him that the regiment was disaffected. These letters had also alluded to a lengthy correspondence between the same native soldiers and "Hindoostanee fanatics in Swat and Sitana". The letter from the 51st N.I. was given up by the 64th N.I. not because the latter was innocent, Edwardes concluded, but because it would have been impossible for its three detachments "to collect and act together without the co-operation of the Kelat-i-Ghilzie Regiment which was similar placed in the same outposts". The latter regiment, wrote Edwardes, had probably made it clear it would not cooperate and so the 64th had given up the letter to "gain a name of loyalty for themselves". The other possibility, of course, is that the letter was handed to members of the regiment who were neither part of the conspiracy nor sufficiently disaffected to keep it secret. Edwardes believed that the letter proved "beyond a doubt that whatever moved the Mahommedans, the Hindoos were moved by the cartridges".¹⁶ He is right in the sense that the majority were being manipulated by the minority. For the conspirators at Peshawur knew only too well that cartridges would not have to be "bitten" on 22 May;¹⁷ for the rising to succeed, however, a religious cause that embraced both faiths was essential.

As a result of this letter (and the other intercepted correspondence), most of the native corps in and around Peshawur - the 24th, 27th, 51st and 64th N.I. and 5th L.C. - were disarmed on 22 May. The exception was the 21st N.I. which Brigadier Cotton, the acting divisional commander, believed to be loyal. It repaid his faith by becoming one of only two traditionally-recruited regiments of Bengal Native Infantry to retain its arms throughout the mutiny. The other corps, the 31st N.I., was not wholly beyond reproach in that one of its detached companies mutinied in June. Both regiments were commanded by familiar and relatively young officers: Major Milne was 45 and, other than a spell in the

¹⁵ An Intercepted Letter from Peshawur (translation by Herbert Edwardes, 30 May 1857), NAM, 5504-63.

¹⁶ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, pp. 353-4.

¹⁷ Since the introduction of the new firing drill in early April 1857, all cartridges had been torn with the hand rather than bitten. (See p. 182).

Commissariat Department, had spent most of his career with the 21st; Major Hampton, one year older, had been with the regiment for 27 years and seen action in five campaigns. Even more important, perhaps, was the fact that - as mentioned in Chapter Three - both had native family ties: Milne was married to a Eurasian; Hampton had two Eurasian daughters.¹⁸

A few days after the disarmament at Peshawur, when it became clear that their treasonable correspondence had been intercepted, the subedar-major and 250 men of the 51st N.I. fled into the mountains. Many were returned by Pathan tribesmen, including the subedar-major who was hanged on 29 May. But the plotting continued and on 28 August, as their lines were being searched for arms, the men of the 51st rose, killed and wounded more than 50 members of H.M. 70th Foot, and headed for the surrounding jungle. More than 700 were recaptured and summarily executed. But they were not alone in their plans to rise. Arms and ammunition, recorded General Cotton, were found concealed in the roofs and walls of every one of the disarmed regiments.¹⁹ But only one actually mutinied - the 51st N.I. - and its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Cooper, had been with it for just a year. Garrett of the 64th N.I. - the next most disaffected regiment - had known his men for barely 18 months. The other commanding officers - Lieutenant-Colonel Harington of the 5th L.C., Major Shakespear of the 24th N.I. and Lieutenant-Colonel Plumbe of the 27th N.I. - had spent most of their careers with their corps.²⁰ This may have prevented the conspirators in their regiments from gaining enough adherents to risk an armed rising.

One mutiny which did occur in the Peshawur district in May involved the 55th N.I. A detachment of the regiment was based at Nowshera, south-east of Peshawur, with a sub-unit guarding the Indus crossing at Attock. On 21 May, as the guard was being replaced by men from the 5th Punjab I.I., it loaded its weapons and marched off to Nowshera where it was apprehended by Major Verner and sowars of the 10th I.C. But when the rest of the detachment heard about the arrests, they mutinied, fired on the sowars and released their comrades. Verner ordered his men to oppose the mutineers but they refused. Next day the detachment of the 55th N.I. crossed the Kabul river and headed north to rejoin the main body of the regiment in the fort at Hoti Murdan. On the night of 24/25 May, with most of the regiment up in arms and the European officers under house arrest, the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Spottiswoode, shot himself in despair. Meanwhile a column of European troops had been

¹⁸ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

¹⁹ Rogers Papers, NAM, 7310-57; Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 163-5; Return by Maj.-Gen. S. Cotton, 19 April 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 50-1.

despatched from Peshawur. As it approached the fort at daybreak on the 25th, the mutineers fled towards the Swat hills with as much treasure and ammunition as they could carry. Only a handful survived, including some Hindu sepoy who - ironically given their alleged reason for rebelling - were forced to convert to Islam by Kohistan tribesmen. One hundred and forty-three native officers, N.C.O.s and sepoy stayed with their officers on 25 May: the eight Sikhs among them joined the newly-raised 16th Punjab I.I.; the remaining soldiers were posted to the 51st N.I. and shared its fate.²¹ Spottiswoode, it should be added, was a former adjutant of the 21st N.I. and had been with the 55th for just two years.²²

For its failure to act against the sepoy of the 55th N.I. at Nowshera and after they fled from Hoti Mardan on 25 May, the 10th I.C. came under considerable suspicion. These doubts were confirmed in June when the civil authorities discovered a "treasonable correspondence between the regiment and the King of Delhi, the Chief of Swat country and the inhabitants of the City of Peshawar". On 26 June, the two wings of the regiment were disbanded simultaneously at Nowshera and Peshawur.²³ Just over two months later, however, a ressalidar and 50 sowars of the 10th I.C. arrived in Delhi and offered their services to Bahadur Shah. The ressalidar also proposed calling in the rest of the regiment from their homes in the surrounding area, though there is no evidence that he did. His motive, he declared, was to defend the faith and protect the King's throne. But the question of money was also raised, albeit obliquely, when the ressalidar mentioned that he and his men had been forced to abandon all their property, money and arrears of pay.²⁴ Their genuine aims, therefore, were probably twofold: to see the restoration of the Mughal empire *and* to join a service which offered higher pay and greater career opportunities than the British. Given their alleged correspondence with Bahadur Shah, they had surely seen a copy of the proclamation issued in his name shortly after the mutiny at Delhi, promising double pay to all Company soldiers who murdered their officers and transferred their allegiance to him.²⁵

Their commanding officer, Major Verner, had been with the 10th I.C. - and its predecessor, the Cavalry of the Bundelkhand Legion - since 1840, longer than any other commandant of irregular cavalry. During that time he and his men had served in three campaigns, including the 1st Sikh War. At first sight, therefore, it is surprising that that such a familiar officer was not able to stem the spread

²⁰ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

²¹ Return by Maj.-Gen. S. Cotton, 19 April 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 52; Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 172-4; List of corps that Mutinied, 11 Aug 1858, F.C., NAI, Nos. 1753-54 of 30 Dec 1859.

²² Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

²³ List of corps that Mutinied, 11 Aug 1858, F.C., NAI, Nos. 1753-54 of 30 Dec 1859.

²⁴ Petition of Ressalidar Nur Muhammad Khan, 29 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 170.

of disaffection in his regiment. On the other hand, it may have been his influence that prevented his sowars from openly siding with the 55th N.I. in May 1857.

Nasirabad in Rajputana, 300 miles to the south-west of Delhi, was the scene of the next mutiny. The garrison was made up of the 15th and 30th N.I., a battery of native foot artillery and the 1st Bombay Lancers. On 18 May, the commanding officer of the 15th N.I. received information from two sources that some of his sepoys were holding secret meetings at night. He therefore gave orders that the men were not to leave their lines after roll-call. As an additional precaution, a cavalry guard was placed over the guns at night. But in the afternoon of 28 May, twenty-one of the "worst characters" of the 15th N.I., who had secreted their arms in their huts, managed to take possession of the guns before the arrival of the night picket.²⁶ The artillerymen simply stood and watched, though a few protected the lives of their officers.²⁷ The remaining troops were assembled and ordered to recover the guns. The Bombay Lancers, considered the most loyal, made a show of obeying but veered away at the last moment, and thereby caused the death of two of their unsupported European officers. In the opinion of Lieutenant Pierce of the 30th N.I., the Bombay troopers "sympathized" with the mutineers and had "no intention of making any effort to retake the guns".²⁸ Nor did the men of the 15th N.I. who, led by the light company, began to steal over to join their mutinous comrades. In a final effort to save the Colours, Lieutenant-Colonel Shuldham ordered the grenadier company to follow him towards the cavalry. As some attempted to obey, they were mobbed by the rest who opened fire on their fleeing officers. The 30th N.I., meanwhile, was standing firm but they would not attack the mutineers. At dusk, the native officers received a note from the subedar of the 15th N.I. to the effect that unless they joined the mutineers by 8 p.m. they would be fired upon. To prevent further bloodshed, they advised their European officers to quit the station. As the station commander, the cavalry and the officers of the 15th N.I. had already left for Beawur, 35 miles to the south-west, they reluctantly agreed. They were accompanied by four native officers and nine other ranks. The following morning, the subedar-major and another 2-300 sepoys detached themselves from the mutineers and began to march on Beawur. But many were dissuaded by men in the employ of a notorious dacoit (who had been in communication

²⁵ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, pp. 438-9

²⁶ Lt. Col. J.R. Shuldham to the Adj.-Gen., 7 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 55

²⁷ Timbrell Narrative, OIOC, MSS Eur/C201.

²⁸ Lt. T. Pierce to his parents, 27 July 1857, Pierce Letters, BL, Add. MSS 42500, vol. 3, f. 33.

with a disaffected jemadar), and others lost heart when they heard the false rumour that all their officers had been killed. Only the subedar-major and 56 others made it to Beawur where they were disarmed.²⁹

The ringleaders of the mutiny were undoubtedly men of the 15th N.I. They had only recently arrived from Meerut where the 11th N.I. had taken their place. It is fair to assume, therefore, that they were part of the conspiracy to mutiny at their previous station. They arrived, in the words of one officer of the 30th N.I., "ready primed for revolt, and it has only been delayed on account of the great difficulty they experienced in seducing our regiment to join them".³⁰ Part of this difficulty may have been due to the identity of the 30th N.I.'s commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, who had joined the regiment as an ensign and served with it in the 1st Afghan and 2nd Sikh Wars, receiving wounds at both Saudulpur and Chilianwala. Lieutenant-Colonel Shuldham, on the other hand, had been with the 15th for less than three years.³¹

The day after the mutiny at Nasirabad, a detachment of the 4th I.C. and the headquarters of the Hurrianah Light Infantry rose at Hansi, 90 miles to the north-west of Delhi. The timing was partly determined by financial considerations in that the latter corps broke out shortly after the men had received their monthly pay. That the joint mutiny was planned is proven by the fact that Captain Stafford, the Hurrianah L.I.'s commanding officer, was given advance warning by two brothers, a jemadar and the drill-havildar.³² In a knock-on effect, detachments of both regiments mutinied at neaby Sirsa a day or two later. The headquarters of the 4th I.C. had left Hansi on 20 May to join the Commander-in-Chief's force of European and loyal native troops assembling at Kurnaul, south of Ambala, with the intention of retaking Delhi. Its 94 men did good service under Captain Hall and, despite being disarmed and dismounted in August as a precaution, two were promoted for gallant conduct and one received the Order of Merit, 3rd Class, for saving the life of Brigadier Hope Grant.³³ Hall, it should be mentioned, had served in the regiment since 1850. Captain Stafford had been with the Hurrianah L.I. for even longer - 12 years - and this length of service may have saved his life, though it could not prevent his regiment from mutinying.³⁴

Anson died of cholera on 27 May and Major-General Sir Henry Barnard, commanding the Sirhind Division, took control of the troops converging on Delhi. Major-General Thomas Reed of the

²⁹ Lt.-Col. W.C. Campbell to D.A.A.G. Meerut Div., 15 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 56

³⁰ Lt. Pierce to his parents, 1st June 1857, Pierce Letters, BL, Add. MSS 42500, vol. 3, ff. 9-10.

³¹ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

³² Account of mutiny by Capt. W. Stafford, 25 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 45.

³³ Return of the 4th I.C. by Capt. G.B. Hall, 1 April 1858, *ibid.*, p. 47.

Peshawur Division, now the senior Queen's officer in Bengal, was named temporary Commander-in-Chief (pending the arrival of Sir Patrick Grant from Madras). On the day of Anson's death, Brigadier Wilson left Meerut with a mixed force of 1,000 Europeans and, on 30 May, defeated 3,000 rebels at Ghazi-ud-din-nagar on the Hindun river, 10 miles east of Delhi. Wilson gained a second - mainly artillery - victory the following day. On 7 June, the two European-led forces linked hands at Alipur, 10 miles north of Delhi. A day later, the combined force of 5,500 men - henceforth known as the Delhi Field Force - won a hard fought battle at Badli-ki-Serai, six miles from the city, before occupying the site of the former cantonment on a ridge to the north-west. The three-month siege of Delhi had begun, though the increasingly outnumbered Europeans were more properly besieged than besiegers.

Meanwhile a small mutiny had taken place at Mathura, 30 miles north-west of Agra. According to the magistrate Mark Thornhill, the district became disturbed after the arrival of the news from Delhi and the details of the King's proclamation. This manifested itself chiefly in attacks on *banias* (moneylenders) and the ejection of new *zemindars* by their predecessors. But on 30 May, as 460,000 rupees were about to be despatched to Agra Fort, the treasury guard (a company of the 67th N.I. and its replacement, a company of the 44th N.I.) attacked their officers - murdering one - before setting off for Delhi with the money.³⁵ News of the outbreak reached Agra that night and the headquarters of the 44th and 67th N.I. were disarmed the following morning (though some sepoys still made their way to Delhi without arms). Both commanding officers were relatively unfamiliar to their troops: Colonel Haldane, 60, had been with the 44th N.I. for just two years; Lieutenant-Colonel Cotton, 48, had only returned to the 67th in 1856 after 13 years with the Judge Advocate's Department. The mutineers arrived in Delhi on 5 June and promptly handed most if not all of the treasure over to King's rebel government.³⁶ By supplying the rebels with military *and* financial support, they were hoping to secure their own long-term employment prospects. Their chief motive, therefore, was essentially professional.

Lucknow was the next garrison to rise. On 30 May, a sepoy of the 13th N.I. - who had earlier been rewarded by Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner, for assisting in the capture of a spy - told one of his European officers that a mutiny would commence at 9 p.m. in the lines of the 71st N.I., at the Muriaon cantonments three miles north of the city. The message was passed to the Chief

³⁴ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

³⁵ Thornhill to G.F. Harvey, Comm. of Agra Div., 10 Aug 1858, and Thornhill to C.B. Thornhill, Sec. to Govt. N.W.P., 5 June 1857, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, p. 685-90.

³⁶ A spy's return of the number of troops in Delhi, 14 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857-8, XLIV, p. 307.

Commissioner, but such warnings were commonplace and no specific action was taken.³⁷ According to an Oudh artillery officer, treasonable correspondence between the 48th N.I. and relatives of the ex-King of Oudh had recently been intercepted.³⁸ The troops were known to be disaffected and the greater part of H.M. 32nd Regiment and a battery of European foot artillery had already been moved to the native cantonments as a precaution. At the appointed time, however, members of all three infantry regiments mutinied and murdered a number of their officers. Prevented from marching towards the city by the presence of European troops, the mutineers moved off in the direction of the nearby cavalry lines at Mudkipur where they were joined by at least 30 members of the 7th L.C. More followed on 31 May as the remaining cavalry at Lucknow - about 150 sabres - took part in the successful operation to eject the mutineers from Mudkipur. A few native officers and 70 or so sepoy remained faithful and did good work rounding up stray mutineers. Among them was the 71-year-old subedar-major, who told his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Master, that he was aware of the conspiracy to mutiny, but could not say anything for fear of his life.³⁹ It may be significant that Master had only returned to the regiment in October 1855 after eight years with the 11th I.C.

Of the three regular Bengal Native Infantry regiments, around 700 remained loyal, most of them from the 13th and 48th N.I., though a number of the latter were distrusted and subsequently disarmed.⁴⁰ The loyalty of the greater part of the 13th was probably down to Major Bruère, their commanding officer, who had served with the regiment for 25 years. When he was killed defending the Residency on 4 September, his surviving men were genuinely grief-stricken; as a sign of respect they attended his funeral, and some were even prepared to ignore caste concerns by carrying his body to the grave.⁴¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer of the 48th was also a familiar figure, having joined the regiment as an ensign in 1826. Despite the occasional absence on staff duty, he had seen plenty of action with the 48th, notably at Mudki and Ferozeshah during the 1st Sikh War. Palmer's influence may have prevented almost half his regiment from joining the mutineers on 30 May. He later commanded the Regiment of Lucknow, formed around the faithful remnants of the 13th, 48th and 71st N.I. The latter regiment had the smallest number of loyal sepoy - about 100 - and is generally considered to have been the most disaffected. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to learn that the 71st's commanding officer, Colonel

³⁷ Maj. T.F. Wilson, *The Defence of Lucknow* (London, 1858), pp. 1-2; Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, Introd., p. 23.

³⁸ Bonham, *Oude in 1857*, p. 35.

³⁹ Evidence of Lt.-Col. Master, 24 Aug 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. 61.

⁴⁰ Sir H. Lawrence to Canning, 1 June 1857, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, p. 25.

Halford, had only served with it for 18 months. He also happened to be 60, the second eldest regimental C.O. in the Bengal Army; Bruère, by contrast, was 44 and Palmer 49.⁴²

The mutiny at Lucknow was followed by a civil uprising in which green banners - the standard of the prophet Mohammed - were raised and one European clerk was murdered. Though easily suppressed by the city police, evidence soon came to light of "an extensive conspiracy in the city and in the cantonments". A former *tahsildar* (native revenue collector) pointed the finger at Shurruff-ud Dowlah, a senior figure in the court of the ex-King, Wajid Ali Shah, and a prime minister to two of Wajid's predecessors. He was arrested (albeit temporarily), as were two of his siblings, the brother of the ex-King (Mustapha Ali Khan), the Raja of Tulsipur and two members of the Delhi royal family. Shurruff would later become a prominent member of the rebel government in Oudh. A more summary justice was meted out to 22 conspirators, said to have been sent from Benares and elsewhere to corrupt the troops, who were shot after a drumhead court-martial.⁴³ But with all the European troops concentrated in Lucknow, the remaining 15,000 or so native troops in Oudh - including irregulars - had no one to police them and over the next fortnight they mutinied almost to a man. Lawrence was convinced the mutinies had been planned in conjunction with disaffected civilians. "Everything had been conducted with the utmost regularity," he informed Canning, with specific reference to the uprising at Faizabad on 8 June, "the Native civil officers taking prominent places; and the King of Delhi had been proclaimed. In all quarters we hear of similar method and regularity... *This quiet method bespeaks some leading influence.*"⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Rohilkhand, the province to the north-east of Delhi, had also risen in rebellion. On Sunday 31 May, mutinies took place in Bareilly, the capital, and Shahjahanpur, one of the bigger towns. Two days before the outbreak at Bareilly, Khan Bahadur Khan, the descendant of the last Muslim ruler of the province, was visited by members of the native garrison: the 18th and 68th N.I., the 8th I.C. and a battery of native foot artillery. The exact details of the conversation are not known, but the following day Khan told the Commissioner that the regiments would certainly mutiny.⁴⁵ Also on 30 May, Colonel Troup of the 68th N.I. discovered that the artillery pay havildar had addressed a letter to

⁴¹ Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 104.

⁴² Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

⁴³ Maj.-Gen. George Hutchinson, *Narrative of the Mutinies in Oude* (London, 1859), pp. 71-5; Wilson, *The Defence of Lucknow*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, III, pp. 451-2.

⁴⁵ Daily Narrative of Events of Badaun, Bareilly, and Shahjahanpur from 12th May 1857 to 19th July 1857, Bareilly Commissioner's Office, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, V, p. 175.

both native infantry regiments, "urging them by the most sacred oaths to rise and murder their European officers, stating that such had been done at all the other stations, and that if they would not do so, the Hindoos were to consider that they had eaten beef and the Mussulman's pork".⁴⁶ Of the two infantry regiments, the 68th N.I. is said to have been the most disaffected. Along with the artillerymen, its sepoy were at the forefront of the mutiny on 31 May, hunting down and murdering one officer and the quartermaster-sergeant. The men of the 18th N.I., on the other hand, hesitated for some time and only turned when they were threatened by the *golundaze*. Even then they concealed their officers and allowed them to escape (though five were subsequently murdered by rebellious villagers). The most prominent traitor in the 8th I.C. was Mahomed Shafi, the senior ressalidar, who is said to have had an understanding with Khan Bahadur Khan (who, on 31 May, declared himself the ruler of Rohilkhand on behalf of the King of Delhi). But even Shafi could not convince his men to murder their European officers who were allowed to escape to Naini Tal, accompanied by 12 native officers and 11 sowars.⁴⁷ The level of disaffection in a corps can once again be correlated to the identity of its commanding officer. Troup, for example, had served just two years with the 68th; whereas Major Pearson of the 18th had been with the same regiment for the whole of his 27-year career. The commandant of the 8th I.C., Lieutenant Mackenzie, was also relatively familiar, having joined as the adjutant in 1849.⁴⁸

A spate of mutinies took place in early June in garrisons as far apart as Moradabad in Rohilkhand, Benares on the lower Ganges, Nimach in central India, Cawnpore in the Doab, Jhansi in Bundelkhand and Jullundur in the Punjab (see Appendix 2). When news of the Delhi outbreak reached the holy city of Benares on 12 May, it made the large "ruffian population" - many of whom openly carried arms - even more volatile than usual. Fearing a civil uprising, both the commissioner and local brigadier suggested evacuating the troops to the nearby stronghold at Chumar. But this was vetoed by Judge Gubbins and the magistrate, Francis Lind, on the ground that it would put in jeopardy the road, river and telegraph communications between Calcutta and upper India.⁴⁹ The garrison at that stage was composed of the 37th N.I., the Ludhiana Regiment of Sikhs, a wing of the 13th I.C. and half of battery of European artillery. Colonel Gordon was convinced his Sikhs would remain loyal but had "misgivings" about the 37th. As for the irregular cavalry, they had let it be known that they would be passively faithful, but "could not be trusted to charge or fire upon mutineers on the *cartridge* question". Lind

⁴⁶ Troup to the D.A.G., 10 June 1857, *ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

⁴⁷ Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 114, 184, 196.

⁴⁸ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

took this to mean they were at heart as mutinous as the sepoys. Discontent increased with the circulation of rumours that the government was planning to issue bread containing pig and cow bones at a below market price.⁵⁰ On 27 May, a trooper of the 13th I.C. tried to incite the Sikhs to mutiny; but he was promptly handed over to the authorities by a Sikh havildar who was rewarded with promotion to jemadar.⁵¹ Around the same time, a respected subedar in the 37th N.I. informed his commanding officer, Spottiswoode, that he had nothing to fear from the regiment in general, even though it contained some bad men who might try to intimidate the well-disposed into mutinying.⁵²

Matters came to a head, nevertheless, in early June when the outlying stations were ordered to send in their treasure for safekeeping. This was the signal for the 17th N.I. to mutiny at Azimgarh, 50 miles to the north, on 3 June. The news reached Benares the following morning. By now the garrison had been reinforced by 150 men of H.M. 10th Foot (from Dinapore in Bihar) and 60 members of the 1st Madras European Fusiliers, rushed across the Bay of Bengal and on from Calcutta by bullock transport. Present with the vanguard of the 1st M.E.F. was its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel James Neill. It was Neill who persuaded the local commander, Brigadier Ponsonby, to carry out an immediate disarmament of the 37th N.I.⁵³ At the hastily-arranged afternoon parade, the Europeans and Sikhs were still not in position when Spottiswoode ordered his men, by companies, to lodge their muskets in their bells-of-arms. He had got as far as No. 6 Company - and was convinced that the regiment contained a majority of loyal sepoys - when two or three voices called out, "Our officers are deceiving us, they want us to give up our arms, that the Europeans who are coming up may shoot us down!". To calm the men, Spottiswoode galloped away to prevent the advancing Europeans from coming any closer. But no sooner had he returned than shots rang out from the direction of No. 2 Company (fired, in the first instance, by the pay havildar), causing the men to rush towards the bells-of-arms to rearm themselves.⁵⁴ In the confusion of the gun battle that followed, sowars of the 13th I.C. are said to have shot in the direction of the Sikhs, who faced about and returned fire. One Sikh attempted to murder Colonel Gordon, but a faithful havildar intervened, receiving the bullet in his arm. Assuming the Sikhs had mutinied, the European gunners opened fire on them, causing the whole regiment to scatter. The mutineers at once fled the station. But elements from all three native regiments remained loyal,

⁴⁹ Memorandum of the Services of Francis M. Lind, Lind Papers, NAM, 5106-1-36, pp. 1-4.

⁵⁰ Francis Lind's diary entry for 19 May 1857, Lind Papers, NAM, 5105-70-2, p. 62.

⁵¹ Lt. R.W. Glasse to Capt F.J. Nelson, 16 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 32.

⁵² Lt. Col. A.C. Spottiswoode to Brig. J. Christie, 11 March 1858, *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵³ Lt.-Col. J.G. Neill to the Adj.-Gen., 6 June 1857, P.P., H.C., 1857, XXX, p. 479.

including more than 200 Sikhs (some of whom formed the treasury guard) and 14 members of the 37th N.I. guarding the paymaster's compound. Lieutenant Glasse, the adjutant of the Sikhs, thought that the fidelity of the treasury guard, in particular, was proof that the regiment had "no design of joining the plans of the mutineers". But he was also prepared to concede that "a certain number out of such a body, comprising, as it did, several Poorbeahs in the superior ranks, must have cherished a mutinous spirit". In a similar vein, some of the loyal sepoys of the 37th N.I. told Spottiswoode that the "majority of the men were entirely ignorant of the intentions of the turbulent characters" and that more would have remained loyal if they had not been shot at indiscriminately. As proof of this, the company on detached duty at Chunar stayed loyal even after hearing of the mutiny at Benares. The detachment of two companies of Sikhs at Jounpore, on the other hand, rose up and murdered their European officer when they received the news.⁵⁵

The mutiny at Benares is a perfect example of how an evil-disposed minority was able to manipulate the majority by playing on their fears and credulity. The cry that Europeans were coming to do them harm was repeated in too many other mutinies where it was palpably false to be considered a genuine, spur of the moment warning. It had probably been agreed by conspirators beforehand as the best way to win over waverers. But the fact that so many were won over by such unlikely claims is yet more evidence of a breakdown of trust between European officers and their native troops. The confidence of the 37th N.I. in their commanding officer, for example, cannot have been helped by his absence for 20 of the previous 22 years on furlough and detached duty with the Stud Department.⁵⁶

The rising of the troops at Cawnpore on 4-5 June contains yet more evidence of a conspiracy between disaffected soldiers and disgruntled civilians. Having returned from his suspicious tour of military stations (including Delhi and Ambala), Azimullah Khan accompanied Nana Sahib on a visit to Luckow in April 1857. Among the civil officials who received them was Martin Gubbins, the Financial Commissioner of Oudh. He found the Nana "arrogant and presuming", and became suspicious when the Nana departed suddenly for Cawnpore on "urgent business". Sir Henry Lawrence shared Gubbins' suspicions and authorized him to warn Sir Henry Wheeler, commanding at Cawnpore, that the Nana was not to be trusted. The warning was obviously ignored because, on 22 May, at Wheeler's request, Nana Sahib arrived at Cawnpore with two guns and 300 horse to guard the treasury and maintain

⁵⁴ Lt. Col. A.C. Spottiswoode to Brig. J. Christie, 11 March 1858, *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 29-30; Lt. R.W. Glasse to Capt F.J. Nelson, 16 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 32

⁵⁶ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

order.⁵⁷ The only European troops stationed at Cawnpore were 15 invalids from H.M. 32nd Foot and a company of foot artillery. By early June they had been joined by 55 fit members of H.M. 32nd Foot (sent over from Lucknow), 70 soldiers of H.M. 84th Foot and 15 Madras Fusiliers (the first reinforcements to arrive from Calcutta). But they were heavily outnumbered by the native garrison which consisted of the 2nd L.C., the 1st, 53rd and 56th N.I., and two companies of native foot artillery.

By the time Nana Sahib arrived at Cawnpore, the troops were already on the verge of mutinying. According to a sowar of the 2nd L.C. who remained faithful, the arrival of the news from Meerut prompted sepoys and sowars alike to discuss an outbreak.⁵⁸ On 20 May, a fire in the lines of the 1st N.I. was interpreted by Europeans as the "probable signal for revolt", but the presence of the 1st's European officers and the arrival of the European artillery deterred an outbreak.⁵⁹ That night the 2nd L.C. also showed signs of disaffection, excited by a message from a sepoy of the 56th N.I. that the Europeans were on their way to destroy them.⁶⁰ It too came to nothing. Two days later, some of the 1st N.I. were "overheard wildly talking of mutiny & murder, and made a proposal to destroy their officers".⁶¹ Around the same time, a detachment of the 2nd L.C. on treasure escort duty at Fatehpur were heard talking "openly of offering their services to the New Government [at Delhi]".⁶²

After 22 May - according to Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, who took 42 depositions in the course of his investigation into the outbreak at Cawnpore - the corruption of the native troops was conducted by two of the Nana's sowars, Rahim Khan and Muddut Ali. But the 2nd L.C., in particular, were "already ripe for mutiny" and needed "little persuasion". On 1 June, wrote Williams, six of their ringleaders - Subedar Teeka Singh, Havildar-Major Gopal Singh and four sowars - had a secret meeting with the Nana, his brother, Bala Rao, and Azimullah that lasted two hours. It reached the ears of the magistrate, Charles Hillersdon, nonetheless, and when he asked the Nana to account for it, he received the reply that it had been held to ensure the troops remained "firm and loyal".⁶³ Yet on 2 June one of the sowars present at the meeting, Shumsh-ud-din Khan, is said to have told the prostitute Asisun that the Peshwa's reign would commence in a day or two and he would be in a position to fill her room with gold

⁵⁷ M.R. Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh* (London, 1858), pp. 30-1

⁵⁸ Deposition of Sowar Ewuz Khan, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., p. c-ci.

⁵⁹ Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, pp. 28-9.

⁶⁰ Statement of Jemadar Shaikh Salamut Ali, 25 June 1857, Kaye Mutiny Papers, OIOC, H725, p. 569.

⁶¹ Mrs Ewart to her sister, 27 May 1857, Ewart Letters, OIOC, MSS Eur/B267.

⁶² John Sherer to his wife, 31 May 1857, O.P. Bhatnagar (ed.), *Private Correspondence of J.W. Sherer, Collector of Fatehpur* (Allahabad, 1968), p. 2.

⁶³ Memorandum by Lt-Col. Williams, 29 March 1859, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., pp. xliv-v

mohurs.⁶⁴ The following day, according to a prominent Cawnpore citizen, the Nana and his advisers held another secret consultation with the subedars of the cavalry and infantry regiments.⁶⁵ He is probably referring to subedars from the 1st N.I. and 2nd L.C., the two regiments that mutinied during the evening of 4 June. The other two infantry regiments - the 53rd and 56th N.I. - and the two companies of foot artillery did not break out until the following morning. They had been abandoned by their European officers, who had been ordered into Wheeler's hastily-constructed entrenchment for their own safety, and by their native officers, whom Wheeler had asked to report on the temper of their men. According to a sepoy of the 53rd N.I., the mutiny began when the light company of the 53rd and the grenadier company of the 56th "concocted a plot for the seizure of the regimental colours and treasure". But most of the men were not disposed to join them until Wheeler, believing both regiments had already turned, ordered his artillery to open fire on the native lines.⁶⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Williams noted that the 53rd N.I. appeared to have been the "least tainted" and that many of those who deserted and joined their mutinous comrades "did so from fear of being implicated in the consequences of revolt". By far the largest number of faithful sepoys were from the 53rd: 10 native officers, 15 N.C.O.s and 22 sepoys.⁶⁷ One of the officers, Jemadar Shaikh Ali, later insisted that Nana Sahib "was the man who corrupted the troops at Cawnpore: first the 2nd Cavalry and 1st N.I. and then the rest went".⁶⁸

According to Williams' memorandum, a sowar from the 2nd L.C. and a subedar of the 1st N.I. visited Nana Sahib on the morning of 5 June and gave him the option of a kingdom if he joined with them or death if he sided with the British. He is said to have replied: "What have I to do with the British. I am with you." Having sworn to be their chief, he instructed the mutineers to carry the government treasure to the nearby village of Kullianpore, where he would join them for the march to Delhi. The Nana then consulted his advisors as to whether this was the best course of action. Azimullah "pointed out the folly of proceeding to Delhi, where their individual power and influence would necessarily cease". He recommended instead the Nana "recalling the mutineers, taking possession of Cawnpore, and extending his authority as far as he could to the eastward; adding that he was thoroughly acquainted with the resources of the British, that the number of Europeans in India was scarce one-fourth that of the Native

⁶⁴ Deposition by Kunhye Pershad, *ibid.*, p. cxxviii-ix.

⁶⁵ Narrative of Events by Nanukchund, *ibid.*, p. ccxciii.

⁶⁶ Deposition of Sepoy Bhola Khan, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., p.cvi.

⁶⁷ Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, introd., pp. 155-7.

⁶⁸ Statement of Jemadar Shaikh Salamut Ali, 25 June 1857, Kaye Mutiny Papers, OIOC, H725, p. 968

army, and that the latter having mutinied, the former were powerless".⁶⁹ Thus began the three-week siege of Wheeler's entrenchment that was to end in the death of all but a handful of its European garrison.

At Cawnpore, as with so many earlier mutinies, there seems to be some correlation between a regiment's level of disaffection and the relative familiarity of its commanding officer. Lieutenant-Colonel Ewart of the 1st N.I., for example, had known his men for only two years. Much of his previous service had been in the judge advocate's department. That he was considered to be something of a martinet is proven by the way his former sepoys carried out a mock parade before murdering him as he was being carried from the shattered entrenchment on 27 June.⁷⁰ Colonel Stephen Williams had spent even less time with the 56th N.I., the next most disaffected infantry regiment, though he was more regimentally experienced and had seen more active service than Ewart. Major Hillersdon, however, had served all his 20-year career with the 53rd N.I., generally considered to be the least disaffected regiment at Cawnpore. The cavalry regiment - the 2nd L.C. - is the exception to the rule, just as it was at Meerut. It was being temporarily commanded by Major Vibart who, like Hillersdon, had begun his service with the same regiment. However the original corps had been disbanded for cowardice in the face of the enemy in 1840 during the 1st Afghan War. The regiment that mutinied in 1857, therefore, had only been in existence for 15 years. Originally designated the 11th L.C., it was accorded the honour of being renamed the 2nd L.C. after illustrious service at the Battle of Multan in 1848. Vibart had gained particular renown during this action by cutting down a Sikh standard-bearer and capturing a regimental standard. The fact that his former sowars helped to carry his possessions during the ill-fated march to the boats at Sati Chowra Ghat on 27 June indicates that he was not personally unpopular. Yet he was unable to prevent his regiment from mutinying.⁷¹

Nana Sahib's involvement in the Cawnpore outbreak is significant for a number of reasons. In the first place, his pre-mutiny machinations indicate the existence of a plot for a rebellion by both civilians and sepoys that pre-dated the cartridge question by almost a year. Sitaram Bawa's claim that the conspiracy only got off the ground after the annexation of Oudh is entirely consistent with the fact that two of the

⁶⁹ Memorandum by Lt-Col. Williams, 29 March 1859, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., pp. xlv

⁷⁰ Deposition of Sowar Ewuz Khan, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., p. ciii.

⁷¹ Service Records, Hodson Index, NAM.

regiments then stationed at Lucknow - the 19th and 34th N.I. - were at the forefront of the disaffection in 1857.⁷² In this context, the cartridge controversy was a heaven-sent opportunity for the conspirators to unite Hindu and Muslim sepoys against their European masters. It may be no coincidence that the rumour about bone dust being added to flour originated at Cawnpore (see Chapter Seven). Then there is Sitaram Bawa's point that the "military classes" were enticed by the promise that the old days of licence would be restored.⁷³ This is important because it identifies plunder as a motive for mutiny. By 1856, with most of India under the heel of the British, the opportunity for native soldiers to supplement their relatively meagre pay with plunder had all but vanished. Only the replacement of the British with native rulers would bring back this cycle of war and rapine. Lastly the mutineers' offer of a kingdom or death to Nana Sahib confirms that they were the real power behind the rebel movement (just as they were at Delhi). Yet only a handful of mutineers tried to set themselves up as rulers in their own right: possibly because they realized that only legitimate princes had a chance of gaining enough grass-roots support to defeat the British; and possibly because their chief aim had always been to attach themselves to a viable employer.

Of the six ruling princes named by Sitaram Bawa as party to the Nana's conspiracy - the Nizam of Hyderabad, Maharaja Holkar of Indore, Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, and the Maharajas of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Jammu - not one openly rebelled during the Indian mutiny. But that was probably because they had the most to lose. The British certainly suspected more than one of them of disloyalty and came to the conclusion that they were waiting to see how events unfolded before they committed themselves. These suspicions were partly founded upon the inability or unwillingness of these princes to prevent their own troops from mutinying. Most of the European-officered Gwalior Contingent mutinied in the first two weeks of June 1857, as did a cavalry regiment of the Hyderabad Contingent. Two of Holkar's native-controlled regiments rose and attacked the British Residency at Indore on 1 July, and the whole of the Jodhpur Legion turned against its officers in late August (see Appendices 2 and 3 for details). Referring to the first three of these mutinies in a letter of 23 July, the Governor of Madras wrote: "Holkar's and Scindiah's conduct appears questionable, at all events they appear to have been shaken for a short time but subsequently to have recovered themselves & remained staunch... The

⁷² Statement of Sitaram Bawa to H.B. Devereux, 28 Jan 1858, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, I, pp. 372-6.

⁷³ Ibid.

Nizam [of Hyderabad] appears true at present but from all I can learn he is a wretched weak creature who will certainly go wrong if his present Minister, Salar Gang, should not be got rid of."⁷⁴

The mutinies at Gwalior and Scindia's reaction are particularly revealing. In late May, Scindia told the British political agent, Major Macpherson, that the worst affected of his contingent (most of whom were *purbias* from Bengal) had been holding "nightly meetings for administering pledges" and been "boasting of the destruction of the English power and of all Christians" since the arrival of news from Meerut. Furthermore "emissaries and letters from Delhi, Calcutta, and other centres of the revolt" had been circulating in Gwalior. Six of the former had been arrested and discharged as deserters from Bengal regiments, said Macpherson, but nothing more serious could be proved against them. Scindia's own inquiries as to the cause of the revolt had revealed a "general hostility to our rule" with the "cartridge question being declared to be merely its pretext". Macpherson added:

Scindia and the *Dewan* [chief minister]...said most confidently that, as no reigning prince of influence had joined the revolt, and as its leaders at Delhi were plainly unequal to their great enterprise, but especially as Benares, Gya (Gaya), and the other centres of Hindu opinion, to which all had looked, had abstained from sanctioning any religious pretext alleged for it, when Delhi should be crushed, the belief in our ascendancy would at once return, and the revolt be arrested.⁷⁵

This may explain why Scindia never sided with his mutinous troops, despite severe pressure for him to do so after Macpherson and the other European survivors left Gwalior for Agra on 17 June. "I may observe," wrote Macpherson, "that had Scindia, in this the dark hour of the storm, supported by the Dewan alone with the two chiefs of his troops, yielded to the pressure of the opinions and temptations which impelled him to strike against us, the character of the revolt had been entirely changed... But he believed in our final triumph, and that it was his true policy to strain his power to contribute to it." For four months, the troops "menaced, beseeched, dictated, wheedled, and insulted Scindia by turns". He, in turn, used every stratagem available to keep them at Gwalior until the British had concentrated enough forces to retake Delhi. Then, said, Macpherson, he "despatched them to rout by our arms".⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Lord Harris to Robert Vernon Smith, 23 July 1857, Lyveden Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F231/5.

⁷⁵ Major S.C. Macpherson to Sir R. Hamilton, 10 Feb 1858, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, pp. 166-189

⁷⁶ Ibid.

According to Ahsanullah Khan, the mutinous troops at Delhi persuaded the King to send *shukkas* (messages) to a number of princes - including the Maharajas of Gwalior, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Jammu - "calling upon them to come over with their troops and munitions of war". But none of the above four replied because they had "no inclination to side with the King".⁷⁷ However Scindia might have been hedging his bets. In a letter attributed to him of 18 November 1857, he congratulated the rebel Nawab of Banda for having reclaimed his former domain. "You have beaten and driven out the English," he wrote. "This is good news to me. Tell me of whoever comes to fight with you and I will give you assistance with my army... I hear that the Rewa Raja has allowed the English to stay with him. At this I am much displeased... I have published your name from this to Delhi."⁷⁸ Such behaviour was certainly in line with Maratha diplomatic tradition: during the 2nd Maratha War the Peshwa, Baji Rao, was an official ally of the Company but kept in regular contact with its enemies, the Maharajas of Gwalior and Nagpur.⁷⁹

Former rulers - such as the Nawabs of Farruckabad and Banda, the Raja of Assam, and the families of the late Rajas of Kolhapur, Satara and Jhansi - had less to lose and were more willing to risk rebellion. The young Raja of Assam, for example, was arrested and sent out of his province in September 1857 after being implicated in a plot to incite the 1st Assam Light Infantry to mutiny.⁸⁰ The extent to which the Rani was complicit in the outbreak at Jhansi, on the other hand, is much disputed. D.V. Tahmankar, her best known biographer, is convinced that her "agents moved about freely and kept her informed of the preparations which were being made for a rising". When Nana Sahib, her former playmate, arrived in nearby Kalpi in early 1857, writes Tahmankar, "he was met by the Ranees men, though the British officials at Jhansi knew nothing of his visit".⁸¹ By late May, the deputy superintendent at Jhansi is said to have obtained "private information... that the Ranees and the troops were one and that some treachery was intended".⁸² A few days later, the officer commanding at Nowgong received letters from both the Jhansi superintendent and his deputy, informing him that they had learned from separate sources that Lakshman Rao, one of the Rani's servants, "was doing his best to induce the men of the 12th [N.I.] to

⁷⁷ Supplementary Evidence of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 274.

⁷⁸ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, IV, pp. 626-7.

⁷⁹ Dirk H.A. Kolff, 'The End of an *Ancien Régime*: Colonial War in India 1798-1818', J.A. de Moor and H.L. Wesseling (eds.), *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 25-6.

⁸⁰ Lt.-Col. S.F. Hannay to Major Ross, 13 March 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, pp. 16-17.

⁸¹ D.V. Tahmankar, *The Ranees of Jhansi* (London, 1958), p. 52.

⁸² List of Rebels, F.C., NAI, 1354-5 of 30 Dec 1859, No. 213.

mutiny", though it was "not known whether the Ranee authorized these proceedings".⁸³ Sepoy Aman Khan later claimed that the mutiny on 5/6 June was sparked by the receipt of a letter from Delhi stating that the Jhansi troops would be regarded as "outcastes" and men who "had lost their faith" unless they joined the rebellion. According to Khan, "the insurgents previous to the mutiny did not consult the Ranee".⁸⁴ But Khan may not have been privy to the conspiracy. As for the other former rulers, it is surely no coincidence that by far the most serious mutiny in the Bombay Army was perpetrated by sepoys of the 27th N.I. at Kolhapur. The Nawab of Farrukhabad, on the other hand, appears to have taken no part in any pre-mutiny plotting and only agreed to set himself up as subordinate ruler to the King of Delhi when mutineers threatened to kill him if he did not.⁸⁵

Other influential rebels included large landholders who had had their estates broken up by revenue settlements of the Company. The most notable was Raja Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur in Bihar, the recruiting heartland of the Bengal Native Infantry. S.B. Chaudhuri is not entirely convinced that Kunwar Singh incited the three regiments at Dinapore - the 7th, 8th and 40th N.I. - to mutiny on 25 July 1857.⁸⁶ Yet the circumstantial evidence is compelling: the three regiments made straight for Jagdishpur and put themselves under the Raja's command; they were joined, three weeks later, by the mutinous 5th I.C. from Bhagalpur. Another disgruntled landholder was the Raja of Mainpuri who had forfeited 149 of his 200 villages as a result of the British land settlement. He was indirectly implicated in the rising of the 10th N.I. at Fatehgarh on 18 June in that a letter from the Raja's uncle, exhorting the sepoys of the 10th to mutiny, was intercepted two weeks earlier.⁸⁷ The Raja himself later petitioned the King of Delhi for troops, but the mutinous officers insisted that none could be sent until the British had been driven from the ridge.⁸⁸

Within six weeks of the outbreak at Meerut, nearly half the native corps in the regular Bengal Army had mutinied, partially mutinied or been disbanded. They included: 4 out of 10 Bengal Light Cavalry regiments; 39 out of 74 Bengal Native Infantry regiments; 6 out of 18 Bengal Irregular Cavalry regiments; 7 out of 18 companies of Bengal Foot Artillery; 1 out of 4 troops of Bengal Horse Artillery;

⁸³ Capt. P. Scot to the D.A.G., 28 July 1857, P.P., 1857-8, XLIV, p. 183.

⁸⁴ Deposition of Sepoy Aman Khan, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, pp. 26-7.

⁸⁵ Narrative of what occurred at Farrukhabad, *ibid.*, V, pp. 730-3.

⁸⁶ Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion*, p. 32.

⁸⁷ List of Notable Rebels, F.C., NAI, Nos. 1354-5 of 30 Dec 1859, No. 83.

and 6 out of 12 companies of Bengal Sappers and Miners. They had been joined in rebellion by three local corps, the whole of the Oudh Irregular Force (3 cavalry regiments, 10 infantry regiments, 4 companies of foot artillery, 2 battalions of military police), the Malwa Contingent, the Bharatpur Legion, and most of the Gwalior Contingent (1 out of 2 cavalry regiments, 6 out of 7 infantry regiments and 3 out of 4 companies of foot artillery). A further three Bengal Light Cavalry regiments, 13 Bengal Native Infantry regiments, three Bengal Irregular Cavalry regiments, seven companies of Bengal Foot Artillery, two troops of Bengal Horse Artillery and two companies of Bengal Sappers and Miners had also been disarmed by this time. The uprisings reached their peak during the week of 3-10 June when mutinies took place in 15 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry, three regiments of Bengal Light Cavalry, four regiments of Bengal Irregular Cavalry, five companies of Bengal Foot Artillery, one company of Bengal Horse Artillery, one Gwalior infantry regiment, one local regiment and most of the Oudh Irregular Force.⁸⁹ The fact that the mutinies began in May and peaked in June, the height of the hot season, was almost certainly deliberate. European troops were at a disadvantage in hot weather and many were stationed in the hills.⁹⁰

In the majority of cases - as if in confirmation of Ahsanullah's claim that it was agreed by the conspirators beforehand - the mutinous regiments headed for Delhi. By mid-August - according to one British spy - the rebel army at Delhi was composed of 20 and a half regiments of infantry and three and a half regiments of cavalry, giving a grand total of 17,975 mutineers and 33 guns.⁹¹ But not all the rebel troops made it to Delhi. Some, notably in the Punjab, were intercepted and destroyed en route.⁹² Others coalesced around alternative rebel authorities: such as Nana Sahib who was proclaimed the new Peshwa at Bithur on 1 July; Birjis Qadir, the younger son of Wajid Ali, who was crowned King of Oudh at Lucknow on 5 July; Raja Koer Singh of Jugdishpur in Bihar; and the Nawabs of Banda and Farruckhabad. In each case, however, the mutinous troops were anxious to set up some form of alternative government to the British.

This determination to transfer their allegiance to a native employer was motivated by considerations that were both political and professional in nature: political in the sense that they were seeking to replace their colonial overlords with traditional native rulers; professional in that many of them,

⁸⁸ Supplementary Evidence of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 276.

⁸⁹ See Appendix 2 for details.

⁹⁰ 3 of the 4 European regiments in the Sirhind Division, for example, were in hill stations.

⁹¹ Letter from Fulleh Mahomed Khan, 13 Aug 1857, Spy Letters, NAM, 6807-138.

particularly the conspirators, hoped that service under these new employers would be more rewarding than it had become under the British. They were, as Kolff has put it, simply exercising their rights under the terms of the traditional military labour market. "To take leave of a master, whose 'salt one had eaten'," writes Kolff, "did neither amount to a breach of faith nor to the end of a relationship." He gives the example of a battalion of Bombay sepoy which, having arrived in Poona in July 1805 one thousand strong, had less than 400 men six months later.⁹³ By 1857, however, the East India Company had so successfully dominated the military labour market that it was no longer possible for sepoy to pick and choose their employer with impunity. The only way to create an alternative was to destroy British power. In this sense it was all or nothing which may explain why, according to Ahsanullah, the mutineers decided in advance "to kill all Europeans including women and children, in every cantonment".⁹⁴ Such atrocities would tar whole regiments with the same mutinous brush and help to ensure that the less enthusiastic sepoy joined the rebellion because they no longer had anything to lose. "There were some who remained faithful," wrote Sitaram Pandey, "and there were still more whose fate it was to be in a regiment that mutinied. These had no desire to rebel against the *Sirkar*, but feared that no allowance would be made for them when so many others had gone wrong. This was well understood by those who instigated the mutiny. Their first object was to implicate an entire regiment so that everyone had to throw in their lot with them."⁹⁵

The argument that the ringleaders were seeking to replace one employer with another is supported by the way in which many mutinous corps retained their command structure and cohesiveness. Stokes observed that the "problem of re-establishing discipline and internal order within a unit" could be "formidable", partly because the mutinous faction was usually "composed of men from the ranks". This was true in a number of cases, notably the mutinies of the 3rd L.C. at Meerut, the 6th N.I. at Allahabad, the 12th N.I. at Nowgong and Jhansi, the 28th N.I. at Shahjahanpur, the 32nd N.I. (two companies) at Deogurh, the 37th N.I. at Benares, the 53rd and 56th N.I. at Cawnpore, the 71st at Lucknow, and Scindia's Contingent at Gwalior. But in many more instances, native officers took an active part in the plotting and perpetration of mutiny. These ringleaders include: the subedar-majors of the 1st, 34th, 41st, 51st, 69th N.I.; subedars in the 2nd and 4th L.C., 5th, 10th, 12th, 15th, 17th, 20th, 22nd, 34th, 42nd, 50th, 52nd and

⁹² The mutineers from Sialkot - the 46th N.I. and a wing of the 9th L.C. - were destroyed almost to a man by Nicholson's moveable column on 10 July 1857.

⁹³ Kolff, 'The end of an *Ancien Régime*', *Imperialism and War*, pp. 26-7.

⁹⁴ Supplementary Evidence of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 268.

⁹⁵ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 174.

72nd N.I., 5/7th and 6/8th F.A., 6th, 7th and 10th Oudh I.I., 3rd and 7th Gwalior Infantry, Mhairwarrah Battalion and 2nd Punjab I.C.; resaldars in the 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 14th and 15th I.C., 2nd Oudh I.C. and Nagpore I.C; and jemadars in the 5th, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 50th and 70th N.I., and 1st Hyderabad Cavalry.

Many of these native officers were working hand in glove with other non-commissioned and sepoy conspirators. But no sooner had a regiment mutinied than its remaining native officers tended either to take, or to be given, control. Lal Khan, a Muslim subedar of the 3rd L.C., is said to have been elected generalissimo of the Meerut brigade with Bulcho Singh, a Hindu subedar from the 20th N.I., as his second-in-command.⁹⁶ They may have been the same two subedars who, according to the courtier Munshi Jiwan Lal, "formally tendered the services of the [mutinous] troops to the King" on 11 May. A day later, the "whole body of native officers" of the Meerut regiments presented *nazzars* (tribute money) to the King and "described themselves as faithful soldiers awaiting his orders". But they were the real power in Delhi, as was proven by the King's acquiescence to their demand that he should proceed through the streets on an elephant to "allay the fears of the citizens and order the people to resume their ordinary occupations".⁹⁷ The political influence of native officers was also evident in Lucknow where they only agreed to the coronation of Birjis Qadir as King of Oudh on the following conditions: orders from Delhi were to override any other authority; the King's *wazir* (chief minister) was to be selected by the army; officers were not to be appointed to the mutinous regiments without the consent of the army; double pay was to be issued from the date of their leaving the English service; and no one was to interfere with the "treatment and disposal of those who were friends to the English".⁹⁸ The native officers were demanding not just financial reward, but professional autonomy *and* a say in the political process as well.

Some native officers even set themselves up as *de facto* rulers. Shortly after the mutiny of two companies of the 56th N.I. at Hamirpur on 14 June, their senior subedar, Ali Bux, proclaimed the rule of the Mughal dynasty with himself as the King of Delhi's agent. Three days later, Bux ordered the execution of the magistrate, Lloyd, and another European official.⁹⁹ In the Fatehgarh district, Subedar Thakur Pandey of the 41st N.I. assumed administrative control of the eastern division, while two other subedars "formed a kind of Appellate Court and appear to have been invested with the same powers as

⁹⁶ *United Service Magazine*, August 1857, p. 475.

⁹⁷ Metcalfe (trans.), *Two Native Narratives*, pp. 83-6.

⁹⁸ Statement of Mir Wajid Ali, 8 July 1859, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, II, p. 85.

⁹⁹ List of Notable Rebels, F.C., NAI, Nos. 1354-5 of 30 Dec 1859, No. 248.

the Lieutenant-Governor of the N.W.P. had under the British rule".¹⁰⁰ All three were under the nominal authority of the reluctant Nawab of Farrukhabad.

But most native officers were content to monopolize the command structure of mutinous regiments, brigades and even armies. Following the mutiny at Nimach, for example, Subedar Shaikh Riadut Ali of the 1st L.C. was appointed brigadier. He "issued orders in the name of the King of Delhi," wrote Gimlette, "and promoted subedars and jemadars to be colonels and majors". Subedar Gurres Ram of the 72nd N.I. was given command of his regiment, and a jemadar in the 1st L.C. was made the brigade major. Even after the defeat of the Nimach Brigade at Najafgarh in late August, a portion of the 72nd N.I. kept together under the command of another subedar, Hira Singh, who was promoted to the rank of colonel.¹⁰¹ At Cawnpore, Subedar Tika Singh of the 2nd L.C., the senior conspirator, was given the rank of general and command of the rebel cavalry, while the subedar-major of the 1st N.I. controlled the infantry.¹⁰² The 56th N.I. was initially led by its havildar-major; but he was replaced by a subedar after the 1st N.I. had "established it as a rule that men who joined from Furlough should get their places and promotion". A jemadar commanded the 53rd N.I., probably because no subedar was available.¹⁰³ Colonel Lennox of the 22nd N.I. named Subedar Dulip Singh of his own regiment and the ressalidar of the troop of 15th I.C. as the chief instigators of the mutiny at Fyzabad.¹⁰⁴ Gimlette added: "The Subedar Major of the 22nd ...assumed command of the station...and ordinary routine was carried on. Subedars became Majors and Captains. Jemadars became Lieutenants, and all with these ranks annexed the horse, carriages and property of their predecessors."¹⁰⁵ Even at Jhansi, where the chief conspirators were identified as four sepoys, the rebel leaders were native officers: Ressaldar Faiz Ali of the 14th I.C. and Subedar Lal Bahadur of the 12th N.I. Ali was allegedly responsible for the infamous massacre of 57 Christian men, women and children on 8 June.¹⁰⁶

The native officer to achieve the greatest prominence during the mutiny was Subedar Bakht Khan of 6th/8th Foot Artillery which mutinied at Bareilly on 31 May. One of the chief conspirators, Bakht Khan was in command when the Bareilly mutineers - augmented by the 28th and 29th N.I. from Shahjahanpur

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Nos. 118, 119 and 120.

¹⁰¹ Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 36, 187-9.

¹⁰² Statement of Sowar Jahangir Khan, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, IV, pp. 501-2; Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 72.

¹⁰³ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, IV, p. 669; Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, II, Introd., p. 159.

¹⁰⁴ Statement by Col. W.G. Lennox, 1 Aug 1857, Faizabad Mutiny, NAM, 5204-73.

¹⁰⁵ Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 121.

and Moradabad respectively - arrived in Delhi on 2 July. At a subsequent audience with the King, Bakht Khan said that he had come with 400,000 rupees and that his men had been given six month's pay in advance. He added that he did not require any financial assistance and would pay the balance of his money into the King's treasury if the rebels were victorious. He also promised to impose discipline if he was made Commander-in-Chief of the rebel army and the King agreed. Bakht Khan replaced four ineffectual royal princes - Mirza Mogul, Mirza Kizr Sultan, Mirza Abu Bakr and Mirza Abdulla - at the head of the rebel army, though Mirza Mogul, the King's eldest surviving son, stayed on as his Adjutant-General. But Bakht Khan's own tenure failed to dislodge the Europeans from the Delhi ridge and, on 23 August, after accusations that he had been negotiating with the enemy, he was replaced in supreme command by a 12-man committee (six nominated by the King and six by the rebel officers).¹⁰⁷

Native officers were not always ascendant in rebel regiments. According to Major Macpherson, Subedar-Major Amanut Ali of the 1st Infantry, Gwalior Contingent, was promoted to "general" by the rebels at Gwalior, "but the most violent sepoys in fact commanded". He added: "These troops spent their whole time in council, *punchayets*, courts, and deputations; and the Maharajah [Scindia] was compelled to receive daily...one of the latter, composed of officers from every corps with privates delegated to watch them..."¹⁰⁸ This power-sharing arrangement was similar to the *punchayet* system which had held sway in the *Khalsa* (Sikh army) prior to the 1st Sikh War (not to mention the military committees which had dominated the parliamentary army after the English Civil War), and probably explains why Scindia found it so easy to play one faction of the Gwalior Contingent off against another. Occasionally other ranks assumed positions of authority. After the mutiny at Allahabad on 6 June, the 200 or so members of the 6th N.I. who made for Cawnpore were commanded by a jemadar, but with a sepoy as his acting havildar-major.¹⁰⁹ When Jemadar Sitaram Pandey, on leave from the 63rd N.I., was taken prisoner in Oudh by a band of mutineers, he noted that the "leader of this party was a *sepoy*, although there were two *subedars* with it".¹¹⁰ Also, according to the official record of notable rebels, Juggut Singh of the 52nd N.I. "became a leader of the rebels and was killed in May 1858 with 13 of his followers".¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, pp. 22-3; 26-7; List of Notable Rebels, F.C., NAI, Nos. 1354-5 of 30 Dec 1859, No. 229.

¹⁰⁷ Metcalfe (trans.), *Two Native Narratives*, pp. 63, 89, 96, 133-5, 204-5.

¹⁰⁸ Macpherson to Hamilton, 10 Feb 1858, Rizvi (ed.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, pp. 166-189.

¹⁰⁹ Deposition by Drummer John Fitchett, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., p. liii.

¹¹⁰ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 165.

¹¹¹ List of Notable Rebels, F.C., NAI, Nos. 1354-5 of 30 Dec 1859, No. 176/

Overall, however, former native officers dominated the military hierarchy of rebel regiments: partly because so many of them had taken an active part in the pre-mutiny plotting; but mainly because most mutineers realized that adherence to military rank was the best and fairest way to maintain regimental cohesion and discipline. The willingness with which many sepoy conspirators were prepared to submit to the post-mutiny authority of their military superiors is surely proof that professional considerations were paramount. The sensitivity of the rank and file towards service issues like seniority, for example, was much in evidence. In late August, the native officers of the 3rd N.I. petitioned the King of Delhi on behalf of the regiment's other ranks (N.C.O.s and sepoys) who objected to the fact that latecomers to the Royal service had recently been placed on the same general list of seniority that applied to those who had been fighting all summer. Formerly, said the petition, these late arrivals had been "kept on as supernumeraries, in the grades in which they had formerly served".¹¹²

Interestingly enough, a rough estimate of the number of Bengal Native Infantrymen who either mutinied, were disarmed and disbanded, or remained loyal, indicates that native officers were over represented in the latter category.¹¹³ This is not surprising, given their age and proximity to a Company pension. More remarkable is the significant proportion of native officers involved in the planning and execution of mutiny, and the conduct of military operations thereafter. Prior to the mutiny, Napier and Lawrence highlighted the inadequacy of career prospects for native officers and the danger of thwarting legitimate ambition. Both were ignored, but the accuracy of their predictions seems to have been proven by the significant role played by native officers during the mutiny. According to Major O'Brien of the 6th Oudh I.I., a "large body" of the native officers of his regiment, the 22nd N.I. and the 15th I.C. were "active instigators of the mutiny" at Faizabad on 8 June. He added: "The prizes they hope to gain by being put in the position the European officers formerly held, & having perhaps from one to four hundred rupees pay per mensem, being in my opinion one of their chief inducements to side with the rebels."¹¹⁴

Long-term financial reward and regimental cohesion went hand in hand. The mutineers could hardly expect to be employed as a body by the restored native rulers unless they retained their discipline.

¹¹² Petition of the commissioned officers of the 3rd N.I., 26 Aug 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 170.

¹¹³ Mutinied: 392 native officers and 36,358 other ranks. Disarmed: 331 native officers and 21,314 other ranks. Disbanded: 41 native officers and 2,151 other ranks. Remained loyal: 150 native officers and 5,598 other ranks. These figures do not include men on furlough who later returned to their regiments. For details see Appendix 3.

¹¹⁴ Major Charles O'Brien, 'Account of the Mutiny of the Troops at Fyzabad', Kaye Mutiny Papers, OIOC, H725, p. 573.

Their political influence was also dependent upon an outward display of unity - as were their lives in that only disciplined troops had a hope of defeating European regiments in the field. A host of accounts confirm this retention of regimental organization. When the 11th and 20th N.I. arrived at Delhi on the morning of 11 May, one European officer described them as "coming up in military formation,...in subdivisions of companies with fixed bayonets and sloped arms".¹¹⁵ As the Nimach mutineers marched towards Delhi, via Agra, the infantry were in front, followed by the artillery and cavalry, with advance and rear guards "told off, and Cavalry flanking parties thrown out".¹¹⁶ At Faizabad the "band played at mess every night", guards "were posted, and parades ordered at usual".¹¹⁷ Even the internal disciplinary system of mutinous regiments was similar to that which had operated under the British. When a sepoy of the 11th N.I. was found asleep on sentry duty at Delhi in July, he was tried and found guilty by a court-martial of all the regiment's native officers. The only deviation from the British system was that the Commander-in-Chief, Bakht Khan, was asked to award a punishment instead of confirming the court's.¹¹⁸

Tapti Roy commented on a similar degree of organisation among the rebel troops in Bundelkhand (the majority of whom were from the splendidly-disciplined Gwalior Contingent):

A series of orders issued practically every day from Kalpi in the name of Tantia Topey [Nana Sahib's military commander] strikingly illustrates the meticulous planning and organization that went into the soldiers' actions. A strict hierarchy of ranks was specified for each regiment with a brigadier-major in command, followed by a subahdar-major, havildar-major, jamadar, naik and the soldiers... Regular inspection, muster rolls and daily drill were compulsory. A change of guards at 10 a.m., 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. was also mandatory. For hearing representations or dispensing justice, periodic courts represented by one soldier, one sardar and jamadars of infantry and artillery together with moulavies [Muslim scholars] and pandits [learned Brahmins] were summoned... Every offence would call for an appropriate punishment... Provisions were made for the families of those injured or killed. Strict orders were given for enlistment, recruitment and discipline. Of the soldiers who escaped from Jhansi, five were apprehended or hanged.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Examination of Capt. Forrest, 5 Feb 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 186.

¹¹⁶ Gimlette, *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 36.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 121.

¹¹⁸ Petition of the Officers of the 11th N.I., 16 July 1857, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 162.

¹¹⁹ Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, p. 64-5.

This professionalism was evident when the Bundelkhand rebels went into action. The assistant magistrate who was present during Tantia Topi's successful siege of Chirkhari, in early 1858, noted: "They had their bugle calls during the last grand assault, and each separate band of matchlock-men was led on and performed its task under the tuition evidently of some of the smartest sepoys who had been instructed by us in the art of war. They had their hospital doolies [litters], and they appeared to have a large and well regulated bazar with abundance of supplies. They, in short, displayed all the active energies of the battlefield."¹²⁰ Even during the defeat of the rebels at Kunch in May 1858, Sir Hugh Rose, the British commander, was moved to praise the professionalism and courage of the skirmishers of the 52nd N.I. who "covered the retreat very well..., facing about kneeling and firing with great coolness".¹²¹

The importance of military discipline and financial incentives was recognized by all rebel governments. On 6 July, Nana Sahib issued a series of proclamations detailing the internal organization of regiments and their officers' monthly rates of pay: colonels would receive 750 rupees, majors 500 rupees, adjutants 250 and quartermasters 150. The latter pair would also receive their (unspecified) pay as subedars; the other subedars in command of companies would be given an additional allowance of 30 rupees. Provision was also made for pensions to be paid to retired and disabled soldiers, and the families of those killed in battle.¹²² But as pay was being distributed in early July, after the destruction of the Europeans at Cawnpore, the rebel troops began "quarrelling about the rewards" and "General Tika Singh" and his men went to see the Nana at Bithur to insist on their share of the treasure.¹²³ Their demands must have been met because the Nana returned to Cawnpore and - according to a sowar in the 2nd L.C. - distributed two months' pay.¹²⁴

The Delhi Proclamation, issued in the name of the King in mid-May, promised to pay Company sepoys 10 rupees a month and sowars 30 if they switched their allegiance to him.¹²⁵ *Ishtihars* (administrative notes) specifying the organization and pay of troops were regularly issued at Delhi. One such, published on 6 July, stated that there would be one colonel as commanding officer, one major as second-in-command and one adjutant for every regiment of infantry and cavalry. "Duties and

¹²⁰ J.H. Carne to the Sec. to the Govt. of India, 4 March 1858, quoted in Roy, *ibid.*, p. 64.

¹²¹ Rose to Lord Elphinstone, 28 June 1858, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 6A/4

¹²² S.C., NAI, Nos. 86-9 of 31 July 1857.

¹²³ Narrative of Events by Nanukchund, Forrest (ed.), *State Papers*, III, Appx., pp. cclxxxiii-ccclvii.

¹²⁴ Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, IV, pp. 500-1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 438-9.

emoluments commensurate with each rank were also spelled out."¹²⁶ According to Mainodin, *perwanahs* (warrants) were extorted daily from the King and addressed to Bengal regiments, promising monthly salaries of 30 rupees to sepoy and 50 to sowars if they joined the King's army. "In every instance," recalled Mainodin, "the King's *perwanah* had the effect of causing the soldiers to mutiny and make their way to Delhi. At the sight of the King's *perwanah* the men who had fought for the English forgot the past, in the desire to be re-established under a native sovereign."¹²⁷

Such generous rates of pay, however, were not realistic. The King had no treasury in May 1857 and the new government's fund-raising efforts could not keep pace with its expenses. On 28 May, an altercation broke out between the native officers of the 3rd L.C. and the Delhi regiments over the government's offer of nine rupees for sowars and seven for sepoy. The cavalry are said to have demanded 30 rupees with no deductions, while the infantry were prepared to accept their old pay. "The Meerut sowars accused the Delhi regiments of having enriched themselves by plunder," recorded Munshi Jiwan Lal, "whereas the Meerut men had by their good behaviour reaped nothing... The foot sepoy replied that the Meerut men were rebellious and utterly bad." The volatile atmosphere was finally defused when the King's servants promised the cavalry 20 rupees a month.¹²⁸ But the financial situation at Delhi steadily worsened, despite the occasional donation of Company money to the King's treasury by newly-arrived mutineers. In an undated letter, the King instructed his son, Mirza Mughal, not to accept any more applications for enlistment in the royal army by non-Company troops because there was no money to pay them. The regular forces in Delhi had not even brought enough treasure for their own expenses, he explained, and it was impossible to collect the land revenue until the country had been pacified. Therefore only those irregulars who were financially self-sufficient for at least two months were to be given permission to come to Delhi. They would be compensated when order had been re-established, but only after the pay arrears of regular troops had been dealt with.¹²⁹ These latter had become so acute by early September that the army was threatening to plunder the city unless its pay demands - said to be 573,000 rupees a month - were met. A partial payment was made on 2 September, but only enough to give each sepoy one rupee and each sowar two.¹³⁰ The rebel troops at Delhi had another reason to regret their change of employer. According to the spy Jat Mall, the wounded

¹²⁶ Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, p. 53-4.

¹²⁷ Metcalfe (trans.), *Two Native Narratives*, p. 60.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

¹²⁹ King of Delhi to Mirza Mughal, undated, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 172.

¹³⁰ Metcalfe (trans.), *Two Native Narratives*, pp. 215-17.

"contrasted the neglect with which they were treated in Delhi, with the care they would have experienced under similar circumstances had they been fighting for the English".¹³¹

At Lucknow, too, the rebel government was unable to redeem its promises of pay. The official salaries ranged from 1,000 rupees for colonels and 165 for subedars to 30 for troopers and 12 for sepoy. But according to *The Bengal Hurkaru*, these figures were "purely nominal" as no man had "yet received full salary for any month".¹³² Firoz Shah, the cousin of the King of Delhi, who took charge of the insurrection at Mandesur in the state of Gwalior in August, promised to pay his sepoy 15 rupees a month. By late September, however, money was scarce and pay had been reduced to the pre-mutiny level of seven rupees.¹³³

But the inability of rebel governments to make good their pledges over pay does not undermine the importance of financial incentives as a motive to mutiny. "I consider that the native troops mutinied in the hope of worldly gain," stated Ahsanullah Khan, who was in a good position to judge. "The admixture of religion was only intended to disguise their real object. If they were really fighting for religion, they would not have plundered the houses and property of the people, nor would they have oppressed and injured them..."¹³⁴ Some regiments (as we have seen) handed the Company treasure they had been guarding over to the rebel authorities, others kept it to pay their men, and a few - like the 17th N.I. - simply divided it among themselves.¹³⁵ But most sepoy were able to benefit by plunder or extortion during the anarchy that ensued. At Gwalior, the mutineers offered their services to Scindia in return for the four and a half lakhs of treasure the British had made over to him; but if he refused to "lead them against Agra, which they would make over to him, with such provinces as he desired", he would have to pay "12 or 15 lacs more", and provide supplies and carriage for them "to move whither they pleased". They were eventually placated by a "donation of three months' pay, and the promise of service".¹³⁶ According to Sir Hugh Rose, every sepoy killed by his Central India Field Force had "generally from 90 to 100 rupees about him".¹³⁷

¹³¹ Examination of Jat Mall, 3 Feb 1858, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 185.

¹³² *The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette*, 15 April 1858.

¹³³ Lt.-Col. H.M. Durand to G.F. Edmonstone, 28 Sept 1857, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, pp. 140-4.

¹³⁴ Supplementary Evidence of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, P.P., H.C., 1859, XVIII, p. 268.

¹³⁵ Statement of Drummer John Saunders, 17th N.I., F.C. (Supp.), NAI, Nos. 525-30 of 30 Dec 1859.

¹³⁶ Major S.C. Macpherson to Sir R. Hamilton, 10 Feb 1858, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, pp. 187-8.

¹³⁷ Rose to Lord Elphinstone, 10 April 1858, Elphinstone Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur/F87/Box 6A/No. 4.

Some mutinous sepoys used promises of higher pay to induce those still loyal to rise. At Jhansi, for example, the 52 N.C.O.s and sepoys of the 12th N.I. who mutinied on 5 June "invited all men of the *deen* [faith] to flock to their standard, offering to remunerate each man for his services at the rate of twelve rupees per month". They were joined by the remaining troops in the station the following day.¹³⁸ In January 1858, the native officers of the mutinous Gwalior Contingent offered the sepoys in the service of the pro-British Raja of Chirkhari 10 rupees a month to come over to them. Many did, while others refused to fight, giving the Raja no option but to surrender. He was forced to pay an indemnity of three lakhs of rupees, part of which was sent to the Nana while the rest was used to settle the soldiers' wage arrears. The Nana had promised his troops a gratuity of one month's pay, pensions for those who fell in action and licence to plunder goods up to the value of 1001 rupees if the attack was successful.¹³⁹

There is no statistical proof that mutineers from one branch of the Bengal Army were any more motivated by the lure of financial gain than those from another. But given that most irregular cavalrymen were Muslims - and therefore had neither caste nor religion in common with the majority of military conspirators - it is probably fair to conclude that they reacted to, rather than initiated, the disorder, regarding it as an opportunity both to restore the Mughals and to enrich themselves. No irregular cavalrymen appear to have been involved in the plotting prior to the Meerut outbreak, and only two regiments had mutinied by the end of May. They were, moreover, the most debt-ridden native troops in the Bengal Army, and debt was an obvious incentive to mutiny. Captain Dennys of the Kotah Contingent blamed penury for the mutiny of his Muslim horse on 4 July. "I always felt that our cavalry could not be relied upon," he wrote later. "They were well dressed and fairly well mounted but their general state of hopeless indebtedness was sufficient to prevent their remaining loyal, if anything like absolute anarchy should ever come."¹⁴⁰ The Bengal irregular cavalrymen were in a similar position. So when, for example, the sowars of the 12th I.C. mutinied at Sigauli on 23 July, killing their commandant and his wife in the process, their first act was to raid the regimental bank of 50,000 rupees and to plunder the shops of *baniyas* [moneylenders]. Having divided the proceeds, they headed for the Opium Agency at Gobind Gunge which they also pillaged.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Deposition of a native of Bengal, Rizvi and Bhargava (eds.), *Freedom Struggle*, III, p. 43

¹³⁹ Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, pp. 62-4.

¹⁴⁰ Dennys Memoirs, NAM, 7901-95, pp. 41-2.

¹⁴¹ Memorandum by Capt. C.A. Byers regarding the death of Major Holmes, 5 Aug 1857, Mutiny Papers, B.L., Add. MSS 41488, ff. 49-51.

By the end of 1857 - according to my calculations¹⁴² - an estimated 40,412 natives of the regular Bengal Army had mutinied. They had been joined by 3,309 Bengal Irregular Cavalrymen, 2,452 local troops, 17,129 members of contingents, legions and various irregular forces and many thousands of disaffected civilians. A further 26,681 regular Bengal troops had been disarmed or disbanded, as had 3,120 Bengal Irregular Cavalryman and 1,396 other irregular troops. Just 6,065 regulars had remained loyal, though their numbers were boosted by 2,149 Bengal Irregular Cavalrymen, 15,075 locals and 17,129 members of irregular forces (mainly the Punjab Irregular Force).¹⁴³ In trying to estimate the number of trained troops who actually fought against the British in 1857, however, two factors need to be taken into account: on the one hand, a significant proportion of mutineers simply returned to their villages and took no part in the fighting; on the other, a number of the disarmed and disbanded troops were sufficiently disaffected to join the rebellion regardless. But the former were probably more numerous than the latter, so a figure in the region of 50,000 active mutineers is probably about right.

This chapter, however, is primarily concerned with the pattern of mutiny and the insight it affords into the motives of the mutineers. From the evidence produced, certain conclusions can be reached. The first is that the mutinies - planned as well as actual - which succeeded the Delhi and Meerut outbreak were not all the result of a knock-on effect. If they had been, they would have spread outwards in roughly concentric circles. Instead, some of the earliest mutinies took place in stations as far apart as Nasirabad in Rajputana and Nowshera in northern Punjab. They were undoubtedly prompted by the initial outbreak; but their timing tended to depend upon the level of disaffection in particular regiments.¹⁴⁴ The 15th N.I. at Nasirabad, for example, had only recently moved from Meerut where it probably became tainted by association. In general, the ringleaders would have considered a regiment ripe for mutiny when they had succeeded in convincing a sizeable proportion of their fellow sepoys that the British really did intend to take away their caste and religion. Then they either planned a mutiny in advance with conspirators in other regiments - as at Lahore, Peshawur, Hansi, Lucknow,

¹⁴² See Appendix 3.

¹⁴³ The combined figure for regular Bengal troops (including the Bengal Irregular Cavalry) of 81,736 does not match the establishment total of around 106,000 because a significant proportion of men were on annual leave when the mutiny broke out. Some mutinied and some returned to duty.

¹⁴⁴ Ranajit Guha has argued that only 'official and pro-landlord accounts' of peasant insurgency describe it in terms of a 'contagion'. The peasants themselves regarded rebellion 'as a form of collective enterprise'. (Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, p. 220).

Bareilly and Cawnpore - or they simply took advantage of a suitable opportunity to encourage their comrades to rise, such as the execution of the Brahmin zemindar at Aligarh, the movement of treasure at Mathura and Azimgarh, or the disarmament of native corps at Benares and Dinapore.

Most of the joint mutinies were planned in conjunction with civilian conspirators. This is entirely consistent with the prime aim of most active mutineers: to be re-employed by a restored native ruler. "All regiments took their Colours with them," observed Sitaram Pandey of the 63rd N.I. "They did not break their oath by deserting them. They left the service of the English and were supposed to have entered the service of another government."¹⁴⁵ Tapti Roy has interpreted the soldiers' actions in a purely political light. "The decision of every rebel unit to move towards the centre [Delhi and Cawnpore]," she wrote, "was...part of an implicit strategy, to build, uphold and strengthen an alternative supra-local political order."¹⁴⁶ In fact this strategy had been predetermined by the sepoy plotters whose original incentive was probably more professional than political in that they hoped their new employers would provide more pay and greater career opportunities than the British had. Their political involvement, therefore was simply a means to a professional end, though it became for some an end in itself.

Roy herself noted that the mutinous sepoys "maintained not only the military organizations of their regiments but also the hierarchy of rank and order within each regiment".¹⁴⁷ Yet she failed to draw the obvious conclusion: that the mutinies were more about professional than religious, or even political, grievances. Some activists were undoubtedly 'politicized' in that they sought the overthrow of British rule. But they would not have been able to hoodwink enough of their fellow soldiers unless the Bengal Army generally had been unhappy with the terms of its employment. Set in the historical context of the Indian military labour market, where there was a long tradition of mercenary soldiers from eastern Hindustan who were liable to switch employers if the occasion demanded, the Indian mutiny makes perfect sense.

A key factor in the gradual alienation of the sepoys from their employer was, as stated in Chapters 3 and 4, their deteriorating relationship with their European officers. The link between a commanding officer's length of service and the relative disaffection of his regiment in 1857 indicates that a familiar and popular commanding officer could slow down the process of alienation. In some cases the

¹⁴⁵ Lunt (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 174.

¹⁴⁶ Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

presence of such an officer was enough to deter a regiment from mutinying; in others it helped to save European lives. But even a popular officer was not always able to prevent his men from succumbing to peer pressure and the material lure of higher wages and plunder.

Chapter Nine - The Peel Commission and Military Reform

This chapter will review the deliberations of the Royal Commission appointed to advise on the reorganisation of the Indian Army. It will conclude that a large chunk of the Commission's evidence, its recommendations and the subsequent military reforms were directed towards redressing the type of professional grievances that underlay the mutiny. Admittedly the Commission was not set up specifically to identify the causes of the military revolt. Nor was the oral and written evidence presented to it entirely free from an element of hindsight. On the other hand, a number of its key proposals (particularly those additional recommendations which went beyond its original remit) were virtually identical to the military reforms that were being urged upon the Bengal Army before the mutiny by far-sighted men such as Henry Lawrence and John Jacob. These proposals were, it could be argued, an implicit response to what the Commissioners (or more properly their witnesses) had identified as the fundamental causes of mutiny.

In late November 1857, with Delhi recaptured but the rebellion far from over, the Court of Directors authorised Lord Canning to assemble a mixed commission of officers (both Company and Queen's) and civil servants to report on the future organisation of the Indian Army. But Canning was unwilling to devote his key personnel to such an onerous task and, in May 1858, despite the opposition of Sir James Outram (a member of his Council) and others, he appointed a single officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Durand, to conduct the inquiry. Durand sent a detailed questionnaire to 85 military and civil officers. They were required to provide written responses to a series of questions on Recruiting, Rules of Discipline, Organisation, Promotion and various other aspects of army life. In August, Durand began drafting summaries of the replies for Lord Canning.¹

Meanwhile, on 15 July 1858, a Royal Commission had been set up in London "to inquire into the organisation of the Indian Army". Its chairman was Major-General Jonathan Peel, Secretary of State for War and brother of the late Prime Minister. His ten co-members were: Lord Stanley, Commissioner for Indian Affairs (and later Secretary of State for India); the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army; General the Marquess of Tweeddale, the former Governor and Commander-in-

Chief of Madras; Lieutenant-General Sir George Wetherall, Adjutant-General of the British Army; Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Smith, a celebrated veteran of the Peninsula, Waterloo and 1st Sikh War; Major-General Viscount Melville, commander of a Bombay cavalry brigade in the 2nd Sikh War; Major-General Henry Hancock, the former Adjutant-General of the Bombay Army; Major-General Patrick Montgomerie; Colonel William Burlton; and Colonel Thomas Tait, the commandant of the 3rd Bengal I.C. and the only member still a serving officer in the Indian Army.²

On 2 August 1858, shortly before the Peel Commission began its inquiries, Queen Victoria gave her assent to an act which transferred the administration of India from the East India Company to the Crown.³ With the Indian Army now the direct responsibility of the Queen, the Commission was asked to respond to eleven questions regarding the army's future organisation. Six questions (numbers 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11) were partly or wholly concerned with the native portion, including the terms of the Indian Army's transfer to the Crown, the proportion of European to native troops, the possibility of mixing European and native troops in regiments or brigades, the preference for regular or irregular native corps (or a mixture of both), the desirability of retaining native artillery corps, and the question of whether cadets for native corps should be attached first to European regiments "to secure uniformity of drill and discipline". The remaining five questions (numbers 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8) were exclusively about European troops: the size of the permanent European force, the proportion of local troops in that force, the method of their recruitment, the relief of Queen's regiments, and the possible consolidation of local and Queen's regiments so that troops could be transferred from one branch of the service to the other.⁴

By December 1858, the Commission had examined 47 witnesses and collected a vast amount of written evidence (including the responses to Durand's questionnaire and Durand's own summaries). Its report was submitted on 7 March 1859. Much of the evidence concerning native corps, particularly those of the Bengal Army, has been dealt with in previous chapters. Here we are more concerned with the interpretation put on it by the Commissioners. Their responses to the original eleven questions were as follows:

¹ Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies, 1858-1879', Ph.D thesis, p. 45; Michael MacLagan, *Clemency Canning* (London, 1962), pp. 240-1.

² P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. i.

³ Act 21 & 22 Vict., Cap. 106, P.P., H.C., 1857-8, II, pp. 367-94.

⁴ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. vi.

1. No change should be made in the terms of employment for existing Company officers (including rates of pay, pensions and promotion by seniority), but new regulations could be applied to future officers. 2. The total number of Europeans necessary for the security of India "should...be about 80,000; of which 50,000 would be required for Bengal, 15,000 for Madras, and 15,000 for Bombay". 3. The "amount of Native force should not...bear a greater proportion to the European, in Cavalry and Infantry, than two to one for Bengal, and three to one for Madras and Bombay respectively". 4. The Commissioners were "unable to arrive at any unanimity of opinion" with regard to the proportion of Local European regiments to regiments of the Line, but the majority came down in favour of abolishing the Local force on the grounds that it caused professional jealousies and was less disciplined than its Line counterpart. 5. In the event that the European force was split between Local and Line regiments, the latter's tour of service in India "should not exceed twelve years". 6. The Commissioners could see "no obstacle to at once allowing the [European] officers of the junior ranks (second lieutenants, cornets, and ensigns) to exchange from one Branch of the service to the other", but there was "a great difficulty in the higher ranks, arising from the seniority system of promotion". 7. With regard to the mixture of European and native troops, the Commissioners agreed with the "proponderance of evidence" that "any admixture of the two forces, regimentally, would be detrimental to the efficiency and discipline of both, but that the admixture by brigade would be most advantageous". 8. Recruitment to a Local European force "should be kept up by drafts" from England and "volunteers from regiments of the Line" leaving India. 9. All Bengal native cavalry should be on the "irregular system" (with a commandant, an adjutant, a medical officer and one European officer per squadron, and the sowars receiving an increase in pay to enable them "to purchase and maintain horses and arms of a superior description"), and the other presidencies following suit if it was thought necessary; the native infantry, on the other hand, should be "mainly regular". 10. Artillery "should be mainly a European force" with exceptions being made for stations which were "peculiarly detrimental to the European constitution [e.g. mountain artillery]". 11. European cadets for native corps should "be thoroughly drilled and instructed in their military duty" in Britain before they were sent out to India.⁵

Only the answers to questions 9 and 11 were an attempt to redress the type of professional grievances that many believed were responsible for the mutiny. This was mainly because the questions themselves had not been drafted with any such intention in mind: they were more concerned with the deterrent value of an enlarged European force, and therefore concentrated on its size and organisation *vis-à-vis* its native counterpart.⁶ But during their examination of the evidence, the Commissioners had had their

⁵ Ibid., p. ix-xiv.

⁶ The pre-mutiny strength of the European force in India was 43,000: 19,000 Company troops and 24,000 Europeans. During the mutiny, three more regiments of infantry and four of cavalry were added to the Company's establishment of nine European infantry regiments; the 27 Queen's regiments (four

attention drawn to a number of "important points", many of which *were* about issues of recruitment and conditions of service. The Commissioners therefore made nine additional recommendations:

1. That the Native Army should be composed of different nationalities and castes, and as a general rule, mixed promiscuously through each regiment. 2. That all men of the regular Native Army...should be enlisted for general service. 3. That a modification should be made in the uniform of the Native troops, assimilating it more to the dress of the country, and making it more suitable to the climate. 4. That Europeans should, as far as possible, be employed in the scientific branches of the service, but that Corps of pioneers be formed, for the purpose of relieving the European sappers from those duties which entail exposure to the climate. 5. That the Articles of War, which govern the Native Army, be revised, and that the power of commanding officers be increased. 6. That the promotion of Native commissioned and non-commissioned officers, be regulated on the principle of efficiency, rather than of seniority, and that commanding officers of regiments have the same power to promote non-commissioned officers, as is vested in officers commanding regiments of the line. 7. That whereas the pay and allowances of officers and men are now issued under various heads, the attention of H.M. Government be drawn to the expediency...of adopting, if practicable, fixed scales of allowances for the troops in garrison or cantonments, and the field. 8. That the Commander-in-Chief in Bengal be styled the Commander-in-Chief in India, and that the General Officers commanding the armies of the minor Presidencies be Commanders of the Forces, with the power and advantages which they have hitherto enjoyed. 9. [That] the efficiency of the Indian Army has hitherto been injuriously affected by the small number of officers usually doing duty with the regiments to which they belong. [To reverse this trend] various schemes have been suggested: a. The formation of a Staff Corps b. The system of "seconding" officers who are on detached employ... c. Placing the European officers of each Presidency on general lists for promotion. Your Commissioners not being prepared to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion on this point, without reference to India, recommend that the subject be submitted without delay, for the report of the Governors and Commanders-in-Chief...⁷

Of all the recommendations made by the Peel Commission, the most contentious was the one that advocated irregular cavalry (at least in Bengal) but "mainly" regular infantry. In his evidence, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Somerset, the Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, had come out against irregular corps because they were less disciplined and gave too much power to native officers. But in a

cavalry and 23 infantry) were increased to 76 (11 cavalry and 65 infantry). By the final suppression of the mutiny in 1859, the total number of European officers and men in India was 98,000 (21,000 Company and 77,000 Queen's troops) [Sources: Return by Col. J. Holland, P.P., H.C., 1859, V, Appx 7, p. 371; Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, pp. 47-8].

⁷ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. xiv.

minute of 4 June 1858, J.P. Grant, the President of the Governor-General's Council, approved of irregulars on the basis that they were the most effective soldiers and could be recruited from untainted areas. Canning's opinion was a compromise. In a memorandum of August 1858, he suggested that all cavalry and 30 regiments of Bengal Native Infantry should be on the irregular system, with a further 20 of the latter as regulars.⁸ But others like Sir Bartle Frere, Commissioner of Sind, and Brigadier-General John Jacob, Commandant of the Sind Irregular Horse, believed that the system should be wholly irregular. Frere observed that a regular regiment with a full complement of European officers would "militate against the professional efficiency of the native commissioned officers".⁹ Jacob noted that the native officers would be "always more powerful, more obedient, and more faithful under a few well-selected officers than under a great number taken at hazard with regard to character or qualification". Four European officers were more than adequate. The large number allowed in a regular regiment, said Jacob, "prevents the native officer, whatever his merit, from attaining a responsible or very respectable position in the army thereby keeping out of its ranks natives of birth, and family, and preventing in the native soldier the full development of that love for and pride in the service which are essential to great efficiency". Irregular sowars, Jacob added, cost less than half their regular counterparts.¹⁰ Frere and Jacob were supported by the members of the influential Punjab Committee - Sir John Lawrence, Brigadier-General Neville Chamberlain and Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Edwardes - who recommended extending the system which operated within the Punjab Irregular Force to the rest of the native army of Bengal, including promotion by merit and substantial powers for commanding officers. But to ensure its success, they added, the European officers would have to be carefully selected: a "bad European officer cannot work a system of merit, he would soon spoil the best native officer in the world".¹¹

In June 1859, having considered the Peel Commission's report, the Military and Political Committee of the Council of India concurred with the view that all Bengal native cavalry regiments should be organized on the irregular system. They could not, however, agree about native infantry. Three members (J.P. Willoughby, John Lawrence and J. Eastwick) wanted all infantry regiments on the irregular system; the other two (R.J.H. Vivian and H.M. Durand) were, like Canning, in favour of 20 regular and 30 irregular corps. Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India from 1859 to 1866, sided with the majority on grounds of economy and politics: the irregular system was cheaper and would

⁸ Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, p. 128.

⁹ P.P., H.C., 1859, VIII, pp. 701

¹⁰ Ibid., pp 733 and 745.

encourage natives of a higher rank to enter the army. European officers, he added, could be appointed to the irregular regiments by selection from a Staff Corps. Canning and Sir Hugh Rose, Commander-in-Chief of India from 1860 to 1865, disagreed, the former pointing out that a pool of regular regiments was needed from which to select the best officers for the irregular corps. But both Lord Elphinstone and Lieutenant-General Sir William Mansfield, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bombay respectively, were of the opinion that all troops in India should be irregular, with four or five officers per regiment selected from a Staff Corps.¹²

The idea for a Staff Corps - whereby unattached officers on a general list would be appointed to staff, civil and regimental duty - had been suggested first by Sir John Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay, in 1830. Other officers and senior officials - including Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Cotton, Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, and Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General - had urged the creation of such a corps prior to the mutiny. But it had always been rejected on the ground of expense. However once the Peel Commission had accepted that the "efficiency of the Indian Army" had been "injuriously affected by the small number of officers usually doing duty with [their] regiments", not least because those left behind resented such duty, reform became a priority. Of the three options mentioned by the Commission, Canning and the Political and Military Committee of the Council of India favoured the system of 'seconding' (i.e. replacing officers who were on detached employ) because, they said, it was the best adapted to the requirements of service in India and would be the most economical. But Sir Charles Wood and the Military Finance Commission in Calcutta preferred the formation of a large Staff Corps of all arms because it would ensure continuity in detached appointments and would enable officers to be selected for the new irregular regiments.¹³

Supported by the majority of Canning's Council and most other senior figures in India bar the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, Wood's preference for irregular regiments and a Staff Corps prevailed. Drafts of the warrant for the formation of a separate Staff Corps in each presidency were laid before the Council on 8 January 1861. All Company and Queen's officers under the rank of field officer were eligible for admittance (as were all officers then in staff employ under the substantive rank of colonel). Henceforth staff employ would include appointments to civil and political posts, to the general and personal staff, and to regimental duty. Ten days after the formation of the Staff Corps,

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 649-89.

¹² Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, pp. 133-5.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 199-211.

Wood instructed that all native regiments were to be organized on the irregular system with six European officers (not including a medical officer). This alteration would result in a "very considerable saving", said Wood, "as nearly one half the charge of a regular regiment consists of the pay and allowances of its officers". He also insisted that the "efficiency of the regiments will in no respect suffer, whilst an opportunity will be given of raising the character and position of the native officers, and, probably, of affording an opening for the employment of natives in a higher position".¹⁴

In 1861, the Bengal cavalry and infantry were reorganised on the irregular system. The 19 surviving cavalry regiments¹⁵ (not including the Guides and the five Punjabi corps) were renumbered 1st-19th Bengal Cavalry and consisted of 13 native officers, 60 N.C.O.s, 6 buglers and 6 troops of 70 sowars each. Of the 44 renumbered infantry regiments, the 1st-11th were from the old regular army.¹⁶ Henceforth they contained 16 native officers, 80 N.C.O.s, 16 drummers and eight companies of 75 sepoy each. By late 1863, the Bombay Army had followed suit. Madras held out for longer because its Governor, William Denison, and its Commander-in-Chief, Lieutenant-General James Hope Grant, did not believe that Madras native officers were fit to command troops or companies: not least because they were mostly low class and not able to use social position as a means to inspire respect. Denison, in particular, was fearful of giving them too much responsibility. If "they are to lead their troops in action", he wrote, "and thus get knowledge and self-confidence, we shall find that we have raised up a class of men more dangerous than useful". The Madras officials were supported by Sir Hugh Rose who suggested abolishing native officers altogether. But in 1865, with the replacement of Rose and Hope Grant by William Mansfield and Le Marchant respectively, the Madras Army finally embraced the irregular system with regard to the number and duties of European and native officers. The cavalry switched to the full silladar system the following year.¹⁷

The chief importance of the irregular system is that it did away with the tendency of European officers to regard regimental duty as a sign of professional failure. Henceforth officers were selected for regimental appointments from the Staff Corps, and after 1864 those with less than seven years' service would have to serve a year's probation and then be examined by a committee of officers before

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 144-5.

¹⁵ They were, in numerical order, the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 17th and 18th I.C., the 1st and 2nd Hodson's Horse, the 1st, 2nd and 4th Sikh I.C., Murray's Jat Horse, the Multani Horse, the Rohilkhand Horse, Robart's Horse, the 2nd Maratha Horse and Fane's Horse.

¹⁶ They were, in numerical order, the 21st, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 42nd, 43rd, 47th, 59th, 63rd, 65th, 70th. An additional two corps - the Regiment of Lucknow and the Loyal Poorbeah Regiment - had grown out of the remnants of regular corps. They became the 16th and 17th N.I in the reorganised Bengal Army.

a permanent posting. The financial incentive to avoid regimental duty was also removed by the equalisation of military allowances with "those obtainable in the early stages of civil...or quasi-military employ". Regimental positions were now regarded as staff appointments with allowances as well as pay. From October 1863, a commandant of an infantry regiment received an additional 700 rupees a month, the senior and junior wing commandants 270 and 230 respectively, the adjutant 200, the Quartermaster 150 and the Doing duty officer 100. "It was because of this financial attraction that there was, after the reorganisation of the native army," writes Shibly, "no difficulty in getting adequate European officers for native regiments." Of the 517 members of the Staff Corps in 1875, 370 held appointments in native regiments.¹⁸

The irregular system also provided native troops with the incentives of greater responsibility and higher pay. In a cavalry regiment, for example, the six senior native officers were in command of troops (or *ressallahs*) and received from Rs. 120 to 300 per month, depending upon seniority. Even the sowars were paid Rs. 27 a month, with the maximum good conduct pay increasing it to 30. Native officers in the pre-mutiny irregular cavalry, by contrast, had received a maximum of Rs. 150 a month, with sowars on Rs. 20. The eight subedars in the reorganised infantry regiments commanded companies and were paid from Rs. 67 to 100 a month, with an extra Rs. 25 for the subedar-major, while the eight jemadars were on Rs. 30 to 35 (the pre-mutiny rates were fixed at Rs. 67 for subedars and Rs. 24.8 for jemadars). But the pay of havildars, naiks and sepoy remained at its former monthly rate of Rs. 14, 12 and 7 respectively until 1895.¹⁹

By the late 1870s, most regiments in the Indian Army were undermanned. General Sir Neville Chamberlain, Commander-in-Chief of Madras, put this down to the fact that the sepoy's static pay had "not kept pace with the relative advantages to be obtained in other employments". Moreover, he added, their pay had decreased in actual terms "because of the universal rise in the cost of living".²⁰ In fact, according to one survey of prices and wages, the average pay for an agricultural labourer "would seem to have risen much in many districts since 1873 and to have fallen much in others". In Midnapore in Bengal, for example, it rose from 4 to 7 rupees a month between 1873 to 1880. But in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh it was fairly static and even fell in some districts (like Faizabad

¹⁷ Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, pp. 149-60, 170-6

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 156-7.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 147, 166.

²⁰ Chamberlain to the Duke of Cambridge, 17 April 1879, Chamberlain Correspondence, OIOC, MSS Eur/C203.

where it dropped from Rs. 4 to Rs. 3.4.6). The price of wheat in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, on the other hand, increased from an average of 23.8 seers per rupee for the period 1861-4 to 15.85 seers per rupee during 1877-80. The latter period saw "wide-spread drought and scarcity over an enormous tract of Central, Western, and Southern India, causing a general rise of prices all over India".²¹ Omissi confirms the trend in rising prices by citing the increase in the cost of a sepoy's average monthly supply of atta, dal, ghi, sugar, salt, firewood and tobacco from Rs. 3.6.8 in 1848 to Rs. 4.11.3 in 1875. The problem of declining recruitment was eased, he says, by an increase in the sepoy's basic pay to nine rupees in 1895 and 11 in 1911.²²

In his letter about low recruitment levels, Chamberlain also suggested that a "more rigid discipline" may have "lessened the popularity of the army".²³ This was an oblique reference to another crucial area of military reform recommended by the Peel Commission: an increase in the power of regimental commanding officers to punish. The vast majority of witnesses who gave evidence to the Commission were of the opinion that Bengal officers, in particular, needed more authority over their men, including enhanced powers to punish and reward (see Chapter Four). But some, like John Jacob and the Punjab Committee, accepted that the quality of commanding officers had to be improved if they were to be entrusted with enhanced powers. This was achieved by the switch to the irregular system and the institution of the Staff Corps in 1861: henceforth regimental officers were selected. Later that year, the revised Articles of War went a long way to satisfying the reformers' other demands: Article 3 gave commanding officers the summary power to reduce N.C.O.s to the ranks *and* to discharge N.C.O.s and ordinary soldiers (a punishment that carried with it a mandatory loss of pension); Article 67 gave commanding officers the option to try offences normally applicable to a District Court-Martial by a Regimental Court-Martial; Article 81 authorised commanding officers to hold summary trials of N.C.O.s and soldiers and, on conviction, to carry out sentences without confirmation from higher authorities, as long as the sentences were not more severe than could be awarded by District Courts-Martial; and Article 83 affirmed the commanding officer's summary power to award light sentences - including extra drill, restriction to barrack limits, confinement in the Quarter Guard, defaulters' room or solitary cell, removal from staff situations or acting appointments, piling or unpling shot and cleaning

²¹ J.E. O'Connor, *Prices and Wages in India* (Calcutta, 1886), pp. 4-20, 43

²² Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp. 54-5.

²³ Chamberlain to the Duke of Cambridge, 17 April 1879, Chamberlain Correspondence, OIOC, MSS Eur/C203.

accoutrements - with the maximum award at the discretion of individual Commanders-in-Chief.²⁴ By 1873, commanding officers could also deprive soldiers of good conduct pay.²⁵

In an effort to bolster further the authority of Bengal commanding officers, the Peel Commission recommended that efficiency should replace seniority as the dominant factor in the promotion of native troops. The reforms of the 1860s acted on this advice. No sepoy was to be promoted to N.C.O. unless he possessed "a competent knowledge of reading and writing in at least one character, except when commanding officers may deem it desirable or expedient to make exceptions in the case of men who have displayed conspicuous courage, or who possess [other useful] qualifications". In general, seniority was to be taken into account, but commanding officers had the discretion to override it.²⁶

"The vicious system of promotion by seniority, in itself sufficient to destroy the discipline of any army, has been abolished," wrote Chesney in 1868, "and by the new Articles of War commanding officers are vested with considerable powers, both for reward and punishment."²⁷

Another recommendation of the Peel Commission was that the uniform of native troops should be assimilated "more to the dress of the country" and made "more suitable to the climate". The hated leather stock had already been discontinued by a General Order of 15 February 1859. So too had the bulky shako headdress, as the loyal sepoys of the Bengal Native Infantry took to wearing their undress Kilburn caps (first introduced in 1847) instead.²⁸ From March 1860, commanding officers of native infantry regiments were given the option to issue *pugris* (turbans). Apart from the Gurkhas and a handful of other corps, who retained their Kilburns, most infantry regiments were wearing *pugris* by the close of the century. Another major alteration took place in 1863 when the tight coatee was replaced by the so-called zouave jacket, said to be based on the coat worn by French zouaves (colonial troops) during the Crimean War. In fact that coat was short and worn open with large braid loops. The model adopted by the Indian native infantry was a long, red single-breasted tunic with cut-away skirts and no collar, not that dissimilar to the coat worn by the British Army. It was not particularly 'native' in style, but it was certainly more comfortable and durable than the old coatee.²⁹ The 'Indianisation' of

²⁴ Articles of War, Act XXIX of 1861, OIOC, L/MIL/17/11/15.

²⁵ Bengal Army Regulations 1873, OIOC, L/MIL/17/2/443, p. 98.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 43, 96.

²⁷ Chesney, *Indian Polity*, p. 290.

²⁸ Mollo, *The Indian Army*, pp. 98, 101.

²⁹ Carman, *Indian Army Uniforms*, II, p. 108.

dress was more apparent in 1869 when sepoy were issued with baggy, blue knickerbocker trousers, worn either with white gaiters or drab puttees.³⁰

Given that only Bengal Irregular Cavalry regiments survived the reorganisation of the Indian Army, the reform of cavalry dress was not an issue. If anything, the uniform for the new Bengal cavalry regiments was more formal than it had been for the old Bengal Irregular Cavalry. The exceptions were the eight surviving irregular cavalry regiments (renamed the 1st-8th Bengal Cavalry) who were allowed to retain their *alkaluk* coats. The others wore *kurtas* (loose frock coats) for winter and white 'American' drill for summer. By 1874, however, all regiments were wearing *pugris*, cummerbunds and a loose *kurta* of regimental pattern.³¹ The Bengal Sappers and Miners also conformed to the general pattern in that shakos and trousers were replaced by *pugris*, *pyjamas* and dark blue puttees.³² All regular native artillery (horse and foot) had been abolished on the ground that it was too dangerous to leave such a vital branch in the hands of Indians. The irregular exceptions were five mountain batteries of the Punjab Irregular Force and four batteries of the Hyderabad Contingent.

The only other recommendations of the Peel Commission that directly concern this study were those concerning recruitment: "That the Native Army should be composed of different nationalities and castes, and as a general rule, mixed promiscuously through each regiment" and "That all men of the regular Native Army...should be enlisted for general service".³³ Both were aimed at dismantling the high-caste Hindu brotherhood in the Bengal Native Infantry that had made a general mutiny possible. Interestingly enough, the Commissioners' report made no specific mention of religion. If they had believed religion to be as central to the mutiny as most subsequent historians have done, it is reasonable to assume they would have referred to it in some way: if only to recommend the Indian government to be cautious when introducing measures which might offend the sepoys' faith. Instead the Commissioners proposed to weaken the position of the high-caste sepoys in the Bengal Army still further by broadening the recruitment base, the very policy that is said to have contributed to the mutiny in the first place.

Three positions on recruitment had emerged from the evidence. The first, generally held by officers and civil servants familiar with the Madras and Bombay armies, advocated a balanced pattern of recruitment from all sections of society. Soldierly ability, and not caste, was what counted for men like

³⁰ Mollo, *The Indian Army*, p. 128.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114-15.

³² Carman, *Indian Army Uniforms*, II, pp. 57-8.

Sir Bartle Frere and Sir Mark Cubbon. They tended to agree with the military axiom that there are no bad soldiers, only bad officers. Diametrically opposed to this position was the view held by Major-General J.B. Hearsey and others that the recruitment of all Brahmins and Muslims from Hindustan should cease. Hearsey particularly mentioned the regions of Oudh, the Doab, Shahabad, Bhojpore and Rohilkhand. Both positions were determined to prevent caste from interfering with military discipline. "Any soldier refusing to work," said Hearsey, "because it interfered with his caste was to be tried by court-martial and sentenced to be flogged, or transportation for life." The third position recommended using the best material available. The Punjab Committee, for example, wanted to counterbalance Hindustani soldiers by recruiting Christians, Eurasians, Santals, Bhils and other unfashionable races, as well as more Punjabis and Gurkhas. They also emphasised the need to balance and separate castes.³⁴ The first recommendation of the Commissioners, therefore, was a fudging of the first and third positions.

Even before the appointment of the Peel Commission, native levies had been raised in Bengal from mainly low-caste recruits. The Mainpuri Levy (later the 35th N.I.) were wholly so; the levies raised at Bareilly (36th N.I.), Meerut (37th N.I.), Agra (38th N.I.) and Shahjahanpur (40th N.I.) had been allowed to enlist two companies of Rajputs each. No decision had been taken on their long-term future by 1860 when Sir Hugh Rose, the new Commander-in-Chief of India, came down in favour of mixed recruitment. "The homogenous composition of the old Native Army, fostering caste, combination and indiscipline," he remarked to Lord Canning, "was one of the springs of the mutiny, and has been proved to be an element of danger in a Native army." He therefore suggested limiting the proportion of any one sect or caste in each regiment to a quarter, with Sikh and Gurkha corps the only exceptions.³⁵

Sir Charles Wood disagreed. He was in favour of a general mixture system (different races and castes throughout the companies of regiments) in conjunction with a district system whereby each regiment was recruited from a particular locality. "The difference," he informed Rose on 25 April 1862, "will be greater in some regiments than in others, some regiments will be more, others less homogenous and here another sort of variety will be created." His intention was divide and rule. He told Denison in 1861 that he never wanted to "see again a great Army, very much the same in its feelings and

³³ P.P., H.C., 1859, V, p. xiv.

³⁴ Cohen, *The Indian Army*, pp. 36-8.

³⁵ Adj.-Gen. of the Army to the Sec. to the Govt of India in the Mil. Dept., 1 Oct 1860, quoted in Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, pp. 325.

prejudices and connections, confident in its strength, and so disposed to unite in rebellion together. If one regiment mutinies, I should like to have the next so alien that it would be ready to fire into it".³⁶

A compromise was finally reached in November 1862 when the Government of India authorised four different systems of enlistment for the Bengal regiments of native infantry: the four Gurkha regiments (not line corps) and two Muzbi Sikh regiments (23rd and 32nd N.I.) were to continue to recruit from a single class; the nine Hindustani regiments (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 11th, 12th, 16th and 17th N.I.) and the other two Sikh regiments (14th and 15th N.I.) would recruit from the same classes under the District system; the Punjab regiments raised in 1857-8 and the Assam and Sylhet corps, 15 in number (19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31st N.I., 42nd, 43rd and 44th N.I.), would embrace the General mixture system with no one class greater than 50 per cent of the total; and the remaining 16 regiments would operate under a Class company system (whereby each company was composed of a different race or caste). The Bengal cavalry was also recruited under a variety of systems: Single class (1st, 14th and 15th B.C.); General mixture (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 7th B.C.); and Class troop (6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th B.C.).³⁷

These systems remained unchanged for two decades. But during that time more and more commanding officers of the General mixture regiments began to report that long association removed any class or race differences between their men, thereby fostering a general *esprit de corps*. This trend was seen as increasing the threat of a mutinous combination and the General mixture system was abolished in 1883. Thereafter, 32 regiments of Bengal infantry and 14 of Bengal cavalry were organised on the Class company or troop system; and the remaining 12 regiments of infantry and 3 of cavalry used the Class regiment system. By 1899, with a halt having been called to the enlistment of low-caste men or menial classes, there were just 22 Class company and 42 Class infantry regiments in Bengal. Madras and Bombay also abandoned the General mixture system between 1887 and 1889: but their regiments were placed on the Class company or troop system, with the exception of one Class regiment in Madras. In general terms, the chief recruitment ground for the Bengal Army had moved from Oudh and its adjacent provinces to Nepal, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier. In 1893, for example, only nine of the 64 regiments of Bengal infantry were composed of high-caste men: seven of Rajputs and two of Brahmins.³⁸

³⁶ Wood to Rose, 25 April 1862 and Wood to Denison, 8 April 1861, *ibid.*, pp. 336-7.

³⁷ Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, pp. 345-9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 390-2.

Shibly has argued that the new irregular system did not go as far as native soldiers wanted it to.

"Before the mutiny," he writes, "a native officer in the irregular cavalry could rise to the command of a squadron which was, under the new system, commanded by British officers." He also points out that the intention to "raise the character and position of the native officers by affording an opening for the employment of natives of higher position" was "not wholly fulfilled". The vast majority of native officers continued to be promoted from the ranks: not a single direct commission in the Bengal infantry was given until 1873, while only 35 were awarded between 1873-85.³⁹ All this is true. But the introduction of the irregular system was still a significant improvement - an opinion Shibly shares:

That the new system answered better than the old one might fairly be asserted, - firstly, on the ground of the greater efficiency, secondly, from the achievements of these regiments in the field, and thirdly, from their obedience. There were no instances where any of the regiments had refused to perform pioneer work when necessary, not merely in sieges, but at any time in the field, or had refused to go on foreign service when required... The superior position and authority entrusted to the native officers, and the efficiency required of them in drill and discipline, developed and improved their capacities.⁴⁰

There were 20 mutinies in the Indian Army between 1858 and 1947, half of them during the First and Second World Wars.⁴¹ None occurred before 1886, while the 15 that took place between the 1880s and the 1930s have been described by Omissi as "minor". The smallest involved just 20 men, the largest a single regiment. Only one - the mutiny of four companies of the 5th Light Infantry at Singapore in 1915 - resulted in sepoy violence against their officers. Most of the mutinies - including the seven that occurred between 1886 and 1914 - were little more than peaceful collective protests over professional issues such as pay, allowances, promotions and the conditions of service. "These affairs should not be seen as miniature versions of 1857," writes Omissi. "They bore much greater resemblance to the strikes and protests of industrial workers, just as peasant-soldiers had much in common with other labour

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 380-1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 179.

⁴¹ See table of mutinies in Menezes, 'Race, Caste, Mutiny and Discipline in the Indian Army, from its Origins to 1947', in Guy and Boyden (eds.), *Soldiers of the Raj*, pp. 100-17.

migrants."⁴²

Yet it could be argued that these mutinies had many characteristics similar to 1857 - just on a smaller scale. That they did not develop into anything more significant is surely down to the post-1857 military reforms: the increased ratio of European to native troops (which remained at around 1: 2 until 1914), the concentration of artillery in European hands and the brigading of one European regiment with every two native corps so that no major station was left without a European presence.⁴³ Also significant were the improvements made to the service conditions of all three presidency armies, and the Bengal Army in particular: the creation of a Staff Corps and the selection of European officers for more lucrative regimental duties which came to be regarded as an honour rather than a chore; the increase in the power of commanding officers to punish and reward, including the replacement of seniority with merit as the dominant principle of promotion; the switch to irregular regiments with fewer Europeans, which gave native officers more responsibility and greater job satisfaction; the increase in pay for native infantry officers and all native cavalymen; the switch from tight and uncomfortable European-style uniforms to those more suited to the Indian climate; and, crucially, the Bengal Army's shift in recruitment from the high-caste Hindus of Oudh and the North-Western Provinces to the Sikhs and Muslims of the Punjab, the Gurkhas of Nepal and the lower castes of Hindustan.

A number of men were central to the creation of the new irregular system, including Sir Charles Wood (later Lord Halifax), Sir John (later Lord) Lawrence, Lord Elphinstone, and Generals Sir James Outram, (Sir) Neville Chamberlain and Sir William Mansfield (later Lord Sandhurst) - but none more so than Brigadier-General John Jacob who had been urging similar reforms since the 1840s. "It was on the basis of John Jacob's principles," wrote H.T. Lambrick, "that the armies of India were reorganized after the Mutiny."⁴⁴ If Jacob had been listened to earlier, the Indian mutiny might not have occurred. He died in December 1858; but he would have been gratified to hear the judgement passed on the new irregular system by Lord Napier, the Commander-in-Chief of India, in 1875: "No impartial observer, who knows what the old army was, and what the present one is, can hesitate for a moment to pronounce the regiments of the present day greatly superior to those of the old army; better drill [sic] and disciplined, more obedient, less fettered by assumptions of religious restraint, more moveable, more

⁴² Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp. 133-152.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 132; Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, p. 374.

⁴⁴ Lambrick, *John Jacob of Jacobabad*, p. 384.

ready for every service."⁴⁵ A greater contrast with the indisciplined, caste-ridden, disaffected Bengal Army of 1857 is hard to imagine.

⁴⁵ Adj.-Gen. to the Sec. to the Govt. of India in the Military Dept., 14 Aug 1875, quoted in Shibly, 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies', Ph.D. thesis, pp. 179.

Conclusion

For much of the last century, Indian and British scholars downplayed the importance of professional grievances in their accounts of why the Indian mutiny took place. Most viewed the Bengal sepoys as uniformed peasants who were affected by the same social, economic and religious concerns as their civilian counterparts. They tended to identify the defence of caste and religion as the key to the military uprising, while regarding the latter as little more than a precursor to a general revolt. Not since the publication of T. Rice Holmes' *History of the Indian Mutiny* in 1882 has a historian of the mutiny attempted to explain it in terms of issues internal to the army. Yet this study's identification of professional concerns as the essential cause of the Indian mutiny is very much in line with the recent historiography of military revolts. The mutinies of the French Royal armies in 1790-1 and 1830, the Italian regiments of the Austrian Imperial Army in 1848, the Russian Army in 1916-17, the French Army in 1917, and elements of the British 8th Army in 1943 have all been attributed chiefly to 'military' factors.¹

It is, of course, difficult to make a direct comparison between mutinies by European and colonial troops, not least because of the ethnic and religious differences between officers and soldiers that were a feature of the latter. Proto-nationalism in colonial forces is another factor that can contribute to military unrest. It would, therefore, be far more satisfactory to compare the Indian mutiny to other colonial revolts. What is striking about the recent history of colonial forces, however, is how loyal they proved to be. In his recently published essay, 'Guardians of Empire', David Killingray acknowledged that colonial soldiers "needed careful handling" and that "disciplinary methods, food, service overseas, policing roles, access to women, and religious sensibilities" all had to be taken into

¹ H.F.A., Strachan, H.F.A., 'The British Army and Society', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1979, pp. 247-54; Jean-Paul Bertaud, *The Army of the French Revolution: From Citizen-Soldiers to Instrument of Power* (Princeton, 1979); Samuel F. Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution: The Role and Development of the Line Army 1787-93* (Oxford, 1978); Douglas Porch, *Army and the Revolution: France 1815-1848* (London, 1974); Alan Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire: Radetzky, the imperial army and the class war, 1848* (London, 1979); Alan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March-April 1917)* (Princeton, 1980); Guy Pedroncini, *Les Mutinieres de 1917* (Paris, 1967); Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas, 'Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917', *Past and Present*, No. 69, 1975, pp. 88-112; David Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale', in Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the*

account. Despite these precautions, "there was always the potential for disaffection". And yet, he conceded, mutiny among colonial troops "was relatively rare". Most colonial revolts were "much smaller-scale protests" than the Indian mutiny, "usually over conditions of pay and service, and easily contained". In the vast majority of cases, the service of colonial soldiers "was marked by loyalty to the regime". Killingray referred in particular to the fidelity of the *askaris* in German East Africa during the First World War "despite the hardships of defeat and retreat", the willingness of French colonial troops to fight in Algeria and Indo-China during the final stages of Empire, and the Portuguese mobilisation of a growing number of African soldiers to fight nationalist forces in Mozambique and Angola in the 1960s and 1970s.² The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that colonial soldiers remained loyal as long as their conditions of service were acceptable - even at the very end of Empire. This was the lesson the British in India had to learn the hard way.

If we do compare the Indian mutiny to revolts by other European armies, a number of common factors can be identified. The series of mutinies by British Highland troops in 1743, 1778-9, 1783, 1794-5, 1797 and 1804, for example, have been attributed by the narrative historian John Prebble to Jacobite sympathies.³ But Hew Strachan rejected this "single phenomenon" theory, emphasizing instead the similarities between the Highland mutinies and the revolt of the Bengal Army in 1857, and "not only in the broad context of a vanishing way of life and a declining social order". For Strachan, the "real issues" in both cases "were predominantly professional": insufficient pay, a fear of foreign service and, above all, the failure of officers to understand their men or to inspire trust. He added:

In particular those used to disciplining English recruits had little feeling for the pride and self-esteem of the Highlanders, little comprehension of their language, little awareness that forms of discipline suited to coarser spirits (especially flogging) did not befit their gentlemanly aspirations... [All but one of the mutinous regiments] were manifesting the pains of adaption to the 'professionalization process'. This is most clearly the case with the Fencible regiments... Fencible indiscipline attributed to the influence of the mob manifests that radical, urban and Lowland (not Highland) discontent rode on the back of basic and genuine grievances regarding conditions of service.⁴

First World War (Oxford, 1998), pp. 191-203; Saul David, *Mutiny at Salerno: An Injustice Exposed* (Brassey's, 1995).

² David Killingray, 'Guardians of Empire', in Killingray and Omissi (eds.), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 16-17.

³ John Prebble, *Mutiny: Highland Regiments in Revolt, 1743-1804* (London, 1975).

The French Army of Louis XVI also had similarities to the Bengal Army of 1857. Both were comprised of volunteer troops who served mainly for financial reward; both were officered by a ruling caste far removed, in social and economic terms, from their men. According to Jean Paul Bertaud, 90 per cent of the pre-revolutionary French Army officers were aristocrats, though "mostly members of the lesser provincial nobility". The typical recruit, on the other hand, was either a peasant or the son of an artisan who was induced to join up by the offer of a bounty of up to 120 livres (depending upon age and height); an agricultural labourer, by comparison, would struggle to earn 100 livres in a year.⁵ The conditions of service for Louis XVI's troops were not that dissimilar to those experienced by the Bengal sepoys in the 1850s: they were poorly paid (just 6 *sous* 8 *deniers* a day, of which 2 *sous* 6 *deniers* was deducted for army bread), badly housed and had little contact with their officers. "Poverty, humiliation, and contempt," wrote Bertaud. "The common soldier was scorned by his officers, and sometimes by the bourgeois, many of whom shut their doors and fastened their shutters on hearing of the approach of the military." There was also no outlet for ambition: between 1781 and 1789, for example, only 46 men were commissioned from the ranks; commoners were rarely promoted beyond lieutenant.⁶

The enthusiastic response of many Royal troops to the French Revolution is generally accepted as the reason for the latter's success. The widespread mutinies of 1790 and 1791, in particular, made it impossible for the King to launch a successful counter-revolution. Yet scholars of the Royal Army have tended to attribute its disaffection to military grievances rather than ideological beliefs. "The essential cause of insubordination, wrote Samuel F. Scott, "existed within, not outside, the Royal Army. Civilians often provided encouragement to the soldiers and the [Jacobin] clubs sometimes offered a forum for them to voice their complaints. But, it was conditions in the army that created the complaints, and it was not the Revolution, but its overthrow of traditional authority, that allowed them to be expressed as they were."⁷ The same could be said of the Bengal Army in 1857. It, too, was encouraged to mutiny by civilians who were seeking political change. It did so not primarily for reasons of ideology or religion, but because it was seeking to improve its conditions of service.

The most critical problem in the French Royal Army, according to Scott, "was the hostility between soldiers and officers". He added: "Divided by the chasm of birth in an estate society, the two enjoyed

⁴ H.F.A. Strachan, 'The British Army in Society', pp. 252-3.

⁵ Bertaud, *The Army of the French Revolution*, pp. 17, 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

entirely different conditions of military service, including duties, rights, and prerogatives." The Revolution was an opportunity to redress these past iniquities and led to an outburst of complaints against "the monopolization of high ranks by nobles, harsh and sometimes inequitable discipline, the disdain with which they were treated by their superiors, and speculation on the part of their officers". These complaints against noble officers were only translated into political terms, said Scott, as a result of the drastic constitutional and social changes introduced by the revolutionary authorities.⁸ By 1857, the Bengal mutineers were also alienated from their European officers. They, too, embraced political change - the overthrow of the same ruling class from which their officers came - as a prerequisite to achieving their professional ends.

Scott also identified a correlation between the number of officers absent from a particular regiment during the regular semester leave from October 1789 to May 1790, and that regiment's propensity to mutiny. The higher the number, the more disaffected the regiment. Scott cited the absences not as an indication that the remaining officers were unable to cope: many of the examples of disaffection took place after the officers had returned from leave. But rather as evidence of the "nearly total separation between officers and men".⁹ A similar disdain for regimental service and the concerns of their men was displayed by most Bengal officers in their quest for detached appointments prior to the mutiny.

Another striking similarity between the mutinies of 1790-1 and 1857 was the role played by the ranks immediately below the white officers: non-commissioned officers in the French Army and native officers in the Bengal Army. Scott's description of the former could just as easily apply to the latter: "The N.C.O.s, especially the sergeants, had extensive military service...but until 1789 their ambitions in the army had been frustrated. The Revolution brought them greatly expanded opportunities for advancement, and most of them embraced it warmly." In 1790 and 1791, wrote Scott, they organized and led mutinies. "The hostility of many officers to the Revolution, intensified after the King's attempted flight [to Varennes in June 1791], provided many N.C.O.s with an opportunity to serve both the new regime and their personal ambitions by purging the army of counter-revolutionary officers." As aristocratic officers were forced out, most of their replacements were former N.C.O.s.¹⁰

The other group that made a significant contribution to undermining their noble superiors was that of officers promoted from the ranks, commonly known as 'officers of fortune'. They came from the same

⁷ Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution*, p. 100.

⁸ Ibid., p. 121.

⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

lower-class background as N.C.O.s and had had similar, if slightly more successful, careers. "Their frustration and resentment at never being fully accepted as officers," wrote Scott, "made them at least as hostile to the Old Regime as were the sergeants." As evidence he cited the prevalence of grenadier companies, whose officers were invariably 'officers of fortune', in incidents of insubordination during the critical years of 1789 to 1791.¹¹ The aspirations of French N.C.O.s and 'officers of fortune' during the French Revolution, therefore, are roughly analagous to those displayed by Bengal native officers in 1857: they all sought to further their careers by expelling the dominant officer caste that had held them back.

Professional concerns are also said to have been largely responsible for the mutiny of the French Army in 1830. Pay was poor for all ranks, but particularly so for N.C.O.s and soldiers who earned about a third as much as their British counterparts. They also had to put up with slow promotion, dilapidated and overcrowded barracks, insanitary latrines and - because most Restoration regiments were under strength - almost constant guard duty. Douglas Porch is of the opinion that even minor reforms could have "dispelled the pessimism permeating the army".¹² But, as with the Bengal Army, they were only carried out after the troops had mutinied.

According to Porch, the disaffection was orchestrated by N.C.O.s who, on receiving the news of the July Revolution in Paris, encouraged the troops to disobey their officers. Many led groups of soldiers to Paris with the avowed intention of defending the revolution from a Bourbon counter-stroke. However their primary motive, wrote Porch, was the "prospect of higher pay and a promotion promised to those who joined the Paris National Guard". In the army generally, the N.C.O.s were quick "to denounce their superiors as Carlists and counter-revolutionaries" because they wished to take their places. Their ambition was particularly keen because the social distinction between N.C.O.s and most officers was barely discernible in the Restoration army. Successive revolutionary governments had democratized the officer corps to the extent that more than half of Charles X's officers had come up through the ranks. Napoleon's dictum that every French soldier carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack was still widely believed. "Young soldiers from a lower middle-class background...formed the NCO class in the army and they resented the low pay, lack of privacy and inhuman barrack conditions forced on them by the Restoration. Consequently, they were eager for a commission even at

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 111-12.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 112.

¹² Porch, *Army and the Revolution*, pp. 28-9, 33.

the price of revolution, and not unwilling to aid in the overthrow of a regime which neglected their interests. The Restoration's alienation of the NCO class explains why this group was quick to join the revolutionaries in 1830."¹³

Republican ideology had "only limited appeal" for Charles X's army, wrote Porch, "and had served as little more than a rallying point for discontent with conditions of service". As proof he cited the decline of republicanism in France after 1834, explaining that the "simultaneous repression of the republican movement [in 1834] and the reform of conditions of service brought open political dissent within the army to a near end". He also referred to the Algerian conquest of the 1830s which promised promotion and the opportunity for plunder. By 1848, with its grievances mostly redressed, the army was largely apolitical and played no part in the February revolution which overthrew the Orléans dynasty. When it was called upon to act, it did so without hesitation. "The army's June crackdown on the revolutionary movement initiated a European counter-revolution," wrote Porch, "and placed the army's loyalty to the government beyond serious question for more than a century."¹⁴ The Bengal Army underwent a similar metamorphosis thanks to the military reforms of the 1860s. "The Government of India made sure that military service was well rewarded," wrote David Omissi, "thus cementing its vital alliance with the communities that provided the bulk of army recruits. The Raj was safer if the men who defended it won honour and made a profit. They did, and the discipline of the troops usually remained steady. The authorities had learned the lesson of 1857, and paid careful attention to the needs and grievances of the ranks."¹⁵ Despite global conflict, growing civil unrest and the rising tide of nationalism, the Indian Army gave no further indication of serious disaffection until the Second World War when thousands of Indian soldiers, captured by the Japanese at Singapore, joined Subas Chandra Bose's anti-British Indian National Army. "By then, however," wrote Killingray, "the imperial structure in India was starting to fall apart and the British departure seemed to many only a question of time. Despite these pressures...the Indian Army remained a loyal instrument of the fading Raj..."¹⁶

The central role played by professional grievances is also evident in the mutiny of Italian regiments of the Austrian Imperial Army during the revolutions of 1848, though some soldiers were understandably influenced by patriotic sentiment. There were, of course, significant differences

¹³ Ibid., pp. 29, 42-4.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 138-9.

¹⁵ Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 192.

between the Austrian and Bengal armies of that era. The former was a polyglot force, conscripted from the various ethnic groupings that made up the Austrian Empire: including Germans, Italians, Czechs, Hungarians and South Slavs. But there was one important similarity: both were officered in the main by the ruling caste which, in the case of the Austrian Army, was ethnic German and of noble birth. In his study of the Austrian Imperial Army in 1848, Alan Sked confirmed that up to three-quarters of officers in Italian regiments were 'foreign', most of them German. The language problem was therefore a "very serious one" and "it was commonly held that German-speaking soldiers were always promoted more quickly since these were the only troops the officers could depend on to communicate orders". The nationalities understandably "resented being officered by German-speaking foreigners", wrote Sked, "and seeing German troops promoted more quickly than anyone else".¹⁷ A similar language problem was evident in the Bengal Army by the 1850s as fewer officers bothered to learn native tongues.

But the alienation between officers and men in the Austrian Army was not simply a racial issue. There was also the social gulf, with most ordinary soldiers the sons of the poorest peasants who could not afford to buy an exemption from military service. Officers tended to regard such recruits with contempt and the feeling was mutual. "There were few officers who enjoyed any popularity amongst their subordinates," wrote one enlightened staff officer. "The majority of them lack the capacity to adjust themselves to the way of thought of the common man.. The officer supervises and conducts the exercises, the drilling of recruits; he holds school for the men; in short, while on duty he spends most of his day with them. Yet he never takes the trouble to study the character of the men, to speak with them in their mode of speech or to teach them their duties by example."¹⁸

If the Bengal Army in the 1850s was too soft on its native troops with commanding officers denied adequate powers to punish, the Austrian Army was too harsh. According to Sked, it "expected blind obedience from its soldiers and was prepared to do everything possible to secure it". Most punishments were either corporal or capital. Violence to superiors, for example, was punishable by death whether the superior was injured or not. Corporal punishment with a hazel stick (the equivalent of a rattan cane) was a summary power enjoyed by a number of officers: from colonels, who could order 50 strokes, to captains in command of companies, who could award 25. There was also the

¹⁶ Killingray, 'Guardians of Empire', p. 17.

¹⁷ Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire*, pp. 29-30, 52-4.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 34-5, 39.

infamous 'running of the gauntlet' whereby offenders were made to pass between two rows of 150 men armed with birch switches. "The result of punishments such as these," wrote Sked, "...was naturally to degrade, humiliate and brutalise the men and, not surprisingly, to encourage violence and disobedience." Austrian soldiers were also very badly paid. A private received 5 kr. a day, of which 3 kr. was deducted to meet his mess bill. The average peasant, after paying all his taxes and feudal dues, would still be left with about 9 kr. a day. The common soldier was therefore the economic equal of a landless labourer and could only make ends meet by finding a part-time job. In addition, pensions were paltry (the equivalent of four shillings per year for every year they had served over six) and only four men in each company of 200 men were permitted to marry.¹⁹

Sked attributed the desertion of thousands of Imperial troops from their colours in 1848 to a number of factors: the revolutionary atmosphere, the alienation between officers and soldiers, the anti-Habsburg stand of the Church, and the fear of being sent away from one's homeland. He added that Italian soldiers found it difficult to resist the blandishments of their fellow countrymen: "instead of discipline, they offered hospitality - free bread, free wine - and even money". As with the French Army in 1790-1 and 1830, when political upheaval preceded mutiny, unacceptable conditions of service clearly played a significant role in the mass defection of Italian troops in 1848. Sked acknowledged this with the remark that the deserters were often accompanied "by these, perhaps key figures, the N.C.O.s".²⁰ Their ambition to become officers in the new 'national' armies was almost certainly a major incentive to revolt - just as it was for N.C.Os in the French Army in 1790-1 and 1830, and for native officers in the Bengal Army in 1857.

It is not ideal to compare the Indian mutiny with revolts by conscripted armies during the two World Wars. Not least because a new factor is evident in both of the latter: war weariness. But the central argument that mutinies are primarily about unacceptable service conditions still seems to hold true. Alan Wildman's authoritative account of *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, for example, concludes that "battle fatigue and war weariness with the war in general, rather than revolutionary agitation or infection from the rear, was the more immediate and fundamental factor" in the mutinies of 1916, "and they do not in themselves reflect an incipient politicization of the army". He added: "Politicization, when it did come about on a massive scale in 1917, emanated from the rear and was most pronounced in the garrisons and transfer points, from whence it found its way to the front. The

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 37-8, 40-1.

mutinies, on the other hand, reflected primarily the desperate situation at the front: the grinding effect of unending casualties, costly and futile attacks, and deteriorating organization and leadership on the most battered units."²¹ Wildman referred, in particular, to the gradual deterioration in the quality and quantity of food for frontline soldiers. During the peak of the food crisis, which hit the front in December 1916-January 1917, bread rations were reduced from three pounds a day to one, and sometimes replaced entirely by cash payments (which were meaningless without supplies) or other products. "One common substitute was lentils (*chechevitsa*)," wrote Wildman, "which the soldiers despised so thoroughly that it can almost be accounted as a major cause of the Revolution."²²

The widespread mutinies in the French Army in 1917 are also generally acknowledged to have been 'military' rather than 'political' in origin. Pétain, who took over as Commander-in-Chief at the end of the first phase of mutinies on 15 May 1917, later cited three main causes. The first was the "launching and exploitation of a pacifist propaganda campaign" in the winter of 1916-17, with soldiers in the trenches bombarded by "antimilitarist and anarchist leaflets" and their confidence in their commanders further undermined by the "reprehensible habit" in the civilian press of editorials criticizing military operations. Second, Pétain referred to the poor physical conditions at the front, including inadequate leave and bad food. Third, was the overconfidence of the the military commanders - Nivelle and Mangin - who convinced the troops that they had discovered the formula for offensive success. When the so-called Nivelle offensive in the Chemin des Dames failed to achieve a breakthrough, the disappointment of the soldiers made them all the more susceptible to pacifists and other traitors. But, added Pétain, soldiers became "politicized" only when they felt down by their leaders. Restoring discipline was therefore a matter of restoring appropriate leadership.²³

French historians have tended to downplay the role of subversion from the interior. Jean Ratinaud characterized the mutinies in 1960 as a "quasi-professional strike" that ended when "intelligence and friendship took their place alongside discipline and order".²⁴ Some English-language historians, alive to early signs of the French moral collapse in 1940, have paid more attention to the part played by the subversives. In 1962, for example, John Williams wrote of "weary and demoralized *poilus* who found

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 59, 206.

²¹ Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, pp. 119-20.

²² Ibid., p. 108.

²³ Quoted in Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 176-7.

themselves "egged on to rebellion by home-front traitors and pacifists". A year later, Richard Watt came to roughly the same conclusion: but with the rider that politics and the subversives played a "distinctly secondary role in initiating the mutinies". He added: "This is not to deny their importance or the growing influence that the pacifist-defeatist group was to gain among the troops. But it is most certainly a fact that at the end of May the troops that were revolting did not constitute a *revolutionary* force, as was later to be claimed. Rather they were the symptoms of an almost mortal disease within the Army: the disease of despair."²⁵ Here, too, there are similarities with 1857 in that most Bengal mutineers would not have characterised themselves as revolutionaries (but rather as mercenary soldiers seeking to obtain improved conditions of service with a new employer).

The most exhaustive study of the 1917 mutinies - and the first based on archival evidence, including the military justice records - was published in 1967 by the French historian Guy Pedroncini. He concluded that the mutinies were a limited and sophisticated protest against three years of fruitless offensives, culminating in the Chemin des Dames fiasco. He was able to demonstrate that the mutinous acts always took place in "active" sectors where troops believed they were about to be ordered 'over the top'. The significance of pacifist propaganda was exaggerated by the military commanders, he claimed, as an excuse for their failings. To Pedroncini, the mutinies were strictly military protests and therefore "nonpolitical". The soldiers' revolutionary rhetoric was simply a "more human desire to save one's life". He added: "The revolution, according to the evidence, was simply something to cling to, without thereby taking on a great significance."²⁶

In 1994, in his study of one particularly disaffected French infantry division - the 5th - the American historian Leonard Smith concluded that Pedroncini had underestimated the political element of the protests. In support of his argument, Smith stressed the diversity of soldiers' demands during the mutinies in the 5th Division: from calls for more regular leave and better food, to appeals for peace and an end to the butchery. Soldiers could juxtapose a demand for peace with the reform of leave policy, wrote Smith, because they were both attempts to establish links with civilian life: "Consequently, the 'political' significance to soldiers of this link can scarcely be overestimated... Once links to the home front were guaranteed by leave reform, soldiers could give up their demand for immediate peace." Smith argued that the soldiers' perception of themselves as citizens rather than subjects was the all-

²⁴ Jean Ratinaud, *1917 ou La Révolte des poilus* (Paris, 1960), pp. 15, 19.

²⁵ Richard M. Watt, *Dare Call It Treason* (New York, 1963), pp. 195-6, 303.

²⁶ Pedroncini, *Les Mutinieres de 1917*, pp. 71-89, 125.

important factor that "opened the door to tacit negotiations with Pétain", and that the latter's "offer of repression, reforms, and proportionality" was what "he and French soldiers could persuade each other to accept".²⁷ No doubt Smith has a point. But he cannot get away from the central fact that the mutinies would not have taken place if life on the front line had been more bearable. In this sense, conditions of service - albeit extreme wartime conditions - were chiefly responsible for the mutinies. Once they were improved - with better food, more regular leave and, most importantly, no more futile offensives - the loyalty of the French Army in World War I was never again in doubt.

Smith does make one point that strikes a chord with the mutinies of 1857: that, according to the postal censorship records, the grievances of the 10% or so of troops who were "participants" in the mutinies in 1917 were "essentially the same" as those held by the "waiting, and otherwise silent, majority".²⁸ In other words, the army as a whole was disgruntled, but only a minority were prepared to follow words by deeds. The actual instigators of mutiny - the group analagous to the conspirators of 1857 - were a smaller proportion still.

The disturbances by British and Dominion troops at the Etaples base camp in September 1917 have also been explained in terms of 'military' factors. The main outbreak of indiscipline occurred on 9 September after the arrest and assault of a New Zealand gunner by the Military Police. It worsened when the outnumbered policemen shot into the crowd and killed a popular corporal in the Gordon Highlanders, prompting thousands of men to invade the town of Etaples in pursuit of the police. The unruly demonstrations continued for six days. According to the camp adjutant, Major Guinness, the "chief cause of discontent" was the fact that men who had already done much service at the front had to undergo "the same strenuous training as the drafts of recruits arriving from home". Guinness also referred to the lack of familiarity between officers and men: "It should be realised that each Infantry Base Depot was commanded by an elderly retired officer who had an adjutant to help him. The remaining officers, like the men, were either reinforcements from home, or had been sent down the line on account of ill-health, and therefore did not know them."²⁹

In their analysis of the disturbances, Gill and Dallas referred to the "particular hatred" directed towards the Military Police at Etaples - who had not seen active service and who were trying to impose "the disciplinary standard of the glasshouse" - and the rioters' intention to release military prisoners.

²⁷ Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, pp. 178, 188-91, 195.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 188.

²⁹ Quoted in Gill and Dallas, 'Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917', pp. 97-8.

They also commented upon the prominent role played by Anzac soldiers - who had a tendency to be "contemptuous of the narrow discipline to which British troops subscribed, and [who] were led by officers who had invariably first shown their qualities as privates in the ranks" - and their close relationship with the Scottish troops "who gave the mutiny its force". There was also the inevitable factor of low morale after three years of seemingly-futile offensives.³⁰

David Englander is of the opinion that all military disorder in 1914-18 "arose primarily from the circumstances of the war". He added: "Soldier grievances invariably were concerned with the conduct of the war in respect of themselves and their families. Apart from questions concerning food and drink, soldiers were exercised by issues respecting pay and allowances, clothing and comforts, shelter, warmth, and rest. Dominating all was the question of leave and family income support. Soldiers lived and died in the trenches while directing their conscious life homewards."³¹

Similar preoccupations lay behind the relatively small-scale mutiny by 193 veterans of the 50th (Tyne Tees) and 51st (Highland) Divisions at the Salerno beachhead in September 1943. Proud members of Montgomery's illustrious 8th Army that drove Rommel out of Africa, the veterans had been wounded or taken sick during the Sicilian campaign and sent to hospitals in North Africa to recuperate. By early September they had been transferred to a transit camp at Tripoli to await a posting back to their units in Sicily. Instead they were sent as emergency reinforcements to British divisions serving with the U.S. 5th Army at Salerno. Their refusal to join unfamiliar units at Salerno resulted in their arrest, court-martial and subsequent conviction for mutiny.

Those involved have always insisted that the transit camp authorities told them that they were returning to their units - a claim corroborated by documentary evidence³² - and that this deliberate deception encouraged many who were medically unfit to accompany the draft. No doubt this breakdown of trust between officers and men genuinely outraged some mutineers who could not envisage service with units other than their own; but it certainly gave others a useful excuse to demand a return to their original units. For my own detailed study of the mutiny has revealed a more fundamental incentive to disobey orders at Salerno: the widely-believed rumour (true as it turned out) that the 50th and 51st Division had been ear-marked for return to Britain to take part in the invasion of

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 98-102.

³¹ Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale', p. 201.

³² David, *Mutiny at Salerno*, p. 209.

France.³³ Some of the veterans had not seen their families for over two years, during which time they had been almost constantly in action. They were battle weary and homesick, and the thought of missing the boat home must have been more than many could bear (as it happened, those veterans who did agree to join units at Salerno were later returned to their divisions before they set sail for Britain). But whichever grievance is accorded the highest priority - deception by officers or lack of home leave - its essential 'military' nature is not in doubt.

The Salerno mutiny shares one other characteristic with earlier military insurrections: the central role played by N.C.O.s. The senior mutineers at Salerno were three sergeants. They later claimed that they did not use their rank to influence their juniors.³⁴ That may not have been their intention: but when such respected and experienced soldiers (one had fought in the Dunkirk campaign) made their position clear - as they did repeatedly - they were bound to affect the actions of others. The court-martial recognized the key role played by the sergeants when it sentenced all three to death (later commuted to 12 years' penal servitude and finally suspended altogether).

By comparing the Indian mutiny with other military revolts, it is possible to draw two conclusions: first, that mutinies tend to originate with professional grievances; second, that disaffected troops only become 'politicized' as a means to redress those grievances. It is, of course, extremely difficult to pinpoint the motives of a group of men - even one as apparently homogenous as the Bengal Native Infantry. Yet it is probably fair to say that the pre-1857 Bengal Army was riddled with the same type of generic military problems which often cause mutinies: low pay, poor career prospects and worsening relations between the men and their officers. Other factors relevant to the 1857 mutiny were unique to the Bengal Army: in particular, the indulgence with which European officers treated issues of caste, thereby encouraging the sepoys to use caste as an excuse both to avoid unwelcome duty and to provide a redress for other grievances; and the gradual relaxation of discipline so that by 1857 the sepoys were, in the words of the *Friend of India*, "confident of their power to dictate terms to their masters".³⁵

The extent to which these 'military' factors became clothed with wider issues rooted in society is one of the great imponderables. Many sepoys may well have convinced themselves that their caste and religion were in danger in 1857, however irrational that belief was in relation to the cartridge question itself. It may even have provided a personal justification for mutinying that mere service grievances

³³ Ibid., pp. 25, 73.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 54-5.

³⁵ *Friend of India*, 7 May 1857

could not. But there seems little doubt that the cartridge question was manipulated to provide a pretext for mutiny by a loose network of military conspirators and disgruntled civilians. These ambitious soldiers - including a surprisingly high proportion of native officers - were probably united by a shared exasperation with the limitations of Company service. Their pre-mutiny plotting with civilians - and the way in which many mutinous regiments strove to retain their command structure and organisation - is entirely consistent with the chief aim of most 'active' mutineers: to be re-employed by a restored native ruler. They were simply exercising the traditional right of mercenary soldiers to choose an alternative employer. It could be argued, therefore, that the sepoy mutinied because they imagined that service under the new native rulers of India would be more rewarding than it had become under the British.

Appendix 1 - The disposition of Bengal troops as of 10 May 1857

Station	Native	European
PRESIDENCY DIVISION		
Alipore	Calcutta Native Militia	
Akyab (Arracan)	Arracan Bn.	
Barrackpore	2 nd , 34 th , 43 rd and 70 th N.I.	
Berhampore	63 rd N.I.; 11 th I.C.	
Bhagalpur	Bhagalpur Hill Rangers	
Calcutta	25 th N.I.	
Chera Punji	Sylhet L.I. Bn.	
Chinsurah		H.M. 84 th Foot*
Chota Nagpore	Ramgarh Force	
Darjeeling	Sebundy Corps of Sappers and Miners	
Dibrugarh	1 st Assam L.I.	
Dum-Dum	1 st /9 th , 2 nd /9 th , 3 rd /9 th and 5 th /9 th F.A.	3 rd /5 th F.A. (No. 20 F.B.); H.M. 53 rd Foot
Gowhatty	2 nd Assam L.I.	
Jalpigori	73 rd N.I.	
Mian Owng (Pegu)	Pegu L.I. Bn.	
Midnapur	Shekhawati Brigade	
Sonthal District	32 nd and 63 rd N.I.; 5 th I.C.	
DINAPORE DIVISION		
Allahabad	6 th N.I.; 6 th /9 th F.A.; Ferozepore Regt.	
Azamgarh	17 th N.I.	
Benares	37 th N.I., 13 th I.C.; Ludhiana Regt	2 nd /3 rd F.A. (No. 12 F.B.)
Dinapore	7 th , 8 th and 40 th N.I.	H.M. 1 st /10 th Foot; 4 th /5 th F.A. (No. 11 F.B.)
Ghazipur	65 th N.I.	
Gorakhpur	12 th I.C.	

CAWNPORE DIVISION		
Cawnpore	2 nd L.C.; 1 st , 53 rd and 56 th N.I.; 6 th /7 th and 1 st /8 th F.A.	1 st /6 th F.A.
Dariabad	5 th Oudh I.I.	
Fatehgarh	10 th N.I.	
Faizabad	5 th /7 th F.A. (No. 13 F.B.); 22 nd N.I.; 15 th I.C. (1 tp); 6 th Oudh I.I.	
Gonda	3 rd Oudh I.I.	
Lucknow	2/8 th F.A. (No. 2 F.B.); 7 th L.C.; 13 th , 48 th and 71 st N.I.; 2 nd , 3 rd and Reserve Oudh Art.; 2 nd Oudh I.C.; 4 th and 7 th Oudh I.I.	H.M. 32 nd Foot; 4 th /1 st F.A. (No. 9 F.B.)
Persidpur	1 st Oudh I.I.	
Pertabgarh	3 rd Oudh I.C.	
Secrora	1 st Oudh Art.; 1 st Oudh I.C.; 2 nd Oudh I.I.	
Sitapur	41 st N.I.; 9 th and 10 th Oudh I.I.; 1 st Oudh M.P.	
Sultanpur	15 th I.C.; 8 th Oudh I.I.; 2 nd Oudh M.P.	
MEERUT DIVISION		
Almora	3 rd /8 th F.A.; 66 th N.I. (Gurkhas); Sirmur Bn.	
Aligarh	9 th N.I.	
Agra	44 th and 67 th N.I.	3 rd B.E.R.; 2 nd /5 th F.A. (No. 21 F.B.)
Bareilly	18 th and 68 th N.I.; 8 th I.C.; 6/8 th F.A. (No. 15 F.B.)	
Delhi	38 th , 54 th and 74 th N.I.; 3/7 th F.A. (No. 5 F.B.)	
Hansi	4 th I.C.; Hurrianah L.I. Bn.	
Meerut	3 rd L.C.; 11 th and 20 th N.I.	H.M. 6 th D.G.; H.M. 1 st /60 th Rifles; 2 nd /1 st H.A.; 3 rd /3 rd F.A. (No. 14 F.B.)
Moradabad	29 th N.I.	
Rurki	Sappers & Miners	
Shahjahanpur	28 th N.I.	

SIRHIND DIVISION		
Ambala	4 th L.C.; 5 th and 60 th N.I.; 4 th Sikh I.I.	H.M. 9 th L.; 2 nd /3 rd and 3 rd /3 rd H.A.
Dehra Dun	Kemaon Bn.	
Dagshai		1 st B.E.F.
Hoshiapur	33 rd N.I.; 9 th I.C.; 5 th /1 st H.A.	
Jullundur	6 th L.C.; 36 th and 61 st N.I.	H.M. 1 st /8 th Foot; 1 st /1 st H.A.
Kasauli		H.M. 75 th Foot
Phillour	3 rd N.I.	4 th /6 th F.A.
Nurpur	4 th N.I.	
Jutogh	New Nasiri Bn.	
Subathu		2 nd B.E.F.
LAHORE DIVISION		
Amritsar	59 th N.I.; 5 th /8 th F.A. (No. 16 F.B.)	
Ferozepore	10 th L.C.; 45 th and 57 th N.I.	H.M. 61 st Foot; 3 rd /6 th F.A. (No. 19 F.B.)
Gardaspur (check)	2 nd I.C.	
Govindghur		2 nd /1 st F.A.
Lahore	8 th L.C.; 16 th , 26 th and 49 th N.I.	H.M. 81 st Foot; 2 nd -3 rd /2 nd H.A.; 1 st -4 th /4 th F.A.
Multan	62 nd and 69 th N.I.; 1 st I.C.; 4 th /3 rd H.A.	4 th /3 rd F.A.
Sialkot	9 th L.C.; 35 th and 46 th N.I.	H.M. 52 nd L.I.; 3 rd /1 st H.A.; 3 rd /1 st F.A. (No. 17 F.B.)
PESHAWUR DIVISION		
Asni	5 th Punjab I.C.	
Attock	4 th /8 th F.A.	
Bunnu	3 rd Punjab I.C.; 5 th Punjab I.I.	
Dera Ghazi Khan	2 nd Punjab I.C.; 4 th Punjab I.I.	
Dera Ismail Khan	1 st Punjab I.C.; 6 th Punjab I.I.; 3 rd Sikh I.I.	
Hazara	1 st Sikh I.I.; 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Hazara Mountain Batteries	
Hoti Mardan	Corps of Guides	
Jhelum	14 th and 39 th N.I.; 4 th /7 th F.A. (No. 1 F.B.)	

Kangra	2 nd Sikh I.I.	
Kohat	4 th Punjab I.C.; 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Punjab I.I.	
Nowshera	55 th N.I.; 10 th I.C.	H.M. 27 th Foot
Peshawur	5 th L.C.; 21 st , 24 th , 27 th , 51 st and 64 th N.I.; 7 th and 18 th I.C.	H.M. 70 th and 87 th Foot; 1 st /2 nd and 1 st /3 rd H.A.; 1 st /1 st (No. 7 F.B.), 1 st /2 nd (No. 10 F.B.), 2 nd -4 th /2 nd F.A.
Rawalpindi	58 th N.I.; 16 th I.C.	H.M. 1 st /24 th Foot
Shumshabad	17 th I.C.	
RAJPUTANA		
Ajmer		
Bewar	Mharwarra Bn.	
Erinpura	Jodhpur Legion	
Karauli	Kotah Cont.	
Nasirabad	15 th and 30 th N.I.; 1 st Bo. L.C**; 2 nd /7 th F.A. (No. 6 F.B.)	
BUNDELKHAND		
Jhansi	12 th N.I. (left wing); 14 th I.C.; 4 th /9 th F.A. (half company, with half No. 18 F.B.)	
Lalitpur	6 th Inf., Gwalior Cont.	
CENTRAL INDIA		
Agar	2 nd Cav., Gwalior Cont.; 7 th Inf., Gwalior Cont.	
Chanda	2 nd Nagpur I.I.	
Jabalpur	52 nd N.I.	
Kharwarra	Mewar Cont.	
Mhow	1 st L.C. (wing); 23 rd N.I.	2 nd /6 th F.A.
Mehidpur	United Malwa Cont.	
Nagode	50 th N.I.	
Nimach	1 st L.C.; 72 nd N.I.; 4 th /1 st H.A	

Nowgong	12 th N.I.; 14 th I.C. (wing); 4 th /9 th F.A. (half company, with half No. 18 F.B.)	
Rajpur	3 rd Nagpur I.I.	
Sagar	31 st and 42 nd N.I.; 3 rd I.C.	1 st /3 rd F.A. (No. 4 F.B.)
Sehore	Bhopal Cont.	
Sirdarpur	Malwa Cont.	
Sitabuldi	1 st Nagpur I.I.	
Takli	Nagpur I.C.	
GWALIOR		
Gwalior	1 st , 2 nd and 4 th Art., Gwalior Cont.; 1 st Cav., Gwalior Cont.; 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Inf., Gwalior Cont.	
Sipri	3 rd Art., Gwalior Cont.; 5 th Inf., Gwalior Cont.	
SIND		
Jacobabad	6 th I.C.; Sind I.H**.	
PEGU		H.M. 29 th and 35 th Foot
IN TRANSIT	47 th N.I. (to Mirzapur)	

Note: Unless specified, the reference to a corps denotes its headquarters.

* Arrived at Calcutta from Rangoon on 20 March 1857 to assist in the disbandment of the 19th N.I.

** Bombay army

European troops in Bengal army: 2 regiments of British cavalry; 16 regiments of British infantry (2 in Pegu); 3 regiments of Bengal infantry; 9 troops of Bengal horse artillery; 24 companies of Bengal foot artillery (with 13 field batteries attached). Total (including European officers and N.C.O.s in native corps)

Regular native troops in Bengal army: 10 regiments of Bengal light cavalry; 74 regiments of Bengal native infantry; 4 troops of Bengal horse artillery; 18 companies of Bengal foot artillery (with 8 field batteries attached); 12 companies of Bengal sappers and miners; 18 regiments of Bengal irregular cavalry.

Irregular native troops commanded by Bengal officers: Punjab Irregular Force (5 infantry regiments, 6 cavalry regiments, 3 troops of Guide cavalry, 6 companies of Guide infantry, 4 batteries of Hazara mountain artillery); Oudh Irregular Force (3 cavalry regiments, 10 infantry regiments, 4 artillery companies); 15 local infantry corps (including 2 Sikh and 3 Gurkha); 4 Sikh infantry regiments; Sebundy Corps of Sappers and Miners; Shekhawatee Brigade; Assam Local Company of Artillery; Ramgurh Local Force (1 cavalry regiment, 1 light infantry regiment, 1 artillery company of artillery); Gwalior Contingent (2 cavalry regiments, 7 infantry regiments, 4 artillery companies); Joudpore Legion (3 cavalry ressallahs, 8 infantry companies); United Malwa Contingent (8 cavalry ressallahs, 8 infantry companies, 1 artillery company); Bhopal Contingent (3 cavalry ressallahs, 6 infantry companies, 1 artillery company); Kotah Contingent (4 cavalry ressallahs, 8 infantry companies; 1 artillery company); Nagpore Irregular Force (1 cavalry regiment, 3 infantry regiments, 1 horse artillery troops); Malwa Bheel Corps (7 infantry companies); Mewar Bheel Corps (1 infantry regiment).

Appendix 2 - When and where Bengal regiments mutinied, were disarmed or disbanded in 1857-58

MUTINIED:

Date	Place	Corps
26 February	Berhampore	19 th N.I.
29 March	Barrackpore	34 th N.I.
2 May	Lucknow	7 th Oudh I.I.
10 May	Meerut	3 rd L.C.; 11 th and 20 th N.I.
11 May	Delhi	38 th , 54 th and 74 th N.I.; 3 rd /7 th F.A. (No. 5 F.B.)
13 May	Ferozepore	45 th N.I.
14 May	Ferozepore	57 th N.I.
14 May	Mozaffarnagar	20 th N.I. (29 men)
15 May	Kasauli	Nasiri Bn. (Treasury Guard)
16 May	Meerut	Bengal sappers & miners (4 coys)
18 May	Rurki	Bengal sappers & miners (2 coys)
20 May	Aligarh	9 th N.I.
21 May	Nowshera	55 th N.I. (2 coys)
22 May	Mainpuri	9 th N.I. (2 coys)
22 May	Bolundshahr	9 th N.I. (1 coy)
23 May	Etawah	9 th N.I. (2 coys)
24 May	Hatrass	1 st Cav., Gwalior Cont.
24 May	Hoti Mardan	55 th N.I.
28 May	Nasirabad	15 th and 30 th N.I.; 2 nd /7 th F.A. (No. 6 F.B.)
29 May	Hansi	4 th I.C. (det.); Hurrianah L.I.
30 May	Sirsa	4 th I.C. (det.); Hurrianah L.I. (det.)
30 May	Hissar	Hurrianah L.I. (det.)
30 May	Mathura	44 th N.I. (1 coy) and 67 th N.I. (1 coy)
30 May	Lucknow	13 th , 48 th and 71 st N.I.; 2 nd and Res. Oudh Art.
31 May	Lucknow	7 th L.C.
31 May	Bareilly	18 th and 68 th N.I.; 8 th I.C.; 6 th /8 th F.A. (No. 15 F.B.)
31 May	Shahjahanpur	28 th N.I.
31 May	Hodal	Bharatpur Legion
May (undated)	Near Cawnpore	4 th Oudh I.I. (wing)
1 June	Near Mainpuri	2 nd Oudh I.C.
2 June	Saharanpur	5 th N.I. (17 men)

3 June	Azimgarh	17 th N.I.
3 June	Moradabad	29 th N.I.
3 June	Nimach	1 st L.C.; 72 nd N.I.; 1 st /4 th H.A.; 7 th Inf., Gwalior Cont.
3 June	Sitapur	41 st N.I.; 9 th and 10 th Oudh I.I.; 1 st Oudh M.P.
4 June	Benares	37 th N.I.; 13 th I.C.; Ludhiana Regt
4 June	Cawnpore	2 nd L.C.; 1 st N.I.
5 June	Cawnpore	53 rd and 56 th N.I.; 6 th /7 th and 1 st /8 th F.A.; 3 rd Oudh Art.
5 June	Jhansi	12 th N.I. (1 coy)
5 June	Jaunpur	Ludhiana Regt. (2 coys)
6 June	Allahabad	6 th N.I.; 6 th /9 th F.A.; 3 rd Oudh I.I.
6 June	Jhansi	12 th N.I. (4 coys); 14 th I.C.; 4 th /9 th F.A. (half company, with half No. 18 F.B.)
7 June	Chobeypur	7 th L.C. (2 tps); 48 th N.I. (2 coys)
7 June	Jullundur	6 th L.C.; 36 th and 61 st N.I.
8 June	Phillour	3 rd N.I.
8 June	Faizabad	22 nd N.I.; 15 th I.C. (det.); 5 th /7 th F.A. (No. 13 F.B.); 6 th Oudh I.I.
9 June	Dariabad	5 th Oudh I.I.
9 June	Ludhiana	3 rd N.I. (1 coy)
9 June	Near Nimach	United Malwa Cont.
9 June	Secrora	1 st Oudh I.C.; 2 nd Oudh I.I.; 1 st Oudh Art.
9 June	Salone	1 st Oudh I.I.
9 June	Sultanpur	15 th I.C.; 8 th Oudh I.I.; 2 nd Oudh M.P.
10 June	Fatehpur	6 th N.I. (1 coy)
10 June	Pershadipur	1 st Oudh I.I. (4 coys)
10 June	Nowgong	12 th N.I.; 14 th I.C. (wing); 4 th /9 th F.A. (half company, with half No. 18 F.B.)
10 June	Rohtak	60 th N.I.
11 June	Gonda	3 rd Oudh I.I.
11 June	Orai	53 rd N.I. (1 coy) and 56 th N.I. (1 coy)
12 June	Aurangabad	1 st Cav., Hyderabad Cont.
12 June	Lalitpur	6 th Oudh I.I.
13 June	Sitabuldi	Nagpur I.C.; 1 st Nagpur I.I.
14 June	Gwalior	2 nd and 4 th Inf., Gwalior Cont.; 1 st and 2 nd Art., Gwalior Cont.
14 June	Hamirpur	56 th N.I. (2 coys)
14 June	Banda	1 st N.I. (3 coys)
Mid-June	Malthoni	31 st N.I. (1 coy)

16 June	Etawah	1 st Inf., Gwalior Cont.
17/18 June	Sipri	3 rd Inf., Gwalior Cont.; 3 rd Art., Gwalior Cont.
18 June	Fatehgarh	10 th N.I.
21 June	Mozuffurnugger	4 th I.C. (det.)
30 June	Lucknow	
June (undated)	Almora	3 rd /8 th F.A.
June (undated)	Kussowlie	4 th I.C. (det.)
Early July	Bhopawar	Malwa Bheel Corps
1 July	Indore	2 Indore inf.regts (no Europ. officers)
1 July	Lucknow	2 nd /8 th F.A. (No. 2 F.B.) check
1 July	Mhow	1 st L.C. (wing); 23 rd N.I.
1 July	Sagar	3 rd I.C.; 42 nd N.I.
2 July	Sasni	2 nd Cav., Gwalior Cont.; 4 th Art., Gwalior Cont.
3 July	Agar	5 th Oudh I.I.
4 July	Near Agra	Kotah Cont.
7 July	Jhelum	14 th N.I.
7 July	Rawalpindi	14 th N.I. (2 coys)
9 July	Sialkot	9 th L.C.; 46 th N.I.
11 July	Saharunpur	29 N.I. (1 coy)
12 July	Jagadhri	5 th N.I. (2 coys)
25 July	Sagauli	12 th I.C. (HQ wing)
25 July	Dinapore	7 th , 8 th and 40 th N.I.
30 July	Hazaribagh	8 th N.I. (2 coys)
1 August	Ramghur	Ramghur L.I. (det.) and Ramghur Art. (det.)
2 August	Ranchi	Ramghur L.I.
6 August	Sehore	Bhopal Cont.
14 August	Bhagulpur	5 th I.C.
14 August	Doomka	5 th I.C. (det.)
15 August	Rohni	5 th I.C. (det.)
19 August	Ferozepore	10 th L.C.
21 August	Mount Abu	Jodhpur Legion (det.)
22 August	Erinpura	Jodhpur Legion
28 August	Peshawur	51 st N.I.
31 August	Multan	62 nd and 69 th N.I.; 4 th /3 rd H.A.
16 September	Nagode	50 th N.I.
18 September	Jabulpur	52 nd N.I.
19 September	Patun	52 nd N.I. (1 coy)
September (undated)	Sehore	52 nd N.I. (2 coys)

September (undated)	Kalabagh	9 th I.C. (det.)
9 October	Deogurh	32 nd N.I. (2 coys)
17 October	Rampur Haut	32 nd N.I. (2 coys)
18 November	Chittagong	34 th N.I. (3 coys)
22 November	Dacca	73 rd N.I. (2 coys)
4 December	Madarigunj	11 th I.C. (det.)
5 December	Jalpigori	11 th I.C. (det.)
January 1858	Rajput	3 rd Nagpur I.I. (partial)

DISARMED:

Date	Place	Corps
3 May	Lucknow	7 th Oudh I.I.
13 May	Lahore	8 th L.C.; 16 th , 26 th , 49 th N.I.
14 May	Ferozepore	45 th and 57 th N.I. (partially)
16 May	Meerut	Bengal sappers & miners (2 coys)
22 May	Peshawur	5 th L.C.; 24 th , 27 th , 51 st and 64 th N.I.
28 May	Ambala	4 th L.C.
29 May	Ambala	5 th N.I.
31 May	Agra	44 th and 67 th N.I.
5 June	Ambala	4 th L.C. (det.)
10 June	Multan	62 nd and 69 th N.I.
14 June	Barrackpore	2 nd , 43 rd and 70 th N.I.
14 June	Calcutta	25 th N.I.
22 June	Dera Ismail Khan	39 th N.I.
25 June	Phillour	3 rd and 35 th N.I.
June (undated)	Attock	4 th /8 th F.A.
June (undated)	Barrackpore	32 nd N.I.
June (undated)	Dum-Dum	1 st /9 th , 2 nd /9 th , 3 rd /9 th and 5 th /9 th F.A.
June (undated)	Lahore	4 th /7 th F.A. (No. 1 F.B.)
June (undated)	Multan	4 th /3 rd H.A.
June (undated)	Nurpur	1 st /7 th F.A.
June (undated)	Peshawur	7 th , 16 th and 18 th I.C.
June (undated)	Rawalpindi	4 th /2 nd H.A.

7 July	Rawalpindi	58 th N.I.
9 July	Amritsar	59 th N.I.
10 July	Amritsar	9 th L.C. (wing)
10 July	Ferozepore	10 th L.C.
14 July	Futtehpore	13 th I.C. (det.)
Mid-July	Thannesur	5 th N.I. (1 coy)
July (undated)	Kohat	58 th N.I. (3 coys)
1 August	Gorakhpur	17 th I.C. (2 coys); 12 th I.C. (det.)
2 August	Berhampore	63 rd N.I.; 11 th I.C.
9 August	Delhi	4 th I.C.
10 August	Ghazipur	65 th N.I.
August (undated)	Delhi	3 rd N.I. (1 coy)
September (undated)	Shamshabad	17 th I.C.
15 December	Indore	Indore troops
16 May 1858	Nurpur	4 th N.I.
16 May 1858	Kangra	4 th N.I. (wing)

DISBANDED

Date	Place	Corps
31 March	Barrackpore	19 th N.I.
6 May	Barrackpore	34 th N.I.
30 May	Ambala	5 th N.I. (two coys)
26 June	Nowshera	10 th I.C. (HQ wing)
26 June	Peshawur	10 th I.C. (left wing)
June (undated)	Sitabuldi	Nagpur I.C.
7 July	Rawalpindi	14 th N.I. (2 coys)

Note: unless specified, the reference to a corps denotes its headquarters

Appendix 3 - Estimate of the number of Bengal native troops who mutinied, were disarmed and disbanded, or stayed loyal

Corps	Mutinied	Disarmed	Disbanded	Stayed Loyal
BENGAL HORSE ARTILLERY				
4 th Tp/1 st Bde	1 + 90*			
5 th Tp/1 st Bde				1 + 90*
4 th Tp/2 nd Bde		1 + 90*		
4 th Tp/3 rd Bde	1 + 90*			
Total:	2 + 180*	1 + 90*		1 + 90*
BENGAL FOOT ARTILLERY				
1 st Co/7 th Bn		2 + 85*		
2 nd Co/7 th Bn	1 + 72*			1 + 13
3 rd Co/7 th Bn	2 + 85*			
4 th Co/7 th Bn		2 + 85*		
5 th Co/7 th Bn	2 + 85*			
6 th Co/7 th Bn	2 + 85*			
1 st Co/8 th Bn	2 + 85*			
2 nd Co/8 th Bn	2 + 85*			
3 rd Co/8 th Bn	2 + 85*			
4 th Co/8 th Bn		2 + 85*		
5 th Co/8 th Bn		2 + 85*		
6 th Co/8 th Bn	2 + 85*			
1 st Co/9 th Bn		2 + 85*		
2 nd Co/9 th Bn		2 + 85*		
3 rd Co/9 th Bn		2 + 85*		
4 th Co/9 th Bn	2 + 85*			
5 th Co/9 th Bn		2 + 85*		
6 th Co/9 th Bn	1 + 28*	1 + 57*		
Total:	18 + 780*	17 + 737*		1 + 13

BENGAL LIGHT CAVALRY				
1 st L.C.	8 + 400*			
2 nd L.C.	7 + 450*			1 + 6
3 rd L.C.	6 + 325*			2 + 75*
4 th L.C.		8 + 400*		
5 th L.C.		8 + 400*		
6 th L.C.	280	156		
7 th L.C.	325*			75*
8 th L.C.		4 + 273		
9 th L.C.	3 + 238	150*		
10 th L.C.	200	100		
Total (L.C.):	24 + 2,218*	20 + 1,479*		3 + 156*
BENGAL NATIVE INFANTRY				
1 st N.I.	12 + 850*			
2 nd N.I.		12 + 850*		
3 rd N.I.	760	90		
4 th N.I.		12 + 850*		
5 th N.I.	139	11 + 666	3 + 180	
6 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
7 th N.I.	7 + 792			4 + 65
8 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
9 th N.I.	10 + 747			1
10 th N.I.	12 + 850			
11 th N.I.	650*			200
12 th N.I.	9 + 750*			3 + 100
13 th N.I.	252			10 + 584
14 th N.I.	13 + 769			100 (Sikhs)
15 th N.I.	7 + 834			1 + 15
16 th N.I.		8 + 736		
17 th N.I.	7 + 746	2 + 115		13
18 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
19 th N.I.			18 + 1,092	
20 th N.I.	12 + 850*			

21 st N.I.				12 + 850
22 nd N.I.	12 + 850*			
23 rd N.I.	12 + 844*			6
24 th N.I.		21 + 875		
25 th N.I.		12 + 850*		
26 th N.I.	7 + 634	12 + 897		
27 th N.I.		16 + 836		
28 th N.I.	11 + 845*			1 + 15
29 th N.I.	12 + 843*			8
30 th N.I.	5 + 762*		5 + 52	4 + 9
31 st N.I.	120*			20 + 831
32 nd N.I.	4 + 375	8 + 600*		1 + 27
33 rd N.I.		13 + 874		
34 th N.I.	6 + 300*		6 + 408	3 + 7
35 th N.I.		12 + 850*		
36 th N.I.	6 + 650*			2 + 109*
37 th N.I.	12 + 869			2 + 126
38 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
39 th N.I.		12 + 850*		
40 th N.I.	10 + 915			7 + 100
41 st N.I.	12 + 830*			20
42 nd N.I.	10 + 630			2 + 220
43 rd N.I.		12 + 850*		
44 th N.I.	1 + 112	10 + 750*		1 + 2
45 th N.I.	4 + 482		9 + 391	
46 th N.I.	9 + 907			
47 th N.I.				12 + 850*
48 th N.I.	2 + 465	1 + 311	22	7 + 80
49 th N.I.		14 + 833		
50 th N.I.	4 + 645			10 + 140
51 st N.I.	17 + 715			
52 nd N.I.	12 + 950*			2 + 16
53 rd N.I.	4 + 810*			10 + 37
54 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
55 th N.I.	8 + 945	8 + 136 ¹		8 (Sikhs)
56 th N.I.	11 + 845*			1 + 5
57 th N.I.	286	11 + 613		

¹Joined the disarmed 51st N.I. at Peshawur and later shared their fate

58 th N.I.		16 + 820*		
59 th N.I.		12 + 850*		
60 th N.I.	10 + 800			
61 st N.I.	2 + 827			10 + 126
62 nd N.I.	650	12 + 850*		
63 rd N.I.		12 + 850*		
64 th N.I.		22 + 968		
65 th N.I.		14 + 950*		
66 th N.I.				20 + 1,140
67 th N.I.	1 + 90	12 + 894		
68 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
69 th N.I.	650*	12 + 850*		
70 th N.I.		12 + 850*		
71 st N.I.	1 + 620			11 + 100*
72 nd N.I.	14 + 953			1 + 14
73 rd N.I.	200*		6	5 + 524
74 th N.I.	12 + 850*			
Total:	392 + 36,358*	331 + 21,314*	41 + 2,151*	150 + 5,598*
BENGAL				
IRREGULAR CAVALRY				
1 st I.C.				12 + 566*
2 nd I.C.				12 + 566*
3 rd I.C.	236			12 + 220*
4 th I.C.	8 + 333	94		1 + 10
5 th I.C.	5 + 366			5 + 59
6 th I.C.				12 + 566*
7 th I.C.		10 + 450*		
8 th I.C.	439*			12 + 11
9 th I.C.	1 + 29		9 + 421*	
10 th I.C.			10 + 450*	
11 th I.C.	4 + 200	6 + 250		
12 th I.C.	8 + 350*			2 + 83
13 th I.C.	10 + 400*	40		
14 th I.C.	10 + 450*			
15 th I.C.	10 + 450*			
16 th I.C.		10 + 450*		

17 th I.C.		10 + 450*		
18 th I.C.		10 + 450*		
Total:	56 + 3,253*	46 + 2,184*	19 + 871*	68 + 2,081*
BENGAL SAPPERS & MINERS				
Total:	440	500*		53
LOCAL INFANTRY: CATEGORY A ²				
Ferozepore Regt. (Sikhs)				20 + 920*
Ludhiana Regt. (Sikhs)	8 + 497			7 + 232
Sirmur Bn. (Gurkhas)				20 + 920*
Kemaon Bn. (Gurkhas)				20 + 920*
New Nasiri Bn. (Gurkhas)				20 + 920*
Kelat-I-Ghilzie				20 + 920*
Total:	8 + 497			107 + 4,832*
LOCAL INFANTRY: CATEGORY B				
Arracan Bn.				20 + 920*
1 st Assam L.I. Bn.	1 + 1			16 + 934*
2 nd Assam L.I. Bn.				20 + 920*
Bhagalpur Hill Rangers				20 + 920*
Calcutta Native Militia				20 + 920*
Hurrianah L.I. Bn.	14 + 750			
Mharwara Bn.				20 + 920*
Pegu L.I. Bn.				20 + 920*
Sylhet L.I. Bn.				20 + 920*
Total:	15 + 751			158 + 7,395*
OTHER LOCAL CORPS				
Bengal M.P. Bn.				14 + 800*
Ramgarh Force:				
Artillery	2 + 80			
I.C.	19 + 350*			1 + 30

² Paid and organized like regular corps

L.I.	10 + 720*			
Sebundy Corps of Sappers & Miners				4 + 200*
Shekhawati Brigade:				
Artillery				2 + 80*
I.C.				12 + 500*
I.I.				20 + 920*
Total:	31 + 1,150			53 + 2,530*
PUNJAB IRREGULAR FORCE				
1 st I.C.				18 + 566*
2 nd I.C.	3 N.O.s			15 + 566*
3 rd I.C.				18 + 566*
4 th I.C.				18 + 566*
5 th I.C.				18 + 566*
1 st I.I.				16 + 912*
2 nd I.I.				16 + 912*
3 rd I.I.				16 + 912*
4 th I.I.				16 + 912*
5 th I.I.				16 + 912*
6 th I.I.				16 + 912*
Hazara Mountain Battery:				
1 st L.F.B.				3 + 110*
2 nd L.F.B.				3 + 110*
3 rd L.F.B.				3 + 110*
4 th L.F.B.				3 + 110*
Corps of Guides:				
Cavalry				
Infantry				
1 st Sikh Inf.				20 + 920*
2 nd Sikh Inf.				20 + 920*
3 rd Sikh Inf.				20 + 920*
4 th Sikh Inf.				20 + 920*
Total:	3 N.O.s			275 + 12,422*
ODUH IRREGULAR FORCE				

1 st Art.	2 + 85*			
2 nd Art.	2 + 85*			
3 rd Art.	2 + 85*			
Reserve Art.	2 + 85*			
1 st I.C.	9 + 460*			
2 nd I.C.	9 + 460*			
3 rd I.C.	9 + 420*	40		
1 st I.I.	12 + 750*			
2 nd I.I.	12 + 750*			
3 rd I.I.	12 + 750*			
4 th I.I.	12 + 750*			
5 th I.I.	12 + 750*			
6 th I.I.	12 + 750*			
7 th I.I.	6 + 350*	300*	6 + 15	
8 th I.I.	12 + 750*			
9 th I.I.	12 + 750*			
10 th I.I.	12 + 750*			
Total:	149 + 8,780*	340	6 + 15	
OUDH MILITARY POLICE				
1 st Regt.	12 + 750*			
2 nd Regt.	12 + 750*			
Total:	24 + 1,500*			
GWALIOR CONTINGENT				
1 st Artillery	2 + 85*			
2 nd Artillery	2 + 85*			
3 rd Artillery	2 + 85*			
4 th Artillery	2 + 85*			
1 st Cavalry	9 + 460*			
2 nd Cavalry	9 + 460*			
1 st Infantry	12 + 750*			
2 nd Infantry	12 + 750*			
3 rd Infantry	10 + 748*			2 + 2
4 th Infantry	12 + 750*			
5 th Infantry	12 + 750*			

6 th Infantry	6 + 375*	6 + 375*		
7 th Infantry	12 + 750*			
Total:	102 + 6,133*	6 + 375*		
BHARATPUR + ULWAR LEGIONS ³	5,000*			
BHOPAL CONTINGENT				
Artillery	1 + 30*			
Cavalry	4 + 200*			
Infantry	8 + 400*			
Total:	13 + 630*			
INDORE IRREGULAR FORCE ⁴				
1 st Infantry	10 + 700*			
2 nd Infantry	10 + 700*			
Total:	20 + 1,400*			
JODHPUR LEGION				
Artillery	1 + 30*			
Cavalry	5 + 158			
Infantry	8 + 376			
Total:	14 + 564*			
KOTAH CONTINGENT				
Artillery	1 + 30*			
Cavalry	4 + 200*			
Infantry	10 + 550*			
Total:	15 + 780*			
UNITED MALWA CONTINGENT				
Artillery	1 + 60*			
Cavalry	10 + 600*			
Infantry	10 + 600*			

³ Troops of independent states not commanded by European officers

⁴ Ibid.

Total:	21 + 1,260*			
MALWA BHEEL CORPS	10 + 500*			
MEWAR BHEEL CORPS (check)				14 + 850*
NAGPUR IRREGULAR FORCE				
Artillery	15		45	
Cavalry	3 N.O.s		9 + 600*	
1 st Infantry				14 + 800*
2 nd Infantry				14 + 800*
3 rd Infantry	2			14 + 798*
Total:	3 + 17		9 + 645*	42 + 2,398*
NIMAR POLICE CORPS				
Cavalry				10 + 400*
Infantry				14 + 700*
Total				24 + 1,100*

* Estimate

Note: double figures are used for native officers and other ranks, eg. 3 + 103 = 3 native officers and 103 other ranks.

Bibliography

A: PRIMARY SOURCES, UNPUBLISHED

(i) Official Documents

(a) Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), British Library, London

Bengal Military Consultations

India Military Consultations

Military Department Records

(b) National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi

Foreign Department Political Consultations

Foreign Department Political Proceedings

Foreign Department Secret Consultations

Military Department Papers

(ii) Private Papers

(a) Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), British Library, London

Chamberlain Correspondence: Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain

Dalhousie Letters: Typescript of Letters from the Marquess of Dalhousie to General Sir William

Gomm concerning military administration and operations 1849-56

Elphinstone Papers: Papers of John, 13th Baron Elphinstone;

Elphinstone (Mountstuart) Papers: Papers of Hon. Mounstuart Elphinstone

Ewart Letters: Letters from Emma Ewart, wife of Colonel John Ewart (1st Bengal N.I.), to her sister

Goldney Papers: Memoirs of Mrs Louisa Goldney

Grant Letters: Two letters from Lt.-Gen. Sir Patrick Grant, C.-in-C. India May-Aug. 1857, to Maj.-Gen.

Sir Henry Barnard, in command of siege of Delhi

Hickman Papers: Papers of Major George Hickman, late 70th Bengal N.I.

Jacob Papers: Papers of Brigadier John Jacob

Kantzow Papers: Record of the Services of Col. Charles Adolphus de Kantzow in India, 1853-88

Kaye Mutiny Papers: The Mutiny Papers of Sir John Kaye

Lawrence Correspondence: Correspondence of Lord Lawrence to Brig.-Gen. N. Chamberlain

Lawrence Letters: The Letters of Sir Henry Lawrence

Lyveden Papers: The Papers of Robert Vernon Smith, 1st Baron Lyveden

Martineau Letters: Letters from Lt. Edward Martineau to Captain Septimus Becher, AAG of the Army

Mawe Letters: Letters from Dr Thomas Mawe, B.M.S., to his sister describing the early stages of the

Mutiny

McGuinness Letters: Letters of Sgt. Christopher McGuinness

Nicholl Letters: Letters of Lt. Thomas Nicholl, B.A.

Sandhurst Papers: Memoranda, correspondence and telegrams of Maj.-Gen. Sir William Rose

Mansfield, 1st Baron Sandhurst

Scot Papers: Personal Narrative of the Escape from Nowgong by Captain P.G. Scot, 12th Bengal N.I.

Talbot Papers: Private Diary and Letter Book of the Hon. Gerald Talbot, P.S. to Lord Canning 1856-8

Timbrell Narrative: Narrative of her family's escape from Nasirabad in 1857 by Mrs Agnes Timbrell, wife of Capt. Charles Timbrell (1823-60), Bengal Artillery.

Walcot Papers: Letters from Lieutenant William Walcot, 47th Bengal N.I., to his wife

Warner Letters: Letters from Ensign Wynyard Warner, 40th Bengal N.I., and Lt. Ashton Warner, 7th Bengal L.C., to members of their family

Wood Papers: Papers of Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control 1853-55 and Sec. of State for India, 1859-60

(b) National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi
Mutiny Papers

(c) National Archives of Scotland (NAS), Edinburgh
Dalhousie Papers: Papers of the 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Dalhousie

(d) Department of Manuscripts, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Edinburgh
Grey Diaries: Diaries of Veterinary-Surgeon Edward Simpson Grey, 8th Hussars

(e) Department of Manuscripts, British Library (BL), London
Dennys Memoirs: Memoirs of General J.B. Dennys
Mutiny Papers: Letters and Papers relating to the Indian Mutiny
Napier Papers: Papers of Sir Charles J. Napier
Peel Papers: Correspondence of Sir Robert Peel
Pierce Letters: The Letters of Thomas Pierce
Service Record of the 31st B.N.I.: Services of the late 31st now 2nd L.I. during the mutiny and Rebellion in 1857

(f) Department of Documents, National Army Museum (NAM), London
Chamier Letters: Letters from Lieutenant Edward Chamier (34th Bengal N.I.), A.D.C. and Persian Interpreter to General Sir James Outram, G.C.B.
Chichester Letters: Typescript copy of letters home, dated 1856-64, by Maj-Gen Hugh Chichester (1836-95), Bengal (later Royal) Artillery 1856-86
Coghill Papers: Papers of Lt. and Adj. Kendal Coghill, 2nd B.E.F.
Edwards Papers: R.M. Edwards, 'Diary of Events in the Districts of Saharunpore and Mozuffurnugger from 11th May 1857 to April 27th 1858'
Gambier Letters: Letters of Lt. Charles H.F. Gambier, 38th Bengal N.I.
Hall Papers: Colonel Montagu Hall, 'Reminiscences of the Indian Mutiny'
Intercepted Letter: An Intercepted Letter from Peshawur
Lawrence Letters: Letters of the Lawrence family
Lind Papers: The Diary and Correspondence of Francis M. Lind, Collector of Benares
Lindsay Letters: Letters of Major William Lindsay, A.A.G. Cawpore
Lyster Papers: The Papers of Lt. General Harry H. Lyster, V.C.
Montagu Hall Diary: Diary of Colonel Montagu Hall, Royal Munster Fusiliers (formerly 1st B.E.F.)
Potiphar Papers: Documents of Private Frederick Potiphar, 9th Lancers, 1845-60
Richardson Papers: Maj-Gen. J.F. Richardson (8th Bengal I.C.), Memoirs of Service in India 1841-58
Rogers Papers: Reminiscences of Foreign Service by Henry Rogers, M.D., late surgeon, H.M. 70th Regiment
Shebbeare Letters: Letters of Major Robert H. Shebbeare, V.C., 60th Bengal N.I.
Sneyd Letters: Letters of Captain Henry Sneyd, 28th Bengal N.I.
Spy Letters: Copies of letters from spies in the city of Delhi
Wilkie Correspondence: Correspondence of Colonel David Wilkie, 4th Bengal N.I.
Wilson Letters: Letters of Sir Archdale Wilson to his wife

B: PRIMARY SOURCES, PUBLISHED

(i) Parliamentary Papers

- P.P., House of Commons, 1852-3, XXVII: First Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories (2 May 1853)
P.P., House of Commons, 1852-3, XXVIII: Fourth Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories
P.P., House of Lords, 1852-3, Vol. XXXI: First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the Operation of the Act 3 & 4, Will. 4., c.85, for the better Government of Her Majesty's Indian Territories
P.P., House of Commons, 1857, XXX: Papers relative to the Mutinies in the East Indies

- P.P., House of Commons, 1857-8, XLIV: Accounts and Papers, Mutinies in the East Indies
- P.P., House of Commons, 1859, V: Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Organization of the Indian Army
- P.P., House of Commons, 1859, VIII: Papers connected with the Re-organization of the Army in India, supplementary to the Report of the Army Commission
- P.P., House of Commons, 1859, XVIII, p. 1-64: A Return "of the Name or Number of each Regiment and Regular and Irregular Corps in India which has mutinied, or manifested a disposition to mutiny, since the 1st day of January 1857..."
- P.P., House of Commons, 1859, XVIII, pp. 111-: A Copy of the Evidence taken before the Court appointed for the trial of the King of Delhi

(ii) Other Contemporary Publications

- Carey, W.H., *The Mahomedan Rebellion* (Rurki, 1857)
- Carmichael Smyth, Lt.-Col. C., *A Rough Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Irregular Horse of the Bengal Army* (privately printed, 1847)
- Chesney, George, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (London, 1868)
- Hodgson, Col. J.S., *Opinions on the Indian Army: originally published at Meerut in 1850, under the title of Musings on Military Matters* (London, 1857)
- Hunter, W.W., *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (London, 1881)
- Jacob, Major John, *Notes on Sir C. Napier's Posthumous Work* (London, 1854)
- Kaye, Sir John, *History of the Sepoy War*, 3 vols. (London, 1864-7)
- , *Lives of Indian Officers*, 2 vols. (London, 1867)
- Khan, Sir Syed Ahmad, *An Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt* (Calcutta, 1860), Capt. W.N. Lees (trans.)
- Lawrence, Sir Henry, *Essays, Military and Political, Written in India* (London, 1859)
- Malcolm, Sir John, *The Government of India* (London, 1833)
- , *Political History of India*, 2 vols. (London, 1826)
- Malleson (ed.), *Kaye and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, 6 vols. (London, 1888)
- Napier, Sir Charles, *Defects, Civil and Military, of the Indian Government* (London, 1853)
- Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of Disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in India in 1857-58* (Calcutta, 1881) - Check
- Nolan, Captain L.E., *Cavalry: Its History and Tactics* (London, 1853)
- O'Connor, J.E., *Prices and Wages in India* (Calcutta, 1886)
- Pelly, Captain Lewis (ed.), *The Views and Opinions of Brigadier-General John Jacob C.B.* (London, 1858)

(iii) Published Documents, Diaries, Letters and Memoirs

- Anderson, G. and Subedar, M. (eds.), *The Last Days of the Company: A Source Book of Indian History 1818-1858*, 2 vols. (London, 1918)
- Anderson, Capt. R.P., *A Personal Journal of the Siege of Lucknow*, ed. by Carnegie Anderson (London, 1858)
- Allen, Charles (ed.), *A Soldier of the Company: Life of an Indian Ensign 1833-43* [Capt. Albert Hervey] (London, 1988)
- Anson, Major O.H.S.G., *With H.M. 9th Lancers during the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1896)
- Baird, J.G.A. (ed.), *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie* (London, 1910)
- Benson, A.C. and Esher, Viscount (eds.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, 3 vols. (London, 1907)
- Bhatnagar, O.P. (ed.), *Private Correspondence of J.W. Sherer, Collector of Fatehpur* (Allahabad, 1968)
- Blomfield, David (ed.), *Lahore to Lucknow: The Indian Mutiny Journal of Arthur Moffatt Lang* (London, 1992)
- Bonham, Col. John, *Oude in 1857: Some memories of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1928)
- Bute, Marchioness of (ed.), *The Private Journals of the Marquess of Hastings: Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in India*, 2 vols. (London, 1858)
- Duberly, Mrs Frances, *Campaigning in Rajputana and Central India during the suppression of the Mutiny* (London, 1859)
- Forrest G.W. (ed.), *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India 1857-58*, 4 vols. (Calcutta, 1893-1912)
- Germon, Maris, *Journal of the Siege of Lucknow: An Episode of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1958)
- Gough, Gen. Sir Hugh, *Old Memories* (London, 1897)

- Gubbins, M.R., *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh* (London, 1858)
 Humbly, W.W.W., *Journal of a Cavalry Officer* (London, 1854)
 Hutchinson, Maj.-Gen. George, *Narrative of the Mutinies in Oude* (London, 1859)
 Kavanagh, T. Henry, *How I Won the Victoria Cross* (London, 1860)
 Lang, John, *Wanderings in India: and other Sketches of Life in Hindostan* (London, 1859)
 Lowe, Thomas, *Central India: During the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858* (London, 1860)
 Loy Smith, George, *A Victorian RSM* (London, 1987)
 Lunt, James (ed.), *From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army, written and related by himself* (London, 1970)
 Metcalfe, Charles T. (trans.), *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi* (London, 1898)
 Norman, Gen. Sir Henry, and Young, Mrs Keith (eds.), *Delhi-1857: The Siege, Assault and Capture as Given in the Diary and Correspondence of the Late Colonel Keith Young C.B.* (London, 1902)
 Philips, C.H. (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck: Governor-General of India 1828-1835*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1977)
 Rizvi, S.A.A. and Bhargava, M.L. (eds.), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh: Source Material*, 6 vols. (Lucknow, 1957).
 Roberts, Field Marshal Lord, *Forty-one Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1898)
 Roberts, Fred, *Letters Written During the Mutiny* (London, 1924)
 Russell, W.H., *My Diary in India, 1858-9*, 2 vols. (London, 1860)
 Sattin, Anthony (ed.), *An Englishwoman in India: The Memoirs of Harriet Tytler 1828-1858* (Oxford, 1986)
 Sherer, J.W., *Daily Life during the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1898)
 Sleeman, Maj.-Gen. Sir William, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (revised edition, London, 1915)
 Thackwell, E.J., *Narrative of the Second Sikh War* (London, 1851, 2nd edition)
 Thomson, Capt. Mowbray, *The Story of Cawnpore* (London, 1859)
 Thornhill, Mark, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1884)
 Toker, Lt.-Gen. Sir Francis (ed.), *The Chronicle of Private Henry Metcalfe, H.M. 32nd Regiment of Foot* (London, 1953)
 Vibart, Col. Edward, *The Sepoy Mutiny* (London, 1898)
 Wilson, Major T.F., *The Defence of Lucknow* (London, 1858)

(iv) Newspapers and Journals

The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette
Calcutta Review
Delhi Gazette
Friend of India
The Hindoo Patriot
The Mofussilite
The Times
The United Service Gazette
United Service Magazine

C: SECONDARY SOURCES

(i) Articles and Chapters

- Amin, Shahid, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 1-55.
 Anderson, Olive, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *English Historical Review (EHR)*, Vol. 86, 1971, pp. 46-72.
 Baker, David, 'Colonial Beginnings and the Indian Response: The Revolt of 1857-58 in Madhya Pradesh', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1991, pp. 511-43.
 Bhadra, Gautam, 'Four Rebels of Eighteen-Fifty-Seven', in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 129-175.

- Brodin, E.I., 'The Struggle for Succession: Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1972, pp. 277-90.
- Cadell, Sir Patrick, 'The Outbreak of the Indian Mutiny', *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. 33, 1955, pp. 118-22.
- Cohn, Bernard S., 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV* (Delhi, 1985), pp. 276-329.
- Crowell, Lorenzo M., 'Military Professionalism in a Colonial Context: The Madras army circa 1832', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1990, pp. 249-74.
- Dallas, Gloden and Gill, Douglas, 'Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917', *Past and Present*, Vol. 69, 1957, pp. 88-112.
- Englander, David, 'Mutinies and Military Morale', in Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 191-203.
- Harding, David, 'Arming the East India Company's Forces', in Alan J. Guy and Peter B. Boyden (eds.) *Soldiers of the Raj: The Indian Army 1600-1947* (London, 1997), pp. 138-47.
- Killingray, David, 'Guardians of Empire', in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds.), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 1-19.
- Kolff, Dirk H.A., 'The End of an Ancien Régime: Colonial War in India 1798-1818', in J.A. de Moor and H.L. Wesseling (eds.), *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 22-49.
- Luke, P.V., 'How the Electric Telegraph Saved India', in Col. E. Vibart, *The Sepoy Mutiny* (London, 1898), pp. 250-67.
- Mackenzie, Col. A.R.D., 'The Outbreak at Meerut', in Col. E. Vibart, *The Sepoy Mutiny* (London, 1898), pp. 213-44.
- Menezes, S.L., 'Race, Caste, Mutiny and Discipline in the Indian Army, from its Origins to 1947', in Alan J. Guy and Peter B. Boyden (eds.), *Soldiers of the Raj: The Indian Army 1600-1947* (London, 1997), pp. 100-17.
- Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, '"Satan Let Loose Upon Earth": The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857', *Past & Present*, No. 128, 1990, pp. 92-116.
- Peers, Douglas M., 'Between Mars and Mammon: The East India Company and Efforts to Reform its Army, 1796-1832', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 1990, pp. 385-401.
- , 'The Habitual Nobility of Being: British Officers and the Social Construction of the Bengal Army in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1991, pp. 545-69.
- , 'Imperial Vice: sex, drink and the health of British troops in North Indian cantonments, 1800-1858', in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds.), *Guardians of the Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 25-52.
- , 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820-50', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History (JICH)*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1995, pp. 211-47.
- Robson, Brian, 'The British Cavalry Trooper's Sword 1796-1853', *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. 46, 1968, pp. 106-9.
- , 'The Organization and Command Structure of the Indian Army', in Alan J. Guy and Peter B. Boyden (eds.), *Soldiers of the Raj: The Indian Army 1600-1947* (London, 1997), pp. 9-19.
- Roy, Kaushik, 'The Historiography of the Colonial Indian Army', *Studies in History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1996, pp. 255-73.
- , 'Recruitment doctrines of the colonial Indian Army: 1859-1913', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review (IESHR)*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1997, pp. 321-54.
- Scurfield, R., 'British Military Smoothbore Firearms', *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. 33, 1955, pp. 62-9 and 111-61.
- Strachan, H.F.A., 'The British Army and Society', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1979, pp. 247-54.
- , 'The Origins of the 1855 Uniform Changes: An Example of Pre-Crimean Reform', *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. 55, 1977, pp. 85-117.
- Steele, Captain Russell V., 'Uniforms Worn by Sir Colin Campbell's Force in the Rohilkhand Campaign, 1858', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. 33, 1955, pp. 115-17.
- Tylden, Major G., 'The Principal Small Arms carried by British Regular Infantry', *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. 45, 1967, pp. 243-7.

(ii) Books

- Alavi, Seema, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770-1830* (Delhi, 1995)

- Allen, Charles, *Soldier Sahibs: The Men who made the North-West Frontier* (London, 2000)
- Anglesey, The Marquess of, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919 - Vol. 2: 1851-1871* (London, 1975)
- Barat, Amiya, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its organisation and discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962)
- Bayly, C.A., *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996)
- , *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983)
- Bayly, Susan, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol. IV:3 - Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, 1999)
- Bertaud, Jean-Paul, *The Army of the French Revolution: From Citizen-Soldiers to Instrument of Power* (Princeton, 1979)
- Cadell, Sir Patrick, *History of the Bombay Army* (London, 1938)
- Carman, W.Y., *Indian Army Uniforms under the British: from the 18th century to 1947*, 3 vols. (1961-9)
- Chaudhuri, S.B., *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies 1857-1859* (Calcutta, 1957)
- Cohen, Stephen P., *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (Delhi, 1971)
- David, Saul, *Mutiny at Salerno: An Injustice Exposed* (Brassey's, 1995)
- Dutt, Nripendra Kumar, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, 3 vols. (London, 1931)
- Fitzmaurice, Lord Edmond, *The Life of Granville George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville 1815-1891*, 2 vols. (London, 1905)
- Gimlette, Lt.-Col. G.H.D., *A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny: An attempt to trace the subsequent careers and fate of the rebel Bengal regiments, 1857-8* (London, 1927)
- Guha, Ranajit, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1983)
- Harding, D.F., *Smallarms of the East India Company 1660-1856*, 4 vols. (London, 1997-1999)
- Heathcote, T.A., *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (London, 1974)
- , *The Military in British India: The development of British land forces in South Asia, 1600-1947* (Manchester, 1995)
- Hibbert, Christopher, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857* (London, 1978)
- Holmes, T.R.E., *A History of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1883)
- Ingram, Edward, *Empire-building and Empire-builders: Twelve Studies* (London, 1995)
- , *In Defence of British India: Great Britain in the Middle East, 1775-1842* (London, 1984)
- James, Lawrence, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997)
- Jocelyn, Col. Julian R.J., *The History of the Royal and Indian Artillery in the Mutiny of 1857* (London, 1915)
- Jones, Kenneth W., *The New Cambridge History of India: Vol III:1 - Socio-religious reform movements in British India* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Kolff, Dirk H.A., *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The ethnology of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990)
- Lambrick, H.T., *John Jacob of Jacobabad* (London, 1960)
- Lumsden, P.S. and Elsmie, G.R., *Lumsden of the Guides* (London, 1899)
- MacLagan, Michael, *Clemency Canning* (London, 1962)
- Majumdar, R.C., *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (Calcutta, 1957)
- Mason, Philip, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers and Men* (London, 1974)
- Metcalf, Thomas R., *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1965)
- Mollo, Boris, *The Indian Army* (Poole, 1981)
- Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, *Awadh in Revolt 1857-1858: A study of Popular Resistance* (Delhi, 1984)
- Omissi, David, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994)
- Palmer, J.A.B., *The Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857* (Cambridge, 1966)
- Pedroncini, Guy, *Les Mutinieres de 1917* (Paris, 1967)
- Peers, Douglas M., *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India 1819-1835* (London, 1995)
- Porch, Douglas, *Army and the Revolution: France 1815-1848* (London, 1974)
- Porter, Andrew, *The Oxford History of the British Empire - Vol. III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999)
- Prebble, John, *Mutiny: Highland Regiments in Revolt, 1743-1804* (London, 1975)
- Ratinaud, Jean, *1917 ou La Révolte des poilus* (Paris, 1960)
- Robinson, Jane, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1996)
- Robson, Brian (ed.), *Sir Hugh Rose and the Central India Campaign* (Stroud, 2000)
- Roselli, John, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal Imperialist* (London, 1974)

- Roy, Tapti, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857* (Delhi, 1994)
- Savarkar, V.D., *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* (London, 1909)
- Scott, Samuel F., *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution: The Role and Development of the Line Army 1787-93* (Oxford, 1978)
- Sen, S.N., *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Delhi, 1957)
- Sked, Alan, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire: Radetzky, the imperial army and the class war, 1848* (Longman, 1979)
- Sinha, S.N., *The Revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand* (Lucknow, 1982)
- Smith, Leonard V., *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton, 1994)
- Smyth, Sir John, *The Rebellious Rani* (London, 1966)
- Sondhaus, Lawrence, *In the Service of the Emperor* (London, 1990)
- Stanley, Peter, *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India, 1825-1875* (London, 1997)
- Stokes, Eric, *The English Utilitarians and India* (1959)
- , *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1978)
- , *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857* (Oxford, 1986)
- Strachan, Hew, *Wellington's Legacy: The Reform of the British Army 1830-54* (Manchester, 1984)
- Tahmankar, D.V., *The Ranee of Jhansi* (London, 1958)
- Taylor, P.J.O., *A Companion to the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857* (New Delhi, 1996)
- , *What Really Happened During the Mutiny: A Day-by-Day Account of the Major Events of 1857-1859 in India* (New Delhi, 1997)
- Temple, Sir Richard, *Lord Lawrence* (London, 1889)
- Trotter, Lionel J., *The Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse* (London, 1901)
- Ward, Andrew, *Our Bones Are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London, 1996)
- Watt, Richard M., *Dare Call It Treason* (New York, 1963)
- Wildman, Alan, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March-April 1917)* (Princeton, 1980)
- Winant, Lewis, *Early Percussion Firearms: A History of the Early Percussion Firearms Ignition* (New York, 1959)
- Yapp, M.E., *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan 1798-1850* (Oxford, 1980)

(iii) Unpublished Theses

- Bourne, J.M., 'The Civil and Military Patronage of the East India Company, 1784-1858', Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1977
- Shibly, A.H., 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies, 1858-1879', Ph.D. thesis, S.O.A.S., University of London, 1969