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Writing and Making History Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountsturart Elphinstone: Three Scotsmen in History and Historiography of British India

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dec. 9th, 1976
(date)
ABSTRACT

Between 1780 and 1830, the decades of the second British empire, the East India Company's small and scattered possessions in south and west India were turned into two powerful imperial provinces. In the course of these fifty years, Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone, raised in Scotland during the apogee of the Scottish enlightenment (1760-1790), rose from junior positions to high office in the Company's service through their contributions to both the expansion of Britain's territories and the introduction of its colonial administrative system.

Although Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone have long been regarded by historians as the leaders of a conservative and pragmatic school of thought on Indian government, no attempt has been made to test this assumption by examining their written works in relation to ideas current in the society in which they grew up. Three separate aspects of their role in the history and the writing of the history of British India will be explored here as part of a reconsideration of the nature of their conservatism and pragmatism. Born when the ancien régime still dominated British social and political life, they served in India at a time when men with ability, but inadequate wealth and patronage to build a successful career in Britain, found their opportunities in the Company's service greatly improved by the government's urgent need for officials with a knowledge of local languages and politics. Parts I and II are based on a detailed study of published works which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone deliberately wrote in a way that would publicize their knowledge as well as their opinions. Part I, a chronological account of their interwoven careers, explores their professional relationship and the way they used writings to gain professional advancement by demonstrating their Indian expertise. In Part II their writings are compared with the most important and widely read works of enlightenment Scotland, to show that their approach to Indian government was based on clearly defined ideological assumptions and was more progressive in intent than is generally acknowledged. In addition to their published works of history, official correspondence, minutes, reports and memoranda, the private papers of the three men and Elphinstone's journals, located in
various archival collections in Britain have been examined to provide further corroboration for their publicly expressed opinions. Part III examines changing historiographical trends and the way in which these trends affected interpretations of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's role in the history of south Asia.
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My research was carried out at the British Library and the India Office Library and Records in London, the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich and in the Special Collections departments of the libraries of the University of British Columbia and the University of Washington. I acknowledge the patience, good humour and expert knowledge of their staff, who made my work enjoyable as well as enlightening.

Finally I thank Edward Ingram, my senior supervisor, for guidance and encouragement above and beyond the call of duty, and express my appreciation — and admiration — for the consummate skill with which he invariably balanced liberty with authority.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approval Page</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on References</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontispiece: Map of India</td>
<td>1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scottish Families: 1760s - 1790s</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Apprenticeship in India: 1780 - 1798</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opportunity: 1798 - 1812</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Home Leave: 1808 - 1817</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Competition and Co-operation: 1812 - 1819</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Recognition: 1819 - 1830</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Philosophical History</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Moral Philosophy</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Systems of Government</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Political Economy and the Munro System</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Heroes of the Anglo-Indian School</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion | 329 |

Bibliography | 346 |
NOTES ON REFERENCES

Abbreviations

Bentinck  The Correspondence of Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India, 1828-1835
DNB  Dictionary of National Biography
IO  India Office Records, British Library
Mss. Eur.  British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, European Manuscripts
H/  India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Series
J/  India Office Records, Haileybury Records
MM  Sir Thomas Munro: Selections from his Minutes and Other Writings
NLS  National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NMM  National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
ECN  Elphinstone Correspondence, 1804-1808
PRC  English Records of Maratha History: Poona Residency Correspondence
Parl. Paps.  Parliamentary Papers
Wellesley  The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley, K.G., during his Administration in India
WD  The Dispatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington during his Various Campaigns from 1799-1818
WND  Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G.
WSD  Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G.
GENERAL MAP OF INDIA 1780 - 1830
INTRODUCTION

In August 1818, George Canning, president of the board of control for India in the ear of Liverpool's administration, told the chairman of the court of directors of the East India Company that he would be "disposed to concur in the appointment of either Sir John Malcolm, Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone or Colonel Thomas Munro as governor of Bombay." He added that, although the directors, since the India Act of 1784, had selected British politicians or officials as their presidency governors, "the distinguished services by your civil and military servants in India" should be recognized.1

Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone were outstanding figures in the history of British India. Over a period of fifty years from 1780 to 1830, they played increasingly prominent roles in military, diplomatic and administrative affairs during the expansion of the Company's empire in southern and western India. Elphinstone, the junior, and arguably the least experienced of the three, was appointed governor of Bombay in 1819. Munro was appointed governor of Madras in 1819 and took up the post a year later. Malcolm succeeded Elphinstone at Bombay in 1827.

Thomas Munro (1761-1827) began his career as a cadet at Madras in 1780, the bottom rung of the ladder climbed by commissioned officers in the Company's army. He was intelligent, articulate, efficient and hard-working, but these qualities had little effect on promotion in the early 1780s and, with no influential connections in the patronage-dominated, corrupt and inefficient Madras government, his early career progressed slowly. It took him sixteen years to rise from cadet, through the ranks of ensign and lieutenant, to captain. His career took off only when he was appointed to a civil post in the Company's revenue branch and he spent most of the rest of his life in administration. At the age of twenty-two, Munro, in a self-portrait drawn for his mother, claimed that

he looked "a good deal like a picture of Don Quixote" he had once seen: about six feet tall, "as lank and meagre as him with a complexion no ways inferior...I would say that I am a person of a grave appearance and of a discrete and sober deportment." Nearly forty years later Elphinstone, in his journal, portrayed Munro as a man of "great natural genius" and of "sound sense...good humour,... and philanthropy." In private. Elphinstone praised no one more highly. Although Munro, unlike Malcolm and Elphinstone, wrote no books on government or history, the government of Madras told the Home government in an official letter in 1814 that "every writing of Colonel Munro's is entitled to attention." Munro died of cholera in July 1827 while awaiting the arrival of his successor as governor of Madras.

John Malcolm (1769-1833), eight years Munro's junior, began his career as a cadet at Madras in 1783. He was a versatile, generous, ambitious man with an ability to get on well with people from all walks of life — Lord Clive, while governor of Madras, described Malcolm in 1799 as having "extensive knowledge, activity and distinguished excellence of temper" — and the industry and talent to convert a limited formal education into an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at Oxford University; an industry and talent he used to advance his career by writing a vast number of memoranda and several books on subjects of interest to those responsible for the government of India. Despite wasting his early years in India in irresponsible escapades and debt, Malcolm managed to rise from cadet to captain in only fifteen years: an achievement owed partly to being better connected than Munro, partly to a deliberate and vigorous campaign of promoting himself as an expert, and partly to being younger. Changes in the Company’s government and new perceptions of

2 Munro to his mother. Aug. 1783, Mss. Eur., F/151/140.


the importance of India to Britain began to provide opportunities for competent officials that had not existed during Munro’s early career. Malcolm was variously employed as a soldier, a diplomat and an administrator. He died in England in 1833, three years after retiring from the Company’s service.

The youngest of the three men, Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859) went to Bengal in 1796 as a writer, the most junior rank in the Company’s civil service. The combination of relatives with influence, fortunate timing and the help of, among others, Malcolm, enabled him to rise rapidly in the Company’s diplomatic service. At twenty-four, Munro was still an ensign, Malcolm was a lieutenant, while Elphinstone, despite being a civilian, held a prestigious and lucrative position as a political assistant to Major-General Arthur Wellesley, later duke of Wellington, the younger brother to the Marquis Wellesley, the governor-general of Bengal. Although army officers were often able to obtain diplomatic and administrative appointments — causing resentment in the civil service — it was less common for a civilian to be appointed to serve with the army. Elphinstone was an able official, intelligent but moody, intermittently ambitious but full of self-doubt. He was at his best in interesting and demanding situations, but suffered from depression and boredom when, as often happened, he found his life in India uncongenial. Despite his advantages, he was frustrated by the difficulty of making enough money to pay his debts and provide for his retirement, and by what seemed to him to be slow professional advancement. Encouraged by Malcolm, he, too, turned to writing to publicize his name and knowledge. Lord Wellesley liked the members of his inner circle to be well-educated and articulate; literary accomplishments — the mark of the cultivated gentleman in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain — were a useful adjunct to the curriculum vitae of an ambitious Company official.

Elphinstone retired from the Company service when he was forty-eight and spent thirty years in quiet, scholarly retirement in England, rejecting offers to enter parliament or to return to India as governor-general, partly on the ground of his inability to speak effectively in either public or
private. He seems to have expressed himself most effectively through the written word. Lord Ellenborough, while president of the board of control, described him in his later years as "a quiet, mild, temperate man."6

Historians describe the three men as friends and usually mention that they were all Scotsmen. Thirty years ago in a seminal intellectual history of nineteenth-century British India, Eric Stokes stated that Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone led the dominant school in the formation of Indian policy until it was superseded by that of the westernizing reformers.7 More recently C.A. Bayly has pointed out that there has as yet been no study of the ruling ideologies of the Company state during the period from 1780 to the 1820s.8 Despite the acknowledged importance of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as a group in British Indian history, most studies of their work treat them as individuals: throughout the period of British rule historians tended to present them as conservative role-models for recruits to the Anglo-Indian civil and military services9 while, since 1947, the main focus has been on the impact of their ideas and actions on developments in India and throughout the British Empire.10 The nature of their friendship, the way in which they built

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7 Eric Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India, (Oxford: 1959) p. 9. Stokes included Charles Metcalfe (1785-1846) in this group. Metcalfe, who also enjoyed a distinguished career in India, was a generation younger than Munro but admired his administrative policies. He was acquainted with Malcolm and Elphinstone.


their careers, and the common origin of the ideas on which they founded their approach to governing India have attracted little attention.

This work examines three separate aspects of the role of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, as a group, in the history of British India. Parts I and II examine the roles of the three men as career-builders and writers. Part I establishes the professional relationship between the three men and the way they used a carefully acquired expertise and their ability as writers to rise in an organization still dominated by patronage and seniority but experiencing the beginnings of bureaucratization. In Part II the historical context of the writings of the three men is examined to establish the philosophical assumptions that lay behind their analyses of Asian society and government and their recommendations in regard to the form of British rule. Part III examines the way in which the three men have been represented by historians in the course of a hundred and fifty years, delineating their starring roles as the heroes of Anglo-Indian historiography and their supporting, but still crucial, roles in works dealing with issues, ideas or problems.

All historical periods have distinguishing characteristics when defined and labelled by later generations, but the time and places in which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone spent their lives are particularly distinctive: their formative years in late eighteenth-century Scotland for its place in the history of ideas and their working lives in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century India for the remarkable process by which the employees of a company of merchants became the rulers of an empire — devising an administrative system for India and a constitutional relationship between the British Crown and the Company as Indian sovereign which were functional, if not ideal. These two regions were connected in a general way in that both Scotland and British India were parts of the Second British Empire and were subject, ultimately, to the authority of what is now regarded as a socially exclusive ruling élite. More directly the two regions were connected by the lives of the many Scotsmen who left Britain in search of careers in India. Linda Colley has pointed out that Scottish
politicians like Henry Dundas were willing "to be co-opted into British national and imperial patriotism" largely for what they could get in return: greater political influence for Scotland and better titles, appointments and pensions for themselves.\(^{11}\) Scotsmen with fewer advantages than Dundas were prepared to promote Britain's imperial interests in India itself, mainly in order to improve their own and their families' status and wealth. In doing so, they took with them the ideas and assumptions of their own society.

It has been widely assumed until quite recently that Scotland's separate historical identity ceased to exist with the Act of Union of 1707. English writers tend to regard developments in Scotland during the eighteenth century as either carbon copies of what was occurring in England and, therefore, as unworthy of separate study, or as part of the process by which Scotland was absorbed into the "British Empire in Europe."\(^{12}\) Certainly parallel trends occurred in Scotland and England; similar practical and intellectual responses to changes affecting the whole western world. The Act of Union, however, called only for political and financial integration. By the 1760s, although union with England was creating the political stability and economic opportunities Scotland's ruling classes had hoped for,\(^{13}\) the country's religious, educational and legal institutions remained

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and its intellectual life continued to owe as much to Scotland's traditionally close relationship with continental Europe and to contemporary Scottish experience as to English influence. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, in cultural terms at least, Scotland remained a distinct society.15

A great deal of scholarly labour has been expended on interpreting the works of both major and minor contributors to the Scottish enlightenment. From the point of view of the history of ideas, there were important differences between the Scottish philosophes on many questions, but certain methodologies and modes of thought attracted particular attention.16 The influence of the secular approach to religion favoured by the so-called Moderate group within the Church of Scotland, the proto-sociological theories that earned Adam Ferguson the title "father of sociology,"17 ideas about political economy that encompassed the issue of moral as well as economic progress,18 and the use of philosophical and conjectural history as a medium through which to transmit the ideas of experts to the general reading public19 are all discernible in Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's approach.


16 Bryson, Man and Society, p. 12.


to Asian societies and government.

In India, the period between the 1740s and the 1820s saw the scattered, sea-board possessions of the East India Company expanded and consolidated into a powerful imperial state. Throughout the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth centuries, this process was explained by historians as a simple and inevitable response to the disordered state of India accompanying the decline of the Mughal Empire. The Company, it was believed, was compelled to arm to protect its factories and to ensure the stability of the various states with whom it traded. More recently the achievement of British political paramountcy in India has been set in a wider context: as part of two separate but ultimately inter-locking processes. In Asian terms, recent research suggests that the East India Company was merely one of several state-building rulers endeavouring to enhance their wealth and power in the sub-continent in the late eighteenth century by means of more centralized forms of government and more efficient taxation. In the European context it is seen as part of the founding of the Second British Empire.

From the late seventeenth century both the Sikhs in the north-western region known as the Punjab, and the Hindu Marathas in western and central India were expanding their territories. During the eighteenth century, the Mughal provinces of Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad, although still paying tribute to the Mughul emperor at Delhi, established hereditary and functionally independent Muslim-ruled kingdoms in eastern and south-central India, while Haidar Ali, a Muslim soldier-adventurer, gained control of the Hindu state of Mysore in the south west of the sub-continent in 1761 and enlarged its power.\textsuperscript{20} The involvement of the East India Company in the economic and political life of India began with its participation as customer, supplier of specie and maritime carrier in Indian trade and banking, and through partnerships between Company officials and Indians. This involvement increased rapidly from the 1740s, when trade rivalry between France

and Britain in India was ignited into military conflict by war between the two states in Europe —
necessity and experience improving the Company’s military capacity to a point at which its potential
as an ally was recognized by Indian rulers and merchant groups.21 By 1765, participation in the
economic and military affairs of eastern India had brought the Company political control of Bengal.
British subjection of the major Indian powers in the south and west of the sub-continent, which
originated again in the official and unofficial involvement of Company agents in Indian economic
matters, was largely achieved during the governor-generalships of Marquis Wellesley (1798-1805),
and the marquis of Hastings (1812-1823),22 by means of a combination of diplomatic manoeuvres
and expensive military campaigns. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were intimately involved in the
process by which southern and western India were absorbed into the Company’s empire.

There had, however, been a serious interruption to this expansionary process. In the early
1760s, the British, as a result of their success against France in the Seven Years War (1756-1763),
had obtained a great colonial empire. But twenty years later this First British Empire of American
settlement and Asian trade appeared to be disintegrating. When Munro began his Indian career in
1780, the Company’s retention of its possessions in southern and western India seemed doubtful: the
Bombay presidency’s army had surrendered to the Marathas in 1779 and in 1780 two Madras forces
were defeated by Haidar Ali leaving Mysore’s armies to ravage that presidency up to the walls of
Madras itself with apparent impunity.23 Although decisive action by Warren Hastings, governor-
general of Bengal (1773-1785), saved Bombay and Madras for the East India Company, concern
mounted in Britain over the Company’s arbitrary government, its insolvency and its ineptitude, and
two special House of Commons committees were established in the early 1780s, headed by Edmund


22 For the sake of convenience, only the senior titles of the governors-general will be used in this work. Lord Mornington became Marquis Wellesley, 2 Dec. 1799. Lord Minto became the earl of Minto, 24 Feb. 1813. Lord Moira became the marquis of Hastings, 13 Feb. 1817.

23 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, pp. 2, 97-98.
Burke and Henry Dundas, to investigate charges of tyranny and corruption in Bengal and incompetent conduct of foreign policy and war. In 1784, the India Act, giving the Crown greater control over British Indian affairs, was passed by William Pitt's administration.

The Act defined the constitutional relationship between the Company as Indian ruler and the British government and provided the political and administrative framework within which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone worked. It set up a Crown-appointed board of control to oversee the civil and military affairs of British India. The governments of Bombay and Madras were placed in greater subordination to the authority of the governor-general of Bengal and his council. The court of directors retained their authority over matters relating to commerce, control of Indian patronage and the right to appoint the governors-general, presidency governors and the three military commanders-in-chief, but the board of control as well as the court of directors now had the right to recall these officials. The government of British India, now subjected to the scrutiny of parliament, was expected to take responsibility for the well-being of its subjects and to maintain a certain standard of integrity in its administration. The court of directors insisted on a clause prohibiting territorial expansion. Although the Company technically retained its authority to govern British India, the act in effect gave the British government the legal power to decide the general direction of Indian policy if it felt it to be necessary or desirable.

The India Act provided a formal structure that defined the areas of authority of what were now the two Home components of the government of British India, but the effectiveness of the relationship between the British government and the Company directorate tended, in practice, to depend more on the capability and temperament of the president of the board of control than on


25 Philips, East India Company, p. 33.

the recognition of constitutionally defined spheres of responsibility. Beneath the decision-making level of the diarchy, the two main factions within the Company — the shipping and commercial party from the City of London and the Indian interest of retired Company servants — asserted pressure on Company policy but both were often divided over specific issues. When Munro and Malcolm attended the House of Commons inquiry into the Company’s affairs on the occasion of its application for the renewal of its charter in April 1813, for example, the unity of the court of directors had been shattered by the Evangelical lobby’s controversial campaign to introduce more Christian missionaries to India.27

Among the permanent staff of both the Company and the board of control, there were men who either gained or maintained their jobs by making themselves experts on subjects relevant to the government of India; an expertise that could influence policy. In 1809, William M’Culloch, who had attracted the directors’ attention with an impressive series of articles on trade in the Morning Chronicle, was appointed, most unusually, from outside India House to a senior position in the secretariat. James Mill was hired to fill an important office after the publication of his History of British India in 1817 brought him to the attention of the directors. James Cumming at the board of control, who became a valued ally of Munro, acquired an extensive and correspondingly influential knowledge of Indian revenue and judicial affairs.28

While the middle levels of the Company’s organization under-went a gradual process of bureaucratization and gentrification after the passage of the India Act, the governor-generalship became the preserve of the aristocracy. From 1786 to 1830, the governors-general, with one exception, were chosen from the British nobility rather than from Company ranks. As individuals they were often selected to work the compromises of factional politics, but aristocrats were favoured because a governor-general needed both the social and political stature — military rank was also


helpful — to uphold their authority over knowledgeable, experienced and powerful civil and military officials in India. Although these officials were drawn mainly from the middle ranks of British society, they increasingly saw themselves in India as a pseudo-aristocratic ruling class, and certainly as the people with the necessary professional expertise to determine policy. To maintain his authority, a governor-general also needed the support of one of Britain's political groups, but even then he had, on occasion, to resort to playing the court of directors off against the board of control. The Home government on the other hand often had difficulty in controlling the actions of the governor-general.

While the Company's servants in India sometimes recognized a unity of interest in opposition to the Home government, they were themselves divided. There was jealousy between the Crown and Company armies, between the civil and military services of the Company and between the judicial and revenue branches of the civil service, and there were sometimes sharp differences over policy. Periodic conflicts between men with authority in London and men on the spot with local experience, and between British objectives and British-Indian needs, raised questions about accountability and control and about independence of action and initiative. Both departmental rivalry and the dual sources of authority over British Indian government affected the careers of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone and received considerable attention in Malcolm's writings. It was possible to have both allies and opponents in either government body in London and in every branch of the Company's service in India. The kin and patronage networks that continued to dominate British politics could provide useful supporters or dangerous opponents but, lacking patrons, allies on policy who held influential appointments could be invaluable; to have one's recommendations adopted as official policy was a major stepping-stone to career advancement.


30 Philips, East India Company, p. 222.
Vincent Harlow, as C.A. Bayly points out, seems to argue that the India Act, becoming law in the year following the loss of the American colonies, inaugurated a period of growing responsibility in Britain towards its overseas territories which came to maturity in the mid-nineteenth century with the concession of internal self-government to the white settlement colonies — a teleological account of the progress of liberal imperialism. Yet, in substance, Harlow demonstrates that this period saw, not liberalization, but rather an effort by the British to centralize power, increase the authority of the executive at the expense of local liberties and remove all natives from positions of authority in its colonies. Bayly himself sees the period of Britain's Second Empire, from 1780 to 1830, as one in which there was a deliberate attempt to set up despotic forms of government, similar to what he calls the neo-absolutist régimes of contemporary Russia and Austria, and he believes that the argument for continuity between the attitudes to empire which prevailed prior to the American Revolutionary War and those of the mid-nineteenth century is difficult to sustain. Certainly, as Bayly argues, the "massive expansion of British dominion" which took place between 1780 and 1830 was accompanied by a vigorous debate on "techniques of governance.”

As B.B. Misra demonstrates, the empire-builders, including Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, were also the pioneers of a process of bureaucratization, and, as P.J. Marshall shows, the expansionary period took place in conjunction with changing attitudes to empire and the Orient and with the development of new and influential proto-sociological theories about man and society. These important works provide the historiographical context in which the careers and thought of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone need to be placed.

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32 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, pp. 8-9; 2


Although traces of rationalism remained and there were pre-echoes of the great intellectual movements that were to inspire the westernizing reformers who followed Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone to India, many of the opinions on government and society, religion and morality, economics and empire, that circulated at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries differed in important respects from those of both the preceding and succeeding periods. Company servants travelled east holding, consciously or unconsciously, attitudes and assumptions that derived from the cultural heritage and socializing processes of the society in which they had been raised. These might be modified or even rejected by experience but they were invariably an influential starting point and they provided the ideological basis for Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s writings on Asian societies.

The three men were indefatigable writers. Their private letters and Elphinstone’s journals provide insight into their professional relationship and the way in which they tried to circumvent the barriers to advancement presented by the rules of seniority and the patronage system. Their public writings, which include Malcolm and Elphinstone’s works of history and contemporary history and the official reports and minutes of all three men — works that were intended to influence policy and attract the attention of the men who decided appointments — provide evidence of the shared assumptions that lay behind their approach to Asian society and the government of India.

Malcolm and Elphinstone’s literary works fall into two main groups. The first includes Malcolm’s Sketch of the Sikhs (1812) and History of Persia (1815),35 and Elphinstone’s Account of the Kingdom of Caubul (1815) and History of India (1841).36 The Sketch of the Sikhs: A Singular Nation who Inhabit the Provinces of the Punjab, was based on material Malcolm collected


during a brief visit to the Punjab in 1805. Recent British expansion in India had brought the Company into contact with the Sikhs for the first time and Malcolm provided a short but interesting analysis of Sikh history, religion and social and political institutions. His work on Persia was more ambitious. It was a by-product of three diplomatic missions to Persia in 1800, 1807 and 1810, during which he collected material on Persia’s past and present condition. The work is described in its full title: *A History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time, Containing an Account of the Religion, Government, Usages and Character of the Inhabitants of that Kingdom*. In his *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, Elphinstone provided a narrative of the short history of the kingdom and a detailed analysis of the social and political organization of what is now Afghanistan.

These works drew attention to Malcolm and Elphinstone’s expertise, established their names in literary circles, and provided useful information for the British government in India. They also allowed the two men to explore, develop and promote their philosophical ideas on society and government on what might be termed the neutral, or non-contentious ground, of states for whose condition the British could not be held responsible. Elphinstone’s *History of India*, which dealt with Hindu and Muslim India prior to the British conquest, was written after his retirement from the Company’s service, when he no longer had any need to promote his career. It may be placed in this category, however, because it was intended to enhance Elphinstone’s literary reputation, dealt with India before Britain became politically involved in the affairs of the sub-continent, and makes clear Elphinstone’s own views of Indian society and government, which he set out with didactic purpose. The second volume of the *History of India* concluded with the battle of Panipat (1765), in which Ahmad Shah Durani of Kabul defeated the Marathas. Elphinstone began work on a third volume, which began with the voyage of Vasco de Gama at the end of the fifteenth century and covered European penetration into India up until 1780. Discouraged, however, by the brilliance of Macaulay’s essays on Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, and doubtful of his ability to produce a history of the early British period in India that would supersede that of James Mill, he abandoned the project. Sir
T.E. Colebrooke, published the completed first eleven chapters, which are written in the same style as the History of India, under the title The Rise of the British Power in the East, in 1887. Malcolm and Elphinstone intended their works to be read, not only by anyone with a professional interest in the nature and condition of India and its neighbouring states, but also by the general reading public, and their interpretations were presented in the broadly philosophical style admired by contemporary audiences. Many of the ideas developed were directly relevant to the problem of finding a suitable form of government for British India.

Historians have paid inadequate attention to these works because they are of the genre known as philosophical history, and because both Malcolm and Elphinstone utilized the technique known as conjectural or theoretical history to explain the evolution of Asian institutions and to describe historical periods for which there was inadequate documentary evidence. This type of work was popular in late eighteenth-century Scotland, but is no longer regarded as sufficiently objective or accurate to be considered historical. Whether or not this verdict is justified, however, Malcolm and Elphinstone's published works provide the ideal source for identifying their personal ideological assumptions simply because philosophical historians were expected to intersperse their narrative with commentary and explanation based on their own philosophical beliefs. It was an unashamedly didactic form of historical writing and, for Scotsmen, the favoured channel of dissemination for the precepts of contemporary moral philosophy.

The second group of Malcolm and Elphinstone's works are contemporary histories that deal with British India. Like many philosophical historians, Malcolm and Elphinstone were less interested in the past for its own sake than for the contribution it could make to understanding contemporary

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conditions and anticipating future developments. The stated object of Malcolm’s *The Political History of India, from 1784 to 1823* (1826), is to provide, through an analysis of the historical process by which Britain had obtained its Indian empire, the information necessary to enable British legislators to reform the government of India on “enlightened principles.” His *The Government of India* (1833), which includes lengthy selections from his official minutes and from earlier publications, presents a justification of his term as governor of Bombay and a final statement of his opinions on aspects of the organization of British Indian government. Malcolm’s *Memoir of Central India* (1823), and Elphinstone’s *Report on the Peshwa’s Territories* (1822), provide accounts of the history and institutional organization of two different regions ceded to the Company by the Marathas after the Third Maratha War. The two men had been made responsible for the settlement of these districts and their books recommend that the nature and historical experience of the societies concerned should be taken into consideration when determining the way in which they were governed. These works were aimed at a specific audience: the men who decided how, and by whom, India should be ruled. There is a close relationship, however, between the ideological framework adopted by Malcolm and Elphinstone in the books in the first category and the ideas that inform their writings on the government of India.

Munro did not write histories but he was interested in contemporary history and his

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33 A selection of Elphinstone’s official papers was published by George W. Forrest under the title, *Selections from the Minutes and other Official Writings of The Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay*, (London: 1884). The work includes a long extract from the *Report of the Peshwa’s Territories* and Elphinstone’s well-known minute on education but it’s scope is very limited and many of the items included are only extracts.
numerous reports include conjectural accounts of the development of Indian social and economic structures. Written communication of information, explanation and opinion was crucial to the decision-making process, both within the Company organization in India, and between India and the Home government. An official whose reports were well-written, provided a logical analysis of problems and a well-argued rationale for his recommended solutions was likely to gain attention and respect. Munro's reports and minutes, like Malcolm and Elphinstone's books, were carefully composed to influence the men who made Indian policy and appointments. These papers, of which the most important were collected and published by Sir Alexander J. Arbuthnot in 1881 under the title *Sir Thomas Munro: Selections from his Minutes and other Official Writings*, have been studied exhaustively to determine how Munro intended his administrative system — usually called the "Munro System" — to work. They have not been studied for what they say about the principles which underlay the system.44

Copious selections from the private and public papers of the three men — but not from Malcolm and Elphinstone's literary works — were published by their nineteenth-century biographers. In 1830, three years after Munro's death, a voluminous collection of his papers was rushed into print under the title *The Life of Sir Thomas Munro* by the Reverend George Gleig. He was prompted by several East India Company directors, who hoped to use Munro's career, opinions and reputation to support their position in the debate on the Company's application for the renewal of its charter in 1833. In 1856, Sir John Kaye produced a similar work on Malcolm, which was eventually followed by one on Elphinstone by Sir T.E. Colebrooke in 1884. J.S. Cotton and John Bradshaw wrote short, popular biographies of Elphinstone and Munro for inclusion in the "Rulers of India" series, published during the apogee of Anglo-Indian rule at the end of the nineteenth century. A volume was not devoted to Malcolm. This was, in part, because he is not associated with any specific areas of India

and the volumes on Elphinstone and Munro were vehicles describing the Company's acquisition and early administration of western and southern India. It was also because at the time the series appeared, Elphinstone and Munro were more highly regarded.

By considering Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's work in the light of the ideas and assumptions of the mid- and later nineteenth century, the Victorians were able to present them as advocates for the conservative, paternalist and pragmatic doctrine on British rule in India to which they themselves subscribed. Edmund Burke, the most durable of the many conservative and reformist thinkers whose works were read by the three Scotsmen, had become the great ideologue of the mid-nineteenth century Conservative Party and his name became associated with the conservatism of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. Their paternalism, which had been largely free of racism, became tainted by the assumptions of racial superiority of their biographers, and the word pragmatic was used to imply an absence of ideological commitment. The three men were made the heroes of, and role-models for, the Anglo-Indian school of thought on the governance of India. But this interpretation, which was regarded as definitive as long as Anglo-Indian historians dominated the historiography of British India, disguises the principled nature and progressive intent of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's ideas. They were late eighteenth-century Scotsmen, not nineteenth-century Englishmen, and their careers, their writings and their legacy to history need to be set in the proper Scottish context.

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PART ONE

AS ACTORS

INTERWOVEN CAREERS IN BRITISH INDIA
For a little over thirty years, Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone gave each other private advice and public support on career and policy issues in India. Although they liked and respected each other, their friendship was professional rather than personal and, if their lives had been spent in a different sphere, they might have had little to do with each other. In India, however, they shared interests and faced similar barriers to professional advancement, while their opinions on Indian government, influenced to some extent by a common cultural heritage, were sufficiently close for them to support each other's policy recommendations.

The six chapters that comprise Part I explore the similarities between the careers of the three men. Chapter 1 looks at their families and explains their different social and, therefore, professional and political advantages. Chapter 2 compares their early Indian experience and their responses to it. Chapter 3, which covers the years 1798 to 1812 in which they all made important advances in their careers, explains in rather more detail the way in which they took advantage of the new opportunities for knowledgeable and competent diplomats and administrators as the Company's territories expanded during the governor-generalships of Marquis Wellesley and Lord Minto. Chapter 4 compares Munro and Malcolm's experience while on leave in Britain to show the political and social limitations of Indian careers. Chapter 5 examines the years 1812 to 1819, in which Munro and Elphinstone widened their experience and enhanced their reputations, while Malcolm, who spent much of the time in Britain and whose part in the Third Maratha War was more controversial, made little professional progress. He kept in touch with influential men, however, and as his name remained prominent, he was probably unaware that he had lost ground in the British Indian hierarchy. The lives of the three men were most closely inter-connected during the last three years of this period, when their interests came into conflict for the first time, but, by 1819, the similarities in their approach to governing India were becoming evident. The final chapter compares the governorships of the three men and their public and private support for each other on both policy and career issues.
The gradual professionalization of the East India Company service that took place in association with its expanding governmental responsibilities in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, gave Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone the opportunity to make their careers. From Wellesley's time a steady supply of men, who were reasonably fluent in Persian and the Indian languages and had some knowledge of Indian politics, was required to administer the internal and external affairs of what were beginning to be perceived as "permanent imperial domains." For men with ability and ambition but inadequate connections, this new demand provided an alternative path to advancement to the time honoured practices of patronage and seniority. Although Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were by no means immune to the effects of the patronage and seniority systems, their acquisition of Indian expertise and the demonstration of their knowledge in letters, minutes, reports and books, played a significant role in their rise from obscurity to high office in the Company's service. Naturally, social status, ambition, timing and temperament also influenced the different stages of their advancement.

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Chapter 1

Scottish Families: 1760s - 1790s

We always retain a partiality for whatever we have been once accustomed to but more particularly if we have been so in youth.

Thomas Munro

Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone spent their youth in Hanoverian Scotland at a time when Britain's exclusive ruling élite successfully presided over a period of political and social stability. As John Cannon points out, the role of the monarchy had been defined in a way which was generally, if reservedly, accepted; a degree of toleration had been achieved which eased the religious tensions that had plagued the previous century; and the 1707 Act of Union, although not popular either side of the border, had provided a settlement which helped free the energies of both the English and the Scots for new challenges — not least of which was the acquisition of a great empire. What was widely believed to be the liberal and open nature of British society was admired by foreigners as well as by the British themselves. Recently, however, it has been persuasively argued that the aristocracy's domination of social and political life in Britain remained largely unchallenged throughout the eighteenth century. Although the turnover among ennobled families seems to indicate that new men were constantly entering the ranks of the aristocracy, Cannon demonstrates that the newly rich were almost invariably well-connected and tended to owe their peerages to their connections and to years of service at court, reliable voting habits in parliament or to influence in borough constituencies; they were rarely industrialists, merchants or ship-owners. The liberality and openness of British society, he believes, was largely a myth, albeit a

2 Munro to his mother, Jan. 1796, Ms. Eur., F/151/142.
3 Colley, "Whose Nation?" p. 106.

myth with just enough truth in it to give it great appeal and widespread acceptance. It allowed enterprising members of less privileged groups to believe that merit would enable them to climb the social and political ladder. A career in the East India Company's service provided slightly less mythical opportunities for those too poor, or too poorly connected, to obtain office in Britain. Here too, however, gentlemanly status was necessary for admission to the service, while influential contacts remained invaluable in career-building.

The years from the 1760s to the 1790s, when Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were growing up, has been referred to as the high point of Scotland's Age of Improvement. For the middle and upper ranks in Lowland Scotland it was an intellectually stimulating period, one in which there was a good deal of cultural cohesion; the same issues were discussed, the same books read by the nobility and their tenant farmers, by lawyers, doctors and clerics, and by merchants and manufacturers. Although the Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone families belonged to different status groups within Scottish society — the Glasgow merchant community, the rural Kirk gentry and the landed aristocracy respectively — they were all members of the middle and upper ranks that were most involved in, and most affected by, the practical and intellectual developments of the time.

The Munros were minor but typical members of Glasgow's merchant community which, in the late eighteenth century, played a key role in Scotland's economic development by investing their profits from the booming tobacco trade with America in manufacturing, banking, land and agricultural improvement. They were neither important nor wealthy enough, however, to be styled "tobacco lords." Thomas Munro's grandfather, a tailor, was the first to profit from the American trade. His father, Alexander, worked in a bank before joining the family firm and improved the

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5 Cannon, Aristocratic Century, pp. 19; ix.

6 Phillipson and Mitchison, Age of Improvement, p. 4.

family's social position by purchasing a small country estate outside Glasgow. This provided him, albeit marginally, with the gentlemanly status which allowed four of his five sons to enter the East India Company's service.8

Equally typical of their time and their place in commercial society, the Munro family valued a practical education. School and university curricula had traditionally reflected the dominant position in Scottish life of the Church and, to a lesser degree, the legal profession. But by the 1760s and 1770s, although Latin and Greek remained important, the popular demand, in larger towns, for subjects such as mathematics, geography and history, European languages, sciences, surveying and navigation, reflected the new, more materialist and cosmopolitan interests of the middle ranks of Scottish society.9

Glasgow University, where Munro spent three years studying mathematics and chemistry, catered particularly to the sons of businessmen and tenant farmers.10 It was closely associated with the world of business in so far as professors aided and encouraged the industrial inventor while engineers and businessmen provided facts for the theoretician.11 The late eighteenth century was not, however, an age of specialization, and Glasgow students, many of whom founded and attended literary clubs similar to those patronized by Scotland's intellectual elite, were often well read on a wide variety of subjects.12 Glasgow businessmen studied the theories as well as the practices of

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10 W.M. Mathew, "The Origins and Occupations of Glasgow Students, 1740-1839," in Past and Present 33, (1966): 82. Mathew compares the occupations of the fathers of Cambridge and Glasgow University students from the 1750s to 1840.

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<th>Church</th>
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11 Faye, Adam Smith, p. 8; Campbell, Scotland since 1707, p. 2.

political economy. Munro was working for a trading company in Glasgow when Adam Smith's great
work on political economy, the Wealth of Nations, first appeared in 1776, and he later recalled:

the Glasgow merchants were as proud of the work as if they had written it themselves;...some of them said it was no wonder that Adam Smith had written such a book, as he had had the advantage of their society, in which the same doctrines were circulated with the punch every day.14

Although Munro complained in later years of the "cold, lifeless reasoning" which students were forced, prematurely, to engage in at college,15 he seems to have acquired an excellent education. Soon after his arrival in Madras at the age of eighteen, he was recommended as "a learned man" to a Dr. Koenig, a disciple of Linnaeus, who, three years earlier, had been engaged by the East India Company to visit Siam and the straits of Malacca in search of plants and minerals. They discussed chemistry.

I was with him almost every day, till one day he told me that he would take it as a favour if I would examine an English translation that he had made of the Latin descriptions of some of his plants; I altered most of the spelling, and...the arrangement of the words. He put a Greek book into my hands...the book did not give me much disturbance; but he talks Latin, Portuguese, and French, — his English is a mixture of all the three, which makes it very difficult to understand him. When he sees I am at a loss for any particular word, he gives me the Latin; if I still hesitate, he gives me the Greek, which is always an effectual method of making me understand.

Koenig had been to Siam to study the Chinese method of reducing tin ore. Munro claimed to write "all the descriptions which the Doctor sends to Banks, Solander, and Mr. Greville," but he did not think they contained anything that was not already known in Europe.16

In addition to the competency in Latin and Greek and the probably above average acquaintance with mathematics and chemistry indicated by Munro's description of this encounter,

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14 Munro to Kirkman Finlay, 15 Aug. 1826, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 427-8.
15 Munro to his sister Erskine, 15 Sept. 1795, quoted in ibid., 1: 170.
16 Munro to his father, 30 March 1780, quoted in ibid., 3: 7; 8-9.
Munro's broad familiarity with English and Scottish literature is evident from the many allusions in his letters as well as from the works he mentions reading or asks to have sent to him.

Although there is some debate as to whether Scotland's education system was as superior to that of England as many people, English as well as Scottish claim, it is agreed that the Scottish attitude to education contained one ingredient England's lacked: a belief that it was of benefit to the state to make education available to the whole population. In the First Book of Discipline (1560) of the Church of Scotland it is stated that if children be found apt to letters and learning then may they not — neither the sons of the rich nor the sons of the poor — be permitted to reject learning. They must be charged to continue their study, so that the Commonwealth may have some comfort of them.17

Over a century later, while English authorities claimed public elementary education would divert "those whom nature and fortune had determined to the plough, the oar or other handicrafts from their proper design," a Scottish statute reinforcing John Knox's original demand for a school in every parish became law. This objective proved unattainable, but much school building took place in eighteenth-century Scotland and, when the question of state responsibility for education finally became an issue in England in the mid-nineteenth century, Scotland already had over a thousand public elementary schools — over a thousand more than England.18

The original objects of Scottish education were to teach basic English literacy so that everyone could read the Bible and other morally uplifting literature, and to provide a few years of instruction in Latin and Greek, for those with the capacity to study for the Church or legal profession. Public education was not free; small fees were charged for English instruction and slightly larger ones for Latin and Greek. Traditionally children from all ranks attended the same schools, bursaries being provided to enable talented children from poor families to move on to the higher

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18 Ibid., p. 7.
educational facilities available only in large towns.

The second half of the eighteenth century, when economic development was well under way, saw the greatest interest in education and the greatest demand for educational reform. Prior to Union, however, many people felt the existing system failed to meet their needs. There were two main forces for reform, both deriving from economic incentives. First, the general public demanded a practical curriculum relevant to the likely employment of most students. The Glasgow presbytery, in 1700, suggested that no one intended for trades should attend the grammar school "because [the study of Latin] is a meer loosing [sic] of so much time, and that of their best time for learning of things that may be more useful for them." Those destined for the religious, legal or medical professions should still study the classics; others should learn "to write well...and to count also; some of the plainest and usefulest parts of geometry and geography; and music, at least the common tunes [psalms]; and history." The second motive for change was the low salaries of teachers, enforced under the 1696 Education Act. These became increasingly inadequate as the rate of inflation rose during the eighteenth century, but an increase was rejected. Many competent men left teaching to become clerks in the new merchant houses and the East India Company — which paid better salaries — and it would have been difficult to recruit new teachers at all without the surplus of well-educated men who lacked the necessary patronage to acquire a Church living, legal office or Indian appointment. To augment their salaries, teachers gave classes in extra-curricula subjects outside school hours. The subjects varied from place to place according to demand and the expertise of the teacher, but the emphasis was always on practicality.

From 1760 on, a number of public academies were founded in Scotland which focussed on practical and scientific subjects as an alternative to the post-secondary education provided by the universities. Although they sometimes offered a regular English and classical education as well, they did not threaten the predominance of the universities because, unlike their English counter-parts,

the middle ranks in Scottish society had a long tradition of participating in university education. The academies were inspired by those of the English non-conformists, dissatisfied with anglican schools and excluded from Oxford and Cambridge. English dissenters wanted an education more relevant to their commercial and scientific interests — interests with much in common with those of the proprietors and directors of the East India Company — but, interestingly, the birth certificates required of candidates for writerships in the Company's service attest to the fact that very few dissenters were ever employed.20

Educated Scotsmen, while taking advantage of career opportunities in India, made themselves useful to the East India Company prior to the 1830s, in many areas requiring some technical knowledge. Scotsmen were prominent as civilian doctors at the presidency capitals and Company outposts as well as with the Crown and Company armies.21 Many, however, carried out additional tasks of a scientific nature. Dr. Francis Buchanan, a Scottish surgeon in Bengal, undertook a botanical mission to Burma which impressed Lord Wellesley, who commissioned him in 1800, to make a general survey of Mysore, following the Company's conquest of the state. Wellesley's victory over Tipu Sultan had not been well-received in London and he intended Buchanan's report to present it in a very favourable light. Buchanan did his duty and portrayed Tipu as a barbarian who destroyed reservoirs and Hindu temples, forced circumcision on unwilling converts, and conscripted labour, while representing Wellesley's war as just, swift and brilliant — unlike Cornwallis's earlier campaigns. Better still Buchanan suggested that the revenues of the region had been seriously underestimated. Wellesley dispatched the report to Britain; Buchanan returned to botany. He is described as "a plant taxonomist," fortunate to be able to make science his profession at a time when few were

20 Writers Petitions, 1775-1806, IO, J/1/9-J/1/21. After the foundation of Haileybury College in 1806, attended for two or three years by all recruits to the Company's civil service, the majority of Scottish application came from upper ranking families, probably for reasons of religion as well as cost. Haileybury was strongly anglican in tone and would have been more acceptable to Scottish episcopelians, many of whom were from aristocratic or gentry families, than to presbyterians. See Applications for Entry into Haileybury College, 1806-1808, IO, J/1/21 - J/1/23.

21 See John Dixon Comrie, History of Scottish Medicine, (1927); Diron G. Crawford, History of the Indian Medical Service, (London: 1914), passim.
able to do so. William Roxburgh of Ayr, known as "the Indian Linnaeus" and "the father of Indian botany," was appointed assistant surgeon at Madras in 1776 but became, soon after, superintendent of an experimental garden on the Coromandel coast where he grew peppers and spices. Later he was made superintendent of the botanical gardens at Calcutta. These had been founded by yet another Scotsman, Robert Kyd of Forfar, who cultivated timber for the navy and spices for export to Europe. Edinburgh doctor John Forbes Royle made important collections of flora in Kashmir and the Himalayas in the 1820s and 30s, restored the Mughal gardens at Saharanpur and developed an experimental garden there for the cultivation of medicinal plants, particularly cinchona. He was also instrumental in the development of tea-planting in India.

Scotsmen were also well-represented among those employed in surveying and map-making. Colin MacKenzie from Stornaway, was a mathematician who went to India originally to study Hindu mathematics. He joined the Madras Engineers in 1782, headed the survey made of Mysore after the defeat of Tipu Sultan — his triangulation methods being used as the basis for the extension of the survey to the whole of India — and was responsible for suggesting the foundation of the Madras Military Institution which trained future generations of Indian surveyors.

With the exception of doctors, Scotsmen were not recruited to the Company's service for their specialized knowledge. The evidence suggests, however, that once there, skills acquired as part of their educational experience were helpful in building careers. Owing to the relative poverty of the Scottish middle and upper ranks and the workings of the patronage system in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many of the Scotsmen who served in India came from upper ranking.

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25 Cain, Cornchest, p. 28.
gentry or professional families and were likely to have reached a reasonable standard of education. John Cannon has identified four aspects of the education of the British aristocracy which helped to support their political supremacy in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. Their education was intended to prepare them for a leading role in public life; it was increasingly standardized — a classical (largely Latin) curriculum provided a common code of values and a firm belief in the rightness of aristocratic rule — it provided "a network of acquaintances;" and it gave the upper classes a virtual monopoly on higher education, thus protecting and giving some justification for their dominant political position. In Scotland, however, a classical education at both the secondary and post-secondary level was available to men of quite humble rank and was by no means the exclusive privilege of the ruling groups. Although this type of learning can have been of little practical value in carrying out civil or military duties in India, it may possibly have been of value in contacts with socially, politically or militarily higher ranking officials, in so far as it gave an impression of intelligence, shared values and similar modes of thought. It is interesting to note in regard to Munro’s mature views on Britain’s empire in India that he admired classical Greece, with its competing city states, rather than the monolithic Roman empire.

Munro believed that a good education was of value even in the East India Company army. In 1785, he told his father that he was afraid that his younger brother Alexander’s educational shortcomings would inhibit his military career — his writing and spelling were bad and he had paid too little attention to history. Three years earlier, in 1782, he had recommended that, if his two youngest brothers were to serve in India, they should be proficient in mathematics and drawing. Technical qualifications, he acknowledged, would not in themselves secure appointments requiring

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27 Cannon, Aristocratic Century, p. 34.

28 Munro to George Canning, 1 May 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 67.

29 Munro to his father, 6 Jan. 1785, Mss. Eur., F/151/140.
technical skills, none the less a knowledge of both subjects was "absolutely necessary" for an officer. Clearly patronage was more important than suitable qualifications in obtaining an appointment, but Munro certainly thought that technical skills, which enabled an officer to perform his duties more effectively, were worth acquiring — presumably for reasons of professional advantage rather than mere personal satisfaction. Malcolm endorsed this view in 1792, lamenting his own inadequacy in "a branch of education which never ought to be neglected in the forming an officer — a complete knowledge of mathematics and drawing."

John Malcolm’s formal education was inferior to Munro’s, but he had greater access to patronage. Born 2 May 1769, he was the fourth son of the seventeen children of George and Margaret Malcolm of Burnfoot in Dumfriesshire. The Malcolm children were educated at the local parish school which taught only the traditional curriculum: reading, writing and basic arithmetic for the first four years, Latin being added for pupils who stayed on after the age of nine. Although Malcolm probably had a smattering of Latin, when he began to take his Indian career seriously in the early 1790s, he seems to have become quickly aware of the social and professional value of knowledge and, on his first furlough from India, spent a winter trying to rectify some of the deficiencies in his education. The Malcolms, however, belonged to the land-owning and clerical groups which had traditionally dominated Scottish life and, despite their present reduced circumstances, had higher social status than the Munros. John Lockhart, Walter Scott’s biographer, mentions that John Malcolm’s grandfather, Robert Malcolm, had "found refuge [at Burnfoot] after forfeiting a good estate and a baronetcy. in the affair of 1715;" an observation which suggests that

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30 Munro to his mother, 21 Feb. 1782, Mss. Eur., F/151/140.
31 Malcolm to his mother, 1792, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 1:42.
33 Malcolm to his mother, 1792, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 41.
Robert Malcolm, who was a Church minister, may also have been a Jacobite. Although Lockhart was not above including gossip as well as facts in his memoir, Malcolm confirmed that the family had moved to Burnfoot soon after the 1715-16 rebellion, telling Scott that the farm had only been "the House of the Malcolm's since 1719 AD!!"\(^{35}\)

John's father, George Malcolm, had been educated for the Church but, owing apparently to a speech impediment, he supported his family as a tenant farmer. Despite Sir John Kaye's emphasis on their humble station, however, the Malcolms were not without connections. John's mother, Margaret Pasley, was a great-niece of Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, the first baronet, and the sister of Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley and of John Pasley, a wealthy London merchant. Elizabeth Elphinstone, wife of Mountstuart's uncle and patron, William Elphinstone, mentions in her diary that she was on visiting terms with the Malcolms, while members of the Johnstone family of Alva, long prominent in Scottish political life and friends as well as landlords and patrons of the Malcolms, sat in parliament and in the proprietors and directors courts of the East India Company.\(^{36}\) According to Thomas Somerville, a contemporary observer, Sir William Pulteney, a member of the Johnstone family who changed his name on his marriage to the immensely wealthy heiress to the earl of Bath, introduced "all the sons of Mr. Malcolm of Burnfoot...into the career of prosperity."\(^{37}\) Pulteney was a prominent political figure and an elder of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland who "had great influence at the India House."\(^{38}\)

Malcolm's relationship with the Elliots of Minto was that of distant cousin; the two families

\(^{35}\) Malcolm to Scott, July 1822, NLS, Ms. 3895.


\(^{37}\) Thomas Somerville, My Own Life and Times, 1741-1814, (Edinburgh: 1861), pp. 97-8; 261.

\(^{38}\) John Rae, Life of Adam Smith, (1895), with an introduction by Jacob Viner, (New York: 1965), p. 255. In 1772, Pulteney recommended Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and Andrew Stuart to the court of directors of the East India Company as possible members of a proposed Special Commission of Supervision. Ibid., pp. 253-4.
had been joined three generations before John Malcolm met Lord Minto, the governor-general of Bengal from 1807 to 1813. Eventually connections become too tenuous to be of much relevance but, as Cannon remarks, patronage was so important in the eighteenth century that very remote relationships were often pressed into service. "Family pride was such that members were usually well aware of distinguished connections particularly when they might be useful." Malcolm was of the same generation but eighteen years younger than Minto and, judged by the standards of Hanoverian rather than Victorian Britain, it was both natural and acceptable for him to make the best possible use of this admittedly rather distant connection. The Malcolm family had fallen on hard times and Malcolm's ambition, his relentless lobbying of potential patrons and his obsession with professional recognition may have owed something to a desire to re-establish the family's status as well as to improve his own.

Mountstuart Elphinstone had no need to search for patrons or pursue distant relationships to further his career. As aristocrats who had for centuries played a leading role in the political life of Scotland, the Elphinstones enjoyed high political and social status. Mountstuart, born on 6 October 1779, was the fourth and youngest son of the eleventh Lord Elphinstone, who, together with his brothers, had reaped political and economic advantage from the union of England and Scotland. Lord Elphinstone, a general officer, was also one of sixteen Scottish representative peers in the House of Lords from 1784 until his death in 1794, and the governor of Edinburgh castle during Mountstuart's childhood. Lady Elphinstone was a niece of the third earl of Bute, George III's prime minister (1762-3). One uncle, George Keith Elphinstone was an admiral who had been raised to the peerage as Viscount Keith; another, William Elphinstone, was an influential director of the East

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28 Cannon, Aristocratic Century, p. 28.

40 Fraser, Elphinstone Family Book, 1: 309.
India Company.41

William Elphinstone and Admiral Keith controlled a patronage network that provided access to careers in India and the navy — and also, on occasion, a formidable Whig opposition to Henry Dundas's Tory domination of Scottish political patronage.42 The groups in Scottish society who benefitted most from such patronage were the well-educated, if impecunious middle and higher ranks. Although a relatively high proportion of Scottish applicants for Company appointments were from landed gentry or legal families,43 Mountstuart Elphinstone's social status was higher than most.

According to the historian of the Elphinstone family, William Elphinstone promoted the careers of five of his nephews but, in particular, those of Mountstuart, his brother James, and his cousin John Adam, all of whom went to India. They "owed their progress...in that service, in greater or lesser degree, to the influence and assistance of their...uncle,"44 an opinion borne out by Mountstuart Elphinstone's numerous expressions of appreciation to both William Elphinstone and Lord Keith for their interest. Mountstuart had easy access to a coveted writership in the Bengal presidency. A civil writership was a better spring-board to a successful career than a military cadetship, while the Bengal civil service, headed by the Supreme government at Fort William, was more prestigious than those of Madras and Bombay and offered greater opportunities for rapid

41 George Keith Elphinstone (1746-1823), entered navy, 1761; served in American Revolutionary War: 1781, Prince William Henry was placed under Elphinstone's care; 1780-90, MP for Dumbarton; 1796-1801, MP for Stirlingshire; returned to navy 1793 as captain; 1794, rear-admiral; commander-in-chief of expedition against the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope; 1795, vice-admiral; 1797, made Baron Keith; 1801, admiral; May 1803 appointed commander-in-chief, North Sea fleet; Feb. 1812, appointed commander-in-chief, Channel fleet; May 1814, Viscount. See Keith, George Elphinstone, Viscount, Navy Records Society: The Keith Papers: Selected from the Letters and Papers of Admiral the Viscount Keith, eds. H.G. Perrin and C. Lloyd, 3 vols., (London: 1927-55). William Fullerton Elphinstone became a director of the East India Company in 1786 and served as chairman in 1804, 1806, and 1814. Philips, East India Company, pp. 7; 338.


44 Fraser, Elphinstone Family Book, 2: 28-9.
Elphinstone received a classical education from a tutor until he was twelve; then spent some time in Edinburgh, attending the high school and public lectures on moral philosophy at the university. At fourteen he moved to London for two more years of schooling at a private academy. Elphinstone's only reference to curriculum states that, on offering him a Company writership, his Uncle William told him to concentrate on writing and arithmetic, and "leave off Greek."47

Neither Munro, Malcolm nor Elphinstone said much about his own religious beliefs. The Malcolms were probably Presbyterian and the Elphinstones were probably, and the Munros certainly, Episcopalian. But the evidence suggests that the approach to both Christianity and Eastern religions favoured by the three men owed much to Scottish Moderatism48 and, for Malcolm and Elphinstone, to deism, which among its many important influences during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had prompted a new intellectual interest in non-Christian religions.49 Although their values and beliefs were those of men raised in a Christian culture, and they undoubtedly saw Protestant Christianity as the most superior form of religion, none of the three was an Enthusiast.

The Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone families all had financial problems. Munro's father had intended Thomas for a mercantile career and, on leaving university at sixteen, he worked for

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45 Although Indian appointments were not technically "sold", during the 1790's newspapers had carried advertisement offering positions for sale, a writership usually being considered to be worth £3000, a cadetship £500. An investigation showed that it was not Company Directors who were selling these positions. See Ainslie Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, (London: 1962), p. 179.


two years as a clerk in the accounting office of Sommerville and Gordon, a company trading with the West Indies. But this apprenticeship in accounting, which may have been useful experience for his later work in the East India Company's revenue branch, came to a sudden end when the effects of the American Revolutionary War brought bankruptcy to his father's firm, leaving the family, quite dramatically, in poverty.\(^{50}\) According to George Gleig, in February 1779 Munro's father obtained a midshipman's berth for his son on an East India Company ship, but soon afterwards, on going to London as the representative of Glasgow's merchant community to lay claims of indemnity for their losses in the American War, he was able to take advantage of a slight acquaintanceship with Lawrence Sulivan, a prominent Company director, to obtain a Madras cadetship instead.\(^{51}\) Alexander Munro struggled unsuccessfully for many years to re-establish himself in business but, from this time, Thomas's parents, two sisters, and two youngest brothers were dependent on the funds Daniel, Thomas and Alexander, the three eldest boys, could send home from India.

Similar losses by George Malcolm, in this case from rash speculations, made it necessary for the older Malcolm boys to find employment somewhat earlier than they might otherwise have done. John's brother Pulteney, his elder by one year, joined the navy at ten under the supervision of his uncle, Thomas Pasley. John was only twelve when the Johnstone family successfully sponsored his application for a Company cadetship. He left Burnfoot to receive two more years of schooling in London under the guardianship of John Pasley before leaving for Madras in 1783.\(^{52}\)

William Elphinstone's East India Company connections make it likely that an Indian career had always been a possibility for Mountstuart. Careers in Britain acceptable to the aristocracy generally required an independent income, and Mountstuart's branch of the Elphinstone family,


\(^{51}\) Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 1: 13-14.

\(^{52}\) Kaye, \textit{Malcolm}, 1: 37-38, 1: 5-8. Twelve was a more normal age for entry into the navy. The India Act of 1784 made fifteen the minimum and eighteen the maximum age for entry into the Company's service. The maximum was raised to twenty-two in 1793. Misra, \textit{Bureaucracy}, p. 47.
whose estates were encumbered with debt, were in no position to provide for four sons. The two eldest boys obtained appointments in the Crown army and the navy. James went to Bengal as a writer in 1791 and died in 1828 after an unexceptional career. Mountstuart and his cousin John Adam, who rose to high office in the Company's secretariat, left together for Bengal in 1795.

There was nothing unusual about impecunious Company recruits. Few families in the eighteenth century sent their sons to India if their social and economic position offered a viable British alternative. But the seemingly avaricious obsession with pay, allowances and the spoils of war expressed in letters home reflected not only the ambitions of a would-be fortune hunter but also the anxieties of the bread-winner for a "clan." When his father was expecting to be sent to a debtors prison in the 1780s, Munro told him that "I shall always endeavour to live on my pay, and remit the batta [field allowance] to you, as it is paid." The survival of the family at home might depend on field allowances, which were often in arrears. Whether or not an individual was personally ambitious, there was family pressure to seek advancement.

Munro's social position was inferior to that of both Malcolm and Elphinstone. Even within an organization of merchants, a man whose father was in trade — particularly if, as in Munro's case he was also bankrupt — was socially inferior to the sons of the landed gentry and clergy. Unlike Malcolm and Elphinstone, Munro had no useful connections in either Britain or India, and he began his career in 1780, at a point in the Company's history when there was little opportunity to acquire power, fame or fortune by merit. He was better educated than his colleagues and, having left Scotland at eighteen — older than the average Company recruit — he was not only more mature

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54 Edward Ingram, In Defence of British India: Great Britain in the Middle East, 1775-1842, (London: 1984), Chap. 3, "The Role of the Indian Army at the End of the Eighteenth Century," and Bryant, "Officers of the East India Company's Army," provide interesting accounts of the way in which the Company army was organized and the many problems which Company, rather than Crown, officers faced.

55 Munro to his father, 29 July 1783, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 45.
but had been subjected longer to the socializing processes of late eighteenth-century Scotland. In Madras in 1780, however, social status and connections would have served him better than his superior education and greater maturity. Malcolm's social status, access to interest and the fortuitous circumstance of the timing of his arrival in India in 1783 gave him greater advantages than Munro, but he was far from enjoying the opportunities available to Elphinstone. He was unapologetically ambitious, however, and worked hard to make both the old patronage system and the new, more bureaucratic channels to advancement work to his advantage. Elphinstone joined the Company service with impeccable social credentials, extensive connections and fortunate timing — he arrived in India in 1796, shortly before the opportunities for men of ability expanded dramatically as a result of the expansionary policies of Marquis Wellesley. His family's position was sufficiently influential to have enabled him to rise steadily in the Company's service with or without much ability, as long as he avoided disgrace. He discovered, nevertheless, that to attain Company appointments which carried the sort of salary that would enable him to return quickly and permanently to Britain, as he desired, extra qualifications were necessary. To rise quickly in the Company service, it was helpful to have a knowledge of Persian and Indian languages and also some understanding, or at least an ability to convey an impression of an understanding, of how Indian governments functioned in the part of India in which you were employed or wanted to be employed.

56 Elphinstone, journal, 30 May 1813, Mss. Eur., F88/ Box 3A5.
Chapter 2

Apprenticeship in India: 1780 - 1801

The 'nepotism' of the Court of Directors’ did not pass beyond the portico of India House. In India every man had a fair start and an open course. The son of the Chairman had no better chance than the son of the Scotch farmer...this was the distinguishing merit of the Company's service.

Sir John Kaye

Writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, Sir John Kaye wished to present the East India Company's civil and military service as a meritocracy, but his claim that "the son of the Chairman had no better chance than the son of a Scotch farmer" of getting ahead was probably as much of a myth as the Whig interpretation of the eighteenth-century British aristocracy as an open élite. Munro's career proves that it was possible for a man without connections to climb high in the Company's service in the early years of the nineteenth century. The contrast between Munro's frustrating early years and Elphinstone's privileged ones, however, makes it pointedly clear that there was no "fair start" or "open course."

In the Company army, promotion was decided by seniority, not purchase or, supposedly, patronage. Raymond Callahan mentions that for men who lacked the wealth and interest to become commissioned officers in the Crown army, the Company's forces offered a military career "ordered according to a different set of rules." This is certainly true, but even in the Company army a connection with the colonel, or, better still with the commander-in-chief, was likely to provide easier access to positions that paid well or offered the greatest opportunities for making money on the side. Similarly, in the civil service, promotion was also, up to a point, by seniority. A political resident was

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1 Kaye, Lives, p. xii.

2 Cannon, Aristocratic Century, p. viii.

supposed to be succeeded by his senior secretary. The right connections in Britain were expected to provide an advantageous initial posting for both military and civil recruits, but contacts in India were equally, if less openly, important to further advancement. Although in theory, the members of India House had no say in the progress of their protégés once they left Britain, a casual word from an influential director to a newly appointed governor-general, governor, or commander-in-chief indicating an interest in the progress of a particular young man, was unlikely to fall on deaf ears. Those with no influential patrons could resign themselves to a lacklustre career or they could try to find ways to beat the system. As the eighteenth century drew to a close and the Company found itself governing more and more territory, ambitious, intelligent and able men, including Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, began to discover that the acquisition of Indian expertise was becoming an increasingly useful passport to promotion.

Munro, who left Britain for India shortly before Elphinstone was born, arrived in Madras in January 1780. He faced the poverty, loneliness and serious handicap to advancement of inadequate patronage with considerable fortitude, but his dislike of the patronage system, which stemmed from temperament and probably principle as well as from frustration, is clearly evident. He insisted that his brother Alexander would be better working for a Glasgow merchant than seeking his fortune with the Company, because "a merchant is his own master, he has not to comply with all the humours of men whom he despises;" he advised his youngest brother, William, to go to Bengal rather than Madras because he would have "a larger field to exert his own industry." Like his younger compatriot, Samuel Smiles, Munro believed in self-help, but at Madras in the 1780s there was little scope for enterprise.

In addition to his lack of patronage, Munro had to contend with a hearing disability, the
result of a childhood bout with measles. In 1781, he was told by General Hector Munro, that his deafness disqualified him for an appointment as adjutant, but a quartermaster's post might be feasible. The deafness varied in its severity and was often a social inconvenience; to what extent it affected his professional life is difficult to say. This incident suggests, however, that until Munro had proved his ability, and possibly even after that, deafness may have limited the type of appointments for which he was considered suitable.

Between 1780 and 1792 Munro learned Persian and the local languages necessary to communicate with the sepoys of the regiments with which he served, and he gained military experience in the Second and Third Mysore Wars. During the first, (1780-82), poor leadership and inefficient organization in the Company army led to unnecessary hardship and poor morale as well as to lost battles. Although Munro told his father that war with Haidar Ali of Mysore would make his promotion more rapid, he criticized the Madras government for bringing the war on themselves by "violating the public faith with the same ease and unconcern, as they do their own private promises."

Throughout Munro's early years in India, letters from friends and relatives kept him in touch with Scottish news and opinion. In 1781 a Glasgow friend described Britain's relations with America to him in a way that suggests the influence of Adam Smith. In 1784 his friend's topics were air-balloons, an airplane and the possible effects of airplanes on future warfare. In 1796 Munro was brought up to date on Scottish cultural life. Dr. Thomas Reid, author of An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense (1764), had gone over the Intellectual and active powers of man in two different Guinea books, and has set every thing on a right footing, so that philosophers will have no trouble

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6 Munro to his mother, 23 Oct. 1805. quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 359. General Munro, who was not related to Thomas, was commander-in-chief at Madras. Munro eventually obtained a quartermastership but only for the duration of the war.

7 Munro to his father, 11 Oct. 1780, Mss. Eur., F151/140.

8 James Melvil to Munro, 30 Jan. 1794, Mss. Eur., F151/152.
with human nature for the future, but may apply to the turning ice into gunpowder or any other interesting speculation.⁹

It is a comment, albeit in light-hearted vein, that reflects precisely the change in direction that occurred in Scottish intellectual life in the 1790s as events in France began to inhibit freedom of thought and expression. Science was replacing philosophy as the focus of intellectual attention. Munro was also told that the lectures of Dr. Hugh Blair, one of Scotland’s most eminent Moderate churchmen and a popular scholar and preacher, were "elegant and copious" and made "a considerable addition to the corpus criticum," while Robert Burns was lively and humorous "but sometimes too profane and saucy to the clergy for which he was genteelly reprimanded in the newspapers."¹⁰

Such news catered to Munro’s interest in European affairs; he asked repeatedly to have British magazines sent out to him and, in September 1798, when all the seasons ships had arrived without bringing the year’s Glasgow Couriers, he told his father how disappointed he was. Perhaps someone had intercepted them who was "as fond of reading newspapers as myself." Munro was particularly interested at this time in relations between Britain and France, being afraid, when reading the parliamentary debates, that Britain would "be bullied into a peace, disgraceful for the present, and eventually more ruinous than any war," and that like the Dutch, Britain "would prefer buying a constitution from France to paying for defending our own."¹¹ In 1805, when he was arranging the revenue assessment and collection of the Ceded Districts, Munro asked a friend to send him all Cobbett’s Register’s, beginning with those from 1802-3.¹²

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¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Munro to his father, 21 Sept. 1798, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 200. For Munro’s requests for magazines see, Munro to George Brown, 6 Oct. 1782, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 26; Munro to his father, 6 Jan. 1785, Mss. Eur., F/151/140; Munro to his sister Erskine, 4 March 1797, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 192; Munro to Peter Bruce, 15 July 1805, Mss. Eur., F/151/12.

¹² Munro to Peter Bruce, 15 July 1805, F/151/12.
Cobbett,13 Ian Dyck describes him as a cultural conservative but a political radical, "edging towards democracy" as a result of his observations of the plight of country workers. Munro was a cultural conservative. He was not a political radical — that would have been out of the question in India anyway — but he observed the plight of India's country workers and, like Cobbett, his reforms were intended to provide them with a measure of economic independence.14

In return for being kept up to date on political and cultural events in Britain, Munro supplied his correspondents, over a period of fifteen years, with acute, articulate, sometimes scathing accounts of the military affairs of Madras, including well-informed analysis of the structure and potential strength of the Indian states. In an attempt to promote his son's career, Munro's father arranged for abstracts of these letters to be passed by Andrew Stuart, a close friend of Adam Smith and a prominent Scottish lawyer and member of parliament,15 to politicians in London interested in the Company's affairs — in particular, Henry Dundas from 1781; Edmund Burke in 1784; and William Elphinstone in the 1790s.16 Although Thomas did not suggest the steps his father took to publicize his merits, he seems to have acquiesced in them as long as his opinions did not appear in newspapers which might eventually be read by officials in India. There was no advantage in passing material to Dundas and Burke anonymously. Far better that Dundas, appointed to the new board of control for India in 1784, should know that there was at least one junior officer at Madras with a considerable knowledge of Indian affairs and a good mind. When Munro returned to Britain in 1808, the only people in public life he felt might be willing to promote his interests were Dundas and his son Robert, and his sister Erskine's new second husband, Henry Erskine, a renowned Whig


14 Ibid., pp. 39-40.


16 Stein, *Thomas Munro*, pp. 22-3.
From 1788 to 1799, Munro served as an assistant to Captain Alexander Read, with whom his name as an administrator is inextricably linked. For the first four years Read was engaged in intelligence and supply duties but in 1792, he was appointed to take charge of the revenue settlement of the Baramahal, ceded to Madras that year by Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The governor-general, Earl Cornwallis told the court of directors that "the most capable and trustworthy of your servants [will be selected] to manage the newly-acquired territories." As he believed that no civilian official on the staff of the Madras presidency possessed the necessary qualifications to carry out the difficult settlement effectively, Read, Munro and two other Scottish soldiers were given the task.

Although Munro eventually made his name as an administrator not as a soldier, by 1795 he was finding revenue work boring and he requested his brother Alexander, who had left the Bengal army for the indigo trade, to obtain information on the Rajputs and on French officers serving in the armies of the Indian states for him to pass on to the governor of Madras, Viscount Hobart. His object was to obtain a transfer back to the army by impressing the authorities with his knowledge. This effort at self-promotion was, however, unsuccessful. He remained in the Baramahal until the next and final war with Mysore.

It was during Munro's Baramahal years that he first met John Malcolm. In a letter to his father in 1796, Munro mentions that he has recently met a Lieutenant Malcolm, who "tells me that you were one of the last persons he saw at home — and that he had a long Crack (as he calls it)
with you about Tipu."20 One of Malcolm’s sisters seems to have been slightly acquainted with Erskine Munro, whom Malcolm mentions seeing when he was on leave in Scotland in 1794 and 1795 but it is not clear how Malcolm came to meet Munro’s father. In 1798, Munro wrote to his sister about several Scottish officers she knew, commenting that Malcolm "is now a very regular correspondent of mine." He concluded that he believed he had now mentioned all her Glasgow friends, which suggests that Munro did not, as yet, know Malcolm very well as the latter was a borderer, not a Glaswegian.21 It also suggests, however, that the two men probably had Scottish acquaintances in common who provided a loose link between them.

Malcolm had first arrived in India in April 1783 but, in the mid-1790s, he returned to Britain on furlough to recover his health. Like most cadets — Munro was an exception — Malcolm’s early years in India were spent irresponsibly. By 1788, however, he had matured a little and, shamed perhaps by the contributions his older brother Robert was making to the family’s finances and by the rapid advancement of Pulteney, who had been promoted lieutenant at the age of fifteen, he wrote a contrite letter home, paid his debts, and began to take his career more seriously.

Malcolm first saw military action during the Third Mysore War (1790-1792), when he served with the troops attached to the army of the Company’s ally, the nizam of Hyderabad. Impressed, however, by the prestige and salaries enjoyed by the Company’s representatives at the nizam’s court, Sir John Kennaway and Graeme Mercer, Malcolm made up his mind at this time to aim for a diplomatic career himself. Mercer pointed out the value of learning Persian and Indian languages: Kennaway probably helped him to gain, in 1792, the appointment as Persian translator to the military detachment serving with the nizam, which he held for nearly two years. According to Kaye, it was during this period that Malcolm began his study of Indian history, recording his research and

20 Munro to his father, 18 April 1796, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.

thoughts on the nature of Indian society and politics in a "large collection of manuscript books" which, most unfortunately, seem to have been lost.

This career-oriented program of study was curtailed in 1794 by a serious illness that drove Malcolm to Britain to recuperate. He recovered on the voyage, however, and was able to spend his ten-month stay trying to improve both his education and his career prospects. His visit coincided with a well-publicized debate on new regulations for the Company's army and, after a brief visit to Scotland, Malcolm went to London to take part in it. In a carefully composed letter to the North Briton, he presented forceful arguments for the resolution of three major grievances: "the galling fact that no officer of the Indian army could, by the existing system, rise higher than the rank of colonel;" the chronic stagnation of Company promotion; and the lack of proper leave and retirement provisions. These issues contributed to "the extreme state of depression" prevalent in the Company's forces. A system that offered neither recognition nor reward for services rendered was oppressive, Malcolm believed, and the Company army would never be really effective until incentives were provided for good service. Throughout his career Malcolm suggested and promoted reforms that would provide recognition and rewards, regarding them as the psychological basis for loyal, efficient service. His concern consistently extended to Indian as well as to British Company officials. His arguments often suggest self, or at least corporate, interest, but they reflected contemporary theories on human nature which held that insecurity and oppression crippled mankind's natural propensity for self-betterment. Malcolm stated firmly that the Company officers' "knowledge of the manners

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23 Callahan, The East India Company Army, provides a detailed account of the events surrounding the introduction of new regulations for the Company's army, arguing that opposition by military officers, particularly in the Bengal army, over Lord Cornwallis's recommendations for uniting the Company with the Crown forces in India, seriously undermined the authority of Sir John Shore as governor-general.


and languages of the people of India" — their local expertise — gave them "innumerable advantages over a general immediately appointed from home;" and he felt that anyone who had demonstrated his ability should be eligible to become commander-in-chief at any of the three presidencies.  

Malcolm's critique of the Company's organization was constrained by the patronage system. He concluded his letters with flattering allusions to the individual and collective wisdom of the court of directors, Dundas, and Cornwallis, ex-governor-general and Indian elder statesman, who would have the last word on any reforms and who could influence Malcolm's career prospects. The papers written at this time represent Malcolm's first, apparently successful, experiment in promoting himself as an expert on British India, for he returned to India as secretary to Sir Alured Clarke, the newly appointed commander-in-chief at Madras. He had been recommended by General Ross, who had been private secretary to Cornwallis in India, and by Colonel Dirom, who had been quartermaster-general during the war with Mysore.

Malcolm had returned to Britain hoping to be able to remedy some of the defects in his education and for this purpose he chose to spend the winter of 1794-5 in Edinburgh, attending public university lectures and reading widely. The erudition of Edinburgh's intellectuals and the opportunities and incentives the city offered to youthful scholars impressed Malcolm. He told his brother Gilbert, a student at Cambridge:

as there is no place in the world where such encouragement is given to literary men [as Edinburgh], so I believe there are nowhere to be found men of more deep learning and science. Learning is a plant cultivated in proportion to demand.

Malcolm had studied Persian and Indian languages, "more with the hope of their being useful than entertaining," and his "demand" for learning seems to have stemmed from a perception of the

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26 Malcolm, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 32.

27 Ibid., 1: 35: 43.

28 Malcolm to his brother Gilbert. 22 Feb. 1795, ibid., 1: 40.

29 Malcolm to his mother, written before he left India in 1794, ibid., 1: 42.
utility to his career of a knowledge of history and an understanding of systems of political and social organization.

While in Edinburgh, Malcolm was directly exposed to the ideas of the Calvinist Moderates on religion and history when he was introduced to Hugh Blair, and he made frequent visits to the home of the popular minister until the sudden death of Blair's wife curtailed them. He read Thomas Reid's philosophy and a great deal of history and returned to India with a copy of the *Wealth of Nations* which he mentions reading when back in Madras in 1797. The cultural life of late eighteenth-century Edinburgh would have been stimulating for anyone interested, for either personal or professional reasons, in the history of different societies and forms of government.

As Malcolm arrived for the second time at Madras in early 1796, Mountstuart Elphinstone arrived for the first time at Calcutta. His reception in India contrasts dramatically with that of Malcolm and Munro. Malcolm, who had an elder brother in the Company's commercial service to meet him but no other advantages, was quickly consigned to garrison duties. Munro was merely one of the eighty-three new cadets to begin their careers at Madras in January 1780, almost all of them Scotsmen "particularly recommended to the care of the general." Munro complained, dryly, that the general had an inconceivable number of relations — "nephews, cousin-germans, etc." — but he was not one of them and he, too, started his career with tedious years of garrison duty. Elphinstone, on the other hand, put in at Madras on his way to Calcutta and was "hospitably entertained" by Lord Hobart, the governor. His Uncle Keith, recently commander-in-chief of an important expedition against the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope, was also at Madras in January 1796 and, on his arrival in Calcutta a month later, Elphinstone wrote home to say that as a result of his Uncle Keith's references, the governor-general, Sir John Shore, and the commander-in-chief, India, Sir Robert

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31 Munro to his father, 6 Feb. 1780, quoted in Gleig, *Munro*, 3: 3.
Abercrombie, had "both...been very attentive."\textsuperscript{32}

Shore "was so good as to appoint" Elphinstone as assistant to the registrar at the residency at Benares, in the Indian state of Awadh, so that he could be with his older brother James who was serving at Benares in the Company's commercial branch. For four years Elphinstone enjoyed a placid routine of whist, billiards, shooting, studies and a little business. Like Malcolm he accumulated debts but, according to Colebrooke, Elphinstone was "through life careless of money" and, unlike Malcolm, he did not escape from them until 1816.\textsuperscript{33} Elphinstone soon became aware, however, that a knowledge of Asian languages would be necessary to obtain the well-paying appointments in the political service to which he aspired and he began to study Persian.

At the same time he embarked on a program of intellectual self-improvement that he was to follow throughout his life. Elphinstone's devotion to literature rarely fails to elicit a tribute to his intellectual acumen from admiring historians and the volume of material he read is certainly impressive. The static nature of his job allowed him to accumulate a library and left him with a great deal of time on his hands that men like Malcolm and Munro, whose duties kept them continuously on the move, rarely enjoyed. His studies and recreational reading, however, were almost certainly, in part, a form of escape from an uncongenial way of life. They provided an alternative to daydreaming - "the visionary life I lead, spending nearly as much time in an ideal world of my own creating as in actual life." Elphinstone added that he was "better entertained where I have everything my own way than in the disappointments and flatness of real intercourse with the world."\textsuperscript{34} Elphinstone enjoyed the challenge of his job during periods of crisis but preferred his reading, daydreaming and hunting to the routine duties of a residency official.


\textsuperscript{34} Elphinstone, journal, n.d., 1812, Mss. Eur., F/88 Box 3A5.
In his early years, Elphinstone was often bored but almost always safe and comfortable. Military life in peacetime was often, no doubt, tedious, but for a cadet it was rarely comfortable and often dangerous. Nine years after leaving home Munro told his sister that he had never experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue or poverty, until he came to India but, since then, "I have frequently met with the first three and...the last has been my constant companion." He had been three years in India before he had any pillow other than a book or any blanket but his over-coat. When travelling his "only conveyance" was a horse, so old and frail that he was obliged to walk two-thirds of every journey. Munro was nineteen at the beginning of the Second Mysore War and twenty-one at its end. He wrote of daily marches of as much as thirty-six miles "without refreshment", eating only what could be found and resting without shelter because supplies were not provided. And he spoke of officers who aged rapidly, their health broken by privation, their morale destroyed by the dreary prospect of waiting sixteen or seventeen years for a promotion which, without the necessary patronage to also obtain a command, still provided only just enough to live on.

In contrast, in 1801, Elphinstone at the age of twenty-one, was travelling from Calcutta in the comfort of a palanquin, to take up a diplomatic appointment at Poona. The journey took ten months, his party choosing a devious route which took them to Madras, where Elphinstone was entertained by another governor, Lord Clive, and to Seringapatam, where he stayed with Colonel Arthur Wellesley, later the duke of Wellington and the younger brother of the governor-general, Marquis Wellesley, who was commanding the subsidiary force in Mysore. There were frequent diversions along the way to visit temples, caves and famous sites. Elphinstone had been in India for seven years when he mentions what is apparently his first experience — at the battle of Assaye —

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35 Munro to his sister Erskine, 23 Jan. 1789, quoted in Gleig. Munro, 1: 73-74.


of sleeping on the ground. Munro was still in poverty after nine years in India; Elphinstone, during his ninth year, became resident at the court of the rajah of Berar. Despite Kaye’s claims that equal opportunity was the distinguishing merit of the Company service, Malcolm and Munro did not experience the same "fair start and open course" for their careers as Elphinstone. Although this had much to do with Elphinstone’s social status and connections, even Elphinstone would probably have progressed less rapidly if he had arrived in India in 1780. At that time there were few diplomatic or administrative posts in the Company’s service for the ambitious to aspire to.

Munro’s ambitions are difficult to gauge. He wanted a successful military career and he allowed his father to advertise his knowledge of political and military strategy, while he himself eventually attempted to advertise it himself by sending military memoranda to Lord Hobart. While employed in the army in 1790, he explained to his mother that, despite his conviction that it was possible to make a quick fortune in trade, he would not leave the army to join his brother Daniel in business because "I have too much obstinacy to quit the profession which I have chosen...and too much absurd ambition to prefer a certain but moderate rank in the world to a high station however visionary and remote the hopes of attaining it may be." Six years later, however, when employed on revenue business, he told Alexander that "the ambition which you suspect me of possessing will not detain me in India — for as there is no chance of gratifying it — it will have as much share as anything else in carrying me home." From his writings, it is clear that he regarded adequate remuneration and public recognition as essential incentives for efficient government service and believed that his own efforts on the Company’s behalf warranted both. Ironically, it was public recognition of his ability as a revenue official and his views on administration as presented in his

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39 Munro to his mother, 1 March 1790, Mss. Eur., F151/141.

40 Munro to Alexander, 15 July 1796, Mss. Eur., F151/142.
official letters, which pointed his career in a direction for which he had no ambition at all.

Malcolm was openly ambitious and after his first few years at Madras, pursued advancement by whatever means he could find. Although he complained of the frustrations of the patronage system he worked indefatigably to manipulate it to his own interests and those of his friends, both as a client and, later, as a patron. While governor of Bombay, however, he told his nephew that he would not "do a job" for him; a statement that may or may not be sincere, but letters from Malcolm to his son and to different nephews indicate that he took quite a tough line with them. Malcolm shared Munro’s convictions about the psychological and practical importance of remuneration and recognition; public recognition becoming, in fact, something of an obsession.

Elphinstone admired heroic figures and, in his early years at least was ambitious for renown. Later he claimed that he had been cured of ambition by a difficult, but ultimately disappointing, mission to Peshawar in 1808 which led to the writing of his Account of the Kingdom of Caubul. He seems to have made little effort to deliberately exploit his connections. Writing from Poona in 1811, shortly after being appointed the resident there, Elphinstone complained of homesickness and of his dislike of India, but concluded by saying that he was none the less grateful to his uncle William "for putting me in a situation where it was within my own reach to make a certain and ample fortune." He often thanked both William Elphinstone and Lord Keith for their efforts on his behalf although he rarely canvassed their interest — perhaps because he did not need to. As a patron, having "to mingle in the filthy fray" was one of the many disadvantages he saw in being a presidency governor and he was glad that his residency appointments did not involve "being obliged to promote the undeserving, to pass over the good, and to displease the presumptuous;" remarks which sound priggish coming from so well-connected a man. Although Elphinstone hoped to rise quickly in the

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42 Elphinstone quoted in Fraser, Elphinstone Family Book, 2: 30, from a letter in the Elphinstone family charter chest, 1 July 1811.
Company's service, his main ambitions, as he described them to Lord Keith shortly before his appointment as governor of Bombay, had been "for a long time...to get home rich, and recover, or help recover, our family interest in Scotland." Neither ambition was fulfilled.

Although Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone came from very different social backgrounds and their early experiences in India, reflecting their respective social positions, were dissimilar, they did have two things in common. They all achieved high office in India and they attained it, in part at least, by discovering the same remedy for frustrated ambition: knowledge. Many East India Company servants were ignorant of Indians and India; Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, and a few of their more energetic and ambitious contemporaries, recognized that knowledge could, in fact, be translated into remunerative and influential appointments. Lord Wellesley's arrival in 1798 opened new opportunities for advancement for the enterprising which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were qualified to seize. Munro was an experienced soldier, beginning to establish a reputation as a revenue official, a good linguist and he had made a perceptive analysis of the Maratha and Mysorean states. Malcolm had anticipated the government's need for men with a knowledge of the history and structure of the Indian states and had prepared himself to meet it. The type of history Malcolm read during and after his self-imposed crammer in Edinburgh provided the most superficial reader with a framework of concepts as applicable to the study of Asian society and government as to European. By making himself an authority on Maratha affairs as well as on Hyderabad's, Malcolm also made himself indispensable in 1803, when the Second Maratha War broke out. Elphinstone had recognized since his days at Benares that to have any chance to make money and achieve renown in the civil service he needed some specialized skills. After his appointment in 1800 as a


44 Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 61.

45 Malcolm, Political History, ed.'s introduction, 1: xcvii.
lowly assistant at the residency at Poona, he complained of insufficient time to read Homer and Virgil because "my debts and my duty compel me to learn Persian and Hindi." Language skills were indispensable to a career in the political service. A knowledge of Persian, as Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone all discovered, was as necessary for ambitious Company servants in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as it had been for Hindus under Mughal rule.

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46 Elphinstone, journal, 6 April 1801, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 26.

Chapter 3

Opportunity: 1798 - 1912

Favour effects less in this country, and competency more, than in any other scene of equal magnitude. There is an interminable field for individual exertion.

John Malcolm

The nature of British Indian government began to change during the governor-generalship of Warren Hastings (1773-1785), who made appointments in Bengal on the grounds of qualification rather than interest, provided financial inducements to Company employees to learn Indian languages, and did much to encourage the study of Hindu culture. In imposing the new standards of efficiency and integrity required under the India Act, Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793) gave more opportunities to men with special knowledge, and promoted the study of Persian by paying an extra allowance of thirty rupees a month to civil writers to cover the cost of employing a tutor. But it was Lord Wellesley (1798-1805), who expected his political and administrative staff to acquire, maintain and justify an Indian empire, who stimulated the professionalization of the Company service.

The Wellesleys became a great aristocratic family in the nineteenth century, but when Richard, Arthur and Henry Wellesley went to India in the last years of the eighteenth century — as the governor-general, a colonel in the Crown army and the governor-general's private secretary respectively — they had much in common with Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone and many others: they were young men, dissatisfied with their own and their family's wealth and status, who hoped that service in India would improve it. The Wellesleys, of course, were well above the Munros and

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1 Malcolm, Political History, 2: 378.


3 Misra, Bureaucracy, pp. 60; 68-9; Embree, Charles Grant, p. 178; Kopf, Bengal Renaissance, p. 18n.

Malcolm's in the British hierarchy but an Elphinstone might, with some justification, regard them as beneath him.

Lord Wellesley came to India with the clear idea of providing a stage on which he and his brothers could make their reputations. The Wellesleys were to be empire-builders, and the contemporary European context — the wars with revolutionary France — gave them the opportunity. French influence in the sub-continent was to be eliminated and British influence expanded to the point at which the Company would dominate the political life of India. In pursuing this objective, Wellesley enlarged both the Company's territory and the number and importance of the military, diplomatic and administrative appointments available to Company employees. The historical importance of this period of British rule in India, as well as of the careers of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, owes much to Wellesley but, in regard to the latter, the obligations were not entirely one sided. Wellesley knew more about the Roman empire than about the Indian states; he knew, no doubt, that Hannibal had taken elephants across the Alps. Someone with better local knowledge, however, had to tell him that a military campaign against Mysore in the monsoon season was less feasible. Similarly, while a classical education was an admirable preparation for a European diplomatic career, negotiations with Indian rulers, necessary to maintain and strengthen Britain's position in India, were more likely to succeed when conducted by Persian-speaking British officials rather than by Indian intermediaries acting as interpreters. The investigation of local land tenure and legal practices was also facilitated by a collector's ability to converse with landlords and cultivators.

Wellesley, who believed that most Company employees were inadequately educated for their new duties as the rulers of extensive territories and millions of people, founded in 1800 a college at Calcutta, known as Fort William College, to be used by officials from all three presidencies. Its

5 Arthur Wellesley, who had been in India since February 1797, and the adjutant-general at Bengal told Lord Wellesley this. Ingram, Commitment to Empire, p. 135.
curriculum was to include subjects that would meet practical needs — Indian languages, history and law and the laws enacted by the governor-general-in-council — as well as other subjects providing the general education needed by the officials of an empire — jurisprudence, political economy classical and modern European languages, European history and natural philosophy (a combination of botany, chemistry and astronomy). Although Fort William College, a casualty of the governor-general's power struggle with the court of directors, became merely a school of languages for Bengal after the foundation of the East India Company's Haileybury College in Hertfordshire in 1806, Wellesley's original conception was indicative of a trend enabling men like Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone to build successful careers in India. David Kopf points out that the most significant feature of the government-sponsored concern with Indian culture was the linking of monetary rewards and privileged access to future elite appointments to the mastery of Indian languages, customs and laws. Wellesley, however, could not afford to wait for Fort William College's charter students to graduate; he had to make do at first with men who, from ambition, intellectual curiosity or boredom, were already proficient in Indian languages and knowledgeable about India. Most of the men who attained high office in the Company's service during Wellesley's régime were accomplished linguists; some were also scholars or had at least written books or papers on subjects of use to the government. Barry Close, Henry Colebrooke, Samuel Davis, Richard Jenkins, William Kirkpatrick, Charles Metcalfe and Mark Wilks, as well as Malcolm and Elphinstone, were among the competent linguists who also combined scholarly research and authorship with their official duties. Munro, who did not write books, was a good linguist with a greater knowledge of south Indian culture than most Europeans.

Munro was confident of his linguistic ability. He had learned Hindustani, without dictionary.

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7 Kopf, Bengal Renaissance, pp. 96-7.
or grammar, from a teacher who spoke no word of English, and he believed that with leisure and a good dictionary he could read "any book in any language in the course of six months." In 1785 he had transferred to a regiment serving in Tanjore for the express purpose of studying Persian with a missionary there, who was a renowned linguist. A year earlier he had recommended that his youngest brother should learn Persian and serve in Bengal because the Bengal government's relations with Muslim states provided excellent opportunities for Persian-speaking officials.\(^8\)

Munro's efforts to become fluent in Persian and some of the south Indian languages were rewarded, at the conclusion of the Third Mysore War in 1792, with an appointment as a civil administrator in the Baramahal region under Colonel Alexander Read. Cornwallis, who was particular about the qualifications of the men he chose to take charge of the Company's new territories, thought an ability to speak the local language to be essential.\(^9\)

Munro and Read worked together for eleven years, the last seven in the settlement and revenue collection duties which provided the springboard for Munro's later eminence, and there has been some debate as to how much of the credit for the revenue practices later known as the ryotwari, or Munro, system should be given to Read.\(^10\) As Munro's superior, Read had ultimate control of policy, but he consulted his subordinates who had little hesitation in expressing, frankly, their views.\(^11\) Munro and Read, by means of a debate carried on largely by correspondence, were together responsible for the foundations on which Munro built the system of revenue and judicial administration later given his name.

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\(^8\) Munro to his mother, 21 Aug. 1783, MSS. Eur., F/151/140; Munro to his father, 6 Jan. 1785, MSS. Eur., F/151/140; Munro to his father, 23 Jan. 1784, MSS. Eur., F/151/140.


\(^10\) Mukherjee, Ryotwari System, pp. 3-17 and Beaglehole, Munro, pp. 8; 12-34. Mukherjee sees Read as the main instigator of the ryotwari system; Beaglehole sees Read and Munro as founding, together, the system that Munro applied and developed to maturity in the Baramahal. See Stein, Munro, pp. 39-49 for a discussion of the historiography on Munro and Read in the Baramahal.

\(^11\) Munro's administrative methods are examined in some detail in Part II, chap. 11, below.
Although Munro told his father that Read's "intimate knowledge of the language and manners of the people...eminently qualified him" for revenue work,\(^\text{12}\) and described his investigation of the revenue system in the Baramahal as more detailed, accurate and original than any other made by a European, he also observed that the information was so badly arranged that the members of the revenue board would understand less than half of it. James Dykes, a later Madras administrator, endorsed this judgment, writing that Read "sadly wanted that perspicuity of style which was so essential for an office that he held otherwise so worthily." Dykes believed, however, that Read's "reasoning powers" were "as strong and clear as his writings are weak and obscure."\(^\text{13}\) Munro also respected Read's enthusiasm for figures, although he criticized his calculations.\(^\text{14}\) But the very fact that Read was having to make calculations and work with complex accounting processes, makes it reasonable to assume that a knowledge of mathematics, as well as of languages, was useful to those employed on revenue business.

Munro, having "never met with a person...who knew more than a few common rules,"\(^\text{15}\) believed mathematical skills to be rare among Company officials in India. His own above average knowledge of mathematics derived from his Scottish university education. This was not unusual. The records of the Survey of India prior to 1800 indicate that 29 per cent of the men employed as surveyors were Scottish and 49 per cent English but, of the fifty men whose contribution was sufficiently important to warrant more than a column of biographical information, 38 per cent were Scottish and only 40 per cent English. Given a population of five Englishmen for every Scotsman, a disproportionate number of Scotsmen were employed on tasks requiring technical knowledge.\(^\text{16}\)

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\(^{12}\) Munro to his father. 14 April 1793. quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 147.

\(^{13}\) Dykes, quoted in Beaglehole. Munro, p. 20 and in Stein, Munro, p. 40.

\(^{14}\) Munro quoted in ibid., p. 53.

\(^{15}\) Munro to his mother. 21 Feb. 1782. Mss. Eur., F/151/140.

Gerald Bryant estimates that the proportion of Scots to English in the Company's military and civil service in the late eighteenth century paralleled the ratio between the population of the two countries, but whereas only one out of nine Scots was a civil servant and only one in eleven served in the rank and file of the army, one in three Company army officers were Scottish. Many valuable and prestigious political and administrative appointments went to soldiers at this time. The greater need for soldiers, as opposed to civilians, to learn Indian languages in order to communicate with the sepoys was, no doubt, one reason: the advantage of having men accustomed to command in positions of authority was another. But Kopf points out that many of Fort William College's students, "especially those from Scotland," had sufficient formal education to enable them to organize data, to formulate policies on the basis of written reports and to prepare memoranda. This seems to suggest that Scotsmen serving in India had generally received a better education than their English counterparts, and that there may be a connection between the large number of Scotsmen who obtained diplomatic and administrative appointments at this time and the increasing need for relatively well-educated officials.

Although knowledge of mathematics played no part in the selection of Read and Munro for service in the Company's revenue branch, it helped them to do their job more effectively, thus enhancing their reputations. Nor was an ability to write well a prerequisite for government appointments, but concise and grammatical reports and recommendations were more likely to attract favourable attention than badly-constructed, badly-spelled ones. Read went on leave after the Fourth Mysore War and died in Europe in 1803, so there is no way of knowing whether his poor writing skills would have hampered further advancement. Munro's competence as a writer, however, and his ability to provide a theoretical framework for his recommendations helped him to present his ideas in a form that would promote his career as well as influence Company policy.

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17 Bryant, "Scots in India," p. 23.

18 Kopf, Bengal Renaissance, p. 95.
Arthur Wellesley observed in 1802 that it was "a well-known fact" that in all British India there was no other region in which British authority had been so effectively established or in which "the country itself, its people, the amount, and the sources of its revenue, are so well known as in the Baramahal."\(^1\) A reputation as an efficient administrator was of little interest to Munro, however, who was pleased to return to the army upon the outbreak of the fourth and final war with Mysore in 1799, albeit in the unspectacular, if essential, commissariat department. Munro was eight years older than Malcolm and four years senior to him in the Madras army, but it was Malcolm who, by successfully attracting the attention of Lord Wellesley and adhering judiciously, but loyalty, to the Wellesley interest, first moved upwards in the Company service.

From 1797 to 1799, his last two years in the Baramahal, Munro corresponded regularly with Malcolm\(^2\) who, after his furlough in Britain to recover his health and improve his education, was employed as secretary to the commander-in-chief at Madras, Lieutenant-General James Harris. Munro, however, was only one of the many men with whom Malcolm corresponded on the closely related subjects of his career and Indian politics. Although Malcolm believed that Harris, Lord Hobart, and Sir Alured Clarke, now commander-in-chief, India, paid a "friendly attention" to his interests,\(^3\) he also requested Sir John Kennaway, who had returned to Britain, to lose no opportunity of mentioning him to "great men coming out either to Bengal or Madras. Malcolm offered to provide them with "much arranged information" on India, implying an exchange of information for patronage, and added that several minutes and memoirs he had submitted to the Madras government had received such "flattering notice" that he was encouraged to persevere with his research and writing.\(^4\) When Wellesley put in at Madras on his way to Calcutta to take up his

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2 Munro to his sister Erskine, 7 Feb. 1798, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.


4 Malcolm to Kennaway, 16 Oct. 1797, quoted in ibid., 1: 61n.
appointment as governor-general in April 1798, Malcolm took the opportunity to shower him with information on the Indian states, and was rewarded the diplomatic appointment he had long hoped for. He was appointed to be assistant to the resident at Hyderabad, Captain James Kirkpatrick.

In making the appointment, Wellesley informed Malcolm that he had been governed "by no other motive than my knowledge of the zeal, activity, and diligence with which you have pursued the study of the native languages, and of the political system of India." Three weeks later Wellesley sent two of Malcolm’s papers — on the state of Tipu Sultan’s army and resources and his general view of the British position in India — to Henry Dundas at the board of control, observing that "the latter is curious, as Captain Malcolm had not seen any of my letters or minutes on the same subject,...I had no knowledge of Captain Malcolm, nor was he recommended to me before I met him at Fort St. George. He is a very promising young man." Wellesley was clearly surprised by the correspondence of views. Malcolm was prepared to go to considerable lengths to promote his career and one of his many British correspondents may have been able to give him a tip, but there is no evidence of it. Malcolm may simply have been fortunate that his opinions happened to coincide closely with those of the new governor-general.

At Hyderabad, Malcolm gained “redit by assisting Kirkpatrick in a successful and bloodless dissolution of the nizam’s regiments commanded by Frenchmen. Summoned to Calcutta by the governor-general, he took with him the French colours and, when welcomed into Government House circles, made it clear that his views of the future of India matched Wellesley’s. When the governor-general travelled from Calcutta to Madras in late 1798 to conduct negotiations with Tipu Sultan, Malcolm went with him. But when the negotiations broke down, as they were probably intended to do, and war was imminent, Malcolm went back to Hyderabad. He accompanied the

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24 Wellesley to Dundas, 11 Sept. 1798, in Edward Ingram, ed., _Two Views of British India. The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801_. (Bath, 1970), with the editor’s introduction, p. 100.
nizam's auxiliary force to Mysore with instructions from Wellesley to report to both him and General Harris on the organization, discipline and state of mind of the nizam's troops. It was a broadly defined commission, of a type Malcolm was given several times by both Wellesley and the marquis of Hastings, to act as a confidential political agent. Even more fortunate for Malcolm, the King's 33rd Regiment, commanded by Arthur Wellesley, had been selected to serve with the Hyderabad force. Malcolm and Arthur began what was to become Malcolm's most important and useful life-long friendship.\(^{25}\)

The Fourth Mysore War, which began in February 1799, ended with the death of Tipu Sultan on 4 May 1799 during the siege of Seringapatam. Shortly after its fall, Wellesley told his brother to ask Read and Munro, in addition to high ranking officers, for their opinions on the best political settlement for Mysore.\(^{26}\) The request indicates that their work in the Baramahal had caught Wellesley's attention. The most important members of the commission entrusted with the settlement of Mysore were Harris, Colonel William Kirkpatrick, military secretary to the governor-general, Colonel Barry Close, adjutant-general at Madras, and Arthur and Henry Wellesley. With the possible exception of Close, all were to some extent Malcolm's patrons and he was made first secretary to the commission. Malcolm, during the time he spent with Wellesley in the winter of 1798 to 1799, may himself have promoted Munro's interests as he had mentioned, as early as 1796, his great respect for Munro as "an uncommon clever fellow."\(^{27}\) Wellesley now appointed Munro second secretary and asked him, in June, to undertake the civil administration of Kanara, a region on the Malabar coast of India, previously ruled by Tipu Sultan, which Wellesley intended to annex to the Company's territories.

Although he had approved of the war, Munro did not like the arrangements made by the

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\(^{25}\) Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 79-82 and Longford, Wellington, p. 95. Longford describes Malcolm as one of Wellington's closest friends.

\(^{26}\) Wellesley to A. Wellesley, 20 May 1799, WSD, 1: 221

\(^{27}\) Malcolm to his sister Mina, 6 Aug. 1796. quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 50-1.
commission for Mysore. He told his father that he did not think that a child, whose ancestors had been in confinement for half a century, should have been installed on the throne, and he disapproved of the exclusion of Britain's ally, the nizam of Hyderabad, from an equal share of the conquered territory. But, in more cheerful vein, he described to his sister Erskine an evening he had spent discussing her poetry with Malcolm and listening to Malcolm read his own poems — without, unfortunately, giving an opinion on the merits of either. Munro respected Malcolm's other talents, however, telling Erskine that he thought Malcolm, who was expecting to go back to Hyderabad when the work of the commission was concluded, should be appointed resident in place of James Kirkpatrick, "because there is no man fitter." Malcolm, Munro stated, had gained much credit with the authorities for his excellent management of the nizam's troops during the war and from "making them instead of an incumbrance a most serviceable body of auxiliaries." The very conspicuous part Malcolm had played in the war was officially recommended to the attention of the Supreme government by Harris; in particular, Malcolm's peculiar talent for conciliating the sirdars of the allied force, and directing their exertions to objects of general utility in a manner foreign to their habits of service — his activity in applying the unconnected power of resource possessed by the contingent in aid of the general wants of the army — and the important assistance which he gave with the corps of his Highness the nizam's regular infantry under his immediate orders, in occupying posts for the security, and covering parties for the supply, of the army during the siege of Seringapatam.

Arthur Wellesley described Malcolm's efforts to discipline and train the nizam's troops as "indefatigable,...[he] leads the life of a canister at a dog's tail." Owing in part at least to these plaudits, Malcolm did not, in fact, return to Hyderabad. He went instead to Persia as Wellesley's

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29 Munro to his sister Erskine, 30 June 1799, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.


31 A. Wellesley to H. Wellesley, 9 March 1799, WSD, 1: 200.
Malcolm’s first mission to Persia in 1800-1801 was undoubtedly the most significant appointment of his career for, though thirty years old, he was still a relatively junior captain. Wellesley, as part of his policy to extend British influence throughout India, wanted to use the problematic threat of an Afghan invasion led by Zeman Shah, to try to frighten the nawab of Awadh into greater dependence on Britain, and decided to give the Afghan threat more significance than it warranted by sending Malcolm to Tehran to persuade the Qajars to mount a diversionary attack on Afghanistan from the west. No one else took the Afghan threat very seriously, but Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798, and the fear that it might lead to an over-land expedition to India, provided extra justification for Malcolm’s mission.32

In Tehran in November 1801, Malcolm negotiated a defensive alliance against France and a commercial treaty which Wellesley hoped would help to screen the political objectives of the mission from the attention of the directors.33 Neither the Company nor Henry Dundas was pleased with the slight achievements and enormous expense of Malcolm’s embassy, but Wellesley was satisfied: he told the earl of Elgin, British ambassador at Constantinople, that Malcolm’s successful negotiations ensured “Future advantages of considerable importance, both to the political and commercial interests of the British government.”34 From Malcolm’s point of view, the importance of the mission lay in its making his name widely known in political and diplomatic circles. Henry Wellesley, back in India after a brief visit to London on Lord Wellesley’s behalf at the end of the Fourth Mysore War, reported that the Prince of Wales would be delighted to receive Malcolm

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33 Yapp, Strategies, p. 29.

whenever he should return to England.  

Back in India in May 1801, Malcolm was appointed temporary private secretary to Wellesley. He accompanied the governor-general on a journey to northern India during which, as the man responsible for the private communications between Wellesley, the council at Calcutta and the governors of Madras and Bombay, he gained some insight into the less formal processes of government. He next went to Madras as the governor-general’s confidential agent. Wellesley had learned that the court of directors, increasingly antagonized by his high-handed conduct, were intending to replace three senior officials at Madras with men whom they could expect to carry out the Company’s, rather than Wellesley’s, instructions. Malcolm’s task was to persuade the three offenders — the governor, Lord Clive, Josiah Webbe and Thomas Cockburn — not to resign, because Wellesley wanted their help in extending the Bengal revenue and judicial system into the Madras presidency.  

Ostensibly Wellesley and the directors disagreed about the implementation of the Bengal system but, in fact, they were fighting a long-drawn out battle for control between the dual authorities in London — the court of directors and the board of control — and the men on the spot in India; a constitutional problem which later attracted Malcolm’s attention in his writings on government.  

Malcolm was happy to postpone his own promised appointment to the residency at Mysore, which he saw as a professional backwater, and he remained acting private secretary until August 1802, when he was sent to deal with a crisis at Bombay following the murder of the Persian envoy. Malcolm appeased the shah of Persia with conciliatory letters and a generous indemnity, accepted the now vacant appointment as resident of Mysore, then almost immediately left a deputy in his  


36 Wellesley to Dundas, 31 July 1799, Ingram, Two Views, pp. 167-73, and Wellesley to Dundas, 30 Sept. 1801, ibid., pp. 331-4; Stein, Munro, pp. 93-4; Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 163-70.  

place while he went in March 1803 to join Arthur Wellesley's army, once again as the governor-general's political agent.\textsuperscript{38}

After their work together on the Mysore Commission in 1799, the careers of Malcolm and Munro had followed different paths, but they continued to keep in touch and Munro credited Malcolm with Wellesley's decision to offer him the appointment in Kanara. Although Munro appreciated that Malcolm thought he would be doing him a great service, initially he refused the position. Read had retired and returned to Europe, and Munro was hoping to be put in charge of the Baramahal; he thought that "no advantages could ever compensate for the loss of old friends and of a country [the Baramahal] to which I was much attached." After a short experience of Kanara's rainfall, he was even more certain of this, but an unrepentant Malcolm told him that the appointment had been his own fault for recommending himself "to men who continue to cherish ridiculous ideas about the good of the state."\textsuperscript{39}

Munro, in a characteristically uneffusive and frank letter, made his "acknowledgments" to Wellesley "for having twice pointed me out as a person that might be usefully employed," and observed that as Wellesley had probably heard of his reluctance to accept the appointment, he would explain his reasons. He did not want to leave the Coromandel coast where he had worked for nearly twenty years. Having spent most of the last nine years in tents, he was afraid that he would not be able to stand the fatigue of investigating the revenues of a new country under the same conditions for two or three more. He had hoped to be given charge of Coimbatore which he knew, from experience of a neighbouring district, would yield more than double the revenue Tipu Sultan had obtained from it, thereby bringing great credit on the collector. Kanara, on the other hand, had been greatly over-rated by Tipu. The first British collector would have no hope of meeting the Company's expectations and would suffer a loss of reputation but, despite this, he had decided that it was his

\textsuperscript{38} Malcolm to Stuart, 20 March 1803, quoted in Kaye, \textit{Malcolm}, 1: 212.

\textsuperscript{39} Munro to his father, 6 Aug. 1799, Mss. Eur., F/151/142; Malcolm to Munro, 19 Sept. 1799, quoted in Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 1: 233-4.
duty to go. Although he would not raise as much revenue as the Company was expecting, he would, owing to his extensive experience, raise more than anyone else. He mentioned the two civilian assistants he had been given; reminded Wellesley that unless they understood the local languages and possessed "great perseverance and great temper with the natives," they would be useless; stated that he was as yet unaware of their qualifications and concluded, tersely, that "if I find them deficient, I shall not fail to report to your Lordship, in full confidence that I shall be furnished with abler assistance." 40

The tone of this letter is very different from Malcolm's expression of gratitude to Wellesley in a letter written early in 1803.

Among the various feelings which at this moment occupy my breast, I recognise with exultation that of a personal attachment to your Lordship to be predominant; and I shall glory in every opportunity I may have of showing the nature of the zeal which that attachment inspires, and how far it places me above the common motives which influence men who are busy in the self-interested pursuit of fortune. 41

Although the final phrase is no doubt hypocritical, Malcolm's general sentiments were probably sincere; he genuinely liked, admired and wished to serve Wellesley. But his flattering and obsequious style would have been unthinkable for Munro, who invariably wrote to both high and low in the same way. This does not mean, however, that Munro's letters to great men were without guile. At thirty-nine he was still ambitious for military rather than civil fame; he had been in ill-health for several months and had been considering returning to Britain on leave prior to the war with Mysore; and he did not like Kanara. His honesty, however, is judicious as well as disarming. After his warning, it would be difficult for the authorities to blame him for revenue shortfalls, while a reasonable collection would be greatly to his credit.

As the result of a great deal of hard work and some carefully written reports, Munro was able to use this unwanted and disliked appointment to establish himself as the most successful

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settlement official in the Madras presidency. In October 1800, the Madras government informed the
court of directors that, as the result of Munro’s energy and ability, the Company’s authority in
Kanara had been fully established. His success in imposing order had also enabled him to “pursue
inquiries into the resources, administration, and history of these districts,” which he had presented
to the government “in one of the ablest reports which had passed under their observation.”

In 1800, Wellesley considered appointing Munro to the residency at Mysore, but the most
critical post at the time was the settlement of the disordered districts, south of the Tumbudra and
Kistna rivers, which were to be ceded to the Company by the nizam of Hyderabad in October 1800
under the terms of a new subsidiary alliance. Munro requested and obtained this appointment.42
He spent fifteen months in Kanara from July 1799 to October 1800 and nearly seven years in the
Ceded Districts, as they became known, a region half the size of England, from October 1800 to
August 1807. In both places he was not only responsible for establishing order and collecting the
revenue the Company badly needed to pay for its wars, he was also, until the end of the Second
Maratha War, expected to organize supplies and transport for Arthur Wellesley’s army. If Elizabeth
Longford’s contention is accurate that Wellesley’s first involvement with the Marathas in 1803 — the
restoration of the peshwa of Poona to his throne — was successful in large part because he had
"studied his Caesar" and prepared basket boats for his army’s river crossings, and because of "a
lovingly perfected bullock-train," Munro should be given some of the credit. He had been
supplying the leather for Wellesley’s boats from 180044 and, as soon as preparations for war with
the Marathas began in November 1802, he was responsible for the continuous movement of at least
ten thousand and often more than thirty thousand bullocks, laden with supplies. He continued to

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42 See Wellesley to Dundas, 26 Oct. 1800, Ingram, Two Views, p. 310; Josiah Webbe, chief secretary to the Madras government,
to Munro, and enclosure, Clive to Webbe, 27 Sept. 1800, and Munro to his brother Alexander, 22 Nov. 1800, quoted in Gleig,
Munro, 1: 308-11; Stein, Munro, p. 73. For a copy of the treaty between the Company and the nizam see Wellesley, 2: 709.

43 Longford, Wellington, p. 124.

organize ten thousand bullocks for Arthur Wellesley's army after peace was restored.

I have not only always had the purchase of the supplies, but the payment of most of the bullocks. This bullock business, together with sheep, boats, pay of boatmen,...and the endless disputes and correspondence about accounts, bills etc., leave me very little time for revenue.45

Munro’s ability to collect revenue from the Ceded Districts, however, was equally crucial to Wellesley’s success. It was indispensable for financing the war.

Munro was severely criticized at first by the court of directors for his repression of the most destabilizing social group in the Ceded Districts, the petty chiefs known as poligars. Some of his revenue policies met opposition and, as a soldier carrying out civilian duties, his position was always threatened by the resentment of the civil service. But Munro’s tough stance with the poligars brought stability, there were still few Madras civilians with the necessary language skills to cope with his job, and his logistical ability in support of Arthur Wellesley’s Maratha campaign all helped to mitigate criticism.46 As doubts began to develop about the efficacy of the Bengal revenue and judicial system that Wellesley wanted to introduce into the Madras presidency, Munro’s reports, describing and justifying a different system began to attract some attention. In August 1804, the Home government, citing several such reports, recommended adhering as closely as possible to the existing land tenure arrangements in the Ceded Districts. Two years later, in October 1806, the Madras board of revenue drew the attention of the Home government to the accurate knowledge and comprehensive detail of Munro’s reports, declaring that the ordered state of the Ceded Districts was due to "the superior merits of the principal collector, Lieutenant-Colonel Munro."47 On Munro’s resignation in October 1807, the Madras government told the court of directors that he had worked "under circumstances of extreme difficulty, and with a degree of success unequalled in the records of this, or probably of

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45 Munro to Read, 6 March 1804, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3:190. Munro was unaware that Read had died at Malta in 1803.

46 Stein, Munro, pp. 89-90; 98.

47 Madras board of revenue to court of directors, 5 Oct. 1806, and Revenue letter to Fort St. George, 24 Aug. 1804, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 240, 238.
any other Government."48

In October 1805 Munro wrote to his mother that he was planning to return to Scotland the following year.49 This letter is dated two months after Wellesley was replaced as governor-general by Marquis Cornwallis, and about two weeks after Cornwallis’s death. Although Munro might have differed with Wellesley on administrative policy, because Wellesley favoured the Bengal revenue and judicial system while Munro was becoming increasingly confident of his own alternative procedures, he had supported Wellesley’s foreign policy and, knowing himself to be respected by both Arthur and Richard Wellesley, he must have regretted their departure and the loss of their interest. He makes no mention of the change of leadership, but would have known that retrenchment and more limited opportunities were likely to be the new order of the day. Although officially going on leave, Munro seems to have had no intention of returning to India when he eventually left for Britain in October 1807. He had not been given the opportunity he so badly wanted to demonstrate his ability as a military commander in the field — possibly owing to lack of patronage but also, perhaps, because he had been too useful in supply and administration — but he had no wish to spend the rest of his life in administration. In Britain he tried, unsuccessfully, to obtain a diplomatic or political appointment. As Munro sailed home, Malcolm and Elphinstone, who by this time were experienced diplomats and well-established political officers, were full of optimism. They were expecting to be sent on professionally advantageous foreign missions.

While Munro and Malcolm, members of the Madras military service, took part in the Fourth Mysore War, Elphinstone, a Bengal civilian, remained at his first post as assistant to the registrar at Benares. In 1800, however, he applied to attend Fort William College. Elphinstone was one of the first students admitted, but he attended for only a few weeks before accepting a well-paid

48 Revenue letter from Fort St. George to court of directors, 21 Oct. 1807, quoted in ibid., 2: 244. See Gleig, Munro, 2: 238-46, Appendix 2, for other expressions of the Madras and Home governments’ approval of Munro’s administration of the Ceded Districts.

49 Munro to his mother, 23 Oct. 1805, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 360.
appointment on the staff of the residency at Poona.\textsuperscript{50} Wellesley’s attention was probably directed to Elphinstone by Henry Dundas, who had promised Lady Elphinstone in 1798 that, although he never interfered in Indian appointments, he "would make known" to the new governor-general "the friendly interest he took in the young writer."\textsuperscript{51} But it is also possible that by applying to the college, Elphinstone recommended himself to Wellesley as an ambitious and intelligent young man; the sort Wellesley was keen to patronize. Wellesley may, in fact, have been misled. Elphinstone’s application probably reflected a desire for a more lively social life and the opportunity to study for its own sake rather than ambition. This view is supported by his lukewarm attitude to the Poona appointment. His friend Edward Strachey was offered the position of secretary to Colonel Kirkpatrick, who had been appointed to succeed Colonel William Palmer, and Elphinstone was to be his assistant. Strachey was reluctant to accept, because he was afraid that he would have "less leisure at Poona than here." Elphinstone advised him to discuss the job with Kirkpatrick, "and if he should say that it would employ the assistant constantly, the offer ought to be rejected."\textsuperscript{52}

Strachey, like Elphinstone, was well-connected. His father, Henry Strachey, had been in India from 1764 to 1767 as private secretary to Robert Clive, reputedly accumulating £18,000 during three years. Clive’s interest enabled him to enter parliament in 1768, and he remained a member of parliament, with close ties with the East India Company and holding a succession of important government offices, until his retirement in 1807. He married Clive’s first cousin, Jane Kelsall, and became guardian to Clive’s son after his suicide.\textsuperscript{53} Henry Strachey’s ward, the second Lord Clive, was governor of Madras at the time Edward Strachey and Elphinstone were deliberating about Poona. Their dilettante attitude to well-paid appointments which would set them securely on the

\textsuperscript{50} Cotton, Elphinstone, p. 22.


\textsuperscript{52} Elphinstone, journal, 23 Jan. 1801, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 22 and Cotton, Elphinstone, p. 22.

path to promotion in the political service would have been incomprehensible to less privileged Company employees.

A serious illness prevented Kirkpatrick from taking up the appointment at Poona and, in May 1801, Malcolm was told by Henry Wellesley that he (Malcolm) might be appointed instead. But in the end, Malcolm was made temporary private secretary to the governor-general and Barry Close went to Poona. The delay in choosing a new resident at the peshwa's court meant there was no urgency for Elphinstone and Strachey to reach their post. Although they left Calcutta in March 1801, with an entourage of one hundred and fifty servants, eight elephants, eleven camels, four horses and ten bullocks, they took nearly a year on the journey. They followed a circuitous route and made many lengthy stops along the way but, while travelling, Elphinstone did prepare himself for his new duties by adding the Maratha language to the list of subjects he was studying. As junior residency appointments were the rung above the College on the ladder to full membership in British India's ruling elite, Wellesley expected residents to observe the intellectual attributes of their staff and to report on "any defect of inclination or abilities on their part." If they performed satisfactorily, however, they were assured of steady advancement.

The Poona residency was an important diplomatic post because, after the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan, the Maratha states were expected to provide the only serious threat to the security — or opposition to the expansion — of the Company's territories. Elphinstone's journal entries from Poona mention continuous negotiations with the different Maratha rulers that were intended by Wellesley to further his policy of establishing British military supremacy throughout the subcontinent. The peshwa of Poona ruled one of the five main Hindu states that made up what

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54 H. Wellesley to Malcolm, 19 May 1801, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 1:152.

55 Sanders, Strachey Family, p. 112 and Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 30.

56 Wellesley to Close, 1799, quoted in Fisher, Residency, pp. 415-16. This letter referred to three young men appointed to the residency at Mysore, not to Strachey and Elphinstone.

the British called the Maratha confederacy. Under the titular over-lordship of the raja of Satara, the peshwa had been, by tradition and power, the dominant member of the five but, when Elphinstone arrived in Poona early in 1802, Daulat Rao Sindhia of Gwalior was the most formidable. He controlled Delhi, and the no longer powerful Mughul emperor, and was dominating the present peshwa, Baji Rao II. He himself, however, was being challenged by Jeshwant Rao Holkar of Indore, who controlled little territory but could bring a large army of irregular troops into the field. The gaekwar of Baroda was closely allied with the British but the intentions of the raja of Berar, who might be important strategically, because his lands lay between Bengal and the Company's east coast territories, the Circars, were unpredictable.

Under the system of subsidiary alliances that Wellesley favoured to achieve his foreign policy objectives with the Indian states, the British were paid for supplying troops and protection to their allies in cash or, preferably, by the cession of revenue producing territory. The Company pledged non-interference in the ally's internal affairs but controlled its foreign relations. Wellesley had negotiated such a treaty with Hyderabad in 1800, and he argued that a similar arrangement with the peshwa would enable him to regulate the relations between the different Maratha states as well as those between Britain and Poona. The Maratha princes, however, were well aware that this type of an alliance meant the end of independence. The peshwa, therefore, held Wellesley at bay until his position within the Maratha confederacy had deteriorated to the point at which he had to have British help to retain his throne. In October 1802 his forces, together with Sindhia's, were defeated by Holkar's army outside the walls of Poona. Compelled to seek refuge in British territory, Baji Rao II was induced to accept a subsidiary alliance the terms of which were defined on 31 December in the treaty of Bassein. Arthur Wellesley escorted the peshwa back to Poona and re-established him on the throne in May 1803, while approaches were made to Sindhia and the raja

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of Berar to obtain their approval of the treaty.

According to U.N. Chakravorty, who cites Maratha sources, Sindhia objected to the treaty on the ground that, although the peshwa was the chief of the Maratha confederacy and his decision was binding on the other members, he was obliged by accepted usage to consult Sindhia, Holkar and the raja of Berar on all matters as important as treaties and war. The peshwa had not adhered to the convention because he had made the treaty under compulsion. The Maratha leaders wished to settle their internal disputes without British intervention and to free the peshwa from British tutelage. Sindhia and the raja of Berar and their armies came together, close to the territories of the nizam of Hyderabad, who was under British protection. Colonel John Collins, the resident at Sindhia’s court, delivered two ultimatums directing the princes to comply with the terms of the treaty of Bassein, among other demands, and to withdraw and separate their forces or face war. The Maratha princes procrastinated and war began on 6 August 1803.

At the beginning of February 1803, Malcolm had been appointed resident at Mysore. Almost immediately, however, he was instructed to join Arthur Wellesley’s army as the governor-general’s confidential agent and he accompanied Wellesley on his march to Poona to reinstate the peshwa. Malcolm, who was in poor health, remained at Poona, however, when Wellesley and the army moved north to confront Sindhia and the raja of Berar, and he now met Elphinstone for the first time. Malcolm returned to the army in July but, by the time war broke out a month later, he was again too ill to go on campaign. When he left for Bombay to recuperate, he recommended that

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60 Chakravorty, Anglo-Maratha Relations, pp. 29-30 and Chap. 2. See also A.S. Bennell, "The Anglo-Maratha Confrontation of June and July 1803.” Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (October, 1962): 107-31. Bennell argues that, owing to the June and July peak of the monsoon season in the northern Deccan, it was in the interests of Sindhia and the raja of Berar to delay action against the Britis, until the autumn while it was in Arthur Wellesley’s interest to fight while Maratha mobility was hindered by flooded rivers. The Maratha princes stalled for time until the end of July when they suggested that both their forces and Wellesley’s should withdraw to their “usual stations.” This was unacceptable to Wellesley. In a statement justifying the war, apparently prepared by Malcolm, it was claimed that the Marathas had demanded British withdrawal to Madras, Seringapatam and Bombay while Sindhia and the raja of Berar proposed to remain on the border with Hyderabad. A. Wellesley to Daulat Rao Sindhia, (translation) 6 Aug. 1803, Wellesley, Despatches, Treaties and other Papers, (ed. Owen), p. 341.

Elphinstone should replace him.

Whether Malcolm was impressed with Elphinstone's knowledge and ability, or whether he merely thought it politic to do a service for a very well-connected young man, is impossible to say, but Malcolm's misfortune — and patronage — gave Elphinstone an invaluable opportunity. He would not have been able to grasp it, however, despite his connections, had he not been a reasonably proficient linguist with some knowledge of Maratha affairs. Arthur Wellesley employed him in intelligence and as an interpreter; he was as yet too inexperienced in diplomacy to assume Malcolm's political role. Elphinstone distrusted his linguistic abilities — he knew little Hindi and when dealing with Marathas, could not "readily understand all that is said to me, much less say all that I ought to express... I even find a difficulty with Deccanee Mussulmans." He appears to have satisfied Arthur Wellesley, however, and, despite his civilian status, rode with him at the battle of Assaye, charged with the cavalry at Argaum and mounted the breach with the storming party at the siege of Gawilgarh: martial exploits emphasised by Elphinstone's nineteenth-century biographers.

The taking of Gawilgarh in December 1803 brought the war against Sindhia and Berar to a close. Malcolm returned to camp the following day, disappointed to have missed the final action but ready to join in the negotiations for peace. That same night Elphinstone dictated the treaty with Berar to his Persian writers and, the following morning, Malcolm "looked over the Persian of the treaty," which had been dictated at such speed that Elphinstone feared the quality of his Persian "must be infamous." The two men then breakfasted together and discussed Elphinstone's future prospects. There were openings at both the residency at Nagpur and with the resident at Sindhia's court and Lord Wellesley had indicated that Elphinstone might choose "what situation [he] wishes

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63 Cotton, Elphinstone, pp. 37: 40: 41-2. See Randolf G.S. Cooper, "Wellington and the Marathas in 1803," International History Review, 11, (1989): 31-8 for an analysis of the battles of Assaye and Argaum. Cooper argues that the Maratha armies were more sophisticated than they are usually given credit for but suffered from their lack of an efficient officer corps.

to fill. Arthur Wellesley told Elphinstone to choose "with a view to the speediest succession to the chief situation," pointing out that Josiah Webbe, technically resident at Nagpur although he had not taken up the appointment, would soon move on, and that Collins would not be returning to Sindhia’s court, and would be replaced by someone from Bengal. Both Arthur Wellesley and Malcolm argued that Nagpur would be most advantageous for Elphinstone. In the political line promotion by seniority was generally accepted, if not a fixed rule, and by placing Elphinstone as first assistant at Nagpur, Malcolm and Arthur Wellesley made sure that he would be first in line to succeed Webbe.

In a private letter, Elphinstone confesses that he hated the prospect of Nagpur: "I begin to wish for idleness, society, and ladies; and I dread being stationed long at a place where I shall be so solitary," but he stresses Malcolm’s kindness and emphasises his obligation to him for arranging his position with Arthur Wellesley’s army. Malcolm had been instrumental in obtaining two career-building appointments for Elphinstone and one, possibly two, for Munro.

After Elphinstone’s departure for Nagpur, Malcolm was sent to replace Collins at Sindhia’s court to conclude the negotiations for peace, a subsidiary alliance and the settlement of the status of Gwalior and Gohud, possessions claimed by both Sindhia and a minor Maratha chief. The peace negotiations were relatively straightforward and the treaty of Bhurampur, for which Malcolm gained much credit, was signed at the end of February. The issue of Gwalior and Gohud, however, was more complex and Malcolm got into difficulties. He believed that the fortress of Gwalior was rightfully Sindhia’s and, for reasons of principle as well as policy, should be returned to him.

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68 For the terms of the treaty of Bhurampur, 27 Feb. 1804, WD, 3: 156-63. A. Wellesley corresponded frequently with Malcolm during the course, and in the immediate aftermath of, the negotiations. See 1 Jan. 1804 to 13 March 1804, WD, 3: 20-140, passim.
Wellesley, for reasons of policy, wished to keep it. Malcolm was severely censured; Major Merrick Shawe, Wellesley's private secretary, informed Malcolm that

Your having shown a great disposition to admit the justice of Sindhia's right (claim) to Gwalior and Gohud is likely, Lord Wellesley thinks, to give his enemies in Leadenhall-street room to found an accusation against Lord Wellesley of injustice and rapacity in insisting upon retaining these possessions contrary to the opinion of the resident.

Malcolm was supported by Arthur Wellesley. Shortly before the issue of Gwalior became controversial, Arthur told Malcolm, self-righteously: "I would sacrifice Gwalior, or every frontier of India, ten times over, in order to preserve our credit for scrupulous good faith, and the advantages and honor we gained by the late war and the peace." After Malcolm had been reprimanded by the governor-general, Arthur told his brother Henry that Sindhia deeply resented the Company's retention of Gwalior "and the misfortune is that, between ourselves, I think we are in the wrong...I differ with the governor-general both as to the right and policy of keeping this fort." He went on to complain that the system of moderation and conciliation he had followed in making the peace treaties, "which had been so highly approved and extolled," had been abandoned. "Our enemies are

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69 See A. Wellesley to Malcolm, 29 March, 30 March, 1 April and 22 May 1804 for A. Wellesley's sympathy for Malcolm's position. WD, 3: 298-9. See Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 262-87 for Malcolm's perspective on the Gwalior controversy. Chakravorty argues that the situation was confused for Malcolm by the fact that General Lake, commander-in-chief, India, had concluded a separate agreement about Gwalior and Gohud with one of Sindhia's feudatories, Ambaji Ingles, and that A. Wellesley took three different lines on the issue when writing to Sindhia, Malcolm and the governor-general. Chakravorty, Anglo-Maratha Relations, Chap. 3.


72 Wellesley to Malcolm, 14 March 1804, WSD, 3: 166.
much disgusted, and complain...of our want of faith." Arthur concluded by observing that someone was needed at Calcutta with the courage to speak his mind to the governor-general. "Since you and Malcolm have left him, there is nobody about him with the capacity to understand these subjects, who has nerves to discuss them with him, and to oppose his sentiments when he is wrong." Malcolm's difficulties in the Gwalior contretemps stemmed from the fact that he was in closer communication with Arthur, and in closer accord with Arthur's views on policy, than with those of the governor-general. As the Supreme government's representative at Sindhia's court, however, he was expected to carry out the policies of the governor-general-in-council, not the policies he and Arthur Wellesley preferred. Malcolm's pursuit of patronage has given him a reputation for sycophancy but, over the Gwalior issue and in Arthur Wellesley's opinion, at least at this stage of his career, he was able and willing to stand up to his superiors.

Wellesley resigned the governor-generalship in 1805, pre-empting his recall by a Home government alarmed and angry at the costs of his wars, but his breach with Malcolm was settled before he left India. He was succeeded by Cornwallis, who died two months after arriving in India, and then by Sir George Barlow, who, as senior member of the Bengal council, became acting governor-general until Lord Minto arrived from Britain in June 1807. The Company was still at war with Holkar in northern India, and Malcolm was employed as political agent with Lord Lake's army which was pushing Holkar's forces into Sikh territory in the Punjab. While engaged in negotiations with Holkar, Sindhia and some of the Sikh chiefs, Malcolm took the opportunity to obtain information on Sikh history, religion and government. At first he intended to use it for a paper to be published in *Asiatic Researches*, the journal of the Asiatic Society, but he changed his mind and

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73 A. Wellesley to H. Wellesley, 13 May 1804, WSD, 4: 383-6.


published it later in book form under the title Sketch of the Sikhs. Although he hoped the work would be an improvement on the existing and inadequate histories of the Sikhs, he nevertheless saw it as only a preliminary study which would, perhaps, stimulate and provide a foundation for a more comprehensive work by someone "with more leisure." G. Khurana states that although the book is sometimes inaccurate, it is more profound than three earlier British works on the subject and is particularly valuable on Sikh institutions and society. It enhanced the knowledge of Malcolm's contemporaries and had considerable influence on later historians of the Sikhs.76

Barlow accepted the terms for peace negotiated with both Sindhia and Holkar by Lake and Malcolm, but added "declaratory articles" which they felt reflected badly on British good faith.77 Lake withdrew from the negotiations and Malcolm soon returned to Mysore. Malcolm has been represented by M.E. Yapp as a poor diplomatist, whose negotiations with the Marathas were criticized by Wellesley and later by Hastings. He claims that Malcolm was unable to estimate the weaknesses of his adversaries, gave way on important points and tried to buy agreements in an unsuccessful attempt to disguise the truth that he was a poor bargainer.78 During the Wellesley régime, however, Malcolm was merely following custom; there was money allocated in the budget for what were in reality bribes. Arthur Wellesley claimed that it was impossible to do business at a Maratha court without buying help. He told Close that as the British must have accurate information about everything that happened at the peshwa's court, he should "forthwith...pay Ragonaut Rao," the peshwa's minister, to provide it.79 Elphinstone at Nagpur paid similar pensions to ministers of the raja of Berar.


77 Editor's introduction, Malcolm, Political History, 1: xxii; Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 363. Chakravorty, Anglo-Maratha Relations, provides details of Malcolm's role in the diplomatic and military manoeuvring that took place between the Company and the Marathas between 1804 and 1806 and the change of Company policy under Cornwallis and Barlow. See Chap. 4.

78 Yapp, Strategies, p. 53.

In his differences with both Wellesley and Barlow, Malcolm claimed to adhere to the principle that trust and incentive were better methods of achieving political objectives than force — an approach later described with little enthusiasm by Elphinstone as Malcolm's "confidence system." One of Malcolm's outstanding talents, however, was an ability to provide a broad philosophical context for issues that were attracting general attention, and he could have justified his reliance on the principles of trust and sympathy as an approach to diplomacy by a reference to the precepts of contemporary moral philosophy. The two qualities were regarded as more important to the successful conduct of formal as well as informal social relationships than laws.

Malcolm returned in March 1807 to his post as resident at Mysore, intending to "draw my salary for eighteen months" and then return to Britain. When Minto arrived at Madras in June on his way to Calcutta, Malcolm, who was about to get married, did not go to meet him. He did, however, write to Minto's son, John Elliot, who had been a Company writer since 1803 but was now private secretary to his father. He explained that as his services had been ignored by the Home government, owing to his "crime of doing my duty under Lord Wellesley," he now intended to make "the sordid motive of adding a few rupees more to my fortune" his guiding principle before returning home. He added that, although he was still ambitious, India was not the place to look for fame. Lord Minto himself replied to the lament, thanking him for his kindness to his son and explaining that, had it not been for Malcolm's imminent marriage, he would have invited him to Madras to consult him "on the most important branches of our public affairs."

On July 1807, Malcolm married Charlotte Campbell, the daughter of Alexander Campbell,
a colonel in the Crown army. A publicly more momentous contract was signed the same week by the emperors of France and Russia at Tilsit. This alliance, in conjunction with the arrival of a French military mission in Persia, raised again the spectre of an overland invasion of India by a European power and caused Minto to send missions to Persia, Afghanistan, Sind and Lahore to arrange alliances aimed at protecting the north-west approaches to British India. Much to Malcolm’s indignation, Sir Harford Jones, formerly the resident at Baghdad, was chosen by the Home government to go to Persia; Elphinstone volunteered, and was eventually selected by Minto, to go to Afghanistan.

Malcolm may have made use of his distant relationship to the Elliots to further his career interests during Minto’s governor-generalship. The friendly interest he took in John Elliot may also have been prompted by the fact that Minto was president of the board of control before he became governor-general. Malcolm had, however, sent papers to Minto before the latter was appointed to head the board of control. In 1804 he sent a memorandum, one hundred and thirty one pages long, entitled “Remarks on a Paper entitled Anonymous Observations on Maratha Affairs,” in which he defended Lord Wellesley by addressing the question “whether the governor-general has exceeded his legal authority or gone beyond the instruction under which (if his own authority was inadequate) his powers were derived.” The memorandum allowed Malcolm to show how much he knew about the problems of British Indian government. In his relations with Minto, Malcolm may also have taken advantage of Charlotte Campbell’s acquaintance with Minto’s children. Charlotte hinted in 1808 at a prior acquaintance with John and Miss Elliot when approaching Minto on behalf of the husband of one of her friends. Certainly, by contemporary standards, Malcolm had close enough connections with the Elliots to justify the papers he showered on to Minto. And he was not alone

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64 Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 386.

65 Memorandum by Malcolm, 20 Oct. 1804, NLS, Ms. 11719
in "spunging to Gibby," as Elphinstone called it.\textsuperscript{86}

As he had done on Wellesley’s arrival, Malcolm sent a long memorandum to Minto soon after the new governor-general reached India. This time, however, rather than demonstrating his by now well-known knowledge of Indian politics, he used it to promote his claims to head the Persian mission instead of Harford Jones — although he included, for Minto’s benefit, a severe critique of most of the members of the Supreme government. He was to do the same for Lord William Bentinck in 1828, although his portraits on that occasion were less brutal and, after several months of getting acquainted with his colleagues, Bentinck congratulated Malcolm on their accuracy.\textsuperscript{87}

These portraits, or, in the case of the ones sent to Minto, character assassinations, were a career-building technique, later disdained — at least publicly — by Victorian pro-consuls. As Yapp points out, however, Malcolm’s methods were common enough at the time.\textsuperscript{88} His analysis of the abilities and temperaments of Company officials was probably intended to give the impression that he had attained greater authority than the men he was describing: he was a superior looking down and assessing the staff. It also implied, however, a more intimate — or collusive — connection with the governor-general than was warranted by his position.

In Minto’s case, Malcolm’s tactics seem to have succeeded. Minto could not send Malcolm as the government of India’s envoy to Persia while Jones was there representing the Crown, but decided to send him to visit the Persian Gulf States, Iraq and southern Persia to persuade the local rulers from allying with the French. Perhaps because his conciliatory approach to the Marathas had brought official censure, Malcolm now took a different diplomatic line. Yapp is again critical; this time of the way Malcolm used "bluster and a display of force" in April 1808 to take advantage of the

\textsuperscript{86} Elphinstone to Strachey, 23 April 1808. Mss Eur., F/128/7 and Charlotte Malcolm to Minto, 6 June 1808. NLS, Ms. 11148.


\textsuperscript{88} Yapp, Strategies, p. 54.
weakness of the sultan of Muscat — his vulnerability from the sea and his dependence on Indian
trade — to force an agreement on him to suit British ends.\textsuperscript{89} Malcolm's threats against the Qajars
a month later were impotent, however, as a display of British force in the Gulf was unlikely to
impress anyone at Tehran, and his mission was aborted when the shah refused permission for him
to advance beyond Shiraz. Minto was dismayed by Malcolm's tactics. He had justified Malcolm's
mission to Robert Dundas in enthusiastic terms: "By Colonel Malcolm, if by any man living, we may
hope to detach Persia from her hostile alliance with our enemy, and if that benefit is no longer
attainable, we shall receive from Colonel Malcolm authentic information and judicious advice." But
in July Minto told Lieutenant-General George Hewett, the commander-in-chief, India, in strict
confidence, that Malcolm "has disappointed me exceedingly," while to the chief secretary, Neil
Edmonstone, he wrote: "Malcolm's proceeding at Muscat, has been affected with the original sin of
his whole system."\textsuperscript{90}

On Malcolm's return to India from Iran, Barlow, who had become governor of Madras on
Minto's arrival, requested him to deal with a mutiny of European officers in the Company army at
Masulipatam. High-handedness having failed to elicit approval in regard to Persia and Muscat,
Malcolm returned to conciliation, but the measures he used to secure the release of the commanding
officer displeased Barlow, who favoured severity, and Malcolm was replaced. Malcolm went to Persia
again at Minto's bidding in 1810 and did reach Tehran, but he became a victim of what was to
become known as the "Persian dilemma:" the question debated throughout the nineteenth century
as to whether relations with Persia should be the responsibility of Whitehall or Calcutta. Jones, with
superior Crown credentials, was already at Tehran when Malcolm arrived and it was Jones, not
Malcolm, who negotiated the expulsion of the French mission and a new treaty with the shah.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 55.

Malcolm handled the situation badly and returned to Bombay jealous, disappointed and bitter.

From 1798 until Wellesley's departure in 1805, Malcolm's career-building techniques had proved spectacularly successful and his performance of his duties had generally satisfied official expectations. The Gwalior controversy, however, foretold a period in which, although actively involved in important events, Malcolm achieved little and experienced a great deal of frustration. On his return to Bombay in November 1810, therefore, he settled down to use his pen to enhance, or perhaps restore, his reputation. He began with the Sketches of the Political History of India, a somewhat rash foray into the dangerous waters of contemporary history in defence of Wellesley's governor-generalship, published in 1811. In a pamphlet on the crisis at Masulipatam, entitled "Observations on the Disturbances in the Madras Army in 1809," Malcolm explains the grievances which led to the mutiny, dealing again with the problems of poor morale that had engaged his attention in London in 1794. At the same time he justifies his own conduct towards the mutineers on the psychological principle that men respond more favourably to a show of confidence than to rigid discipline. His most important work, however, was his History of Persia. Very little was known about Persia and Malcolm, like most Scottish historians of the time, used an examination of the past to help him form general opinions on contemporary society and government. The last five chapters of the work deal with recent Persian history, providing information and analysis useful to anyone responsible for the defence of the north-west frontier of India or trying to assess the likely effect of Russo-Persian relations on European affairs. Its publication in 1815 brought Malcolm's name to the attention of the reading public, not only in Britain but also in other parts of Europe, doing more to maintain his reputation as an authority on Persia than both of his last two diplomatic missions.

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91 See Part II, Chap. 7, below.

Malcolm was busy writing history when he receive a visit from Elphinstone on his way to take up a new position as resident at Poona in February 1811. They had last met at Arthur Wellesley's camp at Ellichpur in December 1803 and had since had many professional experiences on which to compare notes. As a diplomat Elphinstone had been less controversial than Malcolm, but his achievements were not outstanding and he, too, was worried about his future prospects.

Elphinstone had spent three years at Nagpur from December 1803 until January 1807. New to the responsibilities of a resident, at first he was carefully coached and closely supervised, in particular by Arthur Wellesley. After six months, however, Elphinstone was told that the governor-general approved the "judgement, firmness, and ability" he had shown in his dealings with the raja of Berar during the first important months after the conclusion of the war. He was told the same in December 1804, a moment of tense Anglo-Maratha relations, but he was also told that he had gone too far in threatening to withdraw from Nagpur. He was to remain there to persuade the raja to ask for a subsidiary force.

Reporting the incident to Strachey, Elphinstone remarked that "You never saw such hot water in your days...but all ended well. Lord W[ellesley] said that, though convinced of the raja's intention to renew the war, he believed him to have lately dropped his intention; so everything went smooth, and I got a kudos for "energy and firmness." Arthur Wellesley, however, saw Elphinstone's role differently. He believed that, although peace with the Marathas was precarious,

There is...a wide difference between preparation...and an actual determination to go to war at all events; and I am sorry to observe that my friend Elphinstone was not aware of that difference. Accordingly in his despatches he has almost considered war as existing, and has created an unnecessary alarm, which will be the cause of an enormous expense.

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93 Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 15 June 1804, ENC, p. 51.
95 Elphinstone to Strachey, 13 April 1805, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 128.
96 A. Wellesley to Agnew, 13 Jan. 1805, WSD, 4: 479-81.
Elphinstone's period at Nagpur is supposed to have attracted favourable attention to his diplomatic skills, but as Lord Wellesley was recalled in large part as a result of the excessive cost of his military ventures, Elphinstone was fortunate that Arthur Wellesley was about to leave India. He was no longer personally involved in the Company's diplomatic and military affairs or he might have issued a rebuke — although that might have been tactless as Elphinstone's Uncle William was chairman of the Company at the time.97

In January 1807, Elphinstone, who had been suffering bouts of depression and poor health during his generally uneventful years at Nagpur, received permission to go on leave to Calcutta and, for nine months, enjoyed mixed company and a more congenial social life. The Calcutta Gazette described a masquerade for three hundred people given on 11 December 1807 by Mountstuart Elphinstone, Richard Strachey, Richmond Thackeray (father of the novelist, William Thackeray) and a Mr. Perry, as one of "particular splendour, animation, gaiety, and appropriate humour."98 An entertainment on this scale can have done little to help Elphinstone to escape from debt.

During the tedious years at Nagpur Elphinstone had added international law to his studies, reading works by Grotius and Pufendorf, Barbeyrac's commentaries on Pufendorf and the contemporary works on law of R.P. Ward,99 probably with a view to preparing himself for the more interesting diplomatic appointments he hoped would come his way. After returning to Nagpur from leave in April 1808, he asked his cousin, John Adam, who by this time had some influence in the Calcutta secretariat, to try to get him appointed to one of the missions likely to be sent beyond the north-west frontier as a consequence of "the intended invasion of [India] by the French, with the assistance of the king of Persia." Elphinstone did not expect to be selected, because he thought

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97 Yapp, Strategies, p. 161; Philips, East India Company, p. 140.
99 Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 84; 166; 119; Fisher, "Indirect Rule," p. 416.
Minto had "the worst possible opinion" of him.\textsuperscript{100} According to Cotton, there were traces of "a traditionary feud" between the two Scottish families.\textsuperscript{101} If there was a feud, however, it does not seem to have prejudiced Minto against Elphinstone, for three months later he ordered him to go to Delhi to prepare for a mission to Afghanistan.

Elphinstone was pleased with this assignment, because he saw it as an opportunity to participate, albeit peripherally, in international affairs but, by the time he met Shah Shuja, the ruler of Kabul, at Peshawar in 1808, the mission's importance had declined. Napoleon's Spanish campaign removed the likelihood of a European expedition against India, while Shuja was fighting, and losing, a civil war. The Afghans treated the embassy courteously, but Elphinstone was not empowered to offer the help Shuja needed and nothing of political value emerged from their meetings. Although criticized for expense, and for some of his policy recommendations, the mission nevertheless established Elphinstone's reputation as a diplomat; he was fortunate that Minto and the authorities in India, hoping to disguise the fact that the mission had been costly and pointless, emphasised the polished manner in which the negotiations had been conducted rather than their results.

Although the diplomatic achievements of Malcolm's Persian and Elphinstone's Afghan missions were negligible, their careers benefitted from Minto's over-reaction to the French invasion scare of 1808, on account of their ability as writers. The court of directors had decreed in 1805 that "all available information on the geography and history of India should be collected."\textsuperscript{102} This dictum, which could obviously be applied to any place likely to be of interest to the Indian government, provided a superb opportunity for anyone with novel and useful information, and the ability to present it effectively, to attract the attention of the authorities. Minto, uncertain whether the danger of invasion was over and thinking, perhaps, that information — if not alliances — might

\textsuperscript{100} Elphinstone to Strachey, 23 April 1808. Mss. Eur., F/128/165.

\textsuperscript{101} Cotton, Elphinstone, p. 53.

\textsuperscript{102} Court of directors to Supreme government, 5 June 1805, quoted in Grewal, Muslim Rule in India, p. 110.
still be useful, agreed to a request from Malcolm for money to employ Persian secretaries and draughtsmen, and to cover house rent, "not exceeding 2000 Rps. a month," on the ground that the material Malcolm had collected would be useless unless "fully arranged and well-digested." Elphinstone was allowed the same privileges to work on his Afghan material. Elphinstone's Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, like Malcolm's History of Persia, made his name known to the educated public in Britain and established his reputation in government circles as a zealous, knowledgeable and cultured official; a suitable candidate for membership in British India's ruling élite.

When Elphinstone visited Malcolm in February 1811 on his way to Poona, Malcolm took him to breakfast with a fellow-Scotsman, Sir James Mackintosh, the recorder of Bombay. In his journal Mackintosh mentions that they "had an animated discussion about the importance of India to England," but unfortunately records only his own opinion that India was not of great value compared with North America or the West Indies. After a penurious and rather irresponsible start in life, Mackintosh had first made a name for himself through his ability as a writer and, during his six years in India, he was responsible for encouraging a number of literary projects on Asian subjects. Elphinstone's work on Afghanistan was one of them.

No mention was made of literary projects when Malcolm visited Elphinstone at Poona the following May for some hog-hunting, but in October, Elphinstone told Malcolm that he had decided to write a book on Afghanistan. Until this moment, Elphinstone had thought only of publishing his official report "with additions from my journal and papers, and from the few inquiries I intended still to have pursued," but a letter from Mackintosh encouraging him "to publish on the Afghans" seems

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103 Malcolm to Edmonstone, 5 March 1811, NL.S, Ms. 11717 and Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 60n.
to have convinced him to be more ambitious. He expanded the scope of his subject and the quantity of his research. Malcolm had tried to persuade Elphinstone to write a history of India instead, for he had planned to deal with the Afghans, Baluchis and Uzbegs as adjuncts to his Persian history. Elphinstone replied that Persia was so vast a subject that Malcolm would be better to leave him to "fill up the blank between Persia and India," but whatever happened they must avoid duplication, or "I shall spoil your work and waste my trouble (and no small trouble it is writing quires of paper, let alone writing for the public; while I might be hunting [or] hawking, ... with much more profit both to myself and the public.)"\(^{108}\)

Elphinstone found that he enjoyed research, taking pleasure "in inquiring and in gaining knowledge of the subject of which I am to treat, and in this I go on with vigour and rapidity." But he detested composition and resented the interruptions of work and society. He voluntarily interrupted his work in January 1812, however, to spend fifteen days travelling from Poona to Bombay and back to pay a farewell visit to Malcolm, who was leaving India. The journey, he observed afterwards, had been worthwhile because his "conferences with Malcolm [should be] of great consequence to my future prospects." while his renewed acquaintance with William Erskine, Mackintosh's son-in-law and a keen orientalist, would be "of no small advantage to my literary plan."\(^{109}\)

Malcolm's advice on this occasion is not recorded, but it probably related to a project Elphinstone mentions in a letter to his sister in 1813. As resident at Poona Elphinstone held a prestigious and well-paid post in the Company's diplomatic service, but he was still impatient with the speed of his professional progress and Malcolm had suggested the idea "of pushing with the help of my uncles for some promotion which would have expedited my return [to Britain]." It was a

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109 Elphinstone, journal, 7 Feb. 1812, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 244-5.
project that failed, which Elphinstone regretted, but Malcolm, who unlike Elphinstone was always optimistic, convinced Elphinstone that it was "for the best."

The results of Elphinstone's acquaintance with William Erskine were more positive. The two men corresponded regularly while Elphinstone prepared his Afghan material for publication between 1812 and 1814, and Erskine's interest in Asian history and languages provided Elphinstone, intermittently bored and depressed, with some welcome encouragement and intellectual stimulation. Erskine himself was engaged in completing a translation of the so-called memoirs of the Mughal emperor, Babur, which John Leyden, a fellow Scot who had died recently, had been preparing. Erskine and Leyden were members of a group of Scottish orientalists, which also included Alexander Hamilton, Alexander Murray, John Crawford and Vans Kennedy, who attended Edinburgh university between 1784 and 1803 when Dugald Stewart was disseminating the doctrines of the Scottish enlightenment. Jane Rendall points out that most of the Indian research of this group was directed towards discovering the cultural evidence that would enable them to place the history of Indian civilization within the interpretive framework developed by Scotland's moral philosophers. Malcolm and Elphinstone should also be classed as members of the group. Both of them attended lectures at Edinburgh university during Stewart's time and both were influenced by Scottish thought. It was no coincidence that Malcolm was reading Hume's History of England while writing his History of Persia in 1811, or that Elphinstone was reading Adam Smith while writing about the political and social organization of the Afghans.

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110 Elphinstone to his sister Elizabeth, 6 Oct. 1813, Mss. Eur., F/88/ Box 3A5.

111 Rendall, "Scottish Orientalism", p. 45. For a discussion of Vans Kennedy's work see Grewal, Muslim Rule in India, Chap. 6.


No one in late eighteenth-century Britain chose to spend his whole or even part of his life in India, if he had any other way of advancing his own and his family's interests, because Indian service was less recognized and rewarded than public service in Britain or Europe throughout the fifty years that Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone spent in the east. A number of men, including the governors-general, were, nevertheless, able to use India to enhance their status and wealth. Lord Wellesley, who had come to India with the intention of advancing his family's interests, sought officers with a relatively high standard of education and a knowledge of Indian languages and politics as well as practical talents to carry out his policies, and for men with these qualifications, challenging opportunities became available.

Between 1798 and 1810, Malcolm was directly involved in all of the most important political events in British India. He travelled extensively between the different presidencies, throughout the Indian states, and as far afield as Tehran and Baghdad. His life was spent in professional association with members of the highest ranks of both British Indian and Indian society and, until 1805, he was the governor-general's favoured emissary and personal representative. Minto, also, was sufficiently impressed, mostly due to the stream of well-argued letters and memoranda with which Malcolm bombarded him. He sent him twice to Persia. Despite Munro's extra years and Elphinstone's superior connections, Malcolm was the most prominent of the three men at this stage in their careers owing, to a large extent, to his deliberate efforts to make the system work for him: to his indefatigable pursuit of patronage according to the usages of "old corruption," but also to his speedy adoption of newer, more bureaucratic techniques of advancement; the acquisition of the expert knowledge increasingly necessary to the government of India and an ability to write it up quickly and present it, carefully wrapped, in a philosophical package.

Malcolm left India to return to Britain in 1812 but from their first meeting in 1803 until his departure, Malcolm and Elphinstone's careers were closely inter-connected. The elder by ten years,
Malcolm helped Elphinstone to take advantage of the career-building opportunities that became available as a result of Wellesley's policies and he encouraged his literary aspirations. It is possible that Malcolm hoped Elphinstone's friendship would provide access to influential circles in Britain and India, but he also helped Munro when Munro had virtually no influential connections and before his reputation, based on merit, was established. Malcolm was the link between the three men — Elphinstone and Munro did not meet until 1818 — and he probably saw himself, with some justification, as a patron of both the others.

In contrast to Malcolm's high-profile career, Munro spent most of the years between 1792 and 1807 in remote areas of rural India, moving from district to district, village to village, all within the Madras presidency. Apart from contacts with members of his staff, most of his time was spent in the company of the cultivators, minor officials and petty chiefs who made up the overwhelming majority of the Indian population. His only contact with higher authority was by writing, and he used his reports and official correspondence to influence policy and draw attention to himself. His writings on Indian administration, however, were about to give him a great opportunity to advance his career during his long furlough in Britain.
Chapter 4

Home Leave: 1808 - 1817

What I am chiefly anxious about is, what I am to do when I go home. I have no rank in the army there...and as I am a stranger to the generous natives of your isle, I should be excluded from every other line as well as military and should have nothing to do but to lie down in a field...and look at the lark.

Thomas Munro

Home leave was both longed for and dreaded by Company servants who were, in many ways, transients in both India and Britain. Munro's administrative abilities were respected by men in the government of India; Malcolm's diplomatic service, controversial in the Company because of his association with Wellesley, was recognized by the British government with a knighthood in 1812. Like many of Malcolm's rewards, the knighthood may have owed something to Wellesley, now foreign secretary, or to Arthur Wellesley, now Lord Wellington, but it came only two months after two of his brothers, James and Pulteney, had received knighthoods for services in the navy and testified at least to the Malcolms' competency as career-builders. Even if the knighthood indicated a genuine acknowledgment of Malcolm's services, however, an Indian reputation did not solve the employment problem in Britain. Company army officers could not serve in Europe, even though Wellington thought the country's best interests would be served by allowing them to exchange into the Crown army — according to Sir John Kaye, because he wanted Munro and Malcolm to join him in Spain. Few Company officials could hope to penetrate the over-crowded patronage networks in Britain. When Malcolm mentioned his hope of becoming ambassador to Constantinople, Wellington replied that he would be considered an interloper and advised him to go back to India or to "get into parliament if you can afford it."

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1 Munro to his sister Erskine, 5 Aug 1807, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 371.

Men who had acquired money and reputation in India could present themselves as candidates for the Company directorate, but neither Munro nor Elphinstone seems to have been interested in joining the claustrophobic world of city and shipping interest politics, while Malcolm, who toyed with the idea of entering the directorate in 1826, soon abandoned it. The most popular option was to buy a country estate; a gilt-edged investment that would provide an income on which to support a wife and family and, perhaps equally important, a clearly defined status in British society. Many, however, found retirement difficult; Elphinstone spoke of "our best Indians," who, 

In the idleness and obscurity of home...look back with fondness for the country where they have been useful and distinguished, like the ghosts of Homer's heroes, who prefer the exertions of a labourer on the earth to all the listless enjoyments of Elysium.³

Munro not only disliked having nothing useful to do, he did not even like Britain very much: "It is our native land, but...so cold and dark and wet and dirty that...no fortune I think can make it comfortable." India was a "pleasanter country."⁴

For the three years of his official leave Munro spent much of his time restless, frustrated and often wishing he had never come home. After some months in Scotland, he made London his base, making frequent visits to friends and relatives in the country. He was a guest in the social world of the English gentry, so faithfully depicted by Jane Austen, where it was "a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."⁵ Munro's letters indicate that finding a wife was his top priority. He also hoped to find a patron to sponsor his nephew and ward (Daniel's orphaned son John) to a Company writership, to buy an estate and to find something worthwhile to do.⁶

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⁴ Munro to Peter Bruce, 6 Jan. 1809, Mss. Eur., F/151/12.

⁵ The opening lines of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice.

⁶ Mss. Eur., F/151/144, passim.
Although Munro was not the most eligible bachelor, he expected superior talents in a wife. He had what he called a "moderate competency," not a fortune. In 1814 he seems to have had about £50,000; enough to invest £30,000 to provide an annuity of £1000 per annum for his wife in case of his death, but not enough to buy an estate as well. He was a colonel, but in the Indian, not the Crown army; he was nearly fifty, tall and lean but intermittently quite deaf; and he had been away from "polished society" so long that his costume and manners had become eccentric, while his conversation, even the devoted Gleig had to admit, assumed at times "a character indicative of anything rather than an excess of refinement." No doubt he rectified some of these shortcomings while looking for a cultivated woman with a mind "above the common" and a pleasant disposition. He did not want to marry a philosopher, but neither did he want good looks to tempt him "into the hands of a silly wife." He seems to have shared the intellectual ideal of Scotland's moral philosophers that marriage should be founded on equality and companionship. In 1814, a month before he returned to India, Munro married Jane Campbell of Craigie in Ayrshire, who was "extremely handsome" but with whom he had the affectionate and friendly relationship he had hoped for. He did not buy an estate, but William Elphinstone provided a writership for his nephew and, most significant here, his involvement in Indian business led to a major step forward in his career — although not in the direction he wanted it to take. He returned to India in 1814 as judicial commissioner for the Madras presidency.

Munro's three-year leave had been due to end in 1811, but he requested an extension. In

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7 Munro to his sister Erskine, 5 Aug. 1807, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 370. Munro to George Brown, 29 Aug. 1805, Ms. Eur., F/151/151. Munro's finances at this time are discussed briefly in Stein, Munro, p. 140.

8 Gleig, Munro, 1: 297.

9 Munro to his sister Erskine, Ms. Eur., F/151/144.

10 Munro to his sister Erskine, quoted in Ms. Eur., F/151/144. For the philosophes on marriage see David Hume, quoted in Bryson, Man and Society, p. 181; Francis Hutcheson, cited in ibid., pp. 179, 178; see also Lehmann, John Millar, p. 219.

11 Munro, "Memorandum of the services of Sir T. Munro, written by himself," quoted in Bradshaw, Munro, Appendix, p. 220.
April 1811 he wrote to Wellington in Spain that he would not have taken another administrative post in India, had his rank entitled him to a high military command and, if he could obtain a military or political post in Spain or Portugal, he would prefer it to any appointment he might be offered in India. "There is nothing now in the world so interesting as the affairs of the Peninsula, or in which I am so desirous of having some part to play."¹² Munro rarely asked outright for professional help but this was clearly a pointed, if unsuccessful, hint. Three months later, having heard that the earl of Moira, later the marquis of Hastings, would succeed Lord Minto, he mentions his hope that the new governor-general "might be induced from his friendship for Mr. Erskine [Munro's brother-in-law] to employ me in some high diplomatic or staff situation." Nothing had happened by September, when Munro complained that he would have to return to India with the January fleet unless he found a post enabling him to stay at home for another year; "this might certainly be accomplished by any person having friends in the administration, but I doubt much that I should have even in the event of a change, sufficient interest to effect it."¹³ 1811 was not an auspicious time to be job-hunting. The Company was divided over the question whether Christian missionaries in India would provoke unrest among Indians; it was also anxious about the state of its army in the aftermath of sepoy and "white" mutinies; and it was threatened by the free trade lobby and by the infiltration of private trade interests within the directorate.¹⁴ The government was pre-occupied with the war with France. Although neither Company nor government were interested in the details of Indian administration at this time, fortunately for Munro, there were men in both groups, interested in administrative reform.

In preparation for the Company's application for the renewal of its Charter, due to come

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¹² Munro to Wellington, 26 April 1811, WSD, 7: 113.


before parliament in 1813, a committee of the House of Commons was convened to compile a report — known as The Fifth Report — on the state of the Company's government. The report determined the form taken by the parliamentary inquiry and, by the time it was distributed to members of parliament in July 1812, the assessment and collection of revenue and the provision of a justice system had become the most important subjects of discussion — subjects about which Munro knew a great deal. There were increasing doubts in both India and Britain about the efficacy of the system Cornwallis had established in Bengal and the two most active members of the House of Commons committee, Samuel Davis, resident at Benares during Elphinstone's early years and a director since 1810, and James Cumming, a member of the permanent staff at the board of control, were two of its strongest critics. Davis, who wrote the Bengal section of the report, and Cumming, who dealt with Madras, tried to construct a strong case for introducing a different revenue and judicial system into the Madras presidency. They were encouraged by the earl of Buckinghamshire, the president of the board of control, John Sullivan, a member of the board, and Thomas Wallace, assistant commissioner at the board and chairman of the House of Commons committee. Munro, who was given permission to remain in Britain, became their informal consultant. Many of the papers he wrote appear in the Appendix of the Fifth Report, attesting to their influence.

It is not clear how Munro became involved in the preparation of the Fifth Report. While in Britain he had advertised his expertise by submitting memoranda to the board of control on "Retrenchment in the Judicial Establishment (in India)" and on a "Plan for the Indian Army" and, in 1812, he responded to a request from William M'Culloch, a member of the permanent staff at India House, for a paper on the revenue systems of the Ceded Districts and the Indian states.

15 John Sullivan was nephew to Laurence Sullivan although they spelt their names differently. Philips, East India Company, p. 102n.

16 Philips, East India Company, p. 195. Stein, Munro, p. 158.

17 Munro, memorandum. Sept. 1808. NLS. Ms. 12.

18 Robert Dundas to Munro, 30 April 1810, Miss. Eur., F/151/152.
M'Culloch had been directed by the chairmen to send one of Munro's reports from the Ceded Districts to the Supreme government at Calcutta and he wanted any other papers that Munro regarded as "of paramount importance." Cumming's attention, however, had been drawn to Munro's recommendations by a series of Munro's papers — most of them published in the late nineteenth century by Sir Alexander Arbuthnot — sent to England between the late 1790s and 1807. The most important, which provided a clearly delineated alternative to the Bengal revenue collection system, was entitled "On the Relative Advantages of the Ryotwari and Zamindari Systems," but a second paper, with the title, "Trial by Panchayat," is also significant, because it contains Munro's first written recommendations on judicial matters. Both papers are dated 15 August 1807. They were written shortly before his departure from India and may be seen as representing his mature thought on the civil government of British India.

The Company's administrative system was only one of many subjects examined by the parliamentary inquiry of 1813, and many people were more interested in issues such as the promotion of exports to India, free trade and missionaries. Both Malcolm and Munro gave evidence as expert witnesses on all these issues, but some discretion was necessary. Malcolm told Elphinstone many years later that his warnings of the danger "of over-zeal in propagating Christianity in India" had probably, among other "sins," offended Charles Grant, who opposed his promotion because of it. Grant (1746-1823) came from a desperately poor Scottish Highland family which had taken part in the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. He had, however, received a good education of the type available to the Scottish gentry and professional classes which had helped him to build a highly successful Indian career. It had concluded with an appointment from Cornwallis to reform the

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20 MM, 1: 92-101; 2: 3-6. See Beagles, Guno. Munro, pp. 88-91 on Cumming's interest in Munro's work.


Company's commercial department. After retiring to Britain in 1790, he became a dominant figure at India House, a member of parliament and a leader of the Evangelical Clapham Sect. At the time of the charter renewal in 1813, Grant was one of the most powerful members of the directorate, but he denied having obstructed Malcolm's advancement. Munro, was more cautious about missionaries. He was also careful to keep his private enthusiasm for the principles of Free Trade to himself and the deep impression he made at the parliamentary hearings helped persuade the directorate to authorize a trial of his administrative methods in Madras presidency, to be carried out under his direction. According to an anonymous utilitarian pamphlet published in 1831, which compared Munro and Malcolm's views on the government of India, unfavourably, with those of Elphinstone, Munro's evidence before the House of Commons in 1813 "is understood to have materially contributed" to his attainment of the governorship of Madras.

The differences between the revenue and judicial systems introduced by Cornwallis in Bengal and Munro's recommendations derived partly from different local customs but also, perhaps more importantly, from different principles. Broadly speaking, under the Bengal system, which is sometimes, misleadingly, referred to as the zamindari system, revenue was collected by zamindars — local landholders — who, under Mughal rule, had been given the right to a percentage of the revenue collected from their holdings in return for collecting the rest on behalf of the Mughal authorities. They were permitted to administer justice in their districts which gave support to their authority as revenue collectors and, as middle-men, they handled most of the contacts between the state and the cultivators (the ryots). Under Cornwallis, a settlement was made which permanently

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23 Embree, Charles Grant, pp. 7-8.

24 Grant to unnamed correspondent, 14 Oct. 1810, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 449n.

25 Munro to Kirkman Finlay, 15 Aug. 1825 and 10 May 1827, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 427-9, 434-5.

26 Anonymous, Opinions of Mountstuart Elphinstone upon some of the Leading Questions Connected with the Government of British India — Compared to those of Sir Thomas Munro and Sir John Malcolm, as taken from their Evidence before Parliament, By the Author of "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Stationary Condition of India. Political Tracts No.3. (London: 1831), p. 3; see also Philips, East India Company, pp. 202-3.
fixed the revenue assessment in the hope that the zamindars would be encouraged to take an
interest in agricultural improvement if they shared in the benefits of increased production. But their
judicial duties were abolished in the interests of separating executive and judicial powers and were
replaced by a quasi-British system of law courts. These administered what was understood to be
Muslim law, but in a form incomprehensible to most Indians.

It was Munro’s intention that revenue assessment and collection and the judicial system
should be connected and based on an established system known as ryotwari. The term referred to
a land-tenure system in which, in principle, numerous small peasant landholders paid revenue,
according to long-established methods of assessment, directly to a state revenue collector (amildar).
Law was enforced by local officials including the amildar and by the use of local juries (panchayats).
Ryotwari was a type of land tenure and revenue collection system that seems to have been widely,
although not exclusively practised throughout south India. Munro, who believed that to be effective,
laws and legal forms should be rooted in the customs, assumptions and values of a society, even if
they were not always just according to western notions, advocated following traditional Indian legal
practice, carefully supervised by local British revenue collectors, who would be given the powers of
a magistrate.

The East India Company’s decision in 1813 to allow Munro to introduce his system in the
Madras presidency was by no means unanimous, and the main objections of those opposed to it were
presented in two “official dissents” submitted by John Hudleston, a prominent director. Hudleston
argued that Munro’s recommendations merely described what he had done in the Ceded Districts.
They were not a system at all and should have carried no more weight than those of Madras officials
who either supported the Bengal system or suggested other alternatives to it. He claimed that
Munro’s appointment as commissioner represented a usurpation of the powers of the directorate
by the board of control and that Munro, a soldier, should not be appointed as a judicial
commissioner nor should civilian members of the Madras government be expected to serve under
him. Evidence from the period 1800 to 1807 indicates that the members of the board of revenue at Madras, at least, recognized Munro’s recommendations as not merely descriptive but as a carefully thought out administrative system, based on ideas about political economy, and his recommendations, no doubt, carried weight because his work had been highly, frequently and officially, praised. Hudleston’s complaints of board of control interference and the preferential employment of soldiers in civilian positions, however, were more justified. Munro’s writings from 1813 include well-developed arguments to support the attempt by Buckinghamshire to change the way India was governed and to give the board of control greater influence on policy formation. Surprisingly, perhaps, Munro’s close association with Buckinghamshire and the board of control did not prevent him from converting a number of Company directors to his way of thinking.

The complex process which led to the decision for administrative reform would never have taken place had there not been increasingly widespread doubts about the principles on which the Cornwallis system was based as well as about its efficiency. The Company was also frustrated with the permanent nature of the Cornwallis settlement which seemed to prevent it from increasing its revenues. Munro’s system was not initially developed as an alternative to Cornwallis’s; its basic form was defined by Munro and Read in the Baramahal at the time that Cornwallis introduced his regulations in Bengal. But the system was ready, spelled out in Munro’s reports, and Munro was ready, to be consulted and to proselytize, at just the right moment.

Cumming, who was, perhaps, Munro’s most dedicated disciple, described him as having had

27 Stein, Munro, pp. 170-1.
29 Stein, Munro, p. 163. The papers written by Munro on Indian matters in 1813 are to be found in Mss. Eur., F/151/125.
30 Beaglehole argues that the Home government, knowing little of the problems of administering a vast foreign territory, endorsed Munro’s system for its apparent superiority in unearthing Indian resources, not from a preference for its principles. Beaglehole, Munro, pp. 95; 93.
31 Beaglehole, Munro, p. 87.
closer contact with Indians and greater opportunities for examining their institutions "than any other person," and as possessing an "uncommon knowledge of every subject connected with Indian government." Munro's reports not only made Indian systems appear viable, they also had the inestimable advantage of being easy to understand. As Beaglehole describes them, they were unusually well-written and relatively brief. Munro did not initiate the movement in London for administrative reform that took place between 1810 and 1814 but, once it was under way, his written submissions and personal evidence provided it with the principled base, progressive direction and economic justification necessary to overcome most of the opposition. It finally established Munro as a member of British India's ruling élite.

Munro and Malcolm probably met during the parliamentary hearings in April 1813 and they were together in Buckinghamshire's office, early in 1814, when Malcolm witnessed the agreement between Munro and Buckinghamshire about the allowances Munro would receive as judicial commissioner. When, by 1818, Munro had not received his full remuneration and could not supply a written contract to prove his claims, Malcolm dealt with the matter for him at Calcutta before Munro had even raised the issue; a service much appreciated. The two men do not seem to have met often in Britain, however, possibly because Malcolm moved in higher social circles.

Malcolm had returned from India in July 1812 and settled his family in a country house in Hertfordshire. He seems to have liked life in Britain well enough but, like Munro, was restless and spent much of his time on visits and in London. He was consulted, mainly on military matters, by the parliamentary committees preparing for the charter renewal and wrote a long paper for Buckinghamshire recommending reforms to the Company's army, reiterating many of the things he had said in 1794 and in his pamphlet on the "white" mutiny, but which had still received no official

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32 Ibid., p. 91.
33 Munro to Malcolm, 10 June 1818, Gleig, Munro, 3: 257.
attention. He stayed twice with Buckinghamshire and his family, visited Lady Minto, the governor-general’s wife, in Scotland and became friends with Walter Scott, who described him to a close friend as "the Persian envoy,...the poet, the warrior, the polite man, and the Borderer. He is really a fine fellow...I like his frankness and his sound ideas on morality and policy." Malcolm had acquired a family connection with the Elphinstones through his brother Pulteney’s marriage in 1809 to William Elphinstone’s daughter, and he remained on terms of friendship with Wellesley, whom he visited in Ireland, and with Arthur Wellesley, the duke of Wellington by the end of Malcolm’s furlough, who was rapidly becoming famous throughout Europe.

Wellington invited Malcolm to join him at Paris during the exhilarating summer months after the battle of Waterloo in 1815. He was introduced to the emperor of Austria and the czar of Russia, who knew of his Persian experience. He dined with distinguished diplomats and, as a result of the publication of his History of Persia in July 1815, was warmly received in French literary circles and met some of France’s most notable oriental scholars. Mackintosh told Malcolm that Lord Grenville, who had previously held "some prejudices" against Malcolm owing to the tone of Malcolm’s evidence before the House of Lords on the Company charter renewal, was "one of the warmest panegyrists of your history of Persia...he spoke of it with a warmth which is often,...in his feelings, but very seldom in his language." Elphinstone, on reading Malcolm’s History, wrote to a friend in what seems to be mild surprise, that "Malcolm’s ‘History’ is grave, sober, judicious, philosophical. Not a trace of Jack Malcolm in it. It seems really a work of great merit." Malcolm arranged for the translation of the History into French and sent an original English presentation

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34 Notes, Malcolm for Buckinghamshire, summer 1813, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 77-8.
36 Malcolm, journal, extracts 24 July to 11 Sept. 1815, provide an account of Malcolm’s French visit. Quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 100-130.
38 Elphinstone to Captain Close, 8 June 1816, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 317.
copy of his work to the czar. Malcolm’s social success is evident in the invitations he received to many important functions.

In 1815 Malcolm became a KCB and, a year later, a Doctor of Letters at Oxford. His acquaintances were a “who’s who” of eminent European society, yet social prominence failed to gain him office in either India or Britain. He had hoped that the governorship of Bombay or Madras might be offered to him but, when they went to political appointees whose claims and qualifications were, he believed, inferior to his own, he decided to return to India. “High on the list of lieutenant-colonels,” he could expect quickly to obtain “his regiment.” Short of money, disappointed and tired of being idle, he left his young family in England — he now had five children to support — and in October 1816, departed for Madras.

Britain offered little to men who had achieved high rank and carried out difficult and important duties in India. Access to public life was difficult. They were rarely members of Britain’s ruling groups, and men who might have patronized them in India had clients with more pressing claims in Britain. Elphinstone, who took no home leave because it would have lengthened the time required to save enough money for retirement, could have entered political or business life in Britain, had he returned with Malcolm in 1812 with the same amount of money as Munro. His uncles, William Elphinstone and Lord Keith, were influential in Britain as well as India. His brother John, Lord Elphinstone since their father’s death in 1794, had been appointed aide-de-camp to the duke of York, commander-in-chief of the British army, while still in his mid-twenties, and had been a Scottish representative peer since 1806 and lord-lieutenant of Dumbarton since 1811. Another brother, Charles, a naval officer who had attained the rank of rear-admiral at the age of thirty-eight,

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was a member of parliament for Stirling. If Munro had liked Britain better and found a wife sooner, he might have scraped enough money together to buy a small estate and settled to life as an improving landlord. He had acquired land and experimented in growing fruit in the Baramahal and in the Ceded Districts and his scientific and horticultural interests were well known at Madras. He was fortunate, however, to be in Britain while the Home government was concerned with administrative reform — his area of expertise — rather than with foreign policy and army reform. Malcolm, on the other hand, who was a diplomat, had influential friends but could obtain no suitable appointment. But by the time he arrived back at Madras in March 1817, foreign relations and security were attracting much attention in India. In April 1817, Elphinstone told William Elphinstone that Malcolm was awaiting a summons to Calcutta "where his talents will be greatly required at this moment, and where I have no doubt he will be a welcome guest." 

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41 Fraser, Elphinstone Family Book. For a short "memoir" of John, Twelfth Lord Elphinstone, see 1: 130-6, and for Charles Elphinstone see 1: 305-6.

42 Munro to his sister Erskine, 30 June 1799; Webbe to Munro and enclosure, Clive to Webbe, 27 Sept. 1800; Munro to his mother, 20 Aug. 1804, quoted in Gieig, Munro, 1: 228, 309-10, 355-6.

43 Elphinstone to William Elphinstone, 2 April 1817, quoted in Fraser, Elphinstone Family Book, 2: 30.
Chapter 5

Competition and Co-operation: 1812 - 1819

Acting in countries remote from each other, and whose inhabitants differ in language and customs as much as the nations of Europe, some [Company servants] rise to the exercise of almost kingly rule. 

John Malcolm

Between 1812 and 1819 Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone all played important roles in Indian government but, while Munro and Elphinstone's professional stature grew, Malcolm's career appears to have reached a plateau. On his return to India in 1817 he was promoted in the army, but his important post as the governor-general's political agent was similar to posts he had held under Wellesley and Minto. It was not a step up.

The careers of the three men came into direct conflict for the first time during the last three years of this period. That their friendship survived was due partly to mutual respect and liking; partly to shared views on policy that made them natural allies. Although they served in different theatres during the Third Maratha War (1817-18), Malcolm in the north against the Pindaris and Holkar, Elphinstone against the peshwa in central Maharashtra, and Munro against the peshwa's southern feudatories, they were all concerned with the political aspects of the war and with the arrangements to be made for the civil administration of the conquered territories. Munro and Elphinstone were dominant figures in their areas while Malcolm, who knew much more about India than the marquis of Hastings and the commander-in-chief in the Deccan, Sir Thomas Hislop, had considerable influence on the conduct of affairs further north.

Malcolm wrote regularly to both Munro and Elphinstone throughout 1817 and 1818, and Munro and Elphinstone exchanged frequent letters from late in 1817 about the campaign against the peshwa. Although aware of each other's accomplishments, partly through their link with

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1 Malcolm, Political History, 2: 61.
Malcolm, Munro and Elphinstone only met for the first time in May 1818. It is from this period, however, that the ideas shared by the three men begin to appear as a school of thought on the governance of British India.

While Munro and Malcolm were on leave in Britain, Elphinstone lived quietly at Poona, finishing his book on the Afghans, reading, hunting and carrying out his duties as resident. Soon after his arrival in May 1811, the Supreme government asked him for a comprehensive report on the history and legal status of the relationship between the peshwa and his southern jagirdars — "great feudatories" — and to recommend a policy for settling the disputes which were destabilizing central and western India and threatening the security of the Company's territories. According to T.E. Colebrooke, Elphinstone was "especially selected for this duty."2

In an untitled paper remarkable for its detailed information and clarity of expression, Elphinstone demonstrates his expert knowledge of Maratha history, law and politics. He discusses all the questions — ethical as well as practical — that the government should take into consideration, and concludes by recommending the precise terms of a settlement. The problem, Elphinstone believes, is that Baji Rao II is following a "regular plan" to remove "everything that [is] great in his territories, and to draw the whole part of the state into his own hands."3 Although the British doubted the peshwa's ability to do this, any exercise in state-building and the centralization of power alarmed them.

The masterly presentation was Elphinstone's work but the content of the paper, as Elphinstone made clear, owed much to the labours of others. Arthur Wellesley, the local military commander, Barry Close, resident at Poona, and Edward Strachey, his assistant, had first analyzed the relationship between the peshwa and his jagirdars when Elphinstone was serving his apprenticeship in Maratha affairs under their supervision at Poona in 1802 and 1803. In his

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2 Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 248.

3 Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 26 Oct. 1811, PRC, 12: 80-110; see p. 86.
report, Elphinstone cites the opinions of Close and Wellesley and echoes their policy: a threat of military force to back demands that both sides maintain what British research has identified as their legal relationship. The governor-general, Lord Minto, observed that Elphinstone "discussed the question of policy with so much force and ability and the arguments in support of it have been urged by authorities so respectable and competent [Wellesley and Close], that little is left to be added to the subject." In March 1812, Elphinstone was given "carte blanche for all the disposable force of the Deccan" to impose a settlement. The threat of force, however, was generally sufficient to induce the jagirdars to co-operate and, by November, Elphinstone was able to report that the settlement of the peshwa's southern territory was "in such forwardness" that the Company troops could return to their stations.

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The following year the peshwa, pleased with the way the Company had solved this problem, requested British arbitration to settle long-standing differences with Baroda and, in February 1814, a Barodan envoy, Gangadhar Shastri, visited Poona under a British guarantee of protection. Little had been achieved, however, when the envoy was murdered by hired assassins in July 1815 while Elphinstone, who was technically the guarantor of his safety, was away visiting the caves at Ellora. Elphinstone's account of the incident, which is virtually the only one, blames the murder on Trimbakji Danglia, the peshwa's favourite. It has been suggested that the evidence against Trimbakji was not convincing and that the murder may have been arranged by a rival Barodan faction rather than by someone from Poona. Even Elphinstone admitted to being uncertain about Trimbakji's account of the incident, which is virtually the only one, blames the murder on Trimbakji Danglia, the peshwa's favourite. It has been suggested that the evidence against Trimbakji was not convincing and that the murder may have been arranged by a rival Barodan faction rather than by someone from Poona. Even Elphinstone admitted to being uncertain about Trimbakji's account of the incident, which is virtually the only one, blames the murder on Trimbakji Danglia, the peshwa's favourite. It has been suggested that the evidence against Trimbakji was not convincing and that the murder may have been arranged by a rival Barodan faction rather than by someone from Poona.

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5 Extract from minute of the governor-general, 3 April 1812, PRC, 12: 152.


"ultimate design in the murder." The victim, however, was a brahmin, assassinated at a place of pilgrimage; there had been a public outcry on his death; and it was important for the British that justice should be believed to have been swiftly administered. There was sufficient circumstantial evidence to implicate Trimbakji and, as Elphinstone makes eminently clear in his report on the way in which he handled the crisis, he seized the opportunity to remove from an influential position, someone who strongly opposed British interference in the peshwa's affairs.9

It was standard practice for an official to draw attention to his accomplishments and to justify his proceedings in his reports, but Elphinstone's ability as a writer gives a rare subtlety and polish to his account of the crisis. The events are presented in a way which demonstrates his foresight in anticipating every possible contingency and every likely response by the peshwa or Trimbakji. And hints are dropped of the difficulties under which he worked in the tense atmosphere of Poona where, he claims, the peshwa's ministers were intimidated, indeed terrorized, by the peshwa's favourite. Elphinstone received the "unqualified approbation" of the new governor-general, the marquis of Hastings, for his spirit, energy, decision and judgment.10

During the winter and spring of 1813-1814, when the jagirdars were coming to terms and before the negotiations with Baroda reached a crisis, Elphinstone worked hard to finish his book on Afghanistan and, on 7 June 1814, the manuscript of his Account of the Kingdom of Caubul was sent to England. Although less well-received on publication than Malcolm's History of Persia — Elphinstone remarked in response to a friend's account of its reception in England that "this unanswerable proof of the dullness of my works had no effect but that of giving me a very hearty laugh"11 — it nevertheless brought Elphinstone's name before both the reading public and the

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10 Ibid., 12: 386.

11 Elphinstone to Lady Hood, 27 April 1816, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 314.
Home government as an expert on Afghanistan.

Two weeks before Elphinstone’s book began its journey west, Munro had received his commission to return to the east and, on 16 September, he arrived at Madras with his new wife and a mandate, as he described it, "to revise the internal administration in the Madras territories." This involved arranging the assessment and collection of the revenue along ryotwari lines. It also included the gradual introduction of a judicial system giving the collector the powers of a magistrate and employing Indian judges in minor cases and panchayats in civil trials. The Bengal-style courts were to be retained for criminal cases and for appeals. Munro found himself facing the almost unanimous opposition of officials in the Madras and Supreme governments, particularly the members of the judicial department who had most to lose. The number of judicial appointments and the importance of the judicial service itself would be reduced when revenue collectors and Indian judges were given judicial responsibilities, and Munro found it necessary to insist that his instructions from London were phrased as orders; if they began "It is our wish" or "We Propose," the local authorities disregarded them. Although the job was nearly complete by the summer of 1817 — within the three years specified in Munro’s commission — he had made powerful enemies. According to Gleig, his difficulty in obtaining men and supplies from the Madras government during his military campaign against the Marathas in 1817 and 1818 was deliberate obstruction.

The third and final war against the Marathas developed out of a campaign mounted to eradicate the Pindaris, thought of by the British as predatory robber bands and described by Biswanath Ghosh as "armies without masters." For centuries there had been a large "military labour market" in India, drawn not only from traditional Hindu and Muslim warrior castes but also

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12 Munro, "Memorandum of the services of Sir T. Munro, written by himself," quoted in Bradshaw, Munro, Appendix, p. 220.

13 Munro to Cumming, 1 March 1815, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 426-7.

14 Gleig, Munro, 1: 501.

from peasant cultivators and pastoralists, many of whom regarded casual military service as a necessary additional source of income. The Pindaris sometimes fought as auxiliaries with Maratha armies but just as often pillaged Maratha territories. Between 1812 and 1816, their raids were extended into the Company's territories at a time when the British were irritated at the failure of the Maratha princes to conduct either their internal or external affairs in conformity with British expectations — or at least in conformity with the alliances they had signed.

As Ghosh observes, the years 1814 to 1818 are most interesting for the way in which the new governor-general used the Pindari incursions to gain the support of his, at first reluctant, council and the Home government for a policy that aimed at establishing the Company's hegemony in India. For this he required, partly for the sake of appearances, the co-operation of the Maratha rulers against the Pindaris. Military action might not be labelled aggression, if fought in alliance with the Indian princes and, during 1816 and 1817, negotiations took place between the Supreme government and four of the five principal Maratha rulers, ostensibly to gain their support. Holkar refused to negotiate; but new subsidiary alliances were imposed on Sindhia and the peshwa.

At Poona, Elphinstone brought tense negotiations with a resentful peshwa to a successful conclusion for the British. He had to threaten force, however, and he felt that the new demands, which required the peshwa to abandon all contacts with other Indian powers, send home their envoys, give up his formal headship of the Maratha confederacy, and hand over territory to support the British subsidiary force, were so humiliating that, if enforced, they would probably lead to war. The one sentiment held in common by all the Maratha leaders was a deep resentment of the Company's power and no British official was surprised — and Hastings was certainly not


17 Ghosh, Central India, p. 321.

disappointed — when the campaign against the Pindaris in 1817 precipitated a final effort to recover their independence by the leading Maratha princes. As Munro remarked, "It was thought that offensive operations might ultimately involve us in hostilities with Sindhia [and] Holkar...and our preparations were very properly made upon a scale adequate to whatever might occur."19

"Turbulent Frontiers," together with the wide powers exercised by governors-general when communications were slow and unreliable, provide, according to John S. Galbraith, part of the explanation for the conflict between the stated policy of restraint and the fact of British expansion in India in the early nineteenth century. The ambitions of British officials, including those of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as well as Hastings, no doubt also played a part. M.E. Yapp suggests that, "Politicals" — "ministers, envoys, residents and political agents" — at the various Asian courts, intent on advancing their own careers by attracting government attention and the allocation of resources to their own area, exerted a significant influence on both defence policies and the expansion of empire through their monopoly of local information and their ability to interpret the supposed relevance of that information to the authorities in terms of British Indian interests.20 Company officials justified war on the grounds that the turbulence of the neighbouring Indian states and the often savage raids of the Pindaris threatened the security of British India. War and territorial expansion, however, offered excellent career opportunities for both army and civil officials. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's role in determining policies and their conduct during the war not only brought southern and western India into the British empire, it also won for them the culminating appointments of their careers: the governorships of Bombay and Madras.

Malcolm had returned to India in March 1817 and had been promoted brigadier-general. Before taking command of his brigade under General Hislop, however, he was ordered to visit

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19 Munro to his brother Alexander, 6 April 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 242.

various British residencies, as the governor-general's agent, to report on the disposition of the Indian states. His route took him first to Madras and, after consultations with the government, he remained a few days longer to await Munro's arrival.21

At the end of 1816, Munro, whose work as judicial commissioner was nearly complete, requested, unsuccessfully, a military command in the forthcoming campaign against the Pindaris. He was asked instead to supervise the civil arrangements of the districts adjacent to the Madras presidency which Baji Rao II was expected to cede to the Company under the terms of Elphinstone's new treaty. Malcolm, on his arrival from Britain, had thought he might be given both the civil and military control of these districts. Munro was upset that Malcolm and several other colonels with less seniority and, according to Munro, less active Indian military experience than he, had been promoted to brigadier-general and given command of a division or brigade ahead of him.22 These areas of possible friction, however, do not seem to have affected the two men when they met in Madras in July 1817. Munro had reluctantly accepted the civil appointment to supervise the new districts, but Malcolm, satisfied with his own appointment as the governor-general's agent, had already written to John Adam, political secretary to the Supreme government, strongly praising Munro and proposing that he should be given military as well as civil authority and the rank and troops necessary to settle the ceded territory quickly and effectively. "The Marathas will neither cheat nor beat Munro, and, besides, he will be the best man in the universe to look after the jagirdars...it is important a master hand should be the first to touch them."23 In his less flamboyant style, Munro, in a letter to Hastings, praised an "able" report on the various Maratha states that Malcolm was about to submit.24

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21 Malcolm to unnamed correspondent, 9 July 1817, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 159.


24 Munro to Hastings, 12 Aug. 1817, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 461; Malcolm, Political History, 2: 274-330.
After his meeting with Munro at Madras, Malcolm moved on to Poona, calling at Mysore and Hyderabad on the way. When relations with Poona had become particularly tense in the previous May, Elphinstone, with a view to conciliating the peshwa, had suggested that Malcolm should take his place as resident because Baji Rao trusted him. The Supreme government, however, had preferred to use a demonstration of force to persuade the peshwa to agree to the new subsidiary alliance, and he had signed it, resentfully, on June 13. The following day Elphinstone was informed that Hislop would take command in the Deccan, "both in the Pindari war, and in the operations to which our disputes with the peshwa may lead." The plan had been suggested to Hastings by Malcolm, who would benefit, but it annoyed Elphinstone, who would not. Shortly before Malcolm's arrival in Poona, he recorded in his journal that he had been "out of humour" since hearing that he had been superceded. He blamed "a push of Malcolm's to add everything he could to his own credit." On Malcolm's arrival at Poona in August, however, the two men talked frankly and Elphinstone conceded that, although Malcolm had unintentionally injured him, "a plan of mine, by securing the command of the southern army to General Smith, unknowingly frustrated Malcolm's views."26

While in Poona, Malcolm, perhaps to make amends, wrote to William Elphinstone praising his nephew and urging him to support an Indian government suggestion that Elphinstone should be given a financial reward for his services. This gesture on his behalf led Elphinstone to review his own services and "pretensions" to reward and recognition in his journal. He concluded, that "it would be a most liberal allowance to place myself in that respect where Malcolm was in 1806, and to think that my conduct affords good hopes of my turning out as well, if I have an opportunity."27

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men remained on good terms, although Malcolm's garrulousness always irritated Elphinstone who was not a good speaker.

Malcolm's purpose in visiting Poona had been to discover the "dispositions and designs" of the peshwa and he listened patiently to his complaints of the treatment he had received and his professions of loyalty to the Company. Malcolm pointed out firmly, however, that the peshwa's best chance of retaining power lay in the Company's alliance and he encouraged him to demonstrate his will to co-operate with the British by helping them against the Pindaris. Malcolm was confident that Baji Rao II would remain loyal. Elphinstone doubted it himself but, as he admired Malcolm's "sound judgment and great store of knowledge, derived both from reading and observation," he directed the British force, which had been sent to keep an eye on the peshwa, to leave the vicinity of Poona.

On 5 November 1817, on the same day that Sindhia reluctantly signed a new alliance with the British, the peshwa, who had used the excuse of co-operating in the war against the Pindaris to assemble his troops, attacked the residency at Poona. Elphinstone and his staff were forced to take refuge outside the city with the British subsidiary force. With greatly superior numbers Baji Rao next attacked the subsidiary force itself but was driven off. He spent the next six months eluding and harassing two British forces which, under Elphinstone's direction, were expected to bring about his submission. The sack of the residency, however, precipitated a general war against the Marathas. Almost immediately Hastings promoted Munro to the rank of brigadier-general — Malcolm's rank — but his authority to control the reserve division of Hislop's army was ambiguously worded. Munro wrote to Elphinstone that he had originally been ordered to defend the Company's frontier and the nizam's dominions. These instructions, however, had been "superseded by a late order, directing the

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26 Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 369-70.

reserve to be held at your disposal,"\textsuperscript{30} for operations against the peshwa.

Elphinstone was made sole commissioner for the settlement of the territory conquered from the peshwa in December 1817, and given authority to direct all the Company forces in the field against him. This arrangement made Munro, an army officer for thirty-seven years and one of the most experienced and highly respected administrators in the Company’s service, subordinate in military as well as civil matters to Elphinstone, a civilian, eighteen years his junior. There is no evidence, however, to indicate that he resented Elphinstone’s authority, while Elphinstone’s lack of self-confidence, ready acknowledgment of his own inexperience and apparent respect for Munro enabled an arrangement that might have been undermined by jealousy and personal rivalry to work well. The two men did not meet until the end of May, but Munro received from Elphinstone a steady stream of requests for advice on every aspect of the military, political and administrative problems of his new job. Munro may have heard from Malcolm that Elphinstone shared their views on governance but, for whatever reason, he accepted gracefully the role of mentor.

From November 1817 to April 1818, Munro, barred by the presence of troops loyal to the peshwa from joining the division he had been ordered to command, conducted a highly successful campaign of his own devising against the forces of the peshwa’s jagirdars.\textsuperscript{31} Malcolm, generous as always with his tributes to Munro’s ability, provides the most succinct account of a remarkable strategy.

We shall all recede, as this extra-ordinary man comes forward. We use common vulgar means, and go on zealously, and actively, and courageously enough; but how different is his part in the drama! Insulated in an enemy’s country, with no military means whatever (five disposable companies of sepoys were nothing,) he forms a plan of subduing this country, expelling the army by which it is occupied, and collecting the revenues that are due to the enemy, through the means of the inhabitants themselves, aided and supported by a few irregular infantry, whom he invites from the neighbouring provinces for that purpose. His plan, which is at once simple and great, is successful in a degree, that a mind like his alone could have

\textsuperscript{30} Munro to Elphinstone, 5 Feb. 1818, quoted in Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 3: 234.

\textsuperscript{31} See Stein, \textit{Munro}, Chap. 6, pp. 218-45 for a detailed account of Munro’s role in the Third Maratha War.
anticipated. The country comes into his hands by the most legitimate of all modes, the zealous and spirited efforts of the natives, to place themselves under his rule.32

Another contemporary, Captain James Grant, explained that Munro's irregulars, sent to the right and left of his column of march, "occupied the villages, fought with spirit on several occasions, stormed fortified places, and took possession in the name of 'Thomas Munro Bahadur'."33 "Bahadur" was a courtesy title indicating high respect and meaning, literally, "invincible."

A friend of Munro's in the Crown army once observed that to Munro, "the business of the field...[was] relaxation or most agreeable amusement."34 General Dunlop, who had known Munro since they worked together in the counting-house of Sommerville and Gordon in the 1770s,35 understood that the science of war appealed to Munro more than the conventional lure of valour and glory. Warfare, whether strategy, tactics or logistics, was a series of mentally challenging problems, like mathematical puzzles to which solutions must, and could be found. His intellectual interest in the science of warfare is evident in many of his writings. The reports on the Company's political and military relations with the Indian states, which Munro's father had forwarded to the Home government in the 1780s and 1790s, demonstrate his discerning comprehension of the problems peculiar to Indian warfare. So does his correspondence with Arthur Wellesley about the Second Maratha War. The relish with which he tackled the organizational problems of the First Burma War in the 1820s, at a time when he wished and expected to leave India, indicates his appreciation of the central importance of logistics, as well as strategy, tactics and leadership, to war.36

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32 Malcolm to John Adam, 17 Feb. 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 503.
33 Grant, quoted in Ballhatchet, Western India, p. 15.
34 Dunlop to Munro, 29 Dec. 1810, Mss. Eur., F/151/152.
35 Gleig, Munro, 1: 16.
36 Munro to his father, on the Third Mysore War, January 1790 to July 1791, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 79-125, passim; Munro to his father, on general strategic and military matters, 30 Sept. 1796 to 10 Feb. 1799, ibid., 3: 102-110, passim; correspondence between Arthur Wellesley and Munro on the Fourth Mysore War and the Second Maratha War, 17 Sept. 1799 to 24 May 1804,
Munro’s criticism of Arthur Wellesley’s conduct of the battle of Assaye is well-known and often quoted, but Wellesley clearly respected the older man’s opinion. Munro told Wellesley that, considering the disparity in numbers, Assaye should be regarded as a more brilliant exploit than Nelson’s victory at Aboukir Bay. Detaching part of his force, however, "was so dangerous a measure, that I am almost tempted to think that you did it with a view of sharing the glory with the smallest possible numbers." The detached force, he supposed, was sent to turn the enemy’s flank, but this could have been done "with as much certainty and more security" by keeping all the troops together. "The "noble manner" in which the battle was conducted made amends, regardless of whether the tactics were right or wrong, but Munro hoped Wellesley "would not have occasion to purchase any more victories at so high a price." Wellesley, describing Munro as "a judge of a military operation," and claiming to be very anxious to have his opinion on his side, provided a detailed account of the action to which Munro responded that he was already on Wellesley’s side. But he did not entirely withdraw his criticism. He was still "averse to the practice of carrying on war with too many scattered armies" and he analyzed the considerations which would have made him hesitate to follow Wellesley’s course, offering an alternative plan of operation. Munro concluded by conceding, however, that although the mode of attack was not the safest, it "was undoubtedly the most decided and heroic."

Two years later, in 1805, Munro asked his brother in Bengal to send him a plan of the fortress of Bhurtpur, when it was successfully holding out against General Lake. He remarked that he would like to be on the spot to see how the assaults were conducted: "for one would think that

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37 Munro to Wellesley, 14 Oct. 1803, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 177-79.

38 Wellesley to Munro, 1 Nov. 1803, WSD, 3: 210-13.

39 Munro to Wellesley, 28 Nov. 1803, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 182-4.
there is either a want of skill or artillery, for all the breaches are stated to have been narrow and steep."

Several years later, writing Wellington in Spain, Munro analyzed the mistakes made by the French general, Masséna, in a way which implied that Wellington's success owed something at least to weak opposition. There was no mention of Wellington's conduct; merely a remark that "It will be some consolation to Masséna that there is hardly a marshal in Spain who will venture to find fault with him for having run away from the British army, as there is hardly a man of them who has not already done the same thing." Wellington was slightly more generous, commenting in 1825 to Sir Charles Wynn, president of the board of control at the time of the First Burma War, that he had looked at a whole box of papers from India on the war to find nothing in them, except a want of information...The only paper which shows in the writer any knowledge of his subject is Sir Thomas Munro's minute...and it is curious how all appear to have chimed in with his simple proposal, just as a pack of hounds do to the voice of the experienced dog.

For Munro, military campaigns were there to be analyzed and their problems solved. His campaign in the southern Maratha country during the Third Maratha War was an unorthodox but intelligent — and cheap — solution to a military problem.

Munro gave the Company control over the resources of three thousand square miles of the peshwa's territory, thus denying him men and money in his struggle with the British, and he created a broad corridor of Company controlled territory between the Madras presidency and Poona. He did this while holding what he called "a subaltern command" and at virtually no cost to the Supreme government: he collected the revenue as he went along. Malcolm took some credit for having

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* Munro to his brother Alexander, 29 March 1805, quoted in ibid., 3: 208.

40 Munro to Wellington, 26 April 1811, quoted in WSD, 7: 113-14.

41 Wellington to Wynn, 24 March 1825, WND, 2: 429-30. The minute referred to is No. 3, 24 Aug. 1824, in Munro, Minutes, 2: 174-5.

42 Munro had outlined his strategy in a letter to the governor-general prior to the campaign, hoping it would help him obtain a military command. Hastings, however, had already dispatched his commission as brigadier-general. See Munro to Hastings, 28 Nov. 1817, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 473; Stein, Munro, p. 228.
recommended Munro: "Confess," he demanded of John Adam, "that I have a right to exult in the eagerness with which I pressed upon you the necessity of bringing forward this master-workman." There is no evidence that Malcolm's recommendations persuaded Hastings to promote Munro and to allow him to return to the army, but his timely publicity did draw attention to Munro at an opportune moment. Elphinstone told a friend who had been "liberally dispensing praise and censure" on the conduct of various individuals during the war, that Munro was the real hero: "the great claimant to praise for enterprise and talent, and for retaining his zeal and good humour in every circumstance."45

In devising his strategy, Munro had taken into consideration the history of the Marathas and the social structure and organization of the region. He had also applied what was to him the psychologically important principle of self-help. Writing five years later about a different war — the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire — he observed to George Canning that the Greeks should emancipate themselves, without foreign aid, because the struggle would "give them a national character and a spirit to defend their liberty."46 There were many ethnic groups in addition to Marathas in the region Munro took from the peshwa. By giving them a role in their own "liberation" from Maratha rule, they might become useful supporters of the British, whatever régime was set up.

While Munro worked his way through the southern Maratha country, leaving amildars — local revenue officers — to administer the districts he had conquered, Elphinstone travelled the peshwa's territories either with the force attempting to bring Baji Rao II to bay, or with a second force capturing, one after the other, the hill forts south of Poona. Satara was captured in February

44 Malcolm to Adam, 17 Feb. 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 503.

45 Elphinstone to Captain Close, 16 April 1818, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 42.

46 Munro to George Canning, 1 May 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 67. Munro to Hastings, 28 Nov. 1817, quoted in ibid., 1: 471-3.
and, on April 10, the raja, who had been held in captivity by the peshwa from the beginning of the war, was installed by Elphinstone as a Maratha figure-head in a "sovereignty sufficient for [his] comfort and dignity." A month later Munro defeated a force of the peshwa’s infantry at Sholapur and a few days later concluded his campaign by capturing the fortress.

After leaving Elphinstone in Poona in August 1817, Malcolm had first visited Hyderabad to arrange the supply and movement of Hislop’s army into the Deccan because Hislop was seriously ill. He then travelled to Nagpur, to make sure that the raja of Berar would make his contribution of supplies to the Pindari campaign and then, at the end of October, relinquished his role as political agent and took up his military command. Two months later the campaign against the Pindaris was virtually over, but as the war against the Maratha princes was under way in the north as well as in the peshwa’s territory, Malcolm joined Hislop in time to take part in a pitched battle against Holkar at Mehidpur on 21 December. Malcolm led a force of cavalry against enemy horse threatening British troops at a river crossing and then, somewhat rashly, led a charge against the enemy’s batteries; luck and the skill and courage of the sepoys allowing him to take them with the bayonet while under heavy fire. It was a spectacular but orthodox engagement of the type that reaped conventional military acclaim and honours and Malcolm was delighted to have taken part in it. When Munro heard the news, he congratulated Malcolm on his success in a battle "as severe as Assaye," although he wondered why the army "did not instantly follow up the victory, instead of halting four days to sing Te Deum, and write to your grandmothers and aunts how good and gracious Providence had been." He rejoiced, however, that Malcolm had "acted so conspicuous a part in that drama both on your own account, and on that of the honour of the coast [Madras] army." The rivalry between the Bengal and Madras armies was intense.

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47 Elphinstone, journal, 10 Feb. 1818, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 27.


49 Munro to Malcolm, 26 Jan. 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 307.
After Mehidpur, Malcolm was kept busy until early May 1818, negotiating with Holkar and coercing and cajoling the Pindari chiefs into submission. The peshwa, however, who had been moving north at the head of an army relentlessly pursued by the British, suddenly sent an emissary to Malcolm to discuss terms of surrender. There was little doubt that Baji Rao II would soon be defeated in the field. Malcolm was anxious, however, for the sake of Britain's reputation and for the long-term tranquillity of India, that he should be seen to abdicate voluntarily rather than lose his throne to the British in battle. Made a prisoner, he would become an object of sympathy and a potential figure-head for revolt; killed in battle, he might become a martyr. The discontented would rally around "a real or pretended heir to his high station."

For two weeks Malcolm and Baji Rao II were engaged in tense negotiations. Malcolm made it clear at the outset that the Supreme government would not agree to even a nominal sovereignty, and that its generosity would match the speed at which the war was concluded. His eventual success, Malcolm claimed, depended to a considerable degree "on passing events" in other areas that raised or lowered the peshwa's hopes, especially "the complete defeat of the peshwa's troops at Sholapur by our friend Tom Munro."

When Malcolm offered Baji Rao II a lavish pension of eight lakhs of rupees in return for an immediate end to the war, he was censured by the Supreme government for extravagance. Munro and Elphinstone, however, both supported Malcolm's defence of his terms. As Munro described the situation to his brother Alexander:

The amount of the pension, and I believe also the principle of granting him any terms whatever, have been disapproved of. I certainly think differently; I think that great allowance should be made for a native Sovereign, reduced to a state of degradation by a foreign power.

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52 Malcolm to his wife, n.d., quoted in ibid., 2: 250.
Earlier, Baji Rao II had made overtures to Elphinstone who rejected them because he had been instructed "to receive none but those of unconditional surrender." Malcolm, however, had been given no instructions. Baji Rao had not been expected to travel so far north.53

Munro told Malcolm that if the peshwa had come to him, he would probably have offered him ten lakhs rather than eight. He also endorsed the grounds on which Malcolm had made his decision. Baji Rao II's surrender would do more than anything else to restore peace and facilitate the settlement of the country because it deprived the disaffected of their leader. Munro claimed that he would rather have taken Baji Rao than the Bombay government, but hoped that Malcolm would be "the taker of both." To Elphinstone, Munro added that the peshwa's so-called treachery should neither cause resentment, nor be punished, because it was natural. Any sovereign controlled by a foreign subsidiary force in his own domains must become timid, cunning, and treacherous. "We ourselves induce the treachery we punish."54 Munro consistently criticized the subsidiary alliance system for its debilitating moral effects and unfortunate practical consequences.

In the spring of 1818, Hastings asked Munro to undertake the settlement of the peshwa's southern territories in co-operation with Elphinstone in the north, but Munro had already decided to return to Britain on account of increasing deafness and deteriorating eyesight.55 Elphinstone, whose administration of the area around Poona had begun before Baji Rao's surrender and deposition, was given control of the whole region. He learned of Munro's decision in April 1818 and, after the battle at Sholapur, expressed his anxiety at being left to handle the task alone.

I really do not see how we are to fill the blank that you will leave...I had calculated on receiving much instruction from you on the management of the rest of the country, either by minute communications or in the capacity of a joint commissioner...I now find that you will be quitting the scene at the time when the settlement of the country north of the Kistna will just be beginning and I really feel

52 Munro to his brother Alexander, 30 Sept. 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 284.
55 Munro's problem with his sight was due to his need for a new pair of reading glasses. See Stein, Munro, p. 244.n.
some uneasiness at the prospect of under-taking alone a task on which so much is to depend.\textsuperscript{56}

He sent a palanquin with a strong escort to bring Munro to Satara for a meeting at which he took careful notes.\textsuperscript{57}

Elphinstone’s debt to Munro has long been recognized by historians, beginning with Colebrooke.\textsuperscript{58} J.S. Cotton credits Munro with teaching Elphinstone “the duty of investigating thoroughly the indigenous institutions,” and Kenneth Ballhatchett, examining the ideas behind the new system of government, points out that Elphinstone studied Munro’s published writings as well as seeking his advice on the day-to-day problems of administration.\textsuperscript{59} The extent of Elphinstone’s dependence on Munro’s ideas for his administration of the peshwa’s territories has become more evident, however, from papers, now in the Munro Collection in the Oriental and India Office Collection in the British Library, which were unavailable to Colebrooke, Cotton and Ballhatchett.

Elphinstone had had no administrative experience and there is no indication that he had previously given any thought to the maintenance of civil order, to revenue collection or to legal systems — he had had no call to do so as a diplomat. So between January and April 1815, while he and Munro were still at war, Elphinstone sought Munro’s advice on a multitude of subjects including the disposition of the forces Elphinstone was directing against the peshwa, the appointment of civil collectors and how to treat the different classes of jagirdar. Although Malcolm and Elphinstone have been portrayed by historians as being more sympathetic than Munro to the plight of the great Indian landholders, during the early months of Elphinstone’s administration of the peshwa’s territory, Munro, who, at the start of career had favoured the eradication of petty chiefs, now preached to

\textsuperscript{56} Elphinstone to Munro, 30 May 1818, Mss. Eur., F/151/29.

\textsuperscript{57} Munro to Elphinstone, 13 June 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 260.

\textsuperscript{58} Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 22.

\textsuperscript{59} Cotton, Elphinstone, p. 128. Ballhatchett, Western India, p. 32.
Elphinstone on the importance of preserving the existing ranks of Indian society and advised him that the great jagirdars should not be put in a worse position than they had been in under the peshwa’s government. He advised that only members of the lowest class, who might prove refractory, might have their lands sequestered in exchange for a pecuniary allowance.

Munro told Malcolm, who had apparently again made "honourable mention" of his friend to John Adam and "had contrived to make him believe" that Munro would be a "useful instrument" in settling the southern Maratha states, that Elphinstone wanted his aid because he over-estimated the difficulties of settlement. Munro recommended instead that William Chaplin, the collector of Bellari, should replace him in the southern territories and suggested that an experienced revenue official should be appointed as Elphinstone’s secretary.

The first meeting between Munro and Elphinstone took place at Satara at the end of May 1818 and Elphinstone notes in his journal that he has gained much instruction from Munro and has been greatly impressed with his good sense, frankness, and his benevolence. Throughout the summer Elphinstone continued to solicit Munro’s advice in letters which included numerous phrases such as "I am extremely obliged for your answer to my queries...They will be very instructive," and, "I shall not fail to attend to what you say...and shall modify the orders," or, "What you propose...seems the best course." In July he asked what rules he should observe in regard to inams, a prebendary type of landholding related to village and religious services. "What is to be regarded as long possession...so as to entitle the holder to keep his land...How ought the village

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60 See Chap. 11 for a discussion of why Munro changed his approach to higher ranking Indians.

61 Munro to Elphinstone, 8 March 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 239-40.


63 Elphinstone journal, June 1818, quoted in Cotton, Elphinstone, p. 127.

64 Elphinstone to Munro, 22 June, 30 June, 17 July 1818, Mss. Eur., F/151/29.
In August 1818, Munro, now staying with friends at Bangalore, sent Elphinstone a comprehensive report on the condition of the southern Maratha lands. After that they continued to exchange letters on questions of policy until early 1819, when Munro set sail for Britain. Although inexperienced and, according to Munro, lacking in self-confidence, Elphinstone was intelligent and a very successful Company servant. It is unlikely that he would have sought or accepted Munro's advice so consistently, if he had not been in sympathy with the principles on which Munro based his administrative policies. Elphinstone was responsible for the administration of the peshwa's former territories from December 1817 until he moved to Bombay in October 1819 and his approach to administration, as he describes it in his Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa, had much in common with what might be termed the central pillars of the Munro system: regenerating rather than replacing existing revenue and judicial systems, adapting necessary reforms to the stage of development of local society, protecting a graduated social structure and employing Indians in the government.

These criteria were also applied by Malcolm during the four years from 1818 to 1822 during which he was responsible for the settlement and administration of Malwa. The territories of Sindhia and Holkar in the Malwa region that had been annexed by the Company and organized as the Central Indian agency, were described by Malcolm as being open table-land, highly cultivated, watered by numerous rivers and with fertile soil and a mild climate. He told Walter Scott, with obvious pride, that he was governing a territory "as large as England and Scotland," where the "large

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67 Elphinstone, Peshwa's Territories, see pp. 20: 44; 43.

68 Malcolm, Central India, 1: 3-4.
folks are quiet" but the great problem is "to keep the Rob Roys under." There were no important towns in the region and Malcolm seems to have spent much of his time moving from district to district, again alternatively cajoling and coercing the more unruly inhabitants into accepting British rule. He also spent much time gathering and analyzing information about the previous methods of administration in Malwa and about its history. He presented a report to the government in 1822 and expanded it into a two volume Memoir of Central India after his return to Britain. Malcolm believed that such historical research was necessary in order to establish the basis on which the British could develop a form of administration suited to the conditions and needs of the local people.

Malcolm was enjoying the extensive civil and military powers he had been given to settle Malwa and Munro was on the high seas, expecting never to return to India, when Elphinstone learned, on 12 February 1819, that he rather than Malcolm, his patron, or Munro, his mentor, had been appointed governor of Bombay. Munro does not seem to have had any expectation of the Bombay governorship but he, Elphinstone and Malcolm all believed that Malcolm had a good — and deserved — chance of being appointed. Munro was to serve as governor of Madras from 1820 until 1827; Malcolm succeeded Elphinstone as governor of Bombay from 1827 to 1830.

The Third Maratha War was in many ways the apogee of the careers of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. Their all-round talents and Indian expertise were finally tested to the full and they emerged from the conflict as the chief architects of British supremacy in western and central India. Their achievements were officially recognized when George Canning announced that he was "disposed to concur in the appointment of either Sir John Malcolm, Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone or Colonel Thomas Munro as Governor of Bombay."}

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* Canning, quoted in Philips, East India Company, p. 222.
Chapter 6

Recognition: 1819 - 1830

The subordinate governments...present no employment so interesting as securing and regulating a new conquest with ample powers, civil and military, with plenty of troops, and the most liberal support from the governor-general.

Mountstuart Elphinstone

During the years 1820 to 1827, while Elphinstone and Munro served as governors of Bombay and Madras and Malcolm, for most of the time, was in Britain, the three men kept up their friendship by correspondence. Their experiences during the Third Maratha War and their shared attitude to government, more evident after Malcolm and Elphinstone became administrators rather than diplomats, increased their respect for one another. If Malcolm regretted promoting his friends’ talents during the fifteen years when he was the most prominent of the three, he gave no sign. But in the 1820s Munro became the most prominent. Sound administration now took precedence over diplomacy and both Malcolm and Elphinstone sought Munro’s advice and his approval of their own views on governing. He encouraged Malcolm’s literary ambitions and advised Elphinstone about his administrative arrangements at Bombay.

The governorships of Madras and Bombay were to be the pinnacle of the careers of the three men. Munro was considered for, but not offered, the governor-generalship in 1825; Elphinstone declined an offer of it in 1834, ostensibly on the grounds of ill-health; Malcolm would have jumped at the opportunity of serving as either acting or permanent governor-general but was never considered. It was difficult to win renown as a governor, because the over-riding authority of the governor-general and the checks imposed by presidency councils, boards of revenue and

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judiciaries seriously inhibited one's freedom of action. Neither Munro, Malcolm nor Elphinstone expected the post to be particularly rewarding — except, perhaps, financially — both of the others echoed Elphinstone’s verdict that the settlement of newly conquered territories was more interesting. Neither Madras nor Bombay, which carried a lower salary and, possibly for that reason, slightly less prestige at this time, was likely, however, to be declined by a Company official. Since 1784, men with political connections in Britain and a higher social status than that of most Company servants — although not always as much ability — had generally held these appointments. Canning’s nomination of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone was an honour; recognition of their roles in the creation of the British empire in south-western and central India.

Although their biographers stressed devotion to duty in explaining why the three men accepted appointments for which they had little enthusiasm, other considerations were more important. The governorships offered a relatively liberal salary and public recognition: a culmination to a distinguished career that was practically, as well as psychologically, satisfactory. As early as 1801, Elphinstone had been asking himself what he could “do honourably to get money to go home with even for a time?” In 1813 going home for a time was a temptation that had to be resisted because, as he told his sister, it would extend the time it would take him to save enough to retire on for good. A few months before his appointment to Bombay, after thanking his uncle, Lord Keith, for his “warm interest” in his career, Elphinstone observed that “my ultimate view is to get into quiet retirement, which I should do tomorrow if I had £1,500 a year.” For Elphinstone, a governor’s salary and his obligations to the relatives who had promoted his interests were probably the decisive

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2 Kenneth Ballhatchet points out that Elphinstone was often unable to implement his policies as he would have preferred, owing to the conflicting opinions of government and Company authorities in Britain as well as sporadic opposition from the Bombay and Calcutta secretariats. He believes, nevertheless, that officials in India had more influence on policy than those in London. Ballhatchet, Western India, p. 162.


4 Elphinstone to Lord Keith, 3 Oct. 1818, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 49.
considerations. There is no mention of a duty to the Company or the people of India.

Munro, who told his friend Lady Liston that he "would rather wander over this country in a tent than live soberly in any town in my native land," liked the climate and country of India better than that of Britain. But he missed British friends and the more culturally stimulating European environment and was ambivalent about returning to India in 1819, although he claimed that he felt obliged to go. It is unclear, however, whether his obligation was to India, to men in the Company and the British government who had supported him and his policies, or to his family. A desire to consolidate his administrative reforms may have provided an inducement; so too did the salary of £10,000. His first son had been born during the voyage to Britain in 1819 and, at the age of fifty-eight, he found himself with a family to provide for. (A second son was born in 1823). He told his friend and financial agent, George Brown, that he had been too slow in making money ever to make "what is called a respectable appearance in the world" but, with economy, he hoped to save £6,000 a year. His relatively humble origins may have enhanced the attraction of a governorship and the knighthood that went with it, but only because they were honours he felt he had earned. Munro judged everyone by merit rather than rank. Expecting to retire soon to Britain, he told Brown, despondently, in July 1826 that he had no taste for the fashionable world and would, anyway, be too old or too poor "to think of making a figure in genteel life." At the time of his death a year later, however, a lifetime of careful attention to money and a thrifty style of life had enabled him not only to provide financial support over the years for many relatives, but also to leave an estate worth £126,648; a respectable legacy for his widow and sons. Munro had been much poorer when he joined the Company than either Malcolm or Elphinstone but, at the end of his life, was the wealthiest of the three.

5 Munro to Lady Liston, 12 March 1826. NLS, Ms. 5676.

6 Munro to his sister Erskine, 12 Dec. 1819, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 8-9.

Malcolm told Munro in 1820 that he would have about £50,000 by the end of the year, which would enable him to retire to Britain and provide "Porridge and Butter for me and the weans" if he were not, as he was hoping, appointed lieutenant-governor of Central India. Seven years later, about to take over from Elphinstone at Bombay, he told Wellington that the prize money he had recently received from the final division of the spoils of the Third Maratha War, added to his former means, had made him "very independent" and he would not stay long at Bombay unless he was also given authority over Central India. Bombay alone, he claimed, provided no chance of adding to his reputation and the £15,000 to £20,000 he would make was not sufficient to compensate for the hazards of serving again in India. Malcolm had more children to support and a more expensive lifestyle than Munro and his frequent insistence that money was not a determining consideration where appointments were concerned needs to be treated with some caution. William Elphinstone told Munro in 1820 that Malcolm "cannot afford to come home to live in comfort with his habits, and an expensive family to bring up;..." Money, however, seems, quite genuinely, to have mattered less to him than recognition. His private letters allude more frequently to a desire for renown rather than for wealth and indicate that, after his first irresponsible years in India, it became of great importance to him that his parents, brothers and sisters should be proud of his achievements and that, later, he anxiously sought the admiration of his wife and children. Throughout his career he longed for public acknowledgment of his services to the Company and, as he saw it, to the British empire.

A month after taking office as governor of Bombay in October 1819, Elphinstone told Malcolm that his allowances were only Rps.100,000, his expenses Rps. 80,000, and that equipping himself would "run away with the balance of Rps.20,000 for one year at least, if not two." Malcolm, he claimed, was "never in better luck" than when he "escaped Bombay" where he would never have

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10 William Elphinstone to Munro, 10 Sept. 1828, Mss. Eur., F/151/73.
been able to save a farthing, while in Central India "you have Rps.50,000 clear or nearly so." In 1822 Elphinstone is still complaining of his debts, but by May 1827 had accumulated enough money to provide an income for a comfortable country life, occasional travel in Britain and Europe and the pursuit of his literary interests. He could count on "£2,600 a year permanent, £400 a year more till 1834 and £4,300 ready money." He had managed to achieve this desirable state of affairs despite having taken responsibility for some of his brother James's debt of Rps.47,000.

Although Canning had nominated Malcolm, Elphinstone and Munro for the governorship of Bombay as a gesture of recognition for the recent achievements of the Company's servants, he also intended it as a conciliatory move to improve the strained relations between the government and the court of directors. Naming Malcolm and Munro, as well as Elphinstone, as candidates for Bombay, however, was probably meant to indicate an equal appreciation for the services of all three, not that he considered them as equal contenders. If Canning hoped to appease the Company, Malcolm's appointment to a governorship was out of the question, owing to his unpopularity with the directorate for what was regarded as the excessive cost of many of his diplomatic achievements. Munro was never a genuine contender for Bombay because he was wanted for Madras.

Because Bombay became vacant before Madras, and perhaps because in the later nineteenth century Bombay became the more important, Elphinstone's promotion ahead of the two older men has attracted much attention and added, not inconsiderably, to his reputation. Munro's appointment to Madras, however, was decided upon at the same time and, at a time after the Maratha war when efficient administration and reduced costs were priorities, may have been the cornerstone of the arrangements. Sir John Kaye points out that Madras at the time was "the higher and more

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12 Elphinstone, journal, 10 Feb. 1822, quoted in ibid., p. 277.


14 Philips, *East India Company*, p. 222.
advantageous appointment." According to Malcolm, William Elphinstone, Sir Alexander Allan and John Sullivan, three men with great influence over Indian affairs in London, had been working since 1812 to "support Munro’s pretensions to a government" and, by 1818, there was a "strong and respectable" party determined to give a full trial to Munro’s judicial system. This claim is supported by the fact that the directorate made sure that Munro would be able to put his system into operation by appointing George Stratton, William Thackeray and Henry Graeme to the Madras council; all men who supported Munro’s policies and with whom Munro was on good personal terms. James Cochrane, who had trained under Munro in the revenue line and become a close friend, was made president of the board of revenue. As John Ravenshaw told Munro, the directors were determined that there should be no "factious opposition during the whole of your reign."

Munro probably knew more about the Madras presidency and its Indian subjects than any contemporary British official and, if Company servants rather than British political figures were to be the next presidency governors, he was the natural choice. According to George Gleig, whose biography of Munro was an "official life" prepared in close association with John Ravenshaw and other members of the directorate, although Munro was not actually appointed to Madras until the summer of 1819, it was decided the previous summer, when Canning first made his nominations, that Munro would be asked to succeed Hugh Elliot at Madras.

A group that was sufficiently influential to obtain Munro’s appointment to Madras in order to ensure that his system was given a "full trial" were likely to support a candidate for Bombay who was known to hold similar views. Although Elphinstone attributed his appointment to the fact that no one in London knew anything about him and, therefore, had no grounds on which to object to

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15 Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 459.
16 Malcolm to his wife, 1820, quoted in ibid., 2: 316n.
17 Ravenshaw to Munro, 13 July 1820, Mss. Eur., F/151/73. Stein, Munro, p. 251.
18 Stein, Munro, pp. 329-30. Gleig, Munro, 2: 4.
him, this overly modest explanation was given to console Malcolm. There can be little doubt that the Home government knew enough about Elphinstone's administration of the peshwa's former territories to recognize Munro's influence. Canning, who influenced both appointments, seems to have asked Munro to report to him on how Elphinstone was managing, when he visited Bombay en route to Madras in May 1820. The commission implies a close understanding between Canning and Munro; an assertion supported by the unusually respectful letters Munro wrote to Canning and his genuine regret when Canning left the board of control. Canning may have hoped that, with like-minded men at Madras and Bombay, some uniformity could be given to the administration of southern and western India — although neither Munro nor Elphinstone, in fact, believed uniformity to be desirable or possible.

There was always bargaining and manoeuvring between the government and the Company over appointments. On this occasion, however, the usual priorities — political interest and patronage — seem to have been relatively unimportant. Policy pointed to the selection of Munro and Elphinstone in preference to Malcolm. Naturally, Malcolm was disappointed. He reluctantly accepted Munro's superior credentials, telling his wife: "Ambitious as I am, and impatient as I have become of slight, I do not know that I should not have had conscience enough to vote against myself [in regard to Madras]." But he resented the fact that Elphinstone, who was not only his "junior by twelve years in the political line" but who had served under him at the beginning of the Third Maratha War, had been pushed ahead of him by the Company.

During 1819 and 1820, the governor-general, Lord Hastings, attempted to make amends to

20 Stein, Munro, p. 248.
21 Munro to Canning, 30 June 1821, 1 May 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 57-67.
22 Malcolm to his wife, 1820, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 316n.
23 Malcolm to Captain Tod, 1819, quoted in Kaye, Lives, 1: 301.
Malcolm by raising the question of creating a lieutenant-governorship out of the territories conquered from the peshwa and appointing Malcolm to the position. The issue was discussed in letters between Hastings and Elphinstone and between Hastings and Malcolm. The governor-general told Elphinstone that he understood that the directors were prepared "to do something" for Malcolm and he asked Elphinstone to tell him frankly what he thought of detaching from Bombay, part of the peshwa's former territory, "constituting [Malcolm] for a time, lieutenant-governor of an adequate extent?" The proposal was obviously designed solely to appease Malcolm.

Elphinstone's response is curious. He begins by agreeing, mentioning that on his appointment to Bombay he had seriously considered recommending the appointment of a commissioner for the peshwa's former territories under Bombay's authority. A lieutenant-governorship would do what he had in mind and Malcolm with "his enlarged views of policy, and his liberal principles towards the natives" was well-qualified to conciliate a newly conquered people. Elphinstone, however, also told Hastings that Malcolm should be given a council to deal with civil administration. He implies that Malcolm's enlarged views and liberal principles might need curbing. Put beside a letter Elphinstone wrote to Malcolm at much the same time, on 4 December 1819, this suggestion appears hypocritical. Elphinstone tells Malcolm: "It is a great annoyance to a person who is used as we are (or rather as we were and you are) to have his word law and to have nobody to satisfy of the propriety of a measure but himself, to be obliged to explain his motives to a council." And, as Ballhatchet points out, Elphinstone himself "disliked...the methods of government by council." Elphinstone concludes his reply to Hastings by questioning whether it would be advisable

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25 Elphinstone to Hastings, n.d., 1819, quoted in ibid., 2: 103-4. Colebrooke provides no date for Elphinstone's letter but it was written in reply to Hastings' letter of 2 July 1819.

26 Elphinstone, quoted in Ballhatchet, Western India, p. 138.

27 Ibid.
to remove Malcolm from Malwa. "However quiet that country may be at present, it must retain, in the habits of its inhabitants, and in the character of the many petty governments of which it is combined, great materials for disturbance...[and] every disturbance of the public tranquillity is to be dreaded." If Hastings knew of "a fit person" to succeed Malcolm in Malwa or if the country was sufficiently pacified that strong rule was no longer required, then, in Elphinstone's opinion, Malcolm could be moved. Why, one wonders, did Elphinstone think a council so necessary in the government of the peshwa's former territories, but not in Malwa?

Neither Hastings nor Elphinstone says whether the lieutenant-governor would have been placed under Bengal or Bombay. In the first instance, Elphinstone would lose a good deal of the territory he was governing; in the second, he would be in the uncomfortable position of becoming Malcolm's superior. Colebrooke observes dryly: "we can readily understand that the correspondence went no further."29

Malcolm, no doubt, remained unaware of Elphinstone's lack of enthusiasm and anyway would have rejected the appointment on the terms Elphinstone suggested, as Elphinstone probably knew. Malcolm made it clear to the Supreme government that, if he was appointed lieutenant-governor, he would expect to have complete civil and military authority. A solution would have been to make Malcolm lieutenant-governor of Malwa and Central India instead. The extensive districts known as the Central Indian agency comprised lands previously held by Sindhia, Holkar and a number of minor Indian rulers. They had suffered badly at the hands of the Pindaris, and were politically unstable and potentially rebellious; there was some justification for Malcolm's claim that they needed to be ruled by a man with autocratic power.30 Munro supported this view. He told

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29 Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 104.

Canning in May 1820 that Malcolm "ought undoubtedly to be kept in Malwa for some years." If the government, for the sake of ridding itself of a trifling expense, persuaded itself that all would go well without him, "we shall have the centre of India in a state of confusion from which it may be difficult to extricate it hereafter." Neither Malcolm's nor Munro's appeals, however, had any effect.

Malcolm corresponded with Hastings and John Adam, now chief secretary at Calcutta, on the subject of a lieutenant-governorship until November 1820. Then Hastings told him that the Company would not now agree to the suggestion if Hastings made it, because they were working to have him replaced as governor-general. Canning told Malcolm that Hastings had never mentioned to him the type of appointment Malcolm was hoping for and that he was sure it was neither "wholesome" nor legal, for appointments "which grow out of special circumstances known only in India, to be made in England." William Elphinstone and Ravenshaw were more sympathetic. Elphinstone told Munro that Malcolm had been under-valued by Hastings because of his "trials with the peshwa," but from what Munro and Mountstuart had told him, Malcolm had been right and Hastings should have found an appointment for him. Ravenshaw, who was not a great admirer of Malcolm but was aware of Munro's concern for him, informed Munro that as the resident at Hyderabad was to be dismissed for an incident involving the fatal flogging of two Indians, Hyderabad might provide "a good opening for Malcolm." The authorities in neither London nor Calcutta, however, were prepared to commit themselves to either a lieutenant-governorship or any other prominent appointment for Malcolm at this time.

Despite a great many polite words about Malcolm's ability and dedicated service, no one was in a hurry to employ him. His reputation had been established as a diplomat and as the political

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31 Munro to Canning, 15 May 1820, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 51.
33 William Elphinstone to Munro, 10 Sept. 1820, Mss. Eur., F/151/73.
34 Ravenshaw to Munro, 13 July 1820, Mss. Eur., F/151/73.
agent for several governors-general and, although he was now wielding the broad powers he had been given in Malwa with apparent success, events were working against him. With the defeat of the Marathas in 1818, Britain was indisputably the paramount power in India, but the war had been expensive and the government wanted to retrench. In this setting, two of Malcolm's more attractive attributes, his generosity — the Company thought of it as extravagance — and his sensibility became liabilities rather than assets. His unnecessarily liberal pension for Baji Rao II was fresh in everyone's mind, recalling the cost of his first Persian mission which had appalled the directorate, and the indemnity he had authorized after the murder of the Persian envoy in Bombay in 1802, which had led the shah to remark that a dozen envoys might be killed if the British paid for them at the same rate. Malcolm's bargain with Baji Rao II, a financial millstone that the Company would bear for years to come, contrasted starkly with Munro's conquest of the peshwa's southern territories, which was paid for from the revenues of the territories themselves and cost the Company virtually nothing.

Less obvious but nevertheless important, Malcolm respected Indians from all walks of life. The consideration he gave to the feelings of displaced Indian rulers may have appeared, at least from the distance of London, as potentially obstructive now that Britain was the paramount power. Whereas his knowledge of Indian politics and his affable relationships with Indian princes had been useful to the diplomatic branch in the past, the Company expected to be dictating to them rather than negotiating with them in the future and Malcolm's sympathy and generosity might be inconvenient. Short of money and with new territories to govern, the Home government preferred proven administrators to men with "enlarged views and liberal principles."

Malcolm wanted a governorship badly. He had worked hard for fifteen years to obtain one, not only by trying to influence patrons but also by acquiring the qualifications he believed were required for the job; career-building techniques that had served him well in the past. He first rose

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in the Company's service by attracting the Home government's attention in 1794 with his report on the organization of the Company army. His next rise had followed the report he gave to Wellesley on the Indian states in 1798. In preparation for a governorship, Malcolm had spent much of his time, while in Britain between 1812 and 1816, studying the workings of the British government and its relationship with the East India Company on the ground that there could be only one rational objection to the appointment of a Company official to a governorship: his probably inadequate knowledge of the government of his own country, "or in other words,...being too Indian."36 This opinion was shared by Wellington, who supported Malcolm's claims to a governorship a few years later. He told Charles Wynn, the president of the board of control, who preferred British public servants to Company officials as governors, that Malcolm was an exception: he had "lived much in this country, and to great advantage. He has a thorough knowledge of men and affairs here."37

Malcolm knew that Munro and Elphinstone had been selected for their knowledge of Indian forms of administration. He wrote to his wife in 1820 asking, indignantly,

Has not the whole government, in all its parts, been my constant study?...Has not my life been given to all the details of revenue settlement and judicial proceedings, native as well as European modes of administering justice, and the most minute investigation of everything relating to the rules and institutions...of this and neighbouring countries? They shall ere long see all this in a report, which will enable me to ask my friends whether I am or I am not, fit for a civil government.38

Malcolm believed his research into different political and social structures — Sikh and Persian as well as Indian — qualified him for a governorship and between 1819 and 1823, his determination to demonstrate his expertise — to prove that faction, not lack of ability, had led to his exclusion — led to an almost obsessiona l preoccupation with the report he wrote on Malwa.

Munro told a friend in Britain in 1821 that Malcolm was undermining his health with "over-


38 Malcolm to his wife, n.d. 1820, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 316.
exertion and unceasing occupation." He added that despite serious and repeated attacks of fever, no one had been able to prevail upon him to leave the country until he had completed "a very voluminous report on the state of the country and of the people."39 Malcolm seems to have sent the work to Munro for criticism, chapter by chapter, in manuscript, and in May 1819 rejoiced at Munro's praise of his revenue chapter; highly valued because Munro was "not in the habit of giving Balloon Draughts."40 In 1821, as Malcolm was at last preparing to leave for England, Munro, who now had a copy of all the chapters of a work he had dubbed "the Malwa Encyclopaedia," wrote to Malcolm to say how impressed he was by the mass of information it contained.41

Malcolm remained in Malwa until the end of 1821. He had no headquarters — there was no principal town or administrative centre in any of the regions for which he was responsible — and moved between a number of temporary camps or small towns writing letters, restoring order and setting up a revenue and judicial system. He was partly consoled with promotion to major-general, with the award of the G.C.B. and with a salary equal to Elphinstone's as governor because he received army pay in addition to his stipend as a political officer. Shortly before he left India, Munro sent a formal minute to the court of directors proposing that the Company should express, in general orders, its appreciation of Malcolm's distinguished service.42 Elphinstone's feelings were more ambivalent. He attended a farewell banquet for Malcolm at Bombay, observing afterwards that he would miss Malcolm's high spirits and good humour when he had forgotten his noise and egotism. He appreciated Malcolm's "kindness, friendship, and good sense and good humour" and admired, and perhaps envied, his "inexhaustible spirits and impeturbable temper;" qualities he felt he himself lacked, or had to work hard to attain through self-admonition. But he was aware of his "want of

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41 Munro to Malcolm, 15 Oct. 1820, and 15 April 1821, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 75-6.

tolerance for the single defect [egotism] of one of the first and best men I know."⁴³ Although Elphinstone was not egotistic, the numerous entries in his journal recording his feelings and his behavior make him appear very self-absorbed.

From 1822 until 1827, Malcolm remained in Britain dividing his time between a sociable home life, travel to Ireland, Scotland and continental Europe, and writing. He revised his report on Malwa for publication under the title A Memoir of Central India..., expanded his earlier Sketches of the Political History of India into A Political History of India and wrote the Sketches of Persia.⁴⁴

The latter was a compilation of stories and anecdotes drawn from his own experiences in Persia and from Persian life, published in response to James Morier’s Adventures of Hajji Baba⁴⁵ which appeared in 1824. Although Malcolm was intensely critical of Persian government and what he regarded as its deplorable effect on the national character and moral integrity of Persians, he rather liked the Persians’ vitality and quick intelligence. The deceptively light and allusive introduction to his book has two serious purposes. It is to ward off any challenge to his position as the pre-eminent British authority on Persia and to give a more accurate picture of Persia than the one painted by Morier. Although the adventures of Hajji Baba are recounted in the first person singular and every event is ostensibly seen through the hero’s eyes, in fact Morier imposes his own orthodox western values on Hajji’s activities. Beneath an entertaining surface lies a brutal indictment of the moral bankruptcy of Persian culture. Malcolm’s work may be interpreted as more tolerant and, as he stresses, "the sense, the nonsense, the anecdotes, the fables, and the tales, — all...with the exception of a few sage reflections of my own, do actually belong to the good people amongst whom they profess to have been collected.⁴⁶


Malcolm implies that Morier's work should be treated as imaginative literature rather than as a genuine representation of Persian life.\textsuperscript{47}

Malcolm did not send his \textit{Sketches of Persia} to Munro but, as he had done with his work on Malwa, he sent the additions and revisions of the \textit{Political History} to him for his comments. Munro replied in June 1826 that he was impatiently awaiting the last chapter of the work which he proclaimed "by far the most valuable book in our language on our Indian empire, to every person who takes any interest in its stability."\textsuperscript{48} The final phrase probably alludes to Malcolm's main competition, James Mill's \textit{History of British India},\textsuperscript{49} which had appeared in 1817 and was beginning to have some influence on British attitudes towards India and British Indian government. Malcolm described his last chapter to Walter Scott as: "My brains...upon every large question of our administration at home and abroad."\textsuperscript{50} In the concluding paragraph to the two volume work, Malcolm makes what is generally regarded as the classic statement by the "conservative and pragmatic" school of thought on British Indian government associated with his, Munro's and Elphinstone's names.

The change we seek,...must be wrought by the society itself, and come as the result, not as the object of our...labours...;by stimulating the zeal...of those employed in the public service; by liberal encouragement to commerce, and to the introduction of the useful arts of civilized life; by addressing ourselves not only in the substance but mode of administration to the understanding and feelings of those we have to govern; by useful public works; by a moderate assessment of revenue...and toleration of their religious...usages; by institutions founded on sound...principles; by raising into...distinction those of the native population whose services,...talent and integrity, or...influence with their countrymen, make it wise...to elevate; and above all, by governing our vast territories in India with more attention to their interests, and to the character and condition of their inhabitants, than to the wishes and prejudices of those of England, we shall succeed in...accomplishing every plan now in progress

\textsuperscript{47} M.E. Yapp, who argues that Malcolm disliked Persia and the Persians, sees the \textit{Sketches} as a caricature of Persia. See \textit{Strategies}, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{48} Munro to Malcolm, 15 June 1826, quoted in Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 2: 163.


\textsuperscript{50} Malcolm to Scott, 1825, NLS, Ms. 3901.
for the benefit of this...great empire.\textsuperscript{51}

In his preface to the 1970 edition of the \textit{Political History}, K.N. Panikkar points out that in addition to its contemporaneity, which entitles one to treat Malcolm's work as an original source, Malcolm was one of the first writers to make extensive use of government records in writing the history of India. "Intimacy and authenticity are, hence, the hall-marks of his works."\textsuperscript{52} Holden Furber, complaining in the introduction to his edition of the correspondence of Sir John Shore of the inadequate attention his subject had received from historians, observes that the best treatment of Shore's administration is still that given by Malcolm in his \textit{Political History}.\textsuperscript{53} Similarly, Raymond Callahan praises Malcolm's accounts of the Indian Army in the \textit{Political History} and in a review article published in 1818 in the \textit{Quarterly Review}.\textsuperscript{54}

In addition to his approval of the views expressed in Malcolm's literary works, Munro encouraged Malcolm not to give up hope of a governorship. When Malcolm was leaving India in 1821, Munro offered to let him know in advance when he was going to retire, so that Malcolm could "take measures" to be appointed to succeed him. Munro submitted his resignation as governor in September 1823. The same year Malcolm was offered an appointment as resident at Tehran, which he turned down, ostensibly because the government would not give him a credential from the Crown rather than the Company. The shah's perception of the inferior status of an Indian government representative\textsuperscript{55} would curtail his authority and a Crown appointment would do more for his reputation in Britain. It is likely, however, that his decision was influenced by the hope of taking over

\textsuperscript{51} Malcolm, \textit{Political History}, 2: 172-3. The chapter referred to is Chapter 10, the second to last chapter in the edition of the \textit{Political History} edited by Panikkar.

\textsuperscript{52} Editor's preface, Malcolm, \textit{Political History}, 1: v.

\textsuperscript{53} Holden Furber, ed. \textit{The Private Record of a Governor-Generalship: the Private Correspondence of Sir John Shore, Governor-General, with Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control, 1793 - 1798}, (Cambridge, Mass: 1933), p. viii.


from Munro. The governorship of Madras was a vastly preferable appointment to the Company’s residency at Tehran. When Munro’s resignation became known in London in January 1824, Malcolm quickly made it clear to the Company and the government that he wanted the post. In March a letter from Elphinstone told the directors that he, too, wanted it. War was declared against Burma, however, before a dispute between the directors and the government over Munro’s successor had been settled and, in the light of the Burman crisis, Munro offered to stay on.56

Malcolm next turned his thoughts to entering the directorate or standing for election to parliament. When Munro submitted his final resignation in 1826, he wrote to Malcolm to say that he should not enter parliament because he could do far more good by becoming the next governor of Madras; “Nothing will give me greater pleasure.”57 Elphinstone, however, resigned from Bombay at the same time and Malcolm went to Bombay instead. Stephen Lushington, who had the support of the Liverpool administration, became governor of Madras.

Like Malcolm, Elphinstone sent written work to Munro for comments and, as he had done while commissioner for the peshwa’s territories, sought advice as well as information. During Munro’s first months as governor in the summer of 1820, Elphinstone asked for his opinions on a draft of a minute he was writing on the development of a legal code, especially about the expediency of developing judicial regulations compatible with the ryotwari system. He asked for information on the way the Madras College was being organized; he arranged to have all Munro’s minutes on "general subjects" sent to him by Munro’s secretary; and he later thanked Munro for his "particularly instructive" information.58 In 1822, having heard that Munro had instituted a "Native Board of Revenue" at Madras, he asked Munro to explain it to him, as it seemed an excellent way of opening

56 See Douglas M. Peers, "The Duke of Wellington and British India during the Liverpool Administration, 1819-27," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17, (1988), for an interesting account of conflict between the two components of the Home government of British India, the directorate and the British government, and the important role played by Wellington in Indian affairs over the selection of the presidency governors at this time. See also Philips, *East India Company*, pp. 251-4.


the door to "the employment of natives in high and efficient situations." He wanted to know whether Munro was thinking of doing the same for the judicial or any other branch of the service.59

The wording of a request to Munro in 1820 to pass on any ideas that occurred to him "on the subject of our revision of the regulations"60 implies that, although the two men may not have believed a uniform administrative system for their presidencies was feasible, they were aiming to devise regulations, at least in regard to revenue matters and civil law, sufficiently general and flexible to be applied in districts which by tradition had different customs.61

The continuous passage of written material between the two presidencies allowed Elphinstone to benefit both from Munro's extensive experience and from the administrative lessons learned at Madras. On the other hand, Elphinstone's popularity with the directorate and his polished writing style made him a valuable advocate and publicist for the general principles of government on which the two men were agreed.62 In a letter to Elphinstone in April 1823, Munro told him that he had no doubt that Elphinstone and Chaplin's "valuable works...will one day be considered all over India as the best guides for the internal administration of our provinces."63

Munro was made a C.B. in 1818, promoted major-general in 1819 and made K.C.B. on accepting the governorship. In 1825 he was made a baronet in recognition of his services during the First Burma War and for the help he had given to the governor-general, the inexperienced Lord Amherst.64 As a compromise candidate for the governor-generalship, Amherst received little


61 Philips points out that between 1807 and 1823 the directorate and the board of control had both realized that a more flexible system than that of Bengal was required and had encouraged its introduction in Madras. See East India Company, p. 244.

62 Stein, Munro, pp. 326-7.

63 Munro to Elphinstone, 19 April 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 414.

64 See Gleig, Munro, 2: 110-143 for a selection of the correspondence between Munro and Lord Amherst on the First Burma War.
political support from either the Company or the government, making it difficult for him to maintain his authority over Bengal's military and civil officials. In the autumn of 1825 there was a movement in London to recall him, ostensibly because of his conduct of the war, but probably, as Douglas M. Peers suggests, because he had failed to please the directorate while, at the same time, becoming politically expendable to the government. The prime minister, the earl of Liverpool, in a letter to Wellington in October, asked whether Amherst should be recalled and, if so, by whom he should be replaced. Wellington replied that Amherst should be supported. If he had to be replaced, however, Wellington was "clearly of the opinion" that Munro should be appointed governor-general, "because he is peculiarly conversant with Indian warfare; and, in fact, the only intelligent papers which I have seen on the subject of this Burmese war have come from" him. By the end of October Wynn was telling Wellington that the Company was going to insist on replacing Amherst with either Munro or Lord William Bentinck. Wynn supposed that, given the war, Munro would be the better choice, but he wondered, gloomily, whether Munro's authority would equal that of a nobleman sent from England, whether he would be capable of cutting staff appointments and allowances in the army, and whether his unpopularity in Bengal, owing to his support for "ryotwar and judicial reforms" would undermine his position. His age — Munro was sixty-four — was also against him. Differences between the Company and the government delayed a decision and Amherst remained in India, almost entirely owing to the support of Wellington, whose authority on Indian affairs gave him great influence at India House as well as with the government. Munro also defended Amherst.

Munro was kept fully and candidly informed by Ravenshaw about the debate and was confident that if called upon to be governor-general, he would have had no difficulties. Had he been

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offered the post ten years earlier — or even as recently as 1823 when Amherst replaced Hastings — he would "have been delighted with it." But he had first come to India forty-six years before; he ought "according to all ordinary rules, to have been dead seven years ago;" and only his excellent health and "great temperance" had enabled him to endure the rigours of Indian service so long. He was increasingly aware of his age and if appointed governor-general, could not expect to remain more than two years; a period "too short to do any good."68 He never states, however, that he would have declined the appointment if offered it.

The war with Burma ended early in 1826 and Munro, Elphinstone and then Amherst all asked to be relieved; Amherst and Elphinstone returned to Britain, replaced, respectively, by Lord William Bentinck in 1828 and by Malcolm in November 1827. Munro died of cholera in July 1827, before his successor, Lushington, arrived. One of his closest associates in the Madras government, the chief secretary, David Hill, paid tribute to Munro in a letter to Holt Mackenzie thanking him for joining the long list of people "disposed to pay honour to our late incomparable Ruler."

His, without question, was the greatest mind which ever applied itself to the practical study of Indian affairs; and it is infinitely to be rejoiced at that his sentiments upon every branch of them are upon record. Officially and privately he has written I imagine much more on the subject than any other individual: I am sure with much more accurate information and profound and enlarged views. I hope that his writings will be collected, as an inestimable treasury of wisdom and experience to Indian statesmen.69

Many of the writings which demonstrate Munro's profound and enlarged views on Indian government were published three years later in Gleig's Life. In a journal entry from early 1830, Elphinstone mentions reading and being "quite enchanted with" Gleig's work, which consists almost entirely of Munro's own letters. According to Elphinstone, the letters demonstrates that Munro's "judgment and sagacity at nineteen were as superior to those of ordinary people as they were to

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68 Munro to Ravenshaw, 17 May 1826, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 176-7.

69 Hill to Mackenzie, 7 Nov. 1827, NLS, Ms. 6370.
those of his contemporaries when his reputation was more extensive."

Munro's writings, together with those of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Charles Metcalfe, have been identified by Douglas M. Peers as expressing and publicizing an ideology of militarism which came to a peak in British India in the 1820s. In several papers and his persuasive doctoral thesis, Peers sees military fiscalism as the central issue between the Home government and the Indian bureaucracy; in essence, a competition for Indian resources. Anglo-Indians, he claims, argued that the army was the cornerstone of British India because the Company state depended on its efficiency to defend itself from internal and external dangers and, "a form of military fiscalism emerged which argued against the Company's supply-side economics in favour of demand-driven economy where the army's requirements were to be established first." Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone are represented as members of a group of men, well-placed in Indian administration, who, by insisting on "the centrality of the army to the security and prosperity of the colonial state," provided intellectual justification for the appropriation of resources for military purposes.

Various statements by Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, to the effect that the Company's government in India rests on military power, may, indeed, have contributed to the development of militarist attitudes. A strong army, however, was, for them, a means to an end, not an end in itself. Nor did they share, as Peers suggests, Wellington's willingness to sacrifice future progress to security — they recognized the symbiotic relationship between the two and argued that Indian economic and moral improvement would increase the security of Britain's Indian empire just as security from internal unrest and external threats were necessary before economic and moral progress could take place. The three men believed, as Peers states, that British dominion in India

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72 Ibid., p. 387.

was dependent upon military power. They also believed that the army must appear invincible, that the prestige of the government was important and that a long period of peace might affect the efficiency of the army. Everyone in India was aware that a foreign trading company was unlikely to be allowed to govern several previously independent and relatively well-organized states without having a credible threat of force to back it. Many of the numerous statements asserting the dependence of the Company state on military power, however, were for the benefit of those in Britain who, perhaps influenced by Burke’s indictment of Warren Hastings, might be tempted to think that newly conquered territories could be administered under a less despotic form of authority.

In this sense, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were militarists. This does not mean, however, that they thought military rule to be a good system of government. Peers quotes Malcolm as saying that the army was "the only means by which we can preserve India." But Malcolm also said of British India that: "of all governments, that is least likely to command respect over which a sword is always suspended, and which holds existence under respite." The attachment of the sepoys was important to Malcolm because the maintenance of order depended on them, but they could not do that job in perpetuity. The attachment of the civilian population had to be gained by good civil administration. Munro is quoted by Peers as saying "our government rests almost entirely upon the single point of military power." In the unquoted lines of this passage, however, Munro observes that:

there is no native [government] which rests so exclusively upon [military power]...Our situation as foreigners...make[s] it more necessary for us to seek the aid of regular [village governments] to direct the internal affairs of the country, and our security requires that we should have a body of head men of villages interested in supporting

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75 Peers, ibid., p. 120.


our dominion.\textsuperscript{78}

Again, attachment, based on common interest not filial deference, was the object. In the early 1820s, when the general tone of the Company government was quite militarist, Munro told examinees at the College of Fort St. George that everywhere, but most particularly in British India, "the good-will of the people" was the government's strongest support.\textsuperscript{79}

Peers contention that, "it was believed by many, including Munro and Malcolm, that there was no firm and recognised tradition of civil institutions in India," is untenable in regard to Munro, Malcolm or Elphinstone, as is the observation that there was "no widespread conviction that development in itself would lead to enhanced internal security."\textsuperscript{80} The belief that the Company's administrative system should be built upon existing Indian institutions and that prosperity was the best means of attaching the natives were basic assumptions held by all three men. Close to the beginning of his most famous minute, "On the State of the Country and the Condition of the People," written in December 1824, at the beginning of the war with Burma, Munro states that "we must...frame gradually from the existing institutions (my italics), such a system as may advance the prosperity of the country."\textsuperscript{81} In the Political History, Malcolm claimed that "we may be compelled by the character of our government to frame some institutions different from those we found established, but we should adopt all we can of the latter into our system."\textsuperscript{82} Elphinstone told Malcolm in regard to his plans for the administration of the Deccan that he intended to take every precaution to preserve the institutions of the natives as he found them and to do his best to take the

\textsuperscript{78} Munro, quoted in Beaglehole, \textit{Munro}, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{79} Address to Students at the College of Fort St. George, n.d., 1820, quoted in Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 2: 12.


\textsuperscript{82} Malcolm, \textit{Political History}, 2: 99.
people with him rather than "imposing a government by force."\[^83\]

It is possible that, standing on it's own, Munro's statement that "we always are, and always ought to be prepared for war," could be interpreted as "a thinly disguised argument for expansion."\[^84\] That is not, however, what Munro was arguing when he wrote the words in 1820 in a letter to Canning at the board of control. He starts by saying,

I see no reason to expect disturbances from any of the native states now surrounded by our territory. They are all too weak to give us any uneasiness...The Bheels and other plundering tribes, of whom so much has been said, are a miserable race, poor and few in numbers...well treated, they will in a few years become as quiet as any of our other Indian subjects.\[^85\]

He then mentions, as quoted by Peers, that the government should always be prepared for war. His justification, however, is that "this very circumstance gives us the best security for the long enjoyment of peace" and the opportunity, which should be seized, "to improve our own territories."\[^86\]

The detailed research Peers has done on the finances of British India\[^87\] provides a strong argument for the domination of the military interest in Bengal and Bombay presidencies and both Elphinstone and Malcolm tolerated what was happening. They may even have endorsed it; Malcolm was certainly obsessed with military considerations in so far as they might be expected to bring about the attachment of the sepoy troops on whose loyalty British dominion rested.\[^88\] Liberal treatment of sepoys, however, while it might be a drain on the State's resources, does not indicate personal self-interest in appropriating resources for military purposes. Munro's control of expenditures in Madras indicates, not only that he may have learned useful lessons about financial management in


\[^86\] Ibid., 2: 52.


\[^88\] Malcolm, *Political History*, 2: 122-33; Review article, Quarterly Review, pp. 386; 404; 420.
the accounting department of Somerville and Gordon in Glasgow in the 1780s but, also, that he was by no means over-awed by, or even particularly sympathetic to, militarist aspirations.

Nor was he particularly anxious about security. Peers stresses the general fear of internal rebellions, external aggression and the probable relationship between them as Malcolm, among others, argued.\textsuperscript{89} Munro, however, does not seem to have shared these concerns in the 1820s. His observations to Canning about weak "native states" and poor tribes, suggests that he had little fear of Indian enemies while, in a letter to Malcolm written in 1825, he mentions that he has always considered a Russian invasion of India as "impracticable, without the previous conquest of Persia, and the quiet submission of the people to their new masters," neither of which events he thinks to be likely. He concludes somewhat flippantly: "Let us get out of [Ava], and then come Russians and Persians when they will."\textsuperscript{90}

Peers himself points out that, like Wellington, Munro believed firmly in the subordination of the military to the civil authority.\textsuperscript{91} In a memorandum written while on leave in 1812 or 1813, Munro stated that

\begin{quote}
the civil government of India should have a greater control over the military power, than in other foreign dependencies of Great Britain...the authority of government over such an army, [composed mainly of Indians], ought to be maintained by every means not incompatible with the respect due to the commander-in-chief, and...the supreme military power should be vested in the governor-in-council.\textsuperscript{92}
\end{quote}

Munro had no self-interest in supporting the superior authority of governors at this stage of his career — although he may have wished to stress his own non-militarist beliefs to the directorate as he was hoping for an important appointment at the time. As governor of Madras in 1822, he indignantly requested the government and court of directors to express their official displeasure with

\begin{itemize}
\item Munro to Malcolm, 29 Sept. 1825, quoted in Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 2: 156.
\item Munro, memorandum, n.d., 1812-13, quoted in Gleig, \textit{Munro}, 2: 259-60. See also Munro, \textit{Minutes}, 2: 142-3; 153.
\end{itemize}
the Madras military board, for daring to challenge the civil government's — "the supreme authority" — decision on a matter of supply. In December 1823 and April 1825 he submitted two minutes to the commander-in-chief, Madras, insisting that changes in sepoy uniforms must not be made, as they had been recently, simply by directives from the office of the adjutant-general.

It is the duty of the government at all times to see that its own orders and those of the Honourable Court are strictly attended to, but this duty is more especially imperious when the...native army is concerned.\textsuperscript{53}

Munro paid close attention to every aspect of the government of Madras and fiercely defended the civil, but supreme, authority of the governor on every occasion, slight or important, on which it appeared to be challenged. Peers also mentions that Elphinstone warned that "the great problem [in Bengal] has been always to maintain the subordination of the military power to the civil;\textsuperscript{94} an observation which suggests that Elphinstone favoured the supremacy of the civil authority.

In regard to the conduct of the First Burma War, Munro certainly advocated, as Peers points out, "a very forward policy.\textsuperscript{95} He had always claimed, however, that if the British were going to go to war they must, for reasons of economy, do it by means of a vigorous offensive. In 1794 he told his brother, Alexander, "it is always bad and dangerous policy in war to be rigid in proportioning the means to the object in view — it is from this cause that our wars have always been so long and expensive." If men and money are allocated at the beginning of hostilities, "the speedy termination of the war will compensate for the additional expense of preparation.\textsuperscript{96} Gleig included in a list of what he called Munro's "maxims," a statement from a memorandum arguing that "nothing is so


\textsuperscript{94} Elphinstone to Villiers, 19 Aug. 1832, quoted in Peers, "East India Company and it Army," pp. 385-6.


\textsuperscript{96} Munro to his brother Alexander, 6 Dec. 1794, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.
expensive as war carried on with inadequate means." Munro's frequent recommendations for the allocation of extra resources for military purposes during the Burmese war reflected principles of military economy rather than militarist enthusiasm.86

During the course of the war in Burma, Munro suggested that in Pegu, which had only been conquered by the Burmese seventy-five years earlier, the local inhabitants might by encouraged to aid the progress of the Company's army and that the British might detach the region from Burma as part of the peace settlement. Peers points out that the evidence of British officers in Pegu indicated that both aid from local people and the establishment of a semi-independent kingdom in Pegu were pipe-dreams, adding that it is difficult to explain why Munro maintained his argument for so long in face of contradictory evidence. It is possible, however, that Munro maintained his argument because he had already proved, in very practical form, that it was possible to conquer a country with a few troops and the co-operation of the local inhabitants in his campaign in the southern Maratha region in 1818. And there was also evidence, in the successful settlements of Mysore and the Raja of Satara's domain, that semi-independent kingdoms under British hegemony, could be made to work. Peers' suggestion that it may have been a question of "sub-imperialism" is, however, another viable explanation. The supervision of a newly independent Pegu would have fallen to the Madras government and would have helped sustain the presidency's position, relative to the other presidencies, at a time when the eradication of threats to its frontiers made further expansion in India unlikely.99 Munro was always jealous of Madras's status in the empire and was annoyed when he felt its interests were being sacrificed to those of Bengal. Believing, as he seems to have done, that the best long-term form of political organization for the sub-continent was a number of

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87 Munro, memorandum, n.d., quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 309, Appendix 8.


inter-acting but separate states, including the three presidencies and the remaining Indian states, a re-constituted kingdom of Pegu, supervised from Madras, would enhance the presidency's position and provide another semi-independent political unit for the unique imperial formation Munro envisioned. If sub-imperial expansion was behind Munro's interest in Pegu, however, it was for the sake of the presidency, not to expand his own authority because he offered his resignation before the war and was definitely intending to leave India at its end.

In so far as they accepted military despotism as the only form of government capable of maintaining a British presence in India, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone may certainly be designated as "militarists." For them all, however, military power was a means of providing the necessary order under which a better form of civil government could be introduced to India; i.e., was not an end in itself, designed to serve either their own or the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy's interests.

As governors of Bombay, although both Elphinstone and Malcolm were expected to make some attempt at reducing military costs, civil administration took much of their time. Elphinstone held office for eight years while Malcolm stayed for only three, but the opportunities and problems the two men faced were similar. There were two main parts to the job. The first was the effective governance of the native inhabitants of the presidency; the second was the organization of the civil and military employees of the Company in such a way as to achieve the first object as cheaply as possible. The Indian population, through the collection of land revenues, was the main source of income for the government, but as Malcolm emphasized heavily, the Bombay territories were not particularly productive and the presidency's revenues "were not equal to expenses." The cost of the civil service and the army absorbed most of the revenue and sometimes exceeded it. When assessing and collecting the revenue, both Elphinstone and Malcolm followed, in principle, Munro's system; making an accurate survey of the land, then collecting revenue from individual cultivators.

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Land tenures in the regions governed from Bombay, however, were not always the same as those under Madras and collectors were allowed to choose whether they would use the ryotwari system or modify it to suit local practice. In administering justice, Munro's precepts were again used as a framework; civil cases were tried first by Indian judges, and panchayats, although not common in the Bombay territories, were introduced wherever practicable. Both Elphinstone and Malcolm did their best, as a matter of principle, to increase the role of Indians in the revenue administration and the judiciary, although they justified the reforms to the Home government on the grounds of lowering costs.\textsuperscript{101}

Elphinstone's most notable accomplishments as governor were his efforts to develop a code of laws, compatible with both universal principles of justice and Indian custom and tradition — an almost impossible task — and his championship of public education in the vernacular languages, as opposed to the English recommended by would-be westernizing reformers. Ballhatchet examines why, despite Elphinstone's stated objectives: the retention of Maratha systems of administration and law and the maintenance of the status of the Maratha aristocracy, his policies, nevertheless, had long-term, insidious effects on the vitality of local institutions and on the social position of formerly privileged groups. He concludes that Elphinstone's revenue policy had serious repercussions because, "the man with whom the collector made a settlement gained in importance and influence from that very fact," and all men of rank suffered, even when their allowances were continued, because their prestige derived from hidden perquisites of office and rested more on what they could do than on how much they were paid.\textsuperscript{102}

Malcolm was more interested in the improvement of communications and encouraged the construction of roads in India and a steamship link between Bombay and Egypt. But he also tried to improve the efficiency and lower the cost of the public service. He invariably argued, in both his

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 41.

\textsuperscript{102} Ballhatchet, \textit{Western India}, pp. 162: 176.
published and unpublished writings on government, that British rule "must be cheaper and simpler. It must be more a government of supervision in its civil branches than of direct agency." and he took a number of steps to achieve his object.

Both men came into bitter conflict with the Bombay supreme court. Elphinstone’s differences with the chief justice, Sir Edward West, began in 1823 over an issue involving Elphinstone’s friend, the eminent orientalist William Erskine. Erskine was recorder of the court but he had been ill for some time and had allowed a clerk in his office to carry out the business. Some irregularities had occurred, Erskine’s neglect of his duties had been discovered and he had been dismissed. Erskine returned to Britain but Elphinstone became involved in the issue when, in his capacity as president of the literary society, he moved a vote of thanks to Erskine on the Society’s behalf for his services as secretary. Elphinstone concluded his motion with a profession of "esteem and respect" for Erskine which West thought unsuitable under the circumstances. West, who had recently become chief justice, regarded Erskine as guilty of fraud for continuing to hold office when he was physically unable to do the work. Wynn, at the board of control, reprimanded Elphinstone for his untimely compliments to Erskine; calling them prejudicial to the public interest because they exposed the disagreement between the government and the judiciary.

The issue would probably have been forgotten, however, if Elphinstone had not given personal offence to West by not adhering strictly to protocol at a Government House dinner. From this point the differences between the two men degenerated into an acrimonious quarrel that lasted until Elphinstone left Bombay in 1827. West was apparently a difficult man, who quarrelled with other members of the British community, but his public dispute with Elphinstone was discreditable to both. Lord Ellenborough, who succeeded Wynn at the board of control, described West to Wellington as "a most troublesome and dangerous man" who was likely, "by insisting upon a strict

\[159\] Malcolm to John Bac, 23 July 1830, *WSD*, 7: 227.

\[164\] See Choksey, *Elphinstone*, Chap. 22 for a detailed account of the differences between Elphinstone and West.
conformity with all the technicalities of English law, to bring the government of the presidency into contempt and its affairs into disorder." Wellington responded that a "man of sense" would better suit the Bombay supreme court "than a perfect Westminster-Hall lawyer;" a statement he must have remembered when Malcolm became embroiled in a similar dispute.

Aware of the tension between the government and the court during Elphinstone's term, Malcolm had expected trouble. But the assertion, by West's successor, Sir John Grant, that the supreme court had jurisdiction, not merely in Bombay itself but throughout the presidency — a claim precipitated by a case involving a high-status Indian youth, one of the "privileged sirdars" who were under the special protection of the government — turned into a long-drawn out, vituperative and ultimately scandalous dispute. It was finally brought before the privy council which declared in favour of the Bombay government. Malcolm could claim victory. When Grant asked to be allowed to resign and move to Calcutta to practice at the bar, Malcolm warned Bentinck that Grant was hoping to "impress a belief that he resigns because he was not supported, not that he is recalled because his conduct was disapproved." The case had already caused dissatisfaction and agitation among Indians, "and some of them believe that he goes to exercise greater influence in these affairs and probably to rise to higher rank." Grant's recall, Malcolm argued, was necessary to show that "intriguing and venal men" — Europeans as well as Indians — could not use the court to excite opposition to the government.

One of Munro's minutes implies that in Madras also, the judicial branch was attempting to expand the limits of its jurisdiction. It was an issue at the heart of the differences between Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone and the westernizing reformers whose numbers in British India

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165 Ellenborough to Wellington, 2 Jan. 1829, WND, 5: 412.
166 Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 177-195.
167 Malcolm to Bentinck, 6 July 1830, Bentinck, 1: 467-8.
were rapidly increasing. For much of Malcolm's term as governor, he hoped to extend his own jurisdiction by arranging the transfer of Central India from Bengal to Bombay and might have sympathized with Grant's desire for personal aggrandizement. But their differences, as well as Munro's concern over the Madras judiciary's attempts to enlarge its authority and Elphinstone's conflict with West, should be set in a political context. All three men believed in the importance to the government of India of a strong executive arm. There was a principle involved as well as personalities.\textsuperscript{109}

Malcolm wished to limit the jurisdiction of the supreme courts to a few miles beyond the capitals at which they were located, because the people the courts were intended to protect — British subjects, "European half castes,...and that part of the natives who are associated by their ties, their interests, and their occupations with English laws and usages" — formed a community quite different in its attitudes and practices from those of the small towns and villages of India. The British might be able to change the character of Indians over a long period, but they could never change the character of their own form of government. It was foreign and would last, only if "well regulated, but absolute; acting under the strictest responsibility in England, but vested with a power in India efficient to prevent and repress every danger..."\textsuperscript{110} Neither Munro nor Elphinstone was as concerned as Malcolm with the longevity of British rule, but both of them opposed the extension of British-type courts of law into the Indian countryside on grounds of principle — that legal process should be easily understood by the population — and practicality — British-style courts were not understood by most Indians and were a slow and expensive way of enforcing law.

Elphinstone's administration of Bombay is generally regarded as more distinguished than Malcolm's. Kaye claims that "no one ever brought with him from India a higher reputation,"\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{110} Malcolm, \textit{Political History}, 2: 173.

\textsuperscript{111} Kaye, \textit{Lives}, 1: 430. See also Yapp, \textit{Strategies}, p. 53.
while Choksey, who discusses Elphinstone's failure to lower the excessive demands for land revenue, reduce unemployment or solve other problems which produced wide-spread "economic ruin" in the Deccan, nevertheless blames the peshwa rather than Elphinstone. "For a decade could never be enough to set right" the damage done under Baji Rao II's administration. Elphinstone's handling of the presidency's financial affairs, however, was less than distinguished. Recent research by Peers shows that Bombay's accounts for the years 1823 to 1827 indicate a rise in total expenditure of 23%, despite the fact that the Bombay presidency was at peace and taking on no new responsibilities. Madras under Munro by contrast, balanced its books despite taking part in the First Burma War.

The finances of British India were of keen interest to the Home government. Although no detailed figures have been established for Malcolm's short administration, in general his conduct of the government was approved. Ravenshaw, who supplied Bentinck as well as Munro with a great deal of confidential information, complained in 1827 that Lushington, whom he had backed for Madras, had made "a bad start," but Malcolm, "on the contrary is exceeding all expectations formed of him by our council." Some time later he again told Bentinck that Lushington had done everything wrong and in the wrong spirit, but Malcolm was:

getting on very much and generally to the satisfaction of all the authorities at home. I confess myself most agreeably disappointed and if he would only leave others to see his merits without thrusting them before your eyes upon all occasions, he would with me be second only to Munro.

Malcolm's long-hoped for governorship was probably somewhat anti-climatic. Before leaving Britain for Bombay in 1827, Malcolm described to Wellington a "day-dream" in which he was made acting governor-general because Amherst wanted to leave India before a successor could be decided upon, and the measures he executed proved to be so beneficial that he was allowed a full term of

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112 Choksey, Elphinstone, p. 284.


office. He recognized the "almost insurmountable obstacles," however, and, publicly at least, welcomed Bentinck's appointment. Malcolm was also disappointed that he was not allowed to govern Central India from Bombay. He would have liked to make his acceptance of Bombay contingent on the offer of Central India as well, but was in no position to bargain. The question continued to be debated between the board of control, the directorate, the Supreme government at Calcutta and Malcolm long after he had arrived in India; Lady Malcolm even asked Wellington to support her husband in 1828 but to no avail. The Home government ultimately left Bentinck to make the decision. He found so much opposition to the idea that he had no choice but to reject it even though he regarded Malcolm as a friend.

Malcolm resigned from the governorship in December 1830 following the resignation of Wellington as prime minister and, in April the following year, was elected to parliament for Launceston, a seat in the gift of the duke of Northumberland, whom he knew. A staunch Tory, he opposed parliamentary reform, but lost his seat anyway when the Reform Bill was passed in 1832. He spent the last year of his life improving his newly purchased estate in Berkshire and died in London in May 1833. Ballhatchet suggests that the year 1830, when Malcolm, the last of the three men to conclude his service in India left for England, should be seen as a watershed. Quoting Malcolm's regret that "my views of governing this country are too opposed to the pride of conquerors and the general plans of cold calculators to be much approved," he sees Malcolm's departure as the end of an era dominated by certain modes of thought — those of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's school — and the beginning of another in which the tone and priorities are different — those of the westernizing reformers.

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113 Munro to Wellington, 6 Feb. 1827, quoted in Kaye, Malcolm, 2: 479.


115 Bentinck to Melville, 12 Jan. 1829, Bentinck, 1: 141.

116 Ballhatchet, Western India, p. 292.
Elphinstone had left India in November 1827 and travelled home by way of Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Italy and France, arriving in England in May 1829. Ellenborough mentions consulting him about a number of matters relating to India and recorded in his diary that Wellington thought Elphinstone should accept another term at Bombay "with the expectation of afterwards going to Madras." He added that "the Duke has an idea of making him governor-general" in the future. Elphinstone was offered the post of resident at Tehran and a concerted effort was made by his relatives and family friends to persuade him to stand for parliament in Lanarkshire as a Whig. Lastly, in 1834, he was offered the governor-generalship of India and posts as under-secretary to the board of control and as a special commissioner to Canada. He declined all of them. Neither duty, money nor ambition could persuade him to re-enter public life and he spent thirty years in quiet retirement. In 1834, as he began work on his History of India, he received an honorary degree from Oxford University at the suggestion of Wellington, who was chancellor. He later began work on a manuscript published after his death as The Rise of British Power in the East. He died, in November 1859, before completing it.

The names of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone are indelibly associated with a school of thought on Indian government which had a profound influence on the history of British India. Early in their careers they all found that a certain professionalism was necessary to rise high in the Company service, and took steps to acquire the languages and knowledge of India that would enable them to execute successfully, important political and administrative assignments. They all wrote a

119 Ellenborough to Lord Bentinck. 15 May 1830, Bentinck, 1: 439; 11 Aug. 1830, 1: 495.


121 Cotton, Elphinstone, pp. 210-11.

122 Fraser, Elphinstone Family Book, 1: 316.

123 See Donovan Williams, The India Office 1858-1869, (Hoshiapur, Punjab: 1983). Williams argues that although the new arrangements for the government of India made as a result of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 were intended to ensure greater control by the Home government over Indian affairs, the retention of many of the personnel of the old East India Company regime undermined the authority of the Secretary of State and allowed ex-Anglo-Indian officials, for whom Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were "heroes," an influential role in Indian policy-making. P.463.
great deal, to advertise their knowledge and competency to the authorities as well as to provide useful information and advice. This material, when examined in the context of the Scottish culture in which they were raised, establishes the ideological foundations of their school of thought on the government of India.
PART TWO

AS WRITERS

SCOTTISH IDEAS AND INDIAN GOVERNMENT
Many British Indian officials wrote large numbers of letters and reports presenting their own activities in the most favourable light while, at the same time, communicating information, opinions and recommendations to the Supreme and Home governments. Many also wrote books, pamphlets and journal articles to defend their actions, canvass support for cherished policies or merely to make their names known to the general public. But of all the early nineteenth-century writer-officials whose careers were spent entirely in India, none established more enduring reputations than Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone.

Historians are generally agreed that the school of thought on the government of British India of which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were the leading members, was pragmatic and conservative in nature. The word pragmatic is used to imply an absence of ideological commitment while, apparently in contradiction, the name of Edmund Burke is associated with their conservatism. In their official papers on Indian administration, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone certainly emphasise the importance of practical experience over theory in determining policy, and they advocate, as Burke did, the preservation of India's traditional institutions. Their insistence on experience was an assertion, rather than a rejection, of principle, however, and their ideology owed more to the reformist conservatism of Scottish moral philosophy than to Burke.

The features of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's ideology that appear to owe most to Burke, as Eric Stokes, George Bearce and, more recently, Burton Stein suggest, are their appeals to the value of history and experience, their endorsement of traditional institutions and dislike of policies based on speculative theory.¹ No eighteenth-century Scotsman, however, needed Burke to tell him of the uses of history, experience or custom. In discussing the way in which David Hume redirected his intellectual interests from metaphysics to history, Leslie Stephen explains:

> the moral which Hume naturally drew from his philosophy was the necessity of turning entirely to experience. Experience and experience alone, could decide questions of morality and politics; and Hume put his theory in practice when he

abandoned speculation to turn himself to history.²

In a seminal work on the Scottish enlightenment, Gladys Bryson adds: "It was the rare [moral philosopher] who did not begin his investigations with 'Experience' instead of with some large a priori afforded by 'Reason'."³ Most Scottish intellectuals, who used the evidence of history as the data from which to develop theories on a variety of subjects related to man and society, believed their methodology could be classified as empirical, scientific research, not rational speculation. They would have endorsed Munro's opinion that "a few pages of history give more insight into the human mind, and in a more agreeable manner, than all the metaphysical volumes that ever were published."⁴ In The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), Adam Smith claimed that the traditional ranks and orders in society, like customs and traditions, were necessary for stability.

It may...be hard to convince [the individual] that the prosperity and preservation of the state require any diminution of the powers, privileges, and immunities of his own...order....This partiality, though it may...be unjust, may not,...be useless....while it sometimes appears to obstruct some alterations of government which may be fashionable and popular at the time, it contributes in reality to the stability and permanency of the whole system.⁵

Twenty years earlier Hume had stated that men not only reconciled themselves to long-established practice but gained an affection for it that "makes us prefer it to other objects, which may be more valuable, but are less known to us."⁶ From the evidence of their writings, these views represent, precisely, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's opinions on the value of Indian institutions — they contributed to stability — and the way Indians were likely to feel about their own traditions and customs.

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⁴ Munro to his sister Erskine, 15 Sept. 1795, quoted in Gleig. Munro, 1: 170.
⁵ Smith, Theory. p. 231.
⁶ Hume, quoted in Bryson. Man and Society. p. 156. The statement appeared in Hume's Treatise on Human Nature which was first published in 1739.
Inevitably, because their thought derived from a similar intellectual heritage, Burke and the Scottish philosophes shared many ideas. Burke, however, held more orthodox religious views, was less interested in psychology and theories of the progress of civilization and did not write history. These aspects of contemporary Scottish thought, however — Moderatist religious attitudes, perceptions of human nature, proto-sociological explanations of institutional development, contemporary theories on political economy and the methods and uses of philosophical history — are particularly important in explaining Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's approach to Asian society and government. This is not to say that any of the three men had plumbed the work of men like Hume, Smith and Adam Ferguson in great depth. They had merely heard the issues discussed and read some of the books in the way their authors intended: as accounts of social and political organization and of the principles of economics and morality that would prepare their readers for "every honourable office in life," as Francis Hutcheson put it, "and quench the manly and laudable thirst you should have after knowledge." The subjects and methods of study on which there was a loose consensus in late eighteenth-century Scottish intellectual circles reflected practical rather than speculative interests.

The first chapter of Part Two examines the methods and techniques favoured by late eighteenth-century Scottish authors when writing history or providing an historical context for the discussion of political, economic, social and moral issues. The second examines the ideas about mankind and society current in intellectual circles in Scotland between the 1760s and 1790s; the formative years of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. The third, fourth and fifth chapters establish the relationship between Scottish moral philosophy and the assumptions about religion, forms of government and economic progress evident in their works.

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Chapter 7

Philosophical History

I believe this to be the historical age and this the historical nation.

David Hume

History was a popular form of literature in most European countries in the late eighteenth century, but many Scotsmen besides Hume believed that their countrymen had a peculiar aptitude for it. In his History of Great Britain, Hume observed that "tis well known, that the English have not much excelled in that kind of literature." 9 William Robertson criticized Voltaire for failing to cite his sources and for paying too much attention to intellectual activities; like many Scotsmen, Robertson believed that intellectual development could not be separated from the study of society as a whole. 10 Sir James Mackintosh attributed the lack of good historians in France to "Absolute monarchy...[which even] in its most moderate form, is, no doubt, destructive of the free spirit which is the soul of history" — an opinion that may have influenced Malcolm’s wordier observation that the Muslim "annalists of despotism" were unable to attain "any portion of that excellence which belongs to those who, living under happier auspices, have mixed the wisdom of philosophy with the facts of history." 11 Even the Englishman. Edward Gibbon, in a tribute to the work of Hume, Robertson and Adam Smith on the history of "the progress of European society," spoke of the "strong ray of philosophic light [that] has broke from Scotland." 12 Whether or not such opinions

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9 Ibid., p. 25. Hume was referring to Camden’s history of Queen Elizabeth, which he regarded with cautious approval. See also, Black, Art of History, p. 14.


were justified, they indicate a high degree of self-confidence in Scottish historiography and, until the 1790s, everyone in Scotland read and discussed history and almost everyone with literary aspirations made some attempt to write it. In the preface to his History of Persia, the men whose help and advice Malcolm acknowledged were all Scotsmen: James Mackintosh, William Erskine and, in particular, Alexander Hamilton.

Although Malcolm and Elphinstone's historical works were written in the early nineteenth century when fashions in historical writing were beginning to change, they wrote history that was typical of the Scottish enlightenment — new European trends no doubt took time to reach and influence men working in India. The work of the late eighteenth century's greatest historians, Hume, Robertson and Gibbon, has been described as exemplifying rationalist ideals. The term philosophical history is now more generally used, however, to describe their work, which differs in important respects from both the so-called rationalist history of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the nineteenth-century Whig interpretation of history.

The methodology of philosophical history, which was expected both to instruct and to entertain, called for a narrative of the events of a particular time and place, accompanied by an explanation of the origins and significance of political, social, economic and cultural developments in accordance with the philosophical beliefs of the historian. Original documents and contemporary accounts, critically evaluated, were the favoured source material. (Hume's works of history, based largely on secondary material, are exceptions.)

Malcolm, in writing his History of Persia and Sketch of the Sikhs, and Elphinstone in his

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13 Bryson, Man and Society, p. 78.

14 Malcolm, Persia, 1: xi-xii.

15 Peardon, Transition in English Historical Writing, p. 1.

16 For discussions of the Scottish Enlightenment and the study of history see Bryson, Man and Society, Chap. 4; Peardon, The Transition in English Historical Writing, Chaps. 1-3; Nicholas Phillipson, Hume, (London: 1989); Black, Art of History, pp. 77-141; J.V. Price, David Hume, (New York: 1968), Chap. 5; David Hume, History of Great Britain, editor's introduction; Robertson, Progress, editor's introduction.
Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and History of India, both tried to be meticulous in explaining the strengths and weaknesses of their often unsatisfactory sources for early history, although Elphinstone told Malcolm that he ought to have given "some account of every history you quote, to show the claim it has to credit." Writing to his friend and fellow historian William Erskine, Elphinstone complained that social and cultural matters were beneath the dignity of Persian historians and could only be investigated by examining travel accounts, laws and regulations, biographies and letters, legends, and, "above all, tales." Elphinstone believed the last to be particularly useful because they were derived from the author's own observations and were adapted to suit his readers' beliefs. Chaucer, he claimed, depicted the way of life in Richard II's time more accurately "than the 170 volumes of Petitot do at any one period in France." Hume's rejection of fable as an historical source was cited by James Mill to justify his own rejection of Hindu myths and legends, but Adam Ferguson, like Malcolm and Elphinstone, believed they could be helpful. The Iliad or the Odyssey, Ferguson believed, revealed "the conceptions and sentiments of the age" and illustrated the genius of the people "with whose imaginations they were blended." Malcolm believed that the character of a people, as well as of an individual, could often "be better appreciated from anecdotes than from mere narration of events."

When sources were inadequate, philosophical historians — including Malcolm and Elphinstone — turned to conjecture. Malcolm found that the records of ancient Persia had been destroyed by the followers of Muhammad. Old Testament scriptures were unsatisfactory "from the scantiness of facts, the confusion of dates, the errors arising from the proper names in different languages." Greek historians, particularly Xenophon, used history to instruct their own rulers,

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18 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 71.

19 Malcolm, Persia, 1: xi.
ascribing "every quality that can dignify human nature" to ancient kings and peoples whose real history they knew little about, which allowed them "full scope for the indulgence of their imagination." Malcolm himself relied heavily on Ferdosi’s great historical poem, the "Shah Namah," written in the eleventh century. In Ferdosi’s account, the rule of Jamshecid lasts for seven hundred years and witnesses the development of social ranks, the foundation of cities, the invention of arms, the teaching of astronomy and other progressive developments, which lead Jamshecid to become so vain that he declares himself a god. "This impiety brought disaster;" Persia, after a period of unexampled prosperity, was invaded and devastated by a savage foreign prince. Malcolm provides a classical conjectural explanation that suggests the influence of Ferguson:21

May we not, without presumption, conclude that this is a general account of a people's history for a certain period? It describes their emerging from a savage state, in which men have few wants, and consequently few distinctions, either in rank or occupation; their division into the classes of a more civilized community; their becoming industrious, rich and prosperous; their lapsing into a state of luxury and irreligion; and consequently, falling an easy conquest to a foreign enemy. This seems a plain interpretation of the history of Jamshecid as related by Persian authors.22

In his History of India, Elphinstone provides a typical conjectural history of the probable origin of caste divisions in Hindu society and attributes them to the desire of the priestly class to perpetuate existing institutions in order to assure their own control over innovation.23

Conjectural history was justified by Dugald Stewart, who explained that most societies took important steps to progress before they kept records. With no direct evidence, historians were forced to speculate from the nature and physical situation of a particular society, how it was likely to have acted. Travellers’ accounts of contemporary societies in "earlier stages of development" could be

26 Ibid., 1: 231-3; 263.
21 See Ferguson, Civil Society, Part II, Sections II and III, pp. 81-107.
22 Malcolm, Persia, 1: 209.
used as "landmarks" for speculation: "when we cannot trace the process by which an event has been produced, it is often of importance to be able to show how it may have been produced by natural causes." Munro, in a report to the Madras government during his settlement of Kanara, provides a conjectural account of the historical reasons for the traditionally low land revenue assessment of a particular district. He supposes that the original assessment must have been "extremely moderate," otherwise the rocky terrain, "broken by deep gullies formed by the torrents which fall during the monsoon," would have been too expensive and required too much labour to cultivate.

Ferguson's An Essay on the History of Civil Society and John Millar's Origin of the Distinction of Ranks are probably the best known works to rest mainly on conjectural or theoretical techniques. Thematic and comparative in method and universal in their scope, they explore issues such as "the decline of nations" and "the condition of women in different ages," approaching the history of society in a way hailed by some as the forerunner of modern sociology, although not today regarded as history. To contemporaries like Hume, Robertson and Adam Smith, however, and to Malcolm and Elphinstone who modelled their histories on late-eighteenth century examples, conjectural history was a proper approach to the study of past societies.

Like most philosophical historians, Elphinstone and Malcolm were at some pains to analyze Asian societies according to the standards of the stage of civilization they believed them to have reached. This approach may have owed something to the development of "the historical gospel of sensibility." Hugh Blair, Henry MacKenzie and the other Scottish "sentimentalists" hoped to inspire their listeners and readers with an interest in the "concerns of our brethren;" so they would

24 Dugald Stewart, quoted in Peardon, Transition in English Historical Writing, pp. 13-14.
"feel along with them...[and] take part in their joys and sorrows." A capacity for sympathy, Blair believed, should be the core of modern ethics. It was more valuable to society than laws because it bred "mutual confidence and union among men."

Malcolm’s sensibility to the feelings of Indians was widely acknowledged in British India and many anecdotes in Sir John Kaye’s biography attest to his sympathy for defeated princes, loyal sepoys and oppressed peasants. Elphinstone, in a fragment written shortly after his friend’s death, paid tribute to Malcolm’s possession "in an eminent degree, [of] the power of gaining the attachment of those with whom he associated, and [he] was, at one time of his life, the most popular man with all classes that ever was known in India." Malcolm may not have deliberately followed the maxims he would have heard while attending Blair’s sermons in Edinburgh in 1794 and 1795, but his genuine interest in human psychology and his sensitivity to the way he imagined others would feel were a key part of his approach to diplomacy and administration. In his Bombay journal, James Mackintosh mentions that Malcolm annotated the copy of Hume’s history of England’s Tudor dynasty he had been reading, while writing the History of Persia, with the perceptive observation: "The head cannot join the heart respecting Mary; nor can the heart follow the head about Elizabeth." People’s feelings, not least his own, were important to Malcolm.

When applied to the study of history, the concept of sympathy encouraged historians to try to see events from the perspective of the people they were studying; to judge earlier, or other contemporary, societies by their own standards. In discussing Mahmud of Ghazni, who, had conquered between 997 and 1030, an empire extending from the Caspian Sea to the Punjab,

28 The idea of "sympathy" that was popularized by the sentimentalists should not be confused with Adam Smith’s more complex use of the concept of "sympathy" in regard to moral motivation. See Smith, Theory, Part 1, pp. 9-66.

29 Blair, quoted in Dwyer, "Clio," p. 59.

30 Elphinstone, fragment written in 1833, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 331.


32 See Elphinstone, India, 1: Book 5, Chap. 3, pp. 532-77 for Elphinstone’s description and observations on Mahmud’s reign.
Elphinstone places the empire-building in what he believes to be the correct historical context. Mahmud had been treated harshly by earlier European historians for his supposed religious bigotry. Elphinstone points out that although Mahmud had been attentive to the forms of Islam, he had, in fact, been charged with scepticism by Muslim historians and he argues that Mahmud's military ventures were carried out, not to gain converts to Islam, but because conquest was "in his day," the greatest source of glory and gain. Like Malcolm, Elphinstone used Ferdosi's "Shah Nahmah" as an historical source, but he also used a story about its origins to illustrate aspects of Mahmud's personality. The poem had been commissioned by Mahmud to record the achievements of the kings and heroes of ancient Persia. Elphinstone observes that a remarkable feature of the poem, "perhaps an indication of the taste of the age," is Ferdosi's fondness for ancient Persian words and his "studious rejection of the Arabic" — the language of Mahmud's Muslim predecessors who had destroyed the records of the events Mahmud wished to celebrate.

Similarly, Elphinstone relates a story about the writing of the poem because "it throws a strong light on Mahmud's literary ardour; and is improved in interest as well as authenticity by its incidental disclosure of the conqueror's characteristic foible." This is avarice. Mahmud paid Ferdosi in silver when he had promised gold. Ferdosi responded with "a bitter satire," aimed at his patron, and prepared to flee the country to escape Mahmud's anger. But the ruler was magnanimous. He forgot the satire, remembered only the great epic poem and sent ample remuneration to the poet. "The satire, however, has survived. It is to it we owe the knowledge of Mahmud's base birth; and to it beyond doubt, is to be ascribed the presentation of the memory of his avarice, which would otherwise long ago have been forgotten." Satires and stories were acceptable source materials which might provide insight into aspects of history often missing from more conventional documents.

Although Elphinstone considered the context of the time in his interpretation of historical events, he nevertheless criticized Malcolm's History of Persia for "the tone of apology for all the acts

33 Ibid., 1: 564-9.
of cruelty and tyranny" it records. Malcolm defended his work on the ground that people were better off under a strong despotism than under a weak and disorderly one and that, in Asia, it was the duty of the ruler to punish crime. The executions he ordered were not necessarily mere caprice and his sentences not necessarily unjust "because the forms are different from ours." Discussing Persian law Malcolm provided an analogy between Asia and Europe:

Let us imagine in the present tranquil state of our own country, that all criminals whom the laws condemn were sentenced by our king, and that the court-yard of St. James's was the place of execution. Though his sentences might be as just as those of our judges, yet the monarch would be deemed a sanguinary despot.35

Malcolm's work often suggests the influence of Adam Ferguson who had made a similar observation about European and Asian legal practice in his Essay on Civil Society.

When a basha, in Asia, pretends to decide every controversy by the rules of natural equity, we allow that he is possessed of discretionary powers. When a judge in Europe is left to decide, according to his own interpretation of written laws, is he in any sense more restrained than the former?36

Elphinstone's reputation for sympathy and objectivity has no doubt been helped by comparisons between James Mill's interpretation of Indian history and his own. Mill, like other philosophical historians, provided a narrative of events accompanied by explanations of their significance in accordance with his own philosophical beliefs. He would have endorsed Elphinstone's advice to William Erskine to "be bold...and do not think that the History itself is of so much importance as your own opinions,"37 and Elphinstone's criticism of Erskine's work to Sir John Kaye. Erskine's historical writing, according to Elphinstone, suffered from an excessive attention to detail which took up too much time and bored the general reader, who would have been more interested

34 Elphinstone to Malcolm, 11 Sept. 1816, quoted in ibid., 1: 323.

35 Malcolm, Persia, 1: 555.

36 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 263.

in listening to the author's conclusions "and the reflections they suggested." But Mill, who in attacking Sir William Jones's sympathetic conservative approach to Indian culture was indirectly attacking British conservatism, argued that any society or form of government could be judged and prescribed for, from a distance, on the basis of rational principle. There was no place in Mill's scheme for either empiricism or sensibility. Elphinstone excused Mill's biases, conceding that. "As the disciple of a school of philosophy advancing new opinions, Mill was obliged to resort to argument to establish his principles and destroy those opposed to him." But he defended his own approach on the ground that

the excellence of histories derived from European researches alone does not entirely set aside the utility of similar enquiries conducted under the guidance of impressions received in India; which, as they arise from a separate source, may sometimes lead to different conclusions.

Elphinstone thought that, in general, Mill's account of pre-British Indian history took "much the same view of affairs as I do, at least not more unfavourable to the actors." But its "cynical, sarcastic tone" was offensive. On the British period he felt that Mill's imagination was inadequate to deal successfully with Warren Hastings, because Mill was "a mortal enemy of all heroic propensities," and his work suffered from a harshness which lay "more in sneers and sarcastic expressions than in colouring the facts." Elphinstone disagreed with some of Mill's conclusions, thought that he paid too much attention to the controversies over Hastings', Cornwallis's and Wellesley's administrations and too little to the results of them, and saw Mill's "want of sympathy with great...characters — indeed, with anybody except men suffering injustice," to be a serious fault. And "even in this most honourable exception, it is rather indignation at the oppression than tenderness for the sufferer that

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41 Elphinstone to William Erskine. 22 Aug. 1833, quoted in ibid., 2: 341.
David Hume would appear to have been Elphinstone’s model historian.

I now see with wonder the extent and variety of his powers. Eloquent, glowing, picturesque, almost poetical, he flows on in animated and absorbing narrative, exciting all our feelings, and yet pregnant with profound reflections and impressive lessons of morality. How can one be surprised that such powers of eloquence and imagination, combined with and restrained by the soberest judgment and the calmest philosophy, should produce a History with which no modern attempt can stand a moment’s competition?

All these comments, made as late as the 1840s, together with the hope, expressed in the introduction to his history of *The Rise of the British Power in the East*, that an understanding of India’s historical experience would “contribute to just views of the present and wise resolutions for the future,” suggest that Elphinstone’s historiographical taste remained firmly rooted in the Scottish enlightenment.

M.E. Yapp suggests that Malcolm’s *History of Persia* is flawed by the focus on Persian customs and manners, the extra detail on eighteenth-century Persia and the emphasis on defining the Persian national character. It indicates a pre-occupation with the contemporary condition of Persia rather than with its whole history. Judged by today’s standards this is no doubt true. These are all aspects of Malcolm’s work, however, that would have been regarded as strengths rather than weaknesses by contemporary historians and readers of history. William Robertson, in his masterly essay *The Progress of Society in Europe*, traces developments that historians would now describe as state-building and military fiscalism, which led to the recognition of the concept of the balance of power as a regulator of international relations. It was a concept of enormous contemporary interest. The first volume of Hume’s *History of Great Britain* has been described as “the vital sector

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42 Elphinstone, *journal*, 7 June 1840, quoted in ibid., 1: 355. See Part 2, Chap. 4 below for a discussion of the differences between Mill’s ideological assumptions and those of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone.


45 Yapp, "Historians of Persia," p. 346.
on the historiographical front in Hume's campaign to educate the Whigs in political realities, to promote 'moderation' in politics, and provide the Establishment...with a respectable, modern, post-revolutionary intellectual basis." This was most certainly a contemporary issue. Both Robertson and Hume enhanced their reputations by writing history, making a great deal of money from their work. Elphinstone and Malcolm were never rich or renowned enough to disregard the financial rewards or personal satisfaction that could be attained by catering to contemporary taste.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were working in India and writing about India between 1780 and the 1840s (when Elphinstone's History of India was published). It was a period which saw the transition from pre-colonial to colonial rule in India while, in Europe, the forms of the discourse that became known as orientalism were being constructed; the successful "exercise of power by one society over another" — in the words of P.J. Marshall's useful reduction of the loaded term imperialism to its lowest common denominator — and its carefully constructed intellectual and cultural rationalization. The importance of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's role in the transition to colonial rule is well-recognized, but the relationship between their texts on India and other Asian societies and the development of orientalism is more difficult to establish, despite the fact that works of philosophical and conjectural history played a significant part in the development of orientalist attitudes.

Edward Said's Orientalism, published in 1979, was the catalyst for the recent surge of interest in the phenomenon of orientalist discourse. His general definition of the subject is useful, although his concept of a uniform orientalism cannot be sustained, as B.J. Moore-Gilbert suggests,

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when India is taken into consideration as well as the Islamic Middle East. According to Said, an orientalist is one who "teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient, while orientalism is a way of thinking which, founded on a metaphysical conception of the nature of being and on epistemological beliefs, makes a clear distinction between "the East" and "the West." It is also "a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient;" for describing it, making statements about it, ruling over it and establishing authoritative opinions on it. Ronald Inden, in a recent analysis of orientalist discourse, discusses the relationship of knowledge to power and what he calls commentative, explanatory and hegemonic accounts, all of which play central roles in the development and teaching of orientalism. Specialized knowledge, which allows those who possess it to speak with authority, to instruct and to exert leadership, provides the foundation stone of orientalism. Knowledge is transmitted by description, in which the thoughts and acts of subjects are represented to the reader. Commentative accounts provide a framework in which the thoughts and acts are classified according to some accepted system. Explanatory, or interpretive, accounts represent what is "strange and incoherent" in the subject in a way to make it seem rational or normal. Hegemonic accounts are the texts used "by scholars and their administrative doubles" to establish their authority and maintain the precedence of their "knowledge" over the knowledge of rivals. Said claims that for most of the nineteenth century the Orient was studied mostly from books and manuscripts, particularly from texts of what was regarded as "the classical period" of whatever society was being examined. But as

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51 Said, Orientalism, p. 3.
53 Ibid., p. 36.
54 Ibid., pp. 38: 41-2; 43.
55 Said, Orientalism, p. 52.
Gyan Prakash points out,\textsuperscript{56} from the time of the publication of James Mill's \textit{History of British India} in 1817, on-the-spot official reports, surveys and submissions to parliamentary inquiries joined translations of Persian and Sanskrit literature and historical interpretations to bolster the canon of literature which represented the Orient to the West. "Orientalism was a European enterprise from the very beginning." Both scholars and audience were European; "Indians figured as inert objects of knowledge."\textsuperscript{57}

By these criteria, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone are orientalists. They acquired knowledge on Asian topics largely in order to establish themselves as authorities. They researched, wrote about and hoped to teach western audiences about Asia and, as cultural mediators, they passed on their knowledge by means of their own written texts. Malcolm and Elphinstone both used commentative and explanatory accounts in their works of history, classifying subjects and ordering them according to the methods of the genre known as philosophical history and the ideology of late eighteenth-century moral philosophy. Their texts were hegemonic in the sense that they presented their knowledge of India and other parts of Asia with didactic purpose. But their texts never achieved hegemonic status because their knowledge of the Orient, which represented late eighteenth-century principles and assumptions, was quickly superseded — in the case of Elphinstone's \textit{History of India} before it was written — and their interpretations never took precedence over the "knowledge" of their rivals. Inden points out that the challenge to the hegemony of Mill's \textit{History of British India} posed by Elphinstone's \textit{History of India} was easily repulsed.\textsuperscript{58}

The organizing principle of orientalism was essentialism; the Orient as object, separate from and different from the Occident; the "other" to the west's "self." This central dichotomy, the concept


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 384.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 45.
of self and other, encompasses three more important binary classifications: static-progressive; unitary-diverse; material and rational as against emotional and spiritual.\textsuperscript{59} If these categories are inherent in orientalist discourse, then Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone cannot be classified as orientalists in Said's sense for, although they recognized cultural differences, their organizing principle was the universality of human nature. They did not see Indian and Western society in opposition to one another. Elphinstone complimented Malcolm on the "eminent degree" to which his \textit{History of Persia} demonstrated a "knowledge of human nature and of Asia" -- not of the nature of Asia.\textsuperscript{60}

Comparisons feature prominently in orientalist constructions. Analogies provide a convenient, if misleading, way of explaining aspects of an Asian society's beliefs and practices to an audience with no first hand experience of Asian life. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone used them frequently. Where orientalists tended to emphasize differences, however, they stressed similarities. Their comparisons were intended to bring the two cultures closer together; although Malcolm and Elphinstone tended to compare the Indians -- or Afghans or Persians -- of their own day with an earlier stage in European civilization. Munro recognized many likenesses between contemporary Indians and Britons. He acknowledges, for example: "The more intelligent brahmins in their knowledge of politics and finance — and in ideas of justice — differ little from Europeans;"\textsuperscript{61} a statement which does not belong in a discourse of domination.

The existence of a dichotomy between the rational and material west and the emotional and spiritual essence of Hinduism is entirely absent from Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's representations of India, because they did not see the west as essentially rational nor India as much

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., pp. 384-5.

\textsuperscript{60} Elphinstone to Malcolm, 11 Sept. 1816, quoted in Colebrooke, \textit{Elphinstone}, 1: 320.

\textsuperscript{61} Munro to his mother, 5 Oct. 1794, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.
less materialist than Britain. A secular approach to religion in general and an interest in proto-sociological explanations of the origins, purpose and institutional organization of religion deflected their attention from anything more spiritual than a vaguely defined monotheism or deism, while their apparent acceptance of Scottish enlightenment views on the relative importance of feelings, or emotions, compared with rationality, precluded a perception of India as an emotional and spiritual "other." In his recommendations of policies that were intended to lead to economic improvement Munro, at least, seems to have assumed that Indians would be as motivated by self-interest and material considerations as any Lowland Scottish yeoman farmer.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone did not see India as homogenous in opposition to western heterogeneity. They recognized, and recommended the preservation of, many of the different regional forms of administration that prevented the British from imposing their own practical manifestation of a unitary state, and compared the Indian sub-continent with continental Europe in its diversity. While acknowledging the importance of caste to Indians, Munro did not see it as either the governing element in a homogeneous world or as a somehow substantialized alternative to human agency in Indian history. He stated in an official paper that "The influence of caste in India, however great, is insignificant compared to that which the head men of the villages possess from their hereditary station as chiefs of the municipality."62

In regard to progress, as opposed to the representation of Indian stasis, Elphinstone believed that, at the time of Akbar's death, India had been on the threshold of progress similar to that of early modern Europe, but "extrinsic causes" had interrupted the "liberal spirit of inquiry" that was Akbar's legacy.64 Munro, at the time he still feared Mysore as an enemy, saw Tipu Sultan's régime as capable in time of bringing material progress to his state.

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62 Inden, Imagining India, p. 71.

63 Munro, memorandum, 1808, Mss. Eur., F/151/23.

64 Elphinstone, India, 2: 315.
Although Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone made sweeping generalizations about individuals and groups which reflect stereotyped characterizations of Muslims and Hindus, and Malcolm and Elphinstone were typical philosophical historians, commenting on and explaining Asian societies and forms of government according to their own ideological beliefs, in regard to India, which they knew well, their opinions are not those of orientalists as Said defines them.

Philosophical history was the product of a symbiotic association of history and moral philosophy. History played a curious, dual role in intellectual discourse: it was the preferred medium for the expression of philosophical principles as well as providing the empirical evidence from which those principles were derived. In other words, it contributed to both the deductive and inductive processes of reasoning that were used interchangeably by the Scottish philosophers. Historical theories were used to analyze contemporary conditions; historical evidence provided cautionary examples, and the writing of history was used, as Malcolm explained, "to instruct future ages by [the] narration of the events of the past." It became the favoured channel of dissemination for philosophical ideas, partly because financial incentives and their didactic purposes encouraged the Scottish philosophes to present their material in a form as comprehensible to general readers, including fourteen-year-old university students and soldiers on leave from India, as to fellow enlighteners. Malcolm and Elphinstone used philosophical history to develop their ideas on Asian society and government, to advertise their knowledge and to disseminate warnings and advice to those responsible for the government of British India.

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Chapter 8

Moral Philosophy

The ultimate object of philosophical inquiry is the same which every man of plain understanding proposes to himself, when he remarks the events which fall under his observation, with a view to the future regulation of his conduct. The more knowledge of this kind we acquire, the better can we accommodate our plans to the established order of things, and avail ourselves of natural powers and agents for accomplishing our purposes.

Dugald Stewart

Although the Scottish philosophers spoke of their "experimental methods," their research was based rather on "a rough, common sense empiricism" in which introspection and the study of history provided much of the information they needed for the development of their ideas. "A rough, common sense empiricism" would have been accepted by Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as an apt description of their own methodological approach to the problems of Indian government, for their analysis of the problems, and the solutions they suggested seem to owe a great deal to Scottish ideas. This chapter looks at the most important assumptions common to Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone and to many of Scotland's most influential intellectuals.

In the context of the history of ideas, the period of the Scottish enlightenment belongs neither to the "Age of Reason" nor to the so-called "Age of Belief in the Idea of Progress." The Scots believed in the utility of reason but not in its omnipotence; in the possibility of progress but not in its inevitability. The most apt generic label for the period from the 1750s to the 1790s would

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1 Stewart, Outlines, p. 2.

2 Bryson, Man and Society, p. 17.

probably be the "Age of Social Science" in the literal sense that the Scottish moral philosophers were attempting to apply the mathematical, empirical and experimental methods used so successfully by Isaac Newton in the development of his scientific theories, to determining the place of man and society in a general scheme of the universe. Moral philosophy was the matrix of the social sciences. Although the Scots were neither sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, nor economists in any modern sense, the sociological aspects of general enlightenment thought reached their most mature and sophisticated level in Scotland between the 1760s and 1790s — the golden age of the Scottish enlightenment and the formative years of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. The type of explanation the moral philosophers provided for the development of systems of government, civil and military institutions, social structures, the relationship between the sexes and patterns of human behaviour among other topics, was based on their interpretation of human psychology, a determinist explanation of historical change and on a secular but not necessarily atheistic view of religion.

For the moral philosophers, annals, which were regarded as simplistic, were no longer an acceptable type of history. An alternative principle of explanation, to which past actions could be referred, had to be established that was sufficiently all-encompassing to replace Divine Will or rational intent as the motive force for historical change. The Scottish philosophers turned to a belief in the universal character of human nature, with its impulse to economic and moral self-improvement, to provide the new organizing principle; what today might be referred to as the deep structural basis for historical change. Cause and effect were examined "to show how...one cause, prepared the way for another, and augmented its influence," with particular attention paid to the unintended consequences of events. Cultural diversity was accounted for by theories of the social

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stages of development and of national characteristics, produced by peculiar geographic, religious and political circumstances.

Malcolm states, explicitly, that "human nature is always the same in whatever garb it is clothed," and that Indians should be judged "by a standard...suited to their belief, their usages, their habits...and the stage of civilization to which the community as a whole are advanced."\(^7\) He describes Zoroastrianism, for example, as an agent of progress in so far as it was monotheistic and promoted industry, virtue and order. Zoroaster had adapted his ideas to the stage of his society's development in order to achieve his objectives, but the introduction of flame as a symbol of God had led to an unexpected and undesired consequence: the spread of superstition.\(^8\)

Many of Munro's observations that stress the similarities rather than differences between Indians and Europeans indicate his belief in a universal human nature. There is no reason to believe, he states, that Indians are inferior to Britons in natural talent — both possess an equal mixture of good and bad qualities — and he claims to have "no faith in the modern doctrine" of the rapid improvement of the Hindus, or any other people. Munro also warns of the uncertainties of cause and effect when writing of the danger of haste in committing the government to permanent measures "of which we cannot possibly foresee the consequences, and which may often be quite contrary to our expectations."\(^9\) Conversely, William Robertson described the Crusades as "a singular monument to human folly," but nevertheless saw them as having had beneficial consequences "which had neither been foreseen nor expected."\(^10\) According to Adam Smith,

On the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might chuse

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\(^6\) Ibid., 1: 413, 194.

\(^9\) Munro,"On the Employment of Natives in the Public Service," 31 Dec. 1824, MM, 2: 319; Munro, minute, 8 Aug. 1820, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 16; Munro to Canning, 30 June 1821, quoted in ibid., 2: 57. Munro, memorandum, 1820-1, quoted in Gleig, Munro, Appendix 3, 2: 263.

\(^10\) Robertson, Progress, pp. 22: 25.
to impress upon it.11

Elphinstone, in his last work, *The Rise of British Power in the East*, written at a time when Whig historians were declaiming the importance of great men and great ideas as the motive force for historical change, saw the political involvement of the East India Company in Indian affairs, not as the result of conscious decisions to acquire territorial possessions or political power but — as the Scottish philosophers would have done — as the result of structural forces beyond the control of individuals. Despite the fact that the Company's goals had always been strictly commercial, he observes, the "requisite intercourse with local Governments" and rivalry with European powers had "compelled them and all others in that age, to engage in political and military transactions."12 Malcolm observes, in regard to the subjection of India by the British, that the causes of great revolutions are to be found, "not in the successful issue of the complex schemes of ambitious statesmen, but in the simple operation of natural and obvious causes."

Elphinstone was particularly impressed by the concept of stages of development, making many comparisons between contemporary Asian society and earlier stages in European development. In his account of the Afghans, he comments on the similar types of behaviour in countries that have reached the same stage of development but are far removed from each other in time and place. "Chaucer's somnourus tale," he observes, "exactly describes the importunity of the mendicant Mullahs, [in Afghanistan] and the mixture of respect and aversion with which they are regarded." He thought modern Europeans would find it strange that, in Afghanistan, the "masters of the country," the ruling families, did not live in the towns. Yet "such was the case in England after the Norman invasion."14 Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone all tended to compare contemporary Indians with


Europeans at an earlier period. They were critical of anyone who judged Indian peasants by the standards of behaviour expected of well-educated Englishmen from the middle ranks of society.

The social theorists who influenced Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's approach to Asian society generally paid more attention to what they called moral, than to physical considerations as determinants of national character, although Elphinstone, like John Millar and Adam Ferguson treated climate as important. Writing of the Hindus, Elphinstone states that although their "defects...arise chiefly from moral causes," they may also be ascribed to physical constitution and to soil and climate. He points out, ruefully, that the warm climate and fertile soil which make hard labour unnecessary, "produce that state of listless inactivity which foreigners find it so difficult to resist," and he suggests that "the shades of character...in different parts of India...confirm this supposition." giving, as an example, the vigour of the Marathas who inhabit a mountainous and infertile region, compared with the Bengalis "with their moist climate and their double crops of rice." The dreary aspect of their surroundings explained why the Arabs sought for excitement "in contemplation, and in ideas derived from within;" Muhammad having particular opportunities "of indulging in such reveries."

Physical causes were regarded by Hume as of less importance in determining national character than moral causes which he categorized as "the nature of the government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation of the nation with regard to its neighbours and such like circumstances." The uniform system of government of a large empire would create distinctive national characteristics despite climatic variations; small contiguous states would develop marked differences in character and manners although, as in the case of the city-states of Athens — ingenious and gay — and Thebes — rustic and phlegmatic — they were only a short day's journey apart. Closed societies, like the Jews in Europe and the Armenians in the

15 Elphinstone, India, 1: 370-1; 2: 491.

Middle East, with little in common with the nations among whom they lived, would retain their own character as would two nations with different religions and languages inhabiting the same country. A purely republican government would produce one type of national character; an absolute monarchy another; and the nature of the dominant religion would mould the manners of the people in both.

Although Malcolm allowed that in Makran and Baluchistan there was little sign that the people had ever emerged from "the poor and sterile state to which they seem to have been condemned by nature," he was generally more interested in the moral determinants of national character. In his *History of Persia*, he identifies uniform characteristics throughout the Persian empire which he believes to have developed as a result of a tradition of despotic government reinforced by the tenets of Islam. This uniformity was modified among tribal groups, however, who enjoyed a more democratic form of local government which left them less morally debased, but also less amenable to political control, than others.

Like Hume, Munro has little time for theories of the effect of climate on national character. He complains of "learned men" who state that the "vertical rays" of the sun make the natives of India indolent when, in actual fact, Indian farmers are just as industrious as European ones and their women are more so. Their poverty, in Munro's estimation, derives from the system of government, not from "their idleness nor the sun." Climate and terrain, on which they could have no effect, was of less interest to Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone than religion, systems of government and prosperity which were matters which were to some extent within the power of man to improve.

History's status as a recruit in the service of the science of man deflected attention, to some extent, from kings, politics and wars. Hume claimed that history was neither intelligible nor

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18 Ibid., 2: 621: 623.

19 Munro to his father, 10 May 1796, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.
instructive without an accurate understanding of the systems of government, manners, (meaning social morality), economy, and degree of learning of a state, a view endorsed by Malcolm, who sees the system of government and the manners of "the nation described" as the most important parts of its history.\(^{20}\) During the 1780s, a debate on the superiority of manners to laws in the regulation of civil life attracted much attention in Scottish literary clubs and periodicals. Blair, whose published Sermons were among the century’s most popular books, believed that "mere law" was rigid and inflexible; it was manners, which reflect man’s humane and liberal sentiments, which actually held society together.\(^{21}\) Munro’s opinion that the only efficient preventive of crime was "the improvement of manners;"\(^{22}\) expressed in a discussion of policing in 1824, suggests that he held similar views on the relative value of manners and laws. Blair died in 1800 so that, unlike Malcolm, Munro would not have heard him preach when in Edinburgh in 1808, but he bought the five volumes of Blair’s Sermons to take with him to India in 1814.\(^{23}\)

Similarly, in a published paper of instructions to junior officers, Malcolm warned them that the source of manners, "when it proceeds from reason, not from feeling...cannot please; for it has in it...a show of design which repels, as it generates suspicion."\(^{24}\) Good faith, sympathy and confidence were for Malcolm the most important unifying and conciliating forces.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone make no attempt to explain or justify their use of the concepts of a universal human nature, stages of civilization or national character which suggests that they took them for granted themselves and expected their readers to do the same; that they saw them as facts rather than as assumptions. These beliefs were important, however, because they

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\(^{21}\) Blair, quoted in Dwyer, "Clio," p. 59.


\(^{23}\) Bills and Accounts, 12 April 1814, Mss. Eur., F/151/159.

allowed Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone to observe eastern societies, which they regarded as less advanced in most ways than their own, in an analytic but relatively uncritical way. Bigotry, ignorance, superstition and other defects were believed to be universal characteristics of early nineteenth-century Asia — as they had been of medieval Europe — but they were temporary, not eternal, attributes.

If human nature were much the same everywhere, an Asian could be expected to experience feelings similar to a Briton's when faced with the pleasure and pain of everyday life, the approval or disapproval of others. This did not mean that he would necessarily react in the same way, because responses were affected by the experiences and conditioning which created national characteristics. Both Munro and Malcolm, however, believed that there were universal features of human nature that British rulers in India would have to take into consideration.

It is unlikely that Munro and Malcolm consciously applied the techniques of the advocates of sensibility when considering human relations in India, but their priorities nevertheless reflect their own feelings. The professional advancement of both men was frustrated in their early years by inadequate patronage. For Munro, for whom self-fulfillment, service and morality were synonymous, the quintessential components of good government were the provision of opportunity and incentive; the chance to be "interestingly and importantly employed." 25 His professional attention was focussed for much of his career on civil and administrative matters. He accepted the fact of British rule and the importance of India to Britain's political as well as commercial interests, but believed that Indians should do things for themselves as far as possible with the object of eventually governing themselves. British rule should provide the necessary environment — order, stability and opportunity — in which the "human nature" of the Indian people could function in its most moral, active and therefore most progressive way.

Malcolm, whose need to recount to family and friends every instance of official

25 Munro to his sister Erskine, 30 Dec. 1815, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 212.
commendation and every word of appreciation suggests self-doubt as well as the vanity to which it is usually attributed, believed that sensitivity to the feelings of the governed and recognition of service rendered were top priorities. His interests were political and strategic; his experience, until late in his career was confined largely to diplomatic and military affairs, and his writings on India are replete with analyses, profusely illustrated with anecdotes, of the "nature" and "feelings" of the sepoys, "by whose valour and attachment the great conquest has been principally achieved, and without whose continued fidelity it cannot be preserved."36 Their prejudices and sensibilities should be treated with the greatest care.

Introspective is probably the key adjective in describing the private journals kept for many years by Elphinstone, but they indicate a self-preoccupation, during his early years in India at least, that left little room for identifying his own feelings with those of Indians — consciously or unconsciously. In private, his moods seem, to some extent, to have coloured his attitudes but, in his literary works, he generally treats Indians with sympathy — he is particular interested in national character: "those great features, which all possess in common, and which give a marked character to the whole."

Eric Stokes, George Bearce and also Burton Stein, in his recent biography of Munro, all identify Burke’s writings as the dominant influence on the conservative elements in Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s thought. Stokes speaks of them as bringing to the Indian problem, "Burke’s notion of history, that conception which regards human society as a continuous community of the past, present, and future."38 Bearce claims that, "Provided with [Burke’s] Conservative outlook," Munro and Elphinstone began to introduce good government in various parts of India.39 For Stein,


27 Elphinstone, Caubul, 1: 196.

28 Stokes, Utilitarians, p. 15.

29 Bearce, British Attitudes to India, p. 306.
Munro's "basic orientation" was derived from Burke. He shared with other "post-Burkeans" a deep awareness of the "power of nationalism and of what he called 'national character' as expressing the highest order of public values," and an appreciation of hierarchy, especially one based on merit.© "Edmund Burke's imprimatur" was also important in regard to the "ambient moral concerns" which were "a fixture of Munro's writing on India" from early in his public career.31

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Burke had become the great ideologist for Conservatism32 although at the time Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were formulating their ideas he was only one of many important conservative authors, most of whom wrote about "moral concerns," "national character" and hierarchical social structure ("graduated ranks"), as well as about the importance of historical continuity and traditional institutions.33 Burke, after all, was applauded for his championship of traditional institutions because he was expressing, albeit in incomparable language, precisely what most conservative thinkers and most of his readers already believed and wanted to have re-affirmed, not because he was developing a new or exciting concept.

Stein notes that Munro purchased the twelve volumes of Burke's published writings in 1814 but does not mention that he bought, at almost the same time, the complete five-volume set of Hugh Blair's Sermons and William Paley's Works,34 both of which were widely-read expressions of conservative thought in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and works that might also have influenced, or re-affirmed his ideas.

Munro's initial response to the French Revolution differed from Burke's. In 1788 he told a

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30 Stein, Munro, p. 196-7.
31 Ibid., p. 294.
33 See Thomas Schofield, "Conservative Political Thought in Britain in Response to the French Revolution," The Historical Journal 29 (1986): 601-622. In addition to Burke, Paley and Adam Ferguson, Schofield discusses the work of some less well-remembered, but at the time widely read, conservative writers.
close friend that,

I wish Louis may avail himself of the powerful engine he has in his hands, a standing army, to crush the mutineers of his parliament; for if they carry their point of establishing a free government, commerce will become as honourable among them as it is in England, and France will then prove by sea what she is now by land, the greatest power in the world: and you and I may live to see Britain stripped of all her foreign dominions. 35

In other words at this stage he saw the possible over-throw of the existing French government as bad for Britain because the replacement of an absolutist system by a "free government" — one that was similar to that of Britain — would make France stronger, richer and a greater threat. In April 1890, as Burke was preparing his Reflections on the Revolution in France for publication in the same year, Munro told his friend that the situation in France was alarming because as a British patriot he could not watch with indifference, the restoration of French liberty.

That nation, already too powerful, wanted nothing but a better form of government to render her the arbiter of Europe; and the convulsions attending so remarkable a revolution having subsided, France will soon assume that rank to which she is entitled from her resources, and the enterprising genius of her inhabitants. 36

Burke’s prophecies of anarchy and disaster proved to be prescient and did much to enhance his reputation. At the time he was writing the Reflections and Munro was writing to his friend, however, Burke saw the French Revolution as dangerous because a long-established system of government was being over-thrown; Munro saw it as dangerous because the bad system of government of an enemy was being replaced with what he expected to be a better system which would make that enemy more powerful. In 1790, Munro saw the French conflict as a scene in the on-going drama of man’s struggle between authority and liberty and his sympathy was with liberty. Louis’ government represented for Munro, a flawed system that retarded progress, particularly commercial progress.

In 1792 Munro, describing Tipu Sultan’s loss of vigour and spirit as a result of a defeat by

35 Munro to Foulis, Dec. 1788, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 47.
36 Munro to Foulis, 2 April 1790, quoted in ibid., 3: 49.
the Company's forces, hopes that he will recover from his "fit of despair... he is at present as much changed as Mr. Burke's vision." Mr. Burke's "changed vision" presumably alludes to the apparent inconsistencies between Burke's view of events in America, India and France. In regard to America, Burke had claimed, firstly, that universal political disobedience should be regarded as an indication of bad government and not treated as criminal behavior and, secondly, that the exercise of authority should always be adapted to the nature of the subject people. In his clash with Warren Hastings, however, Burke rejected Hastings' contention that government in India had to be adapted to the nature of the subject people, appealing instead to universal principles and the Law of Nature. In his approach to the French Revolution, Burke no longer saw universal disobedience as an acceptable response to bad government. Although an effective argument has been developed by Charles Parkin\(^8\) to establish a basic consistency in Burke's thought, for casual readers like Munro in 1790 and 1792, the inconsistencies were most noticeable.

In 1794 Munro, no doubt aware by this time of the course the French revolution had taken, writes that he prefers Burke's opinions on it to those of James Mackintosh and Burke's other opponents because, despite "his declamations and in some places downright nonsense," Burke developed "more of the springs by which all governments must be moved until human nature is entirely changed and men are no longer actuated by the passions."\(^9\) Munro now condemns the situation in France because the assembly and convention are being ruled by factions which in turn are controlled by the leaders of the mob. The problem is now excessive liberty and he would have agreed with Burke on its dangers. In 1817, however, he wrote that Napoleon's operations had made "most countries on the continent much more interesting than they were before," and in 1823, in response to news of friction between France and Spain, he hopes it will end "in the expulsion of the

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\(^7\) Munro to Andrew Ross, 17 Feb. 1792, quoted in ibid., 3: 77.


Bourbons" from both countries. Munro may not have liked "democracy" but European ancien régimes clearly did not impress him, either for their own sake or as the guardians of stability and tradition.

Malcolm certainly had many areas of agreement with Burke but in regard to India he would probably have condemned him as one who tried to apply to Indian government a standard that had been framed for a different type or stage of society and government. Discussing the impeachment of Warren Hastings in the introduction to his Political History (1826), Malcolm describes Burke as "one of the wisest men and greatest orators that England has ever boasted" — a statement which has contributed to an impression that Malcolm admired Burke unconditionally. Malcolm credits Burke and Henry Dundas with bringing to the notice of the public, the unsatisfactory state of the affairs of the East India Company. He points out that "there can be no doubt that the promoters of these inquiries, however mixed their motives might have been [my italics], became entitled to the gratitude of the country." Malcolm, however, sees Hastings as a great Indian statesman who has served his country well. He claims that despite the "factional" or "party" opinions expressed on the issue of Hastings' impeachment, there were several important facts on which all "dispassionate minds" were now agreed.

Hastings, during a time of unexampled public embarrassment, and at a moment when he had to contend against those from whom he should have derived support, showed all the active energy of a great statesman; and by his...extraordinary exertions, saved the interests of his country in India from...ruin.41

Although he praises Hastings' response to crisis unstintingly, Malcolm concedes that the system of government at the time was corrupt. He is trying to establish Hastings' conduct as a model useful to his defence of Wellesley's governor-generalship, while recording his own opinion that the office of governor-general requires sufficient power to be able to deal with sudden crises. However, the

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40 Munro to George Brown, 1817. Mss. Eur., F/151/174; Munro to Brown, 4 July 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 83.

41 Malcolm, Political History, 1: 20-1.
implication that Burke, wise man and great orator though he is, is tainted by "mixed motives" and "factionalism" — an interpretation that Malcolm retained from the emotional Sketches of the Political History of India (1811) in the more deliberate Political History published in 1826 — suggests that Malcolm's regard for Burke was not uncritical.

There are no grounds on which it may be argued that Burke's philosophy was important to Elphinstone. Despite his extensive reading and his interesting critiques of numerous works of philosophy, history and politics in his journals, his only comment on Burke appears to be a laconic entry for 7 February, 1802, well after Burke's prophecies of the excesses of the French revolution had proved accurate. Elphinstone notes:

"Talked with Colonel Close about Burke; he is in love with him. He read some passages from the 'Reflections'; the assertions seem to me as false as the language was beautiful...A dispute about the right of nations to remove their kings for misconduct."

Elphinstone did mention that he approved of William Paley's plain, manly sense."

Although there are areas where Burke's views coincide with those of Munro, Malcolm and even Elphinstone, when the full range of their thought is taken into consideration, their ideology fits more comfortably with the slightly different ideas and assumptions of Scotland's moral philosophers. The frequency and consistency with which their thought has been associated with Burke's name, however, has over-emphasised their conservatism at the expense of their more reformist ideas.

Stokes, rather surprisingly, sees Wordsworth's concept of "the noble peasant" in the "emotional and mental back-ground to the ryotwari system of land settlement." He suggests that Munro saw "the peasant in all his simplicity," and tried to "secure him in the possession of his land, to rule him with a paternal and simple government." If this had been all that Munro had intended

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42 Elphinstone, journal. 7 Feb. 1802, quoted in Colebrooke. Elphinstone, 1: 44.

43 Elphinstone, journal. 15 Dec. 1820. quoted in ibid., 2: 118.

with his advocacy of the use of Indian institutions he might, indeed, be labelled a Conservative. In all his writings, however, he emphasises other objects that he hopes to accomplish by means of his system of government. In his last minute, written a few days before his death, Munro announces that the "great object of the Company's government" must be to increase the knowledge and raise the character of the Indian people "by bringing them into constant intercourse, and in a great degree associating them with ourselves in every department of public affairs." From this, Munro believes, they will learn that European systems of government were advantageous to all. They would acquire confidence and, in time, would "seek to learn the knowledge which they have found to be so much more useful than their own." A public spirit, he believed, could be created in any nation, "varying, of course, in degree according to the freedom of their institutions." To arouse this spirit in India, all offices must be open to the people. It would then be found that Indians would qualify themselves accordingly and endeavour to outstrip their rivals. They would seek distinction, not only in offices of profit and honour, but also by providing useful service to their country in positions from which they would derive no reward. This is not the statement of a man who sees himself as the conservator of "the noble peasant" or as an example of Wordsworthian concepts of paternalism. Munro saw it as the duty of government to teach Indians the advantages of a more advanced form of government and to give them the opportunity to improve and advance as individuals and citizens.

Although most East India Company recruits, including Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, arrived in India before they were twenty years old, all had been exposed to some degree to the socializing process and cultural environment of their local community and were likely, if only unconsciously, to draw on their experience for guidance in coming to terms with India. During the eighteenth century Scotland enjoyed a period of intense intellectual vitality; a period in which a

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45 Munro, "Trial of Criminal Cases by Jury or Panchayate," 3 July 1828. MM, 2: 56-61.

46 Ibid., 2: 57.
combination of intellectual freedom with a "fundamental conservatism" produced a philosophy of improvement that was empirical, practical and reformist rather than speculative, idealist and revolutionary. If, on arrival in India, the recruit proved to be ambitious, conscientious, culturally curious or merely bored, the intellectual world of Enlightenment Scotland provided him with a theoretical framework for the study of history and contemporary society and government as applicable to an analysis of Asia's past and present condition as to Europe's.

Working from the assumption that human nature is the same everywhere, that societies pass through various stages on the path from savagery to civilization and that national character is formed by inter-related moral and physical causes, the Scottish philosophes examined religions in the secular context of beliefs about social control, social morality and national character. Ideas about the correct relationship between liberty and authority helped to define discussions of the practical and moral efficacy of different systems of government. Modes of subsistence and levels of prosperity were scrutinized in the light of recent ideas on political economy. Laws were assessed according to their utility, given the level of sophistication of a society. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were not doctrinaire disciples of any of Scotland's philosophers, but the way they thought and the way they wrote, particularly about religion, forms of government and political economy, were influenced by the principles and the methodologies commonplace in the society in which they were raised.

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47 Henry Craik, quoted in Bryson, Man and Society, p. 7.
Chapter 9

Religion

The aid of religion was called in to...subdue the ferocity of the times. The Almighty was said to have manifested, by visions and revelations to different persons, his disapprobation of that spirit of revenge, which armed one part of his creatures against the other.

William Robertson

The Reverend William Robertson's account of the secular use to which the powerful influence of religion could be put appears in his explanation of the gradual introduction of systems of law in medieval Europe. By the second half of the eighteenth century the harsh, theocratic rigidity of Scottish Calvinism was being modified, at least for the well-educated middling ranks in society, by intellectual influences from continental Europe, and Robertson, like many of Scotland's leading thinkers, became an important member of the Moderate group within the Kirk. The Moderates, as opposed to the Evangelical High Flyer group, were the dominant party in the general assembly of the Church of Scotland from the 1760s to the 1780s. Although cautious in regard to their opinions on contemporary Christianity, as early as 1755 the Moderates had been sufficiently confident on the subject of liberty of conscience to defend Lord Kames and David Hume from charges of scepticism and heresy and, when the question of compulsory subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith became a controversial issue in the 1770s and 1780s, they argued that all creeds and confessions were incomplete because they were the product of a specific historical situation. They went so far as to assert that Luther and Calvin, products of their time, were no more likely to be infallible than their Catholic contemporaries, and were accused by the Evangelicals of even extending their toleration to Muslims and to "the Alcoran." The proceedings of the general

1 Robertson, Progress, p. 40.


assembly were widely publicized. Its members represented a broad cross-section of educated Scottish society and the ideas of religious Moderatism were debated, if not invariably endorsed, throughout Lowland Scotland.

Although Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone undoubtedly believed the moral and ethical precepts of Christianity to be superior to those of other religions, they were as cautious as most of the Scottish philosophers in revealing their own faith. Munro says little about religion — his own or that of other people — but his few comments demonstrate that he was not a High Flyer. The secular nature of Malcolm's and Elphinstone's approach to religion is evident from their discussion of Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism in their works.

William Robertson once preached that the social, political, moral and religious stage of society at the time of Christ was particularly conducive to the birth and spread of Christianity.\footnote{Gilbert's introduction, Robertson, \textit{Progress}, p. xvii.} Robertson's purpose in this case had been to show how the Will of God could be seen in the process of history, but he later developed the idea in relation to the progress of Europe. He explained that Roman law was incomprehensible to the barbarian invaders and, however perfect it might have been in principle, being no longer perceived as relevant or useful, was discarded by them. But by the mid-twelfth century, when Justinian's "Pandects" were rediscovered, "the state of society was so far advanced, and the ideas of men so much enlarged and improved...that they were struck with admiration of a system which their ancestors could not comprehend."\footnote{Ibid., p. 55.} Munro and Malcolm believed that a British-style judicial system was incomprehensible, and therefore irrelevant, to Indians at their present stage. Elphinstone, particularly in letters to Edward Strachey who was an admirer of Bentham, was less critical of attempts to westernize Indian legal systems,\footnote{Elphinstone to Strachey, 10 March 1822, quoted in Colebrooke, \textit{Elphinstone}, 2: 131-134.} but all three believed that to be successful, any attempt at reform, whether legal, religious, social or political, would initially
have to be adapted to the prejudices and condition of the people it was intended to benefit.

The principle, which Robertson, Blair and other Calvinist Moderates applied to the early development of Christianity as well as to other religions, sought secular, or practical, explanations for the development of religious institutions. Christianity's first significant contribution to mankind, it was argued, had been as an agent of social control: by gathering together the illiterate poor to worship, and by training them to subordination. The Book of Genesis was seen as an account of "human manners in their primitive simplicity, before the arts of refinement had polished the behaviour."7

In the Wealth of Nations, which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone had all read, Adam Smith examined the relationship between religion and the state. Although he conceded, cautiously, that "ecclesiastic establishments" often originated to meet religious needs, they "prove in the end advantageous to the political interest of society."8 Almost all the Scottish philosophers, including Smith, acknowledged that two types of religion usually developed to meet the needs, respectively, of the poor and illiterate and well-educated higher ranks. The religion of the lower social orders was likely to be either austere or imaginative, or maybe both, for the practical reasons that extravagance would be ruinous and the consolation of a beautiful after-life was needed to compensate for the ugly realities of their earthly existence. The wealthy and powerful tended to be more lax and mundane in their religious views and observances.9 Examining Islamic morality, Malcolm observes that it would be unfair to judge the people by the records of the great as "illustrious personages in all ages and countries deem themselves exempt from vulgar restrictions."10 Elphinstone acknowledges the political importance of the clergy in a letter in which he discusses Adam Smith, whom he regarded

7 Dwyer, "Clio," p. 7.

8 Smith, Wealth of Nations, 2: 292.

9 Ibid., 2: 280-313.

10 Malcolm, Persia, 1: 272.
as a man of "enlarged" views. Smith had suggested that the clergy should be paid for practicing their trade...like tailors or other workmen." But Elphinstone felt that they should not enjoy such independence: "The...enterprise and ambition which the clergy have shown in all times makes it absolutely necessary to keep a strong and well-disciplined standing army of them who shall be interested in maintaining order and in fighting (in their way) against other clergy who attack the state." Munro spoke of "pain and poverty" as two apostles who probably converted more people to religion than "all the bishops that ever existed" — an explanation for religious convictions that reflects Hume's arguments in the *Natural History of Religion* as well as Smith's in the *Wealth of Nations.*

The Munro family were Episcopalian and Thomas attended his mother's English Chapel and listened to his father's fireside sermons throughout childhood. The Reverend George Gleig believed that it was important for his prospective role-model to be seen to subscribe to orthodox religious views, and in his *Life of Munro,* asserted that Munro's "whole life, both in public and private, was modelled upon the rules laid down in the Gospel." He avoided a direct statement about Munro's faith in revelation, however, merely observing, somewhat evasively, that "he is, after all, the most vitally religious man whose general behaviour corresponds best with the revealed Will of God." References to religion in Munro's papers are rare and, what there are, do not suggest a deep commitment to either revelation or to a belief in man's dependence on divine will. Munro never mentioned his own religion publicly and his only private allusions, made in the 1790s to his sister Erskine, his most intimate correspondent, were frivolous in tone. He compared his brother James's

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12 Munro to his sister Erskine, 5 March 1795, quoted in Gleig, *Munro,* 1: 165.


14 Munro to his sister Erskine, 7 Feb. 1798 and 25 April 1793, quoted in Gleig, *Munro,* 1: 197; 153. Ibid., 2: 225-6. "English Chapel" was the term used for places of worship set up on an Anglical model by Scottish Episcopalians trying to avoid the stigma of the association of episcopalianism with Jacobitism after the 1745 rebellion.
religious enthusiasm with his own "more sublime religion," insisted on his right to "liberty of conscience" in a hypothetical marriage contract, and spoke of the spiritual truths he might have discovered in the withered leaves sent by Erskine, "if I were a man of devout turn of mind," implying that he was not.\textsuperscript{15} Munro applied the adjectives superstitious and bigoted to Hindus and Muslims respectively in the technical way that David Hume applied the words superstition and enthusiasm to Roman Catholicism and fanatical Protestantism.\textsuperscript{16}

Munro was circumspect in his public statements about the work of Christian missionaries in India. He did not object to their activities as long as Indians could not interpret them as official policy — as sanctioned by the government. As governor of Madras, however, he would not tolerate attempts at proselytization by a Company official and censured, and then dismissed, a sub-collector, one of his own protégés, for distributing within his district, Kanarese translations of the New Testament and tracts on moral and religious subjects. Munro was indignant that the collector, while professing his willingness to conform to the government's directives, requested, nevertheless, that his opinions on converting Indians should be judged "according as they are supported or contradicted by the Word of God" as contained in passages from the scriptures. He sent these passages to Munro as an appendix to his letter of apology. Munro regarded this as "an extraordinary kind of appeal." The collector had used his official position to work as a missionary and, when told by his superior that he was wrong to do so, "justifies his acts by quotations from Scripture, and by election, a doctrine which has occasioned so much controversy; and he leaves it to be inferred, that Government must either adopt his views, or act contrary to divine authority."\textsuperscript{17}

In a series of extracts taken by Gleig from Munro's writings from the years 1812 and 1813,\textsuperscript{15}Munro to his sister Erskine, 9 Sept. 1791, 15 Sept. 1795; 7 Feb. 1798, quoted in ibid., 3: 68; 1: 169; 196.

\textsuperscript{16}Hume, Philosophical Works, 3: 149. See the essay "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm," pp. 144-50. Munro, in regard to eastern religions, would not have accepted Hume's conclusion that superstition was "an enemy to civil liberty and enthusiasm a friend to it."

\textsuperscript{17}Munro, minute, 15 Nov. 1822, quoted in Gleig, Munro. 2: 37-45.
when the question whether missionary activity in India should, or should not, be encouraged was the most contentious Indian issue in Britain, Munro wrote that while primitive people relinquish their superstitions quite easily, the Turks of Europe, although at an advanced stage of civilization, and despite their contact with Christian states, have not discarded their faith in Muhammad's teachings.

He suggests that in India, change will not take place until,

by the improvement of the country, India shall abound in a middling class of wealthy men, secure in the possession of their property, and having leisure to study our best authors translated into the various languages of the country.\textsuperscript{18}

As "our best authors" did not compose the bible, the statement implies that, in Munro's opinion, economic and social development rather than proselytization would provide the path to the progress of India.

Munro was intolerant of stupidity but not of other people's beliefs and, in a letter in which he deliberately connected Hindu with Catholic superstition, he nevertheless provided a sympathetic portrayal of a swami, a religious brahmin of a class who "possess an influence not inferior to that of the Pope and his bishops and cardinals in the darkest ages." The swamis did not marry like the pagoda brahmins, "but must lead a life of celibacy and temperance, or rather abstinence. They have no nephews and nieces like the swamis of Europe." They amass no wealth; whatever they receive they distribute to others; and "they are to the full as respectable as their brethren in Europe.\textsuperscript{19}

In everything, Munro liked diversity, including religious diversity:

give me...the world as it now stands, with all its beautiful variety of knowledge, and ignorance, — of language — of manners — customs — religion and superstitions — of cultivated fields and wide-extended deserts — and war and peace.\textsuperscript{20}

This latitudinarian confession is compatible with Munro's open-minded approach to India, but seems to reject the confining particularism of revealed Christianity. During the 1790s at least, when he first

\textsuperscript{18} Munro, memoranda, dated 1812-13, quoted in ibid., 2: 255.

\textsuperscript{19} Munro to Erskine, 30 Dec. 1815, quoted in ibid., 3: 213.

\textsuperscript{20} Munro to his sister Erskine, 15 Sept. 1795, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 166.
came into close contact with rural Indian society as a revenue collector, Munro's religious views, like those of Malcolm and Elphinstone, seem to have been those of a Moderate.

In his biography of Malcolm, Sir John Kaye makes no attempt to detail Malcolm’s religious beliefs, but the influence of Moderatism on the Malcolm family’s Calvinism is indicated by the fact that Mrs. Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* was read aloud at home and by the young Malcolm’s attendance at a London theatre on his first home furlough; two activities that would have been roundly condemned by Kirk High Flyers. Malcolm’s approval, in his writings on Asia, of anyone who could be described as holding the "sublime general truths" of "pure deism," suggests that he also found the broad, cosmopolitan creed of the deists acceptable.

In Malcolm’s estimation, the religious practices of a society should be the starting point for the historian because they are the natural focus of man’s earliest efforts at art, literature and learning, they are generally used as an agent of civilization; and they help to determine the nature of the state and the character of its inhabitants. The significance of the Koran, for example, had been underestimated by Europeans. "We can hardly (in the pride of better knowledge)," Malcolm suggested, "venture to pronounce that to be puerile or contemptible which has so fully answered the purpose for which it was designed." Unbelievers should admire the skill of Muhammad’s strategy in claiming that the Koran was sent complete by God but only revealed, bit by bit, by Gabriel.

No mode could have been better calculated to preserve and to promote his power. He was at once the civil ruler and military leader...and he drew at pleasure, from a source which they deemed divine, those laws and mandates which were to regulate their lives, and to excite them to actions of virtue and valour.

Although the Arabs, Malcolm adds, were divided at home and despised abroad, Muhammad’s religion taught them to worship one true God, "and they obtained strength from the political union brought about by a common creed to become masters of the fairest portions of the globe."22

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21 Kaye, Malcolm, 1: 57; 31.

22 Malcolm, Persia, 2: 339-42.
Similarly, Malcolm approves, in general, of Sufism, which "inculcated the doctrine of the
equality of the relation of all created beings to their Creator," and he argues that traces of Sufism
may be found everywhere: "in the most splendid theories of the ancient schools of Greece, and in
those of the modern philosophers of Europe."23

On the origins of Sikhism, Malcolm explains in his Sketch of the Sikhs, that, although Nanac
grounded his religion on a principle of pure deism, the minds of the masses could not remain loyal
for long to a creed, "the most sublime general truths" of which were of a nature too vast for their
comprehension. After their founder's death, his followers worshipped his name and, in direct
contravention of his teaching, "they...clothed him in all the attributes of a saint."24 It is an account
that would have provided empirical evidence for Hume's theory on the "flux and reflux of polytheism
and theism."25 After Nanac, the forms of Sikh devotion began to take precedence over the
substance of the founder's beliefs and, strengthened by habit, "they become the points to which
ignorance and unenlightened minds have in all ages of the world, shown the most resolute...adherence."26

Lastly, the tenets of Hinduism, in Malcolm's opinion, had been "calculated to preserve a vast
community in tranquillity and obedience to its rulers," but they also had the effect of making the
country "an easy conquest to every powerful foreign invader." Referring to the doctrine that forbade
all but those of the warrior castes to bear arms except in self-defence, Malcolm observes that, bound
by "the chains of their civil and religious institutions," Hindu states, unlike Muslim ones, could not
increase their numbers by conversion, nor "allow more than a small proportion of the population

26 Malcolm, Sikhs, p. 40.
These various observations recognize rational intent — or social control — unintended consequences and the symbiotic relationship between religion and the power of the state. Malcolm saw religion as an integral part of human nature; as a powerful emotion that could also be a powerful and practical tool. He believed that it had been used by individuals and groups since earliest times, generally for the benevolent purpose of bringing order out of chaos and aiding the progress of civilization, but occasionally to further the ends of power politics. In his historical works, Malcolm consistently portrays the prophets of new religious movements as men with the capacity to conceive the sublime nature of the creator but aware that the weakness of human nature and the particular stage of development of their societies required them to adapt their doctrines accordingly. Once established, the tenets of a new religion had a significant effect on the development of national character and "the revolutions of public affairs." In the short term, the desired objectives were often met but, in the long term, unanticipated consequences sometimes occurred that were of greater significance from an historical perspective. "The sacred character of religion, under whatever shape it assumes, has always given it a supreme influence over the human mind: but its effects are most remarkable when they influence the fate of nations." Malcolm’s examination of religious forms and beliefs was invariably made from a secular and universal standpoint.

Elphinstone’s approach to religion was similarly secular and universal. The Elphinstones had been Episcopalian Calvinists at least until the eighteenth century, but Elphinstone himself does not seem to have preferred any particular sect. On being appointed governor of Bombay, he asked John Adam: "as one must go to church ought it...to be [the] Scotch one or is the [governor] supposed


29 William Elphinstone (died 1514), was bishop of Aberdeen and lord chancellor of Scotland and the seventh Lord Elphinstone married the daughter of the archbishop of Glasgow in 1667 which indicate that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the family had been Episcopalian. Fraser, *Elphinstone Family*, 1: Frontispiece, 13: 220.
to be...always of the religion established by law[?][30] In what reads like an apology for Elphinstone's views, Colebrooke observes that although Elphinstone's journals say little about religion. "when the subject is referred to they breathe a spirit of resignation and reliance on his Maker." Cotton, after pointing out that Elphinstone had once been described as "devoid of religion and blinded to all spiritual truth," defends him with the assertion that his "outward rule of life was based upon the maxims of Stoic philosophy;" that he passed through a period of religious scepticism in his younger days, but "experience of the world and much reading" converted him into a devout Unitarian.31

Elphinstone was more interested in the positive and active "moral virtues" of the Ancients than in the passive Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity — a fact that makes a "spirit of resignation and reliance on his Maker" seem out of character. Stoicism enjoyed wide popularity in educated circles in late eighteenth-century Europe and was a major influence on Adam Smith.32 The term "polite stoicism" has been used to describe the ethics promoted by the Moderate ministers of the Church of Scotland.33 Elphinstone's admiration for the doctrines of Stoicism placed him in good intellectual company: they had a major influence on Adam Smith's thought.34

Elphinstone's scepticism was probably confirmed, if not inspired, by Hume. Although Hume's Natural History of Religion (1757) and Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1777), shocked the orthodox, many educated people accepted the view expressed in the Natural History that,

the whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine theism and religion.35

30 Elphinstone to Adam. 8 Sept. 1819, quoted in Choksey. Elphinstone. p. 257.

31 Colebrooke. Elphinstone. 2: 410; 216.


33 For a discussion of the influence of Stoicism on the moderate clergy see. Richard Sher. Church and University. pp. 175-86


35 Hume. Philosophical Works. 4: 309.
For Hume, however, enquirers were rarely rational and religion, like everything else, was determined more by feeling than by reason. Adopting an historical-anthropological approach, he used the technique of conjecture to explain how the "incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind" had led men to ascribe to the activities of an invisible agent, the acts of nature and the "various and contrary events of human life" that were otherwise inexplicable. The idea that religion originated in human need not divine will was, of course, unacceptable to believers. Hume proceeded to demonstrate that early religions were always polytheistic; that it was natural for mankind gradually to exalt one deity above all others, endow him with omnipotence, celebrate his power and greatness, yet conceive of him as vengeful and vindictive; that man needed then to invent intermediaries between himself and this terrible deity — minor gods, saints or dervishes — thus lapsing again into what was in fact, if not in name, polytheism. He presented evidence to show that polytheism, though "inferior religion," was less harmful than theism; that it was more tolerant, that it inspired courage rather than the abasement and mortification associated with monothestic religions, that the symbols and outward trappings of all the superior religions were equally absurd and that none, however sublime its concepts, had persuaded mankind that virtue and morality alone, not ritual adulation, could be acceptable to a Perfect Being.36

Hume's Dialogues analyses the evidence that may be discovered in the concept of "design" for the existence and benevolent nature of the Creator and for the existence of a divinely created order in the universe. In other words, it questions his own "assumption" in the Natural History that "the whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author," is deliberately inconclusive, and has provided fuel for debate as to Hume's own religious views. But it is one of the most important eighteenth-century works on religious scepticism. In a journal entry for April 1801, Elphinstone mentions reading Hume's chapter on "Academical or Sceptical Philosophy" and observes that he has "finished reading the admirable dialogue on natural religion," a statement which suggests that he

respected Hume's ideas about religion as greatly as his approach to philosophy and history.\textsuperscript{37}

Although Elphinstone's \textit{History of India} was written when he was no longer involved in British Indian government, as philosophical history it provides insight into his personal views on religion. The evidence for Elphinstone's Unitarianism derives from a journal entry for 1846 in which he expresses his liking for Alexander Pope's "Universal Prayer."\textsuperscript{38} While considering the poem, Elphinstone muses on institutional Christianity and on formal ritual, faith in orthodox doctrine, the sanctifying or deifying of human beings to create intermediaries between man and the Creator, and the social role of religion and its value as a superintendent of social duty. There are intimations of approval, in Elphinstone's words, for a proper difference between the dutiful religion of a philosophical élite and the worldly petitions of the masses, which suggest that religious practices should be useful reminders of social obligation for the former but necessary agents of social control for the latter. Although the evidence for the view of Elphinstone as a Unitarian is clear in his obvious dislike of the concept of the Trinity,\textsuperscript{39} in his \textit{History of India}, published five years earlier, he approves Hinduism's celebration of the Unity of God and discusses ritual, faith, the sanctifying of human intermediaries, the social role of religion, and the dual strands of philosophical and popular religious usage in much the same way as he considers aspects of Christianity in his journal. A comparison of the journal with the \textit{History}, suggests that Elphinstone's religious interest focussed on the discovery and examination of the common elements to be found in all great religions.

In his examination of Hinduism, Elphinstone argues that ritual has gained an undesirable, although not complete, preponderance over its moral precept. Reward and punishment is often "well apportioned to the moral merits and demerits of the deceased" and they undoubtedly influence the conduct of the living, but "the efficacy ascribed to faith," the emphasis on forms of devotion and the

\textsuperscript{37} Elphinstone, journal, 1801, Mss. Eur., F/88, Box 13.

\textsuperscript{38} Elphinstone, journal, 6 April 1846. quoted in Colebrooke. \textit{Elphinstone}, 2: 410.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 2: 410.
ease with which crimes can be expiated by penance, undermine the effectiveness of Hindu principles. The contemporary state of religion suffers from a neglect of the principle of monotheism and from "the doctrine that faith in a particular god is more efficacious than contemplation, ceremonial observance, or good works." The elements of ritual and faith in Hinduism were, in Elphinstone's estimation, as undesirable for moral purposes as were those of Christianity.

Superstition irritated Elphinstone because it "debased and debilitated" the mind and was a hindrance to improvement. Brahmin morality, which fostered passive obedience rather than active virtue, also inhibited progress: the "exclusive view to repose in this world, and absorption hereafter, destroys the great stimulants to virtue afforded by love of enterprise and of posthumous fame." Religion, when it controlled law, science and the minutiae of everyday life, inhibited a sense of free agency and reduced life to "a mechanical routine." It is hard to believe that Elphinstone could write of Hinduism in this way and still maintain a spirit of resignation and reliance on his Christian Maker. A more likely statement of his own faith appears to be his opinion that:

When individuals are left free [from religious interference], improvements take place as they are required; and a nation is entirely changed in the course of a few generations without an effort on the part of any of its members.

What Elphinstone thought of as religious interference, Malcolm called religious prejudice. It governed, in particular, his explanation of the role of women in society. Elphinstone shared the view of many of the Scottish philosophers that any inquiry into the manners of a nation should begin with a discussion of the position of women, because their status was an accurate indicator of the stage of civilization it had reached. In giving evidence on India before the House of Commons in 1812, Munro stated that if "a treatment of the female sex, full of confidence, respect and delicacy" indicated "a civilized people," Hindus were equal to Europeans. But Malcolm, like Hume and

* Elphinstone, India, 1: 186; 161.
John Millar, saw women as agents as well as indicators of progress, an important role in society they could fulfil only when society was unencumbered by religious prejudice.

Writing of the Islamic customs of polygamy and female seclusion, Malcolm observes that they "no doubt, had an influence, scarcely secondary to any other cause, in retarding the progress of civilization among those nations who have adopted this faith." For Malcolm, patriarchal despotism encouraged political despotism and political despotism inhibited progress. There was nothing that affected the condition and character of a people more than the laws and customs which governed the relationship between the sexes: "On it, perhaps beyond all other causes, depends the moral state of a country and its progress and general improvement."43

These views are interpreted by Yapp as representing the feelings inspired by Malcolm's marriage, which took place shortly before he went on his second Persian mission and began to write his History of Persia. Malcolm is described as belonging "to the depressing collection of simple, practical men who have been there;" who have lived in "the romantic world of the Indian soldier," where a European woman "was a rarity to be cherished and guarded."44 Munro, writing twelve years before Malcolm's marriage, rejects this rosy picture. India, he claims, was a bad place for a British woman to look for a husband, because

the promiscuous intercourse with the sex that [British men] have all been accustomed to makes it almost impossible that they can ever become tender affectionate husbands - indifference is the only mark by which such men distinguish their wives from other women.45

But, for Yapp, Malcolm's romantic attitude to women was "the root of [his] explanation of the motivation of Persian history."46

44 Yapp, "Historians of Persia," p. 349.
45 Munro to his brother Alexander, 2 May 1795, Mss. Eur., F/151/142. Munro persuaded Alexander to help him provide allowances for their financially destitute sisters so that they would not have to seek husbands in the "marriage markets of Bengal or Madras."
46 Yapp, "Historians of Persia," p. 351.
It is an interpretation that rests on the assumption that "simple, practical men" have no philosophical or cultural beliefs. In a more recent work, Yapp reconsiders Malcolm and identifies him as the "ideologue par excellence of British India." This may swing the pendulum too far in the other direction, but it does acknowledge Malcolm's possession of — or ability to borrow — philosophical principles widely accepted by his contemporaries. The ideological foundation of Malcolm's defence strategies probably owes little to the Scottish philosophes, for whom military science held little interest — although Malcolm would have acknowledged, wryly, the truth of Ferguson's claim that "the maxims of conquest are not always to be distinguished from those of self-defence." But the idea that there was a close association between the status of women and the state of civilization was a popular one in Scotland, which in the late eighteenth century allowed considerable freedom of social intercourse between the sexes and saw this as a civilizing force. The letter of a visiting Englishman, written from Edinburgh in 1774, talks of:

The women, who, to do them justice, are much more entertaining than their neighbours in England, discovered a great deal of vivacity and fondness for repartee. The general ease with which they conducted themselves, the innocent freedom of their manners, and the unaffected good nature, all conspired to make one forget that we were regaling in a cellar. (The cellar does not indicate a "lower class" gathering: the group included Jean Maxwell, later duchess of Gordon, who presented Munro's sister Erskine to Queen Charlotte in 1806 after her second marriage, to Henry Erskine, lord advocate for Scotland.)

In the conclusion to his essay on national character, Hume observed that "the politeness of a nation will commonly much depend" on a free relationship between the sexes, and he suggested that marriages should be conducted "with perfect equality as between two equal members of the

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47 Yapp, Strategies, p. 54.
48 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 152.
49 Graham, Social Life, p. 108.
Francis Hutcheson emphasised compatibility and companionship as the foundation for a right relationship and objected strongly to the double standard that tolerated infidelity in men but not women: "the powers vested in husbands by the civil laws of many nations are monstrous." John Millar claimed that when some progress has been made in the arts and men have achieved "a proportional degree of refinement," they set a value on "those female accomplishments and virtues which have so much influence on every species of improvement." This opinion appeared in Millar's best known and most respected work, The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks, which first appeared in 1771 and ran to three more editions in 1773, 1781 and 1806. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were evidently up to date on Scottish social theory.

Malcolm's Sketch of the Sikhs and History of Persia were written when the debate over the encouragement of missionary activity in India was causing controversy in both Britain and India, and his feelings on the issue are made clear. He uses historical narratives and explanations to warn of the danger of interference in Indian religious beliefs and practices, not only to the political stability of British India but also to its continued existence as a state.

In his Sketch of the Sikhs, Malcolm points out that Har Govind converted "a race of peaceable enthusiasts into an intrepid band of soldiers" out of an "irreconcilable hatred of [Muslim] oppression." In his account of Persia under Islamic rule he states:

kingdoms have become powerful, not from the inhabitants cherishing a spirit of patriotism...but from a congenial feeling of irreconcilable hatred to their neighbours, on account of some slight difference in the mode or substance of their paying their adoration to the great Creator of the universe.

This is true "of human society in every part of the globe," but particularly so in regard to "those

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51 Francis Hutcheson, cited in ibid., pp. 179, 178 and quoted, p. 179.


nations which have adopted the belief of the Prophet of Arabia." Even the pacifism of the Hindus should not be taken for granted, leading Malcolm to recite the speech of a Hindu prince on the occasion of the invasion of his state by the Muslim, Mahmud of Ghazni:

My followers, who appear so mild and submissive, will, if they see no escape, or are irritated beyond their power of suffrance, soon change their character; they will murder their wives and children, burn their habitations...and encounter your army with all the energy of men, whose only desire is revenge and death.

Malcolm gives warning that "the history of India abounds in similar instances" and that the speech accurately depicts the character of Hindus of the military castes.54

While employed in the administration of the Deccan in 1819, Elphinstone was equally anxious to avoid any interference with Indian religion. He stated that he had left out of his Report on the Peshwa’s Territories an account of the dangers that would follow upon any attempt to interfere with religious customs. They were so obvious that "we may hope they will never be braved."

But he went on to point out that,

The numbers and physical force of the natives are evidently incalculably greater than ours. Our strength consists in the want of energy and disunion of our enemies. There is but one talisman, that, while it animated and united them all, would leave us without a single adherent: this talisman is the name of religion, a power so odious that it is astonishing our enemies have not more frequently and systematically employed it against us.55

By the time Elphinstone started writing his History of India in the mid-1830s, however, the British were sufficiently confident to consider a program of westernizing reforms. Apparently reflecting this change, Elphinstone is more concerned with the barriers to improvement he identifies in the practices of Hinduism and Islam than in the danger of provoking rebellion.

Religious considerations are important in Elphinstone’s treatment of Indian history from the first Muslim incursions to the decline of the Mughal empire and in Malcolm’s account of the more recent centuries of Persian history. In both cases, however, when they are dealing with states in which


55 Elphinstone, Peshwa’s Territories, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 95.
Islam is the religion of the rulers, religious issues are generally discussed in relation to the system of government of the state rather than to the manners of the people. Sometime after Elphinstone's death, a correspondent of The Times recorded that on one occasion, Elphinstone had defended Pontius Pilate on the ground that it was his duty as governor to maintain order, and, therefore, what he did was right. To the correspondent "the late Mr. Elphinstone ever appears to us in his most unamiable light when he advocates the hateful doctrine [of political expediency]." Religion was important for Malcolm and Elphinstone for its effects on national character, its political volatility and its inhibiting influence on the progress of civilization: secular interests. The well-being of men's souls, for Munro as well as for them, was not the responsibility of the Supreme government of India.

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56 Quoted in Choksey, Elphinstone, p. 456.
Chapter 10

Systems of Government

A great sacrifice of liberty must necessarily be made in any government...yet...authority...ought never in any constitution, to become quite entire and uncontrollable.

David Hume

The question of the correct relationship between liberty and authority was at the centre of political discourse throughout the late eighteenth century. In Scotland, however, European monarchy, even in its more absolute forms in Russia and France, was assumed to provide a relatively satisfactory balance between freedom and oppression. Although most Scottish intellectuals believed that Britain enjoyed a superior form of monarchical government, it was by no means perfect. It was preferable, nevertheless, to despotism, which Adam Ferguson describes as "monarchy corrupted," and preferable also to the so-called freedom of the ancient republics, because it did not rest on the enslavement of a large segment of the population, was suitable for the governance of relatively large areas, and was unlikely to degenerate into anarchy. Liberty generally meant the security of the persons and property of the governed under rulers whose right to govern rested ultimately on some form of consent. It did not mean democracy or even representative government. Although individual liberty could not be sustained without some form of authority, arbitrary authority was morally degrading and discouraged the progress of civil society.

For eighteenth-century historians, the term despotism lacked many of the derogatory connotations it acquired in the following century. In Hume and Robertson's interpretation of the progress of Britain and continental Europe, despotism was a stage through which states passed

1 Hume, Philosophical Works, 3: 116.
2 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 71.
3 Hume, History, pp. 20; 22.
4 Ibid., pp. 18-24.
between feudalism and limited monarchy. It was a necessary stage which, according to Hume, occurred in England under the Tudor dynasty, while Robertson pointed to the reigns of Louis XI in France and Henry VII in England. European despotism provided the stable environment essential for the "rise of commerce and the arts," the production of agricultural surplus and the exercise of enterprise. This led in turn to the development of graduated social ranks, followed by the gradual shift of power and authority to the "middling ranks" who insisted on a rule of law.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone all acknowledged that British rule in India was despotic; this did not, however, make it automatically reprehensible. Although most Asian governments were seen as despotic, individual rulers might be good, bad or indifferent according to whether they wielded their power for the good of the state or to fulfil their own selfish ambitions. By studying past and present Asian rulers, the strengths and weaknesses of despotism could be identified in order to be built on, or avoided, in British India.

When Malcolm and Elphinstone wrote their books about the Sikhs and the Afghans in the early nineteenth century, Sikh and Afghan leaders had for some time been using the opportunity provided by the decline of Mughul power to the east and the collapse of the Safavid empire in Persia to build independent states. As depicted by Malcolm and Elphinstone, the recent history of each people presented a mirror image of the other. Malcolm traces the transformation of a passive and oppressed people into a proud and warlike one, ruling a state extending through "all the Punjab, a small part of Multan, and most of the tract of country...between the Jumna and the Sutlej." Elphinstone traces the process by which a people, independent and egalitarian under rulers from

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5 Ibid., pp. 24; 30; 83; 221-2; 226. Robertson, Progress, pp. 78-82.

6 Hume, *Philosophical Works*, 3: 306; 161; *History*, p. 230. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, provides a theoretical explanation, with much historical evidence, of the economic and political "progress of mankind"; in Book III, Chapter 4 Smith mentions that he believes Hume to be the first writer to notice the relationship between commerce and manufactures and the introduction of order and good government and the liberty and security of individuals. See also John Robertson, "Civic Tradition," pp. 163-6.

7 Malcolm, *Sikhs*, pp. 1; 4; 86-7.
the Abdali clan, "whose government was at all times democratic," were induced to accept, temporarily, a more autocratic form of government by Ahmad Shah Durani.

Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* is a short book written to explain the present condition of the Sikh people. Two of its three chapters examine contemporary civil institutions and religious beliefs and practices. For Malcolm, institutions were the key to understanding the nature and power of any state, and he examines the historical evolution and political effects of Sikh institutions, claiming that any knowledge he can pass on "will be useful at a moment when every information regarding the Sikhs is of importance." Many pages are devoted to explaining how the tenth and last spiritual leader of the sect, Guru Govind, while upholding the religious tenets of the sect's founder, Nanak, established institutions and practices that turned an "inoffensive, peaceable sect" into a militant but unruly nation.

Govind offered equality through the abolition of caste distinctions and the constitution of a federative republic.

[He] calculated to rouse his followers from their indolent habits, and deep-rooted prejudices, by giving them a personal share in the government, and placing within the reach of every individual the attainment of rank and influence in the state.

He publicized his innovations through preaching and in writings in which he claimed divine sanction for his mission and exhorted his disciples to valour, emulation and sacrifice. Symbols of identity and a ceremony of initiation were devised in order to inculcate a sense of pride and particularity. In sum, he inspired "a low race, and of grovelling minds," with pride and the realization that "their advancement should solely depend upon their exertions."

Malcolm sets the Sikh leader's methods and objectives in a universal context. Govind

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*Elphinstone, *Caubul*, 2: 280.*

*Malcolm, *Sikhs*, p. 3.*


*Ibid.,* pp. 36-7; 40-1.*
possessed "many of those features which have distinguished the most celebrated founders of political communities." His praiseworthy object was the emancipation of his tribe from oppression; his means those that only a comprehensive mind would suggest. His only hope of success was "a bold departure from usages which were calculated to keep those by whom they were observed, in a degraded subjection to an...intolerant race"12 of Muslim rulers. Yet Malcolm saw the contemporary Sikh state as a failure. The Mughals had been alarmed by the Sikh abolition of caste because, according to Malcolm, they recognized that the Hindu practice of limiting most of the population to peaceful occupations was the cornerstone of their own security. But Govind’s revolutionary constitution, Malcolm believes, led to disorder and weakness. By allowing the Sikh chiefs to retain their independence — their liberty — and maintain their local powers, he ensured that only an external threat would give them sufficient unity of purpose to render them a formidable power.13

One of the most serious external threats to the Sikh state was mounted by Ahmad Shah Durani of Kabul in the early 1760s. Although Ahmad’s power was at first over-whelming, the combination of disturbance within his own domains and a resurgence of Sikh unity and perseverance in the face of danger, led eventually to Sikh retention of the Punjab.

The Durani empire had come into existence with the crowning of Ahmad Shah in October 1747, little more than sixty years before Elphinstone himself visited the court of Ahmad's descendent, Shah Shuja al-Mulk in 1808. Traditionally, the Afghan tribes had paid tribute either to the Persians or to the ruling dynasty at Delhi, or they had maintained a fragile independence when their neighbours were too weak to enforce their demands. Ahmad’s endeavour was the first attempt to create an Afghan state and "he either felt, or pretended to feel, a strong attachment to his nation." His ideal was monarchical government on the Persian model. The forms of Ahmad’s court, his ministers, army and the powers of the crown were modelled on Nadir Shah’s, but the difference

12 Ibid., p. 58.
13 Ibid., pp. 36; 81-82.
between the two rulers was apparent in Ahmad's need to modify Nadir's arrangements. Nadir, who had usurped an established monarchy, had faced little internal opposition because Persians were used to despotic government. Ahmad, however, was trying to impose monarchy on a warlike, independent and republican people.\textsuperscript{14}

In Afghanistan, those most familiar with monarchical government regarded a king as an enemy intent on extracting tribute. They could not conceive of him as a magistrate to whom one owed loyalty in return for protection. In addition, owing to the love of equality conspicuous in their national character, Afghans were likely to resent the exaltation of a fellow countryman even more than the domination of a foreign invader.\textsuperscript{15} Ahmad attached his own tribe — his power base — by providing opportunities and privileges while abstaining from interference in its internal affairs, and gradually imposed his authority on the other tribes by non-interference and by sharing the spoils of war. Elphinstone described the character of Ahmad in terms soon to be reserved for British imperial pro-consuls. He had the "enterprise and decision" to seize opportunities; the "prudence and moderation" that was as necessary to the government of a warlike and independent people as the "bold and commanding turn of his natural genius." His military courage and ability were admired by all yet he was, by nature, mild and clement: "and though it is impossible to acquire sovereign power, and perhaps, in Asia, to maintain it without crimes, yet the memory of no Eastern prince is stained with fewer acts of cruelty and injustice."\textsuperscript{16} Elphinstone had few illusions about imperialism. If Ahmad's approach had been followed by his successors, Elphinstone believed, a strong, stable government would have been gradually established. As his successors were less able men, the power of the dynasty declined. The failure to unite the tribes in support of a Persian-style monarchy,

\textsuperscript{14} Elphinstone, \textit{Caubul}, 2: 281-3.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 2: 282.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 2: 298.
however, saved the Afghan people from the worst effects of Asian despotism.\textsuperscript{17}

For Elphinstone, the Afghanistan of the \textit{Kingdom of Caubul}, apart from its republican form of tribal government, resembles "ancient Scotland." The king ruled the towns and the surrounding country and exacted an unreliable tribute from nearby clans. The more distant clans retained their independence. He explains that

\begin{quote}
the inordinate power and faction of the nobility most connected with the court, and the relations borne by all the great lords to the crown, resemble each other so closely in the two states, that it will throw light on the character of the Durani government to keep the parallel in view.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Elphinstone describes in detail the tribal divisions and systems of local government, which, invariably republican in nature, varied from complete democracy to circumscribed patriarchy — using the words "republican" and "democratic" interchangeably. The defect of republican government is its tendency to produce anarchy and disorder; its inestimable advantage is its moral impact. The great moral virtues were, for Elphinstone, the enterprise, energy and civic "virtu" found in Greece and Rome: "however rudely formed," a popular government which provided occupation, interest and a sense of independence and personal worth, invariably inspired courage, intelligence and elevation of character.\textsuperscript{19}

Elphinstone sees the Afghan tribes as "organised republics" which protect people from both foreign invaders and the often disorderly royal government. This explains "the progressive improvement" of Afghanistan, despite twelve years of civil war, whereas Persia remains in a state of decay despite twenty years of peace. Afghan tribal government seemed to Elphinstone to resemble the village governments of India. They, too, were able in some areas to provide relief from oppressive rule and in others, where there appeared to be no superior level of government, to bring

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] Ibid., 2: 282-3; 299.
\item[18] Ibid., 1: 230.
\item[19] Ibid., 1: 231.
\end{footnotes}
Elphinstone asks whether the self-governing tribes of Afghanistan might provide the foundation for a better system of national government. Afghan institutions, although inferior as instruments of national power to those found under a more despotic government, nevertheless afford superior materials for the construction of a "rational constitution." He engages in "a pleasing reverie;" a conjectural explanation, based on British historical experience, of the evolution of a constitutional, monarchical form of government. He is forced to conclude, however, that this is unlikely to happen. The factions of the Afghan court have borrowed too many ideas from neighbouring despotisms. And Afghan social structure possesses within itself "a principle of repulsion and disunion, too strong to be overcome, except by such a force as, while it united the whole into one solid body, would crush and obliterate the features of every one of the parts." Despotism and liberty co-exist uneasily in Afghanistan, the capacity of the ruler deciding which will prevail.

In his account of Islamic Persia, Malcolm, too, examines the causes of disorder. He explains that although Muhammad intended his religion to unite and civilize the Arab tribes, it contained two flaws: by endorsing domestic tyranny it fostered and entrenched political tyranny; and by glorifying proselytisation and conversion by the sword, it sanctified violence and oppression. These were flaws which affected the recent condition of Persia, to which Malcolm devotes the last five chapters of history of the country. Tactfully concluding his account before the accession of the present shah, he claims that "there are, fortunately for mankind, few nations where the authority vested in the chief ruler is so absolute." But he recognizes, as modern scholars do, that some checks to absolute

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20 Ibid., 1: 232-235.

21 Ibid., 1: 233-5.


23 Ervand Abrahamian calls the shahs, "despots without the instruments of despotism;" the lack of a central administrative structure circumscribed their power. "Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran," Journal of Middle East Studies (1974), p. 9. Ann Lambton argues that the authority of the shah was undermined by divisions within the Qajar family and by ineffective financial and military organization. See "Persia: the Breakdown of Society," Cambridge History of Islam, 1: Chap. 6.
power did exist in the high officials, provincial governors and tribal groups, whose power base is beyond the control of the ruler and who will rebel if pushed too far. Religious traditions and sometimes even public opinion are also a significant restraint. But Malcolm maintains that Persia cannot progress. Where a man is accustomed only "to obey or to command, he cannot understand what is meant by individual or political freedom;" he expects his ruler to exercise the absolute power that he himself exercises over everyone under his authority and is apathetic about the form of government under which he lives. Forced by the nature of his government to resort to falsehood, deceit, and violence in everyday life, his immorality, Malcolm believes, should be attributed to a "bad system of internal administration." Although this may excuse his behaviour, it destroys, nevertheless, "all social ties between the rulers and those whom they govern," leading to continuous disorder and the total absence of any sense of national unity. No Muslim, Malcolm believes, has ever made any attempt to pursue a "rational freedom" or check the absolute authority of his sovereign.

Despite this pessimistic conclusion, Malcolm believes that the system does more moral than practical harm to the individual. Persians are reasonably prosperous and as happy as most other people. Their ignorance and prejudice may disgust Europeans, but "men are formed by habit" and their sufferings and happiness are relative: "he who has travelled over the greatest space will be most struck with the equal dispensation of happiness and misery." Europeans, who derive their attitudes from the condition of their own society cannot judge, with any accuracy, the feelings of anyone else.

This was an opinion Malcolm shared with Adam Ferguson, who argued:

Man finds his lodgement alike in the cave...and the palace; and his subsistence equally in the woods...or the farm...he devises regular systems of government,...or naked in the woods, has no badge of superiority but the strength of his limbs and the sagacity of his mind...The tree which an American...has chosen to climb for...the lodgement of his family, is to him a convenient dwelling. The sofa,...and the


25 Ibid., 2: 637-8; 494; 622-3.

26 Ibid., 2: 493; 619.
colonade, do not more effectually content their native inhabitant.27

Malcolm claims that "useful and important" lessons to Britain on the crucial importance of preserving British civil liberties may be learned from studying the condition of Persia. Describing Britain as "a nation who continues, amid scenes of luxury and refinement, to cherish an individual independence, and a political freedom, that are grounded upon the institutions of a race of brave, but turbulent warriors,"28 he again echoes Ferguson, who remarked of civil liberty, that it "requires a fabric no less than the whole political constitution of Great Britain, a spirit no less than the refractory and turbulent zeal of this fortunate people, to secure its effects."29

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone would all have agreed with Dugald Stewart:

It is by the particular forms of their political institutions, that those opinions and habits which constitute the manners of nations are chiefly determined...these are [intimately] connected with the progress and the happiness of the race.30

A few years later Munro suggested that "an excellent book might be written by a man of leisure, showing the wonderful influence that forms of government have on moulding the dispositions of mankind."31 For the Scottish philosophes and for Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, good government meant a satisfactory balance between liberty and authority; bad government meant immorality and stagnation. For Malcolm and Elphinstone, the defects of the countries they analyzed stemmed from the nature of their government. In Persia, the problem was excessive despotic authority; among the Sikhs and Afghans, the bar to progress and power was liberty carried to a politically destructive extreme. Malcolm and Elphinstone saw pre-colonial Indian government as despotic, but not as typical of Oriental despotism; they recognized the existence of de facto, if not

27 Ferguson, Civil Society, pp. 7-8.
29 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 167.
30 Stewart, Outlines, p. 6.
31 Munro to his sister Erskine, 21 Jan. 1800, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 280.
constitutional, limits to the power of the sovereign. They also saw British rule in India as despotic. If India was to progress beyond despotism under British governance, however, the lessons of Asian history would be useful. For Munro, the lessons of European history were also useful.

The form of governance set up in British India between 1780 and 1830 has to be considered in relation to what was happening in both Europe and Asia. C.A. Bayly, stating that attitudes, legends, theories and institutions as well as economic interests must be considered as determining forces in the expansion of British imperial rule during this period, describes the process as representing, not simply a hiatus between waves of liberal reform, as Vicent Harlow presents it, but as "a series of attempts to establish overseas despotisms which mirrored in many ways the politics of neo-absolutism and the Holy Alliance of contemporary Europe." The despotisms set up in the colonies, he claims, were characterized by viceregal authority and an aristocratic military system which emphasised hierarchy, racial subordination and the patronage of indigenous landed élites. In Bayly's interpretation, constitution-making for the dependencies remained evolutionary and pragmatic. Citing Burton Stein's work, he suggests that in southern and western India, the schemes that were set up by the British "owed much to the system inherited from Tipu Sultan by the early Scots administrators Alexander Reade [sic] and Sir Thomas Munro."

In the Asian setting, recent historiographical debate on the British conquest of India during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has centred around the concept of a process of competitive state-building and the development of the necessary techniques of "military fiscalism" to support it. Detailed studies of various Indian regions indicate that this period should no longer be seen as one of Indian economic decline and disorder due to the collapse of the Mughal empire, but rather as one in which a "changing balance of power between centre and province led to growing regional autonomy." As D.A. Washbrooke observes, the Mughal empire was being "superceded

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32 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, pp. 8-9.

33 Ibid., p. 54.
from below by regional states more 'modern' in many of their functions."34 Military needs provided
the motive force for the development of more centralized administrative organizations which aimed
at maximizing the state's receipts from land revenue and from state-encouraged trade. This process
enhanced the importance of towns and middle ranks — merchants, artisans, service gentry — and
increased the "recycling of state resources" in agriculture and commodity production and in
commerce. "In a great many ways, South Asia was involved in 'the social history of capitalism' from
a very early period and underwent many of the same types of social development as those taking
place in Western Europe."35

The Company state was one of the several competing polities introducing centralizing forms
of administration in order to maximize revenues for military purposes and Munro's role in the
building of this Company state, his contribution to what Bayly calls "the politics of neo-absolutism,"
and his vision of empire has been examined recently by Stein.36

Stein relates Tipu Sultan's form of government, which he sees as the model for the system
advocated by Munro, to Max Weber's concept of "Sultanism." He defines this as a system in which
"a primitive, pre-modern administrative apparatus and substantial military force [are] at the personal
disposal of the patrimonial ruler,"37 warning, however, the type of ideological discontinuities
between the ruler and the local lordships — discontinuities between Muslim ruler and Hindu lords
— that existed in Tipu Sultan's state were not considered by Weber. There is documentary evidence
of Tipu Sultan's plans and orders regarding civil administration, some of which would have been

34 Washbrooke, "South Asian Economic and Social History," p. 68.
35 Ibid., p. 72.
36 See Stein, "State Formation," Munro, and "Idiom and Ideology in Early Nineteenth Century South India," in Rural India: Land,
37 Stein, "State Formation," p. 410
available to Munro. According to Stein, Munro criticized Tipu's system while arranging the settlement of Kanara, but, later, utilized Tipu's methods in his own organization of the Ceded Districts. Stein identifies the main element of continuity between Tipu and Munro's administrations as being military fiscalism. As part of their efforts at centralization, however, both men attempted to reduce the power and the ability to appropriate resources of the petty rajas or poligars; they both replaced local lords as the link between cultivators and "the extractive state" with outsiders — in Tipu's case with Muslim officials, in Munro's, with politically safe, non-military, Maratha brahmins — and they both sought to enlarge the tax base by expanding the amount of land under cultivation. Munro, Stein claims, established continuity with Tipu's system because it met the Company's need, as a militarist state, to increase its ability to appropriate resources. Stein also argues that Munro's championship of indigenous institutions and "native agency" was a powerful ideology developed to justify the Company's expanding appropriation of resources. In identifying the continuities between Tipu and Munro's régimes, and by emphasising Munro's insistence on utilizing indigenous institutions, Stein implies that Munro's system was also a form of Sultanism — with ideological discontinuities between British rulers and Hindu lords. This argument, however, which proposes that Munro's administration was an essentially Indian form of government, fails to take into consideration, the implications of what, in another work, he calls Munro's "vision of empire."

Despite the emphasis in the sub-title of his book Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire, Stein allots only five and a half pages to his examination of what comprised Munro's vision. The first principle of the British imperium, visualised, he claims,

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38 Ibid., p. 401. Regulations for the administrative organization of Omalur in Salem were translated by Sir William Jones and published in 1795.

39 Munro to his father, 6 Aug. 1799, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 214-5; 220-2; Munro, "On the Condition and Assessment of Kanara," 31 May 1800, MM, 1: 55-79.

by Malcolm as well as Munro, was Crown rule carried out through vice-regal officials (themselves). He also argues that both men considered the East India Company government to be doomed. He does not mention the sources on which his interpretation is based and both men may have privately favoured Crown rule. Malcolm, however, devotes ten pages of the Political History (1826) to discussing whether the Company was capable of governing the type of state British India had become, and comes down firmly, in public at least, in favour of continued Company government. "The foregoing arguments," Malcolm states, "are meant to show the evil effects which we may anticipate to India, and eventually to England, from the abolishing of the East India Company as a medium for the government of India." His main reasons were that the Crown would know too little about, and have too little interest in, India to govern well.

The second principle of Munro's vision involved the idea of a system of politically separate states functioning under the hegemony of British India. This, in Stein's view is not Burkean prescriptivism or nationalism but simply the idea that competing political units would produce a more efficient and stable order than the domination of one régime over a large geographical area. Stein identifies Munro's vision as a belief that "the Indian subcontinent could become a sphere of interacting states, just as Europe had been from the seventeenth century a self-contained political world." If this is an accurate interpretation, as it probably is, it indicates that Munro saw the continuity he maintained with Tipu Sultan's régime in European, not Asian — or Sultanist — terms, as Stein argues in the paper on "State Formation."

Stein states that Munro's approach to government was partly pragmatic — coping with local conditions — and, from the time of his last two years in the Ceded Districts, partly a "precocious perception of how his pragmatism might be embedded in principles." It is always difficult to

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41 Malcolm, Political History, 2: 63-73.
42 Ibid., 2: 73.
43 Stein, Munro, p. 349.
differentiate between principled action and action rationalized on grounds of principle. It will be argued in Chapter 11 of this thesis, however, that the parallels between the ideas expressed in Munro's earliest reports from the Baramahal and the terms of the debate on political economy, familiar to most men raised in the merchant community of Glasgow in the 1760s and 1770s, suggest that the system he developed rested from the beginning on certain Scottish ideological assumptions.

The processes of state-building and military fiscalism which were taking place in India in the eighteenth century are related by Stein to similar processes that took place in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe. Although historical analysis of Indian state-building is relatively new, the development of the European state system attracted the attention of historians in the eighteenth century and, in regard to the correspondence between Munro's system and that of Tipu Sultan, it is likely that Munro recognized the same similarities between the European and Indian processes as Stein has done. An interpretation of state-building following the lines of William Robertson's analysis of the progress of Europe, would have enabled Munro to recognize features of Tipu Sultan's system that would serve his purposes.

There is no evidence to prove that Munro read Robertson. There is, however, circumstantial evidence that makes it probable. Munro liked reading history; Robertson was a leading — and readable — historian whose History of the Reign of Charles V, to which the fine essay, The Progress of Society in Europe is the introduction, was an enormous success when first published in 1769. History being a favourite literary form, Munro is likely to have read the work anyway. His fondness for Cervantes' Don Quixote, which, according to Gleig, led him to learn Spanish at the age of sixteen so that he could read the book in the original language, makes it not unreasonable to assume that he would have been sufficiently interested in the historical background of Cervantes' heroes to

44 Ibid., pp. 351; 391.
45 Editor's introduction, Robertson, Progress of Society, p. xxiv.
46 Gleig, Munro, 1: 5-8.
read Robertson's work.

In the first chapter of *Progress of Society*, Robertson describes the barbarian invasions of the Roman empire to the fifteenth century, commenting on early efforts by monarchs to counterbalance the power of the nobility by conferring privileges on the towns. The phrase Robertson uses to describe the newly privileged towns is "so many little republics." It may not be coincidence that Munro used the term "little republicks" for what he called the village municipal governments of India.

Although, in Robertson's view, much progress had been made by the fifteenth century, government was "still far from having attained that state, in which extensive monarchies act with united vigour, or carry on great undertakings with perseverance and success." Unity of purpose Robertson believes, may be achieved only by an efficient despotic ruler or by means of "the powerful influence of regular policy." The great eastern empires were examples of the former; eighteenth century European states of the latter. The political constitution of the European kingdoms at the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, was different from both. The authority of the aristocracy — local lords — circumscribed the power of the monarch. The revenues available to the monarch were so small that "the armies which they could bring into the field were unfit for long and effectual service." Charles VII of France was the first monarch to undermine the power of the nobility by establishing a regular army, paid for by the extraction of new taxes; Louis XI's maxims of rule "were as profound as they were fatal to the privileges of the nobility. He filled all the departments of government with new men," enlarged the regular army and imposed heavier taxation to pay for it. Henry VII of England, however, who came to the throne with a disputed title, after long wars during

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47 Robertson, *Progress of Society*, p. 31.

48 Stein notes that the earliest use by Munro of the term dates from June 1806. Stein, *Munro*, p. 130n.

49 Robertson, *Progress of Society*, p. 68.

50 Ibid., p. 69.
which the nobility frequently demonstrated their ability to create or depose kings, was cautious in centralizing authority. He was successful, however, owing to policies which prevented the nobles from keeping armed retainers, "which rendered them formidable, and turbulent;" encouraged population, agriculture and commerce, brought peace, and, by accustoming the people "to an administration of government, under which the laws were executed with steadiness," the English constitution was altered and improved. While the princes of Europe expanded their authority and centralized their administrative systems, so that their states could act "with union and force," events occurred which forced them to use their new powers and the affairs of all the important "nations in Europe came to be insensibly interwoven." A great political system was developed "which grew to be an object of universal attention."51

Robertson provides a lucid account of state-building and military fiscalism which, in his view, created a system in Europe of national states, regulating their foreign relations by means of the concept of maintaining a balance of power. The terminology is different but he describes processes recognizably similar to those taking place in pre-colonial India. If military fiscalism is regarded as Munro's only objective, then it might be possible to accept the view that Munro was content to take over an Asian form of government. When his views on empire are also taken into account, however, some further explanation is required, and here it seems possible to identify an ideological source in Adam Ferguson's thematic examination of different forms of political organization.

Ferguson's thesis was that civil society would never have come into existence without the rivalry of nations and the practices of war52 and he argued that if states grew too large and were successful in imposing peace throughout their territory, their people would lose "the common ties of society," their loyalty to their state and their spirit of enterprise, and an age "of languor, if not

51 Ibid., p. 82; 83.
52 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 24.
decay" would ensue. Scotland's moral philosophers did not accept the idea of inevitable progress; they were interested in the decline, as well as the rise, of civil societies and empires.

The evidence that suggests that Munro's vision of empire encompassed "a sphere of interacting states," similar to those of seventeenth century Europe, is contained in three papers: a letter written by Munro to Lord Hastings in 1817, a memorandum dated 1823 and, as Stein indicates, from the conclusion to Munro's minute "On the Employment of Natives in the Public Service." In the often-quoted letter to Hastings, Munro argues that "even if all India could be brought under the British dominion, it is very questionable whether such a change, either as it regards the natives or ourselves, ought to be desired." Such a conquest would mean that the Indian army, "having no longer any warlike neighbours to combat, would gradually lose its military habits" but, equally important, the political stability imposed by British military power would harm the Indian people. Like Ferguson, Munro believed that security would be "purchased by the sacrifice of independence — of national character — and of whatever renders a people respectable." Subsidiary alliances, Munro claims, are even more harmful to the Indian character than direct British rule, and he suggests that, as the British are now strong enough to ignore threats of an alliance of Indian states against them, it would be better to leave the Indian states their independence. If Britain conquers the whole of India they will debase the whole people.

The memorandum written by Munro in 1823, argues that each presidency should pursue the course best suited to produce improvement in its own territory. Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, a thousand miles apart, neither could nor should be governed by means of one uniform system of

53 Ibid., p. 219.

54 Stein, Munro, p. 349.


56 Munro to Hastings, 12 Aug. 1817, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 465.

57 Ibid., 1: 466-7.
internal administration. "Let each presidency act for itself. By this means, a spirit of emulation will be kept alive, and each may borrow from the other every improvement which may be suited to the circumstance of its own provinces." In the same year Munro, referring to the possibility that Russia might gain territory if the Turks were driven out of Europe, told George Canning that, "it is for the advantage of a great and enlightened nation to have powerful rivals." Munro may not have read Ferguson but he subscribed to similar views on the disadvantages of large, pacified empires and the importance, to the moral character of a people, of a spirit of independence and emulation. He also, like Ferguson, regarded military rivalry between states as a good thing. The form of despotism he advocated was that of the rulers of early modern Europe who were contriving to build the type of "nation state" that has been seen by nationalists in many states as the "principal vehicle of human liberation," not that of the neo-absolutist rulers of the nineteenth century empires of the Holy Alliance.

Munro's view of empire, located in a European rather than an Asian tradition, may, perhaps, be seen as bridging the gap between what P.J. Marshall has described as "the inhibitions and fears about an imperial role in Asia," which were widely held in Britain in the eighteenth century, and the gradually developing confidence of nineteenth-century Britons in the type of empire visualized, too early for his own contemporaries, by Lord Wellesley. While governor-general from 1798 to 1805, Wellesley's object was to subordinate the Indian states to British control and to centralize British power by reducing the minor presidencies to a similar subordination to the Supreme government at Calcutta.

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58 Munro, memorandum, n.d., 1823, quoted in ibid., 2: 264-5.

59 Munro to Canning, 1 May 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 67.

60 O'Hanlon and Washbrooke use this phrase in a discussion of recent work by Indian historians on colonialism and capitalism. See "Histories in Transition," pp. 118-19.


62 Ingram, Commitment to Empire, pp. 117: 145-6; 154.
Writing in the 1840s, Elphinstone accepts the idea of imperial rule throughout the subcontinent and looks for ways to create unity of purpose, rather than emulation and competition, as a path to progress. In his examination of the nature of Indian government from the time of the first Muslim invasions, Elphinstone discusses why would-be conquerors, who had reached Multan in the eighth century, found it difficult to establish themselves in India despite the incentives of Indian wealth and Hindu passivity. He concludes that the Arabs swept easily through Persia because religion and government had not supported each other, but, in India, a powerful priesthood, working with the government and revered by the people, encouraged resistance. Religion coloured the laws and manners of Indians who had a horror of change and the sort of passive courage that was likely to exhaust an impetuous force. Even the divisions in Indian society helped to protect it: the defeat of one prince did not bring about the defeat of the whole country. These facts accounted for the slow progress and relatively "mild and tolerant form" of Islam in India, and for the change in the nature of Muslim government. Chiefs became — in Elphinstone’s words — "politic sovereigns" rather than "fanatical missionaries;" aggrandizement of their families rather than promotion of their faith became their object, and from rough soldiers they became magnificent and luxurious princes.63

The second volume of the History of India begins with an account of a series of campaigns in which greater or lesser rulers of varying degrees of competence tried to dominate, or resist domination by their neighbours.64 Although the form of government in India was invariably despotic, Elphinstone believes that the most oppressive elements of Muslim rule were again modified by the influence of Hinduism. The peace and prosperity of each state, however, depended on the ability of the individual ruler; there was no "system" to ensure the continuance of good government during the reign of a weak, dissolute or tyrannical king.65

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64 See Ibid., 2: 1-92 for Elphinstone’s account of this period of Indian history.

65 Ibid., 2: 87.
There was little social or political friction, in Elphinstone's view, between Hindus and Muslims in India: there were few bigoted rulers; dynasties were founded by both Hindus and Muslims, by the high-born and the humble and by Indians and foreigners. Religion rarely affected the continuous processes of state-building: Muslim rulers rarely united to defeat a Hindu; Hindu states rarely formed coalitions to expel a Muslim rival. The inter-marriage of Muslim rulers with Hindu princesses — actively promoted by Akbar in the sixteenth century — was a positive step and, most important of all, Hindus were appointed to the highest military and civil offices of Muslim-ruled states.

Elphinstone's views on Indian government are most evident in his accounts of the reigns of Akbar, who raised Mughal power to its apogee, and Aurangzeb, whose reign in the late seventeenth century, saw the beginning of its decline. Although Elphinstone rarely adopts Malcolm's pontifical tone and his didacticism takes the form of a sub-text rather than an explicit statement, he probably intended his analysis to provide object lessons on governing India. Malcolm, who wrote twenty years earlier and in a slightly different climate of opinion, used Aurangzeb's reign to issue blatant warnings.

Although, according to Elphinstone, Aurangzeb was the most admired of Indian rulers by Muslim writers, his own approval was reserved for Akbar, who resembled Ahmad Shah of Afghanistan: he was a great ruler as well as a great conqueror. Elphinstone begins his account of Akbar's reign with a discussion of the weakness of the power base of India's foreign conquerors. Tamerlane was the least secure because his own country was furthest from India. The houses of Ghazni and Ghor depended on their own kingdoms but these, at least "were contiguous to their Indian conquest." Babur relied largely on "a body of adventurers, whose sole bond of union was their common advantage during success," and lack of "natural support" had led to the easy expulsion of Akbar's father, Humayun. Britain was only the most recent of India's many foreign conquerors. It

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66 Ibid., 2: 554.
would be easy to recognize that her power base was more distant than Tamerlane's and she relied on a body of sepoy mercenaries whose loyalty might depend solely on common advantage during success.

Akbar, Elphinstone believes, was influenced by the experience of his predecessors and inspired with the "noble design" of "forming the inhabitants of that vast territory [India], without distinction of race or religion, into one community." To create a sense of unity of purpose, "he admitted Hindus to every degree of power, and Muslims of every party to the highest stations in the service, according to their rank and merit; until, as far as his dominions extended, they were filled with a loyal and united people." It was an admirable vision of empire. First, however, Akbar had had to establish his authority over rival claimants to power in the sub-continent, secure his dominions and restore order to an administrative system disrupted by a long period of disorder. The scenario was familiar to anyone who had taken part in the British conquest of southern and western India.

Akbar was a cultured man possessing great physical vigour, courage and intelligence; he became "sober and abstemious" with maturity, enjoyed whole nights spent in philosophical discussion and, though constantly at war, "made greater improvements in civil government than any other king of India." Though not free of ambition, as the countries he invaded had formerly been subject to Mughal rule, he would have incurred more blame than praise, judged by the standards of his time, had he not tried to recover them.

It was to his internal policies that Akbar owed his place, in Elphinstone's view, "in that highest order of princes, whose reigns have been a blessing to mankind." He practised religious tolerance, encouraged research into Hindu doctrine, and sponsored translations of Sanscrit and Greek literature into Persian. Akbar's own religion was pure deism: "His fundamental doctrine was,

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67 Ibid., 2: 259-60.
68 Ibid., 2: 260.
69 Ibid., 2: 315.
that there were no prophets: his appeal on all occasions was to human reason." Although Akbar's religion was too abstract to appeal to the bulk of mankind, and under his successor, Jehangir, Muslim forms were quietly restored, the "liberal spirit of inquiry" personified by Akbar continued to thrive after his death. If "extrinsic causes had not interrupted its progress, it might have ripened into some great reform of the existing superstitions."\textsuperscript{70} India and Indians, it is implied, would have been capable of progress without British guidance, had it not been for the accidents of history.

Akbar had been eulogized by earlier historians for his revenue system. Elphinstone, however, points out that the system was not new; Akbar simply made the existing arrangements work effectively. The way in which the revenue system functioned under Akbar is described in some detail, but its main object — and the point Elphinstone emphasizes — was to reduce the amount taken from the cultivators without reducing the income of the government. This was done by diminishing the losses incurred in the process of collection\textsuperscript{71} — precisely what Munro had hoped to do as a revenue collector. Akbar created a stable and prosperous society by making the existing system work well and by introducing modifications, not innovations, that in the long-term and with further adjustment might have led to a process of change. Lastly, he encouraged all the diverse groups in Indian society to participate in the execution of his "noble design:" to unite the people of India into one community that recognized their own interest in serving the interests of the state.

Elphinstone's examination of the problems and successes of Akbar's reign was a blue-print of empire in disguise; one that might be followed with advantage by the British as they laid the foundations of their own. The points that Elphinstone stresses are Akbar's promotion of unity, tolerance, stability, prosperity and the broadening of traditional beliefs and assumptions. His was a despotic rule, not progressive in itself, but one likely to lead to progress. In contrast, Aurangzeb's failures were presented as a warning. Religious bigotry was Aurangzeb's greatest sin and, at the time

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 2: 316; 329.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 2: 330-5.
Elphinstone was writing in the late 1830s, he provided a useful lesson for those not comfortable with the evangelical invasion of India.

Aurangzeb's bigotry, which in Elphinstone's interpretation, "irritated" the Hindus "by systematic discouragement" more than it "inflamed them by acts of cruelty or oppression," provided the great Maratha leader, Sivaji, with the opportunity to rouse Hindu enthusiasm and "foster a national spirit that outlasted his lifetime." Similarly, Aurangzeb's attempts to crush the Sikhs only strengthened their resistance. Elphinstone regards Aurangzeb's commitment to Islam as genuine and he admires his physical and mental toughness and indefatigable industry. But he criticizes his inability to delegate: "the emperor supervised every branch of government, gave hand-written orders on every campaign, and appointed everyone from his viceroy to the office clerks." He spied on his officials: "an attention to particulars that is neither favourable to the progress of business nor indicative of an enlarged genius." Aurangzeb could neither delegate nor trust; faults which crushed the enterprise and loyalty of his subjects. For Elphinstone, however, what really mattered was the lack of any "generous or liberal sentiment."72

Writing three years after the publication of Elphinstone's History of India, Horace Hayman Wilson complained that "a harsh and illiberal spirit has of late years prevailed in the conduct and councils of the rising service in India which owes its origin to impressions imbibed in early life from the History of Mr. Mill."73 Elphinstone's work was written partly to ameliorate the impact of Mill's depiction of Indian history and culture, and he used the unfortunate consequences of Aurangzeb's "harsh and illiberal" rule as an example to westernizing reformers of what could happen to British India under similar circumstances.

Similarly, Malcolm uses Aurangzeb's policies, in his Memoir of Central India, as an example of what a government should not do to maintain order and protect itself. His perception of the last

72 Ibid., 2: 86; 189; 272; 551-2; 564.
great Mughal emperor is unorthodox. He describes him as an actor whose early zeal for Islam was a ruse to attract the support of Muslims in the contest with his more tolerant brothers for the Mughal throne. In the early years of his reign Hindus were treated as equals, again for reasons of expediency, but later, having attempted and failed to convert them to Islam, he fined them and taxed them heavily. The state’s revenue had declined and Aurangzeb, Malcolm thinks, used this method to fill his treasury, but it was an unstatesmanlike policy that lost him the goodwill of a majority of his subjects.74 Aurangzeb lacked the greatness of mind to make temporary sacrifices for the sake of future gains. "Existing rule," Malcolm states, "is always in some degree unpopular" and pressure leads to resistance. The Hindu princes subject to Mughal rule had been deterred from rebellion by their recognition of the overwhelming power of the Mughals and reconciled by religious toleration and by the advantages they derived from participating in the affairs of a splendid and wealthy empire. The moment the imperial power faltered, however, "new enemies arose in every quarter" and the disastrous response was persecution. Tempted by weakness and provoked by injury, the Rajput princes of Jaipur and Malwa ceased to defend the empire from attack and either secretly or openly supported the Maratha rebels. In doing so, they became "the authors of their own ruin".75

Malcolm describes Aurangzeb as "a prince whose attainment and exercise of power present perhaps as many lessons as the life of any monarch that ever reigned."76 There were four lessons in particular that he wanted to ensure his British readers should learn. Excessive demands for revenue would cost the government the goodwill of the majority of its subjects. Religious toleration and the provision of opportunity to play a part in government were the only ways to reconcile a conquered people to foreign rule. Interference with Indian institutions would lead to a dangerous perception of an identity of interest between discontented subjects and foreign enemies, no matter

74 Malcolm, Central India, 1: 50-1.
75 Ibid., 1: 50-7.
76 Ibid., 1: 50.
if such an alliance jeopardized the true interests of Indians. By the time the Memoir on Central India appeared, this threat determined Malcolm’s military strategy for the defence of British India. Lastly, the prestige of the government must be maintained at all costs. Any suggestion that its power is faltering will lead to disaster, as it did for Aurangzeb. Without both order at home and safety from invasion, the exercise of British power to promote good government would be impossible.

James Mill’s idea of good government for British India was different to that of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. As he was a Scotsman of their generation, however, a brief explanation is required of their contrasting views. Mill (1773-1836) was four years younger than Malcolm and six years older than Elphinstone and, like them, was raised and educated in Scotland. His philosophical assumptions, like theirs, derived from the four main intellectual sources which had influenced eighteenth-century Scottish thought: religion, rationalism, the classical world and "scientific empiricism," and he believed, as they did, in the "natural faculties" of the human race and "the various stages of their career." Yet his attitude towards India — indeed towards man and society in general — differed in several ways from theirs. The difference arises from the relative importance attributed to religion, reason and experience by the four men, to the mature age at which Mill left Scotland, and to British influences on Mill to which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, isolated in India, were less exposed. The influence of Jeremy Bentham, was the most important, although Bentham’s thought would not have attracted Mill, had he not been drawn to rational ideas and methods.

Mill was brought up as an orthodox Calvinist, was educated for the Kirk and licensed to preach. Until he discarded his Christian faith in the early 1800s he belonged to the Evangelical High Flyer group in the Kirk, and he remained in Scotland throughout the 1790s when Moderatism was increasingly tarnished by its association with Henry Dundas and Tory politics. Although Mill admired the work of Adam Smith, John Millar and Dugald Stewart, with whom he had studied, his early

77 Mill, British India, 1: 283.
religions training ensured his resistance to the propositions of Hume and the Moderate churchmen while his later loss of faith and a consequent hostility to religion led him to perceive superstition as the great barrier to progress. Upon discarding his Calvinist faith, however, Mill did not discard its austere morality. He was genuinely disgusted by many Hindu practices.

Elphinstone once told Malcolm that "You will not know what difficulty is until you come...to reconcile Maratha custom with Jeremy Bentham."78 For Mill — and Bentham — rationality and self-interest, not feelings, were the prime motives for human action and they enthroned them as the core of the utilitarian philosophy which Mill then tried, unsuccessfully, to use as an all-encompassing explanation of the history of India. Elphinstone, who was interested in Bentham's works, although by no means the disciple that a utilitarian pamphleteer tried to make him out to be in 1828, clearly recognized that Maratha customs had developed as a result of different cultural influences, themselves part of historical experience. They were irreconcilable with the precepts of European rationalism, the product of another culture with a different history. Mill's rationalism led him to suppose that Britain's military control of India, which looked more solid from Britain than from Calcutta, Madras or Bombay, had created a suitable arena for an experiment in ideal laws and administrative systems. Such suppositions prompted Munro's complaint that, "in recommending new systems, people are too apt to think that mankind are mere pieces of machinery, on which it is perfectly harmless to make experiments every day."79

Although Adam Smith's famous concept of "the invisible hand" played an important role in the development of utilitarian theory, Mill rejected another aspect of Smith's thought that was accepted by Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone; his determinism. For Mill, economic determinism or any other determinist explanation of change, or the idea of deep structural forces moving mankind in directions over which it had little control, were incompatible with his belief that the


79 Munro, memorandum, n.d., quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 308, Appendix 8.
application of rational processes of thought would enable man to control his future. Mill supposed a direct relationship between cause and effect; unintended consequences were unacceptable to a rational mind.

Mill's approach to man, society and government differed from the approach taken by Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone, and by Scotland's most distinguished eighteenth-century philosophers. The difference lay in Mill's attitude to religion, his emphasis on rationality, his rejection of empiricism and his preference for "mind" over "feelings," and in his rejection of the precepts of "sensibility" and of an "historical principle" which insisted that events should be judged within the context of their own time and place. For Mill, man must use his intellect and powers of reason to devise institutions and systems of government that would automatically produce a moral, orderly and progressive society. Most of the Scottish philosophes as well as Munro and Elphinstone, however, would have endorsed Malcolm's view that "Great and beneficial alterations in society, to be complete, must be produced within society itself; they cannot be the mere fabrication of its superiors, or of a few who deem themselves enlightened."^{80}

Unlikely Mill, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, were perfectly aware that India could not be treated as a political tabula rasa. Beneath the umbrella of despotic rule, existed government and administrative practices as familiar and, therefore, as acceptable to Indians as their notions of rights and privileges were to the British. India also had religious and social customs, both cause and effect of Indian "national character," which would take generations, perhaps centuries, to modify. The three men never forgot that the British Indian government was a despotism. Its territories had been acquired by the dubious right of conquest and were retained by military force. As it was neither possible nor desirable that government should rest indefinitely on military power, policies must be devised to bring about the attachment of the people.

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^{80} Malcolm, Central India, 2: 282. Malcolm often repeated verbatim in his writings on Indian government, statements which he considered particularly important. This one also appears in the *Political History*, 2: 83-4.
The necessity of some form of consent was one of Hume's "First Principles of Government." He had argued that,

Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion....and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments as well as to the most free and most popular. The sultan of EGYPT, or the emperor of ROME, might drive his harmless subjects, like brute beasts, against their sentiments and inclination: But he must, at least, have led his mamelukes or praetorian bands, like men, by their opinion.81

It would not have been too difficult to recognize an analogy between the sepoy army and "praetorian bands." Although consent, for Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as well as for Hume, might be a passive, rather than an active condition, as yet there could be no pretence that "opinion" was supporting the Company's government. In the long-run, however, it had to be persuaded to do so because, according to Malcolm, "of all governments, that is least likely to command respect over which a sword is always suspended, and which holds existence under respite." To which Munro added that "in almost every country, but more particularly in this, the good-will of the people is the strongest support of the Government."82

There is no reason to suppose from their writings that Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were uncomfortable with authoritarian rule. According to Malcolm, Britain's position in India made it inevitable: a government of strangers could not change its character, nor could it endure except as a well-regulated but absolute system.83 Malcolm and Elphinstone, however, had learned much from their research on Asian history. Although the forms of despotic government that existed in India were not seen to be as oppressive and, therefore, as anti-progressive as those of most Asian countries,84 the challenge for the British was to break the cycles characteristic of Asian political

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81 Hume, Philosophical Works, 3: 10.
82 Malcolm, Government of India, p. 272. Munro, n.d, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 12.
84 Elphinstone, India, 1: 385.
systems. In order to transform India into a "progressive" European authoritarianism, the British must utilize the powers of a despot to maintain law and order while abjuring oppression. Rebellion against oppression or moral degradation from living under it would in themselves prevent the improvement Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were seeking, and confidently expected, to bring about.
Chapter 11

Political Economy and Munro's System

Political economy considered as a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator, proposes two distinct objects: first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or common-wealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services. It proposes to enrich both the people and the sovereign.

Adam Smith

Although a few writers in the late eighteenth century were beginning to restrict the term political economy to issues relating only to the wealth of the state, many continued to use it in discussing the moral, political and social value of economic policies and administrative systems. This broader sense of the term is applied here to Munro's ideas; to his approach to the problem of improving the economic prosperity and moral well-being — the wealth and virtue — of a people subject to colonial rule. The chapter establishes the relationship between Munro's recommendations on revenue and judicial policy and Scottish ideas on political economy. The government of Madras had no doubt that Munro was responsible for defining the presidency's approach to its political economy. In 1814, in an attempt to clarify the policy of the Home government towards land tenure and revenue collection, the Madras board of revenue paid tribute to the work of Munro. First, it states that his minute of 15 August 1807 contains the only "project of a ryotwar permanent settlement. Second, as a recent dispatch from the Home government has made "marked reference" to this minute, "we accordingly feel ourselves at liberty to regard the project which it contains as the permanent settlement which your honourable court would wish to introduce." Third, the board confirms that, for the sake of accuracy, "in speaking of the ryotwar system, it should "be understood to mean the system recommended in Colonel Munro's letter." Fourth, Munro's views should be given

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1 Adam Smith quoted in Bryson, Man and Society, p. 208.
every attention owing to "the range which his mind takes through the whole science of political economy."

From the reports and minutes Munro wrote on administrative matters between 1796 and 1827, four main objects of what came to be called the Munro system may be identified. Two derived from the traditional system of assessing and collecting revenue adopted by Munro: the ryotwari system. The first of these aimed at creating a society of numerous small but independent landholders, rather than a few great ones, on the ground that the dispersion of the country's agricultural wealth as widely as possible was beneficial to both individuals and the state. The second, which Munro hoped would develop out of the first, was the creation of more social gradations — Munro called them graduated ranks — the result of different applications of skill and industry by individual cultivators. The third and fourth objects governed the administration of justice and the employment of Indians by the government. Munro believed that the Company's judicial system should be comprehensible to Indians, protect the interests of the majority of the population (the cultivators) and maintain social stability. He also argued strongly for the inclusion of Indians in the government of their own country. Every British official was aware of the practical necessity of employing Indians in the lowest branches of the government service, but few saw it as integral to the improvement of India.

Munro's minutes resemble Malcolm and Elphinstone's works of history in that they were written with the intention of educating a particular audience. Minutes written between 1796 and 1812 contain his first analysis of the ryotwari system. The first minute on the judicial system is dated August 1807; others on the subject were written in 1813, 1821, 1824 and 1827. The only minute devoted solely to the employment of Indian's was written in 1824, but Munro made numerous

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2 Revenue Letter from Fort St. George, 12 Aug. 1814, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 244-5, Appendix 2.

3 The papers which were published by Arbuthnot in 1881 have been given titles and dates but, in several instances, papers have only the heading, "On Same Subject." Where there are two or more papers on the same subject they will be identified by date.
references to the subject in other documents. Throughout the period of British rule, Anglo-Indian historians represented Munro's policies as practical solutions to specific administrative problems. T.H. Beaglehole has argued since that Munro's ideas "largely resulted from what he observed in Madras," but concedes that what Munro observed was in part determined by his character and preconceptions. Burton Stein suggests that "we may in the end be left with little that is more profound or penetrating on the influences that shaped the life of Thomas Munro" than that he was "a great Castle-Builder" with faith in his own ability to "do something very grand." Much more can be said than this. Minutes from the 1790s on indicate a process in which an early principled idealism is modified, but not eradicated, by wider experience. Like Malcolm and Elphinstone's works of history, his minutes show that his "Castle Building," when given the form of state-building in India, was founded on principles taken for granted by many educated people in Scotland.

In 1792, when beginning his career as an administrator, Munro asked his brother James to send him a copy of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Although this work is not, as the *Wealth of Nations* has been described, a "hand-book of development economics," Smith does provide, in a chapter on the character of virtue, models for good and bad rulers which match the general approach to government of Malcolm and Elphinstone as well as Munro. Smith defines a good ruler as a man who,

When he cannot conquer the rooted prejudices of the people by reason and persuasion,...will accommodate, as well as he can, his public arrangements to the confirmed habits and prejudices of the people; and will remedy as well as he can, the inconveniencies which may flow from the want of those regulations which the people are averse to submit to....like Solon, when he cannot establish the best system of laws, he will endeavour to establish the best that the people can bear.

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4 Beaglehole, *Munro*, p. 11.


6 Munro to his brother James, 9 June 1792, quoted in Gleig, *Munro*, 3: 81.

The bad ruler: the man of system, on the other hand, is very wise in his own conceit; and is often so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it...Some general, and even systematical, idea of the perfection of policy and law, may no doubt be necessary for directing the views of the statesman. But to insist upon establishing, and upon establishing all at once, and in spite of all opposition, every thing which that idea may seem to require, must often be the highest degree of arrogance.8

In 1823, in an often-quoted letter to George Canning, Munro complained that the Madras records contained "a mass of useless trash," because "every man writes as much as he can and quotes Montesquieu, and Hume, and Adam Smith and speaks as if he were living in a country where people were free and governed themselves."9 This statement appears to establish Munro's rejection of principle, yet his approach to government suggests that he shared many of Hume's and Smith's assumptions about the causes and effects of historical change and, therefore, which broad lines of policy might be expected to produce certain desired effects. The confusion seems to arise from the fact that Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone all assumed, consciously or unconsciously, that the Scottish philosophers' interpretation of the early development of European society helped one to understand contemporary India. But they rejected late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century prescriptions for progress, derived from Britain's experience as an advanced, commercial society, because they believed that they were irrelevant to a country and people which had not yet reached the same stage of development.

Most East India Company administrators talked of promoting the happiness and prosperity of India and argued that if the Company state were protected from external aggression and internal disorder, agricultural production and commerce would flourish. In most cases they were concerned with their own prosperity; increased production would lead to greater revenue receipts, benefitting their own careers as well as the Company. Munro's own recommendations were unlikely to have

8 Smith, Theory, p. 233-4.
9 Munro to Canning, 1 May 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 66.
been entirely altruistic, but he was interested in long-term effects as well as short-term solutions — the consequences of present policies on the well-being of India after his time — and he was convinced that efforts to maximize the Company’s revenue in the short-term, through over-assessment, would not lead to either security or progress.

External and internal security required a strong, and therefore costly, army which would have to be paid out of the land revenue. As the Company also expected to fund its investment in Indian goods for the European market out of its Indian revenue, administrators faced the problem of extracting from the cultivators enough money to run the civil service and the army and to meet the demands of Company shareholders without causing sufficient hardship and resentment to provoke rebellion. Everyone in authority in the Company’s service knew that he was expected to devise ways to increase the government’s land revenue and all were interested in agricultural improvement. There were different schools of thought, however, on how this could best be accomplished.

Munro seems to have possessed from the beginning of his career as an administrator, what Smith defined as a "general and even systematical, idea" of the administrative policies he wanted to carry out, but his application of his system was tempered by his acknowledgement of the need to accommodate the habits of the people. Adam Ferguson had warned:

Forms of government are supposed to decide of the happiness or misery of mankind...forms of government must be varied, in order to suit the extent, the way of subsistence, the character, and the manners of different nations.¹⁰

In discussing the administration of justice in the Madras presidency, Munro acknowledged that British laws had been introduced gradually during several centuries, matching the increasing knowledge and level of civilization of the people, "so that they were always fitted in some measure to their faculties."¹¹ For him, any improvement in the economic or moral condition of Indians would depend on the form of government the Company set up. It would have to take into consideration

¹⁰ Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 62

¹¹ Munro to William Thackeray, n.d., quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 372.
the stage of development of Indian society, but should not merely try to preserve things as they were.

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The Munro system began as a method of revenue administration developed by Alexander Read and Munro in the Baramahal region of the Madras presidency in the 1790s. They took over an existing Indian method of assessment and collection known as ryotwari, familiar to the local population, and tried to give it, as Smith had recommended, all the improvements that they thought the people would accept. How accurately — deliberately or unintentionally — Read and Munro adhered to the indigenous, local form of ryotwari is difficult to determine, but their work was once described to Munro by his friend Josiah Webbe as the system "which you invented" in the Baramahal; a comment which suggests that any modifications were deliberate. Ryotwari, however, was the core, not the whole of the Munro system and should not be used as a synonym for it.

Read and Munro's appropriation of the ryotwari system called for a detailed survey of land in order to place a permanent value on each field; a fixed fraction of what it might, considering the nature of its soil and its access to water, be expected to produce under levels of cultivation that were neither "indolent" nor "improving." Each cultivator then paid rent for the land he could stock and cultivate himself each year. According to Munro, if left to their own exertions, the cultivators would enlarge or shrink their farms according to their fortune. There would, in time, be

no country in the world which could boast of such a numerous race of substantial middling farmers, whose condition, though inferior to that of British landholders, would certainly be preferable to that of the great bulk of the [British] tenantry.

Once assessed, the revenue could not be raised unless the productive capacity of the land was improved by irrigation provided by government. No amount of improvement through the industry or capital investment of the cultivator would alter the assessed value, though a slight remission was

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12 See Stein, Munro, pp. 39-49, for a discussion of the historiography on the origins of the Munro system.


allowed to brahmins who had to employ members of an agricultural caste to plough for them (Munro dissented from this at first), and a substantial remission was allowed to promote the cultivation of valuable cash crops. Rent in cash rather than kind was encouraged.¹⁵

Read and Munro were working to develop the ryotwari system at the time the zamindari system, in a form modified by Lord Cornwallis, was introduced in the Bengal presidency. In Bengal, the revenue was not collected directly from the cultivator but from hereditary zamindars who were landholders, tax-collectors, magistrates and police within their districts. Cornwallis took away the zamindars' powers as magistrates and reserved all higher administrative positions, which in Bengal had previously been held by Indians, for Europeans on the ground that Indians were corrupt. Although zamindari was probably as traditional in Bengal as ryotwari was in the Baramahal, Cornwallis's modifications altered existing social relationships, producing, as Elphinstone put it, "general revolutions of property."¹⁶

Munro explained to Canning in 1823, in terms he hoped would be comprehensible to an Englishman with no Indian experience, the difference between ryotwari and the zamindari revenue system. Ryotwari, he claimed, was a system long in use in the Deccan and in many other countries including England.

In a ryotwari settlement of England, every landowner, whether his rent were £5 or £50,000 a-year, would be called a ryot, and the agreement would be made with him. But in a zamindar settlement of England, we should consider the lord-lieutenants of counties, and other public officers, zamindars and landlords, and make our agreement with them, and leave them to settle with the actual proprietors, whom we should regard as mere tenants.¹⁷

Read and Munro's accurate land survey, their consideration of the relationship between soil fertility and rent and between labour and land improvement, the fixed assessment and the

¹⁵ Ibid., 1: 54.

¹⁶ Elphinstone, Peshwa's Territories, p. 54. Elphinstone was trying to explain why, despite "all the abuses and oppressions of a native government," the peshwa's territories were in a superior state to the Company's possessions in Bengal.

¹⁷ Munro to Canning, 1 May 1823, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 66.
encouragement of cash crops were innovations. Read explained to local cultivators that under this system they could rent out lands which they had improved, "if there be a demand for them," at rates exceeding the permanently fixed rates they had to pay to the state.18 Company policies, local resistance, practical difficulties and even different interpretations of what constituted a ryotwari settlement19 meant that the assessment and collection of the revenue could not always be arranged in the way Read and Munro wanted. But their form of ryotwari aimed, in principle, at providing opportunities and incentives for the individual cultivator to help himself, replacing the subsistence economy with more market-oriented practices,20 with the purpose, clearly stated by Munro, of creating what he thought would be a new middle rank in society. No in-built protection was given, however, from the extra, illegal exactions of local officials, and Munro's later judicial recommendations were prompted in part by the need to prevent such abuse.

It is generally accepted that the Bengal zamindari settlement had its philosophical roots in the economic theories of the Physiocrats and in Cornwallis's faith in great landowners as promoters of agricultural improvement. Confronted with the need to produce order out of the confusion of existing revenue practices, he and his subordinates turned to the ideas that had influenced their own society.21 No one, however, seems to have considered the possibility that the ryotwari system, as it was developed by Read and Munro, might bear a similar relationship to the assumptions held by many of their contemporaries in Scotland.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Scotland was a small, impoverished, backward


19 Malcolm describes one of its features as "raising rent in proportion to industry," but this was certainly not meant to happen under Read and Munro's original plan. See Malcolm. Political History, 2: 96.


country; by the end, it had become a pioneer of capitalist development in both agriculture and industry, superior in some respects to England. Although the scientific curiosity and costly experiments of great landowners had done much to spur improvement in Scotland, yeoman farmers, a rural middle rank pursuing their own economic betterment, rather than improving landlords, had actually caused the late eighteenth-century agricultural revolution. The speed and extent of Scotland's transformation fostered a wide-spread interest in agricultural improvement leading to the development of many theories on the subject.22

Two questions studied and publicly debated in Scotland in the 1780s and 1790s feature prominently in Munro and Read's discussion of land policy for the Baramahal: the relationship between soil fertility and rent and between land improvement and labour. James Anderson (1739-1809), an ardent Scottish agricultural reformer who had been at different times a farm manager, a farm owner, an agricultural journalist and, according to Adam Smith's biographer, "the original proponent of Ricardo's theory of rent," believed that rent should be a premium on the cultivation of good soil, reducing the profits of its cultivator to equality with those of the cultivator of poor soil.23 Adam Smith and Robert Beatson of Fife studied the relationship between soil yield and stock increase. Even the poet Robert Burns, who had practical experience of the difficulty of scratching a living from poor soil, wrote, in 1782:

Our lands...are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from the English and the Lothians and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowances for the odds of the quality of the land and consequently stretch us much beyond what in the event we will be found able to pay.24

The Glasgow merchants who, like Munro's father, invested their profits from trade in landed


24 Ibid., p. 72. Fay provides an interesting study of Smith and the Scotland in which he lived and worked, tracing Scottish influences on Smith and Smith's influence on the members of his own society.
estates outside the city, became interested in agriculture and effective improvers. Read was related to the Beatson family and both Robert, a friend of Adam Smith, and Alexander Beatson, who served in the Madras army with Read and Munro, published works on agricultural improvement.

Read insisted that his and Munro's land survey in the Baramahal must take the fertility of the soil into consideration. Although, at this time, Munro claimed that land was good or bad in proportion to the amount of labour bestowed upon it, he later conceded that rents should be equal everywhere — "that is to say proportioned to the nature of the soil." At first he opposed Read's intention to permit brahmins and other privileged groups to hold land on reduced terms. Stock (capital) and labour, according to Munro, determined the ability of a farmer to prosper. If a brahmin had stock, he could manage his farm as well as any other cultivator; without stock and forbidden to labour, "it is evident that whatever he receives [in the way of a remission of rent] is in fact a gratuity, and a deduction from revenue, which the cultivator gives to him, instead of paying to the government." In notes made in 1820 headed "Ricardo's Political Economy," Munro writes that Ricardo "maintains with Adam Smith, that labour is the measure of value....In the same country, double the quantity of labour may be necessary to produce a given quantity of food." These issues and the opinions they gave rise to, written about and publicly debated in late eighteenth-century Scotland, were as relevant to Indian as to Scottish agricultural improvement. Writing to Read in 1801, after the latter had returned to Britain, Munro remarked, "I suppose you have ere now encountered Arthur Young, and had some debates with him on sagwulli and taccavi." The words sagwulli and taccavi meant, respectively, cultivation and a type of land tenure in which the landlord


27 Munro, "Notes on Ricardo's Political Economy. 1820," quoted in Gleig, Munro, 2: 282.

28 Munro to Read, 16 June 1801, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 165. See Stein, Munro, p. 129 for a definition of taccavi land tenure.
advanced the cultivator money or seed. This type of tenure existed in Scotland as well as India. Agricultural improvement clearly interested Read and Munro for its own sake, not merely for the sake of increasing the Company's Indian revenues.

In a report to Read written in July 1797, Munro states that it is undesirable for the government to have only a few great proprietors as tenants. It would be better to encourage "the multitude of small independent farmers...[to] extend or contract their farms according to their different success." Over time, this freedom would produce "gradations of rich and poor proprietors and large and small farms; and by leaving every man who does not choose to serve another, to set up for himself, the fairest chance and the widest scope is given to the progress of industry and population." Two months later he reiterates his argument that there is no reason to regret that farms are small. Numerous small landholdings are in the best interest of the cultivator and of the general wealth of the state. Small farms do not produce men of "great fortunes and overgrown possessions," but they reduce the number of the poor, and raise everywhere, men of small but independent property who, when sure that they themselves will benefit from the extra labour, will work with a spirit that cannot be expected from the tenants or servants of great landholders.

Nilmani Mukherjee and Robert Frykenberg claim that the ideals of the French Revolution were too widely feared at this time for Munro's apparent preference for equality to indicate "egalitarian or radical impulses," and it is undoubtedly true that Munro's ideas had nothing to do with political egalitarianism — although probably not because he was afraid of a possible challenge from the ideals of the French Revolution to British despotism in India. Like Smith and Hume, he saw the advantages of economic egalitarianism in the relationship between increased individual

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wealth, the power of the state and a suitable balance between liberty and authority.

The opinions of Smith and Hume on the advantages to society of a middle rank formed of small landholders from the middle ranks of society are quite clear. Smith states that "to improve land with profit,...requires an exact attention to small savings and small gains, of which a man born to a great fortune...is very seldom capable." Comparing the condition of the great estates held by one family "since the times of feudal anarchy" with the lands of neighbouring small proprietors, he observes that "you will require no other argument to convince you how unfavourable such extensive property is to improvement." If little improvement could be expected from large landowners, less was to be hoped for from tenants at will. A person who can acquire neither property nor a secure lease "can have no other interest but to eat as much as possible, and labour as little as possible."32

Although Hume, well before the French Revolution, disliked the idea of political democracy, he nevertheless argued that too great a gap between rich and poor weakened the state. Everyone, he claims, ought to enjoy the fruits of his own labour, because such equality is suitable to human nature and does less to diminish the happiness of the rich than to increase the happiness of the poor. It also "augments the power of the state." When wealth is in the hands of the few, they wield all the power, and "will readily conspire to lay the whole burthen on the poor, and oppress them still farther, to the discouragement of all industry."33 Elsewhere, Hume describes the problems of a society "divided into only two classes, proprietors of land, and their vassals or tenants." The tenants are dependents, fitted only for subjection, particularly in a society where their knowledge of cultivation is not valued. Landowners become petty tyrants and engage in feuds, "like the ancient barons," thus throwing society into anarchy worse than the most despotic government. Public liberty is achieved only where "peasants, by a proper cultivation of the land, become rich and independent;" where a demand for luxury goods encourages commerce and manufacturing; and where tradesmen

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33 Hume, Philosophical Works, 3: 296-7.
have acquired property and the middle ranks have authority. "They covet equal laws, which may secure their property, and preserve them from monarchical, as well as aristocratical tyranny."  

Although Munro had recognized the existence of various ranks of local notables within the structure of Indian society by the time Malcolm and Elphinstone joined him as administrators, during his early years in the Baramahal he seems to have seen Indian society as divided into Hume's two classes: landowners, who were often petty tyrants, and their vassals or tenants. His often reiterated desire to create graduated ranks was not only meant to foster agricultural improvement and the wealth of individuals and the state, but also to establish a substantial group, powerful and interested enough to support a rule of law which would eradicate local disorder and make it possible to replace cycles of oppressive, arbitrary rule with more progressive government.

Munro refused to recognize any affinity between the higher ranks of Indian and contemporary British society. "Rajas and old zamindars...are not private landholders, but rather petty princes, and the ryots [cultivators] in their districts stand nearly in the same relation to them as to the sovereign." Similarly he saw "no analogy whatever between the landlord of England and his tenants and the muttadar, or new [company created] village zamindar of this country and his ryots." Although Munro stated in his evidence before the House of Commons in 1813, that Indian government in general was despotic and bore little resemblance to the former feudal institutions of Europe, he nevertheless seems to have seen rajas and zamindars, as well as the smaller chiefs known as poligars, as similar to the type of lordship, with its agricultural dependents and armed military retainers, that had existed under medieval land-tenure systems in Europe. He did not see them as eighteenth-century English landowners.

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34 Ibid., 3: 306.

35 See also Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 70 on two-class societies.


37 Munro, evidence before the House of Commons, April 1813, Parl. Paps. (Commons), 1812-13, 7: 143.
Munro disliked mirasi — communal — forms of land tenure as much as zamindari tenure and for the same reason: both inhibited progress. He answered advocates of mirasi tenure, who held influential positions in the government of British India throughout his career, that the break-up of communal holdings was "the natural course of things;" it always preceded material improvement and was only prevented by over-assessment or lack of water. He believed that communal tenure was explained by the need for communal irrigation systems. It had existed in many countries "in the rude and early stages of agriculture," but was always considered to be "hostile to improvement." It only suited a country where peasants were poor and where government looked to the short-term, not to the long-term, because the village community was bound to make up individual failures. "Government by this means draws as much revenue from the country as is possible under its then actual condition" — implying that this did not encourage improvement. Paying rent in kind rather than cash also suited the same early stage of development, because government always receives half of whatever is produced while the cultivator is secure from demands he cannot pay. The protection to the cultivator against demands for revenue in "a season of calamity," was the only advantage to the communal system recognized by Munro. He believed that it would only be necessary at all under a repressive régime and its great disadvantage lay in preventing the cultivator from accumulating wealth.

There is a surprising similarity between Indian land tenure and traditional land tenure in Scotland which, by the late eighteenth century, was regarded as a hindrance to agricultural improvement. Writing in 1814, Sir John Sinclair explained that a century earlier all Scottish landholders with legal rights had been tenants either directly of the king or of one of the king's great vassals; a situation which could be equated with the sirkar (state) and zamindari (landholder)

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38 Stein, Munro, pp. 49-50; 101; 204-7; 271; 343.


forms of land tenure found in India. Within this framework three tenurial systems existed in Scotland. In one, which went by the name of "steel bow" and resembled the Indian practice of taccavi, the landlord provided his tenants with seeds in addition to the use of his land. Smith mentions, disapprovingly, that steel-bow tenure was still in use. In the second, Highland, or clan, tenure, a "tacksman" held land cheaply from his chief in return for military service, while he sub-let it at a relatively high rent even though he in turn required military service from his tenants. As long as military service was required, the tacksman could justify his position but, when economic returns became more important, he became an expensive and dispensable anachronism. He was the type of quasi-feudal poligar whom Munro tried to eradicate in India. The third system, communal tenure, known in Scotland as "run-rig," had been the most prevalent and still existed around Glasgow in the 1750s and in many other parts of Scotland throughout the late eighteenth century. A Survey of Argyllshire published in 1798 stated that as run-rig was phased out, "every man was late and early at his work, and performed twice as much work as when the work was common." Communal tenure was "perhaps the most serious obstacle to progress in agriculture." Munro shared this view of communal — mirasi — tenure in India.

Prior to taking up office as governor of Madras in 1820, Munro consistently advocated measures designed to reduce the power and influence of petty princes and often that of the prebendary jagir and inam holders as well. This is generally seen as an attempt to maximise the Company's revenue by abolishing intermediaries so that their portion of the produce of the land would revert to the Company state. But it should rather be seen as an attempt to eradicate un-productive, idle and, in the case of poligars, potentially trouble-making groups, who inhibited progress. Munro's efforts to abolish this type of lordship and all forms of land tenure that he

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42 Loosely speaking, jagir-holders, who were usually from important families, had been granted rights to revenue from certain lands in return for military and administrative services; inams were similar grants made for religious or charitable purposes, or to provide an income for village officials.
regarded as standing in the way of agricultural improvement, together with his preference for numerous small landholders and his wish to create graduated social ranks were entirely consistent with eighteenth-century Scottish opinion on the reasons for the progress of European society from medieval confusion to its contemporary, relatively superior stage of development.

During his short term in Kanara in 1799 and 1800, Munro continued to try to eradicate the obstacles to progress he believed inherent in local social and economic institutions. The terms of his appointment, however, were different in Kanara from the Baramahal. There, Read and his assistants were relatively independent and had plenty of time to survey the land. The need for irrigation had complicated the assessment of land values but the predominance of sirkar tenure, by which the cultivator held his land directly from the state, the absence of private property rights in the land and the rarity of petty rajas, poligars or zamindars, had provided relatively uncomplicated conditions. In Kanara, Munro was instructed to use the system set up by the previous rulers, Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore, to make the Company’s first revenue collection, while at the same time suggesting how the Bengal zamindari revenue system could best be introduced. There was neither time nor money for a detailed survey, and the climate, terrain and social and economic structure — intricately inter-related and analyzed by Munro in materialist terms — were quite different from those of the Baramahal.

In two minutes, both entitled “On the Condition and Assessment of Kanara,” Munro explains that Kanara’s economy rests on the cultivation and export of rice. As the region received a reliable and plentiful annual rainfall, the "dependent" types of land tenure Munro associated with the need to irrigate in other parts of the sub-continent were unnecessary. Neither the government, wealthy landholders, nor the community need provide the capital for building and maintaining water tanks and over the centuries all the land, held by innumerable small proprietors, had become,

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according to Munro, private property. Although the only land that could possibly be described as sirkar land was unclaimed waste, in almost every district "there were pretenders, either open or concealed," to ancient poligar domains. These potentially disruptive members of society were anathema to Munro, whereas numerous small landholders with private property rights to their land were precisely what he wanted to encourage — although the cultivators in Kanara were often members of warrior castes and more unruly than those of the Baramahal. His terms of reference, however, seemed to leave him little room for manoeuvre. The "established system" set up by the Mysore régime involved "oppressive exactions" which, according to Munro, were crushing the economy of Kanara, and devaluing the land, and might lead to "the extinction of the class of ancient proprietors. The introduction of the zamindari system would turn his cherished small private properties into a few large, artificially-formed estates.

With great skill and subtlety, Munro manages to promote his own system while seeming to carry out the government’s directives. He presents a persuasive argument showing that both government and people will benefit by retaining a system requiring small proprietors to pay a moderate fixed revenue as they had in the prosperous and stable period before Haidar Ali’s usurpation. This, of course, was the foundation of the ryotwari system, although Munro never mentions it by name. According to Munro, the "excessive exactions" Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan had introduced would eventually have turned Kanara into a desert. "A highly improved country," had been ravaged by Haidar Ali’s use of it as a "fund from which he might draw, without limit, for the expenses of his military operations in other quarters."

Munro claims that "historical evidence" shows that "previous to the conquest of Kanara by

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46 Stein, Munro, p. 71.


48 Ibid., 1: 65; 68.
Haidar, all lands were private property, and the rents were fixed and moderate." Stein's meticulous research on Kanara has failed to discover the evidence, in the form of the books used to register the public revenue and transfers of land, that Munro cited in support of his claims,49 and it seems possible that he exaggerated or fabricated the evidence to suit his own purposes. Edmund Burke had endorsed Cornwallis's zamindari system because he believed it to be the traditional system in Bengal. As Munro himself generally favoured the utilization of existing systems, he may have felt that claims of historical authenticity would strengthen his case for supporting small private property holders.

Having demolished the pretensions of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan's "established system," Munro turns to the introduction of the zamindari system. He begins, tactfully, by conceding that in a country where the cultivators are too poor to improve their land and where there is no private property, dividing the land into larger units "may possibly have some advantages." In Kanara, however, where almost all land is private property, large estates cannot be formed without injustice to the present landowners; nor would they provide any advantage. He discounts the claim that the owners of small properties are unable to improve their land and proceeds to his first explanation of what he terms "the arrangement of nature"50 so far as Indian property is concerned.

Where there is no entail and no primogeniture, where early marriage and adoption in the absence of a natural heir are normal practice, and where there is an abundance of food, "every great estate must in a short time be divided into a number of small ones." Only "violent regulations" can prevent a widely extended division of property. Extra industry might hold together a few large estates but, in general, small ones will be continually formed "by the operation of unrestrained transfer, and of division among all the sons of every succeeding generation." Small estates are the natural

49 Stein, Munro, pp. 68-72.

50 Munro, "On a Permanent Settlement of Kanara." 31 May 1800. MM, 2: 354. This is a section of the first minute "On the Condition and Assessment of Kanara" which Munro's editor, Arbuthnot, extracts and prints separately. MM, 2: 353-60.
condition; to divide Kanara into great estates would be regressive, carrying the region backwards a century or two.

Two more statements of "economic principle," along the line that "where estates are small...the aggregate produce of the land may be, and probably always is, greater than when the whole belongs to a few principal landholders," are followed by a further affirmation of the importance of incentive — this one a partial paraphrase of Adam Smith. In the Wealth of Nations, Smith commented that "a small proprietor...who knows every part of his little territory, who views it with all the affection which property, especially small property, naturally inspires,...is generally of all improvers the most industrious, the most intelligent and the most successful." Munro agrees. Whatever advantage great landowners might seem to derive from their wealth is more than counter-balanced by the deep feelings every small proprietor has for "looking after his little spot, and by the unremitting attention which both his attachment to it, and his necessity, impel him to exert, in order to extract from it its greatest possible produce." Although Munro is decidedly in favour of small proprietors, he recognizes his "duty" to explain how the zamindari system may be introduced to Kanara. What he actually explains, however, are the probably dire consequences, the flaws in the arguments for the supposed benefits and, by a careful choice of words, the link between great proprietors and feudalism. Even the humble potail (village headman) will become "a kind of lord of the manor," while no estates worth more than five thousand pagodas should be formed because the proprietors might become "a kind of petty polgars."

All past events in this country show that great landed property has...a tendency to excite a turbulent spirit in the possessor,...An estate of ten thousand pagodas in most parts of Kanara,...would place under the land-lord so large a district, furnished with retreats so strong, that were he to become refractory, it would be difficult to reduce him to obedience.

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53 Ibid., 2: 356-7.
Landed estates in India meant armed retainers not improving landlords.

From November 1800 to October 1807, Munro was made responsible for the settlement of districts ceded to the Company by the nizam of Hyderabad under the terms of the revised subsidiary alliance. The Ceded Districts were more like the Baramahal than Kanara in that they were arid, relatively flat, their produce was millet, cotton and pulses rather than rice and there was little of Kanara’s potential to prosper; the people were constantly threatened by famine. But unlike the Baramahal, they were surrounded by potentially hostile neighbours and contained large numbers of fractious poligar chiefs. When Munro began his term as chief collector of the Ceded Districts, the governor-general, Lord Wellesley, was hoping that recalcitrant poligars could be turned into zamindari landlords, thus achieving two major objectives at the same time: pacification and the introduction of a clearly defined administrative system. Munro thought this an unrealistic goal and was hoping to find an opportunity to get rid of the poligars. Although severely criticized at first for his rigour in sequestering poligar estates, his success in subordinating the chiefs to Company rule vindicated him. The poligars, however, were neither eradicated nor turned into English-style landlords.

Munro had acquired by this time some support for his opposition to the zamindari system in both the Home and the Madras governments and, on 15 August 1807, in a minute "On the Relative Advantages of the Ryotwar and Zamindar Systems" — the minute referred to by the Madras board of revenue when praising Munro for his knowledge of political economy — he restated his case against its reactionary tendencies to a more receptive audience.54 He explained again how the ryotwari system would promote law, order, prosperity and attachment — a word used to mean loyalty for reasons of interest rather than feelings or tradition. It would require "no artificial restraints, contrary to custom and the laws of inheritance, to prevent the division of estates;" it permitted "all gradations of large and small farms," and it was conducive to good order because

54 Beaglehole, Munro, p. 8.
everyone, as the proprietor of his own land, had an interest in stability and in supporting the government.35

Both Adam Smith and Lord Kames had favoured the sub-division of land. Describing the acquisition of great tracts of land by the barbarian chiefs after the fall of Rome, Smith commented that this "great evil" should have been merely a temporary hindrance to progress. Under natural law the vast estates would have been quickly sub-divided by succession or alienation, but the introduction of laws of primogeniture and entail had prevented their dismemberment and wider distribution of the land.

When land,...is considered as the means only of subsistence and enjoyment, the natural law of succession divides it,...among all the children...But when land was considered as the means....of power and protection, it was thought better that it should descend undivided to one. In those disorderly times, every great landlord was a sort of petty prince. His tenants were his subjects... He made war according to his own discretion, frequently against his neighbours, and sometimes against his sovereign. The security of a landed estate, therefore,... depended upon its greatness. To divide it was...to expose every part of it to be oppressed and swallowed up by the incursions of its neighbours.56

Entail, a natural consequence of primogeniture, had been introduced, according to Smith, to preserve a particular line of succession and to prevent the alienation of any part of a great estate through "the folly, or by the misfortune of any of its successive owners." It still existed throughout Europe because it was believed to be necessary, if the aristocracy were to maintain their control of the great offices of the state: "that order having usurped one unjust advantage over the rest of their fellow-citizens, lest their poverty should render it ridiculous, it is thought reasonable that they should have another." In other words, entail, in Smith's view, allowed a few individuals to monopolize the power of the state. It also undermined the family and, in doing so, social cohesion: "nothing can be more contrary to the real interest of a numerous family, than a right which in order to enrich one,


beggars all the rest of the children."\textsuperscript{57} England had less entailed land than elsewhere in Europe, but more than a third of Scottish land was still entailed. Kames opposed entail because it had converted "one of the greatest blessings of life", landed property, "into a curse." It constituted an easily identifiable obstacle to Scottish improvement.\textsuperscript{58}

Munro believed that small farms were natural in India and that using land as a source of power would both impede economic progress and potentially threaten the stability of the Company state. Although the British might expect local chiefs to be grateful for being allowed to keep their lands, "the love of distinction and independence is a much stronger and more universal passion than gratitude." And although fear of failure and self-interest might deter a chief from opposing British authority, "men...do not always maturely weigh distant consequences." The British would be wiser to avoid the risk of a land settlement which rested for security on gratitude.\textsuperscript{59}

In one of his first minutes as governor of Madras, dated September 1820, Munro changes direction dramatically on the subject of entail.\textsuperscript{60} Considering his earlier pronouncements on the subject of subdivision, it is startling to read an opening paragraph in which he states that the Company, mistakenly, has broken down the entail by which the estates of different classes of zamindar and government servant "were protected from division and descended entire to a single heir," causing so much injury to both individuals and the public that "we ought to revert to the ancient usage and confirm it by law." He claims, probably in justification of his own earlier attitude, that when British power was weak and the great zamindars could offer formidable resistance, the division of their lands was probably desirable. Now that the Company's position is virtually unassailable, however, ancient families of rank should be preserved. If all of them were swept away,

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 1: 384-5.


\textsuperscript{59} Munro, "Permanent Settlement of Kanara." 31 May 1800, MM, 2: 357.

\textsuperscript{60} Munro, "On the Expediency of Introducing Entails." 19 Sept. 1820. MM, 1: 117-20; another minute on the same subject is dated 25 Feb. 1823. ibid., 1: 121-3.
power and distinction would be monopolized by Europeans, creating resentment among Indians likely to spread rapidly through a society in which everyone had been reduced to a similar level of subordination.  

The Company's regulations, Munro states, had been intended to protect the rights of all the people, "but they are too much calculated to facilitate the minute division of property, and the descent of society to its lowest level." He explains that under Indian governments this tendency had been counteracted by allowing lands held by officials to descend undivided to a single heir and by grants of land to civil servants and army officers, who remained in their districts rather than "retiring with their wealth to a distant country, like the European servants of the Company, who have succeeded them." By the 1820s, Munro was acknowledging the importance of the "richer gentry" to the local economy and also the dangers, recognized by Adam Smith, of the situation described by nationalist historians as the drain of wealth. Under Indian governments, Munro observes in a different minute, rich jagirdars, inamdars, higher civil servants and army officers, prominent merchants and cultivators, provided a "supply of men whose wealth enabled them to encourage [the country's] cultivation and manufactures." advantages likely to be lost under British rule, because all senior civil and military posts were filled by Britons whose savings "go to their own country". In a commentary on the Wealth of Nations made after his return to Britain, Elphinstone observed that the drain of Indian wealth to Britain was, "Of all the objections made by Adam Smith against the Government of India,...the only one now in force."

In his minute on entail, Munro expresses regret that the lands of village as well as government officials and of the higher social ranks are being divided and that, unless steps are taken

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61 Ibid., 1: 117-18.
62 Ibid., 1: 118-19.
to prevent this, "every land-owner will be reduced to the state of a common cultivator." The fall of the higher ranks will lower the character of the whole people. They will become less attached to the government, which will lose the opportunity to "improve" them, and the task of government will become more difficult. Munro proposes regulations (which were not adopted) governing all lands traditionally passed to a single heir. They would ensure the continuance of a class of Indian nobility and gentry and "preserve those graduations in society, through which alone it can be improved."65

This apparent contradiction of his earlier opinions on entailed estates may be attributed to Munro's deeper understanding by the 1820s of Indian social structure as well as to the greater stability of the Company state. From his earliest days in the Baramahal, Munro's chief objective had been the creation of middle ranks in the Indian countryside. Apparently seeing local peasant society — inaccurately — in Hume's terms of two widely separated groups, he had expected an intermediate group to emerge as a result of the provision of security and incentives for improvement. Later, realizing that rural Indian society already had its own graduated ranks made up of minor notables and service gentry, and recognizing that Hindu laws governing inheritance and the subdivision of land would prevent the formation of the sort of groups he had in mind, he began to promote the service gentry, advocating its employment by the British in more, and more responsible, positions.

The minute on entail was laid before the Madras government four months after Munro had visited Elphinstone at Bombay in May 1820, so it is tempting to assume that Elphinstone, whose bias in favour of a traditional aristocracy is well known, had influenced Munro's new outlook. Munro, however, had instructed Elphinstone two years earlier — as the younger man began his administrative career — on the importance of supporting the great jagirdars and had, at the same time, pointed out that, "though the people of India have not what we call gentry, they have what they respect as such themselves."66 He identified this group as village potails and curnams (headmen and

65 Munro, "Introducing Entails," 19 Sept. 1820. ibid., 1: 119.

66 Munro to Elphinstone, 8 March 1818, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 3: 239.
accountants), and various revenue officials. Munro's letter was dated 8 March 1818. Four months later, Elphinstone sent a circular letter to the British officials serving under him in the peshwa's former territories directing them to support the authority of the potalis. They must never be displaced, except for treason against the state.\textsuperscript{67}

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone held similar opinions about the value of a graded social structure, but Elphinstone and Malcolm — who, according to Elphinstone, had an "excessive respect" for great men\textsuperscript{68} — saw the upper ranks as the most likely agents of progress owing to their traditionally influential position in society whereas Munro, like Smith and Hume, looked to middle ranks pursuing their own interests and serving the state. Nevertheless, Malcolm and Elphinstone shared Munro's general assumptions about the role of government. They argued that existing institutions should be regenerated rather than replaced and that, while protecting the position of traditional social élites, opportunities should be given to members of the lower ranks to rise in the world. They also argued that revenue and judicial systems should suit the needs and understanding of the people and that giving Indians the chance to play a part in the government was essential to their "improvement" as well as to the stability of the Company state.

In a chapter on local government in his \textit{Political History of India}, Malcolm claims that the way in which the revenue was assessed and collected was one of the most important aspects of government. He discusses the merits and disadvantages of the various Indian revenue systems used by the British, remarking of the Bengal zamindari system that, although it was pleasant to see a rich landowner spending his money on agricultural improvement, general prosperity would not be achieved "unless the frugal and industrious of the cultivating class have the path open to obtain property, as well as to preserve what they already possess."\textsuperscript{69} He makes the arguments for and


\textsuperscript{68} Elphinstone, journal, 28 March 1831, quoted in Colebrooke, \textit{Elphinstone}, 2: 300.

\textsuperscript{69} Malcolm, \textit{Political History}, 2: 90; 93.
against ryotwari without committing himself, but suggests that the Company should not subject "nations so various as those under our dominion in India" to a uniform method of revenue collection. Owing to "the character and construction of Indian communities," the well-being of nine-tenths of the population depended solely on the Company's financial, rather than its judicial or political system. The decrease or increase of crime and litigation, therefore, would depend on the success or failure of the revenue settlement. For Elphinstone, the most important duty of government was the maintenance of order. The administration of justice came next, but the revenue settlement was also crucial: the rights of the different classes should be recognized in order that they could obtain the share in the produce of the soil to which they were entitled. The "best plan," he thinks, would be "to improve on the institutions of the country instead of making new ones, or importing those of distinct and dissimilar countries."  

Neither Malcolm nor Elphinstone had the opportunity — or probably the inclination — to become as expert on Indian land tenure and revenue systems as Munro. In administering the peshwa’s former territories, Malwa and the Bombay presidency, revenue was only one of their many responsibilities and the details were left to subordinates. In their works on administration — Elphinstone's Report on the Territories Conquered from the Peshwa and Malcolm's Memoir of Central India — the chapters on revenue are largely descriptive. They provide useful information on the probable origins of the established systems in the districts they were governing, and recommend the continued use of them under careful supervision aimed at pruning their worst defects.

Malcolm, however, recognizes that taxation was the organizing principle of many forms of administration when he observes, in his History of Persia, that "there is, perhaps, no better way

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of judging the condition of people than by a reference to the mode in which the ruler collects the revenue."72 But both he and Elphinstone preferred utilizing the variety of existing revenue systems to trying to introduce ryotwari everywhere. Elphinstone, despite claiming that he was not democratic enough to insist on ryotwari, permitted all his subordinates in the peshwa’s territories to work on "the principle of the ryotwar settlement." He recommended that the country’s notables, whether the heads of villages or the heads of zamindaris, should be supported and their various rights defined, but the rights of the cultivators should also be protected, even against the demands of their social superiors.73 Malcolm thought it would be "politic" to raise "a superior class of natives," drawn from distinguished army officers, meritorious judges or presidents of panchayats and hard-working and deserving heads of districts and villages, to help with local government. But any system must also "admit the rise of the frugal and industrious cultivator."74 As one might expect, Malcolm emphasized rewards and recognition. Munro opportunities for self-help, as the best way of fostering improvement.

Elphinstone, perhaps just as expectedly, emphasised education. He stated in 1818 that he could think of nothing the British could do to improve the morals of the inhabitants of the peshwa’s former territories except improving their education. But how to bring it about? The establishment of free schools by the Company might create a suspicion of concealed designs. Five years later, in a minute on education, he declares that in all states the well-being of the poor is now agreed to depend on education, because only by education could they acquire "those habits of prudence and self-respect from which all other good qualities spring." He adds that even Adam Smith, "the political writer of all others who has put the strictest limits to the interference of executive government,

72 Malcolm, Persia, 1: 266.

73 Elphinstone, Peshwa’s Territories, p. 44. Elphinstone to Edward Strachey, 10 March 1822, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 132.

74 Malcolm, Political History, 2: 95.
especially in education," admits that the instruction of the poor should be "among the necessary expenses of the sovereign." Smith had also noted the importance of self-respect. In the *Wealth of Nations*, he claimed that the state derived considerable advantage from the education of the poor. The better educated they were, the less liable they would be to "the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders." An educated people were always more decent and orderly than an ignorant one.

They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors...they are less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government. Smith made a direct connection between self-respect and respect for authority. Elphinstone had studied Smith's work carefully. Although he did not always agree with him, he looked to Smith for guidance on questions of government and administration.

Despite their greater respect for aristocracy, Malcolm and Elphinstone, like Munro, rejected the idea that the upper ranks of Indian society could be equated with English landowners. While Elphinstone described zamindars and poligars as "insurgent officers of the old government," Malcolm claimed that although the word zamindar meant landholder and cultivator of the soil, in Central India at least, zamindars were originally just government functionaries, supported by a grant of land.

The political economy of the Madras presidency, in Munro's opinion, should be organized around the method of revenue assessment and collection known as ryotwari. This encouraged the dispersion of wealth throughout the community, to the benefit of both state and individual. It also encouraged the development of more social graduations; in particular, a middle rank of prosperous

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and independent cultivators who would recognize that their improved wealth and status was dependent upon the continued provision of order and opportunity by the Company state. Although there were differences between the attitudes of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone to administration, they were in general agreement about land tenure and revenue collection arrangements. Malcolm and Elphinstone, however, agreed most closely with Munro about the third and fourth parts of his system: the administration of justice and the employment of Indians by the government.

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There were three main objectives behind Munro’s judicial recommendations. He wanted to use traditional forms familiar to the people. He wanted to protect the cultivator from corrupt officials and oppressive social superiors, partly at least to ensure his revenue system could work, and he wanted to use Indians in the administration of justice. They would understand local customs, attitudes and habits better than Europeans and they would benefit morally from public service.

As commissioner for the Ceded Districts, Munro had been expected to introduce the Bengal judicial system as well as the zamindari revenue system and during the years 1800 to 1809, therefore, had to look for a better alternative. The Bengal judicial system derived from English ideas about judicial process. It called for the separation of the executive and legal branches of government and the implementation of a British-style court system with British judges and written depositions, and it was intended to enable private individuals to protect their rights and their property against the power of the state. The laws it actually administered were Islamic, taken over from the previous Mughal administration.

Most Englishmen at the time saw English legal principles as universally valid and likely to have a beneficial effect wherever they were adopted. But in his first public statement on judicial matters, one brief paragraph in a letter to Read written in 1797, Munro points out that the main argument against uniting the judicial and executive functions of government — that the administration of justice might be used to destroy the liberty of the people — is irrelevant in India
because "the people are already under a foreign dominion." The best they can hope for is that their own laws and customs will be preserved as long as they are "compatible with the security of the authority of that government." As there is very little "property" in the country to go to law about, suits in India are brought mainly over the boundaries of fields, stray cattle, the wages of labourers or the shares of farming partners. They are usually connected in some way to the revenue system and, according to Munro, the collector and his tahsildars (Indian revenue officers) or a panchayat (Indian jury) would settle them more easily and quickly than a British judge. European judges, are government officials like the Company's European collectors, were no more likely to protect the cultivators than a collector while, knowing less about local affairs, were less likely to make "true" judgments. He recommends, however, that a superior British court should hear appeals against the decisions of the collector and complaints against "acts of oppression." 76

Munro enlarged on the grounds of his objection to English legal procedures and his preference for magisterial powers for collectors in 1824. Indians not being free in the way the British believed themselves to be, institutions suited to people living under a consensual, semi-representative form of government were, he argues, largely irrelevant.

We suppose that our laws are founded upon just principles, and that they must therefore have the same beneficial operation here as at home; but we forget that one great first principle, the freedom of the people, from which they derive their influence, does not exist here. Our institutions here, not resting on the same foundation as those of a free country, cannot be made to act in the same way. 76

In Britain, according to Munro, people resist oppression, and their spirit gives efficacy to the law: "in India the people rarely resist oppression, and the law intended to secure them from it can therefore derive no aid from themselves." As they will not protect themselves, the system must try to protect them through laws which would be unnecessary in England, or in any other country not under foreign dominion. For Munro this meant investing the person most interested in the welfare...
of the cultivators, the collector, with the power of a magistrate. As most of the government's income derived from land revenue, the collector, as the government's representative, was bound to protect the cultivators, who paid most of the taxes, from being forced to pay extra, unofficial levies to local notables with traditional authority.

Malcolm and Elphinstone approved of Munro's judicial recommendations. Malcolm believed it to be "among the first and greatest objects of a rational and just government (freedom can enter little into a rule of conquerors) to be fully understood by those it governs for." In the Memoir of Central India he states the same "first principle: " that no system can be good that is not thoroughly understood and appreciated by those for whose benefit it is intended. He advocates the use of panchayats and spends fourteen pages discussing the way they work and anticipating objections to their use. Elphinstone echoed Malcolm. While commissioner of the peshwa's former territories, he warned the Supreme government to remember that "even just government will not be a blessing if at variance with the habits and character of the people." Later, as governor of Bombay, he described panchayats as an excellent institution for dispensing justice, and for maintaining its principles "which are less likely to be observed among a people to whom the administration of it is not at all entrusted." Panchayats, however, would not be able to handle all cases. "Numerous native judges with European super-intendence" were needed.

Munro's first official minute on judicial issues, "Trial by Panchyat," was written in August 1807, at the end of his term of office in the Ceded Districts in August 1807. It opens with some musings on Indian manners: the "strange mixture of fraud and honesty in the natives of India, and

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80 Ibid., 1: 270-1.


83 Elphinstone, quoted in Forrest, Elphinstone, p. 57.

84 Elphinstone to Edward Strachey, 21 April 1821, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 124.
even in the same individuals, in different circumstances," that made it unlikely that anyone else could comprehend the ramifications of Indian disputes. The wavering between deceit and probity of Indians and the frequency of perjury and bribery made all evidence unreliable "unless supported by collateral proofs." The number and character of witnesses, therefore, mattered less than knowing what was likely to prejudice the evidence. A European judge could not know this, for his limited command of the native language would prevent him from detecting "the minute points by which truth and falsehood are often separated." Under these circumstances no legal system would be entirely satisfactory but the most effective would be trial by panchayat, which was "as much the common law of India in civil matters as that by jury is in England. No native thinks that justice is done where it is not adopted."85

Most Britons, too, felt that justice could not be done without a jury. A contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine in 1777 wrote that nothing "shines more eminently conspicuous than trial by jury. This invaluable prerogative is the birthright of every Englishman, and distinguishes the laws of this happy country from the arbitrary decisions of other states." William Blackstone, famous for his Commentaries on the Law of England (1765-9), had referred to juries as the "grand bulwark" of English liberties.86 Both might have been surprised to learn that an institution the British were so proud of and thought they had invented, was in common use in India.

Legal process in both Scotland and England changed considerably during the second half of the eighteenth century. In general terms, the "old" system in both countries had treated the community as more important than the individual. In Scotland,87 there had been at least ten different types of court, most of them private or ecclesiastical, and somewhat similar to the


zamindari jurisdictions and caste arrangements for the enforcement of acceptable standards of social behaviour that existed in India. Naturally, the laws, or customs and practices, they administered were less similar. In Scotland, sheriffs and burgh courts, which dealt mainly with debt, property actions, minor crime and "good neighbour" offences, and the high court which dealt with treason and crimes of violence, all used juries. The private barony and regality courts had powers similar to those of the sheriffs courts over certain lands, widely dispersed. Various church courts handled poor relief and social discipline, which meant sexual offences, "sabbath breach," "unseemlie behaviour" — swearing and drunkeness — and slander. The system was very decentralized; large areas were beyond the control of the central government and justice was administered by private individuals rather than paid government officials. Unlike England, there were other law-making bodies beside parliament: in particular the privy council prior to its abolition in 1708, the general assembly of the Church of Scotland and local regality courts. Despite this, custom and usage was more important than statute law. Lord Stair, who is as important in Scottish legal history as Blackstone in English, states in his Institutes of the Law of Scotland (1681), that "Our law is most part consuetudinary where what is found inconvenient is obliterated and forgotten." The law in Scotland rested until the second half of the eighteenth century, largely on custom and habit originating in, and arranged to suit, the needs of local communities.

The "old" system, which supervised the economic as well as the social life of the community, was supposed to maintain order and social stability rather than protect individual rights. Local courts in which jurors, judges and church elders alike knew the usages and personalities involved, and the community's needs, in both civil and criminal cases, worked quite effectively until the eighteenth century. But the system was already in decline when rapid political and economic change and the abolition of private jurisdictions after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 led to prolonged debate and new

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89 Ibid., p. 121.
legislation. Anyone who had read Hume, Smith or Kames knew that the object of the debate was to make the law relevant to a changing society. The "old" system was likely to be thought suitable to an earlier stage in the progress of Scotland.

The system recommended by Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone for administering law in India was intended to maintain social stability and to preserve order rather than to protect the rights of individuals by strict adherence to European notions of what was just. The system may be stigmatized as expediency because it happened to suit the Company's despotic rule. But it mixed "sound principles" with earlier Scottish practice.

Scotland's legal system had developed differently from England's. What statutes there were derived from Roman legal concepts, brought to Scotland by law students who attended French and Dutch universities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Traditionally, most legal decisions had been based on "practicks," printed collections of decisions arranged in alphabetical order by subject. Inadequate records, however, meant that in many areas precedents were lacking. Stair's Institutions, a compendium of established usage that also demonstrated how usage derived from principles of equity as well as precedent, pointed the way to reform. Stair subscribed to the idea of natural law as expressed by Grotius and Pufendorf: "Law is the dictate of reason." But while sometimes speaking of legal rights, he saw law as a series of obligations, that limited both the freedom to be found in the natural state and the sanctity of private property. For Stair, rights in property may be restricted in the public interest: "the holder of property...was theoretically almost a trustee of his property on behalf of the community." Although property was regarded as the foundation of law and, therefore, order, Scottish reformers did not always hold it as sacrosanct as

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92 Ibid., pp. 149; 152.
most Englishmen did.

In 1740, David Hume had argued that law was a social convenience, like the development of language and the use of money, and that particular laws followed from the needs and contrivances of man, not from the dictates of God or kings or even the "absolutes" of "the natural state." Montesquieu's ideas on law, however, were as important in Scotland as Hume's, owing to Montesquieu's influence on Lord Kames, John Millar and Smith. In the The Spirit of the Laws, which appeared eight years after Hume's Treatise, Montesquieu claimed that although reason was an attribute of all men, differences of climate and fertility, customs, religion and historical experience distinguished one society from another. Universal solutions — including universally applicable laws — were not feasible.

Kames's writings on law fit comfortably within the Scottish enlightenment tradition in that they trace the historical origins of laws and the relationship between legal and social change. They recognize the irrelevance of much Scottish law to modern society and seek solutions. One of his precepts in particular is relevant to Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's approach to a judicial settlement of India. Kames believed that "The law of a country is in perfection when it corresponds to the manners of the people, their circumstances, their government. And as those are seldom stationary, the law ought to accompany them in their changes." This maxim provided, not only a justification for the advocacy of Indian institutions by all three men, but also for Munro's view that "We must...frame gradually from the existing institutions, such a system as may advance the prosperity of the country, and be satisfactory to the people." Existing institutions should provide

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93 Hume, Philosophical Works, 2: 263; 271.
94 Stein, "Law and Society," p. 156.
the foundation for an administrative and legal system likely to promote prosperity and stability. But the existing institutions, should not remain permanently and unalterably in place.

While on leave in Edinburgh in 1808, Munro wrote a paper on the problems of the Company’s judicial system. He begins by justifying his recommendations on financial grounds. Whereas costs could be cut safely in the judicial department, any "material reduction" in army pay would undermine its ability to keep order and to defend the state. The company's judicial system, he claims, has grown rapidly into "the most expensive judicial system in the world." This might have been acceptable, if it worked in the public interest, but Indians preferred their own system, which was "free of expense in its principles" and speedy. The Company system was complex and slow. It encouraged litigation because native pleaders brought everything to court; not one in ten European judges could understand his pleaders without an interpreter; the back-log of cases in one Bengal court alone exceeded a hundred thousand. More courts of the same type would not help. The judicial code should be amended so as "to return to the heads of villages their ancient jurisdictions in petty causes;" all important cases should be tried by panchayats; and as far as possible, the administration of justice should be given "into the hands of intelligent natives" rather then to European judges who were seldom qualified. Finally, as Indian collectors had also acted as magistrates, the offices of magistrate and collector, separated under the Bengal system, should be "reunited." Munro concludes with a list of the courts to be abolished, claiming "the whole saving in India would probably amount to nearly half a million Sterling."

A convincing case for retrenchment could be expected to attract the attention of the Company directorate and this paper was, no doubt, in part an exercise in self-promotion by Munro. His opinions, however, remained constant: judicial powers for village headmen, Indian juries and a magistrate's powers for the collector were mentioned in every paper he wrote on the judicial system. He was still calling for a reduction in the number of courts nineteen years later when governor of

97 Munro, memorandum, 10 Sept. 1808, NLS., Ms. 12.
Madras and, in 1827, he declared that "the people would be much more solidly protected by abolishing the expensive establishments, and remitting the amount in their assessment." Although aware of the Company’s need for revenue, Munro hoped that any reduction in the costs of the judicial system would benefit the local economy. Extra wealth distributed throughout society would in the long run, he believed, create more for both the individual and the state.

On his appointment as judicial commissioner for Madras in 1813, Munro submitted a minute on "The Administration of Justice" in which he reiterates the importance of uniting the office of magistrate and collector and of utilizing panchayats and describes the good and the harm done by the Company's judicial system. The good lies in the protection given to the persons and property of Indians and in evidence that the people recognize that "it is the wish of the Government that its power should be founded on justice." The harm lies in the fact that justice is more difficult to obtain than previously owing to a "collision of authorities," the need for a more summary process in petty suits, the abolition of the traditional jurisdiction of pottals and the fact that Indians perceive the system to be good in intention rather than efficient.

The body of the minute is devoted to an account of the viability of the judicial system under Indian governments. Although there had been rampant corruption under weak rulers, this had diminished prior to British rule by the practice of using panchayats and by the "check" of public opinion. According to Munro, if the powers of magistrate and justice of the peace and the control of police were given back to collectors, and panchayats were used in civil cases, the Indian system would work effectively in conjunction with the superior courts and criminal justice system introduced by the Company. The union of the powers of magistrate and collector might be unacceptable in Britain, "but as the municipal institutions of India are calculated for those duties being vested in the same person, it is much better that they should remain united in him...We are not to consider English maxims as always applicable to India but to follow those rules which are most applicable to

the country, as it now is." Munro makes a point that was crucial in Scottish philosophy: that a system at variance with the feelings and beliefs of the people "has...no moral force to uphold it." Adam Ferguson had expressed a similar idea, although he was thinking of liberty rather than safety.

If forms of proceeding, written statutes, or other constituents of law, cease to be enforced by the very spirit from which they arose; they serve only to cover, not to restrain, the iniquities of power...the influence of laws, where they have any real effect in the preservation of liberty, is not any magic power descending from shelves that are loaded with books, but is, in reality, the influence of men resolved to be free; of men who, having adjusted in writing the terms on which they are to live with the state, and with their fellow-subjects, are determined, by their vigilence and spirit, to make these terms be observed.

Malcolm made a similar point in the Memoir of Central India in more pragmatic terms. The Bengal judicial system should not be introduced into Central India because the majority of the population was Hindu. A system based on the Islamic code "would be an innovation almost as great as the introduction of the English law, and one...much more repugnant to the feelings of the inhabitants." Malcolm implies that Muslim law would have "no moral force to uphold it" in Hindu communities.

The importance of allowing Indians to play a part in the administration of justice, for reasons of principle as well as expediency, is the central theme of Munro's last minute, written a few days before his death in July 1827. It was also his last official paper. Panchayats are practical, he argues, because they act quickly and efficiently. They have moral value because "the character of the people will inevitably be raised by being employed in distributing justice," and they may be justified on the principle that even if the decisions of a European judge were technically more "correct," this would not make up for "the evil of excluding the people."

It would merely be executing strict justice among men whom we had degraded; for nothing so certainly degrades the character of a people as exclusion from a share...
in the public affairs of the country, and nothing so certainly raises it as public employment being open to all.\textsuperscript{102}

Kames had asserted that, if the two principles "justice" and "social utility" were in conflict, "justice" might be sacrificed: "Equity when it regards the interest of a few individuals only, ought to yield to utility when it regards the whole society."\textsuperscript{103}

Kames's two concepts, that legal systems should be suited to the nature of the society they were to serve and that the interests of the whole society should take precedence, if necessary, over individual rights, were particularly well-suited to the purposes of the Munro system. Although, unlike Munro's revenue policies, they contained in themselves no principles of improvement, they provided a setting in which the most important of all his principles of progress — personal enterprise and moral development — could be fostered. Munro saw the pursuit of individual self-improvement as beneficial for society as a whole, but he also believed in "public spirit,"\textsuperscript{104} in what appears to be the classical sense of "civic virtu". In the civic humanist tradition, participation in public affairs was part of the way in which man achieved moral fulfilment;\textsuperscript{105} if Indians could not legislate for their own society, they must at least be permitted to administer the legislation of their rulers. Munro's system seems, thus, to combine the eighteenth-century conception of the civic tradition — in which there was declining interest by the end of the century — with intimations of the individualism and emphasis on self-help that were to be important in nineteenth-century liberal ideology.

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The fourth component of the Munro system — the employment of Indians in the

\textsuperscript{102} Munro, "Trial of Criminal Cases by Jury or Panchayat," July 1827, \textit{MM}, 2: 56.

\textsuperscript{103} Kames quoted in Lieberman, "Legal Needs," p. 229.

\textsuperscript{104} Munro, "Trial of Criminal Cases," July 1827, \textit{MM}, 2: 56.

government — had become a major pre-occupation for Munro by the 1820s. Because it was neither desirable nor possible that the Company state should rest indefinitely on military force, policies must be directed to the attachment of the people by providing better government and, for both practical and philosophical reasons, by employing Indians as officials.

In his minute "On the Employment of Natives in the Public Service," Munro claims that even if it were practicable to employ only Europeans — excluding Indians from both high and subordinate offices — it should not be done, because it would be both politically and morally wrong. If Indians submitted passively to European domination, "they would sink in character...[and] would degenerate into an indolent and abject race." In a passionate plea on behalf of Indians, Munro derides the advocates of improvement who fail to recognize "the great springs on which it depends". They place no confidence in Indians, give them no authority and exclude them from office, "but they are ardent in their zeal for enlightening them by the general diffusion of knowledge." Books alone can do nothing; literature cannot improve the character of a nation for, in every age and country, the great stimulus to the pursuit of knowledge is the prospect of fame, wealth, or power. Great attainments have no value if they cannot "be devoted to their noblest purpose, the service of the community."

Munro believes this to be true of all countries, not only India:

Let Britain be subjugated by a foreign power to-morrow; let the people be excluded from all share in the Government, from public honours, from every office of high trust and emolument, and let them in every situation be considered as unworthy of trust, and all their knowledge and all their literature, sacred and profane, would not save them from becoming, in another generation or two, a low-minded, deceitful, and dishonest race.

For Munro it would be better for the British to be expelled from India than to debase a whole people, "for in proportion as we exclude them from the higher offices and a share in the

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107 Ibid., 2: 322-3; 321.
management of public affairs we lessen their interest in the concerns of the community and degrade their character. It is a very different view of empire from the widely held and often cited eighteenth-century view that the wealth and power of empire would corrupt the imperial nation, but it bears a marked resemblance to William Robertson’s analysis of Rome.

Robertson had argued that the Romans, having "desolated" Europe, tried to civilize it. They set up a despotic but not arbitrary government in the conquered territories, preserved public "tranquillity" and, "As a consolation for the loss of liberty, they communicated their arts, sciences, language, and manners, to their new subjects." Their rule, however, was neither happy nor favourable to "the improvement of the human mind."

The martial and independent spirit, which had distinguished their ancestors, became extinct among all the people subjected to the Roman yoke; they lost not only the habit but even the capacity of deciding for themselves....and the dominion of the Romans, like that of all great Empires, degraded and debased the human species.

For Adam Ferguson, "final corruption" lay in developments that deprived "the citizen of occasions to act as the member of a public; that crush his spirit; that debase his sentiments, and disqualify his mind for affairs." In his work on The Government of India, Malcolm expressed a view similar to Munro and Robertson’s but where Munro emphasises Indian interests, Malcolm stresses the British government’s. Unless Indians are treated with more confidence and distinction, and appointed to higher office, Britain cannot hope to retain her position in India for long. If the most active and eminent Indians, on the other hand, are raised in their own estimation and that of others in this way,

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108 Ibid., 2: 322.

109 T.H. Beaglehole suggests that the core of Munro’s administrative system was his commitment, on principle, to a responsible role in government for Indians; that the employment of Indians in the public service, rather than inexperienced Europeans with poor language skills, would be cheaper and more efficient, and would provide the most rapid path to improvement for the Indian people. Despite this concession to principle, however, Beaglehole stresses the words "observation" and "experience" and argues that Munro developed his ideas on administration from practical observation if the nature of south Indian society and from his recognition of the priorities of the Home government, not from ideological commitment. He concedes, however, that Munro’s observations may have been affected by his character and pre-conceptions. Beaglehole, pp. 8; 56; 169; 10.

110 Robertson, Progress, pp. 7-8.

111 Ferguson, Civil Society, pp. 213-4.
"we shall reconcile them, and through them, the population at large, to a government which, daring to confide in its own justice and wisdom, casts off the common narrow and depressing rules of foreign conquerors." Writing to Malcolm on the administration of the Deccan in 1819, Elphinstone tells him that he plans "to preserve the institutions of the natives as I find them and to make great sacrifices for the purpose of taking people along with me, instead of imposing a government by force."

Writing to Munro three years later Elphinstone, like Malcolm, stresses Britain's interest in employing Indians. The way must be paved for Indians to play a role in the government of their own country. It may take fifty years but the system of government and education "must some time or other work such a change on the people...that it will be impossible to confine them to subordinate employments." If they have been denied opportunities to satisfy their ambition, "we may expect an explosion which will overturn our government."

Although not constitutionally disenfranchised by the 1707 Union with England, most Scots had to content themselves, so far as participation in government was concerned, with carrying out policies decided upon by a remote government dominated by English interests. Their provincial, or, perhaps, colonial vantage point made it easier for them than for Englishmen to sympathize with India and Indians. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone all claimed at different times that it would be natural and desirable for British rule to end when India had progressed to a stage at which its own people could maintain a satisfactory form of government. Munro and Elphinstone were probably sincere in this belief; Malcolm, who was more outspokenly enthusiastic about Britain's empire, sounds less convinced. They all felt that it would be a long time before India reached this stage; but

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113 Elphinstone quoted in editor's introduction, Elphinstone, Peshwa's Territories, p. iv.

114 Elphinstone to Munro, 27 Oct. 1822, quoted in Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 143.

it had, after all, taken Europe many centuries to move from the Middle Ages to its present level of civilization.

The central ideas of the school of thought on Indian government associated with the names of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, are discussed by Munro in three minutes: "General Remarks on the Judicial Administration and on the Police," "On the Employment of Natives in the Public Service" and "On the State of the Country and the Condition of the People," all dated 31 December 1824, after Munro had submitted his resignation as governor of Madras and was expecting to leave India shortly for the last time. Although he stayed on for two and a half years during the First Burma War, these three papers should be seen, as Munro intended them to be when he wrote them, as his final statement of the ideas he had often expressed during the previous thirty years.

In a detailed exegesis of the minute "On the State of the Country and the Condition of the People," Burton Stein, who refers to it as "the Great Minute," points out that more than half of it is given to a discussion of land tenure and revenue. Other important topics include "the pragmatic and moral foundation for a greater role for Indians in the internal administration of the country," the judicial system and the police, and "the nature and purpose of British rule in India." He claims that Munro's "review of tenurial forms, especially of mirasi tenure, and his insistence that ryotwar encompassed all other systems as well as pre-dating most is unexpected," because Munro had been appointed governor of Madras in 1819 partly "in recognition of the triumph of his administrative principles." He adds that other subjects one might have expected Munro to discuss, such as the army and trade, are not mentioned.116 The "Great Minute," however, should be seen primarily as Munro's last description of his own system, not as a general statement on British rule. The core issues were land tenure and revenue collection, the judicial system and the police, and the inclusion of Indians in the process of government. The army, defence and trade were of peripheral importance. It is also possible that to Munro, in the 1820s, "the triumph of his administrative

116 Stein, Munro, pp. 287-98.
principles" was less obvious than it appears a century and a half later, for his warnings against innovation are more pronounced in the papers from his governorship than in ones written earlier in his career. Despite the apparent triumph represented by his high appointment, Munro was aware that his system was being challenged by new ideas popular in Britain as well as by would-be competitors in India.

According to Robert Frykenberg's analysis, the greatest challenge to Munro's conception of what his system would achieve came, ironically, from the Indian villagers he hoped to convert to his own ideas about progress. Frykenberg examines an aspect of the history of Madras presidency using the technique known as "history from below," which, since the 1960s, has produced, in regard to Indian history, a novel and rewarding interest in the possibility that the colonized were not merely acted upon; that their own actions were at times determining initiatives rather than simple responses. Confining his study to one area of the Madras presidency — Gunthur District — Frykenberg takes the study of history from below to what is, perhaps, its logical conclusion: the "Nativist theory."117 He examines the interaction between British officials and the élite groups that had controlled pre-colonial local society, demonstrating that the Madras administration was largely an Indian administration. "No amount of theorizing and policy-making in London could gainsay the essential and hard truth that Indians gathered the revenue and that they gathered it in the time-honoured ways." British power was outwardly acknowledged. At the local executive level, however, it was undermined from within by the intrigue, ambitions and debilitating social life of the British community, while being manipulated or circumvented by local groups, both inside and outside the administrative service, to suit their own interests. Although Frykenberg credits Munro with introducing and developing the form of ryotwari that the British thought they were administering in the Madras presidency, he concludes that no matter what system had been adopted, no matter how benevolent, intelligent and practical its objectives, "it still had to run the gauntlets, first of the British

bureaucracy, then of the Desastha bureaucracy, and finally of the village leadership — a neutralizing process that left the operation of the system ultimately in the hands of Indian officials and their associates in local society. True to the criteria of "history from below," Munro the ruler receives no more than a dozen passing references. For Frykenberg, the real power over what happens as opposed to what is supposed to happen, is located not only in India but in the hands of Indians rather than British officials. The Nativist theory would have interested Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone — it implies, after all that what happens in history is not necessarily the result, as Malcolm put it, of "the complex schemes of ambitious statesmen, but [of] the simple operation of natural and obvious causes." They would, no doubt, have been disappointed that the Indians of Gunthur District failed to take advantage of a "better" system of government. They were well aware, however, of the frailty and incompetence of many British Indian officials and were also aware that, as Hume had put it, men were attached to long-established practices and generally preferred them "to objects, which may be more valuable, but are less known to us." It is unlikely that they would have been surprised that their policies produced unintended and unanticipated consequences.

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Munro's minutes and Malcolm and Elphinstone's works on the Company state describe a framework for the governance of British India which, like Adam Smith's definition of political

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119 Mukherjee and Beaglehole both believe that Munro's adoption of the ryotwari revenue settlement brought closer contact between rulers and ruled and his judicial regulations helped create a strong executive arm. Mukherjee claims that Munro's system influenced fiscal and judicial administration, not only in the jurisdiction of Madras but also in areas annexed to British India later. Beaglehole argues that the most distinctive features of the Munro system; the ryotwari settlement and the preference for strong executive rule, were taken over by the Utilitarians and used in their development of the system of district officer and divisional commissioner which became the orthodox model for future British colonial government throughout the empire. See Mukherjee, _Ryotwari System_, pp. 347; 372, Beaglehole, _Munro_, p. 136.


121 Nilmani Mukherjee, writing in 1962, also took a modest diversion into "history from below," calling it "an unorthodox approach, considering the way agrarian history has hitherto been written in India." He concludes that loss of caste privileges and loss of status and influence by local leaders as a result of the introduction of ryotwari caused so much resistance that the authorities, in the interests of stability, had to modify the system to satisfy local expectations. He also concludes that, despite loss of status, local notables retained sufficient influence over the behaviour of groups below them to serve their own ends; to the detriment, according to Mukherjee, of both low status Indians and the administration. "Ryotwari System," p. xvii: 335.
economy, aimed "to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and...to supply the state or common-wealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services." It was intended "to enrich both the people and the sovereign." In the Indian context, however, it required the support of a judicial system suited to the stage of development of Indian society and two extra "conditions," which had already been met by the late eighteenth century in Britain. According to the analysis of European progress made by Scotland's historians and the beliefs about human psychology of the moral philosophers, an economically and politically active middle rank and the participation of Indians in the government of their own country were prerequisites for the progress of India that was Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's objective.

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122 Adam Smith, quoted in Bryson, Man and Society, p. 208.
PART THREE

AS SUBJECTS

WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE
Chapter 12

Heroes of the Anglo-Indian School

We...receive, with caution, the traditionary histories of...[the] founders of states.

Adam Ferguson

There is generally a connection between the way people view their own society and the way they view history and, over the centuries, historical interpretations have reflected the dominant intellectual and political interests of their times; interests which both determine, and are determined by, the assumptions of the most articulate literate group in society. Malcolm and Elphinstone's histories of India, Persia, the Sikhs and Afghanistan, the historical interpretations of Indian institutions which appear in Munro's memoranda and minutes and the attitudes of all three towards Indian government, reflect the ideological assumptions, and the types of historical writing popular in late eighteenth-century Scotland. The representation of the careers and writings of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, by their nineteenth-century biographers, however, which had a profound and durable impact on the historiography of the Indian empire, reflect different cultural attitudes. They established the three men as the heroes and chief spokesmen of the Anglo-Indian school of thought on government and as the role-models for succeeding generations of Anglo-Indian officials who emulated their scholarship as well as their service. Like most biographers of their time, the Reverend George Gleig, Sir John Kaye and Sir T.E. Colebrooke, the first biographers of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, were less interested in the ideas and personalities of their subjects than in their potential as morally, socially and, in regard to India, politically useful role-models. It is easier, however, to understand their object in portraying their subjects as heroes than to explain how it was done.

Although by today's standards the works of Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke are neither good

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1 Ferguson, Civil Society, p. 123.
biography nor good history, they do show why historical knowledge was valued by their contemporaries. For much of the nineteenth century, history remained a branch of literature rather than a discipline in its own right; it was the province of "men of letters" not professional historians and was expected, like all literature, to be useful in pointing out the moral concerns of the day.

From the late eighteenth until well into the twentieth century, most British writers and their readers came from the middle ranks in society and both the subjects they chose and the cultural values they promoted reflected the biases of their own group. The social origins and professional experience of Gleig (1796-1888), Kaye (1814-1876), and Colebrooke (1813-1890), are typical. Gleig, the son of a Scottish bishop, became an Anglican clergyman after a short career in the army and wrote prolifically, at first to augment his stipend. Kaye, the son of a London solicitor, was educated at Eton and at the East India Company's military college at Addiscombe. He became a professional writer after eleven years in the Bengal artillery and, in 1856, joined the Home civil service of the East India Company, succeeding John Stuart Mill as secretary in the political and secret department — a position of great consequence in the making of Indian policy — when the Crown took over the government of India from the Company in 1858. Colebrooke was the only surviving son of the great Sanskrit scholar, Sir Henry Colebrooke. Born in Calcutta and educated at the East India Company's Haileybury College, he served in the Indian Civil Service, was a Member of Parliament for Taunton (1842-52), and Lanarkshire (1857-1868), and was made president of the Royal Asiatic Society on three occasions (1864-6, 1875-7, 1881). All three men were politically conservative and favoured the Anglo-Indian or conservative, as opposed to the westernizing or reformist, approach to governing India.

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2 Richard D. Altick, Writers, Readers and Occasions: Selected Essays on Victorian Literature and Life, (Columbus: 1989), p. 100. In a survey of eight hundred and forty prominent writers, the fathers of 10.6% were from the nobility or gentry, 86.3% were from middle class families and 3.1% from the working classes. Within the middle class group the great majority were the children of professionals: doctors, teachers, lawyers, government officials, artists and, above all, clergymen.

Nineteenth-century biographies were used as agents of socialization; part of the process by which the middle ranks reinforced the moral, ethical and religious attitudes of their own generation and attempted to pass them on to the next. They were a sweeter pill to swallow than sermons; their messages the same but more easily digested. Religion and morality were taken seriously but it was not an "age of faith." Traditional values were being challenged by the ideas that had inspired and survived the American and French Revolutions, by the changing attitudes to social and economic issues that accompanied industrialization, and by advances in scientific knowledge. It was firmly believed that a new, secure world would eventually manifest itself — philosophical liberalism had converted many to an implicit belief in human progress — but in the meantime there was confusion and anxiety. Writers were expected to entertain but also, and more important, to suggest solutions to the intractable problems of the day. Religious scepticism was producing a religion of conduct to take the place of faith in the revealed Will of God as the basis of moral and ethical standards, and public figures, great men, became the new saints whose example, as interpreted by the man of letters, would lead the Victorians from "Doubting Castle." Thomas Carlyle, one of the most admired writers of the day, regarded hero-worship as "the basis of all possible good, religious or social, for mankind."  

Walter Houghton has demonstrated that the hero, when portrayed as role-model, represents a union between romanticism and puritanism: the rebellion of romantic individualism against authority allied with the Protestant concept of a well-disciplined elect. Great men were chosen people: their most important romantic qualities, courage, honour, strength, a spirit of adventure and a kind and tender nature; their puritan qualities were morality, devotion to duty, strength of mind, simplicity, religious faith (hinted at, if not sufficiently evident) and anti-intellectualism. The collective adjective for their qualities was "manly;" the family was the shrine at which both heroes and their

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5 Ibid., pp. 305-40.
followers worshipped.

Superficially, the lives of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone could be made, by careful arrangement, to provide the perfect material for this type of hagiography. They came from middle class families fallen on hard times — Munro’s social status was subtly enhanced, Elphinstone’s aristocratic origins played down and no breath of criticism touched Munro’s father’s bankruptcy, Malcolm’s father’s unwise speculations or the Elphinstones’ difficulties in managing their estates. Sons exiled to a life of dutiful service to family, profession and country in an exotic but potentially dangerous setting provided both entertainment and a vehicle for persuasive moral observations. Honour and eminence in death, represented by statues in Westminster Abbey for Malcolm, St. Paul’s for Elphinstone and Madras for Munro, provided a happy ending.

With their moral seriousness, their endorsement of the view, expressed here by Colebrooke, that in "laying the historical facts before the public [the biographer] assumes the care of the reputation of a great man,"6 and their didactic purpose, Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke are typical of their time. The problems with characterization in nineteenth-century biography are well-recognized, of course, but they were magnified in Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke’s work by their support for a particular political agenda. Their views of British rule in India are typical of the conservative, paternalist and practical approach of the Indianists; an approach subtly different to the conservative, mentorist and empiricist ideology of their heroes.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s school of thought is located between the westernizing reformers and the Indianists and has affinities with both. Their intentions were as principled, as progressive in intent and, in Munro’s case during his early years as a revenue collector, probably as innovative, as those of the supporters of either the Bengal system or the Utilitarian reformers. All three men, however, expected Indian improvement to come from within Indian society, as a result of the provision of security and opportunity, rather than as a result of British legislation. And they

* Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 1: 8.
expected it to take a long time. Although they were neither Rationalists nor Utilitarians, their form of pragmatism rested on a belief that solutions to problems should be determined on the grounds of reason and utility; what it would be reasonable to expect Indians to understand and accept and what would be useful in promoting economic and moral progress. They also believed, however, that man rarely responds to situations rationally, or even as prompted by self-interest. Feelings and habits are more important. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s ideas about what was reasonable, useful and possible resemble David Hume’s, who claimed that a ruler could not expect to introduce "violent change" in the principles and way of thinking of his subjects:

A long course of time, with a variety of accidents and circumstances, are requisite to produce those great revolutions, which so much diversify the face of human affairs. And the less natural any set of principles are, which support a particular society, the more difficulty will a legislator meet with in raising and cultivating them. It is his best policy to comply with the common bent of mankind, and give it all the improvements of which it is susceptible.\(^7\)

The utilization of Indian institutions was recommended by Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone because they saw them as a springboard to progress, not because they wanted them to stay as they were. They believed history proved beyond doubt that successful reformers had taken into consideration the nature of the societies they intended to change and, like good teachers, had taken the people with them rather than forcing them, reluctantly and perhaps rebelliously, to accept innovations incomprehensible in the light of their historical experience.

In the sense that the ideas of the Scottish moral philosophers were "conservative," so too were those of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. But the three men retained throughout their careers the view that the human nature of Indians was essentially the same as that of Europeans and equally capable of improvement if the system of government provided the right framework for progress. Although they rejected the idea that Indians could — or should — be turned into imitation Englishmen, the régime they envisaged for India resembles late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-

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\(^7\) Hume, *Philosophical Works*, 3: 292.
century Europe — the scope of their imagination, like that of most people, was limited by experience. By the 1820s, the challenge presented by the more radical proposals for reform by the westernizers produced increasingly strident protests from Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone against systems and innovations, which they saw as speculative and mechanical rather than empiricist and organic. These protests allowed the next generation of conservative Indianists to adopt Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as allies in their own campaign against westernization.

The Indianist school promoted by Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke also favoured the utilization of India's traditional institutions in the administration of British India. For them, however, these institutions were not necessarily a springboard to progress. Increasingly doubtful about the universality of human nature and increasingly convinced that Indians were either unwilling or, perhaps, incapable of responding positively to British efforts to promote progress, they advocated Indian forms of administration because they would preserve stability and require less effort. British public servants; upright, Christian, manly and, therefore, capable of deciding what was best for Indians on a practical basis without the help of either philosophers, politicians or Indians, would supervise the traditional — static and unenlightened — way of life of the majority of the Indian people, complacent that the blessings of the Pax Britannica, when compared with the supposed horrors of the supposed disorder of pre-colonial India, justified their presence.

The works of Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke, which told the truth, but by no means the whole truth, helped to establish Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as role-models for the Indian public service in regard to both conduct and politics. Gleig's Life of Munro was probably the least distorting of the three. It began as the project of John Ravenshaw, a Company director and supporter of Munro's administrative methods, who was the first to request Lady Munro's permission to publish a collection of her husband's papers. He spent most of 1828 working on his book, telling Lady Munro that although he himself had not the least doubt that her husband's private character had been "as amiable as his public was great," his object was to convince the world of this: "for though
[Munro] had many friends...there was an apparent sternness about him that led people in general to doubt the deal of the milk of human kindness he possessed.8 He assured Lady Munro that he would be perfectly candid. Perhaps he was too candid. Gleig, who had been asked to review the manuscript before publication, severely criticized Ravenshaw's draft, telling Lady Munro that he would be very sorry to see a picture of Munro "given to the world which should fail to place in an attractive light the merits of so distinguished an individual."9 Ravenshaw passed the material he had collected to Gleig who completed the first two of three volumes for publication in 1830.

Gleig was a busy author; with a large parish and a growing family, he found time to produce a four volume History of India (1830-1835), the Life of Munro (3 Volumes, 1830). The Country Curate (1830) and a three volume Lives of Military Commanders (1831).10 He was not, however, a good biographer. Sir Archibald Nye, advised by Clement Attlee to read Gleig's work on Munro on his appointment as governor of Madras in 1946, complained, with some justification, that Gleig failed to do Munro justice in "thinking that the printing of his letters and memoranda, connected together by a few laudatory sentences was quite sufficient."11

To present Munro in the most suitable light, Gleig censored the recent history of the Munro family, the most ascerbic of Munro's criticisms of people and policy during his early years in India, and made no attempt to analyze his ideas. The Munro family were a less than satisfactory model for middle class readers.12 The eldest son, Daniel, was on bad terms with his father and had to leave Scotland hurriedly after killing a man in a duel. He married in India, fought another duel with his

8 Ravenshaw to Lady Munro, 8 Dec. 1827; 8 April, 6 May 1828, Mss. Eur., F/151/197. This file contains an extensive correspondence between Lady Munro and both Ravenshaw and Gleig on the question of the biography.

9 Gleig to Lady Munro, 9 Jan. 1829, Mss. Eur., F/151/197.

10 DNB.


12 See Stein, Munro, Chap. 1, for details of Munro's family and early life in Scotland.
wife's lover and, not surprisingly, became involved in a scandalous divorce. Margaret, the youngest daughter, eloped with the under-age heir to a wealthy banking family in flagrant defiance of both their families. Munro sent money "to our father only because, tho' he may peevishly thwart our mother and sisters in many...points both of pleasure and convenience, it is better that this should happen than that...any room should be given for domestic quarrels." That there was domestic tension at least is evident in Munro's hope that Daniel and Alexander would have their own households in Scotland by the time he went on leave so that he would have somewhere other than his parents' house to stay. He provided Erskine with money when she was widowed and left destitute after a brief first marriage because she was determined not to return to her parent's house. Gleig could not be expected to mention Munro's or Alexander's illegitimate daughters. Family and clan loyalty was strong: Munro provided financial help to more distant relatives as well as to his immediate family. He was close to Erskine and Alexander, advised and admonished his younger brother and was a dutiful son, but his relations with his parents were formal rather than warm.

Although the gothic adventures and family friction of the Munro's were unsuitable for inclusion in Gleig's presentation of a great public servant, he did provide a portrait of Munro as a boy, that may have contributed to the development of one of the late nineteenth century's more notable agents of socialization: the novels of G.A. Henty. There is a remarkable correspondence between Gleig's account of the boyhood activities and "promising" personal qualities of Thomas Munro, and Henty's description of the hero, Charles Marryot, of his novel With Clive in India — and all the carbon copy heroes of his other books. If Gleig's account provided Henty's model, Munro as hero would have reached, indirectly, a wide and impressionable audience.

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13 Munro to his brother Alexander, 3 Feb. 1796, Mss. Eur., F/151/142. See also, Stein, Munro, pp. 10; 12.

14 Munro to his brother Alexander, 4 Dec. 1795, Mss. Eur., F/151/142.

15 G.A. Henty, With Clive in India, (London: 1953), p.11. Henty achieved a large popular audience for his transformations of the genre of heroic biography into historical fiction in order to indoctrinate school boys with correct values.
Gleig’s portrait of Munro may have influenced Henty: Kaye’s account of the First Afghan War certainly did. It provided the setting for Henty’s *To Herat and Kabul*, in which Angus Campbell, Charles Marryot’s clone, strides effortlessly through the seiges of Herat and Ghazni, only to be kidnapped by honourable enemies whose lives he has saved, shortly — and conveniently — before the catastrophic retreat from Kabul. Henty’s hero turned up in different centuries and different parts of the world, fluent linguist and capable of passing as a native anywhere, always confident, always in control, meeting the challenges which were invariably placed in his way with aplomb. Kaye’s Malcolm, but not Malcolm himself, would have been another suitable model.

An ability to speak local languages represented an ability to control local situations and Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were all presented by their biographers as acclaimed linguists. No one has, as yet, cast doubts on Munro’s competency. M.E. Yapp, however, suggests that there may be reason to doubt Malcolm’s ability to read Persian because he admitted receiving help from his Persian secretary in reading an old and obscure Persian manuscript and Elphinstone’s command of languages was played down by a contemporary. In a farewell address to Elphinstone given at the Bombay Literary Society in November 1827 — a type of occasion which usually drew forth eulogies — Colonel Vans Kennedy, secretary of the society and himself a notable oriental scholar observed that Elphinstone, "if not a profound classical scholar...was sufficiently master of Greek and Latin...to enable him to appreciate and enjoy the matchless works of antiquity...His active life, however, and public duties restricted his knowledge of the numerous languages of Asia to a conversancy with Persian and prevented him from prosecuting even that language." Although all three men probably failed to attain the linguistic heights claimed for them by their biographers and, unlike Henty’s heroes, could not have "passed as natives," they were undoubtedly fluent enough to carry

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out their diplomatic and administrative duties.

By the time Kaye and Colebrooke were writing, Thomas Macaulay, in his *Life of Clive*, had made the previously unattractive field of British Indian history more interesting by presenting India as a magnificent but shadowy setting for the triumph of British national character, and in a speech in parliament he established Elphinstone and Munro as its personification:

I reflect with pride that to the doubtful splendour which surrounds the memory of Hastings and of Clive, we can oppose the spotless glory of Elphinstone and Munro. I rejoice to see my countrymen, after ruling millions of subjects, after commanding victorious armies, after dictating terms of peace at the gates of hostile capitals, after administering the revenues of great provinces, after judging the causes of wealthy zamindars, after residing at the courts of tributary kings, return to their native land with no more than a decent competence.

Kaye, "the cynosure of Victorian biographers," as Edward Ingram aptly puts it, "was able to turn John Malcolm, big, talkative, and good at games, into the beau ideal of the Anglo-Indian public service." Although Kaye emphasizes his reliance on Malcolm's own words — his correspondence, unpublished letters and journals — Malcolm's contributions actually consist of carefully selected and generally relatively short extracts. Where only thirty per cent of Gleig's *Life of Munro* is taken up by the biographer's commentary and explanation, Kaye's own words cover more than fifty per cent of the pages of his two large volumes. Claiming to have evenly balanced the historical and biographical elements of his book, Kaye grooms and markets Malcolm's image as the perfect conservative soldier-statesman. Talkative though he might be, however, Malcolm could not, for Kaye's purpose, be permitted to speak for himself. There are no excerpts from Malcolm's published histories in Kaye's biography; the works in which Malcolm's principles are most clearly evident.

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18 Eric Stokes, "The Administrators and Historical Writing on India", in Philips, *Historians*, p. 386.


20 Ingram, "Family and Faction," p. 293.

Kaye successfully established the durable representation of Malcolm as the simple, half-educated man on the spot who owned no philosophical beliefs. Malcolm, he claims, was "peculiarly fitted" for the task of pacifying the long-troubled districts of Central India:

He had no "great theories" to support. He indulged in no philosophical speculations regarding the destinies of man, or the constitution of society. He was not what is conventionally called a deep thinker. His rules of conduct were not of an abstract kind, but available at all times for practical purposes, and readily adaptable to the circumstances of the hour.22

Like most people, Malcolm adopted the ideological assumptions held by many of the educated classes within his own society without contributing much original thought of his own. Having adopted them, however, he utilized them unreservedly in his analysis of Asian society; an analysis based on different assumptions about what was historically important from those of Kaye's generation.

In a footnote in the second volume of his Life of Malcolm, Kaye quotes an observation made by James Mackintosh that Malcolm's introduction of the potato into Persia would be remembered long after "all that is now spoken of in our ridiculous Persian missions has fallen into deserved oblivion." Mackintosh continued:

If Lord Wellesley had accomplished the abolition of infanticide, which poor Jonathan Duncan is so panegyrised for having vainly endeavoured, his name would have been held in everlasting remembrance. All the negotiations and wars which appear so splendid at present, will, in a history of twenty years hence, not occupy ten pages.

Kaye, however, was surprised that a man of Mackintosh's "sagacity" should be so wrong in his assessment of the comparative importance history would attach "to the triumphs of war and the victories of peace."23 For Kaye's generation, political, imperial and military history, their course determined by the ideas and actions of great men, were what mattered. To Malcolm and Mackintosh and other historians who subscribed to the philosophical assumptions of the Scottish enlightenment, however, manners, laws, the arts and commercial progress mattered much more.

22 Ibid., 2: 283-4.

23 Ibid., 2: 62-3.
Neither Gleig, Kaye nor Colebrooke made any attempt to trace the origins of their subjects' thought. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the "Scotch philosophers" were regarded with scant respect in England. With the exception of Adam Smith, whose principles, like those of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, were in the process of being slightly distorted to suit the interests of industrial society rather than those of the commercial society for which they had been developed, they had become the subject of caricature. Scotland was a less distinct society by the mid-nineteenth century than it had been fifty or sixty years earlier and it may not have occurred to their biographers that eighteenth-century Scotsmen, including Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, thought differently on many subjects from themselves. Examined superficially by men with different cultural values and seen in juxtaposition to the new westernizing policies their biographers disliked, the opinions of the three men on governance were presented to support the school of thought of the next generation of conservatives rather than that of their own.

Colebrooke, like Kaye, includes no extracts from Elphinstone's works of history in his biography of Elphinstone. His technique is more structured and polished than Gleig's and less manipulative than Kaye's. He occasionally finds it necessary to excuse aspects of Elphinstone's temperament or "character" which did not fit the image of a great pro-consul — in particular Elphinstone's preoccupation with his feelings — and finds it necessary, also, to apologize for Elphinstone's use of "first principles...which would be considered superfluous in the present day." His commentary, however, takes up only a quarter of the two volumes, and he contents himself with a minimum of historical explanation. Interested himself in oriental scholarship, Colebrooke accepts Elphinstone's intellectualism — a characteristic not usually valued by the Indianist school. In doing so, however, he makes Elphinstone the ideologist of the conservative cadre. Discussing the advantages and problems of British rule at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Colebrooke

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25 Colebrooke, Elphinstone, 2: 149.
states that although it had given India the "inestimable blessing of peace," early attempts to administer justice, protect life and property and establish a sound revenue system had proved to be "such utter failures as to constitute a scandal." This description of the introduction of the Bengal system implies that it was innovative and westernizing in intent. Colebrooke believes, however, that the errors were rectified by the work of the conservatives:

A more simple form of rule with less disturbance of native institutions, a careful study of the rights of different classes, a more liberal employment of natives, larger powers given to British officers, combined with a more careful selection of them, have been the principles on which we have acted in administering new provinces.36

And "the honour of leading the way by his example and by his writings" was due to Elphinstone.

Elphinstone was given the even greater honour of "making" south-western India and Munro was credited with settling the Madras presidency in two short biographies published in 1885 and 1899 as part of the twenty-six volume Rulers of India series — brought out in the 1880s and 1890s, the apogee of the Indian empire. Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke's heroes built an empire out of their sense of duty. They may have questioned policies but they never questioned their role as rulers and they were venerated by the Indians they patronized. The portraits of Munro and Elphinstone in the new series perpetuated the celebration of these qualities.

The intention of Sir W.W. Hunter, the series editor, was to present what he called historical retrospects rather than personal biographies. Each volume was to take some conspicuous epoch in the making of India and, under the name of its leading figure, set forth the problems he encountered, his achievements and his long-term influence.27 Within this framework, the moral rectitude of the leading British figures — the heroes — remained important but the didacticism had taken a more political form.

The series was part of an historiographical trend that was taking place in Europe and the

36 Ibid., 2: 77-8.
United States as well as in Britain. Insistence on the primacy of archival research and scientific methodology as advocated by Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) and Auguste Comte (1798-1857), had led to a plethora of detailed studies, immensely valuable in themselves but too highly specialized to appeal to the general public or to be used as textbooks by students. There was a new demand, therefore, for works with broader terms of reference which led to collaborative works best exemplified by Lord Acton’s *Cambridge Modern History*. Although the twenty-six books in the *Rulers of India* series were published separately over a number of years, the whole work may be seen as part of this development. Designed to reach and influence as broad a spectrum of the reading public as possible, the series was intended to provide a rational justification for British control of India. But it may also be seen as part of an on-going debate, which had intensified since the Crown had taken over responsibility for India from the East India Company in 1858, over who was best fitted to determine the direction of Indian policy: Indian civil servants and military men with long, practical experience in the government, administration and defence of India, or the political hierarchy at Whitehall.

The majority of the contributors to the series were themselves ex-Indian civil servants or army officers, although the increasing numbers of men from universities now engaged in the study of British Indian history is reflected in the inclusion of some scholars. The Anglo-Indian writers came from what has been described as an "imperial service gentry:" men from a political and social stratum that was a by-product of Britain’s imperial expansion. They owed their financial well-being and social status to India; salaries, investments, titles, decorations, and often an aristocratic style of life that would have been beyond their reach in Britain. They were carefully recruited and

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28 All the books in the series except Hunter’s *A Brief History of the Indian Peoples*, contained approximately two hundred pages, cost 2s. 6d. and ran to between three and seven thousand copies; by contemporary publishing standards this was small, cheap and popular.


organized, held all but four or five of the most important appointments in India, had considerable influence on policy making and controlled the executive machinery for putting policy into practice. Although their political affiliations ranged across the spectrum from Palmerstonian Liberals to Disraeli Conservatives and they often differed on specific questions, particularly those relating to Indian foreign policy and defence, they shared a vision of British India; a vision that saw India through a distorting screen of preconceptions that derived from the cultural values of middle class Victorian Britain. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were, in a sense, founder members of the imperial service gentry; their generation were not carefully recruited and organized and their vision of British India derived from the cultural values of late eighteenth-century Scotland rather than from those of Victorian Britain. In other essentials, however, they had much in common with the authors of the service gentry who wrote on the "Rulers of India."

Ever since the India Act of 1784 had established a workable relationship between the British government and the East India Company's government of India, the Crown had been moving steadily towards a greater control over Indian affairs, by legislative means and through the opportunities for closer supervision provided by improved communications. For the Indianists, greater central government control, over expenditures as well as policy making, not only meant less power and influence for themselves but also left India open to what were regarded as undesirable influences. The most important of these were the likelihood that Indian needs would be sacrificed to the exigencies of Britain's interests as a world power, that increasingly powerful democratic movements in Britain might identify their interests with those of Indian subjects rather than British

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32 Donovan Williams, "The Council of India and the Relationship between the Home and Supreme Governments, 1858-1870," English Historical Review 81 (1966): 56-73. Williams demonstrates that during the 1860s there was a hiatus in the increment of Crown control over Indian policy due to the influence exercised by ex-Indian officials in London on Indian policy. By 1870, however, when the telegraphic link between Britain and India by way of the Red Sea was established, adjustments within the structure of the Home government were already providing the Secretary of State with the necessary moral authority and administrative techniques to take advantage of the improved system of communication. P.57.
and the danger that both government and Parliament, ignorant of, and uninterested in, the minutiae of Indian problems, would be susceptible to pressure from groups whose only interest in India was potential profit and whose demands might prove destabilizing to Indian society. The purpose of the *Rulers of India* series, therefore, was to show how well India had been managed in everyone's interest under the paternalist, proconsular system that best suited the aims and interests of Anglo-Indians.

The series provides a teleological account of the building of the British empire in India. The first six volumes deal with the period between the rise of Mughal power and the governor-generalship of Warren Hastings. Of the remaining twenty volumes, twelve are on the life and times of the governors-general. Shore, Minto and Ellenborough are excluded, presumably because their terms of office were not regarded as "conspicuous epochs," but possibly because they were believed to have served British rather than Indianist interests. Elgin was excluded because his term of office was too brief. Two volumes are on Indian princes. Two examine the organization of the fate of the north west Provinces — of enormous contemporary interest in relation to the defence of India. One dealt with the Mutiny and two more volumes were built around the presidency governorships of Munro and Elphinstone. These, largely derived from Gleig and Colebrooke's works, described developments in southern and western India respectively which could not be conveniently or accurately accommodated beneath the name of any one governor-general. Malcolm was probably excluded from the series because his work was too closely connected with the times and places covered in the works on his friends.

In the over-all scheme of the series, progress from late eighteenth-century Mughal decay and Company corruption to late nineteenth-century stability and enlightenment takes place as a result

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31 Kenneth Morgan, *Keir Hardie, Radical and Socialist*, (London: 1975), pp. 191-5. Keir Hardie's proposed visit to India in 1907 aroused white fears before he ever arrived in India which were amply confirmed. "For India, Hardie was indeed a liberator." Hardie himself, in the published account of his visit to India, quoted Munro on the good qualities of Indian's and Indian civilization. Keir Hardie, *India, Impressions and Suggestions*, (London: 1909), p. 5.
of the leadership qualities of a succession of great men. Warren Hastings laid the foundations of the present administration, ironically, by beginning the eradication of corruption. Lord Wellesley was a "king of men", an empire-builder who laid the foundation on which British India rested from 1798 to 1848. Munro and Elphinstone were revered by Indians and produced law, order and revenue in newly acquired territories. Lord Auckland's term of office provided a convenient opportunity to demonstrate the dire consequences of British government interference. "The dismal story" of the First Afghan War demonstrates "the wild injustice" of a policy which sent our armies "to strike down the shadowy Frankenstein of Russian intrigue," and "the crowning injustice" which charged the £15 millions spent on "an enterprise conceived and followed out in aid of British interests alone" to the Indian revenues.

Lord Hardinge gains credit for ending the period of war "entailed by the aggressions of Lord Auckland, and the vain-glorious histrionics of Lord Ellenborough." The eulogies, however, are reserved for the earl of Dalhousie, "the second builder of the temple of British Rule in India." He extended the frontiers of empire, consolidated its internal possessions and by his far-reaching schemes of public works, "inaugurated the great revolution which has converted the agricultural India of antiquity into the manufacturing and mercantile India of our own day."

His masterful character made enemies during his life; his policy towards the Native States raised a tempest of hostile criticism after his death. But during the long period of his actual rule, enmity lay spell-bound by his commanding nobility of soul...and throughout the vast continent, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, spread a universal conviction that there was a veritable king of men in India.

The contribution of Dalhousie's policies to the outbreak of the Mutiny are brushed aside: "when the

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37 Hunter, Dalhousie, pp. 62; 10; 31. See also, Viscount Hardinge, Viscount Hardinge; and the Advance of the British Dominions into the Punjab, by his son and private secretary, (Oxford: 1893).
master hand was removed, those measures had their reaction in the mutiny. But that passes. 38 To
Sir John Lawrence fell the work of reconstruction: "to give full effect to the Royal Proclamation in
which the Queen had expressed her 'earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to
promote works of public utility and improvement, and to administer its government for the benefit
of all her subjects resident therein" 39 — not for the benefit of the British Government or the
Lancashire cotton industry.

India could also produce great leaders but, denied the advantages of a British education and
up-bringing, they were not necessarily great rulers. They lacked the necessary qualities to be the
builders of durable, rather than transient, empires. Ranjit Singh is compared with Napoleon: "The
Sikh monarchy was Napoleonic in the suddenness of its rise, the brilliancy of its success, and the
completeness of its overthrow."

We only succeed in establishing [Ranjit Singh] as a hero...if we free our minds of
prejudice and, discounting conventional virtue, only regard the rare qualities of force
which raise a man supreme above his fellows. Then we shall at once allow that,
although sharing in full measure the commonplace and coarse vices of his time and
education, he yet ruled the country which his military genius had conquered with a
vigour of will and an ability which placed him in the front rank of the statesmen of
the century. 40

Ranjit Singh was undoubtedly a manly ruler but, like Haidar Ali, who is excused much because he
was free of religious bigotry and, despite a "defective training," was not wantonly brutal, he had had
the wrong up-bringing. Tipu Sultan, however, was a Muslim zealot who, "urged on by religious
bigotry, innate cruelty, and despotism, thought little of sacrificing thousands of lives to his...revengeful
feelings." The writer makes it clear, however, that the people of Mysore, the majority of whom are

38 Hunter, Dalhousie, p. 9.
40 Sir Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh: and the Sikh Barrier between our Growing Empire and Central Asia, (Oxford: 1890), pp. 9-10;
Hindu, are kindly, admirable farmers.\textsuperscript{41} The Indian conservatives were generally more sympathetic to Hindus than Muslims, possibly because they were believed to be less threatening and, therefore, more easily categorized as "children." Chaos and conflict in India are generally depicted as the natural outcome of a form of government lacking any concept of mutual obligation or service; under a wise paternal administration all would be well.

In \textit{Sir Thomas Munro and the British Settlement of Madras Presidency}\textsuperscript{(1899)} John Bradshaw, himself a Madras administrator, makes Munro the hero of the regeneration of south India from its state of chaos under Indian rulers to stability and enlightenment under the British. Building and regeneration were favourite motifs of the Indianists, like manliness and correct up-bringings. Bradshaw's emphasis is on the administrative achievements rather than the territorial expansion of the period and he makes Munro the patron saint, of the district officer. Munro was "a character worthy of imitation by every Indian official...brave, wise, kindly," the "natives of his old districts rise up and call him blessed."	extsuperscript{42} A brahmin schoolmaster tells Bradshaw that Munro has been styled "Mandava Rishi,...no other than Munro deified." The emphasis on this type of reverence presents Munro's paternalism as inaccurately patronizing — and would probably have been derided by Munro himself.

The title of J.S. Cotton's \textit{Mountstuart Elphinstone and the Making of South-Western India} (1885) represents an attitude typical of a generation of colonial rulers who could not believe that India — in this case south-western India — could possibly have been "made" — or could even exist — without British help. Cotton presents Elphinstone as one of a group of great men, "trained in the school of Wellesley," who helped to crush the Marathas and establish British supremacy throughout India. Malcolm, Munro and Charles Metcalfe were the other great men operating at this time on

\textsuperscript{41} Lewin Bentham Bowring, \textit{Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan; and the Struggle with the Muhammadan Powers of the South}, (Oxford: 1895), pp. 106-13; 220; 6.

\textsuperscript{42} Bradshaw, \textit{Munro}, p. 7.
the grand stage of empire-building. The early nineteenth century was "the golden age" of the Company's service. "Clive and Hastings had shown to what rank the humblest 'writer' might attain; the cancer of corruption had been extirpated, and commercial duties had been thrust into the background" — rather as if they too were "cancers." Unhampered by the telegraph or even a regular post, young diplomats relied on their own resources, decided without instructions "on measures of supreme importance" and acquired a sense of responsibility at an early age. Cotton's young diplomats are represented as Henty heroes, effortlessly dominating their world, facing challenges with unquestioning confidence, versatile and unhampered by regulation. Cotton was a university lecturer and, like Colebrooke, treated intellectual accomplishments with more respect than many of the contributors to the series. He also paid more than the lip-service of many Anglo-Indian administrators at this time to the concept of British rule as a "trusteeship." Many of his quotations from Elphinstone's writings are to the effect that "we must not dream of perpetual possession, but must apply ourselves to bring the natives into a state that will admit of their governing themselves." This concept appeared more frequently — in writings, if not in policy — as the political aspirations of Indians became more and more difficult to ignore. But it was generally emphasised that advocates of trusteeship, of whom Elphinstone and Munro were the most distinguished, recognized that a long period of British rule would be required before Indians could be made ready for self-government. For Cotton, Elphinstone's career is marred by his refusal to accept further public appointments after his retirement from India. Elphinstone, he complains, permitted his personal inclinations to bias his sense of duty — a cardinal sin — for which he is condemned to occupy "a lower place than he might otherwise have held among the Rulers of India."44

From the mid-nineteenth until at least the mid-twentieth centuries, the dominant mode of

40 Cotton, Elphinstone, pp. 11: 13; 185-90.
44 Ibid., p. 211.
historical writing was that now termed "the Whig interpretation of history," which took the Idea of Progress as its organizing principle. This type of interpretation of Indian history provided what Ronald Inden, in discussing the Indian form of Orientalism, Indology, calls "hegemonic texts;" works which expressed what was regarded as the orthodox view of India — orthodox "knowledge." Inden defines these texts as instruments, "not simply for browbeating those who demur but also for exercising a positive intellectual and moral leadership both within the educational institutions and in the other institutions that make and remake imperial formations." Despite Hunter's insistence on "scientific" methods and the use of reliable sources, the proselytizing purpose and the fact that almost all the source materials had been compiled by the authors themselves or their colleagues ensured an interpretation of history that reflected the conditioning and experiences of the Anglo-Indian public servant.46 The books in the Rulers of India series were hegemonic texts of the Indianist or Imperial school of thought on India.

A different interpretation of Indian history emerged, not surprisingly, from the conditioning and experiences of the man who is regarded as the founder of the Indian nationalist school of historical interpretation. Romesh Dutt (1848-1909) was one of the first Indians to take the London examinations for the Indian Civil Service. He received an appointment in 1871, but had to resign twenty-six years later when, because he was Indian, he could not be promoted to the position of commissioner.47 He became lecturer in Indian history at University College, London until 1904 and then served in the government of the princely state of Baroda until his death.

Western historical writing during the period prior to the First World War was quite widely influenced by a renewed interest in social science and the work of men like Karl Marx, Emil

45 Inden, Imagining India, p. 43.

46 Sir John Kaye's Lives of Indian Officers, which includes chapters on Malcolm and Elphinstone and which first appeared as a series of articles on "Indian Heroes" in Good Words in 1866, and the introductions by Sir Alexander Arbuthnot and Sir George Forrest to their compilations of the official writings of Munro and Elphinstone, edited in 1881 and 1884 respectively, provide further examples of Indianist interpretations of the work of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone.

47 Pannikar, Asia and Western Dominance, p. 116
Durkheim and Max Weber. This trend attracted little attention from British historians of India but did have an impact on the development of Indian nationalist historiography. Whether admired or detested, Marx's economic theories in particular were difficult to ignore and attempts to answer the questions he raised, whether by use of his doctrine or by alternative explanations, opened up new channels of inquiry. Dutt's books, *Economic History of India under Early British Rule* (1901) and *Economic History of India in the Victorian Age* (1903), which owed much to Marx's influence, were the most significant contributions to the history of India to appear between 1900 and 1914 and they provided a serious challenge to the orthodoxy of the Imperial school.

Dutt presented a viable explanation of the poverty of the Indian masses under the supposedly benevolent and enlightened rule of "liberal" Britain. Citing an Indian poet's observation that: "taxation raised by a king is like the moisture of the earth sucked up by the sun, to be returned to the earth as fertilising rain," Dutt points out that the moisture raised from Indian soil under British rule is largely fertilizing other lands; a point Adam Smith and Munro and Elphinstone had conceded. Dutt also complains of the East India Company's use of parliament to restrict Indian manufacturing in order to protect the developing industries of Britain and its treatment of India as a great plantation. All high appointments are reserved for British nominees, merchandise is purchased out of Indian revenues to sell for profit in Europe, and all that can be raised in India from excessive taxation is sent back to Britain after the bare costs of a "starved administration" have been paid. He insists that the British administration in India has been shaped by European not Indian influences; the lack of any popular Indian representation means that India has to endure "unwise and retrograde administration, and to pay for...foolish wars, during periods of England's temporary madness!" It is an assertion that would have been rejected by the Indianists because

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48 Ibid., p. xii.

47 Ibid., p. 333.
they needed to believe that Indian policy was determined by their own group in India, not by politicians and bureaucrats in England — except, of course, when it suited them to use British interference as a scapegoat for failures — and it was ignored by British historians until the 1950s and 1960s when the question of whether decisions on Indian policies were made in Britain or India became a matter of historiographical debate.

Munro and Elphinstone are respected by Dutt as administrators "distinguished no less by their sympathy with the people than by their capacity for organisation and work." They were also approved for their advocacy of the employment of Indians in positions of responsibility. Munro, however, is seen as directly responsible for one element of the economic drain because, by eliminating the role of Indian intermediaries in the collection of revenue under the ryotwari system, he permitted the Company to appropriate a portion of the revenue that would otherwise have been ploughed back into the local economy. He is also held indirectly responsible for the poverty of Madras because, although he insisted that the ryotwari system, like the zamindari system of Bengal, must rest on a permanent settlement, it was later modified to ill-effect by "lesser men." And he is blamed for inadvertently causing the collapse of the structure of what he had termed the village republics of India, because, by removing the revenue assessing and collecting powers of village headmen, he undermined their prestige and authority.

Bombay's poverty is attributed to Elphinstone's deference to Munro and to the company's demand for only raw materials; Malcolm is commended for recognizing this. Malcolm, Dutt points out, recommended the development of Indian industries but even he failed to see, or perhaps did not care to state, that industrial prosperity was impossible in a colony valued only as a provider of raw materials. Munro gained no credit from Dutt for his support for a genuine free trade for

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51 Ibid., pp. 345-6.

52 Ibid., pp. 116-52

53 Ibid., p. 299.
India, perhaps justifiably. In 1825 he had written that,

India is the country that has been worst used... All her products ought undoubtedly
to be imported freely into England upon paying the same duties and no more, which
English products pay in India. When I see what is done in Parliament against India,
I think that I am reading about Edward III and the Flemings.54

But Munro's comments on the subject, although expressed with great conviction in letters to George
Canning and to his Glasgow friend, Kirkman Finlay, an ardent free trade supporter, were never
made publicly.

In Dutt's work, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone retain their stature as well-intentioned and
able men, if not their infallibility as Victorian heroes. Like most early Indian nationalists, Dutt was
a member of the western-educated Indian middle classes who had no wish to return to what they,
as well as Indianists, thought of as "traditional" Indian forms of government. They did not want to
destroy the form of government the British had introduced; they wanted to run it themselves, free
from British control. The recommendations of Munro and Elphinstone in particular, could be used
in support of Indian self-government. They had, after all seen Indian institutions as viable and
Indians themselves as capable of learning how to run an efficient form of government. Munro,
indeed, might have acknowledged men like Dutt and Nehru as acolytes.

Dutt's book presented an important historiographical challenge to the Indianists, not only
because his thesis of an economic drain of Indian resources provided the basis for nationalist
theories of exploitation, but also because, in providing the first critical analysis of the policies of
Munro and Elphinstone, he makes the point that good intentions did not inevitably lead to
improvement. The probability and, perhaps, danger of unintended consequences had been central
to the examination of the relationship between cause and effect made by Scottish enlightenment
historians and it explains the caution of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone. But their policies had
been treated as above criticism by Victorian historians of the Indian empire who invariably

54 Gleig, Munro, 3: 429. See also 2: 66; 307.
subscribed to the orthodox Whig interpretation of history. With its reverence for human agency, its preoccupation with the benefits, not the defects, of policy initiatives, and its wish to demonstrate an inevitable, causative progress towards a more "advanced" present, Whig history deliberately discouraged critical analysis.

Dutt’s challenge was ignored by the contributors to The Cambridge History of India, the most important work on the history of India to appear between the First and Second World Wars, who continued to combine the teleological methods of Whig history with Indianist assumptions about India and British Indian government. It is another collaborative work but the division of labour between local experts and scholars is more evenly balanced than in the Rulers of India series. Two thirds of the sections in volume five, which deals with the pre-Mutiny period of British Indian history, are the work of professional historians. Volume six, which gives brief recapitulations of the 1818-1858 period but concentrates mainly on the years 1858 to 1918, was written almost entirely by former Indian officials, although some had also taught, or were currently teaching, at British universities.

In both volumes the tacit assumption of the Idea of Progress remains although its course is now traced from eighteenth-century chaos and corruption to a twentieth-century sense of unity among Indians. The stability and the enlightenment of British rule, which had been proclaimed with confidence in the Rulers of India series at the end of the nineteenth century, were less obvious gifts in inter-war India. British rule was now credited with having created the conditions under which nationalist sentiment could arise. "The purposes contemplated from afar by Company servants like Thomas Munro were being realized by the servants of the crown." This is an accurate interpretation of Munro's views. It requires great optimism, however, to see it as either a deliberate and consistently followed policy or as a consistently desired outcome, during the years from the 1830s.

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56 Dodwell, Cambridge History of India, 6: vii.
to the 1920s.  

The emphasis in the Cambridge History of India is still on political/legislative and political/military history with carefully structured and still valuable chapters describing what happened and how the system functioned. The sections on social policy and financial developments are descriptive and give no indication that the author is aware of developments in social and economic history. It is still Anglo-centric history as seen from the top. Hero-worship, however, is less evident: completely absent from the work of many of the authors, still present but in a relatively subdued form in that of some ex-members of the Indian Civil Service. Events or issues that involved differences of opinion between rival factions of Englishmen are discussed with admirable objectivity and subjected to a discerning analysis but differences that involved divergent Indian and English points of view still provoked a more biased and emotional response. Although the source material consulted includes parliamentary papers, government documents and a selection of both nineteenth and twentieth-century secondary works as well as the personal accounts, expert reports and collections of letters that had formed the basis of research for the Rulers of India series, the deeply entrenched hero-worshipping and paternalist approach of the Indianists remains dominant. As Burton Stein has pointed out, P.E. Roberts, one of the most distinguished contributors to the Cambridge History of India, acknowledged the need to recognize the "blunders" and "political crimes" of Company officials. He felt, however, that the conduct of a small band of men, including Munro, who "were amongst the greatest Englishmen of their day," compensated for the sins of their countrymen.

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57 For an account of the gradual rejection of the idea of trusteeship in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, see Francis Hutchins, The Illusion of Permanence. (Princeton: 1967).

58 Ibid., 5: see P.E. Roberts, Chap. 17; Lillian M. Penston, Chap. 26 and J.T. Gwynn, Chap. 27.

59 Ibid., 6: see Verney Lovett, Chap. 30.

60 P.E. Roberts, quoted in Stein, Munro, p. 357. Roberts' best known work, India Under Wellesley, (London: 1929), remains one of the best treatments of Wellesley's administration.
The work of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone is not discussed directly and for the most part the three men appear in the two volumes in the role of arbiters; their opinions cited on specific issues as if their endorsement is enough to justify a particular policy. 61 J.T. Gwynn, in a chapter on the Madras land revenue system, however, provides a non-partisan explanation of the complexities of the debate over rival revenue systems. Munro’s influence over the court of directors is identified as the decisive factor in the decision for the ryotwari system. 62 In S.M. Edwardes’ chapter on the Bombay administrative system (1818-1858), Elphinstone’s determination to preserve as far as possible the indigenous revenue and judicial systems is emphasised, 63 while Verney Lovett notes Elphinstone’s refusal to interfere in Indian religion. 64 These two points — the viability of indigenous institutions and a reluctance to interfere with Indian religious practices — were important in Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s argument that Indians would themselves pursue and achieve progress if given the right conditions. By the late nineteenth century, however, disillusion over the reluctance of Indians to change in the way their British rulers thought they should, more rigid racist attitudes and a vested interest in perpetuating and justifying British rule, meant that these points were used to defend paternalist government by foreigners on the ground that the static and conservative nature of Indian society could not be changed. This attitude remains constant in The Cambridge History of India and the use of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s opinions to justify the ideology of the work’s contributors incriminates them, unjustly.

The major achievement of the Cambridge History is its compilation of a massive collection of factual information — an accomplishment that would have been regarded with awe by both Scottish enlightenment and Victorian “philosophes” in search of useful knowledge. In other respects

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61 Ibid. For Elphinstone, see 5: 388; 582. For Malcolm, see 5: 211; 353. For Munro, see 6: 71: 161: 396: 548.

62 Ibid., 5: 470-482.


64 Ibid., 6: 130: 133.
it is history interpreted by a narrow caste of victors, still celebrating their conquests, but finding it increasingly difficult to justify the continuation of their rule.

As Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out, bitterly, "history is almost always written by the victors and conquerors and gives their view." It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the generally uncritical nature of British historical writing, should have allowed the reputations of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone as wise and sympathetic empire-builders to remain unchallenged for over a century. What is more surprising is the relative lack of criticism from the other side. For more than a decade prior to 1947 and for many years afterwards, the history of British India was enmeshed in a sometimes vituperative debate between two opposing schools of thought. The focus of Indian politicians, writers and scholars was directed mainly to the issues of nationalism and economic exploitation. The Indianists, the British imperialist school, mounted a sturdy defence of the British Raj. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were natural heroes for the Indianists, but for Indians, their value as propagandists for the nationalist cause seems to have outweighed their disadvantages as agents of foreign oppression. Their often-quoted statements depicting British rule in terms of a temporary trusteeship, their equally often-quoted opposition to the exclusion of Indians from positions of responsibility, Munro and Elphinstone's recognition of the drain and Munro's support for free access to British markets for Indian goods — now that it was his writings rather than his actions that were important — could all be put to good use in the campaign for self-government.

The strongest criticism came from Marxists. R. Palme Dutt, in a Marxist critique of the condition of India in 1940, expresses their viewpoint when he traces the deterioration of Indian society to the introduction of the concepts of private property and individualism by Munro, "at the behest of the court of directors," claiming that the two concepts undermined the natural communism

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65 Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, (London: 1951). G.S. Sardesai points out that one of the reasons why British historians had the field to themselves was because the pride of Indian historians with strong nationalist views would not permit them to write or publish in English. The most interesting work from the Indian perspective was written in Maratha and Bengali.
of the traditional "village republics."66 Ironically, it was Munro, not the court of directors, who was intent on eradicating communal aspects of Indian village life and inculcating the virtues of self-help and individualism among the cultivators. Munro, however, had many Indian admirers. In 1913, a contributor to the Modern Review quoted a succession of Munro's statements and pointed out that "The employment of Indians in higher posts [is] a subject to which [Munro] reverts again and again, in language which may well be laid to heart by the members of the Royal Commission which is now in session to consider this very question".67 Writing in a prison cell, Nehru quoted a letter in which Munro told Lord Hastings that the advantages to India of British rule had been dearly bought by the sacrifice of independence and national character. Nehru also cites Munro's denouncement that: no previous foreign conqueror of India had treated the whole population as untrustworthy, dishonest and "fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems...not only ungenerous, but impolitic."68 B.S.Baliga acknowledged, approvingly, Munro's influence with the board of control and court of directors between 1808 and 1814 in getting the ryotwari system extended in the Madras presidency.69 K.N. Sastri Venkatasubba, whose Ph.D. degree at London University was supervised by Dodwell, saw Munro as the founder of a "liberal school of Indian administration" and traced the Montagu Declaration of 1917 to Munro's views on Indian governance. Writing in 1939 he claimed that Munro was still exerting influence on British policy.70 The type of influence Venkatasubba admired is evident in a letter written by Munro in 1794 in response to a request from his friend, Colonel Alexander Allen, later a Company director, for information on "Law, Commerce,


68 Nehru, Discovery, p.236.


Agriculture." Munro states that although the inhabitants of the Baramahal region, unlike those of Bengal, had no written legal codes, "they have enough of tradition to make a very good common law. On this tradition and on common sense their decisions are grounded — and...they are just as good as any we could have were we to go for them as far as England." Asking, rhetorically, how English law could possibly be administered through interpreters, Munro announces that he "would as soon see the Inquisition among us as a corps of judges turned loose in the country, and led by such banditti," adding that "we are so vain of our laws that we suppose all nations are impatient to share in the Blessings." 71 This letter was not included in Gleig's selection but its appeal to an Indian in the 1930s is obvious.

Since India gained independence in 1947, interest in Indian history has been diverted into new channels reflecting broad historiographical trends. Men who had spent their careers in British India, however, continued, like Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, to advertise their knowledge and their names by writing Indian history and three works in particular: Philip Mason's The Men who Ruled India (1954)72, R.D. Choksey's Mountstuart Elphinstone: The Indian Years (1971),73 and Sir Penderel Moon's The British Conquest and Dominion of India (1989),74 present Anglo-Indian interpretations.

In The Men Who Ruled India, Mason75 presents the imperialist case in a relatively sensitive form although its thesis remains firmly in the hero-worshipping, paternalist, teleological camp. The framework for his interpretation is provided by the concept of trusteeship: an aim glimpsed by

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71 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
73 R.D. Choksey, Mountstuart Elphinstone: The Indian Years, 1796-1827, (Bombay: 1971).
Munro and Elphinstone...explicitly proclaimed in 1917...it is clear that the change from government for Indians to government by Indians has been carried through successfully. Evidence that suggests that between the 1850s and the First World War a majority of Anglo-Indians paid little genuine heed to the idea of trusteeship is over-looked. The "men who ruled India" are, for Mason, the men who worked in the field with Indians. Not, of course, on equal terms but as fatherly authorities. Mason has little interest in the bureaucrats of the presidency capitals who worked in isolation from the Indian masses, because it is the personal, dedicated relationship between rulers and ruled that he wishes to emphasise — an aspect of British rule that Nilmani Mukherjee was soon to identify as a decisive factor in the superiority of Munro's Madras system of administration over that of Cornwallis in Bengal.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone remain heroes: "the founders" of the British Raj. Their work is described in the first chapter of a section entitled "The Golden Age, 1798-1858:"

the flowering, the highest peak perhaps in the lofty range of what the English have done, when a handful of our countrymen, by the integrity of their character and with not much else to help them, gave to many millions for the first time for many centuries the idea that a ruler might be concerned with their well-being.77

Munro was the archetypal district officer — a ruler who would listen to the people. Malcolm was the man of action, the soldier/statesman with a common touch for prince and peasant alike — always ready to see and be seen. Elphinstone was a man who "revelled in the stress of circumstances when it came his way but who never courted it." A philosopher as well as a man of action, "always ready to listen to a peasant and to right a wrong."78

Mason relied on nineteenth-century biographies and personal accounts, on the Rulers of India series and on the Cambridge History of India as his sources and in association with the

77 Ibid., p. 84.
78 Ibid., p. 102; p.106.
nostalgic sentiments and loyalties derived from his own distinguished career in India, the result was 
a re-statement, albeit a polished and gracious re-statement, of a very familiar historical 
interpretation.

R.D. Choksey's study of Elphinstone probably developed out of the work he had done on the 
history of the Marathas and the Bombay Deccan during Elphinstone's period. Choksey's object is 
to provide insight into Elphinstone as a man, rather than as a British official and he makes good use 
of Elphinstone's often almost illegible journals. Unlike the journals of many prominent men, they 
were not intended for public consumption and they permit a relatively intimate view of their author's 
personality. Choksey's approach seems to owe something to the influence of psycho-history. He 
examines Elphinstone's attitude towards money, patronage, personal relationships, his struggles with 
ill-health and, in particular, his equivocal attitude towards India and his career and portrays him as 
ambitious for recognition but not ambitious enough — or, perhaps, not sufficiently self-confident or 
ergetic enough — to really drive for it as Malcolm did. There is a wealth of interesting, sometimes 
gossipy, detail on Elphinstone, his family, his friends and his contacts with other British Indian 
officials but the book suffers, somewhat, from having no central argument or clearly defined 
framework and in the end, although failures as well as successes are recorded and less praiseworthy 
aspects of Elphinstone's character are mentioned, Choksey's portrayal fails to escape, from the 
nineteenth-century genre of hero-worshipping biography.

Given the long period of time and the many developments that have taken place in historical 
writing since the end of British rule, it is surprising to find that in his recent book, The British 
Conquest and Dominion of India, Sir Penderel Moon has also failed to escape the influence of 
nineteenth-century British Indian history. It is a classical Indianist account in which great rulers are 
at the forefront. In a brief biographical memoir, it is mentioned that Moon considers himself to be 
a "gentleman scholar" rather than a professional historian, that he is not very enthusiastic about 
contemporary historiographical trends and that he sees himself as Munro's "heir." He would have
felt more at home in 1889 than 1989. Moon, however, moves beyond the concept of trusteeship and represents conquest and dominion as a co-operative effort between the British and the most admirable elements in Indian society — "intelligent Indians" and sepoys — to improve India. There is a major sub-theme which identifies what are perceived to be consistently harmful interventions by the Home government. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone fit into Moon’s scheme as the most idealistic and most "politically correct" — from his perspective — of the Anglo-Indians who should, he believes, have been left to direct Indian affairs without the intervention of Whitehall. The book provides a factually detailed and interesting narrative account of the British period in India, but it is a work that in many ways was outdated the moment it appeared. It presents an imperialist perspective of imperial domination, similar to the one offered in the Rulers of India series a century earlier.

From the 1830s until the 1950s, writing on the history of British India was dominated by Anglo-Indian historians, the great majority of whom came from the middle classes and were members or ex-members of the Indian civil or military services. They successfully imposed their own ideology, derived from a melding of English cultural attitudes with the traditions, shared experiences and corporate self-interest of their own caste, on their interpretations of Indian history and Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s role in Indian history, remaining largely immune from successive developments in international historiography. Invariably more interested in the way great men dealt with problems than in the problems themselves, their representation of Indian history retained its status as "orthodox knowledge" until the 1950s.

In the years since Indian independence historical writing, which has focussed on issues and structural forces more than on the lives and work of rulers, has produced fresh insight into Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s role in Indian history. During the 1950s and 1960s, Munro and Elphinstone's work as administrators was examined to discover how their policies, as the agents of colonial rule, affected the social, economic and cultural life of India and to throw light on the nature
of the Company state.\footnote{See Ballhatchet, *Western India*; Mukherjee, *Ryotwari System*; Beaglehole, *Munro*; Frykenberg, *Guntur District*.} At the same time their policy recommendations and cultural attitudes were examined by intellectual historians to identify the ideas and assumptions on which their school of thought on Indian government was based.\footnote{See Stokes, *Utilitarians*; Bearce, *British Attitudes Toward India*.} In the 1980s, two trends in historical writing: one a new approach referred to as "the political economy perspective;"\footnote{O'Hanlon and Washbrooke, "Histories in Transition," p. 123.} the other a re-awakened interest in political history, generated three studies of aspects of British Indian history — state-building and military fiscalism and strategies for defence — that raised new questions and produced new conclusions about the work and thought of the three men.\footnote{See Stein, "State Formation," *Munro*; Yapp, *Strategies*, Peers, "East India Company and its Army," "Duke of Wellington," "Military and Political Economy."}

Although Munro, Malcolm and Elphinston would have shared some of the concerns of the Indianists, and, no doubt, many of the underlying elements of self-interest, their conservatism had emphasised continuity rather than preservation; their paternalism was mentorist rather than proscriptive, while their humanitarian approach to Indian problems derived from ideas about "sensibility" rather than from the patronizing good works beloved by Evangelical philanthropists. Their practicality, which rejected out of hand Utilitarian and Rationalist "system," was nevertheless subjected, as a matter of course, to the touchstones of utility and reason. Like Samuel Smiles, they believed in self-help. Ironically, it was Indian nationalist historians who recognized — and appreciated — the progressive nature of their school of thought while contemporary historians of political economies and social structures cannot entirely dismiss the part played by "the willed decisions of significant agent-actors" — a precise, modern phrase for what the Victorians called "the great ideas of great men."
CONCLUSION

There must always be a connection between the way in which men contemplate the past, and the way in which they contemplate the present: both views being in fact different forms of the same habits of thought, and therefore presenting in each age, a certain sympathy and correspondence with each other.

H.T. Buckle

The careers, ideas and historiographical representations of Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration the connection between the way in which they viewed the past and the way in which they viewed their own world. The connection between the three parts of this thesis also lies in placing their lives and their legacy in the correct historical context.

The fifty years during which Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone served in India was a period of dramatic historical change. Revolutions in America and France were generated and rationalized by ideas about liberty and authority. The age of commerce, with its concern with wealth and virtue, was being superceded by the early industrial age, with its own principles of political economy. Mercantilism, as it was termed by contemporary political economists, was challenged by Free Traders quoting Adam Smith. Half a world away, the "factory" foot-holds of the East India Company on the periphery of the Indian sub-continent, were expanded into extensive territorial dominions. India, between the 1780s and 1820s was transformed from a vibrant region of independent or semi-independent states competing for political and territorial power, into a colonial possession subordinated to the interests of a foreign trading company and a remote but powerful foreign state.

The East India Company had to pay for its army, its administrators and its trade-goods and provide adequate returns for its share-holders, and a variety of practical and principled solutions to the problem of obtaining resources without precipitating rebellion jostled for recognition. Cost,

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security, economic and social progress and the need to provide a moral justification for colonial domination were central issues for all Company officials and Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone wrote a great deal on matters pertinent to them all.

The three men had been raised in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century when union with England brought political stability and an improved economy to the country and new professional opportunities for Scotsmen. Although the aristocracy still dominated British political and social life, the power of the state depended to a formidable extent on the support of the gentry and commercial classes and the fact that this support was forthcoming — that there was a consensus of aims rather than a struggle for power between the landed aristocracy and the rising middle classes — allowed the state to concentrate its energy during the years from 1780 until 1830 on winning its wars with France and expanding its empire in the east. The increased demand for men for naval and army service against the French and military and civil service in India created new career-building opportunities for a class of service gentry; a group who enhanced their own and their family’s wealth and status through service overseas but who brought in return, both the confidence of conquerors and new money to invigorate the middle ranks of society. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone joined the quickening movement of the sons of the Scottish gentry and professional classes into the ranks of the service gentry, and built careers in India which raised their status in Britain.

The fact that they were countrymen helped bring Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone together during the earlier stages of their careers. Scotland was a small country with a small population and among the middle and upper ranks of society everyone knew, or knew of, everyone else. Munro and Malcolm’s sisters had met in Scotland before their brothers’ paths crossed in India and the Malcolm and Elphinstone families were acquainted before the two men went to India. When Munro and Malcolm met in the Baramahal in 1796 and Malcolm and Elphinstone met at Poona in 1803 they would have had acquaintances as well as interests in common to discuss. Malcolm may have

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2 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, pp. 11-12.
cultivated Elphinstone's friendship with a view to improving his own contacts in British political life and the Company but he can have expected nothing beyond friendship with an interesting and intelligent man in return for his good offices on Munro's behalf.

Shared cultural roots, however, were more important than national or social solidarity in bringing the three men together as the founders of a school of thought on Indian government. Although the philosophes who influenced late eighteenth-century Scottish thought were interested in, and influenced by, the same ideas and issues as their European and English counterparts, in their interpretations of society, forms of government and religious institutions they developed certain distinctive methods and principles — now identified as the precursors to nineteenth-century social science — which had a profound effect on Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's approach to Asian society and government.

Many youthful Scotsmen who went to India as Company writers or cadets were likely to have left home possessed of a modicum of Calvinist-instilled discipline and a tendency, if exposed to the influence of Scottish religious Moderatism, to look at religion — Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity as well as the religions of Asia — from a secular rather than a spiritual perspective. They were also likely to have shared the widely-held assumption that the acquisition of practical skills and a life-long pursuit of knowledge were worthwhile exercises in self-interest as well as in professional or public virtue. It was not for nothing that Tobias Smollett made the hero of his novel, Roderick Random (1749), a Scotsman. It was necessary, he stated, because it enabled him to endow Roderick with the level of education required by his character; a level of education "which could not possibly be obtained in England."3 The conjunction of three factors — the intense interest in education and the new developments it produced in eighteenth-century Scotland, the high proportion of Scotsmen from well-educated gentry and professional families who went to India, and the number of Scots who made their names in positions requiring practical skills or an ability to organize, analyze

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3 Smollett, quoted in Embree, Charles Grant, p. 22.
and present information — indicates a connection between the benefits of a Scottish education and
the number of Scotsmen who rose to prominence in India at this time. Munro, Malcolm and
Elphinstone were the most successful of the many Scotsmen who made knowledge useful to their
own careers as well as to the government.

Malcolm, who met Munro for the first time in 1796 and Elphinstone in 1803, provided the
initial link between the three men. He corresponded regularly with them both, visited them when
his peripatetic career brought him within reach and praised their abilities to influential men in the
Company and government. Munro and Elphinstone met only twice, in May 1818 and May 1820, and
their relationship was sustained almost entirely by correspondence on matters of policy although,
after the mainly social visit of Munro and his wife to Elphinstone in Bombay in 1820, the letters
become less formal and occasionally refer to personal matters. Until the Third Maratha War,
Malcolm was the most prominent of the three men and may have seen himself in some respects as
Munro and Elphinstone’s patron but, in the 1820s, when the focus of Indian government was
efficient administration not foreign relations, Munro emerges as the senior member of the group.

By the end of the war the three men are identifiable as a key group in the government of
British India. Eric Stokes sees their ideas on government as the dominant school of thought prior
to 1818 but the decade between 1814 and 1824 is probably the period in which their views had the
most influence. Burton Stein points out correctly that Munro’s appointment as governor in 1819 was
made partly in recognition of the triumph of his administrative principles but, to Munro in the 1820s,
this triumph may have been less obvious than it appears a century and a half later. His warnings,
and those of Malcolm and Elphinstone, against rational systems and proposed innovations are more
pronounced in the writings composed during their governorships than in ones from earlier periods
in their careers and, despite the apparent victory of their school of thought represented by their high
appointments, all three men were aware that their views were being challenged by both old and new
arguments.4

The three men are rarely seen as bureaucrats; they are more often regarded as the archetypes of what B.B. Misra calls rule by "executive interposition," the antithesis of bureaucratic system5 and a form of government described by Munro as "acting without interference, and authorized to pursue whatever measures I thought best for the settlement of the country." 6 They all, not surprisingly, found the periods in which they enjoyed a relatively unrestricted freedom to introduce their own policies to be the most personally satisfying episodes in their careers. Yet the bureaucratic technique of acquiring the specialized knowledge necessary for a particular type of appointment served Munro and Malcolm better than the more conventional paths to high office, seniority and patronage, and even Elphinstone found it useful. Wellesley’s policies as governor-general allowed — indeed required — men who had taken the trouble to acquire some local expertise to obtain challenging, powerful and prestigious positions. No amount of Indian knowledge would have aided the careers of the three men if they had failed to achieve practical results. In early nineteenth-century British India, however, where civil administrators as well as diplomats spent long periods of time working with Indians from many different social and cultural groups and living in isolation from British centres of power and decision-making, an ability to use Indian languages, interpret Indian culture and present information and recommendations in an articulately written form were useful tools which played a major role in their rise to high office.

Having attained some distinction in India, Munro and Malcolm returned to Britain, hoping to find either a satisfactory private life or a new niche for themselves in the public service. Elphinstone, as a member of Britain’s ruling classes, would have had access to British public life if

4 See Phillips, East India Company, pp. 244-5 for comments on differences between the Board of Control and the Directorate after 1823 on some of the key components of Munro’s administrative system.

5 Misra, Central Administration, pp. 80-81.

6 Munro to Cumming, 1 March 1815, quoted in Gleig, Munro, 1: 426.
he had wished and if he had been able to arrange his finances to produce the necessary independent income. But the proven talents of Munro and Malcolm, who had contacts with, but not membership in, the ruling élite, were inadequate to obtain positions in Britain comparable to those to which they had access in India.

The interest in India's administrative affairs of some board of control and Company officials during the period in which Munro was in Britain provided an advantageous context for the advancement of his career at a crucial stage. Malcolm, however, lost ground to Elphinstone, whose successful diplomacy at Poona during Malcolm's six year absence from India, enabled him to close the gap between them in regard to seniority, experience and expertise.

It is possible that the success of Elphinstone's Indian career rested to some extent on his having more written than personal contact with Company and government authorities. In his early twenties his journal is full of self-chastisement for fastidiousness and arrogance, for argumentativeness, shortness of temper and a superciliousness that "must be shockingly offensive," and he described himself as overbearing when contradicted and ill-humoured and disputatious whenever he felt slighted. Although he probably exaggerated these defects and obviously learned to control their public manifestations as he matured, when considering the governor-generalship thirty years later, his struggle with his temper — or temperament — was still something to be considered. He thought that the mode of conducting business, which would require "having much personal intercourse with people," would sorely try a temper which was never suited to "resisting sudden provocations." Although Malcolm's egotism irritated him, his often-stated admiration for Malcolm and Munro's good humour, suggests that in some situations he had difficulty in controlling his own impatience and irritation. Elphinstone's career and possibly his personality had restricted

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7 Elphinstone, journal. 6 April 1801, quoted in Colebrooke. Elphinstone, 1: 26.

6 Elphinstone, journal. 5 March 1802. quoted in ibid., 1: 43-4.

9 Elphinstone, journal. 1 Sept. 1834, quoted in ibid., 2: 335.
his opportunities to establish personal relationships and his written communications which, although written in an execrable hand, were impressively urbane, may have been a preferred medium of social as well as professional intercourse.

In the years following the Third Maratha War, no one in the Home government seems to have been anxious to employ Malcolm, in part because the emphasis he gave to psychological considerations, his respect for rank, his preference for trust over discipline and his sometimes ill-judged generosity had little appeal now that Britain was the paramount power in India. Superceded by both Munro and Elphinstone for the governorships of Madras and Bombay. Malcolm turned, as he had done when his ambitions had been frustrated in 1810, to keeping his name and his opinions before the authorities and the general public by writing books.

Malcolm and Elphinstone's literary efforts enabled them to develop their ideas on Asian society and government and forced them to polish their styles of writing. Here too, however, Elphinstone gained an advantage. Malcolm was an extrovert. His vision was broad, he liked general concepts and grand strategies and his writing style was wordy, full of lengthy periods and general truths. In regard to his own and other's interests he was outspoken and persistent. Elphinstone, introverted and with hours, sometimes days and weeks on end to spend on his studies, wrote with a narrower perspective, perhaps, but with greater subtlety and restraint. He lacked, however, Malcolm's instinctive generosity in promoting his friends. Respect for others in his profession was more often expressed by Elphinstone in his journal or private letters than in public papers while Malcolm and Munro publicized the abilities of men whose merits they approved in letters to the authorities. Munro's public writings, which David Hill had described as "an inestimable treasury of wisdom," lack Malcolm's expansiveness and Elphinstone's polish but they are skilfully and often subtly constructed documents which include principled justifications for his recommendations.

Munro's meeting with Malcolm in Madras in July 1817, just before the Third Maratha War, was the last time the two men were together but, for the last ten years of Munro's life, they
remained in touch through their letters. The enlarged views on governing India, based on certain ideological assumptions about historical progress, institutional development and human psychology, that emerge from Malcolm's published writings were approved by Munro; the similar principles on which Munro's system was based were endorsed by Malcolm when he used Munro as an authority to support his own policy recommendations.

Malcolm and Elphinstone met for the last time in March 1831, when Elphinstone attended a London dinner given by Lord Ellenborough in honour of Malcolm on his retirement from Bombay. The guests included the duke of Wellington and people described by Elphinstone as being of the highest rank and talent. Malcolm was at ease with both peasants and princes: Elphinstone was probably as uncomfortable with the lower ranks as he claimed to be diffident in the presence of "great men." On this occasion, his appreciation of Malcolm's good qualities was unequivocal. Malcolm "rattled away" as he would have done at his own table in Bombay, kept everyone cheerful despite monopolising the conversation and won Elphinstone's admiration for "his ease and independence among a class of people for whom I know him to entertain so excessive a respect."

He made no effort to adapt his talk to please anyone but himself with the exception that,

he constantly went out of his way to bring me forward, and to make me as intimate with the company as he was himself. I can now account for his popularity with people of note whom I have heard talk of him. It could never have been gained by mere courting of favour, or sustained by any one who had less frankness, good humour, and talent than Sir John.

In his study of Lord Wellesley, P.E. Roberts observes that: "It was a cruel nemesis of fate that Lord Wellesley more than any other man, yearned for, and depended for his peace of mind upon, generous recognition of his achievements." The words would provide an equally apt epitaph for Malcolm.

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10 Elphinstone, journal, 25 June 1829, quoted in ibid., 2: 278.
11 Elphinstone, journal, 28 March 1831, quoted in ibid., 2: 300.
Munro was one of the few men of whom Elphinstone whole-heartedly approved; his respect for him as a statesman being equalled by his admiration and liking for him as a man. After their second and last meeting at Bombay he told Edward Strachey who, in Elphinstone's opinion, undervalued Munro, that Munro had

more marks of genius than most men I have seen, a clear and sagacious head in peace and war, original and correct views on all subjects, a real love of the natives and all mankind...good taste, candour and simplicity, that make one at home with him in a minute, and almost made me regret that I was forty and he sixty, both past the days of sudden confidence.\textsuperscript{13}

The different social levels to which their families belonged and the year in which they first arrived in India made a significant difference to the early progress of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's careers; later the pre-occupations of the government of India and their own qualities, ambitions and temperaments affected the course of their public lives. Elphinstone's connections gave him a head-start in the many areas where patronage was the determining consideration — including the acquisition of posts which gave access to promotion by rules of seniority. His early efforts at self-education, except in regard to Indian languages, were probably undertaken as a form of escape from boredom and even after Malcolm and Mackintosh's tutelage, his studies may have owed as much to intellectual curiosity as to ambition. As a careerist, however, his self-education served him well in training his mind, polishing his writing style and providing him with a conceptual framework for his works of history, and principled justifications for the policies he adopted. Unlike Malcolm and to a lesser degree Munro, he avoided controversy, partly because for much of his career he lacked the driving ambition or the dedicated commitment to specific policies that made enemies for the older men.

When Munro began his career as a civil administrator in the 1790s and when Malcolm and Elphinstone turned their attention to writing the history of Asian societies in the early years of the nineteenth century, they all made use, consciously or unconsciously, of ideas that had been the

\textsuperscript{13} Elphinstone to Edward Strachey. 21 April 1821, quoted in ibid., 2: 125.
subjects of high-profile discussion in the society in which they had grown up. They were subjects debated in the western intellectual world generally, but the broadly philosophical approach to man and society taken by the three men emphasised ideas and issues that happen to have received extra attention or publicity in Scotland. Like Scotland’s moral philosophers Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone saw man as possessing the same emotions, virtues, defects and potential for improvement wherever he lived, and blamed man-made, historically determined institutions rather than racial characteristics or divine dispensation for inhibiting progress; Elphinstone also took climatic and geographic conditions into consideration. As men of sensibility as well as sense, they tried to judge "other" societies by the other's standards, while their belief in the possibility of the degeneracy as well as the progress of civilized states mitigated the natural arrogance of the conqueror and fostered caution and gradualism.

As disciples of the Scottish philosophes there are three issues, standing out from this general approach, which are of particular importance in relation to Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's views on the ordering of societies. The first was religion. The second was the question of the correct relationship between liberty and authority in systems of government. The third was what was termed, the "wealth and virtue" question; the attempt to define a satisfactory relationship between economic and moral well-being.

The three men shared the Moderates approach to religion which encouraged tolerance and, more important, the acceptance of sociological and anthropological types of explanation for the development of different religions as well as of systems of government and social organization. They saw Asian religions as having developed to meet the needs of a particular society at a certain stage of its development and as having then regressed as the "sublime" principles of their founders were compromised to meet the more limited comprehension of the masses. Although they undoubtedly saw Christianity as superior to other religions in every respect, they do not seem to have seen it as the one true religion. There was little they admired about Islam or Hinduism but, despite what were
believed to be the deleterious effects on social morality and national character of the two religions, and the barriers they raised to progress, the three men were agreed that they must be left alone. Interference in so sensitive an area could be expected to undermine stability, but, more unusually, the three men felt that in the long run interference was probably unnecessary. Bigotry and superstition were seen as central and undesirable features of Islam and Hinduism respectively, but by applying "the historical principle" to their analysis of Asian religions, they could be seen as defects which would probably be susceptible to the general improving influences of economic progress and education. Their secular approach led the three men to see religion as something far too dangerous in the short-term to be tampered with. But, conversely, as insufficiently important in the long-run, to be worth deliberate policies for reform. The system of government, however, could not be left to reform itself because on it depended the general progress of India, including the reformation of its religions.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, no one seriously supposed there to be a practical alternative to a "despotic" system of government for British India; one which rested on military force. For Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, however, the practical and moral barriers that despotism raised against improvement had to be circumvented. Malcolm and Elphinstone's historical studies had confirmed the view that arbitrary government was morally degrading while participatory "democracy" — the word is used in the broadest possible sense — was morally preferable, but in political terms, potentially anarchic. Strong despotism, which provided order, was preferable to weak despotism under which numerous contenders for power caused civil disorder and the break-down of social infrastructures. Given this diagnosis, British India needed an efficient military force to defend its frontiers and maintain the internal order necessary for society's practical well-being; for its agriculture and commerce to prosper. In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, there was nothing particularly militarist or tyrannical about using the army to preserve the peace. In Britain, civil police forces were a thing of the future and the militia were habitually used
to maintain order in times of crisis.

Most Scotsmen, however, believed that progress involved morality as well as prosperity and in their analysis, morality meant more than good works and an abstinence from sin. It required a contribution to the society of which the individual was a component part and this meant participating in the public life of the community and the state. It was a concept that had nothing to do with representational government. It represented, rather, a conjunction between the civic tradition — classic humanist thought which had influenced Scottish culture by way of the teaching of Latin and Greek in schools and through Renaissance and more recent literary interpretations — and recent historical experience. Inclusion in the British empire in Europe had provided the Scots with the political stability and economic opportunity necessary for them, by their own exertions, to bring about a minor revolution in their country's institutions and practical condition. And they had achieved their revolution despite their loss of political independence. The concept of parliamentary sovereignty had anyway enjoyed less prestige and authority in Scotland, than England, because there were other law-making bodies and the Kirk, rather than parliament, had traditionally been seen as the protector of the liberties of the people. Transferred to the Indian context, inclusion in Britain's empire might be expected to provide British India with the same stability and, in theory at least, with similar economic opportunities. But the progress of India would still require, for moral and psychological as well as practical reasons, the active participation of Indians in the administrative functions of the government.

Although they probably did not work it out in precisely that way, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's approach to the problems of governing India rested on the assumption that an efficient military organization must provide the security, political stability and order necessary for Indian farmers to increase their own wealth and, by extension, the wealth of the state — commerce was also expected to flourish given political stability — while the civil administration must provide

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14 Davies, "The Courts and the Scottish Legal System", p. 121.
the opportunities and incentives for Indians to participate in improving their institutions.

The three men were all committed to the view that systems of government were the most important determinants of national character and, therefore, the arbiters of moral and practical improvement. But it was modes of revenue collection and the administration of justice, rather than constitutional arrangements, that would be important to the well-being of the Company's subjects, and the Munro system should be seen, primarily, as a quite clearly articulated system of political economy, on lines specified by Adam Smith, that was intended to serve the needs of both the state and the Indian people.

The starting point for the Munro system, which was adopted by Malcolm and Elphinstone when they became administrators, was continuity with existing institutions so that Indians could understand and participate in the processes of government. It utilized the ryotwari revenue system, partly because in Munro's opinion it offered fewer barriers to economic development than either zamindari or communal tenure systems, and partly because it brought relatively close contact between rulers and ruled. In principle, although by no means always in practice, the revenue aspects of the Munro system called for a moderate and fixed assessment of land-revenue so that the people might enjoy the fruits of their own labour which would, in turn, encourage personal enterprise. As a result of the natural inequalities of mankind, opportunities for the enterprising would bring into being a "respectable" middle rank based on merit — in the sense of industry and competence. Later, Munro's system aimed rather at maintaining the position in society and government of the pre-colonial notables and service gentry who Munro, with wider experience, as well as Malcolm and Elphinstone, now recognized as having a traditional and important place in Indian social structure. This middle rank, which would enjoy moderate wealth and, hopefully, a superior education, would have a sufficient interest in good government and the necessary public spirit to provide a motive.

15 Elphinstone was one of the first to use the term "Munro system" for the administrative reforms introduced into the Madras presidency between 1814 and 1827. See Beagliehole, Munro, p. 10.
force for the progress of India. In his early years Munro actively discouraged semi-feudal groups with their military traditions and patterns of dependency because he believed they prevented the establishment of the order necessary for prosperity and interfered with the imposition of a more centralized form of authority which, for Munro, should be located in the presidencies, rather than being an all-India imperium.

During his period as governor of Madras, Munro's most eloquent minutes are on the subject of the inclusion of Indians in the government of their country and on legal arrangements which, in addition to strengthening the executive branch of government by providing the collector with legal powers, aimed also at providing more opportunities for Indians to participate in the civil administration of the state. Practicality and expense are referred to in regard to employing Indians but it is invariably moral, or what would now be regarded as psychological, considerations — self-respect, the encouragement of enterprise, incentives to acquire an education and an opportunity to learn how the West organizes government — that are important. One day, although probably far in the future — Munro points out what a long time it took for Europe to attain its "present state" — Indians will be ready "to frame a regular government for themselves, and to conduct and preserve it." Being familiar with the history of Europe Munro may have genuinely believed that it would take centuries for Indians to learn to conduct a "regular" form of government themselves. It is also possible, however, that the emphasis Malcolm and Elphinstone as well as Munro placed on the length of time that would pass before Britain would have to relinquish its control of the subcontinent, indicates they were aware of early manifestations among their Anglo-Indian colleagues of the attitude defined by Francis Hutchins as an "illusion of permanence".

The administrative system introduced by Munro and endorsed in its broad objectives by Malcolm and Elphinstone, was intended to initiate a process of change that, once started, would

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16 Munro, Minutes, 2: 327.

17 Hutchins, Illusion of Permanence.
continue to evolve from within Indian society. It did, indeed, produce change, although not always in the ways envisioned by its founders, and in the twentieth century, a number of important historical works have explored the unintended and unexpected consequences of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's administrations.

The progressive policies of one generation of rulers often appear conservative to the next and it was easy for the many westernizing reformers who followed Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone to India to present the ideas of the three men in this light. It is also easy to fail to recognize principles as such when they differ from one's own. Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone were sympathetic to what they called Indian usages and manners. They believed that India's institutions were viable. They insisted that administrative systems must be comprehensible and relevant to Indians. And they thought that Indian progress, when it occurred, must and would result to a large extent from the efforts of Indians themselves. The generation that followed, however, believed, with increasing conviction, that Britain's supposedly superior forms of government and religion, and the morality, enterprise, industry and knowledge of its people gave it a divine mandate to bring about, in its own image, the improvement of others. For them, Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's school of thought was unlikely to appear as either progressive or based on valid principles.

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone's ideology was neither pragmatism nor mid-nineteenth century Anglo-Indian conservatism. By the time their biographers were writing, "inferior" religions could not be left to reform themselves; they required the dedicated labours of British missionaries. Nor could the British be seen to administer a despotic form of government — it had to be renamed paternalism. Nineteenth-century Whig historians anathematized David Hume for what they saw as his "Tory" defence of despotism and for failing, in his History of Great Britain, to do his duty as an historian "to keep wicked kings in the pillory as a perpetual warning." Hume had seen Britain's transition from feudalism, to despotism, to "liberty," in terms of the successful enhancement of the powers of the Crown at the expense of those of the feudal nobility by the Tudor "despots" — "the
tyranny and caprices" of Henry VIII, "the absolute authority" of "that arbitrary Princess" (Elizabeth). This process had created a milieu suitable for the "rise of commerce and the arts" which, in its turn enlarged the power and authority" of the "middling ranks." The Stuarts, according to Hume, inherited a despotic authority, but were unable to enforce it because it was supported by neither money nor military force.\textsuperscript{18} To Whig historians in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, it would have been a contradiction in terms to describe Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone’s approach to India, based on eighteenth-century intellectual theory and cautiously tolerant toward despotism, as progressive in any sense whatsoever. In addition, by the mid-nineteenth century, the relationship between wealth and virtue was no longer debated: the wealth — and power — of empire was the reward for virtue — which included enterprise — of a British "chosen people."

Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone would have had no quarrel with the label "paternalist" in the sense of a well-intentioned limitation of the freedom of the governed "for their own good" with the ultimate objective, as Elphinstone put it, of guiding "the natives into a state that will admit of their governing themselves."\textsuperscript{19} But by the time Gleig, Kaye and Colebrooke were writing, the paternalism of the Anglo-Indians — fatherly government by Britons for their Indian children — was acquiring a greater intimation of permanence and increasingly racist connotations. The biographers of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone represented the three men as nineteenth-century Englishmen; a portrayal — and betrayal — that had a lasting impact not only on the way the history of the Indian empire has been written but also, because the three men were presented as role-models, on the way the Indian empire was actually governed. Several generations of teleologically-minded historians, who treated the adjectives conservative, paternalist, humanitarian and utilitarian as though they had been captured by the great intellectual movements of the nineteenth century and transformed into capitalized nouns with highly specific meanings, perpetuated a misleading representation of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone.

\textsuperscript{18} Hume, \textit{History}, pp.51; 64; 78-9; 230; 226.
\textsuperscript{19} Elphinstone, \textit{Caubul}, quoted in Sir Olaf Caroe’s introduction, p. xxiii.
Malcolm and Elphinstone's school of thought. It was progressive in intent, mentorist rather than paternalist, sympathetic rather than humanitarian and empiricist rather than utilitarian. And it was the legacy, not of Victorian England, but of Enlightenment Scotland.
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